

The 26/11 Network-Archive: Public Memory, History, and the Global in an Age of Terror

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This article examines the online discourses of public memory of the November 2008 or “26/11” terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India. The thesis of the article is that the 26/11 attacks were memorialized online in a hybrid “network-archive” of old and new media content generated by both media organizations and lay users, and that this network-archive is informed by a distinct mode of public memorialization in which historical responsibility is the criterion for bearing witness to terror. This mode of remembering may reflect a new kind of compact between memory and history. By analyzing the theme of 26/11 as “India’s 9/11,” the article shows how the relationship between memory and history in the 26/11 network-archive complicates understanding of the local and global meanings of acts of terror. In the online memory discourse of 26/11, the experience of terror appears to work as a bridge between local suffering and global belonging.

Keywords: 26/11, terror, memory, history, Mumbai, network, archive, global, local, public

Introduction

This article focuses on online discourses about the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India. Perpetrated at 11 locations over three days, they resulted in 166 dead and more than 300 injured.² The sites targeted in “26/11,” as the incident is now known in India, included the landmark Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, the Taj Mahal and Oberoi hotels, and Chabad House, a Jewish center in the city’s historic Colaba district.³ The choice of buildings—iconic emblems of the city and vibrant centers of its economic and social life—signaled that the attackers meant to wound Mumbai both literally and

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² The figure 166 excludes the nine terrorists killed by Indian security forces.

³ The convention followed in India places the day before the month; hence “26/11.”

symbolically (see Figure 1). It also indicated an intent to display the assault as a spectacle on a global media stage—a deliberate message to India, the United States, and Israel delivered within earshot of the entire world.

From the moment news of the assault broke on November 26 until Indian security forces wrested the last location under siege, Mumbai's famed Taj Mahal Hotel, back from the terrorists on November 28, local, national, and global media organizations covered the event extensively on television, in print, and online. Lay users on the Internet also discussed the attacks exhaustively. During and after the attacks, online media, particularly Web 2.0 technologies such as Twitter, Flickr, Wikipedia, and YouTube, served as source, record, and forum for reflection on the event.⁴ In his book, Twitter cofounder Biz Stone mentioned Indians' use of the micro-blogging platform to share information about the attacks in real time (Press Trust of India, 2014). The potential of social media did not escape the attention of the mainstream media, which used them as a vital source of information in their coverage (Beaumont, 2008).

This article's thesis consists of two propositions: first, that the 26/11 terrorist attacks were memorialized online in the form of a global, hybrid "network-archive" of old and new media content generated by credentialized media organizations and lay users; and second, that the logics of remembrance incorporated in the 26/11 network-archive include a distinct mode of public memorialization based on an idea of historical responsibility as the criterion for bearing witness to terror. The 26/11 network-archive reflects a new compact between memory and history. Manifesting itself in themes like the idea of 26/11 as "India's 9/11," it compels reconsideration of the relationship between terror as a local event and terror as a global event. It does so by suggesting that the experience of terror functions as a bridge between local suffering and global belonging in the online memory discourse of 26/11. This article conceptualizes the event of 26/11 as a site where communication and media studies, memory studies, and Internet studies intersect. It maps the online world of 26/11 in terms of a complex web of concepts drawn from these fields, traversing and engaging with debates about history and memory, the notion of bearing witness, the relationship between so-called new and old media, and the recalibration of the relationship between the local and global in the age of global media.

After making the case for studying online discourse about 26/11, the article theorizes the concept of the network-archive and outlines a methodological approach to studying it. The next section describes the 26/11 network-archive as a global, hybrid media space informed by a logic of memorialization grounded in a notion of historical responsibility and maps the relationship between history and memory at work here. The article then analyzes the relationship between terror as local event and global act in the 26/11 network-archive, as reflected in the trope of 26/11 as "India's 9/11." It concludes with some thoughts about the implications of online memory for the idea of community.

⁴ "Web 2.0" refers to the collaborative, dynamic Web enabled and driven by user participation, in contrast to the earlier paradigm of static Web content. See O'Reilly (2005) for a discussion.



Figure 1. The gruesome aftermath of the attacks at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus.

Source: <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-PbaXHav5GAU/TtCQEKbdcII/AAAAAAAAFZo/41nkk-YA4UQ/s1600/26-11-mubai-wallpapers.png>.

The Case for Studying Online Discourse About 26/11

Online discourse about 26/11 can be seen as a barometer of the changing landscape of the global Internet. It represents a distinct relationship between public memory and political community brokered by the Internet (Rajagopal, 2008; T. Roy, 2009). Cyberdiscussion about 26/11 conforms to a general online pattern regarding politically significant events like the assassination of Osama bin Laden, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the protests over a police officer's shooting of a black youth in the U.S. town of Ferguson, Missouri. In each case, online discourse supplemented mainstream media coverage, often as a critique of the latter. Osama bin Laden's assassination was "unknowingly" reported by a Twitter user based in Pakistan (Gross, 2011). A *New York Times* decision to change the headline of a story about four Palestinian children killed by Israeli armed forces prompted Twitter users to ridicule the paper's rewriting of history using the hashtag #NYThistory, which quickly went viral (Ayoub, 2014). Twitter also had an important role in spreading information about the crisis in Ferguson (Carr, 2014; Southall, 2014). In each instance, discussion of the event on Twitter reflected the real-time production of public memory, tweets becoming the stuff of future collective memories. Twitter became a source of perspectives other than those offered by political authorities and culturally authoritative institutions such as *The New York Times*. Given this pattern, the challenge online media pose to traditional media as the arbiters of information about the world bears investigating. New media politically reinvigorate the past by offering powerful tools

for creating alternative historical narratives. The tensions arising anew between official history and public memory have revived questions of who has the right to speak for the past and the criteria for determining the authenticity of competing accounts of the past. The 26/11 network-archive is freighted with these tensions about history and memory, signalling another reason for studying it.

