

ELISABETTA LOCATELLI*

TOWARDS THE PLATFORMIZATION OF (SOCIAL) MEDIA MEMORY: ARTICULATING ARCHIVE, ASSEMBLAGE, AND EPHEMERALITY

Abstract

Although the platformization process has been intensively studied, a better understanding is needed of how it has affected media dynamics such as the formation of media memory. The original contribution of this paper to the research field is, thus, to highlight the interrelatedness of issues, such as media memory, social media, and the platformization process that are usually considered independently. To achieve this, three theoretical frameworks – media and memory, social media logic, and platformization – will be bridged by means of the platformization of cultural production of Nieborg and Poell with the aim of analysing the case study of the Festival di Sanremo, chosen because of its relevance to the Italian mediascape, Italian cultural memory, and social media presence. The argument will demonstrate that the ongoing process of platformization of media memory is operating in three dimensions: archive, assemblage, and ephemerality. The analysis of the case proposed will also help to highlight the fact that the platformization process is not an unavoidable end, but that there are margins of resistance to it adopting digital platforms connected to mainstream social media ones though independent of them. Issues left open are the governance and the responsibility for custody of media memories, the risk of a fragmented use of archived contents, the decontextualization of media memories, their (mis)appropriation, manipulation, hegemonic selection, and the threat that media memory may become a commodity, reactivated only when necessary and at the mercy of social media platforms' policies.

Keywords

Social media; media memory; platformization; Festival di Sanremo; archive.

ISSN: 03928667 (print) 18277969 (digital)

DOI: 10.26350/001200_000098

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of social media and platforms in society is increasingly relevant to the point that scholars consider them socio-technical actors whose logic permeates society, creating a process of platformization in several fields. This paper sets out to examine whether the process of platformization of society has also affected media memory, bridging the theoretical frameworks of social media logic and platformization with that of media memory. The original contribution of the paper to the research field is, thus, to correlate issues, such as media memory, social media, and the platformization process that are usually considered independently.

* Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan – elisabetta.locatelli@unicatt.it. The author would like to thank Fausto Colombo, Göran Bolin, Nicoletta Vittadini, and the reviewers for their precious suggestions. This article is protected by a CC BY-NC-ND license.

In order to do this, first a literature review will be conducted concerning social media and platformization, and the connection between media, social media, and memory.

The theoretical frameworks will then be applied to the study of the case of the Festival della Canzone Italiana¹, known also as Festival di Sanremo or Sanremo (hereafter Festival di Sanremo) and specifically to the tribute to Luigi Tenco in the 2017 Festival. This case was chosen because the Festival di Sanremo is the foremost music festival in Italy and it is also a renowned tv program; it figures large on social media, and it has a deep relationship with Italian cultural and media memory. Another original feature of the paper consists in the fact that, although the Festival di Sanremo has long been studied as a part of Italian cultural heritage and from the point of view of popular music or television studies, less attention has been devoted to analysing it as a communicative phenomenon and examining the potentiality of its digital and social media presence regarding media memory.

The argument will show how the adaptation of a media event to social media logic (i.e. the logics theorized by Van Dijck and Poell of programmability, popularity, connectivity, and datafication) also relates to the platformization of media memory in terms of infrastructure, governance, and market, following the framework provided by Nieborg and Poell. The study will then conceptualize the platformization of media memory revealing it in three dimensions: archive, assemblage, and ephemerality. The analysis of the case under consideration will also help to highlight that the platformization process is not an unavoidable end but that there are margins of resistance.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA AS PLATFORMS AND THE PUSH TOWARDS PLATFORMIZATION

Social media have been variously conceptualized over time. Briefly, they are places where users can exchange and consume user-generated contents² and contents produced by communities and organizations³. During their development, there was a process of professionalization of content production which is one of the distinctive traits of their consolidation phase⁴. Moreover, social media themselves became brands and business entities⁵, developing into socio-technical actors⁶ and making it possible to define them as platforms, a term which, as Gillespie noted, emphasizes their nature as technical, economic, and socio-cultural actors for online activities⁷.

Van Dijck and Poell suggested that social media are platforms in which architectures, businesses, and users' activities interplay⁸, and pointed out their four logics:

¹ Sanremo Italian Song Festival/Contest.

² M. Kaplan, A.M. Haenlein, "Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media", *Business Horizons*, 53 (2010): 59-68. DOI: 10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003.

³ L. Sloan, A. Quan-Haase, "A Retrospective on State of the Art Social Media Research Ethical Decisions, Big-Small Data Rivalries and the Spectre of the 6Vs", in *The Sage Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*, edited by L. Sloan and A. Quan-Haase, London: Sage Publications, 2017, 662-672.

