Digitally archiving collective memories in the Chilean American diaspora

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Archivación digital de memorias colectivas en la diaspora chilena-estadounidense

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Resumen. El presente artículo presenta un panorama de los paisajes de la memoria chilena en Estados Unidos y discute los retos actuales en la preservación del legado mnemónico en la diáspora a través de los archivos digitales, así como las prácticas mnemónicas dentro del activismo diaspórico offline. El estudio evidencia que los archivos digitales son capaces de proporcionar un espacio dialógico y, hasta cierto punto, no jerárquico para las discusiones sobre temas divisivos e irresolutos como la reconciliación mnemopolítica tras la dictadura de Pinochet

Palabras clave: archivos digitales, memoria colectiva, diáspora chilena, reconciliación

Abstract. This article attempts to take stock of Chilean memoryscapes in the United States and discuss the challenges of preserving mnemonic legacy in the diaspora through digital archives and offline diasporic activism. The main finding of this study is that digital archives can provide a dialogical and, to a limited extent, non-hierarchical space for discussions on divisive and irresolute topics such as mnemopolitical reconciliation after the Pinochet dictatorship.

Keywords: digital archives, collective memory, Chilean diaspora, reconciliation.

Introduction

On August 25, 2018, the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago de Chile hosted an event dedicated to the digital archive *Cantos Cautivos* and its contribution to music, education and technology through the lens of human rights. A panel of experts on the intertwining of new information technologies, human rights violations in Chile and their collective remembrance was brought together by the archive director Dr. Katia Chornik and software developer Hernán Theiler. During his virtual tour through the archive's compilation of musical experiences of political prisoners and detainees during the military dictatorship in Chile from 1973 to 1989, Hernán invited the audience to take out their smartphones and follow his presentation on their personal electronic devices to explore the cartographies of systemic violence under the Pinochet rule, browse through the lists of remembered victims and, most importantly, listen to the songs. "The event was very emotional", recalls the software engineer after the presentation, "and it cost me a lot to keep my composure, seeing the audience, ex-prisoners and the relatives of the forcibly disappeared and meeting them in person". More than 5,000 miles from Santiago, another organization is engaging with the public to raise awareness and foster collective memory of human rights crimes in Latin America. In the recent years, the New York-based Historical Memory Project has hosted a plethora of events, utilizing their archival collections of court files, journals, videos, images, posters and textiles, and thereby disseminating information about the violent past of Chile and other Latin American countries in the United States.

This selection of events—a mere fraction of the myriad of innovative collective remembrances and media practices—verifies that we have firmly ushered into the age of new and emergent entanglements between memory and new media. While researching digital memories of the Pinochet dictatorship, I encountered various resources, ranging from the websites of the state-funded Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago to smaller, grassroots digital archives such as Memoria Viva. I soon came to realize that the trajectory of these initiatives was often either directed at the memories of the exiled Chileans, as in the case of Memorias de Exilio, an archive on the Chilean exile experience in the USSR, or were themselves coming from abroad, e.g. in archives such as *Ecomemoria*, *Memoria Viva*, *Cantos Cautivos* and the Historical Memory Project.

Since the day of the *coup d'état* on September 11, 1973, a mass exile of the politically persecuted had commenced. The military regime forced approximately 200,000 Chileans, or ca. 2% of the entire population, to leave their homeland (Wright & Oñate, 2005, pp. 57-58). This exodus was facilitated by the newly adopted Decree Law 81 which

granted the Pinochet government the right to arbitrarily expel citizens. And so the Chilean exiles were scattered over across the globe, passing through or settling in at least 110 countries, thus constituting what the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ignacio Walker later described as the "fourteenth region" of the Chilean state (Wright & Oñate, 2005). Some countries in the Americas enthusiastically welcomed political refugees, including Canada, Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela, and despite its repressive government, even Brazil. But one country, the United States, draws attention as a particularly striking case. Despite being not very accommodating to Chilean exiles when compared to its neighbors, it was still a desired destination for the persecuted, and many Chileans managed to escape Pinochet's violent rule by finding refuge in the US, especially during the first years of the dictatorship. This exilic process was however highly charged with political and ethical contradictions, since the US government was anything but unconnected to the installment of the military regime, with the administration of Democratic president Jimmy Carter even being closely allied with the Pinochet regime. Still, the political ambivalences could not hinder people from fleeing the dictatorship and today we can speak of almost one million Chilean Americans living in the US: According to the *Registro de Chilenos en el Exterior*, published by the National Statistical Institute in Chile on June 22, 2008, 13.3% of the 857,7814 Chileans living abroad were residing in the US, putting the North American country in second place after Argentina. The 2010 US Census revealed an increase of another 12,725 respondents who identified themselves as Chileans.