Finally, the online discourse of 26/11 centers on the notion of India as a victim of local and global histories of terrorism. It is worth examining how the current potentialities of Internet communication, within a global zeitgeist and imaginary in which terror looms large, shape memories of events in specific locations, in this case, Mumbai. As more people in countries like India, with its fast-growing user base of 243 million, bridge the digital divide, they will increasingly shape conversations across the Internet (Chari, 2014). Study of the 26/11 network-archive can offer insight into how a national online culture such as that in India maps onto a wider universe of online culture.

The Network-Archive: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

I propose that the concept of the "network-archive" incorporating features of both network and archive provides a viable analytic frame for understanding the universe of online content generated by an event. The frame allows one to address the logic of dispersal of information about the event and at the same time assess the accumulated content about the event as a substantive repository of collected memory.⁵ The network-archive can be seen as a product of the "network society," which is a form of global social space structured by flows of images, information, and ideas (Castells, 2009). These flows are driven primarily by the Internet. The network-archive is sustained by "spreadable" media, that is, media which is reworked, reframed, and recirculated by active user cultures (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013). "Spreadability," as Jenkins et al. (2013) define it, "refers to the potential—both technical and cultural—for audiences to share content for their own purposes, sometimes with the permission of rights holders, sometimes against their wishes" (p. 3).

While spreadable "networked" culture predates recent advancements in digital media, such developments have greatly enhanced the speed and scope of circulation of content among user communities (Jenkins et al., 2013). Extending these arguments, the network-archive of repurposed and networked content can be seen as hybrid in at least two senses: It is an amalgam of "old" and "new" media, and it also combines content produced by professional media organizations and lay users alike. Additionally, the network-archive recalls Bolter and Grusin's important concept of "remediation" or the contingent, unanticipated use of older media forms in configurations made possible by new developments in media (2000). Lastly, it is useful to distinguish between an unorganized or "natural" archive online and intentional archives in cyberspace that respond to an event with deliberate collection, curation, and organization of content. The online discourse about 26/11 is an example of the former, whereas a resource such as the September 11 Digital Archive (<http://911digitalarchive.org/>) typifies the latter. To elaborate on the distinction, the September 11 Digital Archive is a planned project of memorialization with

⁵ My definition of the network-archive thus goes beyond Ernst's argument that cyberspace transforms the archive from a store of static memory to "an economy of circulation" (2012, p. 99).

gatekeepers and clear institutional affiliations. Shaped by well-defined ethical and political considerations, it represents an attempt to “foster some positive legacies of those terrible events by allowing people to tell their stories, making those stories available to a wide audience, providing historical context for understanding those events and their consequences” (“About,” n.d., para. 5). The 26/11 network-archive, however, has no such overarching single governing organizational or ethical principle. It is a broader, more diffuse constellation of content that exists in a condition prior to second-order filtering.

These considerations point to a set of methodological strategies for studying network-archives: (a) identifying different imperatives of spreadability or logics of dispersal of content; (b) identifying the heterogeneous range of materials from various media genres and their combinations; (c) assessing the links between these media sources; and (d) identifying the logics of memorialization at work in the discourse. Utilizing this approach, the article analyzes the 26/11 archive-network using Foucault’s method of archaeology, which does not seek to identify intentionality, causality, or a determining subjective consciousness at work in an archive but aims instead to describe discursive “practices” (Foucault, 1972). Archaeology enables a gamut of descriptive analyses for one or more practices as objects of inquiry. It helps one think through what makes certain practices possible at all and discern the varied forms in which these practices flourish, survive, or leave traces. The archaeological method also allows for identification of discursive similarities across heterogeneous types of statements in the same archive. Discussions of the November 2008 attacks in blogs, newspaper articles, tweets, and YouTube posts can thus be treated as parts of a single body of utterances, despite their variation in formal terms (a function of the constraints imposed by each platform or technological genre). In this light, even though a sense of bearing witness that might resemble “consciousness” may be evident in the 26/11 archive, these discussions should be taken as proof of *practices* of recording history and memorialization rather than indicators of psychological motivations.

The Public Memory of 26/11 in Cyberspace

Globality, Hybridity, and Bearing Witness in the 26/11 Network-Archive

Once news of the attacks broke on November 26, 2008, the important features of the 26/11 network-archive developed immediately. The imperatives of the spreadability governing its development were globality, hybridity, and an idea of bearing witness founded on a tension between the respective commitments to historical responsibility and journalistic credibility. The public memory of the event is informed by these logics of dispersal of information.

From its inception, 26/11 was coded as a global media event. Not only were the eyes of the world on India for those three days, but conglomeration trends had already incorporated many of the major Indian news organizations covering it into the global media system.⁶ The media conversations about the

⁶ Rupert Murdoch’s 21st Century Fox had a presence in India through the Star News television channel (renamed ABP news since 2012). The CNN-IBN channel is jointly owned by India’s Network 18 group and Time Warner Inc.

attacks illustrated the operations of a "mediascape" comprising both the media production system that enables worldwide circulation of media images and the content of such flows (Appadurai, 1996). From the familiar CNN- and BBC-style screen format to the repeated explanations of the terrorists' political affiliations, the tone and content of televisual coverage of the event showed that channels were addressing both Indian and global audiences. Online, discussions about the event began circulating in a transnational media space. On the very day of November 26, 2008, Michael Arrington, founder of the influential technology website TechCrunch, collated a series of tweets from first-hand accounts of the attacks, noting that "Twitter isn't the place for solid facts yet—the situation is way too disorganized. But it's where the news is breaking" (Arrington, 2008, para. 2). Yet, as it happened, news organizations did draw on social media in developing their accounts of the "facts" of the event.

