

*Global Memory in the Digital World: Is Another History Possible? **

Dilek Özhan Koçak **

Abstract

Digital media that lead to a transformation of the experience of time and space also evokes new questions for the field of memory. The sustainability of social memory once guaranteed in traditional societies through the bonds and relations that held groups together. Today, in a computerized society, the patterns of common belonging have changed. Beyond categories of the traditional, cultural, and national, new sets of bonds are bringing people together, such as people becoming “relatives in sufferings.” This study argues that digital media have created spaces for unique and quite different collectivities through the opportunities they afford for bringing people together around the world. Moreover, such media have become a space for global memory and even new identity projects. The argument also problematizes the issue of whether digital data has the potential to oppose the official histories aimed at the legitimization of official ideologies with a counterhistory through the digital platforms of *Bak.ma*, *Toplumsal Bellek Platformu*, *Anıt Sayaç*, *Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi*.

Keywords: collective memory, social memory, digital media, global memory, counterhistory

* Received: 28.12.2016 • Accepted: 21.02.2017

** Independent Researcher.
dilekkocak77@gmail.com

*Dijital Dünyada Küresel Hafıza: Başka Bir Tarih Mümkün mü?**

Dilek Özhan Koçak**

Öz

Zaman ve mekan deneyiminde bir dönüşüme yol açan dijital medya, aynı zamanda hafıza alanında da yeni soruları beraberinde getirmektedir. Toplumsal hafızanın devamlılığı geleneksel toplumlarda grubu bir arada tutan bağlar ve ilişkiler tarafından garanti altına alınıyordu. Bugün, bilgisayarlaşmış toplumun da ortak aidiyet biçimleri değişmiştir. Geleneksel, kültürel, ulusal bağlardan öte, örneğin insanlar “acılarda akraba” olabilmektedirler. Bu çalışma, dijital medyanın dünyanın her yerinden insanları bir araya getirebilmede yarattığı olanak sayesinde benzersiz ve oldukça farklı ortaklıklar yarattığını, dahası, bu tür medyanın küresel hafıza ve hatta yeni kimlik projeleri için bir uzam olduğunu tartışmaktadır. Çalışmanın argümanı aynı zamanda dijital verilerin resmi ideolojiyi meşrulaştıran resmi tarihten öte bir karşı tarih için potansiyel olup olmadığını *Bak.ma, Toplumsal Bellek Platformu, Anıt Savaş, Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi* gibi dijital platform örnekleri üzerinden sorunsallaştırmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: kolektif hafıza, toplumsal hafıza, dijital medya, küresel hafıza, karşı tarih

* Geliş Tarihi: 28.12.2016 • Kabul Tarihi: 21.02.2017

** Bağımsız Araştırmacı.
dilekkocak77@gmail.com

Global Memory in the Digital World: Is Another History Possible?

They have made us relatives in suffering.

Rakel Dink, 2008

Those who have not lived through the experience will never know; those who have will never tell; not really, not completely... The past belongs to the dead... (Wiesel 1975: 314, quoted in Agamben, 1999: 33)

The change from oral to written and then to electronic culture has brought about radical changes in the experiences of time and space that form the framework for the practices of daily life. The revolutionary influence of photography in the nineteenth century and television in the twentieth century is overshadowed by the impact of the computer today. While information and communication technologies (ICTs) reconfigure space-time relations, they also restructure material and spatial relationship between people and places. Indeed, social interaction increases in cyberspace (Kitchin and Dodge, 2001: ix). Lev Manovich further argues that computers are overtaking culture, particularly iPhone takes into account that “new media is created on computers, distributed via computers, stored and achieved on computers”

(Manovich, 2002: 63-64). Computers digitize bits and pieces of culture, adding new dimensions to it. But they also determine the pace and limits of cultural transformation, thus becoming a process and tool of cultural production instead of being merely a new cultural space.

In this article, I examine how digital media and culture create possibilities and restrictions for social memory and historiography, and the potential of the troves of data that are recorded and stored in our digital world. The focus lies thereby on the relations of memory/history privileging these over the paradigm of forgetting/remembering. At the same time, the perspective taken is that of ordinary people who have no opportunity to make themselves heard in official histories, who try to protect their

existence by transferring the things from their memories; in other words, ordinary people who resist. I evaluate the resistance that feeds collective memory using as case studies certain digital platforms such as *Bak.ma* (Do Not Look) which is a digital media archive of social movements documenting Turkey's recent history with images, audio recordings, and eyewitness accounts; *Toplumsal Bellek Platformu* (Platform of Social Memory) which brings together the relatives of victims of political killings; *Anıt Sayaç* (Monument Counter) which keeps record of and commemorates Turkish women killed by their husbands or brothers; and *Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi* (Truth Justice Memory Center) which aspires to "uncover the truth concerning past violations of human rights, strengthen the collective memory about those violations, and support survivors in their pursuit of justice." If we note that collective memory (belonging to a group of people bound by time, space, language, religion, geography, and other national/cultural ties) in effect protects community identity and ensures its continuity, then the upheaval of time and space triggered by new media – particularly the potential of social media to bring together people from vastly disparate cultures – lays the foundation for new forms of identity, grouping, and collectivity: hence a transfiguration of collective memory. This study suggests that memory is being globalized via digital media and networks. Digital

media have provided people who share little other than common suffering as victims of human rights violations with a space of enunciation and common belonging. The images, photographs, videos, and writings uploaded into the cloud are a potential data source for an alternative history and historiography, one in which the experiences of ordinary people are given voice and permanence.