Illustrative studies have been published on the Chilean experience of exile and memory struggle abroad, such as on the communities in France (Jedlicki, 2002), Sweden (Delgado Fuentealba, 2011; Cronemo, 2013) and the UK (Ramírez, 2012; Serpente, 2015). Yet, with the exception of extensive studies by Marita Eastmond (1997), and Thomas C. Wright and Rody Oñate (1998; 2005; 2007), the Chilean community in the US has received comparatively little attention, much less so than with special regard to the contemporary entanglements between new memory and media practices. Negotiation processes of memory and identity, as a core topic in these studies, were seldom addressed with consideration of the paramount role of digital media. From what we can see on the web today, the issue of the recent past in Chile is starkly framed in digital archival structures, leaving social media platforms as one of the few spaces where predominant memory discourses can be disputed and challenged.

This article seeks to explore the panorama of the intricately interwoven analogue and digital memory practices of the Chilean diaspora in the US, while the archive, in its conceptual, metaphorical, praxeological, political and material dimension, will constantly resurface as an object of epistemological interest. This article is an attempt

at taking stock of Chilean memoryscapes in the United States and discussing the current challenges of preserving mnemonic legacy in the diaspora. While the focus of this work will be directed at the memory praxis of individual diasporans and at one particular digital archive, the repercussions and synergies of these mnemonic practices within offline diasporic activism will also be taken into consideration.

In order to demarcate my conceptualization of the Chilean diaspora, it is necessary to outline its fundamental features. Referring to the work of Davidson and Kuah-Pearce (2008), I conceive the diaspora as a place of confluence and reciprocity of memories and identities pertaining to a specific community, with a propensity to project selected episodes of the past in the host country in the present based both on their social experience in the country of origin and on their experiences in the host country, the latter usually forged by discrimination and marginalization. I will situate the portrayal of diasporic memories whilst paying attention to the historically and politically double-edged relations between the nation states of Chile and the US. This makes this case study particularly interesting in comparison to other host countries like the USSR, UK and Sweden, states that were more closely aligned to the political ethos of the Chilean refugees, since the presentation "of memories [...] is highly dependent on the political climate of the community or nation state at that point in time and on how the dominant communities manipulate it to ensure political control" (Davidson & Kuah-Pearce, 2008, p. 6).

For the sake of completing this assessment with emic discourses—i.e. ways in which "diasporas use to talk about themselves to themselves" (Tölölyan, 2007, p. 648)—I will also analyze how different Chilean Americans remember and preserve the legacy of the Pinochet dictatorship with the means available to them. In order to reveal how these actors co-shape the trajectory of memory discourses in the diaspora, I will cover two of three states where the most Chileans are currently residing in the United States: New York and California, hoping to analyze representative memory stakeholders in the Chilean diaspora in the United States, as I found it important to also consider voices from the Chilean diaspora that do not hold high stakes in the production of memory discourses. The conversations with selected diasporans should cast light upon their personal stances on intermediaries in the Chilean American memoryscapes, as well as their own modes of remembering and archiving the mnemonic legacy of the Pinochet dictatorship. In this context, we can trace back how Chilean Americans can both contribute to the archival collection and actively consult it, making this prosuming relationship of specific interest for the discussion of digital archives and memory work.

Methodologically, the research has been based on semi-structured interviews with the aforementioned actors. In the case of the Historical Memory Project, in addition to the interviews conducted with the executive director Prof. Marcia Esparza and archivist Paola Viteri, I will rely upon my own participatory observations and archival practice, following Donna Haraway's (1988) premise of situated knowledges.

The Chilean diaspora in the United States before and after the 1973 coup d'état

Numerous immigration waves, caused for instance by economic aspirations during the California Gold Rush in the 1850s or the devastating impact of the 2010 earthquake, have introduced a steady influx of Chilean immigrants in the US (cf. Wright & Oñate, 2005, p. 64). It is therefore important to clarify that the current demographic and political profile of the Chilean diaspora in the US is by no means monolithic. In the case of the San Francisco Bay Area we can clearly observe the conviviality of diverging Chilean communities, comprising Chileans who settled down in this region well before the coup, not seldom demonstrating socially and politically conservative tendencies; strong, socioeconomically diverse groups of Chilean exiles and ex-political prisoners with strong political ties to the left; and Chilean migrants who arrived in the US in search of a better life after the military dictatorship, without particularly pronounced political affiliations. Acknowledging this historical and social complexity of the Chilean diaspora, I would like to take into consideration within the framework of this article actors who take a stance on the mnemonic legacy of the Pinochet dictatorship, prioritizing one specific group who shares a sociopolitical and migratory history: Chilean political exiles who arrived in the United States after September 1973, but also other Chilean émigrés who arrived in the US after the regime's end and who were equally affected by its aftermath.

