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Digital (Hi)story Telling with Social Media: A Project About Participatory History Culture

Abstract: In the digital age, social media serve as a space for the negotiation of historical narratives and discourses and shape the way history is perceived and produced. The dissemination of history-related content on social media platforms is evident and fuelled by low barriers to production and access. The platforms facilitate participatory cultures characterised by collaborative problem-solving and expression. Micro-practices in social media, such as sharing, commenting, and creating history-related content, can be understood as part of a larger history culture. The research project “Digital (Hi)story Telling” examines how students engage with historical narratives on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, and it aims to promote critical digital historical literacy among them. The project uses qualitative questionnaires to investigate students’ interactions with historical culture on social media, their perception of historical contributions, and their engagement in the production process of digital historical narratives. By analysing students’ self-explanations and interpretations of historical cultural contributions, the study sheds light on their historical cultural micro-practices and the conceptions behind them. It could be found that students perceive themselves as potentially active contributors to historical culture, empowered to disseminate historical representations via platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. By receiving, producing, sharing, and disseminating content, they seek to shape historical narratives and participate in the historical culture. This promotes a sense of responsibility and ownership for their interpretations of history, historical consciousness, and active participation in remembering and interpreting the past.

1 Introduction

Regarding history culture, the twenty-first century is characterised by the inclusion of the public sphere in the construction of historical narratives through social media. People participate and easily create content, sometimes sharing biases, disinformation, and misuses of historical content in a performative way. Given that students in postmodern societies grow up in a digitalised environment already before their first formal educational experiences with history at school, social media function as negotiation spaces for creating historical narratives and discourses related to the past and history. The influence of digital transformation on

historical narratives and education has already been addressed for several years.¹ As Mareike König emphasises, social media's low production and access barriers have led to a multiplication of history-related content, actors, and practices.² In this context, it seems to be interesting to ask about the influence of these developments on the perception of historical content among adolescents. To answer this question, the project "Digital (Hi)story Telling with Social Media" focused, in a descriptive dimension, on how students in Switzerland and Greece familiarise themselves with historical narratives through TikTok and Instagram, and, in a normative dimension, how they can be taught to create critical digital historical narratives through these media.

To explore the perception of historical content among adolescents, we will first explore social media as a tool for disseminating and exploring public history. Secondly, we will define social media activities as micro-practices within a participatory culture. Thirdly, we will establish these activities, particularly in relation to history and the past, as participatory historical-cultural micro-practices. Fourthly, we will outline the research questions, methodologies, and samples for the "Digital (Hi)story Telling with Social Media" project. Lastly, we will present findings on students' comprehension of historical-cultural social media posts, their perceptions of such posts, and what they consider to be posts with a connection to the past and history on platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

2 Social Media as a Dissemination Tool for Public History

Social media has become a useful tool in the field of public history – understood here as the dissemination and discussion of historical information with and the

1 Robbert-Jan Adriaansen, *Picturing Auschwitz. Multimodality and the Attribution of Historical Significance on Instagram* (Imaginando Auschwitz. La Multimodalidad y La Atribución de Significado Histórico En Instagram), in: *Journal for the Study of Education and Development* 43/3 (2020), p. 652–681; Robbert-Jan Adriaansen, *Social Media and Multimodal Historical Representation: Depicting Auschwitz on Instagram*, in: Stefan Berger et al. (ed.), *Analysing Historical Narratives: On Academic, Popular and Educational Framings of the Past*, New York 2021, p. 191–208, doi.org/10.1080/02103702.2020.1771963.

2 Mareike König, *Geschichte Digital: Zehn Herausforderungen*, in: Cord Arendes et al. (ed.), *Geschichtswissenschaft im 21. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 2020, p. 67–76; Terry Haydn/Ribbens Kees, *Social Media, New Technologies and History Education*, in: Mario Carretero et al. (ed.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, London 2017, p. 735–753, doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52908-4_38.

engagement of diverse audiences. One way in which social media is being used in public history is through sharing of historical artefacts and primary sources. On social media platforms, such as Facebook, X (former Twitter), TikTok, and Instagram, museums, archives, and historical societies as well as individuals can share images, documents, objects, and other remains that provide a glimpse into the past. This not only makes historical materials more accessible to a wider audience but also allows for the creation of new historical narratives and interpretations through user engagement, and the sharing of personal connections and stories.³

