Connected Histories

Studies in Digital History and Hermeneutics

Edited by
Andreas Fickers, Valérie Schafer, Sean Takats,
and Gerben Zaagsma

Volume 8

Connected Histories

Memories and Narratives of the Holocaust in Digital Space

Edited by
Eva Pfanzelter, Dirk Rupnow, Éva Kovács
and Marianne Windsperger

DE GRUYTER
OLDENBOURG

This publication has been funded by the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure Austria, the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, the University of Innsbruck, and the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C²DH).

ISBN 978-3-11-132881-2
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-132915-4
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-132920-8
ISSN 2629-4540
DOI https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154

Library of Congress Control Number: 2024937632

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at http://dnb.dnb.de.

Cover image: Anne Sausgruber
Typesetting: Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

www.degruyter.com

Contents

Eva Pfanzelter, Éva Kovács, Dirk Rupnow, Marianne Windsperger

Introduction

The World Wide Web and digitisation have become important sites and tools for the history of the Holocaust and its commemoration. The technical possibilities constitute the elements of the turning point that Marianne Hirsch in 2012 referred to as "postmemory's archival turn".[1] For History as Public History, they have become essential tools for mobilising a wide array of social and ethnic groups – especially the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated processes of digital mediatisation. Through the example of the Holocaust, the paradigmatic shift in the humanities becomes particularly evident. Memory institutions now use the virtual digital space and its possibilities at a high professional level as a space for self-representation and as a forum for discussions among potentially international, transcultural, and interdisciplinary user groups.

At the same time, it is not always the established institutions of memory and professional 'entrepreneurs' of memory politics that fully exploit the technical possibilities and potentials of the internet. Creative and sometimes controversial new ways of narrating the history of the Holocaust, or traditional forms of Holocaust remembrance presented anew through digital media, often originate from individuals or groups not within the sphere of influence of major memorials, museums, and archives. Such 'private' presentations have gained particular prominence since the rise of social media. Here it becomes evident: there are new societal intentions and decision-making structures that exceed the capabilities of traditional mass media, as well as new forms and forums of public engagement that function differently, disseminate content differently, activate differently, and not only foster a passive reception but instead thrive on the participation of a broad public. How do these forms of grassroot digital storytelling interact with institutional digital content? What unexpected new audiences can be reached outside of one's own bubble? And what kinds of spaces emerge when historical sources are situated and located by means of augmented reality?

The digital space as an abstract and boundless archive for mediating the Holocaust was thus at the centre of the first EHRI-AT international conference "Connected Histories. Memories and Narratives of the Holocaust in Digital Space" held from 23 May to 25 May 2022 at the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue in Vienna, Austria, co-organised by the Department of Contemporary His-

1 Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-001

tory of the University of Innsbruck and the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) with the participation of all EHRI-AT partners.[2] This volume collects some of the inspiring talks given at this conference.[3] They indicate profound changes in the mediation of Holocaust history and memory.

As "the era of the witness"[4] slowly fades, (digitally) mediated modes of remembrance and commemoration are taking over. Holocaust Studies have begun to embrace the possibilities of digital technologies, moreover Holocaust Studies themselves have become a laboratory to experiment with new digital tools and methods reshaping the landscape, ushering in new scenarios where today's culture of remembrance and Holocaust Education are driven by multimedia and digital advancements.[5] "Digital Holocaust" is no longer solely perceived as the effort to preserve historical archives and eyewitness accounts and guarantee their "survival" into the digital age. On the contrary Holocaust content and memory are (co-)created, (re-)shaped, (re-)mediated digitally and linked, liked and shared online and/or blended with analogue forms of memory. In the realm of the Holocaust digital culture is multiplying the spaces for creating and experiencing collective memory.[6] The institutions of memory – museums, memorials, archives, research facilities and the like – and/or institutionalised memory experience a massive shift in the negotiation processes between the past and the present.[7]

2 For more on the conference, consult: International Conference: "#connectedhistories. Memories and Narratives of the Holocaust in Digital Space," accessed 18 January 2024, https://www.uibk.ac.at/zeitgeschichte/connectedhistories2022/; "Program and Recordings of the talks: Programm #connectedhistories," accessed 18 January 2024, https://www.uibk.ac.at/zeitgeschichte/connectedhistories2022/programm.html.de.

3 We would like to thank Alexander Renner for his support with the publication and most valued help with the images in this volume.

4 Annette Wieviorka, *The era of the Witness*, trans. Jared Stark (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press 2006).

5 See also Éva Kovács, "Testimonies in the Digital Age – New Challenges in Research, Academia and Archives," in *Interactions: Explorations of Good Practice in Educational Work with Video Testimonies of Victims of National Socialism*, Education with Testimonies Vol. 4, ed. Werner Dreier, Angelika Laumer and Moritz Wein. (Berlin: Stiftung "Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft," 2018), 76–92; Marianne Windsperger, "Preserving Lived Contexts. Yizker bikher as Portable Archives from Transgenerational Perspective," in *Mobile Kulturen und Gesellschaften/Mobile Cultures and Societies*, ed. Alexandra Ganser and Annegret Pelz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht/Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2021), 189–203, accessed 22 January 2024, https://doi.org/10.14220/9783737012089.189.

6 See also Eva Pfanzelter, *#URL Holocaust digital. Verhandlungen des Genozids zwischen Public History, Geschichtspolitik und Kommerz* (Innsbruck: iup, 2023), accessed 22 January 2024, https://www.uibk.ac.at/iup/buch_pdfs/10.15203-99106-111-3.pdf.

7 See also Dirk Rupnow, "Zwischen Ignoranz, Missbrauch und Konkurrenz. Zum Stand von Geschichtspolitik, Erinnerungskultur und Holocaust-Gedenken," S.I.M.O.N 9(1) (2022): 109–123.

While this shift has been considered inappropriate for addressing traumatic experiences, perceptions of the digital space in conjunction with the Holocaust have changed significantly over the past decades. To trace some of these changes, lies at the heart of the essays collected in this volume. They indicate a profound generational change, modification in archiving practices, different modes of communication, new ethical standards, and above all, a constant renegotiation and remediation of the history of the Holocaust.

What binds these essays together, is the attempt to better understand the connections between analogue and digital, history and contemporary society, older and younger generations or private and institutionalized memorialization – hence the title of the volume "#connectedhistories". Also, the authors of this volume see digital technologies as a chance to reach younger generations and to further Holocaust education. Despite controversial discourses on the influence of the digital world on today's societies, the essays collected here stand for a more positive interpretation of the constant need to enter into conversation with public debates, different opinions and challenging content, since they are part of history education. Still, they also call for watchful activism and careful moderation to counter online hate, antisemitism, antifeminism and racism.

This collected edition begins with a technological deep dive. In their essay "Does it get better with time? Web search consistency and relevance in the visual representation of the Holocaust", authors Mykola Makhortykh, Aleksandra Urman, Roberto Ulloa, Marya Sydorova and Juhi Kulshrestha make an in-depth analysis of how search engines' image results shape Holocaust memory. They argue that digital mnemotechnologies such as web search engines play a major role in curating information about the present, but also about historical phenomena. The growing body of research demonstrates that search engines and algorithms play an important role in representing and interpreting the past by selecting and prioritising specific information sources and content items. However, how consistent such representations of historical phenomena remain over time is currently unclear. Search engines are known to revisit their ranking of sources and individual content items related to current events (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic) to reflect potential changes in their relevance; however, there is limited understanding of how changes in relevance apply to historical events, in particular, the ones for which there are well-established institutional practices of representation as in the case of the Holocaust. To advance such understanding, the authors analyse image search results in relation to the Holocaust collected via three Western and non-Western search engines – Bing, Google, and Yandex – in 2020 and 2021. Using a combination of historical and qualitative content analysis, they investigate how the relevance of search outputs to the Holocaust changes over time and how consistent the prioritisation of specific aspects of the Holocaust and sites of Holocaust memorialisation remains.

Mia Berg's contribution focusses on "Participatory memory – historiography – research? Exploring representations of the Holocaust on social media". She analyses how the remediation of the Holocaust in social media repeatedly causes controversial reactions leading up to debates on the (limits of) representations of history and/or the appropriateness of the mediation of the Holocaust on social media, although, lately some social media usage is increasingly seen as a new form of remembrance and documentation practice. The example of the Holocaust illustrates how social media questions mainstream forms of commemoration, how normative boundaries are being (con)tested and re-defined through new formats, subjects, or communication practices. Despite highly contested discourses surrounding social media in recent years Berg argues that social media have led to a "democratisation" of communication and remembrance regarding the Holocaust because of the pluralization of actors and practices. By looking at the platforms Instagram and TikTok she analyses whether and how this "democratisation", understood as a participation in knowledge production in the public sphere, is represented in the context of Holocaust remembrance.

"Digital Holocaust memory: A study of Italian Holocaust museums and their social media users" is in the focus of Stefania Manca's and Silvia Guetta's essay. In this chapter the two authors delve into the complex interplay between national and transnational Holocaust memory, as represented on the social media profiles of four Italian Holocaust museums and memorials. Through a combination of semi-structured interviews with museum staff and a survey administered to users, they tried to gain insight into both the communication policies and social media strategies employed by these institutions, as well as the motivations of their online followers. Their findings suggest that social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, are a crucial means of promoting historical information and museum activities to a wider audience. Users place a high value on accuracy of information, express a desire to better understand historical facts and empathise with victims. However, they also note that limited resources can pose significant challenges to effectively implementing digital strategies, and that direct user interaction with museum staff is relatively infrequent. Despite these challenges, Manca and Guetta underline the importance of social media in fostering engagement with Holocaust memory, both on a national and transnational level. By better understanding the motivations of users and the strategies employed by museum staff, it is argued, museums and memorials can work towards creating more effective and impactful digital representations of the Holocaust for generations to come.

Anna Carolina Viana, Bárbara Deoti and Maria Visconti look at historians as influencers in Brazil. In their article "The historian influencer: Mediating and transmitting Holocaust memory on social media in Brazil" they present the chal-

lenges and possibilities of mediating and transmitting Holocaust Memory on social media in Brazil, based on their experience as coordinators and content creators in the Brazilian Center for Nazism and Holocaust Studies (NEPAT), an independent female-led initiative of historians. NEPAT was created in 2019 following the need to open space for academic dialogue in Brazil in the fields of Nazism and Holocaust Studies, as well as to produce accessible content covering such topics on social media – virtual space is especially important in this case because of the spatial distance to the sites of the events of the Holocaust. Since 2020, the initiative has also been creating a podcast called *Desnazificando* (Denazifying), which is, to this date, the only podcast exclusively about these themes in Brazilian Portuguese. The scientific dissemination project on social media is an essential part of the public-facing activity, founded on values the initiative is committed to uphold. In recent years, also in Brazil the Holocaust Studies field has dedicated more attention to the digital world, as digital media have become a valuable platform for disseminating scholarly research, producing memorial and educational initiatives, and reaching a broader audience. In this new and flourishing landscape, however, researchers must critically examine the research practices now shaping Holocaust memory and education and reflect on how researchers and educational institutions create digital outputs to reach their intended audiences. Working with social media implies diving into the scope of marketing, community management, quantitative data analysis, and content strategy. Based on the theoretical outlook of both Digital History and Media Studies, Viana, Deoti and Visconti dedicate special attention to the interactions between users and digital interfaces, as well as the participatory culture fostered by social media networks. This chapter therefore is methodological work of self-reflexivity, using NEPAT's Instagram production as primary source materials for analysis.

The essay by Anja Ballis also deals with the challenges of social media and especially with TikTok. Her contribution "The media network of memory: Sharing Holocaust stories on TikTok and collaborative writing of 'Memory Books'" focuses on the storytelling aspects of social media. She identifies a clear media change during the COVID-19 pandemic where a tendency towards online remembrance on social media can be observed. Since many institutions were temporary closed, some survivors began (re)telling their life-stories on social media, especially on TikTok, where they were often supported by family members. In this manner, Ballis argues, Holocaust survivors achieved agency in (re)telling their story on their own accord and in their own way, thus no longer being dependent on mainstream institutions of Holocaust memory. To support her arguments, the author uses the examples of two Holocaust survivors, Lily Ebert and Gidon Lev, who have become quite popular "online survivors". Ballis argues that the social media activities of the two Holocaust survivors show similarities and differences that

reveal how memory is shaped and multiplied in digital space. Their media network of memory, consisting of media coverage, social media activities and printed memoirs sheds light on the processes of creating and constructing (online) memory. The discussion on the extent to which print media and its structure influence online storytelling – and vice versa – contributes to considerations on shaping memory by different agents and on taking action against forgetting the crimes of the Holocaust.

Josefine Honke's essay "#Connectedmemories: Non-persecuted German witnesses of National Socialism on YouTube" deals with another influential social media platform: YouTube. While it seems to be primarily a place for quick entertainment, historical content on the video portal has become quite popular. Honke argues that YouTube has cultural significance for memorial culture because the videos shown here are a vital component of global memory networks and should therefore receive more attention in research and teaching. Beyond some of the most watched videos focusing on easy entertainment or preparing students for their exams, other YouTube videos and channels have been mostly neglected in memory studies and unjustly so. To support her arguments, the author examines two online videos with non-persecuted German witnesses who talk about the time of National Socialism in Germany. They establish YouTube as memory media where witnesses follow specific modes of representation, and representational aesthetics and mobilised narratives of the past primarily centre on the victims. Honke also discusses the possibilities of connecting memories of on, for example, a municipal level to bring different memories together and engage in both local and national memorialisation. To conclude she argues that YouTube as a global memory network needs to be considered as a "fluid mnemonic space" (Matthew Boswell and Antony Rowland) that constantly changes. They offer opportunities but also challenges to current memory discourses. One of the outstanding features of digital memory media is, so Honke, the engagement of mostly younger generations and their confrontation with the past.

The chapter "Rendering forgotten places of NS terror visible. Art, research, participation, and digital technologies as an assemblage in the project 'Making Traces Readable in the NS Forced Labour Camp Roggendorf/Pulkau'" by Edith Blaschitz, Heidemarie Uhl(†), Georg Vogt, Rosa Andraschek, Martin Krenn and Wolfgang Gasser focus on an Austrian "NS victim site". The essay draws from the understanding that NS forced labour camps and camp-like facilities used for the internment of prisoners of war or civilian forced labourers are hardly visible today. In fact, most of these former labour camp sites are no longer known, as they can be found neither in scholarly nor in local history publications. This means that these sites of forced labour are usually right in the middle of our everyday spaces – with a few exceptions where such sites were turned into memorials or somehow marked with

mementos. The search for new anchor points for reference and confrontation, as well as new formats of dissemination and involvement is characteristic in dealing with such difficult memorial spaces. Against the background of the question of how to address forgotten camp sites in everyday spaces and how digital technologies can support this effort, the project "Making Traces Readable in the NS Forced Labour Camp Roggendorf/Pulkau" was developed and implemented in Lower Austria. The chapter discusses the concept that was elaborated as a combination of the physical location with artistic and specialist approaches, participatory remembrance work, and digital technologies. This connection between the place, different actors and digital technologies can be referred to as an "assemblage" wherein heterogeneous components form a social fabric through collaborative processes and their relationship to one another and create a new space.

Iris Groschek and Nicole Steng question and discuss "Social media at memorial sites: Are we sure this is a good idea? Considerations and experiences on the use of social media by two German concentration camp memorial sites". In this chapter, the authors share considerations and experiences from their own use of social media, particularly online live tours and TikTok videos at the Dachau and Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial sites. This offers practical insights into potentially integrating digital and non-digital memory forms. Additionally, it emphasises the challenge memorials encounter in balancing the delivery of factual information for remembrance and commemoration, while navigating the "unanchored" quality of social media posts and other online formats. Groschek and Steng argue that the examples from the two Concentration Camp Memorials show that digital innovations hold many possibilities for memorial sites. Here, digital and analog realms complement each other almost effortlessly. Yet, one misconception persists: the belief that digital visitors require less attention than those physically present. However, digital visitors display just as much interest as those on-site at the memorial. Also, the close interweaving of online and analogue content creates new approaches to learn about the history of National Socialist persecution, which can certainly help to improve awareness of knowledge and scope for action within society as a whole. This requires not only an appreciative attitude on the part of the memorial sites for new – or differently to address – target groups, but also an open-mindedness for challenging formats. Memorial sites need educational concepts in which digitality does not mean the replacement of paper but is understood as a completely new educational opportunity. They need their own technical know-how and a genuine interest in innovation. In order to remain relevant for the next generation, memorial institutions will have to invest more time and energy in their own, but also user-generated content and co-creation formats, in order to become influencers in the digital world.

The influence of Holocaust survivors in Nebraska is discussed by Beth S. Dotan in "The impact of Nebraska's collective memory of the Holocaust via digital exploration". The cross-disciplinary project (political science, history and digital humanities disciplines) Dotan analyses is the platform "The Nebraska Stories of Humanity: Holocaust Survivors & WWII Veterans, Network & Educational Portal". The site is filled with digitised materials collected locally, including documents, photos and keepsakes from survivor and veteran families, alongside news articles, testimonies, geographical data and primary resources. By spotlighting distinctive regional stories through a fully transcribed and easily navigable collection, it enhances accessibility and amplifies the narrative of survivors and liberator memories and contributions. One of the educational objectives of the site is to facilitate users' comprehension of the breakdown of democracy in pre-World War Two Europe and to showcase the resilience of individuals. The site enables visitors to contemplate the immense challenges people faced when adapting to unforeseen circumstances and trauma, and how they confronted new conditions for survival. The Nebraska Stories of Humanity portal sheds light on the experiences and trajectories of these journeys by revealing documents that provide evidence of the erosion of democratic structures and showcasing personal collections that symbolise hope for the future. The website, with its multifaceted nature, can integrate into critical educational theories and utilize multidirectional memory to link Holocaust pedagogy with state educational standards. Dotan argues that while the goals of the project are to bring together disparate materials from outside collections, families and local resources, the outcome has been much more than the simple gathering of items. Linking the transcribed, digitized artifacts to substantiate testimony metadata creates newly evolving narratives with vast educational and research implications.

In "'Follow for more spookiness': The dybbuk box, networked digital Holocaust memory and interactive narrative on social media", Archie Wolfman investigates a totally different, albeit equally fascinating subject. He retraces the digital fragments of the "dybbuk box" narrative. The "dybbuk box" originates in Jewish folklore and is based on the narrative that the soul of a deceased person can take over and possess a living being. Apparently, in 2001, an antique dealer in Portland, Oregon, named Kevin Mannis, bought a wine cabinet referred to as the "dybbuk box" from a Holocaust survivor. Shortly after Mannis encountered a series of unfortunate events and supernatural occurrences, he sold the box on eBay in 2003. Since then, it has changed hands multiple times. Its sale has sparked an array of responses, including numerous blog entries, news articles, books, episodes on paranormal reality television, numerous horror films from Hollywood to Malayalam- and Hindi-language films, a phone app, a fantasy genre card game, YouTube videos, Tumblr posts, Reddit threads, Twitter (X) comments, TikTok uploads and responses, and, continuing to the present day, countless imitative eBay

and Etsy listings. All accounts regarding the dybbuk box from its various owners link supernatural occurrences and similar incidents to the dybbuk that supposedly haunts, curses, or possesses the box, even though Mannis in 2021 confessed that the story was fiction. Regardless of the authenticity of the initial story, the box's interactive online narrative persists in evolving and spreading. In this chapter, Wolfman examines various instances of the dybbuk box's digital representations across diverse social media platforms like Reddit, TikTok and YouTube. He argues that exploring Holocaust memory within these platforms also reflects shifts in commemoration across generations. Members of "Generation Z" (or Gen Z)[8] shape their identities and form communities by engaging in online spaces – responding, liking, following, criticising, reposting, remixing. Their involvement in digital culture is more interactive, foundational, and self-aware compared to earlier generations.

In the final chapter, Anna Menyhért engages in "Digital trauma processing in social media groups: Transgenerational Holocaust trauma on Facebook". This contribution studies the impact of digital and social media on transgenerational trauma processing, examining how different Facebook groups, public or closed, influence the ways in which people communicate about a collective historical trauma. It touches upon the issue of research ethics in connection with the handling of sensitive data in social media research. It examines two Hungarian Facebook groups on Holocaust memory, and a book, compiled as a collection of posts from the group "The Holocaust and My Family". The author analyses and compares two Hungarian groups, "The Holocaust and My Family" and "The Descendants of the Victims and Survivors of the Holocaust", looking at why these groups are especially suitable for facilitating historical trauma processing. She shows how the concepts of trauma and trauma processing itself are changing in the digital age, related to how the practice of sharing posts and comments on social media gains more importance and thus counteracts the element of silence, which was considered the most important element of trauma on several levels. Menyhért argues that the methods of remembering and practices related to memory have evolved due to the digital environment acting as a mediating platform. Online communities like blogs and social media groups offer an entirely new space for both individual and collective processing of trauma. As such, the emergence of the concept of digital memories can be identified wherein the perception of trauma changed within cultural trauma studies. Compared to the established notion of

8 In this context, see also "Die Generation Z und die NS-Geschichte: hohe Sensibilität und unheimliche Faszination. Qualitative und quantitative Studie. Arolsen Archives/Rheingold Institut, 2022," accessed 18 January 2024, https://arolsen-archives.org/lernen-mitwirken/studie-gen-z-ns-zeit/.

trauma as unchangeable, unspeakable, and impossible to represent or mediate, trauma in the digital era is viewed as multifaceted, represented in various ways, diverse and shared within the digital realm.

Through the digital turn in Holocaust Studies the "era of the witness" has turned into the "era of the user" (Hogervorst, 2020)[9] that is characterised by ubiquity, relationality, new possibilities of combining information through reconfiguration and the active role of the user in the storytelling. The importance of user involvement, of empathy and emotional identification in the digital age is also highlighted in the large-scale study on the Generation Z conducted by Arolsen Archives. In order to know more about the user, the "black box" in Holocaust Education and Public History – that was addressed in several discussions during the conference – needs to be opened through collecting data on users and documenting their experiences. We want to close this volume with questions that were addressed during the conference and in the contributions of this volume:

What about the audiences of social media channels, digital projects, crowdsourcing campaigns? Do the researchers know their audiences, what can they learn from their experiences and what happens when content reaches unexpected audiences? What happens when users become researchers themselves? What can we learn from the digital literacy of the Generation Z? How are digital developments transforming our way of understanding archives? What happens through the remediation of archival content? What is gained and what is lost? How do we approach a virtual space where fact and fiction merges – where we are confronted with augmented realities? How democratic were these changes, and to what extent did they ultimately reinforce old hierarchical structures, as well as cultural, regional, and other inequalities in global knowledge production?

The European Holocaust Research Infrastructure EHRI has already addressed many of these challenges and questions since its founding as a project in 2010 and has become a digital infrastructure that enables the exchange and networking of Holocaust historians, archivists, digital experts, data scientists and users with all kinds of backgrounds and expertise. EHRI provides an infrastructure and laboratory where conversations on technical possibilities and data restrictions are initiated, where new methodologies can be tested and where interdisciplinary exchange happens.

The editors of this volume want to thank Alexander Renner from the University of Innsbruck for his support in the production of this book.

9 Susan Hogervorst, "The era of the user. Testimonies in the digital age," *Rethinking History* 24(2) (2020): 169–183, accessed 18 January 2024, DOI: 10.1080/13642529.2020.1757333.

Bibliography

#connectedhistories. “International Conference: #connectedhistories. Memories and Narratives of the Holocaust in Digital Space.” Accessed 18 January 2024. https://www.uibk.ac.at/zeitgeschichte/connectedhistories2022/.

#connectedhistories. “Program and Recordings of the talks: Programm #connectedhistories.” Accessed 18 January 2024. https://www.uibk.ac.at/zeitgeschichte/connectedhistories2022/programm.html.de.

„Die Generation Z und die NS-Geschichte: hohe Sensibilität und unheimliche Faszination. Qualitative und quantitative Studie. Arolsen Archives/Rheingold Institut, 2022.“ Accessed 18 January 2024. https://arolsen-archives.org/lernen-mitwirken/studie-gen-z-ns-zeit/.

Hirsch, Marianne. *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Hogervorst, Susan. “The era of the user. Testimonies in the digital age.” *Rethinking History* 24(2) (2020): 169–183. Accessed 18 January 2024. DOI:10.1080/13642529.2020.1757333.

Kovács, Éva. “Testimonies in the Digital Age – New Challenges in Research, Academia and Archives.” In *Interactions: Explorations of Good Practice in Educational Work with Video Testimonies of Victims of National Socialism*, Education with Testimonies Vol. 4, edited by Werner Dreier, Angelika Laumer and Moritz Wein, 76–92. Berlin: Stiftung “Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft,” 2018.

Pfanzelter, Eva. *#URL Holocaust digital. Verhandlungen des Genozids zwischen Public History, Geschichtspolitik und Kommerz*. Innsbruck: iup, 2023. Accessed 22 January 2024, https://www.uibk.ac.at/iup/buch_pdfs/10.15203-99106-111-3.pdf.

Rupnow, Dirk. “Zwischen Ignoranz, Missbrauch und Konkurrenz. Zum Stand von Geschichtspolitik, Erinnerungskultur und Holocaust-Gedenken.” *S.I.M.O.N*. 9(1) (2022): 109–123. Accessed 22 January 2024. https://doi.org/10.23777/sn.0122.

Wieviorka, Annette. *The era of the Witness*. Translated by Jared Stark. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2006.

Windsperger, Marianne. “Preserving Lived Contexts. Yizker bikher as Portable Archives from Transgenerational Perspective.” In *Mobile Kulturen und Gesellschaften/Mobile Cultures and Societies*, edited by Alexandra Ganser and Annegret Pelz. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht/Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2021, 189–203. Accessed 22 January 2024. https://doi.org/10.14220/9783737012089.189.

Mykola Makhortykh, Aleksandra Urman, Roberto Ulloa,
Marya Sydorova, Juhi Kulshrestha

Does it get better with time? Web search consistency and relevance in the visual representation of the Holocaust

1 Introduction

Today's digital memory ecosystem is characterised by the abundance of memory-related content. Often referred to as a definitive feature of the "post-scarcity"[1] memory culture, such abundance is particularly pronounced in the case of the recent past, where the volume of content dealing with individual and collective recollections has increased dramatically due to the rise of portable digital devices (e.g. smartphones) generating this content and online storage spaces preserving it.[2] However, even in the case of historical events which happened decades or centuries ago, there is a growth in available content attributed both to the digitisation of institutional collections and the production of digital-born content.[3] In some cases, digital-born content is generated by the memory institutions (e.g. in the case of online materials countering the distortion of historical facts[4]), whereas in other cases such content originates from the users interested in commemorat-

1 Andrew Hoskins, "7/7 and connective memory: Interactional trajectories of remembering in post-scarcity culture," *Memory Studies* 4(3) (2011): 269–280.

2 Andrew Hoskins and Huw Halstead, "The new grey of memory: Andrew Hoskins in conversation with Huw Halstead," *Memory Studies* 14(3) (2021): 675–685.

3 See, for example, Matilde Eiroa San Francisco, "Primary sources for a digital-born history: The Hispanic blogosphere on the Spanish Civil War and Franco's regime," *Culture & History Digital Journal* 7(2) (2018): 1–10; Stefania Manca, Marcello Passarelli and Martin Rehm, "Exploring tensions in Holocaust museums' modes of commemoration and interaction on social media," *Technology in Society* 68 (2022): 1–13.

4 Manca, Passarelli and Rehm, "Exploring tensions in Holocaust museums' modes of commemoration and interaction on social media," 5–6.

Acknowledgments: This work was supported by the Alfred Landecker Foundation as part of the project titled "Algorithmic turn in Holocaust memory transmission: Challenges, opportunities, threats". The funder had no role in study design, data collection and analysis, the decision to publish, or manuscript preparation.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-002

ing a specific personality or an episode of the past[5] or confronting hegemonic memory practices.[6]

The abundance of memory-related content enables new possibilities and challenges for individual and collective remembering. Because of the extensive volume of information about the past, it becomes difficult for individuals to navigate it without relying on digital mnemotechnologies. Defined by Stiegler[7] as a form of technology used for systematically ordering memories, mnemotechnologies come in different formats: from external storage devices (e.g. compact disks[8]) to the algorithm-driven platform affordances (e.g. the *On This Day* function of Facebook[9]). However, independently of the format, most digital mnemotechnologies can organise memory-related content and then retrieve it in response to explicit user requests (e.g. search queries) or implicit signals (e.g. internal system timers).

Among many digital mnemotechnologies, a special place is occupied by web search engines such as Google or Yandex. Search engines are algorithmic systems responsible for collecting Web data and retrieving and ranking these data in response to user queries.[10] The functionality of the search engines makes them one of the crucial types of information gatekeepers,[11] which determine what information sources and interpretations are prioritised to their users and how such prioritisation changes over time. Under these circumstances, search engines play a key role in shaping how the general public understands not only the present,[12] but also the past state of social reality.[13]

---

5 Yvonne Liebermann, "Born digital: The Black lives matter movement and memory after the digital turn," *Memory Studies* 14(4) (2021): 713–732.

6 Mykola Makhortykh and Maryna Sydorova, "Animating the subjugated past: digital greeting cards as a form of counter-memory," *Visual Communication* 21(1) (2022): 28–52.

7 Bernard Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 67.

8 Bruno Lessard, "Archiving the gaze: Relation-images, adaptation, and digital mnemotechnologies," in *Save as … Digital memories*, ed. Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins and Anna Reading (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), 115–128.

9 Robert Prey and Rik Smit, "From personal to personalized memory: Social media as mnemotechnology," in *A networked self and birth, life, death*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (London: Routledge, 2018), 209–223.

10 Dirk Lewandowski, *Understanding Search Engines* (Berlin: Springer Nature, 2023), 1.

11 Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, "News media, search engines and social networking sites as varieties of online gatekeepers," in *Rethinking journalism again. Societal role and public relevance in a digital age*, ed. Chris Peters and Marcel Broersma (London: Routledge, 2016), 93–108.

12 Juhi Kulshrestha, et al., "Search bias quantification: investigating political bias in social media and web search," *Information Retrieval Journal* 22 (2019): 188–227.

13 Andrei Zavadski and Florian Toepfl, "Querying the Internet as a mnemonic practice: how search engines mediate four types of past events in Russia," *Media, Culture & Society* 41(1) (2019): 21–37.

Despite the importance of search engines as a mnemotechnology amplified by their extensive use by internet users[14] and high trust towards them,[15] there are still many uncertainties about how search engines impact individual and collective engagement with the past. In addition to the concerns about search engines limiting the individual agency in the context of remembrance (e.g. by preventing individuals from controlling what information about their past is prioritised[16]), search engines are highly complex and highly non-transparent systems. The lack of transparency is particularly concerning when search engines are dealing with information about traumatic episodes of the past (e.g. mass atrocities) due to ethical and moral obligations to protect the memory of the victims and prevent it from being distorted and the frequent attempts to distort or appropriate memory about these episodes.

To better understand search engine performance in the context of mass atrocities, this chapter examines how three search engines – Bing, Google, and Yandex – prioritise visual information about the Holocaust. Our focus on the Holocaust is attributed to it being an iconic instance of mass atrocity (as well as one of the most studied and documented atrocities in the history of humankind) and the one which is often contested by denialist and antisemitic claims. By conducting a virtual agent-based algorithm audit, we investigate what search engines perceive as the most relevant content for the visual representation of the Holocaust and how such perception changes over time and address the following research questions: How thematically/historically relevant is visual content retrieved in relation to the Holocaust by search engines? What aspects of the Holocaust become more/less visible over time, and how does such visibility vary across individual search engines? What Holocaust sites become more/less visible over time, and what factors (e.g. historical significance) can influence their visibility?

14 Aleksandra Urman and Mykola Makhortykh, "You are how (and where) you search? Comparative analysis of web search behavior using web tracking data," *Journal of Computational Social Science* (2023): 1–16.

15 Sebastian Schultheiß and Dirk Lewandowski, "Misplaced trust? The relationship between trust, ability to identify commercially influenced results and search engine preference," *Journal of Information Science* 49(3) (2023): 609–623.

16 Elena Esposito, "Algorithmic memory and the right to be forgotten on the web," *Big Data & Society* 4(1) (2017): 1–11.

2 Literature review

The research on digital mnemotechnologies is a quickly growing academic field located at the intersection of memory and media studies.[17] Originating from mnemotechnics used to preserve individual recollections and ranging from material (e.g. cave paintings[18]) to mental techniques (e.g. memory palaces[19]), mnemotechnologies were enabled by the industrialisation of memory-related processes via mass media that resulted in new large-scale formats of memory storage and transmission.[20] The immediate consequence of the rise of mnemotechnologies was the increase in the volume of preserved memory-related content that, in turn, created the pressing need to organise such content.

The advancement of digital technologies, particularly the establishment of Web 2.0, characterised by the ease of producing new content, enabled new possibilities and risks for organising memories via mnemotechnologies. Instead of focusing on storing information about the past (e.g. via external storage devices[21]), mnemotechnologies increasingly shifted towards new mechanisms for determining the relevance of stored information for individual users and delivering it in a new range of formats. In the case of heritage institutions, examples of such mnemotechnologies range from search systems integrated with institutions' collections of digitised and digital-born materials[22] to the use of conversational agents (e.g. in the form of holograms[23]) for delivering information about the past to the public.

However, the major change caused by Web 2.0 in the context of remembrance was related to the increasing presence of memory-related content outside of spaces curated by heritage institutions. Under these circumstances, mnemotechnologies have become adopted by commercial platforms such as Facebook/Meta

17 For examples, see Prey and Smit, "From personal to personalized memory"; Neal Thomas, "Social computing as a platform for memory," *Culture Machine* 14 (2013): 1–16; Jacek Smolicki, "You Press the Button, We Do the Rest. Personal Archiving in Capture Culture," *Towards a philosophy of digital media* (2018): 77–100.

18 Prey and Smit, "From personal to personalized memory," 221.

19 Frances A. Yates, *The art of memory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 46.

20 Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy*, 67.

21 Bruno Lessard, "Archiving the gaze."

22 Jefferson Heard, et al., "On mediated search of the United States holocaust memorial museum data," in *Next Generation Information Technologies and Systems. 7th International Conference, NGITS 2009 Haifa, Israel, June 16–18, 2009 Revised Selected Papers*, ed. Yishai A. Feldman, Donald Kraft and Tsvi Kuflik (Heidelberg: Springer, 2009), 38–46.

23 Victoria Grace Walden, "What is 'virtual Holocaust memory'?" *Memory Studies* 15(4) (2022): 621–633.

and Google[24] to deal with the evergrowing volume of content related to the individual and collective past. The constant growth in the volume of such content, the multiple formats in which it appeared and the multitude of interpretations it provided (including frequent attempts to distort the past) and diverse uses of memory-related content by individual users makes the use of mnemotechnologies "by commercial platforms" more challenging compared to the case of institutions. These complexities contributed to the commercial platforms adopting more advanced forms of mnemotechnologies capable of personalising user interactions with memory-related content, filtering out undesired content, and adapting to the appearence of more relevant sources and content items over time.

The variety of commercial mnemotechnologies has been attracting an increasing amount of scholarly attention in recent years, with studies looking at their use by social media platforms (e.g., Facebook[25] or Instagram[26]), video hosting services (e.g., TikTok[27]) or mobile apps (e.g., Apple Memories[28]). Web search engines are no exception in this case, with the volume of research on their role in today's digital memory ecosystem steadily growing. Pfanzelter[29] used aggregate data provided by Google Trends to look at the dynamics of the use of Google search in the context of the Holocaust and found that the use of Google for searching for Holocaust-related information in Germany was more consistent than internationally. Zavadski and Toepfl[30] conducted a large-scale study looking at how Google and Yandex text search algorithms represent information about different episodes of Russian history and found that both search engines tend to prioritise

24 See, for instance, Benjamin N. Jacobsen, "Sculpting digital voids: The politics of forgetting on Facebook," *Convergence* 27(2) (2021): 357–370; Rik Smit, Ansgard Heinrich and Marcel Broersma, "Witnessing in the new memory ecology: Memory construction of the Syrian conflict on YouTube," *New Media & Society* 19(2) (2017): 289–307.

25 Prey and Smit, "From personal to personalized memory."

26 Jennifer Krueckeberg, "Youth and Algorithmic Memory: Co-producing Personal Memory on Instagram," in *Culture and Computing. Design Thinking and Cultural Computing. 9th International Conference, C&C 2021, Held as Part of the 23rd HCI International Conference, HCII 2021, Virtual Event, July 24–29, 2021, Proceedings, Part II*, ed. Matthias Rauterberg (Cham: Springer, 2021), 253–264.

27 Tom Divon and Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "#JewishTikTok: The JewToks' Fight against Antisemitism," in *TikTok cultures in the United States*, ed. Trevor Boffone (London: Routledge, 2022), 47–58.

28 Gabriel Pereira, "Apple Memories and Automated Memory-Making: The Networked Image Inside the iPhone Chip," *Digital Culture & Society* 7(2) (2021): 203–228.

29 Eva Pfanzelter, "At the crossroads with public history: Mediating the Holocaust on the Internet," *Holocaust Studies* 21(4) (2015): 253–254.

30 Zavadski and Toepfl "Querying the Internet as a mnemonic practice," 32–33.

pro-regime information sources. Finally, Makhortykh et al.[31] conducted algorithm audits of text search for a selection of search engines in relation to the Holocaust and the Holodomor and identified substantial differences in the types of information sources prioritised by different search engines regarding these two atrocities.

At the same time, despite the growing number of research inquiring into the implications of using web search engines as a form of mnemotechnology, there are still many gaps which are to be addressed, in particular considering the high complexity of algorithms underlying web search functionalities[32] and their tendency to change over time. So far, most studies focus on a single type of web search – i.e. text[33] – whereas the other forms of search (e.g. image or video search) remain less researched despite the importance of visual content for memory transmission.[34] Similarly, there is a tendency to focus on a single search engine – i.e. Google – despite the contrasting observations about how similar or different interpretations of the past prioritised by different search engines can be.[35] Furthermore, many studies focus on search data collected at a single point of time, despite a few comparative studies on representation of mass atrocities via web search indicating substantial fluctuation in

31 Mykola Makhortykh, Aleksandra Urman and Roberto Ulloa, "Memory, counter-memory and denialism: How search engines circulate information about the Holodomor-related memory wars," *Memory Studies* 15(6) (2022): 1330–1345; Mykola Makhortykh, et al., "Can an algorithm remember the Holocaust? Comparative algorithm audit of Holocaust-related information on search engines," in *Digital Memory. Neue Perspektiven für die Erinnerungsarbeit*, ed. Iris Groschek and Habbo Knoch (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023), 79–93.

32 For the discussion of some factors influencing web search performance, in particular in the context of them deciding on the relevance of sources, see Lewandowski, "Understanding Search Engines"; Olof Sundin, Dirk Lewandowski and Jutta Haider, "Whose relevance? Web search engines as multisided relevance machines," *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 73(5) (2022): 637–642; Aniko Hannak, et al., "Measuring personalization of web search," in *Proceedings of the 22nd international conference on World Wide Web* (2013), 527–538.

33 For instance, Pfanzelter, "At the crossroads with public history"; Zavadski and Toepfl, "Querying the Internet as a mnemonic practice," Makhortykh, et al., "Memory, counter-memory and denialism."

34 For the importance of visual content for memory transmission, specifically in the context of the Holocaust, see Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to forget: Holocaust memory through the camera's eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Sarah Farmer, "Going Visual: Holocaust Representation and Historical Method," *The American Historical Review* 115(1) (2010): 115–122. For a few studies looking at the role of image search on representation the historical and recent past, see Monica Lestari Paramita, et al., "Do you see what I see? Images of the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of Google," *Information Processing & Management* 58(5) (2021): 1–16; Mykola Makhortykh, Aleksandra Urman and Roberto Ulloa, "Hey, Google, is it what the Holocaust looked like? Auditing algorithmic curation of visual historical content on Web search engines," *First Monday* 26(10) (2021): 1–24.

35 For instance, in Zavadski and Toepfl, "Querying the Internet as a mnemonic practice," researchers found little difference between memory-related content prioritised by Google and Yandex in relation to Russian history, whereas in Makhortykh, et al., "Memory, counter-memory and

how the past is represented by search engines over time.[36] Under these circumstances, it is important to investigate whether relevance of content prioritised by the search engines in relation to the visual representation of the past is also subject to fluctuations and how these fluctuations can influence the consistency of the historical representation.

3 Methodology

3.1 Data collection

To implement the study, we conducted a virtual agent-based algorithm audit of image search engines. Unlike other forms of algorithm audits which rely on crowdsourcing data from human users or the use of application programming interfaces (APIs),[37] virtual agent-based audits (also known as sock puppet audits) simulate human browsing behaviour (e.g. entering a search query[38]) via specialised software or programming scripts. The major advantage of virtual agent-based audits is that they allow controlling for personalisation[39] and randomisation[40] factors that can influence what content the search engine prioritises for specific queries. To control these factors, virtual agent-based audits allow the deployment of a large number of agents simultaneously (to account for some agents getting a more random selection of the outputs), using the IPs from the same location, and synchronising the activity of the agents to control for the effect of time.

To conduct the audits, we built a network of CentOS virtual machines (50 machines for the audit on 27 February 2020 and 30 machines for the audit on 18 March 2021) in the Frankfurt am Main region of the Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud. The deployment of machines in the Frankfurt region implied that each of

denialism," rather profound differences between Google and Yandex concerning whether the Holodomor was a genocide were observed.

36 For instance, Makhortykh, et al., "Memory, counter-memory and denialism"; Makhortykh, et al., "Can an algorithm remember the Holocaust?".

37 For a review, see Jack Bandy, "Problematic machine behavior: A systematic literature review of algorithm audits" *Proceedings of the ACM on human-computer interaction 5* (2021), 1–34.

38 Roberto Ulloa, Mykola Makhortykh and Aleksandra Urman, "Scaling up search engine audits: practical insights for algorithm auditing," *Journal of information science* (2022), https://doi.org/10.1177/01655515221093029.

39 Hannak, et al., "Measuring personalization of web search."

40 Mario Haim, Florian Arendt and Sebastian Scherr, "Abyss or shelter? On the relevance of web search engines' search results when people google for suicide," *Health Communication* 32(2) (2017): 253–258.

our simulated agents had an IP address coming from the same part of Germany to control for location-based personalisation. We deployed two virtual agents on each machine: one in the Chrome browser and one in Mozilla Firefox. Each agent consisted of two browser extensions: a tracker and a bot. The tracker collected the HTML of pages visited in the browser and sent them to a storage server. The bot emulated a sequence of actions, such as visiting an image search engine page, entering the "Holocaust" query, scrolling down the results page to load at least 50 images, and cleaning data accessible by the browser and the search engine's JavaScript to prevent earlier searches affecting the subsequent ones.

For the audits, we focused on three search engines – Google, Bing, and Yandex – between which we distributed a similar number of agents (i.e. 33 to 34 per engine for 2020 and 20 per engine for 2021). Our selection was attributed to these search engines being among the most often used worldwide: Google is currently the monopolist on the search market in most countries in the Global North, whereas Bing is usually the second most used search engine there. By contrast, Yandex, the largest Russian search engine, is prevalent in many post-Soviet countries. By comparing these search engines, we were interested to see what the implications of different sets of algorithmic principles are for the changing relevance in the visual representation of the Holocaust as well as whether such representation is influenced by the growing tendency of Yandex to reiterate pro-Kremlin narratives[41] (e.g. in the form of prioritising images showing perpetrators of Ukrainian origin or coming from the sites where such perpetrators were particularly active as part of an effort to stigmatise Ukrainians in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war).

Our decision to focus on image search and not other forms of search (e.g. news or text search) is due to several reasons. First, visual content is known to be particularly effective in communicating meanings in relation to phenomena which can be difficult to describe verbally,[42] including mass atrocities such as the Holocaust.[43] Second, as we noted earlier, research on the role of web search engines as a form of mnemotechnology has focused on text search. In contrast, the role of image search in this context remained less studied despite the above-mentioned potential of visual content and its ability to stir strong affective reactions that make it additionally relevant in the context of remembrance.

41 Daria Krvets, et al., "Different platforms, different plots? The Kremlin-controlled search engine Yandex as a resource for Russia's informational influence in Belarus during the COVID-19 pandemic," *Journalism* (2023), https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849231157845.

42 Roland Bleiker, "Mapping visual global politics," in *Visual Global Politics*, ed. Roland Bleiker (New York: Routledge, 2018), 9.

43 Thomas Trezise, "Unspeakable," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14(1) (2001): 39–66.

3.2 Data analysis

For our analysis, we extracted URLs of image search results for each agent aggregated them across agents, and selected the 50 most frequent search results per search engine. These images were manually examined by one of the authors, who is a trained historian experienced in working with Holocaust-related archival and digital content. This examination aimed to detect the location and time at which the image was produced so it would be possible to identify whether it was related to the Holocaust (and not another historical event) and facilitate the identification of which aspect of the Holocaust the image showed.

The attribution process was facilitated with the use of authoritative information sources (e.g. the US Holocaust Memorial Museum collections) and existing knowledge of Holocaust materials by the author. This allowed to narrow the search process to specific locations/episodes and then verify the initial attribution. In these cases, when no direct match was found, the reverse search in Google and Yandex was used to locate the source of the image.

After the process of attribution was complete, we used descriptive statistics to determine how the proportion of content relevant to the Holocaust was changing over time; the same approach was used to evaluate the changes in the proportion of historical (i.e. content produced in the course of the Holocaust and immediately after it) to non-historical content (i.e. content produced in the post-war period). After it, we manually labelled each image to identify what aspect of the Holocaust it shows (e.g. deportations, life in camps, or post-war commemoration). Two coders conducted the labelling for 2020 data regarding the aspect of the Holocaust shown with the intercoder reliability tests showing high agreement (Krippendorff's alpha of 0.84); for 2021 data, the labelling was conducted by a single coder. The final step of the analysis again relied on descriptive statistics and examined the proportion of image outputs showing content from specific Holocaust extermination and concentration camps.

4 Findings

4.1 Relevance and historicity of web search outputs

We started our analysis by examining how relevant to the Holocaust image search outputs were in 2020 and 2021. Figure 1a shows that the relevance was high in 2020, with the lowest scores observed for Bing, where 91 percent of outputs were related to the Holocaust. A few examples of non-relevant outputs included content showing

images related to other mass atrocities (e.g. ethnic cleansing of Rohingya in Myanmar). In 2021, however, the number of relevant outputs increased even further, with 100 percent of outputs for Bing and Yandex being related to the Holocaust. Such a change can indicate an improvement in the performance of the algorithms powering web search engines, which prioritised more relevant content.

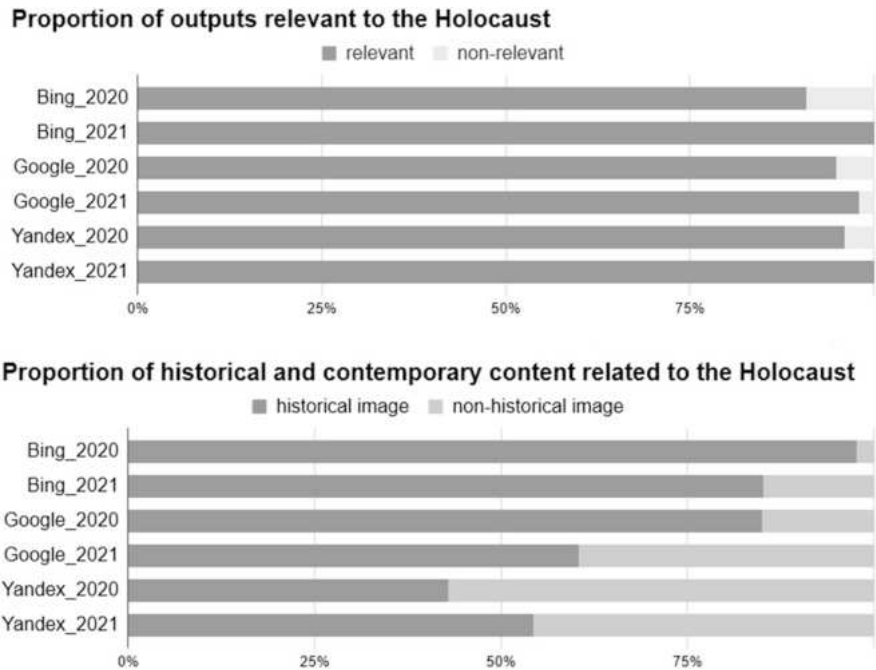


Figure 1: (a) Proportion of outputs relevant to the Holocaust. (b) Proportion of historical images among outputs relevant to the Holocaust.

Unlike relevance which increased over time, in the case of the historicity of outputs, we observed a reversed trend. Figure 1b demonstrates that for Bing and Google, in 2021, the number of outputs showing historical content (i.e. photos made in the course of the Holocaust or immediately after the liberation of the camps) has decreased from 98 percent to 85 percent and from 85 percent to 60 percent respectively. The Yandex is more of an exception in this context due to the increase in historical content in the search outputs; however, the proportion of such content remained lower than for Google and Bing.

The shift towards the present-day aspects of Holocaust remembrance can be attributed to several reasons. One of them is the tendency of search engines to prioritise content coming from journalistic outlets, both due to these sources

being viewed as more relevant by the search algorithms and journalistic outlets being more experienced in search engine optimisation. Under these circumstances, more present-day images are likely to appear due to journalistic outlets focusing on the latest developments, for instance, related to the commemoration of the Holocaust. At the same time, the higher visibility of present-day content can be related to the growing emphasis on using search engines for advertising and promoting Holocaust tourism.

4.2 Holocaust aspects prioritised by web search outputs

Following the analysis of the relevance and historicity of web search outputs, we shifted to examining what aspects of the Holocaust are more and less visible in the outputs. Figure 2a shows that all three engines put a major emphasis on content showing the liberation of the concentration camps in 1945. In addition to the liberation, the search engines (except Bing in 2020) prioritise content devoted to the post-war commemoration of the Holocaust, primarily by showing images of a few selected memorials (e.g. Auschwitz-Birkenau or the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe). Between 2020 and 2021, the visibility of the memory aspect has increased substantially for Bing and Google while decreasing for Yandex (however, the memory aspect still remains the most visible there).

Besides the liberation and memory aspects common for all three search engines, we observed some distinctions in terms of the Holocaust aspects prioritised by the individual search engines. For instance, Bing was the only search engine that emphasised images showing Jews being arrested and deported by Nazis in 2020. In 2021, the visibility of these two aspects decreased, thus putting Bing more in line with Google and Yandex in terms of these issues, but instead, Bing started putting a large emphasis on images showing the consequences of mass murder. By contrast, Google was the only search engine which prioritised images of the pre-war life of Holocaust victims that reflects current representation practices in many Holocaust museums, which aim to go beyond the exclusive focus on the destruction of the Jewish population in Europe and contextualise the Holocaust for visitors.

Our analysis also demonstrates that a number of the aspects of the Holocaust consistently receive little visibility in search results. In addition to the limited number of images related to the life of victims before and after the Holocaust, there were only a few images showing ghettos and camps (except the liberation of the camps). Similarly, only a few search outputs on Google and Bing showed images of perpetrators, thus rendering the individuals responsible for the Holocaust somewhat invisible. At the same time, compared with 2020, we observed an

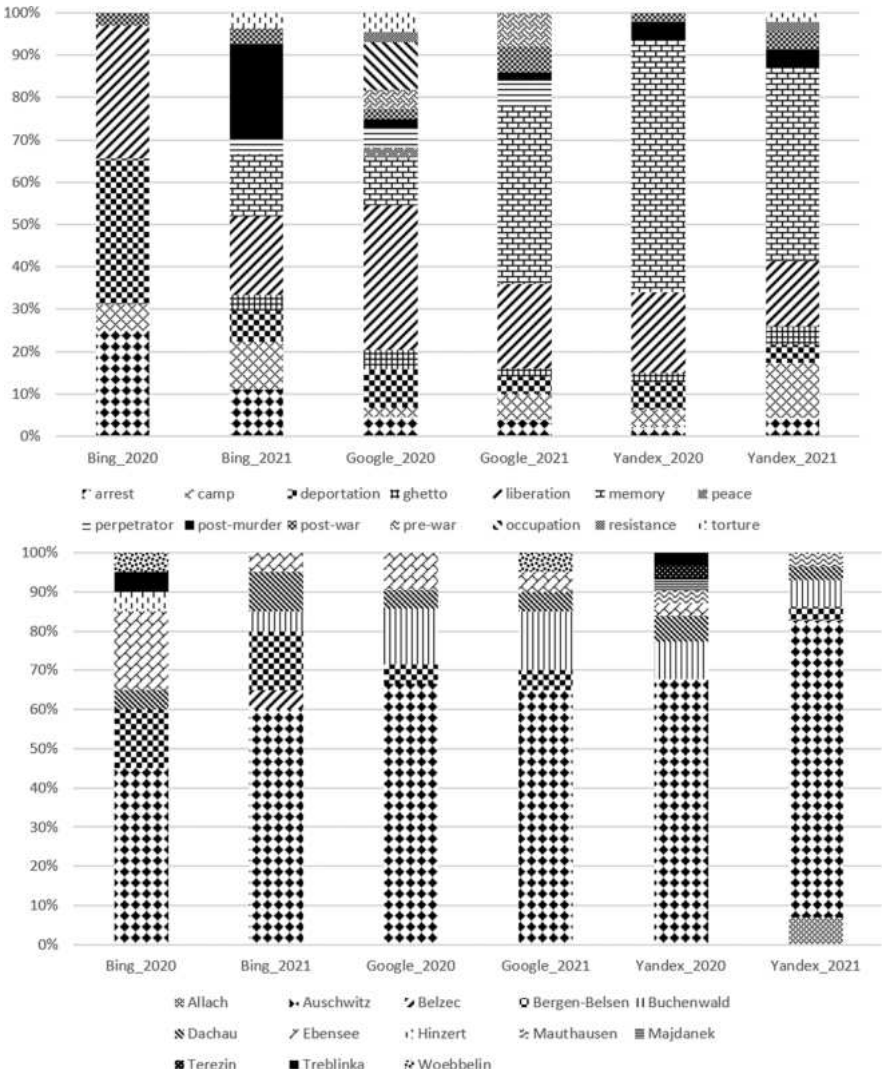


Figure 2: (a) Proportion of search outputs dealing with specific Holocaust aspects. (b) Proportion of search outputs showing content coming from specific Holocaust camps.

increase in the variation of the aspects, particularly for Bing and Yandex, which can indicate that in the long term the diversity of Holocaust representation by search engines can increase.

4.3 Holocaust sites prioritised by web search outputs

In the final part of our analysis, we looked at the distribution of search outputs from specific Holocaust camps. Figure 2b shows that most outputs come from a single site – i.e. Auschwitz-Birkenau. Already in 2020, this specific site was featured in at least 46 percent of outputs for Bing, with Google and Yandex showing an even higher proportion. The visibility of Auschwitz increased even further in 2021, where content from this specific site constituted 55 percent of outputs for Bing and 72 percent and 76 percent for Yandex and Google respectively. Besides Auschwitz, content from a few other camps which appeared more consistently in search outputs included Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau and Ebensee; however, for none of these camps featured more than in 20 percent of outputs.

The high visibility of Auschwitz that becomes even more pronounced over time can be attributed to multiple reasons. Not only is Auschwitz a site of particular historical significance due to the number of victims who died there, but it also occupies a central place in Holocaust-related popular culture.[44] This combination makes Auschwitz a particularly popular touristic destination, resulting in more user-generated content about the camp and a higher amount of commercial advertisement that can also contribute to the visibility of content coming from the site in web search outputs. Finally, there are also many mediatised visual representations of the Holocaust associated with Auschwitz, which are reiterated via journalistic media (the same reason can also explain the high visibility of Ebensee, which despite being a relatively small camp is highly visible in search outputs due to mediatised images of liberated inmates coming from there).

While there can be many reasons contributing to the consistent prevalence of Auschwitz in image search results, the implications of this 'rich get richer' principle in the context of visual representation of the Holocaust can be questioned from the normative point of view. One of the immediate consequences of the focus on the representation of the Holocaust via the prism of Auschwitz is that content from other camps remains less visible, thus resulting in the limited exposure of search users to other experiences of the Holocaust. What is particularly surprising is the extremely low visibility of other extermination camps, in particular the ones located in the eastern parts of Nazi-occupied Poland, despite these camps playing a key role in the Operation Reinhard and resulting in the massive number of deaths

44 Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler; how history is bought, packaged and sold* (London: Routledge, 2017), 97–98.

(e.g. 925,000[45] in Treblinka 2 and 434,508 in Belzec which disappeared from search outputs after 2020 and at least 167,000 in Sobibor and Chelmno which were absent from the top 50 search results altogether).

5 Conclusions

In this chapter, we aimed to empirically investigate how one specific form of mnemotechnology – web search engines – influences the visual representation of historical mass atrocities. For this aim, we audited the performance of three search engines, Bing, Google and Yandex, in 2020 and 2021, in relation to one of the most well-known instances of mass atrocity, the Holocaust. We conducted audits to scrutinise what visual content these search engines prioritise in relation to the Holocaust and how the selection of such content varies over time.

Our analysis shows that the selection of content web search engines prioritised concerning the Holocaust in 2020 and 2021 was quite different. While independent of the search engine, most of such content is relevant to the Holocaust in the sense of showing historical evidence of the atrocity or forms of modern imaginary associated with its commemoration, other features of Holocaust representation are subject to change. Specifically, we observe that for Google and Bing, there is a shift towards prioritising more contemporary user-generated content (in contrast to less emphasis on historical evidence), particularly content from contemporary memory sites (with a particular focus on Auschwitz-Birkenau). Similarly, we found changes in the visibility of specific aspects of the Holocaust: for instance, if images showing the consequences of mass murders were absent on Bing in 2020, in 2021, content showing this specific aspect of the Holocaust constituted one of the largest categories of outputs for this search engine.

The major implication of these observations is that the way mnemotechnologies, such as search engines, organise information about the Holocaust and represent it is subjected to epistemic instability. While the degree of such instability varies between the search engines we examined, with Bing outputs being subject to more change than those of Google and Yandex, it stresses that mnemotechnologies make the representation of the past dynamic rather than static, despite following a set of logical principles which can be expected to result in the reiteration of

45 This and the following assessments of the victims' counts are based on the USHMM data. See USHMM, "Documenting numbers of victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution," https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/documenting-numbers-of-victims-of-the-holocaust-and-nazi-persecution.

the same representation patterns over time. However, the increasing autonomy (as well as stochasticity) embedded in mnemotechnologies results in them keeping memories unstable by design and raises new possibilities and concerns for individual and collective remembrance, in particular in the case of mass atrocities.

In addition to the instability, our analysis shows that the way mnemotechnologies represent the Holocaust results in the unequal visibility of specific aspects of the Holocaust and Holocaust sites. Our findings demonstrate that the representation of the Holocaust is dominated by two or three key aspects largely represented by content from a single Holocaust site, Auschwitz. Under these conditions, many other aspects of the Holocaust, in particular the ones concerning Jewish life in the aftermath of the Holocaust and before it, as well as camp and ghetto experiences (besides the liberation of the camps), remain under-represented. The same under-representation concerns Holocaust sites, particularly some of the key extermination camps in which hundreds of thousands of victims perished (e.g. Sobibor, Belzec, and Treblinka).

The unequal and unstable representation of different aspects of the Holocaust raises the question of the baseline for representing mass atrocities by different forms of mnemotechnologies. Such a baseline is essential both for empirical evaluations of the performance of mnemotechnologies and for identifying the desired performance of these technologies in the context of atrocity remembrance as well as possibilities/risks posed by them in fulfilling ethical and legal obligations in relation to the traumatic past. For instance, is the prevalence of content related to the suffering in Auschwitz in response to general prompts about the Holocaust a form of desired or non-desired performance of a mnemotechnology?

Similar to the case of other forms of technology dealing with the organisation and retrieval of information,[46] the answer to this question depends on the normative expectations about the mnemotechnology's performance. If web search engines are expected to inform their users about the diverse nature of Holocaust remembrance, then the disproportionate focus on Auschwitz at the cost of other less known/visited memory sites, including some of the key extermination camps involved in Operation Reinhard, is likely to raise concerns. By contrast, if the intended aim of the search engine is to guide its users towards information about a few sites/episodes which the majority of search users are likely to associate with

46 For the discussion of the normative expectations concerning another form of information retrieval technology – i.e. news recommender systems – see Natali Helberger, "On the democratic role of news recommenders," in *Algorithms, Automation, and News. New Directions in the Study of Computation and Journalism*, ed. Neil Thurman, Seth C. Lewis and Jessica Kunert (London: Routledge, 2021), 14–33.

the Holocaust, then the performance we observed is to be expected. However, without identifying what performance of mnemotechnologies is desired and what its long-term implications for individual and collective remembrance will be, it is impossible to decide if the current performance is to be improved (and if yes, then how exactly). In the case of web search, the importance of such decisions is amplified by their performance having direct implications for the next generation of mnemotechnologies related to the generative AI[47] due to web search being increasingly integrated with generative AI and influencing what data generative AI has access to for generating outputs.

Finally, it is important to note several limitations of the conducted study. The first is relying on a single query in a Latin script (i.e. "Holocaust"). With the earlier research stressing substantial differences in web search engine performance in different languages,[48] it is important to evaluate how the prioritisation of Holocaust-related visual content can vary among search queries in different languages. Similarly, it is important to examine how different search queries influence the performance of image search in the context of the Holocaust; ideally, such an examination will be combined with soliciting queries from search users to minimise the potential researcher bias regarding the query selection. Another limitation concerns the focus on a single location – i.e. Frankfurt am Main region – that also may have implications for the selection of content the search engines prioritise. Future studies will benefit from comparing image search outputs from different locations to detect how generalisable or Germany-specific the patterns observed in the current study are.

Bibliography

Bandy, Jack. "Problematic machine behavior: A systematic literature review of algorithm audits." In *Proceedings of the ACM on human-computer interaction* 5: 1–34. 2021.

Bleiker, Roland. "Mapping visual global politics." In *Visual Global Politics*, edited by Roland Bleiker, 1–29. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Cole, Tim. *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler; how history is bought, packaged and sold*. London: Routledge, 2017.

47 For more information on those, see Wulf Kansteiner, "Digital Doping for Historians: Can History, Memory, and Historical Theory Be Rendered Artificially Intelligent?," *History and Theory* 61(4) (2022): 119–133; Mykola Makhortykh, et al., "Shall androids dream of genocides? How generative AI can change the future of memorialization of mass atrocities," *Discover Artificial Intelligence* 3(1) (2023): 1–17.

48 Ov Cristian Norocel and Dirk Lewandowski, "Google, data voids, and the dynamics of the politics of exclusion," *Big Data & Society* 10(1) (2023): 1–14.

Divon, Tom, and Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann. "#JewishTikTok: The JewToks' Fight against Antisemitism." *TikTok cultures in the United States*, edited by Trevor Boffone, 47–58. London: Routledge, 2022.

Esposito, Elena. "Algorithmic memory and the right to be forgotten on the web." *Big Data & Society* 4(1) (2017): 1–11.

Haim, Mario, Florian Arendt and Sebastian Scherr. "Abyss or shelter? On the relevance of web search engines' search results when people google for suicide." *Health Communication* 32(2) (2017): 253–258.

Hannak, Aniko, Piotr Sapiezynski, Arash Molavi Kakhki, Balachander Krishnamurthy, David Lazer, Alan Mislove, and Christo Wilson. "Measuring personalization of web search." In *Proceedings of the 22nd international conference on World Wide Web*, 527–538. 2013.

Heard, Jefferson, Jordan Wilberding, Gideon Frieder, Ophir Frieder, David Grossman and Larry Kane. "On mediated search of the United States holocaust memorial museum data." In *Next Generation Information Technologies and Systems. 7th International Conference, NGITS 2009 Haifa, Israel, June 16–18, 2009 Revised Selected Papers*, edited by Yishai A. Feldman, Donald Kraft and Tsvi Kuflik, 38–46. Heidelberg: Springer, 2009.

Helberger, Natali. "On the democratic role of news recommenders." In *Algorithms, Automation, and News. New Directions in the Study of Computation and Journalism*, edited by Neil Thurman, Seth C. Lewis and Jessica Kunert, 14–33. London: Routledge, 2021.

Hoskins, Andrew. "7/7 and connective memory: Interactional trajectories of remembering in post-scarcity culture." *Memory Studies* 4(3) (2011): 269–280.

Hoskins, Andrew, and Huw Halstead. "The new grey of memory: Andrew Hoskins in conversation with Huw Halstead." *Memory Studies* 14(3) (2021): 675–685.

Farmer, Sarah. "Going Visual: Holocaust Representation and Historical Method." *The American Historical Review* 115(1) (2010): 115–122.

Jacobsen, Benjamin N. "Sculpting digital voids: The politics of forgetting on Facebook." *Convergence* 27(2) (2021): 357–370.

Kansteiner, Wulf. "Digital Doping for Historians: Can History, Memory, and Historical Theory Be Rendered Artificially Intelligent?." *History and Theory* 61(4) (2022): 119–133.

Kravets, Daria, Anna Ryzhova, Florian Toepfl and Arista Beseler. "Different platforms, different plots? The Kremlin-controlled search engine Yandex as a resource for Russia's informational influence in Belarus during the COVID-19 pandemic." *Journalism* (2023). https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849231157845.

Krueckeberg, Jennifer. "Youth and Algorithmic Memory: Co-producing Personal Memory on Instagram." In *Culture and Computing. Design Thinking and Cultural Computing. 9th International Conference, C&C 2021, Held as Part of the 23rd HCI International Conference, HCII 2021, Virtual Event, July 24–29, 2021, Proceedings, Part II*, edited by Matthias Rauterberg, 253–264. Cham: Springer, 2021.

Kulshrestha, Juhi, Motahhare Eslami, Johnnatan Messias, Muhammad Bilal Zafar, Saptarshi Ghosh, Krishna P. Gummadi and Karrie Karahalios. "Search bias quantification: investigating political bias in social media and web search." *Information Retrieval Journal* 22 (2019): 188–227.

Lessard, Bruno. "Archiving the gaze: Relation-images, adaptation, and digital mnemotechnologies." In *Save as . . . Digital memories*, edited by Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins, and Anna Reading, 115–128. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009.

Lewandowski, Dirk. *Understanding Search Engines*. Berlin: Springer Nature, 2023.

Liebermann, Yvonne. "Born digital: The Black lives matter movement and memory after the digital turn." *Memory studies* 14(4) (2021): 713–732.

Makhortykh, Mykola, and Maryna Sydorova. “Animating the subjugated past: digital greeting cards as a form of counter-memory.” *Visual Communication* 21(1) (2022): 28–52.

Makhortykh, Mykola, Aleksandra Urman, and Roberto Ulloa. “Hey, Google, is it what the Holocaust looked like? Auditing algorithmic curation of visual historical content on Web search engines.” *First Monday* 26(10) (2021): 1–24.

Makhortykh, Mykola, Aleksandra Urman, and Roberto Ulloa. “Memory, counter-memory and denialism: How search engines circulate information about the Holodomor-related memory wars.” *Memory Studies* 15(6) (2022): 1330–1345.

Makhortykh, Mykola, Eve M. Zucker, David J. Simon, Daniel Bultmann and Roberto Ulloa. “Shall androids dream of genocides? How generative AI can change the future of memorialization of mass atrocities.” *Discover Artificial Intelligence* 3(1) (2023): 1–17.

Makhortykh, Mykola, Aleksandra Urman, Roberto Ulloa and Juhi Kulshrestha. “Can an algorithm remember the Holocaust? Comparative algorithm audit of Holocaust-related information on search engines.” In *Digital Memory. Neue Perspektiven für die Erinnerungsarbeit*, edited by Iris Groschek and Habbo Knoch, 79–93. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023.

Manca, Stefania, Marcello Passarelli, and Martin Rehm. “Exploring tensions in Holocaust museums’ modes of commemoration and interaction on social media.” *Technology in Society* 68 (2022): 1–13.

Nielsen, Rasmus Kleis. “News media, search engines and social networking sites as varieties of online gatekeepers.” In *Rethinking journalism again. Societal role and public relevance in a digital age*, edited by Chris Peters and Marcel Broersma, 93–108. London: Routledge, 2016.

Norocel, Ov Cristian, and Dirk Lewandowski. “Google, data voids, and the dynamics of the politics of exclusion.” *Big Data & Society* 10(1) (2023): 1–14.

Paramita, Monica Lestari, Kalia Orphanou, Evgenia Christoforou, Jahna Otterbacher, and Frank Hopfgartner. “Do you see what I see? Images of the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of Google.” *Information Processing & Management* 58(5) (2021): 1–16.

Pfanzelter, Eva. “At the crossroads with public history: Mediating the Holocaust on the Internet.” *Holocaust Studies* 21(4) (2015): 250–271.

Pereira, Gabriel. “Apple Memories and Automated Memory-Making: The Networked Image Inside the iPhone Chip.” *Digital Culture & Society* 7(2) (2021): 203–228.

Prey, Robert, and Rik Smit. “From personal to personalized memory: Social media as mnemotechnology.” In *A networked self and birth, life, death*, edited by Zizi Papacharissi, 209–223. London: Routledge, 2018.

San Francisco, Matilde Eiroa. “Primary sources for a digital-born history: the Hispanic blogosphere on the Spanish Civil War and Franco’s regime.” *Culture & History Digital Journal* 7(2) (2018): 1–10.

Schultheiß, Sebastian, and Dirk Lewandowski. “Misplaced trust? The relationship between trust, ability to identify commercially influenced results and search engine preference.” *Journal of Information Science* 49(3) (2023): 609–623.

Smit, Rik, Ansgard Heinrich, and Marcel Broersma. “Witnessing in the new memory ecology: Memory construction of the Syrian conflict on YouTube.” *New Media & Society* 19(2) (2017): 289–307.

Smolicki, Jacek. “You Press the Button, We Do the Rest. Personal Archiving in Capture Culture.” *Towards a philosophy of digital media*, 77–100. 2018.

Sundin, Olof, Dirk Lewandowski, and Jutta Haider. “Whose relevance? Web search engines as multisided relevance machines.” *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 73(5) (2022): 637–642.

Stiegler, Bernard. *For a New Critique of Political Economy*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010.

Thomas, Neal. “Social computing as a platform for memory.” *Culture Machine* 14 (2013): 1–16.

Trezise, Thomas. “Unspeakable.” *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14(1) (2001): 39–66.
Ulloa, Roberto, Mykola Makhortykh, and Aleksandra Urman. “Scaling up search engine audits: practical insights for algorithm auditing.” *Journal of information science* (2022). https://doi.org/10.1177/01655515221093029.
Urman, Aleksandra, and Mykola Makhortykh. “You are how (and where) you search? Comparative analysis of web search behavior using web tracking data.” *Journal of Computational Social Science* (2023): 1–16.
Yates, Frances A. *The art of memory*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.
Walden, Victoria Grace. “What is ‘virtual Holocaust memory?.” *Memory Studies* 15(4) (2022): 621–633.
Zavadski, Andrei and Florian Toepfl. “Querying the Internet as a mnemonic practice: how search engines mediate four types of past events in Russia.” *Media, Culture & Society* 41(1) (2019): 21–37.
Zelizer, Barbie. *Remembering to forget: Holocaust memory through the camera’s eye*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Mia Berg

Participatory memory – historiography – research? Exploring representations of the Holocaust on social media

1 Introduction

> Right. Now can we please STOP making Holocaust trends on tiktok? It's straight up antisemitism and you all let it slide.[1]

This tweet exemplifies reactions to TikTok users who, in the summer of 2020, immersed themselves in the role of Holocaust victims in POV ("Point of View") videos. What followed was global outrage, the deletion of many videos and overwhelmed apologies from the creators. Attempts to contextualise these media practices within the realm of memory culture and to inquire about the creators' intentions were rarely made.[2] While the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau at least suggested using the videos to inspire discussion, "not to shame & attack young people whose motivation seem very diverse",[3] Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Tom Divon argued: "Let TikTok Creators Pretend to Be Victims of the Nazis. It Strengthens Holocaust Memory".[4]

The later so-called "Holocaust Challenge" is not the only example of how the representation of the Holocaust on social media repeatedly causes controversial reactions. In the past, the remediation of historical figures or the online presence of historical institutions sparked debates on the (limits of) representations of history and/or their appropriateness on social media. Sharing selfies from concentration camp memorials has also been widely criticised – although they are increasingly

1 Tweet by @aquarosaee, 18 August 2020, https://twitter.com/aquarosaee/status/1295780784159305736. All digital sources were last accessed on 20 October 2023.

2 Nicole Froio, "We Asked TikTokers Why They're Pretending to Be Holocaust Victims," *Wired UK*, 12 August 2020, https://www.wired.co.uk/article/tiktok-holocaust-pov.

3 "Kritik an Tiktok-Trend: Nutzer verkleiden sich als Holocaust-Opfer," DER STANDARD, 27 August 2020, https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000119619725/kritik-an-tiktok-trend-nutzer-verkleiden-sich-als-holocaust-opfer.

4 Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Tom Divon, "Let TikTok Creators Pretend to Be Victims of the Nazis. It Strengthens Holocaust Memory," *Haaretz*, 10 September 2020, https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/2020-09-10/ty-article-opinion/.premium/let-tiktok-users-pretend-to-be-victims-of-the-nazis-it-strengthens-holocaust-memory/0000017f-e9ae-df5f-a17f-fbfe01820000.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-003

seen as a new form of remembrance and documentation practice by visitors, comparable to postcards, guestbook entries and (travel) diaries.[5]

The example of the Holocaust illustrates that in social media established forms of commemoration are being "softened", and normative boundaries are being (con) tested and re-defined through new formats, subjects or communication practices. Some studies on the Holocaust in memory cultures indicate that the discursive potential of social media is often not fully exploited and that established narratives and memory discourses are reproduced on the platforms, which are often tied to (national) gatekeepers such as institutions or states.[6] On the other hand, the variety of history-related references, especially in audiovisual media – the hashtag #holocaust alone has been shared 889,000 times on Instagram and accessed 1.9 billion times on TikTok (as of May 2024) – inevitably gives the impression that not just a canon is being mediated. Instagram accounts like @nichtsophiescholl and initiatives like the Coalition for Pluralistic Public Discourse, but also right-wing influencers make it evident that social media create spaces for negotiation processes. Due to the pluralisation of actors and practices, it is argued that social media have led to a "democratisation" of communication and remembrance regarding the Holocaust. Whether and how this "democratisation", understood as a participation in and co-creation of knowledge (discourses) in the public sphere,[7] occurs in the context of the Holocaust, will be analysed in this chapter by looking at the Instagram and TikTok platforms.

As the terms "democratisation" and "participation" are frequently used but highly contested in discourses around social media, an initial contextualisation is intended. Subsequently, examples and practices will be examined based on research discourses and my own exploratory investigations.[8] In addition, practical research challenges in dealing with audiovisual platforms will be addressed. Here, "citizen science" will be discussed as a possible participatory research approach that enables collaborative forms of knowledge production not only at the level of narratives, but also in research itself – thus taking into account the changed production and distribution of knowledge in the digital space.