Collective Memory: "Connecting People"

What we remember from the past defines our present, gives it meaning, and prompts us to plan for the future. A remembered, collective past is also a guarantor of collective identity. Memory helps to construct national, cultural, ethnic, and religious collective identities (Halbwachs, 1992), fostering a sense of being distinct from others. Traditionally, collective memory and its corollary, collective identity, have been sustained by oral culture: the repetition of stories and the passing along of rituals from generation to generation. A common past, language, religion, and tradition eliminate the arbitrariness of existence. But memory – whether collective or individual – is not permanent. Its basic nature is to be forever subject to revision. Continuity of social memory depends on its transmission from generation to generation by the members of the group (Halbwachs, 1992: 22). When the group collapses or disperses, the

transmission of memory comes de facto to an end and historical memory is lost.

The evolution of the role and form of collective memory is shaped by technological change (Mitsztal, 2003: 22). Social memory needs a place, and space thus plays a central role in the consolidation of social and cultural memory (Assmann, 2011). It is precisely the dimensions of concrete time and space – so indispensable for the construction of collective memory and identity – that have been subject to radical change with the invention of new communication technologies, resulting in sweeping implications for our daily lives, habits, interests, and ways of thinking (Kitchin, 1998: 2).

This transformation of space began in the 1990's with so-called "virtual spaces" engendered by new computer technologies. Virtual spaces, which first entered our lives as a parallel to physical space, have become a reality in themselves for frequent, adept cyberspace visitors. By the 2000's, physical space had become inundated with electronic and virtual information and devices. Tablets and smart phones have created a new image of man travelling in virtual space (Manovich, 2003: 75-76). New media conjure a transformation in the traditional conception of time and space and thus in people's perception of reality (Bell, 2001). As a result, many of our personal and social experiences and memories are rooted in interactions with both traditional and new media. While ICTs and cyberspace

make a placeless world possible, "a combination of cultural globalization and the spatiality of cyberspace" are in their turn transforming the "real" world, as well as the relationship between people and places (Kitchin and Dodge, 2001: 15-16). As digital media and networks reshape the relations of time and space, they also affect the production tools and content of social memory.

In traditional societies, the moral categories that belonged to a group and held communities together originated from a variety of sources, such as religion, nation, and class. The twenty-year-old slogan of Nokia – Connecting People – has proved predictive of today's communication technologies and their ramifications. The prediction is meaningful for explaining changes on the continuums of contemporary/old, shallow/deep, and permanent/temporary. The mobile phone has evolved into a gateway to mobile social networks and the web, over which all types of written and video material can be shared, creating a real-time bridge between virtual and physical space. Yet it is ironic that while advanced technologies have the potential to bring people together from all over the world, the actual communication and bonds between people are weakening day by day. Social memory, with its power to cement people together, deserves the "Connecting People" slogan more than Nokia. A significant question is whether there is a relationship

among new communication technologies, the many changes they bring about in society, and loss of memory (see Jacoby, 1996). I argue that this process should be perceived as a transformation of, rather than as a danger to, memory. While social memory is no longer constructed and sustained by traditional means, it can bring people together who are not a collective in the traditional sense, such as those who have suffered similar experiences. Moreover, collectivity, memory, and identity at a global level may be an ideal solution to the problems inherent to ethnic and national cultures and identities. Social media, which have enabled instantaneous communication among people worldwide, have made possible a different kind of collectivity rooted in cyberspace. As Levy and Sznajder remarked, globalization has brought about a change from national to cosmopolitan memory (2001, quoted in Sancar, 2014: 20) in which process cyberspace played a pivotal role. Global memory springs from a new collectivity, which this chapter illustrates through the example of groups made up of people from all over the world whose common suffering and victimhood born of the violation of their rights has created a basis for global memory.

