THE MEMORIAL MUSEUM IN THE DIGITAL AGE



Edited by

Victoria Grace Walden

The Memorial Museum in the Digital Age is published online in e-book format as a collection and as individual chapters by REFRAME Books (http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/reframe-books).

REFRAME is an open access academic digital platform for the online practice, publication and curation of internationally produced research and scholarship. It is supported by the School of Media, Arts and Humanities, University of Sussex, UK.

ISBN: 978-1-7395820-0-5 (PDF)

Copyright chapters © 2022 Individual Authors. All Rights Reserved.
Copyright e-formats & layouts © 2022 REFRAME Books. All Rights Reserved.

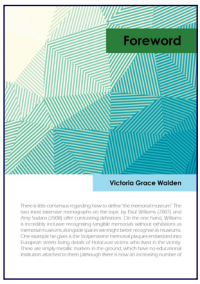
Cover design: Nadya Herrera Catalán
Book design: Nadya Herrera Catalán

For REFRAME Books:
Managing Editor: Katherine Farrimond and Tanya Kant
Design and Layout Editor: Nadya Herrera Catalán
Technical Editor: Russell Glasson

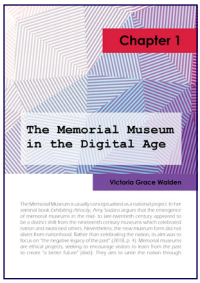
Contact: reframe.us@gmail.com

Cover page images credit: USC Shoah Foundation
Background cover image credit: shutterstock_577969828
Chapter titles image credit: Shutterstock_1994116142/ Nadya Herrera Catalán

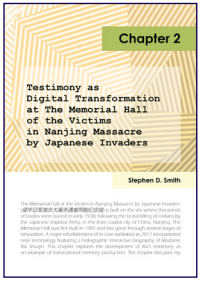
Table of Contents



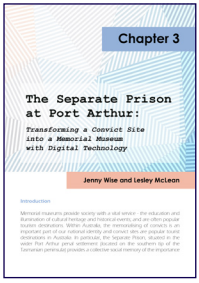
Foreword
Victoria Grace Walden



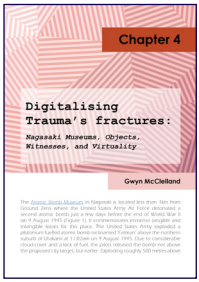
Chapter 1
The Memorial Museum in the Digital Age
Victoria Grace Walden



Chapter 2
Testimony as Digital Transformation at The Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders
Stephen D. Smith



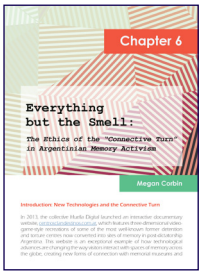
Chapter 3
The Separate Prison at Port Arthur: Transforming a Convict Site into a Memorial Museum with Digital Technology
Jenny Wise and Lesley McLean



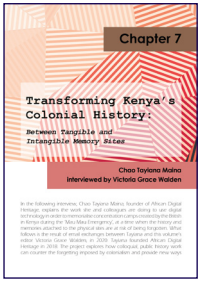
Chapter 4
Digitalising Trauma's fractures: Nagasaki Museums, Objects, Witnesses, and Virtuality
Gwyn McClelland



Chapter 5
Augmented Sarajevo: Digitally Reconstructing War Heritage and the Sense of Place
Sabina Tanović



Chapter 6
Everything but the Smell: The Ethics of the "Connective Turn" in Argentinian Memory Activism
Megan Corbin

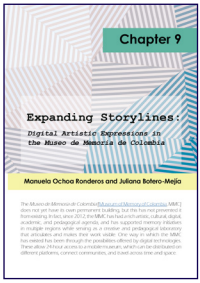


Chapter 7
Transforming Kenya's Colonial History: Between Tangible and Intangible Memory Sites
Chao Tayiana Maina,
interviewed by Victoria Grace Walden

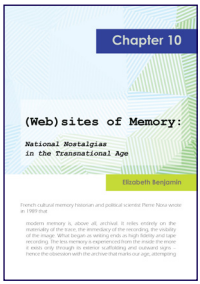
Table of Contents



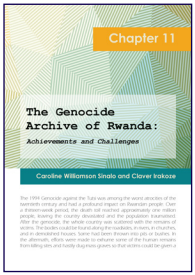
Chapter 8
Belgrade's Protest Museum: Digital Memorialisation as Continuing the Event
Nela Milic



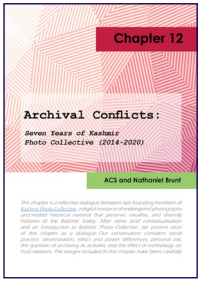
Chapter 9
Expanding Storylines: Digital Artistic Expressions in the Museo de Memoria de Colombia
Manuela Ochoa Ronderos and Juliana Botero-Mejía



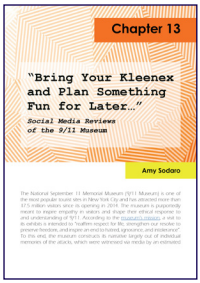
Chapter 10
(Web)sites of Memory: National Nostalgias in the Transnational Age
Elizabeth Benjamin



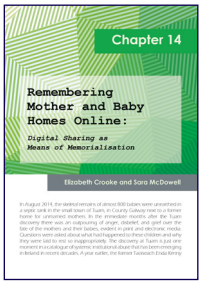
Chapter 11
The Genocide Archive of Rwanda: Achievements and Challenges
Caroline Williamson Sinalo and Claver Irakoze



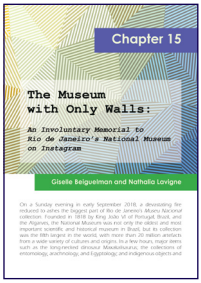
Chapter 12
Archival Conflicts: Seven Years of the Kashmir Photo Collective (2014 - 2020)
ACS and Nathaniel Brunt



Chapter 13
"Bring Your Kleenex and Plan Something Fun for Later..." Social Media Reviews of the 9/11 Museum
Amy Sodaro



Chapter 14
Remembering Mother and Baby Homes Online: Digital Sharing as Means of Memorialisation
Elizabeth Crooke and Sara McDowell



Chapter 15
The Museum with Only Walls: An Involuntary Memorial to Rio de Janeiro's National Museum on Instagram
Giselle Beiguelman and Nathalia Lavigne

Editor

Victoria Grace Walden is a Senior Lecturer in Media Studies at the University of Sussex. She is the author of *Cinematic Intermedialities and Contemporary Holocaust Memory*, and a number of articles about mediated Holocaust memory published in *Memory Studies, Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History, Frames Cinema Journal, Animation Studies*, and *Short Film Studies*. She is editor of *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research* (2021), a complementary special issue of Holocaust Studies, and Editor-in-Chief of the platform www.digitalholocaustmemory.com. She has worked as digital coordinator for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (the IHRA) and freelance educator for the Holocaust Educational Trust, and has been an academic advisor for projects run by the Imperial War Museums, the Claims Conference, and a joint initiative of the UN and UNESCO. She is Principal Investigator on the British Academy/ Leverhulme Trust funded project *Digital Holocaust Memory: Hyperconnective Museums and Archives of the Future*.

Authors in Chronological Order

Stephen D. Smith is Executive Director Emeritus of USC Shoah Foundation and USC Visiting Professor of Religion. He holds a PhD from the University of Birmingham Department of Philosophy and Theology where he researched Holocaust Testimony. Smith was founder of the Aegis Trust for the Prevention of Crimes Against Humanity and Genocide, which researches and advocates on genocide prevention policy and education. He was UNESCO Chair on Genocide Education (2014-2021). He is an immersive digital media producer, with his work including testimony-based VR titles *The Last Goodbye* and *Lala*. Recent published titles include: *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Mass Atrocity and Genocide* (2021), and *Listen. Then Listen Again. Rehumanizing Holocaust Testimony* (2022).

Jenny Wise is a senior lecturer in criminology within the School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at the University of New England. Her research focuses upon the social impacts of forensic science on the criminal justice system, the role of the CSI Effect changing criminal justice practices, dark tourism and crime as a form of leisure.

Lesley McLean is a lecturer in Philosophy and Religion within the School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at the University of New England. She has published in the area of animal ethics (her philosophical interest) and is currently researching the intersection of 'cults' so named in popular discourse with tourism (her religious studies interests).

Gwyn McClelland holds a Master of Divinity from the University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Japanese history from Monash University. He won the 2019 John Legge prize for best thesis in Asian Studies, awarded by the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA). McClelland recently published his first monograph, a collective biography of Catholic sufferers of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. He interviewed the majority of narrators at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. He was Guest Editor of the Japan Foundation Sydney's journal, *New Voices in Japanese Studies* in 2021, and has a contract for a new book in Sensory Studies, co-edited by Dr Hannah Gould. McClelland is currently Japanese Studies Lecturer at the University of New England, Anaiwan Country, NSW.

Sabina Tanović is an architect and post-doctoral researcher at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands. Her current research focuses on contemporary European memory and the construction of architectural commemorative projects. In her book *Designing Memory: The Architecture of Commemoration in Europe, 1914 to the Present*, (Cambridge University Press, 2019), she discusses the commissioning processes and design strategies of several European memorial projects. Applying interdisciplinary approaches, she investigates the correlation between psychological aspects

of bereavement and their integration into memorial-making processes. Sabina is a project leader of the 'Designing Memory' group, focusing on design, adaptation, and remodeling of memorial sites.

Megan Corbin is an Associate Professor of Spanish at West Chester University of Pennsylvania and author of *Haunted Objects: Spectral Testimony in the Southern Cone Post-Dictatorship* (2021). Her research examines the cultural production of memory in Southern Cone Latin America, with an emphasis on the material legacy of the violence of the military dictatorships. Her edited volume with Hispanic Issues On Line, *Vestigios del pasado: Los sitios de memoria y sus representaciones políticas y artísticas*, features essays by 12 scholars and 4 survivors and artists that discuss the importance of sites of memory in the wake of the violence of the last military dictatorships in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay.

Chao Tayiana Maina is a digital heritage specialist and digital humanities scholar. She is the founder of African Digital Heritage, an organisation which seeks to research, strengthen, and develop the technical capacity of African heritage institutions and sectors. She is also the co-founder of the Museum of British Colonialism where she leads digital engagement and documentation. She holds an MSc in International Heritage Visualisation (2016 -2017) from the University of Glasgow/Glasgow School of Art where she graduated with a distinction. Her research work explored the possibilities of embedding intangible histories in 3D digital environments. She is a recipient of the Google Anita Borg scholarship for women in technology and a founding member of the Digital Humanities network in Africa.

Nela Milic is a Senior Lecturer at University of the Arts, London (UAL). She is an artist and an academic working in media and arts. She conducted research for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and worked on the project TimeCase: Memory in Action with a Grundtvig grant. She created the installation *Text Illuminations* for the AHRC funded Arts and Reconciliation project and is a

member of the Space & Place and Design Activism research hubs based at UAL. Nela is co-editor of a Special Issue of the *Journal of Organisational Aesthetics* about London Design Festival at LCC.

Manuela Ochoa Ronderos is an artist and a Humanities PhD student at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada. She studied Art at Universidad de Los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia, and obtained her Masters in History and Theory of Contemporary Art from the San Francisco Art Institute. She is the co-founder of the digital projects *Oropéndola, Arte y Conflict* and *Mirlo Podcast*; worked as co-curator for the exhibit *Feliza Bursztyn, Elogio de la Chatarra* at the National Museum of Colombia (2009); as a producer for *BBC Radio's Apichatpong Weerasethakul* (In the studio); and as an art curator and researcher at the Museum of Memory of Colombia (2016-2019).

Juliana Botero-Mejía is an independent researcher and curator. She studied Anthropology at Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia and obtained her Masters in Social Anthropology and Ethnology from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, France (2012). She has worked at the National Museum of Colombia (2007-2008, 2011-2012), the Museum of Memory of Colombia (2017-2019), and the Museum of Bogotá (2020) as a researcher and curator; at the National Library of Colombia (2014-2016) as a researcher; and on several editorial projects as editor and writer.

Elizabeth Benjamin is a Lecturer in French at Coventry University. Her research interests intersect visual culture, comparative aesthetics, and cultural memory, with a particular interest in the early twentieth century. Her current work explores the role of memorialisation in the formation of national identity, analysed through art, literature, and culture more broadly. She is the author of *Dada and Existentialism: the Authenticity of Ambiguity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), and *Existential Comics: Bande dessinée and the Art of Ethics* (Peter Lang, 2021).

Caroline Williamson Sinalo is Lecturer in World Languages at University College Cork and author of *Rwanda after Genocide: Gender, Identity and Posttraumatic Growth* (Cambridge University Press). She began her collaboration with anti-genocide charity, the Aegis Trust, in 2010 as part of her PhD project, which was funded by an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award and involved spending a year working in Rwanda at the Genocide Archive of Rwanda (2011-2012). Williamson Sinalo has since continued to collaborate with the Aegis Trust, twice receiving Aegis Research, Policy and Higher Education (RPHE) funding. Her research has also been supported by the Irish Research Council (IRC), the Government of Ireland and Enterprise Ireland.

Claver Irakoze is a peace education activist and worked for the Aegis Trust and Kigali Genocide Memorial as Digital Resources and Communications Manager from 2010 until March 2020. Claver also managed the Aegis Trust Archive and Documentation Department from July 2013 till February 2017. His responsibilities included the management of the online archive (www.genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw). He is a singer, songwriter, and author. He survived the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi when he was 11 years old. In April 2019, he published his first children's book entitled *That Child Is me*. Prior to his children's book, in April 2018, Claver released his music video *Umurage w'amateka* (literally translating as *The Legacy of History*); both publications share a particular approach: telling the story of genocide in a less traumatic yet accurate manner to the young generation.

ACS is an anonymous academic contributor from India. We do not include a bibliography to protect their identity.

Nathaniel Brunt is an interdisciplinary scholar, documentarian, and educator He is currently a PhD candidate in the Communication and Culture program at Ryerson University, Canada. His doctoral research is supported by the Canadian federal government's Social Sciences and Humanities Research

Council and The Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation Scholarship. Nathaniel's award-winning photographic work has been published and exhibited internationally. He is a founding member of the Kashmir Photo Collective.

Amy Sodaro is Associate Professor of Sociology at Borough of Manhattan Community College/City University of New York. Her research focuses on memoralisation of atrocity, particularly in memorial museums. She is co-editor of *Memory and the Future: Transnational Politics, Ethics and Society* (2010) and *Museums and Sites of Persuasion: Politics, Memory and Human Rights* (2019) and author of *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence* (2018).

Elizabeth Crooke is Professor of Heritage and Museum Studies at Ulster University. Her research explores the social, cultural, and political issues that shape the creation and expression of heritage and the work of museums, focusing in the most part on Northern Ireland. She is co-editor of *Heritage after Conflict: Northern Ireland* (2018 Routledge) and has published articles on the themes of identity, community and memory in *Cultural Geographies; International Journal of Heritage Studies; Liminalities; Memory Studies; Journal of the History of Collections*; and *Irish Political Studies*. She is the author of *Museums and Community: Ideas, Issues and Challenges* (Routledge 2007) and *Politics, Archaeology and the Creation of a National Museum of Ireland* (Irish Academic Press 2000). Alongside her research, Elizabeth is Course Director of Ulster University MA programmes in heritage and museum studies, both on campus and distance learning courses.

Sara McDowell is Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at Ulster University with expertise in Political and Cultural Geography. Her research focuses on heritage practices, identity, and the reimagining of space in deeply divided societies and she has led projects funded by the ESRC, AHRC, British Academy and the Royal Irish Academy. She has also been involved in collaborative interdisciplinary global projects funded by NERC, the Honor Frost Foundation,

INTERREG, as well as a series of public engagement projects funded by the Northern Ireland Executive. She is joint author of *Commemoration as Conflict: Memory, Identity and Space in Peace Processes* (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2014 with Máire Braniff) and has published in *Cultural Geographies; GeoForum; Political Geography; Memory Studies*, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, and *Space and Polity*.

Giselle Beiguelman researches digital art heritage, art and activism in the networked city and the aesthetics of memory in the twenty-first century. She develops projects of artistic interventions in public spaces and with digital media. She is an associate professor of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo (FAUUSP), coordinates the group Aesthetics of Memory of the 21st Century and was a member of the Interdisciplinary Laboratory Image Knowledge at Humboldt University in Berlin. Her artworks are part of collections at a number of museums including ZKM (Karlsruhe, Germany); the Jewish Museum Berlin; Latin American Collection at Essex University; and Pinacoteca of São Paulo. She is the editor of *Nomadismos Tecnologicos* (with Jorge La Ferla, Buenos Aires, Fundacion Telefonica, 2011) and *Possible Futures: Art, Museums and Digital Archives* (with Ana Gonçalves Magalhães, Edusp /Peiropolis, 2014). Author of *Memória da amnésia: políticas do esquecimento* [*Memory of Amnesia: Policies of Forgetfulness*] (Edições Sesc, 2019). www.desvirtual.com.

Nathalia Lavigne is an art writer and curator, a PhD Candidate at Architecture and Urbanism College, University of São Paulo (FAUUSP) and a former visiting researcher at The New School and the Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. She is a contributor to *Artforum International Magazine*, *Contemporary And* (C&), *Folha de São Paulo*, among others; and has an MA in Cultural and Critical Studies from Birkbeck, University of London. As a member of the Research Group Aesthetics of Memory in the Twenty-First Century CNQP/ FAU-USP, she has developed projects such as *Masp.etc.br*, for the *Museu de Arte de São Paulo* (MASP), which proposed an aesthetic mapping of Av.

Paulista using images shared on Instagram through hashtags. Among the exhibitions she curated are the group shows *Against, Again: Art Under Attack in Brazil* (2020), at the Anya and Andrew Shiva Gallery, New York, and *Tactics of Disappearance* (2021), at Paço das Artes, São Paulo.

Foreword

Victoria Grace Walden

There is little consensus regarding how to define 'the memorial museum'. The two most extensive monographs on the topic by Paul Williams (2007) and Amy Sodaro (2008) offer contrasting definitions. On the one hand, Williams is incredibly inclusive recognising tangible memorials without exhibitions as memorial museums alongside spaces we might better recognise as museums. One example he gives is the Stolpensteine memorial plaques embedded into European streets listing details of Holocaust victims who lived in the vicinity. These are simply metallic markers in the ground, which have no educational institution attached to them (although there is now an increasing number of

mobile apps designed to provide this missing attribute). In contrast, Sodaro distinguishes memorial museums as institutions that both serve as places of ritual memorialisation foregrounding loss and helping to shape a (new) national identity after collective trauma, and as places of education and self-discipline following the traditions of nineteenth century museums. In his seminal work on Holocaust memorials, James Young (1999) includes spaces we might distinguish as monuments as museums, without focusing in any detail on the specificity of the latter. It is clear that the phenomenon of the memorial museum remains understudied, even if there is a wealth of writing that explores such sites as case studies of memory practice more broadly.

This volume does not attempt to respond to the lack of clear definition, rather it embraces the existing diversity to present a wide range of different types of projects. This collection asks what happens to the memorial museum when this cultural phenomenon encounters the digital age? By this latter term, I do not mean to insensitively assume that everyone has access to digital devices or substantive education in digital literacies. However, I wish to acknowledge that there is a ubiquity of the digital, which shapes the everyday lives of most of us, whether we may personally own devices or not. Some of the case studies in this collection will be familiar as memorial museums to the majority of readers, others, perhaps less so. Some chapters focus specifically on examples of memory practice which counter, or attend to the absence created by a dearth of, institutional memorial museums. One notable omission is any chapter which specifically focuses on changes in memorial museum practice in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. This volume was conceptualised in 2018-9 and most of the first drafts of chapters were completed before lockdowns were imposed across the world. In reviewing their chapters, some contributors have added brief reflections on this moment. Given that until this collection, there existed no volume entirely dedicated to memorial museums and digital media, it seems even more urgent to capture the (pre-pandemic) moment reflected in the chapters here. It will not be easy post-pandemic to look back at digital practices before the radical shift to remote engagement in their own

context. I hope that this omission is not disappointing, but rather encourages further scholarship to explore the distinctions (and of course continuities) between the types of digital work captured here, those produced through a time of global crisis, and those yet to come.

In formulating this book, I wanted to think through not only what the memorial museum is and could be in the digital age, but how digital memory projects might challenge institutional frameworks. It seemed contradictory then to produce a standard academic book published by a corporate entity and made inaccessible, as these things often are, by an unaffordable price. If this collection critiques the structures and systems of museology, then it seemed fitting that we publish this work in ways that resist the hierarchies of power within academia and publishing too, which also create environments of exclusion. There are two ways I have tried to embrace the potentials of digital publishing with this book, firstly in its format and secondly in its content. As you will already be aware this is an open access e-book and in being so, it does not intend simply to remediate the format of the book onto the web. It is published by Reframe – an academic collective at the University of Sussex, committed to radical, open access digital publishing. Contributors to the collection were invited to include hyperlinks, videos, and images in their chapters, and I encourage you to follow some of the provided links to the case studies and experience those memory spaces which are available online synchronously to reading the chapter. Split your screen or flit across from online site to e-book and back again, I invite a playfulness and disorder to your engagement with this collection opposed to the linear approach of traditional reading.

In terms of the content, the collection embraces the multivocality and democratising potential of digital memory. Whilst there are many who, quite rightly, criticise the extent to which the internet, and particularly Web 2.0 platforms, dissolve hierarchies, this is a potential within such technologies even if it is not always realised. This book brings together contributors from

13 different countries writing about projects that span Australia, Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, China, Colombia, France, Ireland, Japan, Kashmir, Kenya, Rwanda, Serbia, and the USA. A quick search in any academic repository for 'digital' and 'memorial museum' will provide a list dominated by papers about Holocaust sites or the 9/11 museum in New York. Although both of these histories are discussed in this volume, I have attempted to decentralise them *as examples of* rather than exceptional moments of violence or memory-work, as they are often conceived. Whilst this publication is written in English and I thank my international colleagues for accepting my own ineptness in languages and accommodating my request for them to write in my native tongue, I encouraged contributors to include quotations in original languages where they felt comfortable doing so. This was to be sensitive to a true sense of multivocality, which should not erase the nuances of expression that is often lost in translation.

The collection aims not only to be multivocal in terms of its global reach, but also in terms of decentralising the academic as the only type of expert. The museum sector is full of researchers, curators, artists, archivists, activists, designers, and survivors, who all have fruitful perspectives on the introduction of the digital in their field. Sometimes the academic gaze can be justly criticised for not considering the realities of the processes, politics, and funding issues related to the actual doing of museum practice. By bringing these perspectives into this collection alongside writing by outsiders, like myself, who peer in with a critical view, I hope the volume offers a holistic exploration of memorial museums and the digital and that it opens up a space for further dialogue between heritage professionals and academics interested in this topic. Given the diversity of voices represented in this collection, I welcomed contributors to submit chapters in a style most appropriate to them. Thus, alongside more typical academic narratives, you will find artists and designers reflecting on their rationales for projects, whether completed or not yet finished, conversations between activist-archivists, and an interview. Roles also blur, as you will find academics who are artists, journalists-cum-activists who

are academics, museum directors with PhDs. I hope this draws attention to the blurred boundaries between art, heritage, activism, memory-work, and research. These are not separate fields; we are all part of an ever-expanding community invested in and passionate about memorialisation and education. Developments in this field are best served by us coming together to work across disciplines and sectors.

References

Sodaro, A. (2018) *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press.

Williams, P. (2007) *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*, Oxford & New York: Berg.

Young, J. (1993) *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Chapter 1

The Memorial Museum in the Digital Age

Victoria Grace Walden

The Memorial Museum is usually conceptualised as a national project. In her seminal book *Exhibiting Atrocity*, Amy Sodaro argues that the emergence of memorial museums in the mid- to late-twentieth century appeared to be a distinct shift from the nineteenth century museums which celebrated nation and exoticised others. Nevertheless, the new museum form did not divert from nationhood. Rather than celebrating the nation, its aim was to focus on "the negative legacy of the past" (2018, p. 4). Memorial museums are ethical projects, seeking to encourage visitors to learn from the past to create "a better future" (*ibid.*). They aim to unite the nation through

articulating a shared victimhood or guilt and responsibility, or in more recent incarnations by drawing attention to multiple voices to support reconciliation work, in cases when the remembered atrocity was entirely within the nation's borders (and thus perpetrators and victims were both of the nation). However, Sodaro warns that whilst memorial museums promote the idea of "a more democratic, inclusive, and peaceful culture" they are also "political tools" (2018, p. 5). In recent years we have seen Perm 36, the only major museum dedicated to remembering the Soviet Gulag system, commandeered by the local Government in Russia. Furthermore, as the important addendum to chapter 9 highlights, the future of the Museo de Memoria de Colombia remains precarious as the new regime changed the director of Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, which is responsible for the museums, and many of the staff were subsequently fired or resigned in protest. In Kashmir (Chapter 12), alternative forms of collecting photographs of Kashmiri life must be adopted for the creation of a physical institution could put both staff and those who are the subjects of such photographs at risk due to ongoing conflict. The inherent risk even in these alternative approaches is illustrated by the anonymity of one of our contributors.

In contrast to this new memorial form of the national museum, memory in the digital age has been described in relation to numerous 'turns', most notably the "transnational turn" (A. Assmann 2017) and the "connective turn" (Hoskins 2018a) both of which suggest a radical change in the ways new technologies (re)arrange both individual and social memory. How then do national memorial museum projects navigate today's supposedly transnational and connective world? Do they remain national(ist) ventures or does the introduction of digital technologies alter what is the memorial museum or what it could be? This chapter explores three core themes which emerge throughout this volume: the tension between the national and transnational in memorial museums; the relationship between the memorial museum and "the multitude" (Hoskins 2018); and the extent to which digital

technologies affect the authenticity claims so important to the presentation of material evidence in memorial museums.

National/ Transnational Memory

Renowned memory scholar Aleida Assmann (2017) is more critical than most about the so-called 'transnational turn' in memory studies and practice. A. Assmann reminds us that the transnational does not occlude the nation (2017, p. 67). Indeed, she argues that through the transnational, nations:

> are symbolically and politically recast; they are imagined differently as inherently and externally relational, embedded, and contextualised, always implicated and partaking of larger processes and changes.
>
> (2017, p. 67)

The nation is not always "recast" or "imagined differently", however. Some memory-work can remain stubbornly static in its articulation of nationalism even with regards to transnational events, such as the World Wars and the Holocaust. Indeed, we have seen an influx of nationalist gestures about the past across the European context including the Amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance (2018), more colloquially referred to as the 'Polish Holocaust law' which penalises claims that Poland or Polish nationals were responsible for the Holocaust (with some ambiguity about whether this covers any antisemitic crimes during the period). In Chapter 10 of this volume, Elizabeth Benjamin examines how two French websites that commemorate the centenary of World War I express particularly nationalist sentiments by, for example, providing less access to content in the available translated languages (English and German), and occluding the wider Francophone world beyond France, and with that ignoring the role citizens of the former French colonies played in defending the nation.

Benjamin's example troubles the idea of the 'transnational turn' further because it draws attention to the fact that nineteenth-century nationalism was not geographically bound within coherent spatial units. Indeed, as Benedict Anderson (1983) astutely argues the 'nation' is a key example of how communities are "imagined". Group identities are formed across spaces through media, including maps, museums and memorials in myth-building processes. Anderson gives one example of the illusion of simultaneity felt in reading the newspaper at breakfast time. Wherever one might have been in any particular Empire, one would have read the nation's news at breakfast and in doing so felt part of something bigger – identifying with the wide range of other people who also read the same news at their breakfast time. Narratives told in national museums served a similar effect. The nineteenth century 'nation' involved a motherland and colonies, but as Stuart Hall (1990) has emphasised, people living in the colonies often identified as members of the motherland nation (in his example, Jamaicans saw themselves as British subjects).

A poignant point A. Assmann argues is that we must not assume that 'transnational' is always synonymous with 'global' (*ibid.*). Indeed, today's transnationalism often articulates new "imagined communities" (such as the 'European identity' promoted by the European Union, in which a shared Celtic history (Calvo-Sotelo 2017) and the Holocaust have played prominent roles). This last point is particularly significant in the context of memorial museums. For, the 'transnational turn' in memory studies was particularly influenced by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider's claim that Holocaust memory, specifically, has transitioned from a "national to cosmopolitan memory". They describe this new phenomenon as "internal globalisation" (2002, p. 87). Whilst like Assmann, they acknowledge that cosmopolitan memory "emerges alongside nationally bound memories" (*ibid.*), they argue that the "Container of the Nation-State" is slowly being cracked (2002, p. 88). It is indeed true that a strong transnational Holocaust memory culture has developed, especially through collaborative initiatives like the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance

Alliance) and EHRI (European Holocaust Research Infrastructure). The IHRA, however, only has 35 full-member states, it is certainly not global. There also remain strong national articulations of memory in Holocaust museums and memorial culture. From the downplaying of local fascisms (in countries like Croatia and Hungary) to universalising tendencies (in the United States).

Long-established frameworks within Holocaust commemoration have been applied however in other contexts across the world. When victim groups of genocide or atrocities feel unheard, they have often compared their plight to the Holocaust because they know the term has transnational resonance (see multiple examples of this in Jacob S. Eder, Philipp Gassert and Alan E. Steinweis ed. 2017). In memorial museum practice, the designation of the former Security Prison 21, Tuol Sleng in Phnom Penh, Cambodia was driven by the need to prove the country would memorialise its difficult past as a memorial museum in order to be eligible for UN Reconciliation funding (Kidron 2020). However, anthropological studies have argued that the very notion of collective memory is at odds with Khmer Buddhist beliefs (Bennett 2018a; Bennett 2018b). The initial team behind the museum visited numerous memorial sites in Poland before developing their plans and the Documentation Centre of Cambodia's staff were trained and supported in the creation of video testimonies by the USC Shoah Foundation (based in Los Angeles, the Foundation was established to record Holocaust testimonies). The Kigali Genocide Memorial in Rwanda was developed by the Aegis Trust, which grew out of the National Holocaust Centre in England. Frameworks designed to commemorate or give testimony about one specific genocide in a particular cultural context are not necessarily easily transferrable to others. As we can see with the Cambodian case and the accusations of "bone business" (Kidron 2020), which suggest local communities do not feel comfortable about the memorial culture imposed on them. The controversy related to the display of bones in Cambodia also exemplifies how foreign influences undergo local translation in ways that can become illegible both to local citizens and international critics. In this volume, Stephen D. Smith,

former Executive Director of the USC Shoah Foundation talks about some of the cross-cultural difficulties he and his team navigated in bringing their Dimension in Testimony survivor biography format to the Nanjing Memorial Hall in China (Chapter 2). Whilst Claver Irakoze and Caroline Williamson Sinalo (Chapter 11), former collaborators at the Aegis Trust, talk about the impact of international pressures and interference in the work of the Kigali Genocide Memorial and its digital archive.

Holocaust memory has also been easier to talk about in countries like the United Kingdom, United States and Australia than their own histories of genocide and slavery. Debates are ongoing about a proposal for a new national Holocaust memorial and education centre in London, United Kingdom. London already has a very recently refurbished Holocaust exhibition in the Imperial War Museum (which re-opened in late 2021). The country also has a number of smaller Holocaust museums and libraries that host exhibitions, alongside public engagement and education activities including the Wiener Library, London; The National Holocaust Centre and Museum, Newark; Huddersfield Holocaust Centre; and the Lake District Holocaust Project, as well as numerous Jewish museums often with small Holocaust-related displays. Yet, the United Kingdom does not have a museum to its colonial period. The first museum of slavery, notable called The *International Slavery Museum*, opened in Liverpool in 2007 and is part of the city's larger Maritime Museum. In London, there are references to slavery within the Imperial War Museums' Docklands Museum also. Whilst the Black Lives Matters protests and the felling of the Edward Coulson statue in Bristol in 2020 have spurred a more serious dedication to decolonising heritage spaces in the United Kingdom, there remains little interest in creating an entire museum dedicated to the country's difficult histories. Whilst decolonising is a much-needed project, the way it is being articulated in the United Kingdom risks diversifying the history across disconnected sites rather than investing in a coherent space dedicated to educating people about the long and complicated colonial period.

One project that has sought to address this dearth of engagement with Britain's own difficult histories is The Museum of British Colonialism, a joint UK and Kenyan initiative led by volunteers. Whilst the organisation is a member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (as are the former staff of Perm 36), it lacks a permanent, physical space. Nevertheless, some of their temporary exhibitions have also been transformed into digital ones, and one of the project members Chao Tayiana Maina discusses her digitalisation projects in Kenya in relation to the Mau Mau Emergency in this volume (Chapter 7). Particularly chilling in Chao's account is that despite living amongst survivors and sites of atrocity, she knew little of this relatively recent history until she started working on these projects. The interview with Chao in this volume, thus highlights the tragic success of colonial attempts to eradicate local memory, but the potential for digital technologies to defend against forgetting.

My description of this British situation might seem like an articulation of competitive memory. However, I do not intend to suggest an either/or between Holocaust and colonial memory in Britain (or indeed elsewhere). Michael Rothberg (2009) argues against competitive memory with his claim that debates provoked by memorial-building projects can draw attention to the "multidirectionality" of memory. He exemplifies this claim through the debates about the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum being built near the site of a former slave market in Washington DC, which encouraged public discourse about this tension and eventually led to the development of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (albeit not until 2016). However, in the British context, this has simply not been the case. The debates about the new national Holocaust memorial have been mostly concerned with the loss of a public green space and the possible relocation of a suffragette statue. Complaints about the irony of building a memorial to a genocide orchestrated by the leaders of a regime based abroad, whilst planning none to those led by British authorities opposite Westminster (the seat of the national Government) have mostly come from

academics, but little of this has interjected public fora. Rothenberg's seminal work on multidirectionality demonstrates that thinking across Holocaust and colonialism can be a powerful and meaningful endeavour. Indeed, the connections between Britain's colonial past and the Holocaust remain unarticulated in public museum spaces.

In 2020, The Beau Bassin Jewish Detainees Memorial and Information Centre in Mauritius held online its commemoration event to mark seventy-five years since the liberation of the Jewish men, women and children sent here by British authorities from British Mandatory Palestine in 1940, where they had fled from Nazi-occupied Europe. Although the commemoration ceremony was available internationally, compared to other major anniversaries marked that year, including the liberation of the last Nazi concentration camps and the 25th anniversary of Srebrenica, Beau Bassin was barely mentioned on social media and not mentioned at all beyond partner organisations involved in the ceremony, and a handful of Jewish organisations (Makhortykh and Walden, forthcoming). The Memorial and Information Centre has only existed in physical form since 2014 and the British High Commissioner only apologised to victims in 2020. Commemoration of Beau Bassin would offer rich potential for productive multidirectional memory in Britain, articulating existent links between colonialism and the Holocaust without making frivolous comparisons between histories.

Whilst frameworks of Holocaust commemoration have influenced memory cultures in some places, it has had less impact in others. In Colombia, for example (Chapter 9), public memory work is rooted in reconciliation and making visible multiple voices, from professional artists to rural-living Colombians most affected by decades of violence in the nation. The Arte y Cultura [Art and Culture] platform sought to use art to help citizens express their memories, rather than the tried and tested Holocaust survivor testimony format. In places where institutional, national memory has been slow or purposefully avoided, artists, filmmakers, journalists, academics, architects, and

volunteers have taken it upon themselves to explore how digital technologies might help both to collect material evidence and also disseminate it in ways that would not provoke the articulation of heated, competitive memory in spaces where healing is still in progress and historical political tensions remain unresolved. Such projects often come from-below rather than top-down, use digital technologies to encourage dialogue, and often seem less interested in the final presentation of their archives and more in the process of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. For example, *Augmented Sarajevo* (Chapter 5), African Digital Heritage (Chapter 7), *Belgrade Protest Museum* (Chapter 8), and the Kashmir Photo Collective (Chapter 12), have all focused on collecting stories from people about sites, events, objects, or photographs. They have used a variety of techniques to present their material, from experimenting with virtual reality (VR) to simply scanning photographs which are complemented with handwritten inscriptions.

These from-below projects are in stark contrast to the high production values of virtual reality Holocaust programs like *Spaces of Memory* (Bergen-Belsen Memorial, Germany) and the *Last Goodbye* (USC Shoah Foundation, US). The former offers the opportunity for visitors to the former site of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp to see models of the historical buildings layered with multiple archival objects which tell the camp's history from different perspectives. The latter is a VR film, in which viewers can follow survivor Pinchas Gutter on a visit to the State Museum at Majdanek in Lublin, Poland as he shares fragments of his testimony at relevant places. Both these projects avoid historical re-enactment. *Spaces of Memory* depicts grey models of barracks purposefully avoiding a photo-realist aesthetic. *The Last Goodbye* recreates a visit to a memorial museum at the site of the former Majdanek concentration camp guided by a survivor. The resistance to historical recreation in digital Holocaust projects is rooted in long-standing debates about trivialisation. In contrast to these approaches, in the Argentinian context (Chapter 6), an online interactive documentary presenting three-dimensional tours of former detention centres (centrosclandestinos.com.ar)

illustrates the sites not as they are today – spaces of memory, but as historical representations of when they served as detention centres. In this chapter, Megan Corbin considers the ethics of such an approach, but concludes that the distancing created by the position of being a media witness opposed to being in the physical site retains an evocation that the experience of incarceration is unknowable. In the work of the African Digital Heritage project (Chapter 7), photorealism is one of the techniques used, although it is not the only approach to representation. Here, however, it helps in trying to re-imagine the actual, historical architecture of torture centres at risk of fading from public memory since stories of the Mau Mau Emergency have barely been passed on orally and historical sites have been transformed into buildings with different uses, such as schools.

As it heads towards the "post-witness era" (Popescu & Schult 2015), institutional Holocaust memory is increasingly becoming self-reflexive. Alongside projects like *Spaces of Memory*, which foregrounds its hypermediacy (Bolter and Grusin 1999), the recent redevelopment of the Imperial War Museum, London's Holocaust galleries purposefully disrupts suggestions that it might be recreating affective historical spaces and includes copies of photographs at their original size, sometimes complemented by enlargements. It also purposefully angles projection screens so that videos and photographs stand out as objects to be interrogated, rather than using them to create affective spaces. Whilst the Centros Clandestinos platform engages with questions of knowability, well-known in Holocaust Studies, the later Argentinian dictatorships are not yet so historicised to have reached a post-witness era and the self-reflexive modes this seems to have provoked in the Holocaust context. Yet, whilst the Mau Mau Emergency (1952-1960) is almost as historical as is the Holocaust, it has not been remembered collectively to the extent of the latter – not even in Kenya or Britain. It is wrong to assume that it is the temporal distance from a historical event which defines shifts in the related memory culture: the use of media is essential in ensuring the continuation of memory, from the human voice to digital technologies.

Regarding the Belgrade Protest Museum, in Chapter 8 artist and academic Nela Milc explains how she wanted to present a different image of Serbians. One that not only evidenced mass protest against the oppressive regime of Slobodan Milošević, but also resisted Western European imaginings of the 'orient' Serbians as violent nationalists. Thus, whilst Sodaro's claim that memorial museums often serve as "political tools" (2018, p. 5) refers, in her book, to State-intervention at sites like the Kigali Genocide Memorial and the House of Terror, Budapest, Hungary; the Belgrade Protest Museum offers an alternative imagining shifting from Politics (with a big P) to a ground-up politics by giving the protesters an opportunity not simply to mourn but to celebrate a moment of solidarity despite the failure of their action. At least partially counter to Paul Williams's claim that a memorial museum commemorates "mass suffering" (2007, p. 8), the Belgrade Protest Museum marks the tragedy of the protest's failure, yet in the performativity involved in both the creation process and use it also serves as celebratory. Just as memory scholars are increasingly engaging with participatory methods to appreciate the multidirectionality of memory even within specific contexts[1], several of the chapters in this volume highlight how practices in memorial museums that are not State initiatives are engaging in similar processes. One notable example of a State-led memorial museum which has also tried to express multivocality is the Museo de Memoria de Colombia, however, as Manuela Ochoa and Juliana Botero-Mejia note (Chapter 9), this work is at risk of eradication now different management has taken over the museum at the behest of the new political administration. Despite claims that memorialisation is becoming increasingly "unmoored" from the State (Zucker & Simon 2020),

1 I emphasise multidirectionality "in specific contexts" here to differentiate from Rothberg's (2008) reading of multidirectionality across contexts. For his book highlights how Holocaust and colonial memory in dialogue have the possibility to enhance each other (to both productive and problematic ends). Whilst memory scholars and activists are increasingly taking time to listen to the diverse range of voices related to specific historical events, often referring to this multivocality as multidirectionality.

their project is a stark reminder how much power State agents retain over memory practice, especially in institutional contexts.

Many of the case studies in this collection illustrate how digital technologies have been used in attempts to connect communities affected by a specific conflict in ways that either reiterate existing or reconstitute national projects (from above or from below). Despite claims of a 'transnational turn' in memory studies and practice, this is overstated in relation to memorial museums. Where digital projects are migrated across different national contexts, there is not always an easy process of translation – much work needs to be done to situate the specificities of that digital approach within a different culture (Chapter 2).

From the Collective to the Multitude?

As national endeavours, memorial museums often aim to communicate a coherent collective memory. As Jan Assmann describes, ceremonial activities and institutions organise and objectivise culture so as to present "concretion of identity" (1995, p. 128). Yet, seminal digital memory studies scholar Andrew Hoskins disputes the significance of the containment of collective memory in the digital age. He claims Web 2.0 has instigated a seismic shift from "collective memory", which he considers illustrative of the broadcast era, to memory of the "multitude", which he considers characteristic of our current digital age (Hoskins 2018b). It is worth dedicating some time to examine Hoskins's argument for it has not only been influential in digital memory studies but also offers a contrast to the way multivocality is being articulated in the ground-up approaches to memorial museum work described in some of the examples in this volume.

For Hoskins, the "connective turn":

> drives an ontological shift in what memory is and what memory does [...] liberating it from the traditional bounds of the spatial archive, the

> organization, the institution, and distributed it on a continuous basis via a connectivity between brain, bodies, and personal and public lives.
>
> (2018a, p. 1)

The extent to which memorial museums have acknowledged this connective turn is limited. Even those institutions that engage enthusiastically with digital technologies such as the previous work at the Museo de Memoria de Colombia or memorial sites to former Nazi concentration camps across Europe (such as at Dachau and Bergen-Belsen, Germany and Falstad, Norway), do not radically liberate memory from these "traditional bounds". Indeed, such freeing of genocide memory from institutional gatekeeping is an ongoing concern within many organisations, as articulated in participatory workshops held recently as part of my project "Co-creating Standards for Digital Interventions in Holocaust Memory and Education". Whilst Hoskins argues that the digital "reconnect[s], reimagin[es] and reconstitut[es] the past as network, as archive, as present" (2018a, p. 5), his imagining of this is quite distinct from the way memorial museums engage with digital media. Memorial museums, and genocide and atrocity commemoration projects more broadly, have more readily engaged with digital projects that spatialise their archives through maps – layering different narratives about identified places onto these geographical sites and offering the opportunity to zoom in and out of areas. In the Holocaust context, digital humanities work in this arena has been described as the "spatial turn" (Fogu 2016), notably led by the work of geographers like Tim Cole and colleagues (2014). The distinction between the spatial and connective turns are telling, however. Whilst Hoskins refers to the connection between humans and computers, as well as across multiple humans in an ever-expanding creation of archives by the multitude, the spatial turn is far more interested in connecting existing material content and sites. Such projects transform the archive into repertoire (Taylor 2003), rearranging historical content in new, but still fixed, displays, which foreground the past in comparison to the multitude's "perpetual digital present" (Hoskins 2017).

Furthermore, whilst there are some attempts to reconstitute archives as maps, physical and online incarnations of memorial museums more traditionally rely on a linear, historical narrative which supports the idea that the past is, and can be, learned from in the present and for the future. Such a clear trajectory supports the ever-heard mantra "never again" (Sodaro 2018, p. 5).

Hoskins's notion of the "multitude" challenges the aims of most memorial museums. His term is not simply about expressing multivocality, but about recognising that the "singularity of the individual [is] fundamentally the new centre of media" whilst "inextricable from the complex hyperconnectivity of digital networks and traces" (2018b, p. 92). Thus, whilst notions of collective and cultural memory foreground the coherence of group, often particularly national, identity, the multitude is about the individual's ability to articulate themselves within an ever expanding and shifting network of other agents, both human and non-human, whilst simultaneously having their identity shaped by others. If the broadcast era was characterised by a one-to-many communication model, the spectator or audience as mass, and representation as the mode of communication, then for Hoskins, the connective era is marked by a shift to many-to-many participation, a plurality of users, and performativity (2018b, p. 91). However, memorial museums often maintain a broadcast model in their digital work because they are, as Andrea Huyssen (2003) argues, forms of mass media and they have struggled to make the shift from work designed to express cohesive collective identity, for the sake of peace processes, to a messier, open-ended connective experience which might threaten attempts to bring people together either through unification or reconciliation.

Implicit in Hoskins's argument is a shift in agency. Whilst he is not utopian about digital technologies, indeed he warns about their ability to terrorize experience (2018b, p. 102), Hoskins nevertheless recognises a distinct change in the relationship between the individual and memory. Whilst Hoskins's "hyperconnectivity [...] makes a node out of all of us" (2018a, p. 5), digital

interventions in memorial museums often continue traditional notions of authority. The museum retains its position as gatekeeper, the archives remain controlled by Archons (Derrida 1995). Whilst digital media, particularly those driving Web 2.0, make available the affordances of decentralised, networked, participatory communication and memory, such affordances need to be harnessed to demonstrate actual, radical change. Otherwise, they can simply be used as conduits for the remediation of not only broadcast-era media (such as uploading television broadcast material or photographs onto Google Arts and Culture) but also their logics of communication too (the one-to-many model, which is articulated in VR films like *The Last Goodbye*).

This is not to entirely dispute Hoskins's observations. Rather, I want to highlight that the types of institutions that led the "second memory boom" (2018a, p. 1) – memorial museums – have struggled to adapt to the third. This may put their work at risk of disappearing, particularly within ever evolving, hyperconnective ecologies. However, perhaps this reluctance to let go of pre-digital approaches also resists what Hoskins calls the stripping of the past's "once retrospective coherence and stability, [now] entangled in today's melee of uncertainty" (2018a, p. 6). Memorial museums, State-led or otherwise, might thus be understood as attempts to reconstitute coherent relationships with the past for the sake of peaceful futures. Indeed, we must remember that whilst Hoskins observes a radical change with Web 2.0, it is not one he celebrates. Whilst established memorial museums might hold onto their traditions, newer initiatives, counter-museum and grassroot projects appear, at least on the surface, to embrace more hyperconnective affordances. This does not, however, always materialise solely in digital form.

Across this volume, several chapters demonstrate empirical examples of the tension between hyperconnectivity and the traditional coherence of memorial museum narratives. By engaging with direct witnesses of the 1990s siege, *Augmented Sarajevo* (Chapter 5) seeks to allow "potentially conflicting perspectives to be presented next to each other" to "create a model for a

more inclusive approach to both cultural and war heritage". This augmented reality (AR) project, which is still in development, is a reaction against what the creators perceive to be an absence of serious memorialisation and education work in the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On one hand, Sabina Tanović argues that much of the 'wararchitecture' of the city has been destroyed and sites redeveloped with no attempt to memorialise the past. On the other hand, she notes that when memorialisations are produced there is little engagement with the living victims and witnesses of the siege, and thus such projects are often poorly received and provoke anger, which does little to create productive spaces for collective mourning and reconciliation. In this example, the individuals became nodes in the offline networks created during the project's development, which seeks to listen to a diverse range of experiences which it then hopes to exhibit in an augmented reality format. Whilst the *Belgrade Protest Museum* (Chapter 8) has collected a vast range of experiences and objects and allows the site's visitors to follow different routes through the 1996/97 protests which attempted, but failed to overthrow Milošević, it has functioned to reimagine group identity not only between the protesters, many of whom told their stories for the first time as part of this project, but also between them and younger generations, who have the opportunity to participate in an alternative projection of Serbian identity. In both these cases, as with the African Digital Heritage project, offline conversations with people have been an important expression of connectivity as much as, if not more than any digital representation (created or in development). It has been human acts of sharing with other humans towards the goal of creating something digital that have driven these projects as collective works of memorialisation, musealisation, and memory.

Towards the end of this volume are three chapters dedicated to the relationship between social media and memorial museums, where we might suspect that we would see evidence of Hoskins's "multitude" at play. In Sodaro's chapter about TripAdvisor reviews of the 9/11 Museum and Memorial (Chapter 13), however, a strong national identity is articulated across numerous reviews despite the

anonymity of the platform and the time reviewers take between visiting the site and writing their comments. Thus, these individual nodes in the network seem all too aware that what they write is being observed by others and toe the perceived line of the physical memorial museum. In her earlier work, Sodaro (2008), and Paul Williams before her (2007) note a self-disciplining logic to the memorial museum, which encourages particular paths through its exhibitions to provoke specific moral behaviours. These self-disciplinary mechanisms are lingering techniques of the nineteenth century museum which aimed to encourage civil obedience by introducing the masses to the 'wonders' of the industrial age and the wider world within an environment that strictly dictated visitor behaviour (T. Bennett 1995; Poulot 2013) (I do not use the word 'wonders' here uncritically, but there is not the space in this short chapter to address the important, but wider issues of colonial logics and national museums here). In Sodaro's TripAdvisor case study, we see self-disciplinarity at play on two levels: (1) through the moral behaviour suggested by the 9/11 Museum and Memorial, which was clearly affective for many reviewers, and (2) through the surveillance culture of social media, which, despite Hoskins's suggestion of the individual as node within a wider network, often creates pressure on us to be conventional to avoid stirring controversy (unless we intentionally seek to be provocative or troll). Indeed, Wulf Kansteiner's argument about Holocaust memory online seems true here in relation to 9/11 also:

> The arbitrary limits of social media memory reflected in patterns of public admonition and private self-censorship are strongly influenced by settled, transnational cultural memories as they are defined in Holocaust institutions all over the West.
>
> (2018, p. 117)

In the case of the 9/11 Museum and Memorial, however, it is patriotic, national sentiment that is expressed, and it is even acknowledged in the rare reviews that seek to challenge it. The final section of the current chapter reflects further

on the impact the design of memorial museums has on orchestrating specific affect and response.

Elizabeth Crooke and Sara McDowell (Chapter 14) present examples of counter-publics attempting to remember the 'Mother and Baby Homes' in Ireland, for which there is still no physical memorial museum. However, whilst these counter-public memorialisation projects resist the lack of active memory-work by current and previous Irish Governments, they neither evidence particularly diverse responses to this traumatic past nor new, localised memory practices. Indeed, one of Crooke and McDowell's examples is the listing of victims' names on a Twitter account. Whilst seemingly "unmoored" from State intervention (or indeed lack of it) (Zucker and Simon 2020), this example reiterates a long-standing practice in Holocaust memory of reading names, which has become increasing detached from its origins in Jewish traditions.

In the final chapter of this volume, Giselle Beiguelman and Nathalia Lavigne (Chapter 15) present a case study distinct from the rest of this collection. Whilst others reflect on existent memorial museums or grassroot responses to the lack of such institutions, Beiguelman and Lavigne explore the use of Instagram to memorialise Rio de Janeiro's Museu Nacional, Brazil, after it was mostly destroyed in a fire in September 2018. This example is perhaps the closest this volume gets to Hoskins's description of "memory of the multitude" (2018b, p. 85), illustrating not only "participation" but "scattered yet simultaneous and searchable: connected, networked, archive" (2018b, p. 86). It is through searching the hashtag #museunacionalvive ["the National Museum lives"] that the authors were able to find different examples of users' attempts to maintain the museum's visual presence – each singular user's efforts connect to a wider network via the hashtag. Hoskins is skeptical of this new "memory of the multitude", suggesting that it encourages "sharing without sharing", which moves from "capturing representations of the world in which we inhabit, to one which we can only inhabit through our capturings and connectivities" (2018b, p. 103).

However, the example of *#museunacionalvive* expresses how social media platforms can be used to reflect on past experiences (of visits to the museum before the fire) as well as for selfie opportunities using the museum ruins as a backdrop. Posts that use the hashtag range from immediate reactions to the fire to carefully curated memories of museum visits. It is however only in their connectivity – in spite of or perhaps due to their diversity – that they perform shared mourning and memorialisation. The posts Beiguelman and Lavigne discuss are examples of "self-witnessing", which defines how selfies situate the self in affective relationships with place (Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Henig 2011, p. 221). Rather than entirely dismantling collective memory for the "multitude" then (Hoskins, 2018b), the Instagram posts draw attention to the ways in which connected, digital memorialisation can make visible personal memory-work, which only becomes collective through the mechanism of the hashtag that enables these articulations of self-witnessing to become part of a digitally connected collective. The hashtag unifies these users in a common social project, rather than demonstrating the negative notion of the multitude (Hoskins 2018b). This connectivity enabled by the hashtags is particularly powerful in this context, given the politics of heritage erasure (for more on this, see Chapter 15). Furthermore, it enables individuals to express a relation with a heritage site, which Beiguelman and Lavigne argue was poorly visited by Brazilian citizens in the years leading up to the fire. Whilst Hoskins worries that the obsessive culture of sharing photographs on social media terrorizes the present (2018b, p. 102), with *#museunacionalvive* we see examples of users both inscribing themselves into a memorable moment in the present (particularly in images of the televised fire and at the museum ruins) and carefully curating images from their own personal archives of museum visits into a public memorial. As John Potter and Øystein Gilje (2015) claim curation is a "new literacy practice"; the user agency and creative thought that goes into such work has been underappreciated compared with more explicit forms of production (such as creating videos or writing).

It is worth briefly noting that Hoskins argues that the broadcast era was a "parathesis" in a longer history of connective approaches to memory, stretching back through histories of orality. From the Gutenberg Press to television, print and broadcast media played a significant role in constructing coherent nationalisms. However, if this period is indeed a "parathesis", this might lead us to question whether the desire to maintain coherent, clear narratives from past to present, projecting towards the future is the most suitable way to memorialise atrocities or whether memorial museums should engage more with the emerging hyperconnective ecology. If the broadcast era was a "parathesis" and one deeply connected to the national project, which in many cases informed the very atrocities and genocides that memorial museums seek to commemorate and prevent from happening again, then perhaps the historical models of museology and memorialisation developed during this era are not fit for this purpose. Nevertheless, Web 2.0 does not automatically eradicate nationalism and group identities, if anything the corporatisation of online spaces has led to more polarisation within countries as well as internationally, fracturing cohesiveness but not necessarily to productive ends. Thus, naively assuming new rearrangements of memory does not future proof the 'memorial museum'. Whilst his 2018 work suggests that Hoskins believes by this time that "memory of the multitude" had come to dominate over other forms, in an earlier article he describes an existent division in memory culture: "one formalized, institutionalized, regimented (including online); the other more emergent, confrontational, yet fragmented" (Hoskins 2014, p. 60). The examples in this volume suggest that the "formalized, institutionalized, regimented" memory culture is still very much present in the realm of memorial museum practice, despite the "connective turn". As A. Assmann argues in response to Hoskins, perhaps "we can conceptualise change in more complex ways as an evolutionary process in which new developments coexist and interact with previous systems in challenging ways" (2017, p. 72). Thus, whilst Web 2.0 may be radically re-arranging memory, traditional approaches to remembrance and education embedded in memorial museum practices remain authoritative

both online and offline. Although, their reach is not always increased by going online as is often presumed.

Affect, Authenticity and Material Evidence

To be accepted as trusted authorities about the past, memorial museums' messages need to be believed. Raising doubt or ambiguity could encourage denial or distortion, which is antithetical to the ethos of such institutions. Thus, they tend to prioritise presentations of 'authenticity' through material evidence. Indeed, exhibitions that do not contain any actual historical artefacts, such as the Information Centre beneath the Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Berlin adamantly refuse the 'memorial museum' label (Dekel 2013). Memorial museums far from historical atrocity sites particularly depend on physical objects to retain their air of authenticity, such as we see with the display of complete or fragments of cattle cars at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington and the Imperial War Museum, London.

Paul Williams, however, argues that there is a "basic difficulty with the object base of memorial museums: orchestrated violence aims to destroy, and typically does so efficiently. The injured, dispossessed, and expelled are left object-poor" (2007, p. 25). Yet, whilst Williams claims that this generally leaves memorial museums to be "restricted in size and scope" (*ibid.*), they often rely nonetheless on gathering large quantities of historical objects even if many of these objects symbolise absence more than represent actual violence (for example the abundance of pre-war, family photographs displayed at the former site of Auschwitz-Birkenau). As with other approaches to museology, memorial museums change the value of objects, transforming their "use-value" to "signifying-value" (Williams 2007, p. 28). Again, in the Auschwitz State Museum, for example, we see everyday objects brought to the Nazi concentration camp by victims who believed they were going to be 'resettled', from suitcases to pots and pans, and shoe polishes. These banal objects now amassed in huge piles behind glass screens serve to represent some level of

the enormity of the genocidal actions that occurred at this place. Although, the accumulation of all of the museum's objects still could not quantifiably represent the camp's 1.1 million victims.

There has long been suggestion that museum objects retain an aura within their materiality, which makes the moment of co-presence with the object a powerfully affective experience. A debate has thus ensured which stages a dispute between André Malraux and Walter Benjamin's contrasting perspectives on the aura of pre-digital media when it comes to the impact digital technologies can have on this perceived aura (see Chapter 15). Whilst Malraux (1965) claims the photograph has the potential to offer different ways to look at objects of art, Benjamin argues that mechanical reproduction threats the aura of the artwork (1936, p. 223). Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe (2010) contend, in the context of artwork, that the aura of the original migrates across facsimiles. Taking this further, Sarah Kenderdine and Andrew Yip question the idea that aura is situated within the materiality of the object itself. They claim that "the ability to explore the original by activating its biography is central to the power of the copy to extend aura rather than dilute it" (2019, p. 277). For example, close-ups, zooming in and out, and offering different perspectives on an image can reveal more about an object's history than seeing it in a fixed display as selected by curators in the physical museum.

Nevertheless, in so-called 'virtual museums' presented solely online, everything (and everyone) is at risk of becoming flatten into the same photographic format. One example of this is an image labelled "Damage by the Radiation" on the Hiroshima Peace Museum's Google Arts and Culture. The image is attributed to the United States Army, although its subject is an unidentified woman, who bares her back flesh for the camera to demonstrate the keloids and other visible effects of cancer on her body caused by the devasting atomic bomb. A small magnifying glass icon with a centralised plus sign accompanies the photograph which allows me to zoom uncomfortably close to the details of her skin. The same zoom tool is available to explore

photographs of objects like a damaged lunch box and scorched tricycle. Yet, in the instance of the unidentified woman, it seems distasteful. The woman – a subject, a victim, of this tragedy is now reduced to an object, in the same dimensionality as the lunch box and tricycle. Steffi de Jong describes how video testimonies are presented in museums as "authentic representations of the past", albeit "ex post facto" (2018, p. 156), yet she does not suggest a total objectisation of survivor-victims in the case studies she examines. One might argue that the inclusion of the USC Shoah Foundation's "interactive biographies" at museum exhibits at sites like the Illinois Holocaust Museum and the Nanjing Memorial Hall (Chapter 2) might alter this. Although, these 'interactive biographies' are still curated and treated as distinct exhibits. Significantly, victims and survivors tend to be represented in memorial museums at a mediated distance through photographs or videos, or their artwork or belongings. In contrast, objects tend to be presented in material closeness. This distinction retains a sense that the victims and survivors' experiences remain unknowable to us, whilst the objects may seem more familiar (and it is this positioning between semblance and dissemblance which helps evoke an affect relationship between visitor and the past (Didi-Huberman 2018, p. 154-5)).The treatment of material objects and victim as similar in the Hiroshima Peace Museum's online exhibition on Google Arts and Culture raises questions about the ethics of looking available through digital functions like the zoom and highlights how existing computational frameworks (such as the Google Arts and Culture platform) are not always easily translatable across museological contexts. Indeed, it is telling that the platform is most used by art galleries, which engage with a far broader range of presentation forms than any memorial museums on the platform. What is at stake in the flattening process is the differing affective encounters provoked by subjects and objects of atrocity.

Whilst my brief diversion into debates about aura in the context of art history may have seemed like a distraction, it is now clear how they raise significant questions for memorial museums, where objects are not presented for the

sake of aesthetic value or curiosity but as evidence. Williams argues that (memorial) museums "grant a dynamic life history" to objects by giving them "dramatic roles in the historical story of any event" (2007, p. 31), for a shoe polish or suitcase did not really play a significant role in the Holocaust. The "dynamic life" suggested by Williams continues in some digital spaces too. However, whilst many respondents in the art history debates look favourably upon digital media for their ability to expose the finer details of artworks and offer looks a-new, in his comparative study of three heritage projects that remember the bombing of Nagasaki by the United States Army Air Forces, Gwyn McClelland (Chapter 4) evidences how the digitisation of objects does not necessarily provide opportunities for closer exploration or activation of their biographies (Kenderdine and Yip 2019, p. 277). Digital affordances may offer the potential for new ways to look at objects, however, the extent to which they might do this depends on how they are used by curators and archivists. It is just as possible to create photo dumps online, which are far less interrogative and offer far fewer opportunities to make connections across different images, as it is to create meaningful and explorative experiences.

Despite a potential dynamism in both physical and digital exhibition of objects, Williams is critical of this appropriation in the context of memorial museums. He argues:

> By foregrounding *this* effect on *this* item (an entry etched into a diary, a bloodstained shirt), the object has the effect of foreclosing the life to which the museum attaches it by reducing it to its period of greatest suffering.
>
> (2007, p. 31)

Thus, the everyday shoe polish on display at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum loses its profane significance and instead becomes a Holocaust object. However, this displacement of use-value is one of the mechanisms

through which memorial museums try to evoke empathy. For, we are likely to recognise objects like suitcases and shoe polish (however dated the actual material things), yet the experience of genocide is distinctly unfamiliar to most of us. These objects evoke a recognisable authenticity.

In her PhD thesis (2020) and subsequent peer-reviewed blog post (2021), Imogen Dalziel identifies two distinct forms of authenticity at play at the Auschwitz State Museum. The first, which is insisted by museum staff, is that of a scientific authenticity – the proof that material evidence such as remains of human hair illustrate that genocide happened at this site. The second, which is that encountered by visitors, is one which she defines as "experiential authenticity". Dalziel relates this both to the recognition of one being situated in an actual place where genocide happened, but also to the deeply personal and affect identification with victims through a "prosthetic relationship" with the past (Landsberg 2004). Indeed, Alison Landsberg's notion of prosthetic memory suggests that representations of the past expressed by museums and other forms of popular culture produce memory that is not simply unified and collective. Rather, she argues that each individual takes on a deeply personal memory which combines the encounter with this past through representation with their own experiences, identity, and knowledge (2004, p. 137). For Landsberg, it is the peculiarity of this prosthetic memory – that does not literally belong to the body of the visitor or viewer – that enables the production of empathy. Silke de-Arnold Simine disputes Landsberg's claims, contending that Landsberg does not consider that such representations are "ideologically informed" (2013, p. 34). Indeed, both Landsberg (2004) and Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich (2014) offer rich descriptions regarding how the arrangement of objects in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum creates affective experiences which provoke empathy. These descriptions suggest they recognise that the museum has a specific (ideological) message, which it encourages visitors to understand by creating powerful experiences for them. The successful effect and affect of careful arrangements by memorial museums is clearly illustrated in the nationalist sentiment of many TripAdvisor reviews of the 9/11 Memorial

and Museum (Chapter 13), which seem to express a relatively uniformed understanding of the exhibition's message and affect.

Sodaro argues that it is the intention of memorial museums to create "an intense, affective, and emotional experience" that seeks to encourage empathy with victims with the aim to provoke moral lessons "to prevent future violence, repression and hatred" (2018, p. 25) that distinguishes memorial museums from earlier models of national museology. Whilst I am perhaps more hesitant than Sodaro to suggest such affective strategies only appear with the memorial museum, it is nonetheless obvious that memorial museums are distinct in the fact that they provoke such intensity to encourage lessons to be learnt from the past, rather than to rile celebratory, nationalist sentiment. Landsberg (2004) and Hansen-Glucklich (2014) argue that it is the tactile closeness to the authentic objects from the past that provoke the powerful responses necessary to encourage the empathy, which Sodaro (2008) has argued is important to the memorial museum remit. Nevertheless, neither Hansen-Glucklich nor Landsberg perceive the aura of authenticity to be inherent to the objects in themselves. Rather, they both suggest it is in the museum's arrangement of the objects, and perhaps more importantly in the encounter between visitor and objects. The translation of authentic site and objects into digital spaces might be understood as a different type of arrangement. However, it is not one that necessarily foregrounds the tactile closeness, important to Landsberg's claim. On the one hand, digital technologies can be used to encourage an interrogative, archaeological gaze such as with the augmented reality app *Oshpitzin*, which encourages the viewer to compare today's lived-in landscape with photographs of pre-war Jewish life in the Polish town of Oświęcim (where the three primary concentration camps of Auschwitz were situated) (Walden 2019). On the other hand, online virtual tours like those of Auschwitz and Srebrenica forbid the remote user access to spaces and content available onsite, thus a distance rather than closeness is evoked.

As de-Arnold Simine argues, due to the significance of personal recollections to confrontations with difficult histories, museums "cannot simply rely on the authentic object as a window onto the past, but must deploy interactive multimedia technologies" (2013, p. 12). In this volume, Jenny Wise and Lesley McLean (Chapter 3) consider how the former convict site at Port Arthur, Tasmania has transformed from a heritage site to a memorial museum through the introduction of digital technologies to create sensuous experiences that provoke empathy with the convicts opposed to its earlier iterations as a heritage site which visitors attended to gawk at the actual, living inmates, and then later as an exhibition space telling the history of the prison. Thus, they present an example in which digital media are used to evoke a closeness with the historical humans who once occupied this space (as prisoner and as guard). Furthermore, whilst materiality can be flattened in two-dimensional photographic displays online, digital presentations of objects through virtual or augmented reality (VR/AR) such as in the case of the ex ESMA in Argentina (Chapter 6) might offer rearrangements that provoke the desired empathy, just in different ways to a guided tour of the physical memorial site. As in the case of the ex ESMA represented on the Centros Clandestinos platform, testimony as well as multiple historical sources can be layered into such spaces to augment virtual tours as more than simply viewings of empty, historical sites (although it is possible for users to skip this content). Nevertheless, Corbin (Chapter 6) illustrates through dialogic, guided tours, it is possible for visits to physical sites to be more interactive than virtual museums. Indeed, I have argued elsewhere that digital interactivity has been overstated in memorialisation, particularly in the Holocaust context (Walden 2021). For Corbin, the interactive documentaries on the Centros Clandestinos platform remove the social, interactive dimensions of a visit to the actual sites. Thus, they potentially become far less about doing memory-work (with others) in the present and more about exploring a historicization of the past on one's own. The affect of the situated, social memorial museum and implications for co-mmemoration (i.e. remembering together) and the intense affect evoked by such acts of congregating for memory-work (Durkheim 2001) have not yet been replicated digitally. It does

not necessarily need to be re-created in digital spaces as it has been at physical sites, however. Nevertheless, if affect and empathy are so important to the moral mission of memorial museums we should ask how the compulsion towards digital interventions by such institutions (and in counter-memorial projects) can support this or whether these technologies would be better suited to the creation of a new paradigm of memorialisation.

Conclusion

This opening chapter has sought to introduce three core themes explored in this volume: the tenson between the national and transnational in memorial museums; the relationship between the memorial museum and "the multitude" (Hoskins 2018); and the extent to which digital technologies affect the authenticity claims so important to the presentation of material evidence in memorial museums. In these few pages, I have tried to trouble some of the assumptions made about memory in the digital age and situated the distinct, national, and not always particularly connective practices of memorial museums within and besides wider digital culture.

I have suggested, following A. Assmann, that claims of a total rupture in memory practice as implied by terms such as the "transnational" and "connective turn" are overstated and that as Hoskins previously argued, although he has seemed more reluctant to admit in more recent work, two distinct memory cultures exist simultaneously. Lingering from the broadcast era, the memorial museum remains an illustrative example of the "formalized, institutionalized, regimented" (Hoskins 2014, p. 60) and coherent approach resisting the more fragmentary, hyperconnective one Hoskins observes across social media. Indeed, this is often obvious in the ways in which many memorial museums fail to obtain high levels of virality in their own social media engagement, preferring to use platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and now TikTok as if they are broadcast media to demonstrate their authority and expertise (Walden and Makhortykh, forthcoming).

Finally, I examined debates about authenticity – a claim so important to memorial museums, which trade in material evidence as educational resources, provocations of empathy, and defence against denial and distortion. On the surface, transformations from material to digital presentation of such evidence risk diminishing the authentic aura of sites and objects. However, as we have seen, the aura is not inherent to the material objects, although physical closeness to these tangible things can be powerful. Rather, the aura emerges in the curational arrangement and the encounter between visitor and object. Although, I have highlighted one example of a troubling encounter with a particular digitised object, we must also consider that just as there are multiple ways to arrange objects in physical memorial museums, there are also many ways to do so in digital spaces. Furthermore, augmented reality (AR) offers opportunities to work across physical and digital spaces, extending the number of arrangement possibilities further particularly if/when such experiences integrate technologies such as intelligent tutoring systems (as has been suggested, although not yet realised in a recent article by those involved with the Future Memory Foundation, Verschure & Wierenga 2021). Such responsive systems (which react to user input to design a personalised learning experience) might indeed bridge the gap between the collective memory work of memorial museums and the "memory of the multitude" observed by Hoskins. However, we are not there yet, and this current volume is not a speculation about the future but rather an analysis of the current state of things.

References

Anderson, B.R. (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Arnold-de Simine, S. (2013) *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Assmann, A. (2017) 'Transnational Memory and the Construction of history through Mass Media', in *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies* ed. By L. Bond, S. Craps and P. Vermeulen, pp. 65-82. New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Assmann, J. (1995) 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, 65, pp. 125-33.

Benjamin, W. (1939) 'The work of art in the age of mechanic reproduction', in *Illuminations*, pp. 217-52. New York: Schocken Books.

Bennett, C. (2018a) 'Karma after Democratic Kampuchea: Justice Outside the Khmer Rouge Tribunal', *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 21 (3): 68-82

Bennett, C. (2018b) 'Living with the Dead in the Killing Fields of Cambodia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 49 (2): 184-203

Bennett, T. (1995) *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, London and New York: Routledge

Bolter, J. D., and R. Grusin (1999) *Remediation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Books.

Calvo-Sotelo, J. (2017) *I Celti, la prima Europa*: The Role of Celtic Myth and Celtic Music in the Construction of European Identity, *Popular Music and Society* 40 (4): 369-89.

Cole, T., A. Giordano & A. K. Knowles (eds.) (2014) *Geographies of the Holocaust*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Dalziel, I. (2021) 'Capturing Experiential Authenticity at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum' [blog posts], accessed at: https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory/2021/01/27/capturing-experiential-authenticity-at-the-auschwitz-birkenau-state-museum/

Dalziel, I. (2020) 'Authority, Authenticity and Audience: The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum's Adaptation to the Digital Museum' [PhD Thesis], Royal Holloway, University of London

De Jong, S. (2010) 'Exhibiting: The Witness as a Museum Object', in *The Witness as Object: Video Testimonies in Holocaust Museums*. New York & London: Berghahn Books.

Dekel, I. (2013) *Mediation of the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin*. New York: Palgrave.

Derrida, J. (1995) *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Durkheim É (2001 [1912]) *The Elementary Forms of Religions Life*, trans. By Carol Cosman. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ebbrecht-Hartmann, T., & L. Henig (2021) 'I-Memory: Selfies and Self-Witnessing in *#Uploading_Holocaust* (2016)', in *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research* ed. Victoria Grace Walden, pp. 213-35. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Eder, J.S, P. Gassert, & A. E. Steinweis (2017) *Holocaust Memory in a Globalizing World*. Düsseldorf: Wallstein Verlag.

Fogu, C (2016) '"A 'Spatial Turn' in Holocaust Studies?", in *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture*, edited by C. Fogu, W. Kansteiner, and T. Presner, pp. 218-39. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hall, S. (1990) 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Selected Writings on Race and Difference – Stuart Hall* (2021), pp. 257-71. Edited by Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore. Duke University Press.

Hansen-Glucklich, J. (2014) *Holocaust Memory Reframed: Museums and the Challenges of Representation*. New Brunswick, New Jersey & London: Rutgers University Press.

Hoskins, A (2018a) 'The restless past: an introduction to digital memory and media', in *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition*, edited by A. Hoskins, pp. 1-24. London and New York: Routledge.

Hoskins, A (2018b) 'Memory of the multitude: the end of collective memory', in *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition*, edited by A. Hoskins, pp. 85-109. London and New York: Routledge.

Hoskins, A (2014) '"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 A. Ghezzi, A. G. Pereira, and L. Vesnic-Alujevic, pp. 50-64. New York: Palgrave.

Huyssen, A. (2003) *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Kansteiner, W. (2018) '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 A. Hoskins, pp. 110-140. London and New York: Routledge.

Kenderdine, S. & A. Yip (2019) 'The proliferation of aura: Fascimiles, authenticity and digital objects', in *The Routledge Handbook of Museums, Media and Communication*, ed. by K. Drotner et al, pp. 274-89. Abingdon & New York: Routledge.

Kidron, C. A. (2020) 'The "Perfect Failure" of Communal Genocide Commemoration in Cambodia: Productive Friction or "Bone Business"?' *Current Anthropology* 61 (3): 304-34

Landsberg, A. (2004) *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Latour, B. & A. Lowe (2010) 'The migration of the aura, or how to explore the original through its fascimiles', in *Switching codes: Thinking through digital technology in the humanities and arts*, ed. by T. Bartscherer & R. Coover, pp. 275-98. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Levy, D. & N. Sznaider (2002) 'Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory', *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (1), pp. 87-106.

Makhortykh, M. & Walden, V.G. (forthcoming) '#Hashtag Commemoration: Public Engagement with Commemoration Events during Covid-19 Lockdowns' in *Unlocking Memory: Did the Covid Pandemic Change Commemorations* ed. By O. Fridman and S. Gensburger.

Malraux, A. (1965) *Museum without Walls*. London: Secker & Warburg.

Popescu, D. I., & T. Schult (eds.) (2015) *Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the Post-Witness Era*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Potter, J. & Ø. Gilje (2015) 'Curation as a new literary practice', *E-Learning and Digital Media* 12 (2), pp. 123-7.

Poulot, D. (2013) 'Another History of Museums: From the Discourse to the Museum-Piece', *Anais do Museu Paulista*, 21 (1), pp. 27-47.

Sodaro, A. (2018) *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press.

Rothberg, M. (2009) *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Verschure, P. M.J, & S. Wierenga (2021) 'Future memory: a digital humanities approach for the preservation and presentation of the history of the Holocaust and Nazi crimes', in *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*. https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2021.1979178

Walden, V. G. (2019) *Cinematic Intermedialities and Contemporary Holocaust Memory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Walden, V. G. (2001) 'Afterword: Digital Holocaust Memory Futures: Through Paradigms of Immersion and Interactivity and Beyond', in *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research* ed. V.G. Walden, pp. 267-96. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Williams, P. (2007) *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*, Oxford &New York: Berg.

Zucker, E. M., and D. J. Simon (eds. (2020) *Mass Violence and Memory in the Digital Age: Memorialization Unmoored*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chapter 2

Testimony as Digital Transformation at The Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders

Stephen D. Smith

The Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders (*侵华日军南京大屠杀遇难同胞纪念馆*) is built on the site where thousands of bodies were buried in early 1938, following the brutal killing of civilians by the Japanese Imperial Army, in the then capital city of China, Nanjing. The Memorial Hall was first built in 1985 and has gone through several stages of renovation. A major refurbishment of its core exhibition in 2017 incorporated new technology featuring a holographic interactive biography of Madame Xia Shuqin. This chapter explores the development of Xia's testimony as an example of transnational memory production. The chapter discusses my

experience as a leading individual in the USC Shoah Foundations Dimensions in Testimony project, which originally created interactive biographies of Holocaust survivors. Here forth, I consider the complexities of differing historical, cultural, linguistic, and political contexts that impacted on the process of introducing interactive video produced in the United States and originally designed with Holocaust testimonies in mind, to a traditional memorial museum setting in China dedicated to the Nanjing Massacre. Debates about transnational memory are discussed in Chapter One of this volume and are therefore not repeated here. This chapter can be read, however, as a response to these debates. As Noah Schenker (2016) points out, however well-intentioned, transnational oral history methodology required diligences regarding how the cultural, historical, and site-specific aspects of genocide testimony documentation in diverse national contexts is influenced by the importation of a set of contested interview methods and narrative structures originally developed by the Shoah Foundation for the collection of Holocaust testimonies.

Xia Shuqin is a diminutive woman with an extraordinary public profile in China, a country that does not typically have a cult of celebrity. Xia, who survived the Nanjing Massacre of 1937 at the age of eight, has emerged from the silence of trauma and obscurity to become a public figure representing a painful part of China's past. Eight decades have elapsed since the events of December 1937, and at the time of writing this chapter, there are less than one hundred living surviving victims.[1] The surviving victims, like Xia Shuqin, give a human face to an event that resonates deeply with China's bitter struggle with neighbouring Japan over the Sino-Japanese War. The merciless slaughter of Chinese civilians in Nanjing in the six weeks following the 13th December 1937 invasion of the nation's capital by the Japanese Imperial Army has become a potent symbol of that period, seared into the collective conscience of China. This chapter explores

1 In a recent programme to interview as many living survivors as possible between 2014-2016, USC Shoah Foundation and The Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders were able to locate 101 living survivors capable of conducting an interview.



***Figure 1**. Xia Shuqin, during her visit to Los Angeles to be interviewed for her interactive biography in 2016. Credit: USC Shoah Foundation*

the development of The Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders (The Memorial Hall), and the role Xia Shuqin's testimony has come to play over time as a voice that illuminates the Chinese perspective on trauma and memory. This chapter will focus on Xia Shuqin's interactive video biography, which was incorporated into The Memorial Hall's core exhibition in December 2017, and explore how it augments and transmogrifies the relationship between eyewitness testimony and public engagement in the Chinese context.

The Nanjing Massacre

On 9th December 1937, the Japanese Imperial Army fresh from its three-month drawn-out conquest of Shanghai arrived outside the walls of the

capital city of Nanjing. After three days of bombardment, the Army gave the Chinese an ultimatum, to surrender or face "no mercy" (Yang 1999). The following day, on 13th December 1937, after a final assault on all sides of the city, four divisions of the Japanese Army invaded Nanjing. Inside the city were between 200,000 - 500,000 Chinese civilians, and an unknown number of Chinese troops garrisoned there that did not manage to escape (Askew 2001). An "International Safety Zone" had been established prior to the invasion by a group of 15 foreigners, led by German businessman John Rabe to help protect civilians from the coming onslaught. The group had realised the imminent danger Chinese civilians faced from the advancing Japanese forces, although many civilians had not, or could not, make their way to the safety zone before the invasion. What followed was a well-documented, brutal assault, which seemed to align with Emperor Hirohito's 5th August 1937 guidelines to disregard the constraints of international law for the treatment of Chinese civilians (Saito 2017). Even though General Iwane Matsui, commander of the Shanghai Expeditionary Force and Central China Area Army, was convicted for War Crimes and executed, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East would never determine the culpability of Hirohito (Brook 2001). The Truman Administration believed the post-war occupation reforms would run smoothly if they used Hirohito to legitimise their changes (Bix 2001). Whatever the source of the original order, eyewitnesses describe six weeks of mass atrocity including execution, mass murder, rape, torture, and mutilation of tens of thousands of unprotected civilians.

President of the International Safety Zone, and Nazi Party Member, Rabe, describes the scene in his diary:

> Last night up to 1,000 women and girls are said to have been raped, about 100 girls at Ginling College ... alone. You hear nothing but rape. If husbands or brothers intervene, they're shot. What

> you hear and see on all sides is the brutality and bestiality of the Japanese soldiers.
>
> (Rabe and Woods, 1998, p. 77)

As many as 300,000 civilians and unarmed combatants fell victim to the crimes against humanity that were perpetrated in Nanjing until the second half of January 1938. The exact number of murdered victims was and remains difficult to determine due to the large-scale obfuscation of evidence, un-tallied bodies buried in mass graves, murder in the surrounding region outside of the city walls, and a large population movement both before and after the attack. The official number of victims recognised at The Memorial Hall is 300,000 victims. Both legitimate historians and deniers have challenged this number (Yang 1999). Irrespective of the body count, which will never be determined, the number of Chinese citizens who experienced death, mutilation, and both physical and mental trauma as a result of the atrocities exceeds 300,000 and speaks to the scale of the atrocity.

The Founding and Development of The Memorial Hall

At the time the atrocities were committed, bodies were removed from the city and buried outside the walls in what became known as 'pits of ten thousand corpses'. One such pit in Jiang Don Men was first excavated in 1983 revealing the contents of a mass grave, where The Memorial Hall was later built. The timeline published by The Memorial Hall's website places its opening to the public on 15th August 1985. The fact that the mass graves of an atrocity of such international significance had fallen into obsolescence speaks to the place the events of the Nanjing Massacre occupied in the collective memory in China and around the world in the decades following its occurrence. In 1995, a major expansion of The Memorial Hall coincided with the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II and an increase in tension between China and Japan over the latter's wartime conduct (Saito 2017).

In 2020, the museum occupies a total of 25 acres which includes 11 acres of memorial gardens and 14 acres of building space, of which five are dedicated to a public exhibition. There are few museums in the world where indoor public gallery space can be measured in acres, which in itself represents not only the physical scale of the memorial museum but its ambition to impact public collective memory. The Memorial Hall claims to have had more than 100 million visitors since its opening in 1985. Today, it is China's second most visited tourist site after the Forbidden Palace in Beijing. The museum's annual visitor figure in excess of eight million dwarves the number of visits to Holocaust memorial sites such as Auschwitz Birkenau State Museum (2,150,000), the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (1,643,035) and Yad Vashem (1,010,000). The Memorial Hall's visitor numbers are double that of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum (9/11 Memorial Museum) in New York City (4,000,000).

As a memorial dedicated to the victims of mass graves, the Memorial Hall has now changed its scope to include the experiences of the Chinese women abused as sex slaves by the Japanese Army, known as the 'Comfort Women'. Also, a separate museum has been opened in the city and widened its exhibition remit to honour Chinese resistance to the Japanese Imperial Army. In support of these goals, it has gathered a collection of artefacts, as well as archival and visual resources. The memorial's website describes its collections as covering:

> ...history about the Nanjing Massacre, the 'Comfort Women' system set by Japanese army, the great victory of the Chinese people's resistance against Japanese aggression. A total of near 4,000 photographs, all kinds of 9,992 pieces of records and artifacts, along with 262 video materials are on display, expressing the five main themes of violence, resistance, victory, trial and peace in rational and serious manners (sic).
>
> (The Memorial Hall)

The Meaning of The Memorial Hall in Chinese Culture

The development and scope of the museum's mandate has increased the site's visibility. The museum started as the Nanjing Regional Government's initiative in Jiangsu Province. On 13th December 2014, the Chinese government instituted the National Memorial Day for Nanjing Massacre Victims. The



Figure 2. *Portraits of survivors of the Nanjing Massacre in the core exhibition. Credit: USC Shoah Foundation*

museum was invited to host the National Ceremony, thereby changing it from a regional to national museum. Premier Xi Jinping has attended the national memorial ceremony at the museum on two occasions. On the first occasion, Premier Xi gave the memorial speech and unveiled 'The National Memorial Ding' with Xia Shuqin. The ding is a three-legged cauldron typically used for both cooking and worship, aligning The National Memorial Day with other forms of Chinese culture. The struggle between memory, politics, and the narrative of Japanese occupation and atrocity is a dynamic process, which continues to this day (Mitter and Moore 2011). Paradoxically, during the post-war Maoist period, the need to build an image of a strong unified nation and glorify the revolution meant that historical suppression of the Nanjing Massacre occurred (Violi 2012). In post-socialist China, the need to tell its own story of suffering and resistance both internally and to the outside world has now been embraced, creating a focal point for public education and national remembrance.

Memorials to atrocity that have national significance, such as the Kigali Genocide Memorial in Rwanda, Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia, and the Topographie des Terrors in Berlin, each have their own link between place and memory. The Memorial Hall, like the Kigali Genocide Memorial, is built where murdered victims were buried outside of the city limits. The restoration of the memory of the deceased gives dignity to otherwise forgotten victims and provides a social narrative about the causes and meaning of their victimhood. Crimes of mass atrocity almost invariably disrupt national narratives. New interpretations of their meaning follow as society comes to terms with its past in the present. If the Memorial Hall is to be understood as using past pain to build and reinforce the future identity of the Chinese nation in a global context, the Memorial's message of peace, which is visibly on display, appears to infuse the contemporary politics of memory with a Confucian and highly positive legacy (Violi, 2012). China is undergoing an ideological transformation influenced by its Confucian tradition that may eventually change the characteristics of its regime and the way it interacts

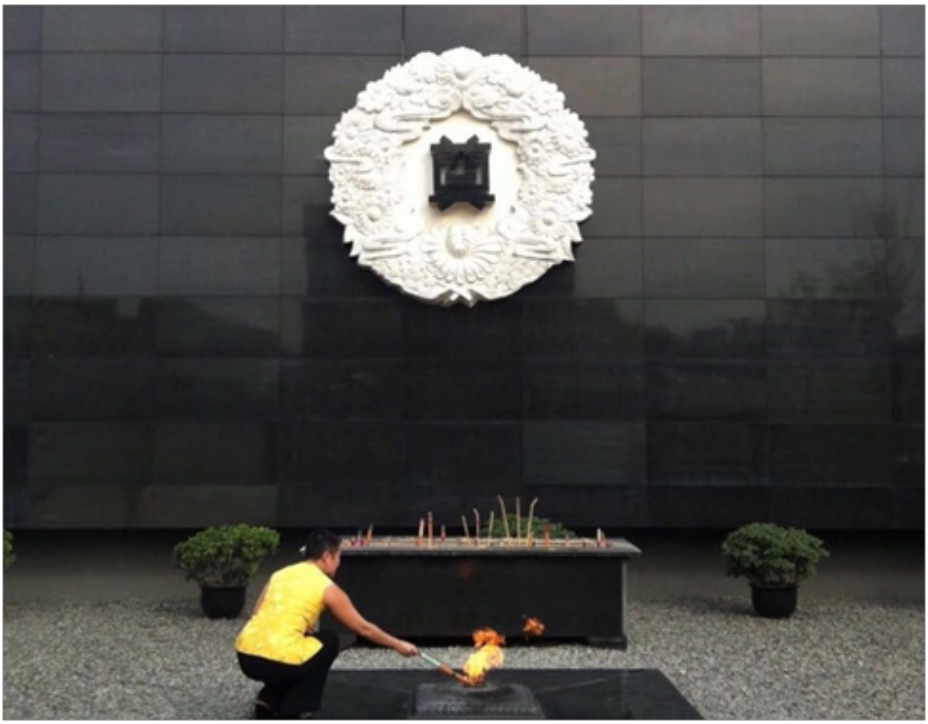


Figure 3. *The Garden of Remembrance is a traditional quiet place of reflection. Credit: USC Shoah Foundation*

with the rest of the world (Jiang 2018). The influence of peace, harmony and the fundamental goodness of humanity emanates from the Memorial. It could be read as being deeply political, but there is a clear Confucian cultural resonance in the way the past is incorporated into the presence. The Museum's symbol is a young child holding an olive branch. However, as with all acts of politicised memory, messages of "never again" can be interpreted in many different ways and act as a double-edged sword — a reason for peace and a justification for war.

