Introduction

In the mid-1990s, the rise of the Internet and the proliferation of personal computers challenged many habits of historical scholarship.[1] Professional historians and history enthusiasts, genealogists, and other groups started to publish websites and blogs about history.[2] Many scholars in academia became skeptical about the reliability of these websites, where amateur and non-professional historians were able to produce, store, and disseminate historical knowledge.[3] History and knowledge about the past became accessible and usable to anyone with Internet access. As the literature scholar Ann Rigney points out, the digital production of historical knowledge became appropriated by several agents "including those who produce sites and those who visit them and leave their traces in the form of additional photographs, comments or stories".[4] Professional historians remained active participants in that process, but they do not constitute the only "gatekeepers" of this public distribution and production of historical knowledge.[5]

The Internet did not only change the way that people engage with history but also the structures and hierarchies of historical knowledge.[6] As Jerome de Groot argues, several important high-tech companies started to control these new opportunities and tried to give "programming and content power" to users through technology.[7] Some striking examples are Google, Wikipedia, Facebook, and YouTube.[8] These popular digital spaces changed the ways that historical knowledge is gathered, produced, and disseminated.[9] They encourage a creative engagement

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1 Regarding the rise of the Internet and the expansion of the personal computer, see Janet Abbate, *Inventing the Internet. Inside Technology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999). For how the Internet and personal computers have changed historical scholarship, see Ian Milligan, *The Transformation of Historical Research in the Digital Age* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).
2 Mark Poster, "History in the Digital Domain," *Historein* 4 (2003): 20.
3 Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, "Web of lies? Historical knowledge on the Internet," *First Monday: Peer-Reviewed Journal on the Internet* 10 (2005), accessed February 15, 2019, http://first monday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1299/1219
4 Ann Rigney, "When the monograph is no longer the medium: Historical narrative in the online age," *History and Theory* 49 (2010): 114–15.
5 Ibid., 115.
6 Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History. Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 90.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice* (London: Arnold, 2000), 189; Mark Poster, "Manifesto for a history of the media," in *Manifestos for History*, ed. Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alun Munslow (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 40.

with the past, as users are not just passive consumers of histories produced by others but take active roles in the construction of historical narratives.[10] Web-users produce historical knowledge by engaging, discussing, using, interpreting, and negotiating the past.

This book examines how historical knowledge is produced in one of the most central digital communities of knowledge, Wikipedia. In 2001, the American Internet entrepreneur Jimmy Wales founded the online encyclopedia with its main concept being that "anyone can edit any page".[11] This allowed Wikipedia to also function as a common and public space for personal reflection. Wikipedia provides this opportunity through the "talk" pages, as each Wikipedia entry has its own "talk" area (Figure 1). More specifically, each entry has two tabs, one with the up-to-date version of the article, and the other named "talk" where users can find the archived discussions about all the edits that the given entry has endured through time. Thus, the "talk" area shows all the discussions and debates between Wikipedia users about the entries. The users question statements that are cited on the Wikipedia page, expressing their disagreements and their suggestions for the relevant entry. Other users then correspond, and the "talk" page becomes a discussion page. On top of that, there is also the "view history" page for each entry, which just logs all the changes (without the discussion), and copies of older versions of the articles (Figure 1).

To demonstrate how historical knowledge is produced on Wikipedia, this book answers the following sub-questions: What are the methods and guidelines that Wikipedia establishes to produce knowledge about the past? How does Wikipedia encourage its users to get involved in the production of historical knowledge, expressing their views online about the past and the way in which they remember it? What historical connections do they make between the past and the present and how is this expressed in the main entry? How do Wikipedia editors engage with historical events and transform the past into historical knowledge? Why do Wikipedians decide to contribute to the production of historical knowledge? Which factors determine their editing choices? What are the characteristics of Wikipedia editors, who actively create and edit articles related to history?

The main argument of this book is that Wikipedia allows people to discuss and debate the past, expressing their opinions and emotions about history and its significance in the present and the future through the "talk" area that Wikipedia

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10 Regarding the participation of people in popular historical activities, see Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past. Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

11 Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia Revolution* (London: Hyperion ebook, 2009), 14.

Figure 1: Screenshot of "September 11 attacks," accessed July 2, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks.

provides.[12] Wikipedia offers a public and digital space for personal engagement and reflection on the production of historical knowledge. Wikipedia users develop multiple relations with the past, take part in discussions and debates about history and its representation, and in that way produce history. This does not mean that all Wikipedia users have the same role and power in the production of historical knowledge. Historical knowledge is not just a product of collaboration and public discussion but the result of hierarchy and power. Wikipedia allows all its users to discuss the editing process of a Wikipedia article and express their own historical understandings in the "talk page" of the article, but few of them, the most experienced editors, can make their contributions part of the main article.

Between public and digital history

This study draws from the historiography of public and digital history, as it was developed in the United States and Europe, and, more specifically, from works

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that fall into two categories. Studies that investigate public memory and studies that focus on the co-production of historical knowledge and "shared authority".[13] These two categories cover several concepts and approaches, which create an important ground for the examination of Wikipedia, but they also reveal weaknesses and historiographical gaps that this book aims to fill.

   History and memory have a long relationship; however, the term public memory was a result of public history's engagement with memory.[14] Several decades before the institutionalization of public history in the late 1970s, the historian Carl Becker introduced the connection between history, memory, and the public.[15] Becker opened up history by enabling the public to engage with the past and, more precisely, to be part of the past through their memories.[16] However, Becker's arguments remained marginal for the next decades. In 1981 the oral historian Michael Frisch started to engage further with the relationship between public memory and history.[17] Frisch argued that most works of public history make clear the need for a wider sharing of knowledge and broader participation in history-making.[18] Frisch followed Becker's suggestions concerning the importance of memory in the production of historical knowledge and pointed out that public history cannot be public without the study of memory. For that reason, even if a memory is historical or ahistorical, public historians should engage in the process of remembering.[19] The study of historical memory can reveal information about "how the past does or doesn't figure in our lives, and what this, in turn, tells us about both history and ourselves".[20]

   In the historiography of public history, memory took the form of an active agent that shapes public understanding and perception of the past. This became the dominant approach of public historians to public memory. In the late 1980s, the French historian Pierre Nora showed that memory is affective and signifies a

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13 I focus on public memory as it has been developed in the historiography of public history and not on the general term of memory and its role in historical scholarship.

14 The first work that engaged with memory on a collective level was the study of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs published in 1925. See Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 1992).

15 Carl Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," *American Historical Review* 37 (1932): 221–36. Halbwachs argued that collective memory is socially constructed. For the different types of memory (collective memory, popular memory, public memory, counter-memory), see David Glassberg, "Public History and the Study of Memory," *The Public Historian* 18, no. 2 (April 1996): 7–23.

16 Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," 223.

17 Michael H. Frisch, "The Memory of History," *Radical History Review* 25 (1981): 9–23.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 22.

20 Ibid., 17.

connection with the present, while history is a representation of the past.[21] Based on this theoretical framework, in the next decades, several studies started to appear and investigate how memory shapes our historical understanding through its connection to the present, its affective character, and its connection to institutions that influence people's perception of the past.

