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The rhythms of social movement memories: the mobilization of Silvio Meier’s activist remembrance across platforms

Samuel Merrill & Simon Lindgren

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ABSTRACT
This article presents a temporal analysis of the activist remembrance of Silvio Meier, a prominent member of Berlin’s radical left scene, who was stabbed to death in 1992. It asks: when has Meier’s activist remembrance occurred and been remediated, with what rhythms, and how has it been influenced by different platforms? To answer these questions, the article draws on the literature dedicated to the interface between social movements and collective and connective memory, and applies Lefebvre’s rhythmanalysis approach. Within this approach a diverse set of material is used to visualise the timing of the digital and non-digital remediation and mobilisation of Meier’s remembrance across different platforms of memory including commemorative events, newspapers, websites and social media. Thereafter the various temporalities of use associated with these platforms and how they can influence the mobilisation of remembrance by social movements is discussed using Lefebvre’s concepts of polyrhythmia, arrhythmia, isorhythmia, eurhythmia and with respect to, firstly, a fifteen-year period between 2002 and 2017 and secondly, a fifteen-day period between 15 November and 30 November 2012 around the twentieth anniversary of Meier’s death. The article concludes by introducing another Lefebvrian concept – dressage – in order to consider which rhythms of activist remembrance might most benefit social movements and their goals. Overall, by demonstrating the importance of attending to the when and not only the what, who, where and how of social movement memories and by highlighting the need to consider the temporal influence of the different digital and non-digital platforms that activists use, as well as, by indicating the broader potential of applying rhythmanalysis approaches to instances of activism, the article has broader relevance for the further study of social movements, their use of different media and their mobilization of memory.

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Early on 21 November 1992, 27-year-old Silvio Meier, well-known within the radical left scene of Berlin’s Friedrichshain neighbourhood, was stabbed to death at the Samariterstraße U-Bahn station during a confrontation with a group of young far-right sympathisers (Hockenos, 2017; Merrill, 2017a). In the following week Meier’s companions organized local demonstrations and vigils in his memory and installed an...
unofficial memorial plaque to him in the station. Since then, changing constellations of Berlin’s antifascist activist groups have organised a commemorative vigil and demonstration every year to mark the anniversary of Meier’s death.

Meier’s case illustrates the sorts of collective memories that Polletta and Jasper argued needed greater interrogation as the ‘raw materials’ and ‘building blocks’ of social movement collective identities almost two decades ago (2001). Since then a number of scholars have investigated the interface between collective memory and social movements, mostly by targeting ‘movements in memory’ or ‘memory in movements’ (Pearce, 2015). Scholars of the first approach have addressed the remembrance of past social movements (e.g. Griffin, 2004; Hajek, 2013) while those of the second have considered how social movements, both past and present, actively utilize collective memory (e.g. Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Daphi, 2017; Harris, 2006). The latter approach, to which this article aligns, has revealed the multiple roles that collective memories play within social movements, not only contributing to their broader collective identities, but also their framing practices, narratives and repertoires and providing means to sustain movement continuity (Doerr, 2014; Gongaware, 2010; Kubal & Becerra, 2014; Zamponi & Daphi, 2014). It has also stressed the mnemonic importance of not only the people but also the places associated with those past events deemed significant by different social movements. This is evident with respect to Meier’s case given that the station where he died has become in Nora’s terms a site of memory where Berlin’s antifascist groups mobilize his remembrance (Merrill, 2017a, 1989).

Less academic attention has been paid to the timing of activist remembrance, a line of inquiry which has attained added significance given the development of digital technologies and internet and social media platforms. These digital technologies and platforms have complicated the somewhat static notion of isolated sites of memory, encouraging the mobilization of activist memories in additional geographical and temporal contexts. Indeed, the activist remembrance of Meier is spreading beyond his former neighbourhood and the station where he died having been increasingly remediated to different internet and social media platforms by Berlin’s antifascist groups within their campaign to have a local street renamed after Meier which commenced in 2010. To date, only a few scholars have considered memory in relation to social movements’ use of internet and social media platforms and explicitly with regard to issues of temporality (e.g. Askanius, 2013; Kaun, 2016). This article therefore proceeds with the purpose of contributing to that literature by analysing the timing and temporal rhythms of Meier’s activist remembrance across a range of digital but also non-digital platforms. Its efforts are guided by the following research questions:

When has Meier’s activist remembrance occurred, when has it been remediated and with what rhythms?

How have different platforms influenced the timing of Meier’s activist remembrance?

These questions are answered through a rhythm analysis approach (Lefebvre, 2004 [1992]) designed to ascertain when and how Meier’s activist remembrance coexists, converges, interacts and conflicts across different platforms. Before this approach and the material and method behind this article’s analysis are introduced, the next section considers how digital technologies and platforms are more broadly reshaping both the spatialities and temporalities of activist remembrance. Thereafter the rhythms of Meier’s activist remembrance are visualised and analysed first over the period between
2002 and 2017 and then in more detail, and with a focus on the temporal influence of five digital platforms, around the twentieth anniversary of his death. The article’s concluding discussion then considers which rhythms of activist remembrance social movements might best pursue.