I have visited The Memorial Hall site on several occasions since October 2011 in a professional capacity. The purpose of my visits was not to conduct academic research directly; however, I had the opportunity as the Executive Director for a genocide research institute (the USC Shoah Foundation) to work directly with memorial staff and make key observations about the site pertinent to this chapter. As a frequent visitor to worldwide memorial museums, the Memorial Hall was far from the intimate encounter I had experienced in many smaller and largely forgotten sites. The Museum's imposing structures and large open-air public spaces, the life-sized experiential tableau of Nanjing under siege, and the large mass grave viewing galleries inside the core exhibition, are designed for volumes of tourists which can exceed 20,000 in a single day during peak season. A typical medium-sized museum in the USA will have up to 750 visitors each day. At the same time, there are also many opportunities for personal engagement that resonate with a more intimate version of Chinese culture.

Life-sized bronze statues of elderly survivors are placed throughout the museum grounds; their footprints embossed in metal beside them are touching and personal and speak to the humanity of the victims. The respect given to elders and the permanence of their legacy in a completely non-digital format provides a much-needed break from engaging with digital screens. Likewise, the Garden of Remembrance invites visitors to light incense in a quiet courtyard shrine. The designers have attempted to find touch points to bring its constant flow of visitors into a personal engagement with the Nanjing Massacre with a photo wall of survivors. Despite its overall impersonalisation due to the size of the edifice needed to accommodate large visitor numbers, the Memorial Hall successfully bridges the gap between the national meta-narrative of tragedy to triumph, and the opportunity for more personal reflection. The memorial art and its many reflective spaces at the site do not rely heavily on digital devices and thereby speak more directly to traditional Chinese cultural values. For example, the photo wall is a simple portrait gallery of individuals depicted with head and shoulders photography. The wall of photos shows the diversity

of identities the victims had, including their age, gender, and social class. It is mounted alongside a large indoor memorial plaza, with Chinese cultural



Figure 4. *Bronze Statue of a survivor of the Nanjing Massacre at The Memorial Hall. Credit: USC Shoah Foundation*

symbology, linking the physical memorial space to the personal experience of those who fell victim, some of whom survived, many of whom did not. The



Figure 5. *The entrance to the core exhibition at The Memorial Hall displays hundreds of files containing the testimony of survivors. Credit: USC Shoah Foundation*

introduction of digital engagement could in fact serve as a distraction to such physical and emotional experiences within the place itself, and so any digital intervention requires careful consideration on the part of the curatorial team.

The second observation pertains to how the Memorial Hall communicates to and on behalf of its three distinct audiences - Chinese tourists, the Chinese Government, and international audiences. To be able to meet the interests of all three effectively, the museum must balance its priorities. Since the inception of a National Day of Remembrance of Nanjing Massacre, the National Government plays a direct role in the 13th December memorial events. I have attended these events both before and after the inauguration of The National Memorial Day and observed a significant difference in the protocol and the level of political participation by high-ranking party officials delivering the national message since 2014. Many elements of the ceremony did not change, including the positioning of survivors as guests of honour in the front row of the 15,000-member audience. Most notably, the change of status of the ceremony from a Jiangsu provincial event to a national event has transformed the reach to wider audiences through a number of digital channels with a heavy emphasis on national television coverage and social media. What was once an almost forgotten period of Chinese history in 1985, is now deeply embedded in the Chinese collective conscience, not only because it has been elevated by the Government, but also thanks to the Memorial Hall's digital communications strategy.

The digital strategies of the museum also apply to how the museum relates its history to global audiences, and how its history is seen within the context of international acts of genocide and crimes against humanity. The museum uses its digital platforms to make its content available to a non-Chinese audience. In turn, the museum has encouraged the display of genocide exhibits at the museum such as the Auschwitz Birkenau State Museum's temporary exhibit, thereby providing a link between the site and global incidences of genocide. The exhibit which describes the history of Auschwitz appears to have had a

dual goal. The first was to provide insights into the Holocaust to its Chinese audience. The second more subtle goal appeared to be a repositioning of the Nanjing Massacre in a more universal context as a lesson for humanity, much as Holocaust memory has been transformed in some contexts. In keeping with The Memorial Hall's overall strategy, the exhibit's launch was designed to reach both local and international audiences and show the relevance of the Museum on the international stage.

Testimony at The Memorial Hall

The Memorial Hall began collecting eyewitness testimony in the 1980s and has amassed more than 4,000 written eyewitness interviews. Such was the weight of history in these testimonies, the file boxes containing the testimonies were included as a part of the core exhibition. Originally presented within an imposing two story bookshelf, the testimonies were the concluding visual statement of the exhibition. Departing visitors were left with the impression that survivors' words were treasured by the institution and encouraged to continue the process of remembering in their daily lives. Following the 2017 renovation of the core exhibition, a new testimony wall containing the files now greets visitors on their arrival to the museum, giving primacy to the collected words of the survivors.

The museum did not systematically collect survivor video testimonies, although some were recorded for the purpose of curating content for the museum exhibits. Prior to 2017, The Memorial Hall took a traditional museological approach to exhibits with an emphasis on static displays and minimal deployment of technology. Television monitors were the only significant use of technology beyond lighting, sound design, and the preservation of human remains (all of which require their own technological solutions). The monitors that were in the core exhibition showed a combination of historical film content and some curated testimony clips that were collected by the museum for the purposes of its displays.

I first visited the Memorial Hall in 2011. It was a professional visit during which I conducted two short interviews with Xia Shuqin and Chen Guixiang, both of whom survived the massacre in 1937. The pilot interviews were designed to determine the viability of conducting a wider and more comprehensive



Figure 6. *A photograph of the audio-visual pilot interviews conducted by the author and Ceci Chan (pictured at The Memorial Hall) in 2011 are now depicted in the core exhibition. On this panel, the museum explains how it has collected the testimony of survivors. Credit: USC Shoah Foundation*

testimony collection programme. In 2012, USC Shoah Foundation began collecting audio visual testimony in partnership with the Memorial Hall with the intent to interview as many of the living survivors of the massacre as possible. The Foundation had been collecting testimony of the Holocaust since 1994 and subsequently testimony about other genocides including Cambodia and the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda. It understood the need and had the methodologies to document personal testimony of the Nanjing Massacre. At that point, more than one hundred eyewitnesses were alive and capable of participating in the project. During the duration of the three-year project, 101 interviewees participated. The interviews were carried out using USC Shoah Foundation life history methodology, which included a discussion about life before and after the period of the massacre. The interview teams were led by USC oral history staff, who trained Mandarin-speaking interviewers for the project. The museum acted as liaison to the families and provided legitimacy in the community for the project. USC Shoah Foundation was granted the freedom to conduct the interviews without content scrutiny. The resulting collection is preserved, indexed and made openly available to registered users on the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. This project was a purposeful step towards digital transformation at the Memorial Hall as the resulting testimonies are digital and widely distributed, providing significant reach outside the Memorial Hall walls. USC Shoah Foundation also retains a full digital copy of the testimonies in its own digital archive.

In addition, Japanese School teacher Tamaki Matuoka collected more than 100 interviews with eyewitnesses to share with Japanese school children. She donated her collection to The Memorial Hall in 2018, bringing the total number of video testimonies to more than 200 (with some duplication). The testimony collections provide a base of historical content. The question was whether the new media content could bridge the gap to the next generation of visitors.

The Testimony of Xia Shuqin

At the time of the massacre, Xia Shuqin was eight years old and lived at No 5 Xinlukou inside the city walls of Nanjing. She describes the morning of the 13th December 1937 in vivid detail:

> 10 o'clock there was a knock at the door. We had already eaten breakfast... my father opened the front door... This Japanese soldier who wore a feathered hat. We could never have imagined it. The edge of his sword gleamed like snow and he had a white flag. Another wore red insignia. When my father saw this he was extremely afraid. He wanted to run back, but he did not have time. They shot him on the spot and killed him instantly... they had a three-fold policy: 'kill all, burn all, loot all.' This was their policy.
>
> (Xia Shuqin 2016)

Xia has vivid memories of the murder of eight members of her family, which she and her sister Xia Shuyun survived. Among the early images of the aftermath of the massacre, Shuqin and Shuyun can be seen in the personal archive of Rev. John G. Magee in a silent moving image standing outside a house, which has a courtyard littered with corpses, presumably those of her family. The home movie captured by missionary and amateur cinematographer, Magee, not only places her at the scene of her family's murder but makes a strong link between her personal experience and her public voice in China today. Her image, then and now, has represented the slaughter of innocents, and those who survived the massacre. Memorial Hall Director Dr. Xhu Chengshan helped to identify Xia Shuqin as the girl depicted in the film reel. Xia, has confirmed that she has a clear memory of being filmed by a tall white man with a long face and a film camera. She describes how he asked her to carry out several tasks like pumping water (which do not appear on the film), so that he could film her around the house.

Xia recalls first speaking about her experiences in the early 1980s. In addition to giving her testimony in China, Xia travelled to Japan for the first time in 1994, as the first Nanjing massacre survivor to go to Japan to give her testimony. She also returned in 2002 with other survivors to give testimony. The veracity of her testimony was called into question in the writing of Asia University Professor Shudo Higashinakana in several publications including *The Nanking Massacre: Fact vs Fiction – A Historian's Quest for Truth* (2005). Xia sued Higashinakana and writer Toshio Matsumura in 2000 eventually winning a lawsuit against Higashinakano and his publisher (Hongo, 2007). Xia Shuqin's successful lawsuit attracted national attention, making her a public figure.

Her family's story is highlighted in the core exhibition of the Memorial Hall, where a reconstruction of her family home on the day of the massacre is a centre piece of the exhibit. This exhibit is accompanied by a short testimony-based video of her explaining to visitors how the day of the 13th December unfolded in her household, resulting in the murder of eight members of her family.

When the Memorial Hall took interest in developing an interactive video biography with USC Shoah Foundation for the 2017 development of the museum's core exhibition, it was agreed between the partner institutions that Xia Shuqin was the most suitable interviewee for the project. After interviewing 101 survivors of the massacre, the USC Shoah Foundation collections team were familiar with the physical and mental state of all known living survivors. Unlike most of the other living survivors, Xia Shuqin was physically fit enough to travel to Los Angeles to be filmed, which was necessary for the volumetric filming. She had both the mental capacity and audience experience to answer questions on a wide range of subjects. She had also proved herself be an agile and independent thinker on controversial subjects.



Figure 7. *Xia Shuqin in Light Stage 6 at USC Institute of Creative Technologies preparing for her five-day interview. The stage was equipped with one 4k RED digital camera and 115 HD Panasonic cameras. Credit: USC Shoah Foundation*

Dimensions in Testimony

Dimensions in Testimony is an audio-visual testimony project developed by USC Shoah Foundation to interview witnesses to genocide intended to emulate natural questions and answers, using pre-filmed video testimony (Traum et al. 2015). The project was conceived by Heather Maio in 2010 and later developed with her organisation, Conscience Display in partnership with the USC Institute of Creative Technologies and USC Shoah Foundation. The program initially interviewed Holocaust survivors, who had been public-facing for several decades in Holocaust memorial museums, schools, university campuses and in informal education. Due to survivors advancing in age, there was added urgency to capturing their personal life experiences, irrespective of the format. The interactive biography methodology drew inspiration from the fact that Holocaust survivors during their engagement with public audiences

not only told their personal life histories but also engaged in question and answer sessions. It had been my own observation as director of the National Holocaust Centre (UK) in Nottinghamshire, England, that after such talks, visitors would rarely ask questions of the eyewitness to clarify historical details about, for example, the date of a deportation, or the number of inmates in a barracks. Invariably, the questions turned to matters of personal reflection and historical consequence - What did it *feel like* to lose your family? Do you *forgive* the perpetrators? Do you have *hope* for humanity? Such topics are covered by interviewees in life histories but are not accessible as direct answers to specific questions. The purpose of Dimensions in Testimony was to gather much more data than a typical life history, and in a format through which users could query the content based on their own interests and curiosity. The question that new technology such as this raises is whether it can substitute for a personal engagement with a living person. As Edmon Rodman (2013) noted when the project was first conceived, "recalling my conversations with survivors, I wonder how a 3-D representation, no matter how well intentioned, can match the experience of making live eye contact with someone who is reaching out with the story of his or her own private hell."

The methodology of Dimensions in Testimony involves first ensuring that the subject has given a life history to an audio-visual archive because we need to establish a clear narrative base for the interactive testimony, and to ensure there is full public access to the life history interview of the interactive biography interviewee. Unlike the life history methodology, extensive research is conducted prior to the interactive biography interview taking place. It involves reviewing all published material about the interviewee, including transcripts of prior interviews and life histories, as well as conducting an in-person pre-interview. Subject-specific questions are generated to ensure that a member of the public who has encountered the subject's biography in any format can ask follow-up questions about the subject matter they have seen, heard, or read. Generic questions, such as date of birth, family, etc. form a secondary set of questions prepared before the interview. During the

interview process, clarifying questions are documented and asked to ensure that future viewers of the interactive testimony will be able to ask follow-up questions to topics raised during the interview. The final set of questions are off-topic responses, which allow the interactive testimony to engage in conversation-like-interaction, such as, "can you repeat that", "I don't have an answer to that question", etc. A five-day full interactive biography consists of a minimum of 600, and more typically more than 1,000 unique responses. Once collected, the testimony data is placed into a database as a set of uniquely named clips that can be retrieved on voice command. The voice command is interpreted by natural language processing, which derives meaning from a string of words. During the interview, the interviewer asks specific questions, but the Dimensions in Testimony natural language processor allows the user to input any string of words that it converts from speech to text. Once the words are converted to text, the processor uses a combination of keywords, synonyms, and training data to examine the query against the database and return the most relevant content clip. This can be played back on any screen or projection device including holographic play back, such as a pepper's ghost system which is a nineteenth-century technology developed to create the illusion of an image on stage, updated with more recent hi-fidelity projection systems. The New Dimensions in Testimony program collects volumetric data, in which the subject is filmed with multiple cameras, for future multi-dimensional playback. By 2022, the Dimensions in Testimony program has interviewed 52 people in eight languages (English, French, German, Hebrew, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, Swedish) making it a significant transnational memory archive.

Methodology of Xia Shuqin's Interactive Biography

The interactive biography of Xia Shuqin was the first non-English language interview to be produced as a part of the Dimension in Testimony programme. In addition, Xia Shuqin was the first non-Holocaust survivor of a mass atrocity added to the collection. Hers was also the first interview to

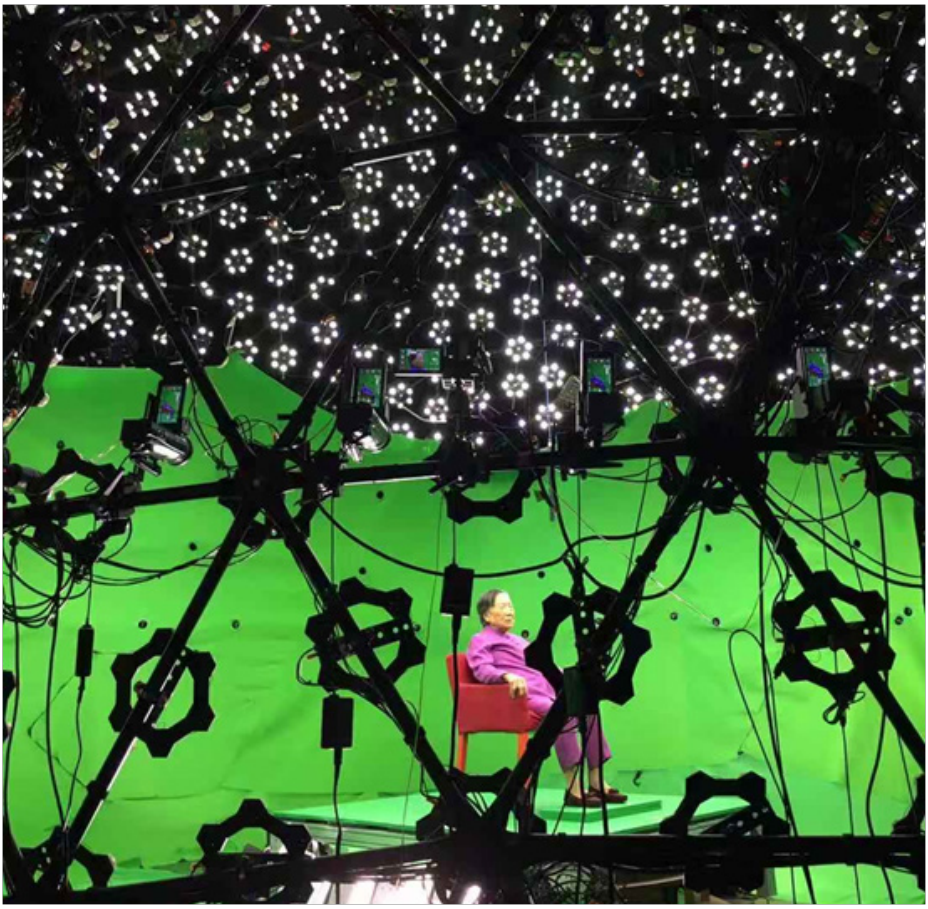


Figure 8. *Xia Shuqin in Light Stage 6 Los Angeles October 2016. The interviewer sits outside of the stage with direct eye contact with the interviewee. The subject was illuminated by 3,000 individual LED lights. Credit: USC Shoah Foundation*

be conducted for an exclusively Chinese language audience. This particular testimony posed several unique challenges. The first and most obvious was

the issue of language. As Xia Shuqin did not speak English, and the project was being developed at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, the language barrier was considered a significant constraint to a successful outcome. The second major issue was understanding the cultural context in which this interview would be used and meeting the needs and interests of the intended audience.

The preparatory phase of the interview involved developing a deeper understanding of the experiences of Xia Shuqin during the time of the massacre as well as detailed understanding of her biography thereafter. As described above, Xia played a significant role in countering denial of the massacre, which formed a major part of her life history and world view during and after the trial in Japan. In order to understand the questions audiences might have for Xia, a survey was carried out at The Memorial Hall. Museum guides were stationed near the exhibit with the reconstruction of her family home.

Immediately after visitors had heard her testimony segment in the museum, they were asked what they would want to ask Xia if they had the chance to speak with her in person. The results of this survey provided guidance on the scope and range of question in the interview. Some cultural factors were unexpected. A significant proportion of the visitors did not want to intrude upon her, believing that her privacy was more important than their own curiosity. This may account for the low number of specific questions proposed about her family today (two unique questions) and her current life (one unique question). There was a disproportionate interest in specific acts of violence (38 unique questions) and personal resilience during the period (34 unique questions). This was particularly interesting as questions asked to Holocaust survivors had disproportionately focused on the meaning of the Holocaust rather than the acts of violence themselves. Many visitors did not want to ask her questions and preferred to send a message of health and good wishes to her and her family. Questions that arose from the survey included:

"Did the slaughter appear to be personal or the carrying out of orders?"
"Why did no one stand up to fight when there were thousands of people in the city?"
"If you could have had the choice would you have gone to Germany with Mr Rabe?"
"How do you feel about the fact the Japanese accused you of perjury?"



Figure 9. *Visitors view of the holographic image of Xia Shuqin. The pepper's ghost screen projects a life-sized image of Xia which is viewed from approximately three meters away. Credit: USC Shoah Foundation*

To work through the specific linguistic and cultural needs of the project, a full-time Mandarin-speaking programme specialist from China, Cheng Fang, who worked closely with Xia Shuqin and her family, as well as with the Memorial Hall, assisted in reconstructing her life story to ensure all points were covered in the interview. As this was the first non-Holocaust testimony conducted by USC Shoah Foundation, changes were also made to the standard question set as all previous interviewees had been Holocaust survivors. Questions such as "Did you wear a yellow star?", "Do you have a tattoo?", "Do you hate the Germans?" were removed. New questions such as, "Can you describe the Japanese bombardment of Nanjing?" and, "Did the Chinese take revenge after the Japanese surrendered?" were introduced.

Xia Shuqin travelled to Los Angeles with her granddaughter Xia Yuan in October 2016 to be filmed in the light stage at USC Institute for Creative Technologies. The entire interview process was in Mandarin conducted by Cheng Fang. A system for translation and real-time transcripts was created to allow the English-speaking team to keep abreast with the questions and answers. This was largely successful, although at times caused some confusion, as a combination of Xia's Nanjing dialect and a gap in the translators' subject-specific knowledge meant that the sense of some answers were lost in translation. Some of these differences were caught during the process, others only came to light when a final transcript was created. While this did not have significant impact on the quality of the interview overall, or the specificity of Xia's answers, it was instructive to understand the wide gap among educated Chinese native language speakers and the lack of a working lexicon related to the history and consequence of the massacre.

Xia Shuqin answered more than 600 unique questions about her life, her experiences during the massacre, and her views on a wide range of subjects. These were all transcribed and translated to provide a basis for training the Dimensions in Testimony system to respond to Mandarin language input

questions in the same manner that happens in English. The system makes use of IBM Watson's Mandarin language speech-to-text and natural language processor, which had recently been released, and provided a unique test case for the platform to be used in China with an audience speaking with a wide range of accents and with very variable levels of prior subject matter knowledge. As with all Dimensions in Testimony interviews, it went through several steps of testing. The interview was alpha-tested at the University of Southern California with Mandarin speaking students. During the alpha phase the raw data was loaded into a content management system where clips were identified, named, and transcribed. Once the content of each clip was identified, training data was added to each clip. This helped the system negotiate a range of queries and directed the user to the most appropriate answer. The entire interview currently contains 6,000 potential user utterances. The development of such utterances enables the Dimensions in Testimony system to understand what audiences are likely to query, and in the particular way in which they are anticipated to ask. The beta phase of testing is ordinarily carried out in an 'as-live' environment, such as a museum where there are larger volumes of users. This live audience data enables the natural language team to continue to train the system based on the actual wording of questions asked by a wide range of intended users. In Nanjing, this was carried out with a relatively small group of students at Nanjing University who were studying the history of the massacre. Once fully responsive and achieving more than approximately 80% accuracy response rate, the interview was prepared for public release. Improving the response rate to more than 80% would require a great deal of new input from a wide range of users and can only be achieved in a live situation. As the system is continuously learning from input data, it requires tens of thousands of interactions to improve its response rate accuracy. Every interaction with the Dimensions in Testimony system is given an accuracy rating by the natural language system itself. If it appears that an inaccurate response was delivered to any user (at any location in the world), the Dimensions in Testimony natural language processing team are manually

able to evaluate the response and help train the search engine to be more successful with future questions of a similar nature (Wong 2018). Due to the nature of the content, machines are not left to make 'improvements' to the accuracy without human intervention.

The Holographic Display in The Memorial Hall

Once the testimony of Xia Shuqin had been produced by USC Shoah Foundation, responsibility for the display in the museum was taken by The Memorial Hall director, Zhang Jianjun, and his curatorial staff. The position of the interactive biography in the museum floor plan, the type of display being used, the type of interactive experience, and the amount of content available to the public were all decisions made by The Memorial Hall exhibit design team.

The exhibit is located in an alcove in the latter half of the core exhibition, which can hold more than 50 people standing. Once visitors have developed enough historical context by passing through the core exhibition, they are able to ask questions based on acquired knowledge once they visit Xia Shuqin. The holographic image is displayed on a life-sized pepper's ghost screen giving the illusion of a 3D hologram, based on the 1862 invention of Professor John Pepper (Burdekin 2015). Xia Shuqin is not visible from the main exhibit corridor where visitor foot traffic is passing by. This placement has a self-regulating effect. Once the alcove is full of people engaging with the testimony, other visitors naturally keep moving by. As the space is vacated, passers-by naturally enter the alcove, curious to discover what is in there, which provides a steady flow of visitors to the space. This does mean that many visitors leave the core exhibition without knowing that the interactive biography of Xia Shuqin is there. However, they are also not aware that they missed seeing the testimony, as it is not advertised as a feature of the Memorial Hall visit. The Memorial Hall exhibition team realised that it is impossible for more than 8,000,000 visitors to interact with a single exhibit without causing

serious congestion on the exhibition floor. For those that do discover Xia's interactive biography, there are no time limitations set on how long a visitor may engage individually or participate with a wider group in questions and answers. Based on a conservative estimate of 150 people each hour engaging with the testimony, approximately 300,000 people each year interact with Xia Shuqin's interactive biography.

As previously mentioned, Xia Shuqin's interactive biography contains more than 600 unique answers to questions that were perceived to be relevant to a Chinese audience. However, the museum curators decided to curate and use only 50 of the 600 responses in the final exhibit. There are several reasons for this. The first reason being the limitations of showing an interactive biography in a core exhibition space. Most visitors will spend 5-10 mins in that space, and in many cases less than five minutes. The museum designers wanted to ensure that every answer delivered pertinent information to an audience that is likely to engage for a short time only. Museum curators chose 50 questions that are regularly asked and provided a screen interface detailing the range of questions Xia's interactive biography can answer. Once the visitor sees a written question on the screen that intrigues them, a microphone attached to the screen pedestal provides the input for the visitor to ask the question of their choice. Dimensions in Testimony is designed as an open conversation system that emulates a real-life interaction without prompts or limits to what can be asked or answered. Xia Shuqin's full interactive biography is designed with such functionality in mind and will likely be used that way in other future iterations. The initial curated version in The Memorial Hall removes the element of complexity and risk that goes with such interactivity. By simplifying the experience to a set of answers to known questions triggered by voice recognition the museum curatorial team understood that it gives a much higher chance of every interaction being delivered to the exact question chosen from the monitor. While this does not stretch the system to its capacity, it does give higher levels of success in a crowded, noisy, fast moving museum space, with short engagement times. As interactive biography is still a new

technology, ensuring that users understand they are engaging with video and not a deepfake or avatar is important to ensure the sense of authenticity.

The other reason the museum chose a closed system was more technical. The non-curated Dimensions in Testimony system is cloud based and is dependent on fast, reliable internet connectivity. There was some hesitation about connecting Xia Shuqin's interview to the internet from a reliability perspective as the museum staff did not want visitors to experience a sub-par interaction because of patchy internet service. An additional reason was a security concern that if the interview was connected to the internet that there was a chance that security could be breached leaving the content vulnerable to being hacked, altered, or replaced. The museum did not want the embarrassment to Xia Shuqin or to the institution, should a deep fake be inserted into the content that would bring her or The Memorial Hall into disrepute. This is not a fear shared by USC Shoah Foundation which ensures its content is viewed through its own platforms and uses regular checks of its data files to verify that they have not been altered.

Dimensions in Testimony interviews can be displayed on many different format screens, from small personal devices such as a tablet, large format screens, such as a portrait monitor large enough to display the interviewee life size on a flat LED screen, or on a pepper's ghost holographic display. The museum opted to use pepper's ghost technology for the display, creating a mini theatre in which Xia Shuqin is shown life-size on what appears to be a small dais with a curtain behind her. The image is brightly lit and vivid, but as the name of the technology implies, it does have a ghost-like translucence which is unavoidable when projecting onto a clear film.

Visitor Reactions

I observed visitors reacting to the testimony of Xia Shuqin shortly after it its launch on 13th December 2017. The intuitive user interface with the

monitor and microphone meant that visitors quickly worked out how to engage with Xia's interview without being supported by a guide. Crowds gathered around, mainly curious, watching rather than interacting with Xia. However, there was rarely a moment without a visitor at the microphone asking her a question. Volunteers would line up behind the podium awaiting an opportunity to ask a question. Stan Ziv (2017) has observed that the intention is to create compassion via technology, an idea that continues to be furiously debated, but there was a clear sense that the visitors were more interested in the subject than the technology. Even though visitors were interacting with video testimony for the first time, they were more interested in Xia Shuqin's answers to the questions they asked. The museum's decision to make the exhibit low-key and off the main exhibit pathway surrounded by archival material from her personal story, emphasises to the visitor that her interactive biography is not a technical gimmick, but a serious way through which to access her personal experiences and views. While many groups and individuals decide to tour the core exhibition without a guide, the museum does provide guiding services. It was noticeable that the museum guides were having some difficulty in moving their groups out of the Dimensions in Testimony space as many group members wanted to remain in the space longer than the time the guide had allotted, illustrating the compelling nature of the engagement. Further audience research data has not been gathered at this time but will be conducted in order to gain data into the impact of the interaction for visitors.

Conclusion

The Memorial Hall has been through a rapid period of growth and development in the last decade. The expansion of new constructions totalling 54,636m2 (13 additional acres) under the leadership of Zhu Chengsu provides a much-expanded footprint to cope with the high volume of demand. The National Memorial Day for Nanjing Massacre on the 13th December each year has significantly changed The Memorial Hall's national

and international profile and given opportunity to expand its reach beyond the museum's physical site using digital technology. The updated core exhibition remains largely based on collections of photographs and original objects, with an expanded use of video, which includes content curated from the recent collection partnership with USC Shoah Foundation. As the survivor population dwindles, the Memorial Hall is placing greater emphasis on their legacy and the primacy of their testimony. Digital, analogue, and archival exhibits, as well as memorial art increasingly emphasise the human story. The interactive biography of Xia Shuqin has not been instrumentalised as a technological advancement, but rather its low-key introduction has placed it in an appropriate biographical setting with content curated to meet a Chinese audience's expected range of interests by the museum curatorial staff. Over time, it is the hope of USC Shoah Foundation to see a full version of Xia Shuqin's interactive biography in operation at The Memorial Hall, if not for the general public, at least for deeper educational experiences.

The Memorial Hall has engaged in a limited but bold step in digital transformation which has successfully navigated the need to meet high demand and expand its footprint beyond the walls of the museum. The interactive testimony of Xia Shuqin is a unique and sustainable way for its visitors to engage with digital testimony, and in a place where the presence of living survivors to tell their own story is rapidly in decline. USC Shoah Foundation learned through the process of interviewing Xia Shuqin and survivors of the Holocaust, that developing testimony of experiences that have similar human consequences but are from dissimilar historical circumstances, has value in helping us to understand the similarities and differences of cultural memory. It was particularly important to research the questions, conduct the project, and interview Xia Shuqin in the language of the visitors. This trend towards transnational digital memory using language specific interviews using Dimensions in Testimony was followed by a program to create content in the Russian language. Language is key to the historical and cultural values of the museum's visitors. It appears that thinking about genocide and atrocity

memory as transnational has its limits. Whilst the Dimensions in Testimony methodology and technologies can be used in different contexts, the outputs created are not easily portable. This observation highlights that memory is not as transnational as recent discourse (discussed in Chapter 1 of this volume) may claim. Xia Shuqin's interview would have little cultural or educational value in a memorial museum in the USA, as interesting as her testimony is, because the system relies on the cues related to history, language and culture. The Memorial Hall has expressed no interest in using interviews of Holocaust survivors from the Dimensions in Testimony collection for its programs outside of the core exhibition. These silos of memory are difficult to break down, notwithstanding the international cooperation to make them work technically. While the value of the interview in the context of China in the long term is yet to be determined, its resonance with visitors to the museum was clearly demonstrated by their levels of engagement with the installation. There is much to be gained by further evaluation of the outcomes for its audience, and in particular evaluation of its outcomes in relation to similar interviews conducted in English, available in memorial museums in the USA.

References

Askew, D. (2001) 'The Nanjing Incident: An Examination of the Civilian Population,' *Sino-Japanese Studies*, 13(2), pp. 2-20.

Brook, T. (2001) 'The Tokyo Judgment and the Rape of Nanking.' *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 60(3), pp. 679–682. Available at: *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2700106.

Bix, H. (2001). *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*. New York: Perennial.

Burdekin, R. 2015. "PEPPER'S GHOST AT THE OPERA." *Theatre Notebook* 69 (3): 152-164. http://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/peppers-ghost-at-opera/docview/1836959310/se-2?accountid=14749.

Higashinakano, O. (2005) *The Nanking Massacre : Fact Versus Fiction : a Historian's Quest for the Truth*. 1st ed. Tokyo: Sekai Shuppan.

Hongo (2007) Nanjing survivor wins ¥4 million in libel suit. The Japan Times. Retrieved from : https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2007/11/03/national/nanjing-survivor-wins-4-million-in-libel-suit/

The Memorial Hall of the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Soldiers [Online]. Available at: http://www.19371213.com.cn/en/about/museum/201608/t20160827_5907664.html (Accessed: 29 December 2019).

Mitter, R. and Moore, A.W. (2011) 'China in World War II, 1937–1945: Experience, Memory, and Legacy,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 45(2), pp. 225–240. Available at: JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25835677.

Rabe, J. and Woods, J. E. (1998). *The Good Man of Nanking: The Diaries of John Rabe*. New York: Alfred A. knopf, Inc.

Rodman, E. (2013) "Adding a New Dimension." Baltimore Jewish times 331, no. 6 (2013): 48–.

Saito, H. (2017) 'Apologies and Denunciations, 1989–1996.' *The History Problem: The Politics of War Commemoration in East Asia*, pp. 74–101. Available at: JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wn0r56.7. (Accessed: 2 January 2020)

Schenker, N. (2016). Through the lens of the shoah: The holocaust as a paradigm for documenting genocide testimonies. *History and Memory*, 28(1), 141-175. Retrieved from http://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/through-lens-shoah-holocaust-as-paradigm/docview/1790897274/se-2?accountid=14749

Shudo, H (2005) *The Nanking Massacre: Fact vs Fiction – A Historian's Quest for Truth*, Sekai Shuppan, Inc

Shuqin, X. (2012) Interviewed by USC Shoah Foundation, 9 December. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKJndgaLHwM (Accessed: 29 December 2019).

Traum, D., Jones, A., Hays, K., Maio, H., Alexander, O., Artstein, R., Debevec, P., Gainer, A., Georgila, K., Haase, K., Jungblut, K., Leuski, A., Smith, S., Swartout, W. (ed.) (2015), '*New Dimensions in Testimony: Digitally Preserving a Holocaust Survivor's Interactive Storytelling,' Interactive Storytelling, 8th International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling, ICIDS 2015, Copenhagen, Denmark, November 30 - December 4*, 2015, Proceedings. New York: Springer International Publishing

Violi, P. (2012) 'Educating for Nationhood: A Semiotic Reading of The Memorial Hall for Victims of the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders,' *Journal of Educational Media, Memory & Society*, 4(2), pp. 41-68. Available at: www.jstor.org/stable/43049391.

Wong, K. (2018) 'A Nanjing Survivor's Story Lives on Digitally,' *Engadget*. Available at: https://www.engadget.com/2018/01/03/nanking-massacre-usc-shoah-foundation/ (Accessed: 1 Jan 2020).

Yang, D. (1999) 'Convergence or Divergence? Recent Historical Writings on the Rape of Nanjing.' *The American Historical Review*, 104(3), pp. 855–856. Available at: JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2650991. (Accessed: 2 Jan 2020)

Ziv, S. (2107) "How Technology Is Keeping Holocaust Survivor Stories Alive Forever; A Powerful Project Allows Survivors to 'Answer' Questions Without Being Present. It's Like Siri If Siri Were an Actual Human with a Life Story to tell. (New Dimensions in Testimony)." Newsweek 169, no. 15.

Chapter 3

The Separate Prison at Port Arthur:

Transforming a Convict Site into a Memorial Museum with Digital Technology

Jenny Wise and Lesley McLean

Introduction

Memorial museums provide society with a vital service - the education and illumination of cultural heritage and historical events; and are often popular tourism destinations. Within Australia, the memorialising of convicts is an important part of our national identity and convict sites are popular tourist destinations in Australia. In particular, the Separate Prison, situated in the wider Port Arthur penal settlement (located on the southern tip of the Tasmanian peninsula) provides a collective social memory of the importance

of the convict past in establishing Australian history, which has ensured that it is now one of Australia's main tourism sites.

While tourism to Port Arthur has existed since its time as an active convict settlement - where tourists would visit to experience both pleasure and thrills - it has a relatively recent history as a memorial museum. The focus of this chapter is exploring the introduction of digital technologies between the early 2000s to mid 2010s[1] that has transformed the Separate Prison at Port Arthur from a place of entertainment and merriment into a memorial museum encouraging visitors to reflect and mourn for those who endured its silence. The first section discusses Port Arthur, and in particular the Separate Prison, as a memorial museum. The second section offers a brief explanation of the establishment of the prison, conditions experienced by convicts within the system and early forms of tourism at the site. In the final section, the implementation of digital technologies within the Separate System to foster a memorial museum environment are discussed and evaluated.

Port Arthur as a Memorial Museum

Characterised as novel hybrids (Williams, 2007), memorial museums combine at least three key functions: a museological and historical function, a memorial function, and a normative function such that they not only provide authoritative accounts of historical events and a place for remembrance and mourning, but a visitor experience that is both affective and (potentially) morally transformative (Sodaro, 2018). Tensions between the scientific, educative, and curatorial functions on the one hand and the emotive, reflective and symbolic on the other, are often particular to the sites under

1 It is important to note here that the data reflected in this paper was collected in 2014 and as such there have been more recent technological improvements to parts of the site, particularly the Visitor Centre, which is not discussed in this paper.

examination, with the tensions themselves representing a thematic feature of memorial museums. This is especially the case when the underlying aim is to strike that fine balance between "intellectual-historical narratives with affective-emotional experiences" giving rise to a more nuanced moral sensibility (Sodaro, 2018, p. 173).

Through the nature of their storytelling, the predominant focus of memorial museums is the illumination and education of a public "about a particular, bounded, and vivid historic event", as well as its commemoration (Williams, 2007, p. 25). Within memorial museums, it is not uncommon to see an emphasis on solemn remembrance connected with public recognition of horrific human rights abuses and terrible wrong-doings – particularly in light of the suffering endured by survivors and their family members – captured in news stories, personal interviews, old film footage and the like. Museums and other heritage sites that are engaging with traumatic events have become memorial museums through their efforts to come to "terms with past violence" (Sodaro, 2018, p. 3). In particular, such museums "seek to harness the perceived power of memory to heal communities" and to prevent these atrocities from occurring again (Sodaro, 2018, p. 3).

While Port Arthur was the site of the dreadful massacre of more than thirty people in 1996 by a lone gunman that horrified the nation and resulted in Australia tightening its gun laws in line with a 'never again' response, our sole focus in this chapter is on the heritage site as a convict settlement, where the violence might best be described as institutional, and predominantly psychological, which was enacted on adult male recidivists in the mid-nineteenth century, a historical time period well outside that traditionally studied in the memorial museum context. The kind of institutional violence enacted on convicts at the site is represented in such a way as to promote a normative stance against it; although, while the Port Arthur authority acknowledges that certain of the penal practices continue today in modern prisons, they offer little further comment or critique.

Although the focus of this chapter is on the atrocities enacted against convicts in the nineteenth century, it is important to note that Port Arthur only became a memorial museum in the twentieth century. Sodaro notes that the nineteenth century was a time of celebrating the "nation-state", to the point of forgetting past negative legacies; while the twentieth century saw the emergence of memorial museums in an effort to "translate the suffering of the past ... [to create] a better future through education and commemoration" (2018, p. 4). Port Arthur is a perfect example of this transition. For example, from the time Port Arthur began closing as a penal institution up until the 1970s there was a political and social reluctance to engage in discourse regarding Australia's "unsavoury historical incident" of its convict past (Jones 2016, p. 26). According to Jones, the topic of convicts became acceptable for academic study after World War I, although there was not widespread acceptance of the convict past until 1970, and even then, older generations continued to view the topic as unsavoury. However, during the 1970s, a time of political change involving, for example, women's and Aboriginal civil rights movements, Australia's convict heritage was discussed more openly, and indeed, more favourably, with many people actively investigating their past to claim convict heritage (Welch 2012). In contemporary contexts, convict heritage has become a 'badge of honour' for many Australians to the point where Port Arthur (and other convict heritage sites) allow and encourage visitors to revisit and understand what happened to their ancestors.

It was during this time of political change that increased funding ($9 million in 1979) was spent to facilitate more extensive tourism activity at Port Arthur. However, even then, the 'convict stain' remained a feature within the exhibits: political ideology dictated convicts be portrayed as a 'problem', with the government offering incarceration as the humane solution (Daniels 1983, p. 6). Almost thirty years later the Port Arthur Management engaged external consultants to revitalise and memorialise the site, resulting in the 2003 Design 5 Architects report that we draw on in

our discussion of Port Arthur. Many of the recommendations proposed the introduction of technology to engage visitors in confronting the institutional and psychological violence enacted against convict prisoners at Port Arthur, and in particular the Separate Prison.

Important to the transformation of Port Arthur as a memorial museum was the re-introduction of (authentic) storytelling. Indeed, storytelling is a fundamental characteristic of memorial museums generally, but in ways that move beyond offering an account of the past to facilitating visitor experience of it; a kind of 'what it was like' experience. Central to this storytelling are the various digital technologies employed on site, and it is these technologies, in connection with the framing of authentic architecture and artefacts, that are central to understanding Port Arthur as a memorial museum. However, before discussing how digital technologies are employed at the site – especially at the Separate Prison – and their integral role in shaping visitor (historical, memorial, and affective) experience, it is important to provide an overview of Port Arthur and its creation in the early 1800s.

History of Port Arthur and the Separate Prison

On the 20th September 1830 the *Derwent* brig arrived at Port Arthur with 15 soldiers and 30 convicts to establish a secondary punishment timber station (Pridmore 2009). As a result, Port Arthur became a penal station for re-offending or 'hardened' repeat offender convicts (Maxwell-Stewart & Hood 2010, p. 5) who were consequently required to serve a more severe sentence. Transportation of prisoners ceased in May 1853. Despite this, the site remained a prison until 1877. It is estimated that Port Arthur housed 10,000 convicts and 12,600 sentences were served (some convicts served multiple sentences) whilst it was open (Pridmore 2009).

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, reform movements by philanthropists and evangelicals were occurring in Britain and the United

States, introducing changes to the criminal justice system concerning the reformation of criminals (through labour, strict discipline, theological instruction, separation and silent treatment) and thus reducing criminality within society. In the early 1830s, there were similar moves within Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) to move away from flogging as a form of punishment towards the implementation of solitary confinement. Construction began on the Separate Prison (also known as the Model Prison) at Port Arthur in 1847 and it began to be used in 1849 before its final completion in 1852 (although there were further additions in the years to come). The Separate Prison at Port Arthur was designed for "incorrigibles"- "the very worst class of reconvicted men" and was "designed to produce docility in those considered dangerous" (Design 5 Architects, 2003, p. 17).

The Separate Prison was the most brutal and inhumane area within the Port Arthur penal settlement and has been referred to as the "terror" of the settlement and the "most dreadful of penal institutions in Australasia" (Beatties Studio 1990, p. 21). Prisoners were forced to live in confined separate cells. At no time was communication between fellow prisoners or between the prisoners and guards permitted. To ensure silence, isolation and segregation, convicts were assigned a number (their names were never used in the Model Prison, thus also ensuring anonymity); convicts and guards wore soft overshoes that muffled the sounds of footsteps; guards used hand-signals, and convicts wore masks while moving between their cells and the exercise yard and between their cells and Church services. Prisoners were also isolated in the Chapel in the Separate Prison, where each prisoner was confined to their own stall along a pew, which prevented the convicts from viewing or communicating with other convicts. Convicts were only allowed to communicate while singing in Chapel or to pass essential information to guards.

The prison routines were monotonous and the prison rules extensive. A breach of the prison rules resulted in the prisoner being sentenced to one of

two punishment cells: "dumb cells" (Beatties Studio, 1990) or the "refractory cells" (Barnard 2010) where they were to remain in silence and without light for either 24 or 48 hours with only one pound of bread and water daily (Brand n.d.). These cells were constructed "to deprive the enclosed prisoner of their auditory and visual senses" (Design 5 Architects 2003, p. 7). Brand (n.d.) makes a distinction between 'Solitary' cells (dark/dumb cells for up to fourteen or thirty days) and 'Separate' cells which constituted imprisonment in a light cell with more food and meat for anywhere between six and twelve months. How these convict experiences are narrated and memorialised using multimedia, and further, how the exhibits and technology immerse the visitor in the story being told, is explored in the next section.

Historically, tourists attempted to visit Port Arthur while it was still in operation to view the convicts as they worked and slept (Jones 2016, p. 40). After its closure as a penal institution in 1877, tourists continued to visit the site; the local press described them as "excursionists and pleasure seekers" (Tribune, 1877, p. 3). Many tourists unashamedly reported to newspapers that they travelled to Port Arthur to "see first-hand the 'horrors' of a penal station" (PAHS, 2019a), sometimes undertaking tours led by 'old hand' convicts who could recount the brutalities and punishments of the site (the legitimacy of the information imparted on these tours has been questioned and criticised as simply being created to 'sell' an experience).

The buildings of Port Arthur quickly fell into disrepair, aided by destructive (and thieving) tourists, two substantial bushfires and the government selling off the penal buildings in an attempt to remove the 'convict stain' from the area (the town was renamed Carnarvon in an attempt to deter tourists and distance the place from its convict heritage). Yet, tourism continued, and a Scenery Preservation Board was created in 1916 to manage the penal site, and visitors to the site begun to be regulated from 1926. However, the real transformation of Port Arthur, and in particular the Separate Prison, into a memorial museum has only occurred relatively recently in its long history.

Digital technologies within Port Arthur

Museums and art galleries have long recognised the need to enhance the visitor experience, which has required cultural institutions shift from a curatorial perspective to a visitor-centred approach that provides interactive experiences where the visitors become actors and co-creators of values (Marini & Agostino, 2021, p. 1). Previous research on tourist experiences of Port Arthur reinforces this wider shift and highlights the tourist preference for interactive facilities in the late 1990s as a way to "produce *feelings*" (Strange, 2000, p. 5-6, emphasis in the original), with Port Arthur having certainly extended their interactive exhibits over the past thirty years. Technologies continue to permeate museum institutions, changing culture and consumer practices and expectations (Bautista, 2013, p. xxiii). Throughout the Port Arthur physical site, visitors experience digital exhibitions and practices, which tell its unique and troubled past. Interactive displays, iPod audio tours, digital imagery, and sound recordings serve to remind visitors of convict experiences, and to evoke identification and possible empathy for fellow human beings in situations of violence and suffering.

While Port Arthur utilises these digital exhibitions and practices, it does this in concert with "authentic objects" that have historically been used to create connections between past and present (Walden 2019, p. 172). Without this physical connection with the site, the Separate Prison would not be a memorial site, and the digital technologies might threaten claims to authenticity, rendering them inconsequential. Within Port Arthur, these digital technologies combined with the Separate Prison itself (or the 'authentic object' - the original architecture, locked cells, the refurbished solitary Chapel, etc.) encourages visitors to see this site as an 'authentic' artefact and encourages symbolic re-enactment (Hansen-Glucklich, 2014 p. 123-124). For example, visitors can engage in the ritual of attending mass within the Separate Prison allowing the visitor to take part in the narrative and to feel empathy for those convicts who were forced to partake in silence and isolation.

However, LaCapra (2004 p. 65) questions how frequently empathy is actually felt in such environments. Instead, he argues that visitors feel identification with victims. Where empathy is felt, it is part of an "empathetic unsettlement" (LaCapra 2004, p. 65); and Hansen-Glucklich (2014, p. 142) argues that this occurs when visitors become emotionally involved in the past – to the point where they feel responsible for ensuring it does not happen again. Port Arthur acts as a memorial museum to create an empathetic relationship, and more importantly an empathetic unsettlement between the visitor and the past, to the point where visitors walk away believing that the Separate System was wrong and that prisoners should never be treated this way again (even though there are remnants of this system still in use in Australia, as the site itself tells visitors).

While many visitors may feel this way, as Walden (2019 p. 172) notes, there are problems with assuming that visitors will always engage empathetically because each visitor comes to a site with their own experience, knowledge and unique way of interpreting and relating to such experiences. As such, while the intention of the site may be to engage the empathy of the visitor, and to encourage visitors to walk away with the feeling of 'never again'; this will not apply to all visitors. The personal background of the visitor, and in particular the age of the visitor will play an important role in how visitors interpret a memorial site. For example, adults will (in general) be more likely to develop an empathetic connection to a site compared to small children who also visit Port Arthur, for whom the site may be seen as something 'fun' and unique. It is also questionable how strong such empathetic feelings are for visitors to Port Arthur – or for how long these feelings remain, and whether such feelings would lead to social resistance to such institutions in the future. In addition, as Walden (2019, p. 150) notes, empathising with the victim often alleviates feelings of guilt and restricts thinking about what can be done to prevent such atrocities again. As such, visitors can walk away from the site more concerned that they are never victimised in the same way, rather than thinking of ways to prevent it on a broader scale. Putting these debates aside, what is clear is that Port Arthur, and particularly the Separate Prison, has

become a memorial site designed to encourage visitors, through the use of technology, to empathise with the convict experience.

For Port Arthur, the story of the convict experience unfolds in a predominantly controlled fashion, with the first use of digital interactive material presented to the visitor in the Visitor Centre, the starting point of the tour. The centre represents a modern, purpose-built addition to the otherwise historical buildings and convict settlement ruins. Photographs of convicts are used throughout the Visitor Centre and site to provide tourists with a visual connection and reminder of the living people that used to occupy this space. Not all these photographs are digital – some images are integrated into signposts within the grounds of the site, while others have been digitised, for example within the available audio iPod tour (offering tourists the ability to choose what 'extra' information they are exposed to), or within interactive digital displays at various locations at the site. The estimated 200 photographs of convicts used across the site were among the earliest-known instances of photography in prisons in Australia (PAHSMA 2009, p. 50). As such, the use of such images reinforces the historical implications of introducing photography into the criminal justice system – these 'mugshot' images of convicts demonstrate the reverberation of the past in the present policing and court measures. However, an important distinction here is that the government did not purposefully select the photographs of these men due to the crimes they had committed; rather, these convicts were photographed because they "just happened to be at Port Arthur towards the end of the convict era, at a time when prison authorities were starting to experiment with photography" (Barnard 2010, p. 13). As such, the images that are used within these digital technologies tell a very specific story.

Digital Technologies within the Separate Prison

The Separate Prison is of particular importance for the Port Arthur Historic Site because it is the only remaining building on the site which truly represents

the penal purpose of Port Arthur (Design 5 Architects, 2003). The Separate Prison provides a unique opportunity for many visitors to experience how penal philosophy is changed, adopted, and then adapted. In this sense, the Separate Prison is the heart of the memorial museum of Port Arthur. Visitors to the Separate Prison share in a curated 'what it might have been like' experience for convicts incarcerated here, and the implications of this system for their well-being. Since the early to mid 2000s, digital technologies have been introduced to enhance the connection between the visitor and the past convict experience.

Prior to the early to mid-2000s there were no audio aids or headphone guides of the Separate Prison; rather there were minimal signs and a few archival photographs displayed. Indeed, in the 2003 Design 5 report on the Separate Prison, the following was noted:

> One of the most striking, different and disquieting aspects of the Separate Prison is the silence one encounters inside the building. Silence and separation was part of the Prison regime in which the convict was supposed to consider the errors of his ways. The rule of silence was also imposed on the guards.
>
> (Design 5 Architects 2003, p. 130)

One tourist recounted her visit in the late 1990s:

> The Separate Prison is the most disturbing of all the buildings. The only building that made me feel really uncomfortable. It is impossible to feel at ease creeping through the still, dark corridors. The distress and depression of those poor souls lurks in every corner, a wake-up call reminding me that there is a lot more to Port Arthur than parkland and sea.
>
> (R. Bennett 1997, p. 15)

The Separate Prison had the presence to emotionally connect some visitors with the site, just through its 'natural' architecture and gloomy appearance. Yet, history has taught us that this emotional maturity is not always present, indeed shortly after the Separate Prison was vacated tourists were begging guides to be allowed to be locked in the dumb cells for entertainment and some tourists held a mock auction in the church of the Separate Prison (Argus 1890, p. 9).

The adaption of digital technologies was proposed by the consultants to enhance, and severely control, tourists' immersive experiences. For Alison Griffiths (2008, p. 2) immersion relates to entering a space that is separate from current reality and allows bodily participation in the experience. Similarly, interactive experiences refer to allowing the "spectator to insert their bodies or minds into the activity and affect the outcome via the interactive experience" (Griffiths 2008, p. 3). Both interactive and immersive experiences are designed to increase the emotional involvement of participants (Griffiths 2008, p. 3).

In the early 2000s, different digital technologies and concepts were considered for adoption in the Separate Prison Conservation. One such suggestion was the use of modern surveillance equipment, which showed the visitor on the screen/s to instil within them the understanding that prisoners in this Prison were constantly being watched (Design 5 Architects, 2003). It was proposed that this could then be strengthened by showing similar images of surveillance via CCTV in shopping malls to connect the visitor with modern themes. These suggestions link to Tony Bennett's (1998) work on museums as a space where visitors come to monitor their own behaviour through education. T. Bennett suggests that during the nineteenth century art and culture were promoted because they were seen as "civilising agencies" on all classes within society (1998, p. 123); the objects displayed in museums at this time were transformed from their original purpose (in the case of Port Arthur, from objects of punishment and reform/violence) to governmentalised artefacts that were designed to instil civic formation (T. Bennett, 1998, p. 50). Continuing this work, Williams argues that museums are places that offer

visitors the "opportunity to raise their moral fibre through a rarified form of amusement" (2007, p. 90).

That is, visitors, upon viewing such exhibits *in public*, are encouraged to engage in self-regulating behaviour where they react to the exhibit in a socially 'normal', 'moral' or acceptable manner (in this particular case, one of respect and horror). In the case of the Separate Prison, the suggestion to introduce digital surveillance technology would not only have allowed the visitor to experience something like the convict experience, but it would also have facilitated self-reflective behaviour within the tourist whereby they become consciously aware of their reaction being on display to other tourists. In doing so, the memorial museum of the Separate Prison would have been complicit in imposing the same system that it actually seeks to critique. While this level of digital surveillance was not eventually adopted, there are alternative strategies that are in place that produce similar results (to be discussed in more detail in later sections).

Another recommendation, that was ultimately rejected, was that the site could re-introduce an old convict guide via image, text and/or audio to imitate the tourist experience directly after the site was closed and also to illustrate the prisoners' experience of this system rather than just the theoretical and intended aims of the system (Design 5 Architects 2003, p. 143). In one of the dumb cells, the report recommended that a taped voice could be played using the first-person, reconstructing the life and experience of an ex-convict guide and inviting visitors to "experience the horrors of the dark cell" (Design 5 Architects 2003, p. 145).

The adoption of digital technologies was recommended "to tease and engage all the senses" of tourists in understanding the central themes of social control and penal practices (Design 5 Architects 2003, p. 146). In addition, because "the workings of the cell indicators, warder's clock, pew locking systems and other technological features were all 'state of the art'

at the time" (Design 5 Architects 2003, p. 101) when the Separate Prison was built; it was thus felt to be fitting that this building received the most significant digital enhancement of all the original buildings at Port Arthur. Also, given historical tourist behaviour, there was an overt need to introduce digital technologies to regulate tourist behaviour and to convert the site into a place of remembrance and reverence as opposed to entertainment.

Following on from the conservation work in the 1970s, it took almost another forty years before the Separate Prison underwent two major conservation projects that focused specifically on introducing digital technologies:

> The aim was to create a sensory environment in which the Separate Prison building is given life and through it, visitors are exposed to what the people who were imprisoned here or worked here experienced. Through re-introducing the sights and sounds of the Separate Prison, the team hope to immerse the visitor in a new kind of experience of this extraordinary building, its stories, and its people. PAHSMA has recreated some sense of containment, of confinement and of isolation and intimidation, as well as reintroducing some of the people associated with the system and place.
>
> (PAHS 2019b)

As the quote suggests, the Separate Prison now provides visitors with sound recordings and digital displays that bring to life the routine and brutal practice of the extreme social, auditory and visual deprivation enacted on individuals for the purpose of prisoner reform, which will now be discussed.

Audio

As tourists approach the Separate Prison, they are met with a sign describing the space. Visitors are informed that this was a new style of prison that

reflected a social and political move away from physically punishing offenders to separating them through isolation (PAHS, 'Separate Prison' sign, photographed 2014). The next sign that visitors encounter is entitled "Be quiet!" and asks visitors to be as quiet as possible so that you can "get the most out of your visit to this special place" by reflecting on how the prison once was (separate and silent) and "if you listen, you will hear how daily life in the Separate Prison once sounded" (PAHS, 'Be quiet!' sign, photographed 2014). While this direction is designed to immerse the visitor, it also plays into the "civic formation" that T. Bennett (1998) writes about. The tourist is encouraged to conform to this request because they wish to "align their conduct and habits in accordance with this elevated mode of display" (Williams 2007, p. 143) of respect and remembrance that is required in a memorial museum. Consequently, the Separate Prison museum instils the same self-discipline as the original site (with the threat of social disregard rather than physical or psychological punishment).

To maximise the effects of digital technologies, Port Arthur restricts access to the Separate Prison via the main entrance so as to ensure visitors enter the building as convicts once did. As visitors walk down the sheltered veranda to the Prison itself, on the wall to the left of them are re-printed sections of the rules of the Separate Prison, and on the right an open space showing original ruins of the building. As visitors approach this space, they (should) encounter their first audio experience within this Prison. The audio allows the listener to hear aspects of the Separate Prison life including the closing (clanking) of cell doors, bell chimes and wind through the building. A voice (presumably intended to imitate a guard) then reads some of the many rules governing the Separate Prison. However, this audio loop is on a timer; as such, it means that visitors to the building may only capture part of the auditory experience, or they may be so unlucky as to miss it altogether.

In essence, by restricting the entry point to the Separate Prison, the visitor is given no choice but to "symbolically re-enact and take part in the narrative"

(Hansen-Glucklich 2014, p. 124) of the convict experience. In so doing, the visitor is aligned with the convict/victim's experience, encouraging them to consider such horrors inflicted upon them rather than to consider how they could prevent this happening in the future (see Walden 2019, p. 149-150). While this is problematic, such an initiative allows the visitor to use their imagination in a way to create understanding, and hopefully empathy with those convicts from the past. As Didi-Huberman states: "to remember (the pasts of others), one must imagine" (2008 p. 30).

The additional audio loop mimicking the recital of rules and regulations, and the intimidating sounds of iron cell doors, further immerses the visitor into the experience of being incarcerated. While a visitor could simply choose to ignore this digital enhancement (or again, miss it completely due to timing), the atmosphere created by the digital recording invites visitors to feel empathetic unsettlement and to encourage respectful and reverent reflection and behaviour.

As the convict settlement of Port Arthur is beyond the living memory of tourists, allowing visitors to recreate this convict experience through immersion allows them to, in a sense, 'remember', which thus enables them to emotionally connect with the past. Without this immersive and interactive element, it is likely that visitors will feel a weaker emotional connection to the site and past atrocities, and will therefore have a weaker investment in preventing future atrocities from occurring (if only to themselves).

Inside the building, similar audio stimulation is played to recreate for visitors what life was like for a convict within the Separate Prison. Visitors experience hearing 'convicts' scrubbing the floors of the Separate Prison, coughs, sighs and muttering (the muttering is often muted and it is hard to differentiate what is being said as a result of the other sounds within the exhibit). In another audio loop, the clanking of chains and the singing of hymns can be heard to represent the times when convicts were taken into

the Chapel for solitary reflection. The singing of hymns becomes louder and louder as you approach the Chapel within the Separate Prison, and the hymns indeed draw you into this space when they are played. Whilst in the Separate Prison Chapel visitors are also able to hear part of a sermon (again if they are present at the correct time). The digital enhancements create a memorial environment that makes it even more difficult to comprehend how past tourists held a mock auction or saw it as a suitable place for dancing and joviality.

The use of audio within the Separate Prison acts as a conduit to immerse and engage the visitor in the past. Through engaging the auditory senses, visitors are encouraged to reflect on nineteenth century legacies in a way to understand first-hand the physical and psychological violence inflicted on convicts. Specifically, the use of audio to recreate daily routines for prisoners allows empathetic unsettlement – the visitor becomes emotionally involved in the site and how convicts must have felt. The digital technology also connects people across generational divides (Marini & Agostino 2021, p. 16). Port Arthur has turned this space into a respectful memorial space, rather than a 'fun' spectacle, through audibly informing the visitor of the strict rules; the cries and sicknesses experienced by the convicts; and the forced religious contemplation. This experience provides a sense of authenticity, and encourages visitors to question whether 'justice' actually occurred. Importantly, all of the audio used (from the use of the guards' voice, the clinking of chains, the closure of cell doors, to the sermon in the Chapel) reveal to the visitor the "political priorities and goals of the regimes" (Sodaro 2018, p. 11); enveloping them in this memorial process and enabling the tourist to question such practices.

Interactive Digital Display

Museums incorporate the latest technologies to better serve their visitors (Bautista 2013, p. 5). While perhaps now dated, the Port Arthur Historic

Site offers visitors the opportunity to work through their interactive digital display within the Separate Prison (Port Arthur Tasmania 2011). This display offers an interpretive tool within a physical gallery that encourages a participatory culture (Bautista 2013, p. 5); that is, the visitor is encouraged to learn more through actively selecting information that interests them. As Bautista notes, the current participatory culture, particularly among younger generations, "is accustomed to immediacy, visual enticement, less entry barriers, and an abundance of publicly available information" (2013, p. 5). A digital interactive display provides a balance between upholding the "traditional, scholarly standards of collection, research, conservation, and exhibition, while at the same time trying to meet the needs of a much wider and diverse public" (Bautista 2013, p. 5).

The display features a model of the Separate Prison that allows visitors to acquire information on each wing of the Prison (and each important stage of the Prison's development). The display initially starts with a single wing (the B wing), and as each stage is clicked, extra sections are added to the model of the Separate Prison, until the final building is displayed. A digital copy of the original *Convict Tasmania Rules and Regulations* can be accessed, which allows the visitor to digitally flip through this important historical memoir of life for a prisoner within the Separate Prison. Other information available covers specific prisoners; information on life within the Separate Prison such as the labour required of convicts, the environmental designs created to ensure as much silence as possible within the building, the material possessions that each convict was allowed in their cell (in one case, there is a drawing of a prisoner's mattress which is then linked to a story of the convict William Carter hanging himself using the straps of his cell hammock), and information conveying the dread that prisoners felt for the solitary system within the Separate Prison.

Information is also provided from the guards' perspective. Comments such as "Cells are clean and correct, with no complaints. The conduct of

the inmates is good" are included with images of the cells (photographs, drawings and plans) (PAHS, 'Separate Prison 4 Aug 1858 digital display', photographed 2014). Other entries by committees and officials overseeing the Separate Prison provide glowing endorsements of the system and the view that they believed the system was genuinely working. Adding these multi-authored perspectives (information from guards, convicts, and authoritative figures, etc.) illuminates the implicit and explicit memories and stories (De Nardi 2019, p. 193). It shares different viewpoints and encourages the visitor to question the narrative that is presented, and also to place themselves in different positions. Multi-voiced discussions about past trauma have "significant politicizing potential" but are often "sidestepped by risk-adverse" memory institutions (Kansteiner 2018, p. 130). In providing these different voices, Port Arthur (subtly) invites the visitor to enter these discussions without risking negative political exposure.

Furthermore, through selecting a few prisoners to focus upon, Port Arthur provides microhistories to visitors to engage a stronger empathetic relationship. While the site itself does provide a "grand narrative" (Walden 2019, p. 173) of the historical evolution of Port Arthur and convictism more generally; the 'close-ups' of individual convicts provided throughout the Separate Prison invites the visitor to feel a greater level of empathy and connection to that specific convict and the site more broadly. Applying digital technologies in this space helps foreground the stories of prisoners, guards, reformers, as well as the building itself. While some of this information would be available in archives or online, it is doubtful that most visitors would access this information independently of visiting the site. As such, it has the effect of "amplifying the stories in places inaccessible to visitors such as the archives" (Marini & Agostino, 2021, p. 16). In essence, the use of this digital display ensures an immersive, immediate and interactive storytelling experience that educates the public and encourages the commemoration of its victims and the need to explore socio-political influences and changes.

Digital Imagery

A number of the cells within the Separate Prison have been sealed off to the public and instead have an information plaque on the door with an eye hole allowing the visitor to glance inside at a digital image of the person that is described on the door. Words float out at the visitor from these peep-holes in front of the image of the person. In this way, digital technologies have been used to "unlock certain levels of experience" by bringing artefacts and historical facts out of the museum cell door (Marini & Agostino, 2021, p. 16). These plaques are designed to educate visitors and reinforce the significance of the Separate Prison as an early penal reform measure. Individuals such as Jeremy Bentham (writer and philosopher), James Boyd (Commandant, Port Arthur), Henry Singleton (burglar and escape artist from the Separate Prison), and William Carter (the only convict to commit suicide in the Separate Prison) are presented to the visitor. As previously mentioned, the utilisation of 'close-ups' occurs several times throughout the Separate Prison. Through the application of different technologies, the site ensures that each display stands-out to the visitor. As such, visitors may have an ongoing empathetic connection to the site (and the range of displays) through being able to actively engage and interact with a variety of activities, rather than becoming desensitised to more of the same information being presented. The peephole also acts as a more immersive experiences for the visitor, where they may feel transported into the cell or privy to a sight that is otherwise off-limits. This technological device also places the viewer more firmly into the position of the guards watching over the convicts, which goes some way to ensuring that the visitor does indeed engage in empathetic unsettlement by forcing them to experience both the victim and perpetrator perspectives.

One of the cells contains a wall covered with convict photos. However, rather than simply presenting these black and white photographs across the

space, Port Arthur has employed digital technologies to provide emphasis and contrast for the visitor. The use of these photographs serves to enhance the "identification and empathy" (Sodaro 2018, p.25) with convicts by connecting the tourist with individual, and real, convicts. It encourages the visitor to grasp the reality of such historical forms of penal torture. The wall presents almost as a checkerboard, with hundreds, if not thousands of convict portraits and silhouettes digitally illuminated. The white rectangles (possibly a third of the spaces within the cell) present convict portraits, and stand in sharp contrast to the orange and red rectangles where just the convict shadow or silhouette is visible. This gives the viewer an understanding of the many faceless convicts that passed through the Separate System – faceless because prisoners were required to wear hoods over their faces; but also, faceless because, as previously mentioned, not all convicts had their photographs taken. There are rows of images at the top and bottom that are not illuminated – forcing the viewer to focus on the middle space of the cell wall, and the illuminated convicts. There is also a dimensional aspect to the display, with some images further forward than others. Within the white spaces, all the images of the convicts are presented in black and white – all men to reflect those incarcerated in the Separate Prison. The men are of varying ages and conditions, yet all are clearly images taken by officials for government purposes (enforced convict portraits).

The photographs available were taken in the early 1870s (Barnard 2010, p. 13) which meant that the men sentenced to the Separate Prison before this time (the Separate Prison had been established almost two decades prior to this) are unknown to us and cannot be digitally represented (unless they were sent back to the Separate Prison during the time the photographs were taken). The lit-up photographs provide the tourist with the convict's name – a modern re-naming or re-humanising of the convicts that were only ever known by numbers within the system. As Victoria Grace Walden argues, "humanising victims is an activist counter-gesture against the dehumanisation" that occurred during an atrocity (2019, p. 173). The personal identification

between the visitor and the victim is a common occurrence in memorial museums, where the inclusion of images of particular individuals (and their accompanying stories in many cases) is used to "build empathy" and create a "personal encounter" (Williams 2007, p. 32-33).

In conjuncture with these digital displays of images were information boards examining the political priorities and goals; not just of the Port Arthur regime at the time, but also the wider socio-political climate driving these changes at a local, national, and international level. As such, it goes further than educating the visitor about past penal policies simply at the site – it demonstrates how people with power can enact policies and how these policies unfold to create a wider regime of violence and injustice. In addition, it also asks visitors to consider the legacies of these past penal policies as a way of reminding visitors that while these exact inhumane treatments may not still exist, prisoners today (or in more recent history) are still experiencing inhumane treatment which stemmed directly from the philosophies underpinning the Separate System. For example, one sign in the Separate Prison asks the visitor to consider how supermax prisons (Katingal, housed inside Sydney's Long Bay Correctional Centre and the Supermax facility inside Goulburn Correctional Centre) still use "many of the same ideas as this Separate Prison" including the "experiment in breaking and remaking the minds of men" (PAHS, 'The Legacy of the Separate Prison' board, photographed 2014).

The use of digital imagery (and associated information) enables Port Arthur to tell a number of different stories – it tells the wider story of convict heritage (including that of the philosophers and high-ranked personnel responsible for the creation and ongoing running of the prison), as well as the individual stories of specific convicts that were housed in the Separate Prison after the 1870s. Such narratives provide illumination and education for the public (Williams 2007, p. 25) as well as an empathetic connection with the experiences of convicts that clearly instils within the tourist a sense of injustice at the sanctioned violence and alleged 'justice' that occurred at the site.

Conclusion

Taking seriously the role of digital technologies in shaping visitor experience of Port Arthur, and especially the Separate Prison, allows us to see the historic site anew as a memorial museum. With an eye to combining memorial, normative and historical factors, Port Arthur uses:

> multimedia and interactive displays to draw the visitor into the story that they are telling, making the visitor play an active role and identify with the story's characters.
>
> (Sodaro 2018, p. 24)

While there has always been tourism to Port Arthur, and in particular the Separate Prison, it has been the installation of digital technologies in the twenty-first century that has ensured that visitors to the Separate Prison have a deep and meaningful empathetic connection to the site. In essence, the adaption of digital technologies has transformed the Separate Prison from a place of entertainment to a memorial museum. As Kansteiner elicits, in today's reliance on media, digital technology is essential for successfully engaging audiences and "staging historical authenticity" (2018, p. 119). Digital technologies at Port Arthur are also used to foster "humanization and personification" – it provides 'voices' and 'personality' (Marini & Agostino 2021, p. 16) to a long past penal system, and in particular the convicts, wardens and reformers of the time. For Faulk and Dierking:

> Since visitors do not make meaning from museums solely within the four walls of the institution, effective digital media experiences require situating the experience within the broader context of the lives, the community, and the society in which visitors live and interact.
>
> (2008, p. 27)

One way to do this is to use digital technologies that resonate with people and provide a humanising effect on the visitor. Using audio that captures (albeit dramatised) human voices in pain or in forced hymn provides a humanising effect on the visitor that a simple analogue or paper-based exhibit could not achieve – the visitor can connect on an emotional level and experience a layered multisensory experience (Faulk & Dierking 2008, p. 28). That is, visitors rely on their auditory and visual senses within the space; but also experience the physical space of the museum that provides further connection through feeling the cold atmosphere and smelling the confined space (albeit without living convicts, heating and food which would have permeated the space).

Throughout the Separate Prison, the visitor is provided numerous opportunities to be drawn into the life of a convict serving time within this institution. Upon arrival, visitors are 'read' the rules and regulations of the prison; just as a convict would have experienced. Similarly, the Port Arthur Historic Society has actively re-arranged and re-built the Separate Prison to ensure that visitors can only enter the building through the main entrance – again, in an effort to replicate the original experience of a convict. This also serves the purpose outlined by Sodaro, where the visitor is now on a "controlled" path which unfolds before them "according to the exhibition designer's intent" (2018, p. 24). In this case, to enable the visitor to enter the building as convicts originally did and to encounter the auditory loop.

Inside the Separate Prison, the memorial museum experience continues with further auditory, visual and touch experiences that enable the visitor to immerse themselves within the environment. Through playing audio that mimics the sounds of prisoners' everyday life (coughing, scrubbing, muttering), the space encourages the visitor to reflect on life as a convict within the Separate Prison and to create their own individualised interpretation and memory of this experience. This interactive experience will impact upon visitors in very individual ways (Sodaro 2018) – for example, those visitors with convict ancestors or previous experience or

knowledge of prisons may react more strongly to such interactive material than other audiences (for example, perhaps children, where the historical narratives may be unknown and therefore the interactive media may provoke different experiences and understandings).

Where the visitor is a descendant of a survivor of the Separate Prison, that person may experience "postmemory" or "prosthetic memory" – where although they have no direct experience of this painful history, they still profoundly feel its legacy (Bond, Craps & Vermeulen 2017, p. 8). In essence, they 'remember' the powerful narratives and images to the extent that they become "memories in their own right" (Hirsch 2001, p. 9). Even without a direct ancestor, many Australians feel deeply connected with the convict heritage and may encounter similar feelings (through culture, as Hirsch proposes). Postmemory connects the visitor through representation, and as such the types of representation offered is central to the memories created (see Hirsch 2001 for a further discussion). Memorial sites such as Port Arthur enable the creation of postmemories by offering visitors immersive and engaging activities that create empathy, understanding and identification with a victim. The introduction of specific convicts who experienced the Separate System, and the telling of their stories through the interactive digital display and digital imagery, further connects the visitor to the convict past in a process of postmemory and reflection. Consequently, the visitor can feel more connected to these convicts, and the site more generally, through these individual examples.

As Sumartojo notes, sensory experiences are "central for shaping visitors" understandings of the site (cited in Drozdzewski & Birdsall 2019, p. 57). This includes the "historical narrative and its capacity to heighten and nuance empathetic connections" (Drozdzewski & Birdsall, 2019, p. 57). The visitor can play an active role within the Separate Prison – they can enter cells and walk around most of the building. While this opportunity existed for historical tourists, many tourists felt disappointment when there were not ex-convicts

on hand to recreate the environment. For modern-day tourists, Port Arthur management has applied digital technologies to recreate the Separate Prison environment in a manner that conserves the site, encourages respectful and reflecting behaviour, whilst also ensuring an immersive and engaging experience. However, the most immersive experience visitors can have within this building occurs with the audio played throughout the Chapel. Not only can visitors enter the Chapel, and select their own isolated stall, but they can also partake in a replicated Church sermon. Hymns and sections of sermons are played regularly enabling the tourist to actively engage in this activity that convicts were forced to partake in.

For some, immersive exhibition produces a cinematic attraction that is sometimes referred to as the "Disneyfication" of museums (Williams 2007, p. 99), and the insertion of digital technologies can lead to the interpretation that this provides evidence of the atrocity (Williams 2007, p. 101). However, the Separate Prison navigates these problems by using multisensory and multi-author perspectives, while also using as many 'authentic' artefacts as possible. As such, the Separate Prison memorial provides the visitor with multiple perspectives that illuminate the implicit outcomes of the Separate Prison, as well as the explicit – it asks the visitor to question the 'evidence' presented to them. In addition, through taking part in 'playful engagement' with the site (going into a cell, or into the Chapel to hear a sermon), the visitor may be encouraged to "introspectively turn towards their own subjectivity and with that to reflect on their own ethical responsibility" (Walden 2019, p. 150).

Essentially, Port Arthur has become a memorial museum through the active engagement with digital technologies. The managers of the site have purposively re-designed, re-built and even re-marketed the site with digital technologies, with the aim of creating a more immersive and empathetic experience for the visitor. Tourists to Port Arthur can experience some of what a convict felt when touring the Separate Prison. This effect is enhanced by audio, visual and sensory stimulation. The visitor is made more aware

of the starkness of the building and the knowledge that life within this atmosphere was designed to reform a prisoner's character through solitude and reflection; but in reality, caused pain and suffering. The experiences of the convicts (who, in many ways, were victims of circumstance and alleged penal reform) are the central narrative through the Separate Prison, and Port Arthur more broadly. As such, Port Arthur has become an engaging and powerful memorial museum.

This is not to say that there are not issues with the adoption of digital technologies within the Separate Prison. The most notable problem is the timed loop which governs whether, and how much, a tourist will experience of the site. It is possible for a tourist to miss the audio altogether (either at entry or in the church); however, it is more likely that a tourist will only capture a partial recording. For example, upon our visit to the site, we were required to wait for the next 'loop' upon entry as we arrived mid-way through. Many tourists are likely to just continue upon their tour without waiting for the 'full experience'. Similarly, it is plausible that a tourist could miss the hymns from the church altogether, thus minimising the memorial experience. One option would be to implement digital technologies that play the audio whenever a visitor is detected. Yet, if Port Arthur played these audio recordings continuously, or had the audio triggered by the visitor entering a particular space, visitors could then potentially miss out on the 'silence' of the system and thus misunderstand an essential part of the functioning of the Separate Prison.

Further, while digital technologies have helped to refocus the site into a memorial museum; there are inevitably aspects of the site that enable tourists to still have 'fun' and be amused. According to Stone's (2006) categorises of dark tourism sites, the Port Arthur site could be described as a "Dark Fun Factory" (fun-centric sites) or "Dark Dungeon" (focus on penal and justice codes in an educational, but commercial capacity) category. The site does offer high degrees of tourism infrastructure; it is commercialised; and it does

offer 'lighter' entertainment within the Visitor Centre. Yet, the Separate Prison itself does not offer this 'lighter' experience. The digital enhancements force visitors to reflect and behave in a respectful manner; and the atmosphere is one of respect. As such, the introduction of digital technologies into this space has transformed it from the Dark Fun Factory that was historically enjoyed into a memorial museum.

While the convict site of Port Arthur has always attracted tourists, it has only become a memorial museum throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Prior to the twentieth century the 'convict stain' was hidden, both politically and socially. As a result, few resources were channelled into preserving convict sites, let alone creating memorial museums. However, after the resurgence of national pride regarding convict heritage in the 1970s, communities and governments alike began to rebuild, conserve and refurbish convict sites, such as Port Arthur, into memorial sites and, then later with technology, into memorial museums. At Port Arthur, the twenty-first century saw the creation and implementation of digital technologies that have created a deeper connection between contemporary tourists and the victims of nineteenth century criminal justice policies. For example, the use of audio within the Separate Prison allows the tourist to experience some of what a convict would have experienced, and as such becomes a way to mediate the past to tourists. As a memorial museum, the Separate Prison has "morally educate[d] their visitors, using experiential, interactive, and affective strategies to give visitors an impactful encounter with the past and inspire empathy in them" (Sodaro 2018, p. 5). Linking to T. Bennett (1998) and Williams's (2007) work, the digital enhancements within the Separate Prison compel visitors to monitor their own behaviour; to become informed or educated; and to, essentially, refine their moral sensibilities with respect to the brutalities of the place, while still nonetheless being 'entertained'.

References

Argus. (1890) "A holiday cruise in the Pateena: The relics of the convict system, III Leaving Port Arthur", *Argus*, Friday 15 April 1890, p. 9.

Barnard, E. (2010) *Exiled: The Port Arthur Convict Photographs*. Canberra: National Library of Australia.

Bautista, S.S. (2013) *Museums in the Digital Age: Changing Meanings of Place, Community and Culture*. United Kingdom: AltaMira Press.

Beatties Studio (1990) *The Convict Days of Port Arthur*. 4th Edition. Beattie's Studio: Hobart.

Bennett, R. (with text by L. Bennett) (1997) *Port Arthur Tasmania*. Australia: Good Intent Enterprises.

Bennett, T. (1998) *Culture: A Reformer's Science*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin.

Bond, L., Craps, S. & Vermeulen, P. (2017) "Introduction: Memory on the move", in Bond, L., Craps, S. & Vermeulen, P. *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies*. New York: Berghahn Books, pp. 1-28.

Brand, I. (n.d) *The "Separate" or "Model" Prison, Port Arthur*. Launceston: Regal Publications.
Daniels, K. (1983) "Cults of nature, cults of history" *Island Magazine*. September, pp. 3-8.

De Nardi, S. (2019) "Community memory mapping as a visual ethnography of post-war northeast England", in Drozdzewski, D. & Birdsall, C. *Doing Memory*

Research: New Methods and Approaches. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 191-210.

Design 5 - Architects Pty Ltd. (2003) *The Separate (Model) Prison Port Arthur: Conservation project report*. Available at: https://portarthur.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Separate-Prison-Conservation-Project-Report.pdf (Accessed: 10 May 2019).

Didi-Huberman, G. (2008) *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*. Translated by Shane Lillis. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Drozdzewski, D. & Birdsall, C. (2019) "Using emplaced ethnography, mobility, and listening to research memory", in Drozdzewski, D. & Birdsall, C. *Doing Memory Research: New Methods and Approaches*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 39-62.

Faulk, J.H. & Dierking, L.D. (2008) "Enhancing visitor interaction and learning with mobile technologies", in Walker, K. & Tallon, L. *Digital Technologies and the Museum Experience: Handheld Guides and Other Media*. United States: AltaMira Press.

Griffiths, A. (2008) *Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums & the Immersive View*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hansen-Glucklich, J. (2014) *Holocaust Memory Reframed: Museums and the Challenges of Representation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
Hirsch, M. (2001) "Surviving images: Holocaust photographs and the work of postmemory", *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14(1), pp. 5-37.

Jones, J.K. (2016) *Historical Archaeology of Tourism at Port Arthur, Tasmania, 1885-1960*. PhD Dissertation Simon Fraser University.

Kansteiner, W. (2018) "The Holocaust in the 21st century: Digital anxiety, transnational cosmopolitanism, and never again genocide without memory", in Hoskins, A. *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition*. New York: Routledge, pp. 110-140.

LaCapra, D. (2004) *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Marini, C. & Agostino, D. (2021) "Humanized museums? How digital technologies become relational tools", *Museum Management and Curatorship*, ahead-of-print, pp. 1-18.

Maxwell-Stewart, H. & Hood, S. (2010) *Pack of Thieves? 52 Port Arthur Lives*. Tasmania: Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority.

Mercury. (1880) "Excursion to Port Arthur", *Mercury*, 10th November 1880, p. 2.

Port Arthur Historic Site. (2019a) *History Timeline*. Available at: https://portarthur.org.au/history/history-timeline/ (Accessed: 10 May 2019).

Port Arthur Historic Site. (2019b) *Conservation Projects and Programs*. Available at: https://portarthur.org.au/heritage-management/conservation-projects-programs/ (Accessed: 10 May 2019).

Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority (PAHSMA) (2009) *Port Arthur Historic Sites Statutory Management Plan 2008*. Available at: https://portarthur.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/SMP_APRIL_2009.pdf (Accessed: 10 May 2019).

Pridmore, W.B. (2009) *Port Arthur ... Convicts and Commandants*. Graphic Impressions: Melbourne.

Sodaro, A. (2018) *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*. Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Stone, P.R. (2006) "A dark tourism spectrum: Towards a typology of death and macabre related tourist sites, attractions and exhibitions", *Tourism*, 54(2), pp. 145-160.

Strange, C. (2000) "From 'Place of Misery' to 'Lottery of Life': Interpreting Port Arthur's Past", *Open Museum Journal 2 (Unsavoury Histories)*, pp. 1-33.

Tribune. (1877) "Trip to Port Arthur", *Tribune*, 27th December 1877, p. 3.

Walden, V.G. (2019) *Cinematic Intermedialities and Contemporary Holocaust Memory*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Welch, M. (2012) "Penal tourism and the 'dream of order': Exhibiting early penology in Argentina and Australia", *Punishment & Society*, 14(5), pp. 584-615.

Williams, P. (2007) *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*. London: Bloomsbury.

Chapter 4

Digitalising Trauma's Fractures:

Nagasaki Museums, Objects, Witnesses, and Virtuality

Gwyn McClelland

The Atomic Bomb Museum in Nagasaki is located less than 1km from Ground Zero where the United States Army Air Force detonated a second atomic bomb just a few days before the end of World War II on 9 August 1945 (Figure 1). It commemorates immense tangible and intangible losses for this place. The United States Army exploded a plutonium fuelled atomic bomb nicknamed 'Fatman' above the northern suburb of Urakami at 11:02am on 9 August 1945. Due to considerable cloud-cover and a lack of fuel, the pilots released the bomb not above the proposed city target, but earlier. Exploding roughly 500 metres above



Figure 1. *The Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, Fredrik Rubensson, Creative Commons, April 7 2012.*

the Urakami valley, a northerly suburb of Nagasaki, the bombing exerted a force equivalent to 22,000 tons of TNT (Kort 2007, p. 4). This was the second of two atomic bombings of cities in Japan: events which definitively altered the course of world history. Whether or not the bombing were decisive for the final stages of WWII, there is little doubt the atomic explosions defined the nature, and the fears central to the following Cold War. Culturally, socially and politically, the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum narrates a unique trajectory – that is often compared to the museum in Hiroshima, the city bombed three days before – yet, Nagasaki has been much less discussed in existing academic literature. What sets the narrative of the bombing of Nagasaki apart from that of Hiroshima is how the centre point of the bombing demolished a much

more marginal, less developed part of the city, fracturing social, cultural, and economic life and resulting in deep trauma in a city that was already divided (McClelland 2019a, p.3-14).

Narrating 'cultural trauma': unknowable truth and the memorial museum

The atomic bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima in war are key points of cultural trauma in the twentieth century that signalled the beginning of the nuclear age. For Jeffrey C. Alexander cultural trauma should be understood as distinct from individualised trauma: "members of a collectivity (*sic*) feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness" (Cited in Marcoń 2011, p. 788). Representing such trauma collective in a museum space, virtual or material, requires an attentiveness to the place, in this case Nagasaki; to the people who experienced this event (those who died and those who survived[1]); to the visitors who arrive in the museum to view and understand; and, to the memory and evidence that remains about the event. For those attempting to communicate collective trauma digitally, the question must be asked: what is the intended result for visitors to these spaces? The open nature of the displays will likely lead to a similar poignant question to the one put to students by a teacher after visiting the Holocaust-based Museum of Tolerance in the United States: "If this doesn't change our behaviour, what is the use of learning all this stuff?" (Reading 2003, p. 82).

Before attending to the purpose of the museum, it should be noted that trauma itself is essentially "unknowable truth", for both sufferer[2] and listener

1 The dead (up to 70,000 in the first five months in the case of Nagasaki) are themselves a limitation on the telling of the narrative whether in the physical or the virtual museum space. The vanquished cannot tell their perspectives, stories, or experiences. We are limited to the evidence of their bodies left behind (in some cases), who talked about their experiences.

2 More than in my previous work, in this chapter I intend to avoid using the word 'survivor'

(Torchin 2012, p. 6). Transmitting a presumed 'reality' of the event of the atomic bombing is not sufficient. Just as scholars suggest there is more than one Jewish Holocaust[3], similarly the event of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki may not be singularised. Philosophically, the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum itself presents such an aporia to the public audience. There is an impossibility of presenting any total truth about what happened. The memorial museum teaches about a history, without a clear beginning and end – so the museum and therefore any virtual museum must testify to the fractures; to a vanishing; and incomplete. Still, there remains a potential educative purpose. Additionally, by the opportunity to witness to the event, the sufferer may realise "a modicum of voice, perhaps even an attenuated sense of agency" (Sarkar and Walker 2009, p. 17).

Within this chapter I will evaluate the still unfolding evolution of digital resources in the case of museum and archive practice related to Nagasaki and their suitability in assisting in the task of teaching the difficult history of the atomic bombing, while the above aporia is front of mind. Memorial museums do exist to convince, and to assist the public in recalling public and collective trauma. Such museums were established in Nagasaki (and Hiroshima) specifically to convince the public of the necessity to avoid any repetition of such an event in the future. I raise here the possibility that digital techniques offer apposite methods that potentially reflect the fractured and incomplete nature of memory that supports the work of historiography (Williams 2012). In displaying a traumatic subject whether through physical objects, or the digital, an ongoing contest between the narrative and

as I am aware of the intrinsic struggle for many who come through difficult historic events to find agency. In having the privilege of talking with the second generation, I have noted a reticence to use the word 'survivor' to describe their parents. Thus, in this essay, I employ instead the word sufferer, avoiding the hoisting of an identity on any person who suffered such an extreme event.

