

Media memories: The case of Youth Radio DT64

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Abstract

Social networking sites (SNS) play many roles in the everyday lives of their users. A growing body of research suggests that platforms such as Facebook also fundamentally change the way memories are performed. This article takes the former East-German youth radio DT64 as a starting point to analyse how media are remembered and how practices of remembering by music audiences might be altered with social networking sites. Drawing on in-depth interviews with former listeners and an analysis of one Facebook group dedicated to the radio station, the article suggests that SNS offer new potentials for media memories that are collaborative and take place in public. The former listeners we interviewed remain, however, sceptical and confirm only limited participation in new forms of performing media memories online. Ultimately, the article discusses the changing nature of media memories in the context of a changing media landscape by looking at questions of identity, temporality and *alternativity*.

Keywords: Media memories, Radio, Social Networking Sites, Music, Facebook, Memory Practices

Introduction

Social networking sites play many roles in the everyday lives of their users. According to Garde-Hansen et al. (2009), these media are, among other things, increasingly used both as memory archives and as places for remembrance. They are platforms where people upload, share, save and archive everyday memorabilia (photos, videos, texts, etc.) through which they can enact personal narratives of self and testimonies of 'media life', a life lived in and through the media (Deuze 2011).

How then are memory practices being played out online with the aid of digital media technologies? What potentialities and affordances for memory practices are set by the technologies and platforms used? How should we conceptualise the specificities of digital and connective memory practices? In this article we set out to explore these questions through a case study of the East-German youth radio station DT64, which was a state-controlled radio that operated for a period of about 30 years (1964-1993) in the German

Democratic Republic (GDR). The radio station gathered large audiences interested in Western music, something that was hard to get hold of in many parts of the GDR. Its shut-down in 1993 resulted in popular protest and street rallies. In the 2000s the social networking site Facebook provided new life to DT64 as a number of groups and pages devoted to the radio station were founded and gathered a new form of (music) audiences devoted to the remembering of DT64.

The case of DT64 gives us the opportunity to contrast and compare affordances of different media technology and how a music radio audience engage in memory practices. We will analyse how people use both traditional media forms (radio, cassettes, notebooks, etc.) and new media (Facebook, cloud-services, digital audio files, etc) to construct memory and commemoration in relation to DT64. Even though both old and new media during the last years increasingly have been analysed as technologies of memory and remembering, there has been a lack of comparative work on digital and connective memory practices (Hoskins 2009, 2011) and memory practices done in relation to traditional media.

In the article we look mainly at three dimensions of memory practices. We look at the changes and continuities of practices and media affordances on the level of identity, temporality and alternativity. With the help of these three dimensions we compare analogue and digital media both as memory artefacts but also how they are used to preserve, keep, share and narrate memories. By doing so, we aim to provide insights into the media memories of music audiences, which has often been overlooked empirically (Lagerkvist 2012).

Identity, temporality and alternativity

The last years have arguably seen an increase of history and memory as a theme in the media. Not least, television has been virtually drenched in programs about historical events and broadcasts claiming to 'make history'. Highly acclaimed historical dramas such as *Mad Men* or *Rome* have been hailed as 'the new rock'n'roll of the business' (Downing 2004, quoted in Ericson 2011, p. 139). And as history is increasingly becoming a theme in the media, the scholarly engagement with the relations between media, memory and history has also become more intense (Schwarz 2005). Mediated memories, José van Dijck proposes, refer to 'activities and objects we produce and appropriate by means of media technologies, for creating and re-creating a sense of past, present, and future of ourselves in relation to others' (van Dijck 2007, p. 21). In general, Morris-Suzuki (2005, p. 29, 30) distinguishes three ways how media can be related to memory: Firstly, media are memory products (media as memory). Secondly, media enable social memory (memory through media) and, thirdly, memory appears as a topic in the media (memory in the media). In this article we mainly focus on how different technologies enable media memories of the radio station DT64.

The development of digital media and the attention paid to the relation between media and memory practices, has led scholars to consider that 'we may have to rethink how we conceive of memory; that we are changing what we consider to be the past; that the act

of recall, of recollection and of remembering is changing in itself' (Garde-Hansen, Hoskins & Reading 2009, p. 1). Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2005) suggests that different media have different affordances¹ and potentialities regarding how they can construct, (re-)produce and frame memories: 'some media (...) seem readily adaptable to the tasks of interpretation and analysis, others (...) seem more readily given to tasks of evoking identification with the experience of the past' (Morris-Suzuki 2005, p. 23). Audio media, and music, have a tendency to 'better' mediate moods and affects from past eras and to invoke strong, but rather unspecific memories (van Dijck 2007, p. 84). Jo Tacchi (1997) has shown how nostalgic practices are aided specifically by formatted music radio, its soundscapes and 'mood-programming', and how music radio rather intentionally plays on memories, feelings of nostalgia and people's sense of (musical) history (see also Bull 2009). Music radio, she argues, has connecting powers and its sound helps to make links across time and space. Through radio 'memories, connections, sociality, future, fantasy, and feelings [...] link together in a routinised way in everyday life [...] radio sound, with its particular properties and qualities, is able to work as a 'conductor' for them' (Tacchi 1997, p. 225). If these are the specificities of the radio, social networking sites have been discussed as having specific potentialities for challenging the boundaries between private and public, which makes personal and collective memories become increasingly blurred (Ashuri 2012, Hoskins 2009). SNS work especially well as platforms for joint memories, since they provide the infrastructure for doing so.