Another way in which social media is being used for public history is through the creation of digital history projects and exhibits. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok allow the creation of interactive, multimedia experiences that can bring historical events and figures to life in new and engaging ways. This can include virtual tours of historical sites, re-enactments of historical events, or interactive timelines that allow users to explore history in a personalised way. For example, on TikTok, you can find re-enactments of historical periods such as the Middle Ages. People are interested in producing short performative videos presenting their interpretation of living in past times.⁴

Social media can also be a tool for community engagement and the co-creation of historical narratives. The platforms can be used to gather oral histories and personal stories as well as to facilitate conversations and dialogue around historical events and their ongoing impact. For example, oral histories from Auschwitz survivors are presented and visual narratives are co-created through TikTok.⁵ This can be especially important in diversifying historical narratives and providing a platform for marginalised communities to share their history.⁶

3 Florentina Armaselu, *Social Media: Snapshots in Public History*, in: Serge Noiret et al. (ed.), *Handbook of Digital Public History*, Berlin 2022, p. 259–276, doi.org/10.1515/9783110430295-022.

4 @thehistorysource, *People in the medieval period*, TikTok-Video, 1.6.2024, www.tiktok.com/@thehistorysource/video/7375345742958824747; for Instagram see for example @middle_ages_history, www.instagram.com/middle_ages_history/

5 @lilyebert, *B7608 – that was my number*, TikTok-Video, 22.4.2023, www.tiktok.com/@lilyebert/video/7224928002512227610

6 There are several narratives through Instagram or TikTok performances that focus on black people's human rights, e.g. the tag “#blackhistorymonth” on TikTok, www.tiktok.com/tag/black-historymonth, or LGBTQIA+ people's civil rights, e.g. the Instagram-Account @lgbt_history, www.instagram.com/lgbt_history/

3 Social Media as Micro-practice in Participatory Culture

The concept of participatory culture entails the act of creating and sharing one's creations, coupled with a sense of social connection among participants who interact with each other within the realm of social media.⁷ According to Henri Jenkins' theory of participatory culture, social media function as a historical and cultural microcosm. This theory outlines five key characteristics: (1) accessibility for artistic expression and civic engagement, (2) support for sharing creations, (3) informal mentorship, (4) belief in the significance of contributions, and (5) a sense of social connection among members – in the sense that individuals are concerned about the opinion others hold regarding their creations. Jenkins emphasises the importance of members feeling empowered to contribute and confident in the value of their contributions, or as he explains: “Not every member must contribute, but all must believe they are free to contribute when ready and that what they contribute will be appropriately valued.”⁸

In addition, Jenkins has also highlighted four key forms of participatory culture: First, there are various forms of *affiliations*, i.e. memberships, formal and informal, in online communities centred around various forms of media (such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok). Secondly, it is characterised by diverse ways of *expression*, i.e. producing new creative forms (such as digital sampling, skinning and modding, fan video making, fan fiction writing, zines, and mash-ups). Thirdly, participatory culture qualifies through *collaborative problem-solving*, i.e. working together in teams, formal and informal, to complete tasks and develop new knowledge (such as through Wikipedia, alternative reality gaming, and spoiling). Fourthly, it consists of multiple *circulations*, i.e. shaping the flow of media (such as podcasting, and blogging).⁹ People are not just passive consumers on social media, but active agents in a specific socio-cultural situation, and as both they are receiving and producing content. Furthermore, the idea of ownership is also relevant in this context of “produsing” (producing/using).

Peter Moormann and Manuel Zahn speak of micro-practices for media production, communication, and mediation contexts as well as modes of perception in

7 Henry Jenkins, *Confronting the challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Reports on Digital Media and Learning, Cambridge 2009.

8 Henry Jenkins, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (Part One), in: *Pop Junctions* (blog), 19.10.2006, henryjenkins.org/blog/2006/10/confronting_the_challenges_of.html

9 Jenkins, *Confronting the Challenges*, 2009, p. 8.

current digitally networked media cultures, meaning “that our present is characterised by ‘new’ digital format logics, more precisely by microformats and microformatting, which penetrate, shape and transform modes of reception, (re)production and communication”.¹⁰ In addition, they use the term “micro-practices” to describe all the ways of dealing with media forms of any extent that are characterised by strategies of shortening and condensing – such as skipping and scrolling or sampling, looping, and mash-up.¹¹

