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ARTICLE

Rancière, political theory and activist community appraisal

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ABSTRACT

Researchers must continually discriminate between competing sources of evidence, knowledge and theoretical justification, selecting who we believe to be credible informants and what we perceive as reliable testimony. In the keeping of records, particularly in the act of appraisal, we utilise methods of evaluation that reflect the social processes, institutional procedures, and interpersonal influences common to our disciplinary milieu. Viewing activist community recordkeeping and archiving through the lens of Rancière and SMT (Social Movement Theory), this article extends theoretical discussion into areas silent in the archival discourse to date. Activists working in radical community recordkeeping environments and archival situations face political and epistemic choices with regard to how and why they represent certain subjects and materials. The authors explore these contentions through the experiences of two such radical archives: Archimovi, an Italian archive of radical social movements; and the archive in a records continuum sense, the radical recordkeeping of animal activist group Direct Action Everywhere, based in the United States.

KEYWORDS

Social epistemology; living archive; radical recordkeeping; Rancière; political theory

Introduction

> Knowledge is only knowledge. But the control of knowledge – that is politics.
>
> Bruce Sterling – *Distraction*

Reflecting upon the practices and self-understandings of radical archives raises important questions about the meaning and purpose of records within the process of social change. In what follows, we will explore two such archives, seeking to address some of the key questions that they raise both about efforts to understand social movements themselves, as well as the practices of recordkeeping that they encompass.

One of our archives was established a decade or so ago in the Italian port city of Genoa and has utilised various means to extend its engagement with contemporary social movements of the region. Our interest in the social documents of Italy's 'radical community' centres on Archimovi's (the Archivio di Movimenti of Genoa) efforts to present the discursive work – speech acts and written communication – of the anti-systemic social movements of the 1960s and 1970s as part of a 'living archive'. The mass politics of

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those years touched all aspects of Italian society, challenging not only hierarchies in the workplace and family, but also the life goals offered to its citizens. While the cycle of struggles that generated these movements ended in the 1980s, their significance, meaning and legacy continue to loom large in Italian society, so that one key goal of a living archive is to share the memories of former participants with more recent generations.

We are interested in exploring how the approach of a living archive to the representation of the discursive work and memory of former activists differs from that of disciplinary thought, in this instance Anglo-American Social Movement Theory (SMT), and the institutions of the Italian state. For example, whereas it is imperative to the archive in question (Archimovi) to present a multiplicity of voices, disciplinary thought and institutional politics wilfully exclude (censure) potentially relevant theoretical, social, and political practices from their consideration. This political landscape informs and shapes the archival needs and appraisal decisions for the archive. So too is the political landscape intertwined with the recordkeeping decisions of activists. Radical recordkeeping,[1] through strategically witnessing events and actions is an extension of the living archives concept into what Upward et al. call 'nanosecond archiving'[2] and recording the now in both form and function.

A case study for radical recordkeeping is also explored in this article. Direct Action Everywhere (DxE) is a grassroots distributed animal activist group with a twenty-year roadmap to end speciesism in their home state of California, USA. The group was established in 2013. DxE have global aims and have members distributed world-wide, with local chapters linked online to the core group, to share open rescue and disruption techniques to promote their cause. 'Open rescue' involves entering premises (where animals are being restrained and used as commodities), rescuing the sick animals for veterinary care, and re-homing them into a micro-sanctuary. DxE provide their members' skills in dealing with law enforcement and in public protest techniques to disrupt everyday speciesism and to invoke self-reflection by meat-eating shoppers in supermarkets or diners in restaurants. As a case study for radical recordkeeping, Katherine Jarvie considers the archiving, including the archives of DxE, as part of the records continuum, represented by Upward's Records Continuum Model.[3] Whether live streaming on Facebook or adding videos to YouTube, the archive of DxE is real-time and 'always becoming'.[4]

DxE clearly articulate the changes in society they want to enact long term. This group is a distinctive example to review appraisal practices concerning its goals and organisational 'functions'. This is particularly so when addressed through the lens of what evidence and memory are required of the group during their self-reflexive journey a) to achieve animal liberation over time and across space, while b) learning both from the social movements before them and being part of a broader social movement around them. The uniqueness of the open rescue techniques as a highly litigious activity makes DxE a fascinating case study. By having a deep understanding of how DxE operate, there are critical and unique ways scholars can begin to explain and explore the term radical recordkeeping.

What also brings these community activist archives together conceptually are the applicability of Jacques Rancière's political thought, such as that expressed within the concept of the emancipated spectator, and our critique of SMT. Archival theory often draws from philosophies of Derrida, Foucault or Giddens; but references to Rancière's

political thought is yet to be fully explored in relation to archival theory. This may be due to the literal interpretation of performance as only performance in the arts. However, recordkeeping as a performance and performative across the continuum is well understood by authors and teachers of the Records Continuum Model.[5] While Critical Theory is increasingly inspiring new archival research,[6] Rancière resisted being labelled a theorist, and only recently have articles about his alignment of thought to Critical Theory been published.[7] This article will introduce SMT and the work of Rancière and draw together the case study of the Archimovi as a living archive and DxE as activists involved in an inherently critical practice of radical recordkeeping, seeking to reconcile the two cases in records continuum terms.