**Sites, nodes and times of activist remembrance**

Originally developed by Nora (1989) in order to designate an array of material and non-material encapsulations of the official memory of the French nation, the ‘site of memory’ concept is now used beyond and below the level of the nation-state and, due to its spatial connotations, most often in reference to the mnemonic status of physical places like the station where Meier died. However, it is not without problems, not least because it promotes a homogenized and territorialized understanding of collective remembrance, unsuited to the radial dynamics of memory evident in today’s digitally and globally entangled society and social movements (Erll, 2011). This is illustrated by the continued activist remembrance of Meier on digital platforms like Indymedia, Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter following the success of the street renaming campaign in April 2012, which also led to the inauguration of a Silvio Meier prize for efforts against far-right extremism. The digital remembrance of Meier creates new examples of what Rothberg calls knots or nodes of memory (2010). This reworking of Nora’s concept highlights how contemporary collective remembrance relies on ‘rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural reference that exceed attempts at territorialization (whether at the local of national level) and identitarian reduction’ (Rothberg, 2010, p.7). Its emphasis on the multidirectional remembrance of individuals and events in different times and places resonates with a new mode of memory research that promulgates cross-boundary frames of analysis including, translocal, transcultural, and transmedial perspectives while foregrounding notions of connective, rather than collective, memory and highlighting processes of remediation (De Cesari & Rigney, 2014; Erll & Rigney, 2009; Hoskins, 2018).

The idea of remediation reveals how digital technologies and platforms have had ramifications for the media form and spread of remembrance practices, aiding their transmission across time and space and allowing their adoption, and thus pluralization, by groups and individuals besides those who experienced first-hand the remembered events (Bolter & Grusin, 2000; Erll & Rigney, 2009; Van Dijck, 2007). Remediation is often a by-product of the broader self-mediation strategies of social movements, because of their tendency to utilize as many technologies and platforms as possible in attempting to facilitate their ‘spillover’ (Cammaerts, 2015). These strategies which relate to the disseminating, mobilizing, organizing, coordinating, recording and archiving logics that activists ascribe to digital technologies and platforms (Ibid), create intentional and non-intentional traces which in turn have consequences for forms of activist remembrance. In Meier’s case, these perspectives help explain how his remembrance is currently widening to a greater extent than ever before, transitioning across different generations of local activists but also to activists further afield as the 2012 decision taken by a left-wing social centre in Bologna, Italy to rename a private square after him testifies.

Little attention has been paid to the temporal characteristics of remediation, which continues to be conceived as a process carried out by ‘specific groups in specific times’
The process of remediation can be related to what Assmann and Czaplicka have described as the transition from more restricted and ephemeral communicative forms of memory to broader longer-lasting cultural forms of memory that occurs after around 80 to 100 years (1995). However, such neat temporal distinctions are complicated by the archival, collaborative and ambient affordances of internet and social media platforms which have led to the acceleration of shifts between, and the entanglement of, communicative and cultural forms of remembrance (Pentzold, 2009). In other words, within today’s global and digital networks of media and memory, the communication and remembrance of activist events like those that commemorate Meier’s death coalesce into one another, spreading rapidly according to logics of connectivity as much as, if not more than, those of collectivity (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Brown & Hoskins, 2010; Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, & Reading, 2009).

The rise of internet and social media platforms has not however necessarily triggered a complete transformation of activist remembrance practices because earlier medial nodes of memory, including physical sites of memory, persist and have not been fully superseded (Keightley & Schlesinger, 2014). This may explain why mnemonic activity across different media still generally conforms to the rarely problematized preference to commemorate and remember events, according to a sense of temporal authenticity, on their yearly anniversaries (Ankersmit, 2002). While evidence suggests that this is true on digital platforms, with for example the timing of remembrance practices on Wikipedia having been observed to increase around anniversaries (Ferron & Massa, 2014; Pentzold, 2009), in general an anticipatory attention to anniversaries can mask more nuanced temporal patterns of activity. Illustrative of this in Meier’s case, it would be problematic to temporally equate his annual vigil and demonstration. While both events previously occurred on the actual anniversary of Meier’s death, they did so at different times of the day and since 1995 (Berlin’s antifascist activists have organized the latter on the closest Saturday to the anniversary. Given that Nora counted anniversaries as examples of sites of memory (1989), it is due time that they are analysed in ways that fully embrace the sorts of temporal, as well as spatial, multiplicity and complexity of collective and connective remembrance advocated by Rothberg’s conception of nodes of memory (2010). This can be achieved by adopting Lefebvre’s rhythmanalysis approach as a means to connect ‘space, time and the energies that unfold’ (2004[1992], p.18) within the study of social movement memories.