⁴ N. Vittadini, *Social Media Studies. 1 social media alla soglia della maturità: storia, teorie e temi*, FrancoAngeli: Milano, 67.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ J. Van Dijck, T. Poell, "Understanding Social Media Logic", *Media and Communication*, 1 (2013): 2-14, DOI: 10.12924/mac2013.01010002.

⁷ T. Gillespie, "The Politics of 'Platforms'", *New Media and Society*, 12, 3 (2010): 347-364, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809342738>; J. Van Dijck, T. Poell, "Social Media Platforms and Education", in *The Sage Handbook of Social Media*, edited by J. Burgess, A. Marwick, T. Poell, London: Sage reference, 2018, 579-591.

⁸ Van Dijck, Poell, "Social Media Platforms and Education".

programmability, popularity, connectivity, and datafication⁹. Programmability is the capacity of social media to encourage and to steer contents produced by users, while in this activity users may, in turn, influence the flow of communication. Popularity refers to the “likeability” of content and to the dynamics that may influence it. Connectivity is the ability of social media to connect people, advertisers, brands, and other subjects involved, on the one hand encouraging connectedness among individuals and, on the other, promoting the mechanisms of “automated connectivity” and “automated personalization”¹⁰. Datafication means that platforms render into data aspects that were not quantified before and refers to their capacity to mine them.

The pervasiveness of social media and other platforms like Google or Apple (known by the GAFAM acronym) is such that they transform society itself, in a process of platformization¹¹.

Helmond defined it as “the rise of the platform as the dominant infrastructural and economic model of the social web” and “the extension of social media platforms into the rest of the web and their drive to make external web data ‘platform ready’”¹². From a material-technical perspective, she pointed out how Facebook had a role in connecting the several actors online and in pushing the web to become a platform itself, a process in which APIs have a central role. In this a “dual logic of platformization” emerges, in which platform features are decentralized while “platform ready data” are recentralized¹³.

Nieborg and Poell pushed forward the reflection about platformization, arguing that in the context of cultural industry (news production and gaming industry) “it is the penetration of economic, governmental, and infrastructural extensions of digital platforms into the web and app ecosystems”¹⁴. They pointed out how platformization and the dominant position of GAFAM platforms changed the market and the approach to advertising and business models; they addressed the issue of how power balances had changed in relation to important issues like misinformation; they also evidenced how platformization had affected the infrastructure of content production and distribution through modularising data, datafying processes, and being increasingly dependent on GAFAM platforms. Cultural production becomes thus “contingent” in the sense that it is dependent on platforms and “malleable, modular in design, and informed by datafied user feedback, open to constant revision and recirculation”¹⁵.

3. (SOCIAL) MEDIA, MEMORY, AND ARCHIVE

Studies in the field of media and memory have an established tradition¹⁶ and show that media have an increasingly significant role in preserving, presenting, and producing memory, being “recordings”, “memory aids”, and “memorial”, as Garde-Hansen high-

⁹ Van Dijck, Poell, “Understanding Social Media Logic”.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹¹ J. Van Dijck, T. Poell, M. De Waal, eds., *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

¹² A. Helmond, “The Platformization of the Web: Making Web Data Platform Ready”, *Social Media and Society*, 1, 2 (2015): 1-11 (1). DOI: 10.1177/2056305115603080.

¹³ Helmond, “The Platformization of the Web: Making Web Data Platform Ready”, 8.

¹⁴ D.B. Nieborg, T. Poell, “The Platformization of Cultural Production: Theorizing the Contingent Cultural Commodity”, *New Media and Society*, 20, 11 (2018): 4275-4292 (4276). DOI: 10.1177/1461444818769694.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 4276.

¹⁶ For a comprehensive historical and theoretical review of media and memory studies see J. Garde-Hansen, *Media and Memory*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.

lighted. In these dynamics, the media are not neutral but have a role and a responsibility in deciding what to archive, choosing the way to present archived materials, and building a narrative of the past¹⁷. Garde-Hansen underscored that digital media function as archives (of history and memories, of the self), also being used in creative ways, for example through mash-ups of broadcast and user-generated contents¹⁸. Moreover, digital media has changed the way in which collective memory is formed, producing a “new ecology” of remembering and forgetting¹⁹. Hoskins highlighted that both at individual and collective level “memory is ‘mediated’ in that how the past is and is not recorded, archived, accessed, retrieved and represented is entangled with the nature, forms and control of the technologies, media and institutions of the day”²⁰. Digital memories can also be interpreted as forms of “prosthetic memory”²¹ that refers to “implanted memories” and that questions the authenticity of memory, the relation between past and present, and the relation between identity and memory. Applied to digital memories this concept reflects on their nature as organic (personal) and inorganic (media), arguing that media and digital media are a form of “externalisation of inner processes, sensations, thoughts and memories”²² that may however have “powerful emotional effects”²³.