Memories of DT64 are specific kind of memories that somewhat fall outside of the categories defined by Morris-Suzuki (2005). Memories of DT64 are what we call media memories: people's memories of media texts, media experiences and practices related to a specific medium². Neiger, Meyer and Zandberg (2011), when talking about media memories, stress that media not only serve as a reference frame for memory work and practices, but are phenomena of interest as such (see also Lagerkvist 2012). Following that idea, we are investigating analogue and digital media memories comparatively. The memories preserved and performed by the informants in this study are memories of the radio station's sound, its mode of communication and its role among the youth audience it gathered at the time. Three major themes of such media memories have emerged from the engagement with earlier research and our own empirical material: temporality, identity and alternativity. The three themes are consequently explored for analogue radio memories and connective, digital memories as performed on Facebook. These three themes and their relation to the specificity of radio as a medium need, however, some further elaboration.

In regards to temporality DT64 shares many features with other music radio stations. The format logic of music radio such as DT64 creates a *soundscape* that audiences can use as a background to other activities. Its mode of presentation is forward-looking, constantly in the present and giving off a sense of *liveness* (Hendy 2000). Hence, its relation to the temporal structures of modern life is very much in accord with how Paddy Scannell (1996) discusses this matter. According to him, broadcasting enriches our sense of time through its

dailyness and liveness, and gives audiences access to a re-personalised and revived sense of everyday life and of being in contact with an unfolding 'now'.

Radio programming has often circled around musical taste formations and generational concepts of youth and youthfulness (Douglas 1999). DT64 is no exception to this rule. On the one hand this is often interpreted as an instrumental strategy on behalf of broadcasters who define their styles of talk and construction of station or brand identity to speak to a specific target group (Berland 2009). But it has also been pointed out how audiences can use radio broadcasts to form 'communities of the air' (Squier 2003). The auditory character of radio has been shown to strengthen this tendency, as sound is said to have specific affective and emotional qualities (Nyre 2008).

Radio has also historically strong ties to questions of alternativity (Guedes Bailey, Cammaerts & Carpentier 2007). Its technical simplicity and the fact that radio is cheap to produce and distribute has made it an often used tool for people engaged in producing alternative, underground or community media. Music audiences and music communities have often used (pirate) radio in order to disseminate music as opposed to the one heard in mainstream music media (Dick & McDowell 2000, Lewis & Booth 1989, Miller 2008).³

Temporality, identity and alternativity are themes tightly intertwined with radio as a medium (both in regards to music radio as a genre and radio as a broadcast technology): radio can be said to have certain media-specific affordances in relation to these three themes. But temporality, identity and alternativity (which are shared ideas about the social world) are also central dimensions in relation to collective memories more generally, and in media enabled social memories specifically. A central aim in the analysis is to carve out the ways in which the specificity of DT64 as a radio-station contributes to how people construct memory, and how their interpretation of DT64 as a form of radio affects their use of digital social media in constructing narratives and performing collective memories of DT64. Furthermore, the categories temporality, identity and alternativity are tightly intertwined with notions of social networking sites. For example such media technologies are often understood as to have inherent potentialities for alternative forms of expression or as affording its users with possibilities for self-expression and identity formation (Bakardjieva & Gaden 2012, Bennett 2003).

In what follows, temporality, identity and alternativity, will be deployed to discuss both analogue (radio) and digital (social networking sites) media memories, in order to ultimately carve out the (changing) nature of media memories in a changing media environment. In her study of mediated memories, José van Dijck concludes that digital technologies – and we would specify SNS – do not necessarily alter memory products, but they do alter the performative nature of memory.. Van Dijck argues that 'they may introduce tentativeness as a stage in the memory process; they may prompt a multimodal sense of remembering and reconnect memories of the self to reflections of others or to reported events in the world at large' (van Dijck 2005, p. 313). Following her point, in this article we analyse media (old and new) as memory products that might serve rather traditional purposes of archiving and storing memory, but also as memory practices that are

potentially altered in the context of SNS, and that potentially alter our idea and interpretations of networked, digital social media.

Background of DT64

The youth radio DT64 was founded during the official German meeting of the Young and Thälmann Pioneers (so called *Deutschlandtreffen*) in 1964 as non-stop show broadcasting live from the event on the *Berliner Welle*. After the meeting DT64 was introduced as a permanent programme aired by *Berliner Rundfunk*. The audience showed a great deal of involvement from the beginning by, for example, writing letters to officials, hosts and producers. As a consequence of the interest from the audience, the broadcasting hours of DT64 were continuously extended, from ten hours a week in 1964 to 20 hours daily in 1987 and a 24-hours full service in 1990. Music programmes dominated DT64, however popular science formats including experts answering questions from the audience were also a constitutive part of DT64 (Ulrich & Wagner 1993).

DT64 reached by far the largest audience among the 15-17 and 19-24 year olds with market shares of 50 and 45 percent (according to a survey from 1973) (Schildt & Siegfried 2006). For young people as a music audience DT64 formed an alternative to the scarcity of other leisure time activities (Stahl 2010). The majority of GDR youth experienced the institutional forms of spare time activities as insufficient. They were largely missing youth centres, sport facilities, swimming pools, clubs and discotheques. At the same time the media landscape for young people did not offer a broad variety. The outlets that were popular, such as *neues leben* and *Mosaik* were rare goods as the paper scarcity prevented the printing of enough magazines to meet the demands (Lietz, Honeit & Rauhut 2006). Listening to the radio became therefore a major activity. In that context DT64 developed an ambivalent character of being embedded in the official media landscape of the GDR *and* providing an alternative forum for youth culture, especially by providing the listeners with music from the West⁴. This points to the fact that what is alternative is dependent on social and cultural contexts (Andersson & Stiernstedt 2008).