Global Memory: “They have made us relatives in suffering”

Levy and Sznajder note that both internal and external factors have

taken their toll on the nation-state’s monopoly over the interpretation of memory and remembering (Levy and Sznajder, 2001: 17, quoted in Sancar, 2014: 68). The concept of global memory digresses from people’s identification of themselves with the history of a nation-state, and its most natural expression is the discourse on universal rights. Global memory belongs to people who have dispensed with ethnic and national belonging. The source of their mutual empathy is shared memory of suffering (Sznajder, 2004, quoted in Sancar, 2014: 69). “Cosmopolitan memory” is defined as a form of memory that goes beyond national memory, ultimately breaking it (Levy and Sznajder, 2001, quoted in Sancar, 2014: 20-22). Electronic communications enable the emergence of cosmopolitan memory as people from many different places and backgrounds are brought together in a fundamentally different form of collectivity, making them aware that the stories that are told and that exist in one place and at a given time often also exist elsewhere. As computer mediated communication (CMC) enables one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many communication practices (Jaffe and Lee, 1995, quoted in Soyseçkin, 2006: 1-2), people who have never shared physical space can communicate collectively. This collectivity at the same time feeds a sense of solidarity, which constitutes the groundwork of collective memory. The resulting “transnational remembrance

culture” thus has the potential to consolidate a basis for human rights policy (Levy and Sznajder, 2001, quoted in Sancar, 2014: 68-69, 88). If we believe that technical innovations change the way we act and think – that is to say, that technology is the independent variable and culture and identity are dependent variables (Morley and Robins, 1995) – then we force people into a passive position with respect to technological innovation. But while learning to live with technology and while considering the possibilities for developing and applying it to contemporary problems, people contribute to the development of an independent memory culture, which is the subject of this study.

A journalist of Armenian descent, Hrant Dink, was killed on January 19th, 2007, in front of the offices of the *Ağos* newspaper in Istanbul of which he was chief editor. Some 80-100 thousand people participated in his funeral with placards displaying the slogan “We are all Hrant Dink, We are all Armenian” written in Turkish, Armenian, and Kurdish. In a public statement she made after the death of her husband, Rakel Dink chose these very words: “They have made us relatives in suffering.” These words make clear that linguistic, religious, and cultural ties no longer hold as means of bringing people together in contemporary societies. Injustices, human rights violations, murders, and even massacres are common experiences beyond the borders of any one country. Today,

people who share no common past or culture are coming together online with the mutual objective of securing the right to live freely. Their global group identity is based on common struggle and the sharing of both their victories and their suffering.

Beyond traditional forms that perpetuate and protect social, collective, and cultural memory and identity, suffering, injustice, unsolved murders, and the like today form a new basis for collectivity and cosmopolitan memory among people who do not share language, religion, or even nationality. People who have no shared past with the Armenian people or have little to none in common with the lives and life histories of mine workers nevertheless come together through the vehicle of social media to put up resistance and to fight together against common violations of human rights. However, when we consider that repetition is the basic means by which a connective structure is woven and events are spared from being lost in the infiniteness of history (Assmann, 1997: 21), a murder like Hrant Dink’s or a violation of human rights that leads to tragical events like the catastrophe in Soma will only be inscribed into public memory through annual commemorations. Since collective forgetting is essentially the cessation or interruption of narrative/ritual repetition, the use of new media technologies may offer a promising, additional platform for a culture of remembrance, one which comple-

ments commemorations taking place in physical space. One such platform is *Toplumsal Bellek Platformu*¹, the motto of which is: “May the facts come out, whomever they offend!” The collective brings together relatives of politically motivated murder victims, and in doing so collects the stories of these killings, thus contributing to the formation of historical memory. The list opens up with Sabahattin Ali, who was killed in 1948, while Hrant Dink is listed last. The platform was founded by Canan Kaftancıoğlu, the wife of Ümit Kaftancıoğlu, who was murdered in front of his home on April 11th, 1980. Historical continuity, remembering, and reminding also serve to call attention to the dark, unexplained aspects of past events. They are a means of resistance against injustice and a quest for truth. Remembering sustains hope and faith, breaking cycles of discouragement and apathy. Sensitivity arises from memory, and the continuous struggle of remembering becomes a footing (Wiesel, 1987: 138, quoted in Sancar, 2014: 59-60) enabling people to avoid the repetition of the same injustices: “the language of remembering (...) is the language that demands the justice. It calls for the action” (Jefroudi, 2007: 34, quoted in Sancar 2014: 61-62). If to know the past is to understand the present and to work out a future course of action, a dark and unlighted past foretells a dark future. Thus, remembrance is

resistance, a pledge of not giving up.

On May 13th, 2014, a fire in a coalmine in Manisa’s Soma resulted in the deaths of 301 miners. It was the most devastating occupational accident – to say nothing of a mining casualty– in the history of the Turkish Republic. Afterwards, protests in towns across Turkey were peppered with placards reading: “Do not forget Soma!”; “Not an accident but a massacre!”; and “Not a workplace accident but murder!” They blamed the government for those deaths. Again, people became relatives in suffering, though they had no other basis for a collective memory. In order to prevent forgetting and not to let the event be swept under the rug of history, various Internet platforms mediating a culture of remembrance were introduced as a complement to yearly commemorations. These platforms enable people to come together and create a culture of remembrance, which in turn may help to preclude similar negligence in the future.

Although the content of *bak.ma*² begins with the resistance at Gezi Park, it was launched as a broad “digital media archive of social movements,” documenting the recent history of Turkey with images, sound recordings, and eyewitness accounts. One section of the platform consists of interviews made with the wives and relatives of the miners who died in Soma, as well as video recordings of their narratives.

