

The blended boundary between individual and social memory in the 2.0 web era

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Abstract

The paper starts with a qualitative research, carried out through 52 in-depth interviews, on memory and its evolutions in connection with digital tools and networked environments.

The aim was to investigate how new generations build their individual memory and, more specifically, which things, mementos and interfaces of memory they use; what practices are implemented to create and to socialize memory, how and in to what extent they transform it into cultural capital.

The role of interactive media for memory production, storage and communication will be outlined; furthermore, the web and social media will be analysed as cultural interfaces through which people approach their past.

The analysis will explore how digital environments for writing, publishing, and showing personal experience are changing the subjective criteria used to distinguish past and present, private and public dimensions of memory.

The productive dimension of 2.0 web environments is indeed giving rise to a new diffused subjectivity in which, on the one hand people are stimulated to enlarge the virtual audience of their subjective memories, whilst on the other hand, they transform and mediate their subjectivity in order to adapt it to a global language and circuit.

The multiple dimensions and changes of memory in the network society

This paper tackles memory and its relations with media, digital tools and interfaces for content production, reuse, retrieval, and communication.

The main objective of this work, carried out through a qualitative research, was to understand if and how people, and in particular younger generations, immersed in new media and digital environments for content production and communication, are configuring and shaping their memory use and assessment.

It is interesting to start with a brief overview of the most remarkable theorizations and hypotheses that social scientists have developed over recent decades on memory, its processes, representations, and functional and relational aspects in modern societies: from authors such as Yates (1966) and Vernant (1971), who outlined the changing of memory meaning and role in relation to different cultural and material contexts (such as ancient Greek or Renaissance societies), to the central contribution of Le Goff (1988) on reconstructing the historical development and evolution of memory in western societies.

In a more sociological framework, in Halbwachs' systemic interpretation (1925; 1946) the individual memory is configured only as social memory and it is built entirely within the frames of social interaction, through communication and the shapes of social relationships.

As observed by Jan Assman (1992: 12), in his reinterpretation of Halbwachs theory:

Individual memory is structured, in a person, in relation to his participation in communicative processes. It is indeed related to his/her involvement in different social groups, from the family up to national and religious communities. Memory rises and is kept alive through communication: if communication is interrupted, if social frames of communicated reality disappear, then the consequence is oblivion.

We remember exclusively what we communicate and what we can locate in the frame of collective memory.

As noticed by Jedlowsky (2002), Halbwachs completely disregards the irrational, emotional and personal dimensions of memory in his analysis, like - for example - the subtle boundary between voluntary and involuntary memory and its unconscious drifts.

According to Luhman (1997: 94), instead, Halbwachs' collective memory concept underestimates social structures as systems, interpreting collective memory more as the sum of individual memories than as a real function of social systems (Esposito 2001).

Furthermore, another critical issue of his analysis was that collective memory was considered strictly tied to the individual experiences and identities that actualize it as well as to their physical limits and boundaries: collective memory could not overcome the biographical limits of individual and groups identities. Individual and social memories were, for Halbwachs, characterized by a fragile status, by temporary and spatial limits deriving from their contingent existence, and were restricted to a non-mediated existence that delimited their role and its importance in social modern systems.

Moreover, his theory indicates an evident indifference towards media, technologies and any other memory interface as factors that allow people to overcome spatial and time limits of individual biographies and to reconfigure collective memory boundaries¹.

Later authors, above all J. Assman (ibid), tried to further develop Halbwachs' concept of collective memory and to increase its complexity, interpreting it as communicative memory – the memory that exists in specific relationships and social interactions and that is circumscribed by the temporal range of biographical lives-, and cultural memory, that is instead related to cultural objects (e.g. books, monuments, but also ritual events and myths) that are socially fixed and institutionalised and that are developed specifically in order to design the social history of a group over time.