The end of DT64 started with the German reunification, when officials declared that there was no space for a format such as DT64 in the German radio landscape. DT64 was taken off-air for the first time in September 1990, but considerable protests by the audience forced the officials to reconsider the replacement of DT64 on 12 out of 18 frequencies. From that point on producers and listeners mobilised to quite massive protests in different parts of the New Länder, especially in cities such as Dresden, Altenburg, Leipzig, Halle, Schwerin and Potsdam (Ulrich & Wagner 1993). The activities ranged from picketing, to demonstrations and signing petitions, occupying buildings and arranging protest camps. Even a protest song was composed.⁵ Stickers were circulated and are still visible at some places (Ulrich & Wagner 1993).



Figure 1: Picture from a silent protest in 1991 in Weimar posted on Facebook

In 1993, however, DT64 was shut-down. The broadcasting station was incorporated into the Middle German Broadcasting Organisation (*Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk – MDR*) and later renamed into Sputnik. Not only the name, but also the larger parts of the original team and programming concept were exchanged.

Some aspects of the analogue history of DT64 are now jointly remembered online on Facebook as a site for memory practices and as an archive of personal and collective memories. There are several groups dedicated to DT64. The group *DT64 – Das Jugendladio der DDR* is, however, the biggest and most active group. Since our first engagement with the Facebook group in October 2011, the membership has grown significantly from 364 to 1219 members in June 2012. Not only the membership, but also the character of the group site changed. With the introduction of the timeline the multilayered temporality constructed in the group became more visible. We can distinguish between two lines of temporality, namely the analogue and digital history of DT64, i.e. the history of the radio station and the history of the Facebook group. The timeline starts out with the analogue history of DT64 in 1964 and its formation at the *Weltjugendtag*, but it also mentions the formation of the Facebook group on 13 June 2011. The first posts in June 2011 are exclusively done by the moderators of the group. Although the numbers of posts by the group members have increased, it is pre-dominantly the moderators that seem to have the posting authority. They also seem to re-post content sent by other group members and remove direct posts from the timeline. However, it is not clear who the moderators and

founders of the group are. The only information given is that the site is run by enthusiasts with non-commercial interests. As an extension of the material posted directly in the group, there is a link to a Sound Cloud account providing five recordings of shows, mixes and songs related to DT64 (for example the DT64 theme, jingles, Top 2000 D from 1990 – a chart show co-produced with the radio station SDR3 from the BRD). The group also includes a rather extensive description of the history of DT64 in the info section and numerous pictures encompassing print outlets from DT64, stickers, postcards, newspaper articles, record and tape covers by GDR artists.

Method

To answer our research questions, we have analysed memory practise in relation to DT64 as they are performed on Facebook. Furthermore, we have conducted ten in-depth interviews with people that were listeners of DT64 in the 1980s and 1990s. The majority of the informants have signed up for the Facebook group that is in focus here. The interviews focused on the individual memories of former listeners and why or why not they are participating in practices of jointly remembering DT64 on Facebook.

We recruited our interviewees both online through the DT64 Facebook group, but also offline through snowballing. Interestingly, we also found three interviewees, who are originally from the Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD), but anyway engaged with a radio station from the former GDR. Furthermore, we were able to recruit only one female informant⁶. Considering former investigations on divergent participation rates in academic studies depending on gender, this is rather surprising, since women are more likely to participate (Rourke & Lakner 1989). However, this bias is also reflected in the postings in the Facebook group, which are predominantly made by male Facebook users, although the share of female group members is a considerable 40 per cent.

Interviewee 1	Announcer at BRD commercial radio station, involved in DT64 protest camps	DT64 Facebook group member
Interviewee 2	Announcer at DT64, BRD	DT64 Facebook group member
Interviewee 3	Listener, GDR	DT64 Facebook group member
Interviewee 4	Listener, GDR	DT64 Facebook group member
Interviewee 5	Listener and volunteer producing and moderating a one-hour slot once a month, GDR	DT64 Facebook group member
Interviewee 6	Listener, GDR	DT64 Facebook group member

Interviewee 7	Listener, co-organised one local DT64 support group, GDR	No group member
Interviewee 8	Listener, co-founder of one local DT64 support group, GDR	DT64 Facebook group member
Interviewee 9	Listener, active DT64 supporter, BRD	No group member
Interviewee 10	Listener, GDR	No group member

Table 1: Overview Interviewees' background

The majority of the interviews were conducted through Skype; four of the interviews were administered face-to-face. The interviews were structured in three thematic blocks. The first block started off with asking, how DT64 came into the life of the informant and what they basically remember from the radio station, what were the favourite shows or moderators, if the informant was involved beyond listening, i.e. sent letters or got involved actively in the radio production. The second part was dedicated to the time of mobilisation in the context of DT64 being taken off air. We were here mainly interested in the question if and how the informants were involved in protests in the early 1990s. The third and last part of the interview took up engagement with DT64 today. Here, we discussed the Facebook page, but also other forms of getting engaged with DT64 after its disappearance, for example, books, documentaries and meeting up with other former listeners and producers.

