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Towards a participatory memory: multi-platform storytelling in historical television documentary

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This article explores strategies used by television programme makers in the multi-platform era, principally concerning personal memories of historical events. The availability and use of televisual materials has increased in the current ‘post-scarcity culture’, especially through the digitization of archival collections and production of history-based content for television. The author therefore considers the contemporary role of television in the active experience of (re-)engaging with past events in the present. The analysis focuses on a specific case of historical television documentary, the Dutch cross-media project *In Europe*, grounded in a textual analysis of the project and the creators’ strategies of multi-platform storytelling. These strategies hold opportunities and implications for a specific kind of shared engagement with the past, which can arguably be called a ‘participatory memory’.

Recent studies have pointed out the centrality of media to the formation of memory. Memory narratives are not only produced in socio-cultural contexts, but are also repurposed and preserved through media practices (Neiger, Meyers, and Zandberg 2011; Erll and Rigney 2009; Huyssen 2003). Media technologies can therefore be defined as ‘tools that mediate between personal and collective cultural memory’ (Van Dijck 2007, 19). Societies continuously negotiate a (shared) understanding of the past and television facilitates such negotiations (Holdsworth 2011; Bourdon 2003; Edgerton and Rollins 2001). In our contemporary ‘post-scarcity culture’ (Hoskins 2011), audiences make conscious decisions to assimilate and discuss televisual images of the past across various platforms. This might signify a growing popularity of television history amongst a wider audience, but can also point to a more complex and dynamic relationship between personal and collective cultural memories in the current media landscape.

In this context, I will explore a case concerning the efforts undertaken by the Dutch public broadcaster VPRO to engage the public in European history. The historical documentary project *In Europe* [*In Europa*] was intentionally designed with a cross-media approach. *In Europe* is principally concerned with providing a ‘space of participation’ (Müller 2009) for users to connect with. The project has been broadcast and made accessible online for approximately seven years, which provides a considerable starting point for a reflection on the interplay between past and present via television. This article poses the following question: how do creators of historical television documentary utilize multi-platform strategies to constitute engagement with the past, and what are the subsequent opportunities and implications for the construction of memory? Multi-platform storytelling involves a distinct dramaturgy in terms of shaping a story. I will therefore first describe how the *In Europe* documentary makers engage viewers with

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history through a particular focus on personal narratives. Second, the *In Europe* project consists of several media platforms and layers of content, which enrich this strategy of the documentary series. I will consider how *In Europe* as a space of participation (pre-) structures user activity and how the (re-)production of personal memories within a space of participation contributes to a specific kind of engagement with the past.

This study is grounded in a textual analysis of the project and its creators' strategies of multi-platform storytelling in relation to personal memories of historical events. The investigated materials entail (1) the documentary series *In Europe*; (2) its related cross-media practices between late 2007 and early 2014 (including user-generated content such as over 700 online viewer/user reactions); (3) in-depth interviews with key professionals involved in the project's production, research and online strategies and (4) viewing figures and visitor data of the series and website. History, memory and their representations are analysed as processes and practices of 'discursive struggle' (Anderson 2001, 22) by drawing upon theoretical work from the areas of television studies, memory studies, narratology, media theory and (television) historiography.

Rewriting 'History' into personal histories

In 1999, Dutch author and journalist Geert Mak embarked on an inspection tour of 'Europe at the end of the millennium', which formed the groundwork for his 2004 book *In Europe: Travels through the Twentieth Century*. Roel van Broekhoven, a Dutch documentary maker and director/editor-in-chief at VPRO television, recognized the possibilities of a screen adaptation of the book. This would result in a prestigious documentary series and cross-media project by VPRO, funded by a multi-million budget (including 400,000 Euros in subsidy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Europe-fund). The first season of *In Europe* was aired on national television between 11 November 2007 and 9 March 2008; the second season was broadcast between 23 November 2008 and 15 March 2009. The series was created for a broad, general audience, and has been hailed as one of the best watched documentary series ever in the Netherlands (ANP, 11 February 2008). Episodes can be viewed on the programme's website; the public broadcasters' catch-up TV website, and history portal; DVD; as well as digital thematic channels. The series has also been sold to Belgium, France, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Croatia. *In Europe* was awarded the 2009 *Prix Europe* for best production in the category 'Emerging Media', because of the project's cross-media nature, the extensive mobilization of podcasts and vodcasts, and innovative use of Google Maps.