¹ www.toplumsalbellekplatformu.org

² www.bak.ma

These make up a “narrative truth” (Wallerstein, 2003: 117), constituted by these first-person accounts emphasizes their humanitarian dimension and brings past suffering into the present, so as not to allow it becoming just another statistic (Avruch and Vejarano, 2001). The focus on subjective experience has consequences for social integration and for the future construction of common identity (Sachs, quoted in Sancar, 2014: 105-106). By enabling those who have similar experiences in common to come together beyond the borders of physical space and share their suffering, new media technologies also promote collective memory on a global level.

Since May 27th, 1995, Saturday Mothers conduct a sit-in protest each Saturday at Galatasaray Square, Istanbul. This group consists of people whose relatives have disappeared in government custody or whose relatives’ murders remain unsolved. Trying to make their voices heard, they meet at noon and sit side by side. They may not know each other or have anything else in common. Their sense of collectivity is based on the photos they hold in their hands, their suffering, and their common demand that the government account for their lost and murdered sons, husbands, and relatives.

The “memory site” (Nora, 1989) that the Saturday Mothers chose for making their voices heard is Galatasaray Square, and the square has come to be identified with them. Nimet Tanrıku, who is one of the

instigators of the sit-in, notes that they share their pain with the relatives of disappeared people from all over the world:

How many friends we have made. When Rosa and Estela found their grandsons that had gone missing during a military dictatorship, though we do not speak the same language, we shared their joy with the language of solidarity. With Nassera from Algeria, with Seher from Palestine, with Wadad from Beirut ... we sit all together at Galatasaray. Those in the countries ruled by regimes under which citizens just disappear are now a click away from us, just as we are a click away for them. There are friends and comrades.

The Truth Justice Memory Center (*Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Çalışmaları Merkezi*), which is an online platform where Saturday Mothers interact, was established in November 2011 by a group of lawyers, journalists, and human rights defenders. Its aim is to strengthen collective memory of human rights violations and thereby contribute to peace and democracy. They are working to create a database of all people who are missing or forcibly disappeared, promoting public awareness of the issue and not allowing the matter to be forgotten in a country where some 200 to 500 citizens disappeared every year from 1990 to 1995.

On each of these platforms, suffering and violence experienced in

physical space are documented with visual and written material. The platforms thus foster global memory and, accordingly, a cosmopolitan sense of identity in their members. The collective bonds that characterize groups brought together in social media have nothing to do with physical place, time, nor a common culture, religion, language, or tradition. And as with social media becoming one of the primary vehicles of interpersonal communication, digital space has evolved into a repository for information, commemoration, and records, steadily replacing the places of memory in physical space. Sites such as *Anıt Sayacı*³, which commemorates women dead due to domestic violence in Turkey with a continuously updated online counter of victims, also assume the role of globally visible memorials in lieu of monuments existing in physical space.

Collective memory benefits from the emergence and new prestige of online social movements. While official history is controlled by political, scientific, and other authorities, memory represents the “small history” of people who cannot claim rights on “big history.” While history purports to be “collective” and “total” (Hobsbawm, 2009: 80), memory, even collective one, has an inherent individual dimension. It must be emphasized that while history is singular, memory is versatile and plural. What memory is for multitudinous individuals, history

is for a society (Nora, quoted in Sancar, 2014: 65-66).

While memory is a tool that protects the individual experience of ordinary people from the totalizing claims of grand historical narratives, it is clear that in terms of permanence, history has the edge over memory. This study raises the question of whether online archives, electronic data, and digital documents may be a source for future historiography. In his article “History as Social Memory,” Peter Burke says that historians must adopt two points of view. First, they should study memory as a historical source in order to produce a critique of the reliability of historical documents. Secondly, historians should see memory itself as a historical phenomenon (2011: 189). Burke suggests that historians should not view memory and history as unrelated models existing in different spaces, but, rather, as two complementary phenomena. This corroborates the argument that digital platforms and personal sites that archive texts, photographs, and videos have the potential to make memory accessible to historians, resulting in a more democratic historiography.

In all of the above-mentioned examples, people sharing similar experiences of suffering consolidated around diverse internet platforms, forging common identities that persist until the groups themselves disperse. Bearing in mind that a perceived “common past” secures continuity between the past and

³ www.anitsayaci.com

present, it is important to ascertain whether this sense of collectivity is destined to wane or can live into the future. Of course, if a victim's past is an obstacle for the future exercise of power, power will seek to do away with it. Such official censorship is implemented through various forms of surveillance and repression. Censorship of the past serves to devalue the history of resistance against the governing power and thus weaken the bonds that tie people together, while the remembrance of common suffering evinces the complicity of the state and those in power. When experiences are not transmitted from generation to generation, the resulting amnesia plays into the government's hands by allowing it to present the current situation as an entirely novel one. One point has to be emphasized here, namely, that it is only through remembering that the continuity of global memory becomes possible.