---

5 Iris Groschek, "Social Media an Gedenkstätten zwischen #weremember und #yolocaust: Ein praxisorientierter Beitrag zu Formen der Weitergabe von Erinnerung in digitalen Medien," in *Entgrenzte Erinnerung*, ed. Anne-Berenike Rothstein and Stefanie Pilzweger-Steiner (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020), 69–89.

6 Hannes Burkhardt, *Geschichte in den Social Media: Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust in Erinnerungskulturen auf Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest und Instagram* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2021).

7 Christian Bunnenberg, Thorsten Logge and Nils Steffen, "SocialMediaHistory: Geschichtemachen in Sozialen Medien" *Historische Anthropologie* 29(2) (15 September 2021): 283.

8 They are based on my experiences in the project "SocialMediaHistory" which will be discussed further in section 4.

2 Democratisation, participation and social media

The examination of the interplay between social media and democracy is a central area of research, particularly within political and communication science. While earlier research "largely pointed in a prodemocratic direction",[9] at least since the US presidential election in 2016, a noticeable shift can be observed. Social media are now increasingly "blamed for almost everything that is wrong with democracy"– from disinformation and filter bubbles to online targeting and even radicalisation.[10] While there are also voices pointing out that "the magnitude and prevalence of the alleged technology-related problems are overblown",[11] some of its structural features nevertheless "pose a threat to a well-informed and inclusive public".[12] Lafont is primarily referring to the business model of social media platforms here, which involves data collection and algorithmic personalisation and, due to low access thresholds and easy production possibilities for (potentially) everyone, simultaneously entails a decline in the importance of traditional media and their related quality criteria.[13]

The concept of democratisation in the context of social media draws on a myth of the 1980s and 1990s and is also courted by the platform operators. In this sense, the applications of Web 2.0 function as a "realised many-to-many public sphere, in which first knowledge and now actions would be democratised in a global 'participatory culture'".[14] In this process "[e]arly conceptions of digital democracy as a virtual public sphere or civic commons have been replaced by a new technological optimism for democratic renewal based upon the open and collaborative networking characteristics of social media".[15] Their open nature thus facilitates "what Charles Leadbeater (2008) called the 'mass-collaboration' of

9 Joshua A. Tucker and Nathaniel Persily, "Introduction," in *Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field, Prospects for Reform*, ed. Nathaniel Persily and Joshua A. Tucker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 1.

10 Helen Margetts, "9. Rethinking Democracy with Social Media," The Political Quarterly 90(1) (2019): 107.

11 Tucker and Persily, "Introduction," 2.

12 Christina Lafont, "Deliberative Demokratie nach der digitalen Transformation," *APuZ* 73(43–45) (20 October 2023): 17. Own translation.

13 Lafont, "Deliberative Demokratie," 11–12.

14 Kurt Imhof, "Demokratisierung durch Social Media?," in *Demokratisierung durch Social Media?: Mediensymposium 2012*, ed. Kurt Imhof u. a. (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2015), 16. Own translation.

15 Brian D. Loader and Dan Mercea, "Networking Democracy?," *Information, Communication & Society* 14(6) (1 September 2011): 757.

individuals and groups who become the source of new innovations and ideas in democratic practices"[16] – or in the case of addressing the Holocaust, of history and memory (practices).

According to Cayce Myers and James F. Hamilton, "the democratic possibilities for social media" can be understood as a new genre for "historical research, composition, and representation"[17] that "creates a new way to rhetorically participate within culture".[18] This development is in continuity with earlier efforts to democratise historical work, that emerged especially since the 1960s and, in the form of history associations and workshops, formed a "counter-movement to the established forms and formats of academic and media historiography".[19] Considering the participatory potential of social media in general, the authors' hope that social media could contribute to a historical representation that is more inclusive, diverse and dialogic[20] does not seem to be entirely feasible. Although these "open up unprecedented opportunities for their users to participate in the social public sphere",[21] "internet use in general as well as active contribution and participation [. . .] are unequally distributed"[22] due to technical, financial, personal, or structural reasons.

Even on "participatory platforms, hierarchies and differences are formed that give some users more opportunities than others".[23] Wulf Kansteiner therefore is right in pointing out that "the new media of collective remembrance are often embedded in traditional power structures".[24] It is especially the platform companies, driven by capitalist exploitation interests, that have a governing role here, as their technical, infrastructural and regulatory frameworks determine how participation can take place.[25] Jan-Hinrik Schmidt calls that a "participation paradox", as companies like Meta and Bytedance provide communication and

16 Loader and Mercea, "Networking Democracy?," 759.

17 Cayce Myers and James F. Hamilton, "Open genre, new possibilities: democratizing history via social media," *Rethinking History* 19(2) (3 April 2015): 1.

18 Myers and Hamilton, "Democratizing history," 7.

19 Bunnenberg, Logge, and Steffen, "SocialMediaHistory," 278; "Democratizing history," 3.

20 Myers and Hamilton, "Democratizing history," 9–12.

21 Jan-Hinrik Schmidt, *Social Media*, Medienwissen kompakt (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2013), 92. Own translation.

22 Schmidt, "Das Partizipationsparadox," 79–80. Own translation.

23 Schmidt, "Das Partizipationsparadox," 77. Own translation.

24 Wulf Kansteiner, "Transnational Holocaust Memory, Digital Culture and the End of Reception Studies," in *The twentieth century in European memory: transcultural mediation and reception*, ed. Tea Sindbæk Andersen and Barbara Törnquist Plewa, European studies, Volume 34 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2017), 310.

25 Schmidt, "Das Partizipationsparadox," 87.

participation opportunities, but "allow their users little or no co-determination".[26] Victoria Grace Walden therefore emphasises that "[c]elebratory hopes for participatory media futures" have now given way to more critical evaluations, stating that the "Web 2.0 has not been as successful in creating participatory cultures as hoped".[27] Following Barney et al. and numerous others, she points out that we nevertheless already live in a "participatory condition":[28] "Where institutions, by which they mean large media corporations, but we could also include museums, can go wrong is by thinking that participation is about granting users agency [. . .] rather than respecting and acknowledging them as already actants of memory and social change".[29]

For the political context, Helen Margetts cautions that we "need to stop denigrating tiny acts and extend our idea of what is democratic participation".[30] She emphasises that "the key difference that social media have brought to the democratic landscape is a raft of new activities which are characterised by being really small, extending below the bottom rung of the ladder of participation".[31] Accordingly, in the context of the representation of the Holocaust, not only posts but also likes, comments or shares can be understood as responsive and participatory acts that involve users in a "process of memory work"[32] and make them part of a "memory of the multitude": "[A]ll over the place, scattered yet simultaneous and searchable: connected, networked, archived".[33]

3 Holocaust and social media

It is not surprising that the participative possibilities are also the subject of many studies on Holocaust memory, which has a long tradition of dealing with

26 Schmidt, "Das Partizipationsparadox," 89. Own translation.

27 Victoria Grace Walden, "Afterword: Digital Holocaust Memory Futures: Through Paradigms of Immersion and Interactivity and Beyond," in *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*, ed. Victoria Grace Walden (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 284.

28 Walden, "Afterword," 285.

29 Walden, "Afterword," 285.

30 Margetts, "Rethinking Democracy," 120.

31 Margetts, "Rethinking Democracy," 108.

32 Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "Hashtags, Stories, Videomemes. Die Erinnerung an den Holocaust auf TikTok und Instagram," in *Digital Memory: Neue Perspektiven für die Erinnerungsarbeit*, ed. Iris Groschek and Habbo Knoch (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023), 160.

33 Andrew Hoskins, "Memory of the multitude: the end of collective memory," in *Digital memory studies: media pasts in transition*, ed. Andrew Hoskins (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 86.

the digital.[34] The call for the conference, which preceded this essay, also states that internet applications in particular "live from the broad participation of the public".[35] From a media archaeology perspective, Walden points out that participation is not a new phenomenon, "but digital technologies have extended its possibilities".[36] In social media, the blurring of distinct roles of recipients and producers shows the "tension between institutional authorial control and the consumers' desire to engage with history on their own terms and according to their own narrative/aesthetic preferences".[37] Beyond that, the platforms "facilitate a global dialogue about the meaning of the Holocaust in the present, allowing for a nuanced understanding of its implications".[38] Eva Pfanzelter therefore describes them as a "paramount example for transcultural mediation processes between history and memory, between commemoration, technology and culture, between institutionalized and public history".[39] The emerging (participatory) practices are constantly placed in relation to other medial predecessors – be it analogue Holocaust culture,[40] film and television[41] or "forms of play".[42] It can be observed that not only the digital Holocaust discourse, despite all expansion of previous boundaries of representation, consequently always follows "well known pathways in terms of aesthetics and historical narrative traditions".[43] Examples like the remediation of historical figures indicate that scholarly criticism and social negotiations also have their iterations. The concerns raised in 2009 regarding trivialisation, blurring of fact and fiction and the absence of contex-

34 For the state of research, see Eva Pfanzelter, "Performing the Holocaust on social networks: digitality, transcultural memory and new forms of narrating," *Kultura Popularna* 1(50) (1 January 2017): 136–151; Burkhardt, *Geschichte in den Social Media*; Victoria Grace Walden, ed., *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021).

35 https://www.ehri-project.eu/registrate-first-ehri-conference-connected-histories-memories-and-narratives-holocaust-digital-space.

36 Walden, "Afterword," 285.

37 Wulf Kansteiner, "The Holocaust in the 21st century: digital anxiety, transnational cosmopolitanism, and never again genocide without memory," in *Digital memory studies: media pasts in transition*, ed. Andrew Hoskins (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 114.

38 Stefania Manca, Juliana Elisa Raffaghelli and Albert Sangrà, "A Learning Ecology-Based Approach for Enhancing Digital Holocaust Memory in European Cultural Heritage Education," *Heliyon* 9 (2023). doi:10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e19286.

39 Eva Pfanzelter, "Performing the Holocaust on social networks: digitality, transcultural memory and new forms of narrating," *Kultura Popularna* 1(50) (1 January 2017): 137.

40 Kansteiner, "Digital Anxiety," 114.

41 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "TikTok und Instagram," 153.

42 Carmelle Stephens, "Playing Pretend on Social Media," in *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*, ed. Victoria Grace Walden (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 237–265.

43 Pfanzelter, "Performing the Holocaust on social networks," 146.

tualisation in the Facebook profile of Holocaust victim Henio Zytomirski,[44] were articulated in nearly identical terms in response to the Instagram profile of German resistance fighter Sophie Scholl (@ichbinsophiescholl) in 2021. What is noteworthy here is not so much the existence of traditions in media criticism but rather that such formats are still perceived as innovative and novel, even after nearly 15 years of practice.[45]

Historical scholarship in particular is only slowly tapping into social media (also and especially for other subject areas). Meanwhile, in Holocaust and Memory Studies, there is an increasing tendency to view new practices of remembering and re-presenting less critically or problematic. Instead, particularly destructive phenomena, such as antisemitism, historical revisionism or fake news, are addressed as issues demanding collective reaction from creators, educators and platforms.[46] Walden points out that there is still little reflection on the interrelationship between research and practice, as research so far "rarely foregrounds research practices, in terms of how Holocaust memory and education are informed by research, how researchers create their digital outputs or how user research is developed to analyse the success of initiatives".[47] Interdisciplinary perspectives could also be expanded, as the predominantly journal-based publication culture on digital holocaust memory "has limited discussion so far into silos that repeat the broader divides of digital humanities, software studies, and media and cultural studies".[48] Tirosh and Mikel-Arieli further conclude that "'marginal', peripheral, non-hegemonic, alternative Holocaust narratives"[49] have rarely been addressed in articles to date. In the context of social media, the challenge is that such narratives and practices are sometimes difficult to access due to algorithmic pre-structuring, language-filtered search results or vast amounts of data. As section 5 illustrates, research on audiovisual platforms in particular is associated with technical, legal and ethical challenges, which also result

44 Eva Pfanzelter, "Inszenierung – Vernetzung – Performanz: Holocaust-Repräsentationen im Netz," in *Holocaust'-Fiktion*, ed. Dirk Rupnow and Iris Roebling-Grau (Brill Fink, 2015), 63–83.

45 Mia Berg and Christian Kuchler, ed., *ichbinsophiescholl: Darstellung und Diskussion von Geschichte in Social Media* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023).

46 "Addressing Holocaust Distortion in Social Media. Guidelines and recommendations for memorials and museums," https://holocaust-socialmedia.eu/wp-content/uploads/Addressing-Holocaust-distortion-website.pdf.

47 Victoria Grace Walden, "Defining the Digital in Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research," in *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*, ed. Victoria Grace Walden (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 2.

48 Walden, "Defining the Digital," 4.

49 Noam Tirosh and Roni Mikel-Arieli, "What we talk about when we talk about digital Holocaust memory: A systematic analysis of research published in academic journals, 2010–2022," *The Communication Review* 26(2) (3 April 2023): 159.

in a disproportionate amount of previous research literature being dedicated to platforms such as Twitter, blogs, Facebook or Wikipedia, which allow easier access to data, and their textual contents. Ebbrecht-Hartmann emphasises that it is the modes of representation on visual platforms that "can be particularly related to the much-discussed challenges of an aesthetic after Auschwitz".[50] These include forms of "presencing, which embeds the images of memory and history videos into a relational network of contemporary and often self-referential everyday documentation", as well as fragmentary and segmented posts that can be linked through hashtags, multimodal compositions and overlays.[51] The following section will therefore present specific examples from Instagram and TikTok.[52] The selected dimensions of *Memory*, *Historiography* and *Research* are of course not distinct, but are intended to serve as spotlights that enable an approximation of a participatory field.

3.1 Memory

> Social media platforms serve as important 'memory ecologies', enabling diverse memory practices such as posting, linking and sharing content. The specific characteristics of each platform influence how they are used to negotiate, commemorate and educate about the Holocaust, providing multiple avenues of engagement beyond traditional public discourse and formal education.[53]

Media have always stored, conveyed, and structured memory and history. As media evolution progresses, the division of collective memory into a generational, institutionally transmitted cultural "long-term memory" and an everyday, informal "short-term memory" is becoming increasingly blurred.[54] In social media this gives rise to a convoluted memory culture[55] which is characterised by a fragmentation of individual and collective memories.[56] This development has been dis-

50 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "TikTok und Instagram," 152. Own translation.
51 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "TikTok und Instagram," 152. Own translation.
52 The focus will be on non-institutional actors. For ethical reasons, contributions from private users will only be discussed in abstract terms and not cited.
53 Manca et al., "Enhancing Digital Holocaust Memory."
54 Jan Assmann, "Das kulturelle Gedächtnis," *Erwägen, Wissen, Ethik* 13(2) (2002): 239–247.
55 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "TikTok und Instagram," 151.
56 Roberta Bartoletti, "Memory and Social Media: New Forms of Remembering and Forgetting," in *Learning from Memory: Body, Memory and Technology in a Globalizing World*, ed. Bianca Maria Pirani (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 82–111.

cussed under a variety of keywords[57] such as "prosthetic memory",[58] "i-memory"[59] or "co-historicity".[60]

The "mediatisation of memory"[61] is based on ideas of Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora, who have argued that history and memory are continuously renegotiated through media in the present.[62] Socially or institutionally predetermined relevance structures are supplemented, if not replaced, by the interests and needs of the users – but also those of the platform operators.[63] In the digital ecosystem, they have an "immense influence on what will be remembered".[64]

One example of the diverse debates and reaction processes on the platforms is the Instagram account @auschwitzfitpics. From January to March 2019, the account was used to repost selfies taken at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum. Although the identity of the account owner and their intentions were not explicitly disclosed, it becomes apparent that the account served as a critique of the users' media practices, which can also be seen in projects such as YOLOCAUST by Shahak Shapira. While the predominant sentiment expressed by commentators was one of dismay and condemnation of the featured images, criticism was also directed towards the account. Frequently, this was based on the misunderstanding that the account operator had also created the images. What can also be observed is explicit criticism regarding the practice of exposing other users through reposts. This was often combined with a call to other users to report the page – even four years after the last post. Notably, in contrast to YOLOCAUST, the criticised users and

57 For an overview of the different terms used to describe forms of digital memory, see Pfanzelter, "Performing the Holocaust on social networks"; Pfanzelter, "Inszenierung – Vernetzung – Performanz".

58 Margaret-Anne Hutton, "Putting Metaphor Centre-Stage: A Case Study of Alison Landsberg's 'Prosthetic Memory,'" *Memory Studies* 15(1) (1 February 2022): 230–242.

59 Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Lital Henig, "I-Memory: Selfies and Self-Witnessing in #Uploading_Holocaust (2016)," in *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*, ed. Victoria Grace Walden (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 213–235.

60 Martin Pogačar, "Digital heritage: co-historicity and the multicultural heritage of former Yugoslavia," *Dve domovini. Razprave o izseljenstvu. Two Homelands. Migration Studies* 39 (2014): 111–124.

61 Andrew Hoskins, "29. The mediatization of memory," in *Mediatization of Communication*, ed. Knut Lundby (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 661–680.

62 Pfanzelter, "Inszenierung – Vernetzung – Performanz," 74.

63 Mia Berg and Andrea Lorenz, "Doing (Digital) History – Kollaborative Formen der Erforschung von Geschichte in sozialen Medien im Projekt #SocialMediaHistory," 7 March 2022, https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.6327925.

64 Angeliki Tzouganatou and Jennifer Krueckeberg, "FROM MONOPOLIZING MEMORY TO CO-CREATING IT: OPENNESS AND EQUITY IN THE DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM," *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research*, 15 September 2021, https://doi.org/10.5210/spir.v2021i0.12255.

their photos were not anonymised. Due to the limited outreach of the account, a lack of media attention and the fact that reposts on Instagram are only possible via screenshots, effectively severing the link to the original image creators, it is likely that only a small number of those depicted were aware of their presence on the account. Occasionally, however, they were tagged by other users under the corresponding post.

The Auschwitz Memorial's Instagram account (@auschwitzmemorial) exemplifies that reposts do not necessarily have to be problematic. Almost daily the account shares user photos – not selfies – of the historical site, thereby increasing the visibility of these users and their perspectives through tags. However, these are not traditional reposts, but rather a practice of updating and (re)contextualisation. In the image captions, emotional accounts of visiting the historical site are, for instance, replaced by information on historical contexts or contemporary poems. Here, Ebbrecht-Hartmann's observation of social media as a space with a non-hierarchical structure is evident, as it "invites a participatory form of remembering and encourages participants to react and respond".[65] Interpretation and remembrance of the historical site are continually reshaped, negotiated and discussed between users and the institution.

Another level of negotiation occurs between users and platforms, in terms of content and features, but also on the policy level. Divon and Ebbrecht-Hartmann have elaborated how "TikTok's features and functions can be adopted and appropriated to the specific needs of individual and institutional creators".[66] They identified six modes of historical storytelling on TikTok: Commemorative, Responsive, Explanatory, Educational, Visit, and Testimony. These various modes also became necessary because "remembering as a participatory practice" does not just have positive implications. The spread of disinformation also functions as a "populist collective action"[67] and "participatory effort", taking "advantage of the affordances and dynamics of social media".[68] Numerous studies have shown that Holocaust de-

65 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "TikTok und Instagram," 162. Own Translation.

66 Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Tom Divon, "Serious TikTok: Can You Learn About the Holocaust in 60 Seconds?," *Digital Holocaust Memory* (blog), 24 March 2022, https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2022/03/24/can-you-learn-about-the-holocaust-in-60-seconds-on-tiktok/.

67 Florian Wintterlin et al., "'It's Us against Them up There': Spreading Online Disinformation as Populist Collective Action," *Computers in Human Behavior* 146 (September 2023): 107784.

68 "What Is Participatory Disinformation?," Center for an Informed Public, 26 May 2021, https://www.cip.uw.edu/2021/05/26/participatory-disinformation-kate-starbird/. See also the concept of "dark participation": Thomas Quandt and Johanna Klapproth, "Dark participation: Conception, reception, and extensions," in *Challenges and perspectives of hate speech research*, ed. Christian Strippel et al., https://doi.org/10.48541/dcr.v12.15.

nial and antisemitism are widespread.[69] Therefore, acts of counter speech must also be part of a participatory, democratic remembrance of the Holocaust,[70] for which Jewish TikTokers in particular have developed a variety of media strategies.[71] It is notable that these sometimes extend beyond social media, enabling participation in other spaces. This is exemplified, for instance, in the Oversight Board that "reviews content decisions made by Meta [. . .] and can choose to overturn or uphold" these decisions.[72] The focus is on cases "that potentially affect many users worldwide, are of crucial importance to public discourse, or raise important questions about Meta's policies". This includes cases of Holocaust denial on Instagram, for which anyone can provide public comments or assessments as part of the review process.[73]

On an institutional level, the UNESCO report *History under attack: Holocaust denial and distortion on social media* has developed recommendations for policymakers and governments, academia, civil society, education as well as social media companies.[74] Not only here does it become evident that participatory memory of the Holocaust is a joint negotiation process within and outside of social media, which is constantly being reconstituted between different actors. Stefania Manca argues that "the presence of Holocaust references on social media and the intense emotional engagement of users highlights the impact of the globalization of Holocaust remembrance".[75] In this context, the different actors not only serve as memory agents but also as participatory speakers for their individual interpretations of the past.[76]

69 Tom Divon and Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "#JewishTikTok. The JewToks' Fight against Antisemitism," in *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, ed. Trevor Boffone (London: Routledge, 2022), 47–58; Monika Hübscher and Sabine Von Mering, ed., *Antisemitism on Social Media* (London: Routledge, 2022).

70 Project "Countering Holocaust Distortion on social media," https://holocaust-socialmedia.eu/.

71 Divon and Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "#JewishTikTok. The JewToks' Fight against Antisemitism."

72 https://www.oversightboard.com/decision/.

73 https://oversightboard.com/news/1322362521715433-oversight-board-announces-holocaust-denial-case/.

74 UNESCO Report "History under attack: Holocaust denial and distortion on social media,"https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382159.

75 Manca et al., "Enhancing Digital Holocaust Memory."

76 Vivien Sommer, "9 Erinnerungsjournalismus und neue Sprecher:innen: Grenzverschiebungen in erinnerungskulturellen Debatten," in *Handbuch kommunikationswissenschaftliche Erinnerungsforschung*, ed. Christian Pentzold and Christine Lohmeier (De Gruyter, 2022), 207–230; Manca et al., "Enhancing Digital Holocaust Memory."

3.2 Historiography

Social media not only change memory practices, but also influence how and by whom history is told and written.[77] The focus of this section is less on a scholarly form of historiography than on the observation that in social media "authors and visitors (as co-creators) engage in the practice of digital storytelling (Lambert 2013)".[78] Connected to this is not only the question of how the past can be "re-represenced as well as historiographically communicated",[79] but more importantly questions of actors, agency and agenda setting. Martin Pogačar states that "memory, remembering and vernacular archiving and cultural heritage discourses empower individuals to co-create micro-narratives and micro-archives based on excavated content".[80] Even in cases where only known or familiar narratives are remediated (instead of telling own stories), "new connections and interpretations can emerge, be taken up, transformed, updated, or potentially distorted"[81] through the narrative and discursive modes of social media.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann illustrates this interconnected storytelling with the example of Holocaust survivors who have been particularly active on TikTok since early 2021. Connections and extensions arise primarily because many of the survivors respond to user comments and questions with video answers, and users, in turn, create video responses (Duets or Stitches) to the survivor's videos. This forms a virtual testimony from individual segments, collaboratively created by the account holders and users.[82] Undeniably, a community of memory is constituted here, but at the same time, the focus is also often placed on everyday topics or lesser-known aspects, which thus receive more attention.

This is also visible in the #FrauenImWiderstand campaign, initiated by historians and journalists Jasmin Lörchner, Bianca Walther and Laura Baumgarten. Their aim was to introduce women who had resisted the Nazi regime, both individually and as part of Jewish, communist, or socialist groups. The campaign was

77 For an initial overview of various definitions of the relationship between memory and history, see Stephanie Decker, John Hassard and Michael Rowlinson, "Rethinking History and Memory in Organization Studies: The Case for Historiographical Reflexivity," *Human Relations* 74(8) (1. August 2021): 1123–1155.

78 Pogačar, "Digital heritage," 117.

79 Vivian Sobchack, "Afterword: Media Archaeology and Re-Presencing the Past," in *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, ed. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 323.

80 Pogačar, "Digital heritage," 117.

81 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "TikTok und Instagram," 162. Own translation.

82 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "TikTok und Instagram," 155.

launched in response to the Instagram project @ichbinsophiescholl and sought to counter the one-sided focus on well-known figures like Sophie Scholl, which is sometimes criticised for serving a German "longing for exoneration".[83] The contributions were initially gathered on Twitter and later the Instagram account @frauenimwiderstand. Under the same hashtag, other users also shared posts on women in resistance. Examples like these make it clear that social media campaigns, projects or posts do not operate in isolation: "Ultimately, the interplay between fragments of the past disseminated in the segment structure of social media, along with networked forms of memory, leads to new historical configurations in which different historical events and memories can come into – sometimes quite tense – relationships with each other".[84]

The project "Zum Feind gemacht", initiated by the Bundesverband Information & Beratung für NS-Verfolgte e.V. (Federal Association for Information and Counselling for Victims of Nazi Persecution), shows that cross-media links are also conceivable. The exploration of the various, often unknown or underrepresented groups persecuted under National Socialism is not only presented on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok (@zumfeindgemacht) but also accompanied by a website. The site provides information about historical persons, places and events, and additionally also offers a platform for people to submit their own (family) experiences in order to tell their own stories.[85]

Instagram accounts like @dieanachronistin, where Nora Hespers explores the resistance of her grandfather, Theo Hespers, or @tadschu, where Patrick Figaj traces his grandfather's life as a so-called "heimatloser Ausländer", underline that the transformation of "passive spectators into socially and morally responsible agents"[86] associated with social media does not necessarily need to be enabled by institutions. In addition to a personal perspective and the creation of relations between the present and historical remnants, a mode of scientific reflection can be observed here that goes beyond the mere representation of history or historical knowledge.

83 Nora Hespers and Charlotte Jahnz, "Häppchenweise Sophie Scholl. Kritische Anmerkungen zum Instagram-Kanal @ichbinsophiescholl," in *ichbinsophiescholl: Darstellung und Diskussion von Geschichte in Social Media*, ed. Mia Berg and Christian Kuchler (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023), 144–164.

84 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "TikTok und Instagram," 162. Own translation.

85 https://zumfeindgemacht.de/.

86 Manca et al., "Enhancing Digital Holocaust Memory."

3.3 Research

On 2 April 2022, the account @tadschu posted an aerial photograph taken by the US Air Force in 1944 and started its explanation of the material in the caption with the words: "Online research today provides insights that were hardly imaginable just a few years ago".[87] The post is just one example of how social media not only narrates history but also makes work processes transparent. Such practices can be seen as an example of science communication. We have argued that history-related science posts are characterised primarily by breaking linear narratives and establishing transparency, as well as addressing processes, ambiguities, and personal reflections.[88] This happens not only when, for example, @augustaschacht explains where memorial sites derive their knowledge of forced labour,[89] or when @arolsenarchives presents its collections.[90] Instead, it is primarily non-institutional actors or individuals without a historical background or education who disseminate historical knowledge (and scholarship) in this form.

One of the latest popular examples is Susanne Siegert, who uses Instagram (@kz.aussenlager.muehldorf) and TikTok (@keine.erinnerungskultur) to educate people about the Holocaust and raise awareness about the history of the Mühldorfer Hart subcamp of the Dachau concentration camp. Siegert, who grew up near Mühldorf, initially had no knowledge of the camp until she visited its memorial sites in 2020. Since then, she has conducted extensive (online) research and shared her findings on social media. She focuses on the stories of individuals connected to the camp and sheds light on the daily lives and atrocities faced by the prisoners. At the same time, she makes her approaches and methods transparent, gives updates on often lengthy/years-long research[91] or asks users for support, e.g., with the transcription or translation of historical sources.[92] On TikTok, she also engages in broader Holocaust education, critically deconstructs stereotypes and myths or ex-

87 Instagram-Post by @tadschu, 2 April 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cb2rBddMCYA/?img_index=2.

88 Mia Berg and Andrea Lorenz, "#InstaHistory – Akteur:innen und Praktiken des Doing History in den sozialen Medien," in *Praktiken der Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. Jürgen Büschenfeld, Marina Böddeker, and Rebecca Moltmann (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2023), 86.

89 Instagram-Post by @augustaschacht, 23 November 2022, https://www.instagram.com/reel/ClT1Kn_jjBs/.

90 Instagram-Post by @arolsenarchives, 26 October 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cy0wrrosqsI/.

91 Instagram-Post by @kz.aussenlager.muehldorf, 16 May 2023, https://www.instagram.com/reel/CssmUtBuTSq/?igshid=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==.

92 Instagram-Post by @kz.aussenlager.muehldorf, 2 June 2023, https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cs_FuNTuArv/?igshid=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==.

plains right-wing extremist symbols. Furthermore, she encourages others to explore online archives and engage in active commemoration and research. For this purpose, she shares tutorials on how to request information from the Federal Archives to learn more about the past of one's own grandparents.[93] Siegert believes that a good culture of remembrance ("Gedenkkultur") involves individuals taking the initiative to investigate and learn, rather than simply consuming presented narratives.[94] The account is therefore a prime example of how memory, education and research are not separate phenomena, but "constantly intertwined".[95] However, the example also proves that "there is still substantial tension between officially accepted memory discourse as acknowledged and practised by Holocaust institutions [. . .] and other forms of non-expert productions that become increasingly visible in digital spaces".[96] Before launching her channels, Siegert did not receive any feedback from the association that supports the memorial sites in Mühldorf on her request whether there were any objections to the project: "I think that despite the high click numbers, my work is ridiculed and seen as a kind of second-class history education".[97] Yet, 187,000 followers on TikTok show the success and potential of active and participatory engagement with Holocaust memory and research.[98]

Concrete forms of collaborative research on Instagram and TikTok can be found particularly in genealogy. Users research their family histories, share tips on helpful resources, or provide guidance on other users' sources. Another one-time, but wide-reaching example is a cooperation between the Instagram account @museumoflostmemories and the Arolsen Archives on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2022. The goal of the digital museum, initiated by David Gutenmacher at the end of 2020, is "to return neglected or misplaced family mementos to their owners", such as photos or VHS tapes primarily collected at estate sales and in second-hand shops. After the items are posted on Instagram and TikTok, the combined 1.5 million followers attempt to identify the original owners using various digital and analogue search strategies – a task that can be completed in as little as two minutes or take significantly longer, if it is successful at all.[99] As part of the cooperation, an at-

93 TikTok by @keine.erinnerungskultur, 17 October 2023, https://vm.tiktok.com/ZGJKj8Kfr/.

94 Jasper von Römer, "90-Sekunden-Gedenken — Susanne Siegert", Veto Magazin (blog), 26 April 2023, https://veto-mag.de/susanne-siegert/.

95 Walden, "Defining the Digital," 5.

96 Walden, "Defining the Digital," 9.

97 Jasper von Römer, "90-Sekunden-Gedenken — Susanne Siegert", Own Translation.

98 For comparison, see the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, the most successful German-language institution, which has 35,000 followers as of May 2024.

99 David Gutenmacher and Elizabeth McCafferty, "Experience: I Reunite Families with Their Long-lost Photos," *The Guardian*, 3 February 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/feb/03/experience-i-reunite-families-with-their-longlost-photos.

tempt was made to find the family of a concentration camp prisoner whose wallet, including photos, is part of the Arolsen Archives' collection.[100] Whether the search was successful is unknown, as no update has been posted so far. The project also raises copyright and data protection issues. While most family members are delighted to rediscover lost memories, Gutenmacher deletes the posts "if the family does not want their memories online".[101] Furthermore, the museum also touches on ethical questions, including the right to speak on behalf of the deceased. These also arise for many other institutions and archives on social media, especially since older usage agreements often did (or rather could) not anticipate the use of personal records on social media platforms, i.e., private media corporations. It is noteworthy that these questions of absence and representation are sometimes also sophisticatedly discussed by users in comments. Under a TikTok video that deals with the topic of masturbation in Anne Frank's diary in a rather sensational and lurid tone, there are many reflections on whether Anne herself would have wanted her private thoughts to be accessible to such a broad audience in the future. Discussions about trigger warnings for potentially distressing content or strategies to address specific topics or persons in an abstract manner (Algospeak) also have their counterparts in scholarly research discourse.[102]

4 Social media and citizen science

It is debatable whether all the examples given are already a form of Citizen Science or merely typical media-specific forms of production, interaction and discussion.[103] If we follow the definition in the *Green Paper Citizen Science Strategy 2020 for Germany*, some arguments can be made in favour of this:

> Citizen science describes the process of generating knowledge through various participatory formats. Participation can range from the short-term collection of data to the intensive use of leisure time to delve deeper into a research topic together with scientists and/or other volunteers, to ask questions, and to get involved in some or all phases of the research process.[104]

100 Instagram-Post by @museumoflostmemors and @arolsenarchives, 28 January 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CZQL_Y3Aon7/.

101 Gutenmacher and McCafferty, "Experience."

102 Rachel L. Einwohner, "Ethical Considerations on the Use of Archived Testimonies in Holocaust Research: Beyond the IRB Exemption," *Qualitative Sociology* 34(3) (September 2011): 415–430.

103 However, the concept of Citizen Science itself is used very differently depending upon the discipline. For an overview, see *The Science of Citizen Science*, ed. Katrin Voland et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021).

104 Mordechai (Muki) Haklay et al., "What Is Citizen Science? The Challenges of Definition," in *The Science of Citizen Science*, ed. Katrin Vohland et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 18.

However, such processes are not limited to participation in social media. Also, in research on social media itself, increasing attempts can be observed to include "a range of non-scientific stake-holders in the scientific process".[105] In a workshop process led by Victoria Grace Walden and Kate Marrison, recommendations for "Digital Interventions in Holocaust Memory and Education" were developed in six co-creative participatory workshops, with creators and educators participating alongside researchers.[106]

In the project SocialMediaHistory (2021–2024), my colleagues and I have tested citizen science as an approach in historical sciences. Together with the public, the project aimed to investigate how history takes place, can be analysed and produced on Instagram and TikTok.[107] The core of the project was a citizen advisory board (*DabeiRat*). Participants accompanied the project team throughout the entire project duration, bringing together various perspectives and experiences related to history on social media, ranging from first-time users to educators and content creators. Based on these "they can substantiate knowledge claims on the phenomena in question and make available to research alternative perspectives on these issues".[108] This was realised, among other things, in smaller research projects, in which different topics were explored with varying methodological approaches for four weeks at a time. All participants documented their observations and examples in a collaborative folder. Afterwards, an online meeting was held to share experiences and to summarise observations and results. Following Nina Simon's differentiation from 2010, the project can generally be classified as primarily collaborative, as it was initiated by researchers, and participants could contribute data and input. However, it also demonstrates co-creative elements, as research questions, topics and approaches were jointly developed by researchers and citizens.[109]

The research project on the Holocaust was based on the observation that our internal discussions mostly circled around three examples: The Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau (Twitter), Sophie Scholl (Instagram) and the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial (TikTok). Our objective therefore was to broaden the view on actors and examples while also exploring possible reasons behind differing reception experiences. In previous exchanges, we had already recognised the

105 Haklay et al., "What is Citizen Science?," 16.

106 https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/digital-holocaust-memory-and-education-recommendations/. One report specifically focusses on the use of social media for Holocaust Memory and Education.

107 Further information on the project can be found here: www.socialmediahistory.de.

108 Claudia Göbel, Lucile Ottolini and Annett Schulze, "Science as a Lever: The Roles and Power of Civil Society Organisations in Citizen Science," in *The Science of Citizen Science*, ed. Katrin Vohland et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 331–349.

109 Barbara Heinisch et al., "Citizen Humanities," in *The Science of Citizen Science*, ed. Katrin Vohland et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 97–118.

highly subjective nature of perceiving historical themes, which then led us to conduct a more systematic analysis. At this point, only a small insight into the approach and initial observations can be given. The results of the joint research will be published in an anthology at the end of the project.[110]

In a first step, the private accounts of the participants were used to search for #Holocaust on Instagram and TikTok, and impressions were recorded. It quickly became apparent that even identical – sometimes even simultaneous – search queries within groups led to different search results (see figures 1 and 2).

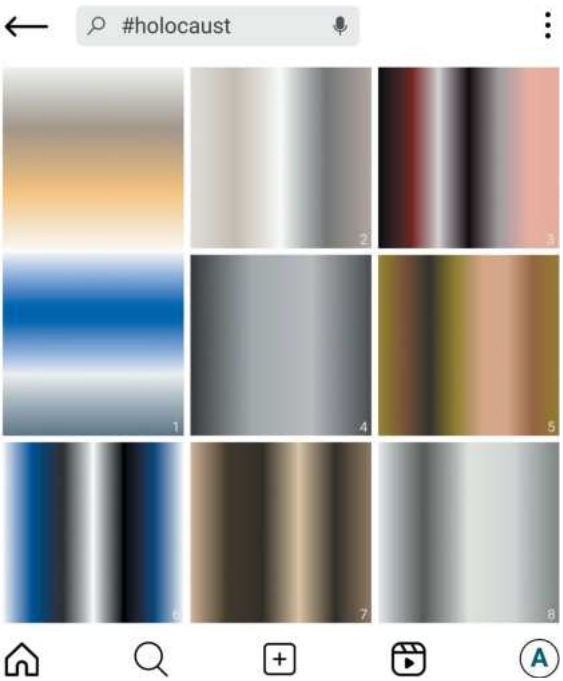


Figure 1: Instagram search results for #holocaust by person A (11 May 2023).[111]

110 *Geschichte auf Instagram und TikTok. Perspektiven auf Quellen, Methoden und Praktiken [working title]*, ed. Mia Berg, Andrea Lorenz and Kristin Oswald (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024).

111 For copyright and data protection reasons, the posts are only depicted in abstract form. They show: (1) A video of a private person holding the Israeli flag in front of the Brandenburg Gate, (2) two historical photos of the sisters Margot and Anne Frank, (3) a quote and recent portrait photo of Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, (4) a historical portrait photo of Bep Voskuijl, (5) a private person in front of the tracks at the former Auschwitz concentration camp, (6) a world map showing the legality of Holocaust denial, (7) a historical portrait photo of Betty Grebenschikoff, (8) a historical photo of Margot, Otto, Anne and Edith Frank.

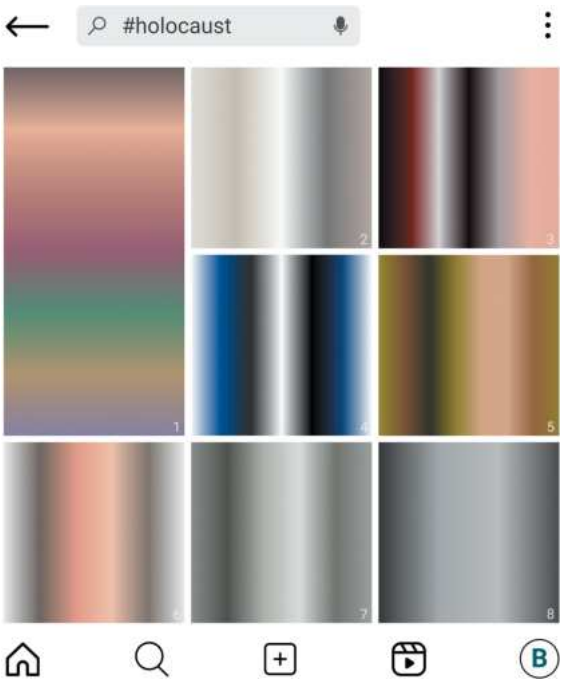


Figure 2: Instagram search results for #holocaust by person B (11 May 2023).[112]

These variations were discussed in the final meeting, considering each individual's usage patterns, location, languages and other potential algorithmic influences.

With a specific focus on TikTok, this "algorithmic experience" was then examined in more detail in a second step. The influence of algorithms and questions regarding their modes and consequences are widely debated in research.[113] Our

112 The posts show: (1) an interview with Edith Eger, (2) two historical photos of the sisters Margot and Anne Frank, (3) a quote and recent portrait photo of Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, (4) a world map showing the legality of Holocaust denial, (5) a private person in front of the tracks at the former Auschwitz concentration camp, (6) a historical photo of Esther Velleman with biographical data, (7) a historical photo of Peter van Pels on the beach with the Jacobson family, (8) a historical portrait photo of Bep Voskuijl.

113 For an initial overview, see Steve Rathje et al., "People Think That Social Media Platforms Do (but Should Not) Amplify Divisive Content," *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 26. September 2023. For historical topics, see Anja Neubert, "Gatekeeper zum 'Markt der Erinnerung'? Wie Algorithmen historisches Erzählen auf TikTok und YouTube konfigurieren," in *Historisches Erzählen in Digitalien. Theoretische Ansätze und empirische Beobachtungen zur Entwicklung historischer Sinnbildungen im digitalen Raum,* ed. Alexandra Krebs and Christina Brüning (forthcoming).

intention was to conduct a very basic experiment on how algorithmic recommendation and user behaviour affect the visibility of Holocaust-related content or lead to experiences of "rabbit holes".[114] For this purpose, participants created new, anonymous and empty TikTok accounts using disposable email addresses and then searched for and interacted with content related to the Holocaust on these accounts. Subsequently, the participants requested an overview of their data from TikTok which once again made (inter)actions visible and comparable.

While data collections in the context of citizen science often face the challenge of ensuring data quality and reproducibility, in our case, the data primarily serves the reflection of subjective experiences. Embracing this subjectivity also aids reflection on the digital conditions under which the presentation, exploration and analysis of history take place: "[O]ur own understanding and appreciation of the Holocaust and engagement in its memory is defined by the media with which we experience it".[115]

Citizen science in this context can not only contribute to broadening perspectives and potentially generating new questions, but also offers a pragmatic approach to dealing with the challenges of researching social media through data contributions and participatory observations.[116] Data donations, for example, are also utilised by *DataSkop* to explore the mechanisms of algorithmic recommender systems, to which platforms do not (yet) grant research access. Simultaneously, project participants could also explore and analyse their own data.[117] Such approaches thus contribute to the reflection of "passive interactivity" in social media participation, where we often find ourselves "unknowingly interacting with systems and providing data to the profiteers of surveillance capitalism".[118] To conclude, the complex co-dependencies should therefore be looked at that need to be addressed more thoroughly when researching social media in digital holocaust memory studies, but also (public) history.

114 "TikTok's Algorithm Leads Users from Transphobic Videos to Far-Right Rabbit Holes," *Media Matters for America*, 5 October 2021, https://www.mediamatters.org/tiktok/tiktoks-algorithm-leads-users-transphobic-videos-far-right-rabbit-holes.

115 Walden, "Afterword," 292.

116 For the ethical challenges of citizen science, see Loreta Tauginienė et al., "Ethical Challenges and Dynamic Informed Consent," in *The Science of Citizen Science*, ed. Katrin Vohland et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 397–416.

117 https://algorithmwatch.org/en/what-tiktok-knows-about-you-data-donations/.

118 Walden, "Afterword," 286.

5 Co-dependencies

Walden has already pointed out the complex relationships that arises in digital media, not only between users and technology but also interfaces, algorithms, or code. To approach the specifics of digital interactivity, she argues that "we should take more seriously the particularities of the meeting of human and machine logics in producing and circulating memory".[119]

Many researchers have noted that new archives are emerging in social media that are no longer built or managed by institutions but "diffused through a 'new memory ecology'".[120] In Europe, this is mainly tied to GAFAM (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, Microsoft).[121] In recent years, the POEM project has been working on the impact of this co-dependency on participatory memory practices, trying to develop "concepts, strategies and media infrastructures for socially inclusive potential futures of European Societies through culture".[122] Regarding memory and history practices, they point out that the (supposedly) public archives "are run for economic purposes in private ownership. The accessibility of these "archives" is regulated by business models and remains unclear towards the future".[123] This not only affects users' personal archives, but also the sustainability of historical-political education or future access to sources for researchers. Only recently, 404 Media presented the headline: "Elon Musk broke all the tools historians need to archive tweets about Israel-Gaza War".[124] Many of the examples of digital holocaust memory that have been discussed in research over the past 10 to 15 years are no longer accessible today, sometimes making it difficult to comprehend or reconstruct research results. The consequences of linking historical narratives to data structures and global corporations are exemplified by the Facebook profile of Henio Zytomirski. Widely discussed in media, society and research, the profile was removed by Facebook after a year for non-compliance with the company's terms of service (prohibiting the creation of Facebook accounts in the name of third parties).[125] Given the increasing number of

119 Walden, "Afterword," 286–287.

120 Hoskins, "Memory of the multitude," 87.

121 José Van Dijck, David Nieborg and Thomas Poell, "Reframing Platform Power," *Internet Policy Review* 8(2) (30 June 2019).

122 https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/764859.

123 https://www.poem-horizon.eu/project-outline/.

124 Jason Koebler, "Elon Musk Broke All the Tools Historians Need to Archive Tweets About Israel-Gaza War," *404 Media*, 26 October 2023, https://www.404media.co/elon-musk-broke-all-the-tools-historians-need-to-archive-tweets-about-israel-gaza-war/.

125 https://teatrnn.pl/henio/profil-henia-na-facebooku/#zamkniecie-profilu.

social media profiles "by" historical figures,[126] this seems to be less of a problem now. However, only what has been preserved by account holders themselves, archived elsewhere on the web, or was additionally published in other formats (books, websites) can be considered archived. Even though more and more institutions have started including social media content in their collections, comprehensive archiving of audiovisual social media content especially, has not yet taken place, mainly due to technical issues, legal hurdles or lack of resources.[127]

As a result, it is often not what is needed that can be researched, but what is accessible in the first place. This is evident not only in terms of archiving but also in general issues related to data collection and (automated) analysis. Three levels should be particularly emphasised here: volume, competencies and legal frameworks.[128] The proliferation of actors and content on social media comes with constantly growing amounts of data that are often no longer accessible manually. Historians have so far only sporadically had the necessary technical skills or methodological approaches to collect or examine the material, apart from smaller case studies. The situation is further complicated by the fact that platforms like Instagram only provide limited APIs or completely prohibit automated data collection. Automated access would for example enable the analysis of large source inventories, the recognition of hidden patterns or to empirically test ideas that traditional methods could not explore.[129] In the course of the citizen science research projects, we have also experienced how difficult it can be to approach objects beyond ethnographic explorations or qualitative observation, including larger datasets. In the end, the collection and analysis would probably have failed due to a lack of technical skills on the part of the project team and citizens, but which was previously not recommended by the universities due to the lack of legally secure access to social media data, especially from the Meta Group.

126 Christine Lohmeier, Christian Schwarzenegger and Maria Schreiber, "Instamemories. Geschichte in digitalen Medien als lebendige Erinnerungskultur jenseits formaler Bildungskontexte," *Medien + Erziehung* (2020): 48-61.

127 For an incomplete overview, see Eveline Vlassenroot et al., "Web-Archiving and Social Media: An Exploratory Analysis," *International Journal of Digital Humanities* 2(1–3) (November 2021): 107–128.

128 We have outlined the challenges of researching social media on a technical, legal, ethical and empirical level here: Mia Berg and Andrea Lorenz, #BigDataHistory – Forschungspragmatische Überlegungen zu Geschichte in sozialen Medien, in *Geschichte im digitalen Wandel? Geschichtskultur – Erinnerungspraktiken – Historisches Lernen*, ed. Olaf Hartung, Johannes Meyer-Hamme and Alexandra Krebs (forthcoming).

129 Alexis Lerner, "Quantifying the Archives: Leveraging the Norms and Tools of Data Science to Conduct Ethical Research on the Holocaust," *Holocaust Studies* (1 January 2021): 1–19.

The challenges in dealing with social media are also apparent in previous research on representations of the Holocaust in social media. While there have been investigations, particularly on Instagram, that work with larger datasets, the data collection either took place at a time when manual collection was still possible or before API access was limited as a result of the Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2015. Additionally, the circumstances and forms of data collection are sometimes not addressed at all – probably for good reasons.

Two things should be highlighted: Firstly, due to sample biases resulting from the available data collection methods or archives, which this text is not exempt from, the validity and representativeness of analyses should be critically examined.[130] Secondly, it must be further explored how the complex multimodal processes of meaning making and negotiation, in interaction with their intra- and extra-medial, as well as human and non-human actors in social media can be analysed in the future. Drawing on the concept of "intra-action", Walden advocates "to consider carefully what particular interfaces mean and do, how algorithms might help or indeed hinder intentions, how code could be used to do different things for memory, how digital interfaces affect the physical landscape, how responsive technologies might affect sites, and how non-professional digital content and institutional memory relate".[131] Given the increasing acceptance of social media for digital holocaust memory and education from both institutional and private actors, the shift of current political conflicts into these spaces, often accompanied by the rise of fake news and hate speech, and the still prevailing intransparencies on the side of platforms, we will likely have much work to do in the years to come.

Bibliography

Assmann, Jan. "Das kulturelle Gedächtnis." *Erwägen, Wissen, Ethik* 13(2) (2002): 239–247.

Bartoletti, Roberta. "Memory and Social Media: New Forms of Remembering and Forgetting." In *Learning from Memory: Body, Memory and Technology in a Globalizing World*, edited by Bianca Maria Pirani, 82–111. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011.

Berg, Mia, and Christian Kuchler, ed. *ichbinsophiescholl: Darstellung und Diskussion von Geschichte in Social Media*. Historische Bildung und public history, vol. 1. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023.

130 Rebekah Tromble, "Where Have All the Data Gone? A Critical Reflection on Academic Digital Research in the Post-API Age," *Social Media + Society 7* (2021): H. 1.

131 Walden, "Afterword," 292.

Berg, Mia, and Andrea Lorenz. “Doing (Digital) History – Kollaborative Formen der Erforschung von Geschichte in sozialen Medien im Projekt #SocialMediaHistory.” 7 March 2022. https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.6327925.

Berg, Mia, and Andrea Lorenz. “#InstaHistory – Akteur:innen und Praktiken des Doing History in den sozialen Medien.” In *Praktiken der Geschichtsschreibung*, edited by Jürgen Büschenfeld, Marina Böddeker and Rebecca Moltmann, 69–88. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839463451-006.

Berg, Mia, and Andrea Lorenz. “#BigDataHistory – Forschungspragmatische Überlegungen zu Geschichte in sozialen Medien.” In *Geschichte im digitalen Wandel? Geschichtskultur – Erinnerungspraktiken – Historisches Lernen*, edited by Olaf Hartung, Johannes Meyer-Hamme and Alexandra Krebs (forthcoming).

Bunnenberg, Christian, Thorsten Logge and Nils Steffen. “SocialMediaHistory: Geschichtemachen in Sozialen Medien.” *Historische Anthropologie* 29(2) (15 September 2021): 267–283. https://doi.org/10.7788/hian.2021.29.2.267.

Burkhardt, Hannes. *Geschichte in den Social Media: Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust in Erinnerungskulturen auf Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest und Instagram*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Geschichtsdidaktik, vol. 23. Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2021.

Center for an Informed Public. “What Is Participatory Disinformation?.” 26 May 2021. https://www.cip.uw.edu/2021/05/26/participatory-disinformation-kate-starbird/.

Decker, Stephanie, John Hassard and Michael Rowlinson. “Rethinking History and Memory in Organization Studies: The Case for Historiographical Reflexivity.” *Human Relations* 74(8) (1 August 2021): 1123–1155. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726720927443.

DER STANDARD. “Kritik an Tiktok-Trend: Nutzer verkleiden sich als Holocaust-Opfer.” 27 August 2020. https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000119619725/kritik-an-tiktok-trend-nutzer-verkleiden-sich-als-holocaust-opfer.

Divon, Tom, and Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann. “#JewishTikTok. The JewToks’ Fight against Antisemitism.” In *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, edited by Trevor Boffone, 47–58. London: Routledge, 2022. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003280705.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Tobias. “Hashtags, Stories, Videomemes. Die Erinnerung an den Holocaust auf TikTok und Instagram.” In *Digital Memory: Neue Perspektiven für die Erinnerungsarbeit*, edited by Iris Groschek and Habbo Knoch, 151–164. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023. https://doi.org/10.5771/9783835384477.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Tobias, and Tom Divon. “Let TikTok Creators Pretend to Be Victims of the Nazis. It Strengthens Holocaust Memory.” *Haaretz* (10 September 2020). https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/2020-09-10/ty-article-opinion/.premium/let-tiktok-users-pretend-to-be-victims-of-the-nazis-it-strengthens-holocaust-memory/0000017f-e9ae-df5f-a17f-fbfe01820000.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Tobias, and Tom Divon. “Serious TikTok: Can You Learn About the Holocaust in 60 Seconds?” *Digital Holocaust Memory* (blog), 24 March 2022. https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2022/03/24/can-you-learn-about-the-holocaust-in-60-seconds-on-tiktok/.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Tobias and Lital Henig. “I-Memory: Selfies and Self-Witnessing in #Uploading_Holocaust (2016).” In *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*, edited by Victoria Grace Walden, 213–235. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-83496-8_9.

Einwohner, Rachel L. “Ethical Considerations on the Use of Archived Testimonies in Holocaust Research: Beyond the IRB Exemption.” *Qualitative Sociology* 34(3) (September 2011): 415–430. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-011-9196-y.

Froio, Nicole. “We Asked TikTokers Why They’re Pretending to Be Holocaust Victims.” *Wired UK* (12 August 2020). https://www.wired.co.uk/article/tiktok-holocaust-pov.

Göbel, Claudia, Lucile Ottolini, and Annett Schulze. “Science as a Lever: The Roles and Power of Civil Society Organisations in Citizen Science.” In *The Science of Citizen Science*, edited by Katrin Vohland, Anne Land-Zandstra, Luigi Ceccaroni, Rob Lemmens, Josep Perelló, Marisa Ponti, Roeland Samson and Katherin Wagenknecht, 331–349. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-58278-4_17.

Groschek, Iris. “Social Media an Gedenkstätten zwischen #weremember und #yolocaust: Ein praxisorientierter Beitrag zu Formen der Weitergabe von Erinnerung in digitalen Medien.” In *Entgrenzte Erinnerung*, edited by Anne-Berenike Rothstein and Stefanie Pilzweger-Steiner, 69–89. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020.

Gutenmacher, David, and Elizabeth McCafferty. “Experience: I Reunite Families with Their Long-lost Photos.” *The Guardian* (3 February 2023). https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/feb/03/experience-i-reunite-families-with-their-longlost-photos.

Haklay, Mordechai (Muki), Daniel Dörler, Florian Heigl, Marina Manzoni, Susanne Hecker and Katrin Vohland. “What Is Citizen Science? The Challenges of Definition.” In *The Science of Citizen Science*, edited by Katrin Vohland, Anne Land-Zandstra, Luigi Ceccaroni, Rob Lemmens, Josep Perelló, Marisa Ponti, Roeland Samson and Katherin Wagenknecht, 13–33. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-58278-4_2.

Heinisch, Barbara, Kristin Oswald, Maike Weißpflug, Sally Shuttleworth and Geoffrey Belknap. “Citizen Humanities.” In *The Science of Citizen Science*, edited by Katrin Vohland, Anne Land-Zandstra, Luigi Ceccaroni, Rob Lemmens, Josep Perelló, Marisa Ponti, Roeland Samson and Katherin Wagenknecht, 97–118. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-58278-4_6.

Hespers, Nora, and Charlotte Jahnz. “Häppchenweise Sophie Scholl. Kritische Anmerkungen zum Instagram-Kanal @ichbinsophiescholl.” In *ichbinsophiescholl: Darstellung und Diskussion von Geschichte in Social Media*, edited by Mia Berg and Christian Kuchler, 144–164. Historische Bildung und public history, Band 1. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023.

Hoskins, Andrew. “29. The mediatization of memory.” In *Mediatization of Communication*, edited by Knut Lundby, 661–680. Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110272215.661.

Hoskins, Andrew. “Memory of the multitude: the end of collective memory.” In *Digital memory studies: media pasts in transition*, edited by Andrew Hoskins, 85–109. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

Hübscher, Monika, and Sabine Von Mering. Ed., *Antisemitism on Social Media*. London: Routledge, 2022. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003200499.

Hutton, Margaret-Anne. “Putting Metaphor Centre-Stage: A Case Study of Alison Landsberg’s ‘Prosthetic Memory.’” *Memory Studies* 15(1) (1. February 2022): 230–242. https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980211037279.

Imhof, Kurt. “Demokratisierung durch Social Media?” In *Demokratisierung durch Social Media?: Mediensymposium 2012*, edited by Kurt Imhof, Roger Blum, Heinz Bonfadelli, Otfried Jarren and Vinzenz Wyss, 15–26. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2015. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-10140-4.

Jünger, Jakob, Stephanie Geise and Maria Hänelt. “Unboxing Computational Social Media Research From a Datahermeneutical Perspective: How Do Scholars Address the Tension Between Automation and Interpretation?.” *International Journal of Communication* 16 (2022): 1482–1505.

Kansteiner, Wulf. “The Holocaust in the 21 century: digital enxiety, transnational cosmopolitanism, and never again genocide without memory.” In *Digital memory studies: media pasts in transition*, edited by Andrew Hoskins, 110–140. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

Kansteiner, Wulf. “Transnational Holocaust Memory, Digital Culture and the End of Reception Studies.” In *The twentieth century in European memory: transcultural mediation and reception*, edited by Tea Sindbæk Andersen and Barbara Törnquist Plewa, 305–43. European studies, Vol. 34. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017.

Koebler, Jason. “Elon Musk Broke All the Tools Historians Need to Archive Tweets About Israel-Gaza War.” *404 Media* (26 October 2023). https://www.404media.co/elon-musk-broke-all-the-tools-historians-need-to-archive-tweets-about-israel-gaza-war/.

Lafont, Christina. “Deliberative Demokratie nach der digitalen Transformation.” *APuZ* 73(43–45) (20 October 2023): 11–17.

Lerner, Alexis. “Quantifying the Archives: Leveraging the Norms and Tools of Data Science to Conduct Ethical Research on the Holocaust. Manuscript.” *Holocaust Studies* (1 January 2021): 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2021.1979179.

Loader, Brian D., and Dan Mercea. “Networking Democracy?.” *Information, Communication & Society* 14(6) (1 September 2011): 757–769. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2011.592648.

Lohmeier, Christine, Christian Schwarzenegger and Maria Schreiber. “Instamemories. Geschichte in digitalen Medien als lebendige Erinnerungskultur jenseits formaler Bildungskontexte.” *Medien + Erziehung*, 2020: 48–61.

Manca, Stefania, Juliana Elisa Raffaghelli and Albert Sangrà. “A Learning Ecology-Based Approach for Enhancing Digital Holocaust Memory in European Cultural Heritage Education.” *Heliyon* 9 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e19286.

Margetts, Helen. “9. Rethinking Democracy with Social Media.” *The Political Quarterly* 90(S1) (2019): 107–123. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12574.

Media Matters for America. “TikTok’s Algorithm Leads Users from Transphobic Videos to Far-Right Rabbit Holes.” 5 October 2021. https://www.mediamatters.org/tiktok/tiktoks-algorithm-leads-users-transphobic-videos-far-right-rabbit-holes.

Myers, Cayce and James F. Hamilton. “Open genre, new possibilities: democratizing history via social media.” *Rethinking History* 19(2) (3 April 2015): 222–234. https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2014.973712.

Neubert, Anja. “Gatekeeper zum ‘Markt der Erinnerung’? Wie Algorithmen historisches Erzählen auf TikTok und YouTube konfigurieren.” In *Historisches Erzählen in Digitalien. Theoretische Ansätze und empirische Beobachtungen zur Entwicklung historischer Sinnbildungen im digitalen Raum*, edited by Alexandra Krebs and Christina Brüning (forthcoming).

Pfanzelter, Eva. “Inszenierung – Vernetzung – Performanz: Holocaust-Repräsentationen im Netz.” In *’Holocaust’-Fiktion*, edited by Dirk Rupnow and Iris Roebling Grau, 63–83. Leiden: Brill, 2015. https://doi.org/10.30965/9783846755051_006.

Pfanzelter, Eva. “Performing the Holocaust on social networks: digitality, transcultural memory and new forms of narrating.” *Kultura Popularna* 1(50) (1 January 2017): 136–151. https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0010.4081.

Pogačar, Martin. “Digital heritage : co-historicity and the multicultural heritage of former Yugoslavia.” *Dve domovini. Razprave o izseljenstvu. Two Homelands. Migration Studies* 39 (2014): 111–124.

Quandt, Thomas and Johanna Klapproth, "Dark participation: Conception, reception, and extensions." In *Challenges and perspectives of hate speech research*, edited by Christian Strippel et al. https://doi.org/10.48541/dcr.v12.15.

Rathje, Steve, Claire Robertson, William J. Brady and Jay J. Van Bavel. "People Think That Social Media Platforms Do (but Should Not) Amplify Divisive Content." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* (26 September 2023). https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916231190392.

Römer, Jasper von. "90-Sekunden-Gedenken – Susanne Siegert." *Veto Magazin* (blog) 26 April 2023. https://veto-mag.de/susanne-siegert/.

Schmidt, Jan-Hinrik. *Social Media*, Medienwissen kompakt. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2013. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-02096-5_6.

Sobchack, Vivian. "Afterword: Media Archaeology and Re-Presencing the Past." In *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, edited by Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, 323–334. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520948518-017.

Sommer, Vivien. "9 Erinnerungsjournalismus und neue Sprecher:innen: Grenzverschiebungen in erinnerungskulturellen Debatten." In *Handbuch kommunikationswissenschaftliche Erinnerungsforschung*, edited by Christian Pentzold and Christine Lohmeier, 207–230. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110629743-009.

Stephens, Carmelle. "Playing Pretend on Social Media." In *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*, edited by Victoria Grace Walden, 237–265. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-83496-8_10.

Tauginienė, Loreta, Philipp Hummer, Alexandra Albert, Anna Cigarini and Katrin Vohland. "Ethical Challenges and Dynamic Informed Consent." In *The Science of Citizen Science*, edited by Katrin Vohland, Anne Land-Zandstra, Luigi Ceccaroni, Rob Lemmens, Josep Perelló, Marisa Ponti, Roeland Samson and Katherin Wagenknecht, 397–416. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-58278-4_20.

Tirosh, Noam and Roni Mikel-Arieli. "What we talk about when we talk about digital Holocaust memory: A systematic analysis of research published in academic journals, 2010–2022." *The Communication Review* 26)2) (3 April 2023): 151–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2023.2177489.

Tucker, Joshua A., and Nathaniel Persily. "Introduction." In *Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field, Prospects for Reform*, edited by Nathaniel Persily and Joshua A. Tucker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Tzouganatou, Angeliki, and Jennifer Krueckeberg. "FROM MONOPOLIZING MEMORY TO CO-CREATING IT: OPENNESS AND EQUITY IN THE DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM." *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research*. 15 September 2021. https://doi.org/10.5210/spir.v2021i0.12255.

Van Dijck, José, David Nieborg and Thomas Poell. "Reframing Platform Power." *Internet Policy Review* 8(2) (30 June 2019). https://doi.org/10.14763/2019.2.1414.

Vlassenroot, Eveline, Sally Chambers, Sven Lieber, Alejandra Michel, Friedel Geeraert, Jessica Pranger, Julie Birkholz and Peter Mechant. "Web-Archiving and Social Media: An Exploratory Analysis." *International Journal of Digital Humanities* 2(1–3) (November 2021): 107–128. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42803-021-00036-1.

Vohland, Katrin, Anne Land-Zandstra, Luigi Ceccaroni, Rob Lemmens, Josep Perelló, Marisa Ponti, Roeland Samson and Katherin Wagenknecht, ed. *The Science of Citizen Science*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-58278-4.

Walden, Victoria Grace. "Afterword: Digital Holocaust Memory Futures: Through Paradigms of Immersion and Interactivity and Beyond." In *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*,

edited by Victoria Grace Walden, 267–296. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-83496-8_11.

Walden, Victoria Grace. "Defining the Digital in Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research." In *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*, edited by Victoria Grace Walden, 1–12. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-83496-8_1.

Walden, Victoria Grace, ed. *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-83496-8.

Wintterlin, Florian, Tim Schatto-Eckrodt, Lena Frischlich, Svenja Boberg, Felix Reer and Thorsten Quandt. "'It's Us against Them up There': Spreading Online Disinformation as Populist Collective Action." *Computers in Human Behavior* 146 (September 2023): 107784. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2023.107784.

Stefania Manca, Silvia Guetta

Digital Holocaust memory: A study of Italian Holocaust museums and their social media users

1 Introduction

Cultural institutions responsible for preserving and transmitting the history and memory of the Holocaust include museums and memorials. These institutions remind visitors of the tragedy and aim to educate them about the events that led to it, the people affected and the lessons that can be learned from it. They also serve to honour the victims and those involved in relief efforts.[1] Additionally, museums play a crucial role in disseminating cultural memory, which encompasses both individual and collective processes.[2] As Nora describes,[3] museums can be considered "lieux de mémoire", symbolic elements of a community's memory and ethical projects that encourage visitors to learn from the past, fostering a common sense of guilt and responsibility that binds the nation together.[4] This is particularly true of memorial museums, which act as a form of public education and help community members remember and reflect on difficult events from the past. By engaging with these memories and understanding their significance, people can learn from the past and form a shared sense of responsibility for the future.

1 Lacin Idil Oztig, "Holocaust museums, Holocaust memorial culture, and individuals: a Constructivist perspective," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 22 (2023): 62–83. Note: All footnotes are references to additional literature/further readings, hence no particular page numbers are given.
2 Astrid Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction," in *Companion to Cultural Memory Studies,* ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 1–15.
3 Pierre Nora, "Between memory and history: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24.
4 Victoria Grace Walden, *The Memorial Museum in the Digital Age* (REFRAME Books, 2022), accessed 20 March 2023, https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/the-memorial-museum-in-the-digital-age/.

Acknowledgments: This work was supported by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) under grant no. 2020–792 "Countering Holocaust Distortion on Social Media. Promoting the Positive Use of Internet Social Technologies for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust".

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-004

The digitalisation of Holocaust memorials and museums, like other cultural institutions, has evolved over time and ushered in new forms of remediation,[5] contributing to the development of a transcultural and global Holocaust memory.[6] The vast majority of museums representing World War Two and the Holocaust today are characterised by "transnational memory",[7] which refers to a wide range of historical phenomena that transcend national boundaries.[8] National memories continue to be significant and are simultaneously reconfigured under globalisation.[9] Contrary to popular belief, although Holocaust memories have become one of the strongest Western collective memories and identities,[10] the Holocaust is a profoundly geographical event rooted in specific geographical locations, times and spaces. Even in Western Europe, national memories are likely to differ and may focus more on a particular aspect of the Holocaust than others, thereby intertwining a local and transcultural memory of the Holocaust in different ways.[11] There is a strong connection between Holocaust memory and traumatic events in diverse nations that reflects the dominance of national perspectives.[12] This connection is evident in the effort to restrict standardisation of Holocaust

5 Wulf Kansteiner, "The Holocaust in the 21st century: digital anxiety, transnational cosmopolitanism, and never again genocide without memory," in *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition*, ed. Andrew Hoskins, (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 110–140.

6 Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in The Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Lothar Probst, "Founding Myths in Europe and the Role of the Holocaust," *New German Critique* 90 (2003): 45–58.

7 Aleida Assmann, "Transnational Memory and the Construction of history through Mass Media," in *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies*, ed. Lucy Bond et al. (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017), 65–82.

8 Ian Tyrrell, "Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History: Theory and Practice," *Journal of Global History* 4 (2009): 453–474.

9 Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney, *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (Berlin, München, Boston: De Gruyter, 2014).

10 Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth, *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance* (New York: Berghahn, 2010).

11 Stefania Manca et al., "Holocaust Remembrance on Facebook during the Lockdown: A Turning Point or a Token Gesture?," in *The COVID-19 Pandemic and Memory. Remembrance, commemoration, and archiving in crisis*, ed. Orli Fridman and Sarah Gensburger (London, UK: Palgrave McMillan, 2024).

12 Leah Angell Sievers, "Genocide and Relevance: Current Trends in United States Holocaust Museums," *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 30 (2016): 282–295.

memory[13] as well as the recognition of the distinction between national memory projects and local commemoration practices.[14]

Although there has been a growing homogenisation of Holocaust memory, especially in Europe,[15] as a result of ever-increasing digital globalization,[16] recent research[17] indicates that museum and memorial presentation strategies are still affected by national preference. For example, during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, German Holocaust museums increased their use of language other than German in their Facebook communication, whereas Italian Holocaust museums tended to publish primarily in Italian, targeting the national community in general.[18] Despite the pandemic's impact on digital internationalisation and globalisation,[19] Holocaust institutions exhibit a broad range of digital accessibility and a clear preference for reaching a wider audience with their contributions.[20]

This chapter focuses on Italian Holocaust museums and memorials and their use of social media platforms to digitise Holocaust memory and bridge national and transnational memories. The study examines how these institutions promote Holocaust remembrance and education while combating distortions on social media. It also investigates how online users respond to the museums' content and what motivates them to seek out Holocaust-related information on social media platforms. By understanding these motivations, museums can tailor their offerings to better educate their audiences, combat misinformation and distortion.

13 Lea David, "Against Standardization of Memory," *Human Rights Quarterly* 39 (2017): 296–318; William Echikson, *Holocaust Remembrance Project: How European Countries Treat Their Wartime Past*, 2019, accessed 20 March 2023, https://archive.jpr.org.uk/object-eur216.

14 Thomas G. Vanderbeek, "Marginalization and Local Commemoration of Third Reich Victims in Germany," *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 36 (2022): 128–145.

15 Éva Kovács, "Limits of Universalization: The European Memory Sites of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 20 (2018): 490–509.

16 Pakier and Stråth, *A European Memory?*.

17 Stefania Manca, Marcello Passarelli and Martin Rehm, "Exploring Tensions in Holocaust Museums' Modes of Commemoration and Interaction on Social Media," Technology in Society 68 (2022): 101889.

18 Manca et al., "Holocaust Remembrance."

19 Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "Commemorating from a Distance: The Digital Transformation of Holocaust Memory in Times of COVID-19," *Media, Culture & Society* 43 (2021): 1095–1112.

20 Chiara Bartolini, "Internationalisation and Marketing Strategies for University Museums," *Les Cahiers de Muséologie, 1-Actes du Colloque "Les Musées Universitaires and Leurs Publics", Communications* (2015): 137–147.

2 Holocaust memorials and museums on social media

Over the past decade, museums and cultural heritage institutions have utilised digital technologies and social media platforms as a means of communication and providing educational content to their online audiences.[21] While archival curation and online access to collection catalogues and management systems are well-known digital services to museum stakeholders,[22] social media have primarily gained attention as an effective tool to attract virtual visitors to museums[23] and to identify content that is more likely to engage their interest.

This new scenario applies equally to Holocaust museums, which have experienced new modes of Holocaust commemoration and representation in recent years.[24] In response to the advancing age of Holocaust survivors and witnesses, digital technologies are becoming increasingly popular as a means of enabling audiences to experience immersive, simulative, or counterfactual memories of the Jewish genocide and other victims killed and persecuted by Nazi Germany and its collaborators.[25] Users are encouraged to choose from a wide range of testimonies and navigate the wide range of digitised resources available on the internet in the progression from the "era of the witness"[26] to the "era of the user".[27] As a result of digital technologies, new memory ecologies are emerging,[28] and social

21 Elisa Giaccardi, *Heritage and Social Media. Understanding Heritage in a Participatory Culture* (London: Routledge, 2012).

22 Ion Gil-Fuentetaja and Maria Economou, "Communicating Museum Collections Information Online: Analysis of the Philosophy of Communication Extending the Constructivist Approach," *ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage* 12 (2019), Article 3.

23 Mi Chang et al., "Identifying Museum Visitors via Social Network Analysis of Instagram," *ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage* 15 (2022): 1–19.

24 Diana I. Popescu and Tanja Schult, *Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the Post-witness Era* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

25 Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins and Anna Reading, *Save as . . . Digital Memories* /London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Kansteiner, "The Holocaust in the 21st century."

26 Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

27 Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Lital Henig, "i-Memory: Selfies and Self-Witnessing in #Uploading_Holocaust (2016)," In *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and* Research, ed. Victoria Grace Walden (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021), 213–236; Susan Hogervorst, "The Era of the User. Testimonies in the Digital Age," *Rethinking History* 24 (2020): 169–183.

28 Hoskins, ed., *Digital Memory Studies*.

media, with its participatory culture,[29] contributes to the emergence of new forms of Holocaust remembrance.[30]

Holocaust remembrance on social media has reached a new level with the widespread adoption of TikTok by Holocaust organizations and users. The TikTok platform has established itself as one of the most popular online platforms for younger generations,[31] and a growing number of Holocaust organizations, museums, and memorials are entering the market with the specific purpose of reaching this target audience, providing information to combat misperceptions, misinformation and distortion.[32]

The explosive growth in TikTok and social media more generally coincided with the outbreak of COVID-19 and the restrictions imposed by various lockdowns. As a result of the pandemic, museums and cultural institutions, including Holocaust museums, have experienced a variety of disruptions in their daily operations.[33] Simultaneously, the pandemic has boosted the willingness of Holocaust memorials to explore and utilize social media, leading to an increased opportunity for experimentation with digital media and further intensifying the ongoing operational changes of these memorials.[34]

Nevertheless, analysing the actual use of these social platforms has yielded mixed results. An investigation of the attitudes towards social media by a sample of 69 Holocaust museums across the world revealed an overall positive attitude,

29 Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

30 Victoria Grace Walden, *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021).

31 Emily A. Vogels, Risa Gelles-Watnick and Navid Massarat, *Teens, Social Media and Technology 2022* (Pew Research Center, 2022).

32 Tom Divon and Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "#JewishTikTok. The JewToks' Fight against Antisemitism," in *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, ed. Trevor Boffone (London: Routledge, 2022), 47–58; Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Tom Divon, "Serious TikTok: Can You Learn About the Holocaust in 60 seconds?," *MediArXiv* (2022).

33 Deborah Agostino, Michela Arnaboldi and Antonio Lampis, "Italian State Museums During the COVID-19 Crisis: From Onsite Closure to Online Openness," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 35 (2020): 362–372; Myrsini Samaroudi, Karina Rodriguez Echavarria and Lara Perry, "Heritage in Lockdown: Digital Provision of Memory Institutions in the UK and Us of America During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 35 (2020): 337–361.