Old and new media functioned together, and media professionals and lay users interacted to create a history of the event. Writing in the *Telegraph* on November 27, Beaumont (2008) noted the use of Twitter, blogs featuring photographs of the attacks, a Wikipedia page on the attacks that updated information in real time, and a map of the attacks set up on Google Maps (Figure 2).

As Beaumont pointed out, mainstream media organizations like CNN were using materials sent in by lay users and following new media forums for relevant information. Media coverage of 26/11 displayed features of the "hybrid model" of communication used in Pakistan in the aftermath of Benazir Bhutto's assassination, when "professional and amateur journalists generated and disseminated news by whatever means possible [and] international mainstream media outfits such as CNN, the BBC, and the UK-based Channel 4 increasingly sought out hyperlocal reporting posted to local blogs, YouTube, and Facebook" (Yusuf, 2008, as cited in Jenkins, 2009, para. 5). Like the coverage of the events in Pakistan, the 26/11 network-archive was also hybrid in that it bridged the local and global, transforming hyperlocal perspectives into an account meant for global consumption.

But the relationship between traditional and new media went well beyond the latter operating as a source of information for the former. Though for analytical purposes old and new media can be seen as separate in the 26/11 network-archive, in practice they operate contiguously. Bolter and Grusin's idea of the "double logic of remediation" (2000, p. 5) explains this feature of the 26/11 media space. Remediation, while reflecting the imperative of "immediacy" or the desire for unmediated communication, also involves "hypermediacy" or the use of older media in newer media technologies. According to Bolter and Grusin, any form of media will be in "constant dialectic with earlier media" (2000, p. 50) putting these older media forms to new uses without necessarily transcending them or even needing to do so.

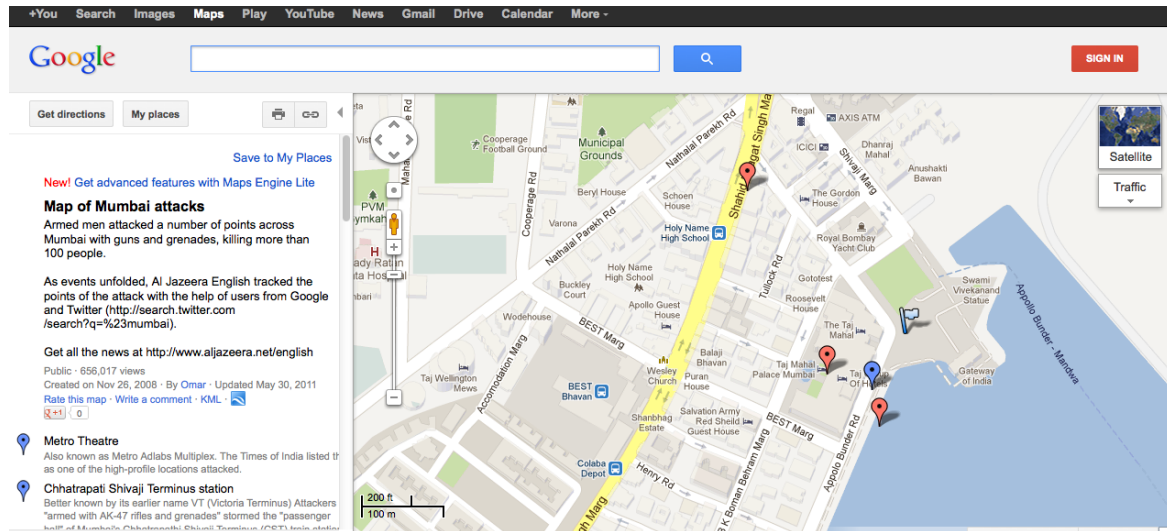


Figure 2. Original version of map of Mumbai attacks (created November 26, 2008, by Omar).⁷

Source:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?ll=18.922445,72.832242&ie=UTF8&msa=0&spn=0.007054,0.007864&z=17&hl=en&mid=zFbqIiC8jIaI.kRi7H5wzIE-0>.

YouTube is a good example of hypermediacy. Its content comprises much remediation of television and film in the form of clips of varying length. With capabilities like real-time streaming, YouTube also features the quality of immediacy. The first few results of a search on YouTube for "mumbai terror attacks" include a set of excerpts from television shows posted by various users, an advertisement for a film, and a clip associated with a blog (Figure 3). The repurposing of content in remediated online media space dislodges such content from its original context of production, the expectations of its originally intended audience, and the semantic constraints imposed on it by its institutional origins. Though old media content—such as an excerpt from a television program—is not made unrecognizable in this new arrangement, it cannot be seen simply as "old" media in a "new" media space. It becomes part of a changed media object, implying altered technical characteristics, a different audience (which may overlap with the television audience), its own claims to represent an event, and its own grounds for evaluation.⁸

⁷ The URL was accessed via Wikipedia in April 2013. The image has since changed.

⁸ For this reason, in the 26/11 network-archive, content "proper," such as excerpted film clips on YouTube or blog entries, are inseparable from a meta-layer of annotations, for example, comments. Within the network-archive, all these forms of expression must be treated as first-order content.

The screenshot displays the YouTube search results for the query "mumbai terror attacks". The search bar at the top contains the text "mumbai terror attacks". The left sidebar includes the YouTube logo, a search icon, and navigation options such as "What to Watch", "BEST OF YOUTUBE", and "Browse channels". The main content area lists five video results:

- Kasab Caught On Tape - Mumbai Terrorist Attacks** by live9tv • 2 years ago • 367,387 views. Description: "Don't miss this video of the Mumbai Terrorist attacks caught on tape!"
- Mumbai Terror Attacks: chilling footage from the people trapped inside** by Journeyman Pictures • 11 months ago • 148,713 views. Description: "Trapped in Terror: Mumbai hotel attack - India: As Al-Qaeda create a terrifying hostage situation in Kenya, this report explores the ..."
- Mumbai Terror Attack Watch NSG successful in mission against Mumbai attackers** by ChicagoRevival • 5 years ago • 939,220 views. Description: "http://chicagorevival.blogspot.com/ Nariman House and the Oberoi Trident were cleared of hostages by Indian commandos."
- '60 Hours' of 26/11 Mumbai terror attack** by IBNLive • 2 years ago • 732,793 views. Description: "A special CNN-IBN show on the third anniversary of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, in which 166 people lost their lives."
- Mumbai terror attacks: Ajmal Kasab hanged, Pakistan reacts cautiously** by IBNLive • 1 year ago • 175,891 views.

