8 The past is (not) another country

Discursive dynamics and representations of the colonial war in digital space

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Introduction

The production of memories by veterans simultaneously involves recreating the past and distant geography in the present time and transnational space of the internet. This interplay of different temporalities via subjective constructions of the colonial war shows how, for most people who have no experience of Africa, it is part of a geographically and historically distant past – a dead past – whereas for the combatants – and for those directly or indirectly affected by it – the past is not located in another time and place. The past is not a static or fixed time; it is not distant or dead. Although time is experienced in many different ways, depending on the individual who is recalling it – which makes it difficult to reify or standardise the veterans' subjectivities or engage in excessive generalisations – it would not be incorrect to infer that the men and women who narrate their stories of war are reconstructing them in the present.

This convergence of temporalities is evident in the mnemonic products created by veterans who provide accounts of first-hand experiences in Africa on sites, blogs or Facebook pages. Memory consolidates identity: Not only individual, but also group identity. It is a relatively coherent link between the past, present, and future which constructs a sense of subjectivity. In the specific case of the colonial war, the community that was formed – through contacts made at the time, or later – is for many people crucial to shaping their identity. This fact explains the phenomenon of metonymic identification: In practise, the bonds of comradeship reinforce the idea that an attack on certain members of a community is an attack on all, or that an attack on the community represents an attack on each and every combatant.

This dynamic is more easily discernible in the reactions expressed on the many digital platforms used by Portuguese veterans, albeit subject to different levels of visibility and accessibility, ranging from blogs to veterans' personal pages on social media and, in particular, the Facebook groups they frequent. From an initial analysis, reactions to certain items of news highlight two questions which are important to our understanding of the narrative dynamics developing within digital media associated with representations of the colonial war (1961–1974) and the veterans. The first stems from the increasing complexity of the mnemonic circuit for the colonial war over the past 20 years, while the second is associated with the production

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of a public image for the figure of the Portuguese combatant. This chapter aims to contribute towards mapping the digital mnemonic circuit for the colonial war, starting with an analysis of veterans' blogs – the first platform to host (re)creations and (re)writings of their memories – before moving on to the labyrinthine paths of veterans' Facebook groups. The objective is to outline the social representations, narratives, and discursive dynamics of combatants in Portuguese digital space, following three lines of analysis: The narrative, the archive, and the hybrid mnemonic community. The digital is understood here as a mnemonic space that has been expanding over the past two decades (2000–2020) due to the advent and democratisation of internet access. Consequently, digital platforms have become – among other things – sites for creating and bringing together communities based on shared interests or common experiences. In fact, blogs, and later Facebook, have enabled Portuguese veterans to find comrades they had lost touch with long ago and/or contact other soldiers who also fought in the colonial war. This has strengthened the dynamics established in digital space by stimulating the (co)narrativisation of lived experiences, thus ensuring the inscription of their memories, political and socioeconomic demands, and identity in digital public space and beyond.

Narrating the war, "(re)mediating" the war

Within the same genealogical path traced by Miguel Cardina and André Caiado in this volume,[1] the war, although never completely absent, was relocated to a marginal locus of enunciation in the years immediately after 25 April. Many of the veterans I spoke to said they had forgotten, or tried to forget, the war.

> The rest I completely forgot. In fact, there are people who have forgotten so completely that they have never mentioned that they fought in the war. I worked in the same office as people who were in Guinea and they never, never said – some were even stationed very near me […] and they had blanked it all out and never talked about Guinea again. It's interesting, even nowadays they don't talk about it.[2]

This was the case with the comrades of Jorge Cabral – above – who suppressed the experience in their public narratives.

> […] bringing up a story from another world – that was science fiction, that couldn't be real. I saw people getting very embarrassed, very uncomfortable listening to me and suddenly someone said, 'let's talk about something else now' and when we got home I said to my wife: 'Look […], no matter how painful it is I'm never going to talk about this again. I can see nobody is interested in it; nobody is interested.'[3]

The veterans' need to forget and to rebuild their lives after the war was reinforced, as the previous extract shows, by the lack of any genuinely interested audience willing to hear their reports and stories.

