


## FOCUS: ART &amp; ARCHIVES

## Living Archives and The Social Transmission of Memory

AMALIA G. SABIESCU 

**Abstract** Living archives refer to practices and environments that connect the organisation, curation and transmission of memory with present-bound creative, performative, and participatory processes. Recent trends in the democratisation of arts and cultural heritage and the advent of digital media have provided living archives with new creative valences, making them potent means for the performative celebration of the past through contemporary acts of creation and transmission. In this article, I argue that living archives perform a function of social sharing of memory that contributes to building social bonds, community and identity. This potential resides in the capacity of living archives to bring together an archival function, concerned with memory preservation and transmission, with a present-bound artistic, performative and creative function. I use the term 'archival performativity' to denote this dual nature of living archives, and will exemplify this concept by drawing on the analysis of living archives through the twin lenses of performance studies and archival science.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the spaces created through the [synergy of creative and archival practice] and their potential for fulfilling one of the most significant functions of cultural heritage, its role as catalyst in processes of social transmission of memory and community building.<sup>1</sup> I will refer to these processes and practices as *living archives* – practices and environments that connect the organisation, curation and transmission of memory with present-bound creative, performative, and participatory processes (Living Archives, 2018). The quintessence of these practices does not stand necessarily in the use of archival records strictly defined; nor are they driven uniquely by archival institutions and stakeholders. Rather, at the core of living archives is the performative celebration of the past through [contemporary acts of creation and transmission]. Living archives marry the archival and the artistic by recording and tracing the past with contemporary creative practice. The archival component points, here, to a concern with memory, memory sharing, and ways of bringing memory into a space of presence (and co-presence) through the mediation of memory texts. According to Ketelaar (2005), memory texts are 'cultural tools' (Wertsch, 1998, 2002) that mediate meaning-making, knowledge and memory transmission, and which can encompass equally physical objects, texts in literal sense, but also monuments, buildings and even human bodies.

Drawing on this expanded definition of memory texts, living archives can encompass such diverse practices and events as body-based performances, curated performances in public spaces, participatory exhibitions and communal celebrations and commemorations. In a sense, living archives have always existed in forms as simple as storytelling to enrapture an audience and by using objects to evoke or trace past events. However, recent trends in the democratisation of arts and heritage and the

Amalia G. Sabiescu (A.G.Sabiescu@lboro.ac.uk) is a lecturer in Media and Creative Industries at Loughborough University in London, United Kingdom.

advent of digital media have provided living archives with new creative valences, making them potent means for the social sharing of memory in ways that were not possible previously for the archive or the arts alone.

By bringing the arts and archives into dialogue, I argue, living archives perform a function of social transmission of memory, which supports building community and identity. I use the notion of 'archival performativity' (Birkin, 2015) to synthesise these qualities, pointing to a conflation of features pertaining to the arts and performance on the one hand and the archive on the other. To explore these aspects, in the following sections I will introduce two conceptual lenses for studying living archives. The first of these lenses comes from performance studies, and is centred on ideas of embodied knowledge and social participation; the second is drawn from archival science and trains its focus on the evidentiary role of the archival record.

Using these lenses, I will map two trajectories for transmitting knowledge and memory in the living archive: one centred on performance, achieved through embodied knowledge, liveness, and participatory experiences of memory; and the other rooted in memory objects of evidentiary value that are infused with meaningful (but silent) narratives that can be read through acts of collective remembering. In the concluding section I will map the implications of this double-lens analysis for theory and practice. Why is the study of living archives significant for the present moment we are now experiencing in these fields? Why is it important to connect these dots? I will draw attention to the importance of acknowledging and creating fields of collaboration where different kinds of knowledges (such as scientific, artistic, popular, kinaesthetic) and creative impetuses can be accommodated and cross-fertilised, building on the concepts of 'interdisciplinary artsapes' and 'interdisciplinary knowledgesapes' (Whatley & Sabiescu, 2016, 17) and the continuum worldview (McKemmish, 2001; Upward, 2000).

## LIVING ARCHIVES AND THE SOCIAL TRANSMISSION OF MEMORY: TWO CONCEPTUAL LENSES

In this section, I will illustrate the notion of 'archival performativity' and its implications for knowledge transmission and identity building by juxtaposing two disciplinary perspectives. The first comes from performance studies and analyses living archives in terms of performance and performative acts. The second comes from archival science and focuses on the role of memory texts. Both archives and performance play a fundamental role in community culture, history and identity. The role of performance in "the transmission of social knowledge and memory" and "consolidating identities" through ritualised social and cultural practices (Taylor, 2003, 18) mirrors the role that the archive fills as a pool of evidentiary texts that trace, represent and mediate the past. Performance embodies and expresses cultural understandings, worldviews and ways of knowing that are pivotal for community sense of identity and cultural transmission. In the words of British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner:

Cultures are most fully expressed in and made conscious of themselves in their ritual and theatrical performances. (...) A performance is a dialectic of 'flow', that is, spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one, and 'reflexivity', in which the central meanings, values and goals of a culture are seen 'in

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→ (the tools) to  
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1 REACTIVATION

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action', as they shape and explain behaviour. A performance is declarative of our shared humanity, yet it utters the uniqueness of particular cultures. We will know one another better by entering one another's performances and learning their grammars and vocabularies. (Turner, 1990, 1).