I argue that *In Europe*'s main strategy is to provide a new reading of history via television. The series on the one hand is a historical-chronological travelogue, starting in 1900 and ending in 1992. The documentary makers take Mak's work as a starting point, and focus on historical narratives and locations which Mak selected, or that fit in with the narrative of the book. On the other hand, the series represents a personal journey through the present and reflects on the status of Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Each episode of *In Europe* places a particular emphasis on a specific year and location in European history (Figure 1), via a strategy through which eyewitnesses of key events, or their descendants, perform acts of memory on screen. These private histories, told in interviews, are continually placed within the public context of the historical event, particularly through the use of often never seen archival footage and by visiting *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory (Nora 1989).

The documentary series pushes normative history into greyer areas, and does so by shifting the focus of the narration to how people have witnessed and experienced that

Season 1			Season 2		
Episode no.	Episode title		Episode no.	Episode title	
	Year	Situation		Year	Situation
1	1900	Dawn of the Century [the European continent]	19	1944	Warsaw and Prague
2	1906	Berlin and Vienna	20	1945	Germany and Russia
3	1914	Vienna and Sarajevo	21	1945	Yugoslavia
4	1915	Ypres, Belgium	22	1946	Israel and Europe
5	1916	The Somme	23	1948	Czech Republic
6	1917	France	24	1950	Europe
7	1917	Russia	25	1956	Hungary
8	1922	Berlin	26	1958	France and Algeria
9	1925	Predappio, Italy	27	1961	German Democratic Republic
10	1929	Berlin	28	1968	Amsterdam/Paris/Berlin
11	1933	Russia	29	1974	Portugal
12	1936	Spain	30	1977	Germany
13	1937	Munich	31	1984	England
14	1939	Germany	32	1986	Chernobyl
15	1940	France	33	1989	Romania
16	1942	Germany	34	1991	Soviet Union
17	1943	Stalingrad	35	1992	Bosnia and The Truth
18	1943	Poland			

Figure 1. Overview of *In Europe* episodes, including locations (sites of memory) and years focused upon in the history of Europe in the twentieth century.

history. This fits Van Broekhoven's own preference for using 'small narratives' as a model for explanation:

Why smaller narratives? Because this allows you to identify with people and to not only listen with your ear, but also with your emotions (personal interview, 3 April 2012).¹

Unlike more 'traditional' perspectives, *In Europe* thus focuses less on the 'big names' of the twentieth century, but represents the decisions of people who had to deal with this history on an everyday basis. Although historians formed a key component of the research process, the programme makers usually refrained from letting historians or experts take centre stage. As co-editor-in-chief Stefanie de Brouwer argues:

It's not about facts, it's about how people deal with that history and what they do with it in the present. (...) The interpretation of facts always provides fuel for a discussion, and history is an emotional business (personal interview, 24 May 2011).

This entailed a focus on oral history and the challenge of selecting the right protagonists and stories to tell different sides of an event. With the exception of lengthier season finales, each episode is restricted to approximately 35 minutes and includes a maximum of three to four on-screen storytellers. Selection is an essential and unavoidable part of television production, and (television) historiography:

Television is a selection in which you always deprive people and events. You choose something, but it's not always a historically responsible choice. In fact, it is quite often a television choice (Van Broekhoven, personal interview, 3 April 2012).

Often the protagonists differed from the individuals featured in Mak's book, not in the least because they were since deceased. Compared to the book, the series zooms in even further on personal stories, the result of a strong emotive approach.

Repurposing archival images plays a central role in *In Europe*. Archival footage can help to represent the testimony of those who are no longer with us. The episode



Figure 2. *In Europe* places an emphasis on personal memories and sites of memory, such as Ernst von Salomon's son being interviewed in his father's study. (Source: VPRO, 2013).

'1922-Berlin' for instance contains archival film footage from the 1960s in which Ernst von Salomon brazenly recounts his involvement in the murder of the Foreign Minister of Germany during the Weimar Republic, Walther Rathenau. Archival footage is also given a new dimension by its juxtaposition with private stories, in this case Von Salomon's son Cassian sharing personal memories of his father. Visiting historical locations functions as a trigger of memory in this context. When interviewed in his father's office (Figure 2), which had been left untouched since the latter's death in 1972, it is clear that Cassian von Salomon still perceives his father as a great authority, which is stressed again by Mak's voice-over narration. The main question that the programme makers try to answer in '1922-Berlin' is: 'If Rathenau had not been murdered, would Hitler ever have come that far?' Using such a combination of textual strategies to crawl back into the past helps viewers to connect with history on a more affective level. Through the variety of strategies outlined, *In Europe* offers a personal perspective on the history of the twentieth century that challenges and contrasts 'accepted' versions of history.