4 Digital (Hi)story on Social Media as a Participatory Historical-Cultural Micro-practice

In this chapter, we understand the reception and production of social media content as micro-practices of a participatory culture.¹² If these micro-practices address the past and/or history in any way, with Jörn Rüsen they can be interpreted as phenomena of history culture.¹³ In this way, the micro-practices become *historical-cultural micro-practices* – a sort of doing history.¹⁴ We understand these as aesthetic, social, political, cultural, and participatory procedures in social media, which always refer to macrostructures from which subjects are not completely free. The social orders produced in these micro-practices and the subjects constitute each other but do change in the same process.¹⁵

Maria Grever and Robbert-Jan Adriaansen explain that historical culture is a holistic post-historical concept that examines how people interact with the past to interpret, transmit, and transform reality.¹⁶ Historical culture theorises the social construction of historical experience and its manifestation in a community’s life.

¹⁰ Peter Moormann/Manuel Zahn, Relationen und Konstellationen aktueller Mikroformate – Theoretische Annäherungen, in: Peter Moormann et al. (ed.), *Mikroformate. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven auf aktuelle Phänomene in Digitalen Medienkulturen*, in: *Zeitschrift Kunst Medien Bildung | Zkmb* 2021, p. 1–2, zkmb.de/relationen-und-konstellationen-aktueller-mikroformate-theoretische-annaeherungen/?print=pdf

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹² Jenkins, *Confronting the Challenges*, 2006.

¹³ Jörn Rüsen, *Historik: Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Köln 2013.

¹⁴ Sarah Willner et al. (ed.), *Doing History. Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur*, Münster/New York 2016.

¹⁵ Moormann/Zahn, *Relationen und Konstellationen*.

¹⁶ Maria Grever/Robbert-Jan Adriaansen, *Historical culture: A Concept Revisited*, in: Mario Carretero/Stefan Berger/Maria Grever (ed.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, London 2017, p. 73–89, doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52908-4_4.

So, the concept's notion encapsulates how a human collective engages with and comprehends its connection to the past both emotionally and cognitively. It encompasses the entirety of social-historical consciousness, focusing on the creators, the mediums of dissemination, the propagated representations, and the citizens' creative reception of it. People interpret their experiences of the human past to understand the present and shape the future. Historical culture encompasses the ways and means that societies, groups, and individuals use to encounter the past and express themselves through their understanding of it.¹⁷ Rüsen has argued that societies produce the meaning of their past not only through academic history and history teaching but through a network of institutions, agents, ceremonies, and monuments that influence the way societies relate to their past, if only through its mere existence.¹⁸

Moreover, historical culture has been identified by many scholars as the principal factor in forging identity. Indeed, the historical narratives produced, through texts, works of art, films, live performances or monuments, very often target the formation of identities and affect historical consciousness. Different social agents usually conduct this production, often at the same time, using different media.¹⁹ Rüsen highlights five dimensions of historical culture. The aesthetic reference relates to the forms of representations to understand the logic of a narrative about the past. The cognitive aspect focuses on the concept of facts and on what probably has happened in the past, while the political aspect emphasises the ideological direction. The moral dimension determines the values of the past based on the moral and social norms of the present. The religious aspect highlights all those aspects of people's subjectivity and is related to beliefs, experiences, and the life-death dichotomy.²⁰

If we now look at the ways of dealing with historical narratives and representations of the past in social media, which Jenkins describes as being "produced" there, we can understand these as *participatory* historical-cultural micro-practices.

17 Peter Lambert/Björn Weiler, *How the Past Was Used: Historical Cultures, c. 750–2000*. Proceedings of the British Academy, Oxford/New York 2017.

18 Rüsen, *Historik*; Jörn Rüsen, *Was ist Geschichtskultur? Überlegungen zu einer neuen Art über Geschichte nachzudenken*, in: Jörn Rüsen et al. (ed.), *Historische Faszination. Geschichtskultur heute*, Köln 1994, p. 3–26.

19 Peter Burke, *Geschichte als soziales Gedächtnis*, in: Aleida Assmann/Dietrich Harth (ed.), *Mnemosyne. Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung*, Frankfurt a. M. 1991, p. 289–304; Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*, 3rd ed., München 2018.