The “externalization” process of memories allowed by social media has been analyzed both at a personal and collective level. Zhao *et al.* demonstrated that social media can be used as tools for producing and curating digital traces in three regions: performance, exhibition, and memory/personal archive²⁴. Reflecting on social media and collective memory, Kaun and Stiernstedt introduced the concept of “social media time”. Their research into a Facebook page dedicated to radio memories, showed that it was used for archive, flow, and narrative²⁵.

Adopting a cultural approach, Bartoletti²⁶ analyzed the role of social media in shaping the relationship between individual, collective, and social memory, identifying five areas of intersection between memory and social media among which there are “forms of construction and objectification of grassroots cultural memory”²⁷. The web, thus, has become a place for building individual and collective memories alongside the work of institutions. Three are the issues at stake, Bartoletti concludes: the relationship between public and personal memory; the increasingly important role of media in creating memories; the ownership and control of online memories. In this direction Colombo,

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁹ A. Hoskins, “Anachronism of Media, Anachronism of Memory: From Collective Memory to a New Memory Ecology”, in *On Media Memory. Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, edited by M. Neiger, O. Meyers, E. Zandberg, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 278-288 (287).

²⁰ A. Hoskins, “The Mediatization of Memory”, in *Save As ... Digital Memories*, edited by J. Garde-Hansen, A. Hoskins, A. Reading, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 27-43 (27).

²¹ A. Landsberg, “Prosthetic Memory: Total Recall and Blade Runner”, in *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*, edited by M. Featherstone and R. Burrows, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996, 175-189 (175).

²² J. Garde-Hansen, A. Hoskins, A. Reading, “Introduction”, in *Save As ... Digital Memories*, 1-21 (11).

²³ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁴ X. Zhao *et al.*, “The Many Faces of Facebook: Experiencing Social Media As Performance, Exhibition, and Personal Archive”, *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 2013, 1-10.

²⁵ A. Kaun, F. Stiernstedt, “Facebook Time: Technological and Institutional Affordances for Media Memories”, *New Media & Society*, 16, 7 (2014): 1154-1168. DOI: 10.1177/1461444814544001.

²⁶ R. Bartoletti, “Memory and Social Media: New Forms of Remembering and Forgetting”, in *Learning from Memory: Body, Memory and Technology in a Globalizing World*, edited by B.M. Pirani, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, 82-111.

²⁷ Bartoletti, “Memory and Social Media: New Forms of Remembering and Forgetting”, 95.

discussing the relationship between media, generational belonging and social memory, proposed a multidimensional model of the relationship between media and collective memory in which individual, social, and public memories are in a dialectical correlation together with institutions/social agents and strategies (for example of remembering or forgetting). Media contribute to determining the importance and the symbolic value of an event, to establishing the rhythm of anniversaries²⁸, and to defining what to remember and what to forget, also in relation to the hegemonic power. In this process, digital media and platforms accomplish “a qualitative leap in the memorial role”²⁹, establishing new rules and enabling the emergence of alternative memories. As regards the economy of attention in the internet age, Assmann argues that the huge stream of information available online is more similar to a supermarket than to a library since “The internet, then, is a medium of an unlimited capacity for accommodating, presenting, and manipulating information without actually storing it”³⁰. The risk, the author concludes, is that the economy of attention will bypass the economy of memory that we inherited from the past.

The paper will argue that social media did not merely push forward the mediatization³¹ of memory, but included it in a platformization process, in which platforms have a role in defining what to archive and what to forget, as the analysis of the case study will illustrate.

4. TOWARDS THE PLATFORMIZATION OF MEDIA MEMORY: THE CASE OF THE FESTIVAL DI SANREMO

To show how the platformization process also related to media memory, the case of the Festival di Sanremo will be analyzed, and especially the exemplary case of the tribute to Luigi Tenco, paid on the 50th anniversary of his death during Sanremo 2017.

The interpretive frameworks that emerged during the literary review (media and memory, social media logic, and platformization) will be wrapped up together using Nieborg and Poell’s dimensions (market, governance, infrastructure), with the aim of disclosing three dynamics of media memory: archive, assemblage, and ephemerality. The Festival di Sanremo was chosen as a case study because it is the foremost music festival in Italy, it occupies a dominant position in Italian media and cultural production also as a tv program, it entails constant reminiscence of the past through tributes and archive, and it has developed over time an established social media presence³².

Started in 1951, the Festival di Sanremo is performed live in Sanremo and has always been broadcast³³, first by radio and then also by television, becoming thus also a

²⁸ F. Colombo, “The Generational Role of Media and Social Memory: A Research Agenda”, *Comunicazioni sociali*, 2 (2019): 215-231 (224).