Providing a space of participation

Historians have generally refrained from including the project's cross-media strategies in their critique of the series. However, by creating an open space for participation and including audiences in the construction of historical narratives, television users were and are able to engage with *In Europe* 24/7. I argue that it is essential to analyse these strategies as an integral part of television in the multi-platform era. Incorporating other platforms has become a distinctive feature of the medium, converting television into a practice of multi-platform storytelling in which content travels across multiple screens and media channels (see also Hagedoorn 2013). As a result of the incorporation of the Internet and mobile devices into the television experience, many television programmes and practices today function as 'spaces of participation' that are re-shaped and co-produced by users. By providing opportunities for participation on for instance a television programme's

website, the programme or website interface provides the framework for users' performance within such a space (Müller 2009, 51–2). Participation has been problematized as a contested, flexible and conceptually broad notion (see, e.g. Jenkins 2014; Carpentier and Dahlgren 2011; Van Dijck 2009). Carpentier (2011) has therefore made a distinction between access, interaction and participation, understanding access and interaction as necessary preconditions of possible participation. Fundamentally, participation is related to the dynamics and logics of decision-making and power, regardless of its arrangements: 'whether it is explicit or implicit, formal or informal, minimalist or maximalist and egalitarian or not' (Carpentier and Dahlgren 2011, 8). I adopt the perspective that participation involves a set of expectations from creators too. As Jenkins (in Jenkins and Carpentier 2013, 266) has suggested, the concept also signifies the motivation of struggles in achieving participation and therefore provides a touchstone to measure what kind of relationships have developed within a more participatory culture.

Resonance and continuity

In Europe was the first case of an organization-wide cross-media operation for one specific project at VPRO. Teams working in television, radio, print media, tourism, website editing and design worked together in terms of content and timing. VPRO Digital project manager Geert-Jan Strengtholt (personal interview, 7 March 2012) calls this 'cross-media management', the endeavour to position the specific properties of media and the pacing of their consumption to create a certain resonance. The creators have also strived for transmediality by directing users to other facets of a story on related platforms. *In Europe* consists of several media platforms, which expand and enhance the strategy of the documentary series (Figure 3). The project created continuity of stories and of audience engagement by adding different layers of content to historical narratives, which can otherwise only be told in a linear fashion. In this manner, the ample audience is addressed more directly.

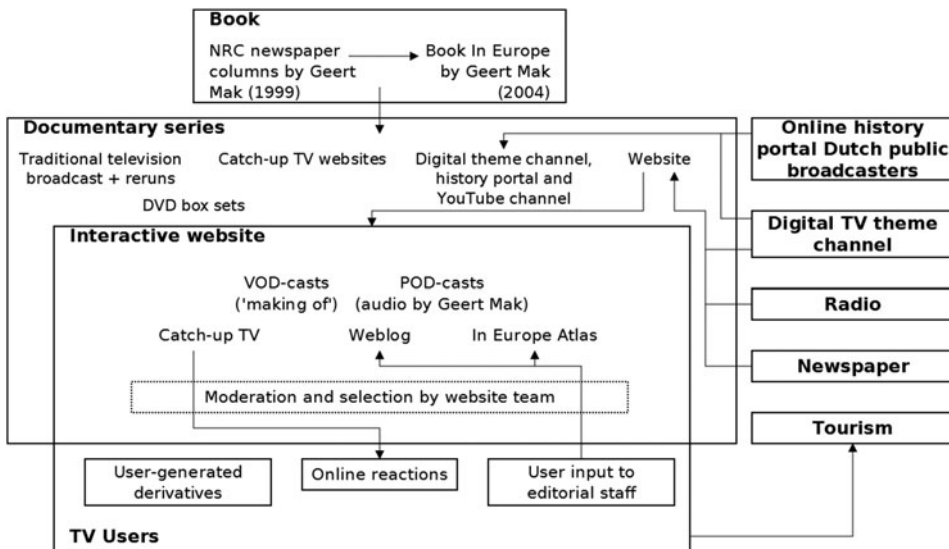


Figure 3. Multi-platform storytelling in *In Europe*: flow of information and overview of modalities.