In the United States, the majority of Chileans have been attracted to inhabit areas with large Spanish-speaking populations, most notably in California, New York and Florida, which is being reflected in the 2010 US Census. As outlined by Phyllis J. Burson (2019), the majority of more recent immigration waves is composed of Chileans who were primarily looking for better economic prospects and originated from less comfortable backgrounds than the political exiles who were, by contrast, preponderantly of middle or upper class, and often endowed with a higher level of education, artistic abilities, and experience in the fields of social activism and politics. Not surprisingly, the later arrivals were more severely affected by the social setback in the host country caused by the lack of language competencies in English and the absence of mutual recognition of university or other qualifications. A survey on Chilean expatriates published in 2001 takes stock of the migratory aftermath at the turn of the century: "Only 21% of the

respondents had left Chile for political reasons, and no more than 17% left during the period of the dictatorship's greatest repression, 1973 through 1976. By contrast, more than 37% of respondents had left after the dictatorship's end [...]" (Wright and Oñate, 2005, p. 64).

Chilean American memory praxis and physical sites of memory

With an increasing number of Chilean exiles since the mid-1970s, major changes took place in the Chilean American communities. A case in point would be the San Francisco Bay Area with its plethora of political organizations and cultural centers that were either established during the apogee of the military dictatorship or adopted a political position either for or against the regime if they had been founded before the coup. Being known as one of the more progressive states in the country, it should not be surprising that the Bay Area was the breeding ground for numerous civil society organizations, such as Non-Intervention in Chile (NICH) that was created in 1972, one year before Allende was overthrown (Calandra, 2010, p. 23). However, not all political or cultural centers showed firm support of the global resistance movement against Pinochet's regime. For instance the oldest Chilean community center, Club Lautaro, founded in 1957 in San Francisco, later attracted mostly Chilean Americans with politically conservative tendencies, and those who supported the military dictatorship during its initial stage. As the right-wing members came to dominate the agenda, some left-leaning members founded the Chilean cultural center La Peña in 1975, remaining as the most active and unique Chilean cultural organization in the nation until today.

In her insightful study of Chilean exiles in California, Marita Eastmond (1997) painted an incredibly vivid picture of the hardships and challenges of Chilean exiles in the Silicon Valley that would help us retrace the political, social and emotional climate in the Chilean community. For the political exiles themselves, finding refuge in the US was a hardship from the start, as they stepped onto territory of turbo-capitalism, the heart of the high-tech industry, and social inequality that Silicon Valley had been epitomizing for many decades. Perceiving themselves to be imprisoned in a land diametrically opposed to their own political and moral convictions, they were ultimately forced to start negotiating with the reality surrounding them by entering the job market and education systems and continuing to care for their families. The initial yearning to return to an insular homelife whilst seeing the refuge in the US as a temporary solution was gradually replaced by the realization of how difficult the return to Chile and reinsertion into the post-dictatorial society would turn out to be.

Ellen Salazar, wife of the ex-political prisoner Jaime Salazar, recounts the experience

of Chilean exiles in the Bay Area, giving insight into professional and interpersonal realities and confirming the aforementioned social dynamics and challenges, as follows:

> For example, if the guys came here and they were well educated in Chile, came from a family that had more resources and seemed to have an okay life in Chile, it's harder for them because there was more lost. For other people, in terms of their employment or financial situation, it was actually way better. *That* is a contradiction right there. (Salazar and Salazar, interview, 2019)

In these tumultuous circumstances, finding comfort in sites of memory (Nora, 1984) for like-minded people was of indispensable value. The Chileans in Northern California, most notably from San Jose, Stockton, Berkeley and San Francisco, had an unparalleled opportunity to build their community around one particular organization named La Peña. Since 1975, this non-profit cultural center based in Berkeley has been promoting social justice through arts, initially as a resistance organization against the Pinochet dictatorship. Its members were primarily Chileans, but also other Latin Americans and North Americans who were supportive of the cause. La Peña's members regularly organized events to raise money for mobilization efforts against dictatorial violence and to inform the local community about the human rights crimes that were happening in Chile.