Besides the interviews, we analysed the Facebook presence of DT64. There are a number of groups dedicated to the radio station. However, DT64 – Das Jugendradio der DDR, which was founded in June 2011, is the largest and most active of the groups. Moderator(s)⁷ post questionnaires and call for exchange on a regularly basis, at least twice a week. These posts receive a moderate response. The founders have linked the page to other ostalgia-related Facebook pages. For the analysis, we considered all posted material, such as pictures, questionnaires and other posts on the wall of the group, as well as the responses by the group members. Besides that, we considered the direct 'surroundings' of the group, namely other groups the moderators are linking to and thereby construct a certain discursive belonging and connective memory (Hoskins 2011)

Analogue and Digital Media Memories

Different media formats are connected with different affordances for media memories. While radio memories, for example, require space for storage of audio cassettes and rest on a technology that is slowly disappearing, digital media memories on social networking sites are inviting more intensively connective and performative aspects of memory. The connective memory (Hoskins 2010) enabled by social networking sites is influenced by the character of the platform, in our case Facebook, that is highly pre-structuring media memories in a commercial environment (see also Garde-Hansen 2009). This becomes clear

by looking at the infrastructure of Facebook in general and on the micro structure of the Facebook group that is strongly edited by the group owners/moderators.

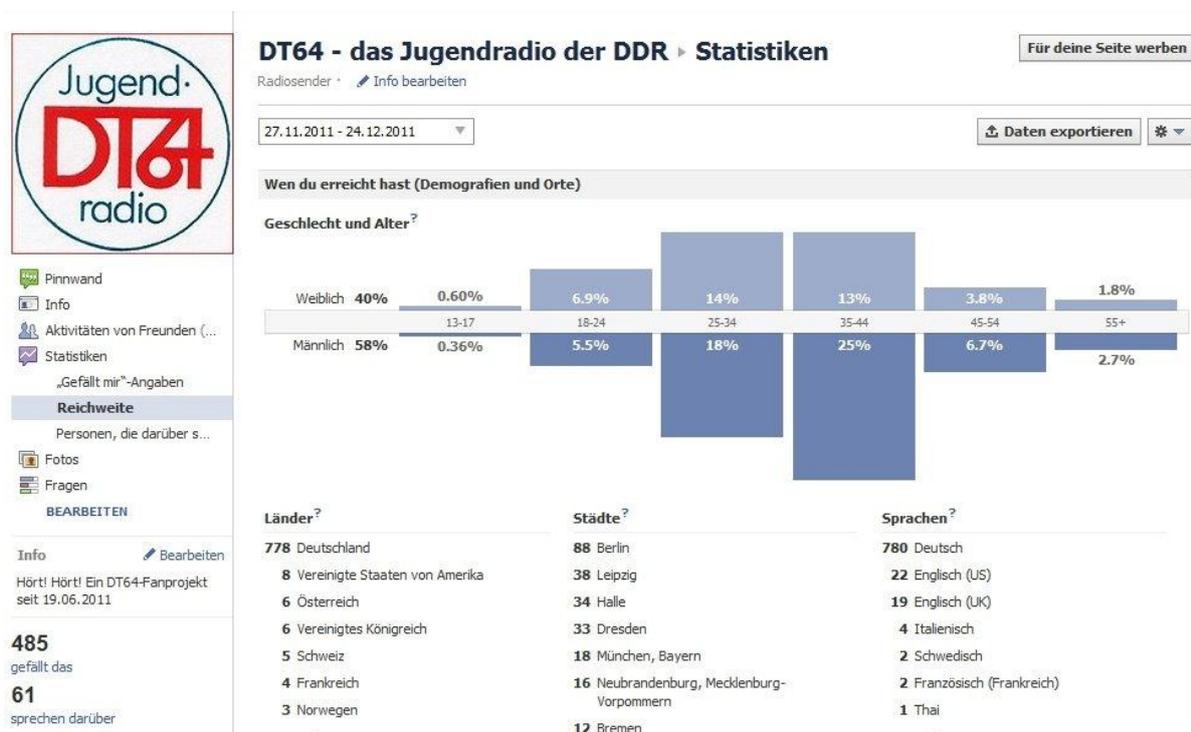


Figure 2: Still from the DT64 Facebook group (28 December 2011)

In the following, we aim to carve out the abovementioned different affordances of analogue and digital media memories based on the in-depth interviews and Facebook group analysis. The aim is not only to describe the character of these specific forms of media memories, but also to touch upon the changing nature of media memories through technology. In the analysis we will focus on three dimensions of media memories that are potentially changed through technologies, namely identity, temporality and alternativity as outlined in the introduction.

Identity Aspects of Analogue and Digital Media Memories

The stories that I connect with DT64, these are the stories I will tell my grandchildren at some point. It's like the war for older generations. Like a formative, really influential period. (Interviewee 1)

The quote above reflects the importance of DT64 for identity work among its audience of young adults and the continuous importance it carries for them today. When asking former listeners directly, it is striking how vividly they remember DT64. This seems plausible considering Andrew Hoskins' reference to social psychology and the importance of

experiences made during the formative years of age 10-30. He states that 'knowledge acquired during this period has been found to be highly accessible and includes the recall of public events and popular culture as well as more personal and autobiographical memories' (Hoskins 2010, p. 462). Our informants remember specific programmes with their airing time as well as recollecting jingles and slogans by heart spontaneously during the interviews. The interviewees also and especially remember the circumstances of listening to their favourite programme, as evident with this Interviewee:

I can still remember that it was a special song from Depeche Mode that I fell for, which got me to DT64. And then I can remember that I was always sitting with my incredible mono tape recorder and my ORWO tapes⁸ and recorded music. That was in 1984 and I was nine. My favorite show was the Mobile Pop Radio. This one was on every Friday evening. And because I was too young to go to the disco, I was always hanging out in front of the radio. The show was on from 8.00 until midnight and then, that was a bit later, there was always the Depeche Mode song of the week, because that was the most popular band in the GDR so they always had this extra, this bonus. (Interviewee 3).