The build-up of the multi-platform story arc would start on Saturday: in keeping with the first 18 episodes, correspondents for national newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* wrote newspaper articles about traces of the past in Europe. On Sunday morning, VPRO's historical radio programme *OVT* [*Simple Past Tense*] featured a format titled the *In Europe Salon*, in which Geert Mak and experts discussed historical events central to the weekly episode. This invested the television series, which would be broadcast that same evening, with new meaning. On Monday, the site would feature additional materials, based on the assessment that the broadcast and its re-viewing caused a peak in website visits. Further contextual information was provided through tourism. Although the prospect of a coach trip did not attract a large turnout, VPRO organized group travel trips to places, monuments and museums (and even eyewitnesses) featured in Mak's book and the series. Such activities exemplify the project's extensive cross-media management and specifically timed commodities and practices, which provide a deeper engagement with the television series. The creators were very aware of the moment on which the users' attention would peak for each of these media, and strived to align these moments in the general narrative to fix the viewers' attention and direct them to other platforms.

Viewing figures and visitor data of the series and website can aid in further verifying how resonance is achieved. There has been a considerable viewer/user dynamic between the *In Europe* series and website. The largest spikes in website visits overlap with broadcasts and reruns on national television (Figure 4). The average monthly ratio of website visits to viewing figures during season 1 is 5.5%, meaning that on average 1 in 18 viewers visited the website. During season 2 this is 6.9% with an average of 1 in 14 viewers visiting the website (Figure 5). Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate how the website has over the years been able to engage a steady stream of visitors, particularly when timing cross-media content together with television broadcasts. This shows the possibilities for engaging users with history and memory when a multi-platform story production is paced to create resonance. Televisual practices of multi-platform storytelling steer the level and extent of such user involvement.

On the other hand, Figures 4 and 5 also show how the possibilities for multi-platform experiences connected to television can still be further exploited and utilized.

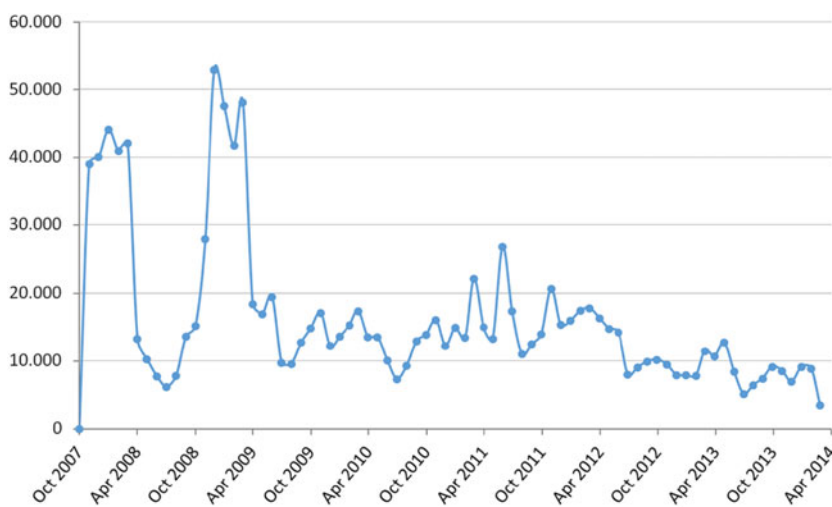


Figure 4. *In Europe* unique website visitors per month. (Source: NTR).

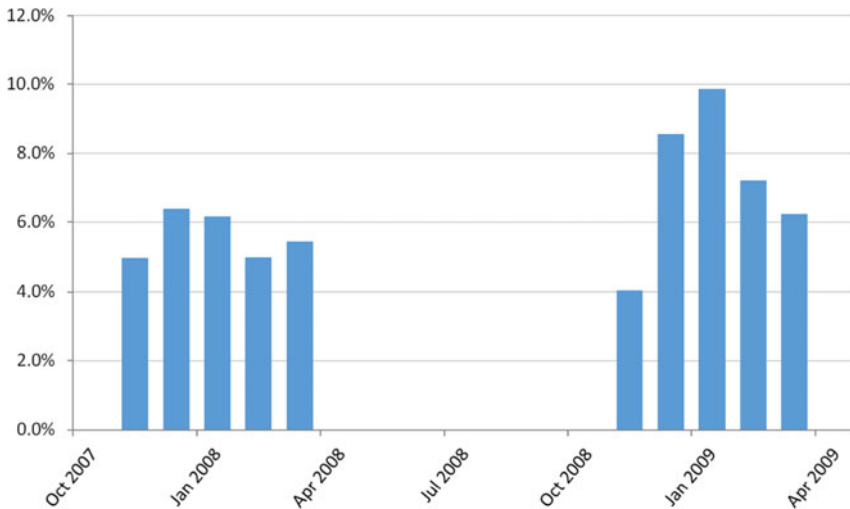


Figure 5. Monthly ratio of website visits to *In Europe* viewing figures during the broadcast of Season 1 and Season 2 on Dutch public television.⁴ (Source: NTR).