Figure 3. Screenshot of YouTube search results for "Mumbai terror attacks" on September 10, 2014.

Global, spreadable, hybrid, and remediated, the 26/11 network-archive operated as a zone of political contestation soon after its birth. It entailed a complicated relationship—at times mutually supportive but often antagonistic—between professional media organizations, such as CNN-IBN, NDTV, and *Outlook*, and ordinary users of social media. Aspects of 26/11, from the appropriateness of the Indian authorities' response to the role of Pakistani intelligence agencies in the attacks, were debated threadbare in the space. More revealingly, though, each of the two types of media entities involved in covering the event raised serious questions about the credibility of the other.

An article on CNN's website sounded a cautious note about the massive volume of unverified information on social media networks (Busari, 2008). Two memes circulating on Twitter posited that the Indian government had banned tweeting about the attacks and that the terrorists were monitoring tweets to keep tabs on the actions of Indian security forces (Beaumont, 2008; Busari, 2008). Bloggers, in turn, criticized mainstream media coverage, especially that of the television networks. Celebrities and ordinary citizens alike took to online media to voice disapproval of the hyperbolic nature of the coverage, captured

in the image of Indian news anchor Arnab Goswami screaming about Indian human rights activists' culpability in the attacks. Television networks and journalists were also reproached for jeopardizing the security forces' mission and lives by revealing vital information about their location (Goldenboy, 2009; Great Bong, 2008).

Together with the mutual antagonism expressed by practitioners in each domain, the ways in which new and old media used one another blurred, leveled, and even inverted the hierarchy of authority between the two sources of discourse in the 26/11 network-archive. The partly supportive, partly antagonistic relationship between the two provided the basis for a new, purportedly ethical, rationale of historical responsibility to emerge as a criterion for bearing witness. This rationale took shape as an implicit ground of a right to articulate one's reflections about the event, even if the event itself was not experienced first-hand. The credibility of responses to 26/11 was judged as much by whether these responses spoke adequately to the demands of history as by conventional notions of media professionalism and rigor. The point here is not that online discourse about the attacks was necessarily more truthful or historically credible than other accounts. The point, rather, is that the online discourse reflected a struggle for redefining the criteria for the appropriate way to respond to and record an event like 26/11. These redefined criteria were not seen as applying exclusively to the professional media. And, as an overarching ethical imperative that applied to *any* kind of response to 26/11, they had the effect of further destabilizing the boundary between professional and lay responses to the tragedy.

This tension is highlighted in an interesting reflection by a blogger, Great Bong (2008), who articulates a critique of mainstream (primarily televisual) media coverage of the attacks. Unsparing of individual journalists and networks, Great Bong attributes the problematic mainstream media coverage of the 26/11 attacks largely to the Indian media's shift toward a U.S.-style profit-driven model. Another reflection of the struggle for authority within media space is the channel NDTV's threat of legal action against a blogger, Chaitanya Kunte, for his criticism of journalist Barkha Dutt's coverage of the attacks. (Rezwan, 2009). NDTV'S legal threat provoked widespread outrage among Indians online (Rezwan, 2009). It was no accident that Barkha in a program on Dutt, who has her own widely watched talk show, chose to defend herself against the accusations on *Newslandry*, an Indian news site (NL Team, 2012). The popular legitimacy of user-generated Web 2.0 perspectives on this issue points to a questioning of traditional structures of journalistic authority and a shift in the nature of the relationship between the field of journalism and other spheres of social life (Benson, 2006).⁹

The attributes of globality, hybridity, and a populist idea of bearing witness crystallize in two nodes of the 26/11 network-archive that combine rich collections of content and networks of links: the set of Wikipedia pages about the attacks and the collection of attack-related materials on SAJAforum, a blog associated with the South Asian Journalists Association. The main page related to the attack on Wikipedia ("2008 Mumbai Attacks," n.d.) is exhaustively documented, footnoted, cited, and linked to internal and

⁹ Benson offers a useful definition of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the field that applies to the news media and other fields: "A social sector at least partially autonomous from external pressures and exhibiting some degree of internal homogeneity, which taken as a whole is able to exert a significant amount of power vis-à-vis other social sectors" (Benson, 2006, p. 189).

external sources. It covers numerous aspects of the event, including chronology, the attacks' locations, political background, and aftermath. Among the related pages linked to this main page are a meticulously documented list of media errors in reporting the event ("Erroneous Reporting on the 2008 Mumbai Attacks," n.d.), details about casualties of the attacks ("Casualties of the 2008 Mumbai Attacks," n.d.), and material on reactions to the attacks ("Reactions to the 2008 Mumbai Attacks," n.d.). The South Asian Journalists Association or SAJA is a U.S.-based nonprofit that offers resources for mediapersons of South Asian origin in North America as well as media personnel whose work relates to South Asia. Launched as a blog in 2006, SAJAforum is an online initiative of the organization ("About SAJAforum," n.d.). The SAJAforum resources on the attacks, in a hybrid, remediated fashion, assembled a wide array of old media and new media content from professional media organizations and lay users: SAJA's original programming, specifically 15 hours of webcasts with over 50 guests carried out over five days; journalistic sources in South Asia available to speak to media organizations and media organizations looking to connect with journalists; transcripts of media conversations pertaining to the attacks, as with then Pakistani President Asif Zardari; collections of op-eds; testimonies by people who knew or were related to victims of the attacks; reactions from U.S. organizations; notices inviting the blog's readers to critique the media coverage (see Figure 4).