Theoretical background

Records continuum thinking is format neutral, beyond academy or institutional setting, and encompasses records that can be either spoken, written, performed, embodied in people or embedded in country. As such, records are logical objects providing traces of social, cultural and organisational activity, that evidence and memorialise individual and collective lives.[8] Individual, community and organisational archives are formed as records and created across space and through time in social and daily transactions and managed in frameworks or systems as individual, group, or corporate memory.[9] Appraisal, as discussed in this article refers to a records continuum understanding of the practice which includes creation, suppression or re-construction of records in space-time. Scholars of the records continuum have therefore included activist archiving (including appraisal) as part of the umbrella term 'recordkeeping'.

As they attempt to change the future, politically motivated communities use recordkeeping to document their actions and hold society to account. This encounter between a radical collective and society, however, proves problematic for traditional theories of social movements to explain. Contemporary accounts of collective action are dominated by sociological approaches to explaining the interaction between the political system and social movements – especially those movements thought to be presenting the 'political' form of the radical community. Within this disciplinary field the predominant accounts, such as that offered by key proponents of SMT Sidney Tarrow and Donatella della Porta, centre on a 'strategy-oriented' modelling of how collective actors do things with the resources present in their environment. The tendency is to root these social movements within the political system, and this promotes attention to 'political' actions usually described as part of consensus politics. Moreover, the intent of these actions is commonly thought of as an effort to gain public attention through coercion or persuasion, an interpretation that devalues the subjectivity and autonomy of the community and expropriates activists from their knowledge of political and social struggle.[10]

The theoretical exploration of social movements and activism advanced within SMT tends to frame collective action in a manner that diminishes, or simply overlooks, thought and practice that is not deemed exemplary of the modernist political vision. This vision witnesses social conflict as a mechanism of politics, discharging within the dynamics of social aggregation, and successful only when contributing to building a stronger consensus.[11] Disciplinary thought treats the discursive work of radical communities as an instrument of political organisation interpreted only through the prism of

the existing political system and state apparatus. This act of homogenisation of the radical community and objectification of radical practices abstracts social documents from their context, with a consequent impoverishment of interpretation (albeit one nominally effective in terms of repression and/or co-optation). Another outcome has been to avoid grassroots theorising while privileging certain forms and discourse of radical politics, above all those associated with the 'political elite' or 'movement entrepreneurs' identified as responsible for the political organisation of the primary social movement within the political arena. As will be seen, however, the approach taken by Archimovi and DxE threatens to disrupt such reductionist and elitist frames, while raising other questions pertinent to a reconsideration of the relationship between testimony and documentation.

Living archives and radical recordkeeping

While radical movement archives typically seek to foreground the values of radical communities past and present,[12] the social documents they hold are not merely the resources of political practice – especially when such bodies aim to be living archives.[13] Fuller's account of social epistemology offers a way to support this claim,[14] and to understand these collective actors as epistemic communities or communities of knowledge. By this we mean that they first, judge the credibility of testimony based on shared schemas of epistemic evaluation; second, they demonstrate the capacity for epistemic agency – the ability to 'make sense of one's experiences' – and; third, the documents they generate seek to affect knowledge outside of the context of creation. These practices of a knowledge community are observable in the activities of living archives, and the performance of radical recordkeeping.

References to living archives in literature have traditionally embodied performance and re-performance of (often marginalised) identity and narrative in collections, often without much reflection on the term itself.[15] As the term has evolved over time, it is becoming clear that a living archive can be understood as 'a site that is inclusive, is never complete, and in which the archivist [aka activist] is an "active participant" in constructing the history that is archived'.[16] The inserted text here is an important change in the emancipation of activist from the authority of archivist appraisal regimes. Rather than constructing history, the 'in time' recordkeeping and archiving understandings by the activist or marginalised communities is a re-shaping of the term. Dekker describes the evolution of living archives as digital aggregations of systematised communications; a new form of everyday archiving, created and curated collectively in communities.[17] Taking this idea further, Evans and Rolan have emphasised that the next step for our understanding is that living archives require 'a distributed, participatory, dynamic recordkeeping network; so, it is about defining the requirements of a networked, socio-technical system and identifying the components that will support their interaction'.[18]

It is from the dynamism of a recordkeeping network and the rejection of a collecting practice that radical recordkeeping came into emergence as a continuum-based idea built upon participatory and distributed recordkeeping practice and infrastructures. Radical recordkeeping is the *performance* of recordkeeping, and while activist intention may not

be to create a 'living archive' per-se, actors radically document the moment in collective systems of record and enact social change through that performance in and through time (or not) across the social movement. The term radical recordkeeping itself is evolving.