The degree to which possibilities are realized is dependent on a production's workflow. This includes the alignment of the various media 'strands' in a production routine, as well as motivating and empowering users to engage in participation and decision-making processes. According to Strengholt (personal interview, 7 March 2012), the contact with the website audience could have been better maintained between the two seasons, which Figure 4 illuminates. After completion of the production of the series, television users are still prompted by broadcasts and reruns to participate and share personal narratives, but at this point there usually is no (full) production team left to engage in such responses and only limited means within a website team. In addition, the location of the website changed by early 2014. The content was partially imported in the history portal *Geschiedenis24* [History24] as part of the Dutch public broadcasters' reduction of channels. Figure 4 suggests difficulties for audiences in 'finding' *In Europe* content at the site's new location. Continuity on the various production levels is therefore a requirement for multi-platform storytelling to maintain resonance over a longer time period.

A quantitative study of general visitor statistics can provide only some measure of the degree of user interaction. For example, in the period that the second season of *In Europe* was broadcast, the website saw 219,931 unique visitors (Figure 4). Little over half of these visitors visited at least one of the episodes subpages (114,004, or 51.8%), while a little less than half visited the weblog (98,447, or 44.8%). These pages all provide users with the option for commenting. The *In Europe Atlas* (discussed below) was considerably less visited (19,730, or 9.0%). Whilst registering the number of website visitors is common practice, it does not say much about the actual behaviour of users on websites. No detailed statistics regarding behaviour and interaction of unique users on the website were collected by the Dutch broadcaster (privacy constraints also need to be taken into account here). This is a notable observation, given the fact that resonance as a production strategy can learn and benefit from detailed knowledge about user behaviour.

Contextualization: sharing and shaping personal narratives

The programme's website functions as the main hub for historical and contextual information. Contextualization is necessary to make online information usable, since the understanding of selected content remains limited without a framework for interpretation (De Leeuw 2012). Figure 6 shows schematically how creators shared their research process with audiences and how the website team engages with users, which ultimately shapes how television users can participate in and provide content for the website. The weblog featured specific calls for user-generated content, varying from personal stories and audio-visual footage to knowledge about music from a specific area. Although television users were able to send in historical information, personal memories and materials (like photographs) by themselves, the calls for content were quite specific in their needs and therefore 'structured' the type of information sent in by users. Conversely, sometimes a user's question or comment functioned as a springboard for a post in which a programme maker reflected on issues dealt with in a particular episode. Finally, via specific calls on the website, creators have drawn upon the audience's knowledge to create 'lists' of historical subjects that should be part of the *In Europe* series, which could also be used in the pre-selection process.

The *In Europe* website team therefore functions as a 'filter' of user input (editorial supervision, as demonstrated in Figures 3 and 6). This is particularly the case for the *In Europe Atlas*. The *Atlas* provided users with the opportunity to share personal narratives related to a specific site of memory, using Google Maps to literally put historical locations 'on the map'. Content was only uploaded when a specific link with the general narrative could be made by event, year or location. Memory narratives were enriched by adding mediated content and by making entries searchable via 'geo-tags' and story routes. In this manner, time and space were literally used as navigation tools. For example, the series featured a historical inspection of the year 1943 and locations in both Germany and Russia. User-generated content included for instance a user reflecting on 1943 as his own year of birth, as well as the year of his parents being set to work in the German village

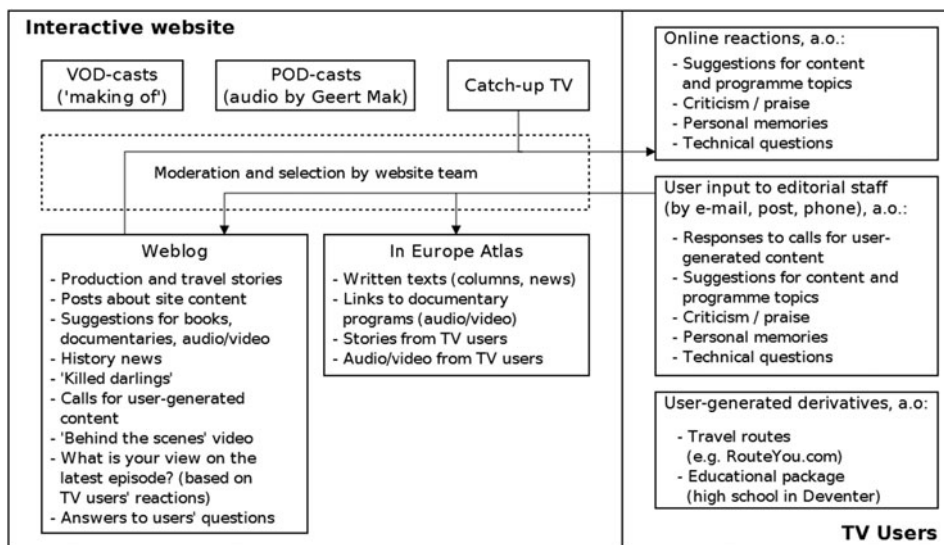


Figure 6. *In Europe* website: strategies and possibilities towards a 'participatory memory'.⁵