**Rhythmanalysis**

First coined by Pinheiro dos Santos in 1931, the idea of rhythmanalysis was later elaborated by Bachelard in 1936 as a means to acknowledge the plurality of time (2000). While Bachelard’s rhythmanalysis was primarily physiological in character, his work heavily influenced Lefebvre’s sociological application of the approach in a series of essays dedicated to the interface of the human body with urban space and time in everyday life (2004[1992]). In these essays Lefebvre introduced an analytical framework for the analysis of rhythm as inseparable from temporality. This framework, which sought in part to identify those rhythms hidden by others or invisible in their taken-for-grantedness, centred on the fundamental concepts of polyrhythmia, arrhythmia, isorhythmia, and eurhythmia. Polyrhythmia refers to the range of different, coexisting
rhythms within a particular context. Arrhythmia refers to the discordance or conflict between rhythms. Isorhythmia refers, in its most exact form, to the rare complete equalisation of rhythms, and should be thought of as mutually exclusive from eurhythmia, the more common productive interaction of rhythms.

Lefebvre seldom discusses these concepts in relation to memory, which may explain why they have rarely been applied in relation to collective remembrance (see Hochman & Manovich, 2013). He did however briefly reflect on the rhythm of history.

In historical time, what is the role of history in the forms of memory, recollections, narrative? Are there not alternatives to memory and forgetting: periods where the past returns – and periods where the past effaces itself? Perhaps such an alternative would be the rhythm of history. . . (Lefebvre, 2004[1992], p 51).

Akin to the idea of a rhythm of history, in this article a rhythmanalysis of collective and connective memory practices reveals different ‘rhythms of remembrance’. In short, rhythmanalysis allows the analysis of the coexistence, convergence, interaction and conflict of acts of remembrance across different times and places platforms. Additionally, it can also help reveal those more discrete rhythms of remembrance concealed by or within dominant mnemonic events such as anniversaries.

Rhythmanalysis has not been fully explicated in relation to social movements even though it has the potential to supplement the concepts of cycles and episodes of contention (see Tarrow, 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001) by helping to further contextualize them within longer timeframes. It has, however, recently been used by scholars interested in the temporalities of urban protest (see Shaw, 2017; Soreanu, 2014), reflecting the general pattern whereby Lefebvre’s thoughts on urban space have overshadowed his thoughts regarding media. This is probably because the latter are relatively minimal and mostly restricted to a short essay in which Lefebvre discusses the mediatisation of time and the polyrhythmic unfolding of the media day with regard to the television and radio (Lefebvre, 2004[1992]).

Building on Lefebvrian perspectives, Keightley has carried out a more concerted rhythmanalysis of digital media to show how it contributes to the production of multilayered, intersecting and occasionally competing temporalities, while noting that these mediatised rhythms are not ‘dependent solely on the features of a technology but on the ways in which they are used in any given context’ (2013, p.61). She argues that the common characterization of mediatised time in terms of speed and acceleration, while often justified, can obscure the ‘variety of temporal experiences that are afforded by media technologies’ within different zones of intermediacy (Keightley, 2013, p.71). Similarly, Kaun has highlighted that, although internet and social media platforms generally foster temporalities of immediacy characterized by uninterrupted flows of rapidly changing and fleeting content, each of these platforms creates its own specific ‘temporal regimes’ (Kaun, 2015, 2016, 2017; see also Kaun & Stiernstedt, 2014). In other words, different digital platforms, as with different physical spaces, ‘constitute and structure temporal and social relations in distinctive ways’ (Till, 2004, p.75). Hochman and Manovich’s use of rhythmanalysis to make sense of the temporalities fostered by Instagram during Israeli national memorial days is also attuned to these perspectives (2013). They communicate their findings through the use of visualisations. An emphasis on
visualisation, along with the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches encouraged by rhythmianalysis (DeLyser & Sui, 2012), also finds expression in the material and methods used here.

**Material and methods: a cross platform approach**

Building on earlier research into Meier’s activist remembrance at the station where he died that used interview, archival and participant observation methods (see Merrill, 2017a), this article adopted a more hybrid understanding of remembrance as practiced both offline and online and therefore mediatised – transformed through the ‘incorporation of media-based logics and norms’ (Coulndry, 2008; p.377; see also Lindgren, Dahlberg-Grundberg, & Johansson, 2014). This acknowledged the similarities and overlaps but also the differences and tensions between different nodes of Meier’s activist remembrance each of which were conceived as more or less digital or non-digital. It encouraged a hybrid methodology which pragmatically combined digital methods (see Lindgren, 2017; Rogers, 2013), mixing qualitative forms of digital ethnography (see Postill & Pink, 2012), carried out around the time of the anniversary of Meier’s death in 2015, 2016 and 2017, with manual and computational techniques for gathering and analysing material relating to Meier’s remembrance from an array of different internet and social media platforms.