Many other interviewees shared the memory of recording DT64 shows and music that was played during the interview. The tapes became a form of capital that was exchanged in the school yards and with which they could trigger attention. The 'recording friendly' broadcasting of whole albums featuring several seconds of silence before and after the airing of each song was beneficial for these practices. Listeners scheduled their routines after the shows that were on-air on DT64. Depending on the specific band, whose album was played or whose concert recording was aired, other activities were cancelled or postponed. One interviewee recollects the disappointment at school when the informant learned that a new song by Depeche Mode was played in *Duett-Musik für den Rekorder* (Duett-Music for the Recorder). As the interviewee was known as the one owning all Depeche Mode songs on tape and now felt excluded from the peers. This former listener never missed the show again.

Similarly to what José van Dijck (2007) described as shoebox full of memories, the informants have kept bits of DT64. They have preserved boxes full of recorded tapes in their attics (Interviewee 6) that they have not been listening to during the last couple of years (Interviewee 1, 7, 8, 10). They also collect stickers as remains from the time of mobilisation in the early nineties (Interviewee 1, 2, 9). In some cases it is the materiality of the tape that is of special importance and that causes a special attachment, since it is such an old and outdated technology.

Interviewee 9 describes this experience:

No you can't just throw these tapes away. They are, they are kind of precious. Back then they were rather expensive and you've invested a lot of time to record them and label them.

After a while the informant summarises why it is important to still keep the recordings:

Somehow, I have the feeling that my memory is really bad and I don't know, but you kind of keep record of what you were doing, because your own memory can trick you and everything is kind of blurred and that's why you keep these tapes.

Our informants keep recorded tapes (Interviewee 3, 6, 7). Although they are not listening to them as the tape technology disappears from their everyday lives, the cassettes remain in place. Van Dijck (2007) refers to this memory triggered by the very materiality of the medium techno-stalgia that is connected to a longing for the retro-technique that provided an original sound. However, our interviewees are quite pragmatic in these terms and do not show strong signs of techno-stalgia. They are keeping the former technology as physical evidence, but they are using and re-enacting the listening experience through current technologies, such as their iPod. For that purpose, they digitise their memory material, such as old recordings of DT64 special programmes. However, most often they are not listening to them more intensively after digitalisation. Similarly to the tapes, the digital memory media are stored away on their computers.

One of our interviewees (Interviewee 8) is in possession of a large archive of DT64 broadcasting material. After the forced disappearance of DT64 this informant aimed at a professional and scholarly engagement with the material and DT64 as trigger for political engagement in a time of transition. During the 1990s the interviewee provided, together with other volunteers, a 'copying' service, making it possible for fans to order specific programmes copied and sent out by regular mail.

The media here serve in their specific materiality and with specific affordances as shoeboxes, carrying memories that are maybe not opened but the interviewees are sure of their existence as remains of the past. Even if they are not often or not at all turning to these memory media, they would never throw them away. The analogue memory media are part of a whole set of shoebox gimmicks that are important for current identity work. These artefacts are kept in case a nostalgic moment appears, which does not come too often, but the way our informants talk about these memory media, when reminded, reveals the character of memory as bodily experiences that involve strong affects (Huber 2011).

The discussion of identity aspects of analogue media memories of DT64 reflects the ambivalent character of the radio station. DT64 was perceived as a valid alternative to other popular cultural products made in GDR, since it made music available that was normally excluded from the cultural sphere. However, DT64 remained a mainstream radio station under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture (*Ministerium für Kultur*) that represented official

cultural politics. This aspect will be further discussed while analysing alternativity aspects of DT64 as both analogue and digital phenomenon. With SNS, people with an interest for DT64 can come together and find each other, even if they beforehand had been unaware of the existence of others remembering DT64. Hence, the SNS have a potential to transform a multitude of individuals with individual memories of the radio station into a collective with social - mediated - memories. The rise of SNS in the 2000s opened a new possibility for a revival of DT64. With the help of a range of different cloud-services the re-distribution of sound-bites and pictures from DT64 has been made possible, and through the Facebook group 'digital witnessing'⁹ by former listeners and DJs have spurred online. The Facebook group provides moments of (n)ostalgia (Gallinat 2006) and has, for example, incorporated links to other (n)ostalgic Facebook-groups. In the news-feed links to videos by East-German pop-stars, pictures of old-fashioned East-German radios and cassette-recorders etc. are appearing frequently. However, a strong restorative nostalgia referring to a longing for the imaginary of the GDR's essential past is not present. Neither is a strong reflexive nostalgia¹⁰ understood as ambivalent, critical and potentially political engagement with the past expressed on Facebook. Rather than the wish for an essential GDR past that unites the members of the group (restorative nostalgia) or the critical and conflictual negotiation of the remembered past (reflexive nostalgia), it is nostalgia for style (Ivy 1995) that is constructed. It is essentially media memories entangling personal and collective memories that are shared in this Facebook group.