34 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "Commemorating from a Distance"; Victoria Grace Walden, "Understanding Holocaust Memory and Education in the Digital Age: Before and After COVID-19," *Holocaust Studies* 28 (2022): 257–278.

although concerns were expressed by smaller institutions.[35] Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are the most commonly used platforms by museums, with a focus on sharing educational content and information about the museum's activities. Other studies suggest that Facebook is preferred for more detailed historical narration, while Instagram is more suitable for live events and sharing visual content, such as pictures, stories and videos.[36] However, larger institutions are more active on Twitter than on other platforms, with the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and Memorial occupying a prominent position in Twitter discourse due to its over 1.3 million followers.[37] Twitter is primarily used for engaging with other institutions, promoting online resources such as virtual tours and educational materials, and participating in political conversations both locally and internationally. As noted by Walden,[38] the use of social media has transformed commemoration practices and allowed for alternative memory work as local and institutional initiatives have gained global reach.[39] However, traditional approaches to remembrance and education, which are entrenched in memorial museum practices, continue to hold sway both online and offline.[40]

This study aims to analyse the attitudes of a group of Italian Holocaust museums and memorials towards social media and digitisation. Additionally, we will investigate how users perceive social media's potential to acquire knowledge of the Holocaust and engage in commemoration and remembrance practices. This research offers valuable insights into the current state of Holocaust education and remembrance in Italy and sheds light on how digital technologies and platforms can preserve the memory of the Holocaust for future generations.

35 Manca et al., "Exploring tensions in Holocaust museums' modes of commemoration and interaction on social media".

36 Imogen Dalziel, "Becoming the 'Holocaust Police'? The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum's Authority on Social Media," in *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and* Research, ed. Victoria Grace Walden (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021), 179–212.

37 Stefania Manca, "Digital Memory in the Post-Witness Era: How Holocaust Museums Use Social Media as New Memory Ecologies," *Information* 12 (2021): 31; Manca, "Digital Memory," 31.

38 Walden, *The Memorial Museum*.

39 Tracy Adams and Sara Kopelman, "Remembering COVID-19: memory, crisis, and social media," *Media, Culture & Society* 44 (2022): 266–285.

40 Walden, *The Memorial Museum*.

3 The case of Italian museums and memorials

Our study focuses on Holocaust commemoration practices through social media in Italy, an area that has received relatively little attention compared to other countries.[41] Italy has struggled to reconcile its collective memories of World War Two and the Holocaust, with the public memory of the Resistance movement portraying Italy as a victim of a war waged by Mussolini and Hitler, while anti-Communist sentiments have given rise to an alternative memory opposing antifascist rhetoric. Despite more than 70 years passing since the war, Italian government-led commemoration and remembrance events continue to mostly focus on German rather than Italian responsibility for the persecution and deportation of Jews, while also highlighting the role of the Italian resistance movement and Nazi Germany's massacres of civilians.[42] The complex interplay between national and transnational memories related to Holocaust remembrance is also reflected in the national calendar of commemorations and celebrations,[43] raising questions about the relationship between history, memory and the present.[44]

This study focuses on Holocaust commemoration through social media in Italy,[45] where the history of Holocaust commemoration has been complex and marked by a lack of nationally representative museums.[46] However, the four se-

41 Dalziel, "Becoming the 'Holocaust Police'?"; Tomasz Łysak, "Vlogging Auschwitz: New Players in Holocaust Commemoration," *Holocaust Studies* 28 (2022): 377–402; Stefania Manca, "Holocaust Memorialisation and Social Media. Investigating How Memorials of Former Concentration Camps Use Facebook and Twitter," Paper presented at *the 6th European Conference on Social Media – ECSM 2019*, Brighton, United Kingdom, June 13–14, 2019; Manca, "Digital Memory."

42 Aline Sierp, "Italy's Struggle with History and the Europeanisation of National Memory," in *Erinnerungskulturen in Transnationaler Perspektive*, ed. Ulf Engel, Matthias Middell and Stefan Troebst (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2012), 212–234.

43 Italy has two significant national commemorations: Liberation Day [Festa della Liberazione] on 25 April, marking the end of the Nazi-Fascist occupation and of the Second World War in Italy, and Holocaust Remembrance Day [Giorno della Memoria] on 27 January, commemorating the liberation of Auschwitz and emphasising the role of the German Nazis in the deportation of Italian and foreign Jews, but not the responsibility of fascism and Mussolini. Additionally, the National Memorial Day of the Exiles and Foibe [Giorno del Ricordo], established in 2004, is celebrated on 10 February, to remember Italian victims in border conflicts between Italy and Yugoslavia.

44 Michele Sarfatti, "Notes and Reflections on the Italian Law instituting Remembrance Day. History, Remembrance and the Present," *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC* 12 (2017): 112–134.

45 In Italy, the term "Shoah" is preferred over "Holocaust." See Dan Michman, "Why Is the Shoah Called 'the Shoah' or 'the Holocaust'? On the History of the Terminology for the Nazi Anti-Jewish Campaign," *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 35 (2021): 233–256.

46 After almost 20 years of planning and negotiations, funding for the Italian Museum of the Shoah has finally been approved. The museum is expected to be located on the grounds of Villa

lected memorials and museums, including Fondazione Fossoli,[47] Fondazione Museo della Shoah,[48] Memoriale della Shoah di Milano,[49] and Museo Nazionale dell'Ebraismo Italiano e della Shoah (MEIS)[50] are among the most significant cultural heritage agencies in Italy and serve as reference points for Holocaust memory. They have education centres that are frequently visited by schools and students and are active on at least two social media platforms among Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.[51] A recent study by Manca[52] examined the social media presence of these four museums and memorials across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. The study found that these institutions primarily target a national audience while also including transnational themes related to Holocaust remembrance. While the social media profiles examined demonstrate that these institutions are reliable sources of historical information and contribute to shaping memory ecologies, they tend to adopt a conservative attitude towards their use. Specifically, they prefer to target audiences over the age of 25, as evidenced by their choice of platforms and one-way communication approach.

3.1 Methods

In July 2021, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with social media managers, including directors, heads of communication departments, and social media managers from the four memorials and museums under study. The

Torlonia, a historically significant site that includes catacombs dating back to the third and fourth centuries and was once the residence of Benito Mussolini. The establishment of this museum is a significant step towards enhancing Holocaust education and remembrance in Italy, particularly in the capital city of Rome. By situating the museum in a historically significant location and highlighting the role of Italy in the Holocaust, the Italian Museum of the Shoah has the potential to play an important role in shaping national and transnational memories related to Holocaust commemoration. See: https://moked.it/international/2023/03/20/new-holocaust-museum-in-rome-italys-government-gives-its-approval-lets-keep-the-memory-alive/.

47 https://www.fondazionefossoli.org/.

48 https://www.museodellashoah.it/.

49 https://www.memorialeshoah.it/.

50 https://meis.museum/.

51 As TikTok was not yet a widely popular platform at the time of the study, it was not included among the social media platforms analysed. Therefore, the study did not cover the initial attempts by one of the four museums to use TikTok (https://www.tiktok.com/@museoshoahroma), as they predated the period during which the study was conducted.

52 Stefania Manca, "Digital Holocaust Memory on social media: How Italian Holocaust museums and memorials use digital ecosystems for educational and remembrance practice," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 28 (2022): 1152–1179.

interviews aimed to gather information on their organisations' missions, identities, communication strategies and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic's constraints. They also aimed to understand their educational policies and future plans.

Between February and July 2021, we conducted a survey aimed at social media users of the four museums and memorials under study. Our goal was to assess the type of information typically contained in social media profiles of organisations of this kind, drawing on the work of scholars such as Isaac and Çakmak,[53] Isaac et al.,[54] and Kansteiner.[55] The survey comprised 36 questions divided into three sections. The first section collected information about respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, location, occupation and educational qualifications. The second section explored respondents' personal experiences and interests in Holocaust issues. The third section examined how users engage with social media content published by Holocaust museums on their profiles/pages and how they perceive social media use by these museums.

Overall, the survey received 276 responses. The majority of respondents (80%) reported using Facebook as their preferred social media platform for following a museum or memorial, while 14 percent reported using YouTube. The respondents were predominantly women with an average age of 52.3 years and higher education qualifications. The survey had a diverse group of respondents, representing various professional backgrounds. The largest group of respondents were teachers and educators, followed by retired individuals and clerical employees. Scholars, academics and cultural operators also represented a significant proportion of the respondents. Additionally, a small group of students participated in the survey.

It is also noteworthy that the majority of the respondents resided in northern regions of Italy, while only a small percentage did not reside in Italy. This information could potentially impact the generalisability of the survey results, as the perspectives and interests of individuals residing in different regions or countries may differ.

53 Rami Khalil Isaac and Erdinç Çakmak, "Understanding visitor's motivation at sites of death and disaster: the case of former transit camp Westerbork, the Netherlands," *Current Issues in Tourism* 17 (2014): 164–179.

54 Rami Khalil Isaac et al., "Understanding Dutch visitors' motivations to concentration camp memorials," *Current Issues in Tourism* 22 (2019): 747–762.

55 Kansteiner, "The Holocaust in the 21st century."

3.2 The perspective of museums and memorials

According to the findings of the study, the four museums and memorials primarily aim to target younger audiences such as school children, teachers, university students and researchers. However, the actual audience is composed of school students aged between 10 and 18 years and women between 50 and 60 years of age, who possess high levels of education. All institutions place a strong emphasis on Holocaust education and offer a variety of activities, including workshops, exhibitions, school projects and training courses for teachers. Some activities are also conducted in collaboration with external partners, particularly in response to the rise of Holocaust distortion and hate speech on social media.

Despite the museums' strong emphasis on Holocaust education, the study found that limited resources, including human and financial resources, hinder the implementation of digital strategies. Due to budget constraints, those responsible for digital communication also manage traditional communications. The museum website is considered a highly significant means of disseminating information, announcing exhibitions, and presenting educational goals. However, all four social media managers highlighted the importance of using social media platforms, mainly Facebook (Figure 1) followed by Instagram (Figure 2) and YouTube. Twitter is considered less relevant and is only occasionally used by some of them.

Figure 1: The four museums' Facebook pages.

The museums' primary objective of social media postings is to convey historical information, provide details about activities and symbolic dates, and give access to in-depth background posts, videos and podcasts of meetings and workshops. Posts are usually published according to a pre-set schedule, with some museums

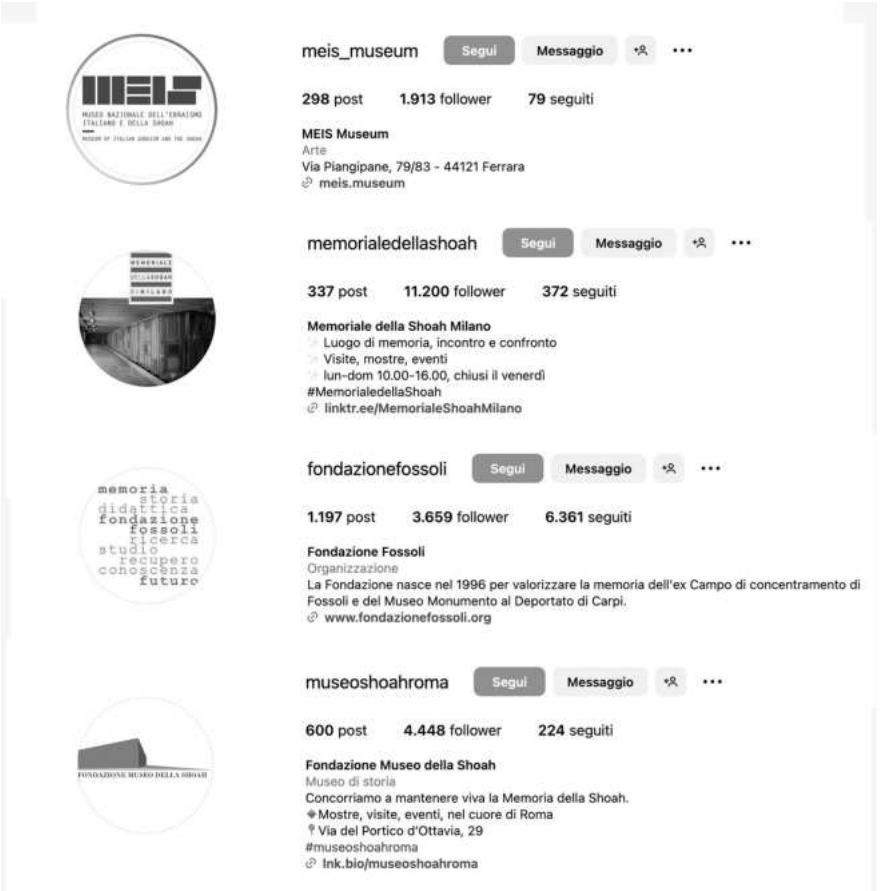


Figure 2: The four museums' Instagram profiles.

utilising specific digital tools to prepare their own output. Outside services are rarely used for this purpose.

The issue of Holocaust distortion and how to address it received particular attention during the interviews. However, the experts emphasised that problems related to Holocaust distortion and denial, as well as hate speech on social media channels, were mostly considered low-level. The handling of this phenomenon is assessed on a case-by-case basis, with obvious denials or hate speech being deleted, while critical voices are tolerated to a certain extent. The interviewees emphasised that such critical voices should fall within a specific range.

It is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the operations of museums and their activities on social media. With the closure of physical

spaces, museums had to find alternative ways to engage with their audiences and continue to provide educational opportunities. The use of digital technologies and social media platforms was instrumental in enabling museums to reach audiences and maintain engagement during this challenging time. Virtual tours, digital exhibitions and online guided tours were some of the ways that museums adapted to the pandemic's restrictions. The educational dimension received significant attention in the implementation of these alternative service delivery strategies and many museums launched new online courses and conferences. Despite the challenges, social media managers reported a high level of interest and willingness to collaborate during the pandemic. This positive response highlights the importance of maintaining and strengthening existing collaborations and developing new ones in the future.

Looking ahead, it is clear that museums would continue to use digital technologies and social media strategies developed during the pandemic. However, it is also important to emphasise the value of in-person events and maintain a balance between online and on-site activities. Overall, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of flexibility and adaptability in the museum sector, and it is likely that many of the changes implemented during this time would continue to shape the sector's future.

3.3 The perspective of users

The survey covers a range of topics, including participants' interests in specific themes related to the Holocaust, such as antisemitism and human rights, as well as their personal motivations for following museum/memorial social media pages. The survey also investigates participants' motivations for following a museum/memorial page, such as the quality of comments by followers/fans or the frequency of new content published. Additionally, it examines the frequency of specific actions taken on the page, such as posting a comment or mentioning/tagging other users/accounts/pages. Finally, the survey investigates participants' satisfaction with certain aspects of the page, such as administrator interaction and feeling safe in the followers/fans community. Overall, it aims to provide insights into various aspects of participants' engagement with museum/memorial pages related to the Holocaust, which can help inform strategies for improving engagement and outreach in the future.

Regarding experiences related to Holocaust education and informal learning activities, the most prevalent experience reported was visiting Holocaust museums and places, followed by participating in events, courses, initiatives, competitions and educational trips. Additionally, a significant number of respondents

reported having experience teaching in schools or museums for educational activities and trips. Although fewer respondents reported experience organising or planning school or museum educational activities and trips, a substantial proportion still reported having such experience.

Table 1 presents a summary of the findings pertaining to users' interest, motivation, actions typically taken on museums' and memorials' social media pages, as well as their satisfaction with their social media experience.

Table 1: Distribution of responses across the several topics of investigation.

Category	Item	M±SD
Interest	Antisemitism	4.28 ± 0.73
	Cultural heritage	4.25 ± 0.72
	Dark tourism	4.13 ± 0.92
	Fascism and other Nazi accomplices' ideology	4.10 ± 0.89
	Heritage from the Holocaust: Hope, Faith and Resilience	4.10 ± 0.88
	Historical events	4.31 ± 0.71
	Holocaust denial and distortion	4.15 ± 0.91
	Human rights	4.36 ± 0.75
	Jewish culture	4.07 ± 0.98
	Nazi ideology	3.50 ± 1.06
	Other genocides	3.79 ± 0.87
	Personal stories of victims or survivors	4.23 ± 0.84
	Racism	4.01 ± 0.91
	Refugees and immigration	3.88 ± 0.91
	Remembrance and commemoration	4.08 ± 0.84
	The Righteous among the Nations	4.09 ± 0.88
	Totalitarian regimes	3.83 ± 0.93
	Trauma psychology	3.75 ± 1.05
	Wars and conflicts	3.57 ± 0.95
Personal motivation	I feel responsible for the coming generations	4.18 ± 0.77
	I feel empathy for the victims	4.27 ± 0.73
	I want to be informed about expositions/evidence/artefacts of the museum	4.26 ± 0.71
	I want to expand my study/professional network of contacts in the field of the Holocaust	3.51 ± 1.17
	It is a part of my history/heritage that I want to know more about	3.87 ± 1.10
	I want to expand my personal network of contacts in the field of Holocaust	3.38 ± 1.14
	I want to speak for those who no longer can, but also for humanity more generally	3.87 ± 1.03
	I want to share personal opinions/ideas on the topic with others	3.65 ± 0.96
	I want to commemorate the victims	3.99 ± 0.90
	It's a way of coming to one's senses and thankfulness	3.81 ± 1.08

Table 1 (continued)

Category	Item	M±SD
	I want to learn more about the Holocaust/Second World War	4.16 ± 0.81
	I want to be able to tell the story further to next generations	4.31 ± 0.82
	I want to understand what happened during the Holocaust	4.35 ± 0.72
	I want to share my study/professional interests with others	3.51 ± 1.19
	I am curious to know what happened during the Holocaust	4.06 ± 0.89
	I want that such a horrific occurrence may never happen again	4.78 ± 0.56
	I am afraid that something can happen in the future again	3.91 ± 0.98
Motivations related to the page	Direct knowledge of the administrator/s of the page/profile	2.50 ± 1.23
	Quality of the comments by followers/fans	2.70 ± 1.02
	Reputation of the Institution in the field	3.89 ± 0.92
	Accuracy of the information published on the page/profile	4.44 ± 0.72
	Relevance of the posts and comments	3.98 ± 0.94
	Frequency with which new content is published	3.65 ± 0.93
	Popularity of the page/profile (e.g., number of “likes”, number of followers)	2.30 ± 1.11
Actions	Like a content	3.46 ± 1.21
	Like comments	2.67 ± 1.21
	Post a comment	2.03 ± 0.81
	Reply to a comment	1.94 ± 0.83
	Reply to a content/comment with new content (e.g., comment with text/photo/video/link)	1.75 ± 0.80
	Post new content (e.g., text, photo, video)	1.60 ± 0.80
	Retweet/share a content	2.55 ± 1.16
	Mention or tag other users/accounts/pages	1.91 ± 1.01
	Use direct or private message to interact with other users	1.75 ± 0.97
	Use direct or private message to interact with the administrators	1.61 ± 0.77
	Use page/profile hashtags in my posts	1.73 ± 0.96
	Participate to donation campaign organised by the page/profile	1.88 ± 0.92
Satisfaction	I am satisfied with how the administrator interacts with fans/followers	3.86 ± 0.88
	I am satisfied with how the administrator interacts with me	3.69 ± 0.88
	I am satisfied with how other fans/followers interact with me	3.48 ± 0.72
	I am satisfied with how the fans/followers interact with each other	3.59 ± 0.76
	I think something in the way administrators handle communication with fans/followers should change	2.85 ± 0.93
	I think the way in which the content is communicated by the administrators is consistent with my expectations	4.17 ± 0.87
	I think that the administrators censor the discussions	2.16 ± 1.11
	I think administrators filter hate messages properly	4.11 ± 0.93
	I think administrators filter fake news properly	4.20 ± 0.96
	I feel safe in the follower/fan community	4.10 ± 0.90
	I feel that administrators respond to fan/follower questions and comments in a timely manner	3.95 ± 0.87

To measure interest, a list of 19 items covering significant topics related to Holocaust history and memory was used (Interest). The results showed that the respondents were most interested in topics related to human rights, historical events, cultural heritage and antisemitism, all with a similar level of interest. Personal stories of victims or survivors and Holocaust denial and distortion were also of great interest. On the other end of the spectrum, trauma psychology, wars and conflicts, and Nazi ideology were among the least interesting topics to respondents.

Items related to "Personal motivation" and "Motivations related to the page" were used to assess the motivations for following the selected social media profile or page. The first group of items pertains to reasons related to the importance of being a witness and the desire to perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust. The most important motivation is "I want that such a horrific occurrence may never happen again", followed by "I want to understand what happened during the Holocaust", "I want to be able to tell the story further to next generations", "I feel empathy for the victims", and "I want to be informed about expositions/evidence/artifacts of the museum". On the other hand, motivations such as "I want to share personal opinions/ideas on the topic with others", "I want to expand my study/professional network of contacts in the field of the Holocaust", "I want to share my study/professional interests with others", and "I want to expand my personal network of contacts in the field of the Holocaust" are less important.

The second group of items relates to specific reasons to follow that particular page or profile. The most important reason to follow the page is "Accuracy of the information published on the page/profile", while factors such as popularity (e.g., number of "likes", number of followers) are much less important.

The activities carried out on the social media page or profile were assessed by examining the frequency of access reported by participants (Actions). Almost half of the respondents reported accessing the page or profile when they receive a notification. Weekly usage was reported as the most common frequency, followed by daily usage. Results show that the most frequently executed activities are "Liking content", "Retweeting or sharing content", and "Liking comments". On the other hand, activities such as "Posting new content (text, photo, video)" or "Using direct or private message to interact with administrators" are much less common.

In the end, satisfaction was evaluated using a set of items that aimed to assess the behaviour of page or profile administrators and their relationship with other online users (Satisfaction). The results indicate that users appreciate how administrators filter out fake news and hate speech, how they communicate content and how they interact with fans and followers. However, users express less interest in interactions with other users on the platform.

4 A convergence of perspectives

The objective of this study was to advance the comprehension of social media practices employed by Holocaust museums and memorials in Italy, by investigating the outlooks of both museums and memorials and their users. Unlike previous studies that focused on internationally relevant Holocaust institutions or large sets of Holocaust memorials in other countries,[56] this study specifically examined the memory landscape of Holocaust-oriented cultural institutions located in Italy.

Based on conversations with museum staff, it was found that Facebook and Instagram are the most frequently used social media platforms, while Twitter is the least used. This partially contradicts previous studies which suggested that larger institutions tend to use Twitter more frequently, especially for political and civic engagement.[57] In this sense, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and Memorial demonstrates a strong commitment to social and civil issues such as combating Holocaust denial and antisemitism on Twitter.[58]

The four Italian museums in question seem to prefer the slower-paced communication style of Facebook and Instagram. They target two specific groups – young adults and middle-aged people (45–70 years) and younger audiences (25–45 years). This is reflected by the demographics of users' survey, which indicates a majority of women, an average age of around 50 years, higher levels of education, and a preference for Facebook and YouTube. Demographics found in similar survey conducted in other countries, such as Germany, demonstrate a diverse profile in term of age, gender and social media preferences.[59]

56 Imogen Dalziel, "'Romantic Auschwitz': Examples and Perceptions of Contemporary Visitor Photography at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum," *Holocaust Studies* 22 (2016): 185–207; Meghan Lundrigan, "#Holocaust #Auschwitz: Performing Holocaust Memory on Social Media," in *A Companion to the Holocaust*, ed. Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2020), 639–654; Manca, "Holocaust Memorialisation and Social Media"; Manca, "Digital Memory"; Manca, Passarelli and Rehm, "Exploring Tensions"; Alexander Craig Wight, "Visitor Perceptions of European Holocaust Heritage: A Social Media Analysis," *Tourism Management* 81 (2020): 104142.

57 Dalziel, "Becoming the 'Holocaust Police'?"; Stefania Manca, "Digital Memory."

58 Dalziel, "Becoming the 'Holocaust Police'?"; Ewa Manikowska, "Museums and the Traps of Social Media: The Case of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum," *Santander Art and Culture Law Review* 2 (2020): 223–250.

59 Stefania Manca and Marcello Passarelli, "Social media as lieux for the convergence of collective trajectories of Holocaust memory. A study of online users in Germany and Italy," *Heritage* 6(9) (2023): 6377–6396.

Recent studies[60] have shown how pandemic-related lockdowns acted as a catalyst for digital transformation in the museum and memorial sector. This is evident in the ways in which our sample of museums and memorials engaged with the public during closures, such as through virtual tours, online seminars, and increased activity on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. The study also indicates that cultural institutions are influenced by proximity linked to geographical proximity,[61] as demonstrated by the geographical distribution of survey participants and the formation of digital spaces. This implies that while virtual tours and seminars are effective means of engaging with audiences, it is crucial to consider the geographical and cultural context of each digital space. Therefore, the creation of digital spaces should be customized to meet the needs of both local and global audiences.

The results of the survey indicate that visiting Holocaust museums and places is the most prevalent experience reported by respondents in terms of educational or informal learning activities on Holocaust topics. This finding highlights the importance of physical spaces in Holocaust education and commemoration. Furthermore, the fact that a significant number of respondents reported having experience related to teaching in schools or museums educational activities and educational trips suggests that educators and professionals are actively engaging with Holocaust education and incorporating it into their teaching and programming. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of providing diverse opportunities for Holocaust education and informal learning activities to engage different audiences and promote greater understanding and awareness of the Holocaust.

Besides, as nearly half of the individuals in the sample are teachers, educators, academics, or cultural operators, there is a predominant interest among professionals in Holocaust education and remembrance policies, but also a broader interest among citizens who are not actively involved in these areas. The ability to create a community of interest among diverse groups who share a common concern reflects the general tendency of history museums to foster social cohesion and consolidate the identity of their audiences.[62] Therefore, this result is relevant to understanding participants' formal and informal educational experiences and highlights the potential for different groups to come together around shared historical events.

60 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "Commemorating from a Distance"; Manca et al., "Holocaust Remembrance."

61 Lisa K. Pennington, "Hello from the other side: museum educators' perspectives on teaching the Holocaust," *Teacher Development* 22 (2018): 607–631.

62 Tracy Jean Rosenberg, "History Museums and Social Cohesion: Building Identity, Bridging Communities, and Addressing Difficult Issues," *Peabody Journal of Education* 86 (2011): 115–128.

Analysis of respondents' interests and motivations indicates a primary focus on Human Rights, historical knowledge, antisemitism, and cultural heritage, all of which are recognised as key topics in Holocaust education.[63] These preferences align with the theoretical and practical traditions of Holocaust education, which emphasise individual experiences over ethically oriented collective memory and strive to humanise statistics.[64] The cosmopolitan memory of the Holocaust, along with the intensification of global memories, has led to the emergence of a shared European cultural memory that highlights the connection between human rights and this historical event.[65] Our respondents' interests also reflect the tendency of memorial museums to convey collective memory through the perspectives of victims.[66] Specifically, they focus on the Righteous Among the Nations' rescue of Jews.[67] The content analysis of the social profiles of the four museums considered indicated that respondents' interests reflect the interweaving of transnational and national memories.[68] This trend is evident in the topics that garnered the most interest from the users. For example, it appears that topics such as Nazi ideology have not generated much interest among the respondents, possibly due to a perception that they are disconnected from the historical context specific to Italy.

The motivation for following the social media profiles of Holocaust museums and memorials is rooted in a sense of civic responsibility for preserving the memory of the Holocaust.[69] This is reflected in the emphasis on individual experiences over ethically oriented collective memory, as well as the focus on topics such as human rights and cultural heritage. The use of social media to expand one's network or share common interests has received little attention, and there is a tendency for one-way communication. However, respondents trust the institutions managing the profiles and recognise them as important educational and informational agencies for preserving Holocaust memory.

---

63 Michael Gray, *Contemporary Debates in Holocaust Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

64 Stuart Foster, Andy Pearce and Alice Pettigrew, *Holocaust Education. Contemporary Challenges and Controversies* (London: UCL Press, 2020); Stuart Foster, Andy Pearce and Alice Pettigrew, *Holocaust Education.*

65 Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Remembering a sociology of Human Rights," *Culture & History Digital Journal* 3 (2014): e013.

66 Oztig, "Holocaust museums."

67 Susan M. Yelich Biniecki and Sarah Donley, "The Righteous Among the Nations of the World: An Exploration of Free-Choice Learning," *SAGE Open* 6 (2016): 1–11.

68 Manca, "Digital Holocaust Memory."

69 Manuela Achilles and Hannah Winnick, "Memory, Responsibility, and Transformation: Antiracist Pedagogy, Holocaust Education, and Community Outreach in Transatlantic Perspective," *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 35 (2021): 123–138.

Finally, respondents value communication with page administrators and the ability to filter fake news and hate speech to ensure safety on social media. Interaction with other users is considered less important. The importance of museums creating safe online spaces for visitors is emphasised, and social media communication staff is committed to protecting online spaces from hate content, creating a safe environment for participants to connect with one another.

Bibliography

Achilles, Manuela, and Hannah Winnick. "Memory, Responsibility, and Transformation: Antiracist Pedagogy, Holocaust Education, and Community Outreach in Transatlantic Perspective." *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 35 (2021): 123–138. doi:10.1080/25785648.2021.1901403.

Adams, Tracy, and Sara Kopelman. "Remembering COVID-19: memory, crisis, and social media." *Media, Culture & Society* 44 (2022): 266–285. doi:10.1177/01634437211048377.

Agostino, Deborah, Michela Arnaboldi and Antonio Lampis. "Italian State Museums During the COVID-19 Crisis: From Onsite Closure to Online Openness." *Museum Management and Curatorship* 35 (2020): 362–372. doi:10.1080/09647775.2020.1790029.

Assmann, Aleida. "Transnational Memory and the Construction of history through Mass Media." In *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies*, edited by Lucy Bond, Stef Craps and Pieter Vermeulen, 65–82. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017.

Bartolini, Chiara. "Internationalisation and Marketing Strategies for University Museums." *Les Cahiers de Muséologie, 1-Actes du Colloque "Les Musées Universitaires and Leurs Publics." Communications* (2015): 137–147.

Chang, Mi, Taeha Yi, Sukjoo Hong, Pon Yan Lai, Ji Young Jun and Ji-Hyun Lee. "Identifying Museum Visitors via Social Network Analysis of Instagram." *ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage* 15 (2022): 1–19. doi:10.1145/3505635.

Dalziel, Imogen. ""Romantic Auschwitz": Examples and Perceptions of Contemporary Visitor Photography at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum." *Holocaust Studies* 22 (2016): 185–207. doi:10.1080/17504902.2016.1148874.

Dalziel, Imogen. "Becoming the 'Holocaust Police'? The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum's Authority on Social Media." In *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and* Research, edited by Victoria Grace Walden, 179–212. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021.

David, Lea. "Against Standardization of Memory." *Human Rights Quarterly* 39 (2017): 296–318. doi:10.1353/hrq.2017.0019.

De Cesari, Chiara and Ann Rigney. *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2014.

Divon, Tom, and Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann. "#JewishTikTok. The JewToks' Fight against Antisemitism." In *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, edited by Trevor Boffone, 47–58. London: Routledge, 2022.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Tobias. "Commemorating from a Distance: The Digital Transformation of Holocaust Memory in Times of COVID-19." *Media, Culture & Society* 43 (2021): 1095–1112. doi:10.1177/0163443720983276.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Tobias, and Tom Divon. "Serious TikTok: Can You Learn About the Holocaust in 60 seconds?." *MediArXiv* (2022). doi:10.33767/osf.io/nv6t2.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Tobias, and Lital Henig. “i-Memory: Selfies and Self-Witnessing in #Uploading_Holocaust (2016).” In *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and* Research, edited by Victoria Grace Walden, 213–236. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021.

Echikson, William. *Holocaust Remembrance Project: How European Countries Treat Their Wartime Past*. 2019. Accessed 20 March 2023. https://archive.jpr.org.uk/object-eur216.

Erll, Astrid. “Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction.” In *Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 1–15. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2010.

Foster, Stuart, Pearce, Andy, and Pettigrew, Alice. *Holocaust Education. Contemporary Challenges and Controversies*. London: UCL Press, 2020.

Garde-Hansen, Joanne, Andrew Hoskins, and Anna Reading. *Save as . . . Digital Memories*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Giaccardi, Elisa. *Heritage and Social Media. Understanding Heritage in a Participatory Culture*. London: Routledge, 2012.

Gil-Fuentetaja, Ion, and Maria Economou. “Communicating Museum Collections Information Online: Analysis of the Philosophy of Communication Extending the Constructivist Approach.” *ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage* 12 (2019): Article 3. doi:10.1145/3283253.

Gray, Michael. *Contemporary Debates in Holocaust Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Hogervorst, Susan. “The Era of the User. Testimonies in the Digital Age.” *Rethinking History* 24 (2020): 169–183. doi:10.1080/13642529.2020.1757333.

Isaac, Rami Khalil, and Erdinç Çakmak. “Understanding visitor’s motivation at sites of death and disaster: the case of former transit camp Westerbork, the Netherlands.” *Current Issues in Tourism*, 17 (2014): 164–179. doi:10.1080/13683500.2013.776021.

Isaac, Rami Khalil, Jeroen Nawijn, Adriaan van Liempt, and Konstantin Gridnevskiy. “Understanding Dutch visitors’ motivations to concentration camp memorials.” *Current Issues in Tourism* 22 (2019): 747–762. doi:10.1080/13683500.2017.1310190.

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

Kansteiner, Wulf. “The Holocaust in the 21st century: digital anxiety, transnational cosmopolitanism, and never again genocide without memory.” In *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition*, edited by Andrew Hoskins, 110–140. London and New York: Routledge, 2017.

Kovács, Éva. “Limits of Universalization: The European Memory Sites of Genocide.” *Journal of Genocide Research* 20 (2018): 490–509. doi:10.1080/14623528.2018.1522825.

Levy, Daniel, and Natan Sznaider. *The Holocaust and Memory in The Global Age*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

Levy, Daniel, and Natan Sznaider. “Remembering a sociology of Human Rights.” *Culture & History Digital Journal* 3 (2014): e013. doi:10.3989/chdj.2014.013.

Lundrigan, Meghan. “#Holocaust #Auschwitz: Performing Holocaust Memory on Social Media.” In *A Companion to the Holocaust*, edited by Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl, 639–654. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2020.

Łysak, Tomasz. “Vlogging Auschwitz: New Players in Holocaust Commemoration.” *Holocaust Studies* 28 (2022): 377–402. doi:10.1080/17504902.2021.1979180.

Manca, Stefania. “Holocaust Memorialisation and Social Media. Investigating How Memorials of Former Concentration Camps Use Facebook and Twitter.” Paper presented at *the 6th European Conference on Social Media – ECSM 2019*, Brighton, United Kingdom, June 13–14, 2019.

Manca, Stefania. “Digital Memory in the Post-Witness Era: How Holocaust Museums Use Social Media as New Memory Ecologies.” *Information* 12 (2021): 31. doi:10.3390/info12010031.

Manca, Stefania. "Digital Holocaust Memory on social media: How Italian Holocaust museums and memorials use digital ecosystems for educational and remembrance practice." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 28 (2022): 1152–1179. doi:10.1080/13527258.2022.2131879

Manca, Stefania, and Marcello Passarelli. "Social media as lieux for the convergence of collective trajectories of Holocaust memory. A study of online users in Germany and Italy." *Heritage* 6(9) (2023): 6377–6396. doi:10.3390/heritage6090334.

Manca, Stefania, Marcello Passarelli, and Martin Rehm. "Exploring Tensions in Holocaust Museums' Modes of Commemoration and Interaction on Social Media." *Technology in Society* 68 (2022): 101889. doi:10.1016/j.techsoc.2022.101889.

Manca, Stefania, Martin Rehm, and Susanne Haake. "Holocaust Remembrance on Facebook during the Lockdown: A Turning Point or a Token Gesture?." In *The COVID-19 Pandemic and Memory. Remembrance, commemoration, and archiving in crisis*, edited by Orli Fridman and Sarah Gensburger. London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2024, pp. 295–318.

Manikowska, Ewa. "Museums and the Traps of Social Media: The Case of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum." *Santander Art and Culture Law Review* 2 (2020): 223–250. doi:10.4467/2450050XSNR.20.017.13020.

Michman, Dan. "Why Is the Shoah Called 'the Shoah' or 'the Holocaust'? On the History of the Terminology for the Nazi Anti-Jewish Campaign." *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 35 (2021): 233–256. doi:10.1080/25785648.2021.1994764.

Nora, Pierre. "Between memory and history: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24. doi:10.2307/2928520.

Oztig, Lacin Idil. "Holocaust museums, Holocaust memorial culture, and individuals: a Constructivist perspective." *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 22 (2023): 62–83. doi:10.1080/14725886.2021.2011607.

Pakier, Małgorzata, and Bo Stråth. *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*. New York: Berghahn, 2010.

Pennington, Lisa K. "Hello from the other side: museum educators' perspectives on teaching the Holocaust." *Teacher Development* 22 (2018): 607–631. doi:10.1080/13664530.2018.1483419.

Popescu, Diana I., and Tanja Schult. *Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the Post-witness Era*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Probst, Lothar. "Founding Myths in Europe and the Role of the Holocaust." *New German Critique* 90 (2003): 45–58. doi:10.2307/3211107.

Rosenberg, Tracy Jean. "History Museums and Social Cohesion: Building Identity, Bridging Communities, and Addressing Difficult Issues." *Peabody Journal of Education* 86 (2011): 115–128. doi:10.1080/0161956X.2011.561171.

Samaroudi, Myrsini, Karina Rodriguez Echavarria and Lara Perry. "Heritage in Lockdown: Digital Provision of Memory Institutions in the UK and Us of America During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Museum Management and Curatorship* 35 (2020): 337–361. doi:10.1080/09647775.2020.1810483.

Sarfatti, Michele. "Notes and Reflections on the Italian Law instituting Remembrance Day. History, Remembrance and the Present." *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC* 12 (2017): 112–134. doi:10.48248/issn.2037-741X/819.

Sierp, Aline. "Italy's Struggle with History and the Europeanisation of National Memory." In *Erinnerungskulturen in Transnationaler Perspektive*, edited by Ulf Engel, Matthias Middell and Stefan Troebst, 212–234. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2012.

Sievers, Leah Angell. "Genocide and Relevance: Current Trends in United States Holocaust Museums." *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 30 (2016): 282–295. doi:10.1080/23256249.2016.1257218.

Tyrrell, Ian. “Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History: Theory and Practice.” *Journal of Global History* 4 (2009): 453–474. doi:10.1017/S1740022809990167.

Vanderbeek, Thomas G. “Marginalization and Local Commemoration of Third Reich Victims in Germany.” *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 36 (2022): 128–145. doi:10.1080/25785648.2022.2062921.

Vogels, Emily A., Risa Gelles-Watnick and Navid Massarat. *Teens, Social Media and Technology 2022*. Pew Research Center, 2022.

Yelich Biniecki, Susan. M., and Sarah Donley. “The Righteous Among the Nations of the World: An Exploration of Free-Choice Learning.” *SAGE Open* 6 (2016): 1–11. doi:10.1177/2158244016659319.

Walden, Victoria Grace. *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021.

Walden, Victoria Grace. *The Memorial Museum in the Digital Age*. REFRAME Books, 2022. Accessed 20 March 2023. https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/the-memorial-museum-in-the-digital-age/.

Walden, Victoria Grace. “Understanding Holocaust Memory and Education in the Digital Age: Before and After COVID-19.” *Holocaust Studies* 28 (2022): 257–278. doi:10.1080/17504902.2021.1979175.

Wight, Alexander Craig. “Visitor Perceptions of European Holocaust Heritage: A Social Media Analysis.” *Tourism Management* 81 (2020): 104142. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104142.

Wieviorka, Annette. *The Era of the Witness*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.

Anna Carolina Viana, Bárbara Deoti, Maria Visconti

The historian influencer: Mediating and transmitting Holocaust memory on social media in Brazil

1 Introduction: On reconnecting with the past

On a night like any other, the hacker under the nickname of Neo uncovers the most harrowing truth. By taking the red pill offered by Morpheus, he finally sees the world as it is: Earth has been dominated by artificial intelligence, and under a black sky, giant machines walk and rule the streets once filled with people. This scene is known to many: the movie *Matrix* (1999) presented us with a dystopian future where humans lost control of the planet and were subjugated by a dictatorship of computers that tampered with reality. Although we are certainly not living in such a situation – at least not yet – *Matrix* raises a meaningful question: What is reality? Living in a century surrounded by and built upon technology, the answer may not be as straightforward as we would like. Nowadays, computers, cell phones and numerous other electronic devices play a central role in our lives, and we relate ourselves to the world through its screens.

Perhaps the most significant turn of this century regarding human relationships happened because of the invention of social media. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and many other social networks have drastically changed how we connect to others and the world. In his text *Past and Present in Digital Public History*, historian Marcello Ravveduto calls our attention to the inseparable connections between ours and the digital world by using the concept of interreality: "[A]n environment in which to live, an extension of the human mind, a mixture of algorithms and interfaces that intertwine with what is real, conditioning everyday life".[1] Interreality is undoubtedly not as frightening as the malevolent robots of *Matrix*. Still, it indicates something Neo, and we have in common: today, it may have become impossible to completely separate what is virtual from what is real because one conditions the other, as they are both in permanent exchange, architecting a reality where human cognition and algorithmic calculations meet.

1 Marcello Ravveduto, "Past and Present in Digital Public History," in *Handbook Digital Public History*, ed. Serge Noiret, Mark Tebeau and Gerben Zaagsma (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022), 134.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-005

Philosopher-biologist Donna Haraway offers a similar perspective in many of her works, most famously in *A Cyborg Manifesto*. Her approach to the idea of the cyborg – a human-machine hybrid – stems from the notion of relationality. That is, rather than existing as a separate being, the cyborg emerges from the meeting between people and the digital environment "where worlds get reconstructed as information".[2] Thus, a certain cyborg-ness of humanity concerns the information systems that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century and the specific forms of relationality that came with them. In an interview where she was asked about her response to Jacques Derrida's idea of the wounds to human narcissism, Haraway reinstated her proposal of a fourth wound concerning digital technology, dismissing human *autopoiesis*. In other words, the constitution of the reality we inhabit does not end with us but instead extends to and encompasses the relationality between humans and non-humans (which includes the digital world). Therefore, as Haraway states, "social relationships include nonhumans as well as humans as socially (or, what is the same thing for this odd congeries, sociotechnically) active partners".[3]

In this world changed by digital technological advances, where the new gains more space every day, we, historians, are hounded by an uncomfortable question: What place does the past hold in our present time? To answer this question, we must look deeper into its central aspect – time – and ask how do people relate to time in this new and inter-reality? Ravveduto points to how, in the forever gleaming world of social media, where something new emerges at every second and where a touch of our fingers endlessly refreshes the feed of posts, photos and news, Western man "runs after the present, anxious at not being able to grasp it while it is going around".[4] Therefore, we face a bizarre situation in which, on the one hand, the present is so short we cannot grasp it, but, on the other, because it is constantly updated, it becomes infinite. We live, thus, in an era of presentism: "[A] dilated and one-dimensional present that chases after itself and sets in motion a series of mechanisms of sterile self-reproduction".[5] Hence, in this new context, our perception of time is shaped by the sense of an eternal present that is ever-changing but perpetual, nonetheless. However, "beneath the surface of the fleeting present, the traces left by the information conceal a darkly static and

2 Nicholas Gane, "When We Have Never Been Human, What Is to Be Done?: Interview with Donna Haraway," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23(7–8) (2006): 140.

3 Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse: feminism and technoscience*, second edition (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 8.

4 Ravveduto, "Past and Present," 132.

5 Ravveduto, "Past and Present," 132.

stagnant past that is always ready to resurface, preventing it from being filed away forever".[6] Whilst chasing the present, we cannot run from our digital past: it is recorded, easily accessed – and it can haunt us.

We now return to our first question: In light of this presentist temporal regime, what place does the past hold in our present time? To start, with the interreality of social media emerges a new type of past distinctive from the one studied by historians: a static past that is largely personal rather than collective because it is impregnated by individual memory. Thus, as Ravveduto affirms, "the link between the past and the present is no longer delegated to historical research, whose scientific rigor in the reconstruction of facts is too slow in comparison to the speed of the digital present".[7] In that sense, the historical past's place has been usurped by memory, "the immediate use of which lends itself to the emotional experience of the interconnected public".[8] From this perspective, we can certainly claim social media is not the most favorable place for historians, since it reduces history "to a sum of disintermediate, emotional opinions that prevent critical thinking from arising", and allows an "editing of the past, without distinction of sources or historical contextualization".[9] Furthermore, by publicising an individualistic memory, social media causes "a wave of collective nostalgia," in which yesterday was always better than today.[10] The temporal depth of history is crushed under the supremacy of memory. Furthermore, the loss of historical time "dissolves any sense of posterity, inducing them [people] not to safeguard the inheritance of their ancestors, nor to conserve any legacy for their descendants".[11] In other words, it becomes arduous to see the past's roots in the present and project life into the future. Nevertheless, how can we correct this temporal misperception?

Although only sometimes welcome in social media, historians must put themselves out there to build a bridge between history and the public. Digital public history may offer a path to overcoming the temporal misperception caused by interreality. The bridge between the real and digital worlds, Ravveduto suggests, can be "founded on the active role of a new professional figure: the historical influencer, whose task will be, through debunking, to create narratives and content that is appropriate for the 'interconnected public'".[12] By creating content based

6 Ravveduto, "Past and Present," 135.
7 Ravveduto, "Past and Present," 135.
8 Ravveduto, "Past and Present," 135.
9 Ravveduto, "Past and Present," 136.
10 Ravveduto, "Past and Present," 135–136.
11 Ravveduto, "Past and Present," 137.
12 Ravveduto, "Past and Present," 137.

on critical thinking and rigorous methodology, it becomes possible to react firsthand to the emotional dominion of memory in the networks. It also becomes possible to build a new memory anchored not on individualistic experiences but on a collective and ethical memory of the past. Moreover, when it comes to traumatic past experiences – such as war, authoritarian regimes, political persecution and genocide – the need for ethical commitment becomes even more evident, as we intend to explore in this chapter's discussion.

To resist the conservative waves of nostalgia, challenge the temporal misperception of interreality and build critical knowledge online about traumatic pasts of the twentieth century: this is the mission of the Brazilian Center for Nazism and Holocaust Studies (NEPAT). NEPAT was created in 2019 out of the need to open space for academic dialogue in Brazil in the field of Nazism and Holocaust Studies, as well as produce accessible content covering such topics on social media. Since 2020, we have also been producing a podcast called *Desnazificando* [Denazifying], which is, to this date, the only podcast exclusively about these themes in Brazilian Portuguese. Our scientific dissemination project on social media is an essential part of our public-facing activity and is founded on values we are committed to upholding. In this chapter, we intend to discuss NEPAT's production on Instagram. Based on the propositions of both Digital History and Media Studies, we will dedicate special attention to the interactions between users and digital interfaces, as well as the participatory culture fostered by social media networks.

2 History and social media, the historian in social media

In *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education, and Research*, British scholar Victoria Walden opens with a pressing question: "What can the digital do for Holocaust memory, education, and research?"[13] The surge in interest in the potential digital media and digital technologies may offer to the transmission of Holocaust memory is undeniable and continually growing. As Walden aptly observes, it undoubtedly concerns the "increasing ubiquity of the digital in our everyday lives".[14] Digital media has thus become a valuable platform for disseminating scholarly

13 Victoria Walden, ed., *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 3.
14 Walden, ed., *Digital Holocaust Memory*, 2.

research, producing memorial and educational initiatives, and encompassing a broader audience. In this new and flourishing landscape, however, we must foreground the research practices now shaping Holocaust memory and education and how researchers and educational institutions create digital outputs and reach their intended audiences. Therefore, as suggested by Walden, this chapter will be a methodological work of self-reflexivity, using NEPAT's Instagram production as primary source materials for analysis.

Instagram is the leading platform hosting NEPAT's virtual content. Instagram is an image-based social network where pictures can be combined with subtitles, allowing us to mix relatively longer texts with visually appealing image cards. Furthermore, it provides features for and encourages direct interaction with our audience; it is, in fact, necessary for this interaction to be constantly sustained so that our posts reach our followers, boosted by the platform's algorithm. Interactions with the profile's followers can happen in a few different ways: through direct comments on the posts; through the *story* function, which supports polls, surveys, emoji reactions, and direct responses; or through an individual chat function, known as direct messaging. The *story* function also allows sharing other profiles' posts and chain interactions and is the most dynamic form of user interaction within the platform. Instagram *stories* only stay on a user's profile for 24 hours; thus, unlike a regular post, it is a far more ephemeral form of content output and sharing. Additionally, maintaining a constant and daily stream of *stories* is one way of feeding Instagram's algorithm and facilitating the dissemination of regular posts.

The content on NEPAT's profile page is organised based on different categories of posts, each with its own concept and finality. These are: Movie Recommendations, Book Recommendations, *Calendário Histórico* [Historical Calendar], *Dicionário de Conceitos* [Concept Dictionary], and *NEPAT responde* [NEPAT answers]. Movie and Book Recommendations, as the name implies, are suggestions of new audiovisual and literary productions regarding the Nazi regime, the Holocaust, and correlated topics. The *Calendário Histórico* is a carousel post about a historical event that occurred on the day the post is published. For example, every September 15th, we release a post about the Nuremberg Laws,[15] established that day in 1935, representing a turning point in antisemitic legislation and persecution in the Third Reich. The aim of the *Calendário* is not only to introduce the public to important dates in the history of the twetieth century but also to place these events in their respective historical contexts, helping our followers to build a repertoire of relevant episodes that substantiate their understanding of the Nazi regime and this period of history.

15 "Leis de Nuremberg," accessed 26 April 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cih-EcXM45Q/.

The *Dicionário de Conceitos*' proposal is inspired by entries in historical dictionaries, where the definition of a historical concept is presented. In this type of post, we choose a relevant concept from academic scholarship and introduce it to our audience. Although we live and work in a fast-paced digital environment where many claim creators should sacrifice information to hold their audience captive, we do not believe this is the right approach in our case – nor is what our community expects. On the contrary, even though we provide an editorialised view of a complex concept, such as the "banality of evil" by philosopher Hannah Arendt,[16] this view is by no means simplistic. *Dicionário de Conceitos* posts usually have up to ten cards combining long texts and images, instigating the public to learn more about the topic. It is important to emphasise that many of these concepts are from authors not translated into Portuguese. In this sense, we perform a double translation: not only from a foreign language into Portuguese but also from scholarly terminology to a more accessible language.

A category of post that gained prominence in our production in 2022 is *NEPAT responde*. Since starting our profile, and as we gained more followers, we realised our audience had recurrent doubts, such as: Was Nazism a left or right-wing regime? Why do you not talk about communism? Did Hitler really die in the Second World War? Questions such as these reflect Brazil's population's lack of education regarding the Nazi regime and the Holocaust in general. When we look at elementary education, for example, the Brazilian Common National Curriculum Base mentions the Holocaust once and only as an appendix of what is considered more relevant: the Second World War. At universities, specialists in the field are few and far between, and this situation only worsens due to the lack of specialised literature. These are only a few examples of how Brazil has insufficient critical knowledge and memory about the Nazi regime and the Holocaust. Although Brazil is not the only place lacking a robust and critical Holocaust memory, our situation is not the same as in Europe for the reasons we just outlined. While it may be true that there is insufficient critical knowledge about the Holocaust there, Europe is still at the centre of the Holocaust Studies field.

However, let us look at it from a comparative perspective. One of the challenges of teaching and working with the memory of the Holocaust in Brazil is that, metaphorically, it often seems as if we are working from zero, unlike in Europe, where there is a sense of direct connection through national or familial history, and where a certain amount of knowledge can be assumed. Regarding Holocaust education in Brazil, we continually build from the ground up since there is no assumed knowledge; we start from this place of presumed and perceived distance

16 "Banalidade do mal," accessed 26 April 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CGSbjkFlUPs/.

from the Holocaust. NEPAT's content production is organised around this notion. We seek to help our followers build up their repertoire of relevant events and information to substantiate their understanding of the Nazi regime and this period of history. At the same time, we present and discuss more sophisticated concepts, which tie together and form the base for a more meaningful understanding of the events beyond factual knowledge. As previously mentioned, our work executes a double translation: from foreign languages to Portuguese and from academic language to an accessible one. However, we are also translating the Holocaust from a European reality into our Brazilian context. This translation work is particular to what we do. It is a unique dimension of teaching about and working with the Holocaust from an outsider's perspective, as Brazilians and Latin Americans, and something that the Eurocentric academic outlook of the Holocaust Studies field often fails to consider.

This glaring lack of knowledge in itself is a good enough reason for us to produce this type of content. However, deepening the public's understanding of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust becomes even more pressing in light of the recent rise of right-wing movements that often make appropriations and allusions to Nazi discourse, spreading fake news and false information about this period of history. According to Brazilian historian Odilon Caldeira, Brazil is "part of a new global wave of extremism, but it would be wrong to think that it is a mere importer and reproducer of this international agenda".[17] As one would expect, Brazilian right-wing rhetoric frequently shields its ideology from criticism by diverting attention to unfounded criticism of communist and socialist ideas. One of the ways they do that is by claiming that Nazism was a left-wing regime: in doing so, they associate the horrors and crimes perpetrated by Nazis to the left, acquitting the extremist right-wing tradition of any political responsibility. By insisting that the left is actually to blame for such crimes, it is easier for the right to justify their own conservative position. It is also a way to shut down political debates because if the left wing is indeed composed of Nazis in disguise, it would have no legitimacy or speaking ground to defend its ideas. Of course, this inverted reality is nothing but a red herring. However, on social media, fake news spreads fast and one must have the tools to see through the fake part of the news.

Thus, through our systematic analysis of keywords on Twitter and Instagram, we observed an escalation in the popularity of this type of discourse. We then proceeded to identify the main arguments employed by the right and constructed

17 Odilon Caldeira Neto, "'Brasil é um laboratório da extrema direita global'. Entrevista com Odilon Caldeira Neto," 2023, https://www.ihu.unisinos.br/categorias/625477-brasil-e-um-laboratorio-da-extrema-direita-global-entrevista-com-odilon-caldeira-neto. Passage translated by the authors.

one of our *NEPAT responde* posts based on this research: *NEPAT responde: O nazismo era de esquerda?* [NEPAT answers: Was Nazism leftist?] (See Figure 1).[18] We started by mentioning why the term "socialist" appears in the name of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). An essential first step was explaining to our audience the meaning of the word "socialist" in that context since 1) it was a term under dispute and 2) it was not the most recurrent one to refer to leftist or communist movements in the 1920s. In short, "socialist", for the Nazis, was every posture or action that was embraced or done in favour of the racially defined "community of the people"; that is, everything that helped safeguard the German race would be a socialist attitude.[19] The term's appropriation was also strategic since, with the growth of Marxist ideas in post-war Germany, the parties fought bitterly for working-class adhesion. Thus, as historian Richard Evans points out, it would be a mistake to see Nazism as a form of socialism affiliated with Marxism or the left since it was, in fact, a counter-ideology to the principles defended by these political strands.[20] To summarise, the centre of the Nazi's ideological proposal was race, not class struggle.

Communism has already appeared in another *NEPAT responde* post – *NEPAT responde: E o comunismo?* [NEPAT answers: What about communism?][21] – in which we felt the need to address why we do not discuss this topic in our social media content since both ideologies often appear in the Brazilian public debate as two sides of the same coin. In this post, we briefly explained the Socialist Revolution and talked about authors that seek to make a revisionist history of the Soviet Union, such as Sheila Fitzpatrick.[22] While addressing the actual experience of socialism, we argued that neither communism nor socialism were restricted to the period of the Soviet Union (1922–1991). Nor is it a property of Soviet Union leaders, such as Vladimir Lenin or Joseph Stalin. Additionally, our post reinforced that Nazism is a right-wing ideology based on white supremacy and racial prejudice and by no means anti-capitalist; whereas communism is a left-wing ideology based on economic analysis and against capitalist exploitation of the working class.[23] Finally, we explained that we are not specialists in the Soviet regime and

18 "O nazismo era de esquerda?," accessed 26 April 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch8C1hFM_uy/.

19 Ian Kershaw, *The "Hitler Myth": Image and Reality in the Third Reich*, reissue edição (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

20 Richard J. Evans, *Terceiro Reich no poder*, 2ª edição (Planeta do Brasil, 2014).

21 "E o comunismo?," accessed 26 April 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CgKvzycsdhG/.

22 Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Revisionism in Retrospect: A Personal View," *Slavic Review* 67/3 (2008): 682–704.

23 John Lukacs, *O Hitler da História* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1998).

finished this post restating that since communism and Nazism are not the same thing, we do not discuss the former. We have had a positive response from our community, which claims their social demands are being heard. In conclusion, through *NEPAT responde*, we can foster direct dialogue with the public, giving our audience the tools to resist multiple kinds of fake news.

3 Sharing authority, creating authority

Although we recognise, as historian Meghan Lundrigan points out, that "social media sources are integral to our understanding of how Holocaust memory functions personally, spatially, and transnationally in our current digital age",[24] it is undeniable that such a sensitive topic does not come without its own challenges when communicating it to digital audiences. In a world with the continuous and alarming growth of neo-Nazi groups and Holocaust denial, the internet becomes fertile ground for harmful theories.[25] That is an even greater concern in Brazil, a country that, as previously stated, does not have a strong Holocaust memory. Therefore, a project that deals with this topic on the internet should have several methodological angles in mind.

Lundrigan highlights how Instagram is a constantly shifting source and how Instagram photos can be seen "both as individual visual reminders of place, as well as the communication of a historicized memory".[26] In that sense, Instagram hashtags illustrate different expanded forms of public engagement with this memory, diverging from traditional forms of memory-making. When people visit Holocaust spaces, for example, Auschwitz and later use hashtags such as #auschwitz or #nowords in their photos, this manner of engagement makes the individual feel part of this shared memory and connected to a global network of remembrance. Because of the way the platform is built – although it is constantly changing to follow recent trends among users and consumers – Instagram is an

24 Meghan Lundrigan, "#Holocaust #Auschwitz: Performing Holocaust Memory on Social Media," in *A Companion To The Holocaust*, ed. Hilary Earl and Simone Gilioti (New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), 639.

25 Naturally, Brazilian far-right extremist discourse is not limited to references to Nazi ideology. Looking at and pushing back against the manipulation of Brazilian history is just as important. However, that falls outside the scope of our work at NEPAT. Our goal is to make high-quality content with proper academic rigour, and since our area of expertise is the Nazi regime and the Holocaust, that is what we focus on. We do this in a way that is connected to Brazilian reality, but we do not talk specifically about Brazilian history.

26 Lundrigan, "#Holocaust #Auschwitz," 640.

Figure 1: VIANA, Anna Carolina. *NEPAT Responde: O nazismo era de esquerda?* 2022. Instagram post screenshot. Screenshot by authors, March 21, 2024.

ideal place to comprehend new forms of documentation: "For the historian, social media is an archive made coherent through hashtags – among other things".[27]

Although visitors/users feel called to engage with Holocaust memory and now have the space on social media to do so, the public's contribution is often regulated by institutions that employ "educational frameworks to guide visitor interpretation through Instagram in appropriate ways".[28] However, one must bear in mind that most Instagram profiles with educational projects toward Holocaust memory are Holocaust institutions known worldwide. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and the Auschwitz Memorial Museum are probably the most recognisable examples. Those places encompass the archival and the memorial aspect – after all, the Auschwitz Memorial Museum is in the former Auschwitz-Birkenau camp complex. In that sense, the educational material produced on these institutions' social media is widely supported by an authority that is physically accessible. Instagram's users can personally visit these sites, record, and share their experience (the "language of online belonging" of "I was there," as Lundrigan names it[29]) and also use these institutions' profiles to

27 Lundrigan, "#Holocaust #Auschwitz," 640.
28 Lundrigan, "#Holocaust #Auschwitz," 643.
29 Lundrigan, "#Holocaust #Auschwitz," 644.

learn more about the Holocaust even if they cannot visit the place. As Lundrigan points out:

> Social media usage expands the authority of engagement with Holocaust memory and its interpretation to broader public audiences, both online and offline; this expansion of authority raises important concerns over competing forms of historical narration, memory, and engagement as these themes relate to the Holocaust's representation. While this issue is not new to visual Holocaust representations and their reception, these competing forms of narration claim substantial public attention, sometimes shifting the lens of authority away from scholarly interpretations to populist ones.[30]

This goes in hand with Victoria Walden's usage of the notion of "entanglement" to understand digital Holocaust memory. She borrows this concept from quantum physicist Karen Barad. Entanglement can be understood as a "lack of self-contained existence" in the sense that individuals do not pre-exist their interactions but rather emerge through and as part of a relationship. Barad argues that "existence is not an individual affair", making "creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity" essentially indistinguishable.[31] Employing this concept in Holocaust memory allows us to grasp its dynamic movement, as memory is not fixed or unchanging. It also provides insight into the tensions between "official" institutionalised memory and "unofficial" laymemory proliferating in digital spaces. "If institutional Holocaust memory is fixed with particular 'rules' about what is and is not appropriate", Walden suggests, "these guidelines are not known or often considered by non-expert creators. Thus, the actual memoryscape is far more varied than many experts would like, and this will only increase".[32] Hence, the necessity of examining the "multiple different actants working at different levels of the digital: computational, interface, institution, (prod)user, and cultural".[33] Therefore, the relationship between institutionalised and unofficial memory must be examined and reconceptualised in light of the realities of the digital era to ensure that the ethical commitments and integrity of Holocaust memory are preserved and continue to be perpetuated.

Regarding our work at NEPAT, this leaves us with two problems: First, we are not an institution in the same way USHMM, Yad Vashem, or many others are – far from it. We do not have a physical location; even if we did, it would not be a memorial site or archive. Therefore, we lack that kind of authority. This brings us to the second concern: We only produce educational content. That is to say, we do

30 Lundrigan, "#Holocaust #Auschwitz," 641.
31 Walden, *Digital Holocaust Memory*, 6.
32 Walden, *Digital Holocaust Memory*, 6–7.
33 Walden, *Digital Holocaust Memory*, 7.

not possess, for example, historical documents to display on our social media to engage our followers. That impacts the way we organise our content and editorial line, after all, our production is based on scientific dissemination, on bringing what we learn in academia and translating that to a general audience – and let us bear in mind that we are speaking of a largely non-academic and unknowledgeable audience, as we have already mentioned.

Speaking from a digital marketing point of view, that means that we must build our authority based on the quality of our content alone. Even as specialists on the theme, as our academic degrees establish, that is not a sufficient guarantee for the public that our content will be accessible or attractive, even if it is well-founded. In that sense, one of our primary concerns is how we communicate this specialised knowledge. Although Holocaust scholars and institutions have been using new technological advances, such as digital databases or virtual tours, that does not necessarily entail the use of new communication strategies. Therefore, our authority has been constructed on how we 'communicate' this authority, as well.

To this end, we use digital marketing methodologies and operate according to what social media networks require of content producers. As we mainly work with reputational content, we must guide our production with different Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) than the regular creator. For us, the number of likes on a post, one of the most used KPIs on social media, for example, does not necessarily mean that this content was relevant to our audience. Thus, we must guide our success by understanding the kind of community we have built on social media. To evaluate engagement, for instance, we analyse the type of discussion a post generated in the comment section, the number of times a post was shared, or we use polls and questions on our Instagram 'stories'. Calling back to a previously cited post, *NEPAT responde: E o comunismo?*, one of our commenters informed us of the usefulness of the post as a resource to share with others, helping to explain a complex topic in a simple – but not simplistic – way. For us, this is an undeniable touchstone of success. All of these measures are part of a Business Intelligence strategy we must be aware of to sustain our relevance in online spaces. In that sense, we do not simply post content on the internet. We are also constantly analysing its resulting interactions and repercussions to understand what resonated with our audience and listen to what they are demanding of us. Therefore, we continually apply self-reflexivity. As an outcome of this well-thought strategy, we formed a very engaged community and are in uninterrupted open dialogue with the public.

4 On colours: The Holocaust in black and white?

Another distinctive aspect of NEPAT's production is evident at first glance on our Instagram page: the colours.[34] Our content is divided by category, each visually represented by a specific colour from our brand palette (See Figure 2). Our choice of colourful tones goes against the grain of what is usually produced by Holocaust institutions since most rely on darker colours and, as previously mentioned, photographs of their sites or documents from their archives. This source material and presentation style resonates with what people expect from historical places such as concentration camps and this traumatic memory, as "darker colours can trigger feelings of sadness".[35] Thus, an Instagram page with this tonality reinforces an aesthetic that communicates: the Holocaust was horrible; but also: the Holocaust is in the past. As Lundrigan points out, when Instagram users apply black and white filters on the photographs they take when they visit Auschwitz, they attempt to convey "a performed sense of historical authenticity and authority". We can read these images "as an exertion of the photographer's understanding of historicism or a wish that the horrible events of the Holocaust remain in the past, grainy and dated". Thus, the monotone Instagram feeds of notorious Holocaust institutions reinforce this impression, fulfilling what the audience expects: the absence of colour symbolises "loss, death, and horror – completely within our stylistic and cultural understandings of Holocaust representation".[36]

Our work goes in another direction entirely: the use of colour is based on a conscious and studied communication choice. Each of our posts is eye-catching, vying for users scrolling casually through their feeds to take a second look. In a marketing sense, the strategy is, as it always is, to make people stay as long as they can on our profile. Furthermore, since it differs from what people usually see in other Holocaust institutions, it also sparks curiosity. Because although there is an established visual pattern observable on several institutions' Instagram pages, there is no official directive on how we are "supposed to" communicate Holocaust memory. In line with Lundrigan's terminology, this is merely a "digital performance"[37] repeatedly reproduced in cultural representations of the Holocaust.

NEPAT's feed may be vibrant, but this does not mean we are representing the Holocaust in a colourful way. Our palette does not represent a romanticisation or

34 For more accurate visual reference with regard to our brand colour palette, we recommend accessing NEPAT's Instagram profile: https://www.instagram.com/nepat.br/.

35 Lundrigan, "#Holocaust #Auschwitz," 647.

36 Lundrigan, "#Holocaust #Auschwitz," 647–648.

37 Lundrigan, "#Holocaust #Auschwitz," 649.

beautification of this memory. In fact, any historical photographs we include in our posts remain in their original colours: black and white when black and white, in full colour when coloured, and so on. That is to say, we are not making any intervention in the images themselves or altering them. On this level, our representation of the Holocaust aligns with the traditional conventions of memorialisation. However, the colours from our palette are applied to the post layout. Thus, they are utilised to 'categorise' the content we post. Each post category has its own colour: Book Recommendations are blue, Movie Recommendations are light orange, *Calendário Histórico* is bordeaux, *NEPAT responde* is green, and *Dicionário de Conceitos* is lilac. Through this visual coding and colour branding, in the midst of an overwhelming amount of social media posts, our audience can easily recognise NEPAT's content while scrolling through their feed. In addition, because of the colours, it is also possible for them to identify what category of post they are looking at.

Furthermore, the colour coding of our content was conceived as a way to turn our Instagram profile into a visual archive of our production. As previously mentioned, Meghan Lundrigan proposes an interpretation of social media as an archive "made coherent through hashtags – among *other things*".[38] In our case, when using Instagram, our colours are 'another thing' with which this visual archive can be built. Thus, we have transformed the layout of our feed into an archival tool. In contrast with other black-and-white feeds, the singularity of our profile adds another layer to the possibilities created by visually archiving Holocaust memory on social media. Therefore, it becomes easier for us to achieve our educational goals of building an ethically committed Holocaust memory that is also communicative, easy to understand, accessible, and concerned with the collective.

5 Conclusion: More than historical, a 'historian' influencer

In *The Matrix*, the turning point in the narrative is Neo's choice to take the red pill, giving him access to the world as it truly is and uncovering the fact that, up until that point, he was living in an intentionally manufactured reality. However, unlike Morpheus, the historians' task is not to offer anyone the red pill as an escape from a given reality. Instead, as historians, what we must do is offer the pub-

38 Lundrigan, "#Holocaust #Auschwitz," 640.

lic tools to understand and face the interreality of the world we live in – the complex product of our collective past, our present choices, as well as the constant and ever-changing interactions between the real and the digital worlds.

We previously brought up the concept of entanglement[39] to discuss the relationship between memorial institutions and online users. The internet affected how people connect with history since it subverted the basis for producing and circulating narratives about the past. As a result, the well-established distinction between historians as producers of historiography and 'ordinary' people as consumers of history has become increasingly blurred and flexible.[40] Thus, the rules about who has the power and legitimacy to talk about the past have changed. In our not-*Matrix* reality, the concept of entanglement extends to the relationship between history and the digital universe as a whole. We, historians, do not have a monopoly on the past and cannot dictate the shaping of collective memory on the internet. However, that is not the goal either. The conditions we operate under are infinitely more complex and engaging than a straightforward producer-consumer relationship. Thus, even if it is a challenging reality, it is also one full of new possibilities.

In that sense, as scholar Eva Pfanzelter points out, producing a public digital history on social media on topics such as the Holocaust (as NEPAT does) is a meaningful task with incredible potential.[41] Nonetheless, all kinds of historiography come with their own risks regarding its uses and appropriations. We historians have immense responsibility over the history we produce, regardless of whether it is in our thesis, in a book, or in an academic paper – and the same applies to social media. After all, we have no control over the public's reception of our work, whether it be positive appreciation or outright distortion. Therefore, what we can do is stay true to our purpose to produce ethically committed historiography in any form or through any medium we choose to use.

By staying away from the public sphere, historians risk losing our social relevance, and the public is deprived of a richer understanding of the past that could come from our contributions.[42] Therefore, it seems more productive to seek a shared interpretation of the past built in collaboration between historians and

39 Walden, *Digital Holocaust Memory*.

40 Meg Foster, "Online and Plugged In?: Public History and Historians in the Digital Age," *Public History Review* 21 (December 2014): 1–19.

41 Eva Pfanzelter, "At the Crossroads with Public History: Mediating the Holocaust on the Internet," *Holocaust Studies* 21(4) (2015): 250–71.

42 Jill Liddington, "O que é história pública? Os públicos e seus passados," in *Introdução à História Pública*, ed. Juliene Rabêlo de Almeida and Marta Gouveia de Oliveira Rovai (São Paulo: Letra e Voz, 2011), 50.

the public. We can pursue ways to guide, complement, and inform the narratives, contributing with our professional knowledge to a more critical understanding of the past. This call to action is intertwined with our social role and responsibility as professional historians – with history degree. After all, we do not seek our degrees in vain: the ample and specialised knowledge we acquire and the skills we exercise are relevant and unparalleled when it comes to understanding the past.

Figure 2: DEOTI, Bárbara. Compilation of posts produced by NEPAT. 2024. Digital image.

That said, we are not here to claim that every historian must produce historical content on social media. However, the work of communicating history on social networks should and must be acknowledged for what it is: work. As we have shown in this chapter, producing historically committed content on social media requires a range of methodologies and research that comes from a combination of traditional historiography and marketing and communication strategies. Resuming a previous example, when NEPAT produces a post about the Nuremberg Laws, we need more than just academic study on what the Nuremberg Laws were. In our conception, having scholarly knowledge is just as important as knowing how to transmit it to a specific audience within a particular context. In our case, that means a largely non-academic Brazilian public that lacks basic knowledge of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust and that is accessing this content on Instagram, a social network that has its own logic. Therefore, a post about the Nuremberg Laws must bear all of these layers in mind.

As previously suggested, when writing about history on social media, we enter a not-always-friendly place, often dominated by the right. However, especially when addressing sensitive topics such as the Holocaust, our presence in

these spaces is crucial for fighting denial and fostering democratic principles – much necessary in Brazil's current political situation. Thus, we agree with Ravveduto's proposition that Digital Public History may be a path to build a bridge not only between the real and digital worlds but also between historical knowledge and the public. This activity can be founded upon the action of a new figure: the historical influencer, whose task would be to "create narratives and content that is appropriate for the 'interconnected public'". The historical influencer would thus be a public *historian* who "intermediates in first person the presence of the past on the Internet", resisting the emotional dominion of individualistic memory and cultivating critical thinking.[43]

Seeing memory as a living, transgenerational, and transnational shared experience, the way we choose to communicate this traumatic past offers new forms of engagement with its memory in the digital era. In that sense, according to Ravveduto, we believe that our work in NEPAT is fulfilling "the social mission of the historian in the twenty-first century".[44]

Bibliography

Caldeira Neto, Odilon. "'Brasil é um laboratório da extrema direita global'. Entrevista com Odilon Caldeira Neto." 2023. https://www.ihu.unisinos.br/categorias/625477-brasil-e-um-laboratorio-da-extrema-direita-global-entrevista-com-odilon-caldeira-neto.

Evans, Richard J. *Terceiro Reich no poder*. 2ª Edição. Planeta do Brasil, 2014.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. "Revisionism in Retrospect: A Personal View." *Slavic Review* 67(3) (2008): 682–704. https://doi.org/10.2307/27652945.

Foster, Meg. "Online and Plugged In?: Public History and Historians in the Digital Age." *Public History Review* 21 (December 2014): 1–19. https://doi.org/10.5130/phrj.v21i0.4295.

Gane, Nicholas. "When We Have Never Been Human, What Is to Be Done?: Interview with Donna Haraway." *Theory, Culture & Society* 23(7–8) (2006): 135–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276406069228.

Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse: feminism and technoscience*. Second edition. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

Kershaw, Ian. *The "Hitler Myth": Image and Reality in the Third Reich*. Reissue Edição. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Liddington, Jill. "O que é história pública? Os públicos e seus passados." In *Introdução à História Pública*, edited by Juliene Rabêlo de Almeida and Marta Gouveia de Oliveira Rovai, 31–52. São Paula: Letra e Voz, 2011.

Lukacs, John. *O Hitler da História*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1998.

43 Ravveduto, "Past and Present," 138.

44 Ravveduto, "Past and Present," 138.

Lundrigan, Meghan. “#Holocaust #Auschwitz: Performing Holocaust Memory on Social Media.” In *A Companion To The Holocaust*., edited by Hilary Earl and Simone Gilioti, 639–655. New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, 2020.

Pfanzelter, Eva. “At the Crossroads with Public History: Mediating the Holocaust on the Internet.” *Holocaust Studies* 21(4) (2015): 250–271. https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2015.1066066.

Ravveduto, Marcello. “Past and Present in Digital Public History.” In *Handbook Digital Public History*, edited by Serge Noiret, Mark Tebeau and Gerben Zaagsma, 131–138. Berlin/ Boston: De Gruyter, 2022.

Walden, Victoria, ed. *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

Anja Ballis

The media network of memory: Sharing Holocaust stories on TikTok and collaborative writing of "memory books"

1 The media network of memory – Lily Ebert and Gidon Lev

For many years Holocaust survivors have played an important role in Holocaust education and have extensively shaped the culture of remembrance, especially in Europe, Israel and the US. They have visited school classes, museums and other institutions to talk about their experiences before, during and after the Holocaust. The frequent invitations that survivors have received to various institutions have shaped the way they give testimony and ensured that the experience is meaningful and trustworthy.[1]

During the COVID-19 pandemic we observed a tendency towards online remembrance on social media.[2] Since many institutions were closed, some survivors began telling their stories on social media, especially on TikTok, often supported by family members. The eyewitnesses give insights into their lives, answer questions from platform participants, advertise their books and comment on their stories and public affairs. They often receive support from younger family members in using the online technology. In this manner, they have achieved agency in telling their story on their own, no longer being dependent on institutions.[3]

Two Holocaust survivors, Lily Ebert and Gidon Lev, have become quite popular "online survivors". Lily Ebert, born in 1923, is a Holocaust survivor who was deported from Hungary in the summer of 1944 to Auschwitz. After four months, she and her two other sisters were sent to forced labor in a munitions factory

1 Aaron Beim and Gary Alan Fine, "Trust in testimony: The institutional embeddedness of Holocaust survivor narratives," *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 48(1) (2007): 55–75.