For the historian Michael Kammen, memory became an important agent that shaped two major processes that defined tradition in American culture since 1870, the Americanization of tradition and then its democratization.[22] The urban historian, Hayden Dolores argued that both personal and collective memories are tied to public spaces.[23] For Hayden, landscapes are "storehouses," in which different social groups of people place their memories.[24] Edward Linenthal and John Bodnar showed that memory can be productive, generating "history wars" that led to the cancelation of exhibitions and public debates.[25] Mike Wallace examined memory close to power and the present and showed how the relation of Americans with their past changed from the 1940s to the 1970s.[26] John Bodnar focused on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and showed two different dimensions of public memory, one related to "official" culture and another related to "vernacular" culture.[27] Both sides represent different political beliefs about the past and its commemoration in the present. In another study, Bodnar also explored how the present and the future shaped the memories of two generations, the 1930s and the 1960s, in Whiting, Indiana, a town close to Chicago, in 1991.[28] Both generations remember their stories based not only on the past but also on the future.[29]

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21 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24.
22 Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 13.
23 Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 9.
24 Ibid.
25 Edward Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), 5; Edward Linenthal, "Struggling with History and Memory," *Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 1094–101; John Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2010).
26 Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), xi.
27 John Bodnar, *Remaking America. Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton University Press, 1992), 13–14.
28 John Bodnar, "Generational Memory in an American Town," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 26 (Spring 1996): 619.
29 Ibid., 637.

In the late 1990s, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen presented a different way to approach memory. Instead of focusing on archives, memorials, and exhibitions, they conducted interviews and investigated how the past shapes the "historical consciousness" and "historical memory" of Americans.[30] However, the emphasis on how the public actively engages with the past is more an exception in the studying of public memory rather than the norm. The abandonment of that approach by more recent studies has led to a lack of knowledge on how the public both remembers and makes sense of the past in the digital age – something that this book seeks to redress. In 1998, David Glassberg examined how Americans have understood and used the past in the twentieth century.[31] He made a significant distinction between the "interpretation of history" that professional historians do and the "sense of history" that the public has. This "sense of history" is a "perspective on the past at the core of who they are and the people and the places they care about".[32] However, Glassberg's work differs from Rosenzweig and Thelen's study, as he focused on public perception of the past through war memorials, festivals, places, and historical documentaries and not on how people themselves understand and think about the past. Following a similar approach, Alison Landsberg introduced the useful concept of "prosthetic memory" to describe the type of memory that is produced when a person becomes part of a broader and larger story through media, even if they did not live during the period in question.[33] Landsberg viewed public memory through movies, novels, or museum exhibitions and not in relation to how people perceived all those historical forms. This approach reveals a repeating pattern in the historiography of public memory.

Erika Doss connected public memory to emotions.[34] She explored why, in recent years, there has been an explosion of public monument-making, a "memory boom," in the US and Europe, but also a broader shift from monuments to memo-

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30 Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*. The approach of Rosenzweig and Thelen to focus on the public to detect memory has also been followed by other studies, see for example Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Greek* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Tammy Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976. Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013).

31 David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), xiii.

32 Ibid., 6.

33 Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

34 Erika Doss, *The Emotional Life of Contemporary Public Memorials. Towards a Theory of Temporary Memorials* (Amsterdam University Press, 2008) and *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago University Press, 2010).

rials.[35] Her main argument was that "today's 'memory boom' reflects less, then, a declension of historical consciousness than a cultural shift toward public feeling, toward affective modes of knowledge and comprehension".[36] However, she did not ask the public how they express their emotions, how they engage with the past, or how they perceive memorials. Instead, she approached the public as a receptor of cultural changes which has given rise to modern memorialization.

In the last decades, several studies appeared and focused on the relation between public memory and museums. For example, the work of Dell Upton explored several civil rights and African American history monuments in the contemporary South to show how these sites managed to integrate their past and define it in the twenty-first century.[37] Roger Aden used the case study of President's House in Philadelphia to explore how a place of public memory is shaped and how different social groups, institutions, and individuals give meaning to it.[38] The past becomes public memory through power, arguments, conflicts, compromises, selections, and negotiations.[39] Amy Sodaro studied different memorial museums and explored how those museums engage with the past, trauma, and violence.[40] Her study showed that public memory in museums is always socially and politically constructed and strongly connected to the present.[41] All those studies have offered useful theoretical frameworks and concepts for the studying of public memory on Wikipedia. However, as shown above, there is a tendency to study memory as a reflection of institutions, memorials, museums, media, movies, novels, etc. that shape public perception of the past. This repeating approach has ignored to a large extent the publicity of public memory. Even though memory reveals people's understanding of the past, it appears to be imposed on the public by museums, movies, TV shows, memorials, historical sites, exhibitions, etc. In that way, the historiography of public history has ignored how the public(s) create, shape, and share their memories about the past. In this study, I focus on the memories of Wikipedia users and explore how their memories engage with the dominant historical narratives, why they feel the need to share their memories, and how their memories contribute to the production of historical knowledge. At the same time, as I show in this book,

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35 Doss, *The Emotional Life*, 5.

36 Ibid., 37.

37 Dell Upton, *What Can and Can't Be Said* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015).

38 Roger Aden, *Upon the Ruins of Liberty: Slavery, the President's House at Independence National Historical Park, and Public Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015).

39 Ibid.

40 Amy Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity. Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence* (New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 133.

41 Ibid., 182.

historical knowledge on Wikipedia is not only the result of personal and collective memories but also of compliance with the policies and guidelines of the Wikipedia community.

Regarding the second category, the "shared authority," in 1990 Michael Frisch offered a significant methodological framework for how to do public and oral history. He pointed out that a great way of doing oral and public history is through the concept of "shared authority".[42] For Frisch, public historians should not just set questions to and simply extract knowledge from the public, but they should promote collaboration between themselves and the narrators.[43] They should advance a democratized shared historical consciousness and encourage more participation in debates about history.[44]

Several works tried to engage with that concept and the co-production of historical knowledge. Most scholars saw "shared authority" as a theoretical element naturally embedded in public history's identity and few tried to explore it deeper or – even more importantly – to apply it.[45] Of course, there are important studies that tried to apply "shared authority" to specific projects. For example, Katharine Corbett and Howard Miller used the concepts of "shared authority" and "shared inquiry" as ways of "doing history with the public" and not for the public.[46] Also, John Bodnar successfully applied "shared authority" to generational memory by conducting several interviews with individuals.[47] Benjamin Filene examined how many people, who work outside museums and universities, referred to as "outsider history-makers," approach history in a way that provokes the interest of thou-

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42 Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), xx. Frisch has also analyzed "shared authority" in other works. For a more contemporary view of "shared authority" in the digital age, see Michael Frisch, "From *A Shared Authority* to the Digital Kitchen, and Back," in *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*, ed. Adair Bill, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski (Philadelphia: Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2011), 126–37.

43 Ibid., xxii; Thomas Cauvin, "The Rise of Public History: An International Perspective," *Historia Crítica* 68 (2018): 8.

44 Frisch, *A Shared Authority,* xxii.

45 There are several theoretical works on "shared authority" and its significance for the development of public history. See David Dean, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Public History*, ed. David Dean (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2018), 1–11; Rebecca Conard, "Complicating Origin Stories: The Making of Public History into an Academic Field in the United States," in *A Companion to Public History*, ed. David Dean (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2018), 19–32; Cauvin, "The Rise of Public History," 3–26.

