



WORKSHOP ABSTRACT

Digital narratives: Exploring digital dimensions of shared experiences and collective memory

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Abstract: Our proposed panel aims for the examination of the impact digital technologies have on preserving, disseminating, and interpreting collective memory and shared experiences. Through an interdisciplinary lens, we want to discuss how digital platforms and memory archives are changing the character of shared narratives, concerning migration, forced migration, war, natural disasters etc. We especially welcome contributions that inquire the phenomenon of intergenerational storytelling within families and communities. We are interested in discussing how digital platforms serve as dynamic catalysts for preserving and sharing collective memories especially on war, flight and migration.

In so doing, we rediscuss the role of digital “museums” (be they explicit or implicit) in challenging dominant national narratives by providing alternative perspectives and amplifying marginalized voices. In the context of the digital era, where social media plays a pivotal role in shaping geopolitical narratives, we underscore the importance of examining the role of youth in sharing their experiences and acquiring knowledge about collective experiences, such as wars, forced migration etc. This acknowledgment prompts reflection on the evolving nature of storytelling virtually – through social media, museums and other digital platforms – and its impact on collective memory in contemporary society.

Our panel therefore offers a nuanced exploration of the intersections between digital technologies, memory archives, and the ongoing disruption of national narratives. Therefore, the panel invites original ethnographic informed research in various fields, such as digital anthropology, museum anthropology, peace and conflict studies, migration studies, pedagogical research, public anthropology as well as experiences of museum practitioners.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Tuesday, September 24, 2024 | Slot 1 | Room 3

Julia Verbeek: Preserving Tibet - digital technologies as a means of sharing life and keeping memories alive along generations

Evgenija Filova: Permissible Truths: Who can talk about racism in Germany and how?

Stephanie Shakay Tierney: From Digital Narrative to Activist Action: Memorialising

Scotland's Witchcraft Trials through Digital Technologies

Irene Marti Gil: Intangible Collectors and Digital Museums: Where Technoculture, Mass-consumerism, and Post-materialism Coalesce.

Tuesday, September 24, 2024 | Slot 2 | Room 3

Sladana Adamovic/Irena Klissenbauer/Klaudija Bilic-Selmanovic: The Museum of Survivors: Bridging Communities through Digital Storytelling

Ergün Özgür: Madımak Hotel' - A Museum of Shame: A Counter - commemorative space by the Alevi Community

Maria Schlechter: The temporal dimension of digital app-based memory work of teenagers

Oksana Kravchenko: The impact educational digital technologies have on preserving, disseminating, and interpreting collective memory and shared experiences of students

SESSION PAPERS

Preserving Tibet - digital technologies as a means of sharing life and keeping memories alive along generations

Julia Verbeek

Tibetans in Exile face severely restricted access to their homeland Tibet and its communication channels by Chinese occupation. Digital technologies emerge here as vital tools for preserving collective memory and shared experiences. Drawing from my MA research conducted at the Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre in Darjeeling, India, I explore these dynamics.

Through social media channels like YouTube, Tibetan refugees share customs and traditions with relatives both within and outside the refugee center. By digitally documenting practices such as weekly Tibetan dances in honor of the Dalai Lama, these platforms ensure the continuity of Tibetan cultural heritage amidst displacement. This becomes pressing regarding generational gaps. While the elderly at large decided to stay in the refugee centre, living in a Tibetan community, the younger generation commonly decided to pursue careers outside the centre, within Indian or abroad (primarily in the USA, Canada, France). To make sure that this younger generation doesn't get detached from their Tibetan heritage and stays connected to the Tibetan (exile) community, the sharing of Tibetan culture via digital technologies is regarded as crucial.

Furthermore, I discuss the significance of Tibetan news channels from the Government in Exile, accessible via social media, in preserving collective memory of Tibetan history

and maintaining connections to the lost homeland. In the absence of direct news from Tibet, these channels serve as a lifeline, fostering a shared sense of embeddedness in Tibetan affairs among refugees and maintaining Tibetan identity. The constant presence of these channels in the refugee center, as artisanal workers for example watch them non-stop during work, underscores their embeddedness into the refugees lives.

In short, I'm offering to the panel an examination of the intersections between digital technologies, memory archives, and identity formation in Tibetan exile.

Permissible Truths: Who can talk about racism in Germany and how?