SAJA FORUM
www.sajaforum.org

SAJA LINKS
Join SAJA now

About SAJAforum, and leaving comments
RESOURCE: Covering Sri Lanka
RESOURCE: Covering the 2008 Presidential Race
RESOURCE: Mumbai Attacks 2008
RESOURCE: South Asian blogs
RESOURCE: The media scene in India
RESOURCE: Tracking South Asian Heads of U.S. Companies
Tracking South Asian TV anchors on U.S. TV

RECENT POSTS
Mohsin Hamid Is On A Roll: Latest 'Self-Help' Book Is Just The Beginning
The New Blog On The Block: 'The Aerogram' carves out South Asian-American niche

RESOURCE: MUMBAI ATTACKS 2008
SAJA's coverage of the 2008 Mumbai attacks

On Wednesday, Nov. 26, 2008, from 1-2 pm New York time, SAJA was hosting a [webcast featuring Rinku Singh and Dinesh Patel](#), the first two India-born men to be signed by a U.S. baseball team, when news broke about the attacks in Mumbai. We mentioned on the air what we knew about the situation and announced a 3 pm webcast about the attacks.

Over the next five days, using [BlogTalkRadio](#), we hosted over [15 hours of programming with more than 50 guests](#) (experts on Mumbai, eyewitnesses, journalists, etc). In addition to those shows, we worked closely with more than 50 U.S. and international networks, helping provide contacts, background information and more.

On Dec. 17, 2010, we [co-hosted an in-person panel and webcast](#) with Mumbai-connected authors Salman Rushdie, Suketu Mehta and Mira Kamdar with Asia Society and the Indo-American Arts Council.

==> [Read coverage of SAJAforum's coverage:](#)

- [Poynter.org](#)
- [LA Times](#)
- [NPR's Morning Edition](#)
- [WorldFocus on PBS](#) (was one of 5 most popular WorldFocus interviews of the year)
- [BlogTalkRadio case study \(PDF\)](#)

This coverage was one of the most important projects in the 15+ years of SAJA and we are grateful to our members and friends around the world for their continued support of SAJA.

Highlights:
[Webcasts: breaking news and commentary](#) (including archives and list of speakers, by show)
[SAJA/Asia Society Panel and webcast with noted authors \(with video\)](#)

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Arun Venugopal
Reporter
WNYC radio *** ON SAJAforum HIATUS ***

Figure 4. Screenshot of SAJAforum coverage of the November 2008 attacks.

Neither SAJAforum nor the set of Wikipedia pages on the attacks divides neatly into professional versus lay media content. Neither do they easily parse into old and new media. Within the SAJAforum resource, professional media organizations and lay users draw on, link to, and criticize as well as praise each other. While this model of credibility stresses accuracy, as conventional notions of media

professionalism do, it also embodies the notions of bearing witness and of the value inherent in the acts of documenting, recording, and commenting. Importantly, both resources appear reflexive and carefully document their relationship to mainstream media. The SAJAforum resource introduces itself by describing how it came to be, referring to acknowledgments in traditional media about the SAJAforum coverage of 26/11. Wikipedia's coverage of the events includes two important pages linked to each other: "2008 Mumbai Attacks" (n.d.) chronicles the event, while "Erroneous Reporting on the 2008 Mumbai Attacks" (n.d.) operates as a meta-commentary on media coverage. These attributes can be interpreted as practices of reflexivity to indicate cognizance of their difference from (and relationship with) traditional media and a sense of their particular responsibility of responding to the event in a way that effectively exploits the possibilities of new media.

Finally, the resources reveal the unevenly open-ended nature of the memorialization processes in the 26/11 network-archive, in which material related to the attacks is continually added, commented on, excerpted, and remediated online. The SAJAforum resource added material until 2010. The Wikipedia pages on the attacks are constantly updated. Other elements in the network-archive also reflect its living nature. Material is frequently uploaded on YouTube, as regular searches for the term "26/11" reveal. On the anniversary of the attack, publications carry features on the impact of the event (Amaria, 2010). The *India Real Time* blog on *The Wall Street Journal* website features an ongoing series of posts tagged "26/11 Mumbai attacks" ("All Posts Tagged 26/11," 2012). Twitter, likewise, continues to resonate with posts about the endless, ongoing aftermath of the events.

Though uncoordinated and not deliberately crowdsourced as a collective effort, the initiative taken by users to keep the 26/11 archive-network extant raises a series of questions. What is the texture of the public memory of 26/11, predicated as it is on an idea of historical responsibility? What is the relationship between history and memory here? What impulses do the structures of memory embodied in the 26/11 network archive reflect, and what effects do they achieve? This article now turns to examine these questions.

Memory and History in the 26/11 Network-Archive

Scholarship in media studies and memory studies has shown that questions of memory and history are fundamentally but often uneasily related, and that in the highly mediated modernity we inhabit, various forms of media are key interlocutors in this relationship (J. Assmann & Czaplika, 1995; Edy, 1999; Kitch, 2002, 2003; Neiger, Meyers, & Zandberg, 2011; Nora, 1989). The 26/11 network-archive is a dynamic example of an online space of "memory-history" (Nora, 1989), in which official historical accounts and popular memory of events cannot be easily separated, troubling the sense of what constitutes both history and memory (Pandey, 2001). The 26/11 network-archive represents a new kind of engagement between memory and history in at least two important respects.

First, public memory in the 26/11 network-archive exhibits characteristics of diverse forms of mediated and nonmediated memory but does not necessarily conform entirely to any one of them. Rather, it is autonomous—an archive of memory beyond the institutional apparatuses of the state, academy, and journalistic field, albeit enmeshed to varying degrees with all three. As a field of diverse, overlapping kinds

of memory, the domains proper of local, national, and global memory are not always distinct in the 26/11 network-archive.