Nations promote their identity with official historiography, and indeed, states see history as a powerful instrument for legitimating the present. Conveyed through the means of common language and perpetuated in the images of conquests and other glorious episodes of the shared past, such histories are in themselves predicated on and constitute discourses of power, thus never going beyond the narrow scope of reinforcing and maintaining political influence.

Memory is continuously getting reorganized and is therefore subject to a "remembering - forgetting dia-

lectic" (Nora and Kaiser, 1998: 13-14). History refers to problematizing an incomplete reconstruction of something that no longer exists, and what this article attempts to question is how memory can be made permanent despite the fact that remembering is inextricably connected with forgetting. The question of whether troves of digital images and videos may be a source for grassroots' (as opposed to "dominant") history calls to mind Peter Burke's view that historians should draw on social memory in their accounts of historical events. If the videos, photographs, texts, and images in the digital world can be protected, can they help to cast an alternative past that in its turn will help to envisage an alternative future in which ordinary people have a voice? Can these recorded sources indeed be saved in the long run until they have the chance to become a part of history?

Citizens who had come together to protest against the construction of a shopping mall that had to replace Gezi Park in the middle of the Taksim district of Istanbul were confronted by a police force on the night of June 1st, 2013. Bulldozers were set to enter the park. The reaction against official interventions and police violence was swift, and the issue grew into a human rights campaign, not only in Istanbul, but in nearly all of Turkey. Irrespective of their otherwise crucial differences in terms of language, sexual orientation, religion, race, ethnicity, and political attitudes, people united

during the protests over Gezi Park. Instead of identifying with the government and/or local authorities, they rallied to the common “Gezi Spirit.” According to the statements by the Ministry of Interior, some 2,5 million people in 79 different provinces participated in the protests. 4,600 people were injured and 8 people died. 14 year-old Berkin Elvan was the last victim, dying after 269 days in coma as a result of having been hit on the head by a tear-gas canister. Protestors mourned those who had died during the events, and their common suffering over the losses of Berkin Elvan (15), Mehmet Ayvaltaş (20), Abdullah Cömert (22), Ethem Sarısülük (26), İrfan Tuna (47), Mustafa Sarı (27), Selim Önder (88), and Ali İsmail Korkmaz (19) reinforced their sense of solidarity. Protestors were supported not only by the population in Turkey, but also by broad international public. People who couldn’t participate in person ordered about 1,500 meals through the Internet and sent them to the park. On July 28th, 2013, at noon Turkish time, the delegates of PEN, Article 19, and Amnesty International staged a memorial service in which seven people holding up the photographs of the by then seven victims kept a seven-minute silence in seven cities: London, Toronto, Geneva, Brussels, Bucharest, Genoa, and New York. The events at Gezi Park did not belong only to Istanbul, but received support throughout Turkey and the world. A common spirit of struggle brought people together.

Can the videos and photos uploaded to *Bak.ma*, *YouTube*, or *hafizakaydi.org* be a source or an archive (Foucault, 2004) for writing the history of these social struggles in the future? The fact that the images were uploaded by ordinary people and had not been mediated or moderated is crucial for historiography and the viability of common memory. If we consider that the past is the model for the present and future and that for each generation the past represents the key to tracing their own lineage and regulating their own relations (Hobsbawm, 2009: 30), then remembering social struggles, violence, injustice, and suffering is the guarantee for carrying a critical perspective into the future.

When Pierre Nora touches on the upsurge of memory, he attributes it to two causes. One is the acceleration and the other is the broadening of history. The struggle of peoples, communities, ethnic groups, and even individuals for freedom and liberation corresponds to a democratization of history (quoted in Sancar, 2014: 65), but in order to make this progress lasting, official histories that further the interests of the state and power must be critically revised. A counter history in which the victimization and suffering of ordinary people is accounted for is possible if the sources of memory today are protected for the future. This type of historical investigation is exemplified by the eighteenth-century practitioners of “history from below” Buckhardt and

Michelet (Hobsbawm, 2009: 251), the micro histories of Carlo Ginzburg, and of course Foucault's implementations of his own concept of counter history (Lowenthal, 1985; Nora, 1989; Halbwachs, 1926, 1950).

Epilogue, or, another “future” is possible: I resist because I remember; I remember because I resist

... memory doesn't contemplate history, it invites us to make it. More than in museums, where its poor old soul gets bored, memory is in the air we breathe, and from the air it breathes us. (Galeano, 1998: 210)

Sir Lewis B. Namier argues that a historian operates not as a camera but, rather, as a painter; instead of reproducing everything indiscriminately, the historian reveals the nature of things through a process of discovery, elimination, and emphasis (1952: 8). Moreover, given that history is written with the documents at hand, which are themselves but interpretations (Burckhardt, 1976: 1, quoted in Kracauer, 2014: 81), it may be said history is subjective.