From the late 1990s and early 2000s onwards the subject of war re-emerged in public space, driven by the work of the existing organisations which represented combatants, such as the League of Combatants (*Liga dos Combatentes*), and a new wave of associations emerging in the context of public awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).[4] The process by which the Portuguese state recognised this psychological disorder began in 1999 and was completed when it officially acquired the status of a disability within the Armed Forces.[5] Moreover, to paraphrase Luís Quintais, the association between war and the phenomenology of trauma facilitated the narrativisation – the creation of narratives – of veterans' war experiences by giving them access to a new, institutionally recognised vocabulary which they could use. The narrative of trauma provides coherence and an intelligible structure for their past actions. Ultimately, creating a new, culturally established vocabulary has allowed Portuguese society to express, describe, and remember a difficult and forgotten/silenced past. In other words, social and political recognition of PTSD has enabled these men's experiences to be incorporated into an officially recognised narrative – trauma – which allows many veterans to interpret the events they experienced as medical trauma and creates a terrain that is more favourable to active listening of their stories.[6]

On a strictly material level, claiming public space not only gave rise to a rapid increase in the number of monuments in honour of the war veterans,[7] but also the production of books, published by the authors themselves or the small presses, featuring the personal memories of the veterans, fictionalised to a greater or lesser extent. Over the past 20 years, the growing number of such publications has coincided with, and is reinforced by, the advent, massification and democratisation of new digital media.[8] One of the reasons for this is the flexibility and ease with which texts can be published and circulated without the author needing to resort to intermediaries, such as editors.[9] A new space for public expression has therefore been created, characterised by a growing discursive authority based on individual, but also – as we shall see – collective lived experience.[10]

The internet has expanded the readership that has access to texts produced at very little cost and without intermediaries. On the one hand, open access to independently published texts provides visibility for those who have had no opportunity to publish their points of view, reflections, comments or memoirs on the commercial markets – due to lack of interest on the part of publishers or the authors' lack of financial means – while also stimulating immediate and interactive dialogue among comrades and among authors and their readers/public.[11] This immediate and intersubjective dynamic had not been possible via the traditional media, such as radio or television, and is one of the most important characteristics of digital platforms, shaping the increasing complexity of the mnemonic circuit for the colonial war over the past 20 years.

The first interactive platforms to be used as repositories for texts alluding to, or in some way related to, the colonial war were websites and blogs.[12] The blogosphere "revolution" or, in more prosaic terms, the explosion of personal blogs, took place in Portugal in around 2003, later than in the Anglo-Saxon virtual world.[13] It was during this period that the first blogs by veterans of the colonial war appeared

and began to form their own blogipelago,[14] i.e. sites on the internet where veterans write for future generations, for their companions and for themselves. Writing for anyone who wants to read them, they are creating a vast archive of narratives and mnemonic artefacts in cyberspace.[15] However, as on a social level outside the internet, the resurgence of the memory of the colonial war is not free from tensions and disputes over meaning.

Briefly mapping out the main narrative threads which stand out in an analysis of these blogs, the first to be identified is the reproduction of the idea of the exotic and lost Africa of the Portuguese empire. This is a space defined by its difference, yet open to anthropological interpretation, which has left a lingering feeling of nostalgia in those who had been there; a space where nature and people are very different to those in the former metropole. It is understood through the veterans' observations and classifications, while coexistence is facilitated by the ability of the Portuguese soldier to adapt to this lush environment. This is a subtle reproduction of Lusotropicalist concepts and is common in the veterans' narratives.

Added to this nostalgic dimension of a lost youth in Africa, there is also an element of catharsis. For many veterans, the construction of narratives based on experiences and feelings associated with their time there, as well as messages exchanged with other comrades, functions as a kind of therapy. The term *blogoterapia* (blogotherapy), created by members of the largest Portuguese blog on the colonial war, *Luís Graça e Camaradas da Guiné*,[16] can be extended to include other more, or less, active veterans' blogs. For some authors, it is the constant stream of updates and consequently their inclination towards the personal legitimacy of the affective-emotive register which distinguishes blogs from other personal pages.[17] On these new, easy-to-use platforms, veterans have created a space for expressing ideas and socialising or, in the words of Levent Soysal,[18] a space for *intimate engagements of the public kind*, which distinguishes them from pages in ".com" format. They are spaces open to the public, where narratives are produced and relationships are established, from which the intersubjective dynamics required for the joint creation of memories are generated.

