

Can Digital History Make Narratives of the Subaltern Visible? Web History as an Epistemological Tool to Challenge Common Metanarratives.

While Digital History is now ubiquitously and prominently discussed in the historical sciences, it still remains to be finally determined what the up-and-coming field actually contains. The debate is currently on a technological side and focuses mainly on technical, methodological, theoretical and empirical aspects of Digital History.¹

What has received little attention, however, is the epistemological potential of born-digital sources of the online web (as opposed to the archived web according to Niels Brügger) for historical analysis and in that context the unbroken need for classical historical theories and methodologies beyond Computer Science. The online web is particularly suitable for micro-history from below as a supplement to prominent grand narratives developed from classical source corpora in order to discursively capture and historically classify digital and born-digital sources.

In my dissertation project *War Women, Peace Women, Beloved Women - Hidden Narratives Within the Red Power Movement, 1960-1980. Can Digital History Make Stories of Suppressed Minorities Visible?* I put forward the thesis that, due to the global, (still) democratic and (still) hierarchyless nature of the Internet, Web History, on the contrary to the structure of classic archives that has arisen from a colonial logic, offers the possibility of also giving a voice to formerly colonized, still colonized and other non-privileged sections of the population and thus making visible sides of metanarratives that were previously suppressed.

As an example, I examine the case of female activists of the pan-indigenous resistance movement *Red Power*, which took place from 1960 to 1980 in its most concentrated form in the USA.²

It turned out that classical sources on the object of research exist in a very fragmentary form for various reasons.³ For one, the history of indigenous women in *Red Power* is difficult to reconstruct because they were hardly perceived in time due to multiple discrimination even though they played a prominent role in the self-determination movement.⁴ The archived web is only of limited help here, partly because it follows the same rules as the analogue archive, which promotes a rather elitist history.⁵

¹ Brügger, Niels, *The Archived Web. Doing History in The Digital Age*, Cambridge 2018; Föhr, Pascal, *Historische Quellenkritik im Digitalen Zeitalter*, Basel 2018, S. 184; Margulies, Simon B., *Digitale Daten als Quelle der Geschichtswissenschaft. Eine Einführung*, Hamburg 2009; etc.

² Smith, Paul Chaat; Warrior, Robert Allen, *Like A Hurricane. The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee*, New York 1997.

³ Cooper Brittney, *Intersectionality*, in: Lisa Disch, Mary Hawkesworth (Hg.), *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, S. 385-406.

⁴ Hightower Langston, Donna, *American Indian Women's Activism in the 1960s and 1970s*, in: *Hypatia* vol 18, No. 2 (Spring 2003), S. 114-132.

⁵ Brügger, *The Archived Web*, S. 56.

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Because, among other things, most indigenous societies and their members use the possibilities of the Internet to draw attention to their history through social media, digital forums and their own digital projects, they recently produce sources, which sometimes provide more information about their hitherto invisible history than traditional sources.

After traditional sources in the USA and Europe had been collected and analyzed, the analogous corpus of sources was juxtaposed with a digital corpus of sources. The visible web stratum «web-sphere» manifested the analytical framework. The catalogue of topics delimiting the «web-sphere» is compiled from keywords and proper names of the *Red Power* movement and its protagonists. The born-digital sources are archived using screenshots, screenmovies and Webrecorder.⁶

It has turned out that only with the addition of digitized and digital-born sources of the online web can a serious analysis of the research object be made in the sense of making the history of this specific minority visible, and that these specific sources shift the focus away from Eurocentric to indigenous perspectives.

⁶ Webrecorder. Collect & Revisit the Web, <https://webrecorder.io/> [01.04.2019].