2 Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "Commemorating from a distance: the digital transformation of Holocaust memory in times of COVID-19," *Media, Culture & Society* 43(6) (2021): 1095–1112.

3 Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Tom Divon, "Serious TikTok: Can you learn about the Holocaust in 60 seconds?," *Digital Holocaust Memory Blog*, accessed 16 May 2023, https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2022/03/24/can-you-learn-about-the-holocaust-in-60-seconds-on-tiktok/.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-006

near Leipzig, where she was liberated by US troops. After the war, she migrated to Israel; due to family circumstances, she eventually moved to England in 1967, where she still lives today. After the death of her husband in 1988, she began to work with Holocaust survivors, recounting her story and speaking about her experiences at schools and museums. During the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, she used social media as a substitute for sharing her story, with the help of her great-grandson Dov. In February 2021, he set up a TikTok account to tell her story and to raise awareness about the Holocaust. In addition, they published a book about her life, *Lily's Promise. How I Survived Auschwitz and Found the Strength to Live*.[4] Lily and Dov interweave Lily's memories of her experiences with storytelling, with social media as an integral part of the narrative structure.

Gidon Lev, born in 1935, is a Holocaust survivor who was deported from Czechoslovakia to the camp of Terezín in 1941; in May 1945 he was liberated by the Soviet Army. His mother Doris also survived, and they emigrated together to the US and later to Canada. In 1959, Lev went to Israel where he still lives today. He was married twice, served in the Israeli Defense Force during the Six-Day-War and worked in several different fields. In July 2021, Gidon Lev, together with his life partner Julie Gray, opened an account on TikTok, in order to promote the publication of his biography *The True Adventures of Gidon Lev*.[5] On the platform they were able to promote the book and raise money for its publication. Over time their focus broadened, and other issues, especially the fight against antisemitism, became important to them.

For the study presented here, I consult the recollections of the two Holocaust survivors Lily Ebert and Gidon Lev. Their activities show similarities and differences that reveal how memory is shaped and multiplied in times of digitality. Of particular interest is the media network of memory, consisting of media coverage, social media activities and printed memoirs. By comparing their media network of memory, we shed light on the process of creating and constructing memory, which has become an influential voice in Holocaust education. In a first step, I will analyze Lily Ebert's and Gidon Lev's motivation for using TikTok and its specific narrative structures of storytelling. Of special interest is the social practice of sharing, which implies a certain set of relational outcomes, for example, options

4 Lily Ebert and Dov Forman, *Lily's Promise: How I Survived Auschwitz and Found the Strength to Live* (London: MacMillian, 2021).

5 Julie Gray and Gidon Lev, *The True Adventures of Gidon Lev* (Ramat-Gan: In-House-Publishing, 2020).

to align with other tellers, and to create, maintain or threaten rapport.[6] Closely connected with sharing is the second step of my analysis: The testimony of both survivors on social media is intertwined with providing a narrative of their life by writing a "memory book" in collaboration with family members.[7] The extent to which print media and its structure influence online storytelling – and vice versa – is discussed in the third section. Thus, my study contributes to considerations on shaping memory by different agents and on taking action against forgetting the crimes of the Holocaust.

2 Motivation for using TikTok – answers from Lily Ebert and Gidon Lev

2.1 The specifics of the TikTok platform

My first encounter with Lily Ebert and her great-grandson Dov was during the COVID-19 pandemic. I read an article in the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, where I learned about their activities on social media.[8] This was a fascinating discovery and I did further background research on Lily Ebert and Dov Forman. In the process, I came across other Holocaust survivors who are active on TikTok. Gidon Lev in particular stood out, receiving a great deal of German media coverage. Gidon Lev was portrayed as well in *Der Spiegel*, where his activities against antisemitism are highlighted.[9]

Media reports above all emphasise TikTok as a leading social media platform, one dedicated to youth culture, especially generation Z.[10] If Holocaust survivors in their nineties get involved with this platform, media point out the following contrasts and opposites: Young meets old, present meets history, dance/entertainment meets education. It also becomes interesting to ask whether the popular

6 Ruth Page, *Narratives online: Shared stories in social media* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

7 Sabrina Semmelroth, *Co-Autorschaft und Ghostwriting in der Holocaustliteratur. Exemplarische Analysen zu einer kontroversen Beziehung* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2019).

8 Spiegel online, „Uroma mit Millionen Followern," accessed 16 May 2023, https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/ur-oma-mit-millionen-followern-a-4656305b-50ab-40f8-aebf-3dd92df516c0.

9 Spiegel online, „Holocaust-Überlebender kämpft auf TikTok gegen Online-Hass," accessed 16 May 2023, https://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/web/holocaust-ueberlebender-kaempft-auf-tiktok-gegen-online-hass-mein-impuls-ist-zurueckschlagen-a-e073c489-3eaa-4d81-a1e2-846f5068bb31.

10 Klaus Hurrelmann and Erik Albrecht, *Gen Z. Between Climate Crisis and Coronavirus Pandemic* (London: Routledge, 2021), 66.

and fast growing TikTok can be a suitable platform for such important topics as Holocaust testimonies.

Currently, TikTok (in Chinese: Douyin; formerly known as musical.ly) is one of the most successful Chinese social media applications in the world. Since its inception in September 2016, the mobile app has seen widespread acceptance, encouraging in particular young users to view, create and comment on "LipSync videos". TikTok is the fastest growing social media platform in the world, with its free app already downloaded more than 175 million times since the start of 2022. For the past nine quarters, TikTok has surpassed 10 million downloads; "No app has had more downloads than TikTok since the beginning of 2018 when WhatsApp had 250 million worldwide downloads, per the report".[11]

TikTok is based on users' content, which they create and publish as short clips (30 seconds and five minutes). Photo filters, augmented reality applications and the use of playful elements are added to the clips, which can be underpinned with popular (chart) music from an extensive library within TikTok. In addition, the audio tracks of all uploaded user videos can be accessed.[12]

TikTok functions in such a way as to motivate users to explore new possibilities for creating videos. Clips often become popular when audio pieces and video are combined in a special manner. The starting point of a "trend" is often a so-called "challenge" to encourage users to implement a specific script for a clip in an individual way, for example a (shared) dance, answering personal questions, or performing an "embarrassing" act in public. By combining existing visual and audio elements, a wealth of content is formed that can be understood as a remix of elements[13] – one of the dominant aesthetic practices of contemporary media culture.

On TikTok the content created and published is played out on the user's individual "For You Page". This page is central to the success of the platform; it makes follower count less important to reach an audience than in traditional social

11 Techcrunch, "TikTok was the top app by worldwide downloads in Q1 2022," accessed 16 May 2023, https://techcrunch.com/2022/04/26/tiktok-was-the-top-app-by-worldwide-downloads-in-q1-2022/?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmF0Lw&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAG70qlel3P4xmqtfqBRbH2rwsg_MGsBPQu6M4mv3yi7mtVElYOa3R7SC9sBWpyvMfw4ObgEZ8tEz74sigRWcmgGEm0aKvjUczMhRu9sCBYmjuxp9fTzQN8T27xtP2tW2khn4rubvhOpb6uAwAX5jd8a_w9SZPgSVZocsGIDGLapb#.

12 Hans-Christian Gräfe and Jonas Kunze, "Medienintermediär TikTok: UGC-Clips als Herausforderungen für das Urheberrecht," in *Tipping Points,* ed. Simon Schrör, Georg Fischer, Sophie Beaucamp, and Konstantin Hondros (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG, 2020), 59.

13 Gräfe and Kunze, "Medienintermediär TikTok," 59–60.

media.[14] Users do not follow other users, although they can; in general, content is presented by means of an algorithm which enables participants to like, comment and share videos. TikTok also has a "duet" function: another video is created in light of an existing clip and published online so that the videos are connected with each other; using the "stitch" function, content of the one video is remixed with new content.[15]

Platforms are gradually infiltrating in, and converging with, the (offline, legacy) institutions and practices through which societies are organised. Therefore, van Dijck et al. argue for the term "platform society" to emphasise the inextricable relation between online platforms and societal structures.[16] The "platform society" does not merely shift the focus from the economic to the social; the term also refers to a dispute about private gain versus public benefit in a society. It is important to notice that platforms are neither neutral nor value-free constructs; instead, specific norms and values shape and organise their architectures. These norms may or may not clash with values engraved in the societal structures and their history in which platforms are implemented.[17]

Concerning Holocaust testimony, we find a variety of platforms which have been developed by institutions and organisations for archiving the stories. Additionally, Facebook and Wikipedia have become central instruments of mediating knowledge and shaping Holocaust memory.[18] During the COVID-19 pandemic, museums and memorials began exploring social media platforms[19] so that we find connections between different digital activities of the institutions.

---

14 Robbert-Jan Adriaansen, "Historical Analogies and Historical Consciousness: User-Generated History Lessons on TikTok," in *History Education in the Digital Age*, ed. Mario Carretero, Maria Cantabrana, and Cristian Parellada (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 48.

15 Marcus Bösch and Chris Köver, *Schluss mit lustig? TikTok als Plattform für politische Kommunikation* (Berlin: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2021).

16 Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp, *The mediated construction of reality* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2018).

17 José van Dijck, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal, *The Platform Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

18 Eva Pfanzelter, "Performing the Holocaust on social networks-Digitality, transcultural memory and new forms of narrating," *Kultura Popularna* 51(1) (2017): 136–151.

19 Martin Rehm and Stefania Manca, "Three Institutions, Three Platforms, One Goal: Social Media for Holocaust Memory," in *ECSM 2021 8th European Conference on Social Media*, ed. Christos Karpasitis (Reading: Academic Conferences International Limited, 2021), 195–204; Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "Commemorating from a distance"; Berlin Ramer Institut, "Press release: Presentation of 'TikTok – Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative'," accessed 16 May 2023, https://ajcgermany.org/en/comment/press-release-presentation-tiktok-shoah-education-and-commemoration-initiative.

Regarding content, TikTok presents – on the one hand – joy, escapism, education and community-building ideas; on the other hand, we find disrespectful content reinforcing racism, classism, distortion and denial of the Holocaust.[20] It must be critically noted that compared to other platforms, TikTok can spread content with hate quickly because of its architecture. Utilising the platform's trends and aesthetics, users "memeify" antisemitism; further, the TikTok's algorithmic repression tends to block JewToks' (#JewishTikTok community) responses to antisemitic content.[21]

2.2 Motivations for sharing stories on TikTok

The two Holocaust survivors Lily Ebert and Gidon Lev have different motivations for using TikTok. In a variety of media articles, Lily Ebert and her great-grandson stress that they use the platform mainly for educational purposes – to conduct "mini-lessons" about the Holocaust.[22] In an interview published on the platform TikTok in 2021, Lily and Dov elaborate on that topic. Dov, born in 2003,[23] emphasises specific possibilities for innovative teaching on the platform: "As we enter the next generation of Holocaust education, social media will provide the platform to educate about the Holocaust and subsequent genocides".[24] Lily appreciates Dov's efforts; she stresses that she has learned a lot from him. For her it is important to reach out to many users: "I could never have dreamt that we could reach as many people as we do on social media".[25] When asked what their goal is on TikTok, they both respond in one voice: "Our goal on TikTok is to teach people about the Holocaust but also about how we can only have peace with tolerance and understanding. We also want to spread messages of love and positivity and about how even if you have the worst trauma in life, things can always get better".[26]

20 Trevor Boffone, "Introduction to 'The Rise of TikTok in US Culture'," in *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, ed. Trevor Boffone (Abingdon, Oxon, and New York: Routledge, 2022), 6.

21 Tom Divon and Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "#JewishTikTok: The JewToks' Fight against Antisemitism," in *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, ed. Trevor Boffone (Abingdon, Oxon, and New-York: Routledge, 2022), 47.

22 Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Divon, "Serious TikTok."

23 Wikipedia, "Dov Forman," accessed 16 May 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dov_Forman.

24 Newsroom TikTok, "TikTok Creator Spotlight: @Lilyebert," accessed 16 May 2023, https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-gb/tiktok-creator-spotlight-lilyebert.

25 Newsroom TikTok, "TikTok Creator Spotlight: @Lilyebert."

26 Newsroom TikTok, "TikTok Creator Spotlight: @Lilyebert."

Dov is convinced that social media has a powerful voice, something which became obvious during the lockdown. In the jointly authored book *Lily's Promise*, published in 2021, he reflects on how social media has been connected with Lily's story. In July 2020, his great-grandmother beseeched him: "'Let's do something, Dov!'"[27] During the pandemic Lily Ebert was missing the meetings and encounters with people. Dov writes: "She always thrived on meeting new people. As a living witness, Lily cherishes her role in Holocaust education".[28] Since the young man had started a Twitter feed in 2020, he was able to share Lily's story on that platform: "Now I'm thinking more seriously about using social media to introduce Safta and her story to new audiences".[29] In the first chapter of *Lily's Promise*, written by Dov, we learn how Lily was persuaded to do this project. One day they were looking at Lily's photo album together and she showed Dov a banknote, previously unknown to him; it was given to her by a Jewish US soldier after her liberation and shortly before she left for Switzerland in 1946. Written on the note is "A start to a new life. Good luck and happiness" and the signature "assistant to Chaplin Schacter". Dov, who had not yet seen this banknote, wanted to find the unknown person for Lily: "'I'll find him for you,' I promise. 'I'll post it on Twitter. I bet someone out there will be able to track him down'".[30] This is the ending of the first chapter of the book; on the next 160 pages Lily tells the story of her childhood in Hungary, persecution and deportation to Auschwitz, liberation in 1945, recovery in Switzerland and her decision to leave for Palestine.[31] Her story is embedded in Dov's narration of bringing together social media and testimony by sharing memory on platforms. The third part of the book, written by Dov, continues to tell us about the success of Dov's feed on Twitter. Within 24 hours they found out who the US soldier was and were able to meet on Zoom with his ancestors. Further, Dov connected with other institutions – archives and museums – and collected more facts about Lily's history. Although he mentions antisemitic statements showing up on his Twitter account as well,[32] he stresses the potential of social media: "I thought social media would help people understand what she had to go through, just for being Jewish. Short clips might draw them in to longer interviews".[33] In the last part of the book, which follows Lily's narration of her

27 Ebert and Forman, *Lily's Promise*, 5.
28 Ebert and Forman, *Lily's Promise*, 5.
29 Ebert and Forman, *Lily's Promise*, 6.
30 Ebert and Forman, *Lily's Promise*, 11.
31 Ebert and Forman, *Lily's Promise*, 168.
32 Gabriel Weimann and Natalie Masri, "TikTok's Spiral of Antisemitism," *Journalism and Media* 2 (2021): 701, 703.
33 Ebert and Forman, *Lily's Promise*, 178.

life between 1946 and 2020, Dov comments on their successful TikTok account and its power for finding new ways to speak to his generation: "You've got to be creative to engage new audiences".[34] He tends to use platforms in a "testimony mode" to present videos in which Holocaust survivors share their stories.[35] Being a member of Gen Z, he is – like 37.3 million Gen Z users – familiar with this platform.[36]

Gidon Lev and Julie Gray chose the path to TikTok for other reasons. In an interview, Gidon Lev's life partner, editor and author Julie Gray explains the reasons. Mainly, they wanted to promote the new book *The True Adventures of Gidon Lev* (2020) that they co-wrote and through which they got to know each other. Julie Gray points out:

> I read an article in the Wall Street Journal, and it was like, "Author Goes Big on TikTok." [. . .] So it came out during the pandemic, we hadn't been able to really promote our book, and we look at TikTok. So we made, like, one TikTok: Here's Gidon Lev, he's a Holocaust survivor, you should read his book. And then we made two or three like that. And people liked it. Suddenly people start commenting [. . .].[37]

Even though it is Gidon's story, he stresses that his life partner Julie is "the brains, the creator, the innovator behind it".

Referring to the modes established by Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Divon,[38] we can add an "advertising mode" in which videos of Holocaust survivors promote their testimony books and other media. The TikTok account is called *thetrueadventures*, which is also the title of the book and the related podcast. This name serves as a marker for the media activities connected with Gidon Lev's testimony.

Soon after starting their TikTok account, Julie und Gidon realised that some people on the platform had their own "interpretations" of the Holocaust. They received comments that compared COVID to the Holocaust. Julie, in her fifties, points out: "That's what made us go viral because we started seeing – yes, we see some antisemitism on our account – but we started seeing people on TikTok comparing having to wear a star to COVID".[39] In particular, they addressed Joe Rogan, a famous US stand-up comedian who compared COVID restrictions to the Holo-

34 Ebert and Forman, *Lily's Promise*, 297.

35 Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Divon, "Serious TikTok."

36 Weimann and Masri, "TikTok's Spiral of Antisemitism," 698.

37 The Times of Israel, "A Holocaust survivor fought antisemitism on TikTok and now he's a social media star," accessed 16 May 2023, https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-holocaust-survivor-fought-antisemitism-on-tiktok-and-now-hes-a-social-media-star/.

38 Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Divon, "Serious TikTok."

39 The Times of Israel, "A Holocaust survivor."

caust. This raised media interest; Gray describes what happened next: "And that infuriated both of us. So we made a TikTok about Joe Rogan, directly took him on. And that's when we got on Newsweek, and the Daily Mail in England – the media picked us up because we took on Joe Rogan and we asked him to apologize".[40]

Increasingly, Julie and Gidon responded to the inappropriate comparisons of the Holocaust to the pandemic, summarised as "responsive mode".[41] In this way, they dedicated themselves to Holocaust education and the fight against antisemitism. In addition, Gidon Lev mentions a very personal reason why this platform is appropriate for him. Since music and dance are an integral part of TikTok, Gidon uses it to perform: "It's a different way of communicating. And it turns out I enjoy actually acting. I'm a dancer – well, a folk dancer".[42]

Reflecting on the motivations of both Holocaust survivors to join TikTok, we find an autodidactic, intuitive, and user-centered way of story-telling. Their accounts on the platform represent a form of memory-engagement that undermines traditional "top-down" models of collective memory.[43] Family members have the agency to provide content and share information on and insights into the Holocaust survivors' lives: Dov moderates Lily's storyline on TikTok in an educational and testimonial mode; Julie stresses the role of education as well and is very active in responding to Holocaust denial and distortion. They are united in the social practice of sharing. In her reflections, Page considers "sharing" to be central for stories told on social media. She references "small stories" that focus on non-canonical and atypical situations and are found in everyday communication, often on social media. These platforms provide glimpses into everyday life, while at the same time restricting users – often by limiting the number of characters – from diving into full autobiographical mode. Users share experiences that they update as often as necessary and embed in different social platforms.[44] Taking up this idea, Page defines "shared story as a retelling, produced by many tellers, across iterative textual segments, which promotes shared attitudes between its tellers".[45] Subsequently, "sharing" can be established on different levels: In a first step, clips of the Holocaust survivors, often in an everyday surrounding, are released on the platform.

40 The Times of Israel, "A Holocaust survivor."

41 Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Divon, "Serious TikTok."

42 The Times of Israel, "A Holocaust survivor."

43 Nurit Novis-Deutsch, Shmuel Lederman, Tracy Adams, and Arieh J. Kochavi, *Sites of Tension: Shifts in Holocaust memory in Relation to Antisemitism and Political Contestation in Europe* (Haifa: The Weiss-Livnat International Center for Holocaust Research and Education, 2023), 14.

44 Alexandra Georgakopoulou, "Small Stories Research. Methods – Analysis – Outreach," in *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, ed. Anna de Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 257, 266.

45 Page, *Narratives online*, 197.

Sometimes Dov and Julie tell new stories, sometimes they remix the content already published and connected with other media.[46] In a second step, users react to the clips with emojis, likes, images, and other tools that are available on TikTok. Such action by the community in turn influences what is told and has to be considered an integral part of the stories. On the one hand, we observe how users are affected by the narrative when posting related duets or comments. On the other hand, the content can also be put into a different, antisemitic and misanthropic context. Both activities were noticed by Dov and Julie; they reacted in different ways to the comments, which in turn influences the narrative of Holocaust survivors on TikTok. And finally, "sharing" is understood as negotiating shared values and sociocultural conditions that are inscribed in the story.[47] Lily and Dov as well as Gidon and Julie are bonding with users in a community who commit themselves to "Never Forget!" and "Remember!" to make the world a better place – despite hate, denial and distortion online.

3 Writing memory books with family members

In Holocaust literature, which deals with the setting down of survivors' memories, co-authorship has been a topic for several years. Recently, the persons who support the writing of biographies have been coming more to the fore. They are no longer "hidden" as ghostwriters. Rather, they become visible persons whose names appear on the book covers.[48] Semmelroth argues for a "structure of actants" involved in the writing of lived history. Moreover, she points to the role of these co-authors for the survivor's story: they contextualise the biographical notes and substantiate the facts as historians; additionally, they take on the role of therapists who listen to survivors' traumatic stories and support them. They are also affected emotionally.[49]

Both books – *Lily's Promise* and *The True Adventures of Gidon Lev* – feature co-authors whose roles will be examined in more detail. Dov Forman is introduced in *Lily's Promise* as her co-author, while in *The True Adventures* Gidon Lev takes on this role. The texts are united by a structure connected to the process of constructing and framing memories.

46 Felix Stalder, *Kultur der Digitalität* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2019), 97.
47 Page, *Narratives online*, 27.
48 Semmelroth, *Co-Autorschaft und Ghostwriting*, 444.
49 Semmelroth, *Co-Autorschaft und Ghostwriting*, 445.

3.1 Under construction – Gen Z meets memory

Lily's Promise is clearly structured: The book consists of five parts, in which Dov and Lily take turns narrating. It is made clear to the readers at the beginning of each chapter who the first-person narrator is. Moreover, the content is structured by time period. Dov narrates three parts of the book, forming the frame in which Lily's life story – separated into two parts – is integrated.

The first chapter with Dov as first-person narrator starts in North London on 3 July 2020. He introduces the reader to his great-grandmother and to himself. He writes that he became involved in her biography during the COVID-19 pandemic. As already mentioned, Dov brings social media to Lily and connects her story with the platform Twitter to find "missing pieces" of her memory. In the second part, two days later on 5 July 2020, Dov continues the story by describing his research on Lily's biography, consulting well-known institutions, for example the United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum (USHMM); the last part of the book takes place on 29 December 2020, Lily's 97th birthday. In this chapter readers learn how Dov communicates with Lily to arrange social media posts on Twitter and TikTok:

> I phone Lily to find out what she'd like me to tweet for her birthday. "I never expected to survive Auschwitz and start a family," she tells me. "Now I celebrate with ten grandchildren and 34 great-grandchildren." I write this in a post, and add a beautiful picture of Lily, and photos of her many descendants. Almost immediately, my timeline begins to fill with message of love and congratulations. I can't wait to share them with Safta.[50]

Dov describes how he – as a great-grandchild and member of Gen Z – uses social media to engage a younger audience with Lily's story and her life. In his parts of the book, he gives insights into his perspective as an adolescent constructing "testimony feeds" on social media. These "testimony feeds" are authenticated by his role as a family member, bringing trustworthy first-hand knowledge to a wider public; additionally, he reveals how he has acquired additional knowledge from institutions about Lily's story, which further strengthens the credibility of his statements.[51] Finally, Lily praises Dov, calling him her "promise keeper": "Dov will go on telling the world. He will keep my promise too".[52]

After telling about her life before and during the Holocaust in the first part of the book, Lily elaborates on the time period after the Holocaust in the second

50 Ebert and Forman, *Lily's Promise*, 297.

51 Eva Mona Altmann, *Das Unsagbare verschweigen. Holocaust-Literatur aus Täterperspektive. Eine interdisziplinäre Textanalyse* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2021), 226.

52 Ebert and Forman, *Lily's Promise*, 292.

part. Here she reflects on her role of becoming an eyewitness of the Holocaust in the 1990s, on the process of writing a transcript of her memories, and her first public lectures on her life during the Holocaust. In addition to this official role, for which she was awarded the British Empire Medal, she also reports on her family's struggle with her story: Her children did not want to ask about her tattoo so as not to upset her; they accessed this part of the history themselves and travelled to Auschwitz without their mother. Lily admits: "The truth is, I've always found it easier to answer the questions of strangers, to talk to large groups in public, than to discuss my past with my own family, at home".[53]

It took her a while to open up to members of her family as well. Sixteen-year-old Dov came just at the right moment. According to Lily, she is now able to give answers, being aware of the little time left: "Now I feel prepared to cast my mind back and try to recover anything my great-grandchildren want to know about my life. 'Ask me anything!', I tell him".[54]

3.2 Writing and quoting – organising memory at last

Trust in family members is central when Holocaust survivors collaborate in writing memory books. The family co-authorship also opens up to focus on the constructive character of memory, to which various people and institutions contribute. A characteristic of these texts is that they reveal and document the process of forming memories by writing together. This is also central to the volume dedicated to Gidon Lev's life. In his case, too, a relationship of trust and affection are linked to writing a survivor's story. Julie, his life partner, states: "The book became more than the story of one man; it became the tale of two people telling an important story in times that desperately needed perspective and hope".[55]

In the preface and first chapter, Julie Gray describes her authorship. In 2012, she emigrated from the US to Israel. Previously, she had lived and worked in Hollywood for ten years as a story analyst and editor for novels and film scripts. In Israel she met Gidon Lev, who was looking for an editor to help write his biography. Gidon had already collected documents and written notes and a manuscript. She could not resist taking on this project because she felt a sense of responsibility to form a Holocaust survivor's narrative: "[Gidon] realized that his memories were not, in themselves, a narrative. The historical and cultural background of

53 Ebert and Forman, *Lily's Promise*, 287.
54 Ebert and Forman, *Lily's Promise*, 291.
55 Gray and Lev, *The True Adventures of Gidon Lev*, XII.

his life had been complicated. He needed someone to join him in his project".[56] First of all, they organised Gidon's collection of notes and documents with the help of volunteers who were contacted via Facebook. With their support, handwritten pages were grouped together and typed. Next, Gidon and Julie worked out a modus operandi for writing down Gidon's story: Julie would present a draft which Gidon could comment on once a week: "Finally, we agreed that we would go over every chapter together, weekly, and that Gidon's notes and comments would focus on those matters of great importance – not just facts, dates, and the like, but his feeling. [. . .] His comments (or lack of them) offered a valuable insight not just into Gidon but into the nature of memory itself".[57]

In Julie Gray, Gidon Lev has a professional writer at his side who organises the workflow. Moreover, she chooses a specific form for the book that always makes it clear who is narrating and where the narrator is. A structural feature of this book is that the time levels are consistently intertwined: When Gidon tells of his birth and childhood in the Czechoslovakia and particularly in Prague, it is linked with a journey that Julie and Gidon took to these places. Travelling to sites of Gidon's life and exploring his everyday life in Israel connects the different time axes. Gidon's memories in the first person are always set in quotes and are thus visually recognisable. Although the work describes the survivor's life chronologically, events in the past are repeatedly interrupted by present experiences of the author and his co-author. In addition, Julie, who immigrated to Israel from the US, is able to ask many questions about the situation of Holocaust survivors in Israel. In this way, she takes on an outside perspective and builds a bridge to readers unfamiliar with the Israeli way of life.

Living, writing, and remembering is a process in which Julie and Gidon share equally. Moreover, Gidon's memories are also constantly challenged, which nevertheless strengthens the trustworthiness of his report. How painful this process is for him is elaborated in the chapter titled "Mother". Repeatedly, Gidon Lev expresses regret about his poor relationship with his mother Doris. When working with Julie on the book, he showed her a binder called *My Mother* with photographs, documents, notes and twelve handwritten pages entitled *Konzentrationcamp Years 1941–1945* written by his mother. Gidon stresses that he has never seen those documents before, "yet he is a keeper of records", writes Julie. Julie addresses some questions which may occur to readers as well: "Had he truly never seen this? Or was his memory playing selective tricks on his mind?" The document causes further troubles: Gidon doesn't believe the report; he argues about whether his father

56 Gray and Lev, *The True Adventures of Gidon Lev*, 4–5.
57 Gray and Lev, *The True Adventures of Gidon Lev*, 8.

and grandfather were in the same transport to Terezín – as his mother wrote in her notes. Gidon is – according to Julie – not willing to believe his mother's version; he is of the opinion that his grandfather was not with them: "'If my grandfather was *with* us, he could have helped me carry my bag!' Gidon sputtered, his face reddening with emotion".[58] Julie writes about Gidon's emotional flashback and his struggle with his memories: "Gidon was more than affronted, he was triggered. Doris's accounts contradicted his own memories".[59]

According to Julie, Gidon agreed months later to include these passages in the book. Between the discussion of the documents and his agreement, Julie describes another private and emotional moment in which readers come close to the Holocaust survivor: He is standing at the Mediterranean, looking into the distance, and wishing he could think more kindly of his mother.[60]

In *Lily's Promise* and *The True Adventures of Gidon Lev*, the (co-)authors Dov Forman and Julie Gray serve as memory keepers to Holocaust survivors' everyday and public life;[61] since veracity and ethics are particularly sensitive issues with Holocaust books as artefacts of living memory,[62] both (co-)authors reveal the process of creating the book and their part in it. Because of their affection for the survivors, who trust them, they are able to ask questions which other generations or people from the outside might not dare to address. The process of re-constructing a narrative and contextualising it with social media or with sites of personal history become specific elements of the narrations. Private life, becoming and being an eyewitness, exploring memories as well as integrating the perspectives of co-authors, establishes a new generation of memory books; these books enrich the traditional canon of Holocaust literature[63] providing an exclusive perspective and reaching out to other media.

58 Gray and Lev, *The True Adventures of Gidon Lev*, 254.

59 Gray and Lev, *The True Adventures of Gidon Lev*, 255.

60 Gray and Lev, *The True Adventures of Gidon Lev*, 256.

61 Stephen D. Smith, *The Trajectory of Holocaust Memory: The Crisis of Testimony in Theory and Practice* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2023), 12.

62 Claire Parnell and Beth Driscoll, "Institutions, platforms and the production of debut success in contemporary book culture," *Media International Australia* 187(1) (2021): 123–138.

63 Jenni Adams, "New Directions in Holocaust Literary Studies," in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Holocaust Literature*, ed. Jenni Adams (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 237.

4 All about media network of memory – platforms, books and individuals

The two case studies focusing on Lily Ebert and Gidon Lev demonstrate a shift in agency: "grassroots" memories contribute to and/or substitute for "national" and "global" memories.[64] Private agents, such as family members, replace the scope of the official, public, state sanctioned forms of remembrance: Great-grandsons and life partners moderate testimonies of Holocaust survivors on their own, oscillating between intuitive autodidactic and professional competences. They represent a tradition of dynamic memory with reformatting, recycling, returning and remembering other media.[65] They are interested in reaching an audience on different media channels to tell the survivors' stories. Their actions are bundled in a media network of memory where digital technology and analog media are intertwined – and not regarded as opposites. The metaphor of the network, which is of course not new in times of digitisation, comprises all sorts of memory media and actants involved in constructing and creating them. Thus, a dynamic experience is offered to an audience, one which is satisfying because it brings us closer to Holocaust survivors.[66] The new actants of memory serve as catalysts for sharing private aspects as well as historical experiences: In the media we find information on how narrations of survivors are created and used; these reports contribute to making the activities on social media better known. On TikTok, messages, important stations in survivors' lives and everyday situations are processed in a few seconds. Testimonial and educational modes go hand in hand with advertising other media of remembrance; and it has to be highlighted, that Gidon Lev and Julie Gray stand up explicitly against antisemitism. In the analyzed memory books, the process of telling a life story can be explored in more detail. Co-authorship has a self-understood function and ensures a multi-perspective and reader-oriented narrative that sets the tone for the sentiments "Never Again!", "Never forget!" and "Fight antisemitism!"

A new memory practice "relationing the Holocaust" is established. This practice aims to make the Holocaust relevant and connected to people's lives and

64 Rebecca Kook, "Agents of memory in the post-witness era: Memory in the living room and changing forms of Holocaust remembrance in Israel," *Memory Studies* 14(5) (2021): 983.

65 Matthew Boswell and Antony Rowland, *Virtual Holocaust Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 207.

66 Tomasz Łysak, "Vlogging Auschwitz: new players in Holocaust commemoration," *Holocaust Studies* 28(3) (2022): 377–402.

serves several psychological processes.[67] Referring to the media network of Lily and Dov as well as Gidon and Julie, we find an extra-participatory approach bringing together media producers and consumers shaped by cultural and social protocols. Individuals are already actants of memory and social change;[68] they establish in writing, reading, clicking, liking, commenting a "practice of sharing". Content is split into different media, users' receptions are valued and co-authors pave the way to new audiences. Individuals – users, readers, viewers, co-authors – are united in the process of the co-production of and participation in Holocaust memory. One might argue that we are missing a critical and distancing perspective which might lead to trivializing the Holocaust; further, the role of the "fact-checking" institution is minimalised, yet factual knowledge is important for decoding Holocaust denial and distortion. The media network of memory reveals the extent to which individuals moderate, shape and discuss the Holocaust in light of survivors' testimonies. This "individual turn" is central for Holocaust memory in the twenty-first century where the digital universe serves as an integral part for connecting people with history, places and memories. Individuals use the full range of media for establishing networks to create values by participatory actions, and they integrate practices of sharing. Consequently, individualisation – manifested in relational approaches to history(ies) – is inextricably linked to the desire for community – expressed in sharing. Individualisation and community are two sides of a coin, so to speak. Institutions that have dedicated their work to Holocaust education for many years must now face the question of how they want to position themselves in the era of the "individual turn".

Bibliography

Holocaust survivor biographies

Ebert, Lily and Dov Forman. *Lily's Promise: How I Survived Auschwitz and Found the Strength to Live*. London: MacMillian, 2021.

Gray, Julie and Gidon Lev. *The True Adventures of Gidon Lev*. Ramat-Gan: In-House-Publishing, 2020.

67 Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Mishra Brenner, "Digital Sites of Tension: The Holocaust on Social Media in Contemporary Europe," in *Sites of Tension: Shifts in Holocaust memory in Relation to Antisemitism and Political Contestation in Europe*, ed. Nurit Novis-Deutsch, Shmuel Lederman, Tracy Adams and Arieh J. Kochavi (Haifa: The Weiss-Livnat International Center for Holocaust Research and Education, 2023), 362–363.

68 Victoria Grace Walden, "Afterword," in *Digital Holocaust Memory Futures: Through Paradigms of Immersion and Interactivity and Beyond*, ed. Vicotoria Grace Walden (Cham: Palgrave, 2021), 284.

Secondary literature

Adams, Jenni. "New Directions in Holocaust Literary Studies." In *The Bloomsbury Companion to Holocaust Literature*, edited by Jenni Adams, 237–263. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

Adriaansen, Robbert-Jan. "Historical Analogies and Historical Consciousness: User-Generated History Lessons on TikTok." In *History Education in the Digital Age*, edited by Mario Carretero, Maria Cantabrana and Cristian Parellada, 43–62. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022.

Altmann, Eva Mona. *Das Unsagbare verschweigen. Holocaust-Literatur aus Täterperspektive. Eine interdisziplinäre Textanalyse*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2021.

Beim, Aaron and Gary Alan Fine. "Trust in testimony: The institutional embeddedness of Holocaust survivor narratives." *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 48(1) (2007): 55–75.

Bösch, Marcus and Chris Köver. *Schluss mit lustig? TikTok als Plattform für politische Kommunikation*, Berlin: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2021. Accessed 15 May 2023. https://www.rosalux.de/publikation/id/44578/schluss-mit-lustig.

Boffone, Trevor. Introduction to "The Rise of TikTok in US Culture." In *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, edited by Trevor Boffone, 1–13. Abingdon, Oxon, and New York: Routledge, 2022.

Boswell, Matthew and Antony Rowland. *Virtual Holocaust Memory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023.

Couldry, Nick and Andreas Hepp. *The mediated construction of reality*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2018.

Divon, Tom and Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann. "#JewishTikTok: The JewToks' Fight against Antisemitism." In *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, edited by Trevor Boffone, 47–58. Abingdon, Oxon, and New York: Routledge, 2022.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Tobias. "Commemorating from a distance: the digital transformation of Holocaust memory in times of COVID-19." *Media, Culture & Society* 43(6) (2021): 1095–1112.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Tobias and Mishra Brenner. "Digital Sites of Tension: The Holocaust on Social Media in Contemporary Europe." In *Sites of Tension: Shifts in Holocaust memory in Relation to Antisemitism and Political Contestation in Europe*, edited by Nurit Novis-Deutsch, Shmuel Lederman, Tracy Adams and Arieh J. Kochavi, 359–408. Haifa: The Weiss-Livnat International Center for Holocaust Research and Education, 2023.

Georgakopoulou, Alexandra. "Small Stories Research. Methods – Analysis – Outreach." In *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, edited by Anna de Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou, 255–271. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2015.

Gräfe, Hans-Christian and Jonas Kunze. "Medienintermediär TikTok: UGC-Clips als Herausforderungen für das Urheberrecht." In *Tipping Points*, edited by Simon Schrör, Georg Fischer, Sophie Beaucamp and Konstantin Hondros, 55–80. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG, 2020.

Hurrelmann, Klaus and Erik Albrecht. *Gen Z. Between Climate Crisis and Coronavirus Pandemic*. London: Routledge, 2021.

Kook, Rebecca. "Agents of memory in the post-witness era: Memory in the living room and changing forms of Holocaust remembrance in Israel." *Memory Studies* 14(5) (2021): 971–986.

Łysak, Tomasz. "Vlogging Auschwitz: new players in Holocaust commemoration." *Holocaust Studies* 28(3) (2022): 377–402. Accessed 16 May 2023. DOI: 10.1080/17504902.2021.1979180.

Novis-Deutsch, Nurit, Shmuel Lederman, Tracy Adams and Arieh J. Kochavi. *Sites of Tension: Shifts in Holocaust memory in Relation to Antisemitism and Political Contestation in Europe*. Haifa: The Weiss-Livnat International Center for Holocaust Research and Education, 2023.

Page, Ruth. *Narratives online: Shared stories in social media*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Parnell, Claire and Beth Driscoll. "Institutions, platforms and the production of debut success in contemporary book culture." *Media International Australia* 187(1) (2021): 123–138. Accessed 16 May 2023. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X211036192.

Pfanzelter, Eva. "Performing the Holocaust on social networks-Digitality, transcultural memory and new forms of narrating." *Kultura Popularna* 51(1) (2017): 136–151.

Rehm, Martin and Stefania Manca. "Three Institutions, Three Platforms, One Goal: Social Media for Holocaust Memory." In *ECSM 2021 8th European Conference on Social Media*, edited by Christos Karpasitis, 195–204. Reading: Academic Conferences International Limited, 2021.

Semmelroth, Sabrina. *Co-Autorschaft und Ghostwriting in der Holocaustliteratur. Exemplarische Analysen zu einer kontroversen Beziehung*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2019.

Smith, Stephen D. *The Trajectory of Holocaust Memory: The Crisis of Testimony in Theory and Practice*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2023.

Stalder, Felix. *Kultur der Digitalität*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2019.

van Dijck, José, Thomas Poell and Martijn de Waal. *The Platform Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Kindle-Version.

Walden, Victoria Grace. "Afterword." In *Digital Holocaust Memory Futures: Through Paradigms of Immersion and Interactivity and Beyond*, edited by Victoria Grace Walden, 267–296. Cham: Palgrave, 2021.

Weimann, Gabriel and Natalie Masri. "TikTok's Spiral of Antisemitism." *Journalism and Media* 2 (2021): 697–708. Accessed 16 May 2023. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia2040041.

Links

Berlin Ramer Institut. "Press release: Presentation of 'TikTok – Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative'." Accessed 16 May 2023. https://ajcgermany.org/en/comment/press-release-presentation-tiktok-shoah-education-and-commemoration-initiative.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Tobias and Tom Divon. "Serious TikTok: Can you learn about the Holocaust in 60 seconds?." In *Digital Holocaust Memory Blog*. Accessed 16 May 2023. https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2022/03/24/can-you-learn-about-the-holocaust-in-60-seconds-on-tiktok/.

Newsroom TikTok. "TikTok Creator Spotlight: @Lilyebert." Accessed 16 May 2023. https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-gb/tiktok-creator-spotlight-lilyebert.

Spiegel online. "Uroma mit Millionen Followern." Accessed 16 May 2023. https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/ur-oma-mit-millionen-followern-a-4656305b-50ab-40f8-aebf-3dd92df516c0.

Spiegel online. "Holocaust-Überlebender kämpft auf TikTok gegen Online-Hass." Accessed 16 May 2023. https://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/web/holocaust-ueberlebender-kaempft-auf-tiktok-gegen-online-hass-mein-impuls-ist-zurueckschlagen-a-e073c489-3eaa-4d81-a1e2-846f5068bb31.

Techcrunch. “TikTok was the top app by worldwide downloads in Q1 2022.” Accessed 16 May 2023. https://techcrunch.com/2022/04/26/tiktok-was-the-top-app-by-worldwide-downloads-in-q1-2022/?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmRlLw&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAIDdyEi18a7FjX8McucO2a4guDKZAKNBpCI5_9YaQOKCFKfOBC7YH_VyOvCDIcxQcKgq6lT-8VVmBjnaGcyuH68a9XSAc0pWgSmCCgSekGs4sRa4db3V6dNgDQwaMEnuUs-Pa_3bTvWll6w2bj0gZNWfrFiR4nIDXIZzC2abnOmB.
The Times of Israel. “A Holocaust survivor fought antisemitism on TikTok and now he’s a social media star.” Accessed 16 May 2023. https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-holocaust-survivor-fought-antisemitism-on-tiktok-and-now-hes-a-social-media-star/.
Wikipedia. “Dov Forman.” Accessed 16 May 2023. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dov_Forman.

Josefine Honke

#Connectedmemories: Non-persecuted German witnesses of National Socialism on YouTube

YouTube is considered one of the most visited websites worldwide.[1] While it seems to be primarily a place for quick entertainment, historical content on the video portal was shown to be quite popular and worth examining.[2] Beyond some of the most watched videos focusing on easy divertissement or preparing students for their exams, other YouTube videos have mostly been neglected in Memory Studies. In addition to its educational and entertaining dimension, YouTube has memory cultural significance. To elaborate this is the aim of this chapter. I will therefore introduce online videos as an essential object of investigation in memory studies. In addition, I offer some points of departure to answer how online memory is currently practiced in and through YouTube videos and show that these videos are crucial parts of global memory networks. As examples, I will use two online videos with non-persecuted German witnesses who talk about the time of National Socialism in Germany.[3]

This chapter examines how YouTube videos with witnesses are part of connected memory networks. Therefore, I highlight different elements of these videos. I start by establishing YouTube videos with witnesses as memory media. Second, I introduce witnesses as audiovisual figures that follow specific modes of representation. Further, I demonstrate that representational aesthetics and mobilised narratives of the past can be classified as primarily centred on victims. Last, I focus on the possible impact of the videos as municipal memories thereby connecting different levels of memories. Therefore, the question of connectedness lies at the centre of each part, highlighting how media, witnesses, narratives and therefore memories are all connected.

1 "Most Visited Websites by Traffic in the world for all categories," last modified March 2023, accessed 24 April 2023, https://www.semrush.com/website/top/.

2 Christian Bunnenberg and Nils Steffen, ed., *Geschichte auf YouTube: Neue Herausforderungen für Geschichtsvermittlung und historische Bildung* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2019).

3 These videos are part of a larger corpus of videos forming the basis of my dissertation project. The findings I present in this chapter are based on this video sample. Overall, it encompasses 101 videos that are derived from a query on YouTube using the search term "Zeitzeuge" (witness) on 15 July 2020 that was extracted using the Mozdeh tool.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-007

1 #Connectedmedia: YouTube videos as memory media

Following the attention generated by the US series "Holocaust" as well as Steven Spielberg's "Schindler's List" television and movies have been shown to trigger so-called "memory booms".[4] Nowadays, the social web is also used to convey representations of the past. As many of the chapters in this volume prove, memories of German National Socialism continue to be spread in digital and social media. In this context, YouTube, especially for young people, has long been identified as one of the most influential websites.

According to a study on the media use of 12- to 19-year-olds in Germany, YouTube represents the second most popular app. Three quarters of teenagers surveyed stated that they use YouTube regularly, spending on average 82 minutes a day watching videos on YouTube.[5] YouTube is considered a "leading medium" and a "digital cultural site".[6] In this chapter, I extend this view showing that it is also a digital memory site.

However, the scientific discussion regarding the memory-cultural impact of the video platform is still pending. While approaches in historical education have already been made, memory studies have often neglected YouTube videos.[7] Significantly, there is a pressing need to move beyond solely researching institutionalised forms of memory. Daring to approach subversive, "emergent, confrontational, yet

4 For in depth analyses of memory booms, see,for example, Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

5 Sabine Feierabend et al., *JIM 2022 – Jugend, Information, Medien. Basisuntersuchung zum Medienumgang 12- bis 19-Jähriger*, ed. Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest (mpfs), (Stuttgart 2022), accessed 24 April 2023, https://www.mpfs.de/fileadmin/files/Studien/JIM/2022/JIM_2022_Web_final.pdf, 37.

6 Rat für Kulturelle Bildung e.V., ed., *Jugend/YouTube/Kulturelle Bildung. Horizont 2019. Studie: Repräsentative Umfrage unter 12- bis 19-Jährigen zur Nutzung kultureller Bildungsangebote an digitalen Kulturorten*, last updated June 2019, accessed 24 April 2023, www.rat-kulturelle-bildung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Studie_YouTube_Webversion_final_2.pdf, 7.

7 A few exceptions are, for example, Alina Bothe, "Negotiating Digital Shoah Memory on YouTube," in *Digital Diversities. Social Media and Intercultural Experience*, ed. Garry Robson et al. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 256–272; Marie-Christine Wehming, "Entgrenzte Erinnerung – unbegrenzte Möglichkeiten? Der Holocaust auf YouTube," in *artefrakte. Holocaust und Zweiter Weltkrieg in experimentellen Darstellungsformen in Literatur und Kunst*, ed. Esther Kilchmann (Göttingen: Böhlau Verlag Köln, 2016), 145–153.

fragmented"[8] parts of digital memory networks and to consider amateur productions as forming an integral part of them, lies at the centre of the following approach. Therefore, I theoretically describe YouTube videos with witnesses as memory media and approach them from a memory cultural perspective. I use the term memory media in reference to the term coined by Astrid Erll.[9] She summarises these media as follows:

> Media of collective memory create versions of reality and the past. The materiality of the medium (communication instrument, technology, and objectification) is as much involved in these creations as its socio-systemic dimension: the producers and recipients of a memory medium also actively participate [. . .] – in deciding which phenomena are ascribed memory-medial qualities in the first place, as well as in selecting and encoding and / or decoding and interpreting what is to be remembered.[10]

This last part of the quote is especially insightful when considering the different agents involved in memory cultures. Accordingly, not only the media, in this case the YouTube videos, but also the channel operators and the users are actively involved in the construction of memory media. As memory media, YouTube videos can be studied as a "meaningful indication of the needs and concerns of the ones remembering in the present".[11] Therefore, memory media do not simply provide information about historical events but allow for conclusions about memory cultures at the time of production of the videos. In addition, the comment section underneath the videos, for example, offers clues about the time of the videos' reception. Thereby, beyond Erll's enumeration of ascribing, selecting, encoding, decoding and interpreting, the participants of digital memory media shape them even further.

8 Andrew Hoskins, "The Right to be Forgotten in Post-Scarcity Culture," in *The Ethics of Memory in the Digital Age: Interrogating the Right to be Forgotten*, ed. Alessia Ghezzi et al. (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 50–64, 60.

9 Astrid Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen: Eine Einführung*, 3rd ed., (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler Verlag, 2017), 137–172.

10 Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis*, 147.

11 Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis*, 7.

The memory agents' merging roles in "participatory digital culture"[12] become clear in neologisms such as "prosumer", "produser", or "viewser".[13] As I have shown elsewhere, I consider the activities of the users of YouTube as forms of "doing memory".[14] I thereby follow the example of the concept of "Doing History on YouTube" coined by Nils Steffen.[15] The historian argues that explanatory videos on YouTube should be understood as a form of "doing history": as practices of performing history. I transfer his considerations to my approach of "doing memory" in YouTube videos with witnesses. Accordingly, I consider them as concepts of performing memories on the video platform. The concepts of memory mediation, representation and images are thus brought into line with the concepts of memory cultures and distinguished from the representation of historical events. Consequently, besides the witnesses portrayed in the videos on YouTube, the activities of various other participating agents in the digital social medium need to be emphasised as practices of constructing and performing memories.[16] Further, these various activities are deeply connected to each other.

12 Wulf Kansteiner, "The Holocaust in the 21st Century: Digital Anxiety, Transnational Cosmopolitanism, and Never Again Genocide Without Memory," in *Digital memory studies: Media pasts in transition*, ed. Andrew Hoskins, 110–40 (New York, London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 114. Kansteiner refers to the "Participatory Culture," coined by Henry Jenkins: Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

13 Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York, NY: Morrow, 1980); Axel Bruns, "Produsage: Towards a Broader Framework for User-Led Content Creation," presented at *Creativity and Cognition 6*, 13–15 June 2007, cited in José van Dijck, "Users Like You? Theorizing Agency in User-Generated Content," *Media, Culture & Society* 31(1) (2009); Dan Harries, *The New Media Book* (London: British Film Inst., 2002), 103, 180.

14 Honke, Josefine, "Doing Memory auf Youtube: Zeitzeug*innen-Videos als Erinnerungsmedien," in Klio hat jetzt Internet. ed. Kilian Baur and Robert Trautmannsberger, 141–58. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023).

15 Nils Steffen, "Doing History auf YouTube – Erklärvideos als Form performativer Historiografie," in *Geschichte auf YouTube: Neue Herausforderungen für Geschichtsvermittlung und historische Bildung*, ed. Christian Bunnenberg and Nils Steffen (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019), 61–70.

16 In this context, the media-technical level is also relevant, which becomes especially obvious through the algorithmic video suggestions of the global platform. Unfortunately, this technological level of agency given to a global company cannot be further discussed in this chapter. Similarly, the role of (amateur) filmmakers and YouTube channels can also not be further explored in this essay. They are not just a difficult and anonymous group of important agents in the memory network but also often private persons. For a lot of YouTube videos with witnesses, there is no official institution or television station connected to them. Yet, as a researcher it is difficult, because the source of the uploaded videos is not always clear. Nonetheless, for a significant amount it can be assumed that the YouTubers are neither professional film producers nor historians.

The different actors involved in producing meaning become apparent through the conceptual pair of memory representation and memory appropriation. Memories come into being at the intersection of the two, where memory media are represented and appropriated. According to media scholar Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, memory media form a "network of images, visual icons, stereotypical figures, and conventionalized narrative forms".[17] This media network influences conceptions of the past, meaning that viewers "gain a sense of the past" as Robert Rosenstone postulated considering history movies.[18] The various elements of memory media are negotiated, reworked, and passed on in different media, and therefore, even amateur filmmakers use them in their YouTube videos. In this process, historical images or memory images mobilise and produce ideas of pasts that follow established conventions of representation, as Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann among others describes. Similarly, Andrew Hoskins has coined the term "Digital Network Memory",[19] describing the interconnected, multimedia access points to the past and history. As part of this network, YouTube videos are closely connected to other memory media.

In summary, memory media form the prerequisite for sharing and negotiating narratives, ideas and images about the past. However, they are not neutral vehicles but shape the transmitted content. Therefore, the potential to significantly influence the users is inherent to them. These users often unquestioningly adopt the views and emotional attitudes conveyed on film. As witnesses play a crucial role in this emotional involvement, the second part of this chapter highlights the figure of the witnesses.

2 #Connectedwitnesses: Witnesses as audiovisual figures

Witnesses are "people who have observed or experienced a historical event to which significance has been attributed in retrospect and who report on it in a public space for the purpose of scientific knowledge or historical education".[20] In the

17 Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, *Geschichtsbilder Im Medialen Gedächtnis: Filmische Narrationen des Holocaus*t (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014), 39.

18 Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

19 Andrew Hoskins, "Digital Network Memory," in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2009), 91–108.

20 Steffi de Jong, "Zeitzeugin / Zeitzeuge," in *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte (2022)*, accessed 30 April 2023, https://zeitgeschichte-digital.de/doks/frontdoor/index/index/year/2022/docId/2396.

context of this chapter, witnesses are considered media constructs, audiovisual figures. In audiovisual media they are represented following certain conventions, as, for example, Judith Keilbach or Frank Bösch have compiled in detail for television productions.[21] The viewers are primarily influenced by the emotionalisation and authentication strategies generated by audiovisual media. Frank Bösch summarises as follows: "[S]ubjective interpretations are spread with the authority of 'having been there'".[22] This "aura of authenticity"[23] persists in YouTube videos with witnesses. Yet, the individual perspective and context of remembering are not considered. Rather, the continuing demand for decontextualized eyewitness accounts are now further satisfied online and on demand.

As soon as a witness figure appears in audiovisual media, the "documentarizing reading"[24] identified by Roger Odin sets in. Odin identifies this as learned reading and deciphering of the conventions of representation. The viewers identify the witnesses as authentic "embodiment of memory [*un homme-mémoire*]".[25] Yet, this deciphering does not offer room to distinguish between different kinds of witnesses. Ebbrecht-Hartmann warns in this regard:

> The witnesses of the crimes and the bystanders, supporters and perpetrators and their divergent points of view are made formally equal in this way [of representing them all as witnesses] and their different perspectives are harmonized in a concept of testimony that has been purged of its legal meaning.[26]

21 Judith Keilbach, *Geschichtsbilder und Zeitzeugen: Zur Darstellung des Nationalsozialismus im bundesdeutschen Fernsehen*, 2nd ed. (Münster: Lit-Verl., 2010); Frank Bösch, "Historikerersatz oder Quelle? Der Zeitzeuge im Fernsehen," *Geschichte lernen* 13(76) (2000), 62–65; Frank Bösch, "Geschichte mit Gesicht: Zur Genese des Zeitzeuge in Holocaust-Dokumentationen seit den 1950er Jahren," in *Alles authentisch? Popularisierung der Geschichte im Fernsehen*, ed. Thomas Fischer and Rainer Wirtz (Konstanz: UVK-Verl.-Ges, 2008), 51–72; Thomas Fischer, "Erinnern und Erzählen: Zeitzeugen im Geschichts-TV," in *Alles authentisch? Popularisierung der Geschichte im Fernsehen*, ed. Thomas Fischer and Rainer Wirtz (Konstanz: UVK-Verl.-Ges, 2008), 33–49.

22 Bösch, "Historikerersatz Oder Quelle?," 65.

23 Heidemarie Uhl, "Vom Pathos des Widerstands zur Aura des Authentischen: Die Entdeckung des Zeitzeugen als Epochenschwelle der Erinnerung," in *Die Geburt des Zeitzeugen nach 1945*, ed. Martin Sabrow and Norbert Frei (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2012), 224–246; Martin Sabrow, "Der Zeitzeuge als Wanderer zwischen zwei Welten," in *Die Geburt des Zeitzeugen nach 1945*, ed. Martin Sabrow and Norbert Frei, (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2012), 13–32, 27.

24 Roger Odin, "Film Documentaire, Lecture Documentarisante," in *Cinémas et réalités*, ed. Roger Odin and Jean-Charls Lyant (Saint-Étienne: CIEREC, 1984), 263–277.

25 Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca, N.Y., London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 88.

26 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, *Geschichtsbilder*, 31.

In addition to Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Aleida Assmann noted that Holocaust survivors are the "paradigm of testimony".[27] Other witness figures copy the initial, medial representation of witnesses of the persecution and extermination of the National Socialists. Witness figures can therefore be understood as a "travelling"[28] concept or as "multidirectional"[29] memory figures. This emphasises once more the connectedness of memories.

Even a brief analysis of some German YouTube videos with witnesses allows us to conclude that the film aesthetics are based on familiar presentation patterns for staging eyewitnesses.[30] The most frequently used camera angle corresponds to the origin of the term "talking head": The subjects are filmed using head and shoulder close-ups. When powerful emotions arise, the camera sometimes zooms in on the witnesses' faces or eyes. Otherwise, the camera remains relatively static. Some videos also use close-ups of gesturing hands. The witnesses sit in a private atmosphere on a sofa or stand outside. They speak in front of groups of students or talk at the kitchen table. They blink tears from their eyes, gesticulate, show objects, or point at places on maps. As diverse as these settings and camera angles may seem, they still allow for a "documentarising reading". Importantly, this reading leads to the impression that the witnesses are talking about the past and not just their past.

Contrary to the infamous German television production of the late 'nineties and early 2000s, there is no bare black wall with a single spotlight, decontextualising the interview.[31] However, this can be attributed less to a conscious decision than to the most feasible solution. In the YouTube videos, the witnesses sitting at home support an immediate, familiar, and seemingly non-staged impression. This "authentic" impromptu staging requires no special equipment, such as the spotlight or the black background. Thereby, the *mise-en-scene* often supports a perception of a confidential family conversation. In addition, the interviews on YouTube are not intended to serve as images that can be inserted into different TV formats, reducing the witnesses to giving cues needed for the production's narrative.

The interviewers and their questions are rarely heard or seen on YouTube. In most cases, the videos focus on one person; exceptionally, two people are interviewed at the same time. Outdoor shots show the witnesses at the locations of the

27 Aleida Assmann, "Vier Grundtypen von Zeugenschaft," in *Zeugenschaft des Holocaust: Zwischen Trauma Tradierung und Ermittlung*, ed. Michael Elm and Gottfried Kößler (Frankfurt/Main, New York: Campus Verlag, 2007), 33–51, 33.

28 Astrid Erll, "Travelling Memory," *Parallax* 17(4) (2011).

29 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

30 These findings are based on the video corpus described in footnote 3.

31 Keilbach, *Geschichtsbilder*, 229.

historical events they discuss. Overall, men are represented significantly more often than women. In summary, the innovative potential of online videos is not exhausted with the representation of the established figure of the witness. There are no new forms or approaches to representation on the video platform; instead, existing means of staging witnesses are reproduced.

Further, not only are the means of representation copied from the initial witnesses, the Holocaust survivors, but beyond the filmic means, their narratives, metaphors and finally the interpretation of their messages have been adopted in connection with the filmic means. In this context, the form of "moral testimony" coined by the Israeli philosopher Avashai Margalit and taken up by Aleida Assmann is particularly insightful.[32] During the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in the 1960s, the figure of the witness emerged. Through this process and staging the witnesses in the media, a demand arose in the post-war societies for their testimonies. Annette Wieviorka, therefore, calls the trial in Jerusalem the "advent of the witness", tellingly referred to as the "birth of the witness" in German literature.[33]

The concept of "moral testimony" supplemented the function of bearers of history with the moral impetus of having to remember the past. With the representation of the survivors of persecution and extermination by the National Socialists being adapted, all media figures of witnesses are endowed with moral authority. At the same time an ethical mission of truth is attributed to them.

This becomes especially apparent when analysing the comments on YouTube videos. As Alina Bothe has noted for video testimonies uploaded by the USC Shoah Foundation, users tend to thank witnesses for sharing their testimony when commenting on such videos.[34] Similarly, this seems to be a learned behavior when in contact with any witness. Users also comment positively on the YouTube videos with non-perpetrated German witnesses of National Socialism in my sample, thanking the witnesses for sharing their testimonies and emphasising the importance of safeguarding their words for the future. Often, the underlying message of "never forget" in these comments is deprived of its initial connection to the Holocaust and employed to any witness account connected to National Socialism.

---

32 Avashai Margalit, "A Moral Witness," in *The Ethics of Memory*, ed. Avashai Margalit (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 147–182; Aleida Assmann, "Vier Grundtypen."

33 Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca, N.Y., London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 56–95; in the French original it is also "avènement"; see Annette Wieviorka, *L'ère du témoin* (Paris: Hachette Littérature, 2002); Martin Sabrow and Norbert Frei, ed., *Die Geburt des Zeitzeugen nach 1945*.

34 Alina Bothe, "Negotiating Digital Shoah Memory on YouTube," in *Digital Diversities: Social Media and Intercultural Experience*, ed. Garry Robson and Malgorzata Zachara (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 256–272.

The people portrayed in the YouTube videos considered here are non-persecuted Germans who were children or young people during the Second World War. They tell, for example, of bombing raids on German cities. Others tell of forced labor camps under the National Socialists or describe their time as a soldier in the *Wehrmacht*. Their stories are mainly framed as victim narratives leading to the next aspect of this chapter.

3 #Connectednarratives: Traditionalisation of victimhood

As Sara Jones points out, "it is the witness to suffering who is seen to occupy a position of particular importance in public and popular history and who has a unique relationship to the concept of authenticity".[35]

Following a continuing German "national myth of victims",[36] framing Germany as "a nation of victims",[37] witness figures in the YouTube videos considered here are mostly portrayed as victims. The media figure of the witness is central to the victim-centered mode of representation and the victim narratives mobilised in the YouTube videos. Their impact has been repeatedly emphasised in media cultural studies – however, these analyses have been limited almost exclusively to television documentaries or video testimonies. Nevertheless, the emotional appeal to viewers and the embodied "aura of authenticity", as highlighted above, apply at least to the same extent to eyewitnesses in YouTube videos. Here, the media figures are also perceived as being able to report "how it really was". I would even go so far as to suggest that YouTube videos stress the authenticity, the unfiltered, and the seemingly direct contact with the past even more and may have an even more intimate effect on the viewers. This is because, in addition to the authenticity figures familiar from television, the online platform also mobilises the social media' non-institutionalised, personal framing making the narratives seem unfiltered. This makes it even more important to question the continuing sacralisation tendencies of these media figures.

35 Sara Jones, "Mediated Immediacy: Constructing Authentic Testimony in Audio-Visual Media," *Rethinking History* 21(2) (2017): 136.

36 Christoph Classen, "Back to the fifties? Die NS-Vergangenheit als nationaler Opfermythos im frühen Fernsehen der Bundesrepublik," *Historical Social Research* 30(4) (2005): 112–127.

37 Lothar Kettenacker, Ralph Giordano and Cora Stephan, ed., *Ein Volk von Opfern? Die neue Debatte um den Bombenkrieg 1940 – 45* (Berlin: Rowohlt-Berlin-Verl., 2003).

For this purpose, I mobilise the intergenerational traditionalization type of "victimhood" examined in German witnesses. This type of traditionalisation was investigated by Harald Welzer et al. at the end of the 1990s.[38] This group of researchers has worked out types of traditions that are applicable to current YouTube videos with witnesses. In addition to intergenerational narrative strategies such as distancing, overwhelming, and justification, those of fascination and victimhood play a particular role. The traditionalisation type of victimhood can be characterised as follows:

> [T]he speakers of the witness generation stylize themselves as victims of a "hard time." This happens on several levels: They [. . .] address their suffering and losses in the bombing war and the expulsion [from Eastern Europe], they lament that they were cheated out of their youth, they adopt characteristics from other victimization stories to frame their own narratives accordingly, and they reverse the roles of perpetrators and victims.[39]

In short, this corresponds to historian Ulrike Jureit's concept of the Germans as "perceived victims".[40] The following YouTube video will show exemplarily how twisted this self-perception as a victim can be for non-persecuted Germans. The video entitled "A witness reports at the camp Kinzigdamm" showcases a significant connection between the family of the witness and the horrors of the municipal past.[41] The video was uploaded in 2015 by the YouTube channel "Gedenkstätte Vulkan". The German term for memorial (*Gedenkstätte*) suggests an institutional framing of the video. Additionally, the YouTube video is an eight-minute film excerpt of a documentary project funded by the Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg [Centre for political education]. However, these authentication markers are even more problematic when it comes to context-deprived excerpts. Such excerpts allow to shift off the initial focus of the documentary and to freely associate personal meaning in the changed framework on YouTube.

In the section of the documentary that is made available on YouTube, an elderly gentleman, who is not named, stands outdoors among schoolchildren. He emotionally recounts the events surrounding the labour camp "Kinzigdamm" that he observed as a child. His descriptions mainly focus on his emotions about the horrors in the camp as well as the numerous attempts of the village community

38 Harald Welzer et al., *"Was wir für böse Menschen wir sind": Der Nationalsozialismus im Gespräch zwischen den Generationen* (Tübingen: Ed. diskord, 1997).

39 Welzer, *"Was wir für böse Menschen sind!"*, 146.

40 Ulrike Jureit, "Erinnerung wird zum Gesellschaftszustand: Eine Beobachtung," in *Gefühlte Opfer: Illusionen der Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, ed. Ulrike Jureit and Christian Schneider (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2011), 19–37, see in particular 23–29.

41 Gedenkstätte Vulkan (19.06.2015), *Ein Zeitzeuge berichtet am Lager Kinzigdamm*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMZyrvxbZnI, accessed 29 April 2023.

and especially his family to provide help. Without judging the historical accuracy of the specific narrative, such accounts make it seem like Germans offering support during National Socialism happened frequently, whereas the opposite is true. This leads to the misconception of many Germans today. In a representative study only 17.6 percent of respondents affirm that there were perpetrators of World War Two among their ancestors. About the same number of people (18 percent) claim that their relatives helped potential victims during this period. Finally, slightly more than half of the interviewees (54.4 percent) report having victims of World War Two among their relatives.[42]

To what extent victimisation is perceived can be shown using the example of the YouTube-video "A witness reports at the Kinzigdamm camp". From the beginning of the film clip, the man is intensely emotional and repeatedly blinks away his tears. After referring to the location of the camp and the barracks, he summarises, "we just knew they [the inmates] were starving and mistreated".[43] In his narrative, the suffering of the two groups – the prisoners and the German population – is connected.

Exemplarily, the German witness's introductory narrative focuses on his mother's arrest. He recounts that his grandmother had baked additional pancakes so that his mother could distribute some to the prisoners in the Kinzigdamm labour camp. Wrapped in her headscarf, she transported the food in the basket of her bicycle to the camp, where the inmates already knew they were allowed to help themselves and thus took the headscarf along with the pancakes. A guard became aware of this and asked the mother where the headscarf was. After searching the camp, her lie of not having had a scarf was exposed and she was "taken away". It remains unclear whether the witness experienced this situation or only shares the memories of his family members. Finally, the witness tearfully tells the youth group: "And suddenly they [the National Socialists] said that my mother had to go to the concentration camp or she would [. . .] just be taken away, be shot or something".[44] This mobilises memory images that are closely related to the accounts of those persecuted and exterminated by the National Socialists. These images are conveyed by focusing on the life threat and by naming concentration camps and shootings. The fact that this threat may have been less drastic for most Germans than conveyed in this statement by the witness is made clear by the following report of the witness, resolving his mother's fate: In the

42 Andreas Zick et al., *MEMO: Multidimensionaler Erinnerungsmonitor* (2018), accessed 29 April 2023, https://www.stiftung-evz.de/assets/1_Was_wir_f%C3%B6rdern/Bilden/Bilden_fuer_lebendiges_Erinnern/MEMO_Studie/MEMO_1_2018/EVZ_Studie_MEMO_2018_dt.pdf, 11.

43 Gedenkstätte Vulkan, *Ein Zeitzeuge berichtet*, TC: 0:00:06 – 0:00:18.

44 Gedenkstätte Vulkan, *Ein Zeitzeuge berichtet*, TC: 0:01:19 – 0:01:30.

town hall, the grandfather negotiated that his daughter would be released in exchange for a few liquor bottles.

The incomparable juxtaposition of concentration camps, shootings and the seemingly simple solution of bribery, is not questioned in the video or the comment section. Therefore, the teenagers listening to the witness and the viewers of the footage alike might gain the wrong impression of this being a stressful, yet successful way to deal with these dangers. Thereby the millions who lost their lives are ridiculed. At the same time, I believe that images of concentration camps and shootings work much stronger than the actual resolution to the story and might remain much longer after the witness account was heard, thereby leading to the impression of Germans being the actual witnesses. This again is underlined by the strong emotional outburst of the witness, introduced with the words: "We have experienced a lot here".[45] While his eyes become watery and his breathing heavy, the man taps his heart and wipes his nose. These emotions finally underline the authenticity of his report and deprive any room to question his account. Yet, it remains unclear who is encompassed in this "we" – whether it only contains his family or extends to the people living in the region sharing municipal memories. It might even encompass a highly problematic we-group mixing the former inmates and the non-persecuted Germans. Therefore, this video example allows us to highlight aspects of the new role that YouTube videos play in global memory networks. Notably, the witness's narrative is firmly anchored in a very concrete place, in this case the former labour camp "Kinzigdamm" near Haslach. These local anchors and municipal memories are explored in the following part of this chapter.

4 #Connectedmemoires: Municipal memories

In the final part, I argue that contrary to YouTube's global reach, YouTube videos with witnesses might significantly impact local memory communities. Even small channels and videos with only relatively few views may affect their respective niches, likely formed by specific regions. Here, viewers are particularly interested and personally connected to the places discussed. I consider this localisation of YouTube videos an essential feature of these memory media. Whether on a global, national, municipal, or individual level, the platform increasingly shapes users' ideas about the past and their images of memory and historical narratives. In particular, different levels of memory are connected online and even merged,

45 Gedenkstätte Vulkan, *Ein Zeitzeuge berichtet*, TC: 0:01:51 – 0:01:55.

as personal memories are shared with a global audience. The municipal level grows increasingly important in history and memory studies and lies at the centre of the following argument.

I am employing the term "municipal memories" ("kommunales Gedächtnis")[46] coined by historian Malte Thießen to highlight the level of memories between the nation-state's official memory discourse and the personal family stories. While it is often stated that the macro-level of the nation-state and the micro-level of family memories form two divergent spheres of memory, the meso-level of municipal memories allows us to connect these two memory practices of public and private memory. In her study of Australian history videos on YouTube, historian Megan Sheehy establishes a typology of different video formats. She calls one important form "amateur local history videos with strong connections to place" and highlights how geographic location is vital in many videos dealing with the past.[47]

It may seem paradoxical that content from small geographic areas can mainly gain importance on the global video platform. However, we need to take into account the platform's search algorithms. As the algorithm remains secret and is mainly considered a black box, we can only make assumptions about its design. Among other things, YouTube has access to user data such as the location of the device from which videos are viewed. It can therefore be assumed that locally based content will be displayed higher up in the individual's search results list. For example, if you enter the term "witness report" in Bamberg, a report from Bamberg is more likely to be recommended. If you enter the exact search term from Dresden, it is more likely that a video with a witness from Dresden is suggested, as this could be considered more relevant to the user.[48] Yet, none of these findings can easily be proven scientifically, and even if they could be, the algorithm would likely be changed again before this volume is published.

Concerning municipal memories in YouTube videos, another video example helps to underline the local context of the videos and the memories shared within: "A witness remembers the Nazi era in Plettenberg" was uploaded by an

46 Malte Thießen, "Zeitzeuge und Erinnerungskultur: Zum Verhältnis von privaten und öffentlichen Erzählungen des Luftkriegs," in *Die "Generation der Kriegskinder": Historische Hintergründe und Deutungen*, ed. Lu Seegers (Gießen: Psychosozial-Verl., 2009), 157–182.

47 Megan Sheehy, "New Perspectives on the Past: YouTube, Web 2.0 and public history," *Melbourne Historical Journal* 36(1) (2008): 65.

48 Compare the official blog of Google: Danny Sullivan, How location helps provide more relevant search results, December 16 2020, accessed 29 April 2023, https://blog.google/products/search/location-relevant-search-results/. Since Google owns YouTube, it is likely that the search algorithms are built on similar structures.

amateur filmmaker in 2012 and is unconventionally 40 minutes long.[49] For amateur filmmakers, the focus often lies in promoting their hobby and showing off their technical skills. The link to the amateur filmmaker's website is superimposed throughout the YouTube video, making the video an advertisement. Also in contrast to most other witness productions, the interviewer is visible and sits next to the witness. Following the example of TV compilation documentaries of the 2000s, the YouTube video combines old film footage or photos, music, and transitions between scenes. The footage, however, lacks information about the origin of the source material shown.

The content of the video focuses on the boyhood of the witness Erich Schmalenbach in National Socialist Germany. The interviewer repeatedly directs the conversation specifically to the small town of Plettenberg. In the process, the two men discuss the Nazi youth organisations. The interview begins with the enumeration of the biographical data of the witness. This is a practice that originated in interviewing survivors of persecution and extermination by the National Socialists, the video testimonies. After the enumeration of biographical facts, the interviewer directly and seemingly promptly introduces the central topic, the beginning of the war, by asking: "Erich, when you were ten years old, the news came out that the Second World War had begun. How did you perceive this [. . .]?"[50]

However, the witness does not answer this question; instead, he is still checking off facts. Thus, the staging and self-presentation of the witness follow the representational convention of an expert questioned about the past, rather than that of a narrator who reports how he perceived things (at the time).[51] Accordingly, the witness's explanations are filled with dates and places. Therefore, when the witness Schmalenbach appears as an expert and describes the various Hitler Youth groups with a particular fascination and enthusiastically mentions their badges, uniforms or the driving knife, the initial question about the perception of World War Two is simultaneously evaded.

At the same time, this introductory scene makes it clear that distinct we-they groups are established in the video. Thus, the witness Erich Schmalenbach reports: "Then [we heard] on the radio that we were now marching into Poland; that the Poles had shot, that now they were shooting back".[52] Here, "we" stands for the affiliation to a nation-state, forming the German we-group. Interpreted in

49 HechmeckeStudio (10 January 2012), *Ein Zeitzeuge erinnert sich an die NS Zeit in Plettenberg*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qibgOAjURJY, accessed 29 April 2023.

50 HechmeckeStudio, *Ein Zeitzeuge erinnert sich,* TC: 0:01:14 – 0:01:25.

51 For the distinction between expert and narrator, see Thomas Fischer, "Erinnern und Erzählen."

52 HechmeckeStudio, *Ein Zeitzeuge erinnert sich,* TC: 0:01:30 – 0:01:39.

the extreme, this group could even be dubbed the German "Volksgemeinschaft"[53] and thus continue influences of National Socialist propaganda. This affiliation runs through the entire video and is even adopted by the interviewer. For example, at another point of the interview, the latter asks: "Were there still many soldiers of ours in Plettenberg?"[54] This shows how the position of the witness is unreflectively adopted by the interviewer. Often, such a unified narratives replace critical questioning of the witnesses. Problematic aspects concerning National Socialism can thus be left out.