However, when historians disregard a particular story, it is typically that of the ordinary person and his or her experiences and knowledge. The knowledge which official history produces is maintained monopolistically. The job of official history is to interpret the shared past

in a compelling fashion, to weave an airtight narrative that solidifies itself by silencing alternative interpretations of historical experience. In the course of centuries, the understanding of the role of historian changed steadily and, in the twentieth century, also radically. While Herodotus thought of “historians as the guardians of memory, the memory of glorious deeds,” Peter Burke sees historians as the “guardians of awkward facts, the skeletons in the cupboard of the social memory” (2011: 192). The practice of counter history provides an alternative that gradually undermines the unity and continuity of official histories (Foucault, 2003: 66).

Michel Foucault notes that the work of Henri de Boulainvilliers who was a French historian changed two things:

On the one hand, he began to write the history of subjects, or in other words, to look at power from the other side. He thus began to give a historical status to something that would ... become the history of the people or the history of peoples. He discovered a certain form of history that existed on the other side of the power relationship. (2003: 168)

History does not record everything in the past; documents support a given history only for a particular line of inquiry and only in a particular sequence. Rulers extract from and stack documents in such a way as to continue their extortive practices into the future (Assmann,

1997: 73), and by this token, social or collective pasts become an “officialised social past” (Hobsbawm, 2009: 13).

In *The Book of Esther* which is a prototypical example of counterhistory, oppressors are presented as “miserable figures” and the conquered are seen as the “only and real victors” (Assmann, 1997: 86). Foucault claims that the role of history is to decode the past, to discover its secrets, to uncover duplicitousness, to tease out what has been suppressed, to decipher truths that have been sealed up (Foucault, 2003: 72).

Foucault’s concepts of “counterhistory” and “countermemory” refer to the struggle against a past associated with power and the restoration of lost voices and forgotten experiences. One method of struggle against official forms of knowledge is “turning knowledge(s) against itself (themselves), or with mobilizing some forms of knowledge against others” (Medina, 2011: 13).

Carlo Ginzburg resurrects Bertold Brecht’s question “who built Thebes of the seven gates?” in reference to “micro-history” and “history from below.” History does not concern itself with these anonymous stonemasons. The biggest obstacle to micro-historical investigation is that documentation and sources on the behavior and attitudes of subaltern classes are rare (1996: 7, 12).

... the triumph of some means the submission of others. In that sense

the history that appears at this point, or the history of the race struggle, is a counterhistory ... Not only does this counterhistory break up the unity of the sovereign law that imposes obligations; it also breaks the continuity of glory, into the bargain. It reveals that the light—the famous dazzling effect of power—is not something that petrifies, solidifies, and immobilizes the entire social body, and thus keeps it in order; it is in fact a divisive light that illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into the darkness. And the history or counterhistory that is born of the story of the race struggle will of course speak from the side that is in darkness, from within the shadows. It will be the discourse of those who have no glory, or of those who have lost it and who now find themselves, perhaps for a time—but probably for a long time—in darkness and silence (Foucault, 2003: 70)

Counterhistory blocks the unifying function of official history (Medina, 2011: 14). When a counterhistory concerns itself with the history of defeats and the ordinary, it is resurrecting events from darkness and mists of time. Lifting the veil of mystery from history is the key to understanding events that appear “mysterious” or “incomprehensible” today.

Many issues and personal experiences that are excluded from official historiography are visible in the products of popular culture,

such as cinema, music, literature, and television. These have become alternative spaces of struggle for shaping social memory (Özyürek, 2012: 11), even as they face obstacles to production and circulation. They are commonly criticized because they do not reflect and may even “distort” official history (Özhan Koçak and Koçak, 2014).

Considering the enhanced potential of the cyberspace as compared with more traditional media formats, it, as a platform that allows people’s voices to be heard without being filtered through some mechanism of control or censorship, has indeed become a treasure trove of the necessary documents and data to conduct a counterhistory, microhistory, or history from below. But the issue with the accumulation and storage of big data is how it can be transformed into a knowledge empowering the underprivileged. When Peter Burke speaks of “information giants and knowledge dwarfs,” he is talking about a change in knowledge society. As information increases, knowledge decreases: the problem is one of effectively transforming information into knowledge. With several dozens of gigabytes of video material shared on *Ustream* during the 2013 Gezi Park protests that were subsequently sorted by city and made available for download have the potential to be a source for counterhistory. However, for this to become knowledge, millions of bits of raw data must be cleaned up and organized.

After all, there is little doubt that future official histories will suggest that the events at Gezi Park had been instigated “because of 2 or 3 trees.” When digitized and openly available, archives, which are defined by Halbwachs as “the prestige of past” (quoted in Appadurai, 2014) – a kind of an empty box, place, site, or institution for guarding the document – have the potential to become a significant source for historiography and play a vital role in the continuity of memory. Personal websites as well as images and data contributed by individuals make archives exempt from the controls of the state and the official networks (Appadurai, 2014).