²⁹ *Ibid.*: 226.

³⁰ A. Assman, “The Printing Press and the Internet: From a Culture of Memory to a Culture of Attention”, in *Globalisation, Cultural Identities and Media Representations*, edited by N. Genzt and S. Kramer, SUNY Press, 2006, 11-22 (19).

³¹ Hoskins, “The Mediatisation of Memory”.

³² The case was reconstructed during several longitudinal analyses from 2013 to 2019 that considered as sources the official website (also through the archived pages on Internet Archive Wayback Machine), official social media profiles, contents archived on RaiPlay, thematic literature, and online news. The sources are detailed during the analysis.

³³ G. Borgna, *La grande evasione. Storia del Festival di Sanremo: 30 anni di costume italiano*, Roma: Savelli Editori, 1980.

tv program and a media event. It created its official page on Facebook in October 2010³⁴, on Twitter in October 2012³⁵, and on Instagram in January 2016³⁶. By 2011 and 2012 a significant number of spontaneous conversations about it had already appeared on Twitter³⁷ and over the years it has become one of the most talked about Italian television programs³⁸. Initiatives were launched in order to broaden and foster user social interaction. These included official hashtags on Twitter or the Facebook page “Sanremo Social” which was opened in December 2011 as a page where young singers could upload their songs and users could vote³⁹ for them.

The tribute to Luigi Tenco was paid at the very beginning of the first night of the 2017 edition by guest star, Tiziano Ferro, who sang “Mi sono innamorato di te”, one of Tenco’s most famous songs, released in 1962⁴⁰.

Some important details can shed light on the specific circumstances of this tribute. Luigi Tenco is one of the most highly esteemed Italian songwriters and the facts relating to his death were the subject lengthy investigations and intense media interest⁴¹, creating a myth around his person. During Tiziano Ferro’s performance, no captions were put on the screen to explain who he was or whom the song belonged to. The figure of the artist was remembered after the song⁴² and in the official social media posts, but no mention was made of Tenco’s tragic death. Tenco took part in the 1967 edition with “Ciao amore ciao”⁴³, performing in the second part of the 1967 semi-final which was not aired by RAI⁴⁴. There are no official recordings of his performance because, at that time, only the finale was archived by RAI and Tenco’s song did not reach that stage. However, the recording of the finale was subsequently mislaid and only recently recovered by Teche RAI⁴⁵ and in early 2017 made available on RaiPlay⁴⁶ for on demand viewing⁴⁷. What has continued to circulate during the years was the official audio recording of “Ciao amore ciao” broadcast on the radio together with pictures and footage taken during the rehearsal. This brief historical reconstruction shows the relevance of media in the process of memory building, storing or not storing cultural product, producing memories, and promoting a specific storytelling of events.

³⁴ Official Facebook page, accessed June, 6, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/festivaldisanremo/>.

³⁵ Official Twitter profile, accessed June, 6, 2019, <https://twitter.com/SanremoRai>.

³⁶ Official Instagram page, accessed June 6, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/sanremorai/?hl=it>.

³⁷ M. Esposito, “La pillola dell’esperto”, in *Social TV. Guida alla nuova TV nell’era di Facebook e Twitter*, edited by G. Colletti and A. Materia, Milano: Gruppo24Ore, 2012, 114.

³⁸ See for example 2018 data, S. Russo, “Social tv: oltre 109 milioni di interazioni in italia nel primo bimestre 2018”, last modified 26 March, 2018, accessed November 28, 2018, <https://www.nielsen.com/it/it/insights/reports/2018/over-109-million-interactions-in-italy-in-the-first-two-months-of-2018.html>.

³⁹ “Sanremo, le novità: il Festival diventa social”, last modified December 13, 2011, accessed December 2, 2018, <https://video.repubblica.it/dossier/sanremo-2012/sanremo-le-novita-il-festival-diventa-social/83526/81916?ref=search>.

⁴⁰ A. Colonna, *Vita Di Luigi Tenco*, Firenze: Giunti, 2017.

⁴¹ Death occurred during the night between 26th and 27th January 1967 after the semi-final performance. F. Molteni, *L’ultimo giorno di Luigi Tenco*, Firenze: Giunti, 2015. On the circumstances of Tenco’s death see A. Colonna, *Vita di Luigi Tenco*, Firenze: Giunti, 2017.

⁴² See Intervista a Tiziano Ferro – Sanremo, accessed January 4, 2019, <https://www.raiplay.it/video/2017/02/Intervista-a-Tiziano-Ferro---Sanremo-7e90e1c6-e523-4eeb-bca5-c4f11446.ab46.Html>.

⁴³ Colonna, *Vita di Luigi Tenco*.