46 Katharine T. Corbett and Howard S. Miller, "A Shared Inquiry into Shared Inquiry," *Public Historian* 28 (2006): 16.

47 Bodnar, "Generational Memory in an American Town".

sands.[48] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen followed the method of "shared authority" by using surveys to explore how Americans understand their past.[49] For Rosenzweig and Thelen, this approach showed how historians can make historical culture more participatory and turn the individuals into "active users or interpreters of the past".[50] Andrea Burns explored how the African American communities of the 1960s and 1970s worked for the creation of their own cultural institutions.[51] Tammy Gordon analyzed the two-hundredth anniversary of the American Revolution by showing how individuals, social groups, and communities of 1976 actively engaged with the past and tried to integrate their works into the national narrative.[52] All those works saw "shared authority" as a methodological tool to do public history and applied it to specific cases. However, in the last three decades, there have been more works that engage theoretically with "shared authority" than those that apply "shared authority".[53] In this study, I have used "shared authority" as a methodological concept in multiple ways by focusing on the comments that Wikipedia editors make, their data in their profile pages, their stories, and their experiences from their engagement with the production of history on Wikipedia.

Since the late 1990s, as the personal computer and the Internet had become part of people's everyday life, several historians started to explore the opportunities that digital technologies had to offer. Most scholars identified the promise of digital technologies for the co-production and democratization of historical knowledge. The term democratization does not refer only to issues of access to historical scholarship but also to issues of production – more people involved in the process of writing and defining history. In other words, more – nonacademic – people have access to digitized historical sources and they can also actively take part in the production of history online. So, digital technologies made the discussion about co-production and "shared authority" even more intensive. As Michael Frisch has explained, on the subject of "shared authority" in the digital age, digital technologies can make audio or video recordings available and reachable for the archiver, the researcher, the user, and the community.[54]

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48 Benjamin Filene, "Passionate Histories: 'Outsider' History-Makers and What They Teach Us," *Public Historian* 34 (2012): 11.

49 Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*.

50 Ibid., 192, 194.

51 Andrea A. Burns, *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013).

52 Tammy Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976. Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 4–7.

53 See n. 45.

54 Frisch, "From *A Shared Authority* to the Digital Kitchen, and Back," 128.

More and more scholars started to engage with the increasing digitization of archives and historical records through digital technologies.[55] Roy Rosenzweig and Michael O'Malley saw the Web as a global "hypertext," in which users could follow different roads and have access to documents, images, sounds, and films.[56] Edward Ayers argued that digital technologies could make historians imagine new ways to present history by displaying data, maps, texts, images, and sounds and by enabling users to make connections and explore all those materials.[57] Rosenzweig and Daniel Cohen showed that digital archives can preserve different voices that exist on the Web and give a democratic perspective to the past.[58] As Rosenzweig explained, digital archives would not belong to intellectual and academic power, but everyone would have access to them.[59] In 2008, during a round table on digital history, several historians argued that the digitization of archives through digital technologies and their online availability could contribute to the democratization of historical knowledge, as more and more people would have access to it.[60] They saw the Web as a place where the historian and the public could collaborate, produce, and share historical knowledge.[61] Notably, all of these works share two key characteristics. Firstly, they suggest that most scholars viewed digitization more as a promise for the future rather than as a phenomenon that was taking place at that very time.[62] Secondly, and even more importantly, all of them have tended to focus more on the growing access of the public to historical knowledge in the digital era rather than on the participation of the public in the production of historical knowledge.

Rosenzweig was an influential figure in the association of digital technologies with the democratization of historical knowledge. In 1994 he created the Center

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55 For a detailed history of digital history, see Adam Crymble, *Technology and the Historian: Transformations in the Digital Age* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021).

56 Roy Rosenzweig and Michael O'Malley, "Brave New World or Blind Alley? American History on the World Wide Web," *Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (June 1997): 132–3.

57 Edward Ayers, "The Pasts and Futures of Digital History," *History News* 56, no. 4 (2001): 6.

58 Roy Rosenzweig, "Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era," *American Historical Review* 108, no. 3 (June 2003): 755; Daniel J Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

59 Rosenzweig, "Scarcity or Abundance? Preserving the Past in a Digital Era," 755.

60 Daniel J. Cohen, Michael Frisch, Patrick Gallagher, et al., "Interchange: The Promise of Digital History," *The Journal of American History* 95 (2008): 455.

61 Ibid., 472.

62 For a historiographical overview of digitization, its history, politics, and challenges, see Gerben Zaagsma, "Digital History and the Politics of Digitization," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* (2022): 1–22.

for History and New Media, a research institution at George Mason University, which aimed to study and use digital media "to democratize the past – to incorporate multiple voices, reach diverse audiences, and encourage popular participation in presenting and preserving the past".[63] This center contributed to the development of several digital history projects, such as the *September 11 Digital Archive*, the *Hurricane Digital Memory Bank*, the *Bracero History Archive, Gulag: Many Days, Many Lives and Objects of History*, which showed that digital technologies could bring the public closer to history.[64] Most of those projects aimed to encourage users to upload documents, photographs, videos, letters related to traumatic historical events, such as September 11 or Hurricane Katrina. They did not use technology to only provide access to historical documents to the public. Instead, they invited the public to creatively engage with the past and make their personal stories part of the broader historical narrative by placing those stories into a digital archive.

In the 2000s, several other digital public history projects started to appear in collaboration with universities, research centers, and libraries.[65] They aimed to enable users to both consume and produce historical knowledge. Digital public history projects continued to use "shared authority" for the purpose of integrating marginalized stories of the public.[66] Most of those projects were based on the

63 Stephen Robertson, "The Differences between Digital Humanities and Digital History," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), accessed August 10, 2021, https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/ed4a1145-7044-42e9-a898-5ff8691b6628#ch25

64 Ibid. For some studies on those projects, see Despoina Valatsou, "History, our own Stories and Emotions Online," *Historein* 8 (2008): 108–16; Pedro Telles da Silveira, "From Instant History to the Infinite Archive: Digital Archiving, Memory and the Practical Past at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media," *Historein* 17, no. 2 (2018), accessed July 3, 2020, https://ejournals.epublishing.ekt.gr/index.php/historein/article/view/10964/16290 For the connection between digital technologies and public history, see Cohen, et al., "Interchange: The Promise of Digital History," 464; Mellisa Dinsman, "The Digital in the Humanities: An Interview with Sharon M. Leon," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, July 10, 2016, accessed August 10, 2021, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-digital-in-the-humanities-an-interview-with-sharon-m-leon; Fien Danniau, "Public History in a Digital Context. Back to the Future or Back to Basics?" *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 128, no. 4 (2013): 118–44.

65 For the concept of digital public history, see Dinsman, "The Digital in the Humanities: An Interview with Sharon M. Leon"; Danniau, "Public History in a Digital Context," 118–44; Serge Noiret, Mark Tebeau, and Gerben Zaagsma, "Introduction," in *Handbook of Digital Public History*, ed. Serge Noiret, Mark Tebeau, and Gerben Zaagsma (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2022), 1–15.