3 Anna Reading reiterates James Young's argument that "in every country's memorials, in every national museum and archive, I found a different Holocaust and at times I found no Holocaust at all" (Reading 2003, p. 81).

the fragmentary is apparent – and the ultimately un-knowable story is told by fragments displayed or represented. The basis of the discussion in this chapter is my own extensive fieldwork involving multiple visits to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum between 2008 and 2019, supported by references within the literature, and my communication including emails to local public historians. Additionally, the work depends upon my analysis of emerging digital representations of the narrative of the bombing of Nagasaki. My wider work as historian in Nagasaki has involved extensive oral history interviews over many years with multiple sufferers of the bombing including the Catholic community, resulting in my book length monograph about their experiences, *Dangerous Memory in Nagasaki: Prayers, Protests and Catholic Survivor Narratives* (McClelland, 2019a).

I will develop my argument by introducing the evidence of the increasing digitalisation of the physical museum and comparing such components to two fully digital spaces that explicate the narrative of あの日*ano hi* ('that day'), 9 August 1945. Characteristics of the museum and the digital platforms include their methods of mapping the impacts, qualitative differences in prioritisation of sufferer voices, images and videos, and the memorialisation of damages and objects left behind by the bombing. As research question I evaluate to what extent objects and witness testimony in memorial museums have been enhanced, or stand to be enhanced by the digital in the Nagasaki context. I argue that emerging digital tools can potentially support, enhance, and expand our capability to conceptualise the historiography of the atomic bombing, although this is not a given (Cassidy *et al.* 2018). New forms of representation continue to evolve, representing memories, space, people, natural features, stories, and what was lost, within the Atomic Bomb Museum, and on the virtual platforms that will continue to transform how this event is curated, narrated, interpreted, and observed.

The museum 'object' traditionally points to the event within a memorial museum (Biedermann 2021). What does this mean for the evolution of

the digital object, and digital platforms which wholly or partially replace the physical building of the museum? There are two digital representations of the story of the atomic bombing I will describe in this chapter including the online Nagasaki アーカイブ *Aakaibu* (Archive), and the Nagasaki Museum on the Google Arts and Culture platform. The Google Arts and Culture site evolved with a close relationship to the physical museum site, whereas the Nagasaki Archive evolved separately, albeit with a similar aim to that of the museum of enabling people to understand more fully the story of the bombing. As I will note, the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum today has a relationship with both digital sites. The Nagasaki Archive combines academic expertise with civic volunteerism. Hidenori Watanave 渡邉　英徳, an information technologist and engineer from Tokyo Metropolitan University was the main driver and originator of the site.

Objects Pointing to the Absent

When visitors enter Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum in Urakami, northern Nagasaki, they encounter multiple found objects on display. The Museum has been filled for many years with such semiotic objects that testify to the power of the atomic bombing, fractures created by the trauma of the bombing, and the state of the aftermath (see also Tang 2005; Reading 2003, p. 71). One scholar discussing the aim of the Hiroshima Peace Museum that similarly has been well-known for objects representing the destruction of the bombing suggests the items displayed must "embody the reality of the horrific effects of the atomic bombs" (Higashi 2018; See also Lowe et al. 2017). But this comment paradoxically suggests that the narrative is best conveyed by an embodiment of broken objects, whereas we might argue the objects do not embody the reality of the bombing. The event of the bombing in fact destroyed, maimed, and vanished bodies of all types, human, animal, and concrete. Therefore, displayed fractured objects operate as powerful symbols (Williams 2007): they subtly point to the terror of the bombing, but the story told is not of what the objects are, but more

often what they represent –the non-embodied; and the no longer visible – that was destroyed, pulverised, atomized on 9 August 1945.

A Short History of the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum

The forerunner to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum was the International Cultural Hall (国際文化会館 *kokusai bunka kaikan*) in the Peace Park (平和公園 *heiwa kōen*, formerly Atom Park, アトム公). This building was erected by city authorities in the Urakami Valley as part of reconstruction efforts in 1955 (Diehl 2018, p36-40). Nagasaki itself was designated a



Figure 2.
Overhead photograph of Nagasaki, prior to the atomic bombing taken by US forces, 1945. Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum display. Photograph by the author, November 2019

"City of International Culture" in 1949, and therefore, the Cultural Hall was intended as a part of this international culture (Diehl 2018, p1). Incidentally, the Nagasaki International Cultural Hall attracted 220,671 visitors in its first year compared to 115,369 people who visited Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Museum (Diehl 2011, p109). As time wore on, by the time of the Tokyo Olympics of 1964, many tourists travelled on the bullet train to Hiroshima, without travelling further afield to Nagasaki (Nelson, 2002, p. 157). Later, in 1994, the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum superseded the International Cultural Hall, and by its location alongside the Peace Park incorporated the hypocenter (Ground Zero) of the bombing. Pre-COVID, large numbers of visitors from outside Japan visited the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum each year. (Ten million visitors had visited in total by 2008, composing c.72,000 visitors per year). Within the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum (原爆資料館 *genbaku shiryōkan*) and the Cultural Hall displays, fractured retrieved objects from the devastation which represented the aftermath of the atomic bombing have been ubiquitous since 1955, while witness records have gradually increased as the displays evolved to become more influenced by digital technologies.

Museum Matters: From *Jitsubutsu* (objects) to virtual displays

In its modern iteration since 1994 the Museum includes permanent exhibition rooms, special exhibition rooms, a bookshop, conference hall, 'Peace study rooms', a library, a resting place and tearoom. In the permanent exhibition, visitors to the Museum are guided firstly into Exhibit A (Figure 3), then on through to Exhibit B, C and D. Museum curators believe that supported guidance and self-direction, ultimately allow the visitor to make up their own mind about the 'truth' of the narrative on the basis of their experience of visiting, observing, learning and interacting.

Exhibit A transports the visitor back to Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, with an overhead photograph of the Urakami valley prior to the bombing, taken by



Figure 3. *Exhibit A: Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, Roland Woan, Creative Commons, April 28 2012.*

US forces (Figure 2), and a wall clock, frozen-in-time at 11:02. Here there is a mix of objects and digitalisation. Video and digital imagery are superimposed on 実物 *jitsubutsu* (realia), and the emblematic ruins of the church on the far wall is a replica. Additional digital images of the region prior to the bombing are flashed on large screens, and a short film of the rising mushroom cloud after the bombing of Nagasaki is screened.

Exhibit B "reproduces the tragic state of Nagasaki immediately after the bombing" (English language pamphlet from the Atomic Bomb Museum) including multiple eclectic 実物 *jitsubutsu* such as a broken water tank, melted rosary beads, a charred lunchbox and a grotesque helmet, incorporating the remains of a skull. Continuing through Exhibit B, the curators emphasise the witnesses of the atomic bombing, their statements, drawings, photos and videos. In Exhibit C, as well as a very short description of the aggressive war of Japan in China and the Pacific, the curators acknowledge the bombing's wider context and the



Figure 4. *Preserved atomised soap display, Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. Photograph by the author, November 2019*

dawn of 'The Nuclear Age'. The display here connotes a history of ongoing nuclear weapon development, including a survey of the numbers of nuclear tests conducted and information on the ongoing development of modern nuclear weapons (Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum leaflet). Finally, Exhibit D is intended to be a highly interactive space. Here, one finds a computer-based quiz and a Video Room where visitors can watch an A-Bomb documentary.

The museum acknowledges the events leading up to the atomic bombings, emphasising the aggressive war of Japan in Asia (this emphasis was protested by some nationalistic right-wing groups upon the new building's opening in 1994) and acknowledging the foreign (被爆者 *hibakusha*) sufferers of



Figure 5.
Robes of a Buddhist monk, Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. Photograph by the author, November 2019.

the bombing (Korean and Chinese internees, Dutch, American, British and Australian POWs). The museum acts as a place of study, for engagement with historical and ethical learning about contemporary society and culture. The digital supports the material displays, as I will discuss shortly (Minear 1995, p. 362).[4]

4 A refurbishment of the museum in 2015 increased the digital content in each exhibit, although some areas are digitally richer than others. There is no mobile app on offer at this museum, or tablet computers, but there are audio guides and small players with earphones available for visitors in Japanese, English, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese (Portugal/ Brazil) Dutch, German, French, Russian, and Arabic (according to the museum website). The provision of translation is a significant advantage for the museum's educative aims.



Figure 6.
Tactile brass sign saved from the aftermath of the bombing from "Ohashi" bridge, Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. Photograph by the author, November 2019.

Before introducing the digital aspects, though, there are multiple artefacts, replicas, a tree-trunk, photographs and artworks on display in the physical museum. Is it possible that the ubiquity of these items in the physical museum deny philosopher Alain Renaud's claim that due to digital advances, "solids [...] are now losing, if not all presence and power within society, then at any rate all regulatory cultural authority" (2002, p. 13). The objectivised environment of the museum as reflected in the objects on display in Nagasaki is a reflection of the conservatism of this institution and its origin in scientific rationalist, enlightenment epistemology. When I visited in 2019, one of the object displays showed preserved atomised cakes of soap on

which the brand-name 'Nissan' is visible in Japanese (Figure 4), and another the robes of a Buddhist monk (Figure 5). These are items recognisable for their human uses but displayed without their users. Seeing these material items encourages visitors to imagine those who used them or wore them.

Elsewhere, a brass sign from a bridge is accompanied by a museum sign encouraging visitors to touch. The tactile use of the brass sign including Japanese characters and a buckle allows visitors to personally feel the results of the atomic blast on the metal, a sensation that is preposterous in a virtual space (Figure 6). If the power of the bomb created a crucible to alter metal like this, we know on human skin, or softer materials, it would have incinerated. Again and again, the objects in Nagasaki's museum point to what is no longer there – the absent – and this anamnesis, or pointing to what is no longer, offers significant possibilities for the digital. How, then, can the digital offer an enhancement of our understanding of the traumatic narrative?

Displays have been increasingly digitalised within the physical museum. The previous Director of the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum 中村明俊 Nakamura Akitoshi[5] kindly responded to me in an email exchange early in 2020, after I met him in late 2019 at the 'Atomic bomb studies group' in Nagasaki city. I asked him about how digitalisation augmented the three-dimensional objects traditionally displayed at the museum. Nakamura described to me the aims of a recent renewal of the Museum in 2015 while he was the director. This, he wrote, was an opportunity to expand the digitalised materials on offer, to improve the resolution of imaging and to achieve "a good balance with realia ('実物 *jitsubutsu*)'". The aim of digitalising was to improve the experience of visitors entering the museum. It offered an opportunity to translate a symbolic object for ongoing interpretation,

5 Nakamura is a celebrated author (Akutagawa Prize 2001; TanizakiJun'ichiro Prize 2007) of short stories and fiction within Japan, with the pen-name, 青来有 *—Seirai Yuichi.*

enhancing the public's intrinsic engagement with such items. By picturing concrete objects on the Nagasaki Museum website such objects' trajectory is expanded and the potential observing audience increased.

He wrote to me in an email as follows:

> 実物の資料とのかねあいを考えながら、今後はさらにデジタル技術の活用が進められていくと思います。そのとき、実物をさらにわかりやすく、当時の状況を伝えるためのデジタル技術も必要になると考えています
>
> (Email 10th January 2020)

> [I believe in thinking about balancing the materiality of the actual object (jitsubutsu), looking ahead we must more and more promote the practical use of digital techniques. As we do so, digitalisation must tell of the true situation of the time [of the bombing], making the objects easier to understand.]

Nakamura returns to the narrative of the bombing (the true situation), and as a fiction writer himself, he understands the importance of the work of the museum to transform objects through pluralistic, educative stories.

The purpose of the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum

As I have argued, however, if the purpose of the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum is to convey the truth of what happened, then it must point not to embodiment, but to the effects of the bombing of disembodiment and atomization. The purpose here is differentiated from nineteenth century museums which tended to remember the past while looking forwards to a glorious future. The Nagasaki memorial museum like others of the twentieth century, comes to terms with violence, oppression, and genocide (Sodaro

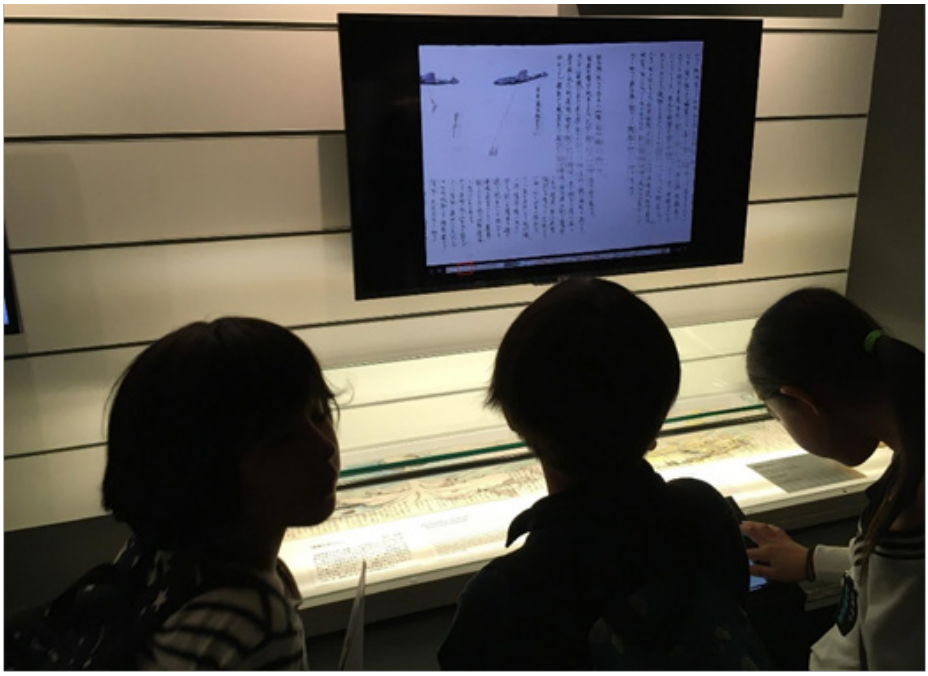


Figure 7. *Children examine a document using a touchscreen. Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. Photograph by the author, November 2019.*

2018, p. 13). By remembering mass-atrocity, this museum is distinguished from museums which recall more generalised conflict or war (Williams 2012). And yet a secondary purpose of the museum is to allow the sufferers their own voice, adding to the multiplicity of story and narrative: the multiple Nagasakis. I will discuss such narratives in the following section.

The ongoing digitalisation of objects and the booming witness records offer new possibilities for the consideration of absence and loss in remembering the event of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Digitalisation extends the

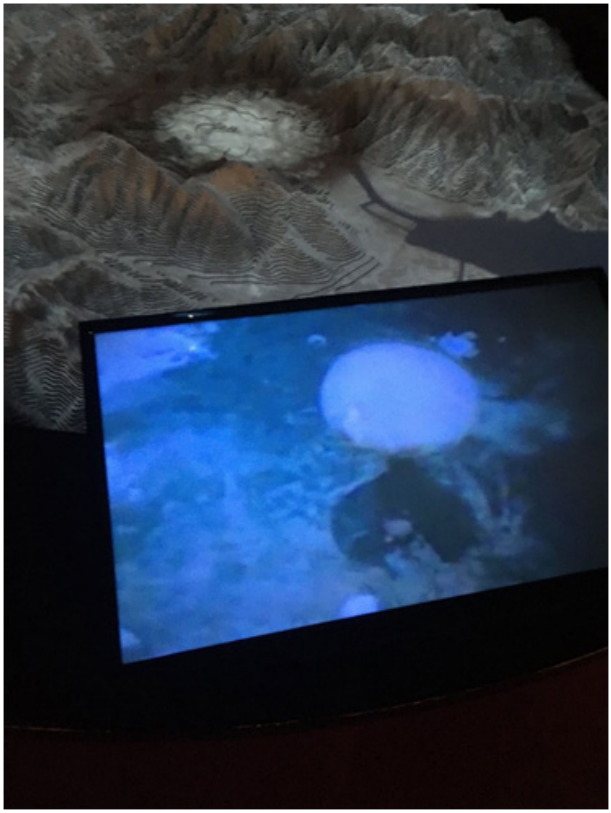


Figure 8.
Projection mapping on a scaled model, Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. Photograph by the author, November 2019.

reach of objects, and as they become digital objects, they become even more accessible and well-known. The twenty-first century museum is driven more by the ubiquity of digital adoption and use than by the emerging digital technology and tools available (Giannini and Bowen 2019, pp. 28-30). Digital culture takes a central place in human life, changing ways of knowing, doing and being.

Digitally Enhancing Objects

Digitalisation may enhance an object's 'life' and recognisability. Adopting a Marxist approach, David Graeber argues that there is another material value beyond the economic. He claims that an object will "seem to generate the very power it embodies" (2013, p. 225). The digitalisation of an object can extend that power within and beyond digital spaces.

Within the physical museum in Nagasaki, the evolution of digital objects includes multiple photographs and sufferer paintings digitalised on

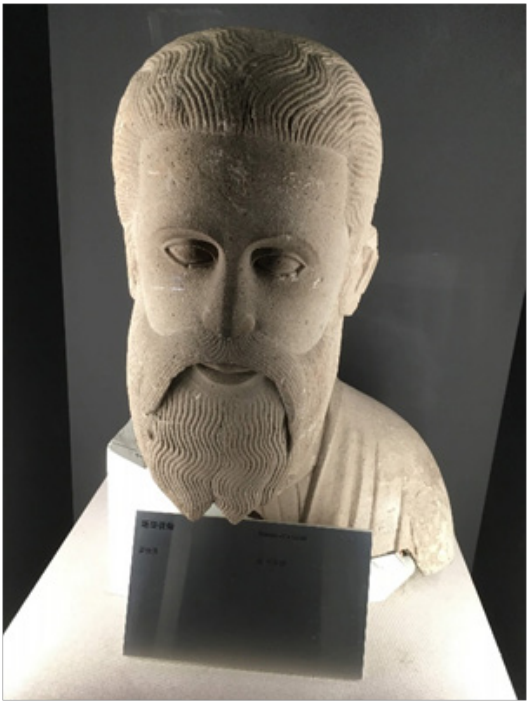


Figure 9.
Statue of a saint, November 2019, Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum Exhibit B. Photograph by the author, November 2019.

computers. Here, the public can interact with them and select those they wish to understand better. Touch screens are popular especially for school children familiar with the use of such technologies (Figure 7). Additionally, museum items are made more accessible through their digital transformation. Nakamura Akitoshi wrote that a previous difficulty was the sheer number of items in the museum's storage. Prior to digitalisation it was impossible to put them all on display for the public.

Nowadays, images too precious in their material state for public display are easily accessible thanks to their digitalisation. Nakamura described a traditional Japanese *makimono*, a scroll that was eleven metres long and thirty centimetres wide, that was drawn following the bombing, narrating in writing and sketches the remembered impacts of the atomic bombing. Previously, people could not access this scroll due to the danger of damage. After digitalisation, the content of the entire scroll is now easily viewed by members of the public, by touch-scrolling section by section on screen.

Projection mapping and computer graphics are used in the modern museum to demonstrate virtually the bombing on a scaled model of the Urakami valley (Figure 8) to crowds of visitors. Curators arranged the model in Exhibit B on a low table under lights, demonstrating the power of the bombing with video and sound effects. Several monitors allow visitors to follow the timed, descriptive video that testifies to the power of the bombing across the materialised topography of the scaled model miniature map.

The Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum might further enhance the 'life' of the objects displayed. The stone statue head of 'a saint' (Figure 9) from the Urakami Cathedral was at the time of fieldwork on display in Exhibit B, alongside the replica wall of the cathedral. This particular statue is striking, an undamaged face, with few blemishes; it can also be viewed online. A photograph of the statue is found on the museum website, although it is difficult to navigate in English.

A snapshot of the same statue in the aftermath of the bombing offers additional evidence of the 'life' of this object. Bernard Hoffman, well-known photographer for Life Magazine, took a photograph visible on the Time Magazine website of the same statue. He manipulated the image created by arranging the statue in the foreground of his photograph of the destroyed Urakami Cathedral. The juxtaposition affects how the viewer understands this image of the head without body, steadfastly staring at the lens, and arranged in front of the atomic destruction. The dis-embodied head-statue we may imagine representing the fracturing or ripping of the bombing and its impacts on the people of this town. This statue manipulated in the image is an early digitalised symbol ascribing a narrative of Nagasaki. The photograph in front of the church commemorated for the author's Western audience on the one hand an exoticism, and on the other the stark irony of the American bombing of the largest Catholic community to be found at the time in Japan. The photograph is also visible



Figure 10. *Screenshot of the Nagasaki archive. Permission Hidenori Watanave, Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies, Tokyo University, 21 December 2018.*

on Google Arts and Culture, the second of the digital archives I describe further shortly.

Deep Memory and the Digital

In addition to the objects and concomitant digital objects discussed thus far, the witness records in museums, both physical and virtual, portray powerful narratives of the atomic bombing. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, explain how the "speech act" has transformative and ethical promise (Quoted in Torchin 2012, p.5). The deep memory of the witness impacts on interviewers and consequent witnesses, including the audience at the museum (Ostovich 2005, p. 44).

For witnessing, the digital takes centre stage. By combining video, audio and image, the physical museum incorporates witnesses' oral discourse, telling the stories of those known in Japan as 語り部 *kataribe*, literally the storytellers of the bombing.[6] The *kataribe* frequently acknowledge in their narrations the human, animal, and natural environments that were razed and are no longer visible. As well as digital archives incorporating recordings, videos, and scans of the kataribe drawings, the physical environment and reflective space found within the museum support their witnessing. Alongside the Nagasaki Museum proper is the "National Peace Memorial Hall for the Atomic Bomb Victims" (国立死没者追悼平和記念館 *kokuritsu shibotsusha tuitō heiwa kinen kan*). This Hall, built by the national authorities next door in 2002, focuses on the people who died; those made absent.

Oral historians including myself, praise the role of witnesses, who transmit through audio-visual archive testimony, social urgency and pleas for change. Sufferer (*kataribe* or *hibakusha*) narratives and audio-visual records are a major

6 Like Holocaust education, there is a transition from live to virtual sufferer witnessing, as discussed by Marcus et al. 2021.

focus at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum (as also in memorialisation of catastrophe around the globe: Sarkar and Walker 2009, p. 1). The impact on the audience of this section of the museum and similar testimony accessible through the Nagasaki Archive should not be underestimated. James Young describes a notable gap, however, between sufferers' "deep memory"[7] and the historical narrative. The prominence of the witness record in the museum allows for the voices of the victims to be heard (LaCapra 1998, p. 11; Young 1997, p. 49). Sound, video, and imagery bring these records alive, even as the eyewitnesses pass away and are no longer able to provide in-person testimony. The curators focus the digital and interactive content on the witnessing of the sufferers themselves, a task more important now as we move on toward the 80-year anniversary of 9 August 1945. Audiences select interviewees they wish to hear, and a wide range of interviews are played on monitors. The remembered sufferers include Japanese, and Korean voices, as well as Dutch, American and Australian POWs caught up in the bombing at the Fukuoka camp near Nagasaki. One section describes the large number of Korean and the Chinese sufferers from the bombing, who were essentially indentured labourers in Nagasaki, estimated at one in seven victims.

The Nagasaki Archive

For those unable to physically visit the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, the interactive online Nagasaki Archive offers a virtual museum, with amassed images, video, and testimonies.[8] This archive purveys a sense of place through the creators' careful mapping of the narrative on to the Nagasaki landscape (Figure 10). The site involved a collaboration between civil

7 By deep memory, Young refers to a term used previously by Saul Friedlander, for the memory the survivor retains that is not representable (1997, p.49).

8 Although scholars discuss the possibility that virtual museums will supersede the physical museum, so far the two have remained complementary (See for example, Evrard and Krebs 2018, p. 315). Yet the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that many people have been unable to visit a museum physically and are thus more dependent on virtual spaces.

society, the academic Hidenori Watanave and Nagasaki University in 2010, and was soon followed by the creation of a similar archive for Hiroshima in 2011 and another after the Great Japan Earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster of 2011.

Today, the Nagasaki newspaper supervises the Nagasaki Archive, supported by digital records supplied by the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. The Museum provides historical photographs for use on the Nagasaki Archive plus the map of the region in 1945. The archive integrates Google Maps, including multiple layers showing Nagasaki city as it was before the bombing and today. Additionally, the site includes witness profile photographs, or videos, with stories at the location where the witnesses remember they were at the time of the bombing, as well as photographs showing the extent of damage after the bombing occurred.

The Archive draws the viewer in by its arrangement of concentric circles around Ground Zero on the Google Map, layering in the old and new maps of Nagasaki city; the before and after. Through the Archive, the viewer is able to better understand the landscape of Nagasaki including its mountains, vital in distinguishing this city's experience of atomic bombing from that of Hiroshima (See Shijō 2015, p. 54). Witness records are made prominent by the inclusion on the map of the profile pictures of sufferers. Mapping interactivity and the layering of digital objects in the Nagasaki Archive, while not comprehensive, allows the viewer to imagine the landscape and the impacts. In contrast to the physical museum, here users can zoom in and out at leisure, and interact with the space as a multi-layered curation. Whereas in the physical museum visitors view a map briefly in Exhibit A and again in the holographic presentation in Exhibit B, on the Nagasaki Archive, every link to objects, photographs, videos, and witness records are wholly incorporated in the online map. Additionally, in the archive schema, compared to the physical museum, the realia, or objects, are a lesser part of the narrative, and the witness records emerge

as the predominant primary source. In this way, the "Nagasaki Archive" website demonstrates in cyberspace how the narration of 'the bombing' in Nagasaki may indeed be enhanced by digital techniques.

In the Archive, as opposed to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum which guides visitors through a pathway, viewers may begin, continue, and finish where they see fit. Of course, there are both positives and negatives of the lack of a guided route. The viewer of the archive chooses a starting point and manages the extent of their personal immersion in the digital space. One might begin at Ground Zero, or alternatively near the city (about 2-3 kilometres south), where the viewer will find many more witness records. Whereas visitors to a memorial museum may become overwhelmed and overloaded, the virtual space offers the opportunity to dip in and dip out, or to consider one aspect, avoiding full immersion in the space for a long period of time. Additionally, the digital archive lends itself to the disparate, fractured and incomplete nature of the narratives, while held together by the digitalised map.

Exploring the Archive

The timeline features of the Nagasaki Archive emphasise how trauma freezes time, turning back to 'that day' in 1945. By clicking on a timeline feature, the viewer may move the map gradually from the 1945 representation to the 2015 map of Nagasaki City. Both maps can be turned off, to view an aerial photograph. The viewer can be taken back in time to 'snapshots', memorialisations of the fractured memory of the bombing and its aftermath. By clicking on a small photograph to enlarge, the viewer may closely examine historic photographs placed on the overlay map of the archive. The collaborative and open source OpenStreetMap view of locations is revealed when looking at such historical photographs; the old appears on the new. Of course, the Nagasaki Archive is not the only example of a digital platform: let us consider one more.

Google Arts and Culture: Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum

The *Google Arts and Culture: Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum* is one further virtual site that demonstrates another example of digitalisation of the story of the bombing. This site incorporates three exhibits, one focused on the destruction of the Urakami Cathedral near Ground Zero, the second examining the impact of the bombing on the natural world and the third, the impact on the city. Compared to the Nagasaki Archive's predominant focus on witness records, and to the physical Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum where both objects and witnesses are central to the narrative, this digital resource constricts focus to a static photographic record (as well as a few videos) and is essentially more linear. The viewer can examine the overall archive of the presented photographs or browse through one of the three 'exhibits' mentioned above. After clicking on an exhibit, a scrolling unidirectional story is revealed, curated by representatives of the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. The exhibits follow a format like an online newspaper story or magazine, incorporating the large central photographs, and interspersed with English narratives. Although written by narrators from the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, the discussion is generalised and does not offer the richness of the multiperspectival records available at either the physical museum or on the Nagasaki Archive. Due to its linearity, the Google Arts and Culture site leaves much less scope for interpretation, compared to the physical museum and the Nagasaki Archive. Although the site describes some important historical photographs, and there is every possibility of empathetic engagement, the content is presented in a shallow, reductionary way that de-emphasises the complexity of the Nagasaki narrative and resulting trauma. With its singular photographic record, the Google Arts and Culture site is considerably less rich in its content than either the Nagasaki Archive, or the original Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum.

Democratising memorialisation with Digitalisation

Both the Nagasaki Archive and the Google Arts and Culture site require no entry ticket, and therefore represent a democratisation of memorialised space offered via cyberspace. Reflecting on the atomic bombing is both painful and difficult. Allowing individuals to examine evidence in private and over time, rather than in a constricted time in public presents an advantage in the use and continuing development of the Nagasaki Archive and the Google Arts and Culture site. Digital interactivity and web functionality allow people to continue their learning about events such as the Holocaust and the atomic bombings online, in addition to museum visits (Reading 2003, p. 67-8). There are many positives about the documenting of the 'life of objects' across virtual space on the two digital sites, adding to the likelihood that the objects' value and potential interpretations will increase and enabling a reach for a global audience of millions (Giannini and Bowen 2019, p. 37). Both digital sites offer an opportunity to narrate the 'life' of an object, and to move physical collections from a familiar linear to a more complex and inclusive format, supported by geographical information systems. The Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum exerts some influence on both digital sites mentioned, and if able to integrate the two resources of the Nagasaki Archive and Google Arts and Culture as cross-referencing arms of the museum itself, the visitor experience at the museum stands to be further enriched (Biedermann 2021).

Studying in online spaces reveals more both about the narration of the bombing and the inherent gaps in narration. The integration of the Archive in the landscape of Nagasaki is highly effective in the narration of the bombing, and the prioritisation of witness records on the archive will potentially enhance the experience of visiting the physical museum space. I have noted elsewhere that the Nagasaki Archive (like the Hiroshima Archive) reveals a wide vacant area of space in the centre, with few witness records represented by faces and testimonies — this lacuna is representative of the widespread loss of very particular narratives, due to its proximity to Ground

Zero (McClelland 2019a; Nagasaki Shinbun 2016). Communities at risk of being forgotten due to the above gap include the 部落民 *burakumin* (pejorative name) outcaste smaller minority community as well as the Catholic minority community located in Urakami (See McClelland and Chapman 2019b). The digital Nagasaki Archive, like any museum, requires careful curation, taking careful account of such gaps and silences.

As when visiting a physical museum, in examining the digital Archive or the Google Arts and Culture site, additional interpretation and imagination envisages what is missing: the lost, and the elided. In order to encompass such gaps, the digital space like the physical must be equally cherished and supported by the communities of historians and the varied public audiences whom they serve. To approximate the place-based museum, the virtual memorial museum that recalls trauma must make a connection through the screen to the viewer, and to their own troubled, or disrupted place.

In short, in comparing the two digital platforms, the Google Arts and Culture site on the one hand, is two-dimensional with limited included narratives tending toward the prescriptive. Exploration of the Archive on the other hand, is not quickly exhausted, with its larger resource of digitalised objects, photographs and videos. Having said that, a major drawback, at least for the international community, of the Nagasaki Archive, is that despite being created prior to Hiroshima's Archive, it is still today untranslated from the original Japanese language. Meanwhile, it is possible to examine the Hiroshima Archive, already translated largely into English, and so non-Japanese audiences will in many cases be drawn to examine this one instead of the Nagasaki case.

Limitations of Virtuality

While the Nagasaki Archive efficaciously maps out the trauma of the bombing, space and place are not easily replicated to the virtual world. Indeed, materiality is essential to the sacralisation of place. The presence of

a 'Peace Memorial Hall' adjacent to the Bomb Museum where the absence of those who were killed is recalled by the symbolic sound of running water, is impossible to replicate online. The political rationale the "National Peace Memorial Hall for the Atomic Bomb Victims" (mentioned above, the 国立死没者追悼平和記念館 *kokuritsu shibotsusha tuitō heiwa kinen kan*) does not stand without criticism. The memorial was sponsored by the national authorities early in the twenty-first century. There is an ongoing danger the bombing is not understood in context of the historical causes rising to the final acts of World War II, and instead as a singular event visited upon the Japanese nation. In the Japanese context, the trauma of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki must be understood in the context of the risk that they will become or already have become a collective or national myth of victimisation (Shipilova 2014, p. 204). Daniel Seltz identifies a "religious tone" from the Hiroshima narrative fuelling a "right-wing" tendency to play up the narrative of the war as sacrificial (1999, p. 93).

Nonetheless, the presence of this reflective and abstract memorial alongside Nagasaki's Atomic Bomb Museum is not always interpreted as sacrificial by the visitor(s) (Seltz 1999, p. 92-93). This is a place of reflection and prayer: memorial services are held here; the names of those who died is collected and a basin of water, a waterfall and a pool recall the "water the victims craved" in the aftermath of the bombing. The building was sponsored by the national government, but, as Young (2002) argues in the case of Holocaust memorialisation, the visitors' interactive interpretation allows for varied responses to it, in its context, alongside the nuances presented by the neighbouring physical museum and the Peace Park. A webcam or virtual space cannot replicate the bodily, material nature of the architecture of the public space of the National Peace Memorial Hall, the physical nature of the flowing water, and the light and darkness of this monument.

Digitalisation does not allow a holistic understanding, especially of place. The viewer's sense of the social construction of place is limited by avoiding the

physical museum and relying solely on the virtual alternatives of Nagasaki Archive or Google Arts and Culture. For it is the local community of Nagasaki, the witnesses, and the inheritors of trauma through postmemory (McClelland 2021) that are the major contributors to the public culture of the museum. Also relevant is the phenomenon of 'dark tourism'. What is the effect on those interested in dark tourism of studying a place like Nagasaki via online sites only? The city has traditionally drawn tourists interested in both the 'dark' aspects of the history of the atomic bombing and the more generalised history of other parts of the city, including the Dutch presence on Dejima through the period of Japan's closure, and early European trade (Bui, Yoshida, and Lee 2018). There are multiple 'dark' histories in the region, including for example the history of the interned Korean workers on Hashima Island, 'Gunkanjima', or 'Battle Ship Island'. In fact, replacement of the place-based museum by the virtual leaves any further understanding of the context up to the viewer, and their own motivation for research, beyond the initial site.

Conclusion

The Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum is a memorial museum faced with a difficult task of describing a story of traumatic experience: that is ultimately unknowable. Perhaps, the museum is better defined by the empty space set aside within it that acknowledges the shattering and the obliterations of collective trauma. The memorial museum's project is an important task that is enhanced by combining digital technologies and literacies that the community already manipulates. In this chapter I have compared the Atomic Bomb Museum to two solely online spaces that both draw on the resources of the physical museum: the Nagasaki Archive and the Google Arts and Culture site. The Nagasaki Archive points to what was made absent by the bombing by displaying photographs, objects, and witness records of the bombing in an imagined space, its virtual mapping creatively depicting the widening

concentric circles outside the hypocenter (Ground Zero) of the bombing.[9] If the digital must embody the effects of the bombing, or make these impacts easier to understand, as former Bomb Museum Director Nakamura Akitoshi exhorts, then it must gesture towards what is absent. On the Nagasaki Archive site this is hauntingly achieved. Conversely, the Google Arts and Culture site is less successful in describing the multiplicity of Nagasaki experiences of the bombing. Digitalisation requires careful and thoughtful curation, and does not by itself promise the enhancing of audience understanding. It does not automatically open up multiplicity or multivocality.

If the benefits of digitalised memory are to be maximised, continual and ongoing liaison between the three varied spaces of memory about the bombing of Nagasaki must occur. History is by nature contested, with a tendency to privilege certain voices above others, and so the curation and civil input for the collaborative project supporting the narration of the story of the bombing of Nagasaki is of highest priority. As long as the collaborative approach and local input remains high, renewed linguistic efforts to improve the already excellent digital resources will allow for the continuing expansion of the reach of the two sites to the public around the world. This will be an added benefit for the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum.

There are limits, of course, to the usefulness of digitalisation and the physical space will continue to be of vital importance. In relying only on the digital, the social, communal and sacred experience of visiting this place, in its very specific cultural, context is lost. The concept of sacralised space – a place of quiet; of prayerfulness; of grief – is not easily conveyed through a screen. Sacred places require materiality. As the digital connects the viewer to their own place of grief, there remains an opportunity for connection. In short, the

---

9 The concentric circles recall the Catholic doctor, Akizuki Tatsuichiro, and his searing 1972 book in Japanese that details his memory of the recovery after the bombing of Nagasaki: 死の同心円: Death's concentric circles.

curators' use of the digital increasingly supports and enhances the significant work done within the physical Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum.

*****

"This chapter is dedicated to the citizens of Nagasaki, to the museum curators, and to the sufferers of the atomic bombing and their children and grandchildren, who continue to tell the story of 'that day'. Thanks also should go to Seirai Yuichi, and to Keren."

*****

References

Akizuki, T. (1972). *Shi no Doshinen, (Concentric circles of Death)*, Tokyo: Kodansha.

Biedermann, B. (2021) 'Virtual museums as an extended museum experience: Challenges and impacts for museology, digital humanities, museums and visitors – in times of (Coronavirus) crisis' *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, Providence Vol. 15 (3).

Bui, H.T., Yoshida, K., Lee, T. (2018). Heritage Landscapes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in: Egberts, L., Alvarez, M.D. (Eds.), Heritage and Tourism, Places, Imageries and the Digital Age. Amsterdam University Press, pp. 55–76. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv62hddf.6

Cassidy, C.A., Fabola, A., Miller, A., Weil, K., Urbina, S., Antas, M., Cummins, A. (2018). Digital Pathways in Community Museums. Museum International 70, 126–139. https://doi.org/10.1111/muse.12198

Diehl, C.R. (2018). Resurrecting Nagasaki: Reconstruction and the Formation of Atomic Narratives. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Diehl, C.R. (2011). Resurrecting Nagasaki: Reconstruction, the Urakami Catholics, and Atomic Memory, 1945-1970 (Unpublished thesis). Columbia University, New York.

Evrard, Y. and A. Krebs (2018). 'The Authenticity of the Museum Experience in the Digital Age: The Case of the Louvre' *Journal of Cultural Economics* 42, 3 (1): 353-363.

Giannini, T., Bowen, J.P. (2019). Museums and Digital Culture: New Perspectives and Research. Springer.

Graeber, D. (2013). 'It is value that brings universes into being' *Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 3 (2), 219-243.

Higashi, J., 2018. The Destruction and Creation of a Cityscape in the Digital Age: Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. Museum International 70, 104–113. https://doi.org/10.1111/muse.12196

Kort, M. (2007). The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb. Columbia University Press, New York.

LaCapra, D. (1998). History and Memory After Auschwitz, 1st edn. ed. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.

Lowe, D., Atherton, C., Miller, A., Atherton, C., Braw, M., Broderick, M., Broinowski, A., Jacobs, R., Kuznick, P.J. (2017). The Unfinished Atomic Bomb: Shadows and Reflections. Lexington Books, Blue Ridge Summit, Unite States.

Marcoń, B. (2011). Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the Eye of the Camera: Images and Memory. Third Text 25, 787–797. https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2011.624352

Marcus, A.S., Maor, R., McGregor, I.M., Mills, G., Schweber, S., Stoddard, J., Hicks, D. (2021). Holocaust education in transition from live to virtual survivor testimony: pedagogical and ethical dilemmas. Holocaust Studies 0, 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2021.1979176

McClelland, G. (2021). Catholics at Ground Zero: Negotiating (Post) Memory. History Workshop Journal 92, 130–150. https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbab017

McClelland, G. (2019a). Dangerous Memory in Nagasaki : Prayers, Protests and Catholic Survivor Narratives. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429266003

McClelland, G., Chapman, D. (2019b). Silences: The Catholics, the Untouchables and the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb. Asian Studies Review 0, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2019.1692783

Minear, R.H. (1995). Atomic Holocaust, Nazi Holocaust: Some Reflections. Diplomatic History 19, 347–365.

Nagasaki Shinbun. (2016). Nagasaki Archive.

Nelson, J. (2002). From Battlefield to Atomic Bomb to the Pure Land of Paradise: Employing the Bodhisattva of Compassion to Calm Japan's Spirits of the Dead. Journal of Contemporary Religion 17, 149–164.

Ostovich, S. (2005). Dangerous Memories and Reason in History. KronoScope 5, 41–58. https://doi.org/10.1163/1568524054005212

Reading, A. (2003). Digital interactivity in public memory institutions: the uses of new technologies in Holocaust museums. Media, Culture & Society 25, 67–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/016344370302500105

Renaud, A. (2002). Memory and the Digital World: a few philosophical pointers for new memory practices in the information era. Museum International 54, 8–18. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0033.00383

Sarkar, B., Walker, J. (Eds.) (2009). Documentary Testimonies: Global Archives of Suffering, 1st edition. ed. Routledge.

Seltz, D. (1999). Remembering the War and the Atomic Bombs: New Museums, New Approaches. Radical History Review 1999, 92–108. https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-1999-75-92

Shijō, C. (2015). Urakami no genbaku no katari: Nagai Takashi kara Rōma Kyōkō e. Miraisha, Tōkyō.

Shipilova, A. (2014). From Local to National Experience: Has Hiroshima Become a 'Trauma for Everybody'? Japanese Studies 34, 193–211. https://doi.org/10.1080/10371397.2014.933669

Sodaro, A. (2018). Exhibiting Atrocity, None edition. ed. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick Camden ; Newark.

Tang, M.-C. (2005). Representational practices in digital museums: A case study of the National Digital Museum Project of Taiwan. International Information & Library Review 37, 51–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/10572317.2005.10762665

Torchin, L. (2012). Introduction: Screen Media and Witnessing Publics. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.

Williams, P. (2012). Memorial museums and the objectification of suffering, in: Marstine, J. (Ed.), The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First Century Museum. Taylor and Francis, pp. 220–235. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203815465

Williams, P. (2007) *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*. Oxford & New York: Berg.

Young, J.E. (2002). Germany's Holocaust Memorial Problem—and Mine. The Public Historian 24, 65–80. https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2002.24.4.65

Young, J.E. (1997). Between History and Memory: The Uncanny Voices of Historian and Survivor. History and Memory 9, 47–58.

Chapter 5

Augmented Sarajevo:

Digitally Reconstructing War Heritage and the Sense of Place

Sabina Tanović

The ruins left of our city still protected us from the cold and the burning sun. They protected us just enough to let us endure this somehow, I smugly thought.
(Karahasan 2010, p. 67)

Culture may be digital, human stories will always be analogue.
Het Nieuwe Warenhuis

To live is to leave traces
(Benjamin 1939)

In August 1992, black snow was falling over Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Warm snowflakes were disappearing in citizens' palms. Eventually, no trace of the black snow was left, except for its source: the burning National and University Library, Vijećnica. Those who witnessed the destruction of the library by the incendiary shells coming from the surrounding hills, speak of flocks of black birds emerging from the building. The phantasmagoric birds were carried by the wind and then transformed into the black snow that "choked the city" (Simić 2005, p. 32) – the burnt pages of books, manuscripts and incunabula destroyed by this pyre of civilisation. Throughout the Siege of Sarajevo (1992-1996), organised by the joined forces of the Army of the Republic of Srpska (RS) and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), after Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in March 1992, most of the city's buildings suffered in the same way. The complete siege, generally considered the longest siege of a capital city in modern history (also successfully sustained by Sarajevo's geological position in a valley which allowed perpetrators to terrorise it from the surrounding hills), lasted for nearly four years, and resulted in thousands of civilian deaths and enormous structural damage to the urban fabric. During these years, Sarajevo's public space morphed into an interior of terror in which resilient citizenship left traces embeded in the city's ruins, as writer Dževad Karahasan explains in the quotation from *Exodus of a City* above.

Three decades since the beginning of the siege, the inevitable force of urban spatial expansion, determined by the fast dynamics of a growing society and consumerism in concert with the lack of collective memorialisation framework has led to a collective loss of war heritage. This chapter discusses how the possibilities of contemporary technologies could reinforce a discourse of collective remembering through the place-tailored digital reconstruction of endangered and demolished war heritage in the capital city, Sarajevo. After briefly exploring the importance of architectural war heritage in regard to national identity-building processes, this chapter focuses on the *Augmented Sarajevo* initiative which colleagues and I have been developing, to argue

that the project's social, political and cultural frameworks deal with the complexities of collective remembrance by challenging competing values and established imperatives geared toward whitewashing palimpsests of the past. In doing this, the initiative posits that the relationship between human narratives and physical space is the cornerstone for digital representations, as succinctly put in the second quotation above, borrowed from a social wall in a coworking space.

The intense destruction of cultural heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina that raged during the conflict from April 1992 until December 1995 is registered in documents that confirm the orchestrated targeting of architecture as a military objective during the siege.[1] A project that was initiated in October 1993 by the Association of Architects of Bosnia-Herzegovina (then known as DAS–SABIH), entitled "Warchitecture - Urbicide Sarajevo", was a project that *ad-hoc* documented the then ongoing unprecedented destruction of the city. It hoped to reach out to the outside world for help and support through a travelling exhibition that was, while the siege continued, installed in cities across Europe and also reached New York (Čurić et. al. 1993). Architects working on the Warchitecture project mapped the orchestrated destruction of the built environment in terms of targeting and the varying degrees of damage, which generated what was recognised as a "new architectural history of Sarajevo" (Herscher 2008). The term *urbicide* that was used in the Warchitecture catalogue was first mentioned in a report documenting heritage destruction in Mostar in 1992 where the notion of "urban genocide"

1 In 1995, the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural, Historical and Nature Heritage of the Canton of Sarajevo (Kantonalni Zavod za Zaštitu Kulturno-Historijskog i Prirodnog Nasljeđa) published an incomplete report that stated 2,771 cultural properties were damaged or destroyed during the war, 713 were totally destroyed and 554 were set on fire and are unusable. The report confirmed that out of 60 valuable urban nuclei, 49 were destroyed or very badly damaged within the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Walasek 2015, p. 152). The Institute published a follow-up catalogue in 2000 and categorised cultural monuments' war damage (Čelić-Čemerlić 2000). Here, the profound damage to the urban nuclei of Sarajevo was mapped in more detail.



Figure 1. *A ruin of the Austro-Hungarian electric power plant administration building in Sarajevo's city center with a billboard announcing new developments. Photograph by the author, 2022.*

designated the destruction of cities and urban culture during the war. From here, the term was appropriated by urban theorists focused on cities and conflict (Walasek 2015, p. 146). In relation to this, Robert Bevan also used the term *memoricide* to stress that societies are as fragile as their architecture (2006, p. 6).

Unfortunately, the material evidence of this destruction that was so important during the siege, both in terms of targeting and protection, is today considered difficult heritage or, more precisely, ambiguous heritage. Concerning the current memory-politics in relation to all tangible heritage (i.e. cultural,

industrial and symbolic war heritage), we can argue that the weaponised aggressive destruction of 1992-95 morphed into an ambiguous post-siege destruction of material war evidence with different intensity and means. Processes of reconstruction that obliterated (and still obliterate) physical layers inflicted during the siege are but just one example.

Compared to the immediate post-siege state, today's built environment and public spaces of Sarajevo show only scarce authentic traces of the destruction. In most cases, damaged and destroyed architecture is either restored or completely reconstructed without consideration for the symbolic and historical value of this particular past. More prominent traces of war such as larger ruins do exist but are, for the most part, on properties stuck in limbo due to ownership issues. For example, Karl Parik's building, an 1894 administration building of the electric power plant from the Austro-Hungarian period in the very centre of Sarajevo, still stands as it was documented in the Warchitecture 1993 catalogue. Importantly, as valuable industrial heritage that was ignored as such even before the siege, the building was used as the example to bring forward an argument that the siege destruction amplified importance (and lack of preservation) of historical layers and created the possibility to reassess its value as "architectural testimony" of the past (Jakšić 1993).

Notwithstanding, a lack of strategic planning in city development, and specifically in architectural reconstructions of designated cultural heritage, arguably worsened since the war (Lamphere-Englund 2015). The case of Vijećnica as a cultural heritage reconstruction also attests to this: In a process that has lasted more than two decades (in two phases of reconstruction), the building was restored to what was assessed as its original state to accommodate governmental offices. The reconstruction process produced a replica of a building - as it was upon its inauguration in the nineteenth century. There are no physical traces of its ageing visible to the public eye nor a meaningful memorial to the destruction of the library – the patina of its more than a century long existence was lost to fire in 1992 and then the physical

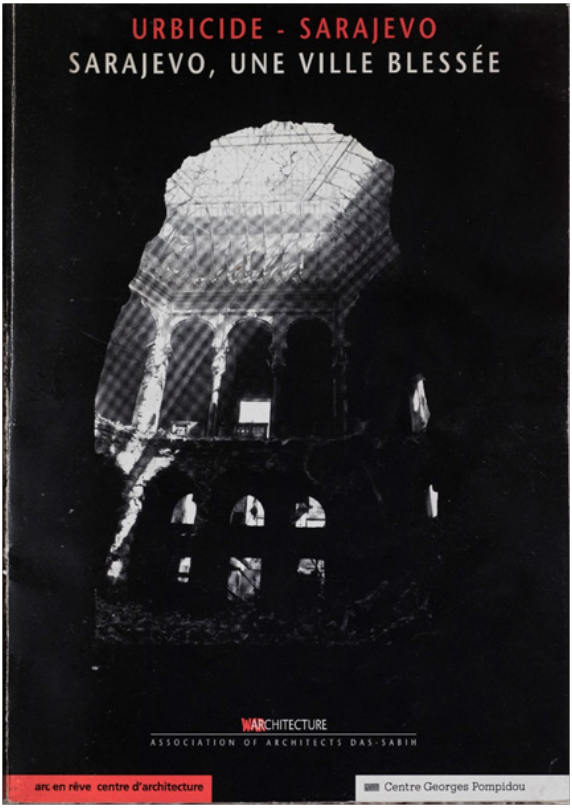


Figure 2. *Warchitecture catalogue 1994 – cover page. Credit: Association of Archtects in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

evidence of this destruction vanished in a lengthy process of renovation and reconstruction after the siege.

In terms of its architectural archaeological value when we discuss the building's authenticity, we can speak of what has been dubbed "fake heritage" (Darlington 2020). In terms of its symbolic value and memorialisation of the former library's destruction, civilian protest and resistance, we can

speak of a slow *memoricide*. One example of such resistance was the heroic collective effort of citizens to save books from the fire that are now only briefly mentioned in a modest exhibition inside the no longer public building with a problematic memorial board at its entrance that instead of reinforcing collective remembrance hints at collective guilt of the "other" (Petrović – Ziemer 2015). This form of *memoricide* presupposes collective indifference that arises as a consequence of multiple factors – eliminating palimpsests of physical space is one of them. As a consequence of a lengthy and politicised reconstruction process, the present Vijećnica is a contested site of memory, a missed opportunity to encourage remembrance discourses based on commonalities (Hartmann 2016). The collective remembrance of what happened is preserved mostly through online platforms (also on the official Vijećnica website) that contain photographs, archive footage and documents such as the Warchitecture project that featured Vijećnica's burned interior on its exhibition catalogue cover for the 1994 Centre George Pompidou exhibition.

To be sure, reconstruction and revitalisation are important in post-war recovery and, if planned and executed sustainably, they aid communities and kinships in a psycho-social process of restoring their sense of belonging and identity (Hadžimuhamedović 2019; Markowitz 2012). At the same time, large structural renovations and urban developments that erased common evidence of difficult pasts dramatically influence collective identities. This was already recognised during the siege when architects stressed the importance of war-damage preservation (Perišić 1993). Next to the iconic Vijećnica, the erasure can clearly be seen in other buildings such as the "Holiday" hotel (formerly known as Holiday Inn) – a siege time hub for foreign reporters that was profoundly damaged, and the "Momo & Uzeir" skyscrapers that burned in 1993, inspiring American architect Lebbeus Woods to declare "the end of an age of reason" (Woods 1993, p. 3). These buildings are now reduced to facsimiles of their inaugural states, more representative of what Jean Baudrillard (1993) criticised as a staged reality. However, they also go further than this since restorations did



Figure 3. *Momo & Uzeir twin towers, Sarajevo 1993. Credit: Yorck Maecke / Sniper Alley project.*

not always consult original designers and heritage experts. For example, the restoration procedure of Momo & Uzeir (today known as Unitic) ended up in court due to a disagreement between the renowned architect of the original buildings, Ivan Štraus, and the investor who was primarily focused on financial aspects of the restoration. Štraus, who argued for a proper use of materials and the symbolic value of his architecture, lost the legal battle (Bajrović 2017).

If we understand authenticity as historical layering, reducing authentic war heritage while producing new official monuments and memorials results in a reduction of space for other narratives (Stig Sørensen and Viejo-Rose 2015).

In the context of Sarajevo and its multifaceted society, the solidification of remembrance through new architecture without consideration for the existing palimpsests of the built environment is unhelpful in finding ways toward meaningful mediation of traumatic memory on a collective level. Ironically, it was precisely the diversity of its social structure that was recognised as one of the motives for the severe destruction (Pirnat-Spahić 1992). The ending of an "age of reason" as proclaimed by Woods thirty years ago, extended into an unreasonable effacement of the past today.

Private and Collective versus Official Remembrance

As the temporal distance from the siege grows, the general interest in this past, its impact and consequences seem to increase. There is a visible proliferation of private memorial museums and guided tours focused on the siege period that are oriented toward a growing audience of tourists. The tours are tailored to offer a representation of the city under the siege in a nutshell and normally follow urban morphology, at selected locations, to illustrate the juxtaposition of mechanisms of terror and survival in Sarajevo. However, memorialisation in public space is scarce. For example, the infamous so-called Sniper Alley is marked by a small monument to a seven-year old boy murdered by a sniper, *Sarajevske ruže* (Sarajevo Roses)[2] and remaining bullet-holes on the facades of the surrounding buildings (soon to be refurbished).[3]

---

2 During the siege, it is estimated that on average, more than 300 shells hit the city every day with a devastating crescendo of 3,777 shells hitting the city on July 22nd 1993. Several of the explosive craters left behind by the shelling were filled with red resin and designated as "Sarajevo Roses".They emerged in the immediate post-siege period and were conceptualised by the architect and architectural historian Nedžad Kurto,who perceived them as documentary memorials marking places where more than three people were murdered by a mortar shell. There is only a small number still existing, the rest were eradicated with the reconstruction of the city.

3 The History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina (formerly known as the Museum of the Revolution), also situated on the former Sniper Alley, houses a permanent exhibition entitled "Sarajevo Under Siege"

Primarily focused on erecting monuments, memorials and memorial museums as symbolic spatial narratives, official efforts to preserve physical layers of the siege are modest and more often then not, dubious. A relatively recent example is the housing block called *Pancirka* (body armour) that earned its name due to its highly strategic position in a neighbourhood close to the siege front line (1984 winter Olympics Village). The block was completely renovated in 2019 and a large poster displaying a small selection of photographs of its ruined state was hung on a rare facade with a title reading "Pancirka Dobrinja: War destruction that occurred during the aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period between 1992-1995". Shortly after it was installed, the already deteriorating poster illustrates stages of *memoricide*, in anticipation of its future non-existence.

Official commemoration of murdered civilians is exemplified with two poignant permanent memorials: the Memorial to Children Killed during the Siege of Sarajevo and the Markale market massacre memorial. However, there is still no official memorial to all of Sarajevo's murdered civilians. Up until now, the only official commemoration of all civilian victims happened in 2012 on the twentieth anniversary of the beginning of the siege when a controversial art performance entitled "Sarajevo Red Line" (*Sarajevska Crvena Linija*), was created in a top-down approach with the ambition to be "without precedence in the history of art."[4]

In reality, however, the performance did not live up to expectations. Citizens who did not identify with the result used social media platforms to argue against such commemorative projects that disregarded the potential psychological and emotional effects on the community. Some proposed collectively planting 11,541 trees, one for each victim, instead of installing red plastic chairs purchased in Serbia, as the performance had. This example attests to the argument that commemoration in Sarajevo causes controversy

4 Haris Pašović, quoted on the East West Theatre Company website.



Figure 4. *Memorial poster on Pancirka building, 2021. Credit: Samra Tanović.*

and is often hijacked by various parties to serve questionable objectives. Even when memorial spaces attempt to consider psychological processes of public and private mourning (this was, for example, claimed by organisers of the "Sarajevo Red Line" project), they can easily reinforce the martyredscape narrative (Naef 2016) that in Sarajevo's context, more often than not, fuels commemorative projects that produce short-term effects driven by strong emotions and spectacle. Additionally, recent observations stress that Sarajevo's "urban space is contested and appropriated through memorialisation and reconstruction, with architecture and memorials embodying the discourse

of conflict through symbolic violence" (Bădescu 2017, p. 28). In this sense, memorial initiatives that focus primarily on symbolic representation whilst disregarding collective participation are likely unhelpful in dealing with traumatic memory (inviting citizens to install their own chairs for the twentieth commemoration could potentially have been a more meaningful approach).

As a result of the lack of meaningful institutionalised official commemoration on the collective level, private remembrance initiatives are taking place across both physical and digital spaces. Importantly, a number of these initiatives are geared towards becoming collective platforms (and can be interpreted as a demonstration of a vigorous presence of unprocessed trauma). For example, a project entitled Sniper Alley was conceived by a man, whose older brother (16-years old at the time) was murdered by a sniper in 1995. Initially, the author's mission was to collect siege-time photographs of foreign reporters with a hope to find his brother in them – a way to build an archive of photographs about their life under the siege before the murder. From this poignant personal quest, the project grew into an extensive (and growing) digital archive thanks to the massive response of war photographers who generously offered their Sarajevo-related collections. The website now also invites citizens to share their stories to become part of the project since more people have started to inquire about siege-time experiences and relationships.

A predecessor to this approach is another private initiative, *Muzej Ratnog Djetinjstva* (War Childhood Museum), that originated from a successful public call in 2010 that invited contributions from all those who lived through the siege as children. Initially, these contributions consisted of a couple of lines describing individual childhood memories (some 1000 personal memories were collected and published as a book). From here, the initiative developed into a physical museum that continues to collect narratives and valuable possessions donated by the children survivors of the siege but also children caught up in ongoing conflicts. These archives offer a space for private remembrance in service of collective remembrance and co-remembrance.

The materiality of the War Childhood Museum highlights the question of losing authentic traces precisely because urban war heritage is not only a testimony to carnage, but a spatial museum of extraordinary human stories and resilience – a proof against the verdict of a "dying city" (Burns 1992), as it was proclaimed a few months into the siege and the overwhelming *urbicide*. To preserve where possible or reconstruct where needed Sarajevo's post-siege landscape implies safeguarding narratives of humanity and resilience. Initiatives such as the FAMA collection which set to record personal experiences (during the war) and memories for the purpose of reinforcing collective remembrance, are recognised in their importance but without an institutional framework for remembrance and co-remembrance their impact and existence is fragile. Notwithstanding, in our so-called "culture of connectivity" (Lagerkvist 2016), media seems to sustain collective remembrance as memorial websites, social media platforms, and web-based archives mushroom in a seemingly open space of remembering.

Sense of place and space versus Tabula Rasa

Apart from the contemporary technological advancements that are instrumental in the process of developing architectural projects, how and why can technologies, such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and mixed reality (MR) be meaningful in actual sites of memory and memorialisation processes? In understanding how digital remembrance can corroborate remembrance in physical space, memorial architecture is a useful subject. As acts of representation, memorial architecture touches upon the essence of architectural creation and the question of how designed space mediates knowledge and feelings. Here, architecture is the primary tool for presenting a view of reality – forcing us to notice it. At the same time, human interaction with that space is what defines the meaning. Generally speaking, this applies to all human-space relationships. People invest places with meaning, both social and cultural, and the importance of place in the process of learning has been underlined (Ellsworth 2005; Lansiquot and

MacDonald 2018). Through cultural context and daily life, people transform places and create specific biographies of them. Cultural practice within culturally defined spaces forms and constantly reinforces social identities. Next to official designations of importance, public places can attain a sacred position through social interactions, for example spontaneous mourning at places of tragic events. Edward Casey talks about "place memory", which he describes as "the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experiences that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability" (Casey 1987, pp. 186-187). This embodied quality of a place can inform practice and produce particular expressions of place. The biographies that places have acquired are more tangible if they are augmented through architectural space, which can be visited and experienced. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan stressed the causal relationship between a place and space arguing that:

> The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.
>
> (Tuan 1977, p. 6).

Indeed, physical memorial spaces are often referred to as "healing environments", assumed to be capable of helping victims and survivors cope, by offering a material framework that is expected to positively influence the processes of mourning and recovering (Sodaro and Apsel 2020). The importance of materiality in the process of mourning has been stressed time and again – spatial environments feature prominently in processes of trauma recovery, and transitions from anger to acceptance (Newby and Toulson 2019). Those who lived under the siege witnessed a need for memorial spaces; commemoration and remembrance existed in the midst of carnage regardless of the immediate danger and high prospects of dying while mourning.



Figure 5. *Jungle Gym – A Holy Shrine of Iron (a personal story of Haris Barimac, born 1978), exhibited at the War Childhood Museum, 2021. Credit: War Childhood Museum.*

The question is then, what happens if the biographies of place and space are violently erased and then plastered over? In many of the narratives in the War Childhood Museum, physical locations and buildings feature prominently in exhibition narratives accompanied by private possessions in the ever-expanding collection of the museum. Specific city locations and micro-locations mentioned in personal memories serve as memory-anchors and demonstrate a rich variety of siege experiences which were in great part conditioned by place and space. A survivor of the deadly 1992 single-mortar attack on a local playground in which four children were murdered and four were wounded, preserved segments of a playground jungle gym framework when these were removed after the siege to make place for an official monument on the site. These segments are now exhibited as artefacts of his memory preserved in the War Childhood Museum.

At the actual location of the event, there is a newly designed signifier of this tragic event while the authentic materials of the past are musealised

elsewhere. This untroubled top-down approach to memorialisation only demonstrates the discrepancy between the official and private perception of authentic materiality as anchor of remembrance. The first sees the material remains as unnecessary rubble whereas the latter invests it with authentic value. Hence, the conventional official commemoration creates a sort of on-site *tabula rasa*. In such cases, digital remembrance could offer a promise to reverse and re-create the authentic sense of place through an assembly of individual space-memories. The digital can provide props for reflection, contemplation, and devotion: that is, designed configurations which viewers can engage with on-site, in direct and purposeful ways through objects of sustained attention. And vice-versa, the authentic site becomes a portal for a tailored digital site constructed from site-specific audio-visual archive material, digital reconstruction of place, and personal accounts. Together, the physical and digital generate potential for a seamless territory for remembering and co-remembering.

In contrast to the physical lived reality, digital reality is assembled and needs to be designed as heuristic to invite introspection and contemplation from visitors. The technology can complement the lived experience by introducing different perspectives or augmenting sensory aspects. To do this in a meaningful way, the content has to be of the space itself – its material, acoustic and tactile characteristics. It needs to integrate personal memories, official memories, and the genealogy of the site, and show their interdependencies. This kind of punctuated town-mapping in a close relationship between physical and digital realities can represent an imaginative way to preserve and convey the unique bond citizens have created with the besieged Sarajevo. In this way, their "primal landscape" (Bixler 2002), defined by extreme destruction and violence, can be semi-anchored to our present-day built environment. Hypothetically, the augmentation of space through archival and living remembrance can present a model for psychosocial support and a way to deal with the seeming placelessness of tangible and intangible war heritage.

In conclusion, the obvious disparity in approaches towards collective remembrance between official and private remembrance invites a convergence of both physical and digital space. Our proposal to reconstruct evidence of the destruction of Sarajevo in augmented reality (AR) and with public participation resonates with possibility: technology can redefine processes of creating permanent memorials by allowing more space for individual contributions. In terms of the effect, immersive technology can offer a way to merge personal narratives with space and thereby reinforce their relationships. For the generations that did not live through the siege but learn about it through narrated experiences of their elders, the possibility to have access to this past (from which they often feel excluded) via contemporary technology can potentially create a path for these younger people to engage with collective remembrance on their own terms. By now, we know that memory transmission through monuments and memorials depends on how meaningful spaces of remembrance are for visitors. For example, James E. Young advocates for more effective and action-provoking memorial spaces as opposed to traditional community commemorative monuments that tend to "assume the polished, finished veneer of a death mask, unreflective of a current memory, unresponsive to contemporary issues" (2003, p. 245).

However, this remains a challenge, especially in dense urban environments where various practical, legal, or social restrictions dictate a program of demands. Moreover, creating a physical structure, whether at an authentic site or not, directly influences its surroundings and people's lives. Inevitably, passersby or those living in close vicinity will be continuously confronted with the symbolic and aesthetic presence of a memorial project. In 2019, a group of Amsterdam citizens protested the national Holocaust memorial, designed by the renowned architect Daniel Libeskind. The memorial commemorates 102,000 names of Jewish people who were deported from the Netherlands during the Second World War with victims' names inscribed on bricks. 102,000 bricks were used to 'fill' the absence with material presence.

Alongside their protest against the non-inclusive designing process, a group of local residents turned to court to stop the large-scale memorial occupying their shared public space. Their criticism and protest were not directed toward the importance of having this memorial in public space, but toward the largeness of the design, their exclusion from decision-making in the commissioning process, and a non-transparent design procedure. In fact, the commissioner's online project – individual purchasing of bricks for the future memorial as a way to make it possible – was a successful process that was not followed through with citizens of the actual building location. This relatively recent example confirms once again that erecting official monuments and memorials needs to be a collective process. The vote of *politeia* needs to be embedded in the process of creation for it to be meaningful to its local community. Digital tools can help here too.

Parallel Realities and Symbolic Heritage: Oslobođenje

Belonging to a generation that lived through the Siege of Sarajevo as a teenage soldier who witnessed a mortar shell tearing to pieces close family members, documentary filmmaker Kenan Kulenović observed how the rawness of the destructed cityscape as he experienced it was rapidly disappearing. The traumatic memory, however, remained. Aware of the irreversible process of losing physical traces of the siege – a process that implies that the lived experience is shifting into history – Kulenović contended that the loss of tangible war traces inevitably leads to the loss of intangible war heritage: events and specific living rituals that developed during the siege will become placeless without their physical reference points and thereby, arguably, more susceptible to modifications. With a sense of urgency, he initiated a proposal to use available technologies to digitally occupy the city with personal memories of people and spaces. The idea originated when Kulenović was using an AR application entitled "SkyView" that provided data about constellations and their relationship to his location on Earth. By using his mobile phone, he was able to see precise and well-illustrated



Figure 6. *Oslobođenje destruction mapping, Warchitecture catalogue 1993. Credit: Association of Archtects in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

information. Kulenović recognised the potential of this type of app to deal with the ubiquity of traumatic memory that shaped his life and environment. Because he envisioned a project that will reconstruct lost war heritage by using augmented reality, he also turned to me, knowing my interest in physical spaces for remembrance.

For a designer interested in how architectural interventions (public monuments, memorials and authentic sites of memory) influence transmission of individual memory and collective remembrance, the invitation to consider augmented reality as a way to memorialise difficult pasts in physical space is inviting as a way to empower participatory culture and allow non-expert users to voice their views about what is officially considered valuable heritage. This is also discussed in research focused on cultural heritage preservation and digital technologies (Giaccardi 2012). At the same time, scholars looking at examples in practice, stress that the idea of heritage-making from below is still pursued within the established paternalistic cultural policies based on the expert-view on heritage (Aigner 2016). Thus, the real challenge is to offer a truly democratic space for remembering that will use available technology to create an inclusive approach, but how does this relate to creating a space for remembering traumatic events?

The *Augmented Sarajevo* initiative aims to test precisely that: create points for remembering and co-remembering by integrating physical places and collectively created digital content. From an architectural point of view, a starting point to do this is the Warchitecture project as a bottom-up registering and mapping of the then ongoing destructive transformation of Sarajevo. It was an active process of symbolic re-construction under extreme and life-threatening conditions against *urbicide*, pursued by professionals and civilians with dedication and creativity (needed to assure even basic materials such as paper and pencils). Andrew Hersher derived the term "warchitectural theory" to argue that Warchitecture "suggests that architecture-as-destruction works analogously, producing new sorts of subjects in the course of producing, through violence, new sorts of objects". He continues:

> Warchitecture is a reminder that what are posed in legitimizing accounts of violence as disembodied and abstract 'targets' are, simultaneously, architecture: objects and spaces for living, for the living. Framed as

> warchitecture, the violence that these accounts neutralize can be reconstituted, an essential preliminary to responding to and opposing this violence.
>
> (Herscher 2008, p. 42)

Hence as a gateway to biographies of places, a first layer toward an augmented space of remembrance are the buildings and public spaces. A second layer is the living archive of personal and place-related memories. One iconic building in particular, Oslobođenje ('Liberation'), holds the potential to integrate the two layers to become an anchor of multifaceted collective remembrance for its condensed symbolic value. The Oslobođenje building in Sarajevo is one of many valuable examples of war heritage subjected to memory politics uninterested in commemorative efforts outside the official straight jacket of commemoration that is tailored for religious memorial cemeteries, public memorial plaques dedicated to soldiers, and battlefield monuments on the surrounding hills. Similarly to Pancirka, the Oslobođenje building is seemingly too complicated to be categorised and treated as valuable war heritage. Home to Sarajevo's daily newspaper, the building was one of the first to be shelled at the beginning of the siege and suffered multiple attacks thereafter – Warchitecture documented the dynamics and the scale of the destruction. (See reportage of the shelling of Oslobođenje on 21st June 1992, timecode: 19-26.44 minutes, TV BiH).

When Serbian architect Bogdan Bogdanović published an article entitled "The Ritual Murder of the City" (1992) that condemned the destruction simultaneously taking place in Dubrovnik, journalists of Oslobođenje took to Sarajevo's burning streets to disseminate newspapers to citizens. Despite the loss of infrastructure, they continued working in an improvised studio in the atomic bomb shelter underneath the building. In fact, the newspaper appeared the following day and continued to appear throughout the siege as an act of resistance against the aggressive terror, a remarkable fact



Figure 7. *Remains of Oslobođenje, 1992. Credit: Emil Grebenar.*

considering the level of danger and lack of resources (Kurspahić 2003). At the opening of the 2018 exhibition dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the Oslobođenje newspaper, war reporter and photographer Miquel Ruiz Avilés recalled the overwhelming "chaos that occurred every fifteen minutes" and hour-long waits to obtain telephone connections that the employees of Oslobođenje patiently pursued, acting as if the circumstances were absolutely "normal" (Krajišnik 2018). The name "Oslobođenje" (Liberation) was not only a symbolic title, but a common denominator for the collective resistance against the siege that, soon enough, reduced Sarajevo to a landscape of ruins dotted with tall piles of concrete and reinforcement protruding from what once were skyscrapers. In the immediate post-siege years, there were

official plans to conserve a ruin of the two collapsed towers of Oslobođenje as a memorial to both destruction and resilience (Čusto 2013, p. 118).

This, however, was never followed through and Oslobođenje was eventually cleared to make way for another newspaper house and its new building. These interventions transformed the site. Again, there are no clues nor memorials that indicate why this particular location is of any significance. Only a portion of the building still exists in the shadow of a new tower. The existing remains of the building (due for renovation) are unchanged and seem locked in an ambiguous historical time – an authentic memorial in its own right. The fact that there is no strong political or institutional interest



Figure 8. *Oslobođenje current situation, 2019. Credits: Samra Tanović.*



Figure 9.
Oslobođenje current situation – interior, 2019. Credits: Samra Tanović.

in the building as war heritage is not surprising since its ruins hover in the capitalist space as ghosts of an alienated time.

The *Augmented Sarajevo* model relies on the concept of what Michael Rothberg calls "multidirectional memory" (2009). Siege memories proliferate in a range of specific urban contexts that shaped different reactions to the forced mechanisms of terror and destruction. To understand the multidirectionality of remembrance, the city is observed as an existing,

unorganised memorial museum of community participation. Collecting and geo-tagging these diverse (at times conflicting) memories to space can, arguably, supersede the immediate contextualisation by socio-political contingencies of a given location simply by opening up a democratic space of remembrance in a parallel reality to re-presence the past (web-based projects such as "It Happened Here" exemplify how to approach social histories of places). The architectural space and a space of collective relationships, open up a third space – that of engagement. The forensic exploration of Oslobođenje's architectural remains through Mixed Reality (MR) will allow visitors to engage with the biography of the place and understand its symbolic value through personal accounts and digital reconstruction of its existence before, during and after the siege. The aim is to create a place of continuous, unbroken, and yet multifaceted remembrance (an alternative to the conventional and highly selective remembrance in public space).

Layers of engagement

During one of the first meetings of the Association of Architects of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo, Kulenović even proposed to retrace the siege line with QR-coded red led lights to be lit every night together with the street lighting – a proposal which instantly met resistance from a young architect arguing that mechanisms of destruction must not (and cannot) be reconstructed. To digitally reimagine the line of the siege and destroyed cityscape as it was mapped in Warchitecture, however, is a way of creating a documentary platform that will allow individuals to revisit this traumatic period by choice and on their own terms. This means that there will be no outstanding physical memorials to memorialise the siege, but an online, place-related app-based space of collective remembrance collecting the existing online material (i.e. web-based archives, documentaries, and personal recollections on social media) and with an evolving construction from digital reconstructions and personal narratives. There are five categories

that create the general framework of the project: 1) architectural place, 2) augmented reality; 3) archive; 4) personal memories; 5) interaction.

Physical locations (as a start, buildings mapped in Warchitecture) will be presented to include their states before and after the destruction to introduce a sense of rootedness by highlighting the evolution of the built space and not only the *urbicide*. Documenting, digitally reconstructing, and recording citizen's narratives, and embedding this content on-site will re-present biographies of places and reinforce human-place attachments. This kind of place-making is imagined to augment a sense of historical and spatial continuity that the siege interrupted. Potentially, focusing on aspects of continuity will challenge the top-down commemorative initiatives and projects that are primarily dealing with destruction and violence as isolated historical events. Additionally, the project will highlight the issue of systematic neglect of different categories of heritage such as the above mentioned industrial and war heritage of the Old Tobacco factory.

The idea to use Augmented Reality (AR) to visualise the evolution of a city has been pursued in earlier initiatives elsewhere, for example in 2010, the Urban Augmented Reality app (UAR) was used to show the development of Rotterdam, in the Netherlands. By means of 3D models, UAR could present the city as it once was, was not yet, and as it might have been, through scale models. The app envisioned the city of the future – by showing artists' impressions of buildings under construction or in the planning stage. The application was not developed further, but instead archived in 2013, possibly due to an incongruent relationship between human expectations and technological possibilities at the time. Today, however, AR applications, such as Google Lens and others, are becoming more available and used for the purposes of better informing and orienting oneself in a city. Since 2017, there have been significant advancements in terms of innovation and availability. Museums use AR and VR applications as well as holograms to enhance their exhibits and create visitor-friendly experiences. Ambitious projects such as the

European Union's *Time Machine*, with a goal to use digital breakthroughs to create a living resource that allows people to "travel through time" are emerging as concepts that still need to be tested and implemented in reality. In memorial museums and memorial sites of difficult heritage, the use of digital technology is still in its infancy due to the sensitivity of the contents. This concern is shared by most memorial institutions who aim to be up-to-date and integrate cutting-edge technology, for example at concentration camp memorial sites at Bergen-Belsen in Germany, Westerbork in the Netherlands, and Falstad in Norway. How technological tools may offer a possibility to travel through time (as the EU project suggests) to a specific traumatic past and how this might impact memory transmission, is yet to be fully understood.

While digital commemoration is becoming ubiquitous as it appears to offer novel solutions to preservation of difficult pasts, the relevance of physical space is not decreasing. For example, in Westerbork a VR model of the transit camp, based on GPS coordinates, is now used to help visitors shape an idea of how large the camp really was. Since there is little left of the original architecture of the camp, digital technology allows visitors to zoom into the camp's facilities and see details of barracks and watch towers. While the digital reconstruction offers historical data, the memorial narrative also features personal stories of the camp's victims. These remain a significant part of guided tours and memorial exhibitions. Hence, the digital rendition of the site is but one of a host of different ways to preserve and tell the story of the Holocaust at this particular site – and this is significant.

Whether resorting to bricks or pixels, or working toward a spatial hybrid of the two, the human-space relationship is at the core of remembrance. It is about the form and the content: the content of personal remembrance is more meaningful if the form in which personal accounts can be situated, explained, and re-experienced, is convincing. The form alone, such as the architecture of contemporary memorials and memorial museums that employ narrative architecture to create a sense of terror or accentuate

absence, for example, is ambiguous without a meaningful process. In this sense, a memorial project that starts as a bottom-up collective effort, open to the inclusion of all survivors and post-war generations, based on an existing place of memory, aims to strengthen the notion of community by emphasising the values of their relationships. The intention is not to point to the absence, as the Libeskind's project does (a common trait of most memorials dedicated to traumatic pasts), but to re-activate the status quo by remembering that the existing absence is a significant part of a broken evolution and a history of human-space interactions.

For Kulenović, who imagined the whole city as an Augmented Reality (AR) museum – a digital reconstruction of the siege line as the border from which the destruction was orchestrated and Sarajevo as a collection of places of resistance – a symbolic beginning was to make a teaser that will communicate the emotional and symbolical importance of the forgotten Oslobođenje remains as a first case-study. While the teaser conveys one personal connection to the building, it only vaguely demonstrates (or rather does not demonstrate) the technological portrait of the idea.



Video: *"Sense of Place" teaser, 2018. Credits: Kenan Kulenović.*

Conceptually, the *Augmented Sarajevo* initiative is a bottom-up work in progress and because of its novelty in the given context it will take time and investment to shape Mixed Reality (MR) content that will satisfy both citizens and professionals. In reality, this means that this long-term project has to be promoted, public calls organised, historical research has to take place, architectural drawings of the destroyed building need to be made, 3D models created and terrestrial laser scans performed, personal accounts of the employees of the Oslobođenje and others need to be filmed and

artists invited to respond to these narratives within the psychological and educational framework of the project. Those already involved in the project also hope to bring urgency to the issue of how post-conflict urban and architectural interventions can be an effective way of erasing the record of trauma if performed haphazardly or intentionally as was the case in Aleppo, Syria (Slade 2018).

Depending on the success of the Oslobođenje case study, the future of the project will be shaped, namely by social and financial sustainability and technological development. Risks involved are great due to the complexity of the topic and the ambiguous memory fatigue related to the siege (in part caused by the aforementioned political indifference and censorship). As imagined, the initiative is set to become a form of resistance to the well-established 'us versus them' ethical model of remembrance. It aims to invigorate existing (mostly digital) remembrance projects based on collecting individual narratives (e.g. FAMA and the War Childhood Museum). In this way, the aim is to achieve a substantial multitude of narratives to demystify forced narratives (and identities) of victimhood and open up space for more inclusive ethical models of remembering. At this point, the Association of Architects, is a key institution navigating the project and a gatekeeper of the content. Primarily focused on preserving built environment, they have the responsibility to explain to potential participants why their input is valuable. Citizens need to agree that their narrative is one in the multitude. This also implies educating participants about the value of war heritage and digital interpretative frameworks as an alternative or important addition to conventional modes of remembrance in physical space – an approach informed by best practices in the so-called Culture 3.0 in which there is no clear distinction between producers and users, and culture and heritage are based on collective (community) "sense-making" (Report of the OMC 2018).

In line with the Warchitecture bottom-up approach, the *Augmented Sarajevo* project has the same motivation and relies on individual efforts

to set a general framework in motion. When possible, the initiators are recording all the important steps that are already taking place to document the whole process from below in order to follow how the initiative, combining expert and lay views on common heritage, will develop. By documenting the process, details that might be overlooked as they happen but could be valuable in the future, are captured with a goal to raise awareness of possible ways to preserve, reconstruct, and renovate war heritage in post-conflict situations, the multilayered and multidirectional character of both individual and collective remembrance, and the importance of the physical layers of the built environment. Allowing these potentially conflicting perspectives to be represented next to each other, will not only display the variety of remembered everyday lived experience in the besieged Sarajevo, but it will also create a model for a more inclusive approach to both cultural and war heritage.

Unlike the memorialisation of the Second World War, which is transitioning into a phase of different dynamics determined by the absence of witnesses, the *Augmented Sarajevo* project has been conceptualised and created by direct witnesses. This audio-visual, spatial and narrative approach to memorialisation of a specific place is an innovative way to convey difficult heritage together with survivors. Without interfering with the authenticity of the actual space, a layer of immaterial authenticity can be added: instead of turning the site into a physical memorial museum (which would inevitably change the original setting), viewers will be able to add to the authenticity of this space (using the app on-site as a point of reference). Consequently, and echoing Ariella Azoulay's (2019) notion of "potential histories", the digital reconstruction of Warchitecture addresses the question of perpetratorship while future legal and justice-seeking initiatives will be able to use the project's content as a document, as was the case with the digital reconstruction of Auschwitz-Birkenau to determine in court the culpability of the camp's guards (Cieslak 2016).

Conclusion

Augmented reality on authentic sites of difficult heritage urges us to consciously consider the fact that each building not only tells a story but has the potential to open up new relationships and meanings. For this reason, the app directly connects human narratives to their built environment in an interactive way. A city is a palimpsest of human-spatial narratives, a landscape coded with personal experiences in space and of space. Immersive technologies have the potential to augment experiences within cities. To digitalise and memorialise these in Mixed Reality (MR) within their physical space is to enliven the sense of place of a historical location within collective remembrance. In contrast to most physical memorials and monuments, by inducing present space with its past through Mixed Reality (MR) available via mobile technology, we can recreate a sense of place and enable those willing to engage with it to have meaningful experiences.

Both the daily newspaper and the building of Oslobođenje played important roles in supporting and maintaining collective identity in times of terror. This site and numerous other examples, such as the Vijećnica building, testify to the fact that wars are pursued through architecture and, at the same time, that warchitecture was the weapon of people. While architectural reconstructions of cultural and war heritage tend to falsely communicate a sense of unbroken continuum while excluding local society, *Augmented Sarajevo* is set to unearth meaningful layerings of the built environment. With an aim to bring forward both architectural and symbolical values of war heritage, the initiative aims to address the complexity of collective remembrance on the siege itself and create a multi-vocal representation of the past. Collecting a multitude of experiences related to specific locations in Sarajevo, will hopefully create a new dynamic in remembering the siege through meaningful interactions with space. The Warchitecture project was an important project that was made possible with the help of institutions and individuals across the world. It not only drew attention to the urbicide of Sarajevo, but initiated more global

discussions about Warchitecture as a concept of action and agency in civil societies. *Augmented Sarajevo* shares the same ambition, aiming to include individuals and institutions worldwide. If destruction of cities in wars is how "modern barbarians" feed their latent hatred toward cities, as Bogdanović put it (Vuković 2011), then embedding a memorial augmented reality grid over Sarajevo's cityscape offers one way to preserve its landscape as a counter-act to such warfare. If Sarajevans can remember collective efforts in a familiar landscape, they can avoid the impediments of top-down memorialisations.

References

Aigner, A. (2016) 'Heritage-making "from below": the politics of exhibiting architectural heritage on the Internet – a case study', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 22 (3), pp. 181-199

Azoulay, A. A. (2019) *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*. Verso Books

Bajrović, E. (2017) 'Pravna noćna mora bh. arhitekte Ivana Štrausa' ("Legal nightmare of B&H architect Ivan Straus"), N1. Available at: http://ba.n1info.com/Vijesti/a168857/Pravna-nocna-mora-bh.-arhitekte-Ivana-Strausa.html

Bădescu, G. (2017) 'Post-War Reconstruction in Contested Cities: Comparing Urban Outcomes in Sarajevo and Beirut', in Rokem, J., & In Boano, C., *Urban geopolitics: Rethinking planning in contested cities*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 17-32.

Baudrillard, J. (1993) 'No Pity for Sarajevo' (originally published in *Libération*, January 7), in Cushman, T. & Meštrović, S. G., *This Time We Knew: Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia*. New York and London: New York University Press (1996), pp. 80 – 84.

Benjamin, W. (1939) 'Louis-Philippe, or The Interior' in Leach, N., Rethinking Architecture. London: Routledge 1997, p. 36.

Bevan, R. (2006) *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War*, Reaktion Books Ltd

Bixler, R. D., M. F. Floyd, and W. E. Hammitt (2002) 'Environmental socialization: Quantitative tests of the childhood play hypothesis', *Environment and Behavior* 34 (6), pp. 795–818

Bogdanović, B. (1992) 'Ritualno ubijanje grada', *Borba* (Belgrade), 28 April

Burns, J. F., (1992) 'The Dying City of Sarajevo', *The New York Times*, 26 July. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/26/magazine/the-dying-city-of-sarajevo.html

Byers, T., W. Imms & E. Hartnell-Young (2014) 'Making the case for space: The effect of learning spaces on teaching and learning', *Curriculum and Teaching* 29(1) pp. 5-19

Casey, E. (1987) *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Cieslak, M. (2016) 'Virtual reality to aid Auschwitz war trials of concentration camp guards', BBC News. Avaliable at: https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-38026007

Čurić, B., N. Delija, I. Grozdanić, N. Hasanbegović, B. Hrelja, N. Hrelja, A. Kalauzović-Mandić, A. Kapić, A. Sadiković, D. Sefić, & S. Spilja (1993) *Warchitecture – Urbicide Sarajevo*, exhibition catalogue, originally published by the Association of Architects DAS–SABIH, Sarajevo, October

1993, reprint Munich, with the aassistance of Baumeister, May 1994. DAS–SABIH = Društvo arhitekata Sarajevo: Savez arhitekata BiH

Čelić-Čemerlić, V., ed. (2000) *Katalog obnove kulturno-historijskog i prirodnog naslijedja Kantona Sarajevo, 1996–2000*, Sarajevo: Kantonalni zavod za zastitu kulturno-historijskog i prirodnog naslijedja Sarajevo

Čusto, A. (2013) *Uloga spomenika u Sarajevu u izgradnji kolektivnog sjećanja na period 1941-1945. i 1992-1995: komparativna analiza*, Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju : Kantonalni zavod za zaštitu kulturno-historijskog i prirodnog nasljeđa

Darlington, J. (2020) *Fake Heritage: Why We Rebuild Monuments*. Yale University Press

Ellsworth, E. (2005) *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

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

Hadžimuhamedović, A. (2019). 'Participative reconstruction as a healing process in Bosnia'. Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery, UNESCO and World Bank (CURE)

Hartmann, K. M. (2016) 'Fragmentation and Forgetting: Sarajevo's Vijećnica', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 22. no. 4, pp. 312–324

Herscher, A. (2008) 'Warchitectural Theory', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 61 (3), pp. 35-43

Jakšić, S. (1993) 'Architectural Testimonies of the Beginning of the Industrial Development of Sarajevo and Damages it Suffered in War

Destruction of 1992.', *ARH: Magazine for Architecture, Town Planning and Design*, No. 24, June, Sarajevo, pp. 64-65.