> Radical recordkeeping is an emergent concept describing "disruption of traditional record-keeping paradigms in revolutionary or profound ways" by groups and recordkeeping and archiving professionals who challenge or disrupt social or mainstream "norms".[19]

Evans et al. explore critical theories of archiving in relation to expansion of community agency and community legitimacy as archival performers in the creation, keeping and pluralisation of records. Their research

> . . . propose[s] an expansive definition of critical archiving and recordkeeping; one that moves beyond academy . . . to embrace transformative, participatory research and practice, which is particularly relevant to the integrated archiving and recordkeeping needs of individuals and communities.[20]

By embracing autonomy, rather than feigning neutrality, the archival activist researcher and participant can collaboratively set transformative goals. Autonomy is inherent to radical recordkeeping and is described in archival literature as the ability for records creators and participants throughout the continuum of recordkeeping actions, to participate in societal memory with their own voice and on their own terms.[21] The autonomy of archival activism relies upon its legitimacy in a socio-political sense as a reliable witness, with power to perform collective action and records appraisal controlled by activists themselves. This terminology could be re-labelled 'recordkeeping autonomy' to match radical recordkeeping as an inclusive term encompassing all records continuum traces.

The concepts described in this section are brought together by analysing the political and power structures that form appraisal techniques by activists, considering that creation, appraisal and maintenance of a 'living archive is itself a politics'.[22] We reconcile the notions of the living archive of the Archimovi with the concept of radical recordkeeping as records-enabled action of animal activists, and the case study of DxE. With the rise of citizen witnesses,[23] strategic witnessing[24] and citizen justice[25] by 'emancipated spectators'[26] as activists, SMT is described below as a relic of sociology's past. This self-empowerment by communities to appraise and share their own archives as participants in archiving rather than spectators, is explored later in this article. In the next section we connect SMT and a critique of these bounds that confine activism as a social construct in finding political truth (and traditional othering), and compare this with outdated notions of archival collecting and appraisal.

Social movement theory, appraisal and recordkeeping

Distinguishing credible informants and reliable testimony is an ongoing task of researchers, who must constantly choose between conflicting sources of evidence and competing knowledges and theoretical justifications. Typically, this task is achieved by leveraging the methods of evaluation customary to our disciplinary milieu, reflecting the interpersonal influences, institutions, procedures and social processes within which we are embedded. The 'epistemic system' formed by the coalescing of these influences is meant to promote

truth.[27] The process of appraisal is one such system of recordkeeping and archiving practice that reinforce notions of truth and evidence in society. Moreover, as Goldman explains,[28] schemas of epistemic evaluation are part of the disciplinary milieu and 'affect the epistemic outcomes of its members'. That is, within our epistemic systems, choices of subjects and materials are validated, and testimony promoted, based on, for example, properties of the speaker and interpreter.[29] The intent is to avoid habits of attention that result in *unfair* discrimination,[30] yet properties such as social location and identity that promote testimonial credibility can prove problematic in this regard. As Miranda Fricker[31] notes, such 'properties' may afford authority to certain speakers and interpreters based on existing prejudiced 'societal norms of credibility', a problem compounded, as Code explains,[32] by 'existing social hierarchies'.

The methods of epistemic communities serve to promote or exclude the knowledge practices of specific groups and communities, creating epistemic 'in' and 'out' groups. This approach may result in a form of confirmation bias where our attention is directed towards finding supporting evidence,[33] and protects established epistemic communities from intervention by 'outgroups'.[34] The terms 'living archives' and 'radical recordkeeping' aim to describe and better understand the activity and autonomy of 'outgroups' of the archive, and the way they appraise and shape their future evidence and memorialisation. This highlights that beyond questions of truth in the sense of establishing 'what really happened', there can also be the important task of grasping the meaning of events according to various participants.

In radical recordkeeping, activist witnessing is enacting real-time appraisal: what and where to record, save and share evidence of activity. Records become a cumulative archive of achievements, progress and obstacles in a collaborative recordkeeping framework within a broader social movement. This 'nanosecond' appraisal can include decisions around what online platforms to use and share records. These platforms impose retention rules outside activist control. Recordkeeping autonomy relies on navigating these risks as an 'outgroup' and decision-making on the way records are networked in and between social movements and communities.