Challenges of preserving Chilean memory in the diaspora: photographical and archival memory work

Marcelo Montealegre, a Chilean American photographer who has resided in New York City since he was hired to work for the Spanish edition of Life magazine in 1967, observed and photographically documented the resistance movement from the very beginning. During the first years of the regime, two groups of Chileans began to flee to the East Coast: those who could not tolerate the idea of being in a dictatorship and left voluntarily, and those who were actually exiled by the government.

Various political groups and solidly united organizations were created and later gathered under the umbrella of the Chile Democrático movement of which many of Marcelo's friends were active members. However, he wished to distance himself from any political affiliations for the sake of his own independence, while at the same time volunteering for the common cause as a photographer and taking pictures of events that were held in the resistance period, such as the 1974 "Friends for Chile" benefit concert that featured renowned musicians like Phil Ochs, Bob Dylan, Arlo Guthrie and Pete Seeger. During these activities that heavily relied on support from organizations

like the New York Ethical Society and the Riverside Church, Marcelo befriended Chilean refugees who lived in the United States as parolees and who, from a legal perspective, were officially entitled to a right of residence, to pursue regular jobs and leave the country, yet were not allowed to return. Firmly integrated in the diasporic network, the photographer subsequently covered a variety of events, both formal and informal, from private funeral ceremonies to United Nations sessions where he witnessed the Chilean ambassador's heinous propaganda of the junta.

The future of his collection, as well as of his fellow colleagues like Juan Carlos Cáceres, a Chilean photographer who documented human rights crimes of the military regime in situ, and for whose work he has expressed major admiration, is what currently causes the most concern to Marcelo. The fate of these archives of tremendous historical value will be jeopardized once the artists are no longer alive. In the light of political developments in Chile and the US during their preceding presidencies and the respective budget restraints in the fields of arts, culture and education by rightist governments, Marcelo remains highly skeptical of governmental structures as gatekeepers of photographical memory.

Organizational alternatives are equally scarce, since foundations in Chile are entirely financially dependent on the government, unlike in Europe where the funding is traditionally ensured by private individuals and organizations. Foundations in the US that are able to maneuver through changing state and federal policies regarding cultural preservation with or without official funds have developed sufficient structures to safeguard photography collections, although these are more likely of high profile celebrity artists than lesser known photographers.

The memory question in Chile: history, memory politics and the new media

Besides the symbolic, political and sociocultural impact of Chile's dictatorial past that reverberated far beyond its national borders, the country contributed decisively to the development of criminal justice processes within the scope of international jurisdiction (see e.g. Ferrara, 2021). In particular, Chile, and in a broader sense, the entirety of Latin American countries who had to suffer through dictatorial rules, were pivotal for the development of transitional justice. The resulting legal paradigm served as the basis for truth-seeking mechanisms in a deeply divided society such as the Chilean after 1990 (Fischer, 2011, p. 410). Since its beginnings in the 1970s, transitional justice has evolved as a concept, transcending its initially strictly penal objectives and reaching into semi-judicial fields, such as memory politics and reconciliation (Fischer, 2011, p. 407). Besides the four pillars of transitional justice as

outlined by Martina Fischer—accountability, reparations, institutional reforms and reconciliation (cf. 2011, p. 411)—in the following, I would like to draw attention to the element of truth recovery within this body of work, that itself covers different notions:

> objective or forensic truth (evidence and facts about human rights violations and missing persons), narrative truth (storytelling by victims and perpetrators and communicating personal truths and multi-layered experiences to a wider public), social or dialogical truth (truth of experience that is established by interactions, discussion and debate) and healing or restorative truth (documentation of facts and acknowledgement to give dignity to the victims and survivors). (Fischer, 2011, p. 411)

One of the important mechanisms that gradually introduced the recovery of forensic truth was the Rettig Report submitted by the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation in 1991. The document provided numbers on victims who were killed or disappeared during the dictatorship but lacked the legal force to name perpetrators. With regard to the recuperation of historical truth, Cath Collins et al. (2013, p. 16) critically remark citing the anthropologist Richard Wilson, that "official truth commissions attempt to craft narratives of the past that, in rendering the present more governable, 'manufacture bureaucratic legitimacy' for the state. "Victims of torture, like perpetrators, also did not appear in that document, until the publication of the Valech Report, designated by Steve Stern as 'citizen testimony' and 'a call for «historical and political justice»'" (2010, p. 299).