Furthermore, Ong (1982) and Goody (1986) investigated the role of different communication technologies

¹ Nevertheless, it is important to contextualize this critic in the historical period of Halbwachs' work (1877-1945), during which mass media effects on social processes had not yet been deeply investigated and television, which would strongly accelerate mediatization processes, was not yet born.

and cultural interfaces (from oral expression to writing, and even print and television medium) in shaping different mnemonics and approaches to cultural transmission.

More recently, Colombo (1986) addressed the relation between memory and communication technologies, such as television, that allow new forms of archiving and registration, and authors such as Reading *et al.* (2009), Erll *et al.* (eds. 2009) considered the impact of the move from the 'broadcast' to the 'post-broadcast' age on memory (individual, social and cultural) and how both the unintentional and intentional recording of events by our ubiquitous electronic/digital media (CCTV, mobile phone cameras etc.) contribute to newly accessible archives that shift our relationship with the past, present and future.

Finally, authors Van House and Churchill (2008) examined, from a user-interaction point of view, which specific interaction and interface design guidelines in digital environment can be implemented in order to favour production, retrieving, and communication memory social processes.

Starting with this framework and in the following analysis we will try to determine if modern network technologies and environments for communication, representation and content production have changed the relation between memory and individuals, allowing people to redefine the social frames of memory in time and space.

One of the first issues that we will consider is if modern technological systems and media for the access, production, and sharing of memory in particular have modified the approach to memory and its use as a cultural frame for individual and social identities in individual and social groups.

One hypothesis was that new generations, particularly young people who were more involved in network environments, have used technologies to empower their belonging to the collective memory, expanding it in space and time and extending their individual records to new contexts and social frames of communication.

A second important issue that we dealt with was the relation between memory and oblivion as functional processes useful in creating and maintaining not only the individual's equilibrium, but also one's own position within social systems.

Many scholars, (Todorov 1995; Connerton 1989; Ferretti 2003) during the last century in particular, analysed how institutions and power groups in many civilisations used cultural memory as a tool to control society, selecting what to remember and what to forget, building specific moments, artefacts, and even languages in order to erect a functional memory of the established order.

As stated by Le Goff (1979: 1070, translation by the author),

one of the most important concerns of groups, classes and individuals that dominated historical societies was to take possession of oblivion. Oblivion and silences in history reveal such mechanisms of collective

memory manipulation.

Over recent decades, another form of oblivion has appeared and overlapped the institutionally driven one. It does not originate from institutional powers, but from the so-called "cultural excess" (Rositi 1981) typical of media societies.

Van Dijk (2007), for example, explored the transformations, especially in younger generations, of individual and collective memory when it is invaded by cultural memory artefacts produced by new media and mass media.

The risk pointed out was that people who are continuously exposed to media messages become unable to select what is true and false, what belongs or not to their own experience, even what it is important to remember or not.

Starting with these theoretical considerations, we investigated a specific issue of oblivion processes related to the hypertrophic production of memory allowed by new technologies, which is causing new forms of memory excess.

In fact, emerging opportunities for users to create new memory artefacts - not only in quick text forms (such as e-mails, text messages, blogs and so on) but also through multimedia items (e.g. digital photos and videos, sounds and music) - seem to produce more and more informative noise that hinders not only collective memory building processes, but also individual memory ones.

A specific question that we investigated was if people, in particular younger generations, are building specific strategies directly related to new technologies and to grassroots production dynamics to cope with this new type of memory hypertrophy.

We attempted to investigate which practices, voluntary and not, people are implementing in order to select, choose, and reuse their growing memory estate, and which are the factors that, on one hand, allow some individuals to take advantage of this "richness" in the building of their individual and social identity and which, on the other hand, relegate other individuals to a kaleidoscopic and compulsive vision of memory in which its profound usefulness for reality interpretation is lost.

How we investigated memory: questions and research tools

This study was developed in cooperation with Tatiana Mazali and Nicoletta Gay as part of the PRIN (Project of Relevant National Interest) project "Trame. Technologies and network environment for the

memory of XXI Century”, promoted by Italian Ministry of Research².