Theorisations around impacts of social change and actions against power structures have a long history and dialogue, as do theories around social movements themselves. Social Movement Theory (SMT) has evolved in three waves, from

- First wave: activist as an irrational actor
- Second wave: rational actors making calculated and strategic decisions
- Third wave: the emergence of New Social Movement Theory (NSMT) exploring cultural and political aspects of collective action and social processes of political engagement.[35]

The move beyond the first and second waves is described from an activist researcher viewpoint in Emma Craddock's … *Investigation of Doing Activism and Being an Activist*.[36] She explains that the SMT model is overshadowed by the concept of 'networked movements [which] emphasises their rhizomatic character with multiple connections and roots, reflecting the way such movements tend to be organised horizontally rather than vertically'.[37] Craddock shows that the organisational analysis of hierarchical structures in government, corporate and official settings is markedly different from how

social movements mobilise. Accordingly, imposing a traditional appraisal model on the contemporary networked structure of activists is not appropriate. Decades earlier, the approach of the Italian State to political dissidence in the latter half of the 1970s is an example of an institution protecting its intellectual space from external intervention, as is the subsequent interpretation of these events by adherents of SMT. In response to the activism of radical communities during the 1960s and 70s, the State reductively categorised the radical subject, as discussed by Moss,[38] through reference to social identities and locations associated with political illegality – criminal, terrorist, marginal, or enemy. Thus, the Italian State chose to heed only repentant radical activists (*pentiti*) within the interpretive community[39] as informants, part of the judicial interpretation informing the meaning of high-cost activism.[40] Subsequently, the transcripts of these informants' interviews have been privileged in sociological accounts of the nexus of politics and the radical community. The credibility of the *pentiti* and their testimony were thought to be enhanced by the rational authority, first of the judicial situation and, second, an ensuing sociological intervention.[41] As Howard has noted,[42] to support this strategy della Porta states that there is a 'lack of scientific interest in the publication of "high fidelity" transcripts without comment or interpretation'.[43] She explains that the sociological content is 'hidden' within the testimony, and to extract it or to provide a 'scientific' account of oral history, requires 'the presence of research hypotheses and a good background knowledge'. Even more important, she continues, 'sociological concepts and hypothesis are indispensable in selecting material and making sense of it'.[44]

The approach of della Porta is clear: the testimony of radical subjects is unreliable (lacks credibility) without the intervention of the sociologist (interpreter) and their research devices.[45] The latter is thought to rehabilitate the recollections of the informant, transforming their oral testimony into a reliable form of historical document that can be 'verified' (or otherwise) when the professional researcher assays them against the 'facts' imbedded in the historical record. This disregard of testimony has led to the more recent uprising of radical recordkeeping and empowerment of activists to utilise their own forms of 'nanosecond archiving' online. When we acknowledge that by nature the radical community (radical thought) is disruptive to established knowledge and traditional institutions, it is understandable that they have been excluded from certain intellectual spaces through the social location and identity afforded them. The vilification of activist as transgressive, other and criminal[46] has activated appraisal for activists; turning them from a perceived unreliable spectator to an emancipated participant in recordkeeping and archiving.

Rancière and the emancipated activist spectator-archivist

Jacques Rancière explains that the radical community 'disrupts the *system of designations* that frame the community in terms of definite standards of inclusion'.[47] Viewed from this perspective, the documents and discursive works of radical communities demonstrate their ability within the records continuum 'to define new conventions of meaning, and to offer alternative reasons and explanations for action'. These communities 'disrupt social order *and* the discourses that have that order as their object'.[48] The effect is that radical subjects generate 'both practical (real life/subjective) and theoretical (discourse/objective) discontinuities – exemplary of radical activity'.[49] This brings the discursive work of

radical communities into direct conflict with the established thought of sociology. The relevance of this challenge to the disciplinary approach of SMT is clear in the work of della Porta, who asserts that the sociologist's expertise is required to negate the 'vagaries' and 'aesthetics' of memory associated with radical thought.[50] Consequently, her sources have focussed heavily on 'official' documents such as police reports, court documents, and *pentiti* interviews, avoiding the theorising and recollections of those former participants who continue – whatever their self-criticisms past and present – to see some merit in the aims and purposes of the movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Moving away from this need to reference 'official' records, social media platforms and radical recordkeeping in real time from the activist perspective is a new way to consider activist archiving. Recording is a performance of activism and engaging in citizen politics. Below, we consider the political ideas of Rancière's as a lens to power and to preferencing these narratives and archives. Liosi discusses the role of activist video representations and Rancière's view of emancipation as challenging the opposition between viewing and acting. There are social structures that frame the relations between saying, seeing and doing that reflect domination and subjection. 'Viewing is . . . an action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions'.[51]

In radical recordkeeping and in living archives, activists have resituated themselves, performing archival action to enact social awareness and change:

> The people formerly known as the "audience" or as "consumers," whom many media scholars conceived of as passive recipients of popular culture, have shown themselves to be quite active users of culture instead. Media users have seized hold of all of mass culture as an archive, an enormous repository of narratives, characters, worlds, images, graphics, and sounds from which they can extract the raw matter they need for their own creations.[52]

Jacques Rancière is not often recognised in archival scholarship, but is an important influence to consider in activist community archives. Rancière's own archival research concerning working class writers of France's Second Empire led him to question the role of the intellectual as commonly theorised within Western radical social movements of the twentieth century. As Paul Patton identifies, the work of Rancière bears the mark of French thinkers affected by the upheavals of May 1968, sharing the presupposition that the role of the intellectual is 'not to bring knowledge to or from the people', but to struggle 'against the order of discourse within which particular forms of knowledge appear or fail to appear'.[53] Rancière, without knowing it, was identifying flaws in activist archival appraisal. In academic situations, this 'appearance' or 'disappearance' from the record is often a function of the social identity and location of the speaker and the judgements of testimonial credibility made by disciplinary thought and archival practice. The assumptions in play are used to disqualify certain agents and aggrandise others, partitioning society into those who know and those who do not.[54] This is exemplary of the disciplinary creation of epistemic 'in' and 'out' groups, and the defiance of established epistemic communities to intervention by 'resistance discourses' of the Archimovi and radical recordkeeping of Direct Action Everywhere.