Krajišnik, Đ. (2018) 'Izložba posvećena Sarajevu i Oslobođenju u opsadi: Riječ i fotografija su najjače oružje', *Oslobođenje*, 11 October. Available at: https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/o2/kultura/izloza-posvecena-sarajevu-i-oslobodenju-u-opsadi-rijec-i-fotografija-su-najjace-oruzje-400219

Karahasan, D. (2010) *Sarajevo: Exodus of a City*, trans. Slobodan Drakulić, Sarajevo: Connectum

Kurspahić, K. (2003) *Prime-time Crime: Balkan Media in War and Peace*, Washington: United States Institute of Peace

Lagerkvist, A. (2016) 'Embodiments of Memory: Toward an Existential Approach to the Culture of Connectivity", in *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies*, edited by Lucy Bond, Stef Craps and Pieter Vermeulen, New York: Berghahn, pp: 174 – 194.

Lamphere-Englund, G. (2015) *Rebuilding Sarajevo: Sarajevo: Urban issues today might have been avoided by viewing reconstruction in more than just physical terms*, Center for Conflict, Negotiation and Recovery, School of Public Policy, Central European University

Lansiquot, R. D. & S. P. MacDonald, eds. (2018) *Interdisciplinary Place-Based Learning in Urban Education: Exploring Virtual Worlds*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan

Markowitz, F. (2012) 'Tales of Two Buildings: National Entanglements in Sarajevo's Pasts, Presents and Futures', *Ethnologie francaişe*, XLII, 4, Vol. 42, pp. 797 – 809.

Naef, P. & J. Ploner (2016) 'Tourism, conflict and contested heritage in former Yugoslavia', *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 14:3, pp. 181 – 188. https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2016.1180802

Newby, Z. & R. E. Toulson (2019) *The Materiality of Mourning. Cross-disciplinary Perspectives*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge

Perišić, S. (1993) 'Historical Reminder: A proposal of possible concept of revitalization and reconstruction of some war damaged structures in Sarajevo', *ARH: Magazine for Architecture, Town Planning and Design*, No. 24, June, Sarajevo, pp. 66-68.

Pirnat-Spahić, N. (1992) 'Destrukcija multikulturalnog grada: Sarajevo', *Informatica museologica*, 23 (1-4), Ljubljana, pp. 85-89.

Report of the OMC (Open Method of Coordination) working group of member states' experts (2018) 'Participatory Governance of Cultural Heritage: European Agenda for Culture – Workplan for Culture 2015 - 2018', European Union DOI:10.2766/984757

Rothberg, M. (2009) *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Slade, T. (2018) 'The Destruction of Memory', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 72 (2), pp: 208-211

Sodaro, A. & J. Apsel (2020) *Museums and Sites of Persuasion: Politics, Memory and Human Rights*, New York and Abingdon: Routledge

Sørensen, S., M. L. & Viejo-Rose, D., eds. (2015) *War and Cultural Heritage: Biographies of Place*, Cambridge University Press

Simić, G. (2005) *From Sarajevo with Sorrow*. Biblioasis: Libraries and Archives Cataloguing in Publication

Tuan, Y. (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Vuković, V. (2011) 'Writing about cities: literary works of Bogdan Bogdanović about cities and urbanism', SAJ, 3 (1), pp: 1–14

Young, J. E. (2003) 'Memory/Monument' in *Critical Terms for Art History*, 2nd edn, ed. R. S. Nelson and R. Shiff. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, pp: 234–247

Walasek, H., ed., (2015) *Bosnia and the destruction of cultural heritage*, London and New York: Routledge

Publishing note:
This chapter has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact its academic content.

Chapter 6

Everything but the Smell:

The Ethics of the "Connective Turn" in Argentinian Memory Activism

Megan Corbin

Introduction: New Technologies and the Connective Turn

In 2013, the collective Huella Digital launched an interactive documentary website, centrosclandestinos.com.ar, which features three-dimensional video-game-style recreations of some of the most well-known former detention and torture centres now converted into sites of memory in post-dictatorship Argentina. This website is an exceptional example of how technological advances are changing the way visitors interact with spaces of memory across the globe, creating new forms of connection with memorial museums and

modifying, or even replacing, past paradigms. As Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian Ott argue, "memory places cultivate the being and participation together of strangers, but strangers who appear to have enough in common to be co-traversing the place" (2010, p. 27). Similarly, Amy Sodaro links the moral education function of the memorial museum in part to the public element of the experience:

> Not only are the museums' visitors aware of and so internalize how they behave while experiencing the exhibition, but the memorial museum also seeks for them to internalize, with the discipline of being watched, the moral lesson of the past that they have learned in the museum, leading to a new moral discipline in everyday life.
>
> (Sodaro 2018, p. 175)

However, the purely online existence of this new project removes the need to physically visit the place altogether, thus eliminating the way in which memory places cultivate the being and participation together of strangers. Instead, it facilitates solitary and individual explorations of the virtual memory place. This article asks, what are the ethical issues involved in introducing such a paradigm-altering technology to the concept of a memory museum? What type of connection (or disconnection) does such technology facilitate? Do such technologies introduce positive or negative additions to the encounter?

In an article published in 2011, digital memory scholar Andrew Hoskins examines the influence new technologies – especially digital media – have had on the metaphors used to discuss memory. Describing the incorporation of these advances into memory studies as "the connective turn", Hoskins argues that we are experiencing "a paradigmatic shift in the treatment and comprehension of memory and its functions and dysfunctions" (2011, p. 20). Rather than examining specific case studies, Hoskins focuses on the implications of this connective turn for where individual and collective memory are to be

found, interrogating the continuity of memory in an always-connected digital world that is complicating the traditional temporal dimensions and physical limitations of the archive.

This chapter interrogates what is lost and what is gained in this turn toward cyberspace as a new venue for interacting with a traumatic past. It will first examine the discussions and debates that took place in Argentina as former detention centres were converted into sites of memory, using the debate about the recovery of Escuela Mecánica de la Armada [ESMA] (the Navy School of Mechanics) as an illustrative example. Then, it will compare the features of some of actual memory sites in Buenos Aires with the interactive documentary features on the website, specifically focusing on the narrative logic and guided visits of the physical sites, taking the *Casino de Oficiales* [Officers' Quarters] of the former ESMA as its central case study. Lastly, it will discuss these similarities and differences in dialogue with the issues raised in the ESMA debate over the conversion of such historical places into memory sites in order to highlight and analyse the ethical questions posed by this new horizon of technologically enhanced memory activism in Argentina.

Argentina: The Last Military Dictatorship and Its Legacy

To understand the ethics surrounding the incorporation of new technologies into memory activism in Argentina, it is essential to first understand the violence of the country's recent history. From 1976 to 1983, the brutal military-led dictatorship in Argentina imprisoned, tortured, murdered, and secretly disappeared thousands. In 1976, the three branches of the military took over the government, installing a junta of representatives from the army, the navy, and the air force. These unelected leaders, in a series of three consecutive military juntas that governed the nation from 1976 to 1983, are collectively referred to in Argentina as the last civic-military dictatorship. The juntas billed their governmental project as *El Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* [The Process of National Reorganisation], meant to restore order to the country after

a period of political chaos. In reality, their project employed state terrorism to target all political opposition and eliminate calls from the progressive sectors for revolution in the name of those who had been historically marginalised – primarily the poor, workers, and the student population. The period of the first junta, comprised of Jorge Rafael Videla, Emilio Massera, and Orlando Agosti (1976-1978), was the most brutal of the years of repression, with the highest incidence of murders, disappearances, and the systemic use of torture to instill fear and compliance among the citizenry. It is estimated that from 1976 to 1983, more than 30,000 people were disappeared throughout the nation (for further details, see the full truth commission report *Nunca Más [CONADEP 1986]).*

Much is still unknown about the details of the violence that the military dictatorship exercised upon its citizens, including the whereabouts of thousands of disappeared victims. However, through testimony given during the initial trials of the military juntas that took place shortly after the restoration of democracy in 1983, information included in the 1984 truth commission's report, *Nunca Más*, and the published testimonies of survivors and a few former military officers, pieces of the truth regarding what happened have emerged. Additionally, forensic information gained from the recovery and study of former clandestine detention, torture and extermination sites (*ex CCDTyEs*, to use the Spanish-language acronym[1]), and recovered remains from mass graves further solidify the information contained in the testimonies with material evidence. This proof has also clarified other previous unknowns, especially regarding methods of torture and the military's operation of the detention centres.

1 CCDTyE stands for Centro Clandestino de Detención, Tortura y Exterminio [Clandestine Centre of Detention, Torture, and Extermination] – for readability's sake, I will simply use the term detention centre throughout the chapter, adding former to delineate when I am referring to the period post-violence and omitting it when I am referring to the period of the dictatorship.

Since the early 2000s, the efforts to recover information about the dictatorship through the recovery of former detention centres have grown in Argentina, and, with these efforts, the work of converting such sites into spaces of memory and operating them as places that educate about the past to prevent future atrocities has become a main focus for memory activists. For example, in 2002, excavations began at the site of the former detention centre Club Atlético, a centre the dictatorship buried under earth and cement when a highway was constructed over it after it was abandoned. The former ESMA was seized from the military by the government and officially deemed a 'Space for Memory' in March 2004. In October 2004, the Olimpo site was also reclaimed. Virrey Cevallos was recovered in April 2007, and Automotores Orletti in March 2009.[2] All of these spaces now function as sites of memory in Buenos Aires that anyone can visit to learn about the recent past. Many sites also host community events and participate in outreach activism meant to raise awareness about the ongoing absences of the disappeared while they continue to advocate for justice for those victims who survived. All of these sites host guided visits for the public, especially for school groups, during which visitors learn about the context of the repression and the history of each site. Much of this work was initially facilitated by the *Instituto Espacios para la Memoria* (IEM) [Institute of Spaces for Memory], which was created in 2002 and in operation until its dissolution in 2014 (Red Latina Sin Fronteras 2014). The work of the virtual project this chapter analyses was begun in conjunction with the Institute, and continued after its dissolution.

Arguably the most well-known of these cases is the recovery and conversion of the ex ESMA. Thus, the debate that emerged regarding how to convert this particular site into a space of memory can be used to illustrate the more general discussions of how to create sites of memory at former detention

2 This list focuses on the efforts concentrated in Buenos Aires, the capital city of Argentina. It is by no means exhaustive – for more on the process of recovering these sites in Argentina, see Guglielmucci (2013).

centres in Argentina. Reflecting debates regarding memorial museums and their design more generally, the process of creating these sites, located at the places where real people (including some living survivors) suffered, tends to be highly controversial.[3] With multiple interest groups involved, often with differing stances on what constitutes acceptable use of the site, the conversation can get contentious. A brief history of the case of the ESMA will help illustrate why the debate that emerged around it is helpful to understanding the dynamics of memory site creation in Argentina.

However, before moving on to an exploration of the case of the ESMA, a clarification of terminology may be necessary. While such sites tend to be referenced in Argentinian Spanish as *sitios de memoria* (sites of memory) or even *espacios de memoria* (spaces of memory), I contend that their design and function parallel the goals of memorial museums, and thus they ought to be considered within the framework of such scholarship. Paul Williams defines a memorial museum as "a specific kind of museum dedicated to a historic event commemorating mass suffering of some kind" (2007, p. 8). He works from the definition of a museum as "an institution devoted to the acquisition, conservation, study, exhibition, and educational interpretation of objects with scientific, historical, or artistic value" (2007, p. 8). While the sites of memory in Argentina I consider in this article do not necessarily devote themselves to acquisition of objects, they do focus on conserving, studying, exhibiting, and educating the public about how to interpret the material elements that make

3 The critiques of the design of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (the USHMM) by Michael Rothberg come to mind, where Rothberg questions the design of the narrative for the space via a lens of "Americanization" of the Holocaust (2000). Also, Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich's examination of the design of how the permanent exhibitions of Yad Vashem, the Jewish Museum Berlin, and the USHMM have the potential to fall into the trap of displaying authentic objects (in this case, the historical artefact is the object, not the space itself). Thus, they re-enact the perpetrators' anonymising gaze or effectively "draw on creative visual and acoustic techniques to encourage a critical and nuanced interaction between viewers and the object of their gaze" (2014, p. 118). Such critiques reveal the consequences of the debates over how best to configure or utilise spaces of memory in the creation of memorial museums.

up each individual site, material elements that carry highly important historical value related to the years of the dictatorship. The information contained in the exhibits, or, in some cases the guided visits, is based on the investigation carried out by each site and, most often, on survivor testimony. In some cases, the sites do acquire new objects as survivors donate them to be displayed, even when they are not actively seeking to expand their acquisitions.[4]

Both Williams (2007, p. 8) and Amy Sodaro (2018, p. 23) recognise in their definitions of the concept that memorial museums are most often not located on the sites of atrocity. However, Sodaro clarifies that there are exceptions to this – specifically, she cites the House of Terror Museum in Budapest and the 9/11 Museum in New York City (2018, p. 23) and Williams also includes in his analysis a number of memorial museums that are, indeed, located at sites of mass atrocity. For example, museums at the former Perm-36 labour camp site and the Choeung Ek killing field, as well as the National Chernobyl Museum, located in a former fire station (2007, p. 10-14). Sodaro stipulates that if they are located at the site of atrocity, memorial museums:

> go beyond mere preservation of the site as evidence of what happened . . . [and] attempt to be more universal spaces in which the broader implications and reverberations of the past can be explored.
>
> (2018, p. 23)

In their designs, the sites of memory in Argentina indeed do go beyond mere preservation, encouraging visitors to make connections between the injustices of the past and broader human rights issues in the present. For instance, the Automotores Orletti site's visit design focuses on Operation Condor's history

4 For example, the Orletti site now exhibits a blanket that was donated by a survivor who had it with her during her detention there. This was a new addition to the site when I visited in July of 2017 that did not exist during my prior visit in July of 2013.

and the broader implications of foreign governments' (particularly the United States') intervention in Latin America. The guided visit also shows visitors a video that contextualises and links the Argentinian military dictatorship to other authoritarian regimes throughout Latin America, encouraging visitors to think about the broader implications of state terrorism beyond the nation's borders.

Sodaro also emphasises that memorial museums provide "a new kind of interactive engagement with the past" (2018, p. 24) by focusing on the experiential component of the museum. The most recent configuration of the ex ESMA's *Casino de Oficiales* [Officers' Quarters] especially engages this component, introducing into the museum space a number of examples of video testimony from the trials of the military junta, as well as infusing sounds into the *Casa del almirante* [Admiral's home] area of the visit, such that one feels as if they are eavesdropping on the Admiral's family living quarters. Additionally, in the *Pecera* area, where prisoners were forced to work producing propaganda for the dictatorship, one hears the sound of a typewriter in the background. In the *Pañol* area, where the stolen goods obtained by the dictatorship in various raids of 'subversive' homes were kept, the current exhibit projects images of the goods on the walls, giving the impression of observing firsthand the accumulation of the illegally obtained merchandise. In addition to projecting the images of these goods, the area incorporates video testimony where survivors describe the illegal activities of the dictatorial forces, denouncing the war booty [*botín de guerra*] stolen by the military. These testimonies encourage visitors to reflect on the morality of such actions, hopefully facilitating further reflection on similar actions within the contemporary world.

While all these elements facilitate an experiential understanding of the site, they are also presented via a controlled path, thus guiding the visitor's encounter with the space within a pre-determined narrative. When the visitor arrives, they are presented with a map of the space. While there are a few instances where wrong turns could alter the order in which the viewer encounters

the exhibits, the path follows an orderly sequence and large display panels help lead visitors down the pre-determined route. This is another defining feature of the memorial museum according to Sodaro (2018, p. 24). These sites, like memorial museums, are also victim-oriented, basing their design on the information gleaned from victim testimony. Their work to document such testimony also shows how they function as an archive, further relating to Sodaro's defining features of the memorial museum (2018, p. 26). Due to all of these similarities between the sites of memory in Argentina and the scholarly definitions of memorial museums, I find analysing these sites using the scholarship on memorial museums appropriate, even if they tend to be referred to as sites of memory instead of memorial museums within scholarship focused on post-dictatorship Argentina.

How to Create a Site of Memory? The Case of the Ex ESMA

The ex ESMA is a property of 17 hectares of land occupying a city block in the Nuñez neighborhood of Buenos Aires. Established as a training school for the Navy in 1924, during the military dictatorship it held a double function. While continuing to operate as a school, a portion of the property was converted into a clandestine concentration camp, where so-called 'subversive' political activists were taken after being detained illegally and without official documentation. In addition to the use of the *Casino de Oficiales* [Officers' Quarters] for this task, other areas of the school also served the double function of both teaching students and participating in the mechanisms of the dictatorship. For example, the mechanic shop repaired the Ford Falcon police cars that were used to pursue and detain 'subversives', the infirmary helped with the secret births and disappearances of the children of detained pregnant women, and the printing press helped disseminate propaganda and create false identity documentation to aid the repression. The sizeable property holds numerous buildings, but not all of them were directly used in the violence, making it a particularly illustrative example of the dynamics of recovering former sites of violence in the wake of political repression. Its size, breadth, and complexity helped underscore the

debates that emerged more generally about how to convert these spaces into sites of memory.[5]

The recovery of the ex ESMA took place in 2004, when then-president Néstor Kirchner removed it from the control of the armed forces that had continued to operate there in the years posterior to the dictatorship and deemed it a space of memory – a conversion process that was neither simple nor easy.

The book *Memoria en construcción: El debate sobre la ESMA* [Memory in Construction: The Debate over the ESMA] (2005) by Marcelo Brodsky – an Argentinean artist whose brother disappeared from the ESMA – documents the variety of perspectives that emerged in the debate about what to do with the space. Various groups advocated both for and against renovating/reconstructing the space, or leaving it as it was found upon recuperation, as well as for and against creating a museum or a cultural centre in the space. In arguing for the design of the space, Alejandro Kaufman, a professor at both the University of Buenos Aires and the National University of Quilmes in Argentina, summarised the common goal of recovering the site, stating:

> *Lo que hay que mostrar en forma irrefutable de una vez y para siempre, para nuestro país y para todo el mundo, es qué fue la ESMA, cómo fue la ESMA, y qué sucedió en la ESMA. No se requiere ningún énfasis especial. Sólo una sujeción estricta a los testimonios y las pruebas.*
>
> (in Brodsky 2005, p. 80)

5 Much of this historical information about the site came from the exhibits in the ex ESMA's Sitio Memoria building [the former Casino de Oficiales], when I visited in July of 2019.

> [What has to be shown in an irrefutable way for once and for all, for our country and for the whole world, is what was the ESMA, how was the ESMA, and what happened in the ESMA. It does not require any special emphasis. Just a strict adherence to the testimonies and the evidence.]

However, the question remained of how, exactly, to accomplish this goal, and whether, indeed, a strict adherence to what happened was all that needed to be included to transmit an understanding to the public. Horacio González, an Argentine intellectual, President of the National Library, and member of the Argentine Intellectuals Group *Carta Abierta* (Open Letter) argued that the building itself (referencing the *Casino de Oficiales*, the primary building used as a concentration camp) had to be the starting point of the history to be recounted in the place and that *"hay que contarla a partir del mismo edificio"* (in Brodsky 2005, p. 75) [It must be told starting from the building itself]. González also proposed that accomplishing this task be done by emphasising the performative, through the use of:

> *el arte, pero a condición de que el arte sea tomado por reflexiones como éstas [las que forman parte del libro], parecidas a éstas, o que partan de un raíz similar aunque con conclusiones diferentes.*
>
> (in Brodsky 2005, p. 76)

> [art, but with the condition that the art be taken with reflections like these (the ones that form the debate over the site), similar to these, or that start from a similar point although with different conclusions.]

González, thus, adds to the debate the significance of the creative role of art, advocating for the incorporation of a type of selective and self-reflexive project that could provoke discussion as a way of transmitting the (up until this point) excluded history of what happened in the ESMA to the present and future.

Some groups, such as SERPAJ (Service, Peace, and Justice – a well-respected NGO in Latin America) advocated for the use of the space as a museum as well as a centre for further study of and advocacy for human rights in the region (Brodsky 2005, p. 224). Others, such as the *Asociación de Ex Detenidos Desaparecidos* [Association of Former Detained/Disappeared], advocated for the absolute maintenance of the site for uses directly tied to the preservation and study of the space's former use as a detention centre, stressing that no irreversible modifications be made to the site and that it must operate independently of any governmental involvement (Brodsky 2005, p. 224). Still others, such as the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* [Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo] – an activist group comprised of mothers whose children were disappeared by the military dictatorship – advocated for both the historical preservation of the buildings of the site that had been used for the work of the repression, and a transformation of the rest of the space into a cultural centre, filling what was formerly a place of death with lively activities that would promote education about human rights in the future, especially amongst the youth population (Brodsky 2005, p. 225).

In the end, the territory that makes up the ex ESMA was divided amongst various interest groups. The *Casino de Oficiales* was set aside as an unmodified *sitio de memoria* [memory site]. The other buildings functioned as the place of operation for different groups, including the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* [Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo], *HIJOS* (the activist group formed by the children of the disappeared), the Secretary of Human Rights of the Nation, the Families of the Detained/Disappeared for Political Reasons, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, and the NGO *Memoria Abierta* [Open Memory]. A building was also devoted to the National Archive of Memory and the Haroldo Conti Cultural Centre of Memory. In 2014, an additional museum devoted to recovering the collective memory of the contentious history of the Malvinas (Falkland Islands) was added to the property.

Today, the various recovered sites of memory in Buenos Aires share a focus on historical preservation of places where victims were directly brutalised, thus valuing the maintenance of the sites as material proof of the past. However, like the new modifications to the *Casino de oficiales* building (now referred to as the *Sitio memoria* building), the sites of memory in Buenos Aires have also been outfitted with new museum-like exhibit features that help contextualise and convey the site's history to the visitor. Many of them also host the type of cultural activities held in the other buildings of the ex ESMA site.[6] While sharing a common perspective regarding the balance between preservation and use of the sites, each space functions somewhat independently of the others, with each focusing their narrative design and guided visits on different aspects of the repression particularly characteristic of each site. However, all begin with a group discussion in which visitors share their connections to the site and their interests in visiting. While this could be dismissed as a common way of commencing any type of guided 'tour', in the context of the memory site it serves an additional function: to help foster connection among the visitors who will be co-traversing a very emotional space and history.

While the ex ESMA initially only allowed visits to the historical *Sitio Memoria* with the accompaniment of a guide, the re-design of the site in 2015 during the presidency of Kirchner modified this approach. The re-design installed a

6 *The groups that operate the sites are extremely dedicated to this balance between preservation and use of the sites – at Automotores Orletti there is a specific room that was identified by former female prisoners as the place where they were sexually abused and tortured which has been sealed off from the guided visit so that further material proof can be obtained. Additionally, the staircase in the garage area is not used to preserve it for any survivors who need to physically walk that staircase to trigger memories to identify where they were held captive – many of the victims were kept blindfolded during the entirety of their captivity and thus, to this day, do not know where they were held. Such experiential memory techniques are therefore extremely important, and the sites all work to keep such options available to survivors.*

more traditional museographic approach, which allowed visitors to explore the site on their own, without a guide. This included the installation of multimedia video projections at various places in the building, as well as traditional text and visual exhibits. The design, the result of a two-year project worked on by more than forty professionals, was careful to not modify any existing structures in the building and to take precautions to avoid long-term damage from frequent visitors walking through the space – for example 'floating' pathways were incorporated for visitors to walk on that would prevent heavy traffic from damaging the original flooring. However, the most sensitive areas, for example *Capuchita*, where inscriptions on the walls made by prisoners during their captivity have been recovered, continue to be accessible only through guided visits. While the site now offers this more individual option, the layout of the exhibits continues to present a carefully curated narrative, starting with the historical context, the history of the ESMA prior to its use during the dictatorship, during its use, and the attempts to hide its history of repression. It also contextualises each of the spaces with prompts that explain their use during the repression, including multiple examples of video testimony in which survivors narrate the uses of each space. This testimony consists of historical footage from the initial trial of the military junta in 1985 and the first ESMA trial in 2010. The visit concludes in the *El Dorado* salon, where a video installation identifies the repressors who have been put on trial, and the verdicts and sentences they received.

As Sylvia Tandeciarz claims in her 2017 study *Citizens of Memory*, this shift to self-guided visits to the site and the installation of the museographic materials was not without controversy. Tandeciarz notes her own unease with the tone of the changes, remarking that the concluding video installation's dramatic employment of light and sound "seemed to make a spectacle of justice" (2017, p. 33). She cites the unease felt by survivor groups as well, especially the group *HIJOS: La Plata's* (the chapter of the Children of the Disappeared's activist group *HIJOS* from the city of La

Plata, Argentina)[7], who critique that it constitutes a type of "Disneylandia" (Tandeciarz, 2017, p. 34). Overall, Tandeciarz concludes:

> I object to what has been done because I find the compulsive accumulation of evidence not only distracting, consuming all of my attention, but ultimately inassimilable in its current format. I find that this information overload – academically rigorous, carefully compiled – rather than complement the visitors' experience of the space, competes with it, ultimately limiting, through prescriptive didacticism, the likelihood of 'that flow of curiosity and interpretations' (Pastoriza 2005, p. 90) I believe is vital to postmemorial transmission.
>
> (Tandeciarz 2017, p. 34)

Such qualms with the modifications presented in the new individual museum visits as an alternative to the guided ones highlight the need for similar scrutiny of the changes presented by the introduction of the digital into this type of memory work. To what extent might the interactive documentary also limit the flow of curiosity and interpretations that Pastoriza (a survivor of the ESMA) and Tandeciarz highlight as key to the successful design of the space as postmemorial?

The "Virtual" Memory Museum: Centrosclandestinos.com.ar

Centrosclandestinos.com.ar began as a project referred to as "The Ex ESMA in 3D" (*"La ex ESMA"*). Spearheaded by Martin Malamud and the group Huella Digital, the project was initially a tool to be used during

7 HIJOS is the organisation created by the children of disappeared parents. Their group is both a support group where they can find common understanding with each other and an activist group that works toward the three foci of memory activism in Argentina: Truth, Memory, and Justice. Since the creation of the initial group, regional chapters have also been created, such as the one from La Plata referenced here.

the 2010 trial related to the violations that took place in the ESMA. Ana María Careaga, the then executive director of the Institute of Spaces of Memory, presented the project as material support for her testimony during the trial. In terms of the efficacy of the reconstruction for this purpose, the director of the project, Malamud, expressed the following in an interview:

> Escuché muchos comentarios de que fue valioso en el juicio. El hecho de ver el lugar creo que aclara muchas cosas, muchos testimonios, ideas vagas que puedan llegar a tener jueces y testigos, porque estas imágenes te dan una sensación de la realidad que es muy impactante.
>
> (2010, p. 12)

> [I heard many comments that it was valuable in the trials. The act of viewing the place, I think, clarifies many things, many testimonies, vague ideas that judges and witnesses can come to have, because these images give a sensation of reality that is very impactful.]



Figure 1. *Landing page of centrosclandestinos.com.ar Screenshot by the author.*



Figure 2. *Secondary landing page of the ESMA site. Screenshot by the author.*

After this initial impact in the trials, the project expanded from a static three-dimensional reconstruction of the Officer's Quarters building of the ESMA to an explorable interactive documentary website (copyrighted in 2013 by the original design group Huella Digital) with additional materials such as survivor video testimony, and historical content about the years of the dictatorship. The reconstruction was also moved online, allowing the public to access and learn from it. Over the years, it expanded to offer visitors the chance to explore not just the ESMA, but other former torture centres, which are now sites of memory, in Buenos Aires: El Club Atlético (2010), Automotores Orletti (2015), El Campito / Campo de Mayo (2018), and La Cacha (2021) (see Figure 1).

Upon entering the website, the visitor finds a list of the sites that are included, and a presentation description states *"Se presentan aquí una serie de documentales interactivos sobre los centros clandestinos de detención, tortura y exterminio que funcionaron en Argentina durante la última dictadura cívico-militar"* [Here are presented a series of interactive

documentaries about the former detention centres that functioned in Argentina during the last civic-military dictatorship.] Upon clicking on the desired site, the visitor is taken to a secondary page that shows a sequence of stills from the 3D reconstruction, with options along the top of the screen to choose from, including the options to see historical images of the actual site, to watch interview-style videos in which survivors give more information about the site, or to directly access the *"recorrido virtual"* [virtual visit] of the site (Figure 2).

Once the visitor chooses the "virtual visit" option, a three-dimensional, virtual reconstruction of the site as it existed during the repression appears, with a quasi-videogame-like quality to it, and the visitor can then choose their point of access to the site from the series of buttons active on the building/floor plan of the site in question (Figure 3). A 360-degree view moves to continually keep the vantage-point of the viewer.



Figure 3. *The virtual rendering of the Casino de Oficiales space of the ex ESMA. Unlike the other sites, the ex ESMA has a suggested "Introduction" option (pictured here), where viewers get a short introductory video that contextualises the site. Screenshot by the author.*



Figure 4. *An example of the space of Capuchita in the ESMA reconstruction. Here, visitors learn about the mattresses upon which the prisoners slept in their individually partitioned spaces of the room. Screenshot by the author.*

Once 'inside' the virtual reconstruction, visitors navigate through the space using their computer mouse and the arrow keys, exploring the various pre-programmed routes and clicking on different points to learn more about their uses during the dictatorship (Figure 4).

Upon entering the specific sites, recorded video testimonies from survivors who narrate various aspects of their detention automatically begin to play. However, this feature can be de-activated if the visitor desires though they must make the conscious decision to do this. The route that one can take through each building is limited by the programming and the extent of the visitor's exploration of the site is highly dependent on their interest; without due diligence, it is somewhat easy to bypass or even accidentally miss certain clickable content within the reconstruction.

The video testimonies and clickable content in the various areas serve to create a narrative, explaining the use of each place and adding additional information as available.

As previously mentioned in the discussion of the options included on each site's secondary landing page, in addition to the *recorrido virtual* [virtual visit], the visitor can explore other educational materials, including in the example of the *Casino de Oficiales* reconstruction, a short documentary film explaining the history of the site (*¿Qué fue la ESMA?* [What was the ESMA?]), short videos explaining the changes that were made to the site during its years of operation (*Cambios Históricos* [Historical Changes]), additional recorded interviews with survivors (*Entrevistas* [Interviews]) and a gallery of historical photos related to the operation and physical features of the former detention centre. All of this valuable historical content created and archived by Huella Digital evidences how the online site, like its counterpart physical site of memory, values knowledge-creation and the maintenance of an archive related to the history of each place. The website's page also includes a detailed description of the uses it foresees for the 3D reconstructions, highlighting that it is for open, universal use and access and uses multimedia, constructed narrative and explicit representation to achieve a mission of establishing truth [*verdad*], that it has been used in various judicial proceedings in its mission to seek justice [*justicia*], and that it has sought to be a collective reconstruction of the past, in fulfilling a mission to create memory [*memoria*] about the violence ("Usos" huelladigital.com.ar).

The Ethical Questions

The first ethical question that emerges when considering Centrosclandestinos.com.ar, is the way the features of the cyber visits to the sites allow the visitor the option to choose to largely avoid the broader historical context of the space – one of the key concerns expressed by the Association of Former

Detained/Disappeared when the ESMA was recovered. By giving visitors the option to de-activate the video testimonies that contextualise the space, the site enables visitors to bypass this valuable explanatory context completely and simply interact with the video-game-style recreations of the structures. While the testimonies themselves were highly valued by the design team for their ability to humanise the exploration of the site (see Ohanian and Malamud, 2013), the ability to choose to not play this content during the visit appears to run counter to the website's pedagogical mission. As noted by Virginia Vecchioli in her analysis of the project:

> A través de recursos de realidad aumentada, animación, modelos en escala, el uso de fotografías y objeto de época, y, fundamentalmente, el testimonio audiovisual de las víctimas inserto en distintos puntos del recorrido se busca que el interactor participe, ficcionalmente, de una de las dimensiones más traumáticas de la historia reciente.
>
> (2018, p. 84)

> [Through augmented reality resources, animation, to-scale models, the use of photographs and objects of the time period, and, fundamentally, the audiovisual testimony of the victims inserted at different points along the path, they seek for the interactor to participate, fictionally, in one of the most traumatic dimensions of the recent past.]

However, does this option to bypass the built-in content significantly alter the paradigm already present in the physical sites in Buenos Aires? In terms of the guided visits, yes, as this would never be an option, save if the visitor chose to abandon the visit completely and leave the site early. However, the 2015 modifications to the *Sitio Memoria* at the ex ESMA appear to present many of these same options to the visitor as are available in the interactive documentary; they can actively thwart the logic of the layout of the space should they so choose. One can simply move quickly from room

to room in the museum installations, not reading the texts that have been carefully composed and arranged, and not listening to the full testimony recordings that are given throughout the building, or intentionally take a 'wrong turn' and encounter things out of order. As Tandeciarz notes in her critique of the modifications, the sheer magnitude of the information presented, and the bombardment posed by the audiovisual content tends to preclude a synthesis of the content by the visitor due to the overwhelming sense that it presents. Therefore, perhaps the result is the same in both cases – it remains the visitor's prerogative to decide whether to take advantage of all that the space has to offer. In terms of what the technology adds in this regard, we must consider that at the physical site, one must sit in the moment and decide to stay still to watch the entire testimony video (some of which are rather lengthy) and once one leaves one cannot view it a second time. Whereas the online venue offers the option of pausing and continuing should the desire or need arise, and even returning later to re-watch the testimony. Such advantages cannot be ignored.

On a related note, the guided visits to the physical sites begin with a discussion in which each visitor articulates their interest in the site, leading to spontaneous conversation about specific features of the space tailored to the interests of the viewer. This multiplicity of narratives is impossible with the online version, as the programming is, of necessity, predetermined and fixed. In another sense, in the physical visit, one is immersed in the space and confined without distractions – as Sodaro notes in her definition of the memorial museum, the space is public and the visitor often self-polices themselves accordingly (2018, p. 175). Thus, for example, the distraction of a phone call or text message would likely not be indulged. However, within the comfortable space of the virtual visit, where one's behaviour is not observed in a public manner, such distractions can interrupt the immersive nature of the memory site, thus inhibiting concentrated focus and reflection.

A second concern related to this non-public nature regards the ability to view the online memory site from the protected space of wherever one's computer is located. This means there is no need for the physical or emotional discomfort of being in the same space where others experienced severe physical and psychological torture. Just the awareness of this separation changes the dynamic and places the visitor in a more voyeuristic position, consuming from afar. John Ellis posits that even the most mundane, everyday media witnessing (he is looking at consuming television news coverage of salient, sometimes even traumatic, events) brings an awareness to the viewer and constructs a type of "acquaintanceship that feels personal and yet is not" (2009, p. 83). However, I am inclined to argue that while this may be possible with the cyber visit, the physical visit remains much more effective at placing the visitor in the conditions under which the memorial museum can achieve its goal of giving:

> the visitor an intense, affective, and emotional experience that will help her identify and empathize with the victims in a way that will morally educate her to work to prevent future violence, repression, and hatred.
>
> (Sodaro 2018, p. 25)

Real-time, instantaneous online access permits psychological distancing and also enables visitors to navigate the site without investing the same time or physical effort required to move through the space on a visit to the tangible site of memory. Both forms of distancing may create a barrier for the memorial museum's creation of "experiences for visitors that engage all the senses: seeing, hearing, and even bodily sensation . . . [that] helps transform visitors into active participants instead of passive spectators" (Hansen-Glucklich 2014, p. 103). Similarly, Laurie Beth Clark observes that:

> memorial spaces frequently rely on structures, rather than – or in addition to – narratives, to facilitate participation and identification. Passageways are ideal for the performance of embodied knowledge because they can provide a spatial chronology of the slaves' or prisoners' journeys from points of first arrival, through the sites of transportation or extermination.
>
> (2013, p. 46)

In the *Sitio Memoria*, the visitor experiences the spatiality of the place where the prisoners were held – the size, the darkness, the hardness, the isolation, the sounds that filter in from the exterior, the temperature; the structure itself is an essential piece of the visit. By experiencing these sites in a virtual realm, the visitor loses this contact with these performative elements of the place. Even the most faithful replica of the space cannot simultaneously recreate all of these elements in the same way in a three-dimensional virtual realm. Malamud himself reported that one survivor, upon viewing the project, commented, *"está bien, pero lo más característico y terrible de los centros era el olor"* ("*La ex ESMA*" 11) [it's good, but the most characteristic and terrible thing of the centres was the smell.] While the smell cannot be replicated in either the virtual or the physical space, this reaction is revealing. The closer one can get to the physical experience of the site, the more that empathic understanding through identification with the victims seems possible. However, on the other extreme, the distancing maintained by the online visit can maintain a foreignness that impedes the development of the erroneous (and naïve) view that the survivor's story is "knowable" – precisely the fear identified by Michael Rothberg (2000) in his consideration of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (the USHMM). While Rothberg acknowledges that "sense-based methods may be most effective", he argues that they may also be "potentially misleading in the ease with which they allow contemporary visitors to touch an event that in both its extremity and everydayness continues to elude us" (2000, p. 262). While Rothberg's comments are in connection to the Holocaust, they can also easily apply to the case of the experiences of the

victims of the detention centres of the Argentinean military dictatorship. In this sense, the distancing imposed by the online visits may avoid such a pitfall of over-identification.

A third concern about these cyber visits is that, unless done collectively by one group via a single computer, they are individual experiences, not shared ones. There is no co-traversing a space in these instances, thus eliminating a factor that appears to be emphasised in the guided visits to memory sites in Buenos Aires. Even in the case of the redesign of the ex ESMA, where individual visits are also now a possibility, it is quite unlikely that one will be the only individual in the place, whereas this is almost exclusively the norm for 'visits' to the online space. As briefly touched on above, the online visit also creates a 'safer' space in which the viewer does not experience the physical discomfort of the site. In the winter, the *Sitio Memoria* does not have heating, therefore the visitor must experience the cold felt by the prisoners, thus underscoring their suffering. Conversely, in the summer it does not have air conditioning, resulting in a similar form of experiential empathic understanding of the stifling heat. The guided visits are also quite long, requiring substantial physical exertion on the part of the visitor, an exertion that can also help facilitate empathy for the victims of the violence. Even the individual visits, when undertaken with the rigour to want to experience all the site has to offer, command a substantial time and physical investment in maneuvering through the whole building. On the other hand, the virtual visits, in removing the need for such physical exertion, open the ex ESMA to populations that perhaps would be physically unable to undertake the guided or individual visit, or who are unable to travel to these sites in Buenos Aires. Such an opening allows more individuals to learn about and from the site, thus further democratising access to this history.

The fourth concern related to the interactive documentary reconstruction of the sites is that they rest on an intent to fully reconstruct the past at its most violent moment, when the site was operational as a detention centre. The focus is on the historical reconstruction of the space as it existed during the

moment of the repression, complete with furniture, realistic lighting (or lack thereof), and a sense of the environment in which it existed, historicising the space based on the content of survivor testimony. This desire to have the user fictionally participate in one of the most traumatic moments of the recent past falls dangerously in line with the qualms expressed in the original debates over what to do with the ex ESMA in terms of not wanting to create a show of horror implying a recreation of the victims' traumas. As mentioned above, giving this false sense of 'knowing' by seeking to have the interactor

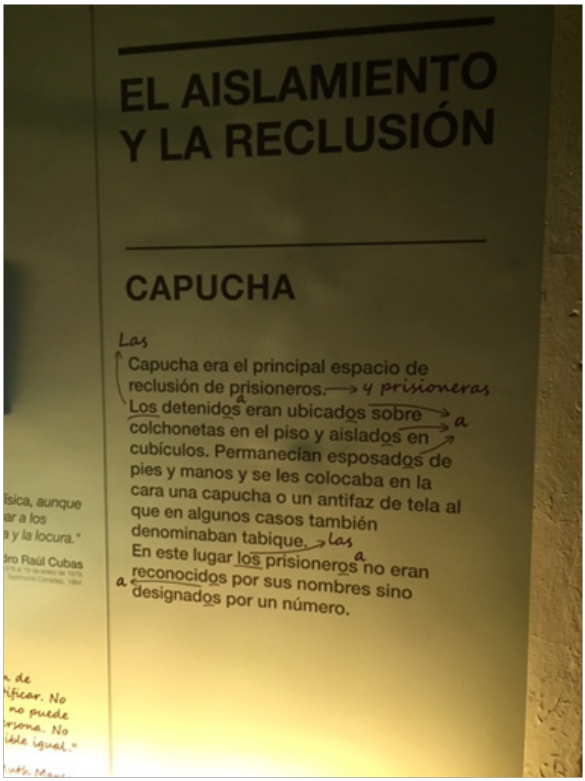


Figure 5. *Installation signaling the Capucha area of the Sitio Memoria, displaying language revisions that recognise and highlight the female victims of the site. Photograph by the author, 2019.*

fictionally participate in the past could be an impediment to the didactic function of the space and the reflection on what remains unreachable in terms of the other's experience.

On the other hand, the recreation of the quotidian use of the site perhaps yields more understanding of the institutionalisation of the violence of state terrorism, or the "banality of evil," to use Hannah Arendt's (2006) term. While the videogame-like quality risks a possible fetishisation of the place of violence by glossing over the gritty details of the repression, the larger issue is that it does not incorporate the desire of many groups to fill former spaces of violence with a range of examples of culture, life, and art capable of generating meaningful reflection on the past. Absent of such art, the ability of the space to function as a memorial museum that helps encourage the visitor to make wider connections to the ongoing impact of the military dictatorships on Argentinian society can be limited. The focus of the content of the virtual site remains on the past, unlike many physical sites of memory that, along with relating the past of the site to the visitor, intentionally call attention to present issues that encourage future activism advocating for human rights. This focus fulfills an aspect of the definition of the memorial museum promoted by Sodaro, that they strive "to be more universal spaces in which the broader implications and reverberations of the past can be explored" (2018, p. 23). However, the virtual reconstruction itself could arguably be viewed as the type of creative art that produces contemplation, the type of project that Horacio González called for in his contributions to the debate over what to do with the ex ESMA.

Lastly, the creation of these virtual sites freezes the archive in a very specific place. While the online venue theoretically opens access to more people, technology evolves rapidly and is not easily or inexpensively updated. Whereas the ex ESMA today operates in a process of constant revision. For example, during my visit in July of 2019, as an extension of a special exhibit devoted to the female prisoners' experiences at the site

(*Ser mujeres en la ESMA* [To Be Women in the ESMA]), the language of many of the permanent installations had been revised to recognise those experiences more fully by specifically changing the terminology on the exhibit signs to the feminine form of the nouns and adjectives. These changes, left as visual and noticeable revisions in the signage of the displays, call attention to the ongoing work of recovering the past (see Figure 5).

Conversely, the sites in centrosclandestinos.com.ar once completed appear to remain largely unchanged. Likely, this is a byproduct of the difficulties associated with obtaining ongoing funding, since the initial design of the sites and video materials included in it have been completed and ongoing redesign must be quite costly. At the same time, unlike the physical ex ESMA, the online site does not require the same level of consistent presence by workers to enable its ability to serve the public, thus it could be a more economical platform to maintain in the long-term.

Lest all these discussions seem negatively skewed, there are also numerous positive factors offered by the virtual reconstructions. First, above all, the interactive documentary site is a new pedagogical tool that offers valuable materials that can be used to teach about the last military dictatorship, the years of state terrorism, and the ongoing legacy of disappearance. The video testimonies included on the sites alone are an invaluable contribution to collective memory in Argentina. In terms of the cyber visits themselves, while the videogame aesthetic of the site (and this is purely an aesthetic, as the visit is not a game, but rather a defined space that the visitor can explore, but not alter) may contribute to a white-washing effect where the gory details are removed from the picture (even as the group expresses that they desire to show an explicit representation in keeping with the truth, graphic renderings of the byproducts of torture are not visible in the reconstructions even if they are referenced implicitly by the interviews), it is also a familiar way of

connecting with new generations accustomed to consuming this type of digital imagery, thus offering a way to draw in the younger generations that such sites seek to educate about this past.

Additionally, the cyber reconstruction adheres to the desires of survivors' groups that no irreversible modifications be made to the physical sites. By offering an online venue, the actual historical building does not suffer the wear and tear of numerous visitors per year and any uncovered proofs of the past remain protected. Gonzalez's suggestions that (1) the focal point of the site be the building itself and (2) that it be the centre from which to relate the history of what happened are foregrounded via the encounter with the online reconstruction. Everything emanates from the study of the site itself, even if the encounter is with a three-dimensional version of it with a videogame aesthetic. Additionally, it must be noted that the newest site added, El campito / Campo de Mayo, was awarded an honorary mention in the category of Immaterial Cultural Patrimony for the 2019 Patrimony Contest of the National Arts Fund in Argentina, thus the project has garnered official recognition as a valuable contribution to the cultural patrimony of the nation.

Conclusion: Autonomy and the Creation of Citizens of Memory

In her study of cultural representation in post-dictatorship Argentina, Tandeciarz (2017) draws on Diana Taylor's (2003) differentiation between the archive – a fixed repository of historical information – and the repertoire – an experiential, performative approach to the past – to argue for the value of the experiential in human rights pedagogy. She offers a new reading of Sara Ahmed's (2004) work on how emotions tie people together to argue that affective experiences "work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective" (2017, p. 256) to build political communities. At the end of her study, which examines

various examples of memory projects in Argentina, including the ex ESMA memory space, Tandeciarz concludes that

> So long as spaces for affective transmissions remain, new generations of citizens of memory will continue to find ways to advocate on behalf of a more perfect union, one forged in the active and ongoing defense of human rights.
>
> (2017, p. 256)

While Tandeciarz, here, is referring to an educational program that facilitates youth projects devoted to examining the legacy of the military dictatorship in Argentina, I argue that her analysis applies more broadly to the types of experiences facilitated by visits to spaces of memory like those explored in this chapter. Removing the physical visit, with its emphasis on connection, and displacing the performative dimension (the repertoire) in favour of the fixed archive of the virtual site, the interactive documentary reframes the visit as an individual experience and potentially diminishes the effectiveness of affective transmission.

While centrosclandestinos.com.ar offers valuable archival material, the main ethical dilemma stems from the uncertainty over how the project will be encountered. A rushed visit to the site, with video testimony deactivated, nearly completely bypasses the affective value of the materials. However, a careful visit to the site, contextualised with additional exploration of the materials offered, might achieve similar results to the physical visit to a space of memory. The ethical quandary lies in that gray area of uncertainty. With the exception of the redesign of the *Sitio Memoria* of the ex ESMA, the physical visits to sites of memory in Buenos Aires arguably guarantee the framing of the visit as an experience within a narrative designed to effectively tie the visitor to the affective dimension of the space. The online visit sacrifices such control, putting the onus on the visitor to create such an experience for themselves. Yet, such freedom is what characterises all

reactions to the past, and perhaps the only truly ethical way of approaching the teaching of this history is to offer the material and allow the visitor to make their own path through it. If we desire to create "citizens of memory" (2017, p. 256) as Tandeciarz terms them, we must recognise that those citizens are autonomous beings who must take the initiative for themselves. The virtual visits, in that sense, constitute yet another tool that offers valuable access to an archive that can help these beings along that path. As a final comment, it must be noted that this chapter was initially written and finished prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, a global event that severely impacted the work of sites of memory everywhere. In Argentina, most sites were forced to cease guided visits for a prolonged period of time during the pandemic. The alternative virtual format of the interactive documentaries offered by centrosclandestinos.com.ar therefore must be recognized as one of even more import, allowing continuity of access to this information despite the physical barriers to cultivating the being and participation together of strangers imposed by the pandemic.

Reference

Ahmed, S. (2004) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge.

Arendt, H. (2006) *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Translated by Amos Elon. London: Penguin Books.

Blair, C. and Dickinson, G. and Ott, B. (2010) 'Introduction: Rhetoric/Memory/Place' in Dickinson, G. and Blair C., and Ott, B. *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*. Alabama: The University of Alabama Press. pp. 1-54.

Brodsky, M. (2005) *Memoria en construcción. El debate sobre la ESMA*. Buenos Aires: La Marca Editora.

Clark, L. B. (2013) 'Coming to Terms with Trauma Tourism.' In Trezise, B. and Wake, C. *Visions and Revisions: Performance, Memory, Trauma*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press. pp. 135-157.

CONADEP (1986) Nunca Más: A Report by Argentina's National Commission on Disappeared People. Translated by Writers and Scholars International Ltd. London: Faber and Faber Limited.

Ellis, J. (2009) 'Mundane Witness.' In Frosh, P. and Pinchevski, A. *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 73-88.

González, H. (2005) 'Las sombras del edificio: Construcción y anticonstrucción.' In Brodsky, M. *Memoria en construcción. El debate sobre la ESMA*. Buenos Aires: La Marca Editora. pp. 71-77.

Guglielmucci, A. (2013) *La consagración de la memoria. Una etnografía acerca de la institucionalización del recuerdo sobre los crímenes del terrorismo de Estado en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Antropofagia.

Hansen-Glucklich, J. (2014) *Holocaust Memory Reframed: Museums and the Challenges of Representation*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Hoskins, A. (2011) 'Media, Memory, Metaphor: Remembering and the Connective Turn' *Parallax* 17:4 pp. 19-31.

Laub, D. (1992) 'Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening.' In Felman, S. and Laub, D. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge. pp. 57-74.

Kaufman, A. (2005) 'Museo del Nunca Más.' In Brodsky, M. *Memoria en construcción. El debate sobre la ESMA*. Buenos Aires: La Marca Editora. pp. 79-80.
Malamud, M. (2010) 'La ex ESMA en 3D. Un recorrido virtual por el ex CCDTyE', Espacios, 3, pp. 6-13.

Ohanian, M. J. and Malamud, M. (2013) 'Memorias 3d interactivas de la Esma. Nuevas narrativas.' *X Jornadas de Sociología*. Universidad de Buenos Aires: Facultad de Ciencias Sociales. Available at: http://cdsa.aacademica.org/000-038/13.pdf)Accessed September 30, 2019)

Pastoriza, L. (2005) 'La memoria como política pública: los ejes de la discusión.' In Brodsky, M. *Memoria en construcción. El debate sobre la ESMA*. Buenos Aires: La Marca Editora. pp. 85-94.

Red Latina Sin Fronteras. (2014) 'Argentina: disuelven el Instituto Espacio para la Memoria.' *Red Latina sin fronteras*. Available at: https://redlatinasinfronteras.wordpress.com/2014/05/09/argentina-disuelven-el-instituto-espacio-para-la-memoria/ (Accessed 18 January 2022).

Rothberg, M. (2000) *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Sodaro, A. (2018) *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Tandeciarz, S. (2017) *Citizens of Memory: Affect, Representation, and Human Rights in Postdictatorship Argentina*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.

Taylor, D. (2003) *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Vecchioli, V. (2018) 'Usos del documental interactivo y las tecnologías transmedia en la recreación de los centros clandestinos de detención de la dictadura argentina.' *Antípoda. Revista de Antropología y Arqueología*, 33, pp. 79-100.

Williams, P. (2007) *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*. Oxford and New York: Berg.

Chapter 7

Transforming Kenya's Colonial History:

Between Tangible and Intangible Memory Sites

Chao Tayiana Maina
interviewed by Victoria Grace Walden

In the following interview, Chao Tayiana Maina, founder of African Digital Heritage, explains the work she and colleagues are doing to use digital technology in order to memorialise concentration camps created by the British in Kenya during the 'Mau Mau Emergency', at a time when the history and memories attached to the physical sites are at risk of being forgotten. What follows is the result of email exchanges between Tayiana and this volume's editor Victoria Grace Walden, in 2020. Tayiana founded African Digital Heritage in 2018. The project explores how colloquial, public history work can counter the forgetting imposed by colonialism and provide new ways

of conceptualising the idea of the 'memorial museum' beyond top-down, institutionalised (and often state-sponsored) collective memory. African Digital Heritage reimagines 'collective memory' through public dialogue against the inaccessible colonial archives that have constructed a history of Kenya, which does not present the histories of the people of Kenya. In the spirit of the orality central to the African Digital Heritage, this chapter is presented as a conversation (albeit a written one).

What are the aims and objectives of African Digital Heritage?

African Digital Heritage is a non-profit organisation founded in Kenya, dedicated to supporting and increasing the use of technology in the African cultural heritage sector. By understanding the place of technology within African cultural heritage we mean:

1. Challenging existing misunderstandings about colonial legacy and misrepresentation of African history.
2. Innovating in the direction of our needs, such as designing digital solutions and approaches that are contextualised to fit the specific contexts of local audiences and institutions.

We believe that technology is not just about digitisation, it is about access, engagement, dissemination, and participation. How do African cultural heritage practitioners and institutions navigate, participate, and express themselves in this digital world? More importantly how does technology provide new ways for us as Africans to share and present alternative historical narratives that move beyond colonial biases? Through aspects such as digital capacity research, digital skills training, visualisations and more our work seeks to answer some of these critical questions.

How did the project come into being?

Before founding African Digital Heritage, I was an undergraduate student studying computer science in Kenya and worked as a public historian on the

side. I was curating public histories as an enthusiast. I started with a widely successful history blog in 2012 <theeagora.com> and proceeded to conduct a nationwide historical documentation project between 2013 and 2016.

The Save the Railway project was a volunteer, public history project that sought to document the history of the railways in Kenya and the place of Kenyans in the narrative of this colossal colonial infrastructure. The project sought to challenge current forms of memorialisation which romanticised railway construction as a European endeavour in the unoccupied wild. It was an experiment in the use of photography, videography, maps, and social media to archive and share alternative historical narratives. Moving away from institutionalised histories, it demonstrated the ability for citizens, particularly young African people (who are not considered legitimate heritage practitioners), to work within the cultural heritage space.

After completing the railway project, I applied to do a post grad program in International Heritage Visualisation at the Glasgow School of Art where I was able to learn more about the theoretical and technical aspects of digital heritage. Upon completing my studies, I took up a position in the New Media department at the Science Museum, developing interactive software for museum exhibitions. I did this for one and a half years, after which I returned home to set up African Digital Heritage.

One of your most ambitious projects, and the one most related to the topic of this collection, is the digital reconstruction of the Mau Mau concentration camps in Kenya. I wonder if you could start by telling our international readership a little about the history of these sites and the Mau Mau Emergency.

Between 1952 and 1960, the British colonial government constructed a network of more than 100 work camps, detention camps, and emergency villages in Kenya in a bid to quash the Mau Mau freedom insurgency, this network was known as the pipeline. The pipeline was a large-scale system to

'rehabilitate' suspected supporters and fighters of the Mau Mau movement. Thomas Askwith, Commissioner for Community Development in Kenya's colonial administration, developed the pipeline in 1953. The notion of a 'pipeline' was used to denote the progression of individuals from initial detention to their ultimate release. The concept of 'rehabilitation' was borne from the fact that, in an effort to delegitimise their struggle, the British colonial administration declared adherence to the Mau Mau cause as a mental disease.

For more than eight years, tens of thousands of Kenyans were detained within these camps, often subjected to forms of egregious and illegal torture, as well as arbitrary violence and even murder. All in the name of retaining colonial control and 'rehabilitating' those Kenyans in favour of an independent nation.

How has this history been remembered in Kenya and beyond, in non-digital forms?

Today, few people in Kenya know where these camps were, or even that they existed. Although the Mau Mau movement is widely acknowledged globally, very little is known about the atrocities that took place during the state of emergency. Particularly the forced villagisation of women and children, and the detention of tens of thousands of men and (some women) who were suspected of being Mau Mau sympathisers. Oral histories from Mau Mau veterans speak of torture, killings, rape, castration all taking place within the detention camps which were dotted all across the country.

Despite the presence of so many camps in Kenya and thousands detained, this history (particularly of detention) is not taught in schools or even part of collective national memory. It remains hyper-localised only being spoken of in families or villages, yet for many of our parents and grandparents this was very much a reality.

There is no museum dedicated specifically to the Mau Mau emergency period, the events leading up to it or the events that took place after.

This history is briefly captured in the Nairobi National Museum and smaller museums in central Kenya although not with the attention or scale that it deserves. This succinct, fragmented representation of colonial history especially of the Mau Mau period does great injustice to how the complexities and dynamics of this period are memorialised and understood in Kenya.

You have talked about the suppression and erasure of this history in Kenya, what drives this? Are there financial, cultural, or political challenges to tangible heritage related to the Mau Mau Emergency and the memorialisation of these sites in Kenya?

The suppression of this history can be attributed largely to four main things:

1. **The destruction of archival files** - The colonial government migrated and destroyed thousands of files pertaining to the presence of the camps and the activities that took place within them. (See Operation Legacy)
2. **The criminalisation of the Mau Mau movement and suppression of oral history** - Mau Mau remained classified as a terrorist organization until 2005. This greatly suppressed oral history and community discussions around the subject and at the same time prevented Mau Mau veterans from forming organisations and taking the British government to court.
3. **The transition from living memory** - Many of those who experienced life in the camps and villages are now of old age, ill health or have passed on.
4. **The destruction and repurposing of buildings** - After independence, most camps were either destroyed or repurposed into state prisons and secondary schools.

In examining the presence and subsequent erasure of this history, a sense of urgency arises to confront this past. At the same time, the need to explore this history further coincides with advancements in digital media and increased access to online platforms. A critical question for us then is, how can technology shape and impact discussions around this subject?

Many of the sites you have selected to reconstruct still exist in some physical form today, but they have been repurposed for other uses. How does your digital work interrogate these sites and make them places for memorialisation and education about the past?

We see technology as a way to dismantle the power structures put in place to suppress this history, increase dialogue within Kenya and the UK, and directly challenge notions surrounding access to accurate, truthful, and unbiased accounts of colonial history. We also see digital tools and media as a way to reach wider audiences in different geographic regions and communicate to audiences at different levels of literacy, expertise, and age. As a volunteer organisation working across Kenya and the UK, a digital approach also allows us to share our work without having to occupy physical space or possess physical collections.

We engage audiences in Kenya and the UK with the history of the camps through a series of interactive digital assets that explore questions related to location, physicality, and the lived experience. We consider this to be restorative and vital history.

Our three-pronged approach combines digital, tangible, and intangible perspectives by:

- Creating 3D reconstructions of the camps that reference existing physical remains and archival sources.
- Overlaying these reconstructions onto an interactive digital map, showing scale and location.
- Populating the digital map and models with oral histories and experiences of those who went through the camps.

Preliminary digital assets shared online and on social media have shown immensely high levels of audience engagement and generated several calls to present and share more about this lesser known past.

How did you go about choosing the types of sources you wanted to include in these visualisations and where did you get them from?

For the reconstructions we have used 3 main sources.

- **Oral Histories** - Oral testimony from veterans and history passed down generations is crucial in providing personal testimonies, memories and experiences that are uncaptured in archival sources.
- **Archival Sources** - Archival sources which include newspapers, video, audio, letters and photographs have provided a key insight into the nature of the camps, their locations and the policies instituted during detention.
- **Physical evidence** - Evidence found in the physical campsites. This includes remains of buildings and materials used to construct the former camps

The decision to use multiple sources stems from the fact that none of the sources are complete on their own. Additionally, the migration of archival files to the UK creates an access barrier for those in Kenya. Ultimately however, using multiple sources has allowed us to expand on the information we use for the visualisations making it more holistic by incorporating multiple perspectives. For instance, an archival source may describe the physical layout of a camp, while an oral history source may describe the activities that would take place e.g how many people would sleep in a cell or what building was used for what.

Community participation has been central to your work. Why did you decide to take this approach and how has it helped shape the project? Have digital tools helped make your project more participatory or has this community work been performed in more face-to-face contexts?

Community participation has been a key pillar for this project primarily because we have approached this subject as learners ourselves. Prior to founding the Museum of British Colonialism in 2018, we had no idea of this history and the existence of these camps. For those of us based in Kenya,

only now do we realise that we have relatives and friends whose parents and grandparents were in camps. So really the process of creating these reconstructions is more about sharing the findings as we learn as opposed to sharing expert outputs.

Additionally, for those of us in Kenya, we do not have access to archival files in the UK and as much as this can be a barrier, we also see it as an opportunity to explore the central place of oral history in decolonisation. The archives are, after all, written from the perspective of colonial officers and administrators. How then do we find our own voice in this discussion, and the voice of our grandparents and parents who lived through this experience first-hand and whose perspectives have been drowned out by official state histories?

As such oral history documentation and the act of physically visiting these sites makes it a community project, one that relies heavily on local knowledge to find these camps (many of the exact locations are not even recorded) and to understand the human experience of this period as painful as it may be.

So far, the community work has been mostly face-to-face however we are working on incorporating community participation into the digital reconstruction process. Some of our questions in this regard include:

1. What impact do interactive visualisations have on community engagement and interaction with colonial/suppressed histories?
2. How can this impact be measured or determined?
3. How can 3D visualisations be made open, accessible, and inclusive to non-expert audiences including those of the older generation whose testimony forms the basis for the visualisations?
4. How does one communicate aspects of dynamism, uncertainty, and incompleteness within a 3D visualisation?

Instead of seeing the community as consumers of the final digital output, we envision them as being active participants in the decision-making process

towards visualising this aspect of colonial history. And we hope to explore this as we continue with the project.

One of your research questions focuses on the difference in age of the veterans you are speaking with for testimonial evidence, who are in their 70s, 80s and 90s now, and the 'new' technologies with which you are trying to present their stories. Could you talk about how you have involved this older generation in the development of



Figure1. *Members of the Museum of British Colonialism team interview Mau Mau Veteran Wambugu Wa Nyingi at his home in Central Kenya, Sep 2018. Credit: Chao Tayiana Maina.*

the project and how they can access its contents?

The next phase of the project is to hold community workshops with the veterans whose oral histories provided a key resource for the creation of the reconstructions. In a sense we want to go back to them and present the outputs we have created. The purpose of these workshops would be to get their opinion on the accuracy of the visualisations and also their perspective on the digital approach. We have not been able to do this yet due to lack of funding, and the worrying aspect for us is that many of the veterans may not be with us for much longer. We do realise that many of them might not also be familiar with the technology we are using and when we do have the workshops, we are thinking of printing stills of the reconstructions and/or creating miniature models to further illustrate the outputs. (This is in addition to the digital models.)

In one of your blog posts about the project, you mention that you "realized that presenting final, unquestionable visualizations is not the approach [you] want to take". This seems to me to acknowledge the complex fluidity of collective memory, or as James Young (1993) has suggested calling it "collected memory". I wonder if you could explain your realisation a bit more, and how the challenges of working with digital media brought you to this conclusion.

As I mentioned before, we have approached this history as learners and for many of us this is the first time we are working on this subject. For instance, when coming up with the 3D models we worked with students from universities in Nairobi to help develop these visualisations. These students were not historians but architects and designers who were not aware of this history prior to joining the team. And I guess that speaks to the beauty of it, because we want to show that you do not have to be an expert to take an interest in this history or to participate in this work. So, for us being open about our learning process becomes a strength where we can invite different opinions and different narratives. If something in our visualisation is incorrect



Figure 2. *A building that was formerly used as a torture chamber in Mweru Works Camp (today, Mweru High School) in Central Kenya. The school has preserved the building in memory of those who were detained here. Credit: Chao Tayiana Maina.*

then we will change it, if we have forgotten something then we will add it and so forth. We are trying to work in a way in which we can track and communicate changes made to visualisations.

Therefore, we did not feel comfortable saying that the visualisations are final or perfect. There are still very many levels of uncertainty brought about by limitations, such as our research sources, barriers in access, and lack of funding. Resultantly, we chose to take an iterative approach to the reconstruction where a single visualisation is open and can be amended to incorporate changes and new information.

The digital reconstructions are not presented as final outputs but as dynamic visuals whose primary aim is to help people in Kenya and the UK generate conversations and dialogue on this subject. Perhaps the essence of true decolonisation is not about experts teaching non-experts but in learning to unlearn what we have known to be true, teaching one another and sharing our lessons whether you are considered to be an expert in the field or not.

Some attempts to remember sites of incarceration, and I am thinking here particularly about the "Sites of Memory" project at Bergen-Belsen, for example, which is a project I keep returning to in my



Figure 3. *A digital reconstruction of the torture chamber in Mweru High School - Clay render, no textures. Credit: Chao Tayiana Maina.*

own research, avoid photo realist modelling. Yet, this seems to be an important part of your 3D reconstructions. Could you explain the significance of photo-realism to your project? Why do you feel it is important to capture the textures of these historical sites?
Actually, this has been a point of discussion in the team. I would not say we are set on photorealistic models as we have both clay renders and photo realistic ones. So far, we have only modelled sites from two former campsites and there are many more sites to go. This is something we would like to further engage with communities and audiences about once we are able to conduct our workshops in future.

However, all the textures we have used on the models are based on textures found at the campsites as they look today. So, the textures are based on the real-life buildings in as much as possible. This has been helpful when trying to illustrate how the buildings looked given the fact that most of the sites are now private property and inaccessible to the public.

In public discourse, the digital is often considered to be immaterial, participatory and to offer permanence in terms of its archiving potential. How do you perceive the potentials of the digital? What do you feel it can do for your project that tangible memorials could not?
Critically, the key strength of digital in this project is that it makes the inaccessible, accessible. And we are not just talking about simply making the structures accessible but also the conversations and sentiments around them.

In the case of these detention camps, they have been here in Kenya for more than 60 years now, why is it that many of us (particularly young people) in Kenya and in the UK are only getting to know about them today? Not only are we now getting to know about the existence of these camps, we are at the same time getting to share what we feel about them. Whether it is expressing shock, anger, or betrayal at the lack of awareness or the

deliberate suppression. There is a collective sense that we can now access and talk about this history today in a way that our parents could not and that is really powerful.

For instance, I recently found out that there was a detention camp very close to where I grew up. When I first started working on the project, I asked my grandparents about this history and they casually mentioned a camp site that is not more than 30 minutes walking distance from our home. This was shocking to me because I realised how much of a generational gap there is in terms of awareness of this history. And it goes to show that the tactics of suppression were in many ways successful.

So, at the very basis we see digital tools, platforms, and media as ways to challenge this suppression and to make this history more known and more understood. The 3D visualisations, videos, maps, and other content are but media through which to enable awareness and collective understanding; they are not the end goal.

We are using the platforms available to us, as young people, working with limited resources and in this way the digital approaches are informed more by our circumstances, our skill sets, and our environments than they are of choice between material and immaterial.

Could you talk a little more about your choice to use 3D-technology and how you intend to layer different historical and testimonial sources into the project?

The decision to use 3D technology was actually informed by our skills sets. Personally, I am a digital heritage specialist and I had prior experience with creating interactive models of historical sites. So, when I came onto the project with the Museum of British Colonialism, I suggested that this could be an experimental approach we could take, and the rest of the team were open to the idea. I believe there is a lot of potential in 3D media to expand

our understanding and engagement with historical collections and sites. Additionally, the ability to overlay different forms of media in 3D spaces makes for a more holistic digital experience.

However, we are not just creating 3D models, we are building a photographic archive, carrying out oral history interviews and using digital maps. So, as you can see there are many types of media being produced. Our videos and fieldwork interviews are all on YouTube while photographs



Figure 4. *Buildings that were used as mass cells in Mweru Works Camp (Today, Mweru High School). The structures are today used as classrooms. Credit: Chao Tayiana Maina.*



Figure 5. *A photorealistic digital reconstruction of the mass cells in Mweru Works Camp. Oral testimony from the local community drew our attention to the fact that the original cell structures did not have windows, while the present-day structures which are used as classrooms do. This has been factored into the digital reconstructions as shown above. Credit: Chao Tayiana Maina.*

can be found on our website, Twitter and Instagram. 3D happens to be one of the approaches, not the only one. This also helps because not everyone may have access to devices or internet speeds capable of displaying the 3D models.

We hope in the future to be able to create new media pieces that combine audio, maps, and the 3D model. The main reason for this is that we have begun collecting a lot of oral history material and we believe this intangible history (recollections from the veterans) should be part of the digital experience, to provide more context to the structures and add a human perspective to the events that took place in the camps.

For whom have you designed the project? Who is your intended audience and how do you intend to make all the content available to them?

We see our organisation as benefiting groups at different levels, sometimes we work with larger institutions such as museums and archives and sometimes we work with smaller community groups. The common strand between them is the use of digital media in one way or another, be it to engage, to increase access, or to share knowledge. I guess ultimately in all these cases the primary target audience would be digital audiences and a secondary audience those who do not use digital media themselves but interact with people who do.

For instance, in the case of the Mau Mau reconstruction when we share material on social media, many people go and pick up the conversation with their parents or grandparents who might not be online. This demonstrates that the work shared on digital platforms has impact in the physical world and vice versa.

What have you learnt as researchers, curators, practitioners, and archivists about working with the digital in this process?

I think the key lesson for us has been that digital is what you make it, the platform does not determine the content; the content you want to produce determines which platform you will use. This has given us a level of flexibility to experiment with different approaches, and different media knowing that some will be more suitable than others. Also, digital is not necessarily a one-size-fits-all solution, sometimes it is suitable and sometimes it is not.

Amy Sodaro (2018) considers 'the Memorial Museum' to be a space that claims to morally educate about and memorialise the past in order to create a better, civic future where similar human rights atrocities or disasters do not happen again. In what ways do the Mau Mau camp reconstructions serve similar purposes?

One of the things that we need to appreciate is the deeply problematic way in which colonialism is remembered and memorialised. The Mau Mau emergency is portrayed as being a guerrilla war with a bunch of amateur forest fighters who were eventually defeated by the British government, who in turn granted Kenya independence out of the goodness of their hearts. Despite growing up in Kenya and going through the public education system, I knew nothing about these camps and the same goes for millions of other Kenyans. Who does this serve? Who does this benefit? We still have people in the UK who think colonialism was a good thing, that it was not that bad, that Africans should be grateful they were colonised.... How do we reconcile this with the reality that men were beaten to death and castrated, women raped, people thrown into mass graves and families separated never to see each other again?

There is so much pain and trauma associated with the colonial period in Kenya that we still need to understand and to come to terms with, otherwise it will keep resurfacing in different ways as it did during the 2007-2008 post-election violence. A crisis which saw more than 1,000 people killed and hundreds of thousands more displaced in a series of ethnically motivated clashes following disputes over election results.

As a third generation Kenyan, interviewing and speaking to Mau Mau veterans is one of the hardest things I have ever done because I could not reconcile my lack of understanding of the colonial period with the horrific experiences they went through. One of the veterans we interviewed told us, "you do not understand struggle, Kenya is not yet free" and I think about those words a lot. We hope that at the bare minimum the Mau Mau camp reconstructions and the material we share and produce related to this period creates a sense of awareness of this history, encourages people to speak about it and speak their truth.

Do you think digital technologies offer new ways to conceptualise the idea of 'the memorial museum'?

Definitely, if we look at memory as something we cannot see or touch, but something we create, we inherit, we share from generation to generation, then we can draw a lot of parallels between memory and digital media. That memorialisation is effective when it speaks both to the heart and mind and I believe you can still achieve this impact through digital output and digital connections.

Your partners – The Museum of British Colonialism, with which you are also involved – was established by a group of British and Kenyan women in January 2018. Do you think the museum and African Digital Heritage take a specifically gendered approach to heritage, history, and memory? If so, could you explain this?

The founding of the museum was serendipitous in that we all came to know each other through friends of friends but the more we began to work together the more we began to realise the lack of women working in public history and we realised that we could make a difference. Especially considering the fact that expertise on Kenya's colonial past is largely the preserve of older white men. And we see this because when we go out into the field, we are not the typical historians that people are used to doing research or interviews on colonial history.

I guess our efforts in a sense break down these stereotypes and say, 'anyone can do this job, no one is more legitimate because of their age, gender or race'. We hope to inspire more women and more young people to actively participate in history. Our work on The Museum of British Colonialism has shown this is possible as we are all volunteers from different sectors, law, human rights, journalism, international relations and more.

What are your future plans for African Digital Heritage?

I see African Digital Heritage as interfacing between the tech and cultural sectors. Supporting practitioners from both industries to work together to design digital approaches specifically suited for African heritage. Eventually, we hope to support more research within the field of digital heritage in Africa in all aspects from digital visualisation to skills and digital engagement. But perhaps our main dream is to one day setup a cultural innovation centre here in Nairobi that will support other people to do this work technically and financially, and provide a dedicated space for innovation, experimentation, and creative cultural exploration.

References

Sodaro, A. (2018) *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press

Young, J. (1993) *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press

Chapter 8

Belgrade's Protest Museum:

Digital Memorialisation as Continuing the Event

Nela Milic

Ceo taj period gledam romanticarski, suvise sam to emotivno prezivljavao, bilo je tu svacega, sad mozda neki ljudi iz svog ugla drugacije vide, pa im se sve to pobrkalo, a ja ne mogu, tacno znam od datuma kad je bilo, od tad do tad... Cak nikad sa ljudima sa kojima delim te uspomene ne pricam o tome niti se ikad toga setimo, eto bilo pa proslo.

(Savic 2007)

> [I view all of that period romantically, I was surviving it too emotionally, there were so many things, now some people maybe from their angle see it differently, so all of it for them is mixed up, but I cannot, I know exactly by the date when it was to when... I never even spoke about it to people with whom I am sharing those memories, nor we ever remember it, like it has happened and it is gone now.]

The digital map examined in this chapter is a memorial to the unsuccessful revolution Serbs attempted in 1996 and 1997 against Milošević's dictatorship[1]. I created it as a visual manifestation of the political awakening of many citizens during that election period, including myself. This chapter presents a theoretically and practice-informed artistic reflection, ruminating on the significance of creating a digital memorial museum of protest in both a Serbian and international context. Scattered throughout the chapter are images from and of the digital map which exists as the only memorial museum of this protest, or perhaps indeed as a counter-form of musealisation and memorialisation given the lack of any physical site to mark the protest – an event at risk of being forgotten.

Upon announcement by international experts and national media that the voting result had been changed a day after the election to uphold the victory of the ruling party, people of the Serbian capital Belgrade and other cities across the country took to the streets in protest. I have captured memories of this three-month long demonstration in an online map containing an archive of photographs, oral histories and objects carried onto the street. They were assembled with the aim to preserve the memory of protest and incite the excitement of their creation and interaction during the event. By emplacing those artefacts on a digital

1 As president of Yugoslavia from 1989, Milosevic pursued Serbian nationalist policies that contributed to the armed breakup of the socialist Yugoslav federation. He was indicted for war crimes in Kosovo in 1999 and overthrown in 2000 when he was extradited to the Hague war tribunal where he died in prison during the trial.



Figure 1.
Protest procession with Belgrade is the World banner. Credit: Facebook @studentskiprotest90ih

map, I formed a virtual museum and made them exchangeable again through Internet.

Online encounters with records of the protest gave this map the quality of a live broadcast depicting Belgrade in eruption. This authentic value seizing the protest's space and time through digital technology allowed artefacts to

travel immediately into personal environments via computers and thus had the potential to congregate protesters around the event once more. Facing it from the comfort of their home, by talking about it or mingling with its artefacts physically and virtually, they were constructing a communal account of the protest and confronting it for the second time, albeit from a historical distance. In this sense, Belgrade's Protest Museum is a project of memory activism and digital continuation of that event.

The current members of the Serbian government insist on forgetting the protest as they come from the same political echelons the protesters fought against. The event is therefore not mentioned publicly, even though it gathered hundreds of thousands of people, and its participants do not celebrate it as they did not manage to overturn the regime. However, the protest procured exceptional and unexpected solidarity that deserves memorialisation. Whilst branded a nationalist, homogenised and violent crowd in the global media, the Serbs at the protest performed the opposite: welcoming, diverse, and peace-loving citizens of the world, challenging their established barbarous reputation. Their surprising, new image depended on embracing multiple perspectives, which is the only way to express a unified truth (Bakhtin 1940 [1984]). Hence, the protest's digital memorial also embodies a multi-vocal, open-ended, and dialogic approach to the past and like in the moment of protest, it suspends time, so the protesters can share and consolidate their experiences and perhaps plot their communal future.

The Belgrade's Protest Museum map aligns to a discursive: the Balkans' way of looking at things as firmly connected to the ground and vastly networked above it, with constant shifting of power, just like the territory of the region itself – bordering, but holding tightly to various states from all its sides that keep and lose their grip interchangeably. That logic of the multitude relies on Mikhail Bakhtin's construction of the 'carnivalesque' (1940 [1984]), which enfolds the memory of Belgrade in my work.

This chapter will reflect on the development of the project as a mnemography – historical ethnography and an artistic cartography. It will map out the journey of producing a digital memorial platform with relative permanence of display. Whilst the Internet is vulnerable as a space of presentation due to its frequent motion of servers, feeds, hosts, and codes, it offers a stable path for memory arousal, even though it does not have the authority of material heritage found in museums, especially if they have their own building. Instead, cyber space delivers a transient, but accessible and open collective experience of and for the public, which is an essential component in the process of encapsulating communal events.

Carnival of Memory: Memorialising the Protest

In *Rabelais and His World*, a study of folk culture depicted by renaissance writer Francois Rabelais, Russian literary critic Michail Bakhtin, recognises carnival through history as a topsy-turvy world where laughter subverts authority. He suggests that it celebrated "temporary liberation from the



Figure 2. *Student mirroring the policeman. Credit: Facebook @ studentskiprotest90ih*

prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. ... It was hostile to all that was immortalised and completed" (1940 [1984], p. 7). Serbs embodied this approach to the protest by overtly disengaging with regular tyranny and staging a carnival instead. Their mass appearance in public spaces reflected an aspect of so-called 'abnormality' to which the opposition was reduced by the regime.

Bakhtin described "carnivalesque" as a catharsis of laughter which was fearless, festive, directed at everyone, triumphant and deriding at the same time (1940 [1984]). Its purpose was to invert the established order, spark the imagination to transgress protesters' reality and instigate change in governance. The protesters expressed their social, political and economic "stuckness" (Lauren Berlant 2011; Ann Cvetkovich 2012) on the street, simultaneously performing their local entrapment and the global framing as 'one nation against the world' the Serbs gained during the Yugoslav wars.

As protesters made their "extraordinary" behaviour visible, its absurdity became exposed and affirmed the carnivalesque - a "complete withdrawal from the present order" (Rabelais 275 in Lachmann et al. 1988, p. 118). Their play between oppressive reality and fictional, joyful life was demonstrated in the actions 'take a picture with your policeman', 'lighten the darkness', 'miss protest', 'on cordon with a book', etc. These initiatives held a dream of a better world and prompted visions of cohesion, collaboration, and comradeship.

Depressed by dictatorship that normalised violence, Serbs were unable to articulate their present, so instead they tried to express how it "felt" (Berlant 2011; Cvetkovich 2012). They indulged in a hedonic festivity and its carnivalesque atmosphere deflated antagonism with the police. Their interactive, relational, and contingent concepts were at the same time liberating and constraining cultural agencies, formulated by the dynamic of the group which created them anew every time it came together. As French

situationist Raoul Vaneigem ascertains in his book *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (1967); in carnivalesque moments, the individual celebrates unification with a regenerated society.

The protesters stood for a collective aesthetic that invited carnival through its use of objects, colours, and urban environment. People guaranteed that their presence was visible when gathering on public squares by purposefully wearing and carrying the marks of circus performers – jester hats, umbrellas, and masks. The effervescence of the protest was infectious and its persistence tactical as many demonstrators assured that daily stunts from walks to performances, and the distinctive iconography of wearables from clothing to placards were constantly encouraging attendance. If not for the political reason, one would come for the carnival that unravelled on the streets.

Local sociologists Velimir Curgus Kazimir and Milija Babovic give vigorous depictions of what was seen and experienced during the protest in their book *'Ajmo, 'Ajde Svi u Setnju* (1997). They open Belgrade up as a tableau of residents' comingling and provide an optimistic picture of the city. They note the persistence of well-mannered behaviour that pointed to polite society rather than the war-mongering nation as seen through the prism of Milosevic's dictatorship.

His election fraud was so scandalous that it deserved an equally spectacular depiction. By adopting carnivalesque as a method of resistance, protesters found themselves in a large community festival that invited interaction with landscape. Situated among the buildings, prohibited from walking where they wanted and pushed towards each other, the protesters acted as a well-rehearsed ensemble, delivering actions on cues, adopting roles as given or self-imposed, and following the rhythm of the mass.

The protest used the city as its stage and its digital memorial museum attempts to manage its artefacts similarly. By spilling the objects over its allocated



***Figure 3**. Dragon puppet. Credit: https://www.facebook.com/studentskiprotest90ih*

compartments and allowing them to inhabit those categories, they win the space, like Belgrade was re-claimed by its residents during the protest through the symbolic popping-up in places. Protesters' sudden presence on streets and squares embodied the potential of these territories – their imagined architectural capacities, historical constellations, and social configurations. In delivering possible futures of those sites, which inspire emergence of different ideas about society's hopes and prospects, the protest's museum artefacts also lent themselves to digital translation, carnivalising the news dominions of cyber world that contributed to cementing Serbia's reputation as a hostile, destructive, and militant state.

Many museum, media and archive activists, artists, and public engagement organisations whose professional ethics arise from interests in social empowerment use digital tools to contest conventional, dominant and narrow representations of their communities. They engage in "agonistic memory" striving to re-politicise memory spheres by addressing representations of conflicts, civic passions, individual and collective agencies operating around their community (Cento Bull 2016).

Ethnographer Stef Jansen (2001) describes the relationship of the crowd to the broader European setting by juxtaposing the city with its representation in the world media at the time. He uncovers a Western propaganda machine that enthused much of the conduct of Serbia's youth, who appeared to embrace some of the EU's and USA's socio-cultural values, yet at other times, opposed them. For instance, the protesters welcomed a variety of subcultures, which in Serbia were regularly divided into exclusive groups. This was performed in public spaces that became busy with adopting 'foreign' principles and so, problematising citizenship – the national category that demarcated Milosevic's leadership. Noting this development in all levels of society, Jansen wrote: "In the Western media-ted gaze, at once, 'the Serbs' had changed from bloodthirsty Balkanese warlords to guardians of democracy in the face of an evil dictator" (2001, p. 37).

This positive representation of the Serbs did not last long, as stories of evil from the area overwhelmed the production of their new look. *Vampire nation* (Longinovic 2011) became a significant brand long before the 90s and it settled in the imaginary of the West with Balkans' populations mirroring characters from Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897 [1990]). Coupled with the protest's uncomfortable ending – a bleak triumph of the opposition that culminated with the assassination of Democratic party leader Zoran Djindjic – the Serbs were resigned to a villain role in an already scripted play.

Furthermore, established local historians expunged the protest from current state interests still revolving around national narratives and the sporadic global attention it garnered quickly moved elsewhere. This glancing over the event, which radically changed the view of the Serbian nation about itself and its potential, inspired the creation of my digital museum. I wanted to inform the public, in particular in Europe and US about the significance of their involvement in representational strategies of societies with less stability and celebrate the local democratising aptitude those societies can offer to the mighty Western states. Rather than being on the receiving end of economic sanctions and NATO campaigns, those societies can guide development of democracies away from capitalism and provide lessons from their history that successfully engaged with their neighbours and worldwide communities like they did for example, during the non-aligned movement[2]. In the protest museum map, Serbs give community support to all societies by revealing their struggle with the regime. The takings from protesters could be applied to re-imaginings of other democracies and lead to the acknowledgement that such community assistance might recuperate a difficult relationship between Serbia and the world. As Richard MacDonald maintains in an investigation of local photo memories, the digital protest museum can satisfy "a need for collective memorialisation shaped by a social context of profound dislocation and discontinuity" (2015, p. 10) and address systematic positioning of Eastern Europe as a backyard of the West.

Hybrid Community: Together Off and Online

Sociologist Jeffrey Alexander (2011) uncovers the narrative of the Egyptian revolution designed by its organisers, as a moral, youth-driven digital statement expressed through social media. He sees it as a performance,

2 Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was an international organization of 120 states. It emerged in the wave of decolonization after World War II with an aspiration to represent the interest of developing countries.

which shows protagonists what a civil, egalitarian society might look like in the image of protestors' behaviour. Such familiar protest reflection is evidenced on Belgrade's protest museum map too, indicating the potency of protesters' performative initiatives. Memory mediated in such histrionic ways stabilises our communal identity. It ejects protesters from the gloomy portrayal of their nation in official histories by allowing creation of a positive alternative which opposes and concurrently enthuses our desire for anchoring (Huyssen 2003).

Unlike well-known memorial museums that mostly commemorate atrocities, lament over sorrowful events and remember suffering of the victims, Belgrade's protest map is about community at its best. However, my interaction with protesters in order to gather their testimonies and artefacts about demonstrations felt like similar acknowledgment of the event, but differed in an engagement with the victims, as a sort of activism because someone finally asked them what had happened there. Some of them had not seen each other for years and my coming 'home' to do this research was an opportunity for their assembly. Their internal referencing concealed experiences, which were bursting to come out, and so, were performed in jokes. The Serbia they live in now is the place they arrived to from the protest following bitter journeys of drugs, unemployment, and poverty. They managed it however they could, often living in depressive, exhausting and disappointed post-carnival mindsets.

They came together in hope to exchange their stories, but many failed to do so as if choked by so much that has happened to them. There was not time to reflect between the wars, to breathe between demonstrations and to learn between generations. The protesters' silence manifested what cannot be transferred. Still, everyone tried to come up with some recollection of the protest as a rope that could get them out of the whirl of events in the 1990s and articulate a version of what was.

Ovi drugari sa univerziteta umetnosti su svi bili sjajni, kao neka masina, svako je pronasao svoj neki srafcic sta ce da radi, svi smo bili tu u operaciji, kad bi jedan izgubio energiju, ovaj drugi bi dodavao, preuzimao i to je bilo odlicno. I mi se i dan danas cujemo. Svi smo pronasli neki svoje izvore... I morali smo da se cuvamo, jer smo bili zgodna platforma da svasta preturis preko nas, a objektivno smo bili klinci za tu svu istoriju koju mi imamo u tom trenutku – razne backgroundove, ljude na ivici svacega.

(Odic Ilic 2007)

[These friends from the University of Arts were great, like some machine, everyone found their own screw in it, what they are going to do, we were all operative, when one lost energy, the other would add it, taking it over and it was great. We were in contact, even today, we all found our own sources... and we had to take care of each other because we were a useful platform to get things over us and we were objectively young for all of that history that we have at that moment, different backgrounds, people on the edge of everything...]

When we were on our own, some of the protesters could not stop talking. For example, 'artivist'[3] Mira Odic Ilic, set off through her life story and even though connected and relevant, the effect of so much history, culture, and happenings, left me numb. A recorded statement from the protest leader seemed useless because it made the problem of transmission even more present: how to convey the momentous experience that Mira and I share, to audiences who were not there?

This collective charge was demonstrated on the map with the work of duo Skart (Djordje Balmazovic and Dragan Protic) who were always involved in the production of artwork with recognisable and affordable anti-regime

3 Using art as a tool for activism.

symbolism. Their graphic design was quickly adopted by activists, cultural circles, and educated social classes that also led the protest. Skart produced a series of coupons in 1993 that fitted later demonstrations perfectly as they predicted the inflation of all values in Serbian society. They offered coupons as compensation for what the country was lacking with Milošević rule – miracle, orgasm, revolution etc. The artwork spread like hotcakes on the protest and people understood the metaphor as the work of opposition. Those coupons are now downloadable from the map and remind of a performative relationship with protest artefacts.