Assmann saw the overwhelming presence of memory discourses in contemporary culture partly as a response to the "experience of traumatic or 'hot' pasts that will not fade away" (2011, p. xi). The event of 26/11 qualifies as a traumatic past unlikely to be forgotten that is kept alive, in mediated form, in a self-perpetuating cycle. The editors of a recent volume on the subject noted that in the present, memory discourses are inseparable from the condition of globalization and need to be studied as such (A. Assmann & Conrad, 2010), a claim borne out by the global character of the 26/11 network-archive. Jan Assmann and Czaplika used the term "communicative memory" to refer to practices of collective memorialization "based exclusively on everyday communications" (1995, p. 126). Such memory is nonstandardized, disorganized, and lacking in thematic consistency. It is also spontaneous and reciprocal, typified in the back-and-forth conversation between two people who can exchange the roles of speaker and listener. Its "proximity to the everyday" distinguishes it from "cultural memory" (pp. 128–129), which is remote and distant from everyday life. Because of its remediated, spreadable, cumulative nature, the online media space of the 26/11 network-archive includes some aspects of communicative memory, seen for instance in quick conversational exchanges on Twitter. It can also contain a purposefully planned series of stories related to 26/11, like the ones featured on *The Wall Street Journal's* "India Real Time" blog, which, as time passes, may come to resemble a repository of cultural memory.

General traits of mediated memory too are visible in the 26/11 network-archive. Edy proposed that "as history 'speeds' up . . . the media become evermore responsible for our memory of events," and that given the reach of media, "their reminders are relatively difficult to avoid" (1999, p. 72). Media, Edy noted, are a more effective vehicle for communication about the past than are formal pedagogical models such as classroom learning, institutional repositories, or symbolic objects like museums and statues. Extending Edy's argument, I suggest that the reach of spreadable media gives events like 26/11 an abiding presence in cultural consciousness. Discussion of every subsequent act of terrorism in India, for instance, has referred to 26/11, with the archive of memory about the latter readily available for reference.

Neiger et al. used the concept of "media memory" to refer to "collective pasts that are narrated by the media, through the use of the media, and about the media" (2011, p. 1). Media memory of this kind operates through the media's ability to make claims about the past and act as "memory agents" (Neiger et al., 2011). Indeed, in the remediated frame of the network-archive, the narrative of 26/11 weaves memories of the event organically with claims about the media through hybrid media, fusing all these features. Drawing on Margalit's (2002) concept of standardized accounts of memory developed through communication, Ashuri argued that such shared memory allows an event to be experienced by community members "who were not there at the time of the event" (2011, p. 105). The 26/11 network-archive incorporates such standardized tropes and themes, as the term 26/11 itself indicates. It also has traits of shared memory, for instance, the fact that those commenting on the terror attacks may not have witnessed them firsthand.

Second, as a repository of collective, cultural, and mediated memory, the 26/11 network-archive does not necessarily privilege any single account of the past. As argued earlier, the 26/11 network-archive introduces the idea that the witnessing of terror, even secondhand, is an appropriately ethical basis for producing a history of 26/11. The mode of remembering itself is as vitally important as any substantive historical or factual claim. Here the principle of performativity is yoked to the act of memory and the imperative of archiving. As analysis of the theme of 26/11 as "India's 9/11" shows, the 26/11 network-archive reveals a new compact between memory and history with important implications for the understanding of 26/11, and of terror more broadly, as both local and global event.

26/11 as India's 9/11: The Experience of Terror as Bridge Between Local Suffering and Global Belonging

The term 26/11 directly invokes 9/11, of course. The term 26/11 very quickly became part of the Indian and international political and media discourse about the 2008 attacks. From the outset, Indian television coverage of the attacks was framed with reference to 9/11 (T. Roy, 2009). U.S. Senator John McCain referred to the attacks as "India's 9/11" (ibid.), and numerous media organizations used the formulation, as did lay users on social media (Chossudovsky, 2008; Cooper, 2009; Monitor's Editorial Board, 2008; Smith & Mukherjee, 2008). Whether the term originated in a newer or older form of media does not matter. Even if it was first used on, say, television, it was quickly incorporated into new media economies of circulation and indigenized by the logic of remediation. It is still in use today in ways that deliberately emphasize the connection between 26/11 and 9/11 (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Tweet on September 11, 2014, comparing 9/11 to 26/11.
Source: <https://twitter.com/dhavalkamdar4u/status/510284108967477248>.

However, the use of the term was not uncontested. Writing in the *Guardian*, Arundhati Roy (2008) depicted the term as fundamentally incoherent. In a *New York Times* op-ed, Amitav Ghosh (2008) argued that despite some similarities the comparison was problematic, partly because of the very different historical circumstances behind the two attacks and partly because the implied equivalence could pave the way for a similarly aggressive militaristic response from India. In an incisive critique, scholar Tania Roy argued that the metaphor of 26/11 as India's 9/11 reflected an amnesia. Roy saw the idiom as a kind of "rhetorical capital" transplanted from the American to the Indian context, enabling New Yorkers and residents of Mumbai to be linked as victims of a shared global history of terror (T. Roy, 2009). The round-the-clock television coverage of the attacks, she argued, privileged the experience of Mumbai's elites and entailed an obliteration of the historically situated identities of the city's residents, designating them as bodies beyond local politics and community. In doing so, Roy noted, the coverage effaced the complex histories of the city and wider geographical region.