Proponents of SMT typically distrust the testimony of the radical community, in particular the intellectual labour held as social documents amongst their archives, the theory and practice that undermines traditional knowledges, and speakers that occupy social categories atypical to testimonial credibility. Arguably, what guides this

disciplinary choice of epistemic sources is a commitment to the 'classical agenda' of research, a need to find stable identities suitable to the repatriation of the radical actor to a modernist political vision of western democracy.[55] It is common for social theorists working within the conceptual frame of SMT, and sociology more generally, to rush to assign the radical community a social identity and location. This 'naturalises' radical subjects, which creates an alibi for their particular theory of the nexus between radical communities and politics.

As a counter to the general approach of SMT, activists can be seen as having agency in current ways of seeing, recording and archiving. Rancière sees emancipated spectators as:

> spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the "story" and make it their own story. An emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators.[56]

Performance and archiving are naturally aligned in the continuum understanding of representation and re-presentation of rituals and have been explored in community contexts such as Daly and Brooks' account of Arizona's All Souls Procession as an archival community representation of history and ritual identity[57] linked to over 3000 years of Day of the Dead celebrations.[58] Though Rancière has used the term 'emancipated spectator' in genres of art, performance and interpretation, we extend his meaning here with activists in the role as recordkeeper and archivist, either witnessing and representing narratives online in social media, or performing a living archive to retrospectively reflect a local resistance discourse.[59] The act of archiving and recordkeeping is a performance.

> "Performance" connotes modes of transmission that are not fixed (as are text and recorded media), but are processual and evolving, that are repetitious but are also unique in each instance – and so is an apt descriptor for how digital archiving currently occurs. "Performance" implies that human actors must embody and execute scripted functions – and so is useful as a metaphor for the necessary collaborations between humans and nonhumans that produce digital archival infrastructures.[60]

This highlights the theoretical reserve of the SMT approach, which occurs at the expense of 'something else', namely, the difference and particularity of the radical subject. This act either excludes radical thought and the social documents of radical community archives from knowledge practices or admits them only when rehabilitated by an appropriate interpreter. This effectively prejudges the testimonial credibility of the radical community, subordinating their speech acts and written communications to the knowledge practices of sociological thought. For example, key adherents of SMT present a monolithic understanding of Italian Marxist culture that quarantines the discursive work of the radical communities of the past, prejudicing their selection of materials and subjects.[61] By limiting who can speak and what can be said in the territory of sociology, the body of research representative of SMT excuses itself, whether deliberately or inadvertently, from engaging with the discursive work and social documents of the radical community as epistemic sources.

Sceptical of the sociological approach to explicating contemporary politics, and in particular the radical actor, Rancière's perspective requires us to consider how theoretical accounts of politics populate their studies with certain kinds of political subjects.[62] He is concerned to understand how, in a given situation, we determine 'whether the subjects who count in the interlocution "are" or "are not", whether they are speaking or just making noise'.[63] Crucially, as Deranty acknowledges, the archival work of Rancière

studied the multiplicity of voices and forms of speech 'below the overbearing discourse of organised Marxism'.[64] This is in contrast to the accounts coming from SMT that on occasion amplify the voice of intellectuals within social movements at the expense of grassroots participants. In the process, these accounts remain oblivious to the work within such movements of those intellectuals who sought, rather than to lead, to construct with other participants service structures – including 'documentation centres' devoted to the dissemination and critical analysis of printed materials – within the movements themselves. Conversely, Rancière, as Deranty remarks, 'refused to express the conclusions reached in studying the writings of the proletarian thinkers in the abstract languages, or using the canonical references, of academic philosophy and social theory'.[65] The multiplication of the discourses of struggle associated with the new movements made their retrieval within a unified figure of revolt intractable without the utilisation of 'blatant generalities'.[66] And, as we have experienced, these generalities have a tendency to carry over into our documentary work and interaction with the archival spaces and recordkeeping of radical communities.

A key form through which activists may assert their equality as authorised speakers for their community and society is recordkeeping.