Cyberspace has become “a parallel world” and “a common mental geography,” accessible through smart phones, tablets, and computers. It is a place where the depth increases with each image and word added to it; where any form of documentation is possible (Benedikt, 2007: 19-20). But unless all these archived documents are presented in some narrative form, protected and actively transmitted, they are doomed to remain mere fragments of information. Documents that are not woven into coherent narrative cannot be carriers of collective memory. A transformation of social memory is expected to follow from the change in communication technologies, but how can social memory keep pace with the rapidly expanding body of available information? Images not used in historical narratives are doomed to be just

vestiges; it is simply not possible for individuals and societies to remember if the objects of memory do not constitute a meaningful unity, i.e. a coherent narrative. In this respect, the Internet and World Wide Web evoke the character of Ireneo Funes from J. L. Borges's *Funes the Memorious* (Borges, 1994). Ireneo Funes is a man cursed to never forget anything. His memory is comprised of more than the combination of every person's memory since the world came into being. As such, his memories are "garbage". While textbooks and encyclopedias once served as filters of knowledge, today every iota of information and news, even the most insignificant bits, are available on the display of our smartphones. This leads to the question of what is going to serve as a filtering and structuring mechanism. Yet, without a filter, this giant storage parallels the mind of Funes: equal to a big nothing. (Gould, Eco, Carriere and Delumeau, 2000).

Borges writes about how much of memory concerns forgetting. To remember everything is equivalent to not thinking at all, because thinking implies generalizing and abstracting. For this reason, the world of Funes consists only of immediate details. Filtration is essential to the transfer of memory. The function of social memory is not to keep record of everything, but to sift through, evaluate, and generalize.

At earlier times, rituals and texts both existed to make the temporary permanent and, by extension, to

provide continuity. Rituals sublimated transience with repetition, texts with duration (Assmann, 2011: 24). But today, how can the information forever flowing through the digital world be rendered permanent? Converting digital information into knowledge will allow us not to forget the past, and enable us to critically apprehend the present and the future. In this way, ordinary people have the potential to become a force against the hegemony in which they are embedded.

Exposure to such a flow of information and images will necessarily alter our perception of the past, present, and future. An image of the past appears in the present as a new image, a fact to which we are desensitized due to the speed and intensity of the flow. While in the digital age global memory is realized through open platforms and individual efforts – and while ICTs have made it possible for people to create different forms of collectivity other than the traditional ones – collective, social, and cultural memory cannot be historicized through ICTs. It is the protection and maintenance of the digital archive that will make microhistory, counterhistory, and history from below possible.

History attains the role of the "primary mode of knowledge about the past when tradition weakens and social memory is fading" (Miszta, 2003: 101), but in an era of "social amnesia," it should be a counterhistory instead of an official history. Why? Because social memory

needs to be upheld by the group and is anchored in places, movements, images, and objects. Because official history, which is a version of the past imposed by hegemonic power and instrumentalized by it in order to reproduce and strengthen itself, allows power to recursively obtain the consent necessary to govern society via the very knowledge it has produced. Because social amnesia is not only one type of reification but indeed its primary form (Jacoby, 1996: 29).

Conclusion

Memory is resistance against a state that tries to cover up violence and unsettling events through suppression. Because where there is power,

there also should be resistance. To prevent this resistance from being but a fleeting moment in time, people should remember their past. Writing history from below implies people staking their claims for social justice on their own historical narratives. ICTs can be advantageous for counter historiography and global memory. By remembering, we know what we were before, what we will be in the future, and what we are now; remembering is the cement of our identity. Digital data will play a pivotal role in the construction of the past and future to the extent to which data are transparently preserved and may be filtered democratically rather than just by those in the business of reproducing official ideology.

References

- Agamben, Giorgio (1999). *Remnants of Auschwitz, The Witness and the Archive*. New York: Zone Books.
- Appadurai, Arjun. "Archive and Aspiration." <https://archivepublic.wordpress.com/texts/arjun-appadurai/>. Retrieved: 28.06. 2014.
- Assmann, Jan (1997). *Kültürel Bellek*. Istanbul: Ayrıntı.
- Assmann, Jan (2011). "Communicative and Cultural Memory." in *Cultural Memories*. Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan, Edgar Wunder (eds.) London and New York: Springer. 15-29.
- Avruch Kevin and Beatriz Vejarano (2001). "Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: A Review Essay and Annotated Bibliography." *Social Justice: Anthropology, Peace, and Human Rights* 2 (1-2): 47-108.
- Bell, David (2001). *An Introduction to Cybercultures*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Benedikt, Michael (2007). "Cyberspace: First Steps." in *The Cyberculture Reader*. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy (eds.) London and New York: Routledge. 19-33.
- Borges, Jorge Luis (1994). *Funes ve Sonsuz Bellek*. Istanbul: İletişimYayınları.
- Burke, Peter (2011). "History as Social Memory". in *The Collective Memory Reader*. Jeffrey K. Olick, VeredVinitzky-Seroussi, Daniel Levy (eds.) London: Oxford University Press. 188-193.
- Foucault, Michael (2004). *The Archeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, Michael (2003). *Society must be defended, Lectures at the College de France (1975-76)*. New York: Picador.
- Galeano, Eduardo (1998). *Upside down: A primer for the looking-glass world*. New York: Picador.
- Ginzburg, Carlo (1996). *Peynir ve Kurtlar*. Istanbul: Metis.
- Gould, Stephen Jay, Umberto Eco, Jean-Claude Carriere, and Jean Delumeau (2000). *Conversations about the end of time*. Fromm Intl.
- Halbwachs, Maurice (1992). *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Halbwachs, Maurice (1926, 1950). *The Collective Memory*. London: Harper Colophon Books.
- Hobsbawm, Eric (2009). *Tarih Üzerine*. Istanbul: Agora.
- Huyssen, Andreas (1999). *Alacakaranlık Anıları (Bellek Yitimi Kültüründe Zamanı Belirlemek)*. Istanbul: Metis.
- Jacoby, Russell (1996). *Belleğini Yitiren Toplum, Adler'den Laing'e Konformist Psikolojinin Eleştirisi*. Istanbul: AyrıntıYayınları.
- Kitchin, Rob (1998). *Cyberspace: The World in Wires*. Chishester: John Wiley and Sons.
- Kitchin, Rob and Martin Dodge (2001). *Mapping Cyberspace*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kracauer, Siegfried (2014). *Tarih Sondan Bir Önceki Şeyler*. Istanbul: Metis.
- Lowenthal, David (1985). *The Past is a Foreign Country*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