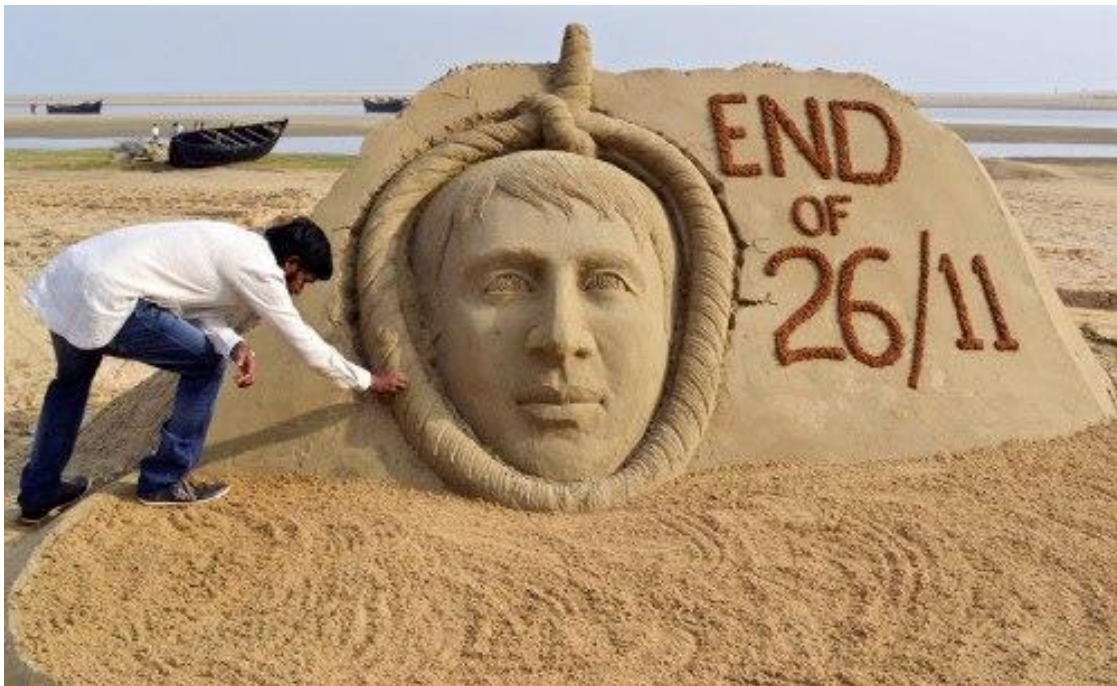


Figure 6. An image of the hanging of Mohammed Ajmal Kasab.

Source: <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/11/21/street-celebrations-after-india-executes-last-mumbai-attacker/>. Credit: Reuters/Stringer.

These arguments about the two events' differing historical genealogies and the class bias in Indian television coverage of 26/11 are persuasive. As the perspectives of Ghosh and Roy imply, anchoring 26/11 to 9/11 is only one way to plot global history or a global history of terror. The invocation of 9/11 in the 26/11 network-archive, however, deserves to be seen through more than one optic because

it mirrors a more complex set of relationships between the global and local. The trope of 26/11 as India's 9/11 is arguably what enabled the experience of terror to be articulated as a bridge between local suffering and global belonging. It did so by effectively combining comparative, affective, performative, and phenomenological imperatives.

The narrative of the highly visible terrorist acts of November 2008 was all but certain to be drawn into the gravitational pull of the imaginary of 9/11. In a fine study, Kitch (2003) showed how the U.S. news media sought to make sense of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks through a "cultural narrative" based on the themes of "courage, sacrifice, faith, redemption, and patriotism" (p. 213). Reinforced in other settings of U.S. social life from churches to schools, this collective national story took the form of a ritual of remembering and grieving (2003). The idea of 26/11 as 9/11, inasmuch as it represented an Indian narrative of suffering, foregrounded both similarities to and differences from the U.S. case. It could instantly draw on the affective power and readily available narrative of 9/11, while clearing a space for expressing the sense of the experience of terror as a distinctive reality of Indian life. The object represented by the term 26/11 was grafted on to an ideoscape structured around the imaginary of 9/11, even as it was proposed as the basis of an ideoscape of its own (Figure 6).¹⁰

One crucial difference between the two narratives is that online memory discourses of 26/11, though amply marked by references to patriotism, courage, and recovery, were more contested than the consensus about 9/11 shared by U.S. news media and other institutions. This might be due to the arguably larger role online media had in shaping the narrative of 26/11 compared to that of 9/11, in which television media may have played a more dominant role. The 26/11 network-archive juxtaposes the idiom of 26/11 as India's 9/11 with a critique of that idiom's very existence. Narratives predicated on its use are accompanied by counternarratives. If the theme of 9/11 is hegemonic in its colonization of perceptions and discussions about terror in present times,, the somewhat unsettled status of the object of 26/11 suggests that sources for counterhegemonic practice are always at hand in online media spaces.

The construction of the memory of 26/11 with deliberate reference to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States also emphasized the performative as the voice of the local: It stressed a symbolic point about Indians' right to assert their local historical interpretations about the world while also drawing attention to their substantive claims about the global significance of Indian suffering. By invoking 9/11, residents of Mumbai, Indians within India, and Indians overseas asserted the *right* to compare the events of November 2008 to those of September 11, 2001. In doing so, they made a statement about suffering, recognition, and a claim to equality. The comparison exemplified the performative historicity signaled by the act of documenting and chronicling, highlighted above. The use of "26/11" can thus be seen as both a global and a local practice, and the very act of usage as an attempt to forge links between the global, national, and local.

¹⁰ It also had the perhaps unintended effect of provincializing American exceptionalists' claims that the United States is the main target of global terrorism.