The Belgrade protesters were urban, middle-class members of the community who were educated young or middle-aged (Bobovic, Cvejic, & Vuletic, 1997; Milic, Cickaric, & Jojic, 1997). Their accounts of collective memory overpower all other ones as they have access to the means of cultural production and their opinions tend to be more highly valued (Olick 1999, p. 338). However, as their integration into the many other societies of which they are part of now and often abroad, is more or less in



Figure 4.
Coupons.
Credit: Skart

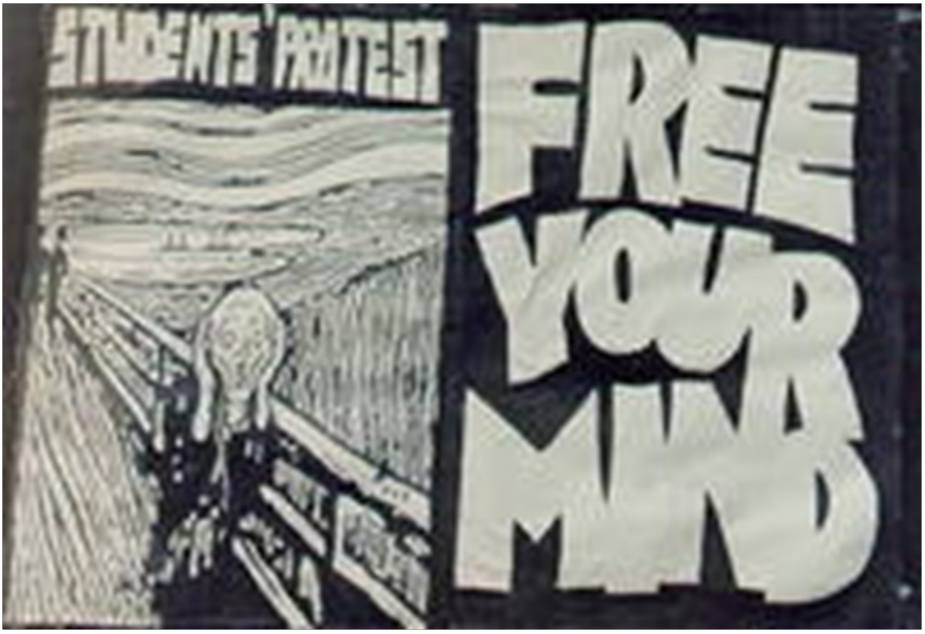


***Figure 5**. Free your mind with Munch. Credit: Facebook @studentskiprotest90ih*

progress, their memories and principles acquired moderation. Furthermore, the twenty interviewed frequently leapt through space and time in their stories, creating confusion for themselves. They were unsure about what they remember, but they knew how they felt at the time of experience. It was, hence, sometimes more beneficial to describe rather than transcribe their oral histories and so, abandon scientific rigour and instead work with arts practice. Another reason for this move was an understanding that even though oral histories challenge official memories, their own authenticity is questionable. I used those fractured accounts as creative work in the protest memorial, mobilising protesters with an interest to make their museum inspiring for generations to come.

Marianne Hirsch's (1999) notion of "post-memory" considers the legacy of memory and its transference to younger generations. Her writing about captured experience and its revival in the bodies of descendants, informed my position of the protest museum as a work for both the generations who took part in the protest and the ones who did not, so they can talk to each other. This discovery between ages includes one generation in the future of the other, rather than dismiss them as victims, perpetrators, observers, or survivors, which are disempowering, simple and reductive categories still prevailing in memory studies.

The protest memorial museum facilitates the meeting of different voices, which have been quietened or dissolved into the noise of contemporary political pressures. It commemorates the event by connecting body, space, memory, and movement. Dots on the map that appear or vanish, just like protesters who run away or inserted themselves into the cityscape relate to Michel Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopia - a layered, "impossible space" of otherness where opposites can coexist. The map's topography makes the protesters present, but their mobility provides them with power as they can choose when and where to show up, provoking the potency for walking – a practice strictly controlled during the protest and only permitted by the police.

Foucault (1969 [2002]) celebrates such questioning of institutional authority and organisations of knowledge. Like the protesters, he positioned himself outside of the systems of power he was fascinated by and he scrutinised "regime(s) of truth" (Foucault 1975 [1979], p. 23 and p. 30). Represented as 'a handful of thugs' by the state-owned media in Serbia, people on the streets saw themselves excluded from broadcast truth. This resulted in their desire to trouble the condition of truth and so to reveal the autocratic state apparatus reliant on social discipline, corruption, and political uniformity.



Figure 6.
Slavisa Savic and Milos Miljatovic. Credit: Facebook @ studentskiprotest90ih

Digital Artefacts: Mapping the Arts Practice

Classified through artworks, actions, sounds, walks, and more, Belgrade's protest museum discloses a wealth of activities that kept protest alive. Its visitors are able to join protestors by, for example, choosing to follow them on a daily procession or focussing only on happenings in a particular area. By adopting protesters' routines, the audience gains a trace of the city during the event. The creator of the procession banner "Belgrade is the world", Slavisa Savic speaks about it in an interview for the map:

> *Ta setnja je po mom vidjenju najbolja turisticka tura, grad nikad ne moze biti vidjen iz tog ugla kao na tim setnjama kada hodas na sred ulice Dzordza Vasingtona, samo onda mozes da dozivis tu arhitekturu...to je kompletno drugaciji grad.*
>
> (Savic 2007)

> [That walk is in my view the best tourist tour, the city can never be seen from that angle as in those processions when you walk in the middle of George Washington Street, only then can you realise that architecture... that is a completely different city.]

The protesters are now unable to observe Belgrade's architecture from the viewpoint they could obtain during the protest as one cannot just walk in the middle of the street. The map reminds them of that unusual experience and offers it to the audience too. By engaging the public via diverse encounters with the protest, this map provides discursive aesthetics for 'the reality' it tries to convey. Refashioning the memory of protest through these different discoveries of artefacts and their position on the map, the audience also employs a critical approach to reading this event and its memorialisation. Interpretation becomes free, infinite, and omnipotent through the public's gaze, because anyone can explore the interlaced terrain of diagramic abstractions from above and indulge in the map's optical play.

The map can be accessed with a world wide web address and from there, the audience can travel in whatever direction by clicking on the provided



Figure 7.
Protest trumpet. Photograph by the author

categories – from following the historical overview of the protest to its variety of sounds. Virtual mapping brings together the collected image, text, and sound indexes into a mathematical sphere in whatever shape they arrived – as GPS coordinates, photographs, or audio files. However, reading the protest museum demands an ability to sense information value rather than its exactness. One has to count on the "human intentionality and agency determining communication, expression and interaction" (R. MacDonald 2015, p. 9-10) to navigate the map. The engagement with it in this personal way mimics the protest which developed its own visual language to distinguish itself from the regime's aesthetics reflected in the national media.

Opposition media organisations like B92 supplied some of the images for the map and others were sourced from local news companies, including *Politika* (Politics), *Vreme* (Time), *Dnevni Telegraf* (Daily Telegraph). They mostly had ended up in a Reuters repository of more than 100 photographs stored in bulk by dates and without reference to original author. They are a mixture of monochrome and colour images taken mostly with analogue cameras assorted in the protest museum with drawings, posters, placards, and postcards, which emerged on the streets and were sometimes sold there. These pictures were either produced for newspapers and magazines or casually taken by protesters. Many come from private collections and Facebook pages that opened and closed during the project. The mnemonic value of these digital images lies in their circulation, rather than in their accrual. Like protest, which disperses transient energy, their currency is ephemeral more than their indexical quality, hence they are a great medium for depicting this event.

Images and other artefacts in the protest museum were taxonomised by the way they were displayed during the demonstrations. They were pinned, carried, printed, and shared on the streets as they were on the stage. Their theatrical status expresses a sentimental attachment to them and a desire that they perform the past. Many badly shot images, ripped posters, and blurred



Figure 8.
Hasta la vista poster.
Credit: Facebook @ studentskiprotest90ih

placards have contextual and historical worth through which the public can re-encounter the event, forging a life to it again and sustaining it by sharing. In the digital realm, this exchange also enhances communal endurance and encourages the engagement with memory.

Community sharing through the protest museum happened in parallel off- and on-line, generating data and advancing this research. For example, the protesters would email me some of the images of their objects before our meeting that would result in the communal exchange of artefacts or vice versa; they would swap the artefacts between them and continue the

transactions digitally, some even setting up a social media account for such activity. Protesters were informed about developments and opportunities to contribute to the project and encouraged to learn about digital mapping as arts, media, and cartographic praxis.

We were dealing with geometry, mechanics of time and architecture, despite following standard procedures of labelling. For example, I used 3DSMax to build one object (a trumpet) in graphics software, but I found myself spending hours digging a snapshot of it from memory and I never accomplished a decent result. It is only when holding the object in one of my hands and drawing it on the computer screen by clutching a mouse in the other that I achieved an adequate image. However, if I had to obtain the artefacts or their representation to create a 3D object, the point of this digital project was lost – I was not creating from memory. Instead, I was experimenting with shapes through numbers, following the computer instructions to gain an aesthetic outcome (i.e. 300dpi, 72 web resolution, JPG file format, etc.). It was only when objects collapsed from 3D in my hand to 2D on the screen that they seemed to fit the environment.

So, I sought to humanise their dimension, scale, and type in this map, as the objects on it were firstly narrowed to the simplest solutions, which injured the beauty of their incomprehensibleness. But, if we do not present those objects and make them noticeable somehow, how we are to know them? I submitted to accepting the map as a technical, yet subjective representation of protest that gives access to collective memory because it was a small cost to having that rich communal space. The price of the clumsy form was negligent to its non-existence. Initially, the amount of memory that I had on the computer did not allow for any software to be used for prototyping, so I found that it was not only quicker, but cheaper to make space in my home for the objects rather than acquire a computer or hard drive with paradoxically, more memory. What started as a digital revolution reverted to a traditional museum exhibit with physical object representation and a digital addition.



Figure 9. *Smile Serbia poster. Credit: Facebook @ studentskiprotest90ih*

The temporality of both of those conditions (physical and digital) is what connects the objects in this museum – the protest unexpectedly flashes through piles of artefacts of protesters' memory and global history, as we suddenly come across them while browsing the Internet. Searching for them on the web and in the physical archives, looking at pictures on screen and in my hands, we try to understand, remember, or rather, not forget the event. We are clinging on those fleeting artefacts, as they hold and carry our past, so it does not vanish before we manage to captivate it, like that was ever possible.

Mapping Eastern Europe: Politics of Memorialisation

Map-makers design history on the back of geography as in atlas naivete – a gimmicky sketch representing the flattened world. In this portrayal, relationships can be painted as perfect and evidently consequential so, mapping is always symbolic. As our mind remembers the images before they

are created and placed on the map, it can also be contingent on creative input and users' interpretation.

American historian Larry Wolff (1994) claims that the whole East European region is an intellectual invention of the economically powerful West, which devised its cultural zone through imaginative, philosophical, and creative travelogues, diaries, and maps. Maps in particular contributed to such knowledge production, hence I am using them to reveal their modes of framing and hopefully achieve a reverse effect, so the East can look at the West with that same downward gaze and we can examine consequences of such viewing and subsequent interpretation of the ground seen in that way.[4] I started this process of undoing the West in 2008 with the project *Balkanising Taxonomy* where I attempted Eastern rendering of the West through shifting my archive. Concerned with the false, standardised, and unfair representation of the Balkans in the EU mainstream accounts continued in continents with Anglo-Saxon majority population, I drew parallels between the position Balkan states were expected to adopt, exhibit, and perform and the position of Western colonies.

Wolff (1994) asserted that maps are social and ideological documents that project power. They are panoptical observations, which imply political, economic, and cultural ownership. Therefore, they make visible or hide the knowledge assumed not suitable to show. Through such technology of control, Eastern Europe has continuously been presented, from the Enlightenment period and colonial expansion, as a parochial, archaic, and Oriental spot in the world where paradox thrives. Problematising this arrangement exposes the interests of cartographers themselves who shaped Eastern Europe as this ideological construction. By positioning itself in the centre and adopting the connotation of 'civilisation', the West has invented a tradition by which it can stay in the middle, thus moving Eastern Europe

4 Some of my maps about Belgrade can be found at Kulturklammer website.



Figure 10. *Screenshot of online map. Credit: Kulturklammer*

to the brutal fringes. The curator of any museum in Eastern Europe now works from that imaginary as if it is real and starts the interaction with every new object from that place. Belgrade's Protest Museum, like the protesters themselves, had started with the imperative to challenge those formulated, authoritative and official narratives. By placing data about the resistance on the Internet's global stage, I continued that urge acknowledging that it sometimes intensified helplessness in power relations with the West and positioned 'carnivalesque' as an illusory quality of counterculture.

With the further challenge of translation from Serbian to English and the dominance of the English language online, I wanted to uproot the map as soon as I established it in the UK, so I could immediately liberate it from the West. I was equally interested in capturing the protest and making visible "the unconscious of Europe" as Mladen Dolar (1990) described

the Balkans in the eyes of the Western states. The political aim of the protest museum project then became two-fold; to embrace opposition to Milošević's regime and to reject Western illustrations of the Serbs as an inherently violent peoples.

Pictured as a darker side of Europe in Maria Todorova's book *Imagining the Balkans* (1997), the region is understood as erected around nationalism. Its Asiatic Byzantine heritage is presented as alien to supposedly civilised European nations. Projected onto in terms of nationalism, the Balkans is blamed for what it has been given and cursed with having too much history (Todrova 2004). Drawing on Alon Confino (1997), Todorova writes about the concept of the nation as "an exploration of a shared identity that unites a social group" (2004, p. 5) whose need for memorialised past reveals its newness. European states had to imagine their own communities in relation to others, making the East dependent on their point of observation (1997, p. 58) and the Balkans an intimidating realm due to its profusion of culture (Gordy 1999). I am using that same technique of memorialising the protest as a significant happening in Serbia's national history to present it as resembling any other Western European state's landmark event.

Literary critic Edward Said (1978) also positions the authors of Western texts in relation to the Orient in his seminal work *Orientalism*. The protest museum thinks with this "Orientation" to unmask the Balkans' narrative imperatives and mechanisms of dominant visual media in the US and Europe that belittle the region. In popular discourse, the Balkans is reduced to a laboratory of Western capitalism, but its inhabitants are experimenting too, trying to find a solution that could release them from ideas the West has for their future. To imagine democracy in the East as it exists in the West is a misconception of democratic values themselves as it does not give liberty to Eastern European society to develop on its own terms.

Realms of memory scholarship as well as democratisation suggestions come from the West with a concept of equality and freedom that does not smoothly translate in the Balkans, especially after 'the allies' NATO bombed Serbia in 1999. Furthermore, it is one thing to question one's own society and another to associate it with primitivism imposed by outsiders who then ridicule it for that same imposition. The protest museum sits between those two approaches to memory: Western, perceived as global and local, aligned with "critical remembering" (Falkenstein 1999). Bakic-Hayden and Hayden (1995), Wolff (1994), and Todorova (1997) have tried to break that cycle of defining "dispossessed" Eastern Europe through liberal calls for EU accession, free markets, civil society, electoral democracy, and political culture. They warn against "nesting orientalism" (Bakic-Hyden 1995) where old twists are created anew and nurturing of the troubled relationship that the Balkans has with West European nations, which in turn, ought to be examined (Wolff 1994).

Mnemography: Media Mapping of Memory

The Belgrade Protest Museum brings together different disciplines; critical and counter-mapping, digital archiving, and participatory arts practice,



Figure 11.
Flowers for police.
Credit: Facebook @ studentskiprotest90ih

developing a methodology which weaves the city firstly in narrative – through oral histories, formal debates, and everyday conversations, then in physical display – on paper, wall or cloth before it gets transferred to a digital platform. Through categorising information on the map by the topics emerged in people's accounts or their actions, the memorial offers a rhizomatic depiction of events rather than a linear and sequential storytelling.

The outlining of the event allows dipping into the past where one can be the protest participant once more and exit at will to be in the present. It shows how the "carnivalesque" illuminates "the freedom of imaginative creativity, enabling the fusion of contradictory and diverse phenomena and inducing liberation from the ruling view of the world, from all conditioning, from banal-truths – everything ordinary, well-known, generally accepted" (Bakhtin 1940 [1984], p. 85).

In the protest museum, memory operates in the same way, which is simultaneously obscuring our formal knowledge of the past and opening it up to interpretations from the present. The map format within which that memory is imprinted influences the way it is interpreted. Although I seek to contest users' understandings of the event, the protest museum is not simply 'a meaning machine', but a creative output and a historical site. It is negotiated by the visitors and myself as its author according to our needs and so, is potentially infinite (Eco 1994, p. 3). However, through systematisation of its empirical data, this virtual map and archive aims to provide harmony. It braids together memories and social frameworks evoked by the images travelling through the digital sphere. The cyber technology within which these files reside is a carrier of memory with means of collection, classification, and the analysis of collated data, which establishes media as method, mediator and creator of memory. This media permits existence of *mnemography*, a dialogical practice between theory and empirical research.

Digital depiction of protesters' memory highlights its plural and dynamic quality and allows enquiry into what happens to the past as it passes from one medium to another – from stories to ceremonies, souvenirs, maps etc. The entanglement of memory, particularly enabled by the Internet, absorbs multiple perspectives, asymmetries, and cross-referential mnemonic practices, which can be examined by the media itself (Conrad 2003). Besides amassing experiences through their use, flourishing technological advancements require acquisition of vast knowledge, which is what permits memory to be thought of, captured, handled, and stored. Digital technology, as media scholar José van Dijck recognises has enabled and increased comparative analysis thanks to the Internet. She sees the networked computer as a performative agent in the process of remembering which highlights the acts of recollection, "but also allows the user to make connections that would never have been discovered without the computer" (2011, p. 166–67).

For example, when positioned next to each other on the digital map, the protest images evidenced new links as the gestures, poses, and movements of the police were mirrored in the protesters' response on the street and were used for imitating the police in hope that they will 'see' themselves and be ashamed. This collective pressure to soften the police force by offering them food, flowers and cigarettes was visible throughout the protest and is now on the map too, assuring its creation from below by incorporating protesters' suggestions for the display of their artefacts on the online map.

Yet, when van Dijck (2004) tried to turn her shoebox archive into a digital one, she noted problems with transmission, because it fundamentally altered the meaning, the value, and the content of this collection. Our relationships modify when our memories change because they reposition us in relation to objects, other people, and ourselves. Digital cultural forms do not just replace or succeed analogue ones – photographs in a shoebox give the viewer a different experience than images on the computer screen. Moreover, digital depictions are often constrained by techno-logistics, algorithmic quantification,

and corporate templates that can encourage us to change the technologies we use for memory, from tying a knot on a handkerchief to creating a blog. This process of media alteration provides digital loses, but also additions in memory. For instance, some protesters combine their memories with other uprisings during Milošević's premiership and memory of the protest seems faded due to a desire to forget its inability to contest the regime. Furthermore, for people who were not at the protest, an interaction with the digital museum might create memories of that activity, suggesting participation in the event itself. Does having been there then make a difference?

Landsberg (1995, p. 178) states that authenticity is unobtainable as the original was never available and asks what is missing from primary experience if we want replacements? Those of us, who were at the centre of the happening are bound to enrich it with archival images, people's accounts, television broadcasts, and other sources, as the modern age makes those accessible via media. The original is always interpreted and mixed with 'limbs' of other experiences. It also evolves further because new technologies are influenced by remediation and merged with representational strategies of older formats.

Even though digital tools have given people unprecedented access to the archive, a possibility of keeping everything in an attempt to accomplish "total memory" (Hoskins 2016) and the sole practice of archiving being available to everyone might be in essence, anti-archival (Taylor 2010). Van Dijck (2011) and performance thinker Taylor (2010) propose this when they consider the Internet's influence on archival praxis. They acknowledge the democratising power of the web, but Taylor wonders if digital technology merely extends into cyberspace our embodied and material cultures or if it moves us into a "different system of knowledge and subjectivity" (2010, p. 6).

The presence on the web earned Belgrade's protest a reputation as the first Internet revolution (Bennahum 1997) because the protesters disseminated the information about the protest to the world, online. A different channel



Figure 12.
Protest accessories.
Credit: Facebook @studentskiprotest90ih

of communication was formed in which 'another' Serbia featured as a parallel universe to the one depicted on the regime's broadcast media and transmitted around the globe. The protesters used digital technology to successfully intervene in both local and global media representations and generated interest in seeing their community anew.

Established as a platform for gathering, the project's development was led by the question: is it possible to receive the experience just as it was lived? For many of the protesters who now live abroad, the return to the Belgrade protest is a return home because it was their formative event. The images of it, emerging whilst travelling through the multimodal and interconnected protest map act as vessels to possibilities – of who we were, who we might have been, who we could have been and who we became, might be, or are yet to become.

Conclusion

The protest museum uses Belgraders' relationships to objects and stories to build a debate about the event. As with most heritage-making endeavours, it focusses on triumphs, achievements or sacrifices found in the effort for realisation and recognition (S. Macdonald 2009). Hence, it is a selective, morally driven process to commemorate the protest interested in propelling community remembrance as alternative history and juxtapose it with other histories already legitimised in public arena.

The protest museum incorporates what Sharon MacDonald calls "difficult heritage": "a past that is recognised as meaningful in the present but that is also contested and awkward for public reconciliation with a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity" (2009, p. 1). It is imagined as a living stage developed through and for participation with its audience, following the rationale that museums can no longer be closed organisations as they were in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries anymore.

To attract youth engagement with their heritage collections even if they are digitised, the museums need to engage with newer technology, so they have someone caring for their artefacts in the future. New digital tools such as simulations, virtual reality experiences, or sensory mechanisms inspire digital preservation and innovations that produce value in dissemination, reconstruction and development of knowledge and evaluation of the cultural offering context (Mannheimer and Cote, 2017).

Museum digitisation should be innovative and tied to the experience that is attractive to the audiences who are now interested in emotional encounters, inter-cultural dialogue, inputs of specialised industries, social return, and benefits to well-being. The protest museum aims to stimulate digital creativity, develop cultural relationships, produce artistic content, and enthuse research, beside its clear political agenda. It looks ahead with new

forms of engagement and learning methodologies that can still facilitate intimate experiences with artefacts. Its crucial faculty – re-enactment – encourages evaluation of the past in a forum where it is jointly discussed by the people who experience it in the past and those coming afresh to it, in the present.

Museums have long been theorised by art historians and cultural anthropologists who have positioned their work with objects as the practice of ordering. Settling the artefacts, usually in a timeline and within place promised an understanding of the human experience. The material world served as mnemonic prompt for finding the meaning in people's stories that accompany it. Their narrative sensibility around heritage was grounded in visual and embodied practices that often correlate with what was done elsewhere (S. Macdonald 2009).

However, the protest museum was not a product of the "politics of recognition" (Taylor 1994) we see with other conservation efforts, but rather of the place itself. Mediation of place's memory, which is a domain of heritage, was structured both discursively and materially through media. The project tries to update and upgrade Belgrade from the sad place featured in "grand narratives" (Lyotard 1979) to a happy one and prototype creative practice as activism that can capture the past. The protest spirit can be extended, nurtured, and continued in the digital realm to remind us that history can re-emerge so as to instigate a sense of community, inspire collective remembrance, or catalyse a social movement. By living online, largely outside of geographical boundaries, the protest museum provides an incubator for a democratic turn that Serbia is yet to see. It opens up a new view of the world with a perception of the unity and an entirely different order (Bakhtin 1940 [1984]).

As a toponym, Belgrade is localised in this protest map, but reading of it demands mentalisation of the world where one projects oneself outside

of the self. The scope of the imaginary in this public space raises tension between the present and the future and pushes the protesters to transition from one domain to the other, often depicting fantasies illustrated in artworks on the site. Protesters' memories of the event become visible through their illusory capture because "the act of imagination is bound up with memory" (Morrison 1995, p. 98). Online, even the museum curator is again with the protesters. A longing to gather their artefacts is a desire for reconstructing that community more than rebuilding the protest. A digital map creator knows that this virtual storage of cultural memory is dependent on a database which constructs, composes, congregates and so, dramatises the past, but provides consolation with it, nevertheless.

> To be part of a movement requires we find places to gather, meeting places. A movement is also a shelter. We convene; we have a convention. A movement comes into existence to transform what is in existence. A movement needs to take place somewhere.
>
> (Ahmed 2017, p. 3)

Many protesters associated their memories with the place (hence the map) rather than fellows. They opened up Belgrade of that time whilst reconstructing their networks based on then residential proximity then. The images in the protest museum were therefore placed in the neighbourhoods that represent Belgrade as a whole, even though the map's loose categories, like all the material in it, spill into each another. For example, one can look at the artworks produced during the protest that would inevitably adorn the walls of various buildings which are also visible if the map explorer chooses to follow its 'the walks' category.

The various paths one can take to arrive to and exit from Belgrade in protest is a way with which I hoped to memorialise the event in the digital sphere. The variety of artefacts in the protest museum transmits the experience of visual

plenty and a sense of abundance from the streets. I could not justify any other approach that would diminish the 'carnivalesque' as its main characteristic and inhabit the city with the same charge. The aim of this digital memorial museum is to inspire audiences to enquire about what happened in this place and to get acquainted with another face of Serbia that potentially holds its future.

References

Ahmed, S. (2017) *Living a Feminist Life*, Durham and London: Duke University Press

Alexander, J. (2011) *Performative Revolution in Egypt: An Essay in Cultural Power*, New York: Bloomsbury Academic

Babovic, M. et al. (Eds.) (1997) *'Ajmo, 'ajde, svi u setnju! Gradjanski i studentski protest 96/97* (Come on, let's all go for a walk: civil and student protest 96/97), Belgrade: Media Center & Institute for Sociological Research at Faculty of Philosophy (Institut za socioloska istrazivanja filozofskog fakulteta)

Bakhtin, M. (1940 [1984]) *Rabelais and his World*, trans. H. Iswolsky, Bloomington: Indiana University Press
Bakic-Hayden, M. (1995) 'Nesting orientalisms: the case of Former Yugoslavia'. *Slavic Review*. 54 (4), pp. 917-931

Bennahum, S. (1997) 'The Internet revolution', *Wired*. 04/01/1997 Available at: https://www.wired.com/1997/04/ff-belgrad/ [Accessed: 30/10/2021]

Berlant, L. (2011) *Cruel Optimism*, Durham, NC: Duke university Press

Bobovic, M., Cvejic, S., & Vuletic, V. (1997) 'Belgrade protest' 96/97, *Sociologija*, 39 (1), pp.15–29

Cento Bull, A. and Lauge Hansen, H. (2016) 'On agonistic memory', *Memory Studies* 9 (4), pp. 390–404

Confino, A. (1997) 'Collective memory and cultural history: problems of method', *The American Historical Review*, 102 (5), pp. 1386–1403

Conrad, S. (2003) 'Entangled memories: versions of the past in Germany and Japan, 1945–2001', *Journal of Contemporary History*. 38(1), pp. 85-99

Cvetkovich, A. (2012) *Depression: A Public Feeling*, Durham: Duke University Press

Dolar, M. (1990) *Freud in Yugoslavia*, unpublished manuscript

Eco, U. (1994) *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Falkenstein, L. (1999) 'Critical remembering: reading nostalgia in contemporary Irish drama and film', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*. 25 (1/2), pp.264-76

Foucault, M. (1986) 'Of other spaces', *Diacritics* 16, pp.22-27

Foucault, M. (1975 [1979]). *Discipline and Punish*, trans. A. Sheridan, New York: Vintage

Foucault, M. (1969 [2002]) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M.S. Smith. London: Routledge

Gordy, E. (1999) *The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press

Hirsch, M. 2008. The Generation of postmemory. *Poetics Today*. Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics 29: 1 (Spring) Available at: http://www.fsf.ane.ru/attachments/article/157/mar.pdf [Accessed: 15.04.2022]

Hoskins, A. (2016) 'Archive me! media, memory, uncertainty', in *Memory in a Mediated World: Remembrance and Reconstruction*, ed. A. Hajek, C. Lohmeier, and C. Pentzold, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-35

Huyssen, A. (2003) *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press

Jansen, S. (2001) The Streets of Beograd. Urban space and protest identities in Serbia. *Political Geography* 20, pp. 35-55 Available at: http://personalpages.manchester.ac.uk/staff/stef.jansen/documents/sj-streetsofbeograd.pdf [Accessed: 29/1/2022]

Landsberg, A. (1995) 'Prosthetic Memory: Total Recall and Blade Runner', *Body & society* 1 (3-4), pp. 175-189

Longinovic, T. Z. (2011) *Vampire Nation: Violence as Cultural Imaginary*. Durham: Duke University Press

Lyotard, J. F. (1979. [1984]) *The Postmodern Condition*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

Lachmann, R. Eshelman, R. and Davis, M. (1988) 'Bakhtin and Carnival: Culture as Counter-Culture'. *Cultural Critique* 11: Winter 1988-1989, pp. 115-152 Published by: University of Minnesota Press Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1354246 [Accessed: 29/3/2022]

Kulturklammer. Organisation website. Available at: http://www.kulturklammer.org [Accessed: 02/11/2019]

Macdonald, S. (2009) *Negotiating the Nazi past in Nuremberg & Beyond*. London & New York: Routledge

MacDonald, R. (2015) 'Going back in a heartbeat: Collective memory and the online circulation of family photographs', *Photographies* 8(1), pp. 23-42

Milic, A., Cickaric, L. & Jojic, M. (1997) 'Generation in protest: student revolt and family socialization', *Sociologija*. 39 (1), pp. 31–49

Odic Ilic, M. (2007) interviewed by Nela Milic

Mannheimer, S., Cote, C. (2017) Cultivate, assess, advocate, implement, and sustain: a five-point plan for successful digital preservation collaborations. *Digital Library Perspectives* 33(2). Available at: http://doi.org/10.1108/DLP-07-2016-0023 [Accessed: 10/03/2022]

Morrison, T. (1995) 'The site of memory', in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*. 2d ed., ed. W. Zinsser. Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin, pp. 83-102

Olick, J. K. (1999) 'Collective Memory: The Two Cultures', *Sociological Theory* 17(3), pp. 333-348

Said, E. W. (1978) *Orientalism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Skart 1990. Art collective website. Available at: http://www.skart.rs [Accessed: 05/11/2022]

Savic, S. (2007) Interviewed by Nela Milic

Stoker, B. (1897[1990]) *Dracula*, New York: Oxford University Press

Taylor, D. (2010) 'Save as... Knowledge and transmission in the age of digital technologies' *Imagining America*. 7. Available at: https://surface.syr.edu/ia/7 [Accessed: 30/10/2021]

Todorova, M. (2004) *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory*. London: Hurst and Company

Todorova, M. (1997) *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press

Taylor, C. (1994) 'The Politics of Recognition'. *Multiculturalism: Expanded Paperback Edition*, edited by Amy Gutmann, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 25-74. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400821402-004 [Accessed: 30/03/2023]

Van Dijck, J. (2011) 'Flickr and the culture of connectivity: sharing views, experiences, Memories', *Memory studies*, 4(4), pp. 401–415

Van Dijck, J. (2004) 'From shoebox to performative agent: the computer as personal memory machine', *New Media and Society* 7(3), pp. 311-332

Vaneigem, R. (1963) *The Revolution of Everyday Life*: 105. Available at: http://library.nothingness.org/articles/all/all/pub_contents/5 [Accessed: 29/01/2021]

Wolff, L. (1994) *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press

Chapter 9

Expanding Storylines:

Digital Artistic Expressions in the Museo de Memoria de Colombia

Manuela Ochoa Ronderos and Juliana Botero-Mejía

The *Museo de Memoria de Colombia* [Museum of Memory of Colombia, MMC] does not yet have its own permanent building, but this has not prevented it from existing. In fact, since 2012, the MMC has had a rich artistic, cultural, digital, academic, and pedagogical agenda, and has supported memory initiatives in multiple regions while serving as a creative and pedagogical laboratory that articulates and makes their work visible. One way in which the MMC has existed has been through the possibilities offered by digital technologies. These allow 24-hour access to a mobile museum, which can be distributed on different platforms, connect communities, and travel across time and space.

Arte y Cultura [Art and Culture], which ran from 2014 until 2019, was a digital project developed by the MMC. The platform documents, collects, recovers, and reviews artistic material (film and video, theatre, visual arts, dance, and music) related to the armed conflict in Colombia during recent decades, created by recognised artists who have dedicated their artwork to making visible what has happened in the country, or by victims who resist horror by appealing to their rich cultural heritage. In this chapter, we focus on *Arte y Cultura* as a case study to examine how a digital project acted in dialogue, not only with other dimensions of the Museum, but also with its digital visitors. We also discuss how it served to accomplish the MMC's objectives, while enriching the debate on Colombian armed conflict. To do so, we first introduce the virtual dimension of the MMC, then focus on the history and evolution of *Arte y Cultura*, and how it interacted with its audiences. Then, we present three examples of how this project complemented different areas within the forthcoming Museum, before concluding with some thoughts on the relevance of its digital dimension, and a brief recount of the changes undertaken by the MMC since 2020.

Before we begin, we would like to highlight that this chapter was originally drafted in 2019. By January 2022, the Museum's webpage had been unavailable for months, but it was working once again by February, when the chapter was last revised. The Museum of Memory faces a scenario of instability and uncertainty, affecting its mission and its relationship with victims of the armed conflict. After repeated calls from the academic community, victims, and Museum employees themselves, there is not an official response about this crisis yet. To learn more about this controversy visit here. If the link to the Museum's website is down when you try to access it, this may well be the reason.

The Virtual Dimension of the Museum of Memory of Colombia

Twenty-first century museums are no longer the collection sanctuaries they used to be. The very definition of 'museum' is under discussion and the

question about the type of relationships each institution wants to have with its visitors has become the main focus (Muac EnVivo 2017). This transformation from the 'object' to the 'subject' as the centre of the museum experience goes hand in hand with the shift in the way societies relate to the past. Thus, memorial museums emerged in response to the violence and atrocities of the twentieth century "and are intended to translate the suffering of the past into ethical commitments to creating a better future through education and commemoration" (Sodaro 2018, p. 4). They "are intended to be about both memory and thinking in the form of historical understanding; they are also aimed at inspiring emotional, affective responses and empathy" (Sodaro 2018, p. 162). To do so, they provide a new kind of interactive engagement with the past that constitutes "a new category of 'experiential' museum" (*ibid.*). These "are focused more on teaching and creating an experience for the visitor than they are on the traditional museological functions of collecting and displaying", because "the stories they tell are more important than the objects contained and displayed by the museums" (Sodaro 2018, p. 24). In this context, information, and communication technologies (ICT) have great potential because, in addition to the history that is told through more classical exhibits (text, photos, and artefacts), memorial museums can include interactive elements like touch screens and headphones or parabolic speakers in order to create a more subjective and individualised experience for their visitors, complemented by lighting, architecture, and sound effects to create ambience. However, the use of ICT in memorial museums is not limited to its physical space; it can also be extended to the online sphere.

This is the case of the Museum of Memory of Colombia, which exists in three different dimensions responding to the way it exists for its public: the physical-spatial, the territorial, and the virtual (CNMH 2017). It is worth saying that contrary to what has happened in other countries where memorial museums are created after the end of a conflict, the MMC was conceived in the midst of an ongoing armed conflict that has modified the

lives of millions of people for more than six decades and in the context of peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo* [Armed Forces of the Colombia-People's Army, FARC-EP], the oldest guerrilla in the continent, and only one of the many illegal armed actors involved in the conflict.[1] Thus, Law 1448 of 2011, also known as *Ley de Víctimas y Reparación de Tierras* [Law for Victims and Land Restitution], established a transitional justice model that seeks to offer full reparations to the victims of the armed conflict. The Law mandated the design of a museum of memory[2] that makes visible and promotes the memories, stories, and faces that violence has taken, as symbolic reparation. Consequently, the MMC is defined as a place where memories meet and are strengthened, where dissent and plurality are valued, and where the expression of feelings can take place, as well as debates about the need to put an end to the conflict, and build the conditions for a new future (CNMH 2017).

The online space of the Museum has been conceived as an ecosystem that includes digital manifestations through which the MMC can interact with its audiences, through the website, social networks, and digital applications. Whilst the Museum does not yet have its own building,[3] its virtual dimensions digitalise its physical collection for two purposes: safeguarding it, and posting its content on the website so anyone with internet access, regardless of where they are in the world, can look at it. However, contrary to the vision of a utilitarian nature of technology, the Museum's virtual dimension,

1 As a result of the peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the guerrilla of the FARC - EP, a Peace Agreement was signed on September 26 of 2016 in Havana, Cuba.

2 The Museum was born from the social conquest achieved by the victims of the armed conflict, their organisations and communities, who have struggled for several decades to make visible to the national society the acts of violence related to the war, so they would not be repeated.

3 Building of the permanent premises commenced in 2020, not without controversies. There are still not certainties about its opening date.

mainly developed in Spanish and with no economic interests,[4] is a space that is based on respect, and convenes, articulates, and allows encounters, including disagreements, in order to produce collective knowledge, and critical thought on the events in the recent history of violence in the country and its social consequences. Thus, the online space is built on the premise of giving a platform to speech, narratives, and creative gestures generally invisible and marginalised that highlight the particularity and diversity of war experiences in different communities around the country, broadening the more traditional notion of public sphere into the digital environment (Mahlouly 2013; Papacharissi 2008).

Digital Projects: *Oropéndola, Arte y Conflicto* and *Arte y Cultura*

In general, the digital has great potential, especially, in relation to creating democratic spaces, inasmuch as citizens participate through the selection of what media content they wish to view and when and where they wish to share it (Jenkins 2019). Despite its many detractors (Fuchs 2010; Dean 2010), we believe ICT allows citizens to express themselves and call for social mobilisation. In doing so, the development of technological platforms for social participation enables conversations between different people, as well as the mutual recognition of their lives and knowledges (Jenkins 2019). In this context, the MMC's virtual dimension makes possible the dialogue between communities affected by the armed conflict, and the population that has not been directly impacted by it,[5] and involves them in the construction of

4 According to José van Dijck, "the way social platforms are designed is conditioned by economic interests and intends to ensure that a large number of users provide content, creating opportunities for commercial transactions. From this perspective, economic parameters are most likely to affect the quality of social interactions as well as citizens' ability to debate rationally on public matters" (in Mahlouly 2013, p. 5-6).

5 The vast majority of violent events related to the Colombian armed conflict have occurred in rural areas, away from urban centres, and are not disclosed to wider public opinion, which has facilitated the dominance and actions of illegal armed actors in these zones, as well as the impunity of their acts.

the Museum itself. This is a fundamental aspect to the MMC because their active participation is a key factor in order to talk about collective creation and construction, or interactive creation, as Jenkins (2012) calls it. According to Jenkins (2010), Pierre Levy tells us that in a network society nobody knows everything (the ideal of the Renaissance Man has been forgotten), there everyone knows something (the range of possible experts is widened) and what someone knows is available for the whole community. The result is a new information ethic. The obligation to share what is known with others appears, and a critical respect arises which compromises with multiple ways of knowing, and an active impulse to accept diversity emerges, because the network's creative capacity and its power to know is expanded. We evolve towards a stronger information system, where groups working together can solve problems that are much more complex than individuals can solve in isolation. Furthermore, in Colombia, where a significant amount of institutional, personal, and family archives have been destroyed, and where access to education and technology is so unequal,[6] artistic manifestations have a documentary value.

Thus, in 2014, the MMC's virtual dimension launched its first digital project with *Fundación Ideas para la Paz* [Ideas for Peace Foundation] and the journalistic portal *Verdad Abierta* [Open Truth]. The website was called *Oropéndola, Arte y Conflicto* [Oropéndola, Art and Conflict], and was led by artists and researchers Manuela Ochoa, one of the authors of this chapter, and Camilo Leyva. The research team also included journalists María Alejandra Medina and Julia Roldán, and the webpage was designed by Christian Benito. *Oropéndola* was online for three years before becoming *Arte y Cultura*, a section of the Museum's website. *Arte y Cultura* is a virtual archive and gallery specialising in the arts and

6 According to the Vice Minister of Connectivity and Digitalization, by March 2019, about half of the Colombian population did not have access to fixed or mobile internet.

the Colombian armed conflict that documents and contextualises the symbolic representations that have arisen from the midst of war in the national territory. In it, digital visitors find artistic expressions (film and video, theatre, visual arts, dance, and music) by Colombian citizens, both recognised artists and victims. Since its early stages, it created synergies with other concomitant efforts of regional initiatives of memory like Museo Casa de la Memoria [Museum House of Memory] in Medellín, and Salón del Nunca Más [Hall of Nevermore] in Granada, as well as with academics and human rights activists.

A starting point for *Oropéndola* was the book *Memorias en tiempos de guerra, repertorio de iniciativas* [Memories in Times of War: A Repertoire of Initiatives], published in 2009 by the *Grupo de Memoria Histórica* [Historical Memory Group], which later would become the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica [National Center for Historical Memory, CNMH]. The research explores creative and artistic experiences of different communities affected by the Colombian armed conflict. First, we selected several artistic initiatives out of the cited database, considering the following criteria: resonance and impact, symbolic value, continuity, and process and history within the community. Then, we contacted the organisations, leaders, and authors of the material to discuss the project with them and, if they were interested in becoming part of it, to get their authorisation to disseminate their artistic expressions via the platform. We also travelled to visit some memory sites and presented the project, including, the already mention, Museo Casa de la Memoria and Salón del Nunca Más, as well as Casa de la Memoria [House of Memory] in Tumaco.

As a parallel process, we created a database of Colombian professional artists that work on issues related to the recent violence in the country. We contacted some of them to start a conversation about their artwork, creative processes, and thoughts on the relationship between art and violence. We presented the project to them, asked for their written

authorisation to be part of the platform and, in certain cases, interviewed them. This methodology was our starting point in *Oropéndola*, and we continued to develop it and enriched it over the years with *Arte y Cultura*. Given the vast quantity and quality of initiatives we collected, and our desire to create an open and permanent collection that could evolve and grow with time, the best format for this project was a website. We were aware of arguments claiming that only a select few have access to the advantages of the internet as a public sphere, rendering its democratic potential illusionary (Papacharissi 2008), and that not everybody could participate equally online (depending, for example, on their class, gender, race, ethnic affiliation, nations' policies towards access and use of the internet, and people's varying digital literacy). Nevertheless, we believed this format had the greatest potential to build a platform that was inclined to horizontal dialogue among equals, inasmuch as it enables conversations that can transcend geographic boundaries and, empowers "amateurs with the same legitimacy as traditional leaders, professionals, and experts" (Mahlouly 2013, p. 2).

Research conducted by Eric M. Uslaner indicates that online communication typically takes place among people who already know each other offline, while Nicholas W. Jankowski and Martine van Selm claim that online discussions are seldom extended to the offline sphere of interaction (in Papacharissi 2008). However, we were not interested in promoting only these kinds of responses, because in the processes towards healing, searching for justice, and guarantees to prevent the repetition of violence, creating safe spaces to talk about difficult issues is very important. Thus, from 2013 until 2015, *Oropéndola* had its own communication strategy through social networks, and organised complementary events, such as contemporary art fairs, screenings of documentaries and talks. These strategies allowed it to be known and

recognised among a young and urban public[7] that had not been directly affected by the armed conflict, especially since most artistic initiatives are created in a rural context, and are rarely known outside of their community. *Arte y Cultura* sought to encourage city inhabitants to get to know the conflict through the expression and sensitivity of art, as well as to provoke actions among these new audiences, but, above all, interactions, the production of which remains one of the greatest challenges for museums (Muac EnVivo 2017).

In ArtBo 2015, the most important contemporary art fair in Colombia, the digital project had a touch screen device. On that occasion, the Fair's visitors interacted with the virtual gallery, and talked with the researchers. Shortly after, *Oropéndola* organised two film screenings in Bogotá of the documentary N.N., by the artist Juan Manuel Echavarría. The events' intention was to bring together a community of people, mostly the page visitors, who could, in this particular case, debate Echavarría's artwork. These gatherings also served to feed a section of the page where we wrote about the main artistic, and social debates derived from such dialogues with the public. We were interested in providing spaces for *Oropéndola*'s visitors to meet in person, so we used the artistic initiatives that are part of the page as an excuse to promote face-to-face dialogues, and to get people together so they could know each other better, and enhance their networks. Promoting and facilitating dialogues between different citizens responds to a strategy that, according to Hammargren, "has proven to be

7 Internet users in Colombia are mostly people who live in cities and are between 25 and 45 years old, and the visitors to our page correspond to that profile. From the launch of Oropéndola in October 2014 until the end of 2015, 15,784 visits were registered, an average of 1,300 per month, which were concentrated in Bogotá (64%), Medellín (10%) and Cali (4%), Colombia's three main cities. 72% of our visitors were young people, between 18 and 35 years old. Although the relaunch of the page as Arte y Cultura did not have its own social network strategy, from August 2018 to December 2019, 78,210 visits were registered, an average of 5,214 per month. The cities with the most visitors continue to be Bogotá, Medellín and Cali, as well as their predominant ages, between 18 and 35.

crucial for building and sustaining peace" and "should also be understood as a core preventive measure" (2019, p. 6).

By the end of 2019, each artistic entry in *Arte y Cultura* was accompanied by a series of pictures and/or videos, an informative review, a historical context, and a list of related articles and links for a better understanding of its content and significance. The visitor also had the possibility to share their favourite artworks in their social networks. In order to find the selected artistic expressions, digital visitors could browse randomly or navigate the content through keywords of their own interest. Each keyword displayed a gallery of artistic expressions related to it, allowing connections between different regions.

Arte y Cultura was not intended to become an official voice or a single memory. This responded to a curatorial decision that, on the one hand, accounted for the struggles between different senses about the past and, on the other, opened up the possibility for the exchange of ideas, points of view, and questions. In consequence, the construction of a digital archive like this should be understood as an incomplete and constantly growing process. The absence of some initiatives did not mean they were disqualified, on the contrary, it reflected that many voices still needed to be included in the project, and to do so, we took advantage of the multiple possibilities that technology allowed to periodically feed the contents. To that extent, research about the arts and Colombian's armed conflict was a permanent responsibility of the team that led the project. However, it continued to be open to suggestions from digital visitors, artists, and communities, who shared their artistic expressions and comments with us via email, because we believed that only through trust and a degree of reciprocity could we encourage conversations and democratising discussions.

Expanding Dialogue

Violence, besides destroying and distorting language, people, and things, prints an image by force: the aggressor always wants to leave a mark on the

attacked person. According to Jean-Luc Nancy, "violence always makes an image of itself, and the image, is what of itself, presses out ahead of itself and authorizes itself" (2005, p. 20). Violence and its visible mark are inseparable. Such a mark is not a consequence of violence, but an exhibition of it and it is the violence itself. Given this, many communities feel they must communicate and express their grief and their story through cultural practices such as rituals and symbolic acts. Can artistic expressions detach, resist or respond to violence? How can art enrich, expand, sublimate, or complement words in a violent context? Can it bring us closer to the possibility of identifying ourselves with others' pain? These were some of the questions *Arte y Cultura* sought to answer.

In the following, we present three examples of how *Arte y Cultura* complemented other dimensions of the MMC, as well as created dialogue with external parties. In the first, we focus on its use by scholars, which illustrates how the Museum accomplishes its mission of being a symbolic reparation measure. In the second, we show how *Arte y Cultura* served to expand the Museum's storyline through the virtual curation of a set of artistic expressions related to the exhibition *Voces para transformar a Colombia* [Voices for the Transformation of Colombia]. In the third, we present how the artwork and critical thought of the artist Erika Diettes, which were part of the digital project, enriched other dimensions of the Museum.

The MMC's Symbolic Reparation Mission

For Colombian lawyer Yolanda Sierra (2015), showing, demonstrating, and amplifying cultural expressions to make and preserve memory has the ability to create, or recover identity or broken social ties, while helping to create the conditions to promote reconciliation, and transformation of social relations, so human rights violations will not be repeated (SRRP 2017). Symbolic reparation, according to Sierra (2015), is effective because it addresses the immaterial, emotional, incorporeal, emotional, subjective, and cultural

needs of people, communities, and society, which cannot be satisfied with economic compensation, or other reparation measures to which the victims of the Colombian armed conflict are entitled.

Arte y Cultura was used by Sierra and his law students to study and analyse artistic expressions that may relate to symbolic reparation processes. For this purpose, the digital archive allowed them to review the artistic processes born from the communities, so in the future, judicial decisions might be based on well-informed contexts. In 2018, art students at the *Universidad de Los Andes* [University of Los Andes] also wrote long essays about the artistic expressions hosted by the platform. Professor Carolina Cerón, who was in charge of the class *Arte y conflicto armado* [Art and Armed Conflict], used these to broaden public and academic understanding of the arts in violent contexts, and the potential agency of digital media archives for public and collective memory. Furthermore, Julia Roldán, current Manager of Cultural Programming at *Red Distrital de Bibliotecas Públicas* de Bogotá [Bogota's Network of Public Libraries] has used *Arte y Cultura* as a pedagogical tool for various activities. Besides the more conventional use as a digital archive to learn about artistic practices related to the armed conflict, it has served her "as a database to find artists and collectives that could be part of our Network. We have identified and invited artists of *Arte y Cultura* to public talks, and to give workshops to our Libraries' visitors" (Personal communication 2022). This use of the platform enriches and strengthens one of the main objectives of the project since its inception: to create an active network of knowledge and skills so the voices of victims and artists are heard and take an active role in national debates and spaces engaged in peacebuilding.

Virtual Curation

The virtual nature of *Arte y Cultura* allowed its structure to grow and evolve according to the trends and behaviours of the platform's users. From the beginning, it was considered as a space to experiment with its contents, and

to create virtual curations. In 2015 we carried out the first exercise of this sort when we selected nine keywords that identified different artistic expressions from the virtual collection: women, grief, narration, transformation, resistance, witness, land, commemoration, and disappearance. This selection resulted after identifying the most recurrent problems, and strategies addressed in the artistic expressions by communities and professional artists. These descriptors helped to guide the public to access the artistic expressions, and foster their curiosity through a flexible configuration of the content. The variety of artistic expressions contained in a single word gave an account of the multiplicity of critical thought on armed conflict and the cultural diversity of Colombia.

For example, when writing the word 'woman' in the search engine, the visitor would find the installation *A flor de piel* [On Surface], by Doris Salcedo (see Figure 1) and the play *Anunciando la ausencia* [Announcing the Absence], by the drama group El Tente (see Figure 2). While Salcedo's artwork circulates in international galleries and is recognised in specialised art media, El Tente's

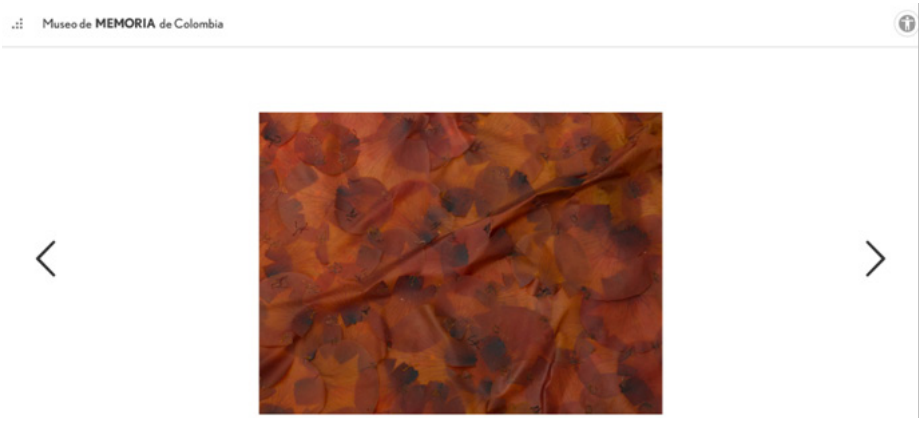


Figure 1. *Doris Salcedo, **A flor de piel**, 2012. Museo de Memoria de Colombia ©2020. Retrieved April 19, 2020. Screenshot by authors.*

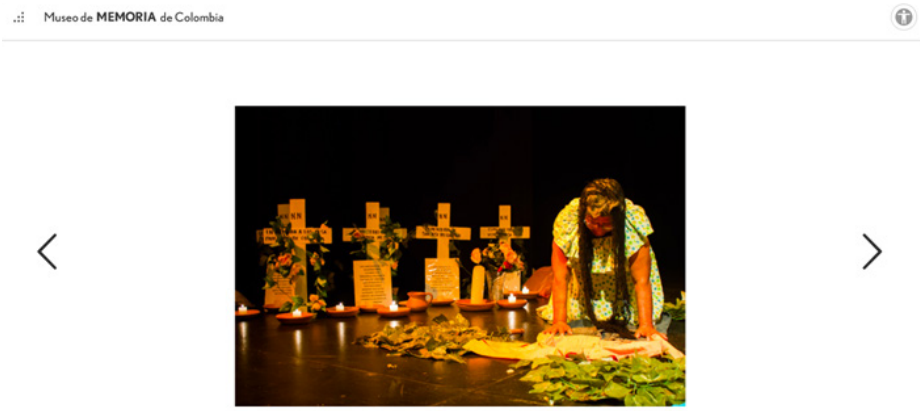


Figure 2. *El Tente,* ***Anunciando la ausencia****, 2016. Museo de Memoria de Colombia ©2020. Retrieved April 19, 2020. Screenshot by authors.*

artistic expression has a regional scope, and is primarily aimed at other victims of forced disappearance. However, both artistic expressions allude to the same modality of violence: forced disappearance, and both take as reference the case of María Cristina Cobos, a nurse disappeared and murdered by a paramilitary group in 2003. The artwork *A flor de piel* (2011) is a gigantic canvas made out of rose petals. Salcedo and her team sewed petals with a thread, as a surgeon sews the skin of an injured person. The blanket has the colours that the skin acquires when it has been hurt. The artwork is supremely fragile, like life itself.

For its part, the play *Anunciando la ausencia* (2013) tells the stories of a group of women from Meta department who have disappeared relatives. Paulina Mahecha, one of the protagonists, shares with the audience the story of her daughter, María Cristina Cobos, her dreams and hopes, as well as the way she disappeared. Through objects belonging to the disappeared loved ones, their photographs and diaries, this group of women demands justice.

The links between these two productions that, at first glance, seem dissimilar, enriches the understanding of a specific case, the forced disappearance of Maria Cristina Cobos, through a variety of symbols and gestures. As shown, different perspectives of the same event can converge to build plural stories. We believed that only by attending to multivocality and the plurality of perspectives involved in past and present violence and atrocities will it be possible to construct a culture of respect for difference, which helps to assure reparation and prevents repetition. By the end of 2019 the search engine of *Arte y Cultura* changed as a result of our permanent interests to create better tools that would allow users to contrast examples and generate dialogue around them (see Figure 3).

The last virtual curation we developed, *Arte y coca* [Art and Coca], was intended to expand the storyline of *Voces para transformar a Colombia*, the

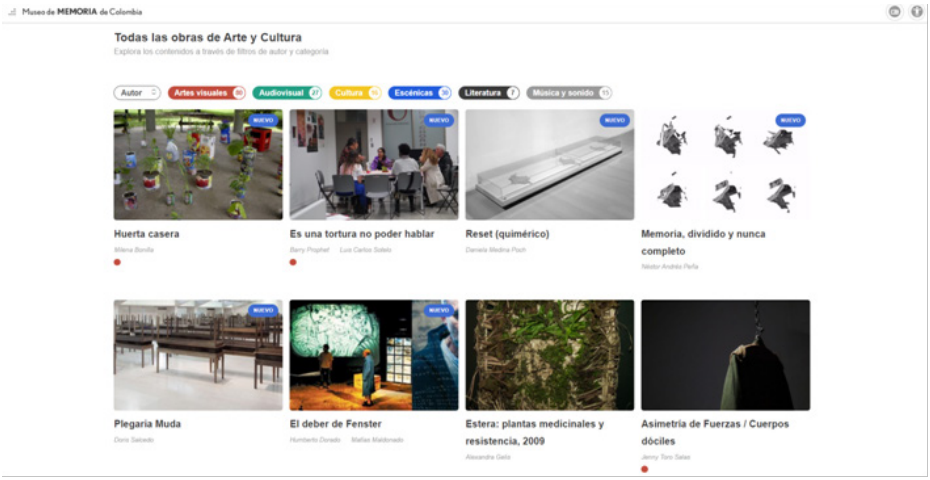


Figure 3. ***Arte y Cultura***. *Museo de Memoria de Colombia ©2020. Retrieved April 19, 2020. Screenshot by authors.*

first MMC's physical exhibition. This travelling temporary exhibition displayed the Museum's storyline and conceptual structure for the first time to the public in order to test reaction to them.[8]

> *Voces* was a 'living museum' that presented its visitors with multiple manifestations of memory of Colombia's recent armed conflict [...]. The three principal narrative axes of Water, Land and Body [...] served as characters that led visitors through the texts, maps, videos, photographs, paintings, installations, conversations, concerts, plays, workshops, 3D immersions and radio programs that the exhibition comprised. Case studies from all around the country were included to illustrate the ways armed conflict has dispossessed, harmed and dehumanized Colombian people, but also how Colombians have fought for their territories, resisting individually and collectively, and re-dignified their injured bodies.
>
> (Lleras et al 2019, p. 545-546)

The *Voces para transformar a Colombia* storyline was not limited to the exhibition space and its pieces. It was meant as a whole and fitted the category of 'experiential' museum, where the public was invited to make, feel, create, experience, interact, and learn through the body, and the encounter with others. The virtual dimension played a very important role here. The MMC website not only offered basic information about the exhibition and its related activities, but it also expanded its thematic and conceptual content, serving as an archive of each of its versions, and as a platform to transmit live events. A special section allowed the internet user to take a 360° tour of the exhibition

8 In 2018 Voces para transformar a Colombia was presented in two different versions at two book fairs (In Bogotá in April and Medellín in September). In 2019 a smaller version went to Cali (September - October). During these two years the exhibition was visited by almost 120,000 people, strengthening ties with victims, its communities, and organisations in the territories, as consistent with the objectives of the Museum's territorial dimension.

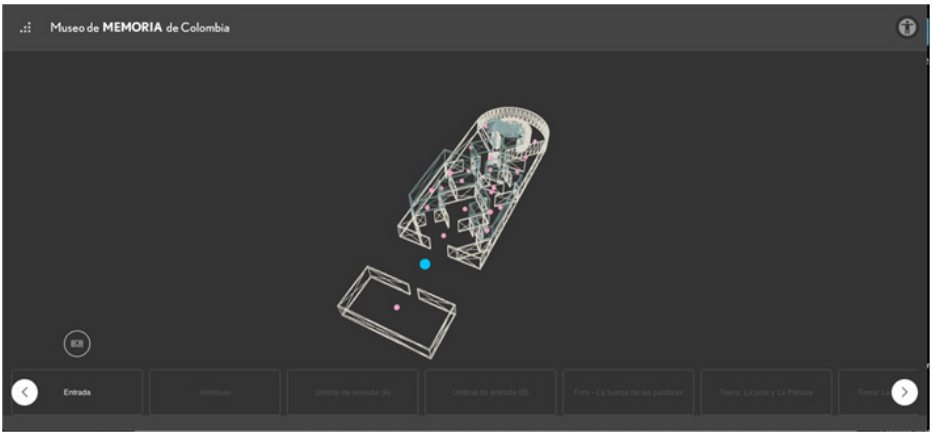


Figure 4. *360° tour of the exhibition* ***Voces para transformar a Colombia*** *in Bogotá. Museo de Memoria de Colombia ©2020. Retrieved April 19, 2020.Screenshot by authors.*

in Bogotá (see Figure 4), which also included photographs of the visitors' interaction with the exhibition, and an explanatory piece of audio for each case study.

Arte y coca was born to expand MMC's storyline, and to complement the physical exhibition.[9] Although it is still not yet available for the public on the MMC page, it was a curated collection planned to be published in digital form. It presents artistic expressions by Colombian artists who have explored coca as a plant, the cocaine production process, the crops fumigation with glyphosate and their effects, and the socio-economic phenomenon of drug trafficking. Through these artistic expressions it was possible to draw references to specific facts and geographic points, as well as to cases of political corruption, and infiltration of drug money into the legal economy.

9 *To learn more about the coca plant case study in the temporal exhibition see: Tierra: Puerto Guzmán Putumayo and González-Ayala and Botero-Mejía (2019).*

Thus, our collection proposed that artistic expressions can act as historical and research material, broadening understanding, and enriching debate about particular issues.

One of the artists that was part of *Arte y coca*, Wilson Díaz, has dedicated a large part of his artistic production to thinking critically about the social imaginaries that surround coca. His installation *Fallas de origen* [Origin Breakdown], winner in 1998 of the *Salón Nacional de Artistas* [National Artists Hall], questions the imaginary of property, domestic economy and drug money. *Fallas de origen* is a big *casita roja de Davivienda* [red house of Davivienda],[10] which has televisions as windows that present people talking about having their own house, while in the front yard of the house there are several coca plants.

Espacios de creación

Since 2018, the digital project included video posts of interviews with some of its artistic contributors. Initially, these were thought to expand the information of each artist's entries, an idea that evolved into an audio-visual series entitled *Espacios de creación* [Creation Spaces]. We interviewed the artists in their studios and presented them to the public, along with their creative processes and creations, expanding the narrative of the artistic expressions.

The first episode of *Espacios de creación* had the artist Erika Diettes as guest. She had three artworks in *Arte y Cultura: Sudario* [Shroud] (2011), *Río abajo* [Down River] (2008) and *Relicarios* [Reliquaries] (2016) (see Figure 5). For seven years, Diettes travelled around the country looking for objects treasured by the relatives of victims of the armed conflict, such as clothes, toys, jewellery, documents, and photographs. Diettes submerged the objects people donated to her in a transparent, and viscous material called rubber

10 Corporate image of the Bank Davivienda since 1973. Davivienda translates as 'give houses'.



Figure 5. *Erika Diettes, **Relicarios**, 2011-2015. Museo de Memoria de Colombia ©2020. Retrieved April 19, 2020. Screenshot by authors.*

tripolymer to create a series of cubes that, like reliquaries, are designed to symbolically protect the memory of absent loved ones.

The *Museo de Antioquia* [Museum of Antioquia] in Medellín opened the temporary exhibition *Relicarios* in November 2016. In it, Diettes organised 165 cubes on the floor, each with one of the donated objects, as if they were graves in a cemetery. Three days before the opening, the victims' relatives visited the exhibition and, in a symbolic act, the artist gave each family a photograph of their reliquary. About this particular artwork, the author highlighted the following in the interview that is part of *Espacios de creación*:

> A three-day closed-door activity was done for the mourners, where they recognized or allowed the space to meet these objects that, in some cases, had been given to me seven years before and, well,

> allow the mourners to have that space and to take it as they would like. In many cases, they [the reliquaries] functioned as graves. I was very impressed that the artwork was exhibited for four months, and every day they had to clean the crosses made by people over the reliquaries. It was an artwork that took the same sacred character from the mourners as for the public.

Following these critical thoughts on the social character acquired by *Relicarios*, we invited Erika Diettes to be part of the academic and cultural activities of *Voces para transformar a Colombia* in Bogotá. In the radio space entitled *Un museo para todos* [A Museum for All], broadcast live through the Museum's website, Diettes shared with the public her experience as an artist who addresses the Colombian armed conflict in her artwork, complementing other dimensions and projects of the Museum.

To broaden the dialogue's spectrum and considering that *Arte y Cultura* did not have its own social networks, media strategies were proposed with the CNMH networks. One of them focused on the commemoration of the victims of forced disappearance on August 30, 2018. For twelve hours, twelve artistic expressions that were part of the digital project and related to this form of violence were published on the CNMH's Facebook and Twitter pages. On the following days, we received emails with suggestions of new artistic expressions and other related artworks, as well as portfolios of artists and victims who wanted to be part of this discussion.

According to Zizi Papacharissi (2008), individuals possess differing levels of agency, based on which they can employ the internet to varying ends, effects, and gratification, in concordance, they are perceived as more than passive consumers of information. As seen in the previous example, *Arte y Cultura* visitors can become content producers and cultural creators, and we argue, following Jenkins (2019), that this can empower them with more freedom of expression and more influence on

their cultural and political environment. Thus, the internet can provide any visitor with the opportunity to express their subjectivities publicly, and to make their voice heard in society, through dialogue and debate (Mahlouly 2013), which could be magnified in the digital spaces of a memorial museum.

Despite the significant potential of digital media, and its expanding capacity to grow a diverse, democratic memoryscape that enables debate and dissensus rather than offering a unified, singular narrative of the past, and due to a lack of institutional view, the Museum launched its own and independent social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) in December 2019. It will be necessary to evaluate and measure the strategies that are developed going forward, to grant and explore interaction and participation.

Conclusion

Arte y Cultura is a digital project with its own narrative, designed to offer an online experience, independently from the physical visit to the forthcoming Museum. It has the primary intention of spreading the work and efforts of the communities that have suffered violence in Colombia, as well as professional artists who have worked and critically reflected on the recent Colombian armed conflict. In a sense, *Arte y Cultura*, as a memorial museum project, "appear(s) to be the embodiment of what Astrid Erll terms 'travelling memory', exemplifying the movement of 'carriers, media, contents, forms and practices of memory' between and across national and cultural borders" (Erll 2011, p. 11, in (Sodaro 2018, p. 5). The artistic expressions included can be consulted abroad and provide samples of what has happened in the country, as well as the resilience of people who have had to experience the most difficult situations. The project re-launched by the MMC in 2018 became the first platform specialised in artistic initiatives related to the Colombian armed conflict. Art can denounce atrocities and violation of human rights and establish non-traditional channels of expression. This allows us to interpret

reality from the sensible and generate profound processes of resignification of lived experience. In a society that has been deeply affected by violence, the arts are a means to recognise, share, and cope with the pain, as well as to awaken new forms of reconciliation throughout the affected communities. Theatre, film, visual arts, dance, and music are not only sources of memory, but can offer historical and critical contributions to society. The arts are able to generate critical thought, and to stimulate sensibility, numbed by the excess of news on violence, and misinformation in the media.

When we initially wrote this chapter in mid-2019 we had big hopes and dreams for the opening of the physical Museum, planned to be in 2022, and of course, for *Arte y Cultura*'s future. We wanted to continue expanding its content, and working on the site's design to increase the visitor interaction options, as well as to maintain a space where it was possible to explore and comment on its contents, upload artworks, and build and share collections with others. One of our priorities was to develop virtual strategies to engage Colombians living in exile, as the platform registered visits from the United States (5.07%), Mexico (1.62%), and Argentina (1.38%). It is possible that many of these users were part of the exiled community, given that these three countries have been receiving thousands of Colombian refugees since the early nineties (CNMH 2018). Our first attempt was during the exhibition of *Voces para transformar a Colombia* in Bogotá, when the Museum experimented with virtual tours and Facebook Live for this specific audience. This experience evidenced further research needed to be done in order to develop adequate methodologies and interactive tools.

Although the Peace Agreement signed with the guerrilla of the FARC-EP in 2016 substantially reduced violence in the country, social leaders who work towards the consolidation of these agreements continue to face persecution. The peace process and social mobilisation that it unleashed have not been enough to disarm the long legacy of violence in Colombia. In this context, promoting and enriching a platform to make visible and disseminate the

artistic expressions of those who denounce, and narrate what happened in their territories, so that the present and future can learn from it, is the Museum of Memory of Colombia's duty. As a memorial museum engaged with the process of translating the suffering of the past into ethical commitments, it aims to create a better future through education and commemoration (Sodaro 2018). *Arte y Cultura*'s artists represent and honour the voice of their dead. With their hands some make murals or weave, whilst some sing so as not to forget. They become visible activists with rights and agency while breaking the paradigm of the anonymous victim destined to suffer. Although looking at artworks through a screen might not replace the experience of viewing a piece of artwork in the flesh, we dreamt that *Arte y Cultura* would continue exploring new technologies and strengthen its possibilities of interaction with its users so that it would serve as a tool to support the efforts of victims to transform Colombia.

*****

The MMC is not an independent institution. It is part of the CNMH, a public entity whose director is designated by the Colombian President. After the 2018 presidential elections, a new head for the CNMH was selected not without controversy, because he has publicly stated that Colombian armed conflict does not exist.[11] By the end of 2019 some of the Museum's staff, including the two authors of this chapter, resigned due to a conflict of interests with the new administration, and some others were fired. In 2020 the *Jurisdiction Especial para la Paz* [Peace Special Jurisdiction, JEP] issued a precautionary measure to preserve and conserve the temporal exhibition *Voces para transformar a Colombia* in the face of possible acts of censorship, prejudice, modification or ignorance tending to re-victimise sectors of victims of the armed conflict in Colombia by the directives of the CNMH. In 2021 a similar process affected

11 To learn about director Dario Acevedo's political views, follow him on Twitter as @darioacevedoc

the latest MMC's physical and temporary exhibition *SaNaciones: diálogos de la memoria* [Healings:[12] Dialogues of Memory]. The two juridical processes are still under investigation. By February 2022 the MMC's website is constantly on and off, and there are no certainties about the future of the existing online content let alone new developments.

This case study is an example of the difficulties regarding continuity with this type of project. When their existence depends on the interests and political will, and their work foregrounds memory, rather than generating narrative, mythical or visual consensus, which opens up space for dispute and negotiation. Memory destructs and recomposes power relationships (Riaño Alcalá 2006), and it is subject to multiple levels of revision and interpretation (Baussant 2007; Halbwachs 1994 and 1997). So, digital tools can become an ally for memory, contributing to the dissemination of the facts, helping to resist the notion of a single or official truth, and recognising the resilient processes of communities affected by violent contexts.

References

Baussant, M. (2007) 'Penser les mémoires', *Ethnologie française*, 33(3), pp. 389-394.

CNMH (2018) *Exilio colombiano. Huellas del conflicto armado más allá de las fronteras*, Bogotá: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. Available at: https://www.refworld.org.es/pdfid/5ba284954.pdf (Accessed: 27 January 2020).

12 The title plays with the meaning of the words sanaciones [healings] and naciones [nations]. The exhibition deals with the effects experienced by the Colombian indigenous communities [first nations] due to the armed conflict.

CNMH (2017) *Museo Nacional de la Memoria: un lugar para el encuentro. Lineamientos conceptuales y guion museológico*. Bogotá: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, available at: http://museodememoria.gov.co/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/MNM-Lineamientos.pdf (Accessed: 25 August 2019).

Dean, J. (2010) *Blog theory: Feedback and capture in the circuits of drive*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Erll, A. (2011) 'Travelling Memory', *Parallax*, 17(4), pp. 4-18.

Fuchs, C. (2010) 'Labor in informational capitalism and on the internet', *The Information Society: An International Journal*, 26(3), pp. 179-196.

González-Ayala, S. and Botero-Mejía, J. (2019) 'Land, the Wiwa map and coca plants: Curating memories of an unfinished armed conflict', *Irish Journal of Anthropology*, 22(1), pp. 290-304.

Halbwachs, M. (1997) *La mémoire collective*, Paris: Albin Michel.

Halbwachs, M. (1994) *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, Paris: Albin Michel.

Hammargren, H. (2019) 'Foreword"', in *Dialogue in peacebuilding. Understanding different perspectives* ed. S. Gruener, S. Smith and M. Hald, Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, pp. 6-7. Available at: https://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/dd64-dialogue-web1.pdf (Accessed: 30 January 2020).

Jenkins, H. (2019) *Participatory culture: Interviews*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jenkins, H. (2012) *Jenkins, el gurú de la Cultura Participativa, en la UAH* [Online]. Available at: http://portalcomunicacion.uah.es/diario-digital/

archivo/24-archivo-entrevistas-reportajes/6181-jenkins-el-guru-de-la-cultura-participativa-en-la-uah.html (Accessed: 22 January 2020).

Jenkins, H. (2010) *Learning in a Participatory Culture: A Conversation About New Media and Education (Part One)* [Online]. Available at: http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2010/02/_children_and_young_people.html (Accessed: 22 January 2020).

Lleras, C. et al. (2019) 'Curatorship for meaning making: Contributions towards symbolic reparation at the Museum of Memory of Colombia', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 34(6), pp. 544-561. Available at: DOI: 10.1080/09647775.2019.1675966 (Accessed: 12 January 2020).

Mahlouly, D. (2013) 'Rethinking the public sphere in a digital environment: Similarities between the eighteenth and the twenty-first centuries', *eSharp*, 20(6), pp. 1-21. Available at: https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_279211_smxx.pdf (Accessed: 21 January 2020).

Muac EnVivo. (2017) *Encuentro El Museo Digital PANEL II / ¿Museos sin colección? / ¿Colecciones sin museos?* Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejtABzXA_Wo&t=3756s (Accessed: 12 July 2019).

Nancy, J-L. (2005) *The ground of the image*, New York: Fordham University.

Papacharissi, Z. (2008) 'The virtual sphere 2.0: The internet, the public sphere and beyond', in Chadwick, A. & Howard, Ph. N. (eds.) *Routledge handbook of internet politics*, New York: Routledge.

Riaño Alcalá, P. (2006) *Jóvenes, memoria y violencia en Medellín. Una antropología del recuerdo y el olvido*, Medellín: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, Universidad de Antioquia.

Sierra, Y. (2015) *Reparación simbólica, litigio estético y litigio artístico: Reflexiones en torno al arte, la cultura y la justicia restaurativa en Colombia, Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia*. Available at: https://icrp.uexternado.edu.co/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2017/10/DOC-DE-TRABAJO-85.pdf (Accessed: 15 May 2019).

Sodaro, A. (2018) *Exhibiting atrocity. Memorial museums and the politics of past violence*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

SRRP (2017) *Guidelines on the Use of Art in Symbolic Reparations*. Available at: https://symbolicreparations.org/projects-publications-/588/ (Accessed: 5 May 2019).

Chapter 10

(Web)sites of Memory:

National Nostalgias in the Transnational Age

Elizabeth Benjamin

French cultural memory historian and political scientist Pierre Nora wrote in 1989 that

> modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image. What began as writing ends as high fidelity and tape recording. The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs – hence the obsession with the archive that marks our age, attempting

> at once the complete conservation of the present as well as the total preservation of the past.
>
> (Nora 1989, p. 13)

If Nora's tape recordings seem like historical artefacts in their own right in the twenty-first century, his argument concerning the increasing obsession with archiving continues to resonate in the present. Nora was of course writing before the advent of the Internet age, before the "connective turn" (Hoskins 2011) and the invention of social media as we know it today. In some respects, then, he anticipated the ways that digital memory would come to collapse the past and the present through hyperconnectivity (Hoskins 2018, p. 2). Nora's work has at once been celebrated and highly criticised. On the one hand, as one of the fathers of the "memory boom" in the study of history and memory (Winter 2007, p. 363), and particularly through the pertinence of the timing of his writing – that is, at the bicentenary of the 1789 French Revolution – Nora and his *Lieux de mémoire* project "sought to offer nothing less than a vast reordering of France's relationship with its past" (Hazareesingh 2016, p. 280). On the other hand, his work was so focused on establishing a framework for 'French' identity that he failed to identify the "methodological nationalism" that underpinned his work (Achille, Forsdick and Moudileno 2020, p. 5), and barely acknowledged the role of the colonial across the thousands of pages of his tomes. This was particularly problematic given the proximity of his publications to the emergence of narratives from the World Wars of the twentieth century, nationalism's role in the catastrophic events of the Holocaust, as well as coming on the heels of the violent conflicts that resulted in the independence of three of France's former colonies (Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria).

The idea of 'national' memory or identity is problematic in the twenty-first century, and memory has long ceased to be contained by national borders, particularly with the emergence of the digital realm (see De Cesari and Rigney (2014) on transnational memory). Nonetheless, while the turn of the

millennium brought with it new questions in memorial culture (among other reasons, through the spate of centenaries of the modern(ist) period, as well as the shock of 9/11), and new opportunities to revisit understandings and representations of the past, it also saw the creation of nationally-motivated memorial websites. At the centenary of World War I, the French government funded the creation of 14-18 Mission *Centenaire* [14-18 Centenary Mission] (2012, henceforth Centenaire), a website dedicated to the centenary of the conflict, and which complemented an existing site *Chemins de mémoire* [Paths of memory],[1] which is dedicated to the preservation of French history through moments of conflict in general, but with particular prominence given to the two World Wars. The latter uses Nora's terminology, bringing with it questions of whether its presentation of aspects of French history would be shaped by the same neo-colonial undertones.

This chapter will analyse these two examples of memorial websites, examining their structures, thematic content, and relationship between primary artefacts (objects, monuments, and artworks) and contemporary creative responses to events and resources. The chapter will compare four aspects that the sites have in common: the inclusion of a mapping function; balance of the national and the international in the representation of the Francophone world; questions of funding, in particular the inclusion and representation of projects funded through the state initiatives of the sites; the role of the archive, the website as archive, and the archiving of a website. The chapter's discussion of the sites will interrogate their socio-cultural and political implications, through debates in cultural memory as well as memory studies more broadly, to assess the extent to which they enact a deliberate memorial positioning that reinforces nostalgia for the colonial past.

The chapter takes as its provocation the use of shared vocabulary between Nora's *lieux de mémoire* work of the 1980s and '90s with *Chemins* (both in

1 Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

its title and its inclusion of a 'memory tourism' map that plots a set of *lieux*) to interrogate the appropriateness of such a loaded framing of history through contemporary sites, especially given the ways in which this might be said to ignore the paradigmatic shift set in motion by the digital turn whereby concepts such as space and time seem to have become of secondary importance to the digital technologies that shape collective memory. The author situates their own argument within the central debate in memory studies that the digital turn has fundamentally altered the ways in which collective memory is faceted (Hoskins 2018; Garde-Hansen, Hoskins and Reading 2009; Mayer-Schönberger 2009), but with an interest in examining the remaining relationship between online and offline practices (van Dijck 2007). No break is ever complete; these enduring traces of links may be used productively to shape new forms of collective memorial practice.

While World War I's events were international, they took place at a time when the notion of the modern nation, and with it, nationalism, was still developing. This was something that became exacerbated in the run up to World War I and its consequent fallout. Nationalism, whose French form is said to have come into being with the Dreyfus affair in the late nineteenth century, would come to perhaps its most disturbing head with World War II.[2] Thus while great efforts are made to highlight international cooperation and positive relations at the centenary of war, including archives such as *Europeana*, which presents the supranational European perspective, it remains instructive to observe how individual nations curate their respective digital memorial spaces, particularly in relation to the central assertion in memory studies that memory is no longer national but rather global (Assmann 2014; Assmann and Conrad 2014). The chapter focuses on the case study of mainland France, precisely to problematise the ways in which national approaches – as seen through state initiatives such as these websites – might be said to align more closely with memorial structures more typical of the nineteenth century, a nostalgic memorial of bygone glories

2 The modern European political system was born in the wake of the French Revolution.

that fails to engage with contemporary, grievance-centred conceptions of memory, and in doing so, diminishes the heterogeneity of the Francophone world as well as the important role of the former French colonies in global conflicts. The chapter will investigate the processing, codifying, and mapping of French historical memorialisation in the creation and navigation of digital spaces to analyse the extent to which opportunities have been taken, at the event of its centenary, to revise and update understandings and perceptions of this conflict, or whether such sites simply rehearse old nostalgias that are not sufficiently tailored to the contemporary age.

Chemins, created in 2003, describes itself as...

> un site du Secrétariat général pour l'administration du Ministère des Armées, édité et administré par la Direction des patrimoines, de la mémoire et des archives (DPMA)
>
> (2003)
>
> [a site of the General Secretariat for the Administration of the Ministry of the Armies, edited and administered by the Department of Heritage, Memory and Archives (DPMA)]

Immediately we can see potential for partiality in the underlying structures of this site. Army, patrimony, and memorialisation, indeed curation, come together with interests in the display of socio-political and cultural history. Out of context, the DPMA might give the impression of being an independent or even academic entity; it is actually managed by the army, so remains under this military wing (with associated political interests). *Chemins* offers a digital space in which users can freely access information and archival documents primarily relating to the two World Wars of the twentieth century, which is continually updated for the contemporary context. The site is divided into three sections: *"Tourisme de mémoire"* [Remembrance Tourism]; "*Educ@def*"

[Education relating to defence]; "*Histoire et Mémoires*" [History and Memories] (see figure 1).[3]

On the other hand, *Centenaire*, in its mission statement section of the site, lays out:

> La Mission du centenaire de la Première Guerre mondiale est un groupement d'intérêt public créé en 2012 par le Gouvernement dans la perspective de préparer et de mettre en œuvre le programme commémoratif du centenaire de la Première Guerre mondiale.
>
> (2012)
>
> [The Mission of the centenary of the First World War is a public interest group created in 2012 by the Government with a view to preparing and carrying out the commemorative programme of the centenary of the First World War.]

This site, which closed in 2019, was specifically dedicated to informing the public of commemorative events relating to World War I. It was notably not presided over by the army, despite being organised in relation to the military conflict(s) of France's past. Despite claiming as its outlook that it was created in anticipation of the centenary of World War I, the site was also a treasure trove of primary and archival material in its own right. *Centenaire* was, like *Chemins*, a French government website, which offered three ways of experiencing the centenary of World War I: *"Vivre le centenaire"* [Live the Centenary], *"Découvrir le centenaire"* [Discover the Centenary], and *"Comprendre le centenaire"* [Understand the Centenary]. This site offered programmes, events, and art collections relating to World War I, in an interdisciplinary space in which artistic forms are levelled, and the contemporaneous and contemporary

3 Translations given here, with the exception of the information relating to Educ@def, are the official translations – those given on the English version of the site.



***Figure 1**. Chemins de mémoire home page. Screenshot by the author, 23 July 2019.*

came together. This was particularly evident in the site's divisions; they were dedicated to living, discovering, and understanding the *centenary*, rather than understanding World War I itself (see figure 2). It is unfortunate that the site no longer exists (an archived version can be found here); the implications of this will be explored further later in the chapter.

Mapping Memory

Sites such as *Chemins* and *Centenaire* raise questions about the digitalisation of memory and memorials for public consumption, particularly as 'officially sanctioned' or mediated by a single (national) authority. The two sites are built on familiar interfaces and functionality while inserting a nationalised mediation of memory on top of the technological medium. One of the aspects of immediate interest to the present chapter in this respect is the inclusion of a mapping function in both websites, each of which uses the APIs and functionalities of Google Maps.

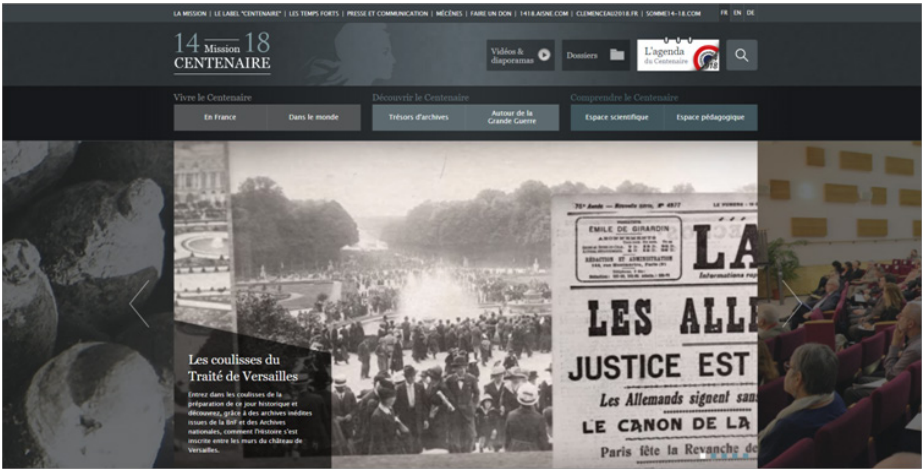


***Figure 2**. 14-18 Mission Centenaire home page. Screenshot by the author, 23 July 2019.*

Chemins contains a section entitled *"Tourisme de mémoire"* [Remembrance Tourism],[4] a centralised and searchable interactive map of museums, sites of memory, monuments, and necropolises at the user's fingertips. This offers a huge wealth of information, as well as the ability to plot *"Parcours thématiques"* [Thematic Routes], including several of the outlines of the Front, all of which is offered, through the map, as a helpful visualisation of the placement of the memorials. The sites are also displayed under the map (with an icon picture of the site), linking to further information for each. At a glance, then, this appears to be a positive inclusion in the site, allowing users to search for and select sites of interest, while being exposed to a number of extraneous sites that might pique their curiosity.

4 "Remembrance tourism" is the translation offered on the English version of the site. It could also be rendered as "memory tourism" – a subtle difference, but with different implications.

Unfortunately, though, an important disadvantage presents itself as soon as the user attempts to enact a query: the search function for *Chemins*'s map does not work particularly well. Where once one could search for 'all', this same query paradoxically now loses numerous entries in comparison to the results gained by browsing by specific region. Perhaps more worryingly, the automatic results (what the user sees before entering any search criteria) differ depending on the language to which the website is set. Most pertinently, there are many results for the French version, but fewer for the English and the German versions. For example, on entering the *"Parcours thématiques"* page, the French version gives almost forty results; the English and German versions offer only one (the same) for each. Even within the French version, the map does not accurately display the results. This indicates either a significant gap in the available metadata, or a programming glitch. Regardless of the reasoning beyond this problem, a result is that it distorts the impression given to any user of the site. It also represents an invisible (and perhaps unintentional) imposition of national hierarchy and nationalist narratives, raising questions as to the extent to which the site is genuinely intended to be used by those outside of the French-speaking context. The site is dedicated to French memorial structures, but it has been decided that it will be offered in English and German translation. The level of translation loss here (through explicitly missing content) is to the extent that we might instead consider it a different site; moreover, if it is going to include a 'version' in English and in German, the level to which it is equivalent will inevitably create political undertones. This is particularly important for German users of the site; access to historical resources between countries that are former adversaries is helpful in the name of openness and the building of understanding, and reduced functionality naturally hinders this.

Nora critiques the construction of collective frameworks in the evolution of national memory, writing that "national memory cannot come into being until the historical framework of the nation has been shattered" (1998, p. 363). It is instructive that this site chooses to base itself in Nora's terminology,

considering that it both presents itself as a memory site (notably through its title, *Chemins de mémoire*, as well as the present section, *Tourisme de mémoire*), and appears to maintain rather than break down (or "shatter") the "historical framework of the nation" to which Nora refers. This being said, it might be argued that Nora's own work does not display true commitment to shattering such frameworks, as he demonstrably reinforces them through his tomes' monumental neglect of the historical and contemporaneous post-colonial space. The website, and Nora, reiterate this contradiction, most notably perhaps in their flaws; the website in its inconsistency between languages, and Nora in his lack of recognition of non-mainland France (this will be explored further, later in the chapter). The site recognises the existence of non-mainland France, but in a very binary fashion; the automatic setting on the *"Tourisme de mémoire"* site is France (though, tellingly, it is not labelled as such, normalising this setting), but with an icon offering "*hors de France métropolitaine*" [outside of mainland France] (see figure 3). Effectively, a division is created between (mainland) France, and 'the rest'.

Nora also criticises the transfer of responsibility from what he designates "primary sites of initiation" (listing family, schools, monuments and museums) to the public domain, noting that they have been "taken over by the media and tourist industry" (1998, p. 363). The media takeover that Nora describes can be seen particularly strongly through sites such as *Chemins*, which promote remembrance as a tourist industry, as we see immediately through the *"Tourisme de mémoire"* section of the site.