The possibility of gaining public recognition and becoming involved in a rewarding activity after retiring – within the dynamic of active ageing, which cannot be disregarded – the literary revelations of some authors, in the form of fictional texts, war diaries or memoirs, together with the social contacts that are created, constitute the framework for understanding the importance of blogs, and later social networks – discussed in the third section – in the lives of veterans.

Veterans' blogs are sites in which the past is narrated and media representations of war are (re)negotiated. Within this medium, veterans may contest public representations when they do not see themselves reflected in the images presented by the traditional media. In providing visibility for their memories, blogs become sites for the active creation of alternative narratives and sometimes political demands.[19] The construction of the public image of the figure of the Portuguese combatant is one of the main concerns evident in the narratives and discursive dynamics of these platforms. The objective is to establish a dignified portrait and respect for those who fought in the name of the Portuguese state, unfolding in various narratives that may

be relatively (de)politicised and/or relatively conservative. Moreover, this relationship is established with other formats, specifically regarding the support provided for those who decide to compile their publications/memories in book form:

> Acknowledgements […] I wish to make it clear that this book has taken shape via the Luís Graça & Camaradas da Guiné blog, where I regularly write about my time as a soldier in the Gabu region. It is an experience I still remember today with great nostalgia and which has led me to elaborate on themes I consider transversal to all comrades who shared the same experiences during their time in service, fighting in the Guinea war. […] Thank you Luís Graça for welcoming me into this universe of veterans and for the unassuming kindness with which you have always received me, not only as a comrade-in-arms, but above all as a trusted friend.[20]

The visibility of criticisms made by some veterans regarding "the way they were treated by the Portuguese state" may sometimes be combined with the reproduction of a glorified image of the "overseas combatant" who "sacrificed" himself – in some cases by giving his life – in the name of patriotic duty.[21] In fact, to paraphrase R. W. Connell, the representation of the combatant "hero" is not specific to this conflict, but has a certain importance in military culture and in promoting discipline, cohesion and unity within the Armed Forces. Consequently, the main purpose of the narrative of heroism is to maintain the efficiency of the violent war machine.[22] It is a cultural marker that was socialised during the conflict by *Estado Novo* (New State) propaganda and is still used today by some combatants. It uncritically justifies participation in war as "sacrifice in the name of the Fatherland" or "the duty to defend the Fatherland," universalist and abstract values which nevertheless provide a coherent and conciliatory narrative structure for the past, from a patriotic or nationalist point of view and erase the colonial nature of the war. In other words, it is part of an individual and/or collective effort to compose, in terms of the concept of "composure," a life story with which they feel comfortable.[23]

In another discursive thread, accounts of episodes from the war reported as descriptions of military tactics, thereby depoliticising the war, are common. This approach covers the war with a veneer of objectivity which, consciously or unconsciously, masks the most problematic issues associated with violent acts committed by the Armed Forces and the PIDE/DGS in Africa, which were never discussed openly by the state and therefore never held to account or judged.[24] Discourses on the war adapt to past experiences, present needs and discourses circulating within society over the years, and also reflect the social environment of the enunciator. Moreover, despite the democratic potential of the internet in terms of inscribing narratives that would not otherwise be available or would not be visible in public space, this does not necessarily imply that the discursive dynamics involved in creating social representations of the colonial war give visibility to under-represented experiences and discourses within the actual veteran community.[25]