Yet, the local anchoring creates opportunities for a democratisation of memories. Instead of putting national memory narratives in the foreground, municipal memory cultures become visible and enable numerous actors to shape ideas about the past beyond formalised national memory practices. It is precisely these "formalized practices of remembrance in German society that are [. . .] a tightrope walk between serious commemoration, empty ritual, domestication of the oppressive from the past, and the hope of relief".[55] The potential dangers and opportunities of municipal online memories will be highlighted in the conclusion of this chapter.

5 Conclusion: Dangers and opportunities

After introducing YouTube videos with witnesses as memory media, I finish this chapter by pointing out the possible impact these could have on global memory networks and how they are influenced by them. Global memory networks need to be considered a "fluid mnemonic space",[56] that constantly changes. They offer opportunities but also dangers to current memory discourses.

On the one hand, different narratives of the past are increasingly mobilized separately online and solidified in so-called echo chambers without integrating opposing opinions. On the other hand, such fragmentation processes are becoming more visible online than offline. In particular, on YouTube memory-cultural tendencies can be examined that question the separation between a "cultural"

53 Norbert Frei, "Volksgemeinschaft," in *1945 und Wir. Das Dritte Reich im Bewußtsein der Deutschen*, ed. Norbert Frei (München: 2005), 107–128.

54 HechmeckeStudio, *Ein Zeitzeuge erinnert sich,* TC: 0:15:56 – 0:16:00.

55 Christian Wiese et al., "Einleitung: Die Zukunft der Erinnerung," in *Die Zukunft der Erinnerung: Perspektiven des Gedenkens an die Verbrechen des Nationalsozialismus und die Shoah*, ed. Christian Wiese et al. (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 1–18, 2.

56 Matthew Boswell and Antony Rowland, *Virtual Holocaust Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 17.

and a "communicative" memory[57] and focus more intensely on the influence of local memory cultures on a national memory.[58]

One of the most significant opportunities of digital memory media is based on the continuous engagement (of younger generations) with narratives of the past. In the case of the portrayal of National Socialism in Germany, with its criminal structures of persecution and extermination of millions of people, memory can offer guidance and has often been used to learn from the past particularly to strengthen universal human rights. In doing so, local memory communities can likewise convey relevant content. In the sense of the slogan of the history workshops, "Dig where you stand",[59] communal reappraisal of the past can thus also take place today. Especially on YouTube, the former workshops are mirrored in what could be entitled: "film where you stand". This offers new access points to the past, especially for younger generations. Similarly, the producers of the videos in question can participate in producing ideas about the past through media, becoming agents in their local memory communities. The videos have the potential "to challenge dominant historical narratives and encourage web users to think critically about how they understand the past".[60]

Through the democratisation potential of the internet, non-institutionalised narratives of the past can also be made publicly accessible and disseminated. Besides opportunities for a pluralisation of memories, this also creates risks. Due to the selection mechanisms, so-called filter bubbles,[61] only information that correspond to the digital profile of the users, their interests and their digitally recorded attitudes, become easily accessible. When dealing with this adjusted content, especially one-sided narratives about the past, there is an increased danger of political instrumentalisation of memories.

---

57 Fundamental to these categories of memory research is Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck, 1992). Further influential publications include, Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (München: Beck, 1999); Aleida Assmann, *Der Lange Schatten Der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur Und Geschichtspolitik* (München: Beck, 2006).

58 Dietmar Süß, ed., *Deutschland im Luftkrieg. Geschichte und Erinnerung* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2007); Habbo Knoch, ed., *Das Erbe der Provinz: Heimatkultur und Geschichtspolitik nach 1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2001); Malte Thießen, *Eingebrannt ins Gedächtnis: Hamburgs Gedenken an Luftkrieg und Kriegsende 1943 bis 2005* (München, Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 2007).

59 Sven Lindquvist, *Grabe, wo du stehst. Handbuch zur Erforschung der eigenen Geschichte*, ed. and trans. Manfred Dammeyer, (Bonn: Dietz, 1989).

60 Sheehy, "New Perspectives on the Past," 71.

61 Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You* (New York: Penguin, 2011).

Therefore, it is important to warn about the dangers of the videos on YouTube. The videos can also impair historical understanding by presenting inaccurate or insufficient information. Anti-Semitic or other contemptuous, revisionist, conspiracy, right-wing populist or radical uses of the past are enabled on YouTube. This encompasses both the videos themselves, but especially the comment section and further sharing outside of YouTube, for example, in closed chat groups. Despite the controversial nature of spirals of increasing radicalisation, attention must at least be paid to filter bubbles that algorithmically suggest only content that lies within one's own beliefs and areas of interest. Other interpretations and ideas are thus not displayed. As a result, certain narratives are additionally solidified, as shown by the depiction of Germans as victims. In the digital space of memories, such narratives can reach an even larger circle of addressees and have an overall effect of seeming to be socially acceptable, since they can be voiced in public spaces and do not require contextualisation. We need to exercise caution when considering these tendencies. Therefore, investigating YouTube videos with narratives of the past is an essential and current necessity, which should be approached in particular from the perspective of cultural studies of memories. On this basis, it is possible to promote media competencies. Instead of being perceived as the transmission of historical "truths", YouTube videos with witnesses could then be identified as practices of telling and performing stories about a past, as doing memory. Moreover, through the present progressive, marked by the ending "-ing" in "doing", it is possible that viewers understand the acts of remembering as happening at that very moment, as anchored in the present. Thereby, the constant processes of change in memories become apparent as well as the connectedness of the different agents involved.

Bibliography

Assmann, Aleida. *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. München: Beck, 1999.

Assmann, Aleida. *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*. München: Beck, 2006.

Assmann, Aleida. "Vier Grundtypen von Zeugenschaft." In *Zeugenschaft des Holocaust: Zwischen Trauma, Tradierung und Ermittlung*, edited by Michael Elm and Gottfried Kössler, 33–51. Frankfurt am Main, New York: Campus Verlag, 2007.

Assmann, Jan. *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. München: Beck, 1992.

Bösch, Frank. "Historikerersatz oder Quelle? Der Zeitzeuge im Fernsehen." *Geschichte lernen* 76 (2000): 62–65.

Bösch, Frank. "Geschichte mit Gesicht. Zur Genese des Zeitzeugen in Holocaust-Dokumentationen seit den 1950er Jahren." In *Alles authentisch? Popularisierung der Geschichte im Fernsehen*, edited by Thomas Fischer and Rainer Wirtz, 51–72. Konstanz: UKV Verl.-Ges., 2008.

Classen, Christoph. “Back to the fifties? Die NS-Vergangenheit als nationaler Opfermythos im frühen Fernsehen der Bundesrepublik.” *Historical Social Research* 30(4) (2005): 112–127.

De Jong, Steffi. “Zeitzeuge / Zeitzeugin.“ Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte (2022). Accessed 30 April 2023. https://zeitgeschichte-digital.de/doks/frontdoor/index/index/year/2022/docId/2396.

Ebbrecht, Tobias. *Geschichtsbilder im medialen Gedächtnis. Filmische Narrationen des Holocaust*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2011.

Erll, Astrid. *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen. Eine Einführung*, 3rd edition. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2017.

Feierabend, Sabine/Rathgeb, Thomas/Kheredmand, Hediye/Glöckler, Stephan. *JIM 2022 – Jugend, Information, Medien. Basisuntersuchung zum Medienumgang 12- bis 19-Jähriger*, edited by Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest (mpfs). Stuttgart 2022. https://www.mpfs.de/fileadmin/files/Studien/JIM/2022/JIM_2022_Web_final.pdf. Accessed 24 April 2023.

Fischer, Thomas. “Erinnern und Erzählen – Zeitzeugen im Geschichts-TV.“ In *Alles authentisch? Popularisierung der Geschichte im Fernsehen*, edited by Thomas Fischer and Rainer Wirtz, 33–49. Konstanz: UKV Verl.-Ges., 2008.

Frei, Norbert. “Volksgemeinschaft.“ In *1945 und Wir. Das Dritte Reich im Bewußtsein der Deutschen*, edited by Norbert Frei, 107–128. München: Beck, 2005.

Harries, Dan. *The New Media Book*. London: British Film Inst., 2002.

Hoskins, Andrew. “Digital Network Memory.” In *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, edited by Andrew Hoskinks, 91–108. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2009.

Hoskins, Andrew. “The Right to Be Forgotten in Post-Scarcity Culture.” In *The Ethics of Memory in the Digital Age: Interrogating the Right to be Forgotten*, edited by Alessia Ghezzi, Ângela Guimarães Pereira and Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic, 50–64. New York: Palgrave, 2014.

Huyssen, Andreas. *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

Kantsteiner, Wulf. “The Holocaust in the 21st Century: Digital Anxiety, Transnational Cosmopolitanism, and Never Again Genocide Without Memory.” In *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition*, edited by Andrew Hoskinks, 110–140. New York/London: Routledge, 2018.

Keilbach, Judith. *Geschichtsbilder und Zeitzeugen: Zur Darstellung des Nationalsozialismus im bundesdeutschen Fernsehen*. Münster: Lit.-Verlag, 2010.

Knoch, Habbo, ed. *Das Erbe der Provinz. Heimatkultur und Geschichtspolitik nach 1945*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2001.

Lindquvist, Sven. *Grabe, wo du stehst. Handbuch zur Erforschung der eigenen Geschichte*, edited and translated by Manfred Dammeyer. Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1989.

Pariser, Eli. *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*. New York: Penguin, 2011.

Rat für Kulturelle Bildung e.V., ed. *Jugend/YouTube/Kulturelle Bildung. Horizont 2019. Studie: Repräsentative Umfrage unter 12- bis 19-Jährigen zur Nutzung kultureller Bildungsangebote an digitalen Kulturorten*. Essen: 2019. Accessed June 13, 2022. www.rat-kulturelle-bildung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Studie_YouTube_Webversion_final_2.pdf.

Rosenstone, Robert. *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Sabrow, Martin and Frei, Norbert (eds.). *Die Geburt des Zeitzeugen nach 1945*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012.

Semrush. “Most Visited Websites by Traffic in the world for all categories.” Last modified March 2023. Accessed 24 April 2023. https://www.semrush.com/website/top/.

Sheehy, Megan. “New Perspectives on the Past: YouTube, Web 2.0 and Public History.” *Melbourne Historical Journal* 36(1) (2008): 59–74.

Steffen, Nils. “Doing History auf YouTube – Erklärvideos als Form performativer Historiografie.“ In *Geschichte auf YouTube. Neue Herausforderungen für Geschichtsvermittlung und historische* Bildung, edited by Christian Bunnenberg and Nils Steffen, 61–70. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019.

Süß, Dietmar, ed. *Deutschland im Luftkrieg. Geschichte und Erinnerung*. München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2007.

Thießen, Malte. *Eingebrannt ins Gedächtnis. Hamburgs Gedenken an Luftkrieg und Kriegsende 1943 bis 2005*. München: Dölling & Gallitz, 2007.

Thießen, Malte. “Zeitzeuge und Erinnerungskultur. Zum Verhältnis von privaten und öffentlichen Erzählungen des Luftkriegs.“ In *Die “Generation Kriegskinder“ – Historische Hintergründe und Deutungen*, edited by Lu Seegers and Jürgen Reulecke, 157–182. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verl., 2009.

Toffler, Alvin. *The Third Wave*, New York: Morrow, 1980.

Uhl, Heidemarie. “Vom Pathos des Widerstands zur Aura des Authentischen – Die Entdeckung des Zeitzeugen als Epochenschwelle der Erinnerung.“ In *Die Geburt des Zeitzeugen nach 1945 1945*, edited by Martin Sabrow and Norbert Frei, 224–246. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012.

Van Dijck, José. “Users like you? Theorizing Agency in User-generated Content.” *Media, Culture & Society* 31(1) (2009): 41–58.

Wehming, Marie-Christine. “Entgrenzte Erinnerung – unbegrenzte Möglichkeiten? Der Holocaust auf YouTube.“ In *artefrakte. Holocaust und Zweiter Weltkrieg in experimentellen Darstellungsformen in Literatur und Kunst*, edited by Esther Kilchmann, 145–153. Göttingen: Böhlau Verlag Köln, 2016.

Welzer, Harald/Montau, Robert/Plaß, Christine. *“Was wir für böse Menschen sind!“ Der Nationalsozialismus im Gespräch zwischen den Generationen*. Tübingen: Ed. diskord, 1997.

Wiese, Christian/Vogt, Stefan/Kiesel, Doron/Schneider-Ludorff, Gury. “Einleitung: Die Zukunft der Erinnerung.“ In *Die Zukunft der Erinnerung: Perspektiven des Gedenkens an die Verbrechen des Nationalsozialismus und die Shoah*, edited by Christian Wiese, Stefan Vogt, Doron Kiesel, and Gury Schneider-Ludorff, 1–18. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021.

Winter, Jay. *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Videos

Gedenkstätte Vulkan (19 June 2015*). Ein Zeitzeuge berichtet am Lager Kinzigdamm*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMZyrvxbZnI. Accessed 29 April 2023.

HechmeckeStudio (10 January 2012). *Ein Zeitzeuge erinnert sich an die NS Zeit in Plettenberg*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=qibgOAjURJY. Accessed 29 April 2023.

Edith Blaschitz, Heidemarie Uhl (†), Georg Vogt, Rosa Andraschek, Martin Krenn, Wolfgang Gasser

Rendering forgotten places of NS terror visible

Art, research, participation and digital technologies as an assemblage in the project "Making Traces Readable in the NS Forced Labour Camp Roggendorf/Pulkau"

After being largely neglected for a long time, NS forced labour camps and camp-like facilities used for the internment of prisoners of war and civil forced labourers are increasingly drawing interest from the realms of research and historic preservation and from the general public.[1] For Austria, the Federal Monuments Office has compiled all research on NS forced labour camps up to and including 2021 und calculated a total of 2,115 "NS victim sites" based on this secondary literature.[2] However, this already very high number is surely just the lower limit: It can be assumed that as the war progressed, collective forced labour camps were established in almost all larger communities for locally used prisoners of war, foreign civil forced labourers (among them also Hungarian Jewish families) – mostly in existing buildings but sometimes in newly built barracks as well. An ongoing research project starting from the 13 camp sites mentioned in the list has already located 64 places with 99 labour camps and camp-like facilities in the district of Krems alone.[3] Most of these former labour camp sites are no longer known, as

1 As an example for Austria, see Christian Klösch, *Lagerstadt Wolfsberg. Flüchtlinge Gefangene Internierte. Dokumentation zur Ausstellung* (Wolfsberg: Edition Museum im Lavanthaus, 2013); conference "Unsichtbare Lager in Niederösterreich: Beforschen, dokumentieren und zugänglich machen", 2019; see http://first-research.ac.at/2019/10/08/tagung-unsichtbare-lager-in-niederoesterreich-beforschen-dokumentieren-und-zugaenglich-machen; https://www.geschichtewiki.wien.gv.at/Zwangsarbeiterlager; http://ungarische-zwangsarbeit-in-wien.at; international see https://www.zwangsarbeit-in-leipzig.de/karte; EU project "Accessing Campscapes", https://www.campscapes.org, accessed 14 March 2023.

2 Bundesdenkmalamt (Austrian Federal Monuments Office), ed., Katalog NS-Opferorte in Österreich (sites of NS victims), https://www.bda.gv.at/service/denkmalverzeichnisse/liste-der-ns-opferorte-in-oesterreich.html/, accessed 14 March 2023.

3 See research project "'NS-Volksgemeinschaft' und Lager im Zentralraum Niederösterreich. Geschichte – Transformation – Erinnerung," Institut für jüdische Geschichte Österreichs with the

Note: We dedicate this article to Heidemarie Uhl (1956–2023), who drew our attention to this place and worked on it alongside us with the passion and commitment that characterized her.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-008

they can be found neither in scientific nor in local history publications. This is partly due to the fact that sources are fragmentary and that dealing with this "loaded" past is difficult when it comes to regional history, but there is also the factor that the use of forced labour was a normal part of everyday life in times of war. The employment of "foreign labourers" or prisoners of war as an everyday element of the NS regime[4] was handed down as historically remarkable only in cases of particular cruelty and rarely made its way into the local memory.

Where they have not been demolished yet, the many existing buildings that served as collective accommodation for forced labourers have long been put to other uses, and former larger-scale encampments are rarely recognisable as such now. The barracks have been removed and the areas have been either reconverted to fallow land or turned into housing estates, parking spaces, or leisure facilities.

This means that similar to the "Stolpersteine", which are placed directly outside the last residences of Jewish displaced and deported persons in order to commemorate them, these sites of forced labour are usually right in the middle of our everyday spaces – with a few exceptions where such sites were turned into memorials or somehow marked with reminders. The former camp sites were put to new uses and their historical dimension is no longer recognisable. So how can we create an awareness of these "loaded" but forgotten locations that are largely spaces in our everyday lives? This question is framed by fundamental challenges of the current culture of memory that arise from the growing temporal distance to the time of the Shoah and NS terror, and especially from the foreseeable end of direct historical testimony. The search for new anchor points for reference and confrontation and associated new formats of dissemination and involvement is characteristic of this present stage of "post-memory".[5] The historic location has come into focus as a new anchor point that is attributed "authenticity"[6] and

University for Continuing Education Krems (ns-lager-niederösterreich.at), 2022–2024, person responsible for research in the Krems district: Edith Blaschitz.

4 See, for example, Florian Freund, "NS-Arbeitskräftepolitik in der 'Ostmark,'" in *NS-Zwangsarbeit in der Elektrizitätswirtschaft der „Ostmark" 1938–1945*, ed., Oliver Rathkolb and Florian Freund. *Ennskraftwerke – Kaprun – Draukraftwerke – Ybbs-Persenbeug – Ernsthofen* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2014), 8–26, 9; in addition, oral history interviews with Franz Bischl, Helene Schneider, Herta Wieninger and Erika Thurner within the framework of the project "Spuren lesbar machen," interviewer: Edith Blaschitz, May 2022, available at: https://pulkau.topothek.at.

5 Hirsch, Marianne, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997).

6 On the frequently used but very vague term of "authenticity," see, for example, Michael Rössner and Heidemarie Uhl, ed., *Renaissance der Authentizität? Über die neue Sehnsucht nach dem Ursprünglichen* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012).

"truthfulness". In order to support referencing and get a better idea, there have been experiments with digital technologies as well. 'On-site' applications facilitate the simultaneous visual perception of historical (moving) images or digital reconstructions at the historical 'location'.

Against the background of the question of how to deal with forgotten camp sites in spaces of everyday life and what digital technologies can do, the project "Making Traces Readable in the NS Forced Labour Camp Roggendorf/Pulkau"[7] was developed and implemented in Lower Austria. The objective was to visualise – in other words, explore, represent, and make accessible – the history of forced labour in the quarry between Groß-Reipersdorf and Roggendorf close to the town Pulkau. The quarry experienced an eventful history and evolved from an early industrial location into a leisure paradise and event venue – and during the NS regime, prisoners of war and foreign civil persons were forced to do extremely hard physical labour there.

For the project, a concept was developed that combines the physical location with artistic and specialist approaches, participatory remembrance work, and digital technologies. This connection between the place, different actors (artists, scientific experts, digital/creative media technologies experts, and citizen scientists), and digital technologies can be referred to as an "assemblage" in which heterogeneous components form a social fabric in a collaborative process and in relation to one another. Within the framework of the implementation, the main focus of the project was on the question of how the various components can be entangled with each other in the most meaningful way possible in order to render the historical events and experiences visible. Due to the increasing temporal distance to the events of the Shoah and NS terror as well as a lack of available sources on locations that have received little attention so far, gaps and blank spaces are to be expected despite the reconstructive process. Another question addressed in the project was how a productive way of dealing with these gaps and fragmentary knowledge can be found.

7 Duration: 11/2021–04/2023, team: Rosa Andraschek (artist), Martin Krenn (artist), Austrian Academy of Sciences: Heidemarie Uhl; University for Continuing Education Krems: Edith Blaschitz, Daniela Wagner; Institute for Jewish History in Austria: Wolfgang Gasser; St. Pölten UAS: Georg Vogt, Clemens Baumann, Thomas Moser, Alexander Schlager, OpenGLAM: Sylvia Petrovic-Maier, with funding from: the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport, the provincial government of Lower Austria (division of Art and Culture).

1 Rediscovering "forgotten" historical locations using the example of the NS Forced Labour Camp in Roggendorf near Pulkau

We understand the forced labour camp in the granite quarry in Roggendorf close to Pulkau as an example of societal forgetting and of the rediscovery of locations of NS crimes. After 1945, people kept quiet about these places – after all, they were testimonies of personal and institutional entanglement with the NS regime and therefore best forgotten. The involvement of local society in the national socialist apparatus of power became a taboo topic. As is well known, Austria distanced itself from any responsibility for the Nazi regime with the so-called "Victim Theory" – by reference to the Moscow Declaration from 1943, Austria defined itself as "the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression" in its Declaration of Independence from 27 April 1945.[8] However, the collective silence and blocking-out strategy is characteristic not just of the former "perpetrator societies" of Germany and Austria but of all European countries that were occupied by the Nazi regime.[9] The historian Tony Judt refers to these national narratives of presenting one's "own" people as innocent and attributing crimes to Nazi Germany as "European post-war myths". These exculpatory self-portrayals lost their power of persuasion at the end of the twentieth century when the Holocaust moved into the centre of remembrance culture.[10] The debates revolving around the repression of personal and institutional involvement in the Nazi crimes and the catching-up through remembering the previously unacknowledged Holocaust victims became a transnational European phenomenon of the end of the twentieth century.[11] A new generation asked new questions about history – it was no longer about the nation that fell victim to the expansion politics of the "Third Reich" but rather about society: The NS tyranny, and especially the persecution and deportation of the Jewish population,

8 See Ruth Wodak et al., *Wir sind alle unschuldige Täter* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990); Heidemarie Uhl, "Opferthesen, revisited. Österreichs ambivalenter Umgang mit der NS-Vergangenheit," *Österreich. Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte 68/34–35* (2018): 47–54.

9 See Tony Judt, "Die Vergangenheit ist ein anderes Land: Politische Mythen im Nachkriegseuropa," *Transit* 6 (1993): 87–120.

10 See Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*: Der Holocaust (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001).

11 See Tony Judt, "Epilog: Erinnerungen aus dem Totenhaus. Ein Versuch über das moderne europäische Gedächtnis," in *Geschichte Europas von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Tony Judt (Munich, Vienna: Hanser, 2006), 931–966; Monika Flacke, ed., *Mythen der Nationen. 1945 – Arena der Erinnerungen*, (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern Verlag, 2004) (catalogue on the exhibition of the same name by the Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin 2004/05).

would not have been possible without the active participation or at least acceptance of broad segments of the population. Working through the shared responsibility for the Nazi crimes brought local history into focus for the first time.

As the Nazi past was consistently ignored in the post-war decades, the places where the NS tyranny manifested itself in concrete terms tended to be forgotten by society.[12] Their history was not passed on to the next generations. There was a social consensus, particularly in the local face-to-face communities, on what to talk about and what to keep quiet about. Dominant narratives focused on military service in the German *Wehrmacht*, institutionalised in the "Kameradschaftsverbände" (associations of comradeship) that became mass organisations a few years after the end of the war. They also characterised the memorial landscape at the local and regional levels. The war memorials, most of which were installed after World War One, now also commemorated the soldiers of the *Wehrmacht*.[13] Memorials for the resistance against the Nazi regime were extremely hard to realise outside the big cities. The fact that there may have been opponents of the Nazi regime – who were imprisoned, deported to concentration camps, or killed for their commitment – in one's own community was another taboo subject. After all, the associated questions of concrete shared responsibility for the denunciation and persecution of political opponents would have challenged the consensus of silence. As a consequence, perpetrators were protected, while the victims were purposefully forgotten. We discovered this same approach to the victims in the region we investigated: The day labourer Anna Goldsteiner from Pulkau was executed by beheading at the Regional Court of Vienna on 5 July 1944 for "Wehrkraftzersetzung" (a Third-Reich term for "undermining the military forces"). It was not until 2011 and upon the persistent and long-futile efforts of her grandson that she was acknowledged with a commemorative plaque – which is now located, not very prominently, at the foot of the war memorial.[14]

As mentioned earlier, the rediscovery of the repressed local Nazi history is the result of the change in perspective on the NS era that came about in the 1980s. The Nazi crimes, and the Holocaust in particular, which were off limits in

12 One exception is the concentration camp in Mauthausen where a memorial was built upon the initiative of the Soviet occupational forces. In line with victim theory, however, the concentration camp was reinterpreted as a site of Austrian victimisation; see Bertrand Perz, *Die KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen. 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2006).

13 This was critically examined for the first time in Reinhold Gärtner and Sieglinde Rosenberger, *Kriegerdenkmäler. Vergangenheit in der Gegenwart*, (Innsbruck: Österreichischer Studienverlag, 1991).

14 See Anna Goldsteiner, "Die Unterstützerin der Schlurfs von Pulkau," in *Nationalsozialismus in Niederösterreich. Opfer. Täter. Gegner* (Nationalsozialismus in den österreichischen Bundesländern 9), ed., Stefan Eminger, Ernst Langthaler and Klaus-Dieter Mulley (Innsbruck u.a.: Studien-Verlag, 2021), 289–291.

the silence consensus of the post-war decades, now took centre stage and the fact that the victims of persecution were forgotten and the NS past repressed thus far were much criticised. Instead, the main focus then moved especially to Nazi history in the immediate vicinity – the forgotten places of Nazi terror became anchor points for the reconstruction of a history of violence on our very doorstep. The silence of the parents and grandparents became the motor for the "generation of memory"[15] committed to the reappraisal of the NS past. Local initiatives researched the persecution of the Jewish population in their district and their community. The study of temporary history was characterised by an intensive confrontation of local and regional NS history, borne by a young generation of historians. A topography of persecution, displacement, and destruction extending across all of Austria was thus rendered visible: the synagogues and houses of prayer destroyed during the November pogrom of 1938, the train stations used for deportation, the external camps belonging to the concentration camps, the innumerable execution sites along the death marches where Jewish forced labourers from Hungary were driven across Eastern Austria towards Mauthausen as the Soviet army drew near. The forced labour camp in the granite quarry of Roggendorf close to Pulkau was first brought up in a publication on Hungarian Jews who were forced to do labour in Lower Austria in 1944/45 – a pioneering work published by Marie Theresia Litschauer in 2006.[16] The aforementioned list drawn up by the Austrian Federal Monuments Office which makes reference to 2,115 NS victim sites is the result and the catalyst of an awareness, which has grown in the past years, of the extent to which forced labourers were used in Austria. But just as is the case in Pulkau, many of these locations still barely register at all in the local memory.[17]

15 See Jay Winter, "The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Contemporary Historical Studies," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 27 (2000): 69–92.

16 Maria Theresia Litschauer, *6|44 – 5|45 Ungarisch-Jüdische ZwangsarbeiterInnen. Ein topo|foto|grafisches Projekt* (Vienna: SCHLEBRÜGGE.EDITOR, 2006), 207–212. In fundamental publications on Hungarian Jewish forced labourers, there is no evidence on the quarry in Roggendorf as a forced labour site yet; see, for example, Szabolcs Szita, *Verschleppt, verhungert, vernichtet: die Deportation von ungarischen Juden auf das Gebiet des annektierten Österreich 1944–1945* (Vienna: Eichbauer Verlag, 1999); Eleonore Lappin, Susanne Uslu-Pauer, Susanne and Alfred Wieninger, *Ungarisch-jüdische Zwangsarbeiterinnen und Zwangsarbeiter in Niederösterreich 1944/45* (Studien und Forschungen aus dem NÖ Institut für Landeskunde 45), (St. Pölten: NÖ Inst. für Landeskunde, 2006).

17 [Fritz Dittlbacher], NS-Opfer Die vergessenen Lager, orf.at, 04/06/2021, see https://orf.at/stories/3215700/, accessed on 23 March 2023.

2 Making places readable – aesthetic strategies of site specificity

As mentioned earlier, many cases of "rediscovered" historical sites of Nazi violence have been built over, adapted for new uses, or demolished. Frequently, only few material relics remain and many of them are hidden below the surface. The project title "Making Traces Readable in the NS Forced Labour Camp Roggendorf/Pulkau" is thus programmatic: In order to make places speak out loud, to tell their story, and to raise awareness for their past, it is necessary to render historical traces readable – regardless of whether they are material remains or have been forgotten. The historical and contemporary location of Roggendorf/Pulkau becomes the starting point for the artistic examination that operates with site specificity and in cooperation with the local community to develop new formats of narration in the process. The artistic projects designed by Rosa Andraschek and Martin Krenn (as we will see later) show the potential of using digital media for these new forms of conveyance – they allow visitors to independently and individually discover the place's history, to decipher the material remains, and to reconstruct the forced labour camp's structures which are no longer there.

3 Space – (re-)constructions of the past – digital technologies

When it comes to historical sites which are preserved and staged as such, visitors have certain 'expectations of authenticity' and wish to see reference made to historical events and experiences. With reference to the touristic context, Erik Cohen already established in the 1970s that visitors accept staged 'authenticity' as 'authentic' when it is recognised as such.[18] A US study of museums came to similar conclusions: In order to fulfil visitors' 'authenticity expectations', it is sufficient for things to appear 'authentic'.[19] Media and technologies are used to fulfil these expectations as well. Operators, on the other hand, are eager to fulfil this need or awaken such

18 Erik Cohen, "Rethinking the Sociology of Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 6(1) (1979): 18–35.

19 Theo van Leeuwen, "What is Authenticity? Discourse Studies – Special Issue: Authenticity in Media Discourse" (2001), cited in Katja Köhr, *Die vielen Gesichter des Holocaust. Museale Repräsentationen zwischen Individualisierung, Universalisierung und Nationalisierung* (Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2012), 16.

needs with appropriate offers. In order to make educational offers more attractive, there have been experiments with technologies such as Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality in the past few years. In this context, 'on-site' applications have been developed that integrate georeferenced historical (moving) images and digital reconstructions right at the historical "site".[20] Such augmented[21] or blended[22] spaces tend to promise users an allegedly direct glimpse into the past. With film techniques such as close-up and direct viewing or the use of moving images, history is 'brought to life' and sometimes viewers even get to experience it as their own. Digital technologies serve as intensifiers of perception and as facilitators of affective reference to historical realities ('putting oneself in another person's shoes'). These applications are often communicated as 'living history', 'time travel', or 'own testimony' of historical events and experiences.[23] The seemingly precise images of the past suggest that they can answer the question of 'What was it really like?' that is relevant for everyone interested in history.

The appeal of the 'direct view into the past' extends to the telling of the history of the Shoah and NS terror as well. Although the announcement of 'authenticity' seems questionable owing to the sensitivity of this topic area – especially when own experiences are insinuated[24] – new ways of conveying history are urgently sought after as the possibility of direct accounts by contemporary witnesses will end soon. For example, there have been experiments with technology-assisted 'own testimony'. One Augmented Reality app on the story of Anne Frank, which was already offered in 2012, promised users a clear picture of the past: It claimed to show Amsterdam "just like it was during World War II".[25] The mobile app "IWalk" by the USC Shoah Foundation makes historical images and eyewitness accounts available in marked locations and is currently also referred to as a

20 Apps such as timelooper, revisitor; see Edith Blaschitz, "Digitale Erinnerungstechnologien in der historischen Vermittlungs- und Bildungsarbeit," *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur (ÖGL)* 4 (2018): 364–371, 344–345.

21 Lev Manovich, "The Poetics of Augmented Space," *Visual Communication* 5(2) (2006): 219–240.

22 David Benyon, "Presence in Blended Spaces," *Interacting with Computers* 24(4) (2012): 219–226.

23 See Edith Blaschitz, "Mediale Zeugenschaft und Authentizität: Zeitgeschichtliche Vermittlungsarbeit im augmentierten Alltagsraum," *Hamburger Journal für Kulturanthropologie* 5 (2016): 51–67.

24 See, for example, early media-assisted offerings such as that of the Anne Frank Exhibition at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles which promised visitors they would "experience the story as never before," as quoted in Edith Blaschitz and Erich Herber, "Mediating The Holocaust Past: Transmedia Concepts at Holocaust Memorials and Museums," in *Politika Memorije in Pozabe, Načini izročila in Interpretacije / The Politics of Memory and Oblivion, Modes of Transmission and Interpretation*, ed. Jana Babšek (Tržič: Muzej Tržic, 2016), 261–274, 269.

25 Downloaded on 2 January 2016; no longer in use today, see https://www.annefrank.org.

window into the past ("IWalk unlocks a new window into our past"[26]), which enables users to empathise: "The groundbreaking Virtual IWalk web app [. . .] allowing viewers to feel like they are standing with the survivor at the location".[27]

In many cases, this perpetuates debates that have an extensive history of discourse regarding the relationship between film and history. In the promise of offering "windows into our past", recourse is made both to the indexicality and documentary character of cinematic pictures and to the reconstructive capacity of cinematic presentation of the past. If we understand history more in the sense of Walter Benjamin as moments that we encounter when the present enters into a constellation with them, we experience another dimension that also became the basis of project work in the granite quarry. The focus here is not on the immersion in a media representation of the past and an attempt at reconstruction, but on the contrast between mediatisation and the present physical space. The past is rendered visible as a trace, as the "empowerment of a memory"[28] through artistic practice – an added value becomes apparent between media phenomena and the physical venue. Searching and finding such traces in this type of quarry involves the context of old photographs as well as material changes and traces on site. Stories can be spread over the place like a net and provide an orientation that is derived from the narration just as much as from the physical experience of walking. In the installation of Martin Krenn, this experience of walking and exploring on one's own encounters fragments of the past that suddenly show themselves, just like Walter Benjamin intended. By now, the practices and constellations between the physical and virtual spaces and their interrelationship offer a multitude of approaches in the field of tension between reconstruction and encounter.

Digital Mapping is also used to reconstruct past events, only it is not the fascination of technology-assisted perception effects that is at the centre but rather the visualisation of historical micro- and macrolevels as well as the enrichment with digital information: Digital overview maps highlight the marked places' integration into larger contexts. Moreover, the individual places can be enhanced with georeferenced information, video and audio files, and images (or linked to

26 About IWalk, https://iwitness.usc.edu/sites/iwalk, accessed on 14 March 2023.

27 New Virtual IWalk Web App Brings Remote Users to Holocaust-Related Historical Sites, https://sfi.usc.edu/news/2022/01/32476-new-virtual-iwalk-web-app-brings-remote-users-holocaust-related-historical-sites, accessed on 14 March 2023; see also Victoria Grace Walden. "Afterword: Digital Holocaust Memory Futures: Through Paradigms of Immersion and Interactivity and Beyond," in *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*, ed. Victoria Grace Walden (London: Springer International Publishing, 2021).

28 Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte," www.textlog.de/benmain/abhandlungen/ueber-den-begriff-der-geschichte.

Figure 1: GPS Web App (photo by Martin Krenn).

relevant databases). By now, there is a multitude of Digital Mapping projects (like the GPS Web App as shown in figure 1) in the German-speaking area addressing the history of the Shoah and NS terror or places of Jewish life.[29]

Digital maps are particularly suitable for collaborative and self-motivated work. Digital Mapping, which refers to the (collaborative) measuring and mapping of spaces,[30] has evolved into an active practice of reconstructing narratives of the present but also the past. With the goals of consolidating the sense of identity and of self-affirmation, for example, communities draw up digital maps together that depict their present and past.[31] In many cases, this results in the development of "counter maps" that "re-map" dominant representations.[32] In other words, the heightened societal awareness of participatory processes and di-

29 See, for example, memento.wien; https://www.mappingthelives.org; https://verbrannte-orte.de; https://www.gedenkplaetze.info, https://map.erinnerungszeichen.de; www.erinnerungslandschaft.at; http://ungarische-zwangsarbeit-in-wien.at, accessed on 14 March 2023.

30 See Chris Perkins, "Mapping Place," in *The Routledge Handbook of Place*, ed., Tim Edensor, Ares Kalandides and Uma Kothari (London: Routledge, 2020), 357–366.

31 See, for eample, the use of https://www.historypin.org as a platform for various community maps.

32 See Perkins, *Mapping*, 362.

versified cultures of memory is also reflected in activities that use spaces as the basis for historical considerations.

In the humanities and social sciences, the space-related approach has led to new questions and to the proclamation of a "Spatial Turn".[33] As Doreen Massey puts it, space is a result of practices, relationships, connections, and inconsistencies.[34] She adds that this makes space a "sphere of the possibility of multiplicity".[35] Since Pierre Nora Memory research has also addressed the connection between places and (collective) memory for a long time now. While these questions pertaining to specific places were nationally, religiously, or ethnically framed[36] in the 1980s and 1990s, transnational perspectives extending beyond the boundaries of identities, nations, and communities of remembrance as well as beyond the discussion of individual places became increasingly relevant from the 2000s and, even more so, the 2010s. Divergent narratives of remembrance are taken into account and changes, connections, and interdependencies are explored.[37] The collective memory is defined as changeable and fluid: Jeffrey K. Olick refers to the collective memory as an "ongoing process",[38] while Astrid Erll talks about a "travelling memory",[39] and Michael Rothberg calls it a "multidirectional memory".[40] Despite the emphasis on these changeable and fluid properties, Susannah Radstone also points out the necessity of locatedness of the transnational memory in its local character-

33 As an example, see Laura Kajetzke and Markus Schroer, "Spaces Studies," in *Kultur. Von den Cultural Studies bis zu den Visual Studies*, ed. Stephan Moebius (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 196–215; see also, for example, Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Knopf, 1995); Karl Schlögel, *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit. Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2006); Ernst Hanisch, *Landschaft und Identität. Versuch einer österreichischen Erfahrungsgeschichte* (Vienna, Weimar: Böhlau, 2019).

34 Doreen Massey, "Space, time and political responsibility in the midst of global inequality," *Erdkunde* 60(2) (2006): 89–95.

35 Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 177–180, see also Michel de Certeau, *Kunst des Handelns* (Berlin: Merve, 1988).

36 Generally, with regard to national places of memory, see Pierre Nora, ed., *Les lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–1994).

37 See, for example, Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Chiara De Cesari and Anne Rigney, ed., *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); Lucy Bond et al., "Introduction: Memory on the Move," in *Memory on the Move* (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 1–26.

38 Jeffrey K. Ollick, *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 84.

39 Astrid Erll, "Travelling Memory," *Parallax* 17(4) (2011): 4–18, DOI: 10.1080/13534645.2011.605570.

40 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

istics, its "condensations and displacements".[41] It is not surprising that these views are formulated in times of the digitalisation of all spheres of life: Digital practices, connectivity, and own technology-assisted media production and distribution are making cultures of remembrance and reconstructions of the past more varied. Hegemonic narratives are being expanded, while divergent narratives are becoming (more) visible. Anna Reading has coined the term "globital memory", which means a memory that uses mobile digital technologies to connect different spaces and public spheres – the local to the (trans-)national, the individual to the collective, and the private to the public.[42]

In spatial research, the introduction of digital technologies has resulted in new questions and evaluation possibilities as well. For example, tools of the digital humanities are used in order to visualise the process of progressing ghettoisation in Budapest based on large volumes of (registration) data.[43] The mediation project of the digital reconstruction of no-longer-existing barracks at the memorial site Bergen-Belsen with the help of survivors led to new findings regarding the accommodation of the prisoners.[44] In this context, Silvana Mandolesi makes reference to the "forensic turn" that is characteristic of the post-eyewitness era: "[W]here the truth is obtained by examining the material traces of violence".[45] When it comes to a spatial localisation of historic events, digital technologies now make it possible to display both space and time – either directly on site using georeferenced apps embedding contents that recreate history, or with the help of maps such as those suggested in the concept of multi-layered "Deep Maps".[46]

---

41 Susannah Radstone, "What Place Is This? Transcultural Memory and the Locations of Memory Studies," *Parallax* 7(4) (2011): 109–123, DOI: 10.1080/13534645.2011.605585, 120.

42 Anna Reading, "Globalisation and Digital Memory: Globital Memory's Six Dynamics. On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age," in *On Media Memory. Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, ed., Motti Neiger et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), 241–252, 243.

43 Tim Cole, "Holocaust Landscapes. Mapping Ghettoization in Hungary," 2014, https://simon.vwi.ac.at/index.php/simon/article/view/140/62, accessed on 14 March 2023; see also Anne Kelly Knowles et al, *Geographies of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

44 See http://www.belsen-project.specs-lab.com, accessed on 14 March 2023; Paul F. Verschure, "Spatializing experience: a framework for the geolocalization, visualization and exploration of historical data using VR/AR technologies," *Proceedings of the 2014 Virtual Reality International Conference*. ACM, April 2014.

45 Anstett and Dreyfus (2015) and Dziuban (2017), cited in Silvana Mandolessi, "Challenging the placeless imaginary in digital memories: The performation of place in the work of Forensic Architecture," *Memory Studies* 4(3) (2021): 622–633, https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980211010922.

46 See, among others, John Bodenhamer, John Corrigan and Trevor M. Harris, *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives Deep* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015); Dennis Wood, "Mapping Deeply," *Humanities* 4(3) (2015): 304–318.

The above-mentioned connection between different spaces and public spheres also overcomes the idea of a clear separation of online and offline worlds that was dominant for a long time. In the present phase, which is referred to as "post-digital" and in which the digital revolution is already considered to have occurred, such a distinction is becoming increasingly obsolete.[47] In many areas of life, digital and analogue elements have already become so inextricably linked that hybridity is perceived as a matter of course. Accordingly, concepts of historical representation, discussion, and participation are becoming hybrid as well.

The space-related approach is particularly appropriate for the implementation of hybrid concepts: Physical sites, heterogeneous actors, and technologies are connected to enable the permeation of what Massey describes as the "polyphonic" space. In other words, a physical place is not just augmented digitally but – and this is important – different components of representation, discussion, and participation are connected and related to each other in a meaningful way. When it comes to such "mergers", "assemblage" ("assembler" is French for "merge" or "put together") seems to be an apt term. It originates from the fine arts and has – based on the philosophical and theoretical considerations of Gilles Deleuze und Félix Guattari[48] – evolved into a term that is flexibly and widely used in the cultural, social, and urbanistic disciplines with different interpretations and definitions. What the various interpretations have in common is that they refer to the relational behaviour of certain heterogeneous actors within a social and/or cultural fabric.[49] Manuel DeLanda defines an "assemblage" as

> a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of a co-functioning: It is a symbiosis, a 'sympathy'.[50] [. . .] It is this type of irreducible social whole produced by relations of exteriority, a whole that does not totalise its parts. [. . .] We can refer to these social wholes as "assemblages".[51]

47 See, for example, Nicholas Negroponte, "Beyond digital," *Wired* (12 January 1998), https://web.media.mit.edu/~nicholas/Wired/WIRED6-12.html, accessed on 14 March 2023; Florian Cramer, "What Is Post Digital?," in *Postdigital Aesthetics: Art, Computation and Design*, ed., David M. Berry and Michael Dieter (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 12–28.

48 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1980).

49 See Ian Buchanan, *Assemblage Theory and Method: An Introduction and Guide* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).

50 Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 1.

51 DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 11.

These non-hierarchical components of "different natures" – which, in turn, form a functioning "social entity" – can be people, towns, or communities[52] but also things[53] or "technological agents".[54] With regard to tourist places, for example, Germann-Golz says that these turn into "hybrid assemblages" whose different components interact with one another: "[T]ourist places are now likely to be hybrid assemblages of physical and virtual environments in which bodies, technologies, virtualities, and materialities become entangled with one another".[55]

4 History of the quarry

The commercial use of the granite quarry, differing shares of which has been owned by the villages of Roggendorf and Groß-Reipersdorf as well as the respective leaseholders, goes back to 1870.[56] The region located away from any larger economic centres was connected to the railway network in 1872, and the improved transport conditions made it profitable to exploit the area's many quarries. The quarry premises were usually leased by large firms from Vienna and its vicinity, which operated construction and quarry companies in various locations throughout Austria. The "Granitwerk Roggendorf" [Roggendorf granite plant] experienced its heyday from the mid-1920s: Approximately 300 quarry workers were employed there to produce crushed rock, sand, and gravel.[57] The workers settled in the surrounding villages and communities with their families. Work at the quarry was dangerous and (fatal) accidents happened again and again. The poorly remunerated quarry workers were not regarded very highly in this region characterised by agriculture but found themselves at the lower end of the regional social hierarchy.[58] Insufficient sales during the time after the global economic crisis forced the quarry company into bankruptcy in 1930. Three years

52 DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, 19.

53 In research on material cultures, for example, "assemblage" is used to refer to open and dynamic relationship structures between objects of different materiality that behave towards one another in specific ways in specific situations (thanks to Thomas Kühtreiber for this information).

54 Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski, "Media witnessing and the ripeness of time," *Cultural Studies* 28(4) (March 2014).

55 Jennie Germann Molz, *Travel Connections. Technology and Togetherness in a Mobile World* (London, New York: Routledge, 2012), 43.

56 Alois Fuchs, *150 Jahre Pfarre Roggendorf* (Eggenburg: Preßvereins-Druckerei, 1934), 50.

57 Police chronicles Röschitz, entry from August 1931 (police station Eggenburg).

58 See, for example, Oral history interviews with Gerhard Gschwandtner (Pulkau, 10/05/2022); Friedrich Daffert (Roggendorf, 19/08/2022).

later, the enterprise was reopened by the well-known Viennese banker and industrialist baron Leopold Popper-Podhragy.[59] The resumption of business was, however, not particularly successful: By 1934, there were only 25 workers employed in the granite factory.

After the "Anschluss" in 1938, Leopold Popper-Podhragy sought exile in England as he was classified as "half Jew" and "subject to political prosecution for concrete acts of persecution against him during the Austrian occupation", as the Restitution Commission found in 1950.[60] In 1941, the quarry enterprise was leased to Franz Geisler from the nearby community of Zellerndorf without the approval of Popper-Podhragy. Later that year, the quarry workers called up for service in the Wehrmacht were replaced by civil forced labourers from Ukraine and Poland, and later by Soviet prisoners of war.[61]

They were most likely accommodated in a closed-down brickyard in Groß-Reipersdorf, very close to the quarry premises.[62] Starting from November 1944, an additional 29 abducted Jews from Hungary and the Vojvodina region, which was occupied by Hungary at the time, were taken to the quarry for forced labour, among them several families.[63] Those who were able to work had to do extremely hard physical labour as well. In the spring of 1945, the Jewish forced labourers fled west to escape the ordered "evacuation". Based on the current state of sources, it cannot be reconstructed with certainty whether the then operations manager Franz Liko or the overseer Anton Wechselberger was involved in their escape.[64]

In 1946, the quarry enterprise was leased by the Hattey family and work was resumed with 50 labourers.[65] However, the business had to be shut down in 1950 when Leopold Popper-Podhragy sued for the right to lease out the premises and

59 Police chronicles Röschitz, entry from 10/07/1933 (police station Eggenburg).

60 Decision of the Restitution Commission before the Regional Court of Vienna, 14/06/1950, Zhl 50 RK 1090/48-22 (RKb 355 50-21), operation facilities act of the granite works Roggendorf/Zellerndorf, BH Hollabrunn, Gruppe XII, Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv.

61 Litschauer, *Ungarisch-Jüdische ZwangsarbeiterInnen*.

62 Litschauer, *Ungarisch-Jüdische ZwangsarbeiterInnen*, 209. Herta Wieninger, who lived in the brickyard with her family, cannot remember whether the prisoners of war accommodated in the brickyard worked in the quarry or not; see oral history interview with Herta Wieninger (Groß-Reipersdorf, 10/05/2022).

63 See "list of Hungarian Jews in the granite works F. Geisler on 31 January 1945," interview with Magda Katic-Pantic, Novi Sad 1998, USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive, https://vha.usc.edu.

64 See video interview with Magda Berger (Großberger), Belgrade 1998, USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive, https://vha.usc.edu; interview with Wilhelm Liko (Kappl, 08/08/2022), Litschauer, *Ungarisch-Jüdische ZwangsarbeiterInnen*, 211.

65 Waldviertler Post, 16/06/1946, 3.

obtained satisfaction from the Restitution Commission.[66] The continuation of quarry operations was not realised then.[67] The factory buildings fell into disrepair and nature reconquered the area. In the post-war period, a scattering created a natural pond that the young people from the surrounding area used as a place for bathing. The quarry premises became a source of recreation and adventure for generations of children and adolescents.[68] In the 1980s, granite exploitation was resumed for a short time and the water vein was scattered again, which caused the pond to run dry. Subsequently, the former quarry premises were and are still used as a venue for cultural and other events.

Today, the place retains few material traces of its past – a transformer building with well-preserved structure and some ruins of quarry operation buildings, among them the building that the Jewish forced labourers were accommodated in. The "Stein-Arena", a small stage with adjacent event room, was built in place of the dilapidated former machine hall.

While the history of the quarry with its significance for the economy of the place is anchored in the local memory,[69] the history of forced labour was not until recently. In 2006, the artist Maria Theresia Litschauer published a book in which the history of Jewish forced labour in the quarry was reconstructed for the first time.[70] In 2021, an information board on the history of the place was erected on the former quarry premises, which refers to forced labour during the NS regime as well.

5 Implementation of the project "Making Traces Readable in the NS Forced Labour Camp Roggendorf/Pulkau"

For the goal of visibility – this means researching, representing, and making the history of forced labour at the quarry accessible – a concept was developed that combines the physical site with artistic and specialist approaches, participatory memory work and digital technologies. This combination of "components of different nature",[71] which form a social whole in relation to each other and in joint

66 Litschauer, *Ungarisch-Jüdische ZwangsarbeiterInnen*.
67 Litschauer, *Ungarisch-Jüdische ZwangsarbeiterInnen*.
68 Interview with Erwin Röck (Pulkau, 03/06/2023, interviewer: Martin Krenn).
69 Erwin Röck, "Wirtschaft," in *Pulkau, Stadtgeschichte, Kunst, Kultur*, ed., Herbert Puschnik and Herta Puschnik (Pulkau: n.p. 1998), 174–180, 179–180.
70 See Litschauer, *Ungarisch-Jüdische ZwangsarbeiterInnen*, 209–212.
71 DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*, see above.

action, can be described as an "assemblage", as described above. In order to capture the changing history of the location in its synchronous and diachronous complexity, the focus was on the question of how these different components can be meaningfully related to each other (entangled) using their respective "added value" and become a collaborative social process.

A key starting point for the discussion was the physical location, which, as already described, was used as an anchor point for the reference to historical events and experiences. The changing history of the quarry – formerly an industrial site and an important economic factor for the region, a "horror site" of forced labour under the Nazis, and a recreational and event location reclaimed by nature – led to the decision to work not only on the phase of the Nazi era, but on the entire "biography" of the site and the associated memories and perceptions. This holistic approach also supported the work with the local Citizen Scientists, who – as is often the case in places 'burdened' with Nazi history – feared a hallmarking as a site of National Socialist crimes.[72]

Heterogeneous actors dealt with the topic in a transdisciplinary way: The project team consisted of artists, historians, and digital/creative media technologies experts without a direct connection to the location. For this reason, there was intensive on-site cooperation with the municipality of Pulkau[73] and the local educational association "Bildung hat Wert". The local contact persons provided the premises, did valuable communication work, supported the search for contemporary witnesses and archives, and sent out information letters as well as calls for collections. A history workshop (see figure 2) was set up on site, in which mainly older people with an interest in local history took part.[74] Scientifically researched information was made available to the participants, and they were invited to discuss the history of the quarry. The exchange with the project team took place on site at the five set dates of the history workshop. In addition, local experts were consulted regarding individual issues. A school project also involved 13- to 14-year-old students from the Neue Mittelschule Pulkau. The students there were introduced to the basic techniques of oral history and subsequently interviewed parents and grandparents about their memories of the quarry.

72 Discussion "Geschichtswerkstatt" (history workshop), 24/06/2022, town hall Pulkau, concept and management: Wolfgang Gasser.

73 Especially mayor Leo Ramharter.

74 Seventeen participants in the beginning.

From the scientific-historical side, research was conducted in (inter)national archives and local private collections and, additionally, oral history interviews with local contemporary witnesses were conducted.[75]

Figure 2: Citizen Science Workshop, Pulkau (photo by Alexander Schlager).

The researched and prepared material was made available to the participants of the history workshop as well as to the participating artists as an impulse for their own further work. All participants were also able to access the material collected in the local "Topothek" (see below).

In the course of the research, contacts were established with descendants of people who were directly involved in the events of forced labour during the Nazi era (operators of the quarry as well as former detainees). One of the later contacts of the project was integrated into an artistic project, reflections from the perspective of the affected families will be included in the planned publication.

Digital technologies were used both to represent the historical events and experiences on site and as a tool for collecting photographs and documents. Today,

75 In addition to the aforementioned oral history interviews, there are further interviews with Erwin Lustig (Rohrendorf an der Pulkau), Helene Schneider, Helga Knell and Johanna Prekl (Pulkau), Maria Engel, Helene Schneider (Groß-Reipersdorf), accessible at https://pulkau.topothek.at, accessed 14 March 2023; Maria Manschein (Roggendorf).

the quarry is a largely "empty" place whose historical layers are barely legible. Mobile digital technologies can be used to create historical spaces at the quarry site that represent and narrate the present location in longitudinal time. Based on the historical research, the artistically curated on-site georeferenced web application "DER STEINBRUCH, DAS LAGER UND DIE ORTSCHAFTEN"[76] (the quarry, the camp, and the villages) makes stories, perceptions, and memories from different times accessible on site and thus visible and audible by means of historical photographs and documents, supplemented by a voice from offstage. Through the physical and sensual experience of wandering through the site, the app's images and texts interweave the eventful history of the former quarry with the current appearance of the area. The creation of "mixed realities" through technologies such as augmented reality was deliberately avoided here, and the media narrative remains recognisable as such.

The second art project (as shown in figure 3),[77] which deals with Jewish forced labour at the quarry, focuses on the fragmentary and changeable character of memory and reconstruction of the past as well as on voids that remain despite historical reconstruction. Traces in the quarry are recorded in a digital memory space, audio files and texts connect the local memory with traditional family memories from Israel to form a transnational memory. The process of constructing the past also becomes visible in the project itself, when participating researchers talk about their approach to the search for traces.

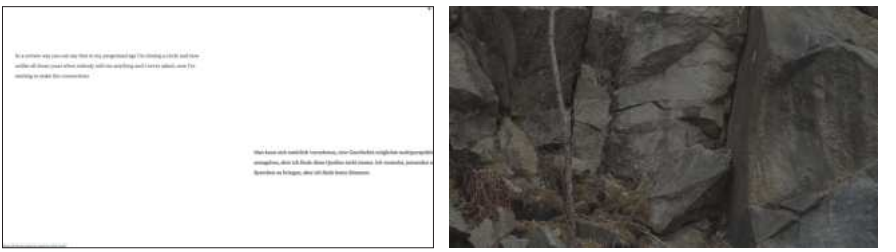


Figure 3: Memoryspaces.at (screenshot and photo by Rosa Andraschek).

Digital technologies were also used as tools and repositories for collecting and documenting. The project team's suggestion to implement the technically very low-threshold, collaborative online platform "Topothek" was implemented by

76 Martin Krenn, see granitsteinbruch.at.

77 Rosa Andraschek, see memoryspaces.at.

the participants of the history workshop.[78] The "Topothek" is a nationwide bottom-up initiative in which, according to its own definition, "locally historically relevant material and knowledge that is in private hands is secured, made accessible, and made visible online".[79] Organised locally in each case, interested parties independently upload historical images and documents, comment on them, and keyword them. The digital artefacts contributed can be accessed in georeferenced form via digital maps.

6 Results and conclusion

The project "Making Traces Readable in the NS Forced Labour Camp Roggendorf/Pulkau" produced two artistic projects in the form of a mobile web app and a digital memory room, a historical documentation of the history of the quarry from 1870 to the present day, 12 oral history interviews with contemporary witnesses between the ages of 86 and 96,[80] several short interviews by pupils, three contributions by local citizen scientists, and the establishment of the digital collection platform "Topothek Pulkau". Three events held in Pulkau for the public (kick-off event, presentation of content results, presentation of artistic results) were met with very high interest.

The developed guidelines and handouts have been made available via the project's webpage and offer numerous helpful tips for communities looking to carry out similar projects. The lab setting also made it clear that certainpartial performances of the project require professional instruction. A community's confrontation of its own past is often associated with local areas of conflict and negotiation processes that need extensive moderation and guidance. Moreover, support is certainly needed in the management and in the collection and licencing of data, as everyone involved needs to have a clear understanding of the circumstances and the purposes that the collected data may be used for.

All in all, it is a very complex project which cannot, in its entirety, be applied to all "forgotten" places but requires appropriate promotion and resources. It can be carried out only with extensive support and interest from the concerned community, as is the case here.

78 https://pulkau.topothek.at.

79 See https://www.topothek.at/de/was-ist, accessed 14 March 2023.

80 Eleven video interviews and two audio interviews; nine video interviews available in the Topothek Pulkau.

Although the invitation of confrontation extended to the entire "biography" of the quarry, all three contributions that were worked out and presented at the end of the project deal with Nazi era topics. The chosen topic was, however, not the quarry itself but issues that allowed for individual reference (forced labour in one's own home community, or the fate of people belonging to one's own family).

Following the initial introduction and storage of some datasets on the part of the project team, the Topothek was also filled by participants of the *Geschichtswerkstatt*. For example, the datasets of the local photo club were included there. Currently, the online Topothek encompasses more than 7,500 digital artefacts, among them 190 relating to the quarry and 119 artefacts from the period between 1938 and 1945. The difference in narratives (artistic/historical vs. self-motivated in the Topothek) has not been examined yet.

The confrontation of material traces on the spot within the framework of the implementation of the artistic on-site application supports the continuous process of reconstruction: The knowledge gained from archive material and testimonies from contemporary witnesses can be examined and verified based on realities on site. Blank spaces and fragmented knowledge were deliberately addressed in the artistic projects. This promotes the perception of history as a reconstructive process and thus counteracts the expectation of seeing "clear" (technology-supported) pictures of the past.

Bibliography

Benjamin, Walter. "Über den Begriff der Geschichte." www.textlog.de/benmain/abhandlungen/ueber-den-begriff-der-geschichte. Accessed on 14 March 2022.

Benyon, David. "Presence in Blended Spaces", *Interacting with Computers* 24(4) (2012): 219–226.

Blaschitz, Edith. "Digitale Erinnerungstechnologien in der historischen Vermittlungs- und Bildungsarbeit", *Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur (ÖGL)* 4 (2018): 364–371.

Blaschitz, Edith. "Mediale Zeugenschaft und Authentizität: Zeitgeschichtliche Vermittlungsarbeit im augmentierten Alltagsraum." *Hamburger Journal für Kulturanthropologie* 5 (2016): 51–67.

Blaschitz Edith and Erich Herber. *Mediating The Holocaust Past: Transmedia Concepts at Holocaust Memorials and Museums*. In *Politika Memorije in Pozabe, Načini izročila in Interpretacije / The Politics of Memory and Oblivion, Modes of Transmission and Interpretation*, edited by Jana Babšek, 261–274. Tržič: Muzej Tržic, 2016.

Bodenhamer, John et al. *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives Deep*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.

Bond, Lucy, Stef Craps and Pieter Vermeulen. "Introduction: Memory on the Move." In *Memory on the Move*, edited by Lucy Bond, Stef Craps and Pieter Vermeulen, 1–26. New York: Berghahn, 2017.

Buchanan, Ian. *Assemblage Theory and Method: An Introduction and Guide*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020.

Bundesdenkmalamt ed. Katalog NS-Opferorte in Österreich. https://www.bda.gv.at/service/denkmalverzeichnisse/liste-der-ns-opferorte-in-oesterreich.html. Accessed on 14 March 2022.
Certeau, Michel de. *Kunst des Handelns*. Berlin: Merve, 1988.
Cesari, Chiara De and Anne Rigney, ed. *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014.
Cohen, Erik. "Rethinking the Sociology of Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research* 6(1) (1979): 18–35.
Cramer, Florian. "What Is Post Digital?" In *Postdigital Aesthetics: Art, Computation and Design*, edited by David M. Berry and Michael Dieter, 12–28. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
DeLanda, Manuel. *Assemblage Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.
Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Mille Plateaux*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1980 (engl. A Thousand Plateaus, 1987).
Eminger, Stefan, Ernst Langthaler and Klaus-Dieter Mulley. *Nationalsozialismus in Niederösterreich. Opfer. Täter. Gegner* (Nationalsozialismus in den österreichischen Bundesländern 9), Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2021.
Erll, Astrid. "Travelling Memory." *Parallax* 17(4) (2011): 4–18. DOI: 10.1080/13534645.2011.605570.
Flacke, Monika, ed. *Mythen der Nationen. 1945 – Arena der Erinnerungen*. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern Verlag, 2004 (catalogue to accompany the exhibition of the same name by the Deutsches Historisches Museums Berlin 2004/05).
Freund, Florian. NS-Arbeitskräftepolitik in der „Ostmark". In *NS-Zwangsarbeit in der Elektrizitätswirtschaft der „Ostmark" 1938–1945*, edited by Oliver Rathkolb and Florian Freund, 8–26. Ennskraftwerke – Kaprun – Draukraftwerke – Ybbs-Persenbeug – Ernsthofen. Vienna: Böhlau, 2014.
Frosh, Paul and Amit Pinchevski. "Media witnessing and the ripeness of time." *Cultural Studies* 28(4) (March 2014): 594–610.
Fuchs, Alois. *150 Jahre Pfarre Roggendorf*. Eggenburg: Preßvereins-Druckerei, 1934.
Gärtner, Reinhard and Sieglinde Rosenberger. *Kriegerdenkmäler. Vergangenheit in der Gegenwart*, Innsbruck: Österreichischer Studienverlag, 1991.
Germann Molz, Jennie. *Travel Connections. Technology and Togetherness in a Mobile World*. London, New York: Routledge, 2012.
Hanisch, Ernst. *Landschaft und Identität. Versuch einer österreichischen Erfahrungsgeschichte*. Vienna, Weimar: Böhlau, 2019.
Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997.
Judt, Tony. "Die Vergangenheit ist ein anderes Land: Politische Mythen im Nachkriegseuropa." *Transit* 6 (1993): 87–120.
Judt, Tony. "Epilog: Erinnerungen aus dem Totenhaus. Ein Versuch über das moderne europäische Gedächtnis." In *Geschichte Europas von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, edited by Tony Judt, 931–966. Munich, Vienna: Hanser, 2006.
Kajetzke, Laura and Markus Schroer. "Spaces Studies." In *Kultur. Von den Cultural Studies bis zu den Visual Studies*, edited by Stephan Moebius, 196–215. Bielefeld: transcript, 2012.
Klösch, Christian. *Lagerstadt Wolfsberg. Flüchtlinge Gefangene Internierte.* Dokumentation zur Ausstellung. Wolfsberg: Edition Museum im Lavanthaus, 2013.
Knowles, Anne Kelly et al. *Geographies of the Holocaust*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.
Köhr, Katja. *Die vielen Gesichter des Holocaust. Museale Repräsentationen zwischen Individualisierung, Universalisierung und Nationalisierung*. Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2012.

Lappin, Eleonore, Susanne Uslu-Pauer, Susanne, and Alfred Wieninger. *Ungarisch-jüdische Zwangsarbeiterinnen und Zwangsarbeiter in Niederösterreich 1944/45* (Studien und Forschungen aus dem NÖ Institut für Landeskunde 45). St. Pölten: NÖ Institut für Landeskunde, 2006.

Levy, Daniel and Natan Sznaider. *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001.

Levy, Daniel and Natan Sznaider. *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

Litschauer, Maria Theresia. *06|44 – 05|45 Ungarisch-Jüdische ZwangsarbeiterInnen. Ein topo|foto|grafisches Projekt*. Vienna: SCHLEBRÜGGE.EDITOR, 2006.

Mandolessi, Silvana. "Challenging the placeless imaginary in digital memories: The performation of place in the work of Forensic Architecture." *Memory Studies* 14(3) (2021): 622–633. https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980211010922.

Manovich, Lev. "The Poetics of Augmented Space." *Visual Communication* 5(2) (2006): 219–240.

Massey, Doreen. "Space, time and political responsibility in the midst of global inequality." *Erdkunde* 60(2) (2006): 89–95.

Massey, Doreen. *For Space*. London: Sage, 2005.

Negroponte, Nicholas. "Beyond digital." *Wired* (12 January 1998). https://web.media.mit.edu/~nicholas/Wired/WIRED6-12.html. Accessed on 14 March 2022.

Nora, Pierre, ed., *Les lieux de mémoire*. Paris: Gallimard, 1984–1994.

Ollick, Jeffrey K. *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*. New York: Routlegde, 2007.

Perkins, Chris. "Mapping Place." In *The Routledge Handbook of Place*, edited by Tim Edensor, 357–366. Ares Kalandides and Uma Kothari. London: Routledge 2020.

Perz, Bertrand. *Die KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen. 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*. Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2006.

Radstone, Susannah. "What Place Is This? Transcultural Memory and the Locations of Memory Studies." *Parallax* 17(4) (2011): 109–123. DOI: 10.1080/13534645.2011.605585.

Reading, Anna. "Globalisation and Digital Memory: Globital Memory's Six Dynamics. On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age." In *On Media Memory. Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, edited by Motti Neiger et al., 241–252. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011.

Röck, Erwin. "Wirtschaft." In *Pulkau*, *Stadtgeschichte, Kunst, Kultur*, ed. Herbert Puschnik and Herta Puschnik, 174–180. Pulkau: n.p., 1998.

Rössner, Michael and Heidemarie Uhl, ed. *Renaissance der Authentizität? Über die neue Sehnsucht nach dem Ursprünglichen*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2012.

Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Schama, Simon. *Landscape and Memory*. New York: Knopf, 1995.

Schlögel, Karl. *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit. Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2006.

Szita, Szabolcs. *Verschleppt, verhungert, vernichtet: die Deportation von ungarischen Juden auf das Gebiet des annektierten Österreich 1944–1945*. Vienna: Eichbauer Verlag, 1999.

Uhl, Heidemarie. "Opferthesen, revisited. Österreichs ambivalenter Umgang mit der NS-Vergangenheit." *Österreich. Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte 68/34–35* (2018): 47–54.

Verschure, Paul F. "Spatializing experience: a framework for the geolocalization, visualization and exploration of historical data using VR/AR technologies." *Proceedings of the 2014 Virtual Reality International Conference*. ACM, April 2014.

Walden, Victoria Grace. “Afterword: Digital Holocaust Memory Futures: Through Paradigms of Immersion and Interactivity and Beyond.” In *Digital Holocaust Memory*, edited by Victoria Grace Walden. Education and Research. London: Springer International Publishing, 2021.
Winter, Jay. “The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Contemporary Historical Studies.” *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 27 (2000): 69–92.
Wodak, Ruth et al. *Wir sind alle unschuldige Täter*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990.
Wood, Dennis. “Mapping Deeply.” *Humanities* 4(3) (2015): 304–318.

Oral History Interviews within the project

Video interviews (accessible at https://pulkau.topothek.at): Franz Bischl, Maria Engel, Helene Schneider, Herta Wieninger (Groß-Reipersdorf, 10/05/2022); Erwin Lustig, Erika Thurner; (Rohrendorf an der Pulkau, 10/05/2022); Gerhard Gschwandtner, Helga Knell and Johanna Prekl (Pulkau 10/05/2022).
Further interviews: Erwin Röck (Pulkau, 03/06/2023, interviewer Martin Krenn); Audio-Interviews: Friedrich Daffert, Maria Manschein (Roggendorf, 19/08/2022); Wilhelm Liko (Kappl bei Salzburg, 08/08/2022, interviewer: Martin Krenn, Edith Blaschitz, camera: Georg Vogt).
Unless stated otherwise, interviewed by Edith Blaschitz, camera: Clemens Baumann.

Video interviews USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive (https://vha.usc.edu)

Berger (Großberger), Magda. Belgrade 1998.
Katic-Pantic, Magda. Novi Sad 1998.

Archives and Collections

Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, St. Pölten.
Police chronicles Röschitz (collection police station Eggenburg).
https://pulkau.topothek.at

Cited digital projects and websites

“Accessing Campscapes.” https://www.campscapes.org
http://ungarische-zwangsarbeit-in-wien.at
http://www.belsen-project.specs-lab.com
https://map.erinnerungszeichen.de
https://memento.wien
https://verbrannte-orte.de
https://www.gedenkplaetze.info

https://www.geschichtewiki.wien.gv.at/Zwangsarbeiterlager
https://www.historypin.org
https://www.mappingthelives.org
https://www.zwangsarbeit-in-leipzig.de/karte
IWalk, https://iwitness.usc.edu/sites/iwalk
ns-lager-niederösterreich.at
www.erinnerungslandschaft.at (DERLA)

Iris Groschek, Nicole Steng

Social media at memorial sites: Are we sure this is a good idea?

Considerations and experiences on the use of social media by two German concentration camp memorial sites

1 Introduction

While "the era of the witness" is gradually giving way to mediated forms of remembrance and commemoration, the employment of digital technology has also become pervasive in the field of Holocaust studies and as part of the education of memorial sites configuring new scenarios in which the "Culture of Remembrance" and Holocaust Education is driven by multimedia and digital technology. Efforts to save and preserve historical archives and the testimonies of the last survivors have taken numerous shapes and forms, including recorded interviews with survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides, survivor testimonies that have been produced in interactive 3D format, or TikTok videos by Holocaust survivors like Lily Ebert. Additionally, the idea of a "virtual Holocaust memory" is progressively including a blend of digital and non-digital Holocaust-related forms of memory. More specifically, driven by the limitations and restrictions imposed on Holocaust memorial and museums by the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, an increasing number of institutions started offering live, online tours that used to take place on location or came up with new forms of digital remembrance and education. Hence, digital culture is opening up new possibilities for externalising collective memories of the Holocaust in the digital space. Similarly, concentration camp memorials and Holocaust museums also play a significant role in the negotiation process on how to learn from the past between the required temporal and emotional distance from past events, and events and developments today, while not only reaching younger generations, but also a wider population in general.

In this chapter, we will share considerations and experiences from our own use of social media, particularly online live tours and TikTok videos at the Dachau and Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial sites. This will not only provide practical insights on how to possibly blend digital and non-digital forms of memory. It will also highlight how memorials face the trade-off between providing factual information while dealing with the "unanchored" nature of social media posts and other online formats.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-009

2 TikTok and commemoration? An example from the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial Site

The platform TikTok has developed in a short space of time into a relevant information and communication medium for a broader younger demographic, where a variety of topics are negotiated. The success of TikTok is based on participation. Consequently, everyone can actively shape the way history is talked about online through their own videos. Historical content on the topic of National Socialism is also available on this platform. There are even survivors of National Socialist persecution, for example, Lily Ebert, Tova Friedman or Gidon Lev, who reach a large audience through TikTok.[1] Until recently, however, there was a lack of content created by memorial sites themselves.

The Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial Site has been active on TikTok since November 2021 and was thus the first such site to use this platform to communicate its topics, with preparatory support from the "Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative on TikTok".[2] Their account intends to reach young people with different levels of knowledge. This is important because on the one hand, studies show that half of the so-called Millennials cannot name a single former concentration camp.[3] On the other hand, as further studies show, "Generation Z" is more interested in the Nazi era than their parents were, and in addition, associate the discussions about Nazi era with current social problems, and wish to deal with

1 See, for example, Lauralie Mylène Schweiger, "Holocaust remembrance on social media," *Deutschland.de*. March 1, 2032, accessed 11 March 2023, https://www.deutschland.de/en/topic/knowledge/holocaust-remembrance-education-on-social-media; Jonathan Edwards, "A 98-year-old Holocaust survivor built a massive TikTok following to combat deniers: 'It happened'". *Washington Post*, 1 February 2022, accessed 11 March 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/02/01/holocaust-survivor-lily-ebert-tiktok/.

2 American-Jewish-Committee, "Press Release: Presentation of 'TikTok – Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative,'" 27 January 2022, accessed 11 March 2022, https://ajcgermany.org/en/comment/press-release-presentation-tiktok-shoah-education-and-commemoration-initiative; Iris Groschek, "Can Social Media Make Commemoration More Inclusive and Diverse?" 27 January 2023, accessed 11 March 2023, https://koerber-stiftung.de/projekte/ecommemoration/interview-iris-groschek/.

3 Harriet Sherwood, "Nearly two-thirds of US young adults unaware 6m Jews killed in the Holocaust," *The Guardian*, 16 September 2020, accessed 20 February 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/16/holocaust-us-adults-study.

the Nazi era in a different way.[4] What can this "different way" look like, and how can institutions enter into a forward-looking dialogue with them?

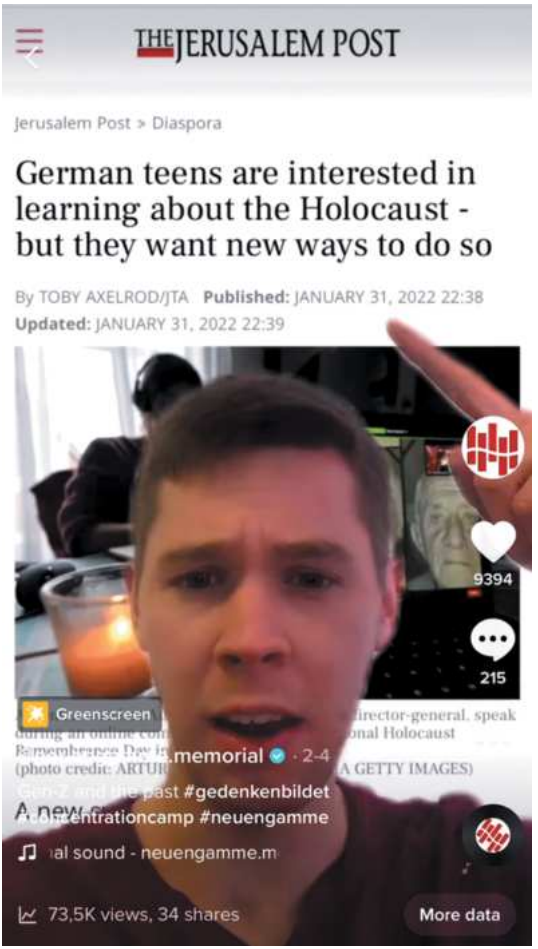


Figure 1: Screenshot TikTok Account @neuengamme.memorial (KZ-Gedenkstätte Neuengamme, 2022).

4 According to the rheingold study on the attitude of "Generation Z" to National Socialism, commissioned by the Arolsen Archives in 2021. "Gen Z and Nazi History. Highly receptive and strangely fascinated. A Qualitative and Quantitative Study. The Arolsen Archives commissioned the rheingold institute to investigate young people's attitudes to the history of the Nazi era," January 2022, accessed 11 March 2023, https://arolsen-archives.org/content/uploads/study-gen-z-and-nazi-history_arolsen-archives.pdf.