This cross-platform approach echoes the transmedial approaches previously used in the study of social movements, and helps to further counteract the tendency to artificially group internet and social media platforms together as a single ‘collapsed category’ (Constanza-Chock, 2014; p.65; see Kavada, 2012; Rogers, 2017). Above all it resonated with the article’s aim to carry out a rhythmianalysis of the activist mobilisation and remediation of Meier’s memory because it allowed his remembrance to be tracked across different platforms, enabling the exploration and comparison of these platforms’ different yet interrelated use and the identification of more nuanced rhythms of remembrance. This article’s cross-platform analysis was extended to a number of non- or pre-digital sites and nodes of memory include Meier’s annual memorial demonstration and a local Berlin newspaper, the politically left-leaning Tageszeitung (founded in 1978). Alongside these, mnemonic activity is also analysed on the Indymedia Germany open-source journalism platform, (launched 2001); the Wikipedia online encyclopaedic platform, (launched 2001); the YouTube video sharing platform (launched 2005), the Twitter microblogging platform (launched 2006) and the Facebook social network platform (publicly launched 2006). Each of these are in turn conceived as platforms of memory where the activist remembrance of Meier occurs.

In order to measure mnemonic activity across these platforms, ‘Silvio Meier’ was used as a search query on each of them for the period between 21 November 1992 and 30 November 2017. The mnemonic activity surrounding Meier on these platforms was inferred and recorded in different ways for each platform:

- For Meier’s annual commemorative demonstration, the highest estimates of participation numbers were compiled from reports in the Tageszeitung. These ranged from 200 participants in 1994 to 5000 participants in 2012 and 2013.
• For the Tageszeitung itself, the number of articles featuring Meier’s name was retrieved by searching the newspaper’s digital archive. A total of 135 articles were found with Meier mentioned in up to four articles in a day.

• For the Indymedia German website, the number of online news articles featuring Meier’s name was retrieved using Google’s search within a website function. A total of 124 articles were found with Meier mentioned in up to five articles in a day.

• For Meier’s German language Wikipedia entry (first published 4 December 2004), the number and timing of edits was manually recorded. In total 285 edits were found, peaking at eighteen on a single day.

• For YouTube, the number of videos associated with Meier was counted through manual searches. A total of 92 uploads were found with up to eleven on a single day.

• For Twitter, the number of tweets featuring hashtags containing Meier’s name in some form (e.g. #silviomeier, #silviomeier2015, #silviomeierdemo, #silviomeier-demo2015) was gathered through Twitter’s web search function. These amounted to 1276 tweets in total, with a maximum of 181 on a single day.

• For Facebook, posting activity on three public Silvio Meier related pages was collected using Netvizz (Rieder, 2013). These included a total of 830 posts, peaking at 102 on a single day.

As an additional indicator of Meier’s wider digital remembrance, Google Trends scores for the search query, available from 2004 onwards, were collected to provide normalised values for how often Meier was Googled at different points in time relative to the search engine’s total search volume (Rogers, 2016).

To illustrate and assess the temporalities and rhythms of Meier’s remembrance a cross-platform visualisation was created by aligning normalised frequency plots of different mnemonic activities associated with each platform (Figure 1). This visualisation was limited to the fifteen-year period between 2002 and 2017 to ensure legibility and because before then the collected data was limited to just two platforms (the demonstration and the Tageszeitung). Also, for legibility reasons, the different mnemonic activities had their frequencies normalised to values between 0 and 1. This approach renders some low-level activity invisible and thus the visualisation should be read as indicative of clusters of activity rather than perfectly reflecting all activity. It should also be acknowledged that the mnemonic activity plotted for each platform is individually quantified in different terms of participants, searches, mentions, edits, uploads, posts, tweets, and so on. Each of these mnemonic activities denotes specific and different levels of engagement with, and commitment to, Meier’s activist remembrance dependent upon the platform in question, and thus should not be considered as equivalent to one another. Far from assuming the equivalence of different platforms, this approach aims to foreground the broader rhythms – rather than volumes – of Meier’s activist remembrance and the timing of his memory’s mobilisation and remediation, while also indicating the influence of each platform’s unique temporal regimes. This approach embraces the inexactitude and messiness of the data environment in a digital era, sacrificing the possibility of absolute reproducibility and the precision of specific data.
points in favour of a general understanding of the phenomenon (Gaffney & Puschmann, 2013; Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013).