The process of constructing narratives of the past continues to reproduce other silences and absences. Even veterans who support a critical stance in relation to

their war service and/or the war itself are not exempt from reproducing other power dynamics within the platforms, not only because conflicts of opinion are evident in the latter, but also because the use of this new technology implies a mastery of computer literacy which many do not have and which is closely connected to the material resources and social class of the veterans. In other words, it is not possible to consider that the narratives presented in the blogs are representative of all veterans who served in Africa: There is a greater representation of officers and sergeants, particularly in the case of the blogs, while the lower ranks, where illiteracy was, and still is, commonplace, are under-represented. Social networks, such as Facebook have introduced a measure of diversity, evident in the different ways of writing posts and comments. In addition to this, the most striking absence is that of African soldiers. These men fought for the Portugal colonial army but are not part of, and have no significant expression or visibility in, the community created in the digital environment.[26]

A digital archive of shared memories

The digitalisation and publication of mnemonic objects from combatants' private archives essentially constitute a remediation in the digital space of previously existing mnemonic objects[27] – such as photographs or other digitalised documents.[28] Through this remediation, the private archives of the veterans enter the public domain and become accessible, via a personal computer – with no major costs or restrictions – to a much wider public, thus giving visibility to history from the point of view of the protagonists. One of the prime examples of this is the aforementioned *Luís Graça e Camaradas da Guiné* blog. Created as an individual blog in 2004, it quickly grew through contact with other veterans via the site.

Sixteen years later, it takes pride in describing itself as the largest collective veterans' blog, with over 800 members active, to a greater or lesser extent, and publishing new texts every day. As the description below the title states, its "[…] objective […] is to help veterans reconstruct the memory puzzle of the colonial war in Guinea." It is important to note that the content of the posts varies greatly. It is a collective archive composed of artefacts and mnemonic texts organised in its own distinctive way, constructed as the blog develops. Digital archives hosted on platforms, such as blogs or social networks, have a dynamism and fluidity that is not found in the more traditional, static archives.[29]

On the one hand, private archives that have become public, such as the *Luís Graça e Camaradas da Guiné* blog, challenge the institutional authority of traditional physical – and digital – archives. There is, to some extent, a break with the recognised authority that chooses what should be preserved, and how, where and who should have access to it: Ultimately, through comparison, they show what the traditional archives hide or do not consider worth preserving.[30] From another perspective, these new archives are revolutionary because they serve to humanise the war by putting faces to the men who fought and, in some cases, died in it. Moreover, they link these men to the geographical space in which the memories were formed – in another time and continent. Africa represents a nostalgic space to

which the veterans return by creating simulacra of the lost land, constructed from photographs and accounts of lived or imagined events.

On the other hand, the archives also make reference to mourning: For a lost youth in Africa, for comrades killed in Africa and for those still suffering as the years go by. Homage to deceased comrades shows that the bonds of friendship forged during the war remain long after it has ended. They also prove that in the absence of public recognition, these comrades-in-arms take it upon themselves to preserve the memory of others and humanise them. Without this, some of these *histories from below* would be lost in attics or street markets.

In addition to their archival function *per se* – the function which has received the most attention from academics working in the field of digital humanities – these digital spaces have a social function which is greatly valued by veterans. The platforms enable them to comment on, contest or confirm the narratives being created from the artefacts and published texts. Some of the posts are reactions to representations produced by the media in the form of news, reports, and interviews.

However, this same flexible, accelerated and dynamic quality confers a certain degree of unpredictability on the digital archive.[31] Platforms evolve according to the economic interests of the moment and blogs and social networks are an example of this, since they depend both on servers and on the interests and objectives of their editors. In order to survive, the veterans' blogipelago has had to make some changes, mainly in the form of cuts, as their servers have shut down and/or editors have lost interest. Adding to this the real prospect of editors passing away, given that many of them are elderly, the precarious and highly unstable nature of the digital archive makes it impossible to study the phenomenon in its entirety. Hence, it is important to understand the limitations of any analysis of the medium. The knowledge that is produced from these platforms is always incomplete, fragmentary and, above all, unstable and rapidly changing. It is a field that generates greater anxiety over the continuity of materials in an open space accessible to the public than in the case of traditional physical spaces.[32]

Hybrid communities: Mnemonic dynamics within and outside digital space

In addition to their discursive and archival dimensions, the pages have a genuine capacity to create mnemonic communities that materialise in meetings, social events and friendships away from the computer screen. As an open and dynamic public space, the internet has made it possible for these men to meet and socialise, engaging in interactions that are not merely restricted to computer-mediated communication but, due to the significant amount of traffic between digital mnemonic activities and regular offline meetings, extend beyond it. The blogs and social networks, in particular Facebook, are very often a means of communicating and coordinating the various veterans' social events held all over the country throughout the year, as well as for exchanging ideas and contesting public representations shared in Facebook groups and on personal pages on the platform.