The general focus of the PRIN project was the design of scenarios, digital resources training and communication models and the development of new offers for cultural services for institutions and foundations that hold documentary patrimonies.

Within this context we developed research focused on users’ analysis, aimed at investigating how people who were embedded in the networking environments and “augmented” through technologies for memory stocking, reproduction, retrieval and communication were approaching memory issues and their practices. Research was carried out through an iterative methodology in which quantitative and qualitative research tools were alternated and intertwined.

We started with a quantitative analysis of young people’s media and cultural consumptions, technological attitudes and modalities for using the web and new technologies.

This first phase of the study, carried out on a sample of 409 young Italian students³ allowed us to create a quantitative scenario of the main media environments used by youngsters and to outline an overview of the motivations, expectations and attitudes with which young people approach new media and traditional media⁴.

In order to use this first profiling for an in-depth qualitative analysis, we summed quantitative data in indexes used to summarize media, cultural and internet consumptions. We then created a typology⁵ of young people, based on the two main quantitative dimensions explored: cultural consumption and internet consumption.

Classifying our interviewed cases in “hyper” and “hypo” cultural consumers and “hyper” and “hypo” network consumers, we tried to distinguish our sample within the variables that, in our hypothesis, were considered the most important dynamic vectors in the present memory system⁶.

In fact, as we tried to demonstrate in the following analysis, an important hypothesis in our work was that the network, media and cultural consumptions strongly influenced the cognitive, cultural and also affective moods with which people remember, choose what to remember and/or share, and preserve and socialize memory.

² More details on the project are available on: http://www.ricercaitaliana.it/prin/dettaglio_prin_en-2005140112.htm

³ The users involved in the quantitative research were 409 students between 19 and 27 years of age from the Piedmont region, equally divided by gender (51.6% males and 48.4% females).

⁴ The results of this step were published in several articles and were analysed in-depth in Gay et. al (2008).

⁵ As assessed by Bailey (1992), classification activity involves the ordering of the cases in term of their similarity and can be broken down into two essential approaches: typology and taxonomy. Construction of a typology requires conceptualization along at least two dimensions (...) A taxonomy begins empirically, rather than conceptually, with the goal of classifying cases according to their measured similarity on observed variables.

⁶ More specifically, we created a cultural consumption index based on the sum and cross-referencing of 13 variables (including media consumptions – such as TV, videogames, internet etc. - and general consumption - such as books, cinema, live shows, etc.). The network consumption index was based on the sum and cross-referencing of 15 variables, each of which is related to the consumption of a network environment: e.g. wiki, blogs, search engines, VoIP, chats, forums... For a detailed description of the methodology used in this quantitative step, see Gay N. et al. (2008), Chapter 2.

Using this typology, from the first system of 409 young people we selected, in the second phase of our research, a subsystem of cases representative of each network and cultural profile and useful to focus on the dynamics and relations among memory, media and cultural consumption and networking environments.

In the last step of our selection process we chose, for each category of the typology (corresponding to an internet and cultural user profile), a similar number of male and female subjects.

In the following table it is possible to observe how we used the cultural and networking environments consumption dimensions in order to define a sampling procedure, useful in selecting the 52 cases which were further involved in the qualitative research through semi-structured interviews.

Table 1: Composition of the qualitative research sample

Network Consumption Quantitative Index	Cultural Consumption Quantitative Index	N. of cases gathered for the qualitative step	
		Female	Male
Hyper users of the network	Hyper Users of media and cultural products	6	7
	Hypo Users of media and cultural products	6	6
Hypo users of the network	Hyper Users of media and cultural products	7	6
	Hypo Users of media and cultural products	7	7

In this phase of the research, a strong relationship between quantitative and qualitative techniques can be easily noticed. Such a direct link was motivated in our research project by two main methodological reasons:

1. the desire to create, through the qualitative interviews, an intense and even emotional experience of reflexion on memory, without blocking and disturbing the interviewees with quantitative questions about his/her technological and cultural behaviours;
2. the parallel need to understand if cultural and internet consumption levels could be considered influencing variables in the actual processes of memory processing, and therefore to analyse users who were strictly profiled and polarized with regard to these dimensions.