The social or dialogical truth, on the contrary, had much less opportunity to unfold in post-dictatorial Chile, since the first democratic presidencies prioritized stability and reconciliation at the expense of a profound societal evaluation of Pinochet's legacy. This policy consequently reinvigorated collective modes of amnesia and possible new beginnings (Ruderer, 2010, p. 35), as well as an ubiquitous feeling of distrust towards the government among the citizenry, since the former granted amnesty to all sides guilty of political violence to ensure reconciliation "as a state project that reenacts nation-state's tendency to promote homogenizing subjectivity, that is, a unitary model of the national protagonist" (Frazier, 2007, p. 197). In this manner, and to put it in Stern's words (cf. 2010, p. 15), the Chilean state tried to keep the memory box firmly sealed during the first years of the Transition period, despite the unbearable cultural craving for truth-telling.

In this very context, it becomes apparent that little space was left for the third type of truth recovery as outlined by Martina Fischer, the restorative truth. In this regard, the initial impulses for its establishment stemmed from the victims and their relatives; their tireless commitment kept the issue of memory on the political agenda of the

state, and morally condemned the perpetrators—something that the government initially failed to administer straightforwardly to the public.

Although acknowledged, the importance of memory politics did not fully penetrate the public consciousness, not least due to the highly conservative media: Stephan Ruderer (2010, p. 328) has observed in this respect that the ideological prefiguration inherited from the Pinochet era proved to be persistently impactful on historical and mnemonic debates. The crack opening of the memory box in 1998 with Pinochet's detention in London introduced a new phase in Chilean memory politics, catalyzed by demonstrations, new cultural expressions and, most notably, new media. "The old ways of talking about memory were wearing out", explains Michael J. Lazzara (2011, p. 352), "and people were looking for new ways to deal with the past". At the turn of the millennium, the notion of "memory as unfinished work" (Stern, 2010, p. 264) then firmly ushered into the collective consciousness, and I would argue that withholding bodies of the disappeared and murdered victims contributed even more so to the permeation of that perception. Lessie Jo Frazier notes that the absence of the bodies afflicts the relatives of the victims in "a culturally specific way", since in "Latin American, largely Catholic settings, where viewing the remains is central to rituals of mourning, the withholding of bodies places both the dead and the living in a liminal position, making verification and resolution of loss through proper mourning impossible" (Frazier, 2007, p. 196). Accordingly, the use of viable technologies such as digital archives turned out to be one of the few primordial mechanisms to perform truth telling, mourning rituals, and re-establish justice and restorative truth. A case in point is the digital archive Memoria Viva, that has been online since 1996 and which preserves information on victims—tortured, disappeared or executed—perpetrators, detention centers, amongst others.

Remembering the Pinochet dictatorship in the diaspora: a case study on Chilean American memory work and the archive Historical Memory Project

As for Chilean memory outside of Chile, a study published by Alejandra Serpente (2015) has demonstrated how the transmission of cultural memory of human rights crimes under the military dictatorship transcended national boundaries when new forms of diasporic commemorative practices were catalyzed by Pinochet's detention in London in 1998. This memory node sparked a mnemonic bond between Chilean exiles and émigrés in Great Britain and their offspring in situ within the framework of shared political activism, established with the picket organized throughout the entirety of the 503 days of the dictator's detention in the British capital. Although similar attempts to claim a diasporic presence have been unquestionably undertaken by Chilean

Americans, they were not rapidly mobilized in collective memory work through a comparably impactful memory node on United States soil as it was the case in the UK.

While memory work has been successfully passed on in some cases in the United States, as it has been the case with families like the Salazars in Berkeley within the La Peña community, Marcelo Montealegre has pointed out that it is mostly the rule that the next generation is reluctant to take on this legacy, explaining "there is very little interest, and most of them don't want to hear about it", and that most of the offspring would not be able to appreciate their parents' (art)work from the resistance generation, since "they were abandoned to a certain extent" for the sake of the cause (Montealegre, interview, 2018).

Chilean American sociologist Marcia Esparza is facing a similar challenge within the context of New York City's higher education system. She is an assistant professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (City University of New York), a school whose student body is almost 50% Latino or Hispanic, and is working in an environment where she experiences a certain amount of disconnectedness to their mnemonic, historical and cultural heritage among young people: "our students and people in the diaspora sometimes, or maybe even too often, forget that there is a relationship between Latin American History and Latinos in the United States, [...] this relationship between what happens and what happened in Latin America and the Latinos there and here is not realized very often" (Esparza, interview, 2018). Marcia founded the Historical Memory Project (HMP) in 2002 to bridge the intergenerational, spatial and temporal gap and target the main audience, the Latin American diaspora in New York City, in order to strengthen the diasporic community through engagement in cultural practices that revolve around the topic of Latin American memory. Historically, the project was brought into being in a time of major reconfigurations within the bounds of Chilean memoryscapes: the judicial system started prosecuting the cases of human rights violations more rigorously, the Valech Commission provided an opportunity for 38,000 survivors of State violence to bear witness on their experience of political imprisonment and torture, all of this occurring during the advent of new media and Internet, that contributed even more so to the dissemination of the discourse. At the same time, the monumentalization of memory also took hold at an accelerated pace, bringing the proliferation of street names, monuments and commemorative sites and later culminating in the 2010 opening of the Museum of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago.