Facebook, and other platforms like it, which connect the archival functions of 'the cloud' with the possibility to share uploaded material with others and make it possible for communities of interest to form, might be the only way a phenomenon such as DT64 could become not only a distant and abstract personal memory but connective memories (Hoskins 2011) supported by preserved materials from the actual broadcasts. Since the GDR was 'shut-down' together with the radio station, there exists no official archive which holds the broadcasts; no economic or state interests are to be found in connection to DT64. All that exists are private recordings and private memories, which, without digital media and social networking platforms, would remain private.

Counter to our expectations, our interviewees, who have digitalised parts of their DT64 collection, do not engage in sharing practices online. No one engages in practices of joint memory in SNS through posting parts of their own recorded collections, something that could be explained with the constraints of the platform, making it harder to, for example, share sound files than pictures or links. One of the explanations might be the structure of Facebook and the affordances for sharing that the platform gives. In order to share on Facebook, the material not only has to be digitised, but also available on some other digital platform (e.g. Sound Cloud, DivShare or Mix Cloud). To share audio files one needs an extension to other platforms rather than only a link to music videos available on YouTube or to articles in online magazines.

Temporality Aspects of Analogue and Digital Media Memories

In this part of the article, we aim to discuss the memory practices and the artefacts or memorabilia held on to by ordinary listeners and the more private or personal memory practices they engage in relation to time. DT64 was not only a permanent jukebox, as we think of music radio stations and streaming services (lastfm, Spotify) today. One of the main drivers behind DT64 was that it encouraged its listeners towards the practice of recording (downloading) music on to audio-cassettes and more importantly to share it with others. Out of the common practice to record programmes and music from DT64, there are a quite large number of recordings preserved of the sounds of this radio station. This is somewhat contra-intuitive. For many commentators, format and music radio is an intangible media form that serves its functional purpose of guiding its audiences through the day, serving as a background, a mood-setter and a ubiquitous sociality (Nyre 2008). From this perspective, recording, preserving and saving music radio is the 'wrong' way of listening to radio. Radio in general, and most certainly formatted music radio, is supposed to be about 'liveness', 'newness', 'actuality' and 'presence'. Nevertheless, as we saw in the interviews, DT64 was frequently and much recorded: people used it as an archive or library of music, from which they, with the help of analogue cassettes, could 'download' the music that they wanted and share with their friends. Such recordings are still kept on old tapes. These kinds of artefacts are analogue memory objects that serve as memory triggers. Based on their specific characteristics as media, they serve different purposes in the process of remembering (Lessard 2009).

Facebook as an archive provides a different kind of temporality for media memories. Our informants and the analysis of the Facebook group point in two directions: connective memories online are about firstly preserving stories and secondly about doing this together. One of the interviewees explains that he started one of the Facebook groups:

in order to preserve the memory of such an outstanding channel.
(Interviewee 1)

This aim of keeping the memory brings the people together online. The practice of connective memory on Facebook however has a character of liveness. It is hardly the case that people go too far backwards in the history of DT64 in the timeline (especially considering that older posts are hidden), but rather engage in current posts and discussions. In that sense directness of exchange and connective memory is crucial and are encouraged by the moderators that share pictures, comments and YouTube clips regularly.

Another important aspect is the multiple layers of temporality that are constructed in the Facebook group. The direct exchange between members and moderators links back to past times and practices. One major theme in that context has to do with the socialness and sociality of radio as a medium. The interpretation of radio as 'the original social media' and the fact that DT64 had social functions, as a library of, and the only gate to, good music through sharing and copying cassettes, are frequently highlighted in the Facebook-

discussions. The way DT64 used guerrilla or viral marketing techniques in times of mobilisation of the shutdown (stickers, flyers etc.) are discussed, but again often instructed by the moderators of the group.



Figure 3: Post of Stickers¹¹

The material side of the media memories constructed here is often highlighted: pictures of cassette-players and cassettes are frequent in the feeds. And this social function and how DT64 was used among audiences of Western music within the GDR is commented upon by the users, as the following example shows:



Figure 4: User post¹²

Yet another theme in the online discussions is about the sociality of protest and the actions surrounding the shut-down of DT64. The users of the Facebook-pages not only commemorate DT64 as a radio station, but also the demonstrations and activism that the shutting down of DT64 spurred among its former listeners. Many comments and postings in



Figure 5: Picture shared in the Facebook group¹³

the Facebook-groups concern the protests. Pictures of demonstrations and street-art are posted in the groups and seem to be at least as important as the actual radio station (see also Figure 1). In this case the tone and discourse is somewhat nostalgic, the lost naivety and enthusiasm of the users youth are traceable in their comments. And it seems also to be a longing for another and vanished place, a place in which demonstrations seemed as an alternative, and that they were able to change something.