20 Rüsen, *Historik*, p. 234–246.

5 The Research Project “Digital (Hi)story Telling with Social Media”

Adolescents communicate mainly by mobile phones, which are most often used for chatting, surfing, or social networking. The most popular social networks are Instagram, Snapchat, and recently TikTok.²¹ The use of TikTok and Instagram as tools for transmedia digital history telling could make historical content more accessible and engaging to a wider audience, particularly adolescents. Thus, the international research project “Digital (Hi)story Telling with Social Media” – a still ongoing collaboration between Switzerland and Greece – explores this new method of storytelling that allows for a deeper understanding of historical narratives by looking at different media platforms.²² Additionally, the research provides insights into the potential challenges and limitations of using social media platforms in an educational setting at school.²³ It is about both *critical media-historical literacy* and *critical media-historical production*; thus, it is about the two dimensions of the process of historical thinking; the first being an analytical process of deconstructing sources and accounts, the second being a synthetic process of constructing a narrative and creating sense using sources and accounts.²⁴

Therefore, the research project follows a *three-step design* and examines (a) how students encounter historical culture on TikTok and Instagram during their everyday life, which is researched by students’ self-declaration, (b) how they understand historical-cultural posts, and what kind of social media posts they consider having a connection to the past and/or history, and (c) how students develop their own digital narratives through a methodology; here, we focus on the synthetic dimension and apply the following design: pre-production process, production process, post-production process, the product itself.

In terms of *survey methods*, we used a qualitative online questionnaire²⁵ for (a) and (b) in both Greece and German-speaking Switzerland, comprising four axes:

21 Jael Bernath et al., JAMES – Jugend, Aktivitäten, Medien – Erhebung Schweiz, Zürich 2020.

22 For more information about the project see phzh.ch/forschung-und-entwicklung/forschungsbe-reiche/fachdidaktische-forschung/didaktiken-gesellschaftswissenschaften/

23 Ericson H. Peñalba et al., Digital Storytelling: A Tool for Promoting Historical Understanding among College Students, in: *Research in Learning Technology* 28 (2020), doi.org/10.25304/rlt.v28.2348.

24 Andreas Körber et al., *Kompetenzen Historischen Denkens: Ein Strukturmodell als Beitrag zur Kompetenzorientierung in der Geschichtsdidaktik*, Neuried 2007; Andreas Körber, *Historical Consciousness, Historical Competencies – and beyond? Some Conceptual Development within German History Didactics*, in: *pedocs*, 29.5.2015, nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-108118

25 Thomas Ebert et al., *Evaluation online. Internetgestützte Befragung in der Praxis*, 1st ed., Wiesbaden 2009.

(1) general questions on age, gender, language(s), and leisure activities; (2) social media preferences (which social media platform they prefer and why); (3) comments and explanations on a featured post; and (4) their beliefs about what constitutes a historical post.

About the *sample*: We assessed the online questionnaire in both Greece and Switzerland to 89 secondary school pupils from 12 to 17 years old during the school year 2021–2022. After having reviewed the answers, we realised that some questions did not work and led to ambiguous answers. We therefore made changes and updated the questionnaire. With the second questionnaire, we received a response rate of 212 secondary school students from 12 to 17 years old. They answered the questionnaire during the 2022–2023 school year. There were 93 pupils from Switzerland and 119 pupils from Greece; 90 declared themselves as male, 116 as female, and 6 as non-binary persons. Based on students' answers, the main hobbies for them are sports, a few say reading and arts, and then a few say gaming.

The data was analysed on the one hand by counting the responses and on the other hand by thematic clustering of keywords in the students' responses to the posts they had in mind. Finally, theoretical coding in the sense of Grounded Theory was applied to reconstruct typical themes, conceptions, and beliefs about the past and history in social media, in particular, TikTok and Instagram.²⁶

6 Findings on Students' Understanding of a Historical-Cultural Social Media Post

First, we presented the students with a fake post – intended as a joke – about the landing on the moon from the website “Histograms. History depicted as Instagrams”.²⁷ Apollo 11 was the first crewed space flight with a successful moon landing on 20 July 1969. The joke of the post is that Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon, already had an Instagram account at the time of the moon landing in 1969. Thus, a mediated historical person is posting a significant historical event of humanity.²⁸ Instagram-Armstrong posted the famous picture of his colleague Buzz

²⁶ Juliet M. Corbin/Anselm L. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Los Angeles 2008.

²⁷ Histograms, Instagram-Post by @armstrong, histograms.com/search/armstrong

²⁸ The remediation of historical figures is a very prominent history form on Instagram, see for example Maria Schreiber et al., *Historical Figures on Instagram: A Typology of Themes and Modes of Representation*, in: *New Media & Society* (2024), doi.org/10.1177/14614448241237496.