The interviews were carried out face to face by the researchers, starting with a semi-structured track based on three main issues:

Subjective memory: a list of questions aimed at investigating what were the main personal memories for young generations, what were the main elements that triggered memory (objects, places, sounds, media...), which were the main interfaces of memory, and, finally, how young people saved, retrieved and reused their records in private and public contexts.

Collective and cultural memory: a group of questions focused on the most remembered historical events by young people. The aim of this session in particular was to understand if, over recent years, institutional sources of memory have changed and if media and new media sources have substituted family, school and book channels as main social memory agencies for the construction of the cultural memory.

The memory of a mediated event: focus on the Winter Olympic Games of Turin 2006 and on how direct experiences of the event were blended and confused, in those interviewed, with media images and representations of the event.

Several results regarding the first topic of the interviews will be presented in this paper, focusing especially on the analysis of the relation between individuals and sociotechnical systems and on factors that allow some individuals to transform memory into cultural capital useful for positioning themselves in the social system.

The emerging mnemonics of networking generations

One of the first issues of the interview analysis that can be underlined is the value that people attribute to their memory and its role in their present and future enrichment.

As noticed in the theoretical recognition in the first paragraph, the growing technological access to recording tools seems to provide a hypertrophy of memory, which can cause the incapacity of people to select and give importance to what they record.

From the qualitative analysis of the interviews, instead, a more complex frame of social behaviours and attitude emerges.

In fact, the attitude towards an hypertrophy of records seems to be present.

The sentence here below, coming from L. (male, 19 years) a hyper-network/hypo-cultural user profile, describes this process perfectly:

Memory isn't a thing that comes from me, but from all this technology that is everywhere and that I use... because I use it a lot and, in the end, it becomes an automatic use. Nevertheless, (memory) is caused more by technology than by a real need to use it

Nevertheless, we also found another type of young people who seem not to be truly moulded by new technological recording tools and not to manifest a real involvement with these growing recording opportunities.

The reasons are many, as mentioned by some witnesses.

A. (male, 22 years) for example, even declares a "philosophical" hostility towards every act aimed at "freezing the present" in memory.

If I must live something I will live it on my own! I don't want to stop and take a picture, to leave the moment in order to take a photo. Either I start with the idea of having to take that picture (and so I take it) or else I live the experience, I remember what I can, and the rest is of no real interest to me. I can always collect pictures from other people.

C. (male, 26 years) identifies a stereotypical profile related to such a "recording addiction".

I took some photos, yes, perhaps ten or less, but I have been watching more than photographing. I hate the "Japanese tourist" who photographs more things that he/she even sees.

In many cases a quite codified language and aesthetic of the "memorable moments"⁷ seems to emerge from the words of the young people interviewed.

Some individuals adhere to it and try to follow it, transforming, immediately and quite unconsciously, their experience into a media format.

Some others reject this approach and claim a more random, natural, and even naive approach to what they remember.

Finally, others have created specific associations between the degree of spontaneity at the time and the medium considered most suitable for recording it.

G. (male, 19 years), an hyper cultural and network profile, for example, says:

For family memories the most suitable recording tool is the camera, while with friends the best is the mobile phone – for videos and photos that are more of a "flash".

If you have the camera with you, you have already planned that a photo must be taken, mobile videos and photos are instead more of a "sketch" that happens spontaneously, things that are more difficult to remember and that you willingly immortalize with your mobile, even if badly, perhaps in order to reconstruct something that was created.

It could be also possible to read many different approaches to the processes of accessing, retrieving and reusing memories.