This global network of contacts serves as the vehicle for veterans to meet and communicate regardless of geographical barriers, providing increasing form and visibility for the mnemonic communities. Based on the aforementioned narrative construction of their experiences via multiple platforms and formats, the veterans create mnemonic networks that enable some comrades to (re)connect with each other and with their past – the shared memory of Africa and everyday experiences of war – thus forming *affective networks* for mnemonic creation.[33]

The internet has amplified discourses latent in Portuguese society that previously had no public or visible space in which they could be expressed. This is as true for the veterans' mnemonic discourses as it is for the nostalgic discourses of some who have returned from the lost Portuguese Africa, and for discourses that question the Portuguese colonial legacy. This dynamic is particularly visible in the social networks, since the blogs have lost some of their vitality following the rise of the former. Spaces, such as Facebook or Twitter, are the new sites for constructing and contesting representations of the past. As Jorge Cabral and Luís Graça, veterans and permanent members of the *Luís Graça e Camaradas da Guiné* blog, note:

> Facebook was a massive blow for the blog. It's easier. It just takes a few *likes*, the blog doesn't have *likes*. And it's interesting that even people who were in Guinea know more about what I write about it from Facebook than from the blog.[34]
>
> That would have helped [people to talk more about the war], wouldn't it? I don't know what influence the blogs had – and then Facebook as well, but later, much later. I also have a Facebook page but I'm not a big fan because it doesn't allow for any continuity or control, it doesn't allow you to cross reference information, does it? On the blog, you can't lie; you can't lie because there's always someone around who was there on the same day, isn't there? In the same situation. Personally, I don't like Facebook, although I do have a page, Tabanca Grande Luís Graça. But people show up there who are interested in, well, sharing things, making friends and I don't know what, that have nothing to do with Guinea and that is acceptable. We have three thousand friends… and on the blog there are 773,[35] and sixty or so have already died.[36]

The concerns expressed by Luís Graça reflect some of the most common dynamics of the social networks. Before they become places for mnemonic creation, sites such as Facebook are designed to boost interactions between users based on the construction of a digital *persona* – with photographs, opinions, and friends. Centring on forming identities for its users, they do not focus exclusively on the production of memories or on socialising with friends. Nevertheless, it is within the network that shared news, whether on personal pages or in groups, facilitates a rapid reaction and response to controversies that grow as they are shared.

One of the most immediate of these dynamics involves sharing and commenting on news without reading it first, thus facilitating glib pejorative comments or parallel discussions based on perceptions taken from increasingly eye-catching

news headlines.[37] These are instant reactions generated within a group dynamic defined by indignation and escalating discourse. Hence, echo chambers are formed which reinforce the group dynamics and result in the reproduction of the same ideas and/or feelings and emotions; a positive reinforcement by an audience of veterans which mirrors the majority opinion in the comment boxes – a dynamic that is already present in the comments sections of newspapers.

The visibility afforded to narratives on controversial themes is not viewed favourably, either because it contrasts with/contradicts the self-justifying narratives of the combatants or because it takes away their visibility. The sense of lost time and the fragility of the narrative that frames their efforts as a sacrifice in the name of the fatherland results in hostile reactions to dissident narratives or those considered to denigrate the image of the veterans. Comments below the line and escalating debates are heightened by the anonymity of these media channels. Added to this is the idea, widespread among veterans, that they should be the ones to tell their own stories, resulting in a certain hostility towards those who have no experience of the war but gain visibility through the study of specific themes.[38]

This is also the case with other mnemonic communities associated with the memory of the Portuguese empire. Elsa Peralta[39] identified the same dynamic in communities of former – first or second generation – Portuguese colonials who returned to Portugal after decolonisation and are known as *retornados*. These communities also began to create personal or collective blogs in the early 2000s, but the explosion came with the growth of Facebook.