> For Rancière, it is not enough for the oppressed just to be heard, seen, or to offer transformative representations of their society; they must be heard as authorized speakers whose speech represents a redefined society. In other words, aesthetic acts must not only call attention to the oppressions of police [and governmental] representation but also change them. They must be performative.[67]

Equality is the key to politics for Rancière, and the above echoes the transformative goals of Critical Theory. SMT distrusts the activist voice, and like the exclusion from traditional archival spaces, is an antiquated view of representation. In contrast, the following section examines the case studies of two activist groups and their performative telling and re-telling of resistance discourse, and witnessing of events for disruption of the status quo, with the objective of enacting social change through archives and witnessing. They enact appraisal as an ongoing activity in a records continuum sense, and resist the traditional view of archival relics in the institutional boundaries or a repository.

The Archimovi as a living archive

> Archives are always a question of power, and Archimovi is a (small) form of counterpower.[68]

Reflecting upon the work of one radical social movements archive in Genoa offers a useful way to explore further several of the questions posed in the previous sections. In what follows, we will draw above all upon two recent volumes: a collection of papers and presentations published in association with a public exhibition about 1968 in Genoa, and a study of the formation and development of the Archivio di Movimenti Genova itself.[69]

The phenomenon sometimes referred to '1968′ – a global movement of rebellion that flared up across both the Western and Eastern blocs, questioning established authorities from France or Britain to Czechoslovakia or China, not forgetting the Americas and even Oceania – lasted a whole decade in Italy.[70] One way in which that country is somewhat

unusual compared to elsewhere in this regard is in the number of archives that have been established to conserve materials from the period. In many cases, as with Archimovi itself, such bodies have been established by those who directly took part in the events in question. In a number of other instances, the archives are older, having been established originally to hold records from an earlier time of unrest – most typically, the years of resistance to fascism.[71] Most unusual of all are those bodies that had been set up during the 1960s and 1970s, at the height of post-war mass movements, as projects charged with collecting the printed outpourings of radical groups as a repository to aid further struggles and campaigning. Of these kinds of institutions, perhaps the only one to have survived into the twenty-first century is the Centro di Documentazione Pistoia, which has successfully made the transition from serving an existing movement, to that of repository of the document work of a movement past.

Both in terms of its purpose and its mode of operation, Archimovi is an archive that has set out to challenge the assumptions that inform the interpretations of the past proffered by the likes of Tarrow and della Porta. Founded in 2009, Archimovi is unashamedly *di parte* – that is, partisan (a word with enormously loaded connotations within Italian political culture). However, it is not simply in its open preparedness to take sides that the Archimovi project distinguishes itself from the SMT discussed earlier. Nor are the archive's proponents primarily motivated by a desire to add hitherto-unheard voices to the historical record, as if such an act might finally restore some sense of 'balance' to the narration of Italian history. Instead, as an active or living archive, the members of Archimovi have consciously worked to create an encounter on the one hand between a store of physical documents once deployed as tools of political organising, and their own oral testimonies of such documents' use on the other. In the process, they are conscious that this meeting of 'voices and papers' brings with it a whole series of challenges as well as opportunities. In reflecting upon this matter, one member of Archimovi has seen fit to quote the words of Pierre Nora, who argues that:

> Memory and history are not in fact synonyms, they are opposites. Memory is always evolving, subject to all sorts of exploitation and manipulation. History is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of that which is no longer. Charged with emotions and charms [*magia*], memory is fed by veiled recollections. History, as an intellectual and secularising operation, demands critical discourse and analysis.[72]

The particular contours of 'the movement' in Genoa were unique within Italy as a whole. While an important industrial city, it appeared able to fend off many aspects of the workplace restructuring that reshaped so much of the country's industry during the period of Italy's 'economic miracle' in the 1950s and early 1960s. Consequently, the traditional organisations of the Italian labour movement there did not experience many of the doubts and uncertainties that in turn opened the door to a mass questioning of their role and function. On the other hand, this meant that when new forms of radical politics did emerge in Genoa, they were often both more marginal than elsewhere in Italy, but also more extreme.

One of the most distinctive features of Archimovi has been its commitment to provide space to the expression of multiple voices from the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Amongst its founders and donors can be found former militants in a wide variety of radical organisations of the period. Indeed, it is all too easy to forget that what in Italy during these years was called 'the movement' was a rich, diverse, contentious, yet still

somehow cohesive ensemble of circles – especially in Genoa. While these groupings were often divided from each other in terms of their specific ideologies and perspectives (as well as personal rivalries), there was nonetheless a widely held sense of a certain common purpose and identity as part of a broader movement against capitalism and the state. In terms of Archimovi's founding mission, therefore, it was considered imperative that in organising its activities and very holdings,

> It was important that we had to contact everybody [from within the movement as a whole]. That is, from the beginning, the Archivio di Movimenti was not set up to preserve the memory of one or two groups. Apart from the fact that the founders already represented a plurality of ideological positions and groups from the period … the founding group was absolutely – I remember this very well – of one mind in all wanting a multiplicity of sources.[73]