In trying to create a scheme, we can identify two main opposite attitudes or types.

The first type seems to consider access to memories mainly as functional tools that are useful for living the present operatively.

We could define this approach as functional, utilitarian, or rational, as does A. (female, 23 years), who says:

I normally look at photos that are, I could say, more "contemporary", not the older ones... I prefer photos from a few months ago, rather than those from five or six years ago...

Another example is that of D. (female, 24 years):

⁷ As Bourdieu (1965) had already noticed in his famous work on photography.

I often remember recent situations like, for example, what happened a week ago (...). The farther I am from the moment - for example from things related to my childhood - the more I forget... (...)

An example? If I am taking an exam (at the university), I can remember the last exams, the exams from one or two years ago....I notice if there are differences, I say: "Look! It was like this over recent years and it's still the same now", this is an example of my memories, now...

We can consider this attitude as an "embodiment" of the digital logic in the human one, where some terms of the IT world are often adopted as metaphors for mental processes. As the same D. further explains:

I don't consider only the memory of the mobile or of the camera, I consider also a "mental space" of memory... I have this very personal idea, that if I keep many things in mind I overload myself, right? So I must erase some... I usually remember the most recent things...

The idea of a limited mental space, that must be kept sufficiently empty, seems derived from a direct analogy between digital tools and human brain. Oblivion, from this point of view, is considered an active process, voluntary, something directly manageable for the individual and the social economy of life. The idea that what is old is not useful for the present also seems to be pointed out: the past, from this point of view, fruitlessly occupies mental space that can be more profitably used for "live processing" activity.

On the other hand, another type of relationship with memory reuse, truly opposite to the former, seems to be defined: a sense of the past as "nostalgia", the need to include memory in order to underline the more private self dimension of one's own life.

In this sense, the farther the memories are in time and space, the more important they appear to the owners.

Hence it is possible to notice a first, interesting difference between hypo cultural and network profiles (derived from the indexes of the quantitative research) and hyper cultural and network profiles. In fact, for "hypo" profiles - individuals who have no massive relation with cultural, media and internet consumption- digital interfaces seem to be inadequate to gain complex and in-depth access to their memory.

The space of memory must preserve its "aura" (Benjamin 1955), which is determined above all by the two dimensions of "embodiment" in specific objects, and "distance" from ordinary spaces: two dimensions very far from digital interface characteristics.

This is how A. (female, 21 years), -belonging to the hypo cultural and network profile- describes her

access to memories:

I prefer to keep photos rather than to look at them. I don't know why. I usually keep them safe in a special place. Perhaps because I prefer to get them out and look at them all together, instead of seeing them everyday and considering them as part of my routine.

On the contrary, G. (male, 19 years), with a hyper cultural and network profile, feels perfectly at home in accessing his memories through the digital interfaces of his PC.

The possibility to retrieve memories in an "always on" interface in no way disturbs the poetry of remembrance and can be comfortably associated with a feeling of nostalgia.

Now with digital devices... My PC is always on...sometimes nostalgia arrives...you open the photos and look at them...(...)

Comparing digital and analogical photos, I prefer the digital ones... perhaps because the PC is a very close tool for me... it is always on...it is always with me...I watch tv with my PC, I do everything with it, and perhaps it is closer than the living room, where I would have to find the right album, look for the photos...the PC is easier and is also more immediate.

The role of technology and networking environments in the social memory configuration

As mentioned in the first paragraph, another important hypothesis that we wanted to explore through the qualitative research, according to the Halbwachs's assessments on the social functional role of memory, is if some individuals are able to use social tools of the web as new environments for sharing memory better than others, thereby extending their private memories to the wider audiences on the web and, if they are doing so to improve their social position in different groups.

In the analysis, we were able to read and recognize a complex system of behaviours, practices, and emotional and rational approaches to memory and its sharing practices.