- Lyotard, Jean-François (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. UK: Manchester University Press.
- Manovich, Lev (2003). "The Poetics of Augmented Space." in *New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality*. Anna Everett and John T. Caldwell (eds.) Routledge: New York and London. 75-93.
- Manovich, Lev (2002). "The Language of New Media." <http://andreknoerig.de/portfolio/03/bin/resources/manovich-langofnewmedia.pdf>. Retrieved: 24.07.2014.
- Medina, Jose (2011). "Toward a Foucaultian Epistemology of Resistance: Counter-Memory, Epistemic Friction, and *Guerrilla Pluralism*." *Foucault Studies* (12): 9-35.
- Mitsztal, Barbara A. (2003). *Theories of Social Remembering*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Morley, David and Kevin Robins (1995). *Kimlik Mekânları*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı.
- Namier, Sir Lewis B. (1952). *Avenues of History*. California: H. Hamilton.
- Nora, Pierre (1989). "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire." *Representations* 26: 7-24.
- Nora, Pierre and Wolfgang Kaiser (1998). *Zwischen Geschichte und Gedachtnis*. Germany: Frankfurt am Main Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verl.
- Olgun, Ezgi (2012). Savaşta Değil, Barışa Yatırım Yapın. [Make an investment to peace, not the war] <http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/139289-savasa-degil-barisa-yatirim-yapin>. Retrieved: 04.06.2015.
- Özyürek, Esra (2012). "Giriş". *Hatırladıklarıyla ve Unuttuklarıyla Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Hafızası*. Esra Özyürek (der.) içinde. İstanbul: İletişim. 7-15.
- Özhan Koçak, Dilek and Orhan Kemal Koçak (2014). "Glorifying the Past on Screen: Conquest 1453". in *Bringing History to Life Through Film*. Kathryn Anne Morey (eds.) UK: Rowman and Littlefield. 71-89.
- Sancar, Mithat (2014). *Geçmişle Hesaplaşma (Unutma Kültüründen Hatırlama Kültürüne)*. İstanbul: İletişim.
- Soyseçkin İdil Safiye (2006). *Identity and Virtual Culture*. A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Metu.
- Tahaoglu, Çiçek (2012). "Susmak Kaybedenleri Cesaretlendirir, Susmayacağız." [Being quiet encourage the losers, we won't be quiet] <http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/139114-susmak-kaybedenleri-cesaretlendirir-susmayacagiz>. Retrieved: 04.06.2015.
- Tanrıkulu, Nimet (2014). "Galatasaray, Hafıza, İtaatsizlik ve Küreselleşmenin Mekânı." [Galatasaray, memory, disobedience and the space of globalization] <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/160801-galatasaray-hafiza-itaraz-politiklesme-sosyallesme-ve-kuresellesme-mekani>. Retrieved: 04.06.2015.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel (2003). *Yeni Bir Sosyal Bilim İçin*. İstanbul: Aram.
- Yavuz, Zana (2015). "Çarpıtılmış Hafızaya Alternatif Bir Hafıza İçin." [For an alternative memory to a distorted memory] <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/medya/166379-carpitilmis-hafizaya-alternatif-bir-hafiza-icin?bia>. Retrieved: 04.08.2015

<http://hakikatadalethafiza.org/tag/cumartesi-anneleri>

<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2-5-milyon-insan-79-ilde-sokaga/gundem/detay/1726600/default.htm>. Retrieved: 19.08.2017

<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/dunyanin-her-yerinden-gezi-parki/gundem/detay/1720586/default.htm>. Retrieved: 19.08.2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr3aikx2DsI>

<http://www.hafizakaydi.org/>