The motivation behind the TikTok project of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial Site (figure 1) is to sensitise a younger, international audience to topics in a low-threshold, interest-generating and modern way. The account was set up to inform, raise awareness, increase the visibility and relevance of the topic of National Socialism in "Generation Z" and, last but not least, to strengthen the level of awareness of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial Site. The memorial site also intended to provide an impetus and a framework for thinking about the significance of history in today's society in everyday digital life. For this purpose, a new digital offer was created on TikTok. It is based on the existing didactic foundations of memorial education but also follows the rules and aesthetics of a new platform which brings new people, partly new questions and specially created dynamic moving image content. Here the memorial was able to draw on its many years of experience in the field of social media.

The basic communication concept from the first year of the memorial site's activity on TikTok is to let mainly young English-speaking volunteers at the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial Site talk in front of the camera about their work, their thoughts and their growing knowledge about the place and its history, addressing an audience of the same age directly. This personalisation allows topics to be broken down into short units without trivialising them and without being emotionally overwhelming. The peer-to-peer communication created by the setting is designed to make it easier for the community to engage with the person in front of the camera and the issues they are addressing, and to be able to ask questions directly.

As people communicating in front of the camera, the volunteers draw attention to objects or manageable topics and contextualise them. They answer both content-related and personal questions with videos or ask honest questions to the community themselves. In terms of historical content, the memorial site has two directions in mind, in line with the studies mentioned above: on the one hand, passing on basic information and, on the other, asking where the community might be surprised by rather unknown information and stories ("untold stories"). The memorial site has also participated with its account in platform-typical "challenges", for example as part of Yom HaShoah, or even "trends" ("we work"). In addition, it has entered into cooperation, amongst others with the TikTok accounts of Deutsche Welle and Gidon Lev, and has also collaborated with the Amicale Internationale KZ Neuengamme, by putting videos created by family members of former persecutees online via the memorial site's TikTok account. In this way, it has also given rela-

tives a voice, in-line with the mission statement of the *Foundation of Hamburg Memorial and Learning Centres Commemorating the Victims of Nazi Crimes*.[5]

Since the memorial site has always responded to questions and comments from the community, it has been possible to offer a wide variety of content that seems to have appealed to many young people: In a very short time, the TikTok account has grown considerably – especially in comparison to any other social media platform used by the memorial site. The very rapid increase in followers, particularly from outside Germany – now over 35,000 (March 2024) – and the community's instant desire to communicate with the account of the memorial site has surprised the people who initiated the account. The new TikTok presence has gained a lot of attention in traditional media and, more importantly, on the platform itself. Within five weeks, the memorial site's account received its first million views for their short videos. Almost immediately, the site recorded a high level of comments, likes and questions, so that community management very soon occupied a large place within the project; by now (March 2024), a single video on the TikTok account @neuengamme.memorial has almost three million views ("Do you see what I see?"), and a cooperation video with Deutsche Welle has been viewed more than nine million times ("3 things you should never do at a former concentration camp").

Of course, the primary goal is not attention at any price. But it aims to achieve a relevant amount of reach and to be taken seriously by the community. Even accounts that want to convey complex topics must adopt the language and communication forms of the specific communities in order to be perceived as relevant and appealing. This also means dealing with the fact that in social media the telling of stories is further condensed and thus there is a danger of oversimplifying topics.

Another issue is the possibility of being overwhelmed when people unexpectedly encounter a memorial site account in their everyday life scrolling through social media, as videos are displayed directly via the "ForYou" page without any active selection having to be made. The emotional burden can also be seen as a barrier to acceptance of the remembrance culture offer of a memorial site's TikTok account.[6] However, against the backdrop of a change from a purely entertainment-centred

5 The foundation "promotes empathy with the persecuted, their relatives and descendants and makes their concerns heard." https://www.gedenkstaetten-hamburg.de/de/stiftung.

6 Fanny Seewald, "#gedenkenbildet. Digitale Erinnerungskulturen an die Shoah. Eine empirische Analyse zur Konstruktion zielgruppengerechter digitaler Erinnerungskultur am Beispiel des TikTok-Accounts der KZ-Gedenkstätte Neuengamme," Master's thesis, Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg, 2023, 48–49.

content platform to "serious TikTok"[7] that is already taking place, not only have the motives for using this platform expanded, but the use of TikTok as a commemorative medium, which was originally classified as inappropriate, is now also viewed less restrictively by memorial sites.[8]

Furthermore, when memorial sites use social media, they must be aware of what it means to feed algorithms with attention-grabbing topics. Thus, in the specific case of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial Site, not only were those people reached who the staff had imagined when planning the content – 17-year-old youths interested in history – but they were confronted with insulting or mocking comments and also had to deal with Holocaust denial and Holocaust distortion as well as conspiracy narratives in comments.[9] Staff had to familiarise themselves not only with current youth language, but also with racist or right-wing "code words", and an ongoing moderation process had to be set up, which among other things began with implementing a "stop list" for words used in comments. During that process, the institution communicated its "netiquette" externally and established a strategy internally that also regulates whether, when and how to respond to comments. The memorial want to stay active on TikTok in order to contribute information and interpretations of historical events and narratives to online debates having an important voice as a credible institution and thus contribute to counteracting anti-democratic tendencies.

7 Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Tom Divon, "Serious TikTok: Can You Learn About the Holocaust in 60 seconds?" March 24, 2022, accessed 11 March 2023, https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2022/03/24/can-you-learn-about-the-holocaust-in-60-seconds-on-tiktok/.

8 Rebecca Starke, "Gedenkstättenpädagogik und Soziale Medien. Eine qualitative Studie über die Verhandlung von Sozialen Medien und Bildungsarbeit durch Mitarbeitende in KZ-Gedenkstätten." Master's thesis, Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg, 2022. Jan Lormis, "#DoingMemoryOnTikTok : Gedenkstätten auf TikTok: Ist-Analyse und Perspektiven der Videoplattform TikTok für die Bildung und Vermittlung in Gedenkstätten", Master's thesis, Hochschule für Technik, Wirtschaft und Kultur Leipzig, 2023.

9 "References to the Holocaust that mischaracterise and distort its history and relevance are an insult to the memories and experiences of victims and survivors. Holocaust distortion erodes our understanding of this history and nourish conspiracy theories, dangerous forms of nationalism, Holocaust denial, and anti-Semitism." IHRA: Recognizing and Countering Holocaust Distortion: Recommendations for Policy and Decision Makers, 2021.

3 Live tours on Facebook? An example from the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site

In retrospect, the Covid-19 lockdown in the spring of 2020 was a turning point in educational programmes at memorial sites, including the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site. There had been individual offers before that used social media (Tweetwalk) or which were oriented towards current media (the audio offering "Tonspuren"). But in March 2020, the question suddenly arose as to how the memorial site's education department could fulfil its tasks if neither visitors nor staff could enter the site.

The tours, digitised exhibitions and streaming offers which all of a sudden became visible everywhere from this point on and clearly demonstrated that this existential question also occupied other institutions.[10] It also became apparent that the digital audience was large, and many people interested in culture were initially very happy to tune in to broadcasts from concert halls or in order to participate in virtual museum tours. Until that moment, the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site had offered workshops lasting either full or half days, and most commonly, two-and-a-half-hour tours of the site. It was agreed that the area of the former concentration camp, where the memorial site is located today, should also play a central role in digital forms of education. A certain time pressure and the personnel capacities justified the need for a quick implementation with little technical complexity. It became clear that films from the site would be a relatively easy method to implement without needing to conceive something completely new (Figure 2). In addition, all participants agreed that the live tours should be a supplement to the memorial site's existing offer.

It therefore made sense for the guides to focus on a specific subject that could be covered in no more than one hour. Often these were topics that are peripherally addressed in the normal tours but can rarely be discussed in any great depth. By concentrating on unknown facts from the history of the place not just new knowledge can be conveyed: It also breaks with the belief of many visitors that they already know everything there is to know about the concentration camp.

The online tours are usually conducted by two to three people. One person streams with a smartphone on Facebook from the Dachau Memorial Site and pays attention to questions from the audience in the chat, while the second person speaks in front of the camera. At the same time, the tours are supervised online by a third individual who takes over the moderation of the comments from

10 Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "Erweiterte Orte: Überlegungen zur virtuellen Transformation von Gedenkstätten," *Medaon – Magazin für jüdisches Leben in Forschung und Bildung*, 15(28) (2021): 1–5. Accessed 11 March 2023, http://www.medaon.de/pdf/medaon_28_ebbrecht-hartmann.pdf.

Figure 2: Announcement of an online live tour at Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial (KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau, 2020).

the audience. This ensures a close connection to the interests of the participants, because our wish is not only for the films to be watched, but that viewers can also seize the opportunity to contribute their own interests, ideas and reflections.

The Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site's choice of Facebook as a streaming platform was due to practical considerations. In 2020, the memorial site was not yet active on all social media platforms, but as already mentioned in connection with TikTok offerings, it is important that institutions become familiar with the medium and language for the respective audience. It seemed to make sense to use the platform on which the memorial had the most followers at that time. On the other hand, the live tours didn't just reach young students, but many teachers and other multipliers were addressed.[11] On 22 April 2020, the first live

11 On the use of social media platforms, see also Stefania Manca, "Holocaust Memorialisation and Social Media. Investigating how memorials of former concentration camps use Facebook and Twitter," in *Proceedings of the 6th European Conference on Social Media*, ed. Wybe Popma and Stuart Francis (Brighton: ACPIL, 2019), 189–198; Stefania Manca and Martin Rehm, "Three Institutions, Three Platforms, One Goal: Social Media for Holocaust Remembrance," in *Proceedings of the 8th European Conference on Social Media*, ed. Christos Karpasitis, (Larnaca: ACPIL, July 2, 2021), 195–204.

tour was streamed on Facebook. To date, it has had more than 6,300 views and there have been more than 100 comments during and after the tour was completed. More than 70 tours have now been conducted. Although the Covid restrictions are now no longer valid, the live tours are still seen as a way to bring the history of the site to people who cannot be there for whatever reason.

4 Digital education within the context of memorial sites

A comprehensive analysis of the effect of different digital offerings at memorial sites is still pending and is also not the aim of this essay. Nevertheless, it is viable to address specific possibilities offered by linking a real place with the digital world. In doing so, the focus is on two questions that Victoria Walden captured in a reflection on the event "The Digitisation of Memory: Technology – Possibilities – Boundaries": What can digital applications do that was not possible before? And how can institutions use this to, on the one hand, make memories accessible in a way that is characteristic of digitality and, on the other hand, preserve them in a digital world?[12]

For a long time, institutions have said that the reason they use social media is to reach "young people". But do they really? After ten years of activity, an analysis of the age structure of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial Site's followers on Facebook, Twitter (now "X" or the follow-up Bluesky) and Instagram shows that they are between 25 and 65years old. For a long time, this was also exactly the age group that the Foundation of Hamburg Memorial Sites and Learning Centres wanted to reach with its topics online – adults who are interested in topics, events, activities of the Foundation and its memorials. Young people seemed to belong more to the field of education departments at memorial sites, because they are more likely to come in a school group to a memorial site as an extracurricular place of learning and not as an individual visitor. The moment the guided tour ends, however, so does the dialogue: In Germany, there is no standard framework in which teachers and memorial educators could work together to determine content and procedures for the preparation and follow-up of a visit to a memorial site. Every teacher is free to choose the framework he or she wants to offer to the student before and after a visit to the memorial site. There is also a

12 Victoria Grace Walden, "Holocaust Remembrance in a Digital Future: Towards Deep Truth or Deep Fake?," accessed 11 March 2023, https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2021/02/12/holocaust-remembrance-in-a-digital-future-towards-deep-truth-or-deep-fake/.

difference between having a group of people (for example a school class) talk about the history of the concentration camp as part of a booked tour and having a conversation with an individual person. There is often no lasting exchange with the young visitors beyond the guided tour or the project day.

How can this be changed? How can institutions also be present in the everyday life of "Generation Z"? How can they show young people the significance of National Socialism when dealing with current social problems? The younger generation's interest in the topic has been proven many times in studies. On platforms that this generation finds interesting, they already participate in the culture of history and remembrance with their own ideas. One example of this is the series of so-called POV ("Point of View") videos on TikTok, which were dubbed the "Holocaust Challenge" on other channels: These videos received a lot of attention, which was expressed in negative comments on other platforms like Twitter. The appropriateness of the expression was criticised, and the young people were denied sincerity in their expressions. As a result, they removed their TikTok videos and turned away from dealing with the topic of National Socialism.[13] Social media platforms can provide the opportunity to actively shape the culture of remembrance. This is what young people have tried to do by choosing their form of storytelling on TikTok, a platform they find exciting and engaging. Instead of condemning this, shouldn't institutions use social media platforms such as TikTok to enter into direct dialogue with young people who show their interest so clearly? They can use the opportunity, on the one hand, to listen to what the young generation is interested in and, on the other hand, to subsequently demonstrate the relevance of memorial sites and the topics associated with them for "Generation Z" by placing them where youths and young adults spend their everyday (digital) lives.

With the appearance of social media, from the very beginning the visual engagement with commemoration and remembrance has become the subject of debate. Selfies at memorial sites initially experienced fierce public criticism from 2012 onwards after they went viral on the internet. Since around 2015 the phenomenon has become the subject of research. The need to leave a visible sign of the visit and the discussion about appropriateness has not diminished since then.[14] The discourse was recently examined by Pia Schlechter, taking into account the categories of gender, sexuality, age, religion and nationality, she was

13 Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Divon, *Serious TikTok*. Tom Divon, Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Performing death and trauma? Participatory mem(e)ory and the Holocaust in TikTok #POVchallenges. Dublin 2022, accessed 11 March 2023, https://spir.aoir.org/ojs/index.php/spir/article/view/12995/10874

14 Jackie Feldman, and Norma Musih. "Selfies in Auschwitz: Popular and contested representations in a digital generation." *Memory Studies*. July 13, 2022, accessed 11 March 2023, doi: 10.1177/17506980221101111.

able to show that in the denial of a "correct" form of memory, exclusions of the selfie-makers from a hegemonic memory collective are produced.[15] So who "may" shape the culture of memory in the future? Who determines what is appropriate and which forms of memory will remain?

Interestingly, social media platforms have become sites for the negotiation of remembrance. In a digital world, the very reach of a post leads to a supposedly higher value than it would have in an analogue world. Therefore, it must be the subject of a public negotiation which forms memory and remembrance take in the digital, considering what is appropriate and which opinions are taken into account. Institutions have the opportunity here to shape the future "culture of remembrance" in an increasingly collaborative form.[16] At the end of the associated negotiation processes, there will be a more diverse, more varied kind of memory, which in this way will become connectable for more people and thus sustainable in the long term. In this framework, institutions also have the task of asking questions about ethical boundaries, because users will specifically respond to a memorial site's contributions in social media with their own texts, images, or other content. They will also have the opportunity to influence the next productions through questions or by posting their own experiences, and in this way enhance the relevance of remembrance for many people.

It is not only the question of the stakeholders of a multifaceted remembrance work that is important, however. Indeed reflections on reasons why digital media should be used at all and what advantages they bring within the memorial context are also important. Since museums have been researching, not only with the joint project "museum4punkt0", what effect different digital solutions mean for the institutions and their visitors, the enormous significance the digital transformation has in the cultural sector can no longer be denied.[17] It is becoming apparent that precisely the opposite of many digitally conservative fears is occurring: Institutions with a greater amount of modern, digital content are considered attractive not only by a virtual audience, but also by potential visitors. To produce relevant digital content is an enormous challenge, especially for very small, volunteer-run memorial sites. However, joining online and Social Media platforms can also be an impetus to push networking and thus become more visible online

15 Pia Schlechter, "Selfies in KZ-Gedenkstätten: Zeigen, Anprangern, Verhandeln. Eine intersektionale Perspektive auf den Diskurs um die »richtige« Erinnerung an den Holocaust in den 2010er-Jahren," in *Digital Memory. Neue Perspektiven für die Erinnerungsarbeit*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung 4, ed. Iris Groschek and Habbo Knoch (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023).

16 Groschek, "Can Social Media Make Commemoration More Inclusive and Diverse?"

17 https://www.museum4punkt0.de/, accessed 20 March 2023.

and thereby score points against other institutions that, for various reasons, neglect an online presence compared to the real place.[18]

Digital offerings bring the distant closer. They create connections between people and places. What became apparent during the pandemic was that not only people from the immediate vicinity were interested in the digital offerings, but wider circles of people could quickly be addressed. Live streams, Instagram campaigns or TikTok videos can be used to inform people worldwide about the history of memorial sites. In many cases, people are engaged who will probably never physically visit one of these places. If these digital offerings did not exist, then these parts of history might not have become known to them either.

Especially memorials sites located at the scene of National Socialist crimes must deal with the fact that they are not self-explanatory. Between the moment of the liberation of the concentration camps and the establishment of the memorial sites, the sites were used in a variety of ways. Buildings were altered, rebuilt or demolished entirely and the construction of memorial sites themselves also brought about further changes to the sites. Therefore, they must be explained to visitors today or deciphered together in an educational format. This is the typical work of education departments at memorial sites, which today are supplemented and expanded using digital means. With the help of digital applications (Figure 3, Figure 4) or arrangements in social media "the past, sometimes irretrievably destroyed, is to be made accessible in such a way that additional layers of time and thus meaning emerge".[19] Altered places can make their diverse past more accessible in the digital sphere and make the layers of time that are often not initially recognisable – and furthermore successfully contextualise them. In addition, they enable people to discover the place and its history on their own not only online, but also during a visit with the help of the media and explanations provided. With digital offerings, visitors can learn much more at their own pace and guided by their individual interests in terms of topics and levels of depth, about the history of the National Socialist sites of violence, on structures of power and exclusion, but also the history of today's memorials. The use of non-linear storytelling, which is an outstanding innovation of digital history narration, also serves this purpose. It enables a greater individualisation of commemoration and learning than would be possible with linear narratives. This can stimulate the development of one's own points of view even regarding modern forms of exclusion or propaganda.

18 One opportunity for networking is the #rememBarcamp, where especially those people from the memorial environment who work with digital methods and tools in different fields meet and exchange ideas.Accessed 11 May 2024 https://www.gedenkstaettenforum.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Aktivitaeten/Rundbrief/Rundbriefe_PDF/einzelne_Artikel/213/GedRund_213-7.pdf, accessed 13 May 2024

19 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "Erweiterte Orte," 1.

On the other hand, these offers mean a lot of new work for the institutions. Existing materials must be prepared for pedagogical use in the digital world, or adapted for the use in social media, including assistance in decoding them. This requires not only knowledge of content and methods, but also financial and human resources. Furthermore, it takes a lot of knowledge and experience to decide which basic narratives should not be touched in a place, i.e., which representations are so fundamental that institutions do not want to leave the selection of objects or documents to chance.

Figure 3: Using the App "The Liberation" at Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial (Foto: KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau; App: Bayerischer Rundfunk, 2020).

As diverse as digital formats are, from TikTok videos to AR extensions, they all offer the non-negligible opportunity to present several different streams of information at the same time, without changing the place itself and the exhibition boards and signs. In this way, memorial sites can address their guests in different, more personalised ways and at different places in a way that is appropriate for a wider variety of target demographics, in order to arouse their interest and also retain it in the longer term. Sustainable digital offerings are more than just one-way communication of news, events and historical happenings on websites and social media. Beyond that they open up a possibility for dialogue with interested (digital or analogue) visitors. Digital offerings tie in with the memorial site's peda-

gogical, dialogue-based work and help institutions to deal with current and socially relevant topics in a totally different way as an exhibition board on the memorial site. An example of this is the possibility to virtually include spaces that are not physical parts of the memorial.

However, digital offerings are not a panacea and they are not replacing a visit to a memorial site. They are an independent form of representation and mediation, often more easily available than a personal visit to a memorial site or the tedious individual research of information that is universally present in the everyday life of many people in the world. They can thus change how memorial sites will be perceived in the future and what the culture of remembrance will look like.

Physical presence at a site is not automatically a more authentic experience. Nevertheless, a sensory perception gives a more diverse impression that goes beyond simply looking at and listening to a technical device. Even if memorial site education work rejects the expectation that visitors can – or have to – "feel something" at the site of a former concentration camp, the physical location of course remains significant and cannot be replaced by digital applications. This begins with the dimensions and distances, which have a different effect physically than in digital space. The fact that everyone can follow their own interests and impressions during a visit, turn their gaze, see other guests, have an overall impression and not be guided by the camera or a predefined narrative thread also changes the visit. Last but not least, sensory impressions have an effect on visitors' capacities for cognitive empathy.[20]

Digital extensions, video-based narratives or virtual reconstructions support and expand pedagogical approaches and create points of contact for personal engagement that did not previously exist in this form.[21] For example, geographical or temporal boundaries can only be overcome virtually by digital means. This makes it possible to directly compare the structure of concentration camps at certain points in time and link them to historical events or biographies. Dimensions and temporal processes become more visible. Digital applications expand the educational offerings with the possibility of finding more individual access and a personal reference to the sources and materials that are available in abundance. Such educational uses are lower threshold than is often the case with analogue on-site offerings. This is because users can voluntarily watch a video or application in complete anonymity, they have control over what they see or click or swipe away, or they can stop using it without social pressure. Analogue offerings do not offer such possibilities with this simplicity.

20 On the concept of cognitive empathy, see Lena Funk, "Empathie," in *Psychologie der Werte: Von Achtsamkeit bis Zivilcourage–Basiswissen aus Psychologie und Philosophie*, ed. Dieter Frank (Berlin Heidelberg: Springer Nature, 2016), 53–65.

21 Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "Erweiterte Orte," 5.

Interested people can also keep their distance, which makes it easier to adopt their own point of view. If online reviews of memorial sites are examined, it is evident that spatial and emotional proximity and distance are a problem for many. When visiting a concentration camp memorial, different strong feelings can arise unexpectedly. If these are to be included in educational processes, it is important to ask whether it may not also overwhelm visitors if they are brought into this situation without any concrete prior knowledge.[22] This is something that memorial sites also need to consider when addressing digital audiences and planning content for social media. A certain immersion is wanted and desired, but it should never be overwhelming. In contrast, digital offerings can also be a way for visitors to maintain a distance that, again, makes it easier to find their own point of view. In this context, Steffi de Jong warns that institutions need to be aware of the dangers of simulating witnessing – simulation is related to the wish for immediacy in Holocaust remembrance and clashes with the idea of Virtual Reality (and maybe other digital approaches) as an "empathy machine" that mirrors sensations and emotions. De Jong argues that the digital should instead be used to emphasise social and historical differences and the diversity of stories.[23]

In addition, the often-existing diffuse historical knowledge visitors bring with them, which comes from different sources, is usually not suitable for reducing fear of contact with the topic. Considering something such as "Dark Tourism", there is a notion that the historical events at a site can be perceived with the senses whilst visiting. But it is not a concentration camp people are visiting today, it is a memorial site. They cannot smell or see what prisoners saw or smelled. As a memorial it is a place that now consists of several layers of time and often works with symbolic representation. In addition, there are often unrealistic expectations of a sudden onset of emotions that are placed on pupils in particular by teachers or politicians: This can be about a hoped-for immunisation against right-wing extremist ideas through visits to memorial sites, but also about determining what socially desirable behaviour or speaking about the topic should be.[24] All of these expectations can prevent people from voluntarily visiting a memorial site, even if they are actually

22 Anja Ballis, "'I cannot say "enjoy" but I can say look and learn.' Touristen schreiben auf TripAdvisor über Besuche in KZ-Gedenkstätten," in *Dark Tourism. Reisen zu Stätten von Krieg, Massengewalt und NS-Verfolgung*, ed. Axel Drecoll, Frank Bajohr and John Lennon (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2020), 66–83.

23 Steffi de Jong, "The Simulated Witness: Empathy and Embodiment in VR Experiences of Former Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps," *History & Memory* 35(1) (2023: 69–107.

24 Verena Haug, "Gedenkstättenpädagogik als Interaktion. Aushandlungen von Erwartungen und Ansprüchen vor Ort," in *Gedenkstättenpädagogik. Kontext, Theorie und Praxis der Bildungsarbeit zu NS-Verbrechen*, ed. Elke Gryglewski et al. (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2015), 113–126.

interested in it, or it can lead to their expectations of the visit not matching the actual circumstances. Here, too, the digital presence offers a possible way out: on the one hand, it gives interested people the opportunity to get to know the memorial site first at a physical distance; on the other hand, the online memorial site has the chance to offer a low-threshold dialogue at eye level and thus be perceived as an approachable and open partner rather than as a superordinate institution.

Digital offerings can therefore be useful on various levels. Potential visitors can familiarise themselves in advance with themes, representations and the place itself. They decide how intensively they engage with the history of the place at any time, they set the pace and also have the option to leave the virtual location. These are things which are difficult to do in the real space.

Figure 4: Screenshot from the 360-degree tour of buildings at the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial that are otherwise not accessible to the public (KZ-Gedenkstätte Neuengamme, 2020).

In addition to the expansion of physical space and the opportunity to dismantle limitations of various kinds, the digital space is also one of communication. The relevance of the National Socialist era becomes clear from the fact that it is still extremely present in the media. But the fact that anyone can speak out on social media also means that anything can be said – and is said. During the pandemic in particular, conspiracy narratives were very widely perceived and analysed.[25]

25 Jochen Roose, *Verschwörung in der Krise, Repräsentative Umfragen zum Glauben an Verschwörungstheorien vor und in der Corona-Krise* (Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2020).

There is loud opposition and protest especially when iconic images of memorial sites are put into aberrant contexts by means of photomontages, or when protesters align themselves with the victims of the Shoah with "unvaccinated" stars during the time of the pandemic. It is important for a memorial site to take a stand on such forms of appropriation by offering fact-based and educational dialogue, providing context, or simply pointing out inappropriateness. Their voice weighs-in due to pedagogical and scientific expertise, decades of experience and a close network with the still living former persecutees and descendants, but also with other memorial sites. Such sites as credible institutions can use their position, for example, to provide opportunities for argumentation against conspiracies and hate speech through well-prepared information.[26] In doing so, it is not absolutely necessary that the memorial sites themselves permanently enter the discourses, but they would first have to be the ones that are most prominent in the algorithms through permanently high click numbers, and thus can reach an even broader community that can pass on the knowledge.[27]

This also highlights a challenge for memorial sites that is largely beyond their scope of action: Algorithms are not objective. Even in their non-transparent development, algorithms are influenced and they subsequently cause distorting effects, for example with regard to the weighting and selection of information in search engines and news feeds. A comparative analysis of search results displayed in English and Russian showed remarkable differences, for example with regard to content denying the Holocaust.[28] A new challenge will be artificial intelligence (AI)-based information generators, such as ChatGPT. Here, it will be necessary to consider how to react to information that users no longer check for origin and consistency, since the entire internet can be used as a basis for generating new texts without any prior verification and without any transparency as to which criteria the AI uses to assess its sources. It is not a new phenomenon whereby state-

26 Pia Lamberty, "Verschwörungserzählungen," *Informationen zur politischen Bildung aktuell* 35 (2020); Countering Holocaust distortion on social media project. "Addressing Holocaust distortion on social media. Guidelines and Recommendations for Memorials and Museums," 2022, accessed 11 March 2023, https://holocaust-socialmedia.eu/wp-content/uploads/Addressing-Holocaust-distortion-website.pdf.

27 Tomasz Łysak, "Vlogging Auschwitz: New players in Holocaust Commemoration," *Holocaust Studies* 28(3) (2022): 377–402, accessed 10 February 2023, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/17504902.2021.1979180?needAccess=true&role=button.

28 Mykola Makhortykh et al., "Can an algorithm remember the Holocaust? Comparative algorithmic audit of Holocaust-related information on search engines," in *Digital Memory. Neue Perspektiven für die Erinnerungsarbeit*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung 4, ed. Iris Groschek and Habbo Knoch (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023).

ments are adopted without being scrutinised. With the advent of AI, however, this phenomenon has taken on a new dimension and critical scrutiny is becoming rarer. ChatGPT can present false or misleading information very convincingly, and since the program ultimately makes calculations about the probability of one word or half-sentence being followed by the next, it can even invent quotes or sources in the process. But one must not forget: When the memorials are silent – who do you hear instead?

An institutionalised, almost globalised culture of remembrance, now thoroughly contested in different ways and from different origins, has experienced a new space for discussion with the dimension of the digital. Institutions use their voice in the digital and especially in social media to not only assume the role of digital gatekeeper in the public sphere, but they are responsible for preserving the dignity of the victims.[29] They are thus also a voice representing ethical positions. This voice, guided by negotiation processes, arises from internal as well as socio-political discussions about appropriateness and dignity. Memorial sites have long been actors in the digital transformation, and educational work on Nazi persecution uses both dialogue and digital means. In this context, memorial sites should always actively ask themselves where there are innovations in digital educational work, where there are new forms of remembrance. Among a range of questions are the following: Which formats are accepted, where do offerings have little added value and are interchangeable? What does digitalisation do to the staff? How will the staff structure have to change in the future with the digitalisation of our lives and the new skills that go with it? Who are followers of memorial sites, who uses the digital offerings? Where are the limits of digitalisation in the field of remembrance culture? How can we explore these limits in a participatory process together with diverse social actors? How is the culture of remembrance changing? What ethics are we committed to?

This means that institutions not only in the digital space have to deal with ethical questions and ask themselves again and again what is appropriate for them to implement and what value, for example, outreach has over ethical-moral concerns about the use of certain social media channels.[30] The digital, as much as it is a public space and as such a place of negotiation, is also subject to rules and limits. Although the content of digital ethics can be co-determined by institutions,

29 See International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, *International Memorial Museums Charter*, 2016, accessed 11 March 2023, https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/international-memorial-museums-charter.

30 History Communication Institute, "Communicating History on TikTok. Ethics, practices and considerations," November 2022, accessed 11 March 2023, https://historycommunication.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/HCI-TikTok-White-Paper-1.pdf.

again, as stated above, memorials cannot disregard the power of algorithms programmed by humans. Algorithmic systems also have great significance in the context of memory, because, as already indicated above, they determine what is shown to whom and they decide which forms have a public reach. They help to structure information but are non-transparent. In addition, information clustered by artificial intelligence has a different focus. The ethical-moral, i.e., human dimension, is missing and, on the other hand, they can be used for propaganda purposes and can thus be misused for political purposes. Analyses by Makhortykh et al. show problems with content, so that results shaped by algorithms (for example, from search engines) tend to display materials that give a general overview of the Holocaust instead of showing the dimensions of National Socialist rule through the variety of individual topics.[31] This could be the important task of Memorial sites.

A digital ethics should therefore also be the foundation of decisions in the development of offerings by memorial sites. This means that the basic principles of historical-political education that apply to analogue education must also be applied in suitably modified form to digital education. The primary task of memorial sites, to remember the murdered with dignity, thus always remains the guiding principle. But the form is negotiable – and institutions take on the role of mediators between the place and its history(ies) and those who visit it, both analogue and digital.

One way to fulfil this mediating or educative role is to help people visualise things that existed in the past but are no longer visible today. In addition to the ability to integrate one's knowledge of the past into a narrative, the capacity for "historische Imagination"[32] is an important component in the didactic discourse on history that people should have in order to engage with the past, whether they are historians or interested non-professionals. This means that each person develops an idea about the past based on his or her own knowledge, which can always be updated as new sources are added. What remains unattainable is a complete and comprehensive idea of the past. Digital extensions of various kinds offer important support for this. For example, if people do not (yet) know how buildings or structures looked, imagining them will either not be possible, or they will only come close to it by chance. Most places in a memorial site will remain incomprehensible, because of the transformation process after the liberation of the former concentration camps. For this

31 Makhortykh, "Can an algorithm remember the Holocaust?"

32 Christian Bunnenberg, "Das Ende der historischen Imagination? Geschichte in immersiven digitalen Medien," in *Brennpunkte des heutigen Geschichtsunterrichts, Joachim Rohlfes zum 90. Geburtstag*, ed. Lars Deile, Jörg van Norden and Peter Riedel (Frankfurt am Main: Wochenschau Verlag, 2021), 174–179.

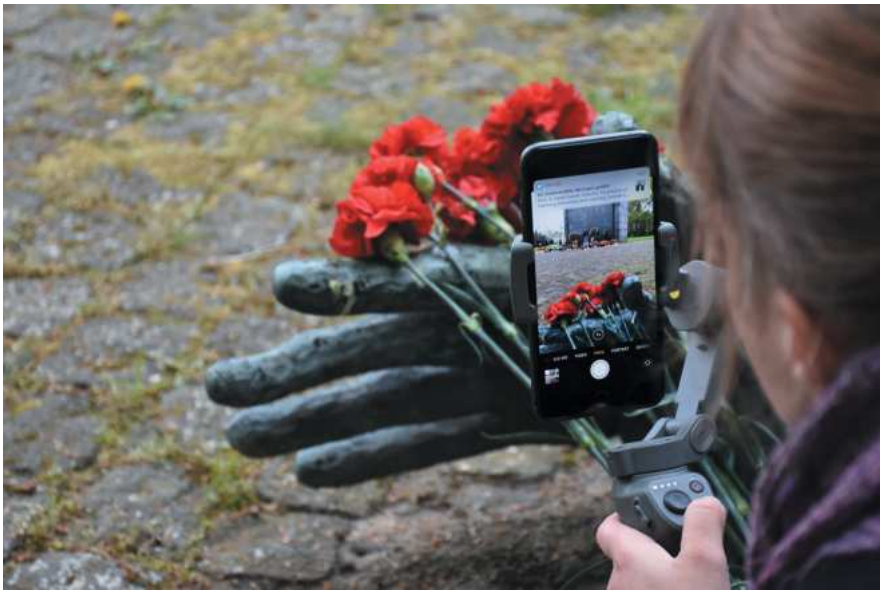


Figure 5: Social media presence at a commemorative event (KZ-Gedenkstätte Neuengamme, 2020).

reason, it can be helpful to access brief videos that expand the historical place and help enhance the imagination, the idea of a place.[33]

Another way to build a bridge between visitors and history is to use networking techniques at various points. Although visitors know that the crimes of National Socialism did not take place in isolation from society, this knowledge is relatively abstract. Through digital applications, the close connections of society and the "network of persecution" can be made visible. Within hybrid events that take place simultaneously at several memorial sites, thus overcoming geographical borders live, individual biographies, but also places and objects that connect these sites can be thematised. Hashtags can be used to weave a tight thematic network online that shows how great the overlaps between the individual memorial sites are today. By displaying information on a visitor's smartphone not only at the memorials themselves, but also at so-called external sites, for example places where concentration camp prisoners had to perform forced labour, it can be per-

33 See, for example, Elisabeth Fink, Steffen Jost and Nicole Steng, "Die Befreiung des Konzentrationslagers Dachau in Augmented Reality. Geschichte digital – vermittelt in virtuellem Web-Rundgang, App und Podcast," *museum heute* 58 (2020): 44–47.

ceived how closely the concentration camps and the prisoners were connected to other parts of society, such as workplaces.

A final example of the possibilities offered by memorials is the promotion of individual participation in remembrance culture (Figure 5). Digital platforms in particular are, as already indicated above, a way for self-determined participation in the future culture of remembrance. The digitisation of files from concentration camps is another good example of this. The collection of data from different sources, a job carried out by only a few people before it was put online, was completed in a very short time with the help of over 80,000 people in the crowdsourcing project #everynamecounts of the Arolsen Archives. Volunteers transcribed the names, dates of birth and addresses of thousands of persecutees. In the process, the helpers could sit at their smartphones, tablets or PCs anywhere in the world. Not only did they experience the work that had previously been done by archivists or historians, but they were also able to discover – and this was the fascination of the project for many participants – on the basis of previously unseen documents how many people were at the mercy of the National Socialist persecution apparatus, and how important it can still be today that their names are preserved and made accessible. Not all fates have yet been clarified. Through active participation, steps could be taken to reconstruct family histories. Further-reaching projects generated from this data can additionally connect records. How the long-term digitisation of the source holdings of the Arolsen Archives was linked with the crowdsourcing approach to ultimately obtain more comprehensive data on individual persons via participatory data collection is a successful approach. This data can then be automatically and orderly visualised and thus made generally usable creating a fact-based, diverse digital memorial.[34]

These examples show that digital innovations hold many possibilities for memorial sites. Digitality does not replace any memorial site as the digital and the analogue worlds go hand in hand. Digital visitors are just as interested as on-site visitors to the memorial site. They must be taken just as seriously, and special offerings should be made to them as well. The close interweaving also creates new approaches to learning about the history of National Socialist persecution, which can certainly help improve awareness of knowledge and scope for action within society as a whole.

In the digital space, there is the chance to constantly enter into conversation, to interactively include different opinions and thoughts as part of the education

34 Like similar projects such as the "Joods Monument" or "InEvidence. The Map of Holocaust by Bullets," https://www.joodsmonument.nl, accessed 24 February 2023; https://www.yahadmap.org/, accessed 24 February 2023. Here see: https://everynamecounts.arolsen-archives.org/, accessed 24 February 2023.

about history, and thus to shape a culture of remembrance for all. This requires not only an appreciative attitude on the part of the memorial sites for new – or differently to address – target groups, but also an open-mindedness for inspiring formats. Comprehensive digital strategies and digital departments that develop cross-departmental solutions are also necessary. What is needed is an understanding of the language of individual communities and a communication strategy that is appropriate to each community. Memorial sites need educational concepts in which digitality does not mean the replacement of paper but is understood as a completely new educational opportunity. They need their own technical know-how and a genuine interest in innovation. In the future, the boundary between digital and analogue will become increasingly permeable and memorial sites now have a great opportunity to actively promote digital literacy in the culture of remembrance.

Memorial sites – and learning with them as experts about a difficult past – are important for the identity of a democratic society. In order to remain relevant to the next generation, institutions will have to invest more time and energy in their own, but also user-generated content and co-creation formats in the future, in order to not only be gatekeepers in the fight against deliberately used misinformation and "alternative facts", but perhaps also to follow Lily Ebert and become influencers in the digital world.

Bibliography

American-Jewish-Committee. "Press Release: Presentation of 'TikTok – Shoah Education and Commemoration Initiative.'" 27 January 2022. Accessed 11 March 2022. https://ajcgermany.org/en/comment/press-release-presentation-tiktok-shoah-education-and-commemoration-initiative.

Arolsen Archives. "Gen Z and Nazi History. Highly receptive and strangely fascinated. A Qualitative and Quantitative Study. The Arolsen Archives commissioned the rheingold institute to investigate young people's attitudes to the history of the Nazi era." January 2022. Accessed 11 March 2023. https://arolsen-archives.org/content/uploads/study-gen-z-and-nazi-history_arolsen-archives.pdf.

Ballis, Anja. "I cannot say ‚enjoy' but I can say look and learn." Touristen schreiben auf TripAdvisor über Besuche in KZ-Gedenkstätten. In *Dark Tourism. Reisen zu Stätten von Krieg, Massengewalt und NS-Verfolgung*, edited by Axel Drecoll, Frank Bajohr and John Lennon, 66–83. Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2020.

Bunnenberg, Christian. "Das Ende der historischen Imagination? Geschichte in immersiven digitalen Medien" In *Brennpunkte des heutigen Geschichtsunterrichts, Joachim Rohlfes zum 90. Geburtstag*, edited by Lars Deile, Jörg van Norden and Peter Riedel, 174–179. Frankfurt am Main, Wochenschau Verlag, 2021.

Countering Holocaust distortion on social media project. "Addressing Holocaust distortion on social media. Guidelines and Recommendations for Memorials and Museums." 2022. Accessed 11 March 2023. https://holocaust-socialmedia.eu/wp-content/uploads/Addressing-Holocaust-distortion-website.pdf.

Divon, Tom, and Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann. Performing death and trauma? Participatory mem(e)ory and the Holocaust in TikTok #POVchallenges. Selected Papers of #AoIR2022. Dublin November 2022, accessed 11 March 2023, https://spir.aoir.org/ojs/index.php/spir/article/view/12995/10874.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Tobias, and Tom Divon. "Serious TikTok: Can You Learn About the Holocaust in 60 seconds?" 24 March 2022. Accessed 11 March 2023. https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2022/03/24/can-you-learn-about-the-holocaust-in-60-seconds-on-tiktok/.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, Tobias. "Erweiterte Orte: Überlegungen zur virtuellen Transformation von Gedenkstätten." *Medaon – Magazin für jüdisches Leben in Forschung und Bildung*, 15(28) (2021): 1–5. Accessed 11 March 2023. http://www.medaon.de/pdf/medaon_28_ebbrecht-hartmann.pdf.

Edwards, Jonathan. "A 98-year-old Holocaust survivor built a massive TikTok following to combat deniers: 'It happened.'" *Washington Post* (1 February 2022). Accessed 11 March 2023. https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/02/01/holocaust-survivor-lily-ebert-tiktok/.

Feldman, Jackie, and Norma Musih. "Selfies in Auschwitz: Popular and contested representations in a digital generation." *Memory Studies* (13 July 2022). Accessed 11 March 2023. Doi: 10.1177/17506980221101111.

Fink, Elisabeth, Steffen Jost and Nicole Steng. "Die Befreiung des Konzentrationslagers Dachau in Augmented Reality. Geschichte digital – vermittelt in virtuellem Web-Rundgang, App und Podcast." *museum heute* 58 (2020): 44–47.

Groschek, Iris. "Can Social Media Make Commemoration More Inclusive and Diverse?" 27 January 2023. Accessed 11 March 2023. https://koerber-stiftung.de/projekte/ecommemoration/interview-iris-groschek/.

Groschek, Iris, and Steffen Jost. "Welchen Stellenwert haben die »neuen Medien« im Zusammenhang mit der Erinnerung an die Verbrechen des Nationalsozialismus?" *Lernen aus der Geschichte Magazin* 7 (2021). Accessed 11 March 2023. http://lernen-aus-der-geschichte.de/Lernen-und-Lehren/content/15185.

History Communication Institute. "Communicating History on TikTok. Ethics, practices and considerations." November 2022. Accessed 11 March 2023. https://historycommunication.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/HCI-TikTok-White-Paper-1.pdf.

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. *International Memorial Museums Charter*. 2016. Accessed 11 March 2023. https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/international-memorial-museums-charter.

Jong, Steffi de. "The Simulated Witness: Empathy and Embodiment in VR Experiences of Former Nazi History & Memory Concentration and Extermination Camps." 35(1) (2023): 69–107.

Kansteiner, Wulf, and Todd Presner. "Introduction: The Field of Holocaust Studies and the *Emergence* of Global Holocaust Culture." In *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture*, edited by Claudio Fogu, Wulf Kansteiner and Todd Presner, 1–42. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.

Lamberty, Pia. "Verschwörungserzählungen." *Informationen zur politischen Bildung aktuell* 35 (2020). Accessed 11 March 2023. https://www.bpb.de/system/files/dokument_pdf/BPB_Info-aktuell-35-2020_barrierefrei.pdf.

Lormis, Jan. "#DoingMemoryOnTikTok : Gedenkstätten auf TikTok: Ist-Analyse und Perspektiven der Videoplattform TikTok für die Bildung und Vermittlung in Gedenkstätten". Master's thesis, Hochschule für Technik, Wirtschaft und Kultur Leipzig, 2023. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:l189-qucosa2-872991.

Łysak, Tomasz. "Vlogging Auschwitz: New players in Holocaust Commemoration." *Holocaust Studies* 28(3) (2022): 377–402. Accessed 10 February 2023. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/17504902.2021.1979180?needAccess=true&role=button.

Makhortykh, Mykola, Aleksandra Urman, Roberto Ulloa and Juhi Kulshrestha. “Can an algorithm remember the Holocaust? Comparative algorithmic audit of Holocaust-related information on search engines.” In *Digital Memory. Neue Perspektiven für die Erinnerungsarbeit*. Beiträge zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung 4 (2023), edited by Iris Groschek and Habbo Knoch. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023.

Manca, Stefania. “Holocaust Memorialisation and Social Media. Investigating how memorials of former concentration camps use Facebook and Twitter.” In *Proceedings of the 6th European Conference on Social Media*, edited by Wybe Popma and Stuart Francis, 189–198. Brighton: ACPIL, 2019.

Manca, Stefania, and Martin Rehm. “Three Institutions, three Platforms, One Goal: Social Media for Holocaust Remembrance.” In *Proceedings of the 8th European Conference on Social Media*, edited by Christos Karpasitis, 195–204. Larnaca: ACPIL, 2 July 2021.

Roose, Jochen. *Verschwörung in der Krise, Repräsentative Umfragen zum Glauben an Verschwörungstheorien vor und in der Corona-Krise*. Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2020. Accessed 11 March 2023. https://www.kas.de/documents/252038/7995358/Verschw%C3%B6rung+in+der+Krise+%28PDF%29.pdf/7703c74e-acb9-3054-03c3-aa4d1a4f4f6a?version=1.1&t=1608644973365.

Schlechter, Pia. “Selfies in KZ-Gedenkstätten: Zeigen, Anprangern, Verhandeln. Eine intersektionale Perspektive auf den Diskurs um die »richtige« Erinnerung an den Holocaust in den 2010er-Jahren.” In *Digital Memory. Neue Perspektiven für die Erinnerungsarbeit*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung 4 (2023), edited by Iris Groschek and Habbo Knoch. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2023.

Schweiger, Lauralie Mylène. “Holocaust remembrance on social media.” Deutschland.de. 1 March 2023. Accessed 11 March 2023. https://www.deutschland.de/en/topic/knowledge/holocaust-remembrance-education-on-social-media.

Seewald, Fanny. “#gedenkenbildet. Digitale Erinnerungskulturen an die Shoah. Eine empirische Analyse zur Konstruktion zielgruppengerechter digitaler Erinnerungskultur am Beispiel des TikTok-Accounts der KZ-Gedenkstätte Neuengamme.” Master’s thesis, Institut für Kultur- und Medienmanagement der Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg, 2023.

Sherwood, Harriet. “Nearly two-thirds of US young adults unaware 6m Jews killed in the Holocaust.” *The Guardian* (16 September 2020). Accessed 20 February 2022. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/16/holocaust-us-adults-study.

Starke, Rebecca. “Gedenkstättenpädagogik und Soziale Medien Eine qualitative Studie über die Verhandlung von Sozialen Medien und Bildungsarbeit durch Mitarbeitende in KZ-Gedenkstätten.” Master’s thesis, Fakultät für Bildungswissenschaften der Pädagogischen Hochschule Freiburg, 2022.

Steng, Nicole. “Das #rememBarcamp 2023” In GedenkstättenRundbrief 213 (2024): 40–46. Accessed 11 May 2024 https://www.gedenkstaettenforum.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Aktivitaeten/Rundbrief/Rundbriefe_PDF/einzelne_Artikel/213/GedRund_213-7.pdf.

Walden, Victoria Grace. “Holocaust Remembrance in a Digital Future: Towards Deep Truth or Deep Fake?.” *Digital Holocaust Memory*. 12 February 2022. Accessed 11 March 2023. https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2021/02/12/holocaust-remembrance-in-a-digital-future-towards-deep-truth-or-deep-fake/.

Walden, Victoria Grace, and Kate Marrison, et al. “Recommendations for using Social Media for Holocaust Memory and Education.” *Digital Holocaust Memory Project*. Sussex: University of Sussex, 2023. doi:10.20919/HVMK3781 https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/files/2023/01/Social-Media-Guidelines.pdf.

Wong, Amelia S. “Ethical Issues of Social Media in Museums: A Case Study” May 2011. In *Museum Management and Curatorship* 26(2) (2011): 97–112. Doi:10.1080/09647775.2011.566710.

Beth S. Dotan

The impact of Nebraska's collective memory of the Holocaust via digital exploration

How can we establish a digital repository that explores the impact and legacy of Nebraska Holocaust survivors and liberators of World War Two Nazi concentration camps while providing critical theoretical framing of collective historical memory?[1] Today digital access to materials related to the Holocaust and Holocaust studies offers numerous avenues for discovery and research previously not imagined. Digital compilation of community-centred stories unifies disparate historical resources. The Nebraska Stories of Humanity: Holocaust Survivors & WWII Veterans, Network & Educational Portal[2] integrates local and searchable narratives with digital humanities frameworks to establish a dynamic public platform. The site is populated with locally acquired digitised documents, photographs, and heirlooms from survivor and veteran families plus news articles, testimony and geographical and primary resources. Unlike other digital collections, all aggregated resources accessible at the site are transcribed and searchable, allowing access to information through several digital humanities repositories. The portal includes Application Programming Interface (API) functionality, anticipating the day when international virtual authority files share their APIs to further substantiate the portal's materials. Centring unique, regional stories through a fully transcribed and navigable collection elevates access and visibility to the narrative of survivor and liberator memories and contributions.

The project has become cross-disciplinary at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) within the College of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences through the political science, history, and digital humanities disciplines. In addition to the programming team at the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH), the project includes co-investigator Professor Ari Kohen, whose work is focused on political science; anthropologist and digital humanist Professor Carrie Heitman; and Holocaust historian Professor Gerald Steinacher, who also serves as one of the project's advisors. The project has been constructed by a team of programmers in the CDRH,

1 This article includes sections that originally appeared in Beth S. Dotan, "Integrating Narratives with Digital Humanities Tools to Inform Holocaust Education Pedagogies," PhD dissertation, University of Nebraska, 2022.

2 Nebraska Stories of Humanity website, accessed 23 April 2023, https://nestoriesofhumanity.unl.edu/.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-010

which is part of the University of Nebraska Libraries system. Beyond the specific courses taught by Steinacher and a few other educators, no research centre in Holocaust studies exists at UNL. The project employs a host of student interns, who are invaluable to the contribution and growth of the website's content. To engage audiences beyond academia, a Stakeholder Committee also connects with a range of community organisation members. Thus, the cross-disciplinary academic nature of the project combined with the connection to the larger community through stakeholder relationships unlocks a plethora of heritage sharing and interaction.

In alignment with intended equitable principles in the United States today, it is imperative to note that the University of Nebraska is a public land-grant institution. A land-grant college or university "is an institution that has been designated by its [US] state legislature or Congress to receive the benefits of the Morrill Acts of 1862, 1890, and 1994".[3] Land-grants institutions provide affordable, higher education of quality to people of various backgrounds. At the time the acts were passed, acquired tribal lands became federal property, were later sold, and the profits were used for educational and economic development through land grants.[4] The University of Nebraska, part of a system of campuses and programs across the United States, resides on the past, present, and future homelands of the Pawnee, Ponca, Oto-Missouria, Omaha, Dakota, Lakota, Arapaho, Cheyenne and Kaw peoples, as well as the relocated Ho Chunk (Winnebago), Iowa, Sac and Fox peoples. We therefore acknowledge the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement (survivance) that bring us together in understanding that the opportunity to impact the state of Nebraska is a result of Native and Indigenous peoples' past experiences, informing our past, present and future as we pay respect to Native elders.[5]

During my doctoral experience at the University of Nebraska, I acquired new knowledge to broaden my scope of Holocaust Educational pedagogy and methodology as well as Holocaust memory. Through the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of faculty within my degree program – Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education (the teacher preparation program) – and the tools of the digital humanities, I was able to conceptualise and realise the structure of the web portal not only from a historical perspective but with educational and theoretical criteria in mind. Furthermore, because of Nebraska's status as a land-grant institution and a

3 APLU, Land-Grant University FAQ, accessed 28 April 2023, https://www.aplu.org/about-us/history-of-aplu/what-is-a-land-grant-university/.

4 APLU, Statement of Land Acknowledgment, accessed 28 April 2023, https://www.aplu.org/about-us/land-acknowledgment/.

5 APLU, Recognizing the Land, accessed 26 April 2023, https://diversity.unl.edu/recognizing-land.

US refugee-receiving state, our team strives to respect heritage diversity in every educational consideration.

One of the educational goals of the site is to enable users to understand the destruction of democracy in pre-World War Two Europe and to exemplify the power of individual' resilience. The site allows the visitor to contemplate the stark challenges of humans adapting to unexpected circumstances and trauma and confront new conditions in survival. Often living as the perpetual outsider, first within their homelands and later in their adopted new communities, survivors are forced to struggle for acceptance and equity within their new surroundings as well. As is frequently the case for immigrants and refugees, economic and cultural trials are ever present. Likewise, individuals returning to Nebraska following military service in the war often struggled silently to return to normalized life, tucking away mementos and memories from traumatic tours of duty in warzones. To illuminate the experiences and processes of their journeys, the Nebraska Stories of Humanity portal discloses documents that serve as evidence of the dismantling of democratic structures and presents personal collections that denote hope for the future.

On many levels, the portal can serve as a blueprint to learn about other minority cultural groups who have settled in Nebraska. Social critic and Austrian priest Ivan Illich claimed technologies "could guide the reconstruction of education to serve the need of varied communities, to promote democracy and social justice".[6] As a multifaceted tool, the website can be incorporated into critical educational theories and employ multidirectional memory to connect Holocaust pedagogy to state educational standards.[7] This integration extends the resource, allowing it to function as more than a simple archive of historical primary documentation of one group, and rather as a model for creating a digital cultural heritage. Our project adapts diverse interfaces for storing and sorting essential information as we develop innovative approaches for relaying digital storytelling to regional and transnational audiences and researchers.

We seek to advance our work as technological options proliferate, and as such we view the work of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI) as a model and necessary resource for global Holocaust learning advancement. Bringing the Nebraska pilot and micro-collection to this EHRI forum elevates the remembrance of individuals presently featured on the site and allows our work to join the global initiative in digital Holocaust memory and education. Despite our seemingly

6 Quoted in Richard Kahn, "Chapter Three: The Technopolitics of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich: For a Collaborative Ecopedagogy," *Counterpoints* 359 (2010): 96–97.

7 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

remote location in the world, we aim to contribute to the growing epistemology of Holocaust memory in a transnational capacity through digital humanities tools and digital storytelling as we situate the narratives of our collection.

For more than 20 years, UNL has used digital humanities methodologies and tools to create unique digital archives for use by researchers, scholars, and the general public. Projects such as the Walt Whitman Archive and the Willa Cather Archive have long aggregated materials from disparate repositories into cohesive, easily navigable websites.[8] UNL has a tradition of involving student and community collaborators in developing and applying computational tools in the digital environment. Students are trained to follow exacting international metadata standards and their work takes place under the direction of trained professionals. The Nebraska Stories of Humanity Project carefully monitors and trains student assistants following the established guidelines of the CDRH. As mentioned, the project engages local stakeholder organisations, but also national and international repositories as well. As textual scholar Jerome McGann states, "[d]igital humanists have seen themselves within the longer tradition of the humanities, suggesting that the main value of their work resides in the creation, migration, or preservation of cultural materials".[9]

Along with utilising the resources from already existing APIs, the project is taking an API-first approach. "The API-first approach to creating Text Encoding Initiative [TEI] – encoded digital editions offers tangible interfaces to textual data that can be used in tailor-made workflows by humanities researchers and other users, well-suited to distant reading techniques, statistical analysis and computer-assisted semantic annotation".[10] By focusing on API-first, we encode the documents with an understanding that they will be removed from original site structures but retain file context. Subsequently, these APIs create duality in acquiring and sharing archival information.

8 See the Walt Whitman Archive at https://whitmanarchive.org/; and the Willa Cather Archive at https://cather.unl.edu/.

9 Quoted in Johanna Drucker, "Humanistic Theory and Digital Scholarship," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed, Matthew K. Gold (University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 85.

10 Toma Tasovac et al., "APIs in Digital Humanities: The Infrastructural Turn." in *Digital Humanities 2016*: *Conference Abstracts* (Cracovie, Poland: HAL, 2016), 94.

1 Cultural heritage

My research considers how a digital repository exploring the impact and legacy of Nebraska Holocaust survivors and liberators of World War Two Nazi concentration camps can integrate critical theoretical framing of collective historical memory. The Nebraska Stories of Humanity website centralises access to the history of the Nebraska Holocaust survivors and World War Two liberators of Nazi camps in a collection of searchable stories in aggregate. As the digital era provides access to content that was formerly remote, we can address our regional collection within the UNESCO definition of emerging digital heritage: "Many of these resources have lasting value and significance, and therefore constitute a heritage that should be protected and preserved for current and future generations".[11] This endeavour considers how we might reimagine the use of archival materials of Nebraska survivors' or veterans' stories by interacting in new ways with Holocaust documentation. On 27 April 2023, when a group of students was asked about their introduction to the portal in an undergraduate course, one student commented, "I learned that there is such a rich history of the Holocaust and World War Two in Nebraska. I didn't know how much the state holds of this part of history".

This introductory prototype of five highlighted individuals provides the framework for expanding the collection. Presently, more than nine hundred posted items across five stories have been transcribed, translated, cropped and reviewed. The search engine is designed to enhance searchable categories through exploration by year, people, language, creator, format, places and source. Through the commitment of our devoted interns and CDRH development team, we continue to expand this body of material to ensure that our collection is a transnational, transcultural, and interdisciplinary contribution to public history and cultural heritage.

2 Use of narrative

Woven within the historical destruction of World War Two are the lives of many who survived the tragedy. Content relaying the challenges of beginning a new life for survivors or returning to Nebraska following service in the war is a vital component of documented testimony today. A common framework of inquiry found

11 UNESCO, Concept of Digital Heritage, accessed 28 April 2023, https://plus.google.com/+UNESCO.

within recorded testimonial collections, both audio and video, includes descriptions of life before, during and after the war. A broad personal history is revealed.

When testimony is accompanied by documentation and primary resources that substantiate the story, the commentary acquires a new degree of validation. The vision of the Nebraska Stories of Humanity web resource is to provide an extensive reflection of each accessible collection. Sometimes no formal testimonies are available, but other resources assist in piecing together a semblance of a personal history. Consequently, transcribed documentation can either stand independently or meld with testimony as a more complex narrative, ultimately providing a meaningful legacy for each story.

Researcher Michal Dahlstrom discusses how "narratives follow a particular structure that describes the cause-and-effect relationships between events that take place over a particular time period that impact particular characters".[12] Digital tools can enhance detail and confirm memory within a collective. Dahlstrom suggests four steps for processing narrative information: "motivation and interest, allocating cognitive resources, elaboration, and transfer into long-term memory".[13] This sequence constructs a platform to leverage narrative not only for the general visitor of the web portal but, in particular, for educators and researchers to interpret how components of these stories of humanity ultimately enhance learning.

In addition to understanding how narratives are amplified in the Nebraska Stories of Humanity website by uniting transcribed documentation and testimony, cultural storytelling has played a key role in the vision for the project. In critical educational theories, scholars of colour, such as Theodora Berry, bell hooks, Delores Delgado-Bernal, and Paulo Freire, use storytelling to strengthen students' depth of knowledge. They integrate their personal stories into teaching methodologies to encourage students to also share their own experiences. The act of storytelling motivates personal expression and creates opportunities to hear others' narratives. In *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks notes that by acknowledging the intergenerational trauma of Black women, others might become witness to their testimony, while those hearing their testimony can reciprocate in healing.[14]

12 Michael Dahlstrom, "Using Narratives and Storytelling to Communicate Science with Nonexpert Audiences," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111(4) supplement (2014): loc. 13614.

13 Dahlstrom, "Using Narratives," loc. 136415.

14 bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

By sharing experiences about survivors of the Holocaust and World War Two liberators of Nazi camps who settled in Nebraska, we can confront the moral questions that are raised when speaking about an oppressed group of individuals or people.[15] The power of sharing stories can open eyes and hearts. These methodologies embrace cultural values and heritage preservation. The act of storytelling, according to the philosophies of the aforementioned scholars, can situate the accounts available through the portal by "imparting knowledge about life experience others have not lived".[16] The portal then becomes a bridge for learning about minority cultural groups that settled in Nebraska, using critical educational theories in conjunction with multidirectional memory to connect Holocaust pedagogy to state educational standards.

3 Multidirectional memory

Multidirectional memory, a concept coined by scholar Michael Rothberg, can help deliver scaffolded knowledge for considering the trauma and survival of immigrant and refugee groups.[17] In Nebraska, as mentioned, settlers and their descendents live on Indigenous people's ancestral lands, thus bear a responsibility to acknowledge other historical tragedies and survival. Nebraska has also long been a refugee-receiving site and immigration destination for many cultural groups. Since 2013 the state ranked highest in the United States for refugee arrivals per capita and for refugee arrivals as a share of immigrants.[18]

Many groups, including Chinese, Germans, Czechs, Eastern European Jews and Latinos arrived in Nebraska in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, followed in subsequent decades by those from war-torn environs of Iraq, Kosovo, Bosnia, Sudan, Liberia, Somalia, Syria and Burma, to name only a few.[19] One *Omaha Jewish Press* article dated 19 November 1949 (and posted on the Nebraska Stories of Humanity Website), reported on "the largest group of Jewish refugees arriving in Omaha, Nebraska from post-war European Displaced Person

15 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

16 bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 89.

17 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.

18 Immigration Research Initiative, "Refugee Resettlement per Capita: Which States Do the Most?," accessed 30 April 2023, https://immresearch.org/publications/refugee-resettlement-per-capita-which-states-do-the-most/.

19 Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, "Re-Inventing the Wheel: Nebraska's Immigration History," accessed 30 April 2023.

camps since 1907".[20] The documentation available at the website provides insight into the lives of those who escaped humanity's unthinkable destruction during the Holocaust and found the inner strength to move forward and start anew in Nebraska.

In recent years, Kitty Williams, an Auschwitz survivor whose narrative will soon be included on the site, embraced opportunities to support and share presentation time with Shireen Ibrahim, a survivor of the ISIS genocide of the Yezidi people who resettled in Lincoln. Whereas Rothberg acknowledges that memory competition does exist, he reminds us that "multidirectional memory [can serve] as a spur to unexpected acts of empathy and solidarity [. . .] and is often the very grounds on which people construct and act upon visions of justice".[21] The influx of refugee and immigrant communities requires that our schools, school districts and institutions of higher learning engage multiple language learners and their situations and honor their cultures. Thus, while studying about those who experienced the Holocaust, we can also leverage learning about today's refugee and immigrant communities who have settled in our state.

It is critical to note in this discussion about multidirectional memory that renowned African American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois penned an influential essay in 1949 titled "The Negro in the Warsaw Ghetto".[22] Following a visit to that recovering war-torn city, which had been 80 percent destroyed, Du Bois was struck by the irony that the cherished Warsaw Old Town was rapidly being rebuilt, while the Jewish Ghetto, entirely burnt to the ground by the Nazis in 1943, remained acres of rubble. Rothberg references Du Bois as a model for multidirectional memory when he reconsiders his concept of the "color line". Du Bois, he states, "sees the ruins of the ghetto [as] common property, a public resource for reflection on the lines of race, culture, and religion that divides groups from each other even as they create new possibilities for alliance".[23] Multidirectional memories provide a pathway for recognising tragic histories and the survival of others in a manner that can unite people through their diverse cultures. Articulating the tools to integrate these new ways of knowing require thoughtful and creative strategies.[24]

20 Nebraska Stories of Humanity landing page, accessed 30 April 2023, https://nestoriesofhumanity.unl.edu/item/soh.sto000.00001.

21 Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 19.

22 Michael Rothberg, "W. E. B. DuBois in Warsaw: Holocaust Memory and the Color Line, 1949–1952," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 14(1) (2001): 169–89.

23 Rothberg, "W. E. B. DuBois in Warsaw," 132.

24 Dotan, "Integrating Narratives with Digital Humanities Tools to Inform Holocaust Education Pedagogies," PhD dissertation, University of Nebraska, 2022, 32–33.

4 Digital storytelling in the Nebraska stories of humanity

The first five stories in the prototype webpages exemplify diverse experiences during the Holocaust in addition to geographic representation of various parts of Nebraska. Items included in their stories provide insight into their journeys and contributions to historical knowledge about the time period. Collection is ongoing; therefore, the archive is not yet comprehensive. As international Holocaust institutions continue to expand access to the historical record and items are collected from families and community contributions, the stories included in Nebraska Stories of Humanity will also grow.

While the project's editorial staff continues to build upon existing story collections, the content used to expand additional individual narratives will be updated on an ongoing basis. The website reveals both an intimate exploration into the featured individuals' lives and a public perspective for acknowledging their contributions as community members. We strive to publish these materials within the proper context and accuracy. Taking into consideration personal memory and interpretation of historical events by each individual, content from war narratives present multiple versions with each circumstance.

The curation of the site content allows for easy navigation, especially for educators and students to compile narratives from many perspectives. Assuring that the voices of both those who shared live testimony in the past and those who never spoke publicly are heard through this collection of transcribed aggregated materials, immortalizing the narrative in perpetuity. Co-Project Investigator on this project Professor Ari Kohen notes,

> Akin to bringing these important witnesses into the classroom, this website presents a 360-degree view into the lives of survivors and liberators – before, during, and after the Holocaust. And, importantly for students in Nebraska classrooms, it connects us to these people directly: the people whose stories are told here are our neighbors and they raised their families, did their work, own businesses, and worshipped in the same places where we live today. Although we cannot bring them into our classrooms any longer, through this website we can get to know them as complete individuals and we can continue to learn from their stories of survival.[25]

The following examples provide a glimpse into some aspects of how this digital storytelling is evident.

---

25 Nebraska Stories of Humanity, Project history, https://nestoriesofhumanity.unl.edu/about/history.

5 Irving Shapiro

There are numerous drafts of speeches given by survivor Irving Shapiro, who lived in Gering, Nebraska. At the conclusion of one of these documents are both typed and handwritten comments (see Figure 1):

> We were condemned to die without a judge or jury, and very seldom did we find a neighbour on whose door we could knock and ask for shelter. Let us not forget our brothers and sisters who still fill the skies with their smoke.
>
> By our deeds let us make sure that such a Holocaust, the darkest memory in the history of men, shall never be allowed to happen again.
>
> It is the ordinary people that we must convince of the necessity – the obligation to remember the Holocaust. As Jews we have no choice. The 6 million cry out from their unmarked graves that they be remembered. As an eternal people Jews are blessed with a long memory.[26]

After settling in western Nebraska following the war, Irving, his survivor wife, Clara, and their children were among the few Jewish families and the only Holocaust survivors in the town. Irving became a well-known Gering businessman, integrating new immigrants from Latino countries into his workplace. He understood the plight of the immigrant, the refugee in a new land. Later in his life he was encouraged to speak to various groups and schoolchildren about his experiences. The portal collection includes a series of speeches he gave over the years. Using TEI, these speeches will be accessible in order to be comparatively researched and examined, along with his memoir as told to Howard Shaff and Audrey Shaff, *A Time in the Life of Israel Szapiro #129564*.[27]

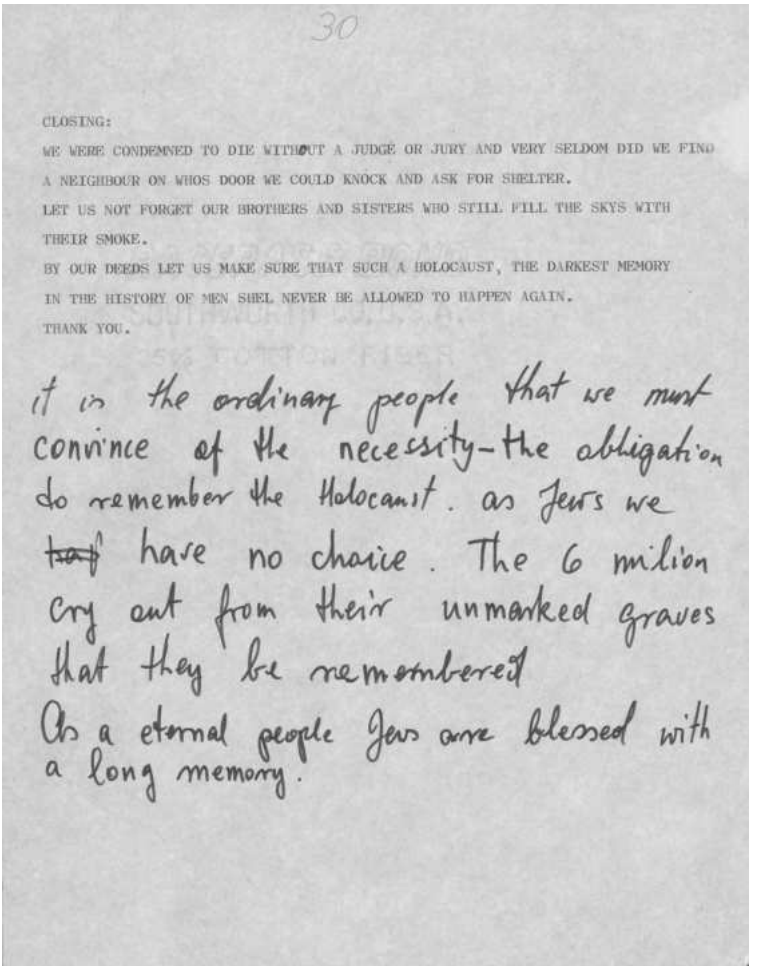
From 1942 to 1945, Irving was imprisoned and assigned to forced labour at Majdanek concentration camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, Buna-Monowitz concentration camp (Auschwitz III), and, at the end of the war, at Dora-Mittlebau concentration camp. He subsequently experienced death marches as the camps were emptied of their prisoners. At Majdanek, Irving was separated from his younger brother, whom he continued to search for throughout the rest of his life.

Their father, Hershel, and mother, Mala, were murdered in the Treblinka death camp in 1942. Irving married Clara Zaltzman in September 1945 in Neustadt, Germany. They later emigrated to Canada with their eldest daughter, Tatiana. In 1955 relatives provided sponsorship for them to move to the United States, where they settled and built successful businesses in Gering. Irving and Clara had two additional children, Hershel and Marlene.

---

26 Nebraska Stories of Humanity, Irving Shapiro speech draft, https://nestoriesofhumanity.unl.edu/item/soh.sto003.00032.

27 Irving Shapiro, *A Time in the Life of Israel Szapiro, #129564* (Keystone: Permelia, 1988).


30

CLOSING:

WE WERE CONDEMNED TO DIE WITHOUT A JUDGE OR JURY AND VERY SELDOM DID WE FIND A NEIGHBOUR ON WHOS DOOR WE COULD KNOCK AND ASK FOR SHELTER.

LET US NOT FORGET OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO STILL FILL THE SKYS WITH THEIR SMOKE.

BY OUR DEEDS LET US MAKE SURE THAT SUCH A HOLOCAUST, THE DARKEST MEMORY IN THE HISTORY OF MEN SHEL NEVER BE ALLOWED TO HAPPEN AGAIN.

THANK YOU.

it is the ordinary people that we must convince of the necessity-the obligation do remember the Holocaust. as Jews we ~~had~~ have no choice. The 6 milion cry out from their unmarked graves that they be remembered

As a eternal people Jews are blessed with a long memory.

Figure 1: "Nebraska Stories of Humanity." Irving Shapiro Speech Draft. https://nestoriesofhumanity.unl.edu/item/soh.sto003.00032.

With the opening of the archives in East Germany, some years following Irving's death, Hershel located previously unavailable documentation regarding Abraham's demise in a German hospital during the last days of the war. These materials in PDF format from Bad Arolsen are in the process of being transcribed by the project team as searchable content for the website. The addition of these documents, and the events held by the family to memorialize Abraham, subsequently become a layer of Irving's narrative that previously could not have been centrally accessible.

6 Bea Karp

Bea Karp was born Beate Stern in Lauterbach, Germany, in 1932. She and her family were forced from their home and transported by passenger train to internment camps in the south of France. Bea and her sister, Susie, were saved by the Jewish French Underground *Œuvre de secours aux enfants*, or OSE) and were hidden in numerous chateaus and convents until the end of the war. They were never reunited with their parents, who were murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. Bea and her sister first went to live with family in London after liberation. Later, through family connections and funds from Sears and Roebuck, Bea arrived in the United States by plane in 1947. After living in New York, she and her husband later settled in Nebraska, where they raised four daughters.

Bea was fortunate to maintain significant artifacts in her personal collection. In addition to a few pieces of clothing and a bag made by her mother, there are documents from the family's forced deportation from Germany to France and a bundle of postcards written in German to her and other relatives by her parents during their incarceration in the French detention camps. Bea also preserved letters penned in French from girlfriends and caregivers that were written throughout and after the war. Much of this collection is available in pdf format on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website.[28] Having open access rights to these materials, we have translated and transcribed these documents and included them, along with many other items, in Bea's collection at the Nebraska Stories of Humanity.

Social worker and child rescuer with the OSE, Vivette Samuel, was responsible for Bea's rescue from Rivesaltes concentration camp in the south of France and her placement in chateaus held by the OSE in the first few years of the war. Children were moved by the underground from one chateau to another numerous times to remain one step ahead of the Nazis. Vivette followed Bea's whereabouts and included her as a flower girl in her marriage to another rescuer, Julien Samuel, at Couret, France, in October 1942 (see Figure 2). Materials that reflect the relationship with the Samuel family have shed light on information that was not previously known.

In Samuel's book, *Rescuing the Children*, we learn about the tremendous efforts made to assist children, not only during the war, but also after liberation.[29]

28 US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Beatrice Pappenheimer Papers, https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn515178#?rsc=24830&cv=0&c=0&m=0&s=0&xywh=-1272%2C-153%2C4652%2C3047.

29 Vivette Samuel, *Rescuing the Children: A Holocaust Memoir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002).

Figure 2: "Nebraska Stories of Humanity." Beate Stern (Bea Karp) at the wedding of Vivette Samuel. https://nestoriesofhumanity.unl.edu/item/soh.sto001.phot.008.

"The OSE was busy following up on the children who had emigrated".[30] Due to information in Samuel's book, we have been able to corroborate Bea's testimony regarding her movements at the end of the war and translated correspondence saved in her possession. One urgent letter in her collection between French officials and the OSE make it clear that Bea and her sister were to be removed as quickly as possible in the spring of 1944 from the convent in Milleau. The girls had been moved when the OSE chateaus were shut down and children were dispersed to places such as Switzerland, to other communities in the French countryside, and to various convents in other locales. At the end of the war the OSE workers were greatly concerned about the well-being of these hidden children, knowing the stress of separation, fear, and exhaustion they experienced during the war years.

> There was also the problem of the children who had been placed in convents. Some of them were tempted to convert and even had themselves baptized. Certainly, they had been saved, and that was the essential thing. But what was one to do with the promise made to parents to raise their children as Jews? At the time, we felt obligated to keep that promise.[31]

In our research we found a photograph taken at Chateau La Borie Children's Home circa 1945, in which Bea was identified in a group portrait of "Jewish Displaced Persons".[32] We might surmise that she may not have recalled spending

30 Samuel, *Rescuing the Children*, 135.

31 Samuel, *Rescuing the Children*, 133.

32 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Ruth Zarnicer Wertheimer.

time in La Borie after the war due to the haste to remove the girls from the convent and ultimately resituate them in London with relatives. Bea never recalled this memory in her recorded testimonies, nor in the hundreds of times she spoke at schools and in the public. By triangulating the personal translated and transcribed correspondence with photographs and references from Vivette Samuel in one location, we have begun to recover additional information about Bea's difficult journey.