⁴⁴ Molteni, *L’ultimo giorno di Luigi Tenco*, 44.

⁴⁵ Teche RAI is the institution responsible for preserving the RAI archive.

⁴⁶ Official RaiPlay Website <https://www.raiplay.it>.

⁴⁷ “Raiteche: 50 anni dopo recuperata la serata finale del Sanremo 1967”, January 6, 2017, accessed January 4, 2018, <http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/media/Raiteche-50-anni-dopo-recuperata-la-serata-finale-del-Sanremo-1967-74f4b205-7550-46c2-af6b-fd19572159d1.html>.

The 2017 tribute *makes memory* because it recalls one of the most important Italian songwriters⁴⁸. It makes memory also visually, creating a vintage effect through the imitation of the style of the 1967 edition⁴⁹, broadcasting images in black and white and using a frame in half-length portrait⁵⁰.

The tribute also *creates a new memory*, producing brand new contents and eliciting individual and collective memories that will be streamed, distributed, and archived on web and social media platforms, somehow surrogating Tenco's missing ones.

In applying Nieborg and Poell's⁵¹ interpretive framework to the analysis of this tribute, the remainder of the paper will highlight how media memory is also affected by the process of platformization. Particularly, it will be argued that platformization entails the interrelatedness of media memory as archive (infrastructure), assemblage (governance and power), and ephemeral event (market).

4.1. *Archive*

The infrastructural⁵² dimension will be analyzed first. There appear to be two kinds of infrastructures involved. On the one hand, there are infrastructures dedicated to archiving broadcast digital contents. The RaiPlay⁵³ website serves as a public web-based archive and streaming service where, following free registration, users can access old and new recordings – for example, both Tiziano Ferro's tribute and the recently recovered full finale of the 1967 Festival. RaiPlay hosts part of the content of Teche RAI and is connected to the platform ecosystem because it is possible to log in with the personal Facebook or Twitter account and contents are platform-ready, in the sense that their link can be shared on Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp.

On the other hand, there are social media infrastructures that host two kind of contents: official contents and user-generated ones (such as commentaries or grassroots productions). Within official contents there is the promotion of the Tenco tribute, inserted in both the television and social media flow, responding to the logic of popularity (the stimulation of social interactions) and programmability (the production of flow of contents). Consistent with this logic, the tribute was announced in the days before the Festival⁵⁴ and it was placed at the very beginning of the 2017 edition, creating a climax functional both in terms of television and social media logics. It intensified the "liveness" of the media event, creating a sort of "media event"⁵⁵ inside the event itself that enhanced online conversations about it. The official tweet commenting on the tribute

⁴⁸ Colonna, *Vita di Luigi Tenco*.

⁴⁹ TV cameras recorded the final evening of the 1967 Festival in color but the broadcast was in black and white. The full recording of the 1967 final evening, available on Rai Play, is in color because it was recovered from the Eurovision broadcast. See footnote 46.

⁵⁰ "Festival di Sanremo. Tiziano Ferro apre la prima serata del festival di Sanremo 2017", accessed January 4, 2019, <https://www.raiplay.it/video/2017/02/Tiziano-Ferro-apre-la-prima-serata-del-festival-di-Sanremo-2017-f890ca76-6eef-4057-a73b-735a9ffa610.html>.

⁵¹ Nieborg, Poell, "The Platformization of Cultural Production".

⁵² *Ibid.*: 4282.

⁵³ <https://www.raiplay.it/>, as for June 2019.

⁵⁴ "Tiziano Ferro: "Ecco perché torno qui con Carmen e per Tenco", last modified February 7, 2017, accessed 5 January 2019, <https://www.lastampa.it/2017/02/07/spettacoli/festival-di-sanremo/2017/tiziano-ferro-ecco-perch-torno-qui-con-carmen-e-per-tenco-hZ0TNblpUs6Ft67hUhj7UI/pagina.html>.

⁵⁵ R. Deller, "Twittering on: Audience Research and Participation Using Twitter", *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, 8, 1 (2011): 216-245, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11105-012-0476-9>.

obtained 538 retweets, 1384 likes, 38 comments⁵⁶. On Facebook, the same kind of post had 12.805 reactions, 585 comments, and 3020 shares⁵⁷.

There are several forms of user-generated contents. Searching on Twitter the hashtags #misonoinnamoratodite together with #Sanremo2017, the results show that users share, for example, their own recordings of the tv screen airing the tribute, their opinions about the tribute or the cover of the 45s of Tiziano Ferro's single. Searching only #misonoinnamoratodite on Twitter what emerges are personal considerations about the tribute paid by Tiziano Ferro or by other singers, and user-generated tributes to Tenco's memory made from vintage footage and pictures. The search on YouTube and Dailymotion using "Mi sono innamorato di te" as keyword, shows that the 2017 tribute was shared as self-produced recordings of the tv screens and personal tributes to Tenco's song, uploaded by users in the form of mashups created by putting together the audio registration of the song and pictures or found footage⁵⁸.