The remediations and rhythms of meier’s activist remembrance from 2002 to 2017

Figure 1 reveals when different platforms were adopted to mobilise Meier’s memory and thus the digital remediation of his activist remembrance. The delay between the launch of particular platforms and their use to remember Meier ranges from around one to five years. This may reflect the time platforms take to achieve popularity and in turn to be adopted by activists, but also likely relates to the growing public resonance of Meier’s death as its twentieth anniversary approached. This had much to do with a new cycle of violent neo-Nazi activity in Germany, exemplified by the revelation in early November 2011 that the National Socialist Underground terrorist group had murdered nine immigrants across Germany between 2000 and 2006 without being detected, turning greater public attention to all post-1989 victims of neo-Nazi violence including Meier (Merrill, 2017a). The remediation of Meier’s remembrance was also brought about due to other factors as the redundancy of Indymedia Germany from 2013 onwards illustrates. A popular platform among social movements (see Pickard, 2006), Indymedia Germany’s redundancy was linked to the competition created by Indymedia Linksunten, a more radical spin-off launched in 2008. Indymedia Linksunten’s mission statement read for a time ‘through Indymedia we are able to write our history ourselves: movements get to leave traces of their passion for future generations because forgotten struggles are lost struggles’, illustrating its utility within social movement’s recording and archiving strategies (Cammaerts, 2015). With the radical left profile of Indymedia Linksunten better suiting those groups mobilising Meier’s remembrance, they soon

![Figure 1. The Rhythms of Meier’s Remembrance Across Platforms 2002 to 2017.](image-url)
Figure 2. The remediation of Meier’s activist remembrance from Indymedia Germany to Indymedia Linksunten 2008 to 2015.

began migrating these strategies to the platform (Figure 2). However, in August 2017 Indymedia Linksunten was banned and taken offline by the German government following the G20 protests in Hamburg. This reveals some of the vulnerabilities of Meier’s digital nodes of memory and highlights that the multidirectional networks of his remembrance can contract as well as expand while also suggesting that the activist remembrance of Meier on Indymedia Germany may increase again in the future.

Figure 1 also conveys the polyrhythmia of Meier’s activist remembrance across different platforms between 2002 and 2017. While the rhythms of Meier’s remembrance on some platforms are less regular, on others they are startlingly consistent. This is obviously the case for his memorial demonstration, but it is also evident with regard to Meier’s appearance in the Tageszeitung and on Indymedia Germany, with these journalistic platforms reflecting the annual news cycles connected to the recurring events of the anniversary of Meier’s death and his commemorative demonstration. The remembrance of Meier on Indymedia Germany has however fluctuated more than in the Tageszeitung. Although both are independent and non-mainstream, this may reflect the differences between the open-source journalism fostered by Indymedia and that associated with the traditional paper press (see Platon & Deuze, 2003). Indymedia’s use of more flexible, crowdsourced reporting processes, as compared to the Tageszeitung’s dependency on more institutionalised journalistic practices has afforded it greater opportunities to remember Meier in moments outside the anniversary of his death. Although still relatively infrequent, during these moments Meier’s memory was multidirectional, invoked in connection with other nodes of antifascist remembrance including other antifascist activist deaths and demonstrations. Most often, however, as in May 2008 and June 2011, Meier was remembered in relation to events like the vandalisation of his memorial plaque by neo-Nazis and the illicit renaming of a local street after him by antifascist activists, demonstrating how the mnemonic activities of social movements ‘offline’ could drive those ‘online’. Overall, the polyrhythmia of Meier’s remembrance has increased since 2002 if only because before then his remembrance was mainly restricted to mentions in newspapers like the Tageszeitung and the events of his anniversary vigil and demonstration.

The more recent mobilisation of Meier’s memory across a greater array of platforms has increased the potential for states of arrhythmia although this is not without
precedent. Previously, in the early 1990s when Meier’s vigil and demonstration both occurred on the actual anniversary of his death they purposefully created extended states of *arrhythmia* by disrupting the normal rhythms of the city and its transport network (Merrill, 2017a). But when the demonstration was moved to the Saturday closest to the anniversary the two events were desynchronized introducing elements of arrhythmia within Meier’s activist remembrance itself. More recently arrhythmic remembrance has been indicated by Meier’s faltering remembrance on Facebook pages. The three Facebook pages connected to Meier reflect the fragmented mnemonic activity often associated with the platform as well as its importance to social movements as a dissemination and mobilization channel (see Cammaerts, 2015; Kavada, 2012; Smit, Heinrich, & Broersma, 2018). The first of these pages was launched in October 2011 and sought to spread awareness of the forthcoming demonstration. The second, which was launched in September 2012, contributed to the campaign to rename a street after Meier. The third was created shortly before the 2015 anniversary and was used heavily that year to mobilise participation in the annual demonstration rather than to create a space in which to remember Meier. Since 2015 its use has dropped off conforming to a pattern whereby duplicate Facebook pages have been launched in different years then rapidly abandoned before being minimally reactivated in order to promote future demonstrations.