What in practice does it entail to establish a living archive, according to Archimovi? In the words of Niri, it means providing an opportunity to those 'who have "made" history to write it, narrate it, recount it'. Rather than abolish the archivist's function, a living archive recasts that responsibility in a new light:

> The archivist is now called upon to expose themselves directly in the recounting of history: in fact, it is they who have their finger on the pulse of documentary consistency … This role, which often, in the past, has been misunderstood, is even more fundamental in the case of a living archive … Only with a multiplicity of sources will one be able to reconstruct that complexity peculiar to the period of 1968.[74]

For Niri, it is this encounter between records of the past and interpretations of protagonists proffered today that makes it possible to talk about Archimovi as a living archive:

> The Archivio dei Movimenti is no longer a simple collection of documents of various origins: the documentary materials are enriched by a personal history that goes beyond the material content of what has been donated. The archive performs [*riveste*] the fundamental role of a catalyst for memory: not only a container, but an active part in the creation of historical sources, of historiographical capacities. The participants in the archive are actors twice-over: once, in the past, they made history, and now they have decided to conserve and narrate it.[75]

By expressing archival autonomy in the conservation and narration of their living archive, the Archimovi shares this drive for control and ownership of their stories, similar to that of other activist groups keeping records in and over time. The Archimovi represent emancipated spectators of politics, actor-participant leaders, conducting archival appraisal for trusted memorialisation of their community.

Earlier we mentioned that the radical circles of Genoa of the time represented a distinctive mix of views and belief systems that distinguished them from their counterparts elsewhere in Italy. One obvious illustration of this is the marked influence of situationist perspectives, which not only prompted the formation of political groups directly inspired by the words of Guy Debord or Raoul Vaneigem, but also coloured the outlook and organisational practices of the local autonomist movement.[76] From the point of view of document work as an aspect of political militancy, a number of those

interviewed by Niri also reflect upon what they recall as distinctive ways of creating and using the written word. As an example, here are the thoughts of Pietro Acquilino, a member for part of this period of a Trotskyist group:

> We tended as an organisation to have a much more traditional way of functioning than other organisations in the movement. For example we regularly kept minutes of discussions in our meetings, of how we voted … with written motions … Amongst other things we had – so it seems to me today – a quite unbalanced approach to politics, in which written things, the positions taken to define ourselves and others, were very important, and therefore that written documentation itself was important.[77]

It must be remembered that many of what are now archives had first been created in the 1960s and 1970s as documentation centres: bodies intended to support the ongoing political practices of mass social movements to which they belonged, rather than preserve traces of their legacy after their passing. In a similar fashion, those former militants who later donated materials to Archimovi had typically collected leaflets and such like not for future posterity, but rather as a means to inform their ongoing political activity at the time. As Piotti explains when interviewed by Niri, his reasons for collecting printed materials forty or fifty years ago were very different to those that later drew him to the undertaking of Archimovi:

> Obviously I imagined a different future to what has come about. The struggle in its own right was the driving premise and principle [for collecting documents such as leaflets forty years ago], the motivation of changing things and creating something different from what then existed.[78]

Archimovi performs as living memory, achieving an equality of voice that Rancière would ascribe. Their collecting and donation evaluation method of appraisal leaves behind the SMT distrust of the activist voice and is part of the evolution to understanding radical recordkeeping. Leaving behind a collecting of past events, radical recordkeeping of the future looks to build archival frameworks for activist use in 'nanosecond' time and over time, which includes appraisal decisions at multiple points of a time continuum – not just at archival thresholds into the archive.

Radical recordkeeping by Direct Action Everywhere

Archimovi, as described above, embraces the multiple voices of an 'archival multiverse'.[79] Rather than relying on retrospective amalgamation of voices into an activist archive, a continuum view of recordkeeping and archiving can be articulated as positioning and repositioning of records over infinite time and space. Records continuum thinking is reflected in the recordkeeping practices of DxE; that is, rather than retrospective storytelling, it uses real-time recordkeeping and witnessing on social media such as witnessing events and posting them to Facebook live. Records are created and re-shared or re-edited on their website and online to distribute their message and enact change across the social movement. Evidence and memory related to each relationship and activity (which may or may not include a social change milestone) are required to build and reflect on their goals. How this is planned or otherwise by the group is insightful to their management of risk, recordkeeping and appraisal practice.

One platform DxE uses is YouTube, which provides an immediate and semi-permanent representation of direct action and protest by the animal activist group. Examples of DxE videos include direct action video, where unmasked activists enter premises and take animals away from their confinement. Other video or photographic records include protest outside or inside businesses that trade animal products. The permanent archiving requirements for this radical form of recordkeeping, and the activist autonomy required, must consider risks and surveillance by third parties on various platforms used and owned by companies not often aligned with the mission and purpose of DxE.[80] The corporate ownership and distributed nature of the movement dissolve authentic autonomy and ownership of the record and is challenging to memorialise compared to a discrete collection like the Archimovi. Post-action collecting by movements nevertheless hasn't worked in the animal rights movement – very few collections have survived that comprehensively archive animal activist group actions.[81] Facebook and YouTube are utilised as convenient repositories for memory-making and sharing by the animal activist community in real-time. This convenience means that the data, images and video are at the mercy of the terms of use by the corporately-owned and/or governmental surveillant platforms.