Final considerations

The digital memories of veterans of the colonial war are an integral part of an increasingly complex mnemonic circuit for the colonial war. Understanding the evolution of the memory of the colonial war in Portugal involves considering not only the policies for remembrance and silence produced by the Portuguese state, but also the practises and discursive dynamics of particular groups and communities based on belonging and mnemonic sharing. This brief cartography of the digital mnemonic circuit for the colonial war has aimed to outline an initial picture of the social representations and discursive dynamics of combatants within Portuguese digital space, a space that has become a site for creating and bringing together communities with shared interests or common experiences. It has essentially focussed on two platforms, namely blogs and Facebook, although this does not mean that the veterans' practises and discursive dynamics are restricted to these digital subspaces. This choice was made because of the social importance and possibilities for the creation of narratives which both possessed and will continue to possess within the veteran community.

The digital is a mnemonic space that has been expanding over the past two decades and will continue to do so in the near future. The recognition of its importance should be reflected in increased research within the social sciences – particularly in the field of memory studies – focussing on digital platforms as spaces which shape

and host the social practises, discursive dynamics, and social representations of many different mnemonic communities. The contribution of digital space extends far beyond the archive and researchers must take into consideration the fact that it is a social space with its own social dynamics, which are intertwined with the traditional social world.

Digital social platforms, such as blogs and Facebook, have given Portuguese veterans the opportunity to meet and form a mnemonic community. This community has galvanised the (co-)narrativisation of their memories of the colonial war, their political and socioeconomic demands, and the production and projection of self-representations of the figure of the combatant, which then engage in dialogue with the representations presented by the traditional media, either contesting or reaffirming them. Driven by the dynamics of social networks, such as Facebook, increasing numbers of echo chambers are being constructed that project and give a voice to the most conservative veteran narratives that are primarily concerned with uncritically preserving a dignified image of the veteran, free of controversies that may tarnish the representation of soldiers who "did their duty by serving the fatherland," and which honours the military establishment and the Portuguese state.

Notes

1 See the chapters by Miguel Cardina, "Portugal, colonial aphasia and the public memory of war" and André Caiado, "The Colonial War Monuments in Portugal: A 60-year portrait" in this volume, and André Caiado, Verónica Ferreira and Miguel Cardina, "Os regressos da guerra: espaço público, mundo digital e (re)produções mnemónicas," *Ler História* 79 (2021): 215–40.

2 Jorge Cabral, veteran and permanent member of the *Luís Graça e Camaradas da Guiné* blog. Interview by the author, Lisbon (Portugal), April 15, 2019.

3 Mário Beja Santos, veteran and permanent member of the *Luís Graça e Camaradas da Guiné* blog. Interview by the author, Lisbon (Portugal), January 7, 2019.

4 The APOIAR association was created in 1988 by a group of professionals and patients from the Behavioural Psychotherapy Department therapy group based at the Hospital Júlio de Matos. Its legal status as a voluntary organisation dates from 1994. The psychiatrists Dr Afonso de Albuquerque, who offered his services as a consultant and was actively involved in the legislation recognising the diagnosis of PTSD as a psychological disorder originating in experiences of war, and Dr Fani Lopes were the driving force behind the association. Information taken from the official webpage, available at https://apoiar-stressdeguerra.com/pt/ [last accessed March 31, 2023]. Afonso de Albuquerque is also one of the authors of the only epidemiological study on PTSD in Portugal, from 2003. Afonso de Albuquerque and Catarina Soares, Paula Martins de Jesus, Catarina Alves, "Perturbação pós-traumática do stress (PTSD). Avaliação da taxa de ocorrência na população adulta portuguesa," *Acta Med Port* 16, no. 5 (2003): 309–320. Other associations, whose aims were not always directly related to PTSD, followed. They include the *Associação Portuguesa dos Veteranos de Guerra* (APVG – the Portuguese Association for War Veterans) founded on 18 March 1999 as a voluntary organisation, the *Associação de Combatentes do Ultramar Português* (ACUP – the Portuguese Association for Overseas Combatants) founded on 7 June 2002 and the *Movimento Cívico de Antigos Combatentes* (Civic Movement for Veterans) founded in October 2006, as well as other local organisations.