The option to pursue *"Parcours thématiques"* inserts a further ambivalent aspect within the map function of the site. This is primarily through the way in which its miniature online curations offer bitesize, easily consumable memory. On top of this, the level of processing is not consistent, from simple description to full brochure. In the case of those dedicated to the Front, the level of curation and processing gives it an air of being an accepted series, which overlays new narratives to the events through interpretation of its

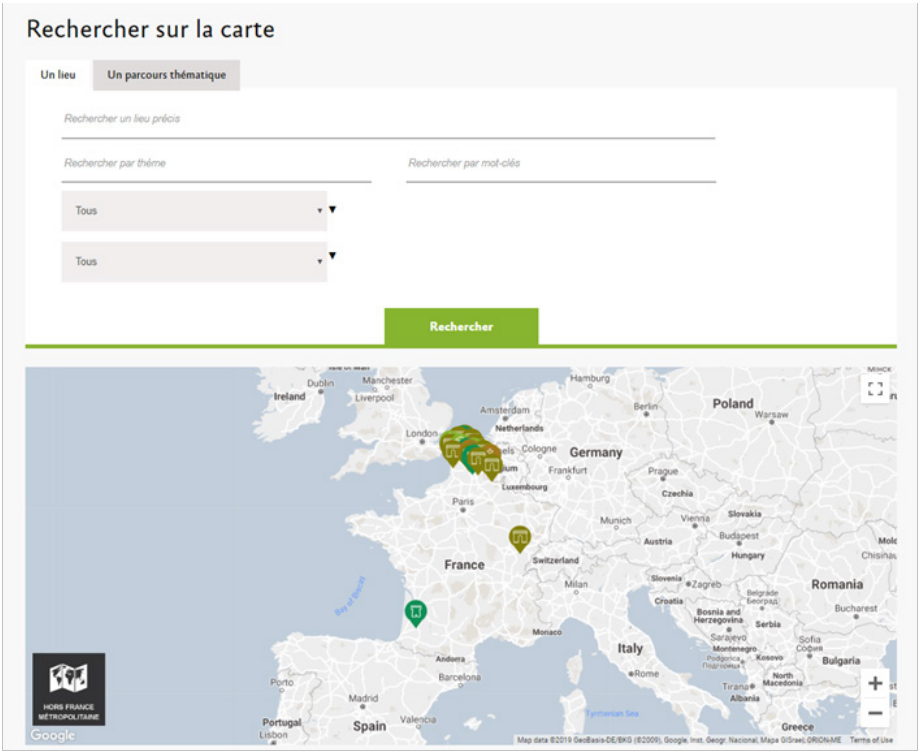


Figure 3. *Chemins de mémoire interactive map widget. Screenshot by the author, 23 July 2019.*

monuments. Additionally, some of the pictures on the maps have tick boxes that the user can mark when they have 'visited' the site.[5] This raises the twin issues of the consumption of memory through tourism (echoing the familiar notion of grief or dark tourism), and the limits of possibility (or desire) for engagement with traumatic memory. As Silke de-Arnold Simine notes,

5 For an example of these brochures, click here.

> Memorial museums try to create a sphere of human engagement with suffering, but struggle with the limits of representation and the outright claims of unrepresentability, especially when it comes to extreme violence.
>
> (2013, p. 203)

In some respects, *Chemins* struggles with the representation of memory, particularly when it comes to the "limits of representation and the outright claims of unrepresentability" to which de-Arnold Simine refers. While the mapping function might be said to add an element of scale or 'bigger picture' processing of monuments – simply through being able to see more of them on the map – and the thematic routes allow for a linking of sites through shared history, their particularly aestheticised processing gives an abstracted and even sanitised presentation, as well as allowing sites to be marked off as 'finished'. This does however raise the interesting question of the continued commemoration of events after their centenary: what criteria does a historical event have to meet to continue to receive a particular level of attention, or conversely, to cease to do so?

Centenaire also contained a mapping function, though it was not as visibly obvious in terms of the site structure (whereas we saw that it was the central guiding thread for *Chemins*), and only plotted monuments to the dead, rather than including other sites of remembering, thus somewhat darkening the memoryscape with its focus on morbidity. The map could be found halfway down *"Vivre le centenaire"* > *"En France"*, as part of a list of themed dossiers. Like *Chemins*, *Centenaire* also reproduced some of the familiar binaries of 'France versus the rest', though instructively in the mapping function, its own divisions were "France", "Europe", and "Monde" [World]. In this respect, although "France" was its automatic setting through zoom level, it offered an interim setting implying the different levels on which these sites of remembrance might act. Nonetheless,

the inclusion of "Europe" as an entity still maintains a Western-centric positioning. Moreover, as Aline Sierp outlines, "European memory politics are characterized by a sustained focus on specific time periods on the one hand and amnesia on the other" (2020: p. 686). This does not give great hope that the interim setting will offer a more inclusive memorial structure than *Chemins*'s binary. Unfortunately, the same can be said of concepts such as World Heritage, as De Cesari and Rigney (2014) outline in their argument for a transnational memory.

Despite its low visibility, the map played an important role on *Centenaire*, for some of the same reasons as its equivalent on *Chemins*. Here we could visualise the spread of monuments across the world. Nonetheless, it was unclear whether the dead represented are those who died in the war (more generally), those who died in France, or those who died 'for' France. Thus, the map immediately undermined some of its own usefulness, as well as raised the issue of ambiguous memory, or an empty sense of obligation to symbols whose meaning may be lost. What is the continuing role of such monuments? Are they simply markers of social forgetting? Viktor Mayer-Schönberger highlights the importance of forgetting, particularly in the digital age, noting that it "lets us act in time, cognizant of, but not shackled by, past events" (2009, p. 12). He writes that "societal forgetting gives individuals who have failed a second chance" (2009, p. 13). But what about when societies or nations themselves fail? This is particularly important within French cultural memory. The mainland does not have a good record when it comes to taking responsibility for its role as perpetrator in its colonial past; while headway was made by the incumbent Emmanuel Macron in 2017, who described colonisation as a "crime against humanity", he later declared that France would make "no repentance nor apologies", and offered instead "symbolic acts" to recognise its role in the occupation and later war of independence in Algeria (Al Jazeera 2021: n.pag.). This negative role makes it all the more important that sufficient information be given for memorials, even if they are 'just' pins on a map.

Despite some of its less helpful settings, in terms of functionality this page of *Centenaire* outplayed that of *Chemins*, even for the simple fact of loading the query that had actually been called. Its different layers of colours and numeric visualisations contributed to this ease of use (see figure 4). What is more, much more metadata was present to support divisions into more specific categories than those that we saw on *Chemins*; *Centenaire* included sites as physically diminutive as plaques, and specified those that were to be considered as standing in for monuments. In this respect, *Centenaire* offered a mapped memoryscape that was both more detailed and more nuanced than

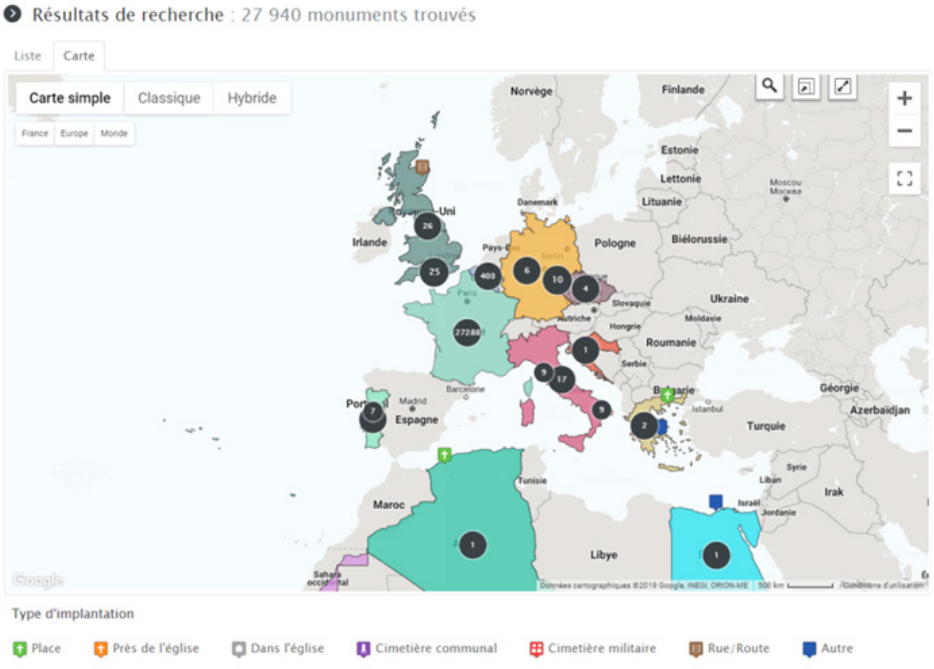


Figure 4. *Screenshot of Centenaire interactive map widget. Screenshot by the author, 23 July 2019.*

Chemins, although this is lost now; even in the cached form of the website, the map cannot be used. For all its flaws, however, the presentation of *Chemins's* map function, its information boxes, and the referencing of connected paths of memory encourages the move into physical interaction (visiting the places in person), as well as layering strands of narrative over what might otherwise be perceived as disconnected map coordinates. The question remains as to whether this overlaying of information leads to the enhancement or the erasure of these memory structures. The answer is perhaps to be found in the inclusion 'on the ground', whether this be physically or digitally, of pertinent, appropriate, and representative information that renders these monuments accessible to a contemporary viewer.

Representing the (Inter)national Past

Chemins and *Centenaire* share an outlook of neat organisation of the past in relation to conflict, which we began to see in the discussion of the mapping of monuments and memorials. This organisational quality both sanitises violence by relegating it into temporally defined and closed boxes, and reinforces national divisions of memory. This was performed on a narrower level through *Centenaire*, owing to its focus on only one conflict, and then on a broader level through *Chemins*, which includes archives sorted by conflict in historical time. *Centenaire* also frequently referred back to *Chemins*, which implied a familial link of sorts, and linked it to this more strongly expressed sense of geographic and temporal division.

French history and memory today continue to be informed and defined by past conflicts, something that is not necessarily unique to France, but with the clear exception of the French Revolution (1789). This was considered the founding event of modern France (and the impetus for the creation of the Republic with the overthrowing of the monarchy), and created an extremely violent break with the past that triggered new ways of representing and remembering notions of French identity. This created a strong sense of

'before' and 'after', as well as an ordering of society according to republican principles following the motto *'liberté, égalité, fraternité'* [liberty, equality, fraternity]. Nora himself uses the Revolution as a key watershed in French history and memory, and bound it to his own concept through his role in the 1980s French cultural turn, which shifted the presentation of history and the development of cultural memory narratives. Notably, though, Nora was writing at a time when the influence of the revolutionary tradition was waning "as the foundational frame of reference for writing about French history" (Hutton, in Tota and Hagen 2016, p. 28). Nora's mammoth reordering of France's relationship with its past is projected through *Chemins*, not least because it is ideologically couched in the language of Nora and his sites of memory through the specific and wholesale use of this term. Instructively, the link to Nora through his vocabulary and memorial construct is never explicitly stated on the site; evidence, perhaps, of the assumption of acceptance of such concepts, as well as the lack of questioning of the flaws in this theorist's work (or at least lack of awareness thereof).

We have seen that both *Chemins* and *Centenaire* are government-funded, nationally (and/or army-) motivated entities, so it is disappointing but not surprising to see neo-colonial models of narrative at play. *Chemins* is illustrative of a site that is very much beholden to its founding cultural and government institutions, and presents itself in such a way as to appear as a constant bombardment of 'advertisement' for its constituent parts. While it contains a huge wealth of resources, it is presented as a cluttered collection of objects, events, and materials (with the exception of the mapping function, whose flaws reduce somewhat the appeal of its organisational qualities). This visual smorgasbord gives the impression that the founding institutions are trying to 'sell' the experience of the site to its users, or consumers. Joanne Garde-Hansen notes that:

> powerful media and cultural institutions whose business it is to record, archive and make accessible the everyday life, major events and social

> and cultural heritage of nations and communities, invariably write those narratives in ways that glorify not only themselves but the cultural hegemony of the societies they serve [...]. They need to keep their customers, readers, audiences and users happy. They control their own archives even if they are actually only the custodians and not the full rightful owners of a nation's heritage.
>
> (2011, p. 50)

Thus, a tension is created whereby *Chemins* constructs a borrowed national heritage while highlighting its own mainland-centric preoccupations. It should also be noted that definitions of 'national' heritage have changed quite drastically over time in the case of France; from the depth of the colonial period to the fullest state of independence, 'France' has included (or excluded) a range of regions, and this is not reflected in the overall construction of the site (with the exception of historical articles, which are divided by war, so this is implicit here), despite being dedicated to its history.

Centenaire did not display the same level of 'selling' that we saw with *Chemins*, perhaps because it presents a tighter focus on a specific event. It more naturally fitted into a series of national and international commemorative practices, both online and offline. Nonetheless, it did have a prominently placed calendar of centenary events, which evidently sought to draw the audience into further exploration of its offering in a more customer-based approach. Additionally, in order for a project to be included within the site, it had to acquire a label of approval, a process that was designed to *"distinguer les projets les plus innovants et les plus structurants pour les territoires"* [mark out the projects that are the most innovative and structurally helpful for the territories] (*Centenaire* 2012). On the one hand, this introduced a hierarchy of ideas through the gatekeeping process of who is granted this 'label', as well as borrowing the vocabulary of marketing through officialising the 'brand' of the site's project. On the other hand, we might note an ambiguity through

the use of the word 'territories', which can cover anything from a region within a nation to a collective of, for example, the overseas departments and collectivities of the Francophone world (though notably the term has largely been dropped from labels of these countries in general). This may at once be seen as more inclusive and more possessive, with resulting implications for the decolonisation of French cultural memory.

Centenaire was not specifically dedicated to France, but still falls within the realm of official or sanctioned representation. What is at stake here is the delicate balance, within memory and the study thereof, between collective memory as an active and collaborative process that reflects multiple voices, versus the notion of national memory as prescribed from above. We might bring together these two notions, or restore the balance, through Maurice Halbwachs (who coined the term *mémoire collective* [collective memory]) and his comment that "even at the moment of reproducing the past our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu" (1992, p. 49); nevertheless, the risk of domination by the national narrative remains high with sites such as *Centenaire*. We can hope that this is somewhat mitigated by the cultural institutions that carry out the processing of the historical data and documents, which are arguably more collective (in both senses of the word) by nature. The case of the centenary offers opportunity but also risk; such an important temporal marker, detached from the events through the absence of those who directly experienced it, will inevitably be clouded by both this distance and the lens of exceptional commemoration. Hoskins writes that "the past always looks alien from the perspective of the present: it is transformed through decay, discarding, forgetting, misremembering, reappraisal, and through all the various needs identified via the lens of today" (2018: p. 5).

The clearest example of problematic representation of the Francophone world for *Centenaire* was that the section *"Vivre le centenaire"* was divided into *"En France"* [France] and *"Dans le monde"* [The World]. We have

seen that this caused issues of scale with the mapping function; here it is reproduced at the level of a third of the site's main content. While it may seem logical for a France-based website to focus primarily on mainland France, it repeats a clear binary that we see regularly in the Francophone context. This scale is replicated, perhaps more extremely, in the Paris/rest of France divide commonly expressed in contemporary French society and culture. While the case of the Paris/rest of France divide is not unproblematic, reflecting a social hierarchy within the nation, it is not unusual for a capital city to hold this status on the national scale. What is striking about the France/the rest divide is the way that it inserts a neo-colonial narrative to the binary, partitioning off the non-mainland Francophone world as other, despite the important role of the former colonies in the conflicts of World War I. There is also discrepancy within the language used here. Since the section indicates where the centenary events can be found, the division into "France" is logical. But if we look more specifically, the French site indicates "in" France, which is not rendered in the English – some of the clarity is lost in translation. The same happens with *"Dans le monde"*, where the French offers "in/around the world", the English gives simply "the world".[6] Beyond the translation loss of the particularity of *"en/dans"* to position this section as offering practical events, the insistence of the binary, which we have seen in each of the *"Vivre"*, *"Découvrir"* and *"Comprendre"* sections, has the unfortunate consequence of ruling out the opportunity for a third option, that is, the Francophone world beyond France itself. This division is further curated (and dictated) by the fact that a user has to choose an option to enter the section; there is no neutral page for *"Vivre le centenaire"*, for example.

These sites both demonstrate that in the quest to create memorial websites from the mainland, they have managed to imply that the only narrative that deserves full attention is that *of* the mainland. This is done in both explicit ways (the binary divisions that quite obviously divide off the mainland from

6 An instructive variation on this is the German, which offers "France" and "International".

the broader Francosphere), and in smaller, more subtle ways, or ways that a user might not necessarily notice (a user will not usually be looking for the discrepancies between the different language-versions of the site). This shows that on every level, the national is being prioritised, and whether this is deliberate or not, implies a normalisation of bias that is couched in a nostalgic revival of the past.

Next-Generation Narratives

One of the strongest elements of the centenary of World War I was the ways in which the (re)presentation of these events from this distance fed into pedagogical narratives, whether this be through the curriculum itself or through extra-curricular projects. Both *Chemins* and *Centenaire* have engaged with the educational opportunities associated with new engagement with this conflict, with respective sections of the sites dedicated to this approach. The difference between them, however, reveals the gap between ideal evolutions and unhelpful perpetuations of the memory of this conflict.

Chemins offers a section whose name, "Educ@def" explicitly identifies with contemporary trends, technologies and social media. The name mimics an incomplete email address, the snappy 'handle' construction of social media such as Twitter and Instagram, and uses compacted abbreviations of the key terms ("educ" = *"education"*, "def" = *"défense"*). The removal of diacritics adds to this through increased compatibility with Internet norms (diacritics usually being erased in address bars, for example), as well as increased cross-compatibility with the Anglophone world, given the otherwise great similarity between terms in each language.

The section, which is very formal and offers funding and project competitions, houses information on pedagogical projects relating to history and memory, including how to teach war, as well as a space dedicated to young people. This

is perhaps the part of the site that most subtly feeds into the French context: the content is obviously aimed at the (mainland) French education system. While many of the documents are perfectly useable across international classrooms, we are reminded of France in the 'how to teach' drop-down, which includes documents from a systematic review of defence and national security. This presents problems on the national and international levels. Even if we accept that as a site aimed at French national identity and cultural memory, *Chemins* might logically focus on France, neglect of the colonial past will perpetuate questions of hierarchy and bias, and fundamentally under-inform generations of children on the responsibility of France towards its past (as well as toward the territories that are still politically attached to the mainland). Furthermore, several nations beyond the mainland are subject to its regulations (the French overseas territories, whose citizens have French nationality, and some of which follow the French education system), and yet are not particularly considered in the construction of this historical narrative. This highlights the site's failure to address the problematic nature of its affirmation of national identity within the context of a clear lack of effort to engage with the mainland's colonial past, due to a continued reluctance to accept responsibility for the nation's role as perpetrator. This is then an image that is being projected into the international digital sphere, being maintained and sustained well beyond the Francosphere.

This section of *Chemins* is evidently responsible for the image and message that it promotes to successive generations of children, who are in some respects increasingly digitally literate (or at least exposed to an increasing amount of digital content in their daily lives). We have seen how this is outwardly projected, but what about the selection processes for the projects that are funded by, and represented on, the site? de-Arnold Simine writes that

> State-funded museums [...] perform a public role of remembrance in which they are expected to represent a broad social or at least political

> consensus, producing narratives that form an integral part of national identity politics.
>
> (2013, p. 2)

That *Chemins* contains a page that predominantly offers to buy projects into its national narrative, selecting those that best represent its political angle, has implications not only for identity politics but also for the continued memory of this historical series of events. We must also keep in mind that websites funded by the government have the advantage of more significant funding (the implied consequence of which is higher quality content) as well as greater visibility (e.g. on search engines). Inevitably, the public has greater exposure to, and likely greater trust in, these sites over less formal, less well-connected and -funded sites. Furthermore, the fact that the site is run through the Ministry of Armies gives it a military filter that will reflect the national and political inclinations of this body. This is particularly notable considering that the site offers to fund pedagogical projects that reinforce *"les liens entre la jeunesse, la défense et la sécurité nationale"* [links between the youth, defense, and national security] (*Centenaire* 2012). The link between memory and youth is important, particularly for post-lived events, but to then connect it explicitly with defence and national security imposes a narrative of a particular attitude towards international relations that is not necessarily compatible with claims of transnational memory in the world in which we now live.

Centenaire proposed a more accessible pedagogical element to its site than *Chemins; "Comprendre le centenaire"* dedicated itself to *"Espace scientifique"* [Scientific Space] and *"Espace pédagogique"* [Pedagogical Space]. This latter space offered educational services, examples of projects, and resources. A positive element of this is the way in which it promotes the role that school children have played in the projects; these can also be filtered into two levels, approximately equivalent to primary and secondary education. It is also notable that the section on *Centenaire* was less focused on funding than

Chemins. Money is always required for such projects, and in some respects it is good that *Chemins* has good visibility for what it is offering. Nonetheless, the end result is that *Centenaire* appeared to promote education from the point of view of sharing, and *Chemins* from the point of view of selection, possible elitism, and imposition ('how to teach', from a French mainland national framework).

The Pedagogical Space incorporated schoolchildren's artistic responses to World War I and its centenary – including one that is labelled *"passeurs de mémoire"* [relay/er/s of memory] – bringing together the new generation and the new media generation. The *"passeurs de mémoire"* project engaged with several layers of the memoryscape discussed in this chapter. First, the class brainstormed their (essentially collective) knowledge of the War, then visited monuments in person, after which they visited archives to look at primary documental artefacts. Finally, they developed their own creative responses to World War I, some of which can be seen digitised on *Centenaire*. These school pupils, growing up beyond access to primary memory of the conflict, essentially engaged with the full process of memory as a reconstruction of the past, while feeding into de-Arnold Simine's evaluation of the cognitive value of memory:

> As neuroscientists insist that memories are a process of re-creation rather than something that is unchangeable and can be retrieved and reproduced, memory has become the mode in which people and societies act out their ever-changing relationship to the past. Memories mediate between experience or knowledge of the past and the problems faced in negotiating the present and as such they are unreliable (Loftus 1995) and yet at the same time significant because it is our emotional and imaginative investment in the past that determines this very unreliability.
>
> (2013, p. 16)

The children were fully engaged in re-creation rather than simple retrieval or reproduction, mediating imaginative investment in the past through their contemporary interpretations. Furthermore, these schoolchildren perpetuate Garde-Hansen's notion of the "creativity phenomenon" (2011, p. 81) that has developed with recent concepts and constructs of memory, where the new visibility of media, such as home videos inspires unprecedented public re-creation and reinterpretation of something that was once relatively confined to the private realm. This demonstrates a very twenty-first century techno-utopian push toward the web as participatory culture, as well as a push back against singular or national memoryscapes.

While neither of these sites provides an ideal web-based response to educational projects in the wake of the centenary, the way in which *Centenaire* involved its public — and particularly in contrast with *Chemins* — engaged with a productive recognition of digital collective memory, demonstrating the ways in which heterogeneous, dispersed, and networked responses to a historical moment can be brought together to offer a new approach to the centenary moving forward. In this respect *Centenaire* may have had its finitude in mind in its presentation of completed projects, but in so doing, it better reflects on-the-ground human responses to the centenary in contrast with the way in which *Chemins* presents as a top-down imposition of instruction.

Role of the Archive

In opening this chapter, I introduced Nora's concern that society was becoming obsessed with storing, preserving and archiving the totality of the past and the present. Websites, whether dedicated to memory or not, sit in a unique position regarding the archive. Often both digitally and physically present, we are nonetheless tempted to see them as windows of accessibility into what might otherwise be consigned to a darkened room, behind physical or financial walls. They also bring with them an assumption of permanence, though they can be removed, for reasons of physical storage space on

servers or stacks, financing of projects, or the end of an event. Despite this, though, they inevitably leave traces, through links, alternative hosting, and initiatives such as the Way Back Machine/Internet Archive. Access may then still entail issues of forward compatibility, for example with Flash player, which no longer functions. The life, death, and afterlife of a website, particularly one that performs the role of archive is particularly instructive to the field of memory studies in the digital age.

The section of *Chemins* that most closely corresponds to an archive, as part of the project as a whole, is the section of the site named *"Histoire et Mémoires"*. Digital articles, sub-archives, and media objects populate this part of the site. It is also unfortunately the most cluttered part of the site. Despite its seeming lack of organisation, it is possible to apply crude filters to the historical archival material. This is done by period: a user can filter by 1870-1871 (the Franco-Prussian war), World War I, World War II, the Indochina war, the Algerian War, external operations, "out of conflict", "other conflicts", and "personalities". It is to be noted that the majority of these themes are war-based, even "out of conflict" documents are war-related, and personalities are classified by the war to which they 'belong'. This effectively cements the confrontational and conflict-imbued element of the memorial structures of this website, as well as providing a constant reminder of the military backing and funding.

The way in which this site is continually fenced off into historical information packages is reminiscent of Nora's claim that "representation proceeds by strategic highlighting, selecting samples and multiplying examples. Ours is an intensely retinal and powerfully televisual memory" (1989, p. 17). Nora's case – aside from ironically highlighting his own failing to be more inclusive in his selection of *lieux de mémoire* – illustrates the relationship between technology and memory during the second memory boom; televisual memory is still highly powerful but is today complemented, and in some cases, dominated by web and interactive media forms. We might today refer

to web memorials using Oliver Grau's (2003) term "image worlds"; while sites such as *Chemins* are not necessarily seeking to embody media art, they create and offer a series of paths of entangled media and technologies that present memory as somewhere between illusion and immersion.

In terms of Nora's process of representation, the case of the *"Histoire et Mémoires"* section, the layout by war after war highlights – strategically or not – the conflictual nature of French history, which is exacerbated by the multiplying of examples. Two elements of the *"Histoire et Mémoires"* section are particularly instructive in illustrating *Chemins*'s presentation of World War I. In addition, they illustrate the depth of the (mainland) Francocentric outlook of the site as a whole. These are the "*Articles historiques*" [Historic Articles] (World War I), and the section labelled "*Mémoire partagée*". The *"Articles historiques"* section includes documents dedicated to the role of non-French nationals in France, the role of the French outside of France, and relations of mainland France with other nations, for example Madagascar (a French colony at the time of World War I until 1960). The positive element of this is that space has been made to showcase the importance of non-mainland nations within this conflict, within the Francosphere, and on the international stage more broadly. On the other hand, it reproduces some of the same problems that we have already seen through siphoning off and partitioning of the non-mainland Francophone world as 'other'. Including the broader Francophone world under the umbrella of the mainland risks both erasing its heterogeneity (as well as re-imposing neo-colonial norms of 'belonging'); separating the two risks reinforcing a situation wherein awareness of colonial history is neglected, and yet the mainland / non-mainland binary is perpetuated. Clearly a third approach needs to be pursued in order to better achieve inclusive practice.

"Mémoire partagée" also raises some of these issues. The section contains articles on memorials and remembrance events outside of France, but still dedicated to French soldiers – essentially memorialising the presence

of mainland France outside of the nation, which becomes particularly problematic when it comes to countries that have since gained independence. We must also problematise the tension of the definition of "shared memory"; the cultural and linguistic imposition implied in these intra-Francosphere relations does not necessarily equate to 'sharing' for all involved. Nonetheless, Sue Campbell posits, in relation to shared memory, that "[t]he very intent of drawing someone into the past may be to encourage the contesting rather than the affirmation of values" (cited in Brown and Reavey 2013, p. 54). We presume that *Chemins* wants to imply a seamless and positive relationship between France and the world, but could we not instead see it as a challenge thereof? These two sections (*"Articles historiques"* and *"Mémoire partagée"*) bring together the past and the present, as the historical articles aim to present very simply the historical events in their context, and the shared memory element presents more contemporary monuments and documents – one of them points out that it is to "honour (the) memory", fixing a continuous narrative over time. Perhaps the answer to this lies in the degree to which the site is explicit in its intentions; deliberately identifying with the idea of challenging the past might go some way towards better, fairer and more engaged representation thereof.

Chemins is a current site that is updated regularly, most obviously through an "on this day" box that offers relevant events matching the correct present date to a corresponding one in the past (matching day and month but changing the year). This gives a constant sense of attention to details of the past that gives users a sense of the past in the present, as well as avoiding some accusations of presentism by inciting them to read more, rather than remaining a gimmick of bitesize facts. In this respect, it is an online archive that manages to evolve even within a certain degree of fixity (in that it primarily showcases a specific set of conflicts). Websites can capitalise on the opportunity given by algorithms that can automatically highlight such parallels. Hoskins writes that "the connective turn fundamentally reconstitutes and redistributes the past", and simultaneously "compresses more of the present into each moment and

potential moment to shape a deep or extended now" (2018, p. 2). These elements can both be seen in *Chemins*'s playful daily updates. What happens, then, when a site stops updating its content? Unlike other media, websites are often considered to be 'dead' if they do not update periodically, which undermines their potential to stand as archives. Nonetheless, providing they are not erased, they still stand as guardians of a wealth of resources in their own right.

Centenaire occupied an unusual position when it came to its activity status. Notably, it continued to update its content once the centenary period of 2014-2018 had finished (and maintained its Twitter profile, @Mission1418). For example, figure 2 shows that in July 2019 the site was offering insights into the Treaty of Versailles of 1919. Evidently, this event can be seen as part of the events of World War I, so it is understandable that it would be included in the scope of the site; nonetheless, the site explicitly claimed its dates as 1914-1918, and its purpose as responding to the centenary thereof. At this point it raised the question of whether, and how, the status of the site should evolve in the following years – even though it had indicated that it would close in 2021 – especially with the approach of the centenary of World War II. Would this new anniversary lead to a re-opening of the current site, with altered aims, or necessitate a new site entirely? This raises questions about the narrative of the two World Wars as separate entities, or conversely as a continuous 'European Civil War' from 1914-1945, as controversially claimed by Enzo Traverso (2007).

On 29 July 2019, the site announced the closing of its physical presence (the central office for the physical archives), reminding us of the existence of the physical behind the digital. The tweet (see figure 5) notably personified the site, writing that it was "living its final hours of existence", reminding us, in suitably morbid vocabulary, of the ephemeral nature of both existence and memory, as well as the transfer of this material from one type of memorial (the centenary and its website) to the general archives (the national archives of the



Figure 5. *Packing up Centenaire, @Mission1418, 29 July 2019. Screenshot by the author.*

Bibliothèque nationale de France), pushing it back into its historical narrative continuum, as well as very literally reinserting it into this paradigm of French archiving. Despite this promotion, very little information is available about the physical site, implying that the project was only meant to be perceived as centralised in its web form. Instead, information is given about the 'Centenary Partnership Program', which set up Centenary Département Committees (in each of the French départements), and a 'Centenary' certification to recognise and allow projects to officially appear on the national programme of commemorations of the centenary.

A final element of interest to the notion of the website as archive is demonstrated through *Centenaire*'s inclusion of *"La grande collecte"* [The big collection], a

widespread call for user-generated content – as the site points out, this allows for an unprecedented expansion of the archive to include personal effects such as diaries, postcards, letters, and other objects. In so doing, the individual contributors became citizen historians, or even citizen journalists. This coming together and digitisation of memorial artefacts allowed for the blurring of personal and public memory structures, or as Sabina Mihelj (2013) terms the two, "official" and "vernacular" memory. De-Arnold Simine challenges this binary further by suggesting that "individual memory can only be developed and fostered in a social context: groups and communities provide the framework and stimulus for these memories" (2013, p. 20). Thus, I would posit that this e-museum provides an opportunity to re-frame the War while developing personal memorial narratives within a collective memoryscape. It also allows individuals to come forward with artefacts that may have been neglected previously.

Nonetheless, without any processing, these artefacts risk feeding into Nora's concern relating to the obsession with the archive, and his claim that society has developed a desire to "preserve every indicator of memory – even when we are not sure which memory is being indicated" (1989, p. 14). Hoskins pushes this further by moving beyond Nora's perceived acceleration of history as the twentieth century's "turn to the past", positing instead that we are now – at the third memory boom that frames these websites' creation – experiencing a "fundamental turn on the past: an emergent, indiscriminate and irreverent memory that haunts" (2018, p. 4). The danger with such calls for content is that so much is collected for remembering, that artefacts become part of an un-sortable and largely unseen mass. This has serious implications for memory; a memory event can only be retained if recalled. This becomes the role of and a risk for the contemporary curator, which is particularly exaggerated in the digital age. It is a risk because while a memory can only be maintained if recalled, it is also distorted every time this happens. This constant shifting of accuracy and response is reflected in curation, particularly beyond the age of living memory. Hoskins points out that "the

weakness of human memory has long been signalled by attempts to bring it external aid" (2016, p. 15); it becomes the responsibility of the curator, then, to mitigate the archiving obsession of our digital age.

Conclusion: Digital Centenaries, Analogue Undercurrents?

The twenty-first century in French intellectual thought has arguably been characterised by the positioning of centenaries as an opportunity to re-situate national perspectives on international conflicts. Hazareesingh details, in relation to the double-edged success of Nora's cultural memory project, that...

> the attempted sanctification of national memory also provoked controversy, not least in the emergence of the notion of *devoir de mémoire* [memory/remembrance as duty], and the French State's repeated and often clumsy interventions in the area.
>
> (2016, p. 282)

Hazareesingh refers here to state initiatives such as the protection of heritage sites on the positive side, as well as laws such as that which criminalised denial of the Holocaust, and the disturbing repercussions of the (later withdrawn) attempt to log the so-claimed 'positive' aspect of French colonialism. While I do not feel it is fair to condemn sites such as *Chemins* and *Centenaire* outright as 'clumsy interventions' of the French state, we have seen here that the oversights and errors of judgment that they have made feed into negative perpetuations of inequality while also constructing a patriotic sentiment – *a devoir de mémoire* – that only really reinforces the dominance of the mainland over the Francosphere. In this respect they have not truly succeeded in re-balancing inter/national perspectives.

One of the greatest mistakes, I would argue, with the ways in which these sites situate themselves in relation to cultural memory, is the deliberate (though un-

referenced) alignment of *Chemins* with Nora's work, through the use of his terminology. This was less the case with *Centenaire*, but its constant referencing of *Chemins* means that this is at least indirectly applicable. This association with Nora is problematic because there exists a nationalist emphasis in his methodology; using these structures as a founding theoretical framework for such sites appears to use the theory as a justification of perpetuating this bias. We should also note that the *lieux de mémoire* originate in the nineteenth century. Erll writes that "at that point, the national memory was still capable of fostering a collective identity, but this function has disintegrated during the 20th century" (2011, p. 23). Although Nora recognised the change in memorial practice, his work identified that "sites of memory function as a sort of artificial placeholder for the no longer existent, natural collective memory" (Erll 2011, p. 23). Nora's work itself, and its secondary application through *Chemins* (and, to some extent, *Centenaire*), evokes a national(ist) nostalgia that is simply not appropriate for websites created in the advent of the third memory boom. These sites need to distance themselves from outdated approaches to the past, particularly in relation to international conflict, to address the transnational, postcolonial, and grievance-based memorial context in which they act.

These sites are not, however, without redeeming factors. We have seen that some elements of each are well-pitched for users today. The deliberate and thought-out educational elements reflect the values presented by Brown and Reavey, who note, "it really matters whether the world that is being performed through memory is one in which we can live and whose values we share or, conversely, is one which is difficult, distressing and conflictual" (2013, p. 54). The educational elements on the sites analysed here do not try to cover up the traumatic nature of World War I, but nonetheless render it accessible and minimally distressing as a digital resource. Ultimately, this means the sites have been successful in conveying second-hand memories of the conflict, while staying true to their own aim, to reveal the multifaceted dimensions of French history (for *Chemins*), and the centenary of World War

I as an event in its own right (for *Centenaire*). There are remaining issues that the sites need to address related to this notion of sharing, however. Firstly, assuring inclusivity through the diversity of archival material in relation to representation of groups, communities, and geographic areas. Secondly, actively acknowledging responsibility for past impositions that were framed as sharing. These would allow individual users to see themselves in the accounts, and situate themselves better in relation to the past. The celebration of the heterogeneity of the Francophone world within these memorial structures would go some way in providing for the intricacies of multicultural Francophone society, where, as Paul Basu notes,

> individuals actually negotiate a plurality of allegiances and identifications (national, ethnic, linguistic, religious, etc.), which transgress group boundaries and are not necessarily isomorphic.
>
> (2013, p. 116)

This "plurality of allegiances and identifications" allows for a multifaceted and evolving memoryscape within and without the national context. Digital media have such potential to express particularly productively the diversification of memory, bringing together Michael Rothberg's concept of "multidirectional memory" (2009) and Hoskins's notion of "digital network memory" (2009). That is, if they are willing to move beyond unhelpful nostalgias of the past.

It is worth noting that neither website assessed in the present chapter is intended to be standalone. Both incentivise the user to engage further – whether online or in person – with the artefacts, events, and other content that they describe, and both refer extensively to structures external to their own. These sites, though not designed to be independent, can deliver expansion of or even alternatives to the physical museum site. Although we live in a globalised world, this does not automatically mean that our access to museums and artefacts is perfect. The simple fact that World War I was

global in nature means that its remaining artefacts are dispersed throughout the world. This leads to issues of practicality in terms of access, but also the loss of original artefacts. We cannot say that any museum is free of the politics of curation, but the online space provides a less linear, more open(-ended) opportunity to explore resources than the physical museum. This will become increasingly important as we move beyond the centenary, at which point physical museums may choose to reduce their focus on World War I (particularly in favour of World War II). In this respect, the online museum can provide a relatively constant access to the memory and remembrance of World War I, as well as a democratisation and decentralisation thereof. This is of course dependent on transferability across new technologies and browsers, which are not immune to digital loss.

On setting out this chapter, I sought to examine the presentation processes of *Chemins* and *Centenaire* to determine their roles within the field of French cultural memory and the sharing and teaching thereof. In her analysis of the role of media in memory formation, as well as the role of memory in media practice, Garde-Hansen points out that many familiar media forms were invented and developed over the last century. She writes that "the last century, in particular, shows us that media and events of historical significance are inseparable" (2011, p. 1). This century of developments in technological and memorial media align neatly with the afterlife of World War I. It is no surprise, then, that technological developments should seek to update the ways in which people access memory of these events. This is particularly important in today's post-lived memory of World War I, where the Internet, and specifically the online museum or memorial site, has an ever-expanding role to play. As de-Arnold Simine argues, "the museum as an institution has acquired the role of society's memory" (2013, p. 11). With centenaries comes the post-lived memorial age from which cultural memory emerges. An important part of remembering conflicts today is entrusted to digital spaces or memory, or digital memorial museums, and World War I is no exception. The challenge for contemporary learners and memory contributors – in both physical and

online forms – is negotiating the balance between the risk of presentism and the value of personal identification with the resources.

Websites such as *Chemins* and *Centenaire*, and the events that they present, could be redeemed and reclaimed through their clarification of contributing factors of conflict and a re-heterogenisation of identities in the nation, as well as a better representation of the spaces that make up the former colonies. The online memoryscape has great potential in foregrounding the "multidirectionality of memory", that is, "the interference, overlap, and mutual constitution of seemingly distinct collective memories" (Rothberg, cited in Achille, Forsdick and Moudileno 2020, p. 232). Through this bringing together of multifaceted, international memories, websites of memory might give back voice to those who have been silenced by narratives of national memory in the physical realm, but as we have seen, there needs to be a greater push for this to be done, for example through public pressures or social media. The centrality of the colonial in French history could so easily and so effectively be integrated into or overlaid onto existing structures (though an overhaul would be preferable) in websites such as *Chemins* and *Centenaire*. These sites could have considerable impact if they were prepared to be the drive behind challenging the French politics of forgetfulness, towards a celebration of a multidirectional memoryscape in the physical and the digital Francosphere.

References

14-18 Mission Centenaire (2012), available at: http://centenaire.org/fr [accessed 26/07/19]; pages available through Web Archive: Mission Centenaire 14-18 | Portail officiel du centenaire de la Première Guerre mondiale (archive.org) [accessed 07/02/22]

Achille, E., Forsdick, C., and Moudileno, L. (2020) *Postcolonial Realms of Memory: Sites and Symbols in Modern France*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press

Aljazeera (2021) 'Macron rules out official apology for colonial abuses in Algeria', 20 January 2021. Available online at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/20/macron-rules-out-official-apology-for-colonial-abuses-in-algeria

Assmann, A. and Conrad, S. (eds) (2014), *Memory in a global age: discourses, practices and trajectories*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Assmann, A. (2014) 'Transnational Memories', *European Review*, 22:4, pp 546-556

Basu, P. (2013) 'Memoryscapes and Multi-Sited Methods', in Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering eds, Research Methods for Memory Studies, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 115-131

Brown, S. and P. Reavey (2013) 'Experience and Memory', in Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering eds, *Research Methods for Memory Studies*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 45-59

Chemins de Mémoire (2003), available at: http://cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/ [accessed 07/02/22]

de-Arnold Simine, S. (2013) *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

De Cesari, C. and Rigney, A. (2014) *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*, Berlin: De Gruyter

Erll, A. (2011) *Memory in Culture*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Europeana Archive (n.d.), available at: https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en [accessed 07/02/22]

Garde-Hansen, J. (2011) *Media and Memory*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Garde-Hansen, J., Hoskins, A., and Reading, A. (2009) *Save as...Digital Memories*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Grau, O. (2003) *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*, Cambridge MA; London: The MIT Press

Halbwachs, M. (1992) *On Collective Memory*, trans. L. A. Coser, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press

Hazareesingh, S. (2016) *How the French Think,* London: Penguin Random House

Hoskins, A. ed. (2018) *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition*, Abingdon: Routledge

Hoskins, A. (2016) 'Archive Me! Media, Memory, Uncertainty', in *Memory in a Mediated World: Remembrance and Reconstruction* eds. A. Hajek, C. Lohmeier and C. Pentzold, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Hoskins, A. (2011) 'Media, Memory, Metaphor: Remembering and the Connective Turn', *Parallax*, 4: 7, pp 19-31

Hoskins, A. (2009) 'Digital network memory', in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural,* eds. A. Erll and A. Rigney, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 91-106

Mayer-Schönberger, V. (2009) *Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press

Mihelj, S. (2013) 'Between Official and Vernacular Memory', in *Research Methods for Memory Studies* eds. E. Keightley and M. Pickering, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 60-75

Nora, P. (2002) 'Reasons for the current upsurge in memory', *Eurozine*, 19 April 2002, pp.1-9

Nora, P. (1996–8) *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* ed. L. D. Kritzman, trans. A. Goldhammer. New York: Columbia University Press

Nora, P. (1989) 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, No. 26 (Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory), pp. 7-24

Rothberg, M. (2009) *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford: Stanford University Press

Sierp, A. (2020) 'EU Memory Politics and Europe's Forgotten Colonial Past', *Interventions*, 22: 6, pp 686-702

Tota, A. L., and Hagen, T. eds (2016) *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, Abingdon: Routledge

Traverso, E. (2007) *Fire and Blood: The European Civil War* 1914-1945, London: Verso

Van Dijck, J. (2007) *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press

Winter, J. (2007) 'The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the "Memory Boom" in Contemporary Historical Studies', *Archives & Social Studies*, 1, pp 363-397

Chapter 11

The Genocide Archive of Rwanda:

Achievements and Challenges

Caroline Williamson Sinalo and Claver Irakoze

The 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi was among the worst atrocities of the twentieth century and had a profound impact on Rwandan people. Over a thirteen-week period, the death toll reached approximately one million people, leaving the country devastated and the population traumatised. After the genocide, the whole country was scattered with the remains of victims. The bodies could be found along the roadsides, in rivers, in churches, and in demolished houses. Some had been thrown into pits or bushes. In the aftermath, efforts were made to exhume some of the human remains from killing sites and hastily dug mass graves so that victims could be given a

proper reburial, providing meaning, dignity, and respect. This process marked an important step in keeping alive the memory of the genocide against the Tutsi. Efforts were deployed to collect various relevant historical artefacts in order to preserve the memory of the genocide, which eventually resulted in the formation of the Genocide Archive of Rwanda. In this chapter, we discuss the digital version of this archive with a particular focus on its collection of audio-visual survivor testimonies, which play a pivotal role in fulfilling the overall aim of the Kigali Genocide Memorial and archive. We foreground



***Figure 1**. Aerial view of the Kigali Genocide Memorial. © Aegis Trust*

that whilst observers are often critical of the impact of Rwandan politics on memory work in the country, the impact of international interference also plays a significant and overlooked role.

In their efforts to preserve the memory of the genocide even more extensively, in 2002, senior officials from the Government of Rwanda and from Kigali City Council visited the National Holocaust Centre in the United Kingdom, established by the Aegis Trust, a charity which works to prevent genocide and mass atrocities through commemoration, education, research and advocacy. Aegis was commissioned to work with the Kigali City Council on the construction, design, and creation of a dynamic and living museum with different exhibitions depicting the history of the genocide against the Tutsi. In 2004, all works were completed and the Kigali Genocide Memorial opened its doors to the public. The establishment of the Kigali Genocide Memorial was the fruit of a productive collaboration between the Rwandan government, the Aegis Trust, the survivor community, and their respective partners.

Located on the outskirts of Kigali City, in an area called Gisozi, the Kigali Genocide Memorial has become like a second home for survivors; a place where they come to pay tribute to their lost loved ones. The memorial also stands as a place for remembrance and learning for Rwandans and the wider world. As a dynamic place, the Memorial provides various services to its visitors and encompasses different elements designed to fulfil the mission of memory preservation and education for current and future generations. The museum at the Kigali Genocide Memorial comprises three permanent exhibitions, the largest of which documents the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. In addition, there is a children's memorial and an exhibition on the history of genocidal violence around the world. The Kigali Genocide Memorial also includes an education facility, an amphitheater for commemorative and awareness functions, memorial gardens, and mass graves where more than 250,000 victims have been buried, and finally, there is the physical site of the Genocide Archive of Rwanda. This archive was also established by



Figure 2. *The Genocide Archive of Rwanda Office at Kigali Genocide Memorial. © Aegis Trust*

the Aegis Trust, in partnership with Rwanda's National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide (CNLG).

In 2010, the time when the authors of this chapter began their involvement with Aegis, a digital version of this archive was made available online, providing a "unified repository" (Rice 2010) for a major collection of historical information related to the history of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. The digitised archive, the first of its kind in Rwanda, includes audio-visual testimonies of genocide survivors, perpetrator confessions, rescuers' and elders' stories, some of the Gacaca court trials, propaganda publications, official documents, documentary films, audio recordings of broadcasts of the hate radio RTLM

(*Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines*) (see Straus 2010), as well as amateur and professional photographs of burials, exhumations, commemoration ceremonies, perpetrators, and survivors. In addition, the archive contains interactive digital mapping data presenting different genocide landmarks including memorials, various post-genocide reconstruction efforts such as unity and reconciliation associations, and peace building projects undertaken by communities and the Rwandan youth around the country. When clicking on specific locations on the map, users can find 360-degree images providing a virtual tour of genocide memorials, written content explaining how the genocide took place in a given area, and a short documentary film featuring the testimonies of survivors or perpetrators from the area.

Most of the documents housed in the archive were sourced from libraries, academic institutions, and survivor organisations around the country or donated by international partners, including television channels, freelance photographers, and independent researchers. The testimonies of survivors and perpetrators were collected by the archive itself, with the collaboration of Ibuka (Kinyarwanda for "Remember"), the umbrella group for genocide survivor organisations. It now has approximately 300 recordings from genocide survivors (in addition to c.100 stories from convicted perpetrators, rescuers, and elders).



Video: *This short film introduces the Genocide Archive of Rwanda*

The Functions of Testimony

The twentieth century witnessed a number of genocides (in Armenia, Nazi-occupied Europe, Cambodia, Darfur, the former Yugoslavia as well as Rwanda) and, as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub write about Holocaust archives, "testimony has become a crucial mode of our relation to events of our times – our relation to the traumas of contemporary history" (1992, p. 5). In Deborah

Schiffrin's view, oral histories of the Holocaust serve commemorative, historical, and psychological functions. As she writes:

> Holocaust oral histories have three different functions: they contribute to collective memory and public commemoration; they serve as historical documents that provide information about the Holocaust; and they provide interactive opportunities for survivors to recount their past experiences.
>
> (2002, p. 311)



Figure 3. *A testimony recording underway. © Aegis Trust*



Figure 4.
A staff member of the Genocide Archive of Rwanda, involved in the testimony subtitling process.
© Aegis Trust

The same could be said about the testimonies collected and digitised by the Genocide Archive of Rwanda, which like other memorial museums and their associated archives, provides a combination of historical evidence, moral education, and memorialisation. For example, these testimonies play a vital function in providing a form of digital memorial. The interviewer always encourages survivors to give full names of all those who died and to describe their characters in as much detail as possible so as to provide the deceased with an identity and sense of humanity among those who remember them.

In addition to their mnemonic role, the digitised testimonies can also serve as historical documents. According to Freddy Mutanguha, the Executive Director of the Aegis Trust, an important motivation for collecting the archival material in general is to fight against genocide revisionism. In Mutanguha's view, genocide denial remains a problem and "the only weapon is to keep evidence of what happened, that will show how it was planned and executed" (cited in Mwai 2013, no. pag). The Genocide Archive of Rwanda provides a platform for survivors and others who experienced the genocide to

share their memories of the genocide, providing a crucial source of historical evidence (Mwai 2013, no. pag).

The archive and digitised testimonies also serve psychological functions. The interviews are conducted in Kinyarwanda, the national (native) language of Rwanda, by staff from the Genocide Archive of Rwanda, using open-ended questions which encourage survivors to speak at length about their experiences before, during, and after the genocide. There is very little intervention from the interviewer, whose questioning generally focusses on gaining as much detail as possible about events rather than trying to steer the survivor towards or away from certain topics.

Unlike the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) or Gacaca tribunals (Rwanda's community courts), the Genocide Archive of Rwanda allows survivors to give their version of events without coercion and without their stories being contested by opposing parties. During the recording phase, most of the time, both the camera operator and interviewer are survivors themselves, and usually conduct the interviews in survivors' homes or chosen location. Survivors are therefore provided with a comfortable environment in which to speak openly. The recording on camera is preceded by a pre-interview session, which consists in establishing contact between the Genocide Archive of Rwanda collection team and the interviewee. During the pre-interview session, both parties get to know each other and discuss why the interviewee's story matters in preserving memory and educating the world. During this session, the interviewee is given a pre-interview questionnaire (PIQ) to fill in on their own or with the help of the archive team if necessary (this is mostly only when interviewees cannot write themselves). The pre-interview questionnaire helps the interviewee to remember and reflect on their life experience before recording their testimony on camera. This process also provides the archive with important information to enable them to prepare the camera recording session effectively, knowing in advance which issues and themes the survivor wishes to address in their testimony.

Such a thorough process not only provides important evidence of the genocide but may also play a role in collective healing by providing survivors and others with a forum for remembering lost loved ones and sharing their version of events. According to Phil Clark (2010), healing after mass atrocity may be facilitated through collective mourning and remembering which provides a form of memorial to lost friends and relatives. Survivors of the genocide frequently express difficulties in coming to terms with losing their families because often they have never seen their bodies and are unaware of the circumstances in which they died (Williamson Sinalo 2018). Another type of healing described by Clark (2010, pp. 258, 271) is "healing as belonging" which refers to the experience of greater psychological and emotional wholeness through reconnecting with a community and gaining a sense of acknowledgement. Knowing that their testimony has been recorded and can be accessed by others may also provide survivors with this form of healing (Williamson Sinalo 2018). As many of the interviews have subsequently been transcribed and translated into both French and English by staff members at the Kigali Genocide Memorial, and made accessible online, survivors may feel satisfied that their stories are reaching international audiences.

In the sections that follow, this chapter will explore some of the benefits of digitisation as well as some of the challenges faced by the Genocide Archive of Rwanda. We reveal how the digital archive plays a crucial role in enabling the aforementioned functions of testimony and provides an important resource for education, research, and peacebuilding. It also faces significant challenges including ones linked to the political context but, most notably, challenges linked to the archive's reliance on outside information, technologies, and funding.

Benefits of Digitisation

Enabling the Functions of Testimony

While testimony plays a crucial role in memory, history, and psychological healing, besides the Genocide Archive of Rwanda, most Rwandans have

limited access to public outlets, such as book publishing, through which to give their testimony. According to Catherine Gilbert, "only seventeen Rwandan women – and far fewer men – have published testimonies to date" and most of these are written with a Western collaborator (e.g. Ilibagiza with Erwin 2006; Kayitare with May 2011; Mukagasana with May 1997; Mujawayo with Belhaddad 2004) (2018, p. 26). In her research into published Rwandan testimonies, Gilbert discusses these collaborations and concludes that, although they provide Rwandan survivors with "access to the Western publishing industry and readership", the relationship between survivor and collaborator may also be "fraught with hidden tensions and underlying struggles" (2013, p. 131; 2018, p. 160). In Gilbert's view:

> The use of a Western collaborator immediately introduces a power dynamic which potentially places the survivor-witness in a vulnerable position. An imbalance of power between the two contributors creates the potential for abuse: there is a risk of appropriating the survivor's story, or even displacing the survivor's voice in favour of a narrative more familiar to a Western audience.
>
> (2013, p. 118)

Questions regarding the collaborator's authorial influence on the survivor's narrative are also raised by Paul Kerstens, who writes that Yolande Mukagasana, collaborating with Patrick May, "confirms that some specific 'literary knowledge' was needed in order to tell her story" (2006, p. 101). Gilbert notes, similarly, that, in the first Mukagasana-May collaboration, there is a "clear division between the speaking subject (the witness) and the writer (the collaborator)" (2018, p. 153). However, according to Gilbert, the "danger of manipulation" is particularly observable in Pauline Kayitare's *Tu leur diras que tu es hutue!* [You will Tell them you are Hutu], where the same collaborator, May, "is described as having enhanced her original narrative" (2013, p. 131). Meanwhile, Gilbert's research also unveiled disagreement

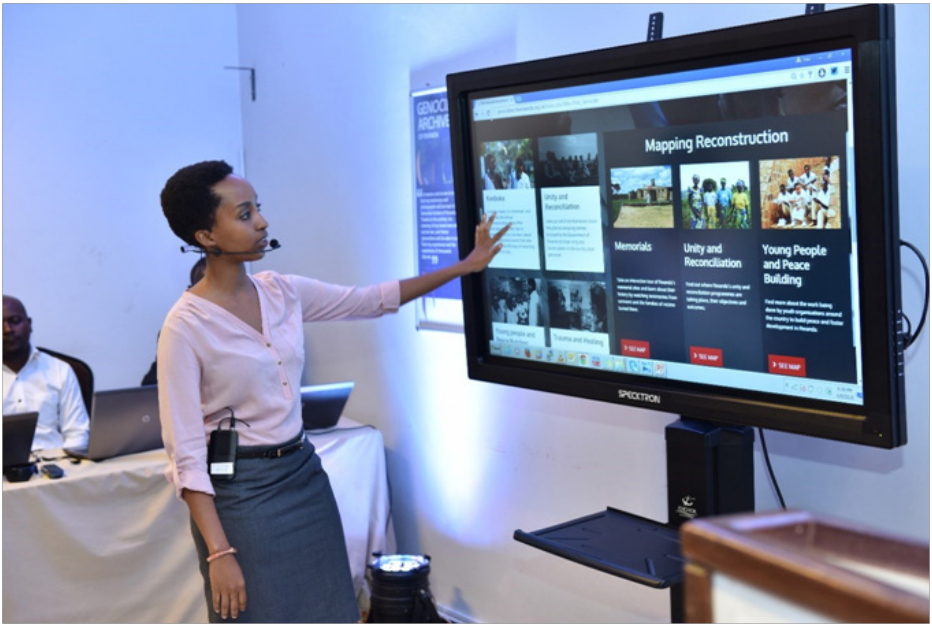


Figure 5. *Yvette Umutoniwase, a former Genocide Archive of Rwanda staff member, delivering a presentation of the Genocide Archive of Rwanda's online platform. © Aegis Trust*

on a "number of issues" between May and Marie-Aimable Umurerwa in the writing of her testimony (2018, p. 159).

Another type of outlet for testimonies is in published collections, which are usually edited by a Western author (e.g., Grayson, Hitchcott, Blackie and Joseph 2019; Hatzfeld 2000; 2003; 2007; Whitworth 2006). In these texts, testimonies may be subject to even greater interference by editors and publishers (see Williamson Sinalo 2018; Fletcher 2013; Kerstens 2006; Hron 2011; Spiessens 2010), leading Madeleine Hron to conclude that "in current cultural production, Rwandans [...] rarely speak for themselves" (2011, p. 133).

Unlike these other outlets, the Genocide Archive of Rwanda allows survivors to recount their stories without intervention, and recording can take as long as the interviewee is able to detail his/her story. Moreover, there is no need to have access to Western languages or publishing as the archive gives a voice to anyone who is willing to bear witness.

Published testimonies are also limiting because they are largely confined to a Western audience because they are written predominantly in French and sometimes English, and most Rwandans do not speak Western languages, nor do they have the means to buy expensive books. The fact that the archive testimonies are recorded in Kinyarwanda and available online means they are accessible to other Rwandans, making it easier for testimony to fulfil its commemorative, psychological, and historical functions for the communities affected by this genocide. The archive testimonies are also translated into English and/or French by the Genocide Archive of Rwanda, making them accessible to an international audience and giving a voice to a larger number of survivors who can be heard locally and globally through the means of technology.

Another benefit of digitisation is that the testimonies will be available indefinitely. In the archive's early days, the testimonies were recorded on mini digital video tapes. For these early testimonies, the archive team had to digitise the recordings individually so that they could be made accessible on the website. More recently, the archive acquired digital cameras so that footage can be easily copied to computers and less work is required to preserve them as there are no more physical dv tapes. While digitisation has created some constraints such as the need for increased digital storage space and ongoing capacity building for staff to effectively manage the archive's digital collections, it has also created a safe place for storing and sharing the testimonies.

Providing Tools for Education, Research and Peacebuilding

In addition to establishing the archive and Kigali Genocide Museum, as part of its work in Rwanda, the Aegis Trust has implemented a peace education

program, which worked with schools and communities to help students, teachers, youth, and parents discuss the genocide, restore humanity through learning positive values and promote peaceful, meaningful lives. Funded by the Swedish International Development Authority (Sida), the Aegis Trust's Rwanda Peace Education Programme, in partnership with Radio La Benevolencija, the Institute for Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP) and the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation, this project ran from July 2013 until June 2016.

The method adopted was built around the storytelling approach through which learning is participatory and takes place through small discussions and debates. The aim was to breakdown people's fear and suspicion, and foster trust between participants, including young people born after the genocide. To achieve its aims, the programme drew heavily on the digitised resources from the Genocide Archive of Rwanda, especially the testimonies, which it used as a key resource for teaching participants about the causes, implementation, and consequences of the genocide against the Tutsi.

A key achievement of the Rwanda Peace Education Programme was to incorporate Peace and Values-Based Education in the Rwandan national curriculum, termed the "Competence-Based Curriculum" by the Rwanda Education Board (REB) (Rwandan Ministry of Education 2015). In practical terms, this involved promoting social cohesion, and positive values including pluralism and personal responsibility, empathy, critical thinking, and action in order to build a more peaceful society. Contrary to the favouritism and discriminatory policies of the education system prior to 1994, the Competence-Based Curriculum focused on developing attitudes, skills, and behaviour to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment. Education in Rwanda strives to be an inclusive system, which teaches people moral and ethical values that help them to think critically and to be resistant to manipulation. As of 2016, this Curriculum integrates Peace and Values-Based Education as a cross-cutting theme across all subjects and academic levels.

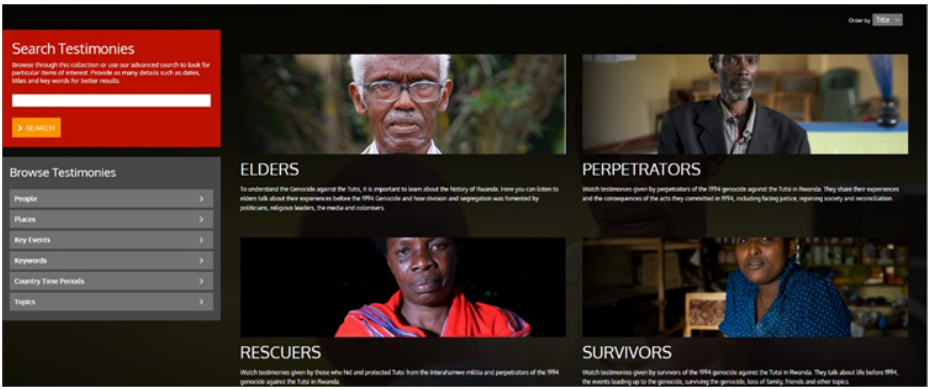


Figure 6. *Testimony landing page © Aegis Trust. Screenshot captured February 15th, 2022*

The use of digital technology has been influential in the success of the Rwanda Peace Education Programme. For example, digitisation means that the content can be easily accessed and transported (unlike a physical exhibition). In addition, the digitisation of the testimonies enables participants to watch those testifying, enabling them to see facial expressions, hear the tone of voice, and the expression of emotion which helps learners to connect and engage with the materials. Through the use of digital indexing (including meta data labels such as topic/themes, locations, and names of people), the large volume of materials is also easily navigable by educators and learners, making it possible to find and share relevant materials quickly through the use of key words. Digitisation also means that the materials can be shared online via social media platforms, enhancing the possibility of raising awareness about the genocide against the Tutsi, and Rwanda's post-genocide construction journey.

With more funding from Sida, from July 2016 to present, Aegis embarked on the Rwanda Education for Sustainable Peace in Rwanda (ESPR) programme, which is contributing to sustainable peace by supporting

curriculum change, and Peace and Values Education within formal and non-formal educational settings. The programme continues to strengthen the skills, attitudes, and philosophy of teachers through Peace Schools and continues to influence and strengthen related policies through research focusing on inclusivity.

In order to disseminate widely its content and methodology, the Aegis Trust, with support from the Embassy of Belgium in Rwanda, has just developed and made available an online educational platform named "*Ubumuntu*" (a Kinyarwanda word for "humanity, generosity or greatness of heart") to support the delivery and expansion of its peace education programmes in Rwanda and beyond. This tool targets a wide range of users, including teachers, youth, students, parents, researchers, and policymakers, who can benefit from the platform's curated interactive contents, designed to help them acquire skills and attitudes about peace and positive values. The *Ubumuntu Digital Platform* pulls most of its content from the Genocide Archive of Rwanda collections, including testimonies, from which specific excerpts are cut and used to provide the basis of a lesson and stimulate discussion. The use of testimony excerpts in the Aegis Peace Education programme is an added value and a testament of how oral testimonies are enabling the learning and understanding of the past. As with the digital archive, the use of digitalisation in the Ubumuntu project has a number of benefits such as the ease of searching, sharing, storing, and transporting the materials.

The digital archive has also inspired international research and several books relating to its contents have been published in recent years. For example, there are two published books of archive testimonies: Wendy Whitworth's *We Survived Genocide in Rwanda* (2006), and Hannah Grayson and colleagues' *After the Genocide in Rwanda: Testimonies of Violence, Change and Reconciliation* (2019), the latter resulting from an AHRC-funded project at St Andrews University known as "Stories of Change". The contents of the archive also led to the publication of Caroline

Williamson Sinalo's (2018) *Rwanda after genocide: Gender, Identity and Posttraumatic Growth*, which analyses archival testimonies to explore the ways in which Rwandans have rebuilt their lives since the genocide. Not only do such works provide greater visibility for the archive but also, they enhance global understandings of the genocide and its legacy in Rwanda. It is clear that through giving a voice to survivors and others and making these important materials available online, the Genocide Archive of Rwanda has achieved a great deal since its launch in 2010. There are nonetheless significant challenges that it faces.

Empowering Local Staff through Capacity Building and Skills Development
Another incontestable milestone made by the Genocide Archive of Rwanda is capacity and skills development for its staff who are all Rwandans. Over the years, the archive team has gained valuable experience in managing physical and digital archives as well as benefited from partnerships with leading international institutions. The staff have had the opportunity to receive high-level training on digital and physical archives, both onsite in Rwanda and abroad. This training has enabled the local staff to manage the archive in a highly professional way, instilling confidence in international donors and partners in the capability of the dedicated team who are pursuing the work of the Genocide Archive of Rwanda sustainably. Consequently, staff retention at the Kigali Genocide Museum and the Aegis Trust has been strong which means that long-serving staff become leading international experts in the field of genocide history, memory preservation, digital assets management, and archiving. Training Rwandans to do this job also aligns with Rwanda's sense of ownership over its affairs and provides a source of dignity as in the past, it was often believed that high-level careers involving specialist expertise should be carried out by Western professionals. This well-trained, professional group of Rwandan experts enables the archive to actively contribute to knowledge production regarding politics, history, and memory in Rwanda and beyond.

Challenges Facing the Genocide Archive of Rwanda

Ethical Concerns

As discussed above, some of the published testimonies are tailored to a Western audience by editors and collaborators. In this sense, the oral testimonies collected by the Genocide Archive of Rwanda provide a 'rawer' form of testimony. Having said that, it is equally important to bear in mind the social and political milieu in which they are recorded.

For example, oral testimonies of events in living memory raise difficult ethical issues for the Genocide Archive of Rwanda. These testimonies are collected to form part of a public archive. This is problematic because, although survivors agree to provide their testimony on a voluntary basis, free from any coercion, and are made aware that their testimony will become public, in some cases education levels may not be very high and survivors may not fully understand the implications of giving their testimony. The genocide is a relatively recent event and many of the people that it affected are still alive. A survivor might agree to discuss their own experiences, without realising that the people that he or she discusses do not want to give their permission for that information to be made public. In some cases, some survivors have requested that their testimonies remain confidential until the event of their death. For others, however, the consequences of giving testimony were only realised later and the Genocide Archive has subsequently had to put in place certain restrictions. For example, it has reduced the number of survivor testimonies available on its digital platform from 43 to 24 and some of these can only be viewed following registration with the site. To view more testimonies, further permissions are required from the archive team, conserving ethical integrity yet reducing the potential functions of testimony as discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Undoubtedly the use of a digital platform may heighten these ethical concerns given the relative ease of access to a large, national, and international audience.

The Political Climate

Another consideration is the broader political environment. Many scholars are critical of the Rwandan government for being an authoritarian regime, citing the lack of free speech in Rwanda, particularly the freedom to criticise the government (Longman and Rutagengwa 2004; Longman 2017; Prunier 2009; Reyntjens 2004; 2016). It is well documented that dissident Hutu politicians and members of civil society have been killed, arrested, or removed from leadership positions (Des Forges and Longman 2004; Hintjens 2008; Longman 2011; Longman and Rutagengwa 2004; Thomson 2011; Waldorf 2011). The lack of free speech has also been observed among genocide survivors who, according to Filip Reyntjens feel that they have become "second-rate citizens who have been sacrificed by the RPF" (2004, p. 180). For example, genocide survivor, Joseph Sebarenzi, was formerly the Speaker of the National Assembly but resigned on 6 January 2000 under presumed pressure from certain members of the RPF. He then fled the country, fearing for his life. Genocide survivors involved in civil society have also faced government intimidation and harassment.

In the late 1990s, Ibuka became increasingly critical of the Rwandan government's neglect of genocide survivors, particularly the lack of economic opportunities for survivors (Longman 2011, p. 30). Following these criticisms, the former prefect of Kibuye Prefecture was assassinated in 2000 and his brother, Ibuka's vice president, Josué Kayijaho, tried to leave the country but was detained by government officials (Longman 2011). He was eventually permitted to leave the country and was then joined by another of his brothers who was the executive secretary of the *Fond d'assistance aux rescapés du genocide* (FARG) along with Bosco Rutagengwa, one of the founders of Ibuka, and Anastase Muramba, Ibuka's Secretary-General. According to Timothy Longman, a member of the central committee of the RPF, Antoine Mugesera, subsequently took over the presidency of Ibuka and the organisation has since "largely followed the RPF line" (2011, p. 31). As Paul Gready notes, many civil society organisations now "act as mouthpieces

for the government" and have become "monitory and control devices" used to "prevent independent civil society from emerging" (2011, p. 90). Reyntjens goes so far as to say "'civil society' is controlled by the regime" (2004, p. 185).

Given that the Aegis Trust was chosen by the Rwandan government to support the establishment and subsequently manage the Kigali Genocide Memorial and the Genocide Archive of Rwanda, it also has to toe the government line if it is to maintain its relatively privileged position. Such a position must be considered when analysing the testimonies collected by the organisation. However, the archive is given a degree of autonomy from governmental control as the primary purpose of the testimonies is to provide survivors with an outlet through which they may express themselves without coercion or intimidation from others. That said, survivors with dissenting views may be more reluctant to come forward, particularly knowing that their testimony could be shared online. Perhaps one of the most surprising facts about the testimonies, however, is that many survivors appear willing to use this platform to express their criticisms of the government on some policies adopted in the post-genocide reconstruction process (Williamson Sinalo 2018) and this reaffirms the freedom of interviewees when telling their stories.

In addition, many of the criticisms noted above fail to contextualise the Rwandan government as acting within an extremely sensitive post-conflict environment, in which people are still dealing not only with the legacy of the genocide but also with that of colonialism and on-going neo-colonial interference. During the colonial period (1899-1962), Rwandan society was completely re-engineered, particularly by Belgian colonists who took over control of Rwanda from Germany in 1918. Like the Germans before them, the Belgians "entered Burundi with entrenched ideological preconceptions of racial and class superiority which they used to interpret the sophisticated hierarchical political and economic structures of the society" (Daley 2007, p. 49). They claimed that the Tutsi were evolutionarily closer to Europeans and thus superior to the Hutu. This belief, based on the now discredited Hamitic hypothesis, stemmed from

the idea that Tutsi were descendants of Noah's son Ham who had migrated to Africa from the Middle East. According to the myth, Tutsi eventually arrived in Rwanda from Somalia or Ethiopia and conquered the Hutu and Twa as a result of their natural superiority (Longman 2001, p. 351). Tutsi were reinvented by the colonial state as a non-native group that was elevated above Hutu but was "still lower down the racial hierarchy from the master [European]" (Daley 2007, p. 50). Indeed, Daley argues that "Belgian colonialism laid the conditions for the traditions of genocide in the region" (2007, p. 13).

In the post-independence period, particularly following President Juvénal Habyarimana's coup of July 1973, France began replacing Belgium as the foremost foreign ally (Melvern 2004). France maintained a close relationship with President Habyarimana even in the face of growing extremism under his government. Several journalistic accounts, research studies, survivor testimonies and government reports have highlighted the significant role played by France in the violence committed before and during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi (de Saint-Exupéry 2004; Wallis 2006; Kayimahe 2002; Commission de recherche sur les archives françaises 2021; Levy, Firestone, Muse 2021). While the post-genocide government has engaged in a radical program of identity-building which fights the legacy of colonialism and postcolonialism, including shifting the official second language from French to English, the legacy of this history cannot be easily overcome, and the international community continues to play a significant role within the country. For example, for all the focus of Western academics on free speech in Rwanda, it is, somewhat ironically, Western organisations that impose the most restrictions on the archive's activities rather than the Rwandan government. A major area of challenge concerns funding and the dependency on international assistance.

Reliance on International Funding

As a developing country recovering from the legacies of colonialism and genocide, the government of Rwanda has been faced with many, arguably

more pressing, challenges than developing a memorial and digital archive. Therefore, the Genocide Archive has depended on civil society, survivor communities and international stakeholders and partners to invest in the work of memory preservation.

While the use of digital technologies has many benefits, there are also costs associated with developing and maintaining digital assets and content. For example, there is a need to continuously upgrade existing digital systems to keep up with the latest technologies. This includes updating digital storage systems as more and more materials are acquired. Finding necessary financial resources to meet the archive's growth has constituted a significant challenge. The management of the digital archive has also meant continuous capacity-building for staff, especially investing in the technical team, to ensure their effective management of the digital connections. Training and subsequently retaining technical staff has been another significant issue for the archive, requiring ongoing financial investment.

The archive has been very successful, so far, in attracting support from various institutions over the years including Sida, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Belgian Embassy in Kigali, the Netherlands Embassy in Rwanda, the Annenberg Foundation, the University of Texas Libraries and the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation. This support has enabled the archive to become what it is today. In 2013, it sought to expand further and acquire new archives and collections. Three years later the Genocide Archive of Rwanda's digital platform was upgraded to include interactive maps and many other collections about post-genocide reconstruction in Rwanda. Having acquired expertise and experience in digital archives, the Aegis Trust is now seen as an experienced and valuable partner in this domain in Rwanda and beyond. Consequently, CNLG invited the Aegis Trust to support the digitisation of the Gacaca records. The journey started in 2013 when Aegis began a partnership with the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam, King's College

London's Department of Digital Humanities, and the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation, partners with valuable experience in digitisation and digital assets management. The first task was a feasibility study for the Gacaca Archives which included approximately 40 million pages of handwritten records generated throughout Gacaca court proceedings (the physical size of which was estimated at 11 kilometres!) as well as nearly 8000 audio-visual items. At the end of 2014, the feasibility study was completed and presented to CNLG and its stakeholders. Subsequently, the Aegis Trust was commissioned to deliver the digitisation of the Gacaca Archive. The expertise gained by the Genocide Archive of Rwanda team was instrumental in driving this project. To date, the scanning of Gacaca records has concluded and the project's focus has shifted to indexing scanned materials into a dedicated system, from which access will be provided to applicable users (assuming that the entire archive will not be open to the public due to privacy implications and sensitivity as the archive collections concern genocide trials).

While the Genocide Archive's ability to attract funding has been behind its success, its reliance on international donors has also created challenges. For example, this reliance means that the archive must always sell its ideas and projects to attract funding which has meant, at times, large shifts in its focus. So rather than setting their own priorities, those working at the archive have had to satisfy the expectations of donors or follow their funding programs and priorities to qualify for their funds. While the emphasis on digital resources has remained at the centre of the archive's activities, the development and uses of such resources has changed considerably. For example, there has been a recent shift away from memory preservation in favour of a focus on peace education. This has resulted in a pause in the expansion of the archive's collections while existing materials have been repackaged to produce new digital platforms for the purposes of peace education. Not only does this result in a delay in gathering more information about the genocide at a crucial time when events are still in living memory, these radical shifts also have major effects on the lives of archive staff who have to re-train to make

the transition from traditional archivists to education content development specialists. Moreover, large funds come with timelines linked to specific projects, resulting in challenges to the sustainability of the archive and job precarity for its employees.

Language and Translation

Another challenge, linked to the reliance on donors and the timelines they impose, is that of language and translation. Given the international presence of the digital archive, there is an obvious need to resource the translation of its contents so that they can be accessed globally. However, donors tend to impose strict deadlines, often favouring the quantity of translated and digitised testimonies over the quality of translation. The collection of testimonies involves a number of processes from pre-interview meetings to the interview itself and, following that, all testimonies are then digitised, indexed, transcribed, and translated. This is a lengthy and costly process. Oftentimes, the donations solicited by the Aegis Trust involve sponsoring this process for a given number of testimonies over a specified period. Sometimes donors will divide their donations into tranches, providing an initial sum of money with the requirement that a specified quota of testimonies be processed before a given deadline. Only if the deadline is met will the next tranche of funding be made available. To meet the deadlines, the archive employs independent translators to expand its internal capacity. This increases the quantity of processed testimonies but sometimes the quality is undermined.

In her descriptions of the translation process, Kathryn Batchelor cites Marjolijn de Jager who refers to translation as a "labour of love" emphasising the importance of an "intimate reading" and "listening" with "the strictest possible attention to the ear" (Batchelor, 2013, p. 2). While de Jager was discussing literary translation, attention to detail is equally necessary for accurately conveying the message of genocide survivors. With pressure to meet deadlines, however, it seems unlikely that such an "intimate reading" can take place, meaning that ultimately the quality of translation

is compromised. Indeed, in an analysis of some of the early translations (2004 – 2011), Williamson (2016) found some important changes in the translated testimonies relative to their original Kinyarwanda versions, including ideological changes such as diluting survivors' accusations against the international community and making survivors appear more accepting of their situation. Thus, just as critics of published collections of testimonies edited by Westerners have been criticised for portraying genocide perpetrators in accordance with Western stereotypes of the "savage" continent of Africa (Hron 2011, p. 136), there appears to be a tendency to perpetuate the culturally acceptable view of survivors as passive victims in some of the translations of their testimonies (Williamson 2016, p. 45). Williamson (2016) identifies a number of reasons, which could account for such changes including the time restraints imposed on translators by donors as well as anticipated audience expectations, given that the translated testimonies are intended for a global audience through their online availability. Such challenges constituted by the translation process and audience expectations have the potential to interfere with, if not undermine, the functions of testimony discussed above.

Having said that, with an awareness of the past challenges of translating Kinyarwanda testimonies into English, the testimonies translated for the abovementioned St Andrews project went through a more "rigorous process" (Grayson and Rukesha 2017, p. 19). According to Grayson and Rukesha, this process included "verbatim transcription of audio into written Kinyarwanda; translation into English by local translators; checking for coherence and accuracy by English native speakers; and finally a back-translation from English into Kinyarwanda by an additional translator" (2017, p. 19). They note, however, that even through this careful process, the team encountered problems such as with the translation of proverbs. As with other internationally funded projects, the St Andrews team have now finished their work on the project so it is not clear that such rigour will be possible in future translations of the archive's materials.

Conclusion

Through this chapter, we hope to have demonstrated the important work that has gone into creating this unique digital resource which gives a voice to ordinary Rwandans, preserves the memory of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, and helps fight against revisionism and contribute to peace by providing a crucial source of historical evidence. Many of the archive's achievements are thanks to the use of digital technology which has enabled it to curate materials that can be easily used, searched, shared, and stored, enhancing the functions of testimony.

We have, in addition, identified some of the most pressing challenges faced by the archive, such as the sensitive political climate as well as, most notably, the archive's dependence on external funding. This latter point is also linked to the expense of managing digital assets. Another challenge faced by the archive, perhaps the most significant of all, is that the Genocide Archive of Rwanda is attempting to write Rwanda's history from within, while depending on information, technology, and resources from outside. Ironically, many from the outside accuse the government of Rwanda of controlling the historical narrative when in reality, it is outsiders, who most frequently document Rwanda's history. Rwanda's own historians traditionally told and maintained the historical narrative through the oral tradition. Consequently, there are relatively few reference works authored by Rwandans themselves. As Nicki Hitchcott observes:

> Rwanda's story has for too long been told by outsiders: colonisers, missionaries, journalists, researchers, humanitarian organisations and non-indigenous writers of fiction. Even Rwandan survivor testimonies are, for the most part, written in collaboration with a Western interpreter or co-author.
>
> (2017, p. 12)

Archive staff are attempting to construct a local, collaborative historical record but all too often find themselves relying on books and articles written by outsiders, who necessarily take a different perspective to a Rwandan one, and serve the political and social interests of outsiders. While the use of digital technologies heightens some of the challenges, such as the ethics of sharing sensitive information, and the necessary involvement of external partners, digital media also provide crucial tools which enable this local construction of history, based on artefacts, oral histories, and local knowledge and expertise. Indeed, thanks to such technologies, the Genocide Archive of Rwanda is undertaking pioneering work, and, despite the challenges, it is nonetheless a unique and invaluable example of Rwandan ownership over history.

References

Batchelor, K. (2013) 'Introduction: Translation – formidable enemy or needed friend', Batchelor, K. and Bisdorff, C.'s *Intimate enemies: Translation in Francophone* Contexts. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, pp. 1-13

Clark, P. (2010) *The gacaca courts, post-genocide justice and reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice without lawyers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Commission de recherche sur les archives françaises relatives au Rwanda et au génocide des Tutsi (2021) "La France, le Rwanda et le génocide des Tutsi (1990-1994)" 26 March. Available at: https://www.vie-publique.fr/sites/default/files/rapport/pdf/279186_1.pdf (Accessed 8 August 2021)

Daley, P. (2007) *Gender and Genocide in Burundi: The Search for Spaces of Peace in the Great Lakes Region*, Oxford: James Currey

Des Forges, A. and Longman, T. (2004) 'Legal responses to genocide in Rwanda', in *My neighbour, my enemy: Justice and community in the aftermath of mass atrocity*, eds. E. Stover and H. Weinstein, Cambridge University Press, pp. 49-68

Felman, F. and Laub, L. (1992) *Testimony: Crises of witnessing in literature, psychoanalysis, and history*. New York and London: Routledge

Fletcher, N. (2013) '(Re)telling the story of the 1994 Tutsi genocide in Rwanda: *Une Saison de machettes* (Machete Season) by Jean Hatzfeld', in *Storytelling: Critical and Creative Approaches* eds. J.Shaw, P. Kelly and L. Semler, Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 66-79

Gilbert, C. (2018) *From Surviving to Living: Voice, Trauma and Witness in Rwandan Women's Writing*, Montpellier: Presses universitaire de la méditerranée

Gilbert, C. (2013) 'Making the impossible possible?: Collaboration in Rwandan women's testimonial literature' in *The Unspeakable: Representations of Trauma in Francophone Literature and Art*, eds N. El Nossery and A. Hubbell, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 115-136

Grayson, H., N. Hitchcott, L. Blackie and S. Joseph (2019) *After the Genocide in Rwanda: Testimonies of Violence, Change and Reconciliation*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris

Grayson, H and P. Rukesha (2017) 'Digital archives in a changing Rwanda', *African Research & Documentation*, 131, pp. 15-23

Gready, P. (2011) 'Beyond "you're with us or against us": Civil society and policymaking in post-genocide Rwanda', in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, eds. S. Straus and L. Waldorf, Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 87–100

Hatzfeld, J. (2007) *La Stratégie des antilopes. Rwanda après le genocide*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil

Hatzfeld, J. (2003) *Une Saison de machettes*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil

Hatzfeld, J. (2000) *Dans le nu de la vie*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil

Hintjens, H. (2008) 'Reconstructing political identities in Rwanda', in *After genocide: Transitional Justice, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Rwanda and Beyond* eds. P. Clark and Z. Kaufman, London: Hurst and Co, pp. 77-99

Hitchcott, N. (2017) *Rwanda Genocide Stories: Fiction after 1994*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press

Hron, M. (2011) 'Gukora and itsembatsemba: The "ordinary killers" in Jean Hatzfeld's *Machete Season', Research in African Literatures*, 42(2), pp. 125-146

Ilibagiza, I. with S. Erwin (2006) *Left to Tell*. London: Hay House Ltd

Kayitare, P. with P. May (2011) *Tu leur diras que tu es Hutue !* Bruxelles: André Versaille

Kayimahe, V. (2002) *France-Rwanda, les coulisses du génocide: témoignage d'un rescapé*, Paris: Dagorno

Kerstens, P. (2006) '"Voice and give voice": Dialectics between fiction and history in narratives on the Rwandan genocide', *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 9(1), pp. 93-110

Muse, R. F. (2021) «A Foreseeable Genocide: The Role of the French Government in Connection with the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda». Available at: https://www.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/gov_user_upload/2021.04.19_MUSE_REPORT.pdf (Accessed 8 August 2021)

Longman, T. (2001) "Identity Cards, Ethnic Self-Perception, and Genocide in Rwanda", in *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World* ed. by J. Caplan and J. Torpey, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp. 345–359

Longman, T. (2011) "Limitations to political reform: The undemocratic nature of transition in Rwanda", in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence (Critical Human Rights)* eds. S. Straus and L. Waldorf, Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 25-47

Longman, T. (2017) Memory and Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Longman, T. and T. Rutagengwa, T. (2004) 'Memory, identity, and community in Rwanda', in My Neighbour, *My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity* eds. E. Stover and H. Weinstein, Cambridge University Press, pp. 162-182

Melvern, L. (2004) *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide*. London: Zed Books

Mukagasana, Y. with P. May (1997) *La Mort ne veut pas de moi*. Paris: Fixot

Mujawayo, E. with S. Belhaddad (2004) *SurVivantes*. Paris: Editions de l'Aube

Mwai, C. (2013) "Aegis Trust, CNLG in Joint Efforts to Archive Genocide Records", *The New Times*, 12 November. Available at: https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/70741 (Accessed 02 December 2021).

Prunier, G. (2009) *From Genocide to Continental War: The "Congolese" Conflict and the Crisis of Contemporary Africa*. London: Hurst Publishers Ltd

Reyntjens, F. (2004) 'Rwanda, Ten Years On: From Genocide to Dictatorship', *African Affairs*, 103(411), pp. 177–210

Reyntjens, F. (2016) '(Re-)imagining a reluctant post-genocide society: the Rwandan Patriotic Front's ideology and practice', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 18, pp. 61-81

Rice, X. (2010) 'Rwanda to unveil Genocide archive' *The Guardian*, 10 December. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/10/rwanda-unveil-genocide-archive (Accessed: 28 January 2020)

Thomson, S. (2011) 'Whispering truth to power: The everyday resistance of Rwandan peasants to post-genocide reconciliation', *African Affairs*, 110(440), pp. 439-456

Rwandan Ministry of Education (2015) Summary of curriculum framework pre-primary to upper secondary 2015. Available at: http://reb.rw/fileadmin/competence_based_curriculum/syllabi/CURRICULUM_FRAMEWORK_FINAL_PRINTED.compressed.pdf (Accessed: 28 January 2020).

(de) Saint-Exupéry, P. (2004) *Complices de l'inavouable: La France au Rwanda*, Paris: Éditions des Arènes

Schiffrin, D. (2002) 'Mother and friends in a Holocaust life story', *Language in Society*, 31(3), PP. 309-353

Spiessens, A. (2010) 'Voicing the perpetrator's perspective: Translation and mediation in Jean Hatzfeld's *Une Saison de machettes', The Translator*, 16(2), pp. 315-336
Straus, S. (2010) 'Rwanda and RTLM radio media effects'. Available at: https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20100423-atrauss-rtlm-radio-hate.pdf (Accessed: 28 January 2020)

Waldorf, L. (2011) 'Instrumentalising genocide: The RPF's campaign against 'genocide ideology'", in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence* eds. S. Straus and L. Waldorf, Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 48-66

Wallis, A. (2006) *Silent Accomplice: The Untold Story of France's Role in the Rwandan Genocide*, London: IB Tauris

Williamson Sinalo, C. (2018) *Rwanda after Genocide: Gender, Identity and Posttraumatic Growth*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Williamson, C. (2016). 'Posttraumatic growth at the international level: The obstructive role played by translators and editors of Rwandan genocide testimonies', *Translation Studies*, 9, pp. 33-50

Whitworth, W. (2006) *We Survived: Genocide in Rwanda*. Laxton: Quill Press

Chapter 12

Archival Conflicts:

Seven Years of Kashmir Photo Collective (2014-2020)

ACS and Nathaniel Brunt

This chapter is a reflective dialogue between two founding members of Kashmir Photo Collective, a digital resource of endangered photographs and related historical material that preserve, visualise, and diversify histories of the Kashmir Valley. After some brief contextualisation and an introduction to Kashmir Photo Collective, we present most of this chapter as a dialogue. Our conversation considers social practice, dissemination, ethics and power differences, personal risk, the question of archiving as activism, and the effect of technology on trust-relations. The images included in this chapter have been carefully

chosen by us to avoid any controversy or possible persecution for the contributors to KPC's archive.

The Indian state is pursuing a policy of persecution for any persons contradicting their narrative on Kashmir, and since one of the members participating in the dialogue you will read below is an Indian national – who can be stopped from entering or exiting India on a whim of the government – her anonymity has become essential to being able to publish this conversation on an open source platform.