With regard to its main objectives, the project was conceived to preserve the collective memory of human rights crimes victims in Latin America in several ways: HMP is

determined to collect, store and curate media that are bearing witness to injustice and violence occurred on the subcontinent in its small physical archive located in Marcia's office, but also guarantee access to an "interactive online archive of court files, forensic evidence, expert witness testimonies, oral testimonies, war photography, and journalistic pieces" (Historical Memory Project, 2019) as a digital resource. At the same time, the project constantly mobilizes its archival collections at events such as photography exhibitions, conferences, workshops and movie screenings to equip fellow diasporans with the necessary knowledge to help them make better-informed political decisions as Latinos in the US, as well as with regard to US foreign policy as it pertains to Latin America. The curated material compiles memories related to occurrences of state terror in Chile, Guatemala, Argentina, Mexico, among other nations, and therefore creates a space where different Latin American collective memories and identities can conflate and co-constitute a diasporic space, building on memories from the country of origin and implementing them within the social realities of the US. The memories that are carved into archival objects, understood as "privileged carrier[s] of diasporic identity" (Baronian et al., 2006, p. 11), are, in this sense, fundamental traces of a cultural continuum that are present in new diasporic constellations after migratory or exile experiences, that are crucial for and characteristic of a primordial collective memory (Chamberlain, 2009, p. 186). On another level, the project seeks to re-signify Chilean and other Latin American memories in the context of migration or exilic displacement in the absence of a great catalytic memory node. Confronted with this difficult task, the archival organization is arranging for transgenerational, political and intersubjective bond-building in the diaspora by reacting to and engaging with other current events in Latin America.

Archival monumentality, materiality and photography of human rights crimes in Latin America

The photographical material, without any doubt, is the most monumental part of the HMP archive and what immediately draws the audience in with its mostly candid, matter-of-fact depiction of unbearable human suffering and loss in the context of state violence. The visual experience of collective memory through photography and its complex materialities entails different possible strategies how the memory stakeholders and other mnemonic agents deal with the past, how memories are suppressed, ignored, actively forgotten, honored or made visible (Huffschmid, 2015, p. 375). In the following, I would like to refer to several works of the anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards to discuss the potentials and limitations of digital images and the persistent importance of the materiality belonging to their counterparts in the physical archive at the John Jay College.

In her 2011 essay "Photographs: Material Form and the Dynamic Archive", Edwards urges the readers to "stop thinking of photographs and their archives simply as passive 'resources' with no identity of their own" (2011, p. 47) and instead see them as resourceful entities, as they are actively mediating social relations in manifold socio-technical assemblages. In this context, Edwards stresses the material aspect of photographs, for the physical manifestation of photographic objects and corresponding archival practices such as acquiring, storing or collecting is indicative of their sociality and historicity.

Shedding light on processes of remediation of archival material would be particularly helpful in HMP's case to visualize at what cost and how Marcia was able to safeguard, acquire and store entire unique collections. I understand these processes, including material changes of the media as well as practices of archival transfer or material loan that are quite widespread within the bounds of the HMP archive, as a constant re-activation of the archival record, with "each activation leav[ing] fingerprints which are attributes to the archive's meaning" (Ketelaar, 2001, p. 137). This is pivotal for the user consulting the resource to comprehend the variety of archival practices *and* the practices of history and sense making that are inscribed into them. In this regard Edwards suggests to examine "the way photography disturbs the core nodes of historical relations and the practice of history—the nature of event, happening, occurrence, the nature of context, narrative, temporal distance, the spatialisation of time, fragmentation, and above all perhaps, the concept of 'presence'" (2016, p. 306). Photographs are therefore a rather uncomfortable medium for a historian's practice, since when used as historical sources, they will be subject to "cultural processes of othering: typifying, fetishising, normalising and pathologising" (Edwards, 2016, p. 305), often resulting in their reductive use as "content rather than being presented as dynamic objects, and layers of historical information obliterated as records are 'updated'" (Edwards, 2017, p. 7). Photographs seem to pierce through these aforementioned historiographical cornerstones such as narrative and context due to their extremely realistic and raw indexation to what once was. When confronted with photographic images, the viewer is presented with documented episodes of human rights crimes, and is forced to face history, to re-experience the depicted scene from the photographer's point of view.