A first type of young people, as we have already seen in the previous paragraph, does not like to produce memories in either analogical world or the digital one; they follow the aesthetics of a natural present.

Other young people use network environments for merely storing records: they use the internet, but they live it not as a sharing and communicating space, but rather as a bigger repository than the physical or off-line ones (e.g. PC, CD-ROM...).

To this view, C (female, 20 years) commented:

I have a blog, but I don't take care of it. I usually use it for communicating with others, or, for cataloguing. That's right! I upload less important photos, to remove them from my PC and to save space.

Nevertheless, most of the people engaged in memory activities that we interviewed told us that they use digital tools not only for storing records but, above all, as a virtual space through which they can communicate and share said records with other people.

According to functional theories of memory (in particular Halbwachs' approach), and also in reference to the sociocybernetic approach which highlights the role of "self-reflexivity" (Luhman 1975) as a useful factor for complex governance systems, memory appears, in these interviews, as interactive material for a reflexive processing and reconstruction of one's own social and individual identity and for the consolidation of a sense of cohesion within the social community.

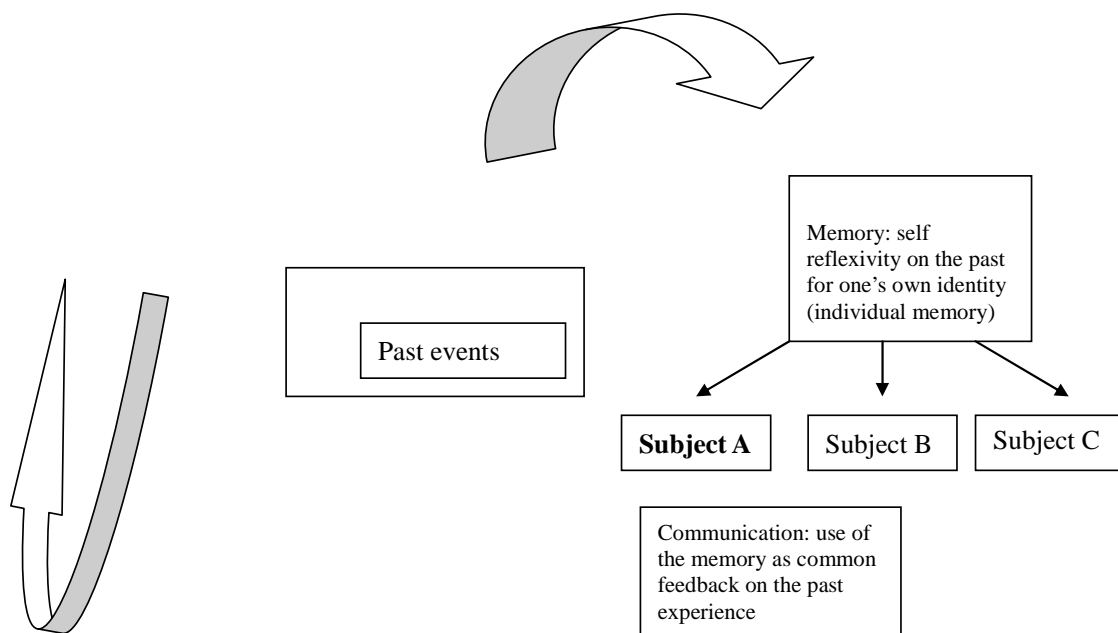


Figure 1: All the subjects perform individual memory processes in order to have elements useful for their personal life.

Only some of them communicate their memories to the social group. Their communication practices, nowadays empowered by technological skills, allow them to create a structured feedback on common events and to acquire a favoured position in the group, as informal gatekeepers of the meaning of the past

In fact, most of the interviewed people that declared to share memories using digital interfaces (e.g. off line interfaces, as for example USB keys or CD-ROM, or on line, through blogs and other sharing environments) underline that they share memories exclusively with the specific people with which they lived the past event or with people (e.g. parents, friends) with whom they have a close relationship.