66 For example, see Vicki Mayer and Mike Griffith, "MediaNOLA: A Digital Humanities Project to Tell Stories of Cultural Production in New Orleans," *Journal of Digital Humanities* 2, no. 2 (2013), accessed March 10, 2019, http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/2-2/medianola-by-vicki-mayer-and-mike-griffith/; Shawn Graham, Guy Massie, and Nadine Feuerherm, "The HeritageCrowd Project:

method of crowdsourcing and wiki technologies to attract individuals to visit and contribute to the projects. On the other hand, several other projects used "shared authority" as a tool for giving the public more access to historical sources and interpretations of the past.[67] However, some crucial questions remained unanswered. Did all those digital public history projects manage to attract a non-academic public? How did the public engage with the past and understand history? Only a few scholars tried to analyze how all these projects worked, if they were successful and managed to engage a broader non-academic audience, how people took part in the projects, and more significantly how they interpreted history.[68] For this reason, all those projects still contain, in Cameron Blevins' words, a "perpetual future tense," even if they have appeared in the last three decades.[69] Ultimately, there is a significant lack of studies that explore how the public has participated in the production of historical knowledge by using digital tools and technologies.

In the last decades, most works in digital history have been strongly connected to the broader field of digital humanities and have focused more on the application of computational tools for the study of history.[70] However, the con-

A Case Study in Crowdsourcing Public History," in *Writing History in the Digital Age*, ed. Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki (Michigan University Press, 2013), accessed August 10, 2021, https://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/public-history/graham-etal-2012-spring/; Lauren Jae Gutterman, "OutHistory.org: An Experiment in LGBTQ Community History-Making," *The Public Historian* 32, no. 4 (2010): 96–109; Andrew Hurley, "Chasing the Frontiers of Digital Technology: Public History Meets the Digital Divide," *The Public Historian* 38, no. 1 (February 1, 2016): 69–88.

67 For example, see Drew VandeCreek, "Webs of Significance: The Abraham Lincoln Historical Digitization Project, New Technology, and the Democratization of History," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (2007), accessed May 8, 2020, http://digitalhumanities.org:8081/dhq/vol/1/1/000003/000003.html; M. Tebeau, "Listening to the City: Oral History and Place in the Digital Era," *Oral History Review* 40, no. 1 (December 1, 2013): 25–35.

68 Only a few scholars have evaluated or critically examined those projects. For example, Fien Danniau has mentioned the failure of many digital public history projects to attract the public: see Danniau, "Public History in a Digital Context". Also, Pedro Telles da Silveira has criticized the Roy Rozenzweig Center's project for its inability to contextualize history: see da Silveira, "From Instant History to the Infinite Archive: Digital Archiving, Memory and the Practical Past at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media".

69 Cameron Blevins, "Digital History's Perpetual Future Tense," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), accessed August 10, 2021, https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled/section/4555da10-0561-42c1-9e34-112f0695f523#ch26

70 On what Digital Humanities is and the different approaches of scholars to it, see Mellisa Dinsman, "The Digital in the Humanities: A Special Interview Series," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, March 27, 2016, accessed August 10, 2021, https://lareviewofbooks.org/feature/the-digital-in-the-humanities; Ray Siemens Schreibman and John Unsworth, *A New Companion to Digital Humanities*

nection between digital technologies and the democratization of historical scholarship still remains important. In a series of interviews with digital humanities scholars organized by the English Literature professor Mellisa Dinsman, several historians, members of the media, and literature scholars discussed the possibility of digital humanities creating a link between academia and the public.[71] The historians Jessica Marie Johnson and Sharon Leon, and the English scholars Marisa Parham and Bethany Nowviskie, argued that digital technologies can bridge the gap between scholarship and the public, which remains significant and has tended to characterize the discussion about digital history in the last decades.[72]

The major weakness of these works in digital and public historiography is that they have been limited to simple celebrations of the potential achievements of "shared authority" without investigating all these projects more closely and examining whether they have managed to engage the public. Most works have focused on the access and not on the production of historical knowledge.[73] Also, only few works have applied "shared authority" as a method of doing public history and even fewer have studied the co-production of knowledge critically. In the last years, many studies have criticized "shared authority," co-production, and openness as neoliberal features that hide labor exploitation, structures of power, hierarchies, and social, economic, and racial inequalities in the digital world.[74] Several works have also analyzed how digital platforms, such as Facebook, Amazon, YouTube, etc. make a profit based on users, who produce content

(Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2015); Patrik Svensson and David Theo Goldberg, "Introduction," in *Between Humanities and the Digital*, ed. Patrik Svensson and David Theo Goldberg (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2015), 1–8.

71 Dinsman, "The Digital in the Humanities: A Special Interview Series".

72 Of course, other digital humanities scholars, such as Franco Moretti, David Golumbia, and Alexander Galloway, disagreed with the statement that digital humanities can create bridges between academia and the public.

73 For a more detailed analysis of how the historiography of public history has focused more on the consumption of history by the public and not on the production of history by the public, see Petros Apostolopoulos, "What is the Public of Public History? Between the Public Sphere and Public Agency," *Magazén – International Journal for Digital and Public Humanities* 2, no. 2 (2021): 311–27.

74 For example, see Fred Turner, "Machine Politics: The Rise of the Internet and a New Age of Authoritarianism," *Harper's Magazine* (January 2019): 25–33; Daniel Kreiss, Megan Finn, and Fred Turner, "The Limits of Peer Production: Some Reminders from Max Weber for the Network Society," *New Media and Society* 13, no. 2 (March 2011): 243–59; Nathaniel Tkacz, *Wikipedia and the Politics of Openness* (University of Chicago Press, 2015); Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017).

and data without being properly compensated.[75] Most of these have been written by media and communication scholars, not historians.

My study on Wikipedia takes into account all those aspects and explores how historical knowledge is produced on Wikipedia by revealing the power relations that are embedded in the online encyclopedia, the hierarchy and the structure of Wikipedia, the characteristics of Wikipedia editors, who create and edit historical articles, and the reasons why Wikipedia editors decide to contribute to the production of historical knowledge. In 1990, Michael Frisch criticized public history scholarship for being "supply side," namely, for focusing on historians and curators as suppliers of historical memory.[76] This approach created two different sides in public history, the historians as suppliers and the public as consumers.[77] This book breaks down the dichotomy between producers and consumers. It places the public itself at the forefront of historical inquiry by exploring how Wikipedia users actively engage with history, how they remember, discuss, and negotiate the past, while they try to contribute to the creation and editing of historical articles on Wikipedia.

A historiographical overview of Wikipedia

The foundation of Wikipedia and the new methods of collection, production, and dissemination of knowledge that it introduced, piqued the interest of many academics, who were curious to study this new encyclopedia. Many works were published to analyze Wikipedia and most of them fall into the following categories: (1) the accuracy of Wikipedia and its relation to education; (2) the history of Wikipedia; (3) the structures of Wikipedia including its participation practices, open character, hierarchy, underrepresentation of specific social groups, and bias in its contents; and (4) the datafication of Wikipedia.

Regarding the first category, an important work and one of the first studies on Wikipedia is the article by the historian Roy Rosenzweig, in which he examined the accuracy of Wikipedia in US history and the way that Wikipedia presents

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75 On digital platforms and labor, see Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism*; Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor," in *Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, trans. Paul Colilli and Ed Emory (Minneapolis University Press, 1996), 132–47; Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 73–97; Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus, "Learning to Immaterial Labour 2.0: My Space and Social Networks," *ephemera: theory and politics in organization* 7, no. 1 (2007): 88–106.

76 Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, 187.