Digital and social media contents seem, thus, to have different meanings. RaiPlay serves as an official and permanent archive enhancing the dynamics evidenced by Garde-Hansen by being a recording and a memory aid because recordings can be accessed potentially by everyone. User-generated uploads serve instead as "grassroots memories"⁵⁹. The further implications of this argument will be discussed in the conclusions.

4.2. *Assemblage*

The archived contents described above show that media memory is composed of several materials (broadcast, user-generated, GIFs, screengrabs or recordings of the tv screen, found footage) that can be (re)assembled in different combinations.

The assemblage is visible also through the social media logic of programmability. Through trending topics, for example, Twitter organizes the contents posted in an algorithmic way, putting together several sources. Users, in turn, have the chance to shape and manipulate these flows, for example creating user generated hashtags (like #queenmary⁶⁰ in 2017) that produce different paths of meaning. The logic of fragments and assemblage also dominates official contents. In 2013 "Sanremo Social" was relaunched as a section of the official website where the users could see the streaming of the tv show and enjoy access to exclusive contents together with the social livestreaming and live blogging⁶¹. Users could access this website for free by logging in with their myrai.tv account, Facebook or Twitter account and could comment on the website or share contents on Facebook/Twitter, showing an interoperability of platforms. Its name was then changed to "Social Room", adapting to the new opportunities of communication offered by platforms, like Facebook live. Official GIFs and stickers for Instagram stories were released in 2019⁶² to be assembled with official and user generated contents. In this

⁵⁶ <https://twitter.com/sanremorai/status/829062001854906371?lang=it>. Data retrieved December 2, 2018. The comments were all written between 7 and 8 February 2018.

⁵⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/festivaldisanremo/photos/a.500915599953946/1399771513401679/?type=3&theater>. Data retrieved December 2, 2018.

⁵⁸ As of January 2019.

⁵⁹ Bartoletti, "Memory and Social Media".

⁶⁰ Dedicated to Maria De Filippi, a famous Italian TV tv compere who hosted Sanremo that year.

⁶¹ "L'offerta web di #Sanremo2014", last modified February 14, 2014, accessed 4 January 2019, <http://rumors.blog.rai.it/tag/sanremo-social/>.

⁶² "La Social Room di Sanremo 2019", last modified February 4, 2019, accessed 5 June 2019, <https://>

assemblage, past and present, broadcast and user-generated contents continuously overlap. Users, thus, become content producers, being part, as Nieborg and Poell point out, of the exploitation of the immaterial capital produced by users, typical of the so-called “platform capitalism”.

This phenomenon also contributes to the fragmentation of the experience of viewing and the personalization of the social media flow due to the “algorithmic content curation” that “affects the visibility of individual content items, but also of entire news outlets”⁶³. This means that the way in which Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram newsfeed is organized, produces personalized consumption experiences that may influence, for example, the voting mechanism since the Festival di Sanremo is a contest.

4.3. *Ephemerality*

Reflecting on the market side⁶⁴ of platformization, it can be argued that media memory becomes an ephemeral event. Social media contents are ephemeral because concentrated in specific moments and then not necessarily archived or retrieved by users. Unlike a personal box of memories, these contents are subject to the constantly changing policies of social media platforms that make it difficult to retrieve past contents, for example due to API’s restrictions⁶⁵. Moreover, the structure of platforms also influences content distribution because they follow their own logics of visibility and invisibility⁶⁶.

The tribute to Tenco can be seen, for example, as the trigger to boost social media conversations but also as one of the several contents responsive to both broadcast and social media logic, designed to heighten popularity and increase user consumption time of social media platforms. Also, on RaiPlay, media memories are ephemeral because they risk getting lost in the vast amount of contents available on demand in a decontextualized way. The threat is that media memory may become a commodity, reactivated when necessary and dismissed when no longer useful.

Since 2017 the official hashtag has been branded by TIM, the main sponsor of the show⁶⁷. This meant that on Twitter the hashtag has been automatically completed with the sponsor’s logotype for the days of the show. This choice can be interpreted as part of the logic of connectivity and of commodification, transforming users’ discourses into goods and targets for advertising⁶⁸. This is also a kind of platform-specific advertising⁶⁹ that strengthens the position of Twitter among the platforms; meanwhile, over time, the number of Italian users has slowly increased⁷⁰. Twitter users themselves thus become, more or less consciously, brand ambassadors for the sponsor. At the same time, the ac-

www.rai.it/programmi/sanremo/news/2019/01/La-Social-Room-di-Sanremo-2019-8642b80f-08dc-4959-993d-eb033a3ce8e2.html.