Further, the comparison of 26/11 and 9/11 proposed an affective and vicarious phenomenology of belonging as a basis for historicity itself. It provided an alternative to notions of professional journalistic objectivity, academic credibility, and state-sanctioned power as authoritative grounds for remembering the event. It did not require an agent of memory to have actually been present at the attack sites or even to have been in Mumbai during the attacks. In the 26/11 network-archive, the claim to a relationship with Mumbai was a claim to having experienced terror, virtually, via proxy or empathy. In the Indian context, access to cyberspace is no doubt subject to a political economy of unequal access. Given the heterogeneous nature of online space, however, use of the trope by lay users alongside international and Indian media organizations cannot be understood as merely a compact between Mumbai's elites and newsmen from similar social backgrounds. If, as T. Roy (2009) suggests, television coverage focused disproportionately on certain locations such as the Taj Mahal Hotel, thereby ascribing greater value to the wealthier citizens of Mumbai and the globe who might have been there, online media discourses related to the November 26, 2008, events mapped the city wrought by terror as a network of affective relations between residents from diverse social backgrounds.

The digitally mediated and remediated world has generated a standardized vocabulary for recounting a past and articulating political claims. State and nonstate actors alike use terms such as holocaust, genocide, terror, and torture in the contemporary ideoscape. Relatedly, a global media culture may be priming people to respond to events such as terrorist attacks in specific ways and with certain vocabularies. Grusin (2010) has argued that media in the post-9/11 world have been subject to a logic of "premediation" that "works to prevent citizens of the global mediasphere from experiencing again the kind of systemic or traumatic shock produced by the events of 9/11 by perpetuating an almost constant, low level of fear or anxiety about another terrorist attack" (p. 2). One may argue that the logic of premediation was unsuccessful because the terrorist attacks of November 2008 did produce a traumatic response among Indians. However, one could also argue conversely that the theme of 26/11 as 9/11 was a preemptive attempt to make sense of the violence and terror and a mechanism to cope with the possibility of trauma. At the very least, the logics of global media circulation and the handy comparison to 9/11 may have provided reference points and a pedagogical framework for comprehending the local event of 26/11.

The multifaceted engagement of local and global meanings of the event of terror in the 26/11 network-archive show that the idiom of 26/11 as India's 9/11 cannot be grasped solely as a possible effect of historical amnesia or representation of a blinkered political vision. The theme also functions as the cornerstone of a framework for constructing a memory that is locally just and authentic as well as globally resonant. This article concludes by considering what the texture of the local and global public memory of 26/11 in the network-archive might imply for the very idea of community.

Conclusion: Memory and Community Online

Insofar as online media give rise to new patterns and expressions of memory, they do so in historically and politically contingent circumstances. Assmann argued that in our memory-obsessed age,

we have witnessed that far from automatically fading and ceding to historical scholarship, memory has been sharpened and reshaped in historically new ways. We are currently facing, reconstructing, and discussing new forms of memory that open up an access to the past that is distinct from and complementary to that which is provided by historical scholarship. (A. Assmann, 2011, pp. 5–6)

The communicative potentialities of online media, combined with the new forces of the zeitgeist, have enabled powerful and often unexpected reshapings of memory and community in recent times.

Simultaneously existing as local, national, and global space, online media structures like the 26/11 network-archive enable the practice of individual private remembrance to be alchemized as the memory of a public that is likewise local, national and global. Online media are revealed as a third space with its own conventions of community and memory, distinct from the domains of both professional and official authority. The remarkable visibility of the trope of 26/11 as India's 9/11 in cyberspace also indicates an intriguing paradox within expressions of memory and community online. Online communication promotes the emergence of modular, spreadable vocabularies and standardized modes of memory that are easy to share. On the one hand, there is a leveling of nuance in such standardized expressions. A similar flattening applies to epistemological hierarchy and authority: Online discourses, blogs, and online forums often treat historical sources, hearsay, comments, and media accounts as equivalent. On the other hand, these developments could represent a democratization of access to the production of memory—that is, an expanded right to contribute to the public memory of an event, new ethical grounds for memory, and a broader sense of what counts as evidence of memory.



Figure 7. The Taj Mahal hotel aflame.

Source: <http://media.newindianexpress.com/4.jpg/2013/11/26/article1912197.ece/binary/original/4.jpg>.

Finally, the online media space offers the possibility of resisting cooption by hegemonic narratives of memory and community. The multifaceted, rhizomatic, partially fragmented structure of public memory about the event of 26/11 online, for instance, did not permit the consolidation of a single narrative of national community or privilege a single account of the past. Televisual treatment of events like 9/11 and 26/11 inaugurated a certain kind of sacralized, spectacular understanding of the events, symbolized in the ritual of incessant replaying of images: planes crashing into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, for example, or the Taj Mahal hotel aflame (Figure 7). Online media, by subjecting these images to remediation, juxtaposing them with other discursive forms, and embedding them in conflicting and complementary narratives, provincialized this understanding and dislodged certitudes about it.

This article has attempted to articulate a theoretical frame that achieves two broad objectives: to bring the online universe of 26/11 into coherent focus as an object of study, and to enable a dispersed, heterogeneous assemblage of content on the topic to be parsed in terms of a delicate network of relations

between sets of concepts: bearing witness, memory and history, the relation between new and old media, and the relationship between the local and global in the present historical moment. The theoretical formulation of the network-archive and the methodology of archaeology are critical to these objectives. The former promotes thinking that transcends the divide between dynamic and static media content and the respective ongoing sedimentation processes of memory and of already accumulated memory, while also recognizing the productive tension between the domains. And applying the methodology of Foucauldian archaeology to cyberspace to identify changes and mutations in discourse online enables identification of particularities in the style and mode of online memory of an event such as 26/11.

Shaped by the tension between evidentiary and affective idioms of historicity, the renegotiation between the global and the local, and differing modes of memory, the 26/11 network-archive embodies new imaginings of community fostered by today's new media. Gyanendra Pandey (2001) has said that "violence and community constitute each other but . . . they do so in many different ways" (pp. 3–4). Certainly the online media space can be a site of violent, exclusive, undemocratic expressions of community. As the 26/11 network-archive suggests, though, it can also be a site of ongoing community building where local, national, and global identities are renegotiated on egalitarian terms; a source of a genuinely transnational historical sensibility; and the fount of a universal language of affect in which to ground a sense of the past.

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