In this manner G. (male, 19 years), for example, describes his memory sharing practices

Yes I do have a blog, but I don't use it for my photographs because these photos are personal... I don't think that they can be of interest to the world. For example, a photo of me and my friend isn't interesting for the world. If it were a landscape... but anyhow, internet is full of landscapes...(...) my photos are full of people, but people I was with at that time, these photos remind me very much of situations, but they are very personal memories, I don't think it's useful to disclose them to the world...

Memories in fact seem to be an important factor of cohesion within friend and family groups.

They are often used and re-elaborated in order to create personalized gifts for loved ones. They are rarely used without any re-elaboration and communicative packaging activity, as, for example, selection in an album, the creation of a poster, or even a multimedia setting through music and animations.

In a digital era in which young people spend a lot of time sharing their present with synchronous technological media, as for example with chats and other live web spaces, the past is configured as a more filtered and mediated social material: it needs to be selected, prepared, and even "improved" through discursive practices.

If in the past oral cultures memory discursive practices were related mainly to oral storytelling abilities, now memories are shared and communicated through technologies and the "remediation" (Bolter and Grusin 1999) of media formats, from the short film to the review to the web cover.

Therefore, hyper cultural and network profiles stand out⁸ in our research as the most efficient means to configure and take advantage of these practices, implementing more complete and sophisticated practices of memory accessing, retrieval and communication and creating an invisible revolution of social mnemonics.

In fact they are able, through web and media use, to enhance their memory representation in space and time, and to enrich it through many multimedia languages (photos, music and videos besides texts), that perform memories as shows and fictions, bringing them closer to the social and shared media imaginary.

⁸ In the quantitative study, hyper cultural profiles were considered as people who declared themselves heavy users of at least two of the three cultural indexes considered (reading index, live show index and audiovisual/multimedia one): from our research, they amounted to 45% of total samples. Hyper network profiles were considered people who make heavy use of more than 4 of the 15 network environments considered in the survey (such as e-mail, blogs, web, wikis, VOIPs, forums, and so on). People who resulted as hyper network profiles amounted to 54% of the sample. For more details on quantitative analysis and results on cultural and network consumptions, see Gay et al. (ibid).