⁶³ Nieborg, Poell, “The Platformization of Cultural Production”: 4286.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ D. Freelon, “Computational Research in the Post-API Age”, *Political Communication*, 35, 4 (2018): 665-668, DOI: 10.1080/10584609.2018.1477506.

⁶⁶ T. Bucher, “Want to Be on the Top? Algorithmic Power and the Threat of Invisibility on Facebook”, *New Media and Society*, 14, 7 (2012): 1164-1180, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812440159>.

⁶⁷ “Sanremo, sui social il 69% del pubblico è femminile”, last modified February 13, 2017, accessed 4 January 2019, <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2017-02-13/sanremo-social-69percento-pubblico-e-femminile-105402.shtml?uid=AEdZpwU>.

⁶⁸ Van Dijck, Poell, De Waal, *The Platform Society*.

⁶⁹ Nieborg, Poell, “The Platformization of Cultural Production”.

⁷⁰ Vittadini, *Social Media Studies*.

tions performed by users, like commenting or liking, could be used by advertisers for profiling and targeting them with personalized ads in the logic of datafication. In the case of a media event like this, the dimension of “liveness” and of real-time datafication of users’ behavior is particularly emphasized due to the huge number of people commenting⁷¹. This process has the additional effect of /reducing the power of RAI in terms of advertising planning, because brands can also reach people by using the targeting mechanism of social media outside of the relationship with the broadcaster. The choice of using RaiPlay shows the application of platformization logics outside social media, because RaiPlay connects RAI, users, advertisers and is a new place for media planning⁷².

5. DISCUSSION AND OPEN QUESTIONS

The paper correlated three theoretical approaches – media and memory, social media logic, and platformization – in order to gain a deeper knowledge of the mechanisms that affect media memory in the contemporary age. The analysis showed that social media are socio-technical actors conceivable as platforms whose logics are pervasively permeating society, creating a process of platformization also in the field of media memory.

The way in which the Festival di Sanremo managed its official social media presence responds to the principles of social media logic evidenced by Van Dijck and Poell⁷³, leveraging the logic of popularity, triggering users’ conversations about it, programming dedicated flows of contents, and exploiting the potentiality of connectivity and datafication of social media through advertising.

The popularity of this event/tv program and its ongoing pursuit of increasing social interactions highlights the importance of the “like-economy”⁷⁴, through which it has also reinforced its dominant position in the Italian mediascape, and the role of platforms in defining the metrics of success. Market logics permeate social media, producing platform-specific advertising (like the branded hashtag) but they also exploit the work of users, making them targets for advertising and brand ambassadors.

The analysis of Tenco’s tribute brought the argument a step forward, revealing how the infrastructure, the governance, and the market of media memory is changed by platformization, revealing its dimensions as archive, assemblage, and ephemerality.

Social media offer new outlets where individual, collective, and broadcast memories can be stored and retrieved, appearing to be a part of the new “ecology” of memory, as it is called by Hoskins, being “mnemonic repositories” of a “mediated memory”⁷⁵. Social media platforms are actually persistent, replicable, scalable, and searchable⁷⁶ repositories where contents are stored, but also, as media themselves, they contribute to give a specific shape to these memories⁷⁷, in the form of flows, hashtag aggregations, or eliciting users’ activities in specific formats. Both live events and old footage can be re-lived through what media and users posted. Social and digital media contents become,

⁷¹ Van Dijck, Poell, De Waal, *The Platform Society*. See also footnote 42.

⁷² The website is actually free for users and hosts advertising.

⁷³ Van Dijck, Poell, “Understanding Social Media Logic.”

⁷⁴ Poell, “Understanding Social Media Logic.”

⁷⁵ Lohmeier, Pentzold, “Making Mediated Memory Work”, 777.

⁷⁶ d. boyd, “Social Network Sites as Networked Publics Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications”, in *Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, edited by Z. Papacharissi, 2011, 39-58.

⁷⁷ Garde-Hansen, Hoskins, Reading, “Introduction”.

thus, a form of “prosthetic memory”⁷⁸ since they are extensions of the body and of individual memory that match organic (persons, individual thoughts and feelings) with inorganic (infrastructures, pictures and video). Like a prosthesis they are outside people and help them, but they are meaningless without users’ actions. As prostheses they have a life outside the people who produced them, being used as archives; but the risk is that, precisely because externalized, they are appropriated, manipulated, or hegemonically selected.