Figure 1 also illustrates the processual equalisation of the rhythms of Meier’s remembrance across his newer platforms of memory towards states of *isorhythmia* hinging upon the returning anniversary of Meier’s death and his commemorative demonstration. These dynamics were clear in 2015 when the anniversary fell on a Saturday meaning that the vigil and demonstration once again took place on the same day. This is not altogether unexpected given the aforementioned significance of anniversaries as temporal authenticators of remembrance and their ability, along with demonstrations, to command the types of public and journalistic interest often sought by social movements. But the temporal convergence of mnemonic activity evident on some platforms does suggest that these patterns are not necessarily established in advance. This was the case for Wikipedia, a platform that can facilitate online activism and the co-construction of global memory (see Konieczny, 2009; Pentzold, 2009) even if its rules regarding neutrality may restrict it from being used to mobilise activist memories as fully as other platforms.\(^2\) Between 2004 and 2009, as Meier’s memory was remediated to the platform, a prolonged period of remembrance activity led to consensus regarding Meier’s entry and its mnemonic narrative. This however was only achieved after an early battle in which the entry’s creators had to defeat requests for its deletion on the grounds that Meier was too insignificant to feature in Wikipedia. From then on, the rhythms of Meier’s remembrance on Wikipedia were more sporadic than others, reflecting the intermittent revision of his entry to convey new information or developments often relating to his remembrance. Still, over time these edits became more restricted to the weeks around the recurring anniversary of his death. When this was not the case, activity again often related to offline memorial activities as indicated by a peak in editing activity in April 2013, which reflected the delayed official renaming of a street after Meier originally planned for the twentieth anniversary of his death. As with Meier’s memorial plaque the maintenance of Meier’s remembrance on this platform was also reactivated when contested. In short, moments of overt opposition punctuated the consensus surrounding the entry indicated by periods of
no or very little activity including a number of attempts, shortly before the twenty-fourth anniversary of Meier’s death, to hide the entry.

This convergence in mnemonic activity has also led to states of eurhythmia around the anniversaries of Meier’s death. The beneficial interaction of different mnemonic rhythms during these moments has also been evident on YouTube and Twitter, two further social media platforms with mnemonic capacities that are frequently used by social movements within their different self-mediation strategies (see Askanius, 2013; Cammaerts, 2015; Merrill, 2017b; Smit et al 2017). The first YouTube videos relating to Meier were uploaded around the fifteenth anniversary of his death in 2007. These were remediations of the only known analogue video footage of Meier from an interview made with a Danish film crew in the summer of 1992. Since then, YouTube videos associated with Meier’s activist remembrance were only uploaded on a more regular basis from 2010 onwards. Twitter hashtags containing Meier’s name appeared from 2009 onwards but not until the period around the twentieth anniversary of his death in any significant quantity. Since then Meier’s remembrance on the platform has remained relatively consistent suggesting that the platform is not being wholeheartedly adopted by activists as a means to consciously mobilize Meier’s remembrance, as would be suggested by an increase in Meier’s remembrance on the platform. Although not all mnemonic activity surrounding Meier can be reliably attributed to members or sympathizers of Berlin’s antifascist activist groups, its eurhythmic concentration around the anniversaries of his death can be interpreted as, intentionally or otherwise, maximizing exposure and raising awareness of Meier’s remembrance and thus these groups’ anti-fascist causes. The potential benefits of this approach are suggested by the patterns in Google Trends scores for ‘Silvio Meier’ that indicate increased public interest in Meier around the anniversary of his death (Figure 1).

Platforms of memory and their temporal regimes in late November 2012

Reflecting the mnemonic significance attached to round number anniversaries (Ankersmit, 2002), during the period surrounding the twentieth anniversary of Meier’s death his eurhythmic activist remembrance hit a crescendo, aligning clearly across all seven of the analysed platforms. Investigating the five most recent platforms of Meier’s memory and their individual temporal regimes of use during the 15 days surrounding the twentieth anniversary of Meier’s death in more detail helps discern the more discrete rhythms of Meier’s activist remembrance (Figure 3).

Although mnemonic activity surrounding Meier had already started to migrate from Indymedia Germany to Indymedia Linksunten by late November 2012 (Figure 2) Meier was still regularly mentioned on the former platform in the days leading up to the twentieth anniversary of his death. However, he was mentioned most on the day following the anniversary and then on day of the demonstration rather than on the anniversary itself. While this reflects the reporting function of the platform it also illustrates the eurhythmic nature of the prolonged moment of the anniversary events whereby the actual anniversary with its vigil provided a means by which to prime Meier’s remembrance, allowing the realization of its activist potential a few days later during his commemorative demonstration.
Similar dynamics were evident on Wikipedia during the twentieth anniversary when most activity on the platform took place on the days after the anniversary and the demonstration with more limited activity occurring on the days in between and on the actual anniversary. The rhythms of this activity may reflect a growth in public awareness and interest in Meier’s remembrance generated by his appearance on other platforms but is also likely the result of the platform’s emphasis on the continuous maintenance and updating of entries and their consensual mnemonic narratives. The result in this instance was a temporal lag, of around 24 hours, between the events that generated both greater awareness of Meier and new information about him, and the increased editing activity that reflected the adding of this new information to the entry and the input of new Wikipedians drawn to it.