7 Utilising digital humanities tools

Incorporating digital humanities tools to augment the archival collection is essential for elevating survivors' narratives. To date we have created three interactive maps that visualise the journeys of Bea Karp, Clarence Williams and Irving Shapiro. These maps include pop-up links to other materials in the collection and to outside resources to obtain further historical context. While some uncertainty regarding exact dates and locations exists due to extreme situations during the war, artifacts often assist in confirming locations. In the case of Staff Sergeant Clarence Williams, a soldier in the 42nd Rainbow Infantry, which liberated Dachau concentration camp, the project team was able to construct a detailed map from his extensive archive of over 250 letters written to his wife, Gretchen. Even though Williams had to be evasive in his writing due to wartime censorship, he was keen in providing locations and experiences in his correspondence shortly after the end of the war. Further, his beloved wife made notations with dates and places on every envelope she received.[33] We are hopeful that Williams's son, Tom, will yet discover Gretchen's letters written to her husband at the front.

The digital humanities provide new research tools and present a multitude of options for learning about memory and Holocaust history. These tools give new meaning to the way people encounter data and artifacts, facilitating the possibility of realising patterns in the materials or discovering side-by-side perspectives that may not have been considered previously. In the pop-up windows in Williams's map, for example, small artifacts he saved throughout his tour are highlighted.[34] The notes he jotted on the backs of the items give insight into the personality of Williams as a soldier, a man and a husband.

33 See the Clarence Williams collection at the Nebraska Stories of Humanity website: https://nestoriesofhumanity.unl.edu/stories/clarence-williams.

34 See Clarence Williams's map at https://nestoriesofhumanity.unl.edu/maps/clarence.

Another digital tool to be included in the next phase of this project will allow network-wide analysis, in order to visualise the extensive relationships of the survivors and liberators throughout the state and in the world. "Network analysis examines relationships among entities, such as persons, organizations, or documents. Operating at multiple levels, it describes and makes inferences about relational properties of individual entities, of subsets of entities, and of entire networks".[35] The advantage of creating network analysis is to highlight the individual's connectedness to the community, and how far-reaching their survival and their life's contributions are tied to each of us personally. One example might be a graphic visual representation of the number of students who have heard Bea or other survivors give testimony over the years.

Digital projects are intended to be accessible and informational and touch people's lives from educational and humanities perspectives. What is the power of the tool on the receiver side? Staff Sergeant Clarence Williams's letter dated 30 April 1945, following the liberation of Dachau by the 42nd Rainbow Divisions a powerful and key piece of correspondence in the corpus of this collection. Williams banters for more than a page and a half about convoy traffic, unexpected German gunfire at their vehicles, and a request to his wife not to send any more hard-boiled eggs in her packages. The remaining two and a half pages include a detailed description of the unit's entrance into the camp and all they witnessed. This letter, discovered more than 20 years ago, has played an important role in connecting local school students with Nebraska Holocaust history. But what about the rest of the collection?

To understand the impact of our project, student intern Ethan Tylski, transcriber of the collection of Williams's handwritten letters for the database, comments on the work he completed:

> I had the honor of reading, transcribing, and encoding around 250 of Clarence's letters in the past two years. One of the big takeaways from that entire experience was that Clarence was a great man, living in the worst of times.
>
> Stuck in my bedroom for the first few months of the pandemic, Clarence and I had a lot of alone time. Although Clarence never knew me, I often felt that we were having a conversation. The words that he wrote often stuck with me for days, or even weeks. There were parallels between what was going on in his life and my own. He missed his family, he grieved the loss of human life, he wanted to see a better world.
>
> Over time I discovered that Clarence and I weren't so different. Although writing eighty years ago, I found that we shared many interests. Clarence was an avid photographer

35 Peter V. Marsden, "Network Centrality, Measures Of," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Elsevier 2015), xx.

and extensively documented the course of the war. I also love photography. Clarence loved a game of cards. I also love cards, but he never won very often and neither do I.

But Clarence, more than anything else, loved his wife, Gretchen, and he wrote to her nearly every day. He missed her dearly. I also miss my partner sometimes, but obviously the circumstances are quite different. I live ten miles away from my partner, Clarence was five thousand miles away. His letters to her often consisted of his day-to-day frustrations; often he was concerned about what type of snack she should send him through V-Mail. Although embroiled in the chaos of war, he never forgot his family. He often asked about them and wanted to hear from them. And he proudly carried a photo of Gretchen and bragged to everyone in his battalion. I can also relate to that.

I mention all of these moments because Clarence's story exemplifies the focus of this project. His is a story of humanity. Even people living eighty years ago were just as human and alive as we are today. They experienced love, anger, and confusion just as much as we do.

I hope you all get the chance to comb through Clarence's letters. I am positive they will impact you as much as they have me. In particular, his letter to Gretchen after liberating Dachau. It is visceral. His words are seared into my memory. By reading his letters you too become a witness of human atrocity and engage in the most human of acts, empathy.

It is my belief that studying history is, in fact, an act of human empathy. By understanding the lives of others, we come to better understand our own lives. That is why this project is so important and the results of this research are so invaluable. Clarence Williams was a great man, living in the worst of times. We can all learn from him.[36]

8 Conclusion

While the goals of the project are to bring together disparate materials from outside collections, families, and local resources, the outcome has been much more than the simple gathering of items. Linking the transcribed, digitised artifacts to substantiate testimony metadata creates newly evolving narratives with vast educational and research implications. A supportive and creative stakeholder group that meets twice annually has seen potential in the use of the varied resources, spurring public events within their organisations. These activities unite the academic production of the website and community engagement, defining the success of digital cultural heritage efforts.[37]

From an education perspective, the Nebraska Legislature has recently passed Education Bill 888, which requires Nebraska schools to teach about the Holocaust

36 Ethan Tylski, University of Nebraska student intern, on his experience working with the project at a speech given at the project launch on 22 April 2022.

37 Judith Elst, Heather Richards-Rissetto and Jorge Garcia, "Creating Digital Heritage Content: Bridging Communities and Mediating Perspectives," *Digital Culture and E-Tourism: Technologies, Applications and Management Approaches* (2011): 140.

and other genocides in their multicultural education units. This website provides an excellent resource and teaching tools for educators to adopt, particularly for students in remote rural areas within our state. As a multidisciplinary learning tool, the "computational and the cultural must be explicitly entangled in order for the user to have a comprehensible and meaningful encounter at the interface", as implied by Victoria Walden on the integration of digital Holocaust memory, education, and research.[38] Recognising the intersections of this resource, educational programming and collaborations are a high priority for the next phase of the website, along with the addition of other stories. Research to evaluate how this digital tool is used by students as a learning tool and as a critical resource will assist in understanding the impact of the Nebraska Stories of Humanity as a unique project, but also as part of a larger movement in digital Holocaust memory.

Bibliography

APLU. Land-Grant University FAQ. Accessed 26 April 2023. https://www.aplu.org/about-us/history-of-aplu/what-is-a-land-grant-university/.

APLU. Recognizing the Land. Accessed 26 April 2023. https://diversity.unl.edu/recognizing-land.

APLU. Statement of Land Acknowledgment. Accessed 28 April 2023. https://www.aplu.org/about-us/land-acknowledgment/.

Dahlstrom, Michael F. "Using Narratives and Storytelling to Communicate Science with Nonexpert Audiences." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111(4) supplement (2014): 13614–13620.

Dotan, Beth. "Integrating Narratives with Digital Humanities Tools to Inform Holocaust Education Pedagogies." PhD dissertation, University of Nebraska, 2022.

Elst, Judith, Heather Richards-Rissetto and Jorge Garcia. "Creating Digital Heritage Content: Bridging Communities and Mediating Perspectives." *Digital Culture and E-Tourism: Technologies, Applications and Management Approaches*, edited by Miltiadis Lytras, Patricia Ordóñez de Pablos, Ernesto Damiani and Lily Diaz, 139–157. Pennsylvania: IGI Global, 2011.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 30th anniversary ed. New York: Continuum, 2000.

Immigration Research Initiative. Refugee Resettlement per Capita: Which States Do the Most" Accessed 7 March 2023. https://immresearch.org/publications/refugee-resettlement-per-capita-which-states-do-the-most/.

Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. "Re-Inventing the Wheel: Nebraska's Immigration History." Strategic Discussions for Nebraska. Accessed 30 April 2023. https://sdn.unl.edu/ne_immigration_history.

Kahn, Richard. "Chapter Three: The Technopolitics of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich: For a Collaborative Ecopedagogy." *Counterpoints* 359 (2010): 81–101.

38 Victoria Grace Walden, *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 5.

Marsden, Peter V. “Network Centrality, Measures Of,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015.
“Nebraska Stories of Humanity.” Accessed 18 May 2022. https://nestoriesofhumanity.unl.edu.
Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.
Rothberg, Michael. “W. E. B. DuBois in Warsaw: Holocaust Memory and the Color Line, 1949–1952.” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 14(1) (2001): 169–189.
Samuel, Vivette. *Rescuing the Children: A Holocaust Memoir*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002.
Shapiro, Irving. *A Time in the Life of Israel Szapiro, #129564*. Keystone, SD: Permelia, 1988.
Tasovac, Toma, Adrien Barbaresi, Thibault Clérice, Jennifer Edmond, Natalia Ermolaev, Vicky Garnett and Clifford Wulfman. “APIs in Digital Humanities: The Infrastructural Turn.” In *Digital Humanities 2016*, 93–96. Kraków: Jagiellonian University & Pedagogical University, 2016. https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01348706.
UNESCO. Concept of Digital Heritage. Accessed 28 March 2019. https://en.unesco.org/themes/information-preservation/digital-heritage/concept-digital-heritage.
US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Beatrice Pappenheimer Papers. Accessed 3 May 2023. https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn515178#?rsc=24830&cv=0&c=0&m=0&s=0&xywh=-1272%2C-153%2C4652%2C3047.
Walden, Victoria Grace. *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. http://libproxy.unl.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=3114163&site=ehost-live.
Walt Whitman Archive. Accessed 30 April 2023. https://whitmanarchive.org/.
Willa Cather Archive. Accessed 30 April 2023. https://cather.unl.edu/.

Archie Wolfman

“Follow for more spookiness”: The dybbuk box, networked digital Holocaust memory and interactive narrative on social media

In 2001, an antique dealer in Portland, Oregon, named Kevin Mannis, bought a wine cabinet at an estate sale. The woman who sold him the box referred to it as the “dybbuk box”[1]. Soon after Mannis took ownership of the dybbuk box, he began to experience bad luck and supernatural phenomena. The most alarming part of the original story of the dybbuk box is that, according to Mannis’ own account, when he gifted the item to his own mother, she immediately experienced a near-fatal stroke. She described the box as “pure evil”[2]. In 2003, Mannis decided to list the haunted box on eBay, as shown in figure 1. An extended excerpt from the original eBay listing is as follows:

> During September of 2001, I attended an estate sale in Portland Oregon [sic]. The items liquidated at this sale [sic] were from the estate of a woman who had passed away at the age of 103. A grand-daughter of the woman told me that her grandmother had been born in Poland where she grew up, married, raised a family, and lived until she was sent to a nazi [sic] concentration camp during World War II. She was the only member of her family who survived the camp. Her parents, brothers, a sister, husband, and two sons and a daughter were all killed. She survived the camp by escaping with some other prisoners and somehow making her way to Spain where she lived until the end of the war. [. . .] After the sale, I was approached by the woman’s granddaughter who said, I see you got the dybbuk box. She was referring to the wine cabinet. I asked her what a dybbuk box was, and she told me that when she was growing up, her grandmother always kept the wine cabinet in her sewing room. It was always shut, and set in a place that was out of reach. The grandmother always called it the dybbuk box.[3]

1 A dybbuk originates in Jewish folklore and is the soul of a deceased person that possesses a living person, the Hebrew etymology of which originates in “to cling” or “to adhere”: Joachim Neugroschel, “Ansky: *The Dybbuk* and the Yiddish Imagination” in *The Dybbuk and the Yiddish Imagination*, ed. and trans., Joachim Neugroschel (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), xv–xvii.

2 “The Dybbuk Box,” Season 2, Episode 4, *Paranormal Witness*, directed by Russell England, aired on 29 August 2012.

3 spasmolytic, “Dibbuk Haunted Jewish Wine Cabinet Box”, 9 February 2004, *eBay*, http://web.archive.org/web/20051105000557/www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/rubyc/eBay_dibbuk.htm, accessed 30 June 2023.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-011

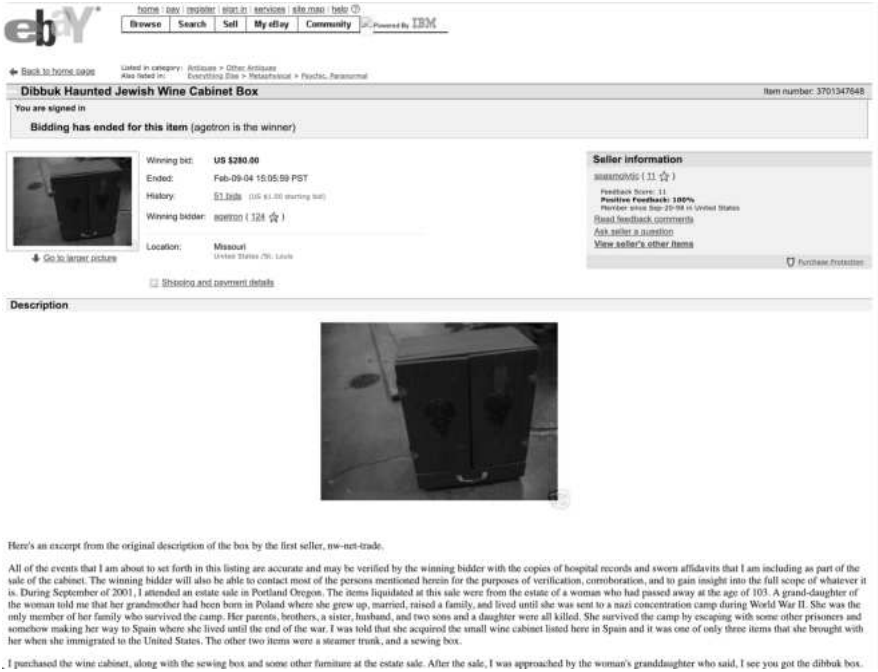


Figure 1: Screenshot from one of the original dybbuk box's first appearances on eBay in 2004, including some of its description and original photo.

Mannis sold the box on eBay in 2003, before the peak of Web 2.0. Since Mannis sold the box, it has spawned countless blog entries, news articles, books, paranormal reality television episodes, numerous horror films from Hollywood to Malayalam- and Hindi-language films, a phone app, a fantasy genre card game, YouTube videos, Tumblr posts, Reddit threads, Twitter comments, TikTok uploads and responses, and, even to this day, countless copycat eBay and Etsy listings[4]. One of its most peculiar recent episodes comprises a viral online story claiming

4 Leslie Gornstein, "A Jinx in a Box?," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 July 2004, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2004-jul-25-ca-gornstein25-story.html, accessed 6 July 2023; Iosif Neitzke, "The Dibbuk Box," 1 August 2013, https://whisperingdark.wordpress.com/tag/iosif-neitzke/, accessed 23 June 2023; Kevin Mannis, "The Dibbuk Box: A.K.A. The Haunted Jewish Wine Cabinet," *Yahoo Blogs*, 2 September 2009, https://web.archive.org/web/20120825053726/ http://voices.yahoo.com/the-dibbuk-box-4184199.html?cat=44, accessed 23 June 2023; Jason Haxton, *The Dibbuk Box* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2011); "The Dybbuk Box," Season 2, Episode 4, *Paranormal Witness*, directed by Russell England, aired on 29 August 2012; Ole Boredal, *The Possession* (Los Angeles: Ghost House Productions), 2012; Jay K., *Ezra* (Chennai: AVA Productions), 2017; Jay

that music artist Post Malone was "cursed" with severe bad luck by the box, after touching it in 2018[5]. The box's third owner, Jason Haxton, wrote a book and created a website about it[6]. The current owner, Zak Bagans, who acquired the box from Haxton, is the host of numerous paranormal reality shows about the box and exhibits a version of it in his "haunted museum" in Las Vegas. Bagans frequently refers to the box as "the most haunted object in the world"[7]. All the nar-

K., *Dybbuk* (Mumbai: T-Series), 2021; "DibbukBox Ghost Box," Google Play, 14 June 2023, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=appinventor.ai_malote1971.DibbukBox&hl=en&gl=US, accessed 25 June 2023; "Cryptid Nation: Seance – 1st Edition," MetaZooHQ, 9 October 2022, https://metazoohq.com/cards/cryptid-nation/seance/1st-edition, accessed 23 June 2023; MindSeedTV "Opening a Real Cursed Dybbuk Box (Gone Wrong) Very Scary Demon Box 3AM," YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEpU-DrHjds&ab_channel=MindSeedTV, accessed 21 June 2023; "#dybbukbox," *Tumblr*, 30 June 2023, https://www.tumblr.com/tagged/dybbuk%20box?sort=top, accessed 30 June 2023; Derpherpderpdeederp, "The Dybbuk Box," 8 April 2019, *Reddit*, https://www.reddit.com/r/Thetruthishere/comments/bav762/the_dybbuk_box/, accessed 26 June 2023; Ashley, @_doyoubelieve_2, 2023. Just dont be like this dude. #dybbukbox #mustwatch #mustwatch #paranormal #doyoubelieve #paranormal #scary #ghost #hauntedtiktok #creepy #haunted #horror #spooky #caughtoncamera #paranormalactivity," TikTok, 15 April 2023, https://www.tiktok.com/@_doyoubelieve_2/video/7222221988071247146?q=%23dybbukbox&t=1688121333087; DuCorbeauALaLicorne, "DYBBUK HAUNTED BOX – paranormal saled box haunted box", 13 February 2017, Etsy, https://web.archive.org/web/20230629112546/ https://www.etsy.com/uk/listing/1487014278/dybbuk-haunted-box-paranormal-saled-box?ga_order=most_relevant&ga_search_type=all&ga_view_type=gallery&ga_search_query=dybbuk+box&ref=sr_gallery-1-1&pro=1&edd=1&sts=1&organic_search_click=1, accessed 30 June 2023; roadshow01, "dybbuk", 29 June 2023, eBay https://web.archive.org/web/20230629113644/ https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/125995219678?hash=item1d55e67ade:g:1a8AAOSwXQhklCxC&amdata=enc%3AAQAIAAAA4KRA%2B5G5pTSp3%2F5kg6%2BSSy3mVKw3tQrFoyNiDxZEX%2BibYKC3FDEgKHNJEwDm02nKIsV9j%2BkSq5GeL7Sg0NP2OVB%2BO5a7qA1VfxlHrvRFb7djywdS7Lx8ANfOe5gHqSw63msVhODDdyzUrdq9CH%2FJJ4R%2F5Ms56s%2FxZJj2zBuJ5aDl%2B4%2BbI4amxpfd9JBgo4aBgpJZVmkoPreiLPr2%2B8ZENAf7MyBk3qbG%2BKMnjWbvJl%2FfkUJA7LxnF11d5X7fSG9JAGTUuFfbd7o9b3YQcpUg0F3%2FEW%2FwU4e8ehAFZjf6os1r%7Ctkp%3ABk9SR-7j4e6gYg, accessed 30 June 2023; KGH (Kalani Ghost Hunter) @kalanighost. 2023, "Anyone wanna open a dybbuk box with me ?," 14 January 2023, 8.53pm, https://twitter.com/kalanighost/status/1614365183568187394.

5 Late Night with Seth Mayers, "Post Malone Was Cursed by a Haunted Dybbuk Box," YouTube, 21 February 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwT-LIX8z18&ab_channel=LateNightwithSethMeyers, accessed 24 June 2023; BBC, "Post Malone's Bad Luck Put Down to 'Haunted' Object," 18 September 2018, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-45559534, accessed 24 June 2023.

6 "The Haunted Jewish Wine Box: Dibbuk Box," 28 October 2009, http://www.dibbukbox.com/, accessed 23 June 2023; Jason Haxton, *The Dibbuk Box* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2011).

7 Numerous episodes of paranormal reality television refer to the box in this way, such as "Robert the Doll and the Dibbuk Box," Season 1, Episode 1, *Deadly Possessions*. Executive producer Zak Bagans, aired on 2 April 2016; and "Curse of the Dybbuk Box," Season 1 Episode 9, *The Haunted Museum: 3 Ring Inferno*, diirected by Adam McDonald, aired 20 November 2021.

ratives about the dybbuk box across its various owners attribute these supernatural events and others like them to the dybbuk that supposedly haunts, has cursed or possesses the box.

The author of the box's original eBay listing, Mannis, confessed in 2021 that the story was an elaborate fiction; Mannis did not buy the box from a Holocaust survivor. Irrespective of the authenticity of the original story, the box's interactive online narrative still continues to transform and travel. The dybbuk box draws on a referential frame as much from popular culture and Jewish folklore as from empirical history (the latter often considered a more appropriate frame for Holocaust memory and education).

Online users interactively produce Holocaust memory and Jewish identity in their engagements with the box. In its remediations on TikTok and YouTube, for example, users often narrativise the box in such a way that emphasises its origins in the Holocaust, within horror genre conventions. In an interactive or networked production of digital Holocaust memory and Jewish identity, responses to these remediations engage in ethical, affective and aesthetic questions about Holocaust history and representation. Many responses are also highly critical of the box's low cultural status, its cultural appropriation of Judaism and Jewish memory, and therefore use the box as a educative springboard to discuss Holocaust memory and Jewish culture. Moreover, Holocaust memory and education instantiated by the dybbuk box exists almost entirely outside of official, institutional commemoration.

This chapter will analyse several examples of the digital remediations of the dybbuk box across different social media platforms, including Reddit, TikTok and YouTube. To investigate digital Holocaust memory on such a platform also speaks to generational changes in commemoration. Both popular and academic commentary identifies platforms such as TikTok with Generation Z (or "Gen Z") culture and sensibilities[8]. Gen Z construct their identities and communities through inhabiting – responding, liking, following, criticising, reposting, remixing – online spaces. Their participation in digital culture is more interactive, fundamental and self-aware in contrast with previous generations.

Therefore, to theorise interactive narratives of the dybbuk box on YouTube or TikTok is also to theorise generational differences in the online culture, aesthetics and sensibilities of digital Holocaust memory. The examples of the box on YouTube and TikTok will demonstrate a distinct affective register through which

8 Generation Z or "Gen Z" is generally understood as encompassing those born, approximately, between 1997 and 2015. Trevor Boffone, "Introduction: The Rise of TikTok in US Culture" in *TikTok Cultures in the United States* ed., Trevor Boffone (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 6–7.

Gen Z produce Holocaust memory online[9]. Specifically, a recent empirical study by the Arolsen Archive describes Gen Z's engagement with Holocaust memory and Nazism in terms of *Angst-Faszination* ("fear-fascination"), a term which, I will argue, characterises a significant amount of online users' interaction with the dybbuk box. According to that study, Gen Z describe their own interest in the Holocaust in terms of a morbid curiosity, simultaneously *anziehend, unheimlich abschreckend, ungeheuerlich und absolut extrem* ("attractive, eerily frightening, monstrous and absolutely extreme").[10] As will be explored in greater detail, online users engage with the dybbuk box online because – through its connections to the horror genre and to Holocaust memory – it is both attractive and monstrous. The dybbuk box becomes a site around which seemingly competing affective-aesthetic impulses coalesce. Online users digitally interact with the box as a means to engage with Holocaust commemoration, and education about the Holocaust, antisemitism, and Jewish identity but also because they are fascinated by the horror genre and the supernatural.

Within this chapter, there is not sufficient scope to narrate and analyse in detail the full extent of every iteration of the dybbuk box across its many forms and platforms. I will take the approach of first summarising some of the most important episodes within the box's many remediations, and then select two from the manifold possible examples to analyse in depth. These two examples are, firstly, the dybbuk box's appearances on paranormal reality television, a televisual genre involving purportedly "real" scenarios (that is, not scripted or fictional) and non-actor ghost-hunters using pseudo-scientific technical equipment to record paranormal phenomena. In particular, online fan communities' reception of these ghost-hunting shows is an important part of how digital Holocaust memory is constructed vis-à-vis the dybbuk box, showing how online users' understanding of the Holocaust is as equally informed by popular culture as by empirical history. Secondly, I will draw on examples from YouTube and TikTok videos together with their user interactions. In particular, YouTube comment sections and TikTok video responses sometimes comprise thousands of comments, including elements of Holocaust denial and antisemitism, as well as debates about the existence of the supernatural. They also comprise an ethical and historiographic sensitivity in online users' understanding of the Holocaust and Jewish identity.

9 Bad Arolsen, "Die Gen Z und die NS-Geschichte: hohe Sensibilität und unheimliche Faszination," 24 January 2022, accessed 25 May 2023, https://arolsen-archives.org/content/uploads/abstract_arolsen-archives_studie-genz-1.pdf. Thank you to Josefine Honke for directing me towards the Arolsen study.

10 Thank you to Libby Saxton for advice on the German translation.

It is important to understand the emergent ways in which Gen Z's digital culture produces Holocaust memory, given recent Dutch research stating nearly a quarter of Millenials and Gen Zs believe either the Holocaust is a "myth" or that the number of people killed in the genocide has been "greatly exaggerated"[11]. As the examples of the dybbuk box on social media will show, a basis in popular culture (not primarily factual history) can still contribute affective and aesthetic value to Holocaust memory and education. Narrative, intertextual analysis of the dybbuk box's appearances on paranormal reality television evidence a referential frame which comprises the popular horror genre, Jewish folklore and other popular Hollywood cinema such as *Indiana Jones: The Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Steven Spielberg, 1981). Further, the box evinces an ongoing shift in the aesthetic and ethical orthodoxies of Holocaust representation predominant in digital space, towards the affective registers of fear and genre of horror, away from ethical-representational conventions, as famously outlined by Terence des Pres, of factuality, uniqueness and sobriety.[12] Particularly, some of the box's manifestations on TikTok or YouTube, discussed in detail below, evidence that the imaginative resources of storytelling and popular culture enrich – not inhibit – the aims of digital Holocaust memory and education. The dybbuk box shows that imaginative, interactive, digital narrative does not necessarily have to chafe against the goals of Holocaust education and the fight against distortion and denial.

1 Memory escaped from (or confined to) its box

Strong refutations of the dybbuk box's supernatural credentials comprise a significant amount of its discussion online. As one Reddit poster simply asserts, there is "no such thing as a 'dybbuk box'"[13]. However, following recent thinking on spectrality and ghosts, this chapter suspends the ontological question – are spirits real or hoax? – shifting instead towards a consideration of the dybbuk box in terms what it does to contribute to the production of Holocaust memory and Jewish

11 Claims Conference, "New study reveals nearly one quarter of Dutch Millennials and Gen Z believe the Holocaust was a myth or exaggerated," 25 January 2023, https://www.claimscon.org/netherlands-study, accessed 18 October 2023.

12 Terence Des Pres, "Holocaust Laughter?," in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed., Berel Lang (New York: Holmes and Meier 1988), 217.

13 ScottSierra, "There's no such thing . . .," 13 May 2023, *Reddit*, https://www.reddit.com/r/Paranormal/comments/13gskn6/what_is_your_opinion_on_dybbuk_boxes/jk22vg5/, accessed 30 June 2023.

identity in different digital, networked contexts[14]. In what ways does the box become a site around which online users negotiate digital Holocaust memory and Jewish identity? Irrespective of whether the box is supernaturally or culturally authentic, its circulation in online spaces contributes to the production of digital Holocaust memory and to the formation of online identities and communities, Jewish and non-Jewish, sceptic and believer. Some of the online discussions of the box confirm this view that, regardless of the credulity of the box or demons and ghosts more broadly, "everyone forgets its [o]irigins" and the dybbuk box subsequently "takes on a life of its own"[15].

The dybbuk box first appeared on eBay in 2003, towards the end of the era of Web 1.0, in which the internet was characterised by "static pages and content delivery"[16]. However, the box rose to viral prominence with the rise of Web 2.0, characterised by user-led "participatory, collaborative, and distributive practices"[17]. The box's digital circulation is viral, defined by Limor Shifman, as a "cultural unit [. . .] spread by multiple agents" and "viewed by many millions"[18]. Despite its viral ubiquity, the dybbuk box has received little academic consideration. The only peer-reviewed academic work on the dybbuk box discusses it jurisprudentially, asking in what sense can a ghost be legally bought and sold on sites such as eBay[19]. There are also some brief mentions of the dybbuk box within studies of the horror film genre and representation of Jews and Judaism, relating to one of its most notable cinematic incarnations, the horror film *The Possession* (Ole Bornedal, 2012)[20]. There has as yet not been any research article or book-

14 Frederic Jameson, "Marx's Purloined Letter" in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's* Spectres of Marx, ed., Michael Sprinker (London: Verso, 2008), 39.

15 Gun__Mage, "The man who Sold it to Zak . . .," 25 June 2021, *Reddit* https://www.reddit.com/r/GhostAdventures/comments/o7pnes/is_the_dybbuk_box_at_the_museum_a_replica/h30znn8/, accessed 30 June 2023.

16 Nupur Choudhury, "World Wide Web and Its Journey from Web 1.0 to Web 4.0," *International Journal of Computer Science and Information Technologies* 5(6) (2014): 8096.

17 Choudhury, "World Wide Web," 8097.

18 Limor Shifman, *Memes in Digital Culture* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2014), 58.

19 Mark Giancaspro, "Testing the Boundaries of Consideration Doctrine: Can You Contract to Buy and Sell a Ghost?" *Alternative Law* 45(2) (2020): 107–113. https://doi.org/10.1177/1037969X19882485.

20 Mark Bernard, "Disorderly Eating and Eating Disorders: The Demonic Possession Film as Anorexia Allegory," in *Food, Media and Contemporary Culture*, ed., Peri Bradley (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 178; Karen J. Renner, *Evil Children in the Popular Imagination* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 109; Klaus S. Davidowicz, *Film als Midrasch: Der Golem, Dybbuks und Andere Kabbalistische Element im Populären Kino* (Göttingen: Vienna University Press, 2017), 68.

length study on the dybbuk box specifically in terms of Holocaust memory, digital re- and trans-mediation, or Jewish identity.

There are no known records of dybbuks having ever haunted or possessed objects such as boxes before 2003. Stories about dybbuks have an extensive history in Jewish folklore. By far the most well-known, pre-digital narrative involving a dybbuk is S. An-sky's 1910s play, *The Dybbuk: Between Two Worlds*, originally written in Russian, and translated into Yiddish. In writing *The Dybbuk*, An-sky, a secular, urban Jew, drew from his ethnographic work with the religiously Jewish occupants of rural and impoverished *shtetlach* (Yiddish for "little towns"). In his research he asked participants about their beliefs in folklore, oral tradition and spirituality. Moreover, its narrative speaks to the haunting of the play's present by antisemitism. *The Dybbuk*'s narrative centres on the marriage of Khonen and Leah. The graveyard of the synagogue in which they are married features the tombstones of a married couple killed during the Khmel'nyts'kyi pogroms of 1648 to 1649. Gabriella Safran reads *The Dybbuk* biographically, in the context of An-sky's anxiety amidst rising antisemitic violence in early twentieth-century Europe involving pogroms and the blood libel accusation and 1913 trial against Jewish Russian Menahem Mendel Beilis[21]. While pre-digital narratives about dybbuks are to do with human – not object – possession, An-sky's play shares in common with the digital dybbuk box the figuration of the dybbuk as a ghost by which the past clings to the present.

Moreover, after the Holocaust, dybbuks continue to metaphorise the persistence of trauma and haunting into the present. Ruth Ellen Gruber, for example, describes Holocaust memory in contemporary Europe simultaneously as a "void", "black hole" and "dybbuk"[22]. While digital iterations of the dybbuk box mutate the narrative so that the spirit clings to an object – not a person – these earlier instances of dybbuks attest to an enduring figurative and allegorical potential for dybbuks. Gruber also cites Marcin Kacprzak, a twentieth-century non-Jewish Polish writer, who describes his own obsession with the Jewish past clinging to him like a dybbuk[23]. One of the most well-known cinematic iterations of the dybbuk is in *Der Dibuk* (Michał Waszyński, 1937), adapted from An-sky's play, shot in Poland and performed in Yiddish. The film has been described as a "kaddish" (Jewish

21 Gabriella Safran, *Wandering Soul: The Dybbuk's Creator S An-sky* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 187.

22 Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002), 41.

23 Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*, 38.

prayer of mourning) that disturbingly foresees the destruction of Jewish communities across Europe only several years after its release[24].

For Zuzanna Dziuban, dybbuks, which figure Holocaust memory as haunting, negotiate relationalities between Jews and non-Jews (for her, specifically in a Polish national context)[25]. Since ghosts can, in the words of Avery Gordon, become reminders of repressed "social violence", Dziuban notes how thinking about the past as ghostly can sometimes instantiate "critical demarginalisation" – in other words, bring greater attention to narratives, identities or practices that have been historically neglected in both scholarship and culture[26]. Conversely, she argues that dybbuks have often become a means by which non-Jews can culturally appropriate Jewish culture, thereby reinforcing such marginality[27]. These examples of diverse metaphoric deployments of dybbuks in relation to Holocaust memory demonstrate how this figure from Jewish folklore has continued its discursive and narrative adaptability into the interconnected, digital era. Moreover, the dybbuk box across different contexts has a complex, multi-faceted relationship to antisemitism and cultural appropriation as well as positive assertions of Jewish identity and the educative-commemorative aims of Holocaust memory.

Official, institutional Holocaust memory and education has typically distanced itself from user-generated, historically decontextualised narratives such as the dybbuk box. Andrew Hoskins describes the bifurcation of memory between, on the one hand, "formalized, institutionalized, regimented" and, on the other, "more emergent, confrontational, yet fragmented"[28]. The dybbuk box exists more or less entirely on the latter side. The dybbuk box exemplifies Hoskins' assertion that within digital memory cultures, "the undesirable past" becomes open

24 Ira Konigsberg, "'The Only "I" in the World': Religion, Psychoanalysis, and 'The Dybbuk,'" *Cinema Journal* 36(4) (1997): 25.

25 Zuzanna Dziuban, "Of Ghosts' Inability to Haunt: 'Polish Dybbuks'" *The "Spectral Turn": Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire*, ed., Zuzanna Dziuban (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2019), 153.

26 Avery Gordon, "Introduction to the New Edition," *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xvi; Zuzanna Dziuban, "Memory as Haunting", *HAGAR Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities* 12 (Winter 2014): 112.

27 Dziuban, "Of Ghosts' Inability," 172.

28 Andrew Hoskins, "The Right to be Forgotten in Post-Scarcity Culture" in *The Ethics of Memory in a Digital Age: Interrogating the Right to be Forgotten*, ed., Alessia Ghezzia, Ângela Guimarães and Lucia Vescnić-Alujević, 60, cited in Wolf Kansteiner, "The Holocaust in the 21st Century: Digital Anxiety, Transnational Cosmopolitanism, and Never Genocide Without Memory," in *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition*, ed., Andrew Hoskins (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), 112.

to a "virality that undermines attempts to sanitise memory"[29]. Wolf Kansteiner describes an entrenched "digital anxiety" on the part of the "Holocaust memory establishment" when it comes to transplanting their educative and commemorative message to low-cultural "simulative and interactive ludic digital environments"[30]. This anxiety was also part of the condemnatory response to, for example, the TikTok "Holocaust POV" trend, in which mostly Gen Z online users used TikTok videos to imaginatively perform in direct address to camera the role of a Jewish Holocaust victim that has reached the afterlife[31]. The fragmented, unsanitised nature of the dybbuk box, like the Holocaust POV trend, highlights a tension in thinking on digital memory – between the interactive, ludic potential of the digital, in contrast to a cautious, moralistic and regulatory imperative to control Holocaust memory online.[32]

Nonetheless, there are legitimate concerns regarding the relationship between Holocaust memory and social media, as played out in the dybbuk box. Racisms, including antisemitism, as well as Holocaust denial, proliferate on the Internet in a manner peculiar to the digital sphere[33]. The dybbuk box could be associated with antisemitism through the racist Christian imagination of Jewish people as supernatural or diabolical. Viral remediations of the dybbuk box sometimes conflate Christian and Jewish folklore and iconographies, in for example, conflating the dybbuk with a "demon" (not a spirit), or confusing the Star of David with a pentagram or vice versa[34]. The question of cultural appropriation often features in online discussions of the dybbuk box, as the box attracts attention from non-Jews as well as Jews[35]. In short, the relationship of antisemitism to the dybbuk box can be summarised in Zygmunt Bauman's definition of "allosemitism" as conceiving of Jews as "radically different from all others", an ambivalent

29 Hoskins, "The Right to be Forgotten in Post-Scarcity Culture," 60.

30 Kansteiner, "The Holocaust in the 21st Century," 112.

31 Sophia Ankel, "TikTok creators are pretending to be Holocaust victims in heaven in a new trend dubbed 'trauma porn,'" 23 August 2020, *Insider*, https://www.insider.com/tiktok-trend-shows-people-pretending-to-be-holocaust-victims-heaven-2020-8, accessed 30 June 2023.

32 Stephens, "Playing Pretend on Social Media," 239.

33 Tom Divon and Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "#JewishTikTok: The JewToks' Fight against Antisemitism" in *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, ed., Trevor Boffone (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 47; Julian Hargreaves, "Antisemitism: how the internet has revived old anti-Jewish tropes," *The Conversation*, 11 March 2022, https://theconversation.com/antisemitism-how-the-internet-has-revived-old-anti-jewish-tropes-178216, accessed 25 June 2023.

34 Jake Webber, "OPENING A DEMON IN A BOX (DYBBUK BOX)," 24 June 2018, YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnYSDEbZ_E0, accessed 25 June 2023.

35 Jewitches, "The Deal With the Dybbuk," 5 September 2020, https://jewitches.com/blogs/blog/the-deal-with-the-dybbuk, accessed 30 June 2023.

comingling of philosemitic and antisemitic tendencies[36]. It may be the box's allosemitic, exoticised appeal – that its Jewishness is tied to its scariness – that attracts some non-Jews. This being said, Kevin Mannis, the creator and original owner of the box, is himself Jewish, and has spoken of his interest in kabbalah and Jewish folklore in relation to the box[37]. He could not have created the box without at least some knowledge of Jewish folklore and religion, as well as Hebrew script. Therefore, debates about the authenticity of the box should be nuanced in light of the original owner's self-exoticisation.

The copy-cat versions of the box that appear on eBay and Etsy typically do not contain any explicit mentions of the Holocaust, although do often feature Hebrew characters or other (sometimes inaccurate or antisemitic) references to Jewish memory or religion[38]. The copy-cat boxes sell anywhere in the region of 30 dollars upwards to hundreds of dollars[39]. The copy-cat boxes relate to another viral trend connected to dybbuk boxes, in which YouTubers post videos of themselves opening the box[40]. Many of these videos have millions of views and are uploaded by YouTubers with millions of followers. In these videos it is ambiguous as to whether video-creators have an authentic, subjectively held belief in the supernatural, or whether they are uploading the videos purely as "clickbait", to gain views, likes, and subscribers (the digital currency of the online "attention economy")[41]. Mentions of the back-story of the dybbuk box – its origins in the Ho-

36 Zygmunt Bauman, "Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern," in *Modernity, Culture and the 'Jew'*, ed., Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 143.

37 Moss, "Finally, the truth . . ." behind the 'haunted' Dybbuk Box can be revealed," *Input*.

38 Tess Cutler, "Haunted Dybbuk Boxes For Sale," October 29 2015, *Tablet*, https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/haunted-dybbuk-boxes-for-sale, accessed 7 June 2023.

39 minoel1431, "***WARNING HAUNTED DYBBUK BOX BEELZEBUB 18+***," 25 June 2023, eBay, https://web.archive.org/web/20230629113921/ https://www.ebay.com/itm/385708240857?hash=item59ce00afd9:g:4M0AAOSw-LZkfAcu&amdata=enc%3AAQAIAAAA4KxVhpEXE2ZT9P%2BiuE2pbwgktzplCw5berPkGvVp215fNhAM562UEpG9pzTyhtynnv7xNLg34s%2FRVkFqCPWf5Tzt7SNeYeWquyewcMyQrdQiqZJideYyW5A6x%2FBczhktN7Dja9kb%2Bvx0cclibzEOacNfMlldCZ52N%2FOsWcDsUezJdWZ3vmxRialoYZE8aPBmUBgvIMv66sf9DOSGggp5E0yZ9AILsMRg%2FeLFvyJG1jurZARPOFFDbQHgZrg8xcwsYVdM94Gtu04Ph%2FXHf1d8z26sPHyhykhGUjmMAY2P0r29%7Ctkp%3ABk9SR_7klO-gYg, accessed 30 June 2023.

40 OVERNIGHT, "OPENING 13 DYBBUK BOXES at the SALLIE HOUSE (Incredible Paranormal Evidence)," 3 December 2022, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkEx_AyMk90, accessed 30 June 2023; Jasko Vlogs, "Opening a Real Cursed Dybbuk Box (Gone Wrong) 3AM Very Scary," 2 November 2022, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOEw7lnBPEs, accessed 30 June 2023; Crypto NWO, "I OPENED 3 DYBBUK BOXES OFF THE DARK-WEB," 14 January 2021, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8SdXqPro78, accessed 30 June 2023.

41 Michael H. Goldhaber, "The Attention Economy and the Net," *First Monday* 2(4), https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v2i4.519.

locaust and connections Jewish folklore and mysticism – are scarce in the videos themselves but often feature in the comment sections for the videos[42].

2 The dybbuk box and paranormal reality television

In contrast to many of the copy-cat eBay and Etsy listings, as well as the YouTube videos that derive from them, the appearances of the dybbuk box on supernatural reality television do feature Holocaust memory as a central narrative component. In general, reality television is a mode strongly characterised by "hybridity", drawing on a seemingly contradictory set of generic and textual codes and in the case of paranormal reality television specifically, combining documentary and factuality with the horror genre[43]. This hybridity speaks to the box's references to the history of the Holocaust while simultaneously being an imaginative, narrative fiction. The online reception of Zak Bagans' paranormal reality television shows involves lively reaction to each episode on social media. As Mannis, the original owner and creator describes, the dybbuk box has become an interactive, user-generated horror story in real time[44].

Episode 4, season 2 of *Paranormal Witness*, "The Dybbuk Box", contains interviews with Kevin Mannis as well as his grandmother, who is alleged to have experienced a stroke because of the dybbuk box. Mannis explains in a talking-head interview, in line with the story written in the original eBay listing, that he bought the box from a Holocaust survivor. He also confirms the same description in the original eBay listing of the box, including an abbreviated, inaccurate portion of the *shema* written on the back. The *shema* is a prayer traditionally recited twice a day by Orthodox Jews as a *mitzvah*. Moreover, it is often recited at funerals. The prayer itself has developed a particular relationship to Holocaust memory as many Jews in the gas chambers of Nazi extermination camps would recite the *shema* moments before they died or that it was sung as a form

42 Jake Webber, "OPENING A DEMON IN A BOX (DYBBUK BOX)," 24 June 2018, YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnYSDEbZ_E0, accessed 25 June 2023.

43 Laurie Oullette, "Introduction" in *A Companion to Reality Television*, ed., Laurie Oullette (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2017), 5.

44 Charles Moss, "Finally, the truth behind the 'haunted' Dybbuk Box can be revealed," *Input*, 8 July 2021, accessed 30 May, 2023, https://www.inverse.com/input/features/dybbuk-box-dibbuk-kevin-mannis-zak-bagans-haunted-hoax-revealed.

of spiritual resistance[45]. More broadly, in this particular version of the dybbuk box, there is potential to read the spirit inside the box as allegorical of the transgenerational trauma that Holocaust survivors carry with them in post-war migratory journeys.

This episode of *Paranormal Witness* involves a narrative expansion of the dybbuk box in relation to the Holocaust. In *Paranormal Witness*, fictionalised reconstructions along with the testimony of Mannis elaborate that the box was created by Havilah, the deceased grandmother of the woman who sold the box to Mannis, and her cousin Sophie, while they both lived in Poland, on the eve of World War Two (neither of these women were named in the original eBay listing, and are given their names for the first time here). Sophie explains that she and Havilah conducted séances during the rise of Nazism in the 1930s, one of which was successful. This is how they contacted a "dark, evil entity", the dybbuk contained within the box of Mannis' 2003 eBay listing. They devised a ritual to contain the dybbuk within the box.

Figure 2: A still taken from Season 1, Episode 4 of Zak Bagans' *Ghost Adventures: Quarantine*, "Dybbuk Box: The Opening". The dybbuk box is in the foreground while archival footage of concentration camp internees is projected in the background.

Continuing in their narrative expansion of the dybbuk box, these paranormal reality shows evince its intertextual connections to popular culture. In 2021, in season one, episode four of *Ghost Adventures: Quarantine*, "Dybbuk Box: The Opening",

45 Norman Lamm, *The Shema: Spirituality and Law in Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1998), 4–5.

shot at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mannis explains to Bagans during a video call that there are in fact 10 boxes, not one. Mannis elaborates that these boxes each correspond to the 10 branches of the kabbalistic Tree of Life. Mannis further expands that Havilah and Sophie via their séances inadvertently "unleashed" the evil of twentieth-century atrocities of not only the Holocaust but also the Korean War, the Khmer Rouge, and the 1984 Bhopal chemical disaster in India. As Mannis says, Havilah "trap[ped] that evil and then ripped it apart". As mentioned, narrative details about the dybbuk box transform and contradict one another as it moves across different formats, platforms and texts.

In response to this expansion of the dybbuk box's narrative world to include 10 boxes, one Reddit user mocks that "this isn't the marvel [sic] cinematic universe and we ain't collecting the paranormal infinity stones here"[46]. This user is referring to the Marvel superhero franchise and in particular films such as *Avengers: Infinity War* (Anthony Russo, 2018), in which the evil protagonist Thanos attempts to collect six separate "Infinity Stones". These stones when assembled altogether have the power to unleash mass annihilation. Another example of the box's entanglement with popular culture is via Bagans' association of it with Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and Raiders of the Lost Ark*. In "Dybbuk Box: The Opening" (see figure 2), Bagans confesses in voiceover narration that, after opening the box, he had expected "some grand moment like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*", referring to the well-known climax of the film in which Jones (Harrison Ford) witnesses the Nazis opening the Ark, and then dying because of it, having unleashed a destructive, magical force. These examples of the box's reception of Reddit indicate that online users' frames of reference for understanding the box (and therefore Holocaust memory) are drawn primarily or entirely from popular culture. On another occasion, in "Robert the Doll and the Dibbuk Box" of 2020 series *Deadly Possessions*, Bagans exclaims to Haxton, who allegedly had buried the box in fear of its paranormal influence: "[Y]ou must have [u]nburied it like you were on *Raiders of the Lost Ark*". Moreover, Haxton likens the box to an ark very explicitly, asserting that acacia wood, the same material allegedly used to construct the Ark of the Covenant, should be used to safely house the dybbuk box[47].

These examples from paranormal reality television illustrate that the dybbuk box is broadly part of a wider fictional output of Holocaust-related cultural production in which the genocide and its memory features as a dehistoricised yet nonethe-

46 MuppetMurderer5, "When I was watching quarantine and . . .", 20 October 2020, *Reddit*, https://www.reddit.com/r/GhostAdventures/comments/jhwjb9/dark_ritual_from_deadly_possessions_dybuuk_box/ga3gssk/, accessed 30 June 2023.

47 Haxton, "The Dybbuk Box: Research," 28 October 2009, http://dibbukbox.com/research.htm, accessed 30 June 2023.

less narratively and symbolically fundamental part of storytelling. Barry Langford's description of recent horror films featuring the Holocaust such as *The Unborn* (David S. Goyer, 2009) and *Dominion: Prequel to the Exorcist* (Paul Schrader, 2005) aptly applies to the way in which the dybbuk box in its various online appearance evokes a "dehistoricized and decontextualized" Holocaust[48]. Thus, through connections to Indiana Jones and the Avengers' Thanos, the dybbuk box mediates the Holocaust as an abstract signifier of a destructive "diabolical evil" within fictional narrative.[49]

3 TikTok and YouTube: Producing memory through comments, replies and remixes

The interactive, user-led nature of YouTube and TikTok lend themselves to fertile analysis of the dybbuk box's relationship to digital Holocaust memory and Jewish identity. In the comment sections of these platforms, prompted by the dybbuk box, online users contribute to interactive discussion about the ethical, historical, religious and psychological factors related to Holocaust memory and Holocaust survivors. A video uploaded by YouTube channel MrBallen narrates the dybbuk box within the affective and generic framework of horror. MrBallen's channel features stories about, in its own words, "strange, dark, and mysterious" paranormal phenomena[50]. In MrBallen's YouTube version, Havilah is scared of the box, desperate to part with it. One comment on MrBallen's YouTube video remarks that if an elderly Holocaust survivor is "scared of something you can be sure that thing is hell scary [sic]"[51]. Another user questions this, stating that a Holocaust survivor "likely has PTSD" and therefore would be "scared of everything" – in other words, not exclusively the box[52]. Another reply exclaims: "she [Havilah]

48 Barry Langford, "Globalizing the Holocaust: Fantasies of Annihilation in Contemporary Media Culture" in *Holocaust Intersections: Genocide and Visual Culture at the New Millenium*, ed., Axel Bangert, Robert S. C. Gordon and Libby Saxton (London: Routledge, 2017), 119.

49 Langford, "Globalizing the Holocaust," 119.

50 MrBallen, "This box will KILL you," *YouTube*.

51 yonahgreene7160, "When a 103 year old holocaust survivor is scared of something you can be sure that thing is hell scary," 7 April 2021, *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bf_9w1vpq50&google_comment_id=UgyGp6C5-dZhNY8dfQ14AaABAg&ab_channel=MrBallen, 25 June 2023.

52 Kjlandon9140, "okay i'm not trying to be offensive . . .", reply to: yonahgreene7160, "When a 103 year old holocaust survivor is scared of something you can be sure that thing is hell scary," 7 April 2021.

survived probably the scariest thing in human history" but is "still scared of the box"[53]. Yet another similar comment opines that, since the dybbuk box originated in the Holocaust, the box "cannot hold any good" as there was "just so much evil" that took place during the Nazi period[54]. These comments perhaps suggest that the dybbuk box, via the imaginative force of horror storytelling, retains an educative value, irrespective of its relationship to factual history. The narrative of an elderly Holocaust survivor petrified of a haunted object associated with the trauma of the Holocaust and antisemitism, for these online users, emphasises the extremity and fear of the Nazi period with a particular affective depth.

Many TikTok videos featuring the box are similar to, for example, MrBallen's YouTube narration. They rely on a form of what Crystal Abidin describes as digital "communicative intimacies", formally expressed in the narrator's slow, hushed speech, direct address to camera in close-up, filming on their mobile phone from the domestic intimacy of their bedrooms, and suspenseful or unnerving horror genre soundtrack[55]. The three-part TikTok narration of the dybbuk box by user Bobbiecurtislee exemplifies this communicative intimacy[56], shown in figure 3. In this example, however, this particular user is more interested in relating to her viewers the horror aspects of the box – in which Holocaust memory is instrumentalised – rather than its educative or commemorative role in online Jewish identity.

Debates on TikTok about the dybbuk box are shaped by the interactive mechanisms built into the platform. TikTok users can access the "react/duet" function, whereby videos can be posted as reactions to other videos, where the "duet" fea-

53 Foxyloaf8129, "Holy shit i never realized that . . .", reply to: : yonahgreene7160, "When a 103 year old holocaust survivor is scared of something you can be sure that thing is hell scary," 7 April 2021.

54 Shelly Simpson -Christian, "In my opinion if there's anything . . .," 8 May 2023, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bf_9w1vpq50&lc=Ugyjr5L9XRdRkOCS22B4AaABAg, accessed 26 June 2023.

55 Crystal Abidin, "Communicative ❤ Intimacies: Influencers and Perceived Interconnectedness," *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media & Technology* 8 (2015), DOI:10.7264/N3MW2FFG.

56 Bobbiecurtislee, "Follow for more spookiness #hauntedtiktok #creepy #spooky #ThisCouldBeUs #WordsOfWisdom #fyp #viral #ghost #demon #scary #scarystories #foryou #foru," 30 December 2020, https://www.tiktok.com/@bobbiecurtislee/video/6912134105148722437, accessed 30 June 2023; Bobbiecurtislee, "Follow for more #greenscreen #ThisCouldBeUs #WordsOfWisdom #hauntedtiktok #creepy #spooky #fyp #viral #ghost #demon #scary #scarystories #foru," 31 December 2020, TikTok, https://www.tiktok.com/@bobbiecurtislee/video/6912227854453427461, accessed 30 June 2023; Bobbiecurtislee, "follow for more spookiness 🎃 #Bye2020 #hauntedtiktok #creepy #spooky #fyp #viral #scary #foryou #ghost #demon #NewYearNewMiO #ThisCouldBeUs #foru," 31 December 2020, https://www.tiktok.com/@bobbiecurtislee/video/6912475597423873286, accessed 30 June 2023.

tures the original video alongside the one responding to it[57]. Users can also tag other creators in their video descriptions. One particular video – in response to videos such as those made by Bobbiecurtislee – employs both of these functions, in which the TikTok user performs a self-composed klezmer-style song as a means to playfully educate their followers about the Jewish folklore underlying dybbuks. This video also includes captions warning their followers about the antisemitic, inappropriate co-opting of Jewish culture by many of the TikTok users who post videos about the supernatural aspects of the box[58]. The video's creator responds to one comment eruditely in terms of how the dybbuk box can be critiqued for its dehistoricised exploitation of Holocaust memory: the dybbuk box "feels like exploiting holocaust trauma for ~mystique~ and spreading ~scary~ inaccuracies about our marginalized, scapegoated ethnoreligion"[59]. (Bracketing a word with tildes has developed as a means of expressing sarcasm or irony on social media.)[60] The video's creator also tags another TikTok user who has posted a video on their channel of them opening a dybbuk box that they ordered from eBay or Etsy[61]. In this context, online users' engagement with the dybbuk box becomes a means by which to simultaneously educate about Jewish folklore from an explicitly self-identified Jewish perspective as well as to warn other users about the potential antisemitic baggage associated with some ways of participating in the haunted box.

TikTok is well-documented as fostering vibrant sub-communities which are organised around tags such as #QueerTok, #BookTok, #WitchTok, and most pertinent for this chapter, #JewTok[62]. #JewTok is a tag employed by users who self-identify as Jewish and tends to feature videos involving autogenous promotion of Jewish identity, and education about Judaism and religious practices as well as

57 TikTok, "Duets and Reactions on TikTok – Safety Tips," 27 March 2019, https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-gb/duets-and-reactions-on-tiktok-safety-tips, accessed 30 May 2023.

58 sj_rachel, "#duet with @sj_rachel go watch @kitttenqueen 's video explaining more #dybbuk #dybbukbox #jewish #jew #jewtok," 2 February 2021, https://www.tiktok.com/@sj_rachel/video/6924770820770336006, accessed 30 June 2023.

59 sj_rachel, "yes, it feels like exploiting . . .," 2 February 2021, *TikTok*, https://www.tiktok.com/@sj_rachel/video/6924770820770336006, accessed 30 June 2023.

60 Jess Kimball Leslie, "The Internet Tilde Perfectly Conveys Something We Don't Have the Words to Explain," 5 June 2017, *The Cut*, https://www.thecut.com/article/why-the-internet-tilde-is-our-most-perfect-tool-for-snark.html, accessed 2 July 2023.

61 sj_rachel, @theodoradewinter "please don't open anymore so-called dybbuk boxes . . .," 2 February 2021, *TikTok*, https://www.tiktok.com/@sj_rachel/video/6924770820770336006, accessed 30 June 2023.

62 Trevor Boffone, "Introduction: The Rise of TikTok in US Culture" in *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, ed., Trevor Boffone (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 4.

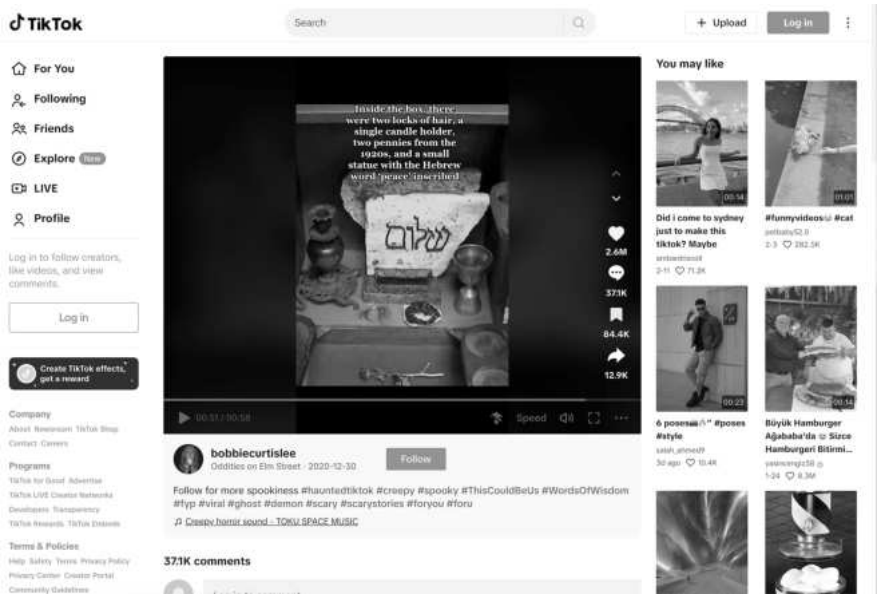


Figure 3: This still is taken from one of the many TikTok videos narrating the dybbuk box as a supernatural, mysterious digital object. It is tagged under #spooky and #hauntedtiktok.

antisemitism and the Holocaust. There is considerable overlap on TikTok between Jewish online space in general, and Holocaust memory and education. The dybbuk box often features on TikTok alongside the #JewTok tag. The tag #dybbukbox as of June 2023 has 46.9 million views, while #JewTok has videos containing overall 1.5 billion views.[63] Thus, the dybbuk box becomes a locus on social media around which Jewish identity and Holocaust memory are constructed and debated via the Internet, in line with Diana Pinto's notion of "Jewish space" as any space or "agora" virtual or otherwise, in which "Jews and non-Jews interact" about "Jewish themes" and where "Jews intermingle with others *qua* Jews"[64].

63 That is, the total amount of views for all the videos with the tag, not one single video with 1.5 billion or 46.9 million views: TikTok, https://www.tiktok.com/tag/dybbukbox; TikTok, https://www.tiktok.com/tag/jewtok, accessed 5 June 2023.

64 Diana Pinto, "The Jewish Challenges in the New Europe" in *Challenging Ethnic Citizenship: Germany and Israel Perspectives on Immigration*, ed., Daniel Levy and Yfaat Weiss (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), 251, cited in Erica Lehrer, "Virtual, Virtuous, Vicarious, Vacuous? Towards a Vigilant Use of Labels" in *Jewish Cultural Studies: Framing Jewish Culture Boundaries and Representations*. Volume IV, ed., Simon J. Bronner (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), 387.

However, in other cases, some of which are referenced above, the dybbuk box features in videos not tagged under #JewTok, instead tagged under #hauntedtiktok or #spookytok[65]. TikTok users such as Bobbieleecurtis, who receive millions of views on their videos, engage with the dybbuk box primarily in terms of horror credentials, not Jewish, folkloric origins, under these tags. That the dybbuk box is tagged under two seemingly disparate communities means it is describable as a "boundary object", in that it exists within two separate social spheres can therefore potentially act as a bridge between them[66]. The YouTube and Tiktok videos about the dybbuk box evinces how the notion of "fear-fascination", mentioned in the introduction, may be central in how a younger, generation of online users produce digital Holocaust memory.

The Arolsen study also suggests that for Gen Z the uncanny, attractive, monstrous qualities of the Holocaust and National-Socialism lend that historical period the "aura of 'true crime'"[67]. This is significant in that it offers empirical insight into the ongoing generational shifts in the aesthetic, ethical, generic and affective determinants of the production of digital Holocaust memory. Recent scholarly insights into the true crime genre, in terms of its audiences and affects, shed light on the fear-inducing dybbuk box and the way in which this intersects with Holocaust memory. Jean Murley describes the true crime fans as involved in a "serious exposé of 'unmitigated evil'"[68]. Tanya Horeck suggests that true crime, as a mode drawing on documentary, also satisfies for its spectators what Bill Nichols terms an "epistiphilic" drive – love or desire for knowledge – inherent to documentary spectatorship[69]. There is also Murley's ethical emphasis on understanding true crime as premised on "easy acceptance of violence as entertainment". The terrifying fascination of the dybbuk box, then, underlines that for Gen Z users the Holocaust figures within this epistemic desire to comprehend extreme violence and evil while (perhaps sometimes uneasily) traversing pop-culture entertainment and education.

---

65 Thehappydead, "The box that holds a spirit. #spookytok #conspiracytiktok #scarytiktoks," 17 January 2022, https://www.tiktok.com/@thehappydead/video/7054268345520147758, accessed 30 June 2023.

66 Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer, "Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907–39," *Social Studies of Science* 19(3) (August 1989): 393.

67 Bad Arolsen, "Die Gen Z und die NS-Geschichte."

68 Jean Murley, *The Rise of True Crime: 20th-Century Murder and American Popular Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger), 2008, 17 cited in Tanya Horeck, *Justice on Demand: True Crime in the Digital Streaming Era* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2021), 1.

69 Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 31.

4 Conclusion

As the dybbuk box is such an expansive object, only some of its examples have been covered here. One of the many avenues for further research includes the dybbuk box's appearances in Indian cinema, in the Malayalam-language *Ezra* (Jay K. 2017) and its Hindi-language adaptation, *Dybbuk* (Jay K. 2021). The former focuses on the Jewish community in Kochi and the latter on the Jewish community in Mauritius. Studying the dybbuk box in these films potentially becomes a means by which to cinematically highlight the small diasporic Jewish communities in Mauritius and Kochi. Another aspect to the box's narrative and its online reception is the role of gender, as all of the main protagonists in Mannis' original story are women. A long, detailed YouTube comment emphasises this, listing numerous examples in the original dybbuk box narrative of where Kevin or subsequent owners (all men) ignored women's warnings or suffering in relation to the box[70]. Another possibility in thinking about the dybbuk box is the role of the Covid-19 pandemic in changing online users' engagement with the Internet and how this impacts digital Holocaust memory. Many of the televisual and social media appearances of the dybbuk box appeared in 2020 during the first year of the pandemic. Moreover, during the pandemic, the observation went viral that "covid" spells "divoc" backwards, which online users speculated is another spelling of "dybbuk", thus connecting the dots to antisemitic conspiracy theories about Jewish "influence" within the pharmaceutical industry and its role in the pandemic[71].

Given the extraordinary breadth of interconnected posts, videos, blogs, films and listings, and more about the dybbuk box online, this chapter attempted to provide a summary of the most salient aspects of the box for digital Holocaust memory and then to evaluate just a few examples of its specific iterations. As mentioned, the box provides a challenging case for digital Holocaust memory studies because of the ways in which its form and content sit outside of the comfortable orthodoxies of commemoration and representation. Because of this, the haunted object also shows what happens to Holocaust memory once it has figuratively been released from its box – what it looks like almost entirely independent of any official, institutional memorial framework, produced by non-specialists in a complexly networked

70 poeticblade, "Kevin seriously needs to start listening to women . . .," 15 November 2021, *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bf_9w1vpq50&lc=UgxFJ5bLwOiiImMcMwJ4AaABAg&ab_channel=MrBallen, accessed 30 June 2023.

71 Samantha Putterman, "No, COVID spelled backward doesn't mean evil spirit possession in Hebrew," 11 February 2022, https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/feb/11/facebook-posts/covid-spelled-backward-divoc-which-means-possessio/, accessed 30 June 2023.

way. In some cases, the user-led discussions produced by the dybbuk box's online appearances exhibit a high level of literacy and understanding of the historiography and ethics of Holocaust memory. In short, once memory has been released from its box, the task should be not to condemn or mistrust but to acknowledge and understand it.

Bibliography

Abidin, Crystal. "Communicative Intimacies: Influencers and Perceived Interconnectedness." *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media & Technology* 8 (2015). DOI:10.7264/N3MW2FFG.

Ankel, Sophia. "TikTok creators are pretending to be Holocaust victims in heaven in a new trend dubbed 'trauma porn.'" *Insider*. 23 August 2020. https://www.insider.com/tiktok-trend-shows-people-pretending-to-be-holocaust-victims-heaven-2020-8. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Ashley, @_doyoubelieve_2, 2023. "Just dont be like this dude. #dybbukbox #mustwatch #mustwatch #paranormal #doyoubelieve #paranormal #scary #ghost #hauntedtiktok #creepy #haunted #horror #spooky #caughtoncamera #paranormalactivity." *TikTok*. 15 April 2023. https://www.tiktok.com/@_doyoubelieve_2/video/7222221988071247146?q=%23dybbukbox&t=1688121333087. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Bad Arolsen, "Die Gen Z und die NS-Geschichte: hohe Sensibilität und unheimliche Faszination." 24 January 2022. https://arolsen-archives.org/content/uploads/abstract_arolsen-archives_studie-genz-1.pdf. Accessed 25 May 2023.

Bauman, Zygmunt. "Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern." In Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus, *Modernity, Culture and the 'Jew'*, 143–156. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998.

Choudhury, Nupur. "World Wide Web and Its Journey from Web 1.0 to Web 4.0." *International Journal of Computer Science and Information Technologies* 5(6) (2014): 8096–8100.

BBC. "Post Malone's Bad Luck Put Down to 'Haunted' Object." 18 September 2018. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-45559534. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Bernard, Mark. "Disorderly Eating and Eating Disorders: The Demonic Possession Film as Anorexia Allegory." In *Food, Media and Contemporary Culture*, edited by Peri Bradley, 164–184. Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Bobbiecurtislee. "Follow for more spookiness #hauntedtiktok #creepy #spooky #ThisCouldBeUs #WordsOfWisdom #fyp #viral #ghost #demon #scary #scarystories #foryou #foru." 30 December 2020. https://www.tiktok.com/@bobbiecurtislee/video/6912134105148722437. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Bobbiecurtislee. "Follow for more #greenscreen #ThisCouldBeUs #WordsOfWisdom #hauntedtiktok #creepy #spooky #fyp #viral #ghost #demon #scary #scarystories #foru." 31 December 2020. *TikTok*. https://www.tiktok.com/@bobbiecurtislee/video/6912227854453427461. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Bobbiecurtislee, "follow for more spookiness 👻 #Bye2020 #hauntedtiktok #creepy #spooky #fyp #viral #scary #foryou #ghost #demon #NewYearNewMiO #ThisCouldBeUs #foru." 31 December 2020. https://www.tiktok.com/@bobbiecurtislee/video/6912475597423873286. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Boffone, Trevor. "Introduction: The Rise of TikTok in US Culture." In *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, edited by Trevor Boffone, 1–14. London/New York: Routledge, 2022.

Pinto, Diana. “The Jewish Challenges in the New Europe” in *Challenging Ethnic Citizenship: Germany and Israel Perspectives on Immigration*, edited by Daniel Levy and Yfaat Weiss, 239–252. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002.

Crypto NWO. “I OPENED 3 DYBBUK BOXES OFF THE DARK-WEB.” 14 January 2021. *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8SdXqPro78. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Goldhaber, Michael H. “The Attention Economy and the Net.” *First Monday* 2(4). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v2i4.519.

Cutler, Tess. “Haunted Dybbuk Boxes For Sale.” October 29 2015. *Tablet*. https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/haunted-dybbuk-boxes-for-sale. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Davidowicz, Klaus S. *Film als Midrasch: Der Golem, Dybbuks und Andere Kabbalistische Element im Populären Kino*. Göttingen: Vienna University Press, 2017.

Derpherpderpdeederp, “The Dybbuk Box”. 8 April 2019. *Reddit*. https://www.reddit.com/r/Thetruthishere/comments/bav762/the_dybbuk_box/. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Des Pres, Terence. “Holocaust Laughter?.” In *Writing and the Holocaust*, edited by Berel Lang, 217–233. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988.

Divon, Tom and Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann. “#JewishTikTok: The JewToks' Fight against Antisemitism” in *TikTok Cultures in the United States*, edited by Trevor Boffone, 47–58. London and New York: Routledge, 2022.

DuCorbeauALaLicorne, “DYBBUK HAUNTED BOX – paranormal saled box haunted box.” 13 February 2017. *Etsy*.

Dziuban, Zuzanna. “Of Ghosts’ Inability to Haunt: ‘Polish Dybbuks.’” In *The “Spectral Turn”: Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire*, edited by Zuzanna Dziuban, 131–184. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2019.

Dziuban, Zuzanna. “Memory as Haunting.” *HAGAR Studies in Culture, Polity and Identities* 12 (Winter 2014): 111–135.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McClintock. London: Penguin Books, 2003.

Google Play. “DibbukBox Ghost Box”. 14 June 2023, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=appinventor.ai_malote1971.DibbukBox&hl=en&gl=US. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Gordon, Avery F. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Gun__Mage, “The man who Sold it to Zak . . .”. 25 June 2021. *Reddit*. https://www.reddit.com/r/GhostAdventures/comments/o7pnes/is_the_dybbuk_box_at_the_museum_a_replica/h30znn8/. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Giancaspro, Mark. “Testing the Boundaries of Consideration Doctrine: Can You Contract to Buy and Sell a Ghost?” *Alternative Law* 45(2) (2020): 107–113. https://doi.org/10.1177/1037969X19882485.

Gornstein, Leslie. “A Jinx in a Box?.” *Los Angeles Times* (25 July 2004). https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2004-jul-25-ca-gornstein25-story.html. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Gruber, Ruth Ellen. *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002.

Hargreaves, Julian. “Antisemitism: how the internet has revived old anti-Jewish tropes”. *The Conversation* (11 March 2022). https://theconversation.com/antisemitism-how-the-internet-has-revived-old-anti-jewish-tropes-178216. Accessed 30 June 2023.

“The Haunted Jewish Wine Box: Dibbuk Box.” 28 October 2009. http://www.dibbukbox.com/. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Haxton, Jason, *The Dibbuk Box*. Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2011.

Horeck, Tanya. *Justice on Demand: True Crime in the Digital Streaming Era*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2021.

Lamm, Normal. *The Shema: Spirituality and Law in Judaism*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1998.

Hoskins, Andrew. "The Right to be Forgotten in Post-Scarcity Culture." In *The Ethics of Memory in a Digital Age: Interrogating the Right to be Forgotten*, edited by Alessia Ghezzia, Ângela Guimarães and Lucia Vescnić-Alujević, 50–64. New York/Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Jameson, Frederic. "Marx's Purloined Letter." In *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's* Spectres of Marx, edited by Michael Sprinker, 26–67. London: Verso, 2008.

Jasko Vlogs. "Opening a Real Cursed Dybbuk Box (Gone Wrong) 3AM Very Scary." 2 November 2022. *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOEw7lnBPEs. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Jewitches. "The Deal With the Dybbuk." 5 September 2020. https://jewitches.com/blogs/blog/the-deal-with-the-dybbuk. Accessed 30 June 2023.

KGH (Kalani Ghost Hunter) @kalanighost. 2023. "Anyone wanna open a dybbuk box with me ?." 14 January 2023, 8.53pm. https://twitter.com/kalanighost/status/1614365183568187394. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Kansteiner, Wolf. "The Holocaust in the 21st Century: Digital Anxiety, Transnational Cosmopolitanism, and Never Genocide Without Memory." In *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition*, edited by Andrew Hoskins, 110–140. New York and London: Routledge, 2018.

Konigsberg, Ira. "'The Only "I" in the World': Religion, Psychoanalysis, and 'The Dybbuk.'" *Cinema Journal* 36(4) (1997): 22–42.

Langford, Barry. "Globalizing the Holocaust: Fantasies of Annihilation in Contemporary Media Culture." In *Holocaust Intersections: Genocide and Visual Culture at the New Millenium*, edited by Axel Bangert, Robert S. C. Gordon and Libby Saxton, 112–131. London: Routledge, 2017.

Late Night with Seth Mayers. "Post Malone Was Cursed by a Haunted Dybbuk Box." *YouTube*. 21 February 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwT-LIX8z18&ab_channel=LateNightwith SethMeyers. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Lehrer, Erica. "Virtual, Virtuous, Vicarious, Vacuous? Towards a Vigilant Use of Labels." In *Jewish Cultural Studies: Framing Jewish Culture Boundaries and Representations*. Volume IV, edited by Simon J. Bronner, 383–395. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014.

Leslie, Jess Kimball. "The Internet Tilde Perfectly Conveys Something We Don't Have the Words to Explain." *The Cut* (5 June 2017). https://www.thecut.com/article/why-the-internet-tilde-is-our-most-perfect-tool-for-snark.html. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Mannis, Kevin. "The Dibbuk Box: A.K.A. The Haunted Jewish Wine Cabinet." *Yahoo Blogs*, 2 September 2009. https://web.archive.org/web/20120825053726/ http://voices.yahoo.com/the-dibbuk-box-4184199.html?cat=44. Accessed 30 June 2023.

MetaZooHQ. "Cryptid Nation: Seance – 1st Edition." 9 October 2022. https://metazoohq.com/cards/cryptid-nation/seance/1st-edition. Accessed 30 June 2023.

MindSeedTV. "Opening a Real Cursed Dybbuk Box (Gone Wrong) Very Scary Demon Box 3AM." *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEpU-DrHjds&ab_channel=MindSeedTV. Accessed 30 June 2023.

minoel1431. "***WARNING HAUNTED DYBBUK BOX BEELZEBUB 18+***." 25 June 2023. *eBay*. https://web.archive.org/web/20230629113921/ https://www.ebay.com/itm/385708240857?hash=item59ce00afd9:g:4M0AAOSw-LZkfAcu&amdata=enc%3AAQAIAAAA4KxVhpEXE2ZT9P%2BiuE2pbwgktzplCw5berPkGvVp215fNhAM562UEpG9pzTyhtynnv7xNLg34s%2FRVkFqCPWf5Tzt7SNeYeWquyewcMyQrdQiqZjdeYyW5A6x%2FBczhktN7Dja9kb%2Bvx0cclibzEOacNfMlldCZ52N%2FOsWcDsUezJdWZ3vmxRialoYZE8aPBmUBgvIMv66sf9DOSGggp5E0yZ9AILsMRg%2FeLFvyJG1jurZARPOFFDbQHgZrg8xcwsYVdM94Gtu04Ph%2FXHf1d8z26sPHyhykhGUjmMAY2P0r29%7Ctkp%3ABk9SR_7klO-gYg. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Moss, Charles. “Finally, the truth behind the ‘haunted’ Dybbuk Box can be revealed.” *Input*. July 8 2021. https://www.inverse.com/input/features/dybbuk-box-dibbuk-kevin-mannis-zak-bagans-haunted-hoax-revealed. Accessed 30 June 2023.

MuppetMurderer5. “When I was watching quarantine and . . . .” 20 October 2020. *Reddit*. https://www.reddit.com/r/GhostAdventures/comments/jhwjb9/dark_ritual_from_deadly_possessions_dybuuk_box/ga3gssk/. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Murley, Jean. *The Rise of True Crime: 20th-Century Murder and American Popular Culture*. Westport: Praeger. 2008.