The events that followed the shut-down of DT64 and the social mobilisation that occurred in relation to the radio station has led to DT64, in some respects, remaining alive in the personal as well as connective memories of a generation of East-Germans who experienced their youth in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Alternativity Aspects of Analogue and Digital Media Memories

As indicated earlier, DT64 as a radio station and its media memories have an ambivalent character when it comes to alternativity. The analogue media memories of our informants resonate with Jérôme Bourdon's (2003) analysis of TV memories. 'What is remembered, is

not programmes but interactions with the world of television, which can take place at the time of viewing (...), but also later' (Bourdon 2003, p. 12). Most of our informants have been strongly involved with the radio station; they have been volunteers, they organised local support groups and occupations during the time of the phase-out, they were temporary moderators or just passionate listeners that never missed their favourite show. In that sense DT64 provided a platform for different forms of alternativity: in the context of its shows and soundscape, but also the fan practices fighting for the preservation of the radio station in the early 1990s. The memories that our interviewees shared with us are memories with a 'special feel'. The interviewees often refer to the special sound of DT64 - a unique programming, mainly unavailable rock music from the West - that was the foundation for their deep involvement with the radio station and still nurtures their memories.

DT64, they had a programme and concept that you couldn't find anywhere else. (...) DT64 was really Rock oriented. You could listen to more Hardrock on DT64 then on the typical West channels. Since I am a music euphoric person, I've been listening to RIAS and Bayern3 and everything that you could receive down there in Dresden. And I often noticed that bands such as Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin and so on were played endlessly in the GDR. In the West, in contrast, they were played only rarely, I think they were too heavy for them over there. (Interviewee 5)

A majority of the interviewees preferred listening to DT64 compared to *West* stations, although they were listening to DT64 specifically because the radio station offered them West music. One of the interviewees living rather close to the border had the opportunity of excellent reception of BRD radio channels. Although it was common sense that listening to radio and watching television from the West in good quality is a privilege, the informant preferred listening to DT64, since it offered this genuine sound and was 'recording friendly'.

I mean I've listened to NDR2 and HR3, but you couldn't compare that to DT64. They just didn't offer the same programmes and music. (Interviewee 6)

The interviewees repeatedly confirm the genuine soundscape and programming of DT64 that linked them stably to the radio station. For example, another interviewee mentioned that DT64 was the first and last radio station he ever constantly listened to.

The specific soundscape of DT64 that is remembered by our interviewees connects to the mnemonic function music has (van Dijck 2007). Van Dijck argues that 'listening to records helps inscribe and invoke specific events, emotions, or general moods' (van Dijck 2007, p. 79). Without even listening to tracks that were played on DT64, our informants immediately develop an emotional recollection of the sound that was so typical for the radio station and that contributed to realise personal and social identifications (van Dijck 2007). As one interviewee recollects, the interviewee was a punk during the time of most

intensively listening of DT64. This interviewee would not have become a punk without the musical influence of DT64 that brought the subcultures into the living room. To conclude in van Dijck terms, 'musical memories are shaped through social practices and cultural forms as much as through individual emotions' (van Dijck 2007, p. 94).

DT 64 has naturally been the subject of what can be referred to as an official history. Books and documentaries appeared shortly after the phase-out in order to preserve the history and tell the story of the radio station and its disappearance. Several interviewees mention these forms of mediated memory as a 'proper' and professional way to commemorate this radio station. The books, predominantly written by former DT64 producers, are presented as legitimate sources for the historical narratives around DT64. The interviewees stress in that context the importance of sharing memories. Memories collected in the books and told in the documentary are perceived as important, as historical documents that preserve memories in a rather professional manner, which points to the relational character of memories that are constructed in connection to other individuals and collectives. Facebook then offers a platform for alternative engagement with DT64 memories as well. Compared to the official memories provided by books and documentaries, the group members have a possibility to tell their own stories about DT64. At least they have it potentially. This stands emblematical for the question of who ultimately owns and possesses the media memories of DT64 and who therefore uses Facebook for archiving and presenting what happened at a specific time in a specific place. The structure of Facebook making it hard to share auditory memory bits directly complicates these practices.

Most of our informants remain, however, rather sceptical when it comes to the authenticity of memory practices on Facebook. The people that engaged in postings in the Facebook group might - they argue - not be actual former listeners of DT64. Interviewee 5 for example was contacted by other group members, who claimed that they know his voice from DT64. The informant, however, is quite sure that they are much too young to be able to have listened to his show. From that experience, this informant draws a general conclusion about the politics of friendship promoted by Facebook, namely the erosion of what friendship actually means.

You know, I think, and that's my opinion, these people are quite young people, who learned about DT64 through their parents (...). And then it is like this feeling of sympathy and they are saying 'oh yes, I know you from DT64'. But they are actually much too young. And that's maybe also the thing with Facebook. I think, it is a stupid button, this 'Friend' button. A friend today is easily defined in the game: It's just someone you know from somewhere. This is your friend. I've been working for ages in psychiatry and there the people think of you as a friend if you just spend some time with them and it's similar on Facebook. (...) Friendship for me means much more and it's a notion that would never actually work on Facebook. But well if you are on there, you

have to adjust to the principles and then in the end you're hitting the 'Friend' button anyway. (Interviewee 6)

If our informants share content, they share online material from other sites, hence confirming already established ways of remembering the media landscape of the GDR. The Facebook-pages about DT64 are, in different ways, connected to established tropes of nostalgia and longing of the past; of a time gone and place no longer existing. The popular culture of the 1980s and 1990s are somewhat fetishized in the discourse on the Facebook pages. Pictures of old East-German radio sets, of cassettes and audio tapes and other vanished media technologies are also posted in the Facebook news-feeds. The low engagement in practices of jointly remembering DT64 by our interviewees was rather surprising given their strong emotional involvement with the radio station. For example, they remain sceptical about using the potentials provided by Facebook to meet fellow fans and enthusiasts.