Most of the videos associated with Meier uploaded to YouTube around the twentieth anniversary of his death were witness videos (see Smit et al. 2017) of that year’s commemorative events, mainly of the demonstration but also of the vigil. These were mostly added to the platform on the day of these events. This conveys something of the platform’s temporal affordances in allowing the rapid remediation of events and the prompt digital archiving of activist videos. The speed of the platform’s mnemonic use did however also hinge on the time YouTube users spent editing their videos and in other years more heavily edited videos were uploaded to the platform for longer periods after the vigil and the demonstration. While YouTube is clearly used within activists’ recording and archiving strategies in other years it was also used to disseminate more polished promotional videos that blended the footage of Meier with witness videos in a bid to mobilize people to attend the next demonstration (Cammaerts, 2015). Additionally, solidarity videos dedicated to Meier like the one uploaded by a group of Austrian antifascists during the twentieth anniversary demonstration illustrate how the platform has facilitated the multidirectional spillover of Meier’s activist remembrance (see Rothberg, 2010).

Twitter references to Meier around the twentieth anniversary of his death were most evident of the day of the demonstration and although there was also activity in the week before and after the demonstration this was limited on the day of the
anniversary itself. Due to the platform’s temporal affordances, it was thus mostly used by activists as a means to instantaneously communicate local developments during the demonstration in real time as they unfolded. In short, it was used by activists to coordinate more than in any other self-mediation capacity (see Cammaerts, 2015). With much of the content of these tweets relating to the dynamics of the demonstration at hand, the explicit remembrance of Meier beyond the appearance of his name was limited. The threads created by Meier’s dedicated hashtags were, however, occasionally punctuated with tweets of a more explicit, albeit fragmentary, mnemonic quality including those that, for example, contained links to the more coherent digital memories fostered by Meier’s YouTube videos and his Wikipedia page. These digital networks of mnemonic content, created between different platforms of memory, clearly exemplified again the sorts of multidirectional remembrance at play (see Rothberg, 2010).

Only two of the three analysed Facebook pages were running at the time of the twentieth anniversary of Meier’s death and even though these were separately created in order to promote the recurring demonstration and the commemorative campaign to have a street named after Meier, they were used only sparingly in the build-up to Meier’s 2012 commemorative events. The rhythms of Meier’s remembrance on these pages reflects their promotional aims and the dissemination and mobilization capacities attributed to the platform by activists (Cammaerts, 2015). However, these pages’ limited and faltering use suggests that the platform was not favourably used by those activists most interested in mobilizing Meier’s memory but rather more it was utilized in a token manner that ensures at least some presence on it. Such an opinion of the platform is also hinted to by the dormant interest page dedicated to Meier, which regurgitates his Wikipedia entry and has attracted just two ‘likes’.

**Conclusion: timing activist remembrance**

This article has shown that over the last fifteen years Meier’s activist remembrance has been remediated to numerous new digital platforms of memory and has subsequently aligned polyrhythmically with that which is evident on a number of non- and pre-digital platforms of memory during the period surrounding the anniversaries of his death. This has often resulted in the eurhythmic mobilization of his memory as exemplified during the twentieth anniversary of his death when the timing of his activist remembrance was influenced by the various temporalities of use and temporal regimes associated with different internet and social media platforms. These different digital platforms, like different non- and pre-digital platforms, have been shown to have their own temporal rhythms which, amongst other things, influence how they are used by social movements to mobilize memories.

Within the eurhythmia of the weeks surrounding the anniversary of Meier’s death the events that take place on the actual anniversary of his death including his vigil, and more recently, the award ceremony of his prize, serve in most cases to generate awareness and publicity for the forthcoming demonstration. This allows the activist mobilisation of Meier’s memory to be made most manifest during his demonstration insofar as its act of protest takes priority over Meier’s remembrance. Similarly, on most of the platforms of memory considered in this article, Meier’s activist remembrance on
the actual anniversary of his death was overshadowed by that which occurred on the day of his commemorative demonstration, complicating the assumed temporal significance of anniversaries.