Aldrin in front of the US flag on the moon – 8 min ago from the viewer's point of view – under his handle *@Armstrong*, informing that he had managed to land on the moon. Underneath, the platformised Armstrong wrote the factually confirmed and now iconic words “. . . one small step for #mankind”. Under the username *@buzzaldrin*, the portrayed Aldrin writes the first comment of a further 20: “the view is #beautiful #nofilter” (cf. Fig. 1).

We chose this post because, on the one hand, it can easily be recognized as fake by people knowing about the date of the moon landing. On the other hand, the post plays on various levels with temporalities, (ana)chronisms, facts, people, and icons that have entered (not only) Western societies' cultural memory. It also shows familiar user habits like posting, commenting, and using hashtags.²⁹ We therefore asked the student to comment on this post.

Almost all students found it funny and showed historical criticism: “I would laugh a little, because it's clearly not uploaded by Armstrong, and I might show it to my friends. I might as well have thumbs down”. Only a few students underlined that this post was fake and therefore somehow problematic because of its potential of being shared by people. About half the students referred to the historical significance of the event: “I would be angry that some people think that one of the most important moments for humanity was staged and fake.” Some of the students made an aesthetic historical judgement in the sense of Rüsen: “I'd think it's fake whenever there's a chance, I'd like it because it looks good, otherwise I'd just move on straight away.” Also, the students addressed the affiliation, expression, and circulations, but also the “produsing” in the sense of Jenkins: “I would share it with others and feel proud and happy that something like this goes up and many people have the opportunity to share it.” Most of them regretted that they could not share the post because it was published on a website and not on Instagram. We found the same reactions in both the Greek and Swiss students' answers. However, only in Switzerland, very few students gave superficial answers and were quite brief: “I would not talk about this with my friends”. “I saw a post with a man on the moon.” Or: “It was the sort of post my dad would find funny.” They just describe and keep it short. This could reflect the private character of the media; the adolescents don't like that adults or schools are appropriating what they consider to be the media of their age group, or it could show an attitude one could label with a nonchalant “so-what-ism” which leads to the (re)action of “let's wipe it to the side”.

29 Although it is showing an older Instagram Interface due to its creation point.



Fig. 1: Fake Instagram post by a user called “armstrong” ©Histagrams.com.

7 Findings on the Production of Historical Content and What Kind of Social Media Posts Students Consider Having a Connection to the Past and/or History

In the optimised questionnaire, we asked the students: “*How can an Instagram post present history?*” Here, the students typically focused on the description of aesthetic/technical ways in which Instagram accounts present history. Therefore, their answers highlighted the “superficial visual structure” of the posts which means that they described how they watch history on Instagram: “Mainly post a picture and a text, sometimes through short videos”. Or: “Also, posting historical maps, art, songs”. In both countries, there was no concern about how an Instagram post should present history through narratives, i.e. on the procedural historical “how”. Some students showed an awareness of the recipient’s side: “It depends on the person who is posting.” Very few answered with “It cannot”, meaning that there

is no connection between Instagram and history. Concerning what has been said so far, the students from Greece and Switzerland answered quite similarly.

This also applies to the question: *How can a TikTok post present history?* Regarding TikTok – and this is an interesting difference from the answers about how Instagram can represent history – students typically refer to the procedural dimension and less to the superficial visual structure: “Mostly creating a video and you can explain what happened, and you can choose a background or not. Sometimes like a documentary.” It can thus be concluded that the students associate and focus more on the perceptual dimension regarding Instagram and more on the procedural dimension regarding TikTok. One can speculate that this could be because TikTok is much more multimodal and because TikTok allows longer formats and more editing options than Instagram.³⁰

Another difference is that only in the case of TikTok the students addressed a pedagogical dimension. One student answered the question like this: “By teaching people facts about history that they didn’t get taught at school.” This feeling or urge to teach “people” was typical among the students.³¹ Together with this pedagogical impetus, a compensatory one towards history taught at school can be reconstructed. A student stated: “It can also educate the viewer in a way that makes it more interesting, and more appealing due to the platform’s capabilities”. Another student’s conception was that there are “people” who are to be taught. The students, therefore, see themselves as being addressed by “others”; these others and their reception of the historical knowledge presented are significant for them; they are understood as “generalised others”. They have expectations towards this abstract group and the role associated with it – e.g. rules, roles, and norms – which make the reactions predictable and understandable.³² Thus, young people attribute their social interactions on Instagram and TikTok as belonging to others.