77 On this dichotomy, also see Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976*, 4.

historical events.[78] According to this study, Wikipedia accurately reports names, dates, and events in US history and most of the factual errors are small and insignificant. Also, these errors did not differ much from either the Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia or the Encyclopedia Britannica. Rosenzweig's critique of Wikipedia was that good historical scholarship does not only require an accurate presentation of historical events but also good knowledge of literature, analysis and interpretation of sources, and a "clear and engaging prose".[79] In their study, the historian Cullen Chandler and the librarian Alison Gregory ignored the traditional warnings of academics about the problems of using Wikipedia within educational contexts and used Wikipedia as an example of a resource that can help students develop their critical thinking.[80] Several other studies have placed more emphasis on the broader technology that Wikipedia uses and explored how this technology can become an important tool for education.[81]

A volume edited by two scholars of education, Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki, offered different interesting perspectives about history on Wikipedia.[82] Specifically, the chapter by the historian Martha Saxton studied the representation of women across the online encyclopedia and showed how students should deal with this source of knowledge.[83] Saxton shared her experience of working with students analyzing Wikipedia entries related to women's history, evaluating their contents and sources for accuracy and significance.[84] The historian Amanda Seligman explored how Wikipedia can teach students to think about authority, authorship, and argument in tertiary sources.[85] Seligman pointed out that instead of forbidding Wikipedia as a source of knowledge, historians can use Wikipedia as a valuable pedagogical tool. She argued that educators should

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78 Roy Rosenzweig, "Can History be Open Source? Wikipedia and the Future of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 93 (2006): 117–46.

79 Ibid.

80 Cullen J. Chandler and Alison S. Gregory, "Sleeping with the Enemy: Wikipedia in the College Classroom," *The History Teacher* 42 (February 2010): 247–57.

81 For example, see Robert E. Cummings and Matt Barton, *Wiki Writing: Collaborative Learning in the College Classroom* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Robert W. Maloy, Michelle Poirier, Hilary K. Smith, and Sharon A. Edwards, "The Making of A History Standards Wiki: 'Covering, Uncovering,' and 'Discovering' Curriculum Frameworks Using a Highly Interactive Technology," *The History Teacher* 44, no. 1 (2010): 67–81.

82 Jack Dougherty and Kristen Nawrotzki, ed., *Writing History in the Digital Age* (Michigan University Press, 2013), accessed August 10, 2021, https://writinghistory.trincoll.edu/

83 Martha Saxton, "Wikipedia and Women's History: A Classroom Experience," in *Writing History in the Digital Age.*

84 Ibid.

85 Amanda Seligman, "Teaching Wikipedia without Apologies," in *Writing History in the Digital Age.*

not only teach students how to make historical arguments, but also how to weigh up the value of one argument against another in order to acquire a more rounded critical perspective.[86] In the same book, the historian Shawn Graham described the ways in which an article on Wikipedia can be improved, to teach students "how knowledge can be crowd-sourced, produced, and disseminated" in the digital age.[87]

Over time, additional studies focused on the history of Wikipedia and its methods for the collection and production of knowledge. The work of the digital media strategist and journalism scholar Andrew Lih was published in 2009 and constituted the first popular history of Wikipedia.[88] Lih investigated the history of Wikipedia, its development over time, and shed light on the community of Wikipedians.[89] The contents of his work ranges from short biographies of Jimmy Wales and other Wikipedia founders to different important events in Wikipedia's history. In 2011, the media theorists Geert Lovink and Nathaniel Tkacz edited a collective work that contained several chapters analyzing Wikipedia.[90] This study constituted a significant work on the production of knowledge on Wikipedia and all its chapters examined interesting aspects of Wikipedia. In particular, the chapter by the historian Dan O'Sullivan traced the history of encyclopedias in Western tradition and situated the emergence of Wikipedia within that historical context.[91] The historian Peter Burke also placed Wikipedia within the broader history of knowledge by tracing different ways of gathering, analyzing, disseminating, and employing knowledge.[92] Burke argued that Wikipedia's knowledge is based on the methods of a "citizen science," a scientific – in the broad sense of the term "science" – research conducted by amateurs and nonprofessional scientists. This process is described by Peter Burke as an "amateurization" of knowledge, which signifies a new phase in both knowledge production and collection, as well as in users' involvement.[93] Following a similar line of thinking, the Ph.D. dissertation by the media scholar, Fethi Erinç Salor, *Sum of all Knowledge: Wikipedia and the*

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86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.

88 Lih, *The Wikipedia Revolution*.

89 Ibid., 12.

90 Geert Lovink and Nathaniel Tkacz, ed., *Critical Point of View. A Wikipedia Reader* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Culture, 2011).

91 Dan O'Sullivan, "What is an Encyclopedia? A Brief Historical Overview from Pliny to Wikipedia," in *Critical Point of View. A Wikipedia Reader*, 34–49. On the same topic, see also Dan O'Sullivan, *Wikipedia. A New Community of Practice?* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

92 Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge. From the Encyclopedie to Wikipedia* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 2012), 273–4.

93 Ibid., 273.

Encyclopedic Urge (2012), examined the history of Wikipedia with a focus on it as a new form of encyclopedia.[94] In her recent work, *Should You Believe Wikipedia? Online Communities and the Construction of Knowledge* (2022), the computing scholar Amy Bruckman explored the characteristics of online communities that define the construction of knowledge, such as collaboration, identity, privacy, social roles, accuracy, online behavior, etc.[95] In her analysis, Bruckman used Wikipedia as an example of an online community and focused on its design and structure.

In *Consuming History. Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture*, Jerome de Groot explored different forms of public and popular history and investigated how the past is represented in these forms.[96] His book included a chapter on digital history websites and Wikipedia. He analyzed the history of Wikipedia as a digital source of knowledge and traced the main methods that Wikipedia uses to produce knowledge.[97] The chapter is more of a history of Wikipedia rather than an analysis of history on Wikipedia, even though he offers a good description of the platform and situates it within the field of public history along with other popular histories (games, tv shows, movies, etc.). Also, the Ph.D. dissertation by the historian Despoina Valatsou, *The Emergence of New Sites of Memory on the Internet* (2014), studied diverse kinds of "memory websites" where historical content and information are produced not only by professional historians but increasingly by a public audience. Valatsou examined Wikipedia as a site of memory and analyzed its different guidelines.[98] This work is significant in terms of the historiography of Wikipedia; however, Valatsou did not perform an analysis of specific case studies to show how Wikipedia users remember the past or how they get involved in the production of historical knowledge. Instead, she explored how Wikipedia works and its broader conceptual ideas about history. Valatsou's work is based on the interesting study of Robert S. Wolff, which explores how digital technologies have transformed the writing of history.[99] Wolff used the famous concept of Pierre Nora

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94 Fethi Erinç Salor, *Sum of all Knowledge: Wikipedia and the Encyclopedic Urge* (Ph.D. diss., University of Amsterdam, 2012).

95 Amy S. Bruckman, *Should You Believe Wikipedia? Online Communities and the Construction of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

96 Groot, *Consuming History*, 93–8.

97 Ibid., 90–101.

98 Despoina Valatsou, *Ανάδυση νέων μνημονικών τόπων στο διαδίκτυο* (Ph.D. diss., National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2014).