Evgenija Filova

This paper is part of my PhD dissertation on (anti-)racism in arts and culture in Berlin. Using the methods of digital anthropology, I have been following artists documenting and exposing cases of racism in the scene on social media. For the past year, I have been continuously watching reels and live videos of police officers violently assaulting peaceful protesters while artists and activists have been disrupting cultural events with sit-ins and art interventions challenging forms of racism within those institutions. Prominent examples include the anti-racism demonstration in Berlin in late January 2024 where thousands demonstrated under the slogan “to defend democracy” against a potential rise of the far-right. The demonstration was sparked following a larger meeting of far-right groups for “remigration”: planning mass deportations of migrants from Germany. In the sea of overwhelmingly white protesters, the group consisting of migrants and people of color marching for antiracism in solidarity with Palestine was violently attacked by fellow protesters and the police. These attacks against a racialized group on a demonstration against racism highlight the exceptionalizing and exclusionary politics and practices in Germany limiting who is permitted to talk about racism and how. The weaponization and politicization of history is particularly targeting migrant populations who resist this dislocation and instrumentalization of “German guilt”. Chillingly, accusations of antisemitism have been frequently deployed even against Jewish individuals, complicating the meaning and use of antisemitism as a term. In an era of aggressive silencing of any form of public solidarity with Palestinians in Germany, digital and social media provided the perfect platform to tell the stories of struggle, mourning, and racism. Hundreds of artists took on social media to talk about the cancellations they have been receiving of their shows and funding, some with disturbingly ferocious content accusing them directly of terrorism.

From Digital Narrative to Activist Action: Memorialising Scotland’s Witchcraft Trials through Digital Technologies

Stephanie Shakay Tierney

This paper examines the connections between digital technologies and collective memory by investigating how activists memorialise the witchcraft trials of the early modern period in Scotland. Drawing from ethnographic research, including participant observation, interviews, and digital methods such as social media engagement and podcast analysis, this paper examines how digital platforms reshape shared narratives. Such technologies enable the collective memory of the witch trials to transcend physical

boundaries, connecting activists across Scotland and creating a virtual space where shared narratives foster community.

Intangible Collectors and Digital Museums: Where Technoculture, Mass-consumerism, and Post-materialism Coalesce.

Irene Marti Gil

In today's globalized, technocultured world, mass-consumerism has paradoxically triggered a postmaterial "experience economy," by which consumers are more willing to spend their money on experiences than products. The increasing value placed on ephemerality, immediacy, and immateriality leads Gen Y and Z to accumulate cultural, recreational, professional, academic, and personal experiences as status-markers and personhood-definers. Thus, "intangible collecting" emerges as a new aspect of the traditional, otherwise object-based, collectionism, with which it shares the motives driving collecting practices, as well as its curatorial strategies.

This paper shows that gathering nonmaterial assets serves the same purposes as collecting tangibles: they are used to define the collector's self, add value and prestige to their persona, and establish social relationships of both similarity and otherness with people around them. Regarding curatorship, exhibits of intangible assets are as carefully designed and crafted as material collections are. However, intangibles are displayed in a new kind of museum— social media. Social media platforms have become the new exhibition cabinets that showcase the collector's social and economic capital in digital (and ephemeral) museums of intangible memorabilia. As of 2023, 92.7% of all internet users had and utilized social media, which equates to 4.8 billion social media users worldwide. With this number of collectors, visitors, and stakeholders, social media is the biggest, most diverse, populated, personalized, and customizable museum ever created. Therefore, the ultimate goals of this presentation are to bring to light the new phenomenon of social media as digital museums, which deserves scholarly attention, and to prove the validity of intangible collectionism as a useful concept with vast potential for anthropological research.

The Museum of Survivors: Bridging Communities through Digital Storytelling

Sladana Adamovic

In the digital age, preserving history requires innovation and empathy. At the Museum of Survivors, we harness digital platforms to share poignant war experiences of children. Our online museum, designed to engage younger audiences, resembles an Instagram page, featuring objects and quotes from interviews with war witnesses and their descendants.

Our mission is to make history interactive and accessible, fostering empathy and understanding among younger generations. By challenging dominant narratives and amplifying marginalized voices, we aim to create a shared journey through history that promotes deeper connections and insights.

We believe that understanding others often begins with understanding oneself. Our digital storytelling approach encourages visitors to reflect on their own histories, helping

them process their past and build empathy. Through carefully curated stories, we connect communities affected by war, promoting dialogue.

Moreover, we explore how digital tools can be utilized in educational settings. We are particularly interested in how schools can integrate digital archives and storytelling into their curricula to foster a deeper understanding of historical and contemporary issues among students. This includes investigating the impact of digital storytelling on students' engagement and their perception of collective memory.

Key questions we explore include: How do digital platforms like ours captivate and educate younger audiences about the complexities of war? How do we disrupt traditional national narratives and contribute to a more inclusive historical discourse? How can digital storytelling be a catalyst for empathy and personal reflection?

The presentation will focus on integrating digital archives and storytelling into school curricula to foster a deeper understanding of historical and contemporary issues among students. In the presentation, we will first introduce the Museum of Survivors and then delve into this focus.