Situating the archive: the politics of digital mnemonic and archival work in the diaspora

Similar to Carolina Ramírez' study of the London picket in 1998, the Historical Memory

Project seems to anchor its sense of belonging and home in what has been called "diasporic public sphere" (Ramírez, 2012). Ramírez pinpoints that "belonging is most certainly a political quest rather than a naturally given state" and that "'homing' requires establishing connections and being 'in line' with the wider social context" (2012, p. 24). Translating this observation into the mission framework of the New Yorker project, the archive should serve as an antidote to current injustices by helping to collectively remember the injustices from the past and thus raising awareness among students, as well as immigrant and diasporic communities. This vision is tightly connected to the call for mnemopolitical mobilization and activism which can be understood as one of the possible mechanisms for fellow émigrés, diasporans and ex-exiles to leave frameworks of marginalization, invisiblization and victimization.

As a stakeholder in the mnemonic community of Chilean exiles and immigrants, Marcia has been able to partially safeguard Chilean diasporic memory through affiliation to a public university. Still, and for the very same reason, the project has been impelled to navigate through some financial and political constraints that emerge through its proximity to the US American university, even though the college provides the basis of existence for the archive in broader terms. By fostering human rights memory and raising awareness of state-sponsored episodes of terror in Latin America, HMP has brought itself into a highly delicate position. As evidenced by declassified CIA documents on the support provided by the United States to stage the 1973 coup in Chile, the archive is bearing witness of deeds that corroborate the involvement of the US federal government in foreign affairs, thus creating a conflict of interest between the project and the government-related higher education institution. These political and financial pinch points induce a stronger necessity to collaborate with other organizations that would able to help cultivate the project, from the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience or the Argentinian human rights organization Memoria Abierta, to local archives in Guatemala that were able to lend their documents to HMP. As it becomes apparent, the archival collections resemble living creatures, reliant on contribution and care of multiple, international stakeholders, responding to current political tensions and processes.

Discussion and conclusion

While discussing the potentials and limitations of digital archives within diasporic and exilic memoryscapes, the argument developed in this article has incorporated multiple perspectives in order to elucidate the intricate entanglements of technology, power, politics, and memory as a social phenomenon mediated through cultural and media practices. To a significant extent, this study has to contend with the challenging gap

between subdisciplines of media archaeology and media history. By focusing on the latter perspective, the role of digital archives has been described within the shifts induced by technological developments. In this context, this article illuminated how grassroots digital archives are fundamental means for truth recovery in a political climate that shrugged off a profound discussion of the dictatorial past. Ina Blom's accurate observation seems to be extremely pertinent that media are being inserted into narrative horizons of historical memory, while media archaeology, on the contrary, exclusively aims its attention at different modes of "operationality [of technical machines and their various components] that may attest to historical context but that radically ignores it, in the sense that a functioning machine, however 'dated', may produce effects in ever-new contexts" (Blom, 2017, p. 18).

The epistemological benefit of a media archeological approach was particularly fertile during the discussion of material quality of photographs as mnemonic carriers and their ways of remediation, since technological changes in mediascapes bring along imperative changes in how diasporans remember state violence under Pinochet. It remains to be seen how the digital externalization of human rights violations and suffering incurred during the Pinochet regime will change the memory praxis of mnemonic agents, especially since the legacy remembered elicits extremely different effects in the Chilean diasporic community as a whole.

Both tendencies—to see new media as an external memory field that incorporates us as well as clearly separate, externalized memory forms—might equally give us a false sense of security that the memorial legacy is immortalized as items that are circulating through aforementioned media ecologies. More dangerously, this belief might atrophy our individual physical and cognitive memory work, especially after difficult stages of life, such as generational shifts, migration and exile, once we have introduced our memories into said digital economies, falsely believing our memories would stand the test of time there.

At this juncture, it becomes apparent that the discussion cannot proceed any further without touching upon the cornerstone that is the collaborative potential that can be utilized within digital archives. The Historical Memory Project digital archive has thus far not accomplished to initiate direct involvement of the public, despite having asserted itself to be an interactive digital resource in its mission statement, apart from the material mobilizations of archival collections in public events. This problem nevertheless has to be acknowledged in a wider sociopolitical and economic context: the political tension between the archive and the university it is ensconced at contributes to a lack of funds for the establishment of collaborative technocultural

practices. Arguably, the communicative potential that could have been achieved through the sharing of pictures collected in the digital archive has not been fully translated into the resource's architecture, contributing to a rather static state of the digital memory site.