Digital platforms like RaiPlay serve as an official archive, broadening access to archived contents (while Teche RAI are accessible only in specific libraries). User-generated uploads serve instead as “grassroots memories”⁷⁹ generated by individual and collective discourses, offering new opportunities for collective memory to be formed: for example, for those who commented on the Festival di Sanremo on social media platforms, or for those who got to know Tenco through the tribute or through other users’ memories. In this direction, it can be argued that social media enhance social memories, that is to say memories belonging to a specific social group⁸⁰. This is also done in a generational way, for example those who were young in the Sixties and remember Tenco personally, or who have known his music after he died through media, social, and personal memories.

As regards collective memory, it can be hazarded that the canalization of conversations through hashtags and the logics of algorithms may tend to strengthen social memories, enhancing the memory of one social group at the expense of others but also encouraging their coinciding and overlapping. The public flux of conversations may also reinforce and shape collective memories together with traditional media⁸¹, such as the role of the Festival di Sanremo in the cultural and social life of Italy or of Tenco as one of the most important Italian singers.

As a consequence, the power of archive and assemblage highlights the problems of governance⁸², the responsibility of curating media memories through the ownership and selection of contents. The digital nature of contents makes it possible to assemble them, allowing users’ creativity to emerge through grassroots memories and media assemblages. The risks are that the media memories configure as a cacophonous assemblage of decontextualized materials, cherry-picked according to the specific need of each situation, or that they may be vulnerable to processes of (mis)appropriation, manipulation, hegemonic selection. The absence, for example, of explanations during the tribute, preserves the figure of Tenco and perpetuates the memory of his talent, while somehow purging by the dramatic circumstances of his death. This could be problematic for young generations that have the chance to know this artist only indirectly through other people’s or media memories. Another question regards copyright and protection of materials. If, on the one hand, the presence of platforms like RaiPlay, let RAI set limits to the circulation of copyrighted contents (like original video and audio), on the other, these contents circulate freely on the web and on social media platforms when users screengrab and post them. From this point of view, it will be interesting to see how the new EU copyright

⁷⁸ Landsberg, “Prosthetic Memory: Total Recall and Blade Runner”.

⁷⁹ Bartoletti, “Memory and Social Media”.

⁸⁰ Colombo, “The Generational Role of Media and Social Memory: A Research Agenda”.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Nieborg, Poell, “The Platformization of Cultural Production”.

law⁸³ will be adopted by each country and how the relationship between GAFAM platforms and broadcast media will evolve.

The potentiality of archiving on demand and the fragmentation of social media contents also render media memory ephemeral and dependent on (social) media policies for storing and retrieving them. The danger is that memory may become a commodity, subservient to market logics, reactivated only when necessary, and that the focus is only on the “liveness” of the media event, dismissed when finished. As Assman⁸⁴ points out, the risk is that the internet will become a memory supermarket, where media memories are stored like goods or, as said by Nieborg and Poell, “interchangeable cultural commodities”⁸⁵, according to a market logic, and lose their intrinsic value as social and cultural memories.

In this context, social media and public institutions have a key role to play in preserving and curating memory. The analysis shows adaptation and resistance to the platformization process. On RaiPlay contents are platform-ready, which is to say ready to be shared on social media platforms, and also the Festival itself produces official contents for this purpose, confirming the centrality of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in the context of cultural production. However, if there are “locked-in”⁸⁶ contents, there are also “locked-out” ones, in other words all the contents archived on RaiPlay that, although in dialogue with social media platforms, abide by their own specific criteria for being collected, stored, labelled, and retrieved. In fact, RaiPlay videos can be shared but not downloaded and the platform itself provides exclusive contents, like highlights and historical materials, that are not available outside of it. It is also a place in which RAI can handle media planning autonomously, retaining direct links with advertisers. If, on the one hand, RaiPlay itself subscribes to the logic of fragmentation, not proposing a flow but a series of on demand videos, on the other, it guides the viewer with an editorial selection and thematic areas that help users to understand and contextualize contents. Maintaining media memory in a curated and open-access logic is important to make it independent and protect it from the vulnerability of social media platforms. It would be fruitful, as is already being done by some scholars, to continue the debate on the nature and ownership of users’ contents on social media.

More research is needed to comprehend the value of media contents in shaping individual and collective memory, comprehending not only news or documentaries, but also entertainment contents that are key to understanding the social and cultural climate of a country. Further research is also needed to comprehend how the bridging of broadcast and social media affects intergenerational memory, for example in the analyzed case of the tribute to Tenco, where past and present indissolubly overlap.

⁸³ Digital Single Market. Policy. Copyright, accessed 4 June, 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/copyright>.

⁸⁴ Assman, “The Printing Press and the Internet: From a Culture of Memory to a Culture of Attention”.

⁸⁵ Nieborg, Poell, “The Platformization of Cultural Production”: 4282.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*