Madımak Hotel' - A Museum of Shame: A Counter - commemorative space by the Alevi Community

Ergün Özgür

Within the majority Sunni Muslim population of present-day Turkey, the Alevi community comprises the Kızılbaş and Bektasi groups. Like other minorities, Alevi communities have endured violent attacks and repression, such as those against the Zaza-speaking Alevis of Dersim in 1937 and 1938, resulting in their displacement within or outside Turkey.

Urbanization and industrialization since the 1960s have prompted increased migration of the Alevi population towards larger cities in Western Turkey. Pogroms in Alevi-populated cities, like the incidents in Maraş in 1978 and Çorum in 1980, further accelerated their displacement. Following the military coup in 1980, many young Alevis actively involved in left-wing politics were imprisoned. Additionally, on July 2, 1993, a peaceful Alevi festival in Sivas was attacked, resulting in the deaths of 37 people, 33 of whom were festival participants suffocating from smoke when the Madımak Hotel, where they were staying, was set on fire.

Drawing on an analysis of media sources and interviews with Alevi activists, this article examines the discourses surrounding the burning of the Madımak Hotel in Sivas, Turkey, on July 2, 1993. A related theme concerns the official transformation of the hotel into a cultural centre in 2011, despite the Alevi community's request for a 'museum of shame' (utanç müzesi). Since 2019, the Alevi community has been working on building an online Museum of Shame, followed by the establishment of a physical one in Ankara.

The article discusses how past events have triggered the memories of the Alevi community and mobilized them to create their own counter-commemorative space in their quest for justice. Moreover, it highlights key leading figures and organizations that activate memories within the Alevi community.

Keywords: Madımak Hotel massacre, Alevi Community, digital and physical museums of shame, searching for justice, witnessing history

The temporal dimension of digital app-based memory work of teenagers

Maria Schlechter

Nowadays, it is amongst the most popular activities of teenagers to collect, preserve, share, and delete memories on smartphones by using various apps. Thereby each app-feature imposes a certain temporality for feasible memory work. For example, Snaps shared on Snapchat are characterized by a fast-paced temporality as they are only visible for a few seconds. For this reason, teenagers typically use these snaps to address mundane memories of everyday activities, that took place recently. In comparison, visual memories on Instagram are arranged chronologically and temporally unlimited. Hence, only beautiful, and extraordinary moments in life are presented on Instagram to a defined audience, similar to a photo album.

In the presentation, I will discuss in detail how teenagers make these different temporalities of apps socially relevant by using them for different types of memory work with acquaintance, friends or best friends.

Thereby I will draw first on a digital ethnography undertaken as part of my dissertation, and second, on the current research project "TELL" at the Bertha von Suttner Private University. The fieldwork for my doctoral thesis took place in a middle school in Vienna. It revolved around the question of social bonds with peers in school and how daily personal encounters intertwine with remembering and documenting these experiences digitally. In the research project "TELL" an app is designed in collaboration between social researchers, software engineers, youth workers and adolescents in open youth work. The app is intended to be a resource for biography work and documenting and sharing collective memories. Due to the researched fields most of the adolescents in both projects have migration background.

On-site presentation is also possible.

The impact educational digital technologies have on preserving, disseminating, and interpreting collective memory and shared experiences of students

Oksana Kravchenko

Due to the exponential growth in the use of digital technologies the problem of control, verifying, reliably preserving, presenting and interpreting collective memory and shared experiences on the Internet directly among students has arisen. According to S. Kivunja, digital pedagogy allows embedding computer digital technologies into the art of teaching, enriching learning, teaching throughout the entire training course. The use of the latest VR headsets has opportunities to immerse students in the most important historical events, be it wars, revolutions, regime changes and epochs, and makes them experience certain feelings and emotions by interacting with digital twins and avatars. The emotional background creates vivid stable memories of the events and personalities seen, allows to form an opinion based on visual, auditory and, in some cases, tactile experience. Discussing the experience of virtual panoramas, students use not only live communication, but also VR-chats within their youth community, their families, listening to the older generation's opinion and acting as one of the opinion leaders for younger generations. Many people create family chats to share their impressions, record the most

important events that concern not only one family, but also the state. All this forms the continuity of a certain relationship within one family, a small community and later throughout the country.

On social media, young people express their opinions without fear for reputation and consequences, as most use fictitious names and avatars. As for the reliability of information, according to research by Rambler & Co, 93% of respondents have at least once encountered false information. Most often, fakes are found on social networks and messengers (64%).

Nevertheless, the use of digital technologies is the most important tool for teachers to influence personality formation, and for students it is an opportunity to share experiences, create the desired future and preserve collective memory.