At the same time as the eurhythmic activist remembrance of Meier may represent a positive force for the groups that mobilize his memory, it also may indicate that their mnemonic efforts are becoming increasingly standardized and their disruptive potential eroded. Previously, both Meier’s demonstration and vigil, have faced forms of temporal regulation akin to the training of rhythms to accede to particular societal norms described by Lefebvre as dressage (2004[1992]). Relatively early on in its history, the demonstration succumbed to the dominant societal rhythms of the working week by being scheduled for the closest Saturday to the actual anniversary, even if this also may have helped mobilize greater numbers of participants.³ The vigil still takes place on the anniversary proper, but it too has become a well-rehearsed ritual with a shorter duration than it had in the past (Merrill, 2017a). With these dynamics in mind, along with Lefebvre’s contention that the training of rhythms relies heavily on formulaic repetition (2004[1992]), it is worth considering whether the mobilization of Meier’s remembrance via newer digital platforms of memory might share a similar fate and become subjugated to broader, dominant socio-technical rhythms, undermining its activist potential.

The repetitive confinement of Meier’s remembrance on these platforms to the period surrounding the anniversary of his death may make it easier for its activist potential to be managed by the authorities and likewise limit the possibility for activists to spread the remembrance of Meier amongst broader audiences as they see fit. Meier’s Google Trends scores suggest as much insofar as they indicate that the interest that such audiences show in Meier has become more confined to the moment of the anniversary of his death and his annual demonstration (Figure 1). The ability of the German authorities to regulate such platforms meanwhile has already influenced Meier’s activist remembrance as the shutdown of Indymedia Linksunten and the loss of its digital activist archive demonstrates. Concern for the vulnerability of digital nodes of remembrance may even lie behind the seeming reluctance of Berlin’s antifascist activists to wholeheartedly utilize platforms like Facebook and Twitter, especially given their commercial but also surveillance qualities, the latter of which are keenly acknowledged in a part of the city that was previously exposed to the surveillance apparatus of the East German state.

Even if this may be so, there can, as Lefebvre once again reminds, be no absolute identical repetition (Ibid), highlighting the possibility that activists might still mobilize Meier’s memory in unforeseen ways and at unforeseen times in the future. The key to achieving this, however, may lie in contemporary activists’ greater pursuit of the states of arrhythmia created by their predecessors in the years immediately following Meier’s death rather than the states of eurhythmia foregrounded by this article’s analysis. Given that this article’s analysis has also shown how those acts of contestation that can interrupt or dissipate the eurhythmic activist remembrance of Meier can also help drive and reinforce mnemonic activity across, different digital and non-digital platforms of memory, creating nodal networks of multidirectional memory (Rothberg, 2010), perhaps seeking out states arrhythmia instead of eurhythmia will not only better
serve the broader activist goals of Berlin’s antifascist groups but also Meier’s remembrance in general.

Given these perspectives, the analysis of the rhythms of Meier’s activist remembrance presented in this article can be instructive for the further study of social movements, their use of different media platforms and their mobilization of memory. Firstly, by demonstrating the importance of attending to the when and not only the what, who, where and how of social movement memories that have dominated research in this area to date. Secondly, by highlighting the need to consider the temporal influence of the different digital, as well as non-digital, platforms that activists use in their remembrance but also other activities. And finally, by indicating the broader potential of applying rhythmanalysis approaches to the study of social movements and their activism. It is hoped then, that this article may encourage other rhythmanalyses of social movements with respect to new empirical case studies whether or not related to activist media and remembrance practices. Should they be concerned with the latter matters, they might benefit from further marrying an interest in the activist cultures of media use that surround different platforms of memory with a concern for these platforms’ particular architectures and affordances. This could be partly achieved by engaging with Miyazaki’s idea of the ‘algorhythm’ in order to understand how computer code influences the temporalities of human behaviour, and how the use of internet and social media platforms ‘is not immaterial, but lively, rhythmical, performative, tactile and physical’ (Miyazaki, 2013, p.13). Such future rhythmanalyses, building on the contributions made by this article, will hopefully help clarify further whether it is in the interests of social movements to pursue the eurhythmic mobilisation of memories or whether this may in fact encourage the regulation and neutralisation of these memories and their associated practices of activist remembrance.

Notes

1. Meier’s remembrance on Facebook also occurred outside the confines of these pages. These pages were chosen for analysis due to practical reasons but also because collective Facebook activity is largely organized around pages (and groups) and broader hashtag searches on the platform can be biased by users’ personal settings.

2. Some discussions on Meier’s Wikipedia entry stress that the platform should be used to inform and not to commemorate. Others suggest that because the political complexities of Meier’s remembrance cannot be communicated impartially they should be omitted altogether.

3. On four occasions during the last fifteen years, in 2011, 2010, 2005 and 2004 this meant that the demonstration took place before the actual anniversary of Meier’s death.

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Notes on contributors

Samuel Merrill is an interdisciplinary researcher based at Umeå University’s Department of Sociology and Digital Social Research Unit (DIGSUM). His current research interests centre on social movements, collective memory, cultural heritage and digital media.

Simon Lindgren is Professor of Sociology at Umeå University, Sweden. His research is about politics, power, and resistance at the intersection of society and digital technologies.

ORCID

Samuel Merrill http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9572-5922
Simon Lindgren http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6289-9427

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