The recordkeeping of activist groups like DxE are actively involved in external intervention in their attempt to reach and incorporate a multiplicity of voices in their records. YouTube is one platform that is an extension of activism evidence, conference papers, activist training, and community stories:

> YouTube functions as one of the most polemical, controversial, and wide-ranging video archives of our times. It is a hybrid media space where commercial, amateur, governmental, nonprofit, educational, activist, and other players interact with each other in continually more complex ways.[82]

Leisa Gibbons has considered 'YouTube, small stories and memory-making'[83] in her archival research. Memories here are not static, but active representations creating new meaning and relationships over time. For Rancière, similarly, his thoughts on action and representation can be closely aligned to YouTube videos online and performance studies. The YouTube platform can be considered an archive and narrative tool for DxE. Though this reflection has been asserted by archival theorists, the ideas of Rancière also reiterate this view as mobilised storytelling:

> Rancière's perspective is crucial because it widens the articulation of what we can consider mobilizing images, giving prominence to the observer and legitimizing the gaze as an engaging and narrative tool for creating stories from what they see and understand.[84]

This shows a shift from the 'othering' of the spectator in SMT to empowerment and prominence in the performance of recording and authentic testimony of the activist. Rancière views performance as an equaliser, and the citizen witness can also be tied to community systems of justice where legislation is lacking or skewed to the benefit of powerful and influential industries like mining and animal agriculture. DxE are a radical recordkeeping example here due to their unique recordkeeping techniques – such as open rescue live video documenting and sharing evidence in a nanosecond. DxE activists pluralise these records online by assessing risk and networked value (appraisal) and strategically determine the platforms to publish this evidence.

Conclusion

The methodological approach of SMT to the tracking of radical organisations, and the associated choices of subjects and materials, are understandable as a pragmatic choice of an *explanatory* project, a project that aims to fossilise, homogenise and normalise knowledge. This approach we contrast with the living archive of the Archimovi, a project unafraid of complexity and the multiplication of discourses, both consequences of bringing together a physical store of documents and oral testimonies as to their use proffered by protagonists unrestrained by the epistemic community associated with the archive. While the Archimovi and SMT are similarly partisan in habits of attention, only the former provides space for contentious voices, with an array of sources representing the variety of radical organisations that made up the Italian social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Where adherents of SMT rely on sociological thought to rehabilitate the recollections of movement participants, Archimovi presents oral histories and recollections that form part of the active creation of historical sources. The archive also differentiates itself by exposing the role of the archivist in the creation of historical narrative, an approach distinct from the fantasy of academic positivism, the purported objective or disinterested view from above adopted within the disciplinary milieu of SMT. Whereas proponents of SMT attempt to shield knowledge from epistemic interventions, the living archive (in this instance Archimovi) aims to promote the historiographical capacities of movement participants and to share their memories with new generations, while leaving it to the latter to make their own assessments concerning the meaning and significance of the events under discussion.

We introduced this article with a quote from Bruce Sterling that 'Control of knowledge – that is politics'; and noted that 'Living Archive is Itself a Politics'.[85] Archival appraisal and autonomy is shaped by the socio-political landscape, yet little discussion of Rancière and his political thought is present to date in the archival literature. Rancière's notion of equality and control enacted by participant-activists counters external control of citizens. Living archives are traditionally understood as appraising and collecting activist historic representation re-lived and re-performed over time. There is a developing understanding of what now constitutes a living archive which can be rethought alongside radical recordkeeping. Future research can explore their developing similarities and differences and evolution of conception of living archives over time, particularly when viewed from a records continuum context. What aligns these two case studies is better understanding Rancière's emancipated spectator, and records continuum understandings of activist recordkeeping evolution – from the historic view of a living archive as repository of collective meaning, to networked actions of autonomy. So too can these views be considered alongside broader community archives discourse in future research and continuum literature.

Radical forms of recordkeeping, in the example of DxE, have an in-time appraisal decision on creation and over time in the various social media platforms the group uses. Activists and individuals have autonomy to curate radical recordkeeping online for the benefit of a broader social movement in and through time. This is the first exploration into the difference between the living archive and radical recordkeeping, and further research is to be undertaken to explore more than just appraisal differences between the two. The records continuum understanding of records, archives

and recordkeeping as performance is their commonality. The political thinking of Rancière highlights the power and equaliser of citizen witnessing and performing activist roles in society, and is an underrepresented view in the archival literature to date. The more recordkeeping and archiving are viewed as an activity of political action rather than an end-point artefact of a movement, the more the parallel notions of Rancière's thinking about emancipated spectators as empowered archivists can be explored.

Notes

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