99 Robert S. Wolff, "The Historian's Craft, Popular Memory, and Wikipedia," in *Writing History in the Digital Age.*

and examined Wikipedia as a virtual "site of memory," that is, a place where people try to make sense of past events.[100] According to Wolff, writing history in the digital era and in public spaces such as Wikipedia forces professional historians to share a space with others whose narratives come from their memories. His study is significant as it connected Wikipedia with memory; however, it did not manage to show that the complexity of Wikipedia as a system of historical knowledge production is not only the result of personal and collective memories but also compliance with specific rules and policies.

Regarding the third category, several works examined the structure of the Wikipedia community by first exploring its participatory and collaborative practices, open character, and hierarchy, but also later the biases and gender gap evident in its contents. Specifically, the communication scholar Joseph Michael Reagle Jr. studied the "good faith culture" that exists within the community by conducting an ethnographic analysis of Wikipedia.[101] He argued that the "neutral point of view" (NPOV) policy brings users together to create and edit Wikipedia pages and the "good faith culture" facilitates this process of collaboration.[102] This does not mean that Wikipedia is always harmonious, but that collaborators have the purpose to work toward openness, universalism, and good faith.[103] Regarding all those critics who have raised concerns about the deterioration of Wikipedia, Reagle mentioned that Wikipedia acknowledges and discusses this criticism and strives to constantly change.[104] In this way, Wikipedia has become a self-regulated community. Another significant study on how authority on Wikipedia works is the chapter by the communication scholar Mathieu O'Neil, "Wikipedia and Authority".[105] O'Neil explored Wikipedia's organizational structure to show how the distribution of power and authority takes shape across the online encyclopedia.[106] He argued that Wikipedia is representative of a new kind of organization, termed an "online tribal bureaucracy," which contributes to the creation of an "online peer production project" that tries to manage the critiques expressed by its users.[107] O'Neil pointed out that

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100 Ibid. On Wikipedia as a global memory place, also see Christian Pentzold, "Fixing the floating gap: The online encyclopaedia Wikipedia as a global memory place," *Memory Studies* 2, no. 2 (May 2009): 255–72.

101 Joseph Reagle, *Good Faith Collaboration. The Culture of Wikipedia* (London, England and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

102 Ibid., 169.

103 Ibid., 170.

104 Ibid., 173.

105 Mathieu O'Neil, "Wikipedia and Authority," in *Critical Point of View. A Wikipedia Reader*, 309–24.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid., 320.

both the considerable size of Wikipedia and the lack of a constitution to assign specific roles to its users restrict its democratic character.[108]

Regarding the participation of Wikipedia users, the political scientist Johanna Niesyton interviewed the Hebrew Wikipedia user Drork Kamir to discuss how he became involved in Wikipedia, his interests, and the reasons for his active involvement.[109] Kamir admitted how different the Hebrew Wikipedia is in comparison to the Arabic version, and how the reactions to his comments by users changed from one platform to another.[110] Following the same perspective, the media theorist Nathaniel Tkacz conducted an interview with Edgar Enyedy, an active Wikipedia user from 2001 to 2002.[111] Enyedy argued that Wikipedia has been a "hierarchical social network, behind an unreliable knowledge repository," as "it has reduced the minimal requirements of knowledge to below average in both quality and reliability".[112] The work of the media scholar José van Dijck also examined Wikipedia by placing it within the context of connectivity.[113] He showed that Wikipedia's success lies in the fact that it can mobilize different types of users to contribute to its contents.[114] Furthermore, Wikipedia users find in Wikipedia a space for socialization, which enhances user's mobilization.[115] His study is not only limited to the human users of Wikipedia, but also examines the important role of bots and non-human agents in the production of content on Wikipedia.[116] One of the few studies that focuses on Wikipedia users' participation, by exploring the discussions on the "talk pages," is an article by René König, "Wikipedia. Between lay participation and elite knowledge representation".[117] König focuses on the talk pages connected to the German Wikipedia entry for the September 11 attacks, and argues that all related alternative theories pertaining to the events of September 11 are confined to the "talk pages"

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108 Ibid. 321.

109 Dror Kamir and Johanna Niesyto, "User Drork: A call for a free content alternative for sources," in *Critical Point of View. A Wikipedia Reader*, 288–95.

110 Ibid., 289.

111 Edgar Enyedy and Nathaniel Tkacz, "'Good luck with your wikiPAIDia': Reflections on the 2002 Fork of the Spanish Wikipedia," in *Critical Point of View. A Wikipedia Reader*, 110–18.

112 Ibid., 118.

113 José van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity. A Critical History of Social Media* (Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Sabine Niederer and José van Dijck, "Wisdom of the Crowd or technicity of the content? Wikipedia as a sociotechnical system," *new media & society* 12, no. 8 (2010): 1368–87.

114 van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity*, 136.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid., 137.

117 René König, "Wikipedia. Between lay participation and elite knowledge representation," *Information, Community & Society* 16, no. 2 (2013): 160–77.

and do not appear in the main article, the editing process of which remains transparent.[118] However, the participatory structure of Wikipedia does not necessarily mean more democratic and inclusive practices.[119]

Another significant work on the participatory culture of Wikipedia is the book by the media and management scholar, Dariusz Jemielniak, who was also an active Wikipedia editor.[120] In his work, he explored the roles of conflict and debate in the development of an article, the "edit wars," peer and bureaucratic control, which challenge the common assumption that Wikipedia is completely free, the development of trust in procedures, the organizational design, and the evolution of leadership within the Wikipedia community.[121] Jemielniak argued that Wikipedia balances open access and users' power with a set of traditional organizational forms. This is how Wikipedia manages to be successful and attractive to participants.[122] In his work, the media theorist Nataniel Tkacz explored Wikipedia's concept of openness by placing it within a political and historical context.[123] He argued that Wikipedia is not just characterized by collaboration and participation but by hierarchical structures and power relations between its users.[124] Tkacz connected Wikipedia with neoliberalism and argued that Wikipedia's model as a space "without politics" is, in fact, a "post-political space".[125] Tkacz's analysis is very useful for this book as it presents Wikipedia not just as a simple public space, but as a space where power relations are embedded. At the same time, even though his arguments about neoliberalism and Wikipedia accurately reflect many of the strategies Wikipedia adopts and the logic behind them, it is something of an exaggeration to identify Wikipedia as a representative example of neoliberalism, especially in our current data-driven and attention-targeted digital world.

In 2010, the information science scholars Noriko Hara, Pnina Shachaf, and Khe Foon Hew analyzed how Wikipedia communities change across different languages.[126] The authors made a comparative examination of typical behaviors on the discussion pages of non-English Wikipedia communities. They aimed to show

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118 Ibid., 160, 173.