Neitzke, Iosif. “The Dibbuk Box”. 1 August 2013. https://whisperingdark.wordpress.com/tag/iosif-neitzke/. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Neugroschel Joachim, ed. and trans. *The Dybbuk and the Yiddish Imagination*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000.

Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991.

OVERNIGHT. “OPENING 13 DYBBUK BOXES at the SALLIE HOUSE (Incredible Paranormal Evidence).” 3 December 2022. *YouTube.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkEx_AyMk90. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Oullette, Laurie “Introduction.” In *A Companion to Reality Television*, edited by Laurie Oullette. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2017.

poeticblade, “Kevin seriously needs to start listening to women . . . .” 15 November 2021. *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bf_9w1vpq50&lc=UgxFJ5bLwOiiImMcMwJ4AaABAg&ab_channel=MrBallen. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Putterman, Samantha. “No, COVID spelled backward doesn’t mean evil spirit possession in Hebrew.” 11 February 2022. https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/feb/11/facebook-posts/covid-spelled-backward-divoc-which-means-possessio/. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Renner, Karen, J. *Evil Children in the Popular Imagination*. Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

roadshow01. “dybbuk.” 29 June 2023. *eBay*. https://web.archive.org/web/20230629113644/ https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/125995219678?hash=item1d55e67ade:g:1a8AAOSwXQhklCxC&amdata=enc%3AAQAIAAAA4KRA%2B5G5pTSp3%2F5kg6%2BSSy3mVKw3tQrFoyNiDxZEX%2BibYKC3FDEgKHNJEwDm02nKIsV9j%2BkSq5GeL7Sg0NP2OVB%2BO5a7qA1VfxlHrvRFb7djywdS7Lx8ANfOe5gHqSw63msVhODDdyzUrdq9CH%2FJJ4R%2F5Ms56s%2FxZJj2zBuJ5aDl%2B4%2BbI4amxpfd9JBgo4aBgpJZVmkoPreiLPr2%2B8ZENAf7MyBk3qbG%2BKMnjWbvJl%2FfkUJA7LxnF11d5X7fSG9JAGTUuFfbd7o9b3YQcpUg0F3%2FEW%2FwU4e8ehAFZjf6os1r%7Ctkp%3ABk9SR-7j4e6gYg. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Safran, Gabriella. *Wandering Soul: The Dybbuk’s Creator S An-sky*. Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: Harvard University Press, 2010.

ScottSierra. “There’s no such thing . . . .” 13 May 2023. *Reddit*, https://www.reddit.com/r/Paranormal/comments/13gskn6/what_is_your_opinion_on_dybbuk_boxes/jk22vg5/. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Shelly Simpson -Christian. “In my opinion if there’s anything . . . .” 8 May 2023. *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bf_9w1vpq50&lc=Ugyjr5L9XRdRkOCS22B4AaABAg. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Shifman, Limor. *Memes in Digital Culture*. Cambridge, MA/London: The MIT Press, 2014.

sj_rachel. “#duet with @sj_rachel go watch @kitttenqueen’s video explaining more #dybbuk #dybbukbox #jewish #jew #jewtok.” 2 February 2021.

Star, Susan Leigh and James R. Griesemer, "Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907–39." *Social Studies of Science* 19(3) (August 1989): 387–420.

Stephens, Carmelle. "Playing Pretend on Social Media." In *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research*, edited by Victoria Grace Walden, 237–265. Cham: Switzerland, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

Street, Kori and Kim Simon. "Using Social Media in Holocaust Education." *IHRA* (11 November 2014). https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/social_media_in_holocaust_education.pdf. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Thehappydead. "The box that holds a spirit. #spookytok #conspiracytiktok #scarytiktoks." 17 January 2022. https://www.tiktok.com/@thehappydead/video/7054268345520147758. Accessed 30 June 2023.

TikTok. "Duets and Reactions on TikTok – Safety Tips." 27 March 2019. https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-gb/duets-and-reactions-on-tiktok-safety-tips. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Tumblr. "#dybbukbox." 30 June 2023. https://www.tumblr.com/tagged/dybbuk%20box?sort=top. Accessed 30 June 2023.

Webber, Jake. "OPENING A DEMON IN A BOX (DYBBUK BOX)." 24 June 2018. *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnYSDEbZ_E0. Accessed 30 June 2023.

yonahgreene7160. "When a 103 year old holocaust survivor is scared of something you can be sure that thing is hell scary." 7 April 2021. *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bf_9w1vpq50&google_comment_id=UgyGp6C5-dZhNY8dfQ14AaABAg&ab_channel=MrBallen. Accessed 25 June 2023.

Filmography

Bornedal, Ole. *The Possession*. Los Angeles: Ghost House Productions, 2012.

"Curse of the Dybbuk Box." Season 1, episode 9. *The Haunted Museum: 3 Ring Inferno*. Directed by Adam McDonald. Aired 20 November 2021.

"The Dybbuk Box." Season 2, episode 4. *Paranormal Witness*. Directed by Russell England. Aired on 29 August 2012.

Goyer, David S. *The Unborn*. Universal City: Rogue Pictures. 2009.

K., Jay. *Ezra*. Chennai: AVA Productions. 2017.

K., Jay. *Dybbuk.* Mumbai: T-Series. 2021.

"Robert the Doll and the Dibbuk Box." Season 1, Episode 1. *Deadly Possessions*. Executive producer Zak Bagans. Aired on 2 April 2016.

Russo, Anthony and Joe Russo. *Avengers: Infinity War*. Burbank: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures. 2018.

Schraeder, Paul. *Dominion: Prequel to the Exorcist*. Los Angeles: Morgan Creek Pictures. 2005.

Spielberg, Steven. *Indiana Jones: Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures. 1981.

Anna Menyhért

Digital trauma processing in social media groups: Transgenerational Holocaust trauma on Facebook

> This is tough. It took my breath away.
> The first Hungarian to apologize for the crimes of his/her grandfather.
> (Facebook group post, Commenter '7')

> This is not a website of tales. These are the dreadful stories of the dead.
> (Facebook group post, Commenter '3')

How does the framework of a social media group influence the ways in which people communicate about a collective historical trauma? What is the impact of digital and social media on trauma processing on the individual and on the collective and transgenerational levels? How does sharing of memories of traumas on social media help unblock avenues to the past, and how does it contribute to the processing of collective historical traumas and consequently to the mobilisation of memories, modernisation and the transformation of identities?

The ways of remembering and memory practices changed because of the digital environment as a mediating framework, and online communities such as blogs and social media groups provide a radically new space for both individual and collective trauma processing. There are several Facebook groups that deal with memories of the Holocaust. In this chapter, I analyse and compare two Hungarian groups, "The Holocaust and My Family" and "The Descendants of the Victims and Survivors of the Holocaust", looking at why these groups are especially suitable for facilitating historical trauma processing. I will also show how the concepts of trauma and trauma processing themselves are changing in the digital age, related to how the practice of sharing posts and comments on social media gains more importance and thus counteracts the element of silence, which was considered the most important element of trauma on several levels.

Note: An earlier version of this chapter was published in the special issue of *Hungarian Historical Review*, "Processing Historical Traumas after 1945: Legacies and Representations of War and Dictatorship in Post-War Hungary and in Eastern Europe" *Hungarian Historical Review* 2 (2017): 355–380.

It is gratefully noted here that the research was supported by the European Union Horizon Europe Programme; Marie Sklodowska-Curie Individual Research Fellowship 'TRAPRODIG', No. 701882.

I would like to thank Zsanna Szabó, research assistant in my projects, for her contribution in updating the data on the Facebook groups, and for her valuable comments about the chapter.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-012

Following the emergence of the concept of digital memories, the perception of trauma changed within cultural trauma studies. The now classic, at the time pioneering works of cultural trauma studies were published in the 1990s, after Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was classified in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association.[1] Research fell back on early twentieth-century concepts of hysteria and combat neurosis (Freud, Janet)[2] and on neuro-biological studies that analysed the state of the brain in the moments of trauma and over the long term in order to identify enduring effects (van der Kolk and van der Hart[3]). Cultural and historically oriented trauma studies examined testimonies collected for the growing Holocaust archives for research on collective memory. Notions and ideas such as "postmemory" (Marianne Hirsch[4]), "re-traumatization" (Jörn Rüsen[5]), and the possibility of transmitting trauma by reading (Felman and Laub[6]) induced a boom of cultural trauma studies in the 2000s, prompting gender-oriented studies and interpretations of testimonies and life-writing (Henke[7]). The field of (digital) memory studies has also become a site of increasing research, and, especially in Europe, this development coincided with a growing academic interest in the recent history of Eastern Europe. The volume *Save As . . . Digital Memories*[8] launched digital memory studies as a new scholarly field that takes the influence of new media into account, particularly memory mediation and mobile forms of memory. The collection *Memory, Conflict and New Media: Web Wars in Post-Socialist States*[9] further expanded the field by examining post-totalitarian digital

1 American Psychiatric Association, ed., *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, (Washington: American Psychological Press, 1980).

2 Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Pandora, 1992).

3 Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma," in *Trauma. Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 158–182.

4 Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14(1) (2001): 5–37.

5 Jörn Rüsen, "Trauma and Mourning in Historical Thinking," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in History and Archaeology* 1(1) (2004): 31–43.

6 Shoshana Felman, and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

7 Suzette A Henke, *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

8 Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins and Anna Reading, ed., Save As . . . Digital Memories (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009); Motti Neiger, Oren Meyers and Eyal Zandberg, ed., *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age* (New York: Palgrave, 2011).

9 Ellen Rutten, Julie Fedor and Vera Zvereva, ed., *Memory, Conflict and New Media: Web Wars in Post-Socialist States* (London–New York: Routledge, 2013); Ellen Rutten, "Why Digital Memory

memory politics and practices, highlighting their differences from Western European approaches: the former tend to counteract official practices of forgetting the traumatic past in post-socialist states.

The earlier version of this chapter was written as part of my research project entitled "Trauma Studies in the Digital Age: The Impact of Social Media on Trauma Processing in Life Narratives and Trauma Literature: The Case of Hungary", which introduced, defined and developed the new field of digital trauma studies, investigating the impact of social media on trauma processing. One of the initial hypotheses included the concept of "frozen currents" or "blocked avenues", metaphors which referred to unresolved collective traumas, a series of events in the twentieth century (in the context o Hungary: World War One and the Trianon Peace Treaty, World War Two and the Holocaust, the totalitarian dictatorship and the socialist regime and its fall) which hindered modernisation.[10] I argued that there are social forces that can be mobilised to aid further efforts to overcome traumatic retellings of the historical memory of the twentieth century.

To map the impact of the digital environment and digital media on understandings of trauma, I examined the role of silence, one of the central concepts of cultural trauma studies. The three phases of recovery from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as generally defined in the psychological field since the 1990s based on the work of Judith Herman are the following: 1. reconstituting the survivor's feeling of security; 2. reconstructing the trauma narrative; 3. reestablishing the relationships of the survivor and integrating them into the community.[11] Before the digital age, the second phase was of interest for literary and cultural trauma studies, which tended to focus on interpretations of texts produced during trauma processing and recovery and the investigation of (adequate) reading strategies. The digital era brought the third phase into greater prominence in the public sphere, with instant responses and, hence, dialogue made possible through social media. The practice of sharing traumatic experiences online (in blogs, social networking groups) and reacting to them (in comments and chats) eliminates the element of silence thought to be inherent in trauma, on the one hand, as its basic characteristic feature (meaning the survivor is unable to speak about it) and, on

Wars Should Not Overlook Eastern Europe's Web Wars," in *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*, ed. Uilleam Blacker, Aleksandr Etkind and Julie Fedor, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 219–231.

10 Anna Menyhért, "The Image of 'Maimed Hungary' in 20th Century Cultural Memory and the 21st Century Consequences of an Unresolved Collective Trauma: The Impact of the Treaty of Trianon," *Environment, Space, Place* 8(2) (2016): 69–97.

11 Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Pandora, 1992).

the other, as a cause of secondary traumatisation, when others do not or are not able to listen to the survivor, and even on a third level as an official oppressive or tabooing practice (by, for example, a totalitarian regime). As silence has been considered a crucial element in most definitions of trauma, this change in focus had the potential to redefine trauma in connection with practices of sharing in digital media (see Figure 1).

In contrast with the earlier conception of trauma as fixed in time and space, unspeakable and beyond representation and mediation, trauma in the digital age is considered multiply configured and represented, multidimensional, diverse and shared in the digital space.[12]

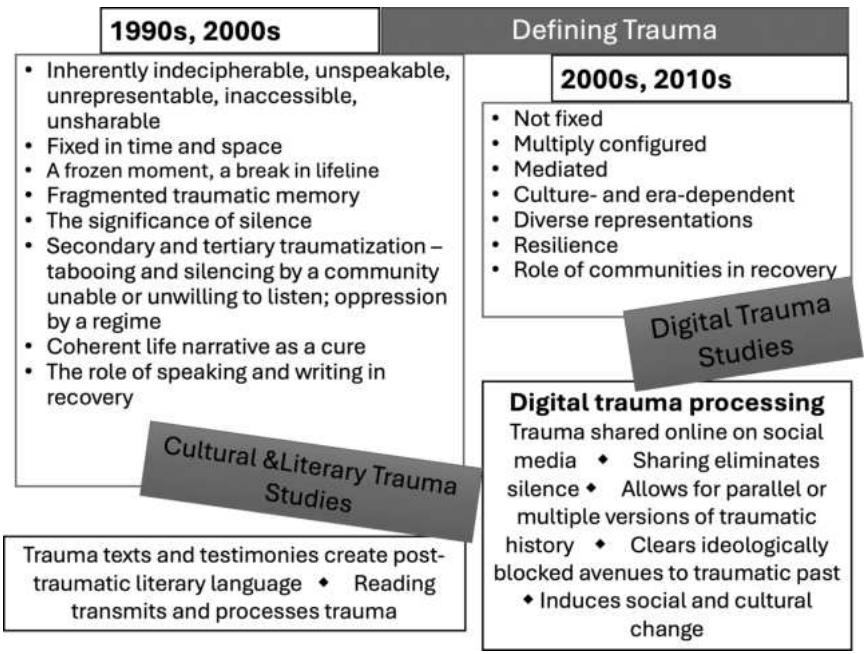


Figure 1: Definitions of trauma 1990–2020 (© Anna Menyhért).

The study of Central European societies can offer specific insights for understanding digitally mediated trauma processing due to their historical experiences with

12 Paul Arthur, "Trauma Online: Public Exposure of Personal Grief and Suffering," *Traumatology* 15(4) (2009): 65–75; Paul Arthur, "Memory and Commemoration in the Digital Present," in *Contemporary Approaches to Literary Trauma Theory*, ed. Michelle Balaev, 152–175 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

totalitarian regimes. These regimes repeatedly perpetuated top-down narratives or enforced silence about traumatic historical events. Hungary stands out by having the largest Jewish population in Central Europe, primarily concentrated in Budapest, where a substantial Jewish community was retained despite attempts at eradication.

The convergence of democratisation and digitalisation in Hungary and Central Europe brought about a shift in memory practices. The accessibility and reach of digital platforms democratised the dissemination of historical trauma narratives, enabling diverse voices to contribute to collective memory and to challenge hegemonic narratives. Because of the change in the ways in which trauma is perceived in the digital age, digitally mediated trauma processing could be a way to "thaw" "frozen currents" or at least to allow the existence of parallel or multiple versions of traumatic history: official, rigid versions, determined by oppressive ideologies of the past and present, as opposed to other versions, created by communities, civil society, and artists. The latter versions are versatile, mobile, emotionally active, and capable of prompting responses that encourage and facilitate the processing of traumas.

One still current example is The Living Memorial on Budapest's Liberty Square, a collection of letters, photographs, books, personal effects which belonged to victims of the Holocaust in Hungary, and an array of other items. The memorial is a poignant response to, and quiet rebuke of, a monument erected hastily by the state in 2014, and its creation was organised through a Facebook group by protesters.

The Hungarian government made 2014 an official Holocaust memorial year. Disagreements, disputes, debates and protests surrounded the government's controversial commemoration plans. The official monument is a statue of an eagle swooping down on a statue of the archangel Gabriel. The eagle represents Germany and the archangel Gabriel represents Hungary. The implication of the official monument is that Hungary was a victim of the German occupation in March 1944, rather than an accomplice of Nazi Germany, both in the war effort against the Soviet Union and in the deportation of Hungarian Jewry.[13] The monument was erected un-announced

13 Éva Kovács, "The Hungarian-Holocaust Memorial Year 2014. Some Remarks," *S:IMON Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation* 4(2) (2017): 109–121, accessed 20 December 2023, https://simon.vwi.ac.at/index.php/simon/article/view/93/87; Kovács, Henriett and Mindler-Steiner, Ursula K. "Hungary and the Distortion of Holocaust History: The Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014." Politics in Central Europe 11, no. 2 (2015): 49–72. https://doi.org/10.1515/pce-2015-0010.

after prolonged protests, as if in a night raid, on 20 July 2014,[14] and it was followed by the creation of the Living Memorial through a Facebook group (among other ways of connection between the organisers). This example shows how trauma processing through online support groups can open previously closed paths to the frozen past which other media – like a monument – would continue to block by official, ideological means.[15]

Another predecessor of the groups I am going to discuss below was the Facebook page of the Open Society Archives project entitled "Yellow Star Houses", which attracted 4,000 people in the first three days of its existence in 2014. It recalled an event in which 2,000 apartment buildings were marked with a yellow star in June 1944 in Budapest and Jewish people were gathered and forced to make their residences in these buildings. Within the framework of the "Yellow Star Houses" project, around 1,600 of these buildings were marked with a yellow star sticker in 2014 and a map with background material was made available online.[16] People started to comment on the project's Facebook page and then the Holocaust Facebook groups were set up – as the group settings were more suitable for interactive communication as a page.

Over the course of the 2010s, several other Facebook groups were created as forums for sharing memories of the Holocaust in Hungary and in other countries (see Table 1). Characteristic examples include the groups named "The Holocaust and My Family", "The Descendants of the Victims and Survivors of the Holocaust", and "Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors". I joined two groups initially out of personal interest, namely, "The Holocaust and My Family" and "The Descendants of the Victims and Survivors of the Holocaust", but I soon realised their importance in connection with my research. I sensed that potential new insights could be gained from observing these groups, so I took the role of a "digital participant observer", i.e., an anthropologist doing digital fieldwork.[17]

---

14 Randolph Braham, "Hungary: The Assault on the Historical Memory of the Holocaust," in *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later*, ed. Randolph L. Braham and András Kovács (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016), 261–309.

15 Mykola Makhortykh and Anna Menyhért, "Keeping the Past from Freezing: Augmented Reality and Memories in the Public Space," in *De-Commemoration: Removing Statues and Renaming Places*, ed. Sarah Gensburger and Jenny Wüstenberg (New York: Berghan Books, 2023), 355–367, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781805391081-039.

16 Gabriella Ivacs, "Digital Trauma Archives: The Yellow Star Houses project," in *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, ed. Anna Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen (London: Routledge, 2016), 205–218.

17 Annette Markham, "Fieldwork in Social Media: What Would Malinowski Do?" *Journal of Qualitative Communication Research* 2(4) (2013): 434–446.

Table 1: Holocaust-themed Facebook groups.[18]

NAME	MEMBERS (December 2023)	LANGUAGE	FB-GROUP TYPE	SET-UP DATE
The Holocaust and My Family	8443	HU	public	2 February 2014
The Descendants of the Victims and Survivors of the Holocaust	7494	HU	private / closed	25 January 2013
The Living Memorial	1864	HU	private / closed	23 March 2014
2G: Second Generation Children of Holocaust Survivors	5383	ENG	private / closed	29 May 2013
3GNY: A NYC-Based Organization for Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors	1809	ENG	public	21 March 2007
Family Holocaust Stories, Videotapes and Documentaries	58867	ENG	private / closed	3 March 2021
Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors	5267	ENG	private / closed	28 October 2006
Holocaust Survivors and Descendants	7664	ENG	private / closed	22 June 2018
Untold Stories of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany	6828	ENG	private / closed	15 August 2017
Holocaust Book Reviews Discussions	4305	HU	public	16 April 2015

Online support groups are powerful examples of the connecting capacity of social media. The experiences I gained as a member of these groups are very important

18 There are many very small (20 to 100 members) and small (a few hundred members) groups all over the world, not listed here, such as groups of survivors at a given location, or for a certain subtopic (recipes, books). At earlier stages of my research I made note of several other larger groups that do not exist on Facebook any more: The Roma Holocaust and My Family (HU, A roma holokauszt és a családom]; Holocaust and Genocide Online Reading Group (ENG). Additionally, there are many Facebook pages run by institutions, or of individual books or projects on similar topics.

to me. By participating, I was able to read previously unshared family stories and see pictures of lost family members of people in the group and pictures of family documents, including false identity cards. I have seen how group members were able to connect with one another by discovering connections to a shared past which had hitherto been unknown to them. They established links to the family members or acquaintances of the same victims through posts and comments. Connections were often built upon spaces and locations which had been shared by victims. Among these were ordinary places such as hometowns and streets, but it was mostly Holocaust locations: ghettos, labour camps, the yellow star houses of Budapest, deportation collections points, deportation routes, train stations and concentration camps including locations within them, and then the locations on the way back for the survivors: displaced persons camps and the stages of the journeys home.

It was poignant, sad and moving to understand the continuous contradiction between the in-a-normal-case happy feeling of recognition and the realisation that this recognition is about places of traumatic memories. It was emotionally difficult to watch people use ordinary measures to establish connections when in fact what had prompted them to do so was the deaths and murders of their loved ones. The ordinary question "did your relative go to that school too?" was replaced by "was your relative deported from that town too?" It was equally moving to see that the establishment of contacts could provide comfort in such cases too, as well as the development of the new relationships, and the recognition of a shared fate through the discovered locations which could alleviate the isolation of the victims' descendants. Members of the groups felt supported in their shared search for links based on evocations of memories of those who "have not returned" (a phrase frequently used to refer to those who were deported to and perished in concentration camps).

These processes are the steps of sharing, connecting and thus processing the trauma. Those who add comments to the given post, and even those who only read the posts and comments but do not add anything themselves can all be part of the processing. The burden of sharing the trauma – the mediated, vicarious traumatization – is reduced by the awareness of community support. In these groups, in the specific environment of Facebook, spaces have been created where loss and trauma can be shared in the manner and extent provided by social media via posts and comments. As a result, communities were formed, the development of which could not take place in the physical space during the past decades due to the silence surrounding the collective trauma and affecting several generations and also due to the physical distance separating the members. It is interesting how important the memories of physical, geological places are for es-

tablishing contact in the virtual space, as if such memories could help balancing out the lack of non-virtual contact.

The two Facebook groups in question seemed very similar at first glance, especially because their memberships overlap. However, although members discuss the same themes, and intersections or parallels occur even on the individual narrative level, there are significant differences between the groups, which are, interestingly, related to the differences between Facebook group-types (public, closed, secret) and their rules for privacy and activities: the platform determines communication.

Facebook, the most visited social media site in the world with its roughly three billion monthly active users (in the fourth quarter of 2023),[19] has provided the digital era with many concepts, practices and functions that have not remained within the boundaries of a digital medium but have had an influence on our non-digital lives. Liking, friending and unfriending have gathered weight in the identity formation processes of digital/post-digital generations, as has the constant urge to share information about ourselves and gain approval as measured by the number of likes we have received.[20] The Facebook lifestyle expects members to post and share in order to have more eye-catching material on their timelines, with life stories organised in a linear way. This expectation often clashes with the needs for privacy protection, and data protection rules, not least because sharing is also a marketing tool for Facebook as well as a tool for gaining political power for various political actors and interest groups. Companies and individuals with Facebook pages are willing to pay to get more likes and shares, whereas other companies employ people to constantly like ads on several devices and from fake profiles so that they could demonstrate a higher level of interest in the ads. Commercially or politically aimed sharing and sharing private information and sensitive data within a supportive Facebook group constitute the two far ends of the sharing scale, with many variants within the world of social media.

Consequently, for any research on the role of sharing within social media groups in trauma processing, it is interesting to consider the extent to which the Facebook framework can determine the nature of interaction within the groups. The main difference between the types of Facebook groups, due to their different privacy settings, is that in the case of public groups anyone can see what members post, and not only on Facebook, but also in other browsers, whereas in the

19 "Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 3rd quarter 2023," Statista.com, accessed 30tNovember 2023, https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/.

20 José van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

case of private (earlier called closed) groups only members can see the posts and any other mention of the stories posted in the group.[21] The name and description of a private group, as well as the number of its members and the names of the administrators are visible to anyone on Facebook. It is only possible to find a private group on Facebook.

The second difference is that anyone can join a public group or be added or invited by a member, whereas to join a private group one needs to be added upon request or be invited by an administrator. In the case of both public and private groups, anyone can see the group's name, its description, its tags and the list of the members, and anyone can find it via search. (The third type of Facebook group is secret groups, which cannot be seen, noticed, or visited without an invitation from the administrators or without knowing an URL. Membership, furthermore, requires an invitation from a member and the approval of an administrator, and only current and former members can see the group's name, description and tags or find it in search. Finally, only current members can see other members and read posts and stories about the group.)[22] Thus public Facebook group members are aware of the fact that their posts might reach anyone. Private Facebook group members allow only other group members to see what they post.

With reference to the area of social media research ethics in a humanities context, posts posted in private Facebook groups constitute sensitive data which need privacy protection, whereas posts in public Facebook groups belong more to the domain of copyright issues, thus different types of Facebook groups need different research approaches with regards to copyright and protection of personal data.[23] Consequently, in the course of my research, I cite posts that were posted in private groups only anonymously and with the explicit and informed consent of the members.

The Hungarian-language Facebook group called "The Holocaust and my Family"[24] is a public group that has approximately 8,400 members. It had around 4,000 members soon after it was created in 2014, 5,500 members in 2015, 6,000 in 2016, 7,000 in 2017, 8,000 in 2019. This group was founded by Mátyás Eörsi in 2014, and Zsuzsa Hetényi joined him as an administrator soon after. The description of

21 Facebook's settings page, accessed 30 November 2023 https://www.facebook.com/help/220336891328465.

22 According to privacy settings of Facebook as of 30 November 2023.

23 Marie-Laure Ryan, Lori Emerson and Benjamin Robertson, ed., *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media* (Baltimore: The John Hopins University Press, 2013); Leanne Townsend and Clair Wallace, *Social Media Research: A Guide to Ethics* (The University of Aberdeen, 2016), accessed 30 November 2023, https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_487729_smxx.pdf.

24 "A Holokauszt és a családom," accessed 30 November 2023, https://www.facebook.com/groups/holokauszt.csaladom/. All translations from the Hungarian are my own.

the group refers to the impact of the political situation on community remembrance practices as follows:

> ['T]hanks to' the memory politics of the government, more and more stories are coming to light that had been kept in silence or remained a family secret until now, and they should not be forgotten.

The choice of the group type within Facebook's framework, i.e., that this group is a public one, had several implications. In the description of the group, the founding administrator clearly states the reasons for their decision, which are connected to their long-term aims with respect to the legacy of the Holocaust in Hungary:

> This is going to be a public group. We have made this decision after long debates. Although we understand fears, we opted for the public group because one of our aims is to break with the culture of silence.
>
> Our parents and grandparents tried to hide their Jewishness, did not talk about their sufferings, and we could and still can see what this attitude had led to. We cannot accept that the descendants of victims keep their silence whereas the descendants of perpetrators are loud. That is why we will not change our minds about the public nature of this group. We understand those who are unwilling to participate because of this, and we are sorry. If they wish, they can have me post their stories anonymously.

The openness of the public group determines ways of communication within the group: the general atmosphere among members, their rules, and the group's outputs that do not remain within the digital sphere. This group has clearly set rules of referencing and quoting which are basically the same as academic citation methods, in accordance with copyright law.

On 22 April 2015, administrator Zsuzsa Hetényi posted the group's rules concerning the practice of citing posts and she informed group members that she had previously consulted Artisjus, the Hungarian copyright agency/collecting society and asked for a legal recommendation about quoting from the group. She indicated that Artisjus advised the group that the texts posted in a public Facebook group have a status like the legal and copyright status of a book. Copyright and authors' rights of posts and comments belong to their authors and to the administrators as editors. Consequently, one needs the consent of the authors to publish these materials partially or fully. However, short excerpts of the posts can be freely cited for research purposes with an appropriate reference method: referring to the name of the author of the post, the date it was posted and the Facebook group, in this case "Hetényi and Eörsi, eds., 'The Holocaust and My Family'".

The group reached out to the general non-digital public in several ways: they organised a Marathon reading in Central Theatre in Budapest on 13 May 2014, during which guests were able to enter anytime to listen to stories, light a candle

and remember, as well as a Remembrance Day on 4 May 2014, in Budapest's Rumbach Sebestyén Street Synagogue, with readings based on the posts.

Saving the posts outside Facebook and archiving stories that had not been made public before or had been kept secret within families, the members of which had not talked about their past and their Jewish roots became one of the most important goals of the group very early after its creation. On 10 February 2014, Kriszta Bíró posted the question: "SOMEONE is archiving what is going on here, aren't they?" It turned out that arrangements had already been made, and several members, led by academic György C. Kálmán, had already started saving data from the posts into archives.[25]

A collection of selected posts and comments were published, together with essays analysing the group and its impact on Holocaust memory in Hungary, in a book entitled *The Holocaust and My Family*.[26] The editors grouped selected posts in thematic blocks in nine chapters representing the most common topics. The chapters are entitled "Survivors", "Second Generation", "Grandchildren", "Jews in Rural Hungary", "Jews in Budapest", "Women", "Mixed Families", "Gentiles" and "Rescuers". An introductory chapter, serving as a kind of motto, entitled "The 70th Anniversary – If Only Zuckerberg Knew", consists of a post followed by a long thread of comments. (In a somewhat paradoxical way, the last chapter actually endorses the narrative embodied by the Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation on Liberty Square, as it suggests that the Holocaust in Hungary only started after the occupation of the country by the Wehrmacht in March 1944. It thus ignores the massacre of Kamianets-Podilskyi in August 1941 during which approximately 23,600 Jews were killed. While for the members of the Facebook group 2014 certainly marked the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust, it needs to be highlighted that antisemitic atrocities in Hungary had started before the German occupation of the country.[27])

This thread is a characteristic example of the way in which digital media / social media allows for new ways of communication, and calls attention to the impact Facebook can have on collective ways of processing trauma by establishing contacts and networks and furthering recognition. It is also significant that the thread begins with an anecdote which serves as a focal point for a whole web of interconnected ideas, associations and memories. Vera Surányi posted a story

25 György C. Kálmán, "A Holokauszt-csoport mint Facebook-esemény [A Holocaust-group as a Facebook-event]," in *A Holokauszt és a családom* [The Holocaust and my family], ed. Katalin Fenyves and Marianne Szalay (Budapest: Park, 2015), 13–21.

26 Katalin Fenyves, and Marianne Szalay, ed., *A Holokauszt és a családom* [The Holocaust and my family] (Budapest: Park, 2015).

27 I would like to thank Thomas Cooper for this observation.

about a Jewish doctor, who, after having returned to his hometown from Theresienstadt, is called to see a patient in his home. To the patient's anxious relatives he says, "Don't worry, he will recover, but the bed he is lying in is mine". Another member of the group, István Békés, recognised the doctor in the anecdote as his father. Békés' family members noticed the post and commented on it. Then the discussion continued about "lost and found" pieces of furniture. Then, people who had lived in the same neighbourhood as children exchanged posts about how these furniture cases were connected to the silence about the Holocaust and the taboos on Jewish identities. András J. Surányi added that while he did not know about his family being Jewish, he knew his friend's family was a Jewish family. They then mentioned a famous actor who also lived in the same neighbourhood as a child. He was the son of a housekeeper family and has by now become a prominent theatre director and a radical right-wing personality. This is how the topic, which had prompted comments which were not devoid of innuendo (housekeepers of big blocks of flats were in many instances connected to the Arrow Cross party in 1944 and/or were notorious for taking belongings left behind by Jewish people when they were taken to the ghettos or the concentration camps), arrived at the issue of the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust and, in connection with that, the topic of the current political situation in Hungary. The thread ends with a comment by Eszter Babarczy, who says "this is the most wonderful comment thread I have ever read, if only Zuckerberg knew".

The whole thread is not published in the book, i.e., on Facebook it continues after Babarczy's comment. It can be looked up in the group (it was posted on 20 March 2014, and it has 136 comments).[28] The associations and interconnections continue and develop new sub-threads, such as the topic of the varying extents to which members of different social classes were attached to furniture, and how it was easier for families who belonged to certain social classes, such as the intelligentsia, to leave their belongings behind and escape, "carrying" their main capital, i.e., their knowledge and experience, with them. A commenter named Balázs Láng has suggested that such comment threads form a new genre, the "comment-novel", similar to the epistolary novel; then literary works are mentioned which are in some way connected to the topic of returning from the camps; then writers who died in the Holocaust are remembered; then the topic of whether Jews can be recognised by their "Jewish" appearance, or whether a Jewish person can know if someone else is also Jewish because of some kind of subtle connection to a shared past. This post is a characteristic example of the associative-wandering-

28 Although the administrators paused the group on 28 March 2023, all the contents can still be accessed.

multi-focused manner of communication through comments in a social media group, with sharing as a key element in digital trauma processing.

The group became significantly less active after the publication of the book and the events connected to it (such as the Marathon reading). It seems that it fulfilled its aim. The administrators decided to pause the group in March 2023, while its content is still fully accessible.

In a sense, the activities and the achievements of this group are pointing outside the group and towards the closure of an era: the era of silence surrounding the Holocaust in Hungary, as it was expressed in the initial description of the group cited above. The "Holocaust and My Family" Facebook group works essentially from the digital toward/back to(?) the non-digital linking achievements gained in the virtual space to the physical space and reality. Katalin Fenyves, the editor of the book *The Holocaust and My Family*, characterised it as an "imprint of collective memory", and a narrative of "the common history of a community".[29] This group talks about the past and links memories to the present to create a community and a space for it, in which it becomes possible to tell a story. In turn, telling the story makes it possible to acknowledge and process the traumatic past within the Jewish community and raise awareness among the larger non-Jewish public. The community seems to have been ready for the emergence of such a platform.

One of the questions that can be asked is how people as members of an online community remember and evoke the memory of historical trauma, and how they remember the stories behind the trauma that might or might not have been passed on to them. According to Aleida Assmann, "remembering trauma evolves between the extremes of keeping the wound open on the one hand and looking for closure on the other".[30] She differentiates between four ways of "dealing with the traumatic past," among which "remembering in order to forget" describes best the Facebook group "The Holocaust and My Family": remembering in such cases is a "therapeutic tool to cleanse, to purge, to heal, to reconcile". Assmann links this practice to transitions from dictatorship to democracy in a South African context on a state level, stressing that the confrontation with traumatic history has the specific goal of "creat[ing] a shared moral consensus".[31] A similar

29 Dóra Ónody-Molnár, "A holokauszt és a családom – a kollektív emlékezet könyves lenyomata [The Holocaust and My Family – The Imprint of Collective Memory in a Book]," www.zsido.com, 17 November 2015, accessed 30 November 2023, https://zsido.com/holokauszt-es-csaladom-kollektiv-emlekezet-konyves-lenyomata/.

30 Aleida Assmann, "From Collective Violence to a Common Future: Four Models For Dealing With the Traumatic Past," in *Justice and Memory: Confronting Traumatic Pasts. An International Comparison*, ed. Ruth Wodack, Gertraud Auer and Borea d'Olmo (Vienna: Passagen, 2009), 31–48, 39–40.

31 Assmann, "From Collective Violence to a Common Future," 37, 39, 40.

goal of working through the legacy of silence is present in the Facebook group "The Holocaust and My Family". In this digital community, remembering is a tool with which to mobilise memories to build a host forum, a platform which makes it possible to share memories. The group aims to further the sharing of memories within the community and form a shared communal identity. The name of the group, which includes the word "family", is expressive of the intention to deal with the past on a family/community memory level. This is a gesture of inclusion via family history, accepting macro history via micro-history, to gain access to the micro-histories of others to interlink members and develop a network which can collectively approach a past which had been closed off from them by silence and tabooing. The result is a multi-perspective, multi-centered, shared story with common elements as nodal points which is easier to access and accept for the members of the community. This story offers the reassurance of understanding, which may help victims of trauma find some closure to the painful past and further efforts to work through trauma. The decrease in the level of activity after the publication of the book of the stories collected from the posts confirms the hypothesis that the group was heading for a certain closure, and the outcome of this quest found form in a book which represents the community, overcomes transgenerational taboos and addresses the public.

In the group, "The Descendants of the Victims and Survivors of the Holocaust"[32] the main tendencies and the general atmosphere are different. It is a private (earlier called closed) group with nearly 7,500 members (the group's size gradually grew between 2015 and 2023, with 2,400 members in 2015, 3,700 in 2016, and 6,300 in 2022). In this group, disagreements, debates, emotionally loaded posts, comments, and even outbursts are more common and frequently the disagreements concern the group itself: its way of working and its rules, the position and role of members within the group and the ways in which they interact.

As opposed to the other group, this group does not have the clear-cut aim of framing, telling and interlinking stories of families. It is more concerned with individual and transgenerational identity issues: the identity of the members as descendants of Holocaust victims and survivors, the problems raised by their legacies and identity on the group level. While "The Holocaust and My Family" collects stories and shares them publicly, and thus deals with the past so as to free the present from its long-term negative impact by incorporating the stories as finalised by the multi-perspective narration, the "The Descendants of the Victims and Survivors of the Holocaust" focuses on the present as defined by the past and on the ways in

32 "A holokauszt áldozatainak és túlélőinek utódai," accessed 23 November 2023, https://www.facebook.com/groups/holokausztmasodikesharmadikgen.

which traumas have shaped present identities. According to the description of the group, it deals with

> everything about our mothers/fathers/grandparents in this topic, and the related individual or social second-generation and third-generation traumas, the ways in which they find form, and consequences.

This group does not provide rules for referencing and citing posts. As it is a private group, keeping in mind the necessity of informed consent and the protection of privacy and sensitive data, I talked to one of the administrators on the phone about my research aims, and we agreed that I would seek the consent of the group members to analyse and quote their posts and comments anonymously. I posted a request for consent, described my research, provided contact information and promised to contact individually the members whose posts I intended to cite, but who would not have given their consent in a comment to my post. Many people indicated in their comments that they welcomed my research, and some of them asked to be informed as to which of their comments I would use. When analysing specific comments, I refer to group members by numbers, and I do not give the dates of the posts to ensure the protection of sensitive data. I refer to each commenter as "(s)he", "her/ him", and "their" so as not to reveal their gender. The original posts were in Hungarian. All translations and paraphrases are mine. Some of the posts have since been deleted from the group.[33]

With regards to reconnecting to the offline mode of relations, as opposed to the public readings organized by the other group, members of this group meet informally and focus on personal connections. On the level of the social media framework, the private/closed Facebook group is a good fit for this purpose, as well as for the main theme of the group, which seems to be sharing in connection with inclusion and exclusion and group identity. The theme is observable as a general ambivalence and in the oscillation between the need for secrecy and the need for publicity. It is also pertinent to the one specific – and not typical – story thread, the confession of the grandchild of a perpetrator, which I will analyse in detail.

The question of "who has a place in the group" was raised several times by Member 3. (S)he wished to have recommendations for new commenters, adding that everyone was welcome, but (s)he was somewhat mistrustful. Secondly, as the level of distrust grew, (s)he expressed discomfort over many members "disappearing", and (s)he asked new members to indicate in their posts why they had

33 Raw data collected from the posts is archived according to the Data Management Plan of my research project. It can be shared upon request, after careful consideration of individual queries and only for research purposes.

joined the group. As (s)he explained, "I wouldn't like some people being interested in our stories in order to read crime stories". It is interesting to note the use of the word "disappear" in this context: pointing, on the one hand, to unfamiliarity with the workings of an online group, where members come and go, are active or remain passive as they wish, and may well be "fakes", i.e., people who have been dishonest (possibly entirely so) in their profiles. On the other hand, the increasing anxiety in the posts derives from the traumatic memories of past persecutions which are being triggered by the insecurity felt at not being able to control who has access to members' painful and sensitive stories. Such anxieties were mentioned in the introductory description of the other group "The Holocaust and My Family", which opted to be public, regardless of these kinds of fears. It seems that even the framework of the private group is problematic with respect to fears deriving from the long-term impact of past traumas. Consequently, when Commenter 3 posted for the third time about the wish to identify members, the issue of the potential clash of the religious identity of posting members and silent onlookers came up and, even though the remark is tinted with self-reflexive, self-doubting tones, the strong sense of feeling threatened connected to victim/survivor versus group identity based on religious differences is unmistakable:

> Maybe I am a maniac, but I am asking yet again our Christian friends who joined us to explain why they are with us. We have revealed many things about ourselves, but don't know anything about those who are not survivors or descendants. I am interested!

As a reaction to this post, many members introduced themselves, but only a fraction of the whole membership. Some people were offended. They did not wish to be checked up on, as they felt that this kind of inquiry constituted an unwelcome inspection which a Jewish community against segregation and racism in particular should not practice. Thus, debates followed, with some people leaving the group and later returning, including the original poster.

The "us" and "them" dichotomy, which is part of universal identity formation processes, is also linked to the legacies of the traumatic past in Hungary. Group identities are often shaped by "chosen traumas" (Vamik Volkan[34]) and the legacies of traumatic experiences in society.[35] The "us" and "them" dichotomy is prevalent in everyday identity discourses, in which members of the out-group ("them") are

34 Vamik Volkan, "Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity," *Group Analysis* 34(1) (2001): 79–97.

35 István Bibó, "Eltorzult magyar alkat, zsákutcás magyar történelem" [Distorted Hungarian disposition, dead-end Hungarian history], in István Bibó, *Összegyűjtott munkái* [Collected works I.] (Bern: Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem, 1981), 255–286.

often presented as unaccountable or unknown aliens or hostile and even vindictive strangers. The everyday pervasiveness of this societal attitude is also reflected in the preferred tendency to rely on personal contacts through societal interactions, in order to remain within the boundaries of the in-group ("us"). The Facebook group discussed above represents these kinds of identification processes: the acceptance of new members – i.e., allowing them to become one of "us'" – is being done via personal recommendations, according to a decision made by the group administrators almost two years after the issue was first raised.

The theme of inclusion and exclusion was central to the instance when a grandchild of a perpetrator confessed in the group (Commenter 1). In fact, (s)he had done so in the other group, "The Holocaust and My Family", some months earlier, in a comment on somebody else's post about why people kept silent during the Holocaust and why they were silent later. (S)he said that (s)he felt guilty and responsible. That group accepted the confession calmly and offered encouragement. Commenter 1 mentioned that (s)he would understand if (s)he were to be excluded from the group, but others said that exclusion was not a solution, and they thanked him/her for his/her confession. In the group "The Descendants of the Victims and Survivors of the Holocaust" the same confession generated different, emotionally loaded reactions. The confession was as follows:

> I am not the descendant of victims or survivors. I am the grandchild of a perpetrator: my grandfather took part in the deportation of Jews from Pécs. As an officer, he was supposed to bring food to the around 5,000 Jews huddled together in the Lakits barrack. He did not do so, he sold the food instead. Because of what he did, some of the people waiting in the barrack did not survive the transport: they starved to death. Among the victims there were four children. After the war he was not called to account, he lost his captaincy only due to his activities in 1956. He died of a stroke in 1967.
>
> His death was not peaceful: somebody shuffled a Bible to him and hid a plastic skeleton dummy in the pages. I remember only this, I was 8 years old at the time. My mother died when I was 37. That's when I got his letters. That's when I learned who my grandfather really was.
>
> Obviously I won't be able to ask for forgiveness for unforgiveable sins. I only would like the souls of murderers and victims to rest in peace until the Last Judgement. And if you now have me excluded from this group I will understand.

In an interesting remark added later as a comment to the original post, the poster mentions the group "The Holocaust and My Family" in the context of inclusion-exclusion. The person posting suggests that the person who posted the confession must have been "removed" from "The Holocaust and My Family". Later, however, in another comment, the poster confirms that the person who made the confession is still a member of "The Holocaust and My Family".

The confession of the original poster was followed by a long discussion consisting of hundreds of comments which touched on many dimensions of the long-term impact of transgenerational Holocaust trauma. I will cite a few examples as part of this case study focusing on the themes of sharing the burden of the past, inclusion-exclusion, and group identity. (Phrases referring to the themes are underlined.)

> Well, there is no forgiveness and no peace between murderers and victims in any way. I will not sign such a peace treaty at the expense of the victims, and I don't agree with it at all. I reject even the intention of mentioning innocent victims together with hangmen. Thus, if you want to get into this group with this intention then you are not in the right place. My victims will never reunite with the souls of hangmen, not even via the mediation of the holy spirit. (Commenter 2)

> Hi! Gosh! I never would have thought that I would read such a text and that someone would dare [post it] and, moreover, to this group! For a minute I was dumb . . . I am also a grandchild, although my gran survived, but her little boy did not! He starved. It is difficult to speak, to write anything as a reply to your post, there isn't a single day when I don't think of that little boy, and those awful people who did that to my family. But, as we know, it is never too late, I wouldn't say that you have a place in our group, but the fact that someone has told this story is something. Everyone will be punished in their own way sooner or later, just like your grandfather before his death. (Commenter 5)

> [The poster] is obviously not responsible for the sins of his/her grandfather. I appreciate that (s)he doesn't want to excuse and falsify the past! (Our present government is not responsible for the sins of the Horthy regime. So they should not falsify the past either . . .) [The poster] has this heavy bequest from his/her ancestors: the guilt that (s)he should not be feeling. We have a different inheritance: the inheritance of suffering and painful absence. And here we meet at this point, in this place, in virtual space. And the descendants can see the human being in the other from both sides. (What [The poster's] grandfather did not see, did not sense.) It is an unsettling, strange situation . . . (Commenter 6)

> This is tough. It took my breath away. The first Hungarian to apologize for the crimes of his/her grandfather. (Commenter 7)

> I am greeting the first Hungarian convert shakenly but with pleasure and with the respect that courage deserves. I am requesting her/him to stay, to endure patiently and without anger if (s)he is attacked here. There isn't anybody else whom those in deep pain could stone. We, who are able to do so, can be friends. (Commenter 8)

> I understand this, but I state clearly that we are here only because of our own dead, not for others, and we do not wish to allow perpetrators to get close to them even in their death. (Commenter 2)

> If you exclude him/her, I will understand, but I will leave the group as well. Nobody is born to be a sinner. I shouldn't be explaining this to Jewish people. (Commenter 8)

> Perpetrators are victims as well, if someone doesn't understand this, they shouldn't engage in this subject. (Commenter 9)

The original poster offered the following response in a second post:

> I asked to join this group to learn about the wrongs suffered by the descendants of victims. Many say that I am not responsible for the deeds of my grandfather. I don't agree. [. . .] I carried this burden from 1996 till last year, that is, for 18 years. And I did not talk about it. [. . .] I am responsible, and my children are responsible, and my grandchildren will be, too. (Commenter 1)

This thread of posts shows how online support groups secondary predominantly work on resolving trauma on the secondary/tertiary level, i.e., trauma which originally was the consequence of the failure to recognize or acknowledge the sufferings of victims and survivors, including non-emphatic reactions of individuals at the time, as well as the silence and tabooing of the decades of the communist era. Historical trauma did not conclude in collective processing. Rather, it was pushed back to the individual level, with everyone carrying their own burden and passing it on as a legacy of post-traumatic symptoms, guilt, mourning and loneliness to their offspring. But this unintentional bequeathal included not only the descendants of victims, but also the descendants of perpetrators, witnesses and bystanders. As time passes, boundaries of identities become less clear-cut, resulting in the "trans-generational intersections of identities", which is a new term I have coined referring to the processes of identity changes and identity intersections related to the roles traditionally listed in the so-called trauma grid (victim, perpetrator, bystander, collaborator).[36] Several studies – and also the thread of posts above – show that the descendants of perpetrators are also affected by traumatisation.[37] In one of the comments in the above cited thread of posts a commenter draws attention to the digital sphere as a meeting place. In this case, the group takes one step further: they meet and integrate a descendant of a perpetrator into the carrier group of the collective trauma.

Sharing traumatic experiences online in a support group means that there are others "present" and "listening", i.e., the second and third stages of recovery (reconstruction of the trauma narrative, reintegration in a community)[38] can be reached at the same time. A study by Michaelle Indian Rachel and Grieve pub-

36 David Read Johnson and Hadar Lubin, *Principles and Techniques of Trauma–Centered Psychotherapy* (Washington: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2015), 119.

37 Ellen Rosenthal, ed., *The Holocaust in Three Generations* (London: Cassell, 1998); Dan Bar-On, *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

38 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

lished in 2014 shows that "socially anxious individuals" prefer online support groups to face-to-face meetings.[39] One of the reasons for this, in addition to the opportunity to remain anonymous and the ability to withdraw anytime from contact without consequences, is that there is usually a large number of people "around", and thus in all (mathematical) likelihood posts will be met with at least some emphatic responses. Those unable to comment on or recognise the traumas of the other will remain silent, but this will not be noticeable online, thus their silence will not become un-recognition, and it will not constitute a wall of indifference or lead to secondary traumatisation (although the lack of secondary traumatisation might be considered illusory, as keeping silent might be a way of shirking the ethical call to respond and thus allowing the silent party to avoid either confronting or denying the trauma of the other).

In an article about the transformation of Jewish identity in Hungary in relation to the "strategy of silence" over the Holocaust and Jewish roots and identity practiced by survivors and the remaining Jewish community in communist Hungary, the authors, Ferenc Erős, Éva Kovács and Júlia Vajda cite a respondent who remembers his father, a survivor, as "not existing inside". The respondent felt the burden of inherited trauma in the "inhibitions within internal family life". "In a certain sense", the respondent commented, "this made my family dead".[40]

It is a common practice in online support groups, especially private / closed and secret Facebook groups, to call the group a "family" or a "hive" ("mamahives" are very common), and members often come to regard the group as an extended family. As we have seen in the examples of the Facebook groups discussed here, in a certain sense online group communication can function as a substitute for lost "internal" family life. The group "The Holocaust and My Family" enables its members to accept their family as/even though they are lost. By sharing their loss, they become members of a new, digital family of people who have suffered a loss, and this fact becomes part of their identity. The concept of family is reinterpreted in this process, so that in its new sense it can become the receptive environment for recognition of transgenerational intersections of identities, enabling dialogue among the descendants of the different groups affected by the trauma of the past.

39 Michelle Indian and Rachel Grieve, "When Facebook is Easier Than Face-to-Face: Social Support Derived from Facebook in Socially Anxious Individuals," *Personality and Individual Differences* 59 (2014): 102–106.

40 Ferenc Erős, Júlia Vajda and Éva Kovács, "Intergenerational Responses to Social and Political Changes: Transformation of Jewish Identity in Hungary," in *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, ed. Yael Danieli (New York: Plenum Press, 1998), 315–324, 319.

One of the members in the group "The Descendants of the Victims and Survivors of the Holocaust" sent me a private message welcoming my research, because (s)he felt that (s)he cannot process the trauma related to her Holocaust survivor grandparents, whom (s)he did not even know. When (s)he attempts to confront this trauma, (s)he only becomes upset and cries repeatedly, even though (s)he is a member of several groups. Further research is needed to investigate whether the digital environment can offer solutions to such problems, and whether trauma processing in online support groups on the collective level can be directed back to the individual level.

The Hungarian groups I analysed here differ from similar, Holocaust-themed English-language groups, which I have also been following for some years. There can be several reasons for this, among them the political situation in Hungary, the traumatic past specific to the region with its layers of frozen currents and the readiness of the Jewish community to work on trauma processing via storytelling at the time of finding the right platform, an online forum. The directions of trauma processing led to both towards a closure with creating a shared, multi-focused narrative and towards debates about identity issues impacted by transgenerational intersections. As opposed to the Hungarian groups, the various English-language groups are more neutral, with looser connections between members. The feelings of urgency and the sense of readiness for the moment of sharing is missing, as well as any tensions. Some groups are linked to institutions that take on the management of the online memory practices about the Holocaust,[41] others are very small, with 20–100 members. On the other hand, some of the English language groups seem more permanent and stable, with an ongoing, steady flow of activities. It will be interesting to see how long these groups will last, and what directions they will take, especially with the appearance of other social media platforms that also have Holocaust-themed posts and activities, such as TikTok, Reddit, or Instagram, where the topic is discussed in completely different tones. Holocaust denial often intersperses the comments, the safety of the space of a private Facebook group is completely missing, and the interaction is happening in the online public sphere.[42]

41 Eva Pfanzelter, "Performing the Holocaust on Social Networks: Digitality, Transcultural Memory and New Forms of Narrating," *Kultura Popularna* 51(1) (2017): 136–151, https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0010.4081; Victoria Grace Walden, "What is 'Virtual Holocaust Memory,'" *Memory Studies* 15(4) (2019): 621–633, https://doi.org/10.1177/175069801988871; Stefania Manca, "Digital Memory in the Post-Witness Era: How Holocaust Museums Use Social Media as New Memory Ecologies," *Information* 12 (1) (2021): 1–17, DOI:10.3390/info12010031.

42 For example, on Reddit, a 2016 (by now archived) thread with 1,600 comments features under the title "Guy thinks he is a Holocaust survivor because his grandma survived the Holocaust"

Bibliography

"2G Second Generation Holocaust Survivors Facebook group." Accessed 30 November 2023. https://www.facebook.com/groups/2GSecongGeneration/.

"A Holokauszt és a családom." Accessed November 30, 2023. https://www.facebook.com/groups/holokauszt.csaladom/.

"Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors Facebook group." Accessed 30 November 2023. https://www.facebook.com/3GsWorldwide/.

"A holokauszt áldozatainak és túlélőinek utódai." Accessed 23 November 2023. https://www.facebook.com/groups/holokausztmasodikesharmadikgen.

"Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 3rd quarter 2023." Statista.com. Accessed 30 November 2023. https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/.

American Psychiatric Association, ed. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Washington: American Psychological Press, 1980, third edition.

Arthur, Paul. "Memory and Commemoration in the Digital Present." In *Contemporary Approaches to Literary Trauma Theory*, edited by Michelle Balaev, 152–175. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Arthur, Paul. "Trauma Online: Public Exposure of Personal Grief and Suffering." *Traumatology* 15(4) (2009): 65–75.

Assmann, Aleida. "From Collective Violence to a Common Future: Four Models For Dealing With the Traumatic Past." In *Justice and Memory: Confronting Traumatic Pasts. An International Comparison*, edited by Ruth Wodack, Gertraud Auer and Borea d'Olmo, 31–48. Vienna: Passagen, 2009.

Bar-On, Dan. *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Bibó, István. "Eltorzult magyar alkat, zsákutcás magyar történelem" [Distorted Hungarian disposition, dead-end Hungarian history]. *Összegyűjtött munkái* [Collected works I.], 255–286. Bern: Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem, 1981.

Braham, Randolph. "Hungary: The Assault on the Historical Memory of the Holocaust." In *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later*, edited by Randolph L. Braham and András Kovács, 261–309. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016.

Dijck, José van. *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Erős, Ferenc, Júlia Vajda and Éva Kovács. "Intergenerational Responses to Social and Political Changes: Transformation of Jewish Identity in Hungary." In *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, edited by Yael Danieli, 315–324. New York: Plenum Press, 1998.

Facebook's settings page. Accessed 30 November 2023 https://www.facebook.com/help/220336891328465.

which puts the issue of intergenerational trauma into popular register and slang. Among the comments there are many that relativise the issue, but several others reflect on the topics of, among others, historical trauma, traumatic legacy, slavery. https://www.reddit.com/r/facepalm/comments/fl9fuy/guy_thinks_he_is_a_holocaust_survivor_because_his/.

Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Fenyves, Katalin, and Marianne Szalay, ed. *A holokauszt és a családom* [The Holocaust and My Family]. Budapest: Park, 2015.

Garde-Hansen, Joanne, Andrew Hoskins and Anna Reading, ed. *Save As . . . Digital Memories*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.

Gyáni, Gábor. "Hungarian Memory of the Holocaust in Hungary." In *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later*, edited by Randolph L. Braham and András Kovács, 215–230. Budapest: CEU Press, 2016.

Henke, Suzette A. *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. London: Pandora, 1992.

Hetényi, Zsuzsa, A post in the Facebook group "A holokauszt és a családom" ("The Holocaust and My Family"). 22 April 2015. Accessed 30 November 2023. https://www.facebook.com/groups/holokauszt.csaladom/posts/1627432357480860/.

Hirsch, Marianne. "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory." *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14(1) (2001): 5–37.

Indian, Michelle, and Rachel Grieve. "When Facebook is Easier Than Face-to-Face: Social Support Derived from Facebook in Socially Anxious Individuals." *Personality and Individual Differences* 59 (2014): 102–06.

Ivacs, Gabriella. "Digital Trauma Archives: The Yellow Star Houses project." In *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, edited by Anna Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen, 205–218. London: Routledge, 2016.

Johnson, David Read, and Hadar Lubin. *Principles and Techniques of Trauma–Centered Psychotherapy*. Washington: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2015.

Kálmán, György C. "A Holokauszt-csoport mint Facebook-esemény [A Holocaust-group as a Facebook-event]." In *A Holokauszt és a családom* [The Holocaust and My Family], edited by Katalin Fenyves and Marianne Szalay, 13–21. Budapest: Park, 2015.

Kovács, Éva. "The Hungarian-Holocaust Memorial Year 2014. Some Remarks." *S:IMON Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation* 4(1) (2017): 109–121. Accessed 20 December 2023. https://simon.vwi.ac.at/index.php/simon/article/view/93/87.

Kovács, Henriett and Mindler-Steiner, Ursula K. "Hungary and the Distortion of Holocaust History: The Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014." *Politics in Central Europe* 11(2) (2015): 49–72. https://doi.org/10.1515/pce-2015-0010.

Makhortykh, Mykola and Menyhért, Anna. "Keeping the Past from Freezing: Augmented Reality and Memories in the Public Space." In *De-Commemoration: Removing Statues and Renaming Places*, edited by Sarah Gensburger and Jenny Wüstenberg. New York: Berghan Books, 2023, 355–367. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781805391081-039.

Manca, Stefania. "Digital Memory in the Post-Witness Era: How Holocaust Museums Use Social Media as New Memory Ecologies." *Information* 12(1) (2021): 1–17. DOI:10.3390/info12010031.

Markham, Annette. "Fieldwork in Social Media: What Would Malinowski Do?" *Journal of Qualitative Communication Research* 2(4) (2013): 434–446.

Menyhért, Anna. "The Image of 'Maimed Hungary' in 20th Century Cultural Memory and the 21st Century Consequences of an Unresolved Collective Trauma: The Impact of the Treaty of Trianon." *Environment, Space, Place* 8(2) (2016): 69–97.

Neiger, Motti, Oren Meyers and Eyal Zandberg, ed. *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age*. New York: Palgrave, 2011.

Ónody-Molnár, Dóra. "A holokauszt és a családom – a kollektív emlékezet könyves lenyomata [The Holocaust and My Family – The Imprint of Collective Memory in a Book]." www.zsido.com. 17 November 2015. Accessed 30 November 2023. https://zsido.com/holokauszt-es-csaladom-kollektiv-emlekezet-konyves-lenyomata/.

Pfanzelter, Eva. "Performing the Holocaust on Social Networks: Digitality, Transcultural Memory and New Forms of Narrating." *Kultura Popularna* 51(1) (2017): 136–151. https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0010.4081.

Rosenthal, Gabriele, ed. *The Holocaust in Three Generations. Families of Victims and Perpetrators of the Nazi Regime*. London: Cassell 1998.

Rüsen, Jörn. "Trauma and Mourning in Historical Thinking." *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in History and Archaeology* 1(1) (2004): 31–43.

Rutten, Ellen, Julie Fedor and Vera Zvereva, ed. *Memory, Conflict and New Media: Web Wars in Post-Socialist States*. London/New York: Routledge, 2013.

Rutten, Ellen. "Why Digital Memory Wars Should Not Overlook Eastern Europe's Web Wars." In *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*, edited by Uilleam Blacker, Aleksandr Etkind and Julie Fedor, 219–231. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Ryan, Marie-Laure, Lori Emerson and Benjamin Robertson, ed. *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2013.

Townsend, Leanne and Wallace, Clair. *Social Media Reserach: A Guide to Ethics*. Aberdeen: The University of Aberdeen, 2016. Accessed 30 November 2023. https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_487729_smxx.pdf.

van der Kolk, Bessel A. and van der Hart, Onno. "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma." In *Trauma. Explorations in Memory*, edited by Cathy Caruth, 158–182. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Volkan, Vamik. "Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity." *Group Analysis* 34(1) (2001): 79–97.

Walden, Victoria Grace. "What is 'Virtual Holocaust Memory.'" *Memory Studies* 15(4) (2019): 621–633. https://doi.org/10.1177/175069801988871.

List of contributors

Rosa Andraschek is an artist living in Vienna. Using photography, video, and sound as well as interventions in public spaces, she focuses on the obscured and overlooked aspects of Austria's past. Andraschek's works, rooted in her background in Political Science and Contemporary History, reveal silent echoes of history that pervade public spaces yet remain unnoticed. In 2021, she was awarded the Ö1 Talent Scholarship for Fine Arts, and in 2022, she received the Emerging Artist Award of the city of Salzburg.

Anja Ballis is a Professor at the University of Munich and chair of Language and Literature Education. Her research focus is on Holocaust Education, teaching with Digital Media, and deepening teachers' professional digital competences. Her publication "'In any case, you believe him one hundred percent, everything he says.' Trustworthiness in Holocaust survivor talks with high school students in Germany," written together with Dr. Lisa Schwendemann, can be found at DOI:10.1080/17504902.2021.1915016.

Mia Berg works as a Research Assistant at the Chair of History Didactics and Public History at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. Her fields of interest include Historical Culture, Digital Media, especially Social Media, and Digital (Public) History. Her latest research in the citizen science project "SocialMediaHistory" explored how history takes place, can be analysed, and produced on Instagram and TikTok.

Edith Blaschitz is a historian, Assistant Professor for Transdisciplinary Art and Cultural Research, and Head of the "Digital Memory Studies" research unit at the Department of Art and Cultural Studies at the University of Continuing Education Krems. Her fields of research include (Visual) Contemporary History, Mediatized Memory Cultures, transdisciplinary Research, (participatory) Technologies of Remembrance, and "Invisible Heritage" ("burdened heritage", women's history, etc.).

Bárbara Deoti is a coordinator of the Brazilian Center for Nazism and Holocaust Studies' (NEPAT). She graduated in History from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG-2020). Her main interest concerns the literary representations of Nazism in alternate history books, such as *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), and contemporary literature, such as *The German House* (2018).

Beth S. Dotan is Research Assistant Professor at the Norman and Bernice Harris Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln (UNL). She is co-PI on the Nebraska Stories of Humanity: Holocaust Survivors & WWII Veterans, Network Portal & Educational Website, established through the UNL Center for Digital Research in the Humanities. Dotan's research focuses on Digital Holocaust Memory and Education. She was the Founding Director of the Institute for Holocaust Education in Omaha, Nebraska, USA, and was the International Department Director at the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum in Israel.

Wolfgang Gasser is a Historian and Researcher at the National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism, and is responsible for educational projects at the renovated Jewish cemeteries in Austria. His research and teaching areas are the Cultural and Social History of Austrian Jews in Modern Times, Holocaust Studies, the Politics of Memory, and Public Science. He is also a

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-013

teacher's Trainer for Political and Holocaust Education, on an annual program for Austrian teacher seminars in Israel and several others.

Iris Groschek is Head of the Public Relations and Social Media Department of the Foundation of Hamburg Memorials and Learning Centres Commemorating the Victims of Nazi Crimes. The Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, of which she was previously Head of the Education Department, is the largest memorial within the foundation. Her current work focuses on public relations, culture marketing, digital communication, and digital educational tools. Her latest publication is a volume co-edited with Habbo Knoch entitled *Digital Memory. Neue Perspektiven für die Erinnerungsarbeit*, Göttingen 2023 (Beiträge zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung vol. 4)

Silvia Guetta is an Associate Professor of General and Social Pedagogy with a PhD in the theory and history of the educational process. She has been teaching at various levels since 1980. Her academic research focuses on the culture of peace education, intercultural education, the history of Jewish education in Italy and the application and methodological development of Feuerstein in Italy. She is a scientific advisor for the cultural and scientific exchange agreement between the University of Florence and the University of Tel Aviv, as well as Al Quds University and other Jewish and Arab universities. She is also an Associate Member of the UNESCO Transdisciplinary Chair "Human Development and Culture of Peace" and has been a member of the international network INEE (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies). She represents the academic journal IJJER (Jewish Education Research, Bar Ilan University, Israel) and is co-director of the Aracne publishing house. She has been a trainer and coordinator of various UNICEF projects. She has been a member of the intergovernmental organisation IHRA for several years and is the director of the post-academic course on Holocaust education.

Josefine Honke is a Doctoral Researcher at the University of Konstanz, Germany. Her research interests encompass (Digital) Memory Studies, the representation of AI in Audiovisual Media, and Gender Studies. Her most recent publication is "Doing Memory auf Youtube: Zeitzeug*innen-Videos als Erinnerungsmedien," which is available at https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110792898-008.

Éva Kovács is a sociologist and the Academic Director of the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies. Kovács studied Sociology and Economics at the Corvinus University in Budapest (PhD, 1994; Habilitation, 2009). She is also Research Chair at the Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Her research fields include the History of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, research on Memory and Remembrance, and Jewish Identity in Hungary and Slovakia. She has authored five monographs, edited nine volumes, published numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals, and co-curated exhibitions in Berlin, Vienna, Krems, and Budapest. She is founder of the digital audio-visual archive "Voices of the Twentieth Century" in Budapest.

Martin Krenn is an artist, artistic researcher, and curator. He works as a Professor of Art Mediation/ Education at the Institute of Fine Art, Braunschweig University of Art. Krenn uses various types of media, including text, photography, and video. Most of his projects in public spaces take the form of social sculpture. By consistently expanding the field of art, he tries to initiate discussions about socio-political topics and thereby challenges conventional thinking. He was awarded a PhD for his project "The Political Space in Social Art Practices" by Ulster University, Faculty of Art, Design and the

Built Environment, Belfast Campus in 2016. Since 1995, he has had numerous international exhibitions.

Juhi Kulshrestha is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Computer Science, Aalto University. Her research focuses on studying online news and information consumption, online political communication, online social media, and the role of online algorithmic intermediaries in shaping people's online information diets. Her latest publication titled "Ethics in Artificial Intelligence: Bias, Fairness and Beyond" can be found at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-7184-8.

Mykola Makhortykh is an Alfred Landecker Lecturer at the Institute of Communication and Media Studies at the University of Bern. In his research, Mykola focuses on politics- and history-centered information behaviour in online environments and how it is affected by the AI-driven systems. His latest publication titled "Shall the robots remember? Conceptualising the role of non-human agents in digital memory communication" can be found at https://doi.org/10.1017/mem.2024.2.

Stefania Manca is Research Director at the Institute for Educational Technology at the Italian National Research Council. Her research focuses on Holocaust memory and Holocaust education, with a particular emphasis on the use of digital technologies to both preserve historical memory and enhance educational outreach. She completed her PhD in Education and ICT at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya with a thesis on "Teaching and learning about the Holocaust with social media: A learning ecology perspective". She is also a member of the Network for Innovative Holocaust Education (NIHE) and of the European Practitioners Network Against Antisemitism (EPNA), where she is involved in researching the phenomenon of antisemitism on social media and what educational measures would be most appropriate to counter this phenomenon.

Anna Menyhért is a Full Professor of Trauma Studies at the Budapest University of Jewish Studies, at the Department of Cultural Studies and at the Department of Social Work and Social Sciences; as well as the PI of the Hungarian team in the interfaith security collaboration EU project SHIELD. She is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Kőszeg, a Visiting Professor at the University of Florence as the co-coordinator of the EUniWell project 'Trauma', and an Affiliated Researcher at the Democracy Institute of the Central European University. Her fields of research and teaching are Trauma Studies, Literary Studies, Cultural Studies, Critical Theory, Hungarian Studies, and Creative Writing. She is the author of five monographs, including *Women's Literary Tradition and Twentieth-Century Hungarian Women Writers* (Brill, 2020). Currently she is working on a book entitled *Trauma in the Digital Age* (De Gruyter). She is the co-editor of the book series Transdisciplinary Trauma Studies at De Gruyter and the co-Chair of the Trauma and Memory Working Group of the Memory Studies Association.

Eva Pfanzelter is Associate Professor and Deputy Head at the Department of Contemporary History, as well as Head of the Digital Humanities Research Center at the University of Innsbruck. Her fields of research and teaching are European and regional Contemporary History, Holocaust Studies, Memory and Politics of Memory, Migration, and Digital Humanities. Her latest publication on "#URL Holocaust digital. Verhandlungen des Geonzids zwischen Public History, Geschichtspolitik und Kommerz" can be found at https://doi.org/10.15203/99106-111-3.

Dirk Rupnow is Professor at the Institute for Contemporary History and currently Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and History. He was a visiting Professor at Dartmouth College (2007), Stanford

University (2017), and the Hebrew University Jerusalem (2022) and Research Fellow at the International Research Center Cultural Studies IFK and the Institute for Human Sciences IWM, both in Vienna, the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish Histroy and Culture and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. His main fields of research and teaching are European History in the 20th and 21st centuries, Jewish and Holocaust Studies, Intellectual History, Migration, Cultures and Politics of Memory and Museology.

Nicole Steng, a Historian and Educational Staff Member in the Education Department of the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site, specializes in the development and integration of digital educational offerings. She has contributed to various projects, including the Augmented Reality application "ARt - The Concentration Camp in Drawings." Her latest publications are "Das #rememBarcamp 2023," in *GedenkstättenRundbrief* 213 (2024): 40–46, (with Elisabeth Fink) "Die Befreiung des Konzentrationslagers Dachau in Augmented Reality. Medienpädagogische Handreichung für die schulische und außerschulische Bildungsarbeit," Bildungsabteilung der KZGedenkstätte Dachau, 2020, https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/dachau-bildung-202005-UA_20210723.pdf, and (with Elisabeth Fink and Steffen Jost) "Die Befreiung des Konzentrationslagers Dachau in Augmented Reality. Geschichte digital – vermittelt in virtuellem Rundgang, App und Podcast," in *museum heute* 58 (2020): 44–47.

Maryna Sydorova is a Data Engineer and a Scientific Programmer at the Institute of Communication and Media Science at the University of Bern. Before working at the Institute, Maryna worked as a freelance data scientist and cloud architect with a particular emphasis on AI. Her research interests include generative AI, natural language processing, and the development of new methods for AI audits. Her latest publication titled "Generative AI and Contestation and Instrumentalization of Memory About the Holocaust in Ukraine" can be found at https://doi.org/10.1515/eehs-2023-0054.

Heidemarie Uhl (†) was a contemporary historian and Senior Researcher at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna as well as Lecturer at the University of Vienna and the University of Graz. Uhl was a member of the Austrian Delegation to the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) and member of the scientific board of the Haus der Geschichte Österreich, the Militärhistorische Denkmalkommission at the Austrian Ministry of Defence, and Chairperson of the Fachkommission der Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten. She was also a member of the editorial board of the scientific journals Zeitgeschichte and Contemporary Austrian Studies. In her research, she focused on constructions of identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Central Europe, Memory Studies with a focus on World Wars One and Two, national socialism, the Holocaust and post-1945 decades, modernity in Vienna and Central Europe around 1900, and theories of culture, identity, and memory.

Roberto Ulloa is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Konstanz and GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences. His primary focus is understanding the impact of online platforms as digital institutions on social dynamics and individual attitudes and behaviors. His current research includes the investigation of biases in search engines, digital inequalities, and the effects of information-seeking behavior on attitudes. He utilizes diverse methodologies to collect online data and employs computational methods for analysis.

Aleksandra Urman is a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Social Computing Group at the University of Zurich. In her research, Aleksandra primarily examines biases in algorithmic systems and various

aspects of political communication on social media, such as computational propaganda, radicalization, and polarization. Her latest publication titled “A Balancing Act: How Media Professionals Perceive the Implementation of News Recommender Systems” can be found at https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2023.2293933.

Anna Carolina Viana is a coordinator of the Brazilian Center for Nazism and Holocaust Studies’ (NEPAT). She is a PhD student at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) and has researched the Nazi regime since 2019. In her Master’s degree, she analyzed Alfred Rosenberg’s *The Myth of the 20th Century* (1930). Her primary concern was to study the author’s uses of history, the temporal relations established in his work, and his intellectual trajectory and exchanges. In her PhD, she intends to broaden her Master’s object and investigate the uses of history in Rosenberg’s complete literary work.

Maria Visconti is a coordinator of the Brazilian Center for Nazism and Holocaust Studies’ (NEPAT). She holds a PhD in History (2023) from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) and is a member of The Perpetrator Studies Network. She has a Master’s degree in History from UFMG (2017), where she also has a graduate degree in History (2014), with a one-semester academic extension at Friedrich-Alexander University, in Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany (2013), with a focus on Nazi Germany. She has been researching the Nazi regime since 2012 and studied the Nazi resistance group White Rose for her Master’s degree. Her PhD dissertation focused on the narratives of the Nazis who were judged in the Nuremberg Trials, creating archetypes based on discursive patterns.

Georg Vogt is Head of the research group Media Creation at St. Poelten University of Applied Sciences, and Lecturer at the University of Viennas Institute for Theatre, Film and Media Studies. He is also active as an author, editor, curator, and filmmaker. In 2017, he co-founded the film festival Suburbinale as a platform for art-based research on suburban areas. His research interests include the intersection of communities, archives, history, and media, as well as contemporary film and media production, collaborative working environments, art-based research practices, and film and media history. https://icmt.fhstp.ac.at/team/georg-vogt.

Marianne Windsperger works as a Research Coordinator in the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI). She studied Comparative Literature and Romance Languages at the University of Vienna. She has been a member of the executive board of the Theodor Kramer Society for Exile Studies in Vienna since 2018. Her research and publications focus on Literary Representations of the Holocaust, the Afterlife of Yiddish literature, and Transgenerational Memorial Practices. Her most recent publications include *Places and Media of Encounter. Transfer, Mediality and Situativity of Jewish Literatures* (2021), edited with Olaf Terpitz, and *Preserving Lived Contexts. Yizker bikher as Portable Archives from a Transgenerational Perspective* (2021).

Archie Wolfman is a PhD researcher in Film Studies at Queen Mary University of London. His research examines the politics of Holocaust memory in transnational cinemas. In particular, he is interested in how films negotiate competitive and comparative memory of different genocides and identities.

Index

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111329154-014