Preferred topics and themes were also surveyed. “If you think of creating a history post on Instagram or TikTok, *what theme or topic would you choose?* Please name a specific topic – and explain why!” was asked. The answers show that most of the stu-

30 However, the JAMES study in Switzerland and our questionnaire for the Greek students showed that adolescents are more familiar with Instagram than TikTok. Cf. Bernath et al., JAMES Erhebung Schweiz.

31 Mia Berg and Andrea Lorenz did an ethnographic observation on historical content on TikTok. One of their results was that videos labelled with “history you don’t learn in school” are one of the prominent types of historical content on TikTok. Mia Berg/Andrea Lorenz, #HistoryTok – Virale Vergangenheit in Geschichtsdarstellungen auf TikTok, in: Friederike Fischer et al. (ed.), Memefication und Performance. Interdisziplinäre Zugänge zur Videoplattform TikTok, Berlin 2025, S. 179–204.

32 George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*. The Definitive Edition, Charles W. Morris Annotated Edition, Chicago 2015.

dents – in both countries – would post about wars, maybe because these are typically taught in schools. The list is headed by “WWII”, followed by “WWI”. Some students wrote: “Wars in general”, Greek students often mentioned the “Civil War in Greece”, and a few named the “Cold War”. Regarding wars in general, but WWII in particular, the educational impetus of the students described above is evident: “I would choose the history of the nazis cause is such an important topic because it teaches us about the mistakes that should never ever happen again in the history of humanity.” Most of the students also mentioned “present wars” or “recent wars”, like this student: “Right now I’d make a video about what’s happening in Iran, cause its actually really brutal and it’s important for the people who don’t know what’s happening to know what’s happening.” In Switzerland the students also would post about “colonialism”, which also comes with their compensatory conception: “I would choose something in history that not enough people know or doesn’t get talked about enough, for example how societies are still impacted today from colonialism.” Very few students and only from Greece mentioned “Ancient History”, “Mythology” or “Antiquities”. In addition, in both countries – albeit rarely – entertainment is listed: “Maybe also some fun.”

Finally, the students were asked: “What do you consider to be a *post about the past and history*?” To answer the question, they should choose and copy the link of Instagram and/or TikTok posts related to the past and history. In the first step, the chosen posts were analysed both in terms of historical access and thematically. There were major differences between the two countries. In Greece, students shared posts about national history, historical glorification, and history celebrations or jubilees. In Switzerland, students had a broader approach to history, such as everyday history and marginalised histories (e.g. “gay pride movement”, “women’s history”, and “migrants’ histories”). In both countries, around a fifth of the posts selected by students are so-called a-historical posts (e.g. something political of the day or a flag that cannot be interpreted as either explicitly historical or non-historical). There is also a kind of “showman’s history” posts to the same extent, e.g. “know-it-all”, who either present a great deal of detailed historical knowledge or lose themselves in trivia about historical figures. This “showman’s history” also emphasises the entertaining or “fun” character of historical narratives presented, shared, used, and produced in social media.

8 Conclusion

To summarise, it can be said that, with their pedagogical impetus to make history known (descriptive) and to tell history (explanatory) to (unknown) others (in the World Wide Web), students see themselves – if they wanted to post – as empowered

and equal producers of historical culture, as agents of a public history whose practices are – or would be – meaningful. In doing so, they address and imagine a – mostly unknown and imagined – meaningful “general other”. Through the micro-practices of receiving, producing, sharing, and circulating, they can get the feeling that they can actively shape the historical culture in and through social media; students understand TikTok and Instagram as media for disseminating historical representations to a wider audience. Jenkins’ concept of participatory culture and the idea of ownership play a significant role in these micro-practices as they allow students to actively participate in the process of creating and shaping historical culture and thus develop a sense of responsibility and ownership of their interpretations and representations of history. This not only helps to promote students’ historical consciousness but also provides space for participation and co-creation in the shaping of historical narratives and the active engagement of young citizens in the process of remembering, interpreting the past, and telling or retelling history.

In the next step of our project “Digital (Hi)story Telling with Social Media” we will conduct a study with students in a museum about their performances when creating a TikTok post. We are interested in how they define, negotiate, and use content, sources, multimodal features, and narrative elements to create a historical narrative about the museum’s exhibition.

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