119 Ibid., 173.

120 Dariusz Jemielniak, *Common Knowledge? An Ethnography of Wikipedia* (Stanford University Press, 2014).

121 Ibid., 6.

122 Ibid.

123 Tkacz, *Wikipedia and the Politics of Openness.*

124 Ibid., 6.

125 Ibid., 4–7.

126 Noriko Hara, Pnina Shachaf, Khe Foon Hew, "Cross cultural analysis of the Wikipedia community," *Journal of the American Society of Information Science and Technology* 61 (2010): 2097–108.

the differences and similarities of Wikipedia communities through an examination of different cultural patterns. A few years later, Noriko Hara and Pnina Schachaf produced a collective study of Wikipedia, in which they followed a global approach for the examination of Wikipedia.[127] The book includes several comparative studies of Wikipedia in more than one language and case studies of Wikipedia in languages other than English.[128] Its chapters focus on the content, processes, structures, and policies of Wikipedia. In the same thematic area, an article by the translation scholar Henry Jones explored the role of translation in the production of knowledge on Wikipedia.[129] For Jones, Wikipedia articles include a series of activities, such as "translating, collating, summarizing and synthesizing" based on sources published in different languages.[130] As such, Wikipedia editors, who are engaged in these practices, are not just "information bridges," rather they are active and engaged participants occupying important roles in the production of knowledge.[131]

Some scholars also applied computational tools to the study of the Wikipedia community. For example, a professor of Game Design, William Emigh, and a professor of Linguistics, Susan Herring, used corpus linguistic methods and factor analysis for word counts to identify features of formality and informality.[132] They showed how user actions through the mechanisms of the system may (or may not) shape the contents of Wikipedia and Everything2 (online community of users).[133] For the authors, Wikipedia works as a concise encyclopedia in a very similar way to an expert-based encyclopedia, but it also contains "talk pages" that provide a more personal perspective on the production of knowledge.[134] Others, such as the physicists Csilla Rudas and János Török, have focused on how editors change the consensus-building process on Wikipedia.[135] They used an agent-based

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127 Pnina Fichman and Noriko Hara, ed., *Global Wikipedia: International and Cross-Cultural Issues in Online Collaboration* (Lanham: Rowman et Littlefield, 2014), 1.

128 Ibid.

129 Henry Jones and جونز هنري, "'Wikipedia,' Translation, and the Collaborative Production of Spatial Knowledge / الفضائية المعرفة إنتاج في والتشارك والترجمة ويكيبيديا," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 38 (2018): 264–97.

130 Ibid., 272.

131 Ibid., 271.

132 W. Emigh and S. C. Herring, "Collaborative Authoring on the Web: A Genre Analysis of Online Encyclopedias," in *Proceedings of the 38th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (Los Alamitos: IEEE Press, 2005), 1.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid., 10.

135 Csilla Rudas and János Török, "Modeling the Wikipedia to Understand the Dynamics of Long Disputes and Biased Articles," *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 43, no. 1 (163) (2018): 72.

opinion model and showed that banning agents from editing reduces the consensus-building process and increases the system's relaxation time.[136]

In the last few years, there has been an increasing volume of works on the subject of bias and the gender gap on Wikipedia. For example, in their chapter "Gender Gap in Wikipedia Editing: A Cross-Language Comparison," the information scholars Paolo Massa and Asta Zelenkauskaite explore the gender gap across different versions of Wikipedia and try to establish if the gender gap in other language editions of Wikipedia is as pronounced as it is in the English one.[137] Their main argument is that the gender gap on Wikipedia reflects the broader gender gap across the sciences.[138] In the same collective work, Hélène Bourdeloie and Michaël Vicente examine the gender gap on Wikipedia as a reflection of broader gender inequalities across society.[139] Their study is based on the notion that the gender gap exists across all versions of Wikipedia, and as such Wikipedia reproduces existing gender inequalities within society.[140] This argument ignores the active agency of Wikipedia users and the intervening role that Wikipedia itself plays in the digital world.[141] Along similar lines, the sociologists Julia Adams, Hannah Bruckner, and Cambria Naslund investigate the extent of underrepresentation on Wikipedia, especially in relation to women and people of color, by examining American sociologists on Wikipedia.[142] Even though there is diversity within the discipline of sociology, on Wikipedia most represented sociologists are white men.[143] Their paper reveals the mechanisms that are responsible for these gaps on Wikipedia, such as gatekeeping practices, deletion of articles about women, the policy of "no original research,"

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136 Ibid.

137 Paolo Massa and Asta Zelenkauskaite, "Gender Gap in Wikipedia Editing: A Cross-Language Comparison," in *Global Wikipedia: International and Cross-Cultural Issues in Online Collaboration*, 85–96.

138 Ibid., 95.

139 Hélène Bourdeloie and Michaël Vicente, "Contributing to Wikipedia: A Question of Gender," in *Global Wikipedia: International and Cross-Cultural Issues in Online Collaboration*, 148.

140 Ibid., 147, 157.

141 For the intervening role of Wikipedia, see Heather Ford, *Writing the Revolution. Wikipedia and the Survival of Facts in the Digital Age* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: MIT Press, 2022), 18.

142 Julia Adams, Hannah Bruckner, and Cambria Naslund, "Who Counts as a Notable Sociologist on Wikipedia? Gender, Race, and the 'Professor Test'," *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 5 (2019): 1–14. See also Wei Luo, Julia Adams, and Hannah Brueckner, "The Ladies Vanish? American Sociology and the Genealogy of its Missing Women on Wikipedia," *Comparative Sociology* 17, no. 5 (2018): 519–56; Julia Adams and Hannah Bruckner, "Wikipedia, Sociology, and the Promise of Big Data," *Big Data & Society* (July–December 2015): 1–5.

143 Julia Adams, et al., "Who Counts as a Notable Sociologist on Wikipedia?" 1.

etc.[144] One of the latest works on Wikipedia is the collective study by the communication scholar Joseph Reagle and the social scientist Jackie Koerner, *Wikipedia @20. Stories of an Incomplete Revolution*, which explores multiple topics related to Wikipedia but focuses mainly on the problems of diversity, bias, and the gender gap.[145] In one of the chapters, Jackie Koerner examines Wikipedia's problem with bias, which produces an unfriendly environment for its users.[146] For Koerner, bias exists all throughout Wikipedia's contents, policies, and in the participation of its users.[147] As a result, Koerner suggests that Wikipedia should restrict all those policies and focus instead on how it will become more inclusive.[148]

More recently, while Wikipedia has established partnerships with various other digital platforms, such as Google, Amazon, Apple, etc., there have been a number of works that have approached Wikipedia by seeking to place it into the broader context of the datafied digital world.[149] For example, the study by the media scholar Heather Ford examines how Wikipedia covered the 2011 Egyptian

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144 Ibid., 8–11.

145 Joseph Reagle and Jackie Koerner, ed., *Wikipedia @20. Stories of an Incomplete Revolution* (Massachusetts: MIT Press 2020), accessed August 10, 2021, https://wikipedia20.mitpress.mit.edu/ On the problem of bias and the gender gap, and the need for Wikipedia to become more inclusive and diverse, see Heather Ford and Judy Wajcman, "'Anyone can edit', not everyone does: Wikipedia's infrastructure and the gender gap," *Social Studies of Science* 47, no. 4 (2017): 511–27; Alexandria Lockett, "Why do I have Authority to Edit the Page? The Politics of User Agency and Participation on Wikipedia," in *Wikipedia @20*; Siân Evans, Jacqueline Mabey, Michael Mandiberg, Melissa Tamani, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Community," in *Wikipedia @20*; Adele Vrana, Anasuya Sengupta, Siko Bouterse, "Towards a Wikipedia For and From Us All," in *Wikipedia @20*; Jina Valentine, Eliza Myrie, and Heather Hart, "The Myth of the Comprehensive Historical Archive," in *Wikipedia @20*; Matthew A. Vetter, "Possible Enlightenments: Wikipedia's Encyclopedic Promise and Epistemological Failure," in *Wikipedia @20*; Ian A. Ramjohn and LiAnna L. Davis, "Equity, Policy, and Newcomers: Five Journeys from Wiki Education," in *Wikipedia @20*; Katherine Maher, "Capstone: Making History, Building the Future Together," in *Wikipedia @20*.