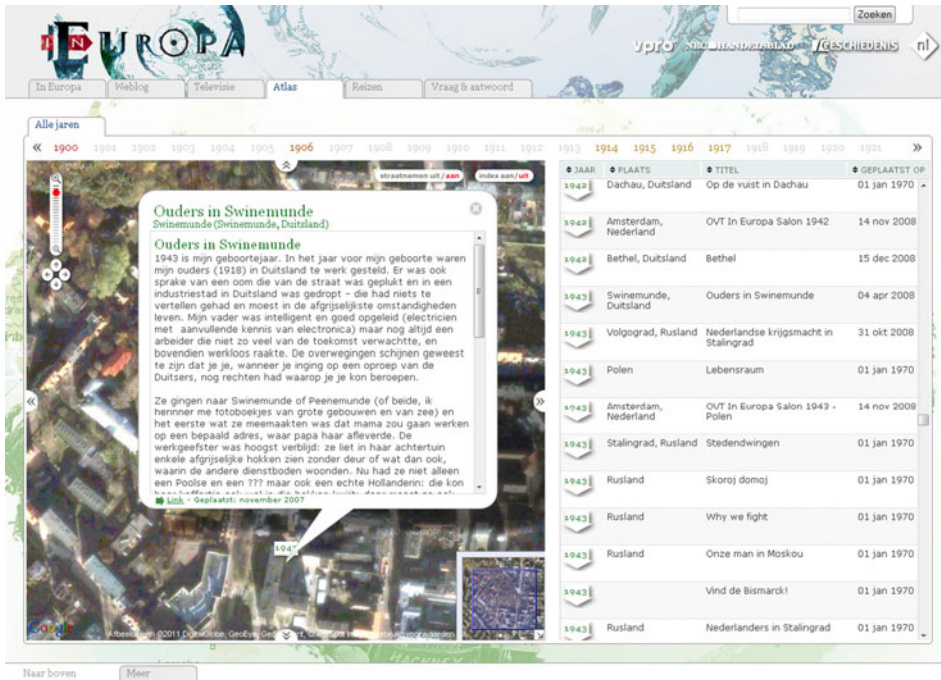


Figure 7. Entry in the *In Europe Atlas* from a user with the year 1943 and location in Germany. (Source: VPRO).

Swinemunde (Figure 7). The envisioned scenario was to make the historical story routes available via GPS. However, this plan was not carried out because of technological limitations to conveniently electronically map and display walking routes for users at the time (today there are more extensive augmented reality possibilities, like the smartphone app *Layar*). It can also be argued that the data were not dense enough to provide complete walking routes through cities in Europe.

The ambition to 'open up' this space even more to television users – for users to add their own narratives autonomously – was not fully realized, as Strenghtolt (personal interview, 7 March 2012) explains, due to practical complexities and concerns about the quality of user narratives. I argue that such apprehensions are part and parcel of cross-media and transmedia story productions. Storytelling is a craft, and user-generated content can lack storytelling techniques or content may deviate too much from the general narrative. Multi-platform production routines involve a distinct dramaturgy in representing main elements of a narrative, and a specific mode of engagement which demands considerable efforts of both creators and users. In this case, the 'top-down' filtering of personal narratives is a necessity for storytelling purposes, but also limits the range of possible memory narratives to be included and preserved.

(Re-)producing personal memories via user commentary

User comments are shared through an 'open policy' (i.e. not moderated beforehand) on either the online episode pages or weblog pages, providing television users with the opportunity to share their personal experiences, thoughts and know-how. However,

the website team has the option to remove posts that do not make a sensible contribution to the online discussion (I reflect on implications below). What are the characteristics of users' comments on the *In Europe* website, and how can the online sharing and (re-) production of personal memories within such a space of participation contribute to a specific kind of engagement with the past?