5 This recognition has its basis in Law no. 46/1999, updating Law no. 43/76 defining the status of the disabled person within the Armed Forces, and Decree-Law No 50/2000 creating the National Support Network for Portuguese Soldiers and Former Soldiers with "psychological disorders resulting from exposure to traumatic stress factors during military service." Legislation available at: https://apoiar-stressdeguerra.com/pt/o-stress-de-guerra/legislacao/ [last accessed March 31, 2023].
6 Luís Quintais, "How to Speak, How to Remember: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and the Portuguese Colonial Wars (1961–1974)," *Journal of Romance Studies* 1, no. 3 (2001): 98.
7 See Chapter 5 in this volume, and André Caiado, "The Monumentalization of the Portuguese Colonial War: Commemorating the Soldier's Efforts amid the Persistence of Imperial Imaginaries," *Memory Studies* 14, no. 6 (2020): 1208–25.
8 Between 2000 and 2010 there was a 530.9% increase in internet subscribers in Portugal. This figure has been calculated based on data provided by ANACOM and the *Instituto Nacional de Estatística* (Statistics Portugal), available at https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Assinantes+do+acesso+à+Internet-2093 [last accessed July 11, 2022]. The penetration rate in Portugal was 16.43% in 2000, rising to 53.3% in 2010. More recent data indicates a rate of 73.79% in 2017, using data from the International Telecommunication Union via Eurostat and Statistics Portugal, available at https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx [last accessed on July 11, 2022], and, according to Internet World Stats, 78.6% on 31 December 2021, based on information available at https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats9.htm [last accessed July 11, 2022].
9 José van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 71.
10 Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991), available at https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343743.
11 There are costs, starting with the purchase of the hardware and the internet contract, but they are lower than the costs associated with publishing a book, for example. In addition, no payment is required to access blogs or other open-access personal pages.
12 Blogs may be defined as personal pages hosted on servers which, due to their relatively standardised design, enable non-specialists to create texts without needing to master computer coding. They became popular in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Although personal or institutional pages and forums emerged both before and during the blog server explosion, this chapter focusses on platforms which combine the characteristics of both, i.e. those which allow for community dynamics but also serve as private archives with open and more or less public access.
13 Paulo Querido and Luís Enes, *Blogs* (Lisboa: Centro Atlântico, 2003), 7, and Catarina Rodrigues, *Blogs e a Fragmentação Do Espaço Público* (Covilhã: LabCom, Universidade da Beira Interior, 2006), 21. According to Catarina Rodrigues, the first Portuguese blog only appeared in 1999.
14 "I favor the term 'blogipelago' over the more common 'blogosphere.' [...] The term 'blogosphere' tricks us into thinking community when we should be asking about the kinds of links, networks, flows, and solidarities that blogs hinder and encourage. 'Blogipelago,' like archipelago, reminds us of separateness, disconnection, and the immense effort it can take to move from one island or network to another. It incites us to attend to the variety of uses, engagements, performances, and intensities blogging contributes and circulates," in Jodi Dean, *Blog Theory* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2010), 38.
15 Cf. *Infra*.
16 Blog available at https://blogueforanadaevaotres.blogspot.com [last accessed July 19, 2022].
17 Greg Myers, *The Discourse of Blogs and Wikis* (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), 2, and Geert Lovink, *Zero Comments* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 3.