146 Jackie Koerner, "Wikipedia Has a Bias Problem," in *Wikipedia @20*.

147 Ibid.

148 Ibid.

149 For Wikipedia's partnerships, see Heather Ford, "Rise of the Underdog," in *Wikipedia @20*; Rachel Withers, "Amazon Owes Wikipedia Big-Data," *Slate* (October 11, 2018), accessed August 10, 2021, https://slate.com/technology/2018/10/amazon-echo-wikipedia-wikimedia-donation.html; Emma Roth, "Google is paying the Wikimedia Foundation for better access to information," *The Verge* (June 22, 2022), accessed July 23, 2023, https://www.theverge.com/2022/6/22/23178245/google-paying-wikimedia-foundation-information; Noam Cohen, "Wikipedia Is Finally Asking Big Tech to Pay Up," *Wired* (March 16, 2021), accessed July 23, 2021, https://www.wired.com/story/wikipedia-finally-asking-big-tech-to-pay-up/

revolution while it was taking place.[150] Ford discerns a shift in terms of Wikipedia's broader function, from being an encyclopedia to more of a "data project" that does not consist of "facts" but of "factual data" due to Wikipedia's connections with Google.[151] As data is collected on Wikipedia, particularly while an event is taking place, struggles over that data and its meanings then appear.[152] For this reason, Wikipedia, as a central digital knowledge infrastructure, does not only reflect the existing world; instead, it actively intervenes and constructs the world we live in.[153] Ford's work is one of the few studies on Wikipedia that has taken advantage of the editing history and "talk pages" of Wikipedia articles. Another study that has placed Wikipedia into the broader context of a datafied digital world is the article by the media scholar Steve Jankowski, who explores how Wikipedia has intersected with other digital projects, such as Google Search and AI software, in the last twenty years.[154]

The historiography of Wikipedia reveals a broader shift from studies that examined the accuracy of Wikipedia in the production of knowledge to studies that focused on how Wikipedia works, its policies, structures, participatory culture, to more current works on how Wikipedia can become more diverse and inclusive and how it provides data to other digital platforms. All these works provide a useful context for my research, but their combined nature also reveals the lack of works on Wikipedia users' involvement in the production of historical knowledge. Both the engagement of people with the production of historical knowledge and the opportunity that everyone can write their own opinions about history constitute important aspects that are often marginalized or neglected by the above-mentioned studies. This perspective is significant if we consider that the main feature of Wikipedia is the "amateurization" of knowledge, as the British historian Peter Burke has argued.[155] We cannot have a complete understanding of how Wikipedia works without examining and, more importantly, asking its mains protagonists, the Wikipedia editors, about their engagement with the production of historical knowledge and their participation within the Wikipedia community.

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150 Ford, *Writing the Revolution*, 11–12.

151 Ibid., 12.

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid., 18.

154 Steve Jankowski, "The Wikipedia Imaginaire: A New Media History beyond Wikipedia.Org (2001–2022)," *Internet Histories* (August 12, 2023): 1–21.

155 Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge*, 273.

Chapter outline

The book consists of five chapters, each chapter exploring different aspects of the production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia. The research takes advantage of multiple methods, ranging from qualitative analysis and surveys to quantitative approaches. The book is based on an examination of multiple Wikipedia pages that constantly get updates and change. Therefore, it is possible that many of the examined pages will not reflect the most recently updated versions when this book comes to be read. I mention my last visit to each page in the footnotes. Also, in most cases, I do not study Wikipedia pages by placing them into a timeline or linear narrative; instead, I approach them based on the structure, layout, and narrative (including hyperlinks) that Wikipedia provides.

Specifically, Chapter 1 focuses on history as a subject category of Wikipedia and explores the broader system of Wikipedia. It aims to show how Wikipedia allows editors to produce historical knowledge, what tools Wikipedia provides them, which policies and guidelines it has established, and how it manages to encourage users to actively engage with Wikipedia's contents. Its methodology is based on a qualitative analysis of English-language Wikipedia pages, which refer to the guidelines and methods of Wikipedia.

Chapters 2 and 3 investigate the agency of Wikipedia users by exploring how they engage with history and contribute to the production of history. Both chapters focus on four case studies, four traumatic historical events that have shaped modern history in the United States and have had a significant impact on the world: the Great Depression, the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Vietnam War, and the September 11 attacks. The second chapter examines the production of history on the pages relating to the Great Depression and the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while the third chapter analyzes the Vietnam War and September 11 attacks. The point of this division is to ascertain whether there are any differences in the users' engagement with history between these four case studies. In both chapters, I study the main pages connected to these historical events on Wikipedia and their related "talk pages" to highlight the discussions and debates about history between the Wikipedia editors involved.

Chapter 4 studies the characteristics of Wikipedia users who contribute to pages related to history, the volume of edits they make, their interests, experiences, and educational background, which prompts them to take part in the Wikipedia community and to produce historical knowledge. By applying a network analysis of thousands of historical pages on Wikipedia, I detect repeating patterns that reveal why Wikipedia editors decide to contribute to pages related to history, the wider interests of these editors, and their identities as they are promoted within the Wikipedia community. At the same time, by examining the number of

edits Wikipedians make and the centrality of Wikipedia editors within a network, I reveal the different kinds of editors there are, their various roles, and their level of power, which define the production of historical knowledge on Wikipedia. This chapter is based on the relevant pages from three separate categories relating to modern United States history: "History of organizations based in the United States," "History of science and technology in the United States," and "LGBT history in the United States".[156]

Chapter 5 examines the experiences of Wikipedians, who create and edit historical pages on Wikipedia. By doing survey research and asking Wikipedians themselves, this chapter provides an overview of Wikipedia users' engagement with history, their editing experiences, the reasons why they edit, their historical interests, their criteria to edit or create a historical page, their personal relation to the historical topics they edit, their educational background, their collaboration with other editors, and their activity within the – history related – WikiProjects. The results of the survey and the stories that participants shared in their responses provide some answers as to why Wikipedians get involved in the production of history and how they view the past they create or edit.

Overall, this book presents Wikipedia as a "sociotechnical system" that manages to engage a public audience that then becomes an active agent in the production of historical knowledge.[157] The engagement of the public with history is based on scholarship, personal experiences, intimate relations to the past, emotions, negotiations between users, and is governed by a community-authored set of guidelines and practices. However, that engagement does not always result in the production of historical knowledge. Even though Wikipedia allows all its users to comment on the editing process of a Wikipedia article, to express their own historical understandings on the relevant "talk pages," and to discuss the representation of history, few of them – the most experienced editors and some non-human agents – can make their contributions part of the main article.

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156 For these three categories, see "Category:History of organizations based in the United States," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:History_of_organizations_based_in_the_United_States; "Category:History of science and technology in the United States," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_science_and_technology_in_the_United_States; "Category:LGBT history in the United States," *Wikipedia*, accessed September 10, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:LGBT_history_in_the_United_States

157 For the term "sociotechnical system" in relation to Wikipedia, see Niederer and van Dijck, "Wisdom of the Crowd or technicity of the content?".