To try and provide a cursory summary of the wars and proxy wars that India and Pakistan have fought over the region of Jammu and Kashmir, or the intricacies of the ongoing insurgency, is an unfulfilling endeavour. In order to begin to understand the Kashmiri demands for *azaadi* (freedom) we must trace uprisings from the early twentieth century and how they have evolved all the way to the present. In the space accorded to us in this chapter, we would only reinforce a nation-state driven narrative by being brief about the complex relationships between the people of Kashmir, myriad local and foreign militant groups, and the states between whom they are enmeshed. Not to mention, historical facts are heavily disputed. Not by two sides, but sometimes three or more. In other words, we must disappoint all those unfamiliar with the grand narrative of the Valley through our refusal to present any shorthand version.

What is undisputed is that Kashmiris have suffered continuous violence, deprivation, and human rights violations since the late 1980s. Though India and Pakistan are both responsible for the present woes of the Kashmiri people, India has had control over much more of the territory - and with it much of the population - since 1947. Therefore, the burden of providing the Kashmiri people with the choices and autonomy they were promised, on the Indian side of the Line of Control, has lain with every Indian government since 1947. And until 2019, every government has failed to resolve the dispute, and

failed to help the beleaguered people of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. But they left a facade of autonomy intact via Article 370. Article 370 in the Indian constitution had enshrined a special status for Kashmir since 1948. This veil of autonomy had been inviolable (if in word and not in deed). Even if as a diplomatic ruse, it provided a vestige of hope for due process. In what should be seen as an ongoing collapse of democratic processes, on August 5th 2019, Article 370 was abrogated by both houses of parliament in New Delhi. There was no consultation with the Kashmiri legislature. Hope for future autonomy as good as disappeared with this aggressive about-face. Jammu and Kashmir was also separated from Ladakh and from one state the Indian nation found itself with two union territories, all in a matter of three days.

Every prominent Kashmiri politician, not to mention lawyers, and hundreds of young men who were labeled potential troublemakers, were pre-emptively arrested before the bill was tabled. A communication blockade of shocking breadth and intensity was also enforced from August 4th across the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, blocking access to the internet, cutting off telephones and texting. Consequently, Kashmiris were the last to know their fate. For more than three months, no word could get in or out of the Valley. This is also the reason for the absence of the voice of the Kashmiri members of KPC in the conversation you will read below.

The Analogue and the Digital: KPC's Approach

The boundaries between the analogue and the digital are clearly defined in our work. The relationships are analogue – we spend time in the Valley, we build our bonds ourselves, and we archive the images digitally using a small scanner, personal laptop, and hard drive. A secure back up to the cloud happens later.

During the archival process, someone from KPC is always on the ground, at the site where the images are located, with the individuals to whom the

images belong. But we do not take possession of the images unless asked to, and even where we have accepted custody of the material, it is as caretakers not owners.

The archive has no physical location, no fixed address, in order to avoid the threat of erasure. But anyone who writes to us with a request to view images for a legitimate purpose is given access to the scanned material relevant to their work. We do not make the images available online easily because the conflict is ongoing and an image that may have been benign could become dangerous. Every day is a day fraught with new archival tensions.

There is immense potential for abuse and misuse. We aim never to put contributors or members of the collective at risk. No archival, scholarly or artistic work is above the safety, security, and integrity of our team. This is also why we consciously remain out of public view on social media. The Indian state uses Twitter, Instagram and Facebook as platforms to identify those who may be raising political awareness, or providing any commentary or information contradictory to the state's overwhelming narrative.[1] In order to continue to work in the Valley long term, we must avoid surveillance. Therefore, the archive currently serves the purpose of a silent space for research, to ask questions that have been forgotten. The identification of gaps in Kashmiri history from the visual remnants we hold, and the many conversations we have, are the guiding impetus behind our pursuit for new photographic collections.

Many collections within KPC hold the seeds of memorialization. But under the current conditions, even a provisional notion of the memorial museum seems to exist only within the home, the homes in the Valley and the homes of the

1 As recently as April 2019, Masrat Zahra became one among several innocent journalists booked under Section 13 of the draconian Unlawful (Activities) Prevention Act and IPC Section 505 – for which the accused can be jailed up to seven years and held without evidence or bail – for sharing her reportage on Instagram.

Kashmiri diaspora. In this conversation, two founding members of KPC reflect on our work and our choices over the past eight years.

Archival Conversation: Looking Back on Seven Years of KPC

ACS is a writer.

Nathaniel Brunt: What was the beginning of the Kashmir Photo Collective, for you? In your eyes, how has the project evolved since we started work on it in 2014?

ACS: When we met in Kashmir, I was a documentary photographer collaborating with a local NGO, and I was frustrated with the pre-existing narrative of the Valley – a paradise landscape eaten away by war – because it obscured what people were experiencing rather than clarified it. Also, the visual material that was easily available to me, as a practitioner interested in research and in having a social practice, was lopsided, repetitive and propagandistic.[2] The idea of Kashmir Photo Collective was born out of this frustration but also from going into many people's homes and seeing photographs that were extraordinary. Images that were introducing me to histories that I wanted to know more about. Images that allowed me to see and hear anew, beyond the constant media din. Things I was not finding in books, in newspapers, in libraries, and definitely not in archives.

Kashmir has an abysmal archival trajectory. The Indian state doesn't allow access to documents from Kashmir in the national archives beyond the mid-1920s. And if you go into the catalogues that exist in the press archives, there is not much material that you can access that is visual. Beyond the exotic travel photography, tourist photography, and press photography that was

2 Social practice is how artists and curators focused primarily on collaborative, community-driven projects describe their works. Their practice aims to impact the social discourse through interactive, collective processes.

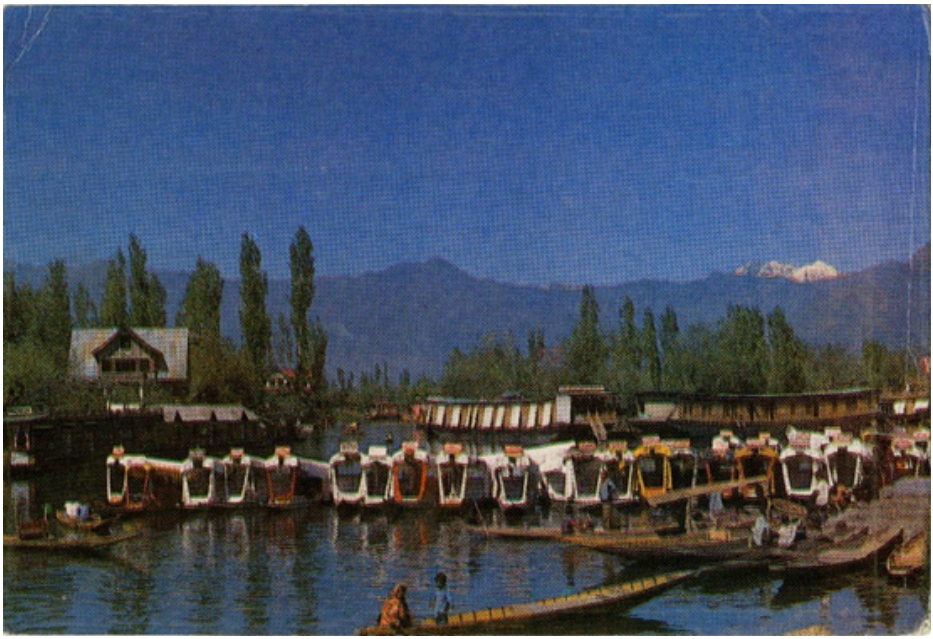


***Figure 1**. A typical postcard image of the Kashmir Valley. Personal collection of Nathaniel Brunt*

circulating from the conflict and from the militancy, there was very little available to explore the layers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The idea of the collective – and we have to go back and forth between this idea of the collective and the idea of the archive – was born from the realisation that a highly collaborative process is needed to make a truly rich and readable archive appear.

I know we only named it Kashmir Photo Collective after a year or so because there were already digital archives in South Asia that had been dealing with

photographic materials and questions of preservation, questions of how to make visual history accessible. We knew how we named it would also reveal the direction of the work. Would we be like the Indian Memory Project and the Nepal Picture Library or something entirely different?

The Indian Memory Project was one of the first public digital photographic and archival projects in South Asia that asked people to send in images – only from the analogue period – and to tell a story about the image, both of which Anusha then posted online. In IMP, Anusha works with single images, not entire family collections, pinpointing some key moments in both the history of photography and the history of the subcontinent that have not been seen before. Hers is an anecdotal form that is ideal for online engagement. Her use of primarily family photography, online, looking to fill a void in South Asian historiography, was unique.

The Indian Memory Project inspired the Nepal Picture Library, which I had the chance to hear about and see firsthand because I was in Kathmandu for an oral history and archiving workshop with them in the year of the earthquake, and I also interviewed the NPL team about their projects and processes. They had already been scanning thousands of photographs from private collections in the city at that point, trying to build an alternative history of Nepal.

Nathaniel Brunt: Can you tell me about this broader context of grassroots archival, memorial, or heritage projects of the last 10 years. Why do you think that, specifically within the South Asian context, this form of digital work with historical material has emerged, especially in zones of contested history?

ACS: I think the presence of a portable device like the scanner is an extraordinary transformation. People do not talk enough about the kind of revolution it has brought about in photographic and artistic processes as a whole, not just archival processes. The scanner is a different kind of documentary machine from the camera. The ability for people to have an



Figure 2.
A handpainted photograph of Pandit Tarachand Mattoo, Revenue Minister of the Dogra Court, late 19th century. From the Mattoo Collection. © Kashmir Photo Collective/ Mattoo Collection

affordable object through which they can document and copy material for themselves, without having to displace it, is nothing less than wondrous.

Apart from access to technology, each country in the subcontinent has its own matrix of impossibilities to deal with. For example, being a country that was colonized means that a lot of our older archives are outside the country. In South Asia, whether it is during the colonial period or after, in the name of preservation, in the name of saying, "we can take care of these things better

than you can" – there is a subtle-not-so-subtle political game at play, where South Asian archives are made inferior, and our libraries and museums do not have the 'right' standards of preservation – the community lose control and access to their own preserved heritage. It disappears behind closed doors.

However, to further complicate already muddled matters, distrust of South Asian government institutions and their changing political exigencies and intentions is entirely legitimate. So, in one sense, we could say that all of these initiatives are born out of necessity since we are cornered from all sides, and must find a more local citizen-driven form of preservation, research and dissemination to fight these agonizing realities.

Rather than codify it as a postcolonial urge or an urge driven by access to global visual culture via the internet and television, this rapid growth in archiving initiatives within South Asia should also be seen as something even more fundamental– people wanting to take history into their own hands and take a good close look at it. To stare at it. To talk about it. To have access to the pieces of the puzzle themselves.

Because the textual domain has been conquered and parsed out by Historians, the visual domain is more ours, more open and more in tune with public discourse. To make a gross generalization, even in rural India, for example, people are used to seeing history; they see it on the walls of temples, they see the remnants of history in the landscape. They definitely hear history at home when events are talked about and retold. But scriptures, reading, and the acquisition of knowledge in books is not historically theirs, especially because that kind of knowledge has always been caste and class controlled.

So 'seen' history naturally attracts amateur or grassroots historians to the practice of preservation and archive making once there are tools to make it our own, making us players in what was otherwise a space restricted to capital-H Historians. These are my educated guesses on this matter.

Nathaniel Brunt: With the colonial history of South Asia, especially in regards to museums and other traditional institutions looting material objects from the region to be shown in a western setting, the move towards digital feels like a way of beginning to address some of these ethical issues and power dynamics in 20th century museum and archival culture. Can you speak about how digital technology has influenced the ethics of our project and the methods we use in the field?

ACS: I have been working primarily with family photographs and family collections, which means first and foremost that I don't want to go to somebody and say, "Hey, can we take your family album?". Not only did we not have the resources – and we still don't have the resources to deal physically with that kind of material – but it is usually unethical to take a record – an heirloom, a private possession with that kind of intimacy embedded in it – into cold storage.

The image is on a journey and I do not want to be the person who says, "No, I want to hold onto the power of this image solely within the context in which I found it". The process of taking is an exertion of the desire to embed even the family photograph in the machinations of the market. This has been written about by many people, issues of ownership and power being such a key part of why traditional archives are so problematic.

When we decided to work with families, digitally archiving in situ was a beautiful way of connecting with the people whose experiences and ways of seeing we were trying to hold on to. Here, Kashmir does have a very specific context. Oftentimes I have felt a lack of trust between communities within the Valley, and towards outsiders in the Valley. Whether it is journalists or it is scholars or it is activists, Kashmiri people's lives are often weaponised or tokenised. And the weaponisation of their stories to serve a purpose they have not asked for has become commonplace. Rarely, if ever, do people have the opportunity to see stories about themselves outside of the preexisting framework of borders and nation-state and militant demands, the idea

and struggle for freedom. The present-day high-pitched media discourse structures their narrative.

I think when we enter the space of the home and allow the images and domestic space to guide the conversation, we learn more, and so does everyone else in the room. Some of these images contain what has not been spoken before, or not been spoken for many years. We have the scanner in the room and the families are watching us scan each of their images. Then when we come back with those same images printed on these very clean A4 sheets of paper, the kind they would see in any Xerox shop, and we sit with them and we discuss each image and we write on each image what it is that they are saying about it, what is triggered by it – it feels strangely momentous. Every time we accomplish this, the energy behind KPC is rejuvenated.

Because the most important stage of the archival process is taking place in this space of familiarity, it upends the institutional framework within which traditional archives have situated themselves. Yes, we digitize the material so it can be preserved for the future but in trying to encapsulate what happened in that moment of archiving, into the collection itself, the archive holds the memory of the event of archiving. You are not just memorialising a particular person or a story that you have chosen. This is a very roundabout answer to the question of the digital because it's not about technology, it's about how its deployed strategically, and when to remove machines from the equation is as important as knowing when to bring them in the room.

Nathaniel Brunt: This idea of a reflexive archival practice is fascinating. I think another tension that exists in any heritage or historical projects of collection and documentation is between preservation and access. We have certainly struggled with this for a long time now. We are an archival initiative and an evolving collective with curatorial, scholarly, and artistic ambitions at the same time. We are dealing with digital material, which in a strange way is both archival – in the sense that we are collecting and we are creating a

body of work that others can have use of in the future – but there is always this issue with digital material, which is the ephemeral quality of it. File formats are constantly changing and there are many other challenges that exist with digital preservation.

ACS: Because we are dealing with the lives of people still living in precarious situations, the process of dissemination can be dangerous. It can cause real harm. I tend to be on the side of overt caution because the material we work with is so personal. And in the rush for dissemination, to create something 'new' out of a colonial or neo-colonial history, the actual communities who inhabit those stories become very distant from the archive.

For me, the most difficult question of dissemination is always, "How do we give Kashmiris living in the Valley and in the diaspora access to this material?" How do we ensure that the next generation of people who haven't been able to see the Valley that we have been able to see, that their ancestors have been able to see, how do we make it available to them? If the internet is controlled by the state and its supporters, where else do we go? If there is no access to the internet for months on end, why should that be our platform?

I am partial to the book form in allowing for a certain level of control over how the material can be shaped with the family. The physical form of the book provides the feeling of an unalterable final and formal boundary. The temptation for tinkering and the potential for obsolescence is ever-present when the work lives online. Distribution is also possible through longstanding intimate networks. If you burn a book, I can reprint it, I can disguise it. If you kill the website and shut down the internet, or jail people for trying to bypass digital blockades; where is the work then?

Ultimately, I think dissemination is something that, given the particular conditions of Kashmir, becomes secondary to the process of actually archiving as much as possible. That is our biggest challenge – still getting access to material. There is more fear now than ever before so I still want to focus on that.



Figure 3. *Teachers of Government Girls High School, Pampore. 1952 to 1977. From the Qadri Collection. © Kashmir Photo Collective/Qadri Collection*

Nathaniel Brunt: Of course, an objective stance is impossible. We are embedded within this context and we have formed many close bonds over the years. I certainly struggle with these realities and often wonder how to best describe our roles. How do we situate our politics in this? Are we activists, are we researchers? Or are we something in between?

ACS: I do not think it is useful to try and categorise this type of work. Every collection, every time you engage with an individual about the history that comes through the images that we are working with, you are opening up a new set of questions.

For example, if I am working with a professor of literature and I find images of conferences that have taken place at University of Kashmir that include major literary figures, this is a piece of literary history. What I am doing there is revealing a pathway for a historian to look into another part of the literary history of Kashmir, which may not be well known.

But within that same collection, perhaps, in a family photograph, would be the image of somebody who was killed. When we talk about that image, someone might say, "Oh, this was taken in this year, in this place. This relative of mine, he was building a house in this location. He needed to get there in a hurry and an encounter had taken place and he was killed in a reprisal killing."

Now at that point, is it my job to probe the veracity of that statement and figure out whether it was an encounter, whether it was a reprisal killing, whether it was something else? Or is it my job to listen and allow that person to recount what it is that had taken place, in the manner that they have understood it? For them to see it being inscribed on the image? And for that utterance to then be on the record in some form?

What form of activism is our amateur archiving? I would not want to think of it as a form of activism that plays a huge role in the present. The word activist is charged with a potency that makes you think that the person is working for change now. It is horrible to have to say this but I think our work exists because we recognise that these histories are going to 'disappear' in the next decade or so. For me, the urge lies in giving people space to speak before the opportunity to recount those memories has passed entirely, when days for that work no longer exist, that is the urgency that exists behind KPC. Now, whether you see that urgency as activism, or you see it as historical work, it does not matter to me; all that matters is that the work needs to be done.

Nathaniel Brunt: We are speaking about photographs and photographic archives, but can you discuss the ways in which our interviews utilise the



***Figure 4**. A KPC worksheet produced during an interview with the Amin family. Editorial Board of S.P. College magazine Pratap showing Professor P.N. Pushp, S.N. Dhar, R. C. Pandita, and Abdul Graffoe Malik in the bottom row along with the student editors for the English, Punjabi and Urdu sections who are standing. 1945-1947. From the Amin Collection. © Kashmir Photo Collective/Amin Collection*

physical objects of the photographic print?

ACS: The process of inscription that you are referring to developed very organically. I think the very first time I was sitting with a set of photographs that had been scanned, I realised that the easiest option for reproduction was to print these images out on A4 sheets of paper that were locally available. The idea had been to build a digital space for these images that was similar to that of Susan Meisalas's Kurdistan or even Fred Ritchin and Gilles Peress's

Bosnia project. Initially when we were going to interview the families about the images and about the stories that came out of the images, we had been imagining various digital pathways. If the image would appear on the screen, it could lead you to multiple different places because this engaging precedent had already been set through other projects that were taking place in the generations before us.

Nathaniel Brunt: Looking back to when we started the project there was a lot of faith in the idea that social media or online circulation could do some good in our world and that social media driven projects could promote positive progressive change in contested regions. This was during the Arab Spring and there was a lot of talk within both the documentary and museum community about the seemingly amazing ability of online social activism. I think, that at least from my perspective when recalling that time, our thinking was certainly embedded within this milieu, which has obviously changed very much since then with the proliferation and insidious use of this same digital media spaces by anti-democratic movements.

ACS: Yes, I remember when I first engaged with Kurdistan online and then again with the Ritchin and Peress project, I was so captivated by the possibilities. But the way in which digital space, including social media, transformed into a heavily trolled, controlled and commercialised space, was daunting. Then a whole number of issues came up with regards to not just privacy and misuse, but also how expensive and complicated it is to maintain these digital spaces. Especially to ensure that there is continuous engagement taking place when we had no funding.

Dissemination requires more conversations with our contributors and more trust building since it's a step beyond archiving. It is difficult to find the energy, time and money to do both types of work simultaneously. The family in question has to understand the form and possible consequences fully before we move forward.

Addressing these concerns also moved me so far from the actual work of archiving that we needed to do in the field. I think it quickly made me realise that I needed to be a lot more circumspect about the way we work. When I met with that first family, I realised that they were not really comfortable with an audio recorder or a video camera being put on. Not knowing how your voice could be manipulated, or how in images you could be manipulated, is very different from watching someone write exactly what you are saying down on a copy of an image that you have just seen them scan, being able to read over their shoulder and cancel out words and say, "Oh no, no, maybe this is what happened", and to actually physically see the image on a piece of paper transform into this scramble of sentences and memories and names and dates.

What started off as a very simple act of wanting to record enough material around the images to create rich contextualisation transformed into a process that we realised worked for us and worked for the family. Those documents are physical records of the archival moment. When we chose to display them for the first time in Dhaka, it was clear that people were going to stand and read what had been handwritten onto the page. Because that tension between the clean image, the posed family portrait, the studio portrait, the portrait of the picnic, that is this familiar vernacular positioning of a certain kind, alongside the deconstruction of that positioning being done through text... you could see people ricocheting back and forth between that.

Once we realised that there was so much power in the physicality of the recording process that we were using, we also realised that within each collection, there was the possibility of research streams being created. Multiple projects coming out of a singular collection or a group of two or three collections. I think we became much more interested in situating the archive as a resource for people who were seriously interested in doing work on or in the Valley rather than it just being something that people could browse through online as they would a journalistic project or even an artistic

project. The realisation that it could be a resource for so many things that we have not even imagined yet, put an end to that digital dilemma.[3]

Nathaniel Brunt: With any project where you are working with people in a cross-cultural context, there are dynamics of power, inequality, and cultural differences that are really important to be aware of and attempt to address. We have both inhabited a position that has allowed us to exclusively access certain types of information and at the same time excluded us in other contexts. As an Indian woman, especially as somebody who grew up in Bombay during the height of the insurgency in the 1990s, could you speak about your experience working on this project in the field and how this has changed since we started in 2014?

ACS: I read this beautiful book written by Sahba Husain called *Love, Loss, and Longing in Kashmir*. She is a researcher who worked in Kashmir for the last 18 or 20 years on human rights issues with a number of different groups and independently. Her book is partially a critical self-reflection on the process of what it means to come to terms with Kashmir. It was a moving read for me because her generation grew up believing that the Indian nation could be a benevolent secular democratic force. My generation of women are dealing with the nation state as an oppressor and it comes through, I think, in both the commonality and the difference of my experience.

The commonality has a lot to do with the fact that no matter where you live in India, you have a contradictory yet seemingly clear picture of Kashmir painted in your mind. It is almost unavoidable. Even though Kashmir is not in our history textbooks, there is a way in which you expect to see beauty and suffering, and expect to feel potent emotions when you first go there. The Valley unsettles so many of those assumptions so quickly. There are many

3 The dilemma over being known virtually versus being relatively unknown but extremely active within the community. When it is just a few people with a little bit of money, you have to choose where your energy can be most valuable, and our choice has been to make the digital secondary and prioritize research.

other aspects of your prejudice that you encounter, and it takes decades to unravel it all within yourself as Hussain shows.

With a rabid and vicious ultranationalism and Islamophobia pervading every space in India today, to occupy any space in Kashmir – especially as an upper caste, middle class woman from Bombay, with little if any experience of war – is a highly questionable position to be in. Why should anyone sitting across the table from you take your seriously? Because you are there? Because you continue to be there, year after year? Because you don't ask the expected questions? Because you know enough to respect rituals and boundaries and cultural norms? Because you speak the local language or understand it? Because you don't seem to have an overt political agenda? I came to realize that the inhibitions that come from identity are mine. There is no set of rules to follow that will help you feel better if you're unclear about your own purpose. People see through you if you're nervous quite transparently and quickly so purpose is essential.

With Kashmir, time also plays a crucial role. The time that you spend there, scrubbing off the layers of misconceptions and preconceptions, the strange nature of time itself when you are there and when you are away. As an Indian in a democracy that is flailing and failing, Kashmir makes me confront all of my nationalistic subconscious, whatever it is in me that I have constructed to be 'Indian'.

In my decade of engagement, what has outlasted all personal, political and professional turmoil is friendship. Friendship is the most difficult thing to sustain in this context but it is only this bond that allows this type of work to happen and keep happening. Everything is secondary to asserting your kinship when it matters.

Nathaniel Brunt is an interdisciplinary scholar, documentarian, and educator.

ACS: Remind me, how did you end up in Kashmir?

Nathaniel Brunt: I had been living in Bangkok and trying to find my way as a documentary photographer in Southeast Asia. I wish I had a better story, but I traveled to Kashmir on a whim in early 2013. Before this I had finished graduate school and a lot of my research focused on conflict and photography. Kashmir was a place I knew about from books and from reading in an academic context, but I did not really know that much about what was happening on the ground at that time. That spring, when I arrived, there had been a lot of protests and street fighting in the region.

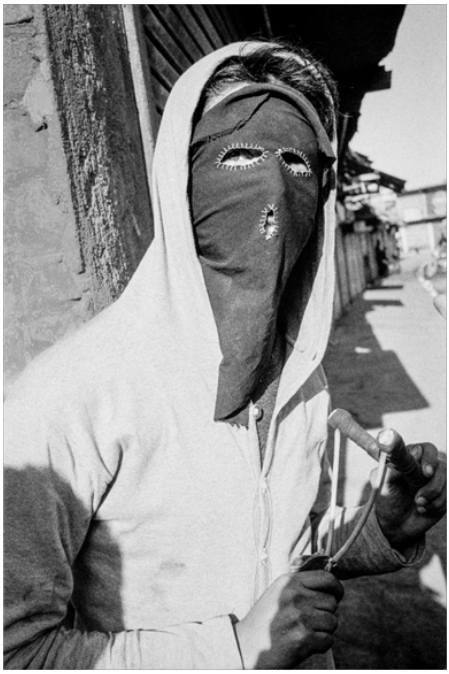


Figure 3. *A kashmiri protester during a street fight with Kashmiri police and Indian paramilitary forces in Baramulla. March 2013 © Nathaniel Brunt*

I travelled to Kashmir right after Afzal Guruv had been hung in Delhi. I spent around two and a half weeks that first trip traveling around the Valley and documenting the aftermath of Guru's death and the protests that followed. The street fighting in Srinagar and other locations was between a lot of young men, around my age or slightly younger, in their twenties, and local police or Indian security forces.

ACS: When you arrived, did you already find that a problematic position to be in as someone who had just arrived in the Valley? It is very much the position of the foreign photojournalist that has traditionally

existed in South Asian photographic history. You were also working at that time with someone whose family's photographs have become part of the KPC archive. What were some of the early dynamics that pushed you towards working with collections of vernacular materials and other types of photographs that you later got interested in?

Nathaniel Brunt: Of course. I think in this context it is important to mention that I studied cultural history in graduate school before this. So, I was always interested in the photograph, not just as artistic expression but as a material object that traveled through time and through space and gained different meanings in various contexts. I was always thinking that way, but certainly going there that first time I was still very much embedded within that classic approach of photojournalism, of trying to be there at the time when events were happening and making a record of them photographically.

That being said, I became very aware of my position rather quickly and increasingly uncomfortable about what these photographs I was making – of people in very desperate circumstances – were actually saying about this incredibly complex situation that I really had no relationship with. Working with a Kashmiri photographer and living with his family, I got a window into the everyday life of families in these conflicted spaces. Our method during this period was to hop in the car each day and drive as far as we could in one direction and try to see as much of the Valley as we could and meet people along the way. Through this process I began to realise that, as an outsider, taking photographs really was not enough. It wasn't showing very much about this region and its past.

ACS: From the very beginning, while you were living with a Kashmiri family, you were also spending a lot of time with groups of young men and looking at issues of masculinity, which comes through in your work.

Nathaniel Brunt: I was becoming friends with a lot of young men whose lives were different from my own. Yet at the same time we shared a lot of the same values and were about the same age. They were very relatable, yet

they were willing to lay down their lives for their beliefs in various ideologies that were sometimes difficult to comprehend. It is really important to acknowledge that there are competing issues of masculinity in any conflict. And in this one, as is usual in asymmetrical conflict or insurgency, there is a power dynamic that is very lopsided. Let us not forget that the region is the most militarised zone in the world. Certainly some of the prominent issues that exist in the Valley have to do with issues of emasculation. Young men seek out other outlets to reassert masculinity in this highly militarised environment full of Indian soldiers and paramilitary forces that have destroyed normative concepts of what it traditionally means to be a man and to assert masculinity as a Kashmiri.

ACS: *In the context of speaking about memorialisation, one of the things that I found very discomforting, but that also I have come to accept over time, was that memorialisation is an ongoing rather than a finite process when you are working in the Valley. You are so aware at any given point of time that the people you know are constantly in a bizarre form of unpredictable mortal danger. This relationship between mortality and memorialisation and having to be constantly aware that there is a dark humour and a sort of madness that is operating within the space that you are trying to live in and work in... I would be interested to know at what point you felt more aware of that? For me it has been inescapable from the beginning.*

Nathaniel Brunt: In terms of memorialisation, in 2014 I began a documentary work called #shaheed (Brunt 2020). That year I became interested in digital vernacular photographic cultures and their relationship to expressions of masculinity during wartime. This project was very much tied to these intertwined ideas of memorial culture and issues of masculinity. The project examined, through my own photographs and collected images from social media and from various people's cell phones, the cultures of militancy and martyrdom among young men in Kashmir. The project specifically explored digital photographic and visual material produced by young Kashmiri militants during that period. Over the course of two years I tracked

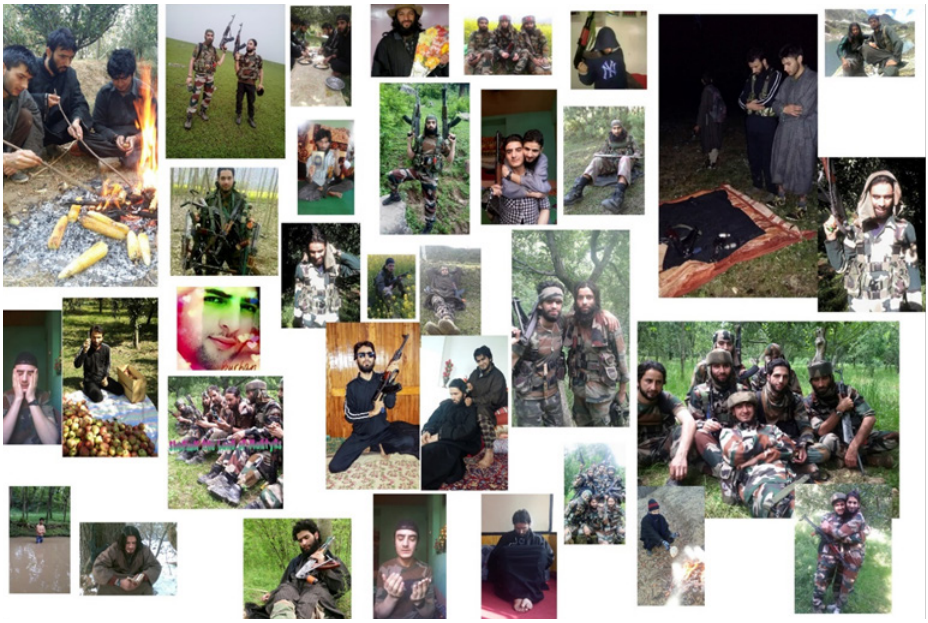


Figure 6. *A collage of mobile photographs created by Kashmiri militants from Nathaniel Brunt's project #shaheed. The photographs were collected by Nathaniel Brunt in 2016. The collage was made by Brunt in 2017. Donated to Brunt by anonymous, Summer 2016.*

the digital dissemination and circulation of this material through platforms like Whatsapp, Facebook, and Twitter. By the end of the project I collected hundreds of these images that explored the lives and deaths of these young men and the memorial culture that was tied to this phenomenon. While the project was primarily digital in its methods the project was circulated as a physical exhibition that included both photographic prints of the militants images and my own, as well as a number of mobile phones which allowed visitors to explore the large archive of digital photographs and videos on their own.



***Figure 7**. Hundreds of people gather in Kakapora, Kashmir, for the funeral of 21-year-old Talib Ahmed Shah, a Kashmiri Lashkar-e-Taiba militant. From Nathaniel Brunt's project #shaheed. © Nathaniel Brunt*

ACS: I remember when I first saw your project, it was very clear that even though the men who had joined the militants were still alive, they were very aware that their images were going to circulate even after they were killed, probably alongside images of their funerals. It is well known that once they join the militancy, their lifespan will be short. They are engaged in this form of image production almost immediately from the time they join up. There is a self-awareness in the form of the images that is quite extraordinary.

Nathaniel Brunt: Yes, they are essentially creating memorial records while they are still alive. They are creating digital records of their lives but at the

same time they know they will not survive. You see the same thing in other kinds of jihadist media. Certainly, there is the phenomenon of martyrdom videos that are taken before a *fedayeen* operation takes place. Yet this material in this project was different and there was this combination of the visual material serving as a celebration of life, and at the same time, will serve a memorial after their death. You can see this in the banners and posters that were displayed in south Kashmir in 2016. These vernacular memorials were created by local villagers from these communities and used repurposed digital images taken by these young militants during their lives. This phenomenon also clearly is tied to the hagiographic role of the



Figure 8. *A memorial banner featuring militant photographs is displayed above a martyr's graveyard in Pulwama district south Kashmir.* © *Nathaniel Brunt*

photographs. While not unique to the region, there is a culture around martyrdom in Kashmir where each martyr is connected to the previous one and the next one in a long history. This is a religious phenomenon but also nationalistic and cultural as well.

ACS: The militancy is labyrinthine though and not every group is fighting for purely religious reasons. The militancy cannot be reduced to one broad brush stroke because there are many different kinds of groups with various agendas that have changed overtime.

Nathaniel Brunt: Exactly. Like any insurgency, things are incredibly fluid and constantly changing. They're changing by the day sometimes but that is well beyond the scope of this conversation.

ACS: On the one hand, it seems to me that in order to memorialise, you need an end point but when you see that there is no end point in sight, does the memorial process change? As archivists, we are very aware of the fact that the vernacular material in our collection is material that most Kashmiri historians have not had access to. For me I feel like the memorial process has been about allowing access to underrepresented histories of the Valley in the collection that had been completely obscured because of the nation state and borderland narrative that has dominated discussion about the region.

We were initially afraid to include material specifically focused on the militancy in the archive because we have tried to maintain an 'apolitical' position. Could you share a little bit about that process of coming to terms with the fact that we do need to have this material as part of the archive, perhaps it even being an essential part of the archive.

Nathaniel Brunt: I think the first thing, if we are talking about a broad contextual sense of memorialisation in Kashmir, especially around the insurgency, is that the memorialisation of the insurgency has often taken place in very ephemeral formats. There are few real memorials, in terms of physical memorial sites, or museums or archives that preserve material from this period. The only one I can think of is the wonderful newspaper archive at Kashmir University.

ACS: *I think of the martyr's graveyards, this is the only war memorial I can think of.*

Nathaniel Brunt: Yes, of course. But the public memorialisation of specific events or points in history during the conflict does not really exist in a specific place. And when public sites have been proposed or when they have been put up at a local level they have often been destroyed by authorities. We deal with photographs, and photographs, for example, have been very dangerous memorial objects for both the state and for the population. As in other conflicts, whether it is Northern Ireland or the American war in Vietnam, families have often destroyed their own photographs out of fear that they would be used to identify relatives with allegiances to various anti-government or government factions. In the 1990s many people took their albums into their yards and burned them. On an institutional level, a lot of the material produced by NGOs that were working in the region, such as human rights documentation, was also destroyed by government agencies or by various groups on the ground in Kashmir. The horrible floods in 2014 wiped out much of the small amount of this material that people had saved. In regards to memorialisation, it has not taken place on a public level, both due to the nature of an active conflict zone but also the



Figure 9. *A portrait destroyed in the 2014 floods. From the Sadiq Collection. © Kashmir Photo Collective/Sadiq Collection.*

fact that so much of it has been destroyed or lost because of factors beyond the control of the population.

ACS: Yes, I was just thinking of a photograph you took in Chittybandi... the family is sitting with a collage of photographs they have created of their son, which has images of him as a younger boy and then as a militant and then at his funeral. For me, this is a very private memorial site that we have sometimes seen in people's homes and that has also been key to the beginning of our archival work. This realisation that photographs were really dear to people but dear in an intricate thorny way. I remember when we went to meet the

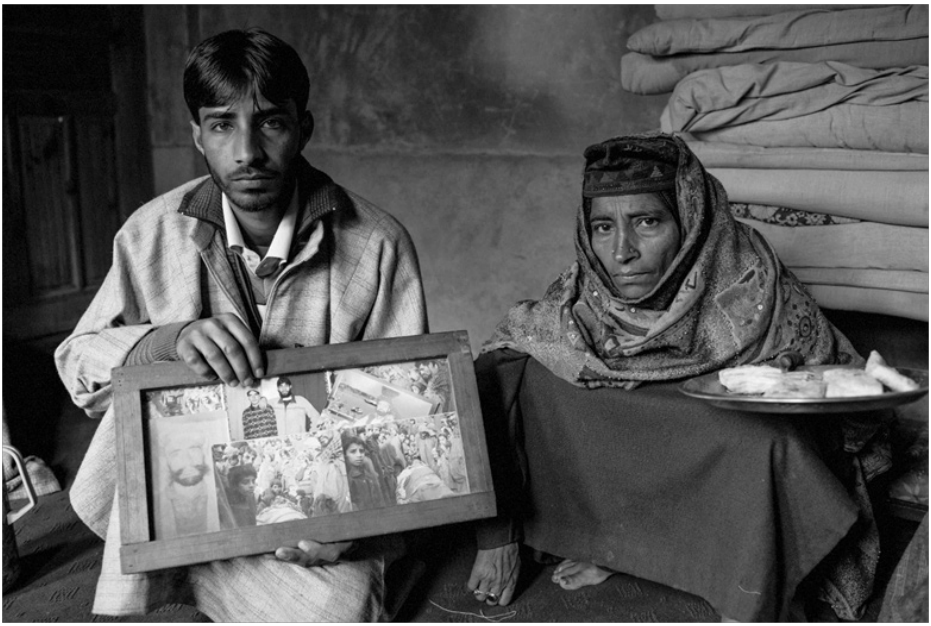


Figure 10. *Showkat Ahmed and his mother display a collage of family and memorial photographs in their home in Chittybandi.* © *Nathaniel Brunt*

Mattoo family – one of the first collections that we archived – it was right after the floods and they told us how they had climbed up on the roof of their house and what they had taken with them was the photographs.

Nathaniel Brunt: And people have often risked their lives to protect this material. These things are really, really important. And on a grassroots level, people are facing danger as a repercussion for these archival activities.

ACS: But at the same time, when you are living in a state of active conflict for such a long period of time, like many of the young people who we are friends with, who have grown up with the conflict, they are trying to make sense of it as they grow up. People on a personal level are doing their own form of both understanding the conflict but also memorialising the events that they think matter as they happen. I think a lot of that for me has been a revelation in the process of our work.

Nathaniel Brunt: Yes. The experience that you talked about, in 2013, in Chittybandi, really was an epiphany for me. Seeing this incredibly powerful visual narrative about the effects of sustained conflict on one family through this collage of images made it clear that this was something completely beyond what I could capture or communicate as a photographer and an outsider. S's scrapbook is another work like that. It tells this incredibly powerful narrative of a young man in wartime trying to understand both the events of the present, as an active protester in 2008, but also simultaneously trying to make sense of all the history that had led up to that point through this vernacular visual medium. This is a body of work, once again, that is way beyond the capacity of somebody who is not from there. It communicates what was going on in the region through the first-person voice on the personal and vernacular level.

ACS: A lot of this material that we are gathering seems particularly illegible for people who have not worked or lived in the Valley. I think it is one of the reasons why our focus has been to grow the archive versus specifically focusing on disseminating the material as we get it. We have had a small showing in a group exhibition but I feel like the process of engaging with

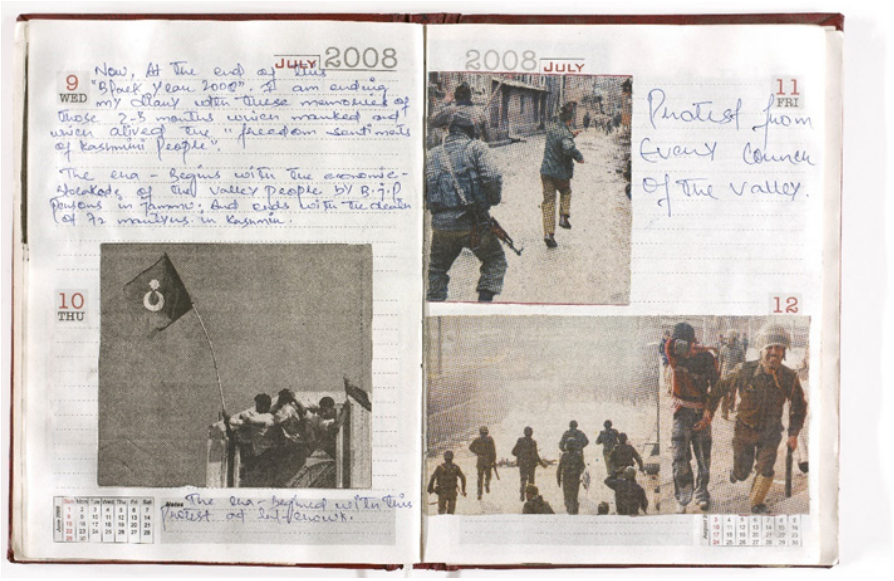


Figure 11. *A page from the scrapbook of S. S produced the scrapbook during the youth-led anti-Indian protests that took place across the Kashmir Valley in 2008. Credit: S.*

this material is something we want to open up on a local level with Kashmiri media professionals, artists, and scholars. And then with the Kashmiri public at large. When we have shared the photographs, in an intimate one-on-one setting with our Kashmiri friends and colleagues, the way they respond to it is rousing. Is it comparable to what would happen to someone in a memorial site? They are encountering 'new' images of Kashmir from our collections, sometimes from as early as the late 19th or early 20th century. In a space like the Valley where so much of this material has been destroyed and the dominant visual tropes are so persistent, I have wondered how to replicate that encounter we have facilitated one on one with our laptops on a much

wider scale. I also wonder what changes if the encounter is not private, and is there isn't room for dialogue about the images being seen.

Nathaniel Brunt: I think it has taken us time to come to some of these realisations. But even moving away from the idea of this project being what



Figure 12. *P.N.K. Bamzai and Daya Bamzai (nee Mattoo) on their wedding day, circa 1920. From the Mattoo Collection. © Kashmir Photo Collective/Mattoo Collection.*

we have often called an archive, we have also been moving more towards conceptualising its possibilities as a resource. Recently, some prominent scholars, such as Christopher Pinney (2015), Elizabeth Edwards (2016), Tina Campt (2012) and Ariella Azoulay (2008, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015) have pointed towards the plurality of information and evidence that photographs can possess. For me, imagining the future potentiality that a project like this can hold for people from a wide variety of backgrounds and disciplines is what excites me and makes me want to continue doing this kind of work. My hope is that a broad range of people can access this project and draw different kinds of meaning and information from these images and the associated oral histories.

Our pedagogical work with the Seagull Foundation's History for Peace program is a good example of this. Here we used the oral history and photographic material we collaboratively collected from the families and reused it as raw material to develop pedagogical tools and programming for South Asian school teachers to use in the classroom. In this case the original material from KPC was remixed and repurposed to serve a pedagogical function to educate students about the complex and contested nature of the region's history, and to help them develop critical thinking skills and visual literacy.

ACS: I was also wondering if you think that this material could ever be used for forensic purposes? In a time where we're dealing a lot with questions about evidence and visual media, we have had to grapple with the possibility that there might be evidence of a war crime or of human rights violations in the archive.

Nathaniel Brunt: Yes. If we are talking about the notion of evidence on a legal level that is obviously well beyond my specialisation. That being said, we know from very good human rights reporting that between 8,000 and 10,000 people are still missing in Kashmir as a result of the conflict (ITPK and APDP 2015). These are believed to be enforced disappearances perpetrated



Figure 13. *Portraits of the Valley's missing. The International Peoples' Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Indian-Administered Kashmir [IPTK] and the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons [APDP] (2015) estimate that there have been over 8000 enforced disappearances since the beginning of the insurgency in 1989. © Nathaniel Brunt*

either by security forces or by various militias or insurgent groups. With some photographs being pictures of the dead, there is certainly a possibility that they could be used for forensic purposes to help try to identify some of those who are still missing.

I do not want to use the term forensic lightly, but I also think it is interesting how the archive provides a certain form of deep dive into the culture and history of the region. In terms of the forensic process there is a form of excavation going on in the process of this work. In some ways the collection

exists almost as a set of core samples of various stages of the region's history that over many years of insurgency and counterinsurgency may never return. I also think it is really important for us not to promote a nostalgic vision of this past, but also allow this material to speak about ups and downs of life during that period.

References

Azoulay, A. (2015) 'Archive' in Downey, A. (ed.) *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East*. London: I. B. Tauris

Azoulay, A. (2013) 'Potential History: Thinking through violence.' *Critical Inquiry,* 39(3)

Azoulay, A. (2012) *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography*. London: Verso

Azoulay, A. (2011) *From Palestine to Israel: A Photographic Record of Destruction and State Formation, 1947-1950*. London: Pluto Press

Azoulay, A. (2008) *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York: Zone Books

Brunt, N. (2020) '#shaheed: A Metaphotographic Study of Kashmir's Insurgency (2014-2016)' in *Spaces of War, War of Spaces* eds S. Maltby et al., New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc

Campt, T. M. (2012) *Image Matters: Archive, Photography and the Africa Diaspora in Europe*. Durham: Duke University Press

Edwards, E. (2016) 'Der Geschichte ins Antlitz blicken: Fotografie und die Herausforderung der Präsenz' in Wolf, H. (ed.) *Aufzeigen oder Beweisen? Die Fotografie als Kulturtechnik und Medium des Wissens*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter

Husain, S. (2020) *Love, Loss, and Longing in Kashmir*. New Delhi: Zubaan Books

The International Peoples' Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Indian Administered Kashmir, and The Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons. (2015). *Structures of Violence: The Indian State in Jammu and Kashmir*. Publication. Srinagar: International Peoples' Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Indian Administered Kashmir [IPTK] and the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons [APDP].

Pinney, C. (May 2015) 'The Civil Contract of Photography in India.' *Comparative Studies of South Asia, African, and the Middle East*, 35(1).

Chapter 13

"Bring Your Kleenex and Plan Something Fun for Later…"

Social Media Reviews of the 9/11 Museum

Amy Sodaro

The National September 11 Memorial Museum (9/11 Museum) is one of the most popular tourist sites in New York City and has attracted more than 17.5 million visitors since its opening in 2014. The museum is purportedly meant to inspire empathy in visitors and shape their ethical response to and understanding of 9/11. According to the museum's mission, a visit to its exhibits is intended to "reaffirm respect for life, strengthen our resolve to preserve freedom, and inspire an end to hatred, ignorance, and intolerance". To this end, the museum constructs its narrative largely out of individual memories of the attacks, which were witnessed via media by an estimated

two billion people around the globe. Thus, together with the requisite documents, objects and artefacts, the museum is filled with both professional and amateur videos and photographs and numerous audio recordings of witnesses, first responders, and the victims themselves, making for a highly affective and individualised museum encounter. Through its experiential exhibits and individual storytelling, the museum offers visitors an emotional and intense 'experience' of 9/11, though one largely devoid of historical and political contextualisation.

While much has been written about the creation of the museum and its exhibitions (e.g. Poole 2018; Senk 2018; Sodaro 2017; Sturken 2015), to date there has been little examination of the responses of visitors to their experience of the museum, particularly in online forums. In this essay I analyse visitor reviews of the 9/11 Museum on TripAdvisor. Overwhelmingly positive, most of them describe the museum as a 'must-see' attraction that is deeply moving and difficult, but important, to experience. At the same time (anecdotally, but tellingly), many New Yorkers refuse to visit the museum, suggesting a tension in the role and meaning of the 9/11 Museum; the experience of 9/11 created by the museum appears to be one aimed primarily at tourists who did not experience the actual event or witnessed it only through media. A visit to the museum is thus a stop on the tourist itinerary, affording what appears to be deeper understanding of the terror attacks of 9/11, but one that neatly fits a dominant political narrative of the innocence, redemption, and resilience of the US in the face of the past and ongoing threat of terror. But for many visitors, a visit to the museum is not enough: they are compelled to share their experience of the museum on social media.

In many senses, these online reviews are an extension of the individual memories displayed in the museum and they add another layer of witnessing to the historical narrative of 9/11. Research suggests that individuals post online reviews out of concern for others and for self-enhancement—writing a review is a way of sharing an important individual experience, aiding others

in planning their visits, and demonstrating one's self-efficacy (e.g. Jamerson 2017; Munar and Ooi 2012; Bronner and de Hoog 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). In my examination of the online reviews of the museum, I thus analyse both what the reviews tell us about the experience visitors have in the museum, but also what they reveal about the social act of posting such reviews. With online review forums exploding in popularity, I also consider the relevance of social media as a tool for researchers seeking to examine how visitors understand and articulate encounters with difficult pasts and in doing so, extend the work of the museum beyond its walls into the digital realm. As my analysis of TripAdvisor reviews demonstrates, visitors feel that there is a moral obligation to remember 9/11. By posting reviews of the museum, visitors are performing their duty of remembrance before a global audience. However, because the museum's story of 9/11 is devoid of context, the narrative it creates reinforces neoliberal, ethnic nationalism and exclusion, an ethos that is very much reflected in visitors' reviews.[1]

The National September 11 Memorial Museum

The National September 11 Memorial Museum opened in May 2014 with the purpose of honouring the victims of 9/11, educating about 9/11's causes and consequences, and serving as an "an agent of resolve, demanding that each of us, individually, nationally, and globally, place a value on human life" (Greenwald 2016, p. 12). The museum is part of a memorial complex and lies deep underground beneath the 9/11 Memorial. The memorial, "Reflecting Absence," consists of two massive waterfall pools in the footprints of the Twin Towers. Rimming the pools are bronze parapets inscribed with the names of all who were killed in the 2001 attacks and the 1993 bombing of the World

1 I am very grateful for a BMCC Faculty Development Grant, which enabled me to conduct this research and write this chapter. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to my wonderful research assistant, Lindsey Gatrell, a sociology major at BMCC with extraordinary sociological insight, and computer and internet skills that transformed tens of thousands of reviews into manageable samples that could be analysed.

Trade Center. While the memorial provides a space for contemplation and reflection (e.g. Young 2016), interpretation and narration of the 9/11 attacks is left for the museum, so visitors must descend underground to learn about 9/11. And venture underground they do; the museum is one of the most popular tourist sites in New York City — it is ranked number two in things to do on TripAdvisor and, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the museum boasted an average of 9,000 visitors per day, presumably each of them hoping to expand their knowledge and understanding of the attacks of 9/11.

The 9/11 Museum is very much a model twenty-first century memorial museum. Memorial museums are a relatively new form of commemoration that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century as a mechanism for the commemoration of violent pasts. They depart from more traditional history museums that celebrate the nation, instead reflecting a shift in how societies around the world relate to the negative past through what Jeffrey Olick has termed a "politics of regret" (2007), which focuses on confronting and coming to terms with past violence. As hybrid institutions, memorial museums seek to combine the affective power of memory and memorials with the authority and educative functions of history and museums in a way meant to help visitors to learn lessons from the past to create a more peaceful and democratic present and future (Williams 2007; Sodaro 2018). To inspire this kind of transformation, memorial museums use experiential, multimedia exhibits that create an encounter with the past intended to inspire empathy and ethical transformation. They go beyond the collection and display of objects and instead use theatrical tropes to create an immersive and interactive experience for visitors. Because memorial museums remember violence and destruction — events that are often "object-poor" (Williams 2007, p. 25) — they tend to focus on storytelling and experience, though objects are imbued with special meaning as they serve as evidence of past violence. The materiality of the objects on display in the 9/11 Museum, for example, becomes extremely important to the visitor experience, as we shall see in the reviews, offering something perceived to be more 'authentic' than media images, though

the museum itself is arguably a similar form of mass entertainment and consumption (Huyssen 1995).

As a memorial museum, the 9/11 Museum thus uses experiential and multimedia exhibits to create a personal connection between the violent past being remembered and the museum's visitors. This is in part because such a connection is believed to contribute to the museum's stated goals of moral transformation, but also because of the unique form of violence being remembered: 9/11 was a spectacularly public event — a brief, destructive rupture that was viewed across the world. The museum's creators realised that because so much of the world witnessed 9/11, many visitors would bring their own memories of the day to the museum. It was thus conceived to be a space where those individuals' memories, in the words of president and CEO Alice Greenwald, "could be affirmed, preserved, and integrated into the larger narrative [the museum] would contain" (2016, p. 12). Letting individual stories drive the narrative became a central principle in the design of the museum; in the words of Jake Barton, head of Local Projects and one of the lead exhibit designers, his desire was for the museum to make "history" out of individual memories (2013).

It was not only because 9/11 was so widely witnessed that the museum designers chose to emphasise individual stories and memories, but also because they knew how sensitive and contentious the project was. Worried that the museum would be seen as politicising and historicising an event that was still very much alive in the memory of vast swathes of the world's population — still extant as what Jan Assmann would call communicative memory — they sought to avoid "graft[ing] historical 'meaning' onto the events" (Greenwald 2016, p. 12). Thus, there is minimal contextualisation of the events, with just a small section focused on "before 9/11" and the rise of al Qaeda and a couple of rooms focused on "after 9/11" with brief mention of some of the ongoing repercussions. Rather, most of the museum, in particular the historical exhibition, focuses on the events of September 11,

2001. The core of the exhibit is a detailed timeline that traces the 102 minutes from the first plane hitting the north tower to the second tower's collapse. It is illustrated with a multimedia onslaught: photographs, videos, audio recordings, documents, and artefacts cram the already cramped rooms, filling in the minutes of that morning with agonising and affective detail. Everywhere one looks is an image of destruction: video footage of burning or collapsing towers, screams and sirens playing on loop, and dusty, charred and sometimes bloody belongings of those who were there bring the attacks into three-dimensional reality.

This multimedia cacophony, rather than giving historical context to the events, gives one an experience of the attacks of 9/11. It can be debated to what extent a museum can recreate the past for visitors. Nevertheless, as Alison Landsberg argues, these types of memory museums offer visitors the "opportunity of having an experiential relationship to a collective or cultural past they did not experience"; while this encounter is not "authentic," it is "acutely felt" — enough so to produce in visitors a "prosthetic memory" of a past that they did not directly experience (2004, p. 33). Thus, just as September 11 'began' for those estimated billions who witnessed the attacks, the exhibit starts with the first plane smashing into the north tower as if literally coming from out of the blue. In the exhibit, as on that day, fear and panic ensues as three more planes meet their deadly ends and the extent of the attacks becomes clear. The exhibit then ends with the smouldering hole in lower Manhattan and the heavy sadness that settled upon the city, country and much of the world. It is an emotional and affective journey into the experience of 9/11. Adding force to the emotional toll is the fact that much of the story is told by the individuals that were there: in audio recordings and voice mail messages, in witnesses' descriptions of what they saw, and in the notes and artefacts that they left behind. Visitors are also invited into the storytelling about 9/11 (e.g. Senk 2018). There is a recording booth where they can record their own memories of the day or they can write messages on the museum's "Signing Steel" that are projected onto the massive slurry wall, which was created to

hold back the waters of the NY Harbor and is now a central architectural detail of the museum.

Through these interactional components and the fragmentation of memory and experience that create the museum's narrative and exhibits, we can think of the 9/11 Museum as a memorial museum 2.0. It is a participatory, dynamic and interactive space in which visitors are invited to contribute to meaning-making about 9/11 through their own memories of this recent past, and their experiences in the museum. And they do this not only in the museum, but in the reviews that they write on social media sites like TripAdvisor. However, because the museum's narrative is devoid of historical context and produces an experience that is primarily emotional, it reproduces the exclusionary politics and nationalism with which the US has confronted the threat of terrorism since 9/11. Online visitor reviews then become yet another space in which these sentiments are circulated and cemented.

The 9/11 Museum and Social Media

In its prolific use of multimedia displays, its reliance on individual narratives and memories, and its effort to be a space of interaction and participation, the 9/11 Museum both reflects and is part of the new forms of communication made available in our digital, Web 2.0 world, in particular social media. Accordingly, social media sites like TripAdvisor, because they are public, global spaces of user-generated content, can be seen to extend the work and the experience of the museum in important ways. As Ferguson, Pinche and Walby argue in their study of TripAdvisor reviews of prison museums, "social media technologies change the way we understand our heritage, but also enable public audiences to take part in the construction of the past" (2015, p. 369). They allow for the creation of what Buckley-Zistel and Williams (2020) describe as new "moral spaces" in which transnational "shared values" are reinforced. This is particularly true for the 9/11 Museum. Online visitor reviews add yet another dimension of interactive and participatory construction of

meaning about 9/11. The popularity of the museum and flood of reviews on TripAdvisor[2] suggest that the museum plays an important role in how visitors make meaning of the attacks of 9/11 and, more generally, human nature and the human experience. The rest of this chapter will examine how visitors respond to the exhibitionary tropes used in the museum in the effort to inspire moral transformation, considering the sorts of experiences visitors report having in the museum and what these experiences tell us about both visitor motivations for going to the museum and reviewing it on social media.

My use of social media reviews is in part expedient, as the museum does not allow third party researchers to conduct research on site, but social media sites like TripAdvisor also add an important dimension to understanding visitor responses to memorial museums. They are not unlike visitor comment books, though there are significant differences. There is a body of scholarship that focuses on visitor comment books as an important window into individuals' meaning making of the museum experience and as a social space where visitors "perform" their responses to the exhibits and enter into a community that together constructs meaning (Simon 2014; Macdonald 2005; Reid 2005). Online forums like TripAdvisor can be seen as a new type of visitor comment book, where visitors are able to share their experiences and responses to touristic and museum encounters, where there is established "a relation among strangers in regard to their varied responses to the common world of the exhibition" (Simon 2014, p. 128). However, online reviews serve a different purpose than visitor books. While both provide spaces for visitors to respond to museum exhibits, online reviews are also aimed at future or potential visitors and do not assume that the reader has also seen the exhibit; instead, in addition to visitor responses and meaning-making, online reviews provide information and advice about visiting the museum and describe and evaluate the museum experience.

2 By way of comparison, there are 8 times as many reviews of the 9/11 Museum as of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), another prominent US memorial museum.

They are often not immediate responses, like the ones in comment books, which visitors inscribe on their way out of the exhibit, so visitors have had time to process their experiences and can edit their reviews. They are also entirely public and aimed at a truly global audience, so they follow a different set of rhetorical conventions and can be useful for deepening our understanding of visitor motivations and meaning making in visits to memorial museums. Of course, they are also written by a self-selecting set of individuals who remain largely anonymous. Nevertheless, TripAdvisor reviews of the museum provide valuable insight into how visitors experience and write about the museum.

A number of scholars from various fields have written about TripAdvisor as a new type of digital platform that connects tourists, potential tourists, and tourist operators. TripAdvisor is the largest "travel guidance platform" in the world, with over 980 million reviews and visited by hundreds of millions of individuals each month. Ritzer and Jergenson (2011) argue that sites like TripAdvisor operate on a dynamic of "prosumption", in which the site's users are responsible for both the production and consumption of information. Individuals write the reviews, taking the position of the "expert witness" vis-à-vis the site they are reviewing and the readers of their reviews. Then these individual reviews are aggregated by TripAdvisor, which uses complex algorithms to rank sites, creating a "collective voice of the tourist" (Jamerson 2017, p. 120-121). Due to this combination of individual experiences and narratives and the collective aggregation of this information, sites like TripAdvisor are widely considered to be trustworthy and authentic sources of information (Jeacle and Carter 2011). It is in part its pre-eminence as a trustworthy resource for tourists that my research focuses specifically on TripAdvisor reviews. However, as the primary global site for tourist reviews, TripAdvisor also exemplifies the contemporary compulsion to share via social media. This sharing is a self-reflexive "performance that shapes the logic and experience of the act itself" – it is, in the words of Wight, "an existential marker of the self" (2020, p. 4). In the case of reviews of the 9/11 Museum,

visitors are self-reflexively performing a moral obligation to remember for a global audience.

TripAdvisor is also the most popular site on which to review the 9/11 Museum, with approximately 95,000 reviews,[3] the overwhelming majority of which are extremely positive.[4] The method that I have used for this study is what Timothy Recuber terms digital discourse analysis, a mode of analysis of digital texts and narratives — the "small data produced within digital culture" that "can reveal much about the ways that social actors make sense out of the messiness of everyday life" (2017, p. 48-49). TripAdvisor provides a wealth of individual stories, thoughts, feelings, and opinions that can be productively mined to help us to understand the ways in which "institutions and cultures are 'enacted and re-enacted moment-by-moment'" (Gee qtd. in Recuber 2017, p. 50). Analysing the discourse that occurs on these sites helps us to understand how meaning is made and reality constructed in these new spaces of interaction; this is particularly important when it comes to memory of violence and suffering. In the words of Roger Simon:

> through the articulation of socially produced meanings and the expression of affective investments, when 'remembering together,' social media participants are not only articulating personal encounters with the traces of a particular history but, as well, collectively redefining what may be understood as the temporal and spatial parameters of a historical event.
>
> (2012, p. 92)

3 It is important to note, however, that the 9/11 Memorial and Museum have the same TripAdvisor site so a number of the reviews are of the memorial only and I have not included those in this study.

4 Almost 70,000 rate the museum as excellent and 85,000 excellent or very good; just over 1100 rate the museum as terrible or poor.

After reading through hundreds (perhaps thousands) of reviews at random, I identified a number of different themes recurring throughout.[5] My computer savvy research assistant then scraped the TripAdvisor website for reviews containing key words related to the themes (for example, for the importance of the museum, we collected reviews containing the word "important," but also "relevant," "significant," "must see," etc.) and then created a random sample for each of the themes. For the purpose of this chapter, I will focus on two themes that dominate the reviews: the emotional or affective experience of the museum and the importance or significance of both the museum's existence and visiting the museum. These two themes are not mutually exclusive and are both present to varying degrees in most TripAdvisor reviews and help us to understand both the experience and motivations of visitors. I will also consider a third sub-theme that emerged in many of the sample reviews that I examined: ambivalence about visiting the museum and writing reviews.

Emotion and Affect in the 9/11 Museum

Most TripAdvisor reviewers comment on the intensely emotional experience that the museum provides. A sample of reviews mentioning the emotional experience, including similar terms like sad, moving and heart wrenching, can help us to understand the range of emotions that visitors experience. The museum's experiential exhibits and emphasis on individual stories of victims, survivors, and witnesses clearly succeeds in its goals to evoke an affective response in visitors. Sadness is the most common emotion, with a number of reviewers describing crying, sobbing, or weeping. For example, one visitor writes:

---

5 In addition to those themes that I focus on here — the importance of the museum and the emotional experience of visiting — other themes that I identified included terrorism/terrorists, victims, patriotism, the museum as tribute, advice for visitors/practical information, the appropriateness of the museum, and visitor behaviour.

> This visit was one of the most emotional and moving experiences of my life. The actual memorabilia from that terrible day brings the specter of man's inhumanity to man into horrifying focus. An unforgettable but sad experience that still brings tears to my eyes when I reflect on it. ...There is still a long way to go before our species achieves enlightenment or even civilization.

Another reviewer describes himself as "a guy who doesn't get emotional" but who "cried ¾ of the time that I was in there," while another wrote: "I was unable to finish the entire exhibit because I was weeping and so emotional I could not bear to see any more," going on to say "I am glad that I came to the museum, but would not be able to return". A number of reviewers similarly describe being glad that they visited, but adding that they would not return because of the intense emotional experience.

Other reviewers acknowledge emotions beyond sadness evoked by the museum. As noted, because the museum creators worried about politicising or historicising 9/11, they instead focused on creating an experience of the day and many reviewers comment on how the historical exhibit takes visitors back to that moment. One visitor writes "I felt like i had been thrown back in time and could remember watching it on TV". Another describes how the museum "bring[s] you back to that fateful day", while many others (over 200) describe "reliving" the day in the museum. With this trip back in time, come other, more raw emotions from the day itself, such as one reviewer describing how the museum "gave you the sense of fear and panic that these poor people must have been experiencing" and another writing that "one relives first hand each horrific moment of fear, anguish, anxiety, pain and devastating suffering experienced by the people involved in person or through media coverage that day". Still other reviewers write about the anger that the museum evokes at the terrorists who carried out the attacks. For some reviewers this anger appears to be mild, such as one who writes, "when I left I felt a little anger towards the people that committed this horrific

crime". However, for others this anger is more palpable and powerful, such as this review:

> For some, the hopelessness could trigger a deep depression. ... for me it triggered rage. Rage against those who murdered innocents who were simply at their desks, reporting for work, on a gorgeous September morning.

In the 9/11 Museum's effort to inspire empathy and transformation it utilises powerful affective tools that elicit strong emotional responses in visitors. For some visitors, this may mean reliving the trauma or emotion that they experienced that day;[6] for others, it perhaps offers a sense of what happened that day in a way that deepens their understanding or shapes their memory of 9/11.[7] For still others it may cause empathic unsettlement, a "responsive[ness] to the traumatic experience of others [...but] not the appropriation of their experience" (LaCapra 2001, p. 41). Whatever experience of 9/11 they have in the museum, almost all visitors describe it as deeply emotional.

It is worth noting that TripAdvisor reviews list both the date of the experience and the date of the review. Most reviewers post shortly after their visit (within a month), but there are those who wait months or even a year or more to post. Those reviews also note the intensely emotional experience of the museum, such as this review, posted in July 2019 for a visit in August 2018:

---

6 Anecdotally, several people – including museum guides and psychologists who were close to the development of the museum – have suggested to me that one primary purpose of the museum is to return visitors to the trauma of the day as a form of healing, a kind of exposure therapy to help them work through their trauma.

7 Again, anecdotally, I have taken students to the museum who were only one or two years old on 9/11 and their immediate response is often something like "Now I understand what 9/11 was like."

> Take your tissues and be prepared for the emotional rollercoaster of this memorial museum. We've all probably seen the tragic incident on tv so many times but that does not prepare you for the raw emotion of this place.

That some reviewers are still impacted by the emotional experience months after their visit suggests that the affective power of the museum's exhibitions lasts beyond the visit. This also suggests that, while museums are arguably a form of mass media (Landsberg 2004; Huyssen 1995), they are different from other media forms like television. Their materiality and authenticity in terms of space and the objects and artefacts that they display suggests that, in the words of John Durham Peters, "'being there' matters since it avoids the ontological depreciation of being a copy" (2001, p. 596). Witnessing 9/11 live on television or via media is one privileged form of witnessing in real time, but for many visitors, being there on the site makes 9/11 even more 'real'. This sort of powerful, 'authentic' experience is the goal of the museum vis-à-vis ethical transformation, though whether the emotional experiences described by viewers transform them ethically is another question.

A 'Must-See' Museum

Despite what many visitors acknowledge to be a very emotionally difficult experience, most reviewers agree that it is important to visit the museum. It is described repeatedly as a "must-see" museum not to be missed by any visitor to New York City, but what exactly is so important about the museum? Many of the reviews are rather vague in answering this question. Some reviewers note the ambiguous – and somewhat tautological – connection between the massive crowds and the museum's importance, as in this review: "The wait time to buy tickets was 45-60 minutes and everyone stood in line because this site is that IMPORTANT! 15 years after the tragedy; this site is that important!". And many expound on the museum's importance with imperatives like "This is truly something all Americans need to see" or "[...]it is overwhelming to

remember but so important", without giving a clear indication of what is so important about it and why it must be visited.

There are other reviewers, however, that give a slightly more concrete sense of why it is important that the museum exists, and that people visit it. Some of the reviews point to the importance of 9/11 as a historical event, one that changed the world and has continuing repercussions. Some, like this review, note the importance of the museum for explaining 9/11 to generations that were not yet born in 2001: "As a global turning point in the way the world operates in so many ways, this was really important for our 9yo son to see what happened on that fateful day". However, the cliched reference to that "fateful day" and vague statement about 9/11 changing the way the world operates obscure what this reviewer believes is truly important about the museum. Other reviews connect the story told in the museum to ongoing repercussions, like terror attacks: "Very important stop for the remembrance of 9/11 and especially these days with still more terrorists attacks". Yet again, precisely what is this connection between a visit to the museum and the experience of ongoing terror attacks is missing. Because it tells the story of 9/11, the museum is viewed as important for conveying learning and understanding about the past. A number of reviewers comment that they have "a whole new understanding on (sic) the devastation of 9/11" after a visit to the museum or that it helps "make sense of the tragedy in a way that just seeing the news hadn't". These reviews suggest that understanding or making sense of past violence is not just cognitive, but also affective, and that being in the museum and experientially encountering the story of 9/11 imparts greater understanding than other forms of media. This gets us a little closer to one important aspect of the museum: the way the experiential exhibits make 9/11 "real" for visitors. This review, titled "Very moving experience, and important to make it 'real' for us foreigners" is worth quoting in its entirety:

> The ground zero and then the memorial museum, was an unreal experience. Or to be exact.. making the unreal feel very much real (sic).
> I watch this event unfold live on TV, as many other in the world. But to really feel the size and magnitude of what really happen, I didnt feel it until i was there.
> The museum is built after the timeline of 9/11, and brilliantly so. Making it personal in every way, exibiting personal assets and stories.
> This is a really worthy tribute to the victims of 9/11, and if you are going to New York, you really need to go here. The whole experience, with the park and the waterfall at the WTC footprints and down to the museum underground, is something that may take a whole day, but it needs to be done. To make the TV images feel real.

This review articulates what others, I believe, suggest: the need for (and importance of) the museum to make the images and memories of the day more real, tangible, and meaningful for those who witnessed it from afar. The ability of the museum to do this suggests that the experience of 'being there' in the space itself, and seeing the artefacts and exhibits brings visitors closer to the events of 9/11 in a way that will give them a better personal connection to the events. Marita Sturken (2016) writes about the uniqueness of the material transformation caused by 9/11 (massive buildings reduced to rubble; bodies reduced to ash) and how in the museum the materiality of 9/11 – closely linked to ideas of 9/11's exceptionalism – serves as a centrepiece of the story the museum tells. It seems to be this very materiality – and the scale and devastation that it evokes – that serves, for some visitors at least, to make 9/11 more real and tangible. And while witnessing on television carries responsibility – "we cannot say that we did not know" (Ellis 2000, p. 1) – the embodied and material experience of the museum is hoped to further move visitors to accept ethical responsibility vis-à-vis the past and present, in this case to work towards fulfilling the memorial's aim to "end hatred, ignorance and intolerance".

This ethical message is indicated in other reviews: "it's an important museum to never forget what happened that day and how the people of New York united and were able to overcome hatred". In reminding and reinforcing a rejection of hateful ideology, the museum may even contribute to healing for some, such as a reviewer who titles their review "Personal Catharsis" and writes:

> I was a flight attendant during 9/11. I was supposed to be at the Towers exactly at 9:03 AM that day... I knew people who perished that day... It took me a long time to get the courage to go visit. It is a must. It is important for healing.

This healing is perhaps facilitated for some because of the values embodied by the museum and the lessons it teaches, that are identified in a number of reviews, such as "courage," "unity," "resilience" and "that not everyone in the world values the freedom that we love". These values may help to heal individuals' trauma, but as one review suggests, they might also help to teach the transformative lessons about the value and precarity of life that Greenwald describes (2016). For example,a reviewer writes: "My visit has changed me. I look differently at my friends and family because of it. Life is precious, and none of us knows when all that we hold dear may be snatched from us without warning".

While many invocations of the museum's importance are rather vague, many others describe its importance in terms of never forgetting the victims. This is the predominant reason articulated in TripAdvisor reviews for the museum's importance: that it is a tribute to those who died, and important to visit as a form of respect for the victims. Again and again, reviewers declare that we must never forget and very often this entreaty is in conjunction with the importance of visiting the museum as paying tribute to the victims, like this one:

> The memorial is somber, beautiful and a fitting tribute to all those who lost their life in the terrorist attack of 9/11[...] We must never forget that

terrible event nor the heroes who helped and sacrificed during that horrific event.

This call to never forget reflects an ethical obligation or duty ascribed to memory, particularly in the wake of mass atrocity or violence. Philosopher Avishai Margalit (2004), for example, has conceived of an "ethics of memory" that binds individuals and groups more closely together. Jeffrey Blustein's (2008) moral philosophy argues that memory holds "moral demands" vis-à-vis our responsibility for the past. Memory can be seen as a form of justice for victims of violence; as Paul Ricoeur writes "the duty of memory is the duty to do justice, through memories, to an other than the self" (2006, p. 89). The idea that memory is an ethical obligation that those in the present have toward victims of past violence is one that often stems from Holocaust remembrance, but that has become firmly embedded in today's culture of commemoration. The proliferation of memorial museums and other types of memorials to victims of violence — including the 9/11 Museum — reflect the idea that there is a social and individual obligation to remember. The many invocations on TripAdvisor to never forget September 11, 2001, suggests that this obligation has seeped into and shaped the ways in which individuals and societies reckon with violence and atrocity.

However, it is important to note that this obligation to remember is generally one-sided and manifests as a form of national memory – what Viet Thanh Nguyen (2013) refers to as "the ethics of recalling one's own" – a point that is highly evident in visitors' responses to the 9/11 Museum. Unlike Nguyen's concept of "just memory," which entails both recalling one's own *as well as* others, the 9/11 Museum and visitor responses to it reflect the obligation to remember those "near and dear" to the reviewers (Margalit 2004, p.8); even those 9/11 victims that might have been "others" in terms of culture, language, religion, social class, immigration status, etc. (e.g. Delano and Nienass 2014), are posthumously absorbed into a singular 9/11 victim – a metonym for US cultural values – and remembered as "one's own." In this

way both the museum and visitors' responses to it reflect that the duty to remember often serves as a screen for nationalist and exclusionary memory and a reminder of the "structures and histories that produce dominant and subordinated memories" (Nguyen 2013, p. 161). And because this duty to remember is embedded in a particular national, hegemonic historical and social context, we can begin to understand why visitors feel it is important not only to visit the museum, but also to review it on a site like TripAdvisor.

Visitor Motivations

Visitors come to museums with assumptions and expectations that shape how they experience and understand their visits to memorial museums (Russo 2012). Thus, it is difficult to ascertain with any certainty their motivations. This is particularly true not only in the case of 9/11, which so many people all over the world witnessed in real time and have their own memories of, but also when relying on social media reviews, in which most visitors do not directly address the question of motivation. Yet, the emphasis in TripAdvisor reviews on the importance of visiting the 9/11 Museum even though it is a difficult emotional experience may provide some insight. There exists a broad literature on visitor motivations to sites of what has been termed "dark tourism", finding that people visit such sites for a number of different reasons, including the desire for an authentic historical experience, the hope to learn in order to understand, simple curiosity or the desire to see a famous historic site, or perhaps even the wish to have a safe encounter with mortality and death (e.g. Biran et al 2011; Stone and Sharpley 2008; Seaton 1996). Many of these reasons appear to be present in the reviews analysed here. Yet, I believe there is something more that is connected to the moral obligation to remember that many visitors write about.

As a number of these sample reviews suggest, many reviewers express ambivalence about visiting the museum (as do many New Yorkers) and acknowledge that a visit is not a pleasant experience. For example, a

reviewer who called the museum a "surprise," started their review saying "I wasnt thrilled about visiting the museum because it stirred up sadness for me because I love NY and our people...". Another reviewer, who called the museum "cathartic" wrote "I was unsure of what to expect from a Museum which is also a memorial to such a recent horrendous event". Others described their ambivalence about writing a review: one says "I thought reviewing a memorial to thousands of lives lost would be a strange thing to do...", and another writes "The 9/11 memorial and museum is hard to review as in reality, in an ideal world, it would not be there". Nevertheless, these visitors felt compelled to not only visit but to beseech others to visit as well by writing a review. This suggests that there indeed exists some sort of imperative to visit the 9/11 Museum and remember the victims, violence, and heroism of the day.

That this moral demand of memory might shape tourists' behaviours and attitudes fits into Rachel Hughes' concept of "dutiful tourism." Hughes writes about this phenomenon in the Tuol Sleng museum in Cambodia, arguing that: "visiting involves returning to a moral terrain in which mass political violence and its ongoing social and (geo)political effects are approached through dutiful exposure" (2008, p. 328). However, this exposure is not simply what one would get from a history book or school lesson. It goes deeper than cognition: "knowledge is less authoritative than affect: it remains ultimately desirable to have submitted oneself to the ghosts of others" (ibid.). The fact that so many visitors describe their need/desire to pay tribute to the victims of September 11 (even visitors from other continents and countries), suggests that an experiential and emotional encounter with the pain and sadness of the day — with the "ghosts" of 9/11 — is a moral obligation and a form of dutiful tourism, in addition to being a more 'authentic' and 'real' experience of 9/11.

The museum's affective and decontextualised historical exhibit seems created for just such an encounter with 9/11's ghosts; for those who were not there

that day, the museum allows them a first-hand experience that makes it "real" and meaningful. This interaction between the museum experience and the visitors as witnesses to that experience is described by Sarah Senk as a "memory exchange" that

> privileges affect within a politically circumscribed context and, ultimately, serves as a form of cultural capital that values the demonstrable, communicable 'experience' of grief, a commodified sentiment that can self-generate.
>
> (2018, p. 258)

For the encounter alone is not enough for more than 95,000 visitors; they also feel compelled to review their experience for future visitors, demonstrating their "'experience' of grief". In this way, writing the reviews seems to be an extension of the moral obligation to witness, remember and feel a connection to this past violence. In her study of visitor comments about a 1962 art exhibit in Moscow, Susan Reid argues that reviews are largely "symbolic or expressive gesture[s]" and so can be read as "an exercise in self-affirmation and posturing, a performance of individual aspirations, identities, elective affinities, and distinctions" (2005, p. 682). Similarly, the 9/11 Museum reviews are largely symbolic and expressive; however, unlike Reid's comments serving as a reflection of artistic and cultural tastes, the 9/11 Museum reviews are a form of moral posturing and a reflection of one's political, national, and ethical position in a world where, as we are told in the museum, there is good/innocence/light in opposition to the forces of evil. The following review reminds us of which side we should be on in this Manichean divide — that of all "true" Americans:

> The museum and memorial is well done. Brings back the horrifying memories of that tragic day. But also shows how US was able to come back and be better and stronger. Will keep those memories alive in

> those of us who lived it and will keep it alive for all who come after to REMEMBER all the things that happened and the sacrifice of the brave men and women of the US. It is busy and a little hard to navigate and look at everything but dont miss anything, do north tower, south tower, memorial hall, watch the movies, relive it all and never forget. Make our children understand what happened and never forget. A must see for ALL TRUE AMERICANS.

The fact that the TripAdvisor reviews are so overwhelmingly positive suggests that they are indeed a demonstration of "moral superiority" (Buckley-Zistel and Williams 2020). For the most part, they do not reflect critical thinking about 9/11 or how it is portrayed in the museum and instead go along with the dominant nationalistic narrative present in the museum and US culture and politics: that of US innocence and redemption in the face of pure evil. However, a few reviewers seem to sense what is at stake in visiting and responding to the museum in a public forum like TripAdvisor. A reviewer writes:

> I don't want to sound unpatriotic, but I don't see how this museum is going to withstand time – after you've seen it once, that's enough. I don't think I will go back to the Museum again – not for the prices charged for admission [...]
>
> Again, please don't think I dislike America, because I love my land. I'm not trying to bad mouth this monument to our history.

I believe that this review, and a handful of others like it, says something that is left out of, though implied in, many other reviews: that to critique the museum is to be unpatriotic; it is to critique the United States. The narrative and exhibits of the museum portray the exceptionalism of 9/11 as a singular, unprecedented event carried out against pure and innocent United States citizens by evil forces. It gives little historical context and instead focuses on

the emotions and trauma of the attacks in a way that can be seen to reinforce an intolerance, divisionism and 'us vs. them' attitude which has permeated US politics and public discourse, particularly in recent years. These last two reviews, the first distinguishing "true" Americans from implied false ones and the other fearful that criticism of the museum will be perceived as unpatriotic recall the divisive and infamous words of President George W. Bush in the aftermath of 9/11: "either you are with us or you are with the terrorists". Thus, it appears that dutiful tourism to the 9/11 Museum is a demonstration that one is on the 'right' side of history, aligned with the forces of good depicted in the museum. Writing a review for the world to see is an extension and performance of this moral duty and a message to all about where one's loyalties and commitments stand. Perhaps this is how we can best understand both motives for visiting the museum and reviewing it on social media: as a demonstration of an ethical commitment to American values like freedom and democracy that, according to the museum, visitors are meant to come away with after witnessing 9/11 in its exhibition.

References

Barton, J. (2013) "The Museum of You." TED Talk. Available at:https://www.ted.com/talks/jake_barton_the_museum_of_you?language=en

Biran, A, Y.Poria and G. Oren. (2011) 'Sought Experiences at (Dark) Heritage Sites', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(3), pp. 820-841

Blustein, J. (2008) *The Moral Demands of Memory*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Bronner, F. and R. de Hoog. (2011) 'Vacationers and eWOM: Who Posts, and Why, Where, and What?', *Journal of Travel Research* 50(1): pp. 15–26

Buckley-Zistel, S. and T. Williams. (2020). 'A 5* Destination: the Creation of New Transnational Moral Spaces of Remembrance on TripAdvisor', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 18 pp.

Delano, A. and B.Nienass (2014) 'Invisible Victims: Undocumented Migrants and the Aftermath of September 11', *Politics and Society* 42(3), pp. 399-421

Ellis, J. (2000) *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*. London: I.B. Taurus

Ferguson, M., J. Pinche and K. Walby (2015) 'Bridging or fostering social distance? An analysis of penal spectator comments on Canadian penal history museum', *Crime Media Culture*, 11(3), pp. 357-374

Greenwald, A. M. (2016) 'Through the Lens of Memory: Creating the 9/11 Memorial Museum', in *No Day Shall Erase You: The Story of 9/11 as Told at the National September 11 Memorial Museum* ed A. M. Greenwald, New York: SkiraRizzoli, pp. 11-30

Hennig-Thurau, T., K. Gwinner, G. Walsh, D. Gremler. (2004) 'Electronic Word-of-Mouth via Consumer-Opinion Platforms: What Motivates Consumers to Articulate Themselves on the Internet?', *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 18(1), pp. 38-52

Hughes, R. (2008) 'Dutiful Tourism: Encountering the Cambodian Genocide', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 49(3), pp. 318-330

Huyssen, A. (1995) *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. New York: Routledge.

Jamerson, T. (2017) 'Digital Orientalism: TripAdvisor and Online Travelers' Tales', in *Digital Sociologies* eds J. Daniels, K. Gregory and T. McMillan Cottom, Chicago, IL: Policy Press, pp. 119-136

Jeacle, I. and C. Carter (2011) 'In TripAdvisor We Trust: Rankings, Calculative Regimes, and Abstract Systems', *Accounting, Organizations, and Society* 36, pp. 293-309

LaCapra, Dominick (2001) *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press

Landsberg, A. (2004) *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Memory in the Age of Mass Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Macdonald, S. (2005) 'Accessing Audiences: Visiting Visitor Books', *Museum and Society* 3(3), pp. 119-136

Margalit, A. (2004) *The Ethics of Memory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Munar, A.M. and C.Ooi (2012) 'The Truth of the Crowds: Social Media and the Heritage Experience', in *The Cultural Moment in Tourism* eds L. Smith, E. Waterton and S. Watson, New York: Routledge, pp. 255-273

Nguyen, V. T. (2013) 'Just Memory: War and the Ethics of Remembrance', *American Literary History* 25(1), pp. 144 – 163

Olick, J. (2007) *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*. New York: Routledge.

Peters, J. D. (2001) 'Witnessing', *Media, Culture and Society* 23(6), pp. 707-723

Poole, R. (2018) 'Performing trauma: Commemorating 9/11 in downtown Manhattan', *Memory Studies* <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017749979> Accessed August 20, 2019

Recuber, T. (2017) 'Digital Discourse Analysis: Finding Meaning in Small Online Spaces', in *Digital Sociologies* eds J. Daniels, K. Gregory and T. McMillan Cottom, Chicago, IL: Policy Press, pp. 47-60

Reid, S.E. (2005)'In the Name of the People: The Manege Affair Revisited', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 6(4), pp. 673-716

Ricoeur, P. (2006) *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

Ritzer, G. and N. Jurgenson (2011) 'Production, Consumption, Prosumption: The nature of capitalism in the age of the digital "prosumer"', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 10(1), pp. 12-36

Russo, A. (2012) 'The rise of the media museum: creating interactive cultural experiences through social media', in *Heritage and Social Media: Understanding heritage in a participatory culture* ed E. Giaccardi. New York: Routledge, pp. 145-157

Senk, S. (2018) 'The Memory Exchange: Public Mourning at the National 9/11 Memorial Museum', *Canadian Review of American Studies* 48(2): pp. 254-276

Simon, R (2014) *A Pedagogy of Witnessing: Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Simon, R. (2012) 'Remembering together: social media and the formation of the historical present', in Heritage and Social Media: Understanding heritage in a participatory cultureed E. Giaccardi, New York: Routledge, pp. 89-106

Sodaro, A. (2018) *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press

Sodaro, A. (2017) 'Prosthetic Trauma and Politics in the National September 11 Memorial Museum', *Memory Studies* 12(2), pp. 117-129

Stone, P. and R. Sharpley (2008) 'Consuming Dark Tourism: A Thanatological Perspective', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(2), pp. 574-595

Sturken, M. (2016) 'The Objects That Lived: The 9/11 Museum and Material Transformation', *Memory Studies* 9(1), pp. 13–26

Sturken, M. (2015) 'The 9/11 Memorial Museum and the Remaking of Ground Zero', *American Quarterly* 67(2), pp. 471-490

Wight, C. A. (2020) 'Visitor perceptions of European Holocaust heritage: A social media analysis', *Tourism Management* 81(12), pp. 1–12.

Williams, P. (2007) Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities. New York: Berg

Young, J. E. (2016) *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss and the Spaces Between*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press

Chapter 14

Remembering Mother and Baby Homes Online:

Digital Sharing as Means of Memorialisation

Elizabeth Crooke and Sara McDowell

In August 2014, the skeletal remains of almost 800 babies were unearthed in a septic tank in the small town of Tuam, in County Galway next to a former home for unmarried mothers. In the immediate months after the Tuam discovery there was an outpouring of anger, disbelief, and grief over the fate of the mothers and their babies, evident in print and electronic media. Questions were asked about what had happened to these children and why they were laid to rest so inappropriately. The discovery at Tuam is just one moment in a catalogue of systemic institutional abuse that has been emerging in Ireland in recent decades. A year earlier, the former Taoiseach Enda Kenny

had publicly apologised for the Irish State's historic treatment of women and girls in workhouses or 'laundries', as they became known, operated by the Magdalene order of nuns. Addressing the Irish parliament Dáil Éireann in 2013 he had said: "I, as Taoiseach, on behalf of the State, the government and our citizens deeply regret and apologise unreservedly to all those women for the hurt that was done to them, and for any stigma they suffered, as a result of the time they spent in a Magdalene Laundry" (Kenny 2013). Acknowledging the trauma endured by thousands of women and girls, through almost a century of abuse, Kenny described Ireland as revisiting a "dark chapter" in its past. At last, he noted "we are giving up our secrets"(Kenny 2013). That apology, and the longer address of which it was a part, is just one outcome of tireless campaigning by activist groups seeking recognition and justice for the treatment of unmarried mothers in twentieth century Ireland at the hands of the State and Church.