I distinguish three forms of user engagement. The majority of the analysed user comments were posted online between 2007 and 2011.² In the first place, responses comprise personal memories of a historical event as encountered from one's own experience, including mediated experiences. For example:

I can still vividly remember the images of the Ceaușescus from the news [regarding the Romanian Revolution in "1989-Romania"];

This programme ["1989-Romania"] evokes old memories and emotions (the best day of my life) of the revolution, experienced live on the street.

This first form of user engagement, which I designate as *personalization*, demonstrates how users further contextualize historical content by sharing their own memories. For instance, a viewer of the episode '1961-GDR [German Democratic Republic]' shares his personal recollections of the GDR in the 1980s:

In the mid-1980s I visited the GDR a few times. Empty motorways, no commercials, and aloof people who didn't resemble their "Brüder" ["neighbours"] in the West. It was striking that the GDR left the national legacy of responsibility for WWII completely to the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany]. Another example, as seen more often in this series, of collective denial of the national past.

Such comments provide eyewitness perspectives of historical events, but also accentuate the personal 're-experiencing' of mediated history.

In the second place, user narratives authenticate personal and mediated memories through engagement with a *lieux de mémoire*. Individual memories are shared about the personal experience of visiting a site of memory, like this example about a visit to the battlefields and the last post in Ypres, in relation to '1915-Ypres, Belgium':

The atrocities of the First World War and the totally pointless trench warfare chills you to the bone and has touched us deeply.

Such comments re-iterate the central experience of what history *felt* like. Overall, users seem to ground their commentary in their personal position as 'experience experts' more than a position of historical knowledge (although the latter certainly occurs). For instance, this viewer of '1916-The Somme':

I have regularly visited the Somme with its past, and I increasingly perceive the misery, the futility of this war [the First World War]. Incidentally, the region lets you "recall" much in a fitting way.

Responses of this kind authenticate *In Europe's* mediation of the past in relation to *lieux des mémoires*. This second form of user engagement, *authentication*, reveals how users verify individual (mediated) memories through their own engagement with a site of memory, and by sharing these memories online.

In the third place, responses of both praise and criticism of the series and the project's cross-media approach show a critical attitude towards mediated representations of history. Praise includes positive responses on the project's representation of the past, such as:

Extremely pleased that such important knowledge is made accessible in a fascinating manner!;

Geert Mak voices the atmosphere, feelings and issues [of the English miners' strike in "1984-England"] very well. It was a major social upheaval and *In Europe* reminisces this perfectly.

Criticism reflects expectations of Mak's work and how history 'should' be represented as well as commenting on historical content 'lacking' from the programme:

I had not expected from Geert Mak that this programme ["1989-Romania"] would place such an emphasis on the work of the firing squad;

Disappointed (...) the general vision on the twentieth century is presented as a moralistic sermon [in "1900-Dawn of the Century"].

The category of criticism demonstrates the most interaction from viewers with previously posted comments. For example:

[F]rom comments on the website and checking certain episodes, like this one ["1945-Yugoslavia"], it can also be concluded that despite the useful historical perspective provided by *In Europe*, in certain respects a broader perspective is yet more desirable: in this case, the (responsibility of the) Balkan part of Europe is focused upon in a somewhat one-sided manner, whereas it would be in favour of the objectivity to bring the political-strategic influence of the West on the Balkans to the attention.

This third form of user engagement, *evaluation*, not only reflects on the documentary's representation of history, but also supplements the featured historical topics by discussing what kind of historical narratives or historians should have been featured. Comments also illuminate some viewers' preference for more official representations of history compared to the content of the documentary series.

It is important to reiterate that access is a key precondition for any possible user involvement. In their 2010 coalition agreement, the Dutch government decided that public broadcasters needed to reduce the number of channels, including websites and digital thematic channels. Websites were required to be linked to a programme being broadcast on one of the main channels. The *Atlas* has not been updated since 2009, and therefore remained a document of limited participatory memory during 2007–2009, accessible online between 2007 and 2013. In early 2014 the website's content has (partially) been imported in the Dutch public broadcasters' history portal *Geschiedenis24* [History24]. In the process, the *Atlas* has become unavailable, whilst the option for users to share comments remains. Previously posted user comments with the episodes and selected posts from the weblog have been preserved. Whilst reducing the number of channels is intended to offer a coherent and recognizable programme output, actively removing websites can also be more costly and time consuming than static preservation. Hence, *In Europe* reveals challenges and pragmatic implications regarding the preservation of a 'long tail' effect for multi-platform television productions.