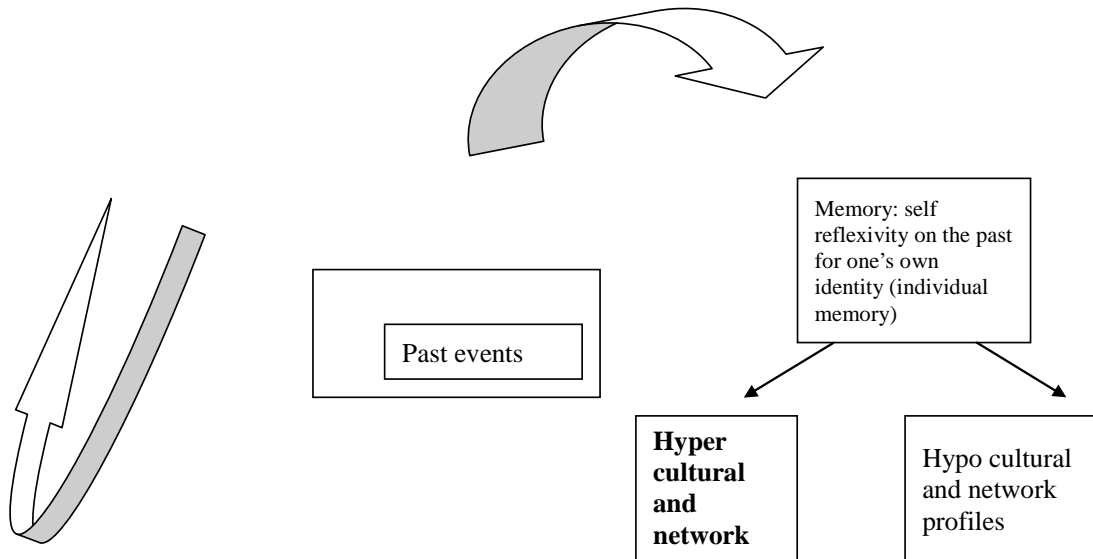


Figure 2: Hyper cultural and network profiles have many more possibilities to become the “new gatekeepers” of social memory than hypo cultural and network ones: in fact the former have more channels, tools and also abilities than the latter in order to act their self-reflexivity on memories and to promote it as a shared issue in the community

The blended boundary between individual and social, past and present in web 2.0 era

A final issue that we would like to mention in this paper is the shift, in the last years, from 1.0 to 2.0 web environments and logics and its consequences for memory practices.

With the rise of web 2.0, in fact, the possibilities to upload contents and personal materials are radically increased and this process seems to favour a collapse between present and past (what I upload today will be memory tomorrow) and between the individual and the social dimensions (what we publish in a blog for an addressed target is potentially visible also to a world wide audience).

Nevertheless, the hypothesis of a collapse was reconsidered and put into perspective during our interviews and analysis.

Hence, as noticeable in our interviews, if the present is the time of the public and of the unlimited life sharing, also for the minor cultural and web consumers (as our hypo cultural and network profiles) that share it through mobile tools, the past seems to belong to the more private sphere, in which only the

more functional aspects of the identity are chosen and shared.

Also in the young generations studied, voluntary processes of memory creation seem to preserve the deep and personal value of the remembering act, maintaining a strong distance towards every tool and web environment which tend to blend private and public sphere, objective and subjective.

In the web 1.0 era - that is the technological frame in which our sample grew up and was living during the interview period - younger people seem to maintain quite a clear position about what must be remembered, how and for which reason.

Table 2: A schematization of the main differences on how new generations face the present and the past through web 1.0 and technologies. In the web 2.0 era these boundaries are disappearing

PAST	PRESENT
Filtered	Not filtered
More Mediated	Less mediated
Private	Public
Subjective contents	Objective contents
More a-synchronous tools for sharing (e.g. CD, USB)	More synchronous tools for sharing (e.g. chat, VOIP,)

But what will happen when, in the next years, contents that were produced for the present, as e.g. the "status updates" of social networking, will become past, memories? Is there a consciousness of the permanence of these contents as future memory artefacts?

If in the web 1.0 sphere young people seem to be conscious and seem to play an active role in the definition of the difference between individual and social, subjective and objective, and even the distinction between present and "junk" contents from special and memory contents, with the rising of 2.0 era, and in particular of the social networking environments, the boundaries between these categories are blending.

As assessed from this interview with A. (female, 23), an hypo cultural and hyper network profile, that witnesses as in the 2.0 space, multiple identities and even memories are spreading out:

I have different profiles, as MSN, Myspace, and so on... I upload my photos, memories, whatever strikes me. (...) I upload there things not for somebody in particular, but for everybody. They are for everybody, in general...

The main active 2.0 web users (only five cases in our interviews, carried out in summer 2007⁹) seem to lose the difference between public and private spheres of memory, between past and present, and even between what must be remembered and what not.

We can conclude that, from this first, explorative, research, in the passage from 1.0 to 2.0 web era, the social sharing of memories will radically increase, but such process will not automatically improve the auto-reflexivity level of subjects about memory and their ability to take advantage of records disclosure for their individual identity and for the meanings construction in the social system.

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⁹ In the quantitative study, only "2.0" network environments considered were blogs (heavily used by 19% of the people) and wikis (heavily used by 5% of the people). Social network sites were not considered as they had been launched in Italy only very few months earlier. In the qualitative study, carried out nine months later, several interviewees declared their use of social network sites (in particular My Space and MSN): 5 of 52 interviewees stated that they had started using them.

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