18 Levent Soysal, "Intimate Engagements of the Public Kind," *Anthropological Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (2010): 373–99.
19 Such as publishing petitions, e.g. Petition no. 309/XIII/2.ª, "Request for the special pension supplement awarded to veterans to be replaced by early retirement," launched by Inácio Silva, available at https://blogueforanadaevaotres.blogspot.com/2018/01/guine-6174-p18171-ex-combatentes-da.html [last accessed July 19, 2022].
20 Saúde, *Um Ranger na Guerra Colonial*, 19. For more examples of acknowledgements of this kind, see for example, Caiado, Ferreira and Cardina, "Os regressos da guerra," 227–36.
21 The use of the term "overseas" reproduces the terminology used by the *Estado Novo*, although the regime did not recognise the existence of the war. The expression "overseas war" became established in Portuguese society and, according to Miguel Cardina, it is interesting to observe "[…] that the use of the term 'overseas war' transcends the circles of the more conservative veterans or those nostalgic for the regime, revealing an understanding of the conflict determined by the experience of the combatant and by ways of naming this experience that are rooted in the self-justificatory language of the regime," cited in Miguel Cardina, "O passado colonial: do trajeto histórico às configurações da memória," in *O Século XX Português: política, economia, sociedade, cultura, império*, eds. Fernando Rosas, Francisco Louçã, João Teixeira Lopes, Andrea Peniche, Luís Trindade, and Miguel Cardina. (Lisboa: Tinta-da-China, 2020), 382–83. The term reproduces the idea spread by the *Estado Novo* of territorial continuity, as opposed to a territory under colonial rule.
22 Raewyn W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 214.
23 Penny Summerfield, "Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews," *Cultural and Social History* 1 (2004): 65–93.
24 On one of the massacres which received the most media coverage, see Mustafah Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).
25 Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley, "The Modalities of Nostalgia," *Current Sociology* 54, no. 6 (2006): 923–25.
26 The reasons for this lack of representation may be posed as hypotheses, but more specific and detailed research is needed to corroborate them. Some are linked to the death of some of these men after independence – in particular in Guinea – or to the lower level of internet access in certain African countries. The internet penetration rate amounts to around 43% in Africa, in comparison to 87.7% in Europe. For example, the rate in Guinea-Bissau is 44%, in Angola 26% and in Mozambique 20.3%. Data provided by Internet World Stats for 31 December 2021, available at https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm [last accessed July 11, 2022].
27 Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 14–15.
28 Cf. Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*.
29 Cf. Michael Moss, "Opening Pandora's Box: What Is an Archive in the Digital Environment?" in *What Are Archives?* ed. Louise Craven (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 71–88.
30 Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).
31 Not unconnected with the intertwinings of the current economic model. Essentially, although the aim of the platforms that stand out in this phase of the internet is to create content for their users, in fact most of the time they exploit the creators by capitalising on their work. This is also the case with Google which, in turning itself into the key tool for "organising the world's information," has developed a parasitic strategy for blogs. According to Geert Lovink "user-generated content" accumulates profiles which are later sold "[…] to advertisers as direct marketing data, and Google soon discovered it could profit from all the free information floating around the open Internet, from

amateur videos to news sites," in Geert Lovink, *Networks Without a Cause* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2011), 5.

32 One example of the instability of digital pages is the *Guerra Colonial* page created by RTP to accompany a major documentary by Joaquim Furtado, entitled *A Guerra* (2007). The page is no longer available: http://www.guerracolonial.org/home.

33 Dean, *Blog Theory*, 96.

34 Cabral, interview.

35 At the time of the interview. The figure now stands at around 862 members, according to data from 19 July 2022.

36 Luís Graça, Guinea veteran and founder member of the *Luís Graça e Camaradas da Guiné* blog. Interview by Diana Andringa, Lisbon (Portugal), May 15, 2018.

37 Headlines are becoming more eye-catching precisely because social networks influence the way in which news is consumed. The more eye-catching – or, in more extreme cases, sensationalist – a headline is, the more "clicks" or readers it will attract and consequently there will be more traffic on the newspaper's page.

38 Cf. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," and Jay Winter, "Thinking about Silence," in *Shadows of War*, eds. Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio, and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3–31.

39 Elsa Peralta, "The Return from Africa: Illegitimacy, Concealment, and the Non-Memory of Portugal's Imperial Collapse," *Memory Studies* 15, no. 1 (2022), 13.

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