Via strategies of multi-platform storytelling, multiple and continual productions can create room for user involvement in (online) history representations, and subsequently a more participatory construction of memory. Through the three forms of engagement, users negotiate the creators' framing of personal memories and *lieux des mémoires*. Television users reflect on the past in comparison to the present and, in their own ways, provide the stories of *In Europe* with new layers of meaning. This begs the question where and how to demarcate user involvement. For instance, in the heat of a historical debate regarding Mak's work and the documentary series, the website team made the decision to remove posts from the website that were too focused on a single person or resembled a 'rant'. Therefore, creators have the responsibility to reflect on what kind of representations of the

past they give a voice, and scholars should critically assess how this impacts the formation of historical memory in multi-platform environments.

Towards a ‘participatory memory’?

Studies of memory comprehend cultural memory as shared and (re-)constructed knowledge of the past outside of but nevertheless entangled with ‘official’ historical discourse (Plate and Smelik 2009; Sturken 1997). New cultures of participation and digital technologies can provide a more direct link between audiences and sources of historical information, but to actively engage television users in spaces of participation, links need to be made meaningful. As Erll and Nünning (2008, 5) argue, a ‘memory’ which is represented by media and institutions must be ‘actualized’ by individuals to have impact on society. Historical television productions facilitate such negotiations by portraying those parts of the collective memory that are most relevant at the given time to programme makers and their audiences (Edgerton and Rollins 2001, 8). Although all countries have their own historiographies, *In Europe*’s multi-platform strategies prompted viewers to identify with the histories and memories of fellow Europeans on a more affective and personal level.

Television can make history as a process more visible, as Scannell (2005, 51) has argued in relation to broadcast television. Cross-media formats broaden the scope of history that becomes visible through television and its connected platforms, and provide users with further insight into how historical information is selected and produced. The aggregation of contextual information can encourage engagement and provides a more comprehensive framework of interpretation to users. Cross-media formats therefore enhance television’s ability to make the historical process visible, creating new possibilities for audiences to engage in history and including audiences in the construction of historical narratives. As a result, multi-platform story productions have the potential to help construct a specific kind of collective memory and shared engagement with the past, which can arguably be termed a ‘participatory memory’.³

Participatory kinds of memory with which an audience can identify are constructed by focusing on what history *felt* like at the time. Creators’ production choices and narrative strategies, as exemplified by the case of *In Europe*, pre-structure and ‘trigger’ such forms of engagement with the past. This process is not fully egalitarian as user contributions can be moderated, but rather signifies a first step by opening up a space for participation across different platforms. Through a focus on personal memories and emotional identification with historical events, television working towards a participatory memory causes accepted versions of history to be contrasted and challenged.

In Europe demonstrates that ‘sharing’ history in itself is not enough in constructing a participatory memory: television in the multi-platform era requires the facilitation of spaces of participation, where users can engage in discursive struggles over what is accepted as history from their own position as experience experts. This process is ‘opened up’ as well as complicated by the practicalities of television production and multi-platform storytelling. Steering the level and extent of user involvement through resonance and contextualization is a necessity for storytelling purposes, and sets the preconditions for the range of memory narratives which can possibly be brought together.

The case of *In Europe* shows the potential for constructing a participatory memory which deserves further attention. It needs to be critically evaluated how (pre-)structuring and steering user participation through production practices impacts the formation of historical memory in relation to cross-media documentaries. A necessary element in this is

to take into account the extent in which multi-platform projects can be safeguarded against digital amnesia and a ‘long tail’ effect can be preserved by broadcasters, for instance by considering (open) digital standards and meta-documentation from the onset of the project. Multi-platform strategies can enhance constructing participatory memory through resonance, contextualization and the online (re-)production of personal memories. Such approaches facilitate the continual use and preservation of previously broadcast television series to ‘live’ and ‘live on’ online.

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Notes

1. All translations are by the author.
2. Website visits of unique visitors in the respective months. Average viewing figures are based on viewing figures of first episode broadcasts in the respective months.
3. Between 2007 and 2013, the *In Europe* project ran a central website at <http://ineuropa.nl>; in early 2014 the website’s content has been (partially) imported in the Dutch public broadcasters’ history portal *Geschiedenis24* [History24] and the *In Europe* website’s link has subsequently been altered and linked to <http://www.geschiedenis24.nl/in-europa.html>.
4. The over 700 analysed user comments were posted on the *In Europe* website between late 2007 and early 2014. This includes some duplicate or restored postings due to technical issues of the website.
5. For a different conceptualization, see Lozano (2013, 139–142). Lozano addresses the concept of television memory and the utilization of television’s past (such as reruns, remakes and the re-use of archival footage) as a new participative television memory.

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