So, returning to the divisiveness of Chilean memoryscapes, is the quest for a *memoria mínima común de convivencia* as proposed by Joan del Alcàzar (2014, p. 50), even with the aid of digital archives, an entirely naïve endeavor? Is the memory in the diaspora, and perhaps in Chile itself, overloaded by the burden of human rights crimes and damaged lives that impede a stratification of voices recalling the past? And is the digital archive able to genuinely make a change in that respect? What goes without saying is that the archive has changed irretrievably from a rigid place where power systems established, ensured and guarded their nomos, albeit with some withstanding continuities regarding "the non-human topologies of the digital archive and its pre-digital orders" (Blom, 2017, p. 18). Yet, for the Chilean community in the US, digital and physical archives have proven to be of utmost importance as long as they reinforce what Caswell et al. have called "representational belonging" (2018, p. 89), regardless of their digital or physical condition. Digitized musical testimonies of the *Cantos Cautivos* archive and enacted archival collections of the Historical Memory Project in conferences or photo exhibitions have equally resonated with the mnemonic fabric of the Chilean diaspora by addressing both the personal and political needs of mnemonic agents. In other words, similar to physical Latin American community archives in the US (Caswell et al., 2018), digital archives like *Cantos Cautivos* and Historical Memory Project became places of refuge, home and belonging, producing an understanding of the archives that has stridently shifted away from the hostile nomological panopticon.

However, both initiatives are by no means non-hierarchical, post-custodial archives. The creators of both digital archives, whose biographies have been affected by the Pinochet regime, forge the memories of the dictatorship by carefully curating its material and thus "wield[ing] much control and dominat[ing] the selections of elements for memorial production" (Davidson and Kuah-Pearce, 2008, p. 7) in the Chilean diaspora. In this vein, I would argue that collaborative projects are able to unfold individual memories along with their conflictive potential, arranging a mosaic of a diverse memoryscape that transcends preconceived and historiographically polarizing notions.

The sociopolitical contextualization of digital archives as grassroots initiatives, as projects originating from the academe, and as means of art and activism has demonstrated how the preservation of Chilean memory is currently finding itself in the

dichotomy between the need to increasingly distance itself from traditional institutions of cultural memory and the organizational difficulties to safeguard this mnemonic legacy with means available to mnemonic agents such as Marcelo, who is firmly rejecting the idea to pass on his photography archive of more than 100,000 images to government related institutions.

In other words, the memories of Pinochet's Chile are still being fiercely preserved in the US in community cultural centers such as La Peña or in the events organized by Marcia Esparza in the Historical Memory Project. The preservation of Chilean diasporic and exilic memories hence does not seem to face extinction in the near future, and as we have also observed, digital media practices are being utilized to reinforce the memory work. The main force of Chilean memory consequently originates from the offline mobilization efforts in the diaspora and seeks reinforcement in digital media, such as digital archives. In the Chilean memoryscapes, the dominant mnemonic agents in the diaspora frame the issues of the recent past through custodial digital archival structures where the potential for mnemopolitical conflict seems to call for control measures, in order to secure the nomos of human rights and the memory of the regime victims.

Considering the foregoing, the goal of reconciliation within Chilean memoryscapes appears very burdensome, if not even impossible, yet precisely in this context, extremely necessary. In respect thereof, the digital is able to provide a dialogical space "and a nonhierarchical norm development and experimentation with liberal values" (Brinkerhoff, 2009, p. 201) for discussions on daunting, divisive and irresolute topics such as mnemopolitical reconciliation. The future archive for Chilean memories should perhaps consequently be contrived to ensure an encounter of diverging memories in cyberspace, possibly through digital testimonial as in *Cantos Cautivos*.

As previously outlined, it is of utmost importance to underline that each mnemonic agent has to individually assume responsibility for the memory work conducted in the digital realm and critically see the presumptive forces of virtual tools, being aware of the question of power, influence, material and financial constraints, as well as the expiration date of digital projects. In this vein, the potential underlying digital memories is immense, yet they will never replace physical archives, memory sites and mnemonic practices: "until our internal thoughts are remembered, digital memory will remain fundamentally incomplete" (Mayer-Schönberger, 2009, p. 166).

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