In this period, the unmarried mother was hidden away in such institutions as an unwelcome "symbol of unacceptable sexual activity and a problem that had the potential to blight the reputation not only of the family but of the nation" (Luddy 2011, p. 110). The women were thought to represent "possible immorality, a drain on public finances and someone in need not only of rescue, but also of institutionalisation" (Luddy 2011,p. 110). As a result of this "fall from grace", it was thought by "humbly accepting the discipline and rigours of the home" that "moral and spiritual values" would be restored to the women (Luddy 2011, p. 117). On entry, women were categorised either as amenable to reform or, if it was a second offence, as "less hopeful cases" (Garrett 2000). When born, the outlook for the child was poor. Crowley and Kitchin describe illegitimate births as "demonised" by the State and Catholic Church as "gross moral infractions" (2008, p. 359). With mothers in homes, the question was what should become of her illegitimate child – Luddy puts it bluntly 'for many women the care of their children did not become an issue, since they were often removed or died' (Luddy 2011, p. 118).

With the growing awareness of this treatment of mothers and their children, online media, particularly social media platforms, have become a vital means of processing the experiences. The nature and consequence of that can be understood in three ways: (1) the collective activity is an opportunity for individuals to acknowledge, remember and commemoratethe losses; (2) social media platforms are emerging as informal online repositories and means of cataloguing or documenting past experiences that lacked public and state recognition; and (3) the online exchange amongst individuals and groups is creating momentum that is underpinning further online and offline campaigning. When all three merge, social media play critical roles in providing dynamic fora for remembrance, activism, history-making, and archiving. As such these digital platforms have the potential to challenge and contest both the official narratives of the historic roles of institutions and the state processes of acknowledgment and commemoration. In cases where traumatic histories have been untold or supressed, traditional memorial practices such as state funded museums or archives are, in the early phases at least, thought of as less fitting for subaltern histories. Alternatives are emerging as counter monuments (McDowell and Crooke 2019), with elements that reflect activist archives (Flinn and Alexander 2015) and community-based memorial museums (Crooke 2017). These processes demonstrate how established forms of remembering must acknowledge the cultural dynamics of uncovering and sharing the histories previously excluded from the national canon and the nation building origins of our national museums, archives, and monuments.

As an alternative to the memory processes of the State, digital platforms provide opportunity for individuals to generate and share memorial activity. The relative ease of establishing social media accounts, the apparent freedom to express one's views, and the ability to have massive public reach, provide individuals and groups the possibility for agency previously beyond their reach. Here in an alternative digital memorial space, there is evidence of new forms of collecting, display, and interpretation of the past. The physicality

of a statement building or tangible collection may be absent in this digital construct; however, the commemorative form of the memorial museum is still apparent. Sodaro (2018), in her exploration of memorial museums in the US, Chile, Colombia, Hungry and South Africa, presents the three primary functions of a memorial museum as places of truth telling; spaces for healing and repair; and places to morally educate people. Amongst the examples we discuss in this chapter, of groups that are commemorating, cataloguing, and campaigning online, there is evidence that the digital space is also one for telling, healing, and learning. However, in our examples, the individuals and groups driving the initiatives are using these practices as a form of protest. Online agitation for change is driving their activity in a way that is akin to the activism of social movements (Juris 2012). Such activism uses online documentation, assemblages of artefacts and exhibitory practices to give visibility to and amplify anew campaign. Through conspicuous and public revival of memory, such initiatives are not only insisting people do not forget, but also appealing for people to act and initiate change (Crooke 2016).

This chapter is the outcome of exploring a selection of Facebook accounts associated with activist groups, as well as other interventions on Twitter, to garner insights into how these platforms are leading to new forms of political participation and mobilisation, and memorialisation in a way that is both "challenging discourses [and] sharing alterative perspectives" (Loader and Mercea 2012, p. 3). The sites discussed in this chapter demonstrate how social media are informal repositories that accumulate evidence, through testimony and imagery, forge new narratives, and garner support through the formation of a broad social network. Stephanie Benzaquen refers to these as "inadvertent archives" which, despite their variations, lacking order and instability, when brought together as a collection still have consequence: "they can provide an alternative imagery that brings back narratives shifted 'off-stage' by the institutional discourse" (Benzaquen 2014, p. 796). The pseudo-permanence of social media sites (Church 2013), and their easy accessibility and searchability, makes them an invaluable source of information for a network of followers.

With the lack of State or national forms of recognition, social media platforms are an alternative location for symbolic memorialisation and social action. We suggest one of the consequences of this grassroots activity is its contribution to a movement that underpins further on- and offline initiatives.The chapter begins by briefly contextualising allegations of mistreatment at Mother and Baby Homes in Ireland before identifying two parallel processes of memory-making: one driven by the justice campaigns and the other the State-led response. The body of the chapter unpacks the plethora of digital activities that are trying to make sense of a complex, yet traumatic period of Irish history. We argue that forms of digital activism are engaging in new forms of memory-work that are challenging official narratives of the past. The chapter closes with some reflections on the implications of these practices.

Negotiating the Narrative – Key Contributors and Social Media Responses

As well as a highly emotive history, what is slowly and painfully coming to the surface, are varied narrative accounts of the women's experiences that raise questions about authorship, intention, and editorial control in telling this period. Although there is a growing field of academic research into the treatment of unmarried mothers and child welfare (Buckley and McGregor 2019; Costello Wecker 2015; Finnegan 2004; Garrett 2000; Luddy 2011; McCormick 2005), as will be demonstrated, digital platforms play a significant role in the circulation and consumption of details about the period. Furthermore, the tensions between the different versions of the history of the period, as well as the absent or untold stories, demonstrate the high stakes at play. As this history is revealed not only has it potential to be another damning revelation for the authorities who managed the institutions, it may also call to question the compliance of the State and of those people who 'turned a blind eye'. On the surface there are two high-profile players constructing the narratives of the Mother and Baby Homes. One is the strategic activity of the justice campaign sector and the second is the State-funded Commissions of

Enquiry. Today the nature and character of how these two factions operate is significant for their digital capacity and ability to trigger further online activity. It is clear the activism of one, and reactions to the methods and outcomes of the other, is driving social media activity that itself is causing a circulation of opinion and unmediated accounts of the period.

The most organised of the justice campaign sector is *Justice for Magdalenes Research* (JFMR), a group of adoption rights activists, academics and lawyers founded in 2003 as *Justice for Magdalenes*. Established to lobby for a State apology and the establishment of a compensation scheme, both of which have since transpired, the work of JFMR has more recently moved in new directions. This includes the creation of an oral history initiative, the maintenance of the *Magdalenes Names Project*, the formation of educational resources, campaigning for the preservation of Magdalene buildings, and the continuance of a political campaign focused on restorative justice. The group works with Adoption Rights Alliance, and a global law firm, forming *Clann: Ireland's Unmarried Mothers and their Children: Gathering the Data.* Clann is compiling witness statements which, in the longer term, they aim to make accessible in a digital archive. The second player is the State, which has responded to public challenge through the establishment of committees of enquiry. The *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries* (McAleese Report 2013), which lead to the Taoiseach's apology, revealed that some 10,000 women entered ten laundries or homes dotted around Ireland between 1992 and 1996. As new stories came to light, including the Tuam discovery, in 2015 the Irish Government established *The Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation*, with the aim to provide a full account of what happened to women and children in these institutions. With a remit to consider the "practice and procedure in the care, welfare, entry arrangements and exit pathways for the women and children", the Commission has since produced five interim reports, and the 2,865-page Final Report of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation was published January 2021.

The publication of the Final Report culminated in a firm division between the Irish Government-funded Commission and the assessments produced by campaigners. Within months of publication of the Commission report, a group of 25 academics published an alternative Executive Summary, to be read as substitute to the summary that prefaces the Commission's publication. The academic group described their account as written in solidarity with those who experienced human rights violations in the mother and baby homes, presenting it as scholar-activism (Enright and O'Donoghue 2021). Their account provides an alternate analysis of the data collected, that places the responsibility for the experiences of women and children firmly at the door of the State and Church, rather than distributing that responsibility to others. Across 80 pages they explore multiple differences between their analysis and that of the Commission. As an example, in the Final Report, the Commission admitted the Homes presented a "harsh environment"; however, they go on to diminish that point by describing Ireland as being, at that time, "a cold harsh environment for many" adding the responsibility for the treatment of mothers rests, in the main, with the fathers of the children and their immediate families. Given this situation, they describe the Homes, operated by the State and Church, as a "refuge" for the mothers (2020, p1). The academic group takes issue with the use of the word refuge, arguing instead that the State provided no meaningful sanctuary and instead the Homes were places of mass abuse where women were stripped of human and constitutional rights. Their assessment details what they see as systemic abuse, a failure of acknowledgement, and avoidance of human rights and legal responsibilities (Enright and O'Donoghue 2021). This is more than a discussion of semantics, what is exposed is a significant lack of agreement across parties both about the acknowledgement of past wrongs, the legal implications, and how to deal with those legacies.

Looking across the emerging narratives, although there is a consensus that the Homes were undesirable and harsh places, clear differences in the record of women's experiences are emerging from the State and the campaign sectors,

and the reactions to this disparity is then reflected in reactions online. Turning first to JFMR, the synopsis of the period provided by JFMR academic and activist Katharine O'Donnell is uncompromising, she presents the women's experiences as follows:

> On entry the inmates' hair was shorn, they were given a uniform, a religious name and number and were treated as 'penitents' who had to atone for 'sins' through forced, unpaid, hard labour at laundry and needlework. The inmates were often cold, food was meagre and poor, sanitary and hygiene facilities were degrading, and communication was forbidden. For insubordination, inmates were punished by solitary confinement without food. The older population was 'institutionalised' and co-inmates could disappear without explanation. Irish Government departments provided lucrative State contracts to the religious orders. Courts sentenced girls and women, and never followed up in securing their release at the end of their sentences. Gardaí searched for escapees and returned them to the Magdalenes, and girls and women were sent from residential schools, County Homes, and Mother and Baby Homes.
>
> (McDonnell n.d.)

Elsewhere the JFMR accounts are developed in legal and academic publications that provide a deeper analysis of the women's experiences and calls for greater public engagement and critique of State responses (see O'Rourke and Smith 2016). As the State record emerges slowly, we see frustration amongst the activist sectors at both the content of that record and the rate at which it is coming through. The clearest example of this is the response from JFMR to the McAleese Report in the form of a series of critiques. JFMR criticises the report for significantly underestimating the number of deaths of women; instead, JFMR continues, it "gives exclusive attention to the religious orders' version of events" and by doing so "completely ignores survivor testimony" (JFMR 2015, p. 10). The McAleese

Report, running to more than 1,000 pages, considered testimonies of 128 women on the living and working conditions in the homes. There is a consensus in this document that working conditions were unnecessarily harsh, punishments were humiliating, and a lack of compassion was shown to the women. However, the more shocking descriptions of physical brutality and demeaning practices, such as head shaving, which one can read about elsewhere, are recorded as a rarity. For instance, one witness commented:

> It has shocked me to read in papers that we were beat and our heads shaved and that we were badly treated by the nuns. As long as I was there, I was not touched myself by any nun and I never saw anyone touched and there was never a finger put on them. … Now everything was not rosy in there because we were kept against our will … we worked very hard there … But in saying that we were treated good and well looked after.
>
> (McAleese 2013, p. 933)

In this respect the Report differs from the other versions of the period that are more easily available through print and social media. The gap between the knowledge generated through State research, and that generated by advocacy groups, demonstrates the complexity of revealing the experiences of the homes (such as whose testimony is gathered and shared), and then constructing a narrative that is circulated more widely.

The March 2019 report from the *Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation* documented burial practices and, significantly, noted the difficulties the Commission has had in finding people in the wider community willing to speak out about the period. Since its establishment, the Commission has been criticised for delays and there has been dissatisfaction amongst survivors who have suggested the Terms of Referenceare too narrow – the

exclusion of consideration of illegal adoption being one criticism (*Dáil Éireann Debate* 15 May 2019). While acknowledging the complexity of the task in hand, Ruth Coppinger (the Dublin West TD for Irish Solidarity–People Before Profit)speaking in 2018 to *Dáil Éireann*, following a further time extension for the work of the Commission, described the "acute dissatisfaction" with the Commission felt by survivors, in particular because of the vulnerability of people "who had been failed by the State, the religious denominations and the entire establishment" (*Dáil Éireann Debate* 13 February 2018). This is also evident in responses online, which frequently express frustration at the delays, which are interpreted as hiding the truth. On the Facebook account Coalition for Mother and Baby Homes Survivors, one commentator goes as far as to refer to the delays as a "current form abuse", which is, for this writer, "in its own way every bit as shameful as the original abuse".

As we compare accounts, social, cultural, religious, and political issues weave through each other to form a complex web that makes navigating this period difficult. The formation of a narrative needs to negotiate issues of remembering and silences. The voices that are sought and heard in the construction of narrative, as well as recognition, acceptance and reparation, shape how people remember and how memory is employed. Alongside the State and the justice groups, there are further significant stakeholders shaping the narrative. One is borne from silence – the mothers and families who have not come forward, as well as the many people who would have worked in or with the homes (such as the health care sector, city and county councils, coroners), many of whom have not spoken publicly. Another is the online community, which plays a significant role in shaping commemorative and remembrance practices and their potential agency. The remainder of this paper considers this virtual memoryscape and thinks about how their activities intersect around the themes of digital remembrance and mourning, digital archiving, and digital activism, all of which through alternative collecting, interpretation, and display practices, acts as a counter to the State approach.

Digital Mourning and Remembrance

For the many thousands of women and girls that passed through Mother and Baby homes or laundries the sense of loss or trauma that they may have endured would have been for the most part a private endeavour, hidden from the public sphere. Yet the emergence of testimonies from that period and discoveries have occasioned an outpouring of mourning both from those who have discovered a personal connection with the past and for a new cross-section of society, enraged and saddened by a seemingly dark period of Ireland's past. There is a growing interest in the ways in which grief, loss and sadness is expressed online. Marwick and Ellison's (2012) work on the interconnections between unrelated individuals who meet online to collectively grieve poses interesting questions about remembrance in a digital age. Digital mourning, with characteristics of persistence (permanence), replicability, scalability and searchability, has proved a valuable means to understand how collective memorialisation has changed with the advent of social media (Marwick and Ellison 2012). Their research has sought to examine the motivations of those who engage in the practice of digitally mourning someone they did not know. Marwick and Ellison's participants spoke of having a connection with the dead or the family of the dead, such as being a mother, losing someone in a similar fashion, or being from the same town. In some instances, individuals presumably found a Facebook page dedicated to remembrance after popular press covered the case. Others may simply seek to participate in a ritual of public mourning (Marwick and Ellison 2012,p. 388). Cesare and Branstad (2018), examining the intimate facets of online mourning, suggest that individuals use online tools to maintain relationships with the deceased, forge communities with fellow survivors, and cope with loss. In the case of the Mother and Baby Home-related sites, there is a diversity of participants in this online activity. There are those that initiate and administer the social media accounts and there are the people who come online and respond to posts and start a conversation with other contributors to the conversations that follow. Amongst the respondents the majority do

not appear to be maintaining a link previously established with a mother or deceased baby. Instead they are forging a new connection with a baby they never knew and have no biological link with (they are not a later sibling for instance). Instead the connection is one of remembrance and respect for a baby or young child they can only imagine and solidarity and mutual support for an online community with a similar feeling of outrage.

This is perhaps best exemplified by a Twitter account TuamBabiesNames (@BabiesTuam), which circulates the names of children that died in the Mother and Baby home at Tuam "daily, lest anyone forget them". The names are from the list compiled by the historian Catherine Corless, who first brought the events at Tuam to light. In a week in September 2019, we learn of the death of "Mary Blake 4 months", "John Garvey 6 weeks", "Kathleen Heneghan 25 days", and so on. Each baby gets their own tweet and by 3rd December 2019, when the site had been running for approximately 20 months, there were 1,918 tweets and 1,895 followers. Each tweet has the same format and few words – the name and age of the baby. There is no additional information – the barest of facts are enough to begin the commemoration process and, in their starkness, have greater visual impact. A familiar trope for twentieth century war memorials (Sorensen Stig et al. 2019), the list humanises the loss and its simplicity will raise the emotional effectiveness of the intervention. As the user scrolls down the account it becomes a memorial list of babies, serving as a virtual "memorial wall" (see Hess 2007). In this roll call, the act of naming is crucially important – it is a simple act of acknowledgement of a child who did not get the opportunity to speak his or her own name. In his work on the commemoration of AIDS victims, Hawkins talks about how forgetting a name "is to allow death to have the last word" (1993, p. 772). In an act of reversing, naming gives visibility and agency – "so that voice may not fail, the names are written down"(1993, p. 772). This is particularly important in the context of Mother and Baby homes in Ireland whereby even the names of the Mothers were changed on entering a home. Pregnancies were hidden from public view and babies were 'disappeared' through adoption. In this

account the names are repeated, in a continuous roll of names, which are then retweeted and liked by followers. Occasionally people reply, with "RIP" or a short message – one person commented "may his memory be eternal". By looking at the comments left by users, it is evident that connections are being forged. Other sites with analogous purposes include Tuam Babies (@TuamBabies) established "to commemorate the 796 babies buried in an unmarked grave", and accounts established with a justice role such as Tuam Home Survivors Network (@TuamHome) and Tuam Babies Family Group (@Tuambabiesfami1). These examples reinforce the findings of existing work suggesting that online spaces expand the mourning process in three ways: temporally by allowing users to engage with the deceased over extended periods of time, spatially by removing geographical barriers to participating in collective mourning, and socially by collapsing multiple spheres of life into one online space (Brubaker et al.2013). The social media accounts presented here, enable those who take the initiative to bypass the vertical hierarchies very often associated with the establishment of built memorials or museum interventions in the landscape. Furthermore, connectivity online gives the message a public reach far beyond what individuals and groups could have achieved otherwise.

Memory Activism Online

There is a profound sense of sorrow in many of the groups who remember Mother and Baby homes online. For those who document their lives in this medium, the social media site can be viewed as an opportunity to forge a personal or community archive. In the most part, lacking the discipline and adherence to standards assumed amongst the traditional tangible public archive, the potential of a community archive borne from social media activity is significant (Acker and Brubaker 2014). There is a growing recognition of the role that online forums play in mobilising political participation and energising activism. Many of the online groups that have emerged in the wake of the scandal have mobilised around redress and reparation, aiming to shed a light

on something once hidden and silenced. Harlow and Guo (2014), writing about the impact of Facebook on immigration activists in the US, argue that digital tools are not only "transforming the definition of activism" but have the capacity to redefine the shape of future forms of activist activity. They suggest that activists in the digital realm use social media networks in their "repertoire of contention" (Tilly cited in Harlow and Guo 2014, p. 14). When archives and museums exist primarily online, there are often links to grass roots social movements searching for alternative truths that are a counterpoint to 'official narratives', such as the Museu da Pessoa Brazil (Clarke 2009) or the Prison Memory Archive in Northern Ireland (McLaughlin 2011).

The centrality of the Internet and the speed in which digital technologies now shape our economic, political, cultural and social interactions (see Ash *et al.* 2018) have important implications for the scope of contemporary activism. Despite the huge academic interest in the term "digital activism", Kaun and Uldam (2018) posit that it remains a "fuzzy term". Activism in the digital realm, they note is somewhat "broad and ambiguous". As activism emerges within and in response to societal context, so does media technology, including digital media. Hence, the character and form of media technologies are shaped by social, political, and economic needs and practices, while they in turn shape the very possibilities for self-expression, political participation, and activism (Kaun and Uldam 2018). Hardt (2017) attributes participation in digital activism to a growing interest in the ways in which social movements are organised and how they articulate their ideas. This together with massive technological developments give an impression of "accelerated rhythms of political shifts" (Hardt 2017, p. 90). These seismic shifts in technology and access are changing the face of mainstream narratives. Historically activists have in part depended upon the media to communicate their political agenda to the broader public (Harlow and Guo 2014). As Bakardjieva *et. al* (2012) note "mass media and institutional gatekeepers are being circumvented by citizen reporters and commentators who provide first-hand, real-time coverage and non-hegemonic interpretations of offline political events" (2012, p. i). Baer

suggests that "digital platforms offer great potential for broadly disseminating feminist ideas, shaping new modes of discourse about gender and sexism, connecting to different constituencies, and allowing creative modes of protest to emerge" (2016, p. 18).

Analysis of Facebook sites set up in the wake of the discovery at Tuam, suggests that many groups online see themselves as activists or are aligning themselves to what might be defined as digital activism. The groups that appear first, when using the words "mother baby home Ireland", are groups using Facebook as a platform for campaigns. For these activist groups the online social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are locations where a viewpoint can be articulated, shared, and garner support. The reach of social media is an opportunity to forge a network of alliance, mutual support and encouragement. When we considered online activity at key moments in the past 5 years, such as immediately following the discoveries at Tuam, political wrangling over an inquiry and the decision to exhume bodies, there is a continuous record of dissatisfaction with State processes. The visit of Pope Francis to Ireland in the summer of 2018 to celebrate the 'Year of the family' was widely debated online. Commenting on the cost of the visit one activist noted "Costing €32m for pope's visit and yet 796 children left in a sewage tank! If one baby was found in my back yard, I'd be in prison accused of wrongdoing?? Cover ups aplenty facilitated by the church and state! Shamefull!" With mounting public pressure on the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, in a meeting with the Pope, Ms Zappone suggested that the Church should contribute financially to the repatriation of the bodies at Tuam. Online activists however demanded justice. As one member noted, "the sisters in the congregations have no remorse. They abused, enslaved, and murdered without a hint of conscience, and now they do not want to participate in the scheme being set up to compensate the survivors. Break up the congregations, defrock the 'nuns' and charge them for their crimes". In October 2018, the Irish government announced that they would finally exhume the bodies at Tuam as part of a forensic investigation. While this

was welcomed, online activists used it as an opportunity to stress the slow progress of institutional responses to the revelations. As one member of the Justice for Tuam Babies Group noted "shame the government did not make this decision back in 2013! Prolonging the suffering of those tiny souls and survivors, costing them thousands to get answers". These examples point to the meeting of individuals to share mutual despair and vexation.In response to images of tabloid newspaper headlines critical of the state, individuals post comments that further condemn the church and state. Increased online activity coincides with growing awareness and momentum found in newspaper reporting. For instance, @JusticefortheTuamBabies, was established in June 2014, coinciding with intensive print media coverage. A campaign can be maintained, newspaper headlines can be shared, and statements can be made in response to Government reports. Facebook is the means to forge and add to an online community with a shared interest and one that can give momentum to the justice campaign.

The traditional print media, with its significant online footprint, is initiating further citizen journalism by way of social media sites (Goode 2009). Activity on many of the sites can be read as garnering support to put pressure on the government to speed up their inquiry into the events that took place in the laundries. Some of the groups are actively involved in lobbying the government to act. One member, reflecting on their own connection with the site at Tuam wrote "We the families have 11 of our loved ones in this Pit. And still we wait and wait with no information despite the Government's obligation under the ECHR. We will have our day. #truth #justice #accountability #prosecutions". On another site a commentator reveals the sense of disempowerment that, collectively, their group seek to reverse. With the comment "no 1 politician care (sic) 1 iota about the babies that lay in a septic tank in Tuam. No government gave a thought to all the young mothers that went to their graves never knowing peace", there is a sense of despair directed at the current political elite. Some of the groups, who identify as survivors, engage in activism on and offline. *The Coalition of Mother and Baby Home Survivors* is a loose

umbrella group of several survivor groups "fighting for truth and justice for all survivors of Motherand Baby homes, Catholic or Protestant, and all victims of the forced separation of single Mothers and their children from 1922". The *Justice4Mothers* Facebook has become an online location for women and men to voice their outrage at how these women were treated in the past and the failure of contemporary efforts to acknowledge and provide reparation. There are common responses around which many contributors unite: their rejection of the Catholic Church; their abhorrence for nuns working in the various establishments; a sense of shared trauma passing through the generations; and the need for justice. How the comments are composed vary, with the intensity of feeling often revealed in the choice of language. One describes religion as making the women "pariahs to society" as well as convincing them they are "shameful"; furthermore "religion forces women to birth children they can't care for, then Religion kills and disregards them". The emergence of new digital spaces now means that activists in this realm have opportunity to generate their narratives. Their reach does not have to be mediated by agencies that may or may not be sympathetic to their aims. Mediation will of course follow on from their contribution, as we are only now beginning to appreciate the impact of Facebook algorithms on the user experience (Leong 2020). Furthermore, the question of whether online forms of activism translate into real world action is widely debated. Postmes and Brusting's (2002) work sheds doubt on how willing online political activists are to engage in the real world. Morozov (2011) somewhat controversially identifies a form of activism that is more akin to what they coin "slacktivism" whereby activists prefer to lobby for change in the comfort of their own living rooms as opposedtooften fraught public spaces where protest and dissent is voiced.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that many women shared traumatic experiences of having babies in these institutions, this was a community that had to wait decades to become established. Enforced silence was institutional strategy; however, the

revelations of recent decades, and the ease of online networks, have enabled that community of survivors to come together. Ireland does not yet have a digital or built memorial museum, in the form that would be recognised internationally (Sodaro 2018), to acknowledge the women and children who passed through the doors of the Mother and Baby Homes. It has been suggested that a former Home could become a museum and expert groups, reporting to government, have advised that memorials should be erected at other sites. At first glance the memorial activities explored in this chapter contribute to that need and demonstrate the appetite for commemoration and reparation. However, with deeper consideration the lessons to be learned from these examples go far deeper, not only for our understanding of memory activism but also for our understanding of the potential of new forms of memorial museum.

As this chapter has shown, in the context of remembering Mother and Baby homes, online fora are critically important in sharing narratives and providing a focal point for contesting institutional narratives and practices. They are also intimately bound up in the politics of recognition. A common thread connecting each of the groups we studied was a need to upend decades of silence and shame to gain recognition and visibility. Flinn suggests that the demand for recognition is often triggered by change and uncertainty, which causes communities to "feel they are in the process of losing their identity or having that identity marginalised or ignored" (Flinn 2007, p. 159). This has particular resonance in Ireland, a society that has witnessed profound cultural, political, and economic changes over the course of the past century. The stories of marginalised women and girls sit perhaps uneasily in the new Ireland.

Digital platforms are providing a dynamic forum for previously unconnected people to forge new communities that are contributing to the commemoration of past lives and experiences. The digital memorial can be seen as "a unique space for individuals to join together in acts of remembrance" (2007, p.

827). Hess suggests that the appeal of writing online lies in "the promise of free and unrestricted discourse, the ability to create communities across long distances, and the ease of collection and distribution of information for the participant groups" (2007, p. 827); subsequently, this relative freedom can potentially empower and strengthen the vernacular voices of commemorating communities (Hess 2007). By going online, individuals are making an intervention, that due to the reach and multiplicity of networks, can go in various directions with unpredictable outcomes. For some, this is the appeal of an open network that is separate from controlled state processes of memory work. The sites we examined offered individuals an opportunity to speak out, that was previously difficult to obtain. Even with the relative accessibility of social media, which allows people to put their experience on record, or intervene in the memory process – this is not an equal process. It may appear that social media allows contributors to speak freely and the process is a democratic one. However, the road to empowerment online of previously unheard voices is not even. The online experience of sites such as Facebook is shaped by algorithms that "constitute new power relations" generated by networks "forming new regimes of truth" (Leong 2020, p. 105). While an appetite may be satiated by speaking out via social media, there remains issues about equality of opportunity to contribute and whether the message is heard with any consequence.

With the idea of shifting power, the memorial activity documented in this chapter resonates with the practices espoused by proponents of a radical rethink of the museum concept. In their exploration of the rise of issues-based museology, Carter and Orange (2012) consider how museums have shifted from a central focus on physical objects (and the related functions of collecting, conservation, display and interpretation) to contemporary social concerns. It is the museum idea "recast as instigators of social activism" (Carter and Orange 2012, p. 111), that is relevant to the discussions in this chapter. With the argument for greater community production and transformation of authority in the museum space (Lynch and Alberti 2010), these examples of community

memorial projects via social media are bringing this much further than many in the museum sector proposed. If the new museum is a place that can empower communities to engage with social issues, including human rights abuses, then it can be combined with the work of individuals and human rights advocacy groups. The pooling of this work can go even further to suggest a radical rethink of the idea of a memorial museum to include practices that are sometimes ephemeral, impermanent, and unauthorized. The dialogue evident in the discussions provided by and between social media contributors, clearly demonstrate that the memorial narrative is one that is unstable. The digital world has potential to overcome the fixity of the memorial landscape as associated with memorial monuments (Sorensen Stig *et al.* 2019) and the permanent exhibitions found in the memorial museum (Sodaro 2018). Digital remembrance allows for a new form of memory activity that goes beyond territory, allowing for a more rapid spread and greater connectivity, while still fostering "rhythms of remembrance" (Merrill and Lindgren 2020).By doing so there is potential for some of the methods and opportunities of social media to transform our notion of the memorial museum.

The phenomenon of online commemorative and activist communities raises important questions not only for the practices and processes of memory-work. We have argued that these individuals and groups are undertaking three interconnected activities: commemorating the past, cataloguing past experiences and campaigning for justice. They are providing a counter or subaltern narrative to the institutions that many of them feel previously failed generations of women and girls in Mother and Baby Homes all across the island of Ireland. They are doing all this in a challenging socio-political environment and are navigating a digital space that is uncensored and uncontrolled. In the context of remembering and challenging narratives associated with Ireland's Mother and Baby homes, online communities and activists represent a multiplicity of voices, experiences, and perceptions. They are building their own record of the past and meticulously documenting how the institutions of Ireland are addressing a dark episode in the country's past.

Note on anonymity

In order to protect the anonymity of contributors, the authors have not provided names, dates or exact reference for the statements taken from social media.

References

Acker, A. and J. R. Brubaker (2014) 'Death, memorialization, and social media: A platform perspective for personal archives',*Archivaria*, 77, pp. 1-23

Ash, J., Kitchin, R. and A. Leszczynskieds. (2018) *Digital Geographies*, SAGE Publications Limited

Baer, H. (2016) 'Redoing feminism: digital activism, body politics, and neoliberalism', *Feminist Media Studies*,16(1), pp17-34

Bakardjieva, M., Svensson, J. and Skoric, M. (2012)'Digital citizenship and activism: Questions of power and participation online', *JeDEM-eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government*,4(1), pp.i-iv

Benzaquen, S., 2014. Looking at the Tuol Sleng Museum of genocidal crimes, Cambodia, on Flickr and YouTube. *Media, Culture & Society*, 36(6), pp.790-809

Brubaker, J. R., Hayes, G. R. and P. Dourish (2013) 'Beyond the grave: Facebook as a site for the expansion of death and mourning' *The Information Society*, 29(3), pp. 152-163

Buckley, S. and C. McGregor (2019) 'Interrogating institutionalisation and child welfare: the Irish case, 1939-1991'. *European Journal of Social Work* 22(6) pp.1062-1072

Carter, J. and J. Orange (2012)'Contentious terrain: Defining a human rights museology', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 27(2), pp.111-127

Cesare N. and J. Branstad (2018)'Mourning and memory in the twittersphere', *Mortality*, 23(1), pp. 82-97

Church, S. (2013)'Digital Gravescapes: Digital Memorializing on Facebook', *The Information Society* 29, pp. 184-189

Clarke, M.A. (2009) 'The Online Brazilian Museu Da Pessoa' in *Save As ... Digital Memories* eds J. Garde-Hansen, A. Hoskins and A. Reading, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 151-166

Costello Wecker, E. (2015) 'Reclaiming Magdalenism or washing away sin: Magdalen laundries and the rhetorics of feminine silence', *Women's Studies*, 44(2), pp. 264-279

Crooke, E. (2017)'Memory politics and material culture: Display in the memorial museum', *Memory Studies*, 13(2),pp. 1-13

Crooke, E. (2016)'Artefacts as agents for change: commemoration and exchange via material culture, *Irish Political Studies* ,31(1), pp. 86-100

Crowley, U. and R. Kitchin(2008)'Producing "decent girls": Governmentality and the moral geographies of sexual conduct in Ireland (1922–1937)',*Gender, Place and Culture*,15(4), pp. 355-372

Dáil Éireann Debate 15 May 2019 *Mother and Baby Homes Motion* Houses of the Oireachtas Vol. 982 No. 7 https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2019-05-15/ [Last Accessed 20 April 2020]

Dáil Éireann Debate 13 February 2018 *Third Interim Report from the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes: Statements* Houses of the Oireachtas. Vol. 965 No. 4. https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2018-02-13/30/ [Last Accessed 20 April 2020]

Enright, M. and A. O'Donoghue eds. (2021) Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation Draft Alternative Executive Summary. 13 July 2021 https://www.tudublin.ie/media/website/news/2021/main-news/Draft-September-24.pdf [Last accessed 27 March 2022]

Finnegan, F. (2004) *Do Penance or Perish: A Study of Magdalen Asylums in Ireland*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Flinn, A. and B. Alexander (2015) 'Humanizing an inevitability political craft: Introduction to the special issue on archiving activism and activist archiving', *Archival Science* 15(4),pp. 329-335

Flinn, A. (2007) 'Community histories, community archives: some opportunities and challenges', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 28(2), pp. 151-176

Garrett, P. M. (2000) 'The abnormal flight: The migration and repatriation of Irish unmarried mothers', *Social History*, 25(3), pp. 330-343

Goode, L. (2009) 'Social news, citizen journalism and democracy', *New Media & Society*, 11 (8), pp. 1287-1305

Hardt, M. (2017) 'Multiple Temporalities of the Movements', *Triple C: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 15(2), pp. 390-392

Harlow, S. and L. Guo. (2014) 'Will the revolution be tweeted or Facebooked? Using digital communication tools in immigrant activism', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*,19(3), pp. 463-478

Hawkins, P. S. (1993)'Naming Names: The Art of Memory and the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt', *Critical Inquiry* 19(4), pp. 752-779

Hess, A. (2007) 'In digital remembrance: vernacular memory and the rhetorical construction of web memorials', in *Media, Culture and Society* 29(3), pp. 812-830

Juris, J. S. (2012) 'Reflections on# Occupy Everywhere: Social media, public space, and emerging logics of aggregation', *American Ethnologist* 39(2), pp. 259-279

Justice for Magdalenes Research (2015) *Death, Institutionalisation & Duration of Stay A critique of Chapter 16 of the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries and related issues* Available at http://jfmresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/JFMR_Critique_190215.pdf [Last Accessed 6 December 2019]

Kaun, A. and J. Uldam (2018) 'Digital activism: After the hype', *New Media & Society,* 20(6), pp. 2099-2106

Keightley, E. and Schlesinger, P., 2014. 'Digital media–social memory: remembering in digitally networked times', *Media, Culture & Society* 36(6), pp. 745-747

Kenny, E. (2013) Magdalen Laundries Report: Statements, Dáil Éireann, 19 February 2013 https://www.kildarestreet.com/debates/?id=2013-02-19a.387#g389 [Last Accessed 6 December 2019]

Leong, L. (2020) 'Domesticating algorithms: An exploratory study of Facebook users in Myanmar', *The Information Society* 36(2), pp. 97-108

Loader, B. D. and D. Mercea (2012) 'Networking democracy? Social media innovations in participatory politics', *Social Media and Democracy*, London: Routledge, pp. 12-21

Luddy, M. (2011) 'Unmarried Mothers in Ireland 1880-1973', *Women's History Review*, 20(1),pp. 109-126

Lynch, B. T. and Alberti, S. J. (2010) 'Legacies of prejudice: racism, co-production and radical trust in the museum', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 25(1), pp. 13-35

Marwick, A. and N. B. Ellison (2012) '"There isn't wifi in heaven!" Negotiating visibility on Facebook memorial pages', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56(3), pp. 378-400

McAleese, M. (2013) *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries*. Available at http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/MagdalenRpt2013 [Last Accessed 12 October 2019]

McCormick, L. (2005) 'Sinister Sisters? The Portrayal of Ireland's Magdalene Asylums in Popular Culture', *Cultural and Social History*, 2(3), pp. 373-379

McDowell, S. and E. Crooke (2019) 'Creating liminal spaces of collective possibility in divided societies: building and burning the Temple', *Cultural Geographies*, 26(3), pp. 323-339

McDonnell, (n.d.) *Justice for the Magdalenes* UCD Impact Case Study Available at https://www.ucd.ie/research/portal/impact/casestudycompetition/pdf/CASE_STUDY_Katherine_ODonnell_FINAL2.pdf [Last accessed 12 August 2019].

McLaughlin, C. (2011) *Recording Memories from Political Violence: A Film-Makers Journey*. Intellect Books

Merrill, S. and Lindgren, S. (2020) The rhythms of social movement memories: The mobilization of Silvio Meier's activist remembrance across platforms. *Social Movement Studies*, 19(5-6), pp.657-674.

Morozov, E. (2011) *The Net Delusion: How not to liberate the world*. London: Penguin

O'Rourke, M. and J. M. Smith (2016) 'Ireland's Magdalene Laundries: Confronting a History Not Yet in the Past'. In Hayes, *A. and M. Meagher eds A Century of Progress? Irish Women Reflect*, Galway: Arlen Housepp. 107-34

Postmes, T. and S. Brusting (2002) 'Collective action in the age of the Internet: Mass communication and online mobilization', *Social Science Computer Review*, 20(3), pp. 290–301

Sodaro, A. (2018) *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence*. London: Routledge

Sorensen Stig, M. L., D. Viejo-Rose and P. Filippuccieds. (2019) *Memorials and Memorialisation: History, Forms, and Affects in Memorials in the Aftermath of Armed Conflict. From History to Heritage* London: Palgrave

Chapter 15

The Museum with Only Walls:

An Involuntary Memorial to Rio de Janeiro's National Museum on Instagram

Giselle Beiguelman and Nathalia Lavigne

On a Sunday evening in early September 2018, a devastating fire reduced to ashes the biggest part of Rio de Janeiro's *Museu Nacional* collection. Founded in 1818 by King João VI of Portugal, Brazil, and the Algarves, the National Museum was not only the oldest and most important scientific and historical museum in Brazil, but its collection was the fifth largest in the world, with more than 20 million artefacts from a wide variety of cultures and origins. In a few hours, major items such as the long-necked dinosaur Maxakalisaurus; the collections of entomology, arachnology, and Egyptology; and indigenous objects and

audio recordings of native Brazilian's original languages, were almost completely lost (Greschko 2018).

This tragic episode of the National Museum's fire was broadcasted live on TV, and the mesmerising scene of the flames consuming the building immediately went viral on Instagram. While most of the initial posts were reporting the fire, with pictures and videos reproduced from television screens, a wide variety of images would soon appear on this social media platform: historical photographs of the museum building, old family albums with photos of children when they had visited the museum for the first time, selfies with the façade's ruins in the background, and all sort of memes. Among the different hashtags referencing Brazil's National Museum a few days after the fire was *#museunacionalvive* ("the National Museum lives"), a sentence that later would become the name of the museum's official campaign asking for its reconstruction.

Departing from the interpretations of the term 'memorial museum' so far explored in this volume, this final chapter considers how digital technologies might offer the opportunity to *memorialise* a museum after its partial destruction. Thus, it considers how we might memorialise museums rather than discussing a particular genre of museum which memorialises. This chapter analyses the repercussion of the fire of Rio de Janeiro's National Museum through the visual content shared on Instagram. Focusing mostly on the *#museunacionalvive* hashtag, we ponder what is actually considered to be alive in this museum's phantasmagorical imagery after the material loss of most of its 20 million items, investigating how the remediation process of an archive that no longer exists operates. As such, between 2nd September 2018 and 2nd September 2019, we analysed approximately 6,500 posts which used the hashtag *#museunacionalvive* on Instagram, besides the Museu Nacional account itself, trying to identify patterns among these images that could be conceptualised as a memorial. Our starting point was to understand

what kind of memories dominate, and from them, which narratives about the museum could be told in the future.

In his essay *Museum Without Walls (Le Musée Imaginaire)*, André Mauraux (1947) describes photographic reproduction as something that favours the relationship with the physical objects. He argues that because of this, artworks survive and can be remembered. However, what happened with the National Museum could be seen as a counterexample of this idea. It is curious to see people taking selfies with the ruins of the former Imperial Palace where the royal family lived during their time in Brazil, even after the independence from Portugal in 1822. As a significant number of selfies with the façade's ruins in the background demonstrate, instead of a museum without walls (Malraux,1947), this archive seems to survive as a *museum with only walls* – which was how the building remained for a while, with only its façade still standing.[1] The images evoke little materiality anymore; like the ashes and wreckage, they are only the remains of an irreversible loss. If Malraux's idea was to open the physical limits to make artworks better known by increasing people's interest in seeing them in person, the reproduction of objects of the National Museum are now completely detached from their original referent, which no longer exists.

The chapter begins by contextualising how this accidental digital memorial created on Instagram relates to the lack of public programmes dealing with memory and heritage preservation in Brazil and the erasure of the nation's history. Brazil's National Museum fire – which happened less than three months after its 200th anniversary – is discussed not as an isolated

1 Since this chapter was originally written in 2019, we do not address the reconstruction project of the Museu Nacional, which is due to be partially reopened in 2023, and completely in 2027, when the bicentennial of the Independence of Brazil is celebrated. Besides that, following the argument of this text, we do not consider this actually a 'reopening', but, instead, a new Museu Nacional, since the original one was destroyed in 2018. More information found here.

incidental episode, but as part of a national politics of forgetfulness that erases many of the most violent occurrences in Brazilian history, including slavery, genocides of indigenous populations, and dictatorship. The context, therefore, is that heritage preservation is an everyday challenge, and the erasure of the country's history is a permanent reality. Next, we offer a theoretical exploration of the significance of Malraux's seminal book to the digital age, particularly through the lens of Foster (1996). Finally, we analyse a variety of these images investigating the different categorisations of this imaginary museum that have been spontaneously created by the audience. The themes presented emerged from images that were mostly collected in the first three months after the fire, when the memorialist tone was still predominant. Applying a qualitative methodology with thematic coding, we devised three curatorial categories of this imaginary memorial museum collaborative created online: 'Museum in flames'; 'The memory boom of the self'; and 'Remembering with matter: An archive of remains'. Our main interests are the consideration of how this "archive without a museum" can be understood through this group of images, and what other definitions of 'museum 'and 'memorial' could be told in the future from this material shared online.

We chose to concentrate the search and analysis of the images found via the hashtag *#museunacionalvive* due to the intriguing idea of liveness that it evokes, whilst referring to the museum's destruction. How does the remediation of an archive that no longer exists – or even the museum itself – operate? The idea of 'the National Museum lives' also evokes an involuntary and collaborative memorial, constantly updatable online. Our decision to consider this non-material content as a kind of memorial also adheres to Paul Williams's definition of the word. He states that a memorial could be "anything that serves in remembrance of a person or event" (2007, p. 7). Although this is not the purpose of the National Museum's campaign, which insists that the museum keeps existing; the pictures shared using the hashtag above go beyond this idea.

The Politics of Forgetfulness in Brazil's History[2]

The extermination of memory and erasure of the other have been inscribed in the pages of Brazilian history since colonisation (Seligmann-Silva 2016). Catechesis was colonialism's inaugural gesture, imposing forced incorporation into the dominant Catholic culture alongside slave labour. In recent history, negationist discourses arose calling the Brazilian dictatorship *ditabranda* [a conjunction of the terms "dictatorship" and "soft"] (Toledo 2009), and the few spaces devoted to its memory indicate how Brazilian history is marked by erasing violence and institutionalising oblivion.

It was no different with the National Museum fire. Mourned with exhaustion in the early days following the event, it disappeared very quickly from the news and public conversation. For a week, we were flooded with records of the bicentennial Palace that housed the museum, burning and succumbing to the fury of fire. However, the tone of general dismay at the loss of the priceless heritage of 20 million items displayed some structural hypocrisy. Amid the collective whining, it turned out that while the museum was open, it was an illustrious stranger to the public. In 2017, for example, the number of Brazilians who visited the Louvre Museum in Paris was 50.5% higher than those that visited the National Museum (Barifouse 2018), indicating how the indifference of the local audience for the National Museum did not correspond to a lack of interest in visiting museums in other places worldwide.

A survey on Google Trends shows that the commotion did not last seven days online. Between 2nd and 3rd September 2018, searches for *"Museu Nacional"* peaked in popularity. They then dropped by the 9th of the same month to almost zero. The number of hits on Google cannot express the full

2 Some considerations exposed in this section were previously analysed in the essay 'Tropical Compulsive Beauty' in the book Memória da Amnésia: políticas do esquecimento [Memory of Amnesia: Politics of Forgetting] (Beiguelman 2019, p. 212-231).

gravity of the situation, but its trend charts are still an indicator of mobilisation around a topic. The National Museum fire did not even rank among the top 10 most searched events on the Internet (Google Trends 2018). A year later, the sad hypothesis was confirmed: trends in Google searches for the "*Museu Nacional*" on the first anniversary of the fire were nearly identical to those before the tragic event on 2nd September 2018.

It is important to note that this was not the first fire to destroy a major collection in Brazil. The case of the 1978 fire at the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro (MAM), which burned 950 works in 40 minutes, is internationally known. Recent examples include the loss of the most popular Brazilian museum, the Portuguese Language Museum in Sao Paulo, in 2016; and the partial fire at the Brazilian Cinematheque, which resulted in the definitive loss of 270 titles. The lack of projects undertaken to deal with these losses also reinforces the fragility of memory policies in the country. Moreover, it illuminates the recurrence of the neutralisation of pain and conflict to reiterate the myth of sociability and affection. This is what indicates the force of the politics of forgetting: our social and institutional inability to problematise traumatic memories.

Traumatic memory is understood here as the memory of historically and socially produced collective experiences, with material and affective losses and not infrequently marked by processes of racial discrimination, prejudice, and violence. Historian Dominick LaCapra argues that one of the central features of this type of memory is the blurring of the boundaries between past and present, making traumatic experiences "seem or feel as if it were more 'real' and 'present' than contemporary circumstances" (2016, p. 377). This causes its dynamics to tend to repetition, continually reproducing the past as an eternal present. By continually reiterating itself, traumatic memory is not amenable to updating and prevents the creation of alternative narratives, culminating in some cases in the impossibility of mourning (LaCapra 2016, p. 378).

The hashtag *#museunacionalvive* functions in this way with particular nuances that need to be stated. On the one hand, there is the effort of the professors and staff of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), who are maintaining the reality of the National Museum after the fire (they are the only people trying to restore the collection). It is not possible to ignore the struggle of the UFRJ, a public university, as the target of attacks by the current conservative Brazilian government in maintaining its management prerogative over the museum collection, a collection that has only survived in recent decades due to the efforts of its teachers, students, and technicians' research. However, on the other hand, the hashtag is symptomatic of a process of concealing conflicts that marks Brazilian history as a whole.

From a Museum with only Walls to an Archive without Museum

In *The Museum without Walls,* Malraux (1947) anticipates many aspects of how we currently access art objects as images on digital platforms and in social media. He defines the imaginary as the result of several processes of displacement or "metamorphoses" (Malraux 1965, p. 12): first, when the objects are removed from their original contexts and sent to museums; second, when they are displayed as pictures in art books. In this "dialogue of resurrections" (Malraux 1965, p. 231), the discourses of the works are built by the imaginary of each epoch, overlapping each other. Bringing this discussion into the contemporary context, one could say that the digital reproduction and circulation of these images can be considered the third stage of these metamorphoses. While looking at some Instagram galleries or collaborative art-related hashtags with massive contributions, one can easily conclude that Malraux's famous statement that "Art History has been the History of what is photographable" seems even stronger nowadays (Malraux 1965, p. 108).

Malraux's claims counter those of Walter Benjamin's, in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), regarding how reproduction affects the aura of the artwork. For Malraux, the reproduction favours rather

than threatens the original; it is thanks to them that artworks can survive and continue to be remembered. Hal Foster provides a comparative reading of the two authors in "The Archive without Museums": "Moreover, if for Benjamin reproduction shatters tradition and liquidates aura, for Malraux it provides the means to reassemble the broken bits into one meta-tradition of style, a new Museum without Walls" (Foster 1996, p. 109).

In this essay, Foster takes up some points raised by Malraux in a reflection on the growth of visual culture in the academic field. Malraux's importance to Foster refers especially to his discussion about the impact of photographic reproduction techniques on art. Foster sees a comparison between Malraux's claims about photography and the reproduction of these images in the digital sphere:

> Is there a new dialectics of seeing allowed by electronic information? If, according to Malraux, the museum guarantees the status of art and photographic reproduction permits the affinities of style, what might a digital reordering underwrite? Art as image-text, as info-pixel? An archive without museums? If so, will this database be more than a base of data, a repository of the given?
>
> (1996, p. 109)

According to Foster, reducing the art object into an image-text – that is, into code – opens another phase after the transformation of the world into images: in the digital context, the world is accessed as pure information. To him, the preponderance of visual culture and the critique of the autonomy of art can result in a superficial view of history and the trivialisation of this field as a product of mass culture. The image, when evoked as a central element, also becomes a capitalist fetishised item. Consequently, museums have replaced their mnemonic function with a predominantly visual and entertainment experience that, combined with

new buildings that are architectural icons, is more important than the collection itself.

In recent decades, Malraux's essay has frequently emerged in discussions about museums in the digital age (Arvanitis 2013; Henning 2013; Foster 1996, Huhtamo 2013). The English title *Museum Without Walls*, although contested for suggesting a mistaken relationship with architecture (Krauss 1996), ended up being interpreted as a precursor of virtual museums or the notion of art as circulation in Web 2.0 images. However, in today's 'museums without walls', the history of art is told not only through what is photographable, but also what can be shared and memefied – processes that completely differ from the photographic reproduction.

The suggested path between the two texts of Malraux and Foster is taken here mostly as a metaphor to discuss what happened with the National Museum as a literal example of what an archive without a museum can be. How can a collection that exists mostly as image still evoke a museum that no longer exists physically, at least not in its original configuration? What kind of referentiality did these dissolved objects (not only as images) pledge, following Foster's argument?

The proliferation of new digital media in recent years has brought a radical change in this phenomenon as described by Foster in the late 1990s. Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin (2010) define the current moment as a "third memory boom". Unlike the documentary overdose of previous decades, which took place through media that had control over how a certain memory was transmitted, today everyone produces and transmits their own memories in real-time and sometimes involuntarily. And the main characteristic of what Hoskins refers to as this "orgy of hyperconnectivity" (2018, p. 2) is precisely the blurred border between communication and archive – what he calls "grey media" or "technological unconscious" (2017, p. 20), referring to the invisible operations of software and algorithms. The uncertainties of how

these processes take place generate an equally undefined memory state. In other words, the problem is no longer just the obsession with archiving and what we do with these files, but also the difficulty in realising when, how, and for whom we are producing memory.

Similarly, in the last decades, many authors have brought new readings regarding the digitalisation of objects and collections, specially problematising the status of the aura as something that belongs to a unique place and time. In *After Art* (2013), which addresses the reception of art as an image in the multiple forms and contexts in which it circulates, the art historian David Joselit argues that Benjamin's brilliant analyses about the mechanical reproduction of the twentieth century "become a roadblock" in a context where "images are no longer and probably can never again be site specific" (Joselit 2013, p. 14). Mostly, he argues, because what makes them relevant is "their capacity for replication, remediation and dissemination at variable velocities" (2013, p. XIV). Sarah Kenderdine and Andrew Yip also update this discussion exploring the notion of "proliferation of aura" in digital objects. They analyse projects made by museums using augmented reality and other image-reproduction techniques, and argue that "authenticity vested in objects is not always solely located in their materiality" (Kenderdine and Yip 2018, p. 275). The art theorist Boris Groys goes further by saying that "digital metadata creates an aura without an object" (2016, p. 16). This new way of archiving differs from that described by Benjamin of the object without aura because it produces a network of information documenting the lost 'here and now' of an artwork, which finds on the internet an unlimited space of possibilities.

We further this debate by considering the extent to which museums can be musealised by audiences as well as by institutions. Both groups produce events and document themselves, creating an endless archive about their activities in a continuous present, in which one might assume that the past – represented by collections – does not seem so important anymore. Nonetheless, this was not the case for the National Museum. If the greatest

function of museums nowadays in entering the flow of time is to document itself, producing "temporary exhibitions that demonstrate the transitory character of the present order of things" (Groys 2016, p. 3), the opposite happened for this particular institution, which only entered into the dynamic of temporal flow after its destruction.

This is apparent on the National Museum's Instagram account, which was belatedly created on May 2, 2018 (see Figure 1), but only became substantially active after the fire.

Until then, follower engagement on posts averaged less than a thousand. The post that first mentioned the fire had more than ten thousand likes, whilst the one announcing the campaign #museunacionalvive, on 11th September, had four thousand – which is still not very much in comparison with other museums of such importance. Nevertheless, it was a substantial

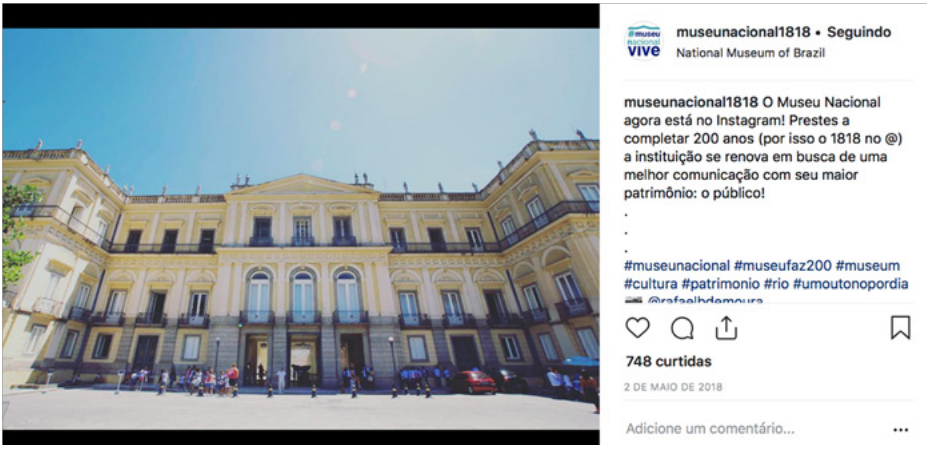


***Figure 1**. The National Museum's first Instagram post, on May 2nd 2018. Source:Instagram/@ museunacional1818. Screenshot by the authors, July 2019*

increase. Also, specific research departments created social media profiles for the first time after the fire. Profiles such as the @malacologia_museu_nacional, from the Malacology sector, and @orthopteramnrj, from the Orthoptera sectors, inform about their research and provide historical facts about each department.

However, it is also quite unusual that the National Museum did not have an account on Instagram before 2018. Although the use of this platform by institutions is often restricted to digital marketing strategy, Instagram has established itself as one of the main communication channels between museums and their audiences. Ignoring this has certainly contributed to the fact that the National Museum has remained so neglected by visitors. The huge mourning observed through the more than nine thousand posts of the hashtag #lutomuseunacional ("mourning for the National Museum"), mostly concentrated during the days after the fire, did not correspond to the low number of visitors to the museum in recent years. In comparison, another local institutional in Rio de Janeiro, the controversial Santiago Calatrava-designed Museu do Amanhã (Museum of Tomorrow), which opened at the end of 2015, was the most visited museum in the country in its first year of activity, with 1.4 million people. The Museu do Amanhã is the antithesis of the National Museum. Planned as the main symbol of the urban renewal project of the Rio do Janeiro' port area, it is the perfect example of the trend of spectacle museums. It has become an architectural symbol and its design suggests that experiences are more important than artefacts. The very creation of a new scientific museum with an immaterial collection – which had a budget of 32 million reais (estimated $8 million) in 2017, while the National Museum received only 445,500 reais (estimated $111,375) in the same year – is a paradigmatic example of how heritage preservation has been neglected in Brazil.

The concept of the musealisation of museum spaces is fundamental to understanding this phenomenon. It is devised from the idea about the

musealisation of everyday life (Huyssen 2000), during the so-called second memory boom in the 1980s (Hoskins 2018) and a fascination with the past. Once, museums were considered a source of great interest for being "repositories of temporality" (Castells 2011). More recently however, museums seem to have been abdicated of this role, as they have also been vastly musealising themselves, and their collections and spaces are seen more through their "broken bits" (Foster 1996) and the noisy realm of social media. This also occurs with a large number of people sharing photos of museum spaces, alongside the institutions' posts. While many institutions used to ask visitors to stow their phones whilst inside the galleries, in the last few years they have begun to stimulate all kinds of interactions using photography and its spread on social networks. The word 'museum' is mentioned approximately 22 million times in an Instagram search for this hashtag in December 2021. Although there are many generic images among this tag, it is significant that people are referencing museums on the platform.

Furthermore, the audience assumes new and distinct roles from the museum's spectator as they photograph and share personal archives of these images and organise them with hashtags. They are essentially archiving and curating collections. As Beryl Graham points out, "audiences are not only documenting but curating and taxonomizing" (2016, p. 586). Along with the official reproduction of artworks taken by institutions, these "participatory documentation archives" are available on these networks without hierarchical distinction.

Such practices can be also understood as examples of "counter-collecting", a term devised by Beiguelman and Magalhães in the book *Possible Futures* (2014) to classify a current counterculture of archiving and how personal records might, in the future, blend with institutional archiving practices. Domenico Quaranta discusses a similar idea in the same book:

> In the Digital Age, archiving and collecting are no more just an act connected with power, institutions and authority: people can be involved in it with what they choose to save on their hard disk, and to share again online; they can, if not compete, at least cooperate with institutions in the effort of preserving ephemeral artworks that have been distributed online at some point in their existence, but that are not online anymore. Your hard disk, for the future archivist or art historian, may be a resource as valuable as a museum's digital collection.
>
> (2014, p. 233)

Although he discusses the preservation of digital artworks, these arguments about how the audience could have agency in this process are certainly relevant in the case of the National Museum. Images of lost objects from the collection and former exhibition spaces taken by visitors and shared on Instagram have, after the fire, gained enormous importance as preservation documents for the museum's memory. This is exemplified by a note on the museum website on how to support the "National Museum is Alive" project asking those who have images and virtual copies from the collection and exhibition rooms to send them through the Museum's website <https://ufrj.br/museunacionalvive/apoie/comoapoiar>. Even though the use of this material still presents several methodological challenges especially on how to find and archiving it, this signals that the role of the audience whilst taking selfies in the museum spaces could have significant importance in the future.

Method

In this study, we analysed a group of approximately 6,500 posts that included the tag *#museunacionalvive* on Instagram between 2nd September 2018 and 2nd September 2019, besides the Museu Nacional account, to identify patterns among the images shared through this hashtag that could be related

to the idea of a memorial. Our starting point while looking at the heterodox group of images was to understand what kind of memories dominate, and from them, which narratives about the museum could be told in the future. How could this archive without a museum be understood through the images shared online?

Although analysis through metadata could be useful in many cases by giving more precise information for this number of images, we chose a qualitative method of analysis to achieve a better "critical understanding of how social media are used in non-standard ways, identifying practices that might easily be missed through automated analyses" (Highfield and Leaver 2015). As such, through thematic coding this sample of images, we aimed to identify new taxonomies about the National Museum and the collective memory created after its destruction.

We chose Instagram as an object of analysis due to the range and importance it has been reaching in recent years, having overpassed recently a billion monthly users. Since it was launched in 2010, this social media platform has been transforming the way we relate to images. Lev Manovich coined the term "Instagramism" to define this contemporary phenomenon, comparing it to modern avant-garde movements at the turn of the twentieth century, such as futurism and surrealism, in terms of its impact and production of its own visual language (2017). If the invention of photography in the nineteenth century had a significant impact on art history in the era of the "post-photographic museums" (Walsh 2007, p. 24), the increasingly popularity of Instagram encouraged an equally significant change. The combination of the use of cell phones by museum visitors and the sharing of images of artworks on social media has caused a huge transformation concerning how we relate to these objects also. Since circa 2012, most museums around the world started to review their restrictive policies on taking photos inside the galleries. Instagram seemed not only to have caused this recent change, but perhaps to have facilitated the

spread of this phenomenon.[3] In *Art after Instagram: Art spaces, Audiences, Aesthetics*, Lachlan MacDowall and Kylie Budge also attest the rise of a "new audience agency" after the photography ban was lifted in exhibitions, and Instagram became a "space of its own" for images of art and museums to circulate under new categories and an unprecedent scale and speed (2021, p. 10).

#museunacionalvive: An Involuntary Memorial Museum

As a counterexample of the musealisation of the museum space previously discussed, the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro was mostly musealised on social media after its destruction. It is quite significant that "the Museum National Lives" campaign appeared as a response to the mourning tone of the viral hashtag *#lutomuseunacional*. The main difference between the two hashtags is how the latter is more restricted to the factual episode and has become an amalgamation of contradictory political protests.

It is also important to mention that the National Museum's fire happened about a month before the presidential election when the polarisation of the Brazilian political atmosphere reached its peak. Through this same tag *#lutomuseunacional* ("mourning the National Museum"), one could find most people protesting against the far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro, who would win the election in October, but also posts from his supporters [Figures 2 and 3].[4]

---

3 Since 2011 the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art removed the signs asking visitors to stow their cellphones. As Barratt, the Met director has affirmed, the museum's concern that putting images online could affect the museum attendance proved to be incorrect. Link accessed in September 2019.

4 As an example, on Figure 2 one can see (on the left, at the top) a post written "PT no", citing the left-wing party that lost the election.

The hashtag *#museunacionalvive*, which reached approximately 6,500 posts in September 2019, is more relevant in its content, focused on the museum and its collection.

In this last section, we discuss the categories that we identified through our sample of this virtual archive that was shared on social media during the year after the fire. We decided to focus on the particular hashtag *#museunacionalvive* due to its suggestive idea of liveness while referring to the destruction of the museum. The specific themes presented here emerged from the group of images collected especially in the first three months after the fire, when the mourning and memorialist tone was still more predominant. From this image collection, we identified three possible categories that represent an ongoing digital memorial to the National Museum: (1) 'Museum in flames', (2) 'The memory boom of the self', and (3)



Figures 2 and 3. *Some examples of posts pro (PT não) and against the far-right president Jair Bolsonaro (Ele não) Source: Instagram. Screenshots by the authors, July 2019*

'Remember with matter: An archive of remains.' We deliberately avoided the most explicit marketing posts, which at a certain point begun to represent the most prevalent use of this hashtag. Although they are important because they indicate how the institution perceives itself after the fire, they also overshadow the spontaneous character of how the audience created memories about the museum, which interested us more to investigate.



Figure 4. *Source: Instagram/ @iquesv, 3rd September 2018. Screenshot by the authors, July 2019*

1. Museum in Flames

The first images that began to appear on Instagram about the fire were pictures of television screens broadcasting the mesmerising scene of the flames on that Sunday evening. The television and its material trace has once again gained the importance of eyewitness in the story of that unbelievable episode.

One could have stayed for hours, stuck in these chains of mediations – a live TV event broadcasted live on social media – in a "perpetual digital present" (Hoskins 2017), watching 200-years of history burn with no predictable future to come.

This was not the first fire at a Brazilian museum, but this was "perhaps the first *telememoricide* in history, recorded and replicated to exhaustion as it happened, on the Internet and on television" (Beiguelman 2019, p. 215). The term *memoricide* was created by Mirko Grmek in 1991 in the context of the Balkan wars but mostly disseminated by Ivan Lovrenovic in the essay "The Hatred of Memory" (1994), for *The New York Times*. Understood as the intention to destroy all traces of a nation's cultural existence in a particular place, this notion seems timely for this episode, even in such a different context.[5] Although there are few similarities between the museum fire and the Balkan wars of the 1990s, the main topic of Lovrenovic's article, a similar discourse against memory can be noted in many of the processes of the erasure of Brazilian history.

The notion of media witnessing, "a witnessing performed *in, by*, and *through* the media" (Frosh and Pinchevski 2009, p. 1), is also worth discussing here. Analysing the concept through examples of the Holocaust and 9/11, Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski differentiate how the intersections of media and

*5 Ivan Lovrenic, '**The Hatred of Memory**', May 28th 1994.*

witnessing occurred in the two events. "Whereas in the former the ultimate, authoritative witnesses are generally understood to be those who were there, in the latter we are haunted by the possibility that it is the distant television viewers [...] – who were the event's true witnesses" (2009, p. 3). After the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, an act considered to be a media event in the moment it happened, everyone seems not only to be a witness but also a testimony-producer.

While witnessing the death of the National Museum happening in real-time through the many types of images, and the repercussion in the first days, one could have thought initially that the event would be treated as a serious national tragedy. However, a year later, not only had the issue disappeared from public debate but the pictures depicting the museum in flames also appeared less frequently on social media. If the vigilance of the testimony-producer exists to prevent these events happening again, the National Museum's fire was certainly not an example of this. Although highly reproduced through different media, the images of the burning museum circulated to exhaustion only for a few days. Even so, they still carry an important symbolic charge and are often posted when the topic of the National Museum's destruction appears again. This repetition is also representative of a traumatic memory associated with this event, inscribing it in an eternal present that avoids a serious attempt to understand its causes and consequences.

While looking at these images, Kazimir Malevich's arguments in *On the Museum* (2015), come to mind. In this classic anti-museum statement, originally written in 1919 in the context of the Russian post-revolutionary avant-garde when old Russian museums were at risk of being attacked and destroyed in civil wars, he argues that incinerating the past was the only way to open the path to a new form of truly living art, created from its ashes that "could be accommodated on one chemist's shelf" (Malevich, 1919, p. 270). Although it is hard to compare these two different contexts – for the Russian avant-garde, watching the art of the past burn was part of a





Figures 5 and 6. *Museum in flames. Source: Instagram/ @marcelotabachi, @iquesv, @eduardosalustio. Screenshots by the authors, July 2019*

revolutionary project that aimed to create a new cultural tradition, whilst the politics of forgetfulness in Brazilian history does not have any program except the institutionalisation of oblivion itself and the erasure of traumatic memories – it is interesting to observe Malevich's argument in favour of the museum's destruction saying that 'our living museums' could be found in any other places except these spaces. In this sense, to come across the images of the National Museum in flames in a hashtag that tells us that the "National Museum Lives" is, in a certain way, a realisation that the museum's existence could also be linked to its destruction, which does not prevent it from continuing to live across other spaces.

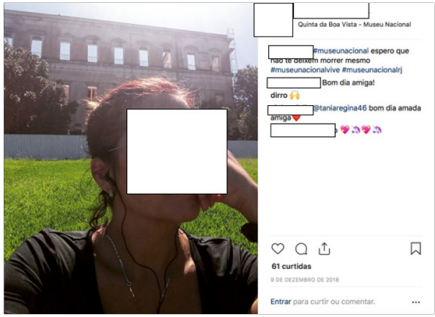
2. The Memory Boom of the Self

On the evening of the fire, a group of students of museology organised an open call on social media that asked people to send emails of old photographs, including selfies, they had of the National Museum. Motivated by this call, people started to post on Instagram any kind of image of the museum space they had in their personal archives. Suddenly, everyone seemed to have a special memory to share about a museum that had been forgotten for years.

Sometime after the fire, the second wave of posts that began to appear was selfies taken in front of the museum with only the façade of the former Imperial Palace standing [Figures 7-10].

Some of them were not really selfies, but staged photographs of a testimony-producer looking to the ruins of the background façade feigning surprise, as if they were witnessing the tragedy at its very moment or visiting an archaeological site or other place of memory whose destruction took place a long time ago. The vintage Instagram filter used in some of these pictures, such as Figure 11, also helps to blur the boundaries of the temporal index, reinforcing a tendency of re-enacting the past to better understand it.









Figures 7, 8, 9 and 10. *Source: Instagram, @piresbrb, @cristianocardoso_foto, @dradriscilaladeira, @vinhos.julia. Screenshots by the authors, July 2019*

It is tempting to look at these images as a banal aspect of a narcissistic selfie culture, but the captions highlight the need for a deeper reading. Whilst people's smiling faces looking at the camera against the backdrop of the museum ruins suggest a superficial engagement with this tragic episode, their texts have a sincere tone. One of them writes that "#museunacional I hope that they don't really let you die" (Figure 10); whilst another affirms that "The end of History has ended but not for the ones who has it on the memory" (sic) [Figure 7]. Although they look like generic statements, they indicate that the



***Figure 11**. The Museu Nacional's façade after the fire and a visitor posing behind the destruction scenario. Source: Instagram/@contraomundomoderno. Screenshot by the author, July 2019*

act of depicting oneself in the ruins is seen by these people as an authentic gesture in defence of the National Museum's memory preservation.

Confessional culture is a good way to understand the collective reaction on social media about this episode. Defined by Andrew Hoskins (2017) as the twenty-first century version of the memory boom, it relies mostly on a memory of the self, which is characterised by a constant uncertainty about the past and of what should be kept or not in memory for the future. Along with regression of media consciousness, an unclear idea of what is social communication or what is an archive, the self-image produced by our times has become grey and opaque. As Hoskins states, "a society that can no longer 'see' itself is a society without memory" (2017, p. 10). This lack of self-consciousness about our historical past is typical of the politics of forgetfulness in Brazilian history, as already discussed. This gesture of sharing old pictures from their childhood, of probably their first and only visit to the museum, or even taking selfies on the museum ruins, indicates an attempt to inscribe personal memory into official history as a way to assimilate it.

Since the selfie was chosen in 2013 by the Oxford Dictionaries as the word of the year, much has been written on the subject which is directly related to the use of social networks, especially Instagram. In *The Social Photo: On Photography and Social Media* (2019), Nathan Jurgenson defines the selfie as "the social photo one takes of oneself", an authentic manifestation of this new cultural practice and way of seeing in which photography is understood less for its technical evolution and "more as a broader development in self-expression, memory, and sociality" (2019, p. 10). These three aspects clearly inform the selfies taken on the Museum Nacional's ruins. Whilst looking at the camera trying to find their best angle in the picture, the photographers are working on their self-expression; while writing protest phrases in the caption, they are expressing their concern with the National Museum's memory preservation, and, at the same time, communicating all of this to their social community.

3. Remembering with Matter: An Archive of Remains

> *Even as traditional memory disappears, we feel obliged assiduously to collect remains, testimonies, documents, images, speeches, any visible signs of what has been, as if this burgeoning dossier were to be called upon to furnish some proof to who knows what tribunal of history.*
>
> (Nora 1989, p. 13)

The role of materiality and the importance of matter to evoke memory is a vivid debate in the realm of memorial studies. The appearance of thing theory (Brown 2001) is seen by many authors as a response to the "dematerialization of objects in the digital media" (Huyssen 2016, p. 107). However, it is also true that the rise of this field has contributed to the development of different kinds of approaches to matter itself. This has led to an increasing interest in physical objects rather than a desire to replace them with virtual representation.

Nora emphasises the "dilated materialization" of memory when speaking about the decentralisation of the archive's producers in our time, extending to everyone the role "to preserve every indicator of memory" (1989, p. 19). He coined the term "*lieux de mémoire*" for anything that can "stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial" (*Ibid.*). Although he includes places such as museums and cemeteries as well as non-material ones such as anniversaries, his mention of materialisation recognises the significance of the role of matter in these places. If memory is seen as intangible, remembering can only happen, according to him, with, or in, material form – even if it is only a date in a calendar. According to Nora, the "*lieux de mémoire*" have only appeared due to a collapse of memory that happened as a consequence of the acceleration of history, a break in the present concerning the past and the future. As such, the only way to access the past is through its reconstruction, which mostly happens in the form of remains.

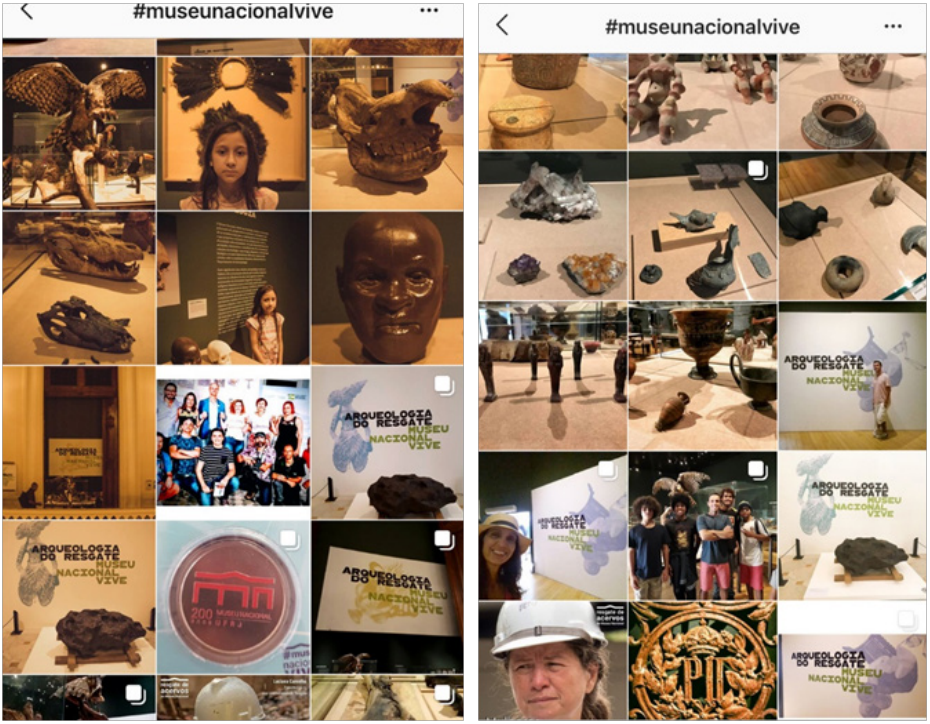
Most of the changes implemented by museums in the last decades indicate a transformation towards increasingly looking at physical and digital space as complementary fields. Interest in material culture still prevails in the digital realm regarding how artworks are shared on social media. As Kylie Budge attests in 'Objects in Focus: Museum Visitors and Instagram' (2017), after developing research about an exhibition at the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Sydney, Australia), among all the images analysed through one hashtag and two geotags, forty percent were close-up photographs of the shoes on display. Thus, she concluded, "despite the allure of technology and of all things in the digital realm, people are still drawn to being in the presence of and dwelling on the three-dimensional object" (2017, p. 81).

Fragments from the National Museum's collections started to appear on the *#museunacionalvive* hashtag when the rescue of objects began, but they increased significantly when part of this material was displayed in an exhibition of more than one hundred items rescued from the museum's rubble.[6] Also called *Museu Nacional Vive (National Museum Lives – Archaeology of a Rescue)*, it played a significant role in feeding the hashtag *#museunacionalvive*. Between February and April 2019, when the show took place in an important museum in Rio de Janeiro, images of this show predominated with this hashtag [Figures 12 and 13].

The first thing to notice is the contradiction between the aim of the exhibition – to assure that the "museum is still alive and producing knowledge", as per the programme – and the exhibition itself: a compilation of fragmented pieces; replicas of the originals that were burned, and anything that survived from the almost total destruction.[7] If the rescue is the main theme of the show, curated by the National Museum Rescue Committee, how could one not associate

6 The exhibition also included another group of pieces that were kept in other buildings or on loan.

7 More information here.



Figures 12 and 13. *Source: Instagram, #museunacionalvive. Screenshots by the authors, July 2019*

it with the notion of loss and death? Even if one recognises the importance of the ongoing work of the museum's employees and researchers, the only way to understand that the museum is alive, especially in the context of this exhibition, is to regard it as a site of memory.

This leads us also to what Nora says about how to respond to the disappearance of traditional memories by collecting remains or "any visible signs of what has been" (1989, p. 13). The remains, here, are present in two different ways: as the

physical fragments of the rescued archive and as reproduced images shared online. Since photographs are also a trace of something *that-has-been* and has stayed in the past (Barthes 2000, p. 117), they play an essential role in contrast to the false idea of liveness suggested by the campaign *#museunacionalvive*. If the National Museum lives, it does so mostly as a trace of the past collected as memory. At the same time, the pictures of these remains included in the exhibition reinforce their physical properties as "something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask" (Sontag 2005, p. 120).

A picture that could be representative in that sense is one of the foundation decree from June 6th 1818, showing its mission "to propagate the knowledge and studies of the natural sciences in the Kingdom of Brazil, which contains thousands of objects worthy of observation and examination" [Figure 14].

Another such image displays a beam that has been twisted in the fire, and fragments of the muse statues that stood at the top of the palace [Figure 15].

Even if this is not the intended discourse of the exhibition, the combination of these pieces as images united by the same hashtag creates a revealing narrative of the defining moments of the museum's history, from its promising beginning to its violent end.

Another highlight of this show was a papier-mâché replica of a carved wooden throne donated by the ambassadors of King Adandozan (1718 –1818) to Prince Regent D. João VI in 1811. It was among the 700 items of the Africana collection that were entirely lost in the fire [Figure 16]. Even though it was not so significant in quantity as other American collections, this was the oldest in the country, containing objects incorporated from many different areas of the African continent (Lucia Araujo 2019, p. 575).

For this exhibition, however, more important than its origin was a replica created by a 13-year-old student when he found out that the fire had destroyed

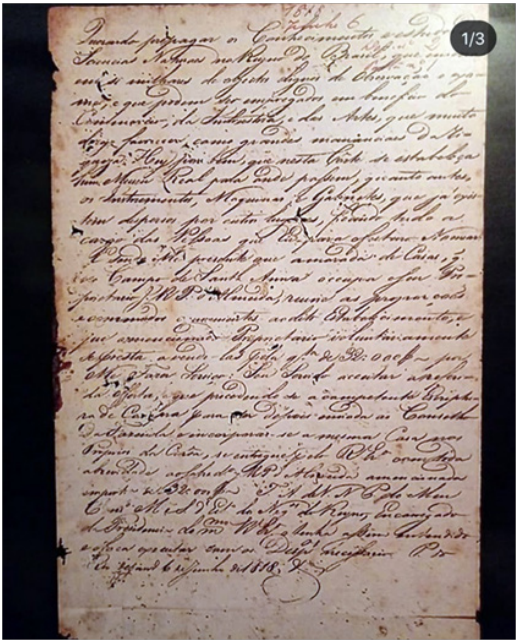


Figure 14.
Image found through the hashtag #museunacionalvive. Screenshot by the authors, July 2019[8]

the original. Interestingly he has chosen a fragile material to materialise the lost object, adding a sense of ephemerality that connects with how this memory has so easily vanished.But this episode also leads us back to Nora's statement about the sites of memory's aim to "materialize the immaterial" as a way to respond to our impulse in archiving any signs of the past. The boy's gesture in creating a replica of a piece that does not exist anymore reinforces the role of the material object to evoke memory – even when its presence actually points to its absence, there is an impossibility to recreate what has been lost forever. Since the new object was also included in the National Museum's collection, it is interesting to follow how its future archive will intersect with personal

8 Photographed label text citation.

memories about the destruction. As this and other images found through the hashtag #museunacionalvive when the show took place demonstrate, this incorporates a characteristic of memorial museums, which are always "between the ephemeral and the permanent, between dissolving personal memory and hardened official histories" (Williams 2007, p. 1).

Our starting point while looking to the heterodox group of images was to understand what kind of memories dominate, and from them, which narratives about the museum might be told in the future. The remains are probably the type of images that play the most significant role in the group analysed. Fragments of all kinds were a recurrent image under the



Figure 15. *Source: Instagram @fatinha_morado. Screenshot by the authors, July 2019*

hashtag *#museunacionalvive* in the first year after the fire: the remains of the collection musealised in the exhibition *Archaeology of a Rescue*, the ruins of the building façade, old photographs depicting the museum space as remains of collective memories.

Intrinsic to photography, the fragment is also an important concept in Malraux's *Museum Without Walls*, in which he expresses an interest in the ruin's aesthetic that is often related to the post-war context, when the essay was finished (1947). While writing about the photography of artworks, he would consider the fragment as offering the possibility to re-create an object from entirely new perspectives. This is one of the arguments that made his



Figure 16. *Instagram @ araujohistorian. Screenshot by the authors, July 2019*

text so contemporary in the debate about the circulation of images with new technologies. However, as he argues, this fragmentary recreation of an object – similarly the symbolic value that museums give to works of art – exists only as fiction. From this perspective, one can look at images of ruins of the National Museum, or the remains of its collection, as a symbolic possibility of restoring the pieces or spaces that do not exist anymore.

Conclusion

The ubiquity of photography in contemporary culture, combined with its use on social media as an archive, offers a new context for museums for planning exhibitions and speaking with audiences, and for preservation and documentation of collections. Through the analysis of the visual content shared on Instagram about the Rio de Janeiro's National Museum in the year after its destruction, we could notice a very diverse use of the platform both by audiences and the museum. Although posts in a marketing campaign tone are prevalent under the hashtag #museunacionalvive ("the National Museum is alive"), the broader 'archive without museum' can be understood through the several different lens outlined above.

The work of publicising the rescue process and the activation initiative on the internet and through public programmes have been fundamental. However, this hashtag illuminates the continuity of forgetting policies in the country, making less likely a discussion about the extent of the loss of at least half of the collection. After all, what was lost was much more than the building and its precious pieces. The fire subtracted a portion of the knowledge reserved for the next generations, not only from Brazil and Portugal but from the world. Given this scenario, the idea that the National Museum lives suggests traumatic memory, in a peculiar way. Rather than clinging to the past, the posts shared under this hashtag avoid problematising the abandonment that culminated in its fire by constructing a positive presence that becomes virtually more real than the circumstances of its symbolic and irreversible material

loss. Finally, the musealisation of the National Museum after its destruction creates an imaginary museum in the fictional sense suggested by Malraux. It is a museum that only lives in the fragments of memories constantly and collective recreated.

References

Arvanitis, K (2013) 'Museums outside walls: mobile phones and the museum in the everyday.' In *Museums in a digital age*. Parry, Ross Florence: Taylor and Francis, pp. 170-176.

Barifouse, R. (2018) 'Em 2017, mais brasileiros foram ao Louvre, em Paris, do que ao Museu Nacional', *BBC News Brasil*, 3 September [online]. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-45402234 (Accessed: 26 September 2019)

Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida*. London: Vintage Books

Beiguelman, G. (2019) 'Beleza Compulsiva Tropical' in Beiguelman, G. *Memória da amnésia: políticas do esquecimento*. São Paulo, Edições Sesc, pp. 312-331

Beiguelman, G.; Magalhães, A. (2014) *Futuros possíveis: arte, museus e arquivos digitais* (Possible futures: art, museums and digital archives). São Paulo: Petrópolis / Edusp.

Brown, B. (2001) 'Thing theory'. *Critical Inquiry* 28 (1), pp. 1–22.

Budge, K (2017) 'Objects in focus: Museum visitors and Instagram', *Curator: The Museum Journal* 60.1 pp. 67-85

Castells, M. (2011) 'Museus na era da informação: conectores culturais de tempo e espaço'. In: *Revista Musas* (5): 8-21, year VII. Available at: http://www.museus.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Revista-Musas-5.pdf (Accessed: 26 September 2019)

Foster, H (1996) 'The archive without museums.' *October* 77, pp. 97-119

Frosh, P. and Pinchevski, A. eds. (2009) *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the age of Mass Communication*, New York: Palgrave

Graham, B. (2016) 'Exhibition Histories and Futures: The Importance of Participation and Audiences', *A Companion to Digital Art* ed C. Paul, West Sussex: Willey Blackwell, pp. 575-596

Greschko, M. (2018) 'Fire Devastates Brazil's Oldest Science Museum', *National Geographic*. Available at: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/news-museu-nacional-fire-rio-de-janeiro-natural-history (Accessed: 5 July 2019)

Groys, B. (2016) *In the Flow*. London: Verso Books

Grmek, M. (2019). *Pathological Realities: Essays on Disease, Experiments, and History*. Fordham University Press.

Henning, M. (2013) 'With and without walls: photographic reproduction and the art museum.' *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies*: pp. 577-602.

Highfield, T. and T. Leaver (2015) 'A methodology for mapping Instagram hashtags', *First Monday* 20 (1), pp. 1-11. Available at: https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/5563/4195 [access on January 7th 2020]

Hoskins, A. (2017) 'Digital media and the precarity of memory', in *Collaborative Remembering: Theories, Research, and Applications* eds L. Meade, B. Harris, V. Bergen, J. Sutton, A. Barnier, Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, pp. 371-385

Hoskins, A. (2018) 'The restless past: an introduction to digital memory and media', in *Digital Memory Studies: Media Pasts in Transition*. Ed. Andrew Hoskins. New York: Routledge, pp. 1-21.

Hoskins, A. and O'Loughlin, B. (2010) 'War and Media: The Emergence of Diffused War', Cambridge: Polity Press.

Huyssen, A. (2000) 'En busca del tiempo futuro', *revista Puentes* 2 (23), pp. 15-22

Huyssen, A. (2016) 'Memory things and their temporality', *Memory Studies*, 9(1), pp. 107–110

Huhtamo, E. (2013) "On the Origins of the Virtual Museum" in Museum in a Digital Age. Ed Ross Parry. London and New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 134-148.

Kenderdine, S., and A.Yip (2018). 'The proliferation of aura: Facsimiles, authenticity and digital objects.' In *The Routledge Handbook of Museums, Media and Communication*. New York: Routledge, pp. 274-289.

Joselit, D. (2013) *After art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Jurgenson, N. (2019) *The social photo: On photography and social media*. London; New York: Verso Books.

LaCapra, D. (2016) 'Trauma, History, Memory, Identity: What Remains', *History and Theory* 55 [online]. Available at: 10.1111/hith.10817 (Acessed 26th September 2019)

Lovrenovic, I. (1994) 'The Hatred of Memory: In Sarajevo burned books and murdered pictures.' *The New York Times* 28.

Lucia Araujo, A. (2019) 'The Death of Brazil's National Museum', *The American Historical Review*, 124(2), pp.569-580.

MacDowall, L., and K.Budge (2022). Art After Instagram: Art Spaces, Audiences, Aesthetics. New York: Routledge.

Malevich, K. 'On the Museum' (2015 [1919]) In Avant-Garde Museology: e-flux classics, ed. Arseny Zhilyaev. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 268-273.

Malraux, A. (1965 [1947]) *O Museu Imaginário* [The Museum without Walls], Lisboa: Edições 70

Manovich, L. (2017) 'Instagram and Contemporary Image' [on line]. Available at: http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/instagram-and-contemporary-image

Museu Nacional (2019) 'Museu Nacional apresenta balanço depois de um ano' [online]. Available at: http://www.museunacional.ufrj.br/destaques/balan%C3%A7o_resgatehtml.html (Acessed 26 September 2019)

Nora, P. (1989) 'Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire'. *Representations*, pp.7-24

Quaranta, D. (2014) 'Salvo pela cópia: webcolecionismo e preservação de obras de arte digital', in *Futuros possíveis: arte, museus e arquivos digitais* (Possible futures: art, museums and digital archives). São Paulo: Petrópolis / Edusp

Seligmann-Silva, M. (2016) 'A história do Brasil é uma história de apagamento da violência' (interview by Soraia Vilela), Goethe Mag, December [online]. Available at: https://www.goethe.de/ins/br/pt/kul/fok/cul/20880092.html (Acessed 26 September 2019)

Sontag, S. (2005) *On Photography*, New York: Rosetta Books

Toledo, C. N. . 'Crônica Política sobre um Documento Contra a "Ditabranda."' In Revista de Sociologia e Política, v. 17, n. 34, out. 2009. ISSN 1678-9873. Available in: https://revistas.ufpr.br/rsp/article/view/29358/19121. (Accessed May 1st 2022).

Williams, P. (2007) *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*, Oxford, New York: Berg

Walsh, P. (2007) 'Rise and fall of the post-photographic museum: Technology and the transformation of art'. In *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage*, The MIT Press. 3-16