Conclusion

In summary, the constraints and affordances of the Facebook-platform downplays the actual media memories of DT64 and highlights instead the already existing and commercialised (n)ostalgia available in other online media. YouTube clips and pictures of East-German (outdated) media technology are more common than actual memories of the broadcasts or audio-files of how DT64 sounded. However, the sociality of the radio and of DT64 as well as the social events that took place after its shut-down in 1993 is also remembered and highlighted in the discussions. These features of DT64 become the most important to remember, arguably since these stories fit neatly with established narratives and understandings of the contemporary media landscape, in which social media and online sociality are becoming increasingly important. As such, the commemoration of DT64 can be perceived as a way for the Facebook users to make sense of their own media-biography. Accordingly, the authenticity of the online memories of DT64 as well as of the connective memory practices online, are questioned by our informants. Others - they argue, but not they themselves - use these Facebook groups not as a way of remembering a radio station from the past, but 'merely' to construct and uphold their personal identity.

The main finding of the analysis focusing on analogue and digital media memories showed that SNS offer new possibilities to come together and jointly remember. Identity, temporality and alternativity appeared as useful categories to explore the changing nature of media memories in a changing media landscape while being closely interrelated.

In general, our interviewees – enthusiastic former listeners and mostly engaged on Facebook – remain sceptical about connective media memory practices. The analysis of the most active Facebook group also showed that the affordance of Facebook as a memory platform constrains these practices. Since it is harder to share audio files, users repost already shared and circulated material rather than sharing their own digitised memorabilia. The vivid exchange in the group analysed here is mainly triggered by the active moderators.

In that sense, the users adhere to a guided form of joint remembering. Furthermore, the revival of DT64 is not so much a question about restorative nostalgia. The informants do not long for a lost political system in their memory practices, but for sharing personal memories with fellow listeners that are sometimes completed with memories of others (Ashuri 2012). Facebook gives enthusiastic users the possibility to meet and jointly remember important features of their use of DT64. However, since the affordances of Facebook set constraints on what is shared, users tend to repost and reproduce already existing memorabilia from other sites.

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Notes:

¹ For the notion of media affordances see also Hutchby 2001.

² Memories of DT64 are of course also other things. For example it might be a nostalgic look on a person's youth or on a lost era of popular music. Nostalgia, furthermore, is a key driver in the development of popular music and the music industry. There has for a number of years been a shared interest between the music industry and music audiences to indulge in nostalgia for various periods of popular youth culture. Through forms of so-called "retromarketing" music audiences as consumers has been given the opportunity to relive their memories of being young over and over again (Bennett 2001). Memories of DT64 might also be interpreted as a form of Ostalgia. Anselma Gallinat (2006, 2010) defines ostalgia as the reactionary longing back to the GDR as a political system and its ideology. She stresses that an ostalgie movement including pop-cultural phenomena such as ost-parties was prevalent especially in the early 1990s, when transformation processes were still strongly experienced by the East-German population. Later, this ostalgia became mainly commodified and the ideological link was left aside. There might be nostalgic or ostalgie elements within these memories and online media practices, but the informants' performances and reflections are, we argue, not limited to these categories.

³ DT64 on the other hand was a state financed radio playing mainstream popular music. Nevertheless the radio station was, in the context of the GDR an "alternative" voice, not at least since it was the only radio station offering Western pop-music. Hence it highlights the fact that what is an "alternative" media has as much to do with the specific media landscape as it has to do with institutions and intentions in production (Andersson & Stiernstedt 2008). The demonstrations and mobilization of DT64's audience in the face of the radio station's termination in 1992 further underlines the air of alternativity that surrounded DT64 within the GDR.

⁴ Only one third of the music played by DT64 was actually produced in the GDR or the Soviet Union as RIAS (Rundfunk im Amerikanischen Sektor) the direct rival of DT64 in Berlin examined in 1965. Western pop songs made up 29 percent of airtime while 38 percent were covers of Western tracks, which very much reflects the flexibility of DT64 of staying within the legal regulations that demanded 60 percent of the music should originate from socialist countries (Stahl 2010).

⁵ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aimBXngYQ_g

⁶ In order to keep the anonymity for all interviewees and since we have only recruited one female respondent, we are not indicating the gender throughout the analysis.

⁷ Unfortunately, we were not able to get in touch with the group founders and moderators. Therefore, we do not know who is behind this group. There is one post stating that the group was founded by enthusiasts of DT64.

⁸ ORWO is the short form for Original Wolfen, the name of the East German manufacturer of photographic film and magnetic tapes.

⁹ Here meant as an adaptation of media witnessing (Frosh and Pinchevski 2009).

¹⁰ For the distinction between restorative and reflexive nostalgia see Boym 2001.

¹¹ The headline to the post reads '...the former advertising material number 1: the sticker. Do you still have some of these? Please post them here if that's the case :).' (Facebook 2011-11-01).

¹² 'We all hang out in front of the radio and pressing the record button with two fingers...that was the only option to listen to your favorite group...and to fill your collection with complete albums...the most things were only available under the counter...from the cure to depeche mode [sic]... it was a superb time in the East...' Reply post reads, 'To preserve these memories, this site was created :). Thank you for your comment.' (Facebook 2011-11-01).

¹³ The post says “For all DT64 people an essential artifact for archiving music – for all younger people this is, so to say the Mp3-stick from before.” (Facebook 2011-11-01)