Likewise, archival records, recordkeeping practices and archives hold a fundamental role in shaping community and identity. In his article 'Sharing: Collected memories in communities of records', Dutch scholar and former archivist Eric Ketelaar builds on Jeannette Bastian's concept of 'community of records' to argue that records, recordkeeping practices and archives play a fundamental part in shaping community and identity by serving to mediate a common past and thus providing continuity and cohesion to a community (Ketelaar, 2005). *into historical approach*

However, archives and performances accomplish this function of memory transmission very differently, and this difference is noticeable as well in the configuration of living archives and their role in building social bonds and community identity. Later in this section, I will show how the memory transmission function of performance is achieved through embodied knowledge and social participation, whereas archives meet it through memory objects of evidentiary value that facilitate acts of collective remembering. *transmission is both the offline reactivation and the digital accessibility and narration of the archive*

#### A performance lens: Embodied knowledge and participatory experiences of memory

In this section, I refer to two understandings of performance. Firstly, performance is a cultural practice or event with a wide variety of forms ranging from theatre, dance and storytelling to music and play (Schechner, 2013). As cultural practice, performance subscribes to and embodies particular worldviews, ways of knowing, values, and identities (Madison & Hamera, 2005). Secondly, performance is a conceptual lens and methodology used primarily in performance studies but now widely appropriated in other fields of practice and research. At the core of the performative approach is the close link between practice and research, thinking and action. This implies that "whatever is being studied is regarded as practices, events, and behaviors, not as 'objects' or 'things'". This quality of liveness – even when dealing with media and archival materials – is at the heart of performance studies" (Schechner, 2013, 3).

Below, I describe two main features afforded by a performance lens for the study of living archives: embodied knowledge and social participation. *reactivation?* I will illustrate them by drawing upon examples from living archives research and practice.

#### Embodied knowledge

Adrian Palka's multimedia performance installation, *Bark and Butterflies*, is a creative intervention that uses family archives to evoke and honour the memory of his father and other Polish people deported to a Siberian labour camp during the second World War.<sup>2</sup> The installation was developed by Palka during a journey to Siberia on the traces of his father, following the trail described in his father's wartime diary. Palka took with him digitised images of the hand-written diary, recordings of the text read in Polish, English transcriptions and family photographs. These were used and manipulated through digital media to improvise *in situ* performances that brought to life the memory of his father. The material was then developed into a multimedia performance that was staged in several



**Figure 1.** Montage Portrait Jan Palka (aged 16) Butterflies in the Siberian Taiga (2013). Photo courtesy of Adrian Palka. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jana.1284)]

arts festivals “to communicate the story in a way that enabled people to understand its physical and emotional impact and consequences for individuals, as well as its political and cultural significance” (Palka, 2018, 91) (Figure 1).

Palka’s installation illustrates two aspects regarding the role of performance in mediating knowledge and memory transmission. First, it suggests that intense emotions and affect have to be lived and performed through the body in order to reach closure and understanding. Mere rational thought is not enough to bring to the surface an otherwise complex entanglement of feelings and experience. Second, Palka’s journey in the steps of his father illustrates that to relive and understand a very personal experience and a very personal memory, he had to share them with others. Solitary engagement with his father’s evoked experience would not do. He had to share his memory, make others part of his experience.

#### re-activation

A performance lens enables us to **look at living archives from an embodied knowledge perspective, with a focus on action and interaction during an event**. This perspective is anchored in an epistemological stance that rejects the Cartesian distinction between mind and body (Whatley & Sabiescu, 2016); the “apartheid of knowledges, that plays out inside the academy as the difference between thinking and doing, interpreting and making, conceptualizing and creating” (Conquergood, 2002, 153). A performer or dancer’s way of thinking is embodied, circumscribed to a psycho-somatic whole as a form of “kinaesthetic intelligence” (deLahunta & Zuniga Shaw, 2006, 58). The body perceives, knows and has memory (Figure 2).

These same aspects are illustrated in the live performance *P(AR)ticipate: body of experience | body of work | body as archive* by video dance artist Jeannette Ginslov, which explored the artist’s memory of life in South Africa during Apartheid and democratic times.<sup>3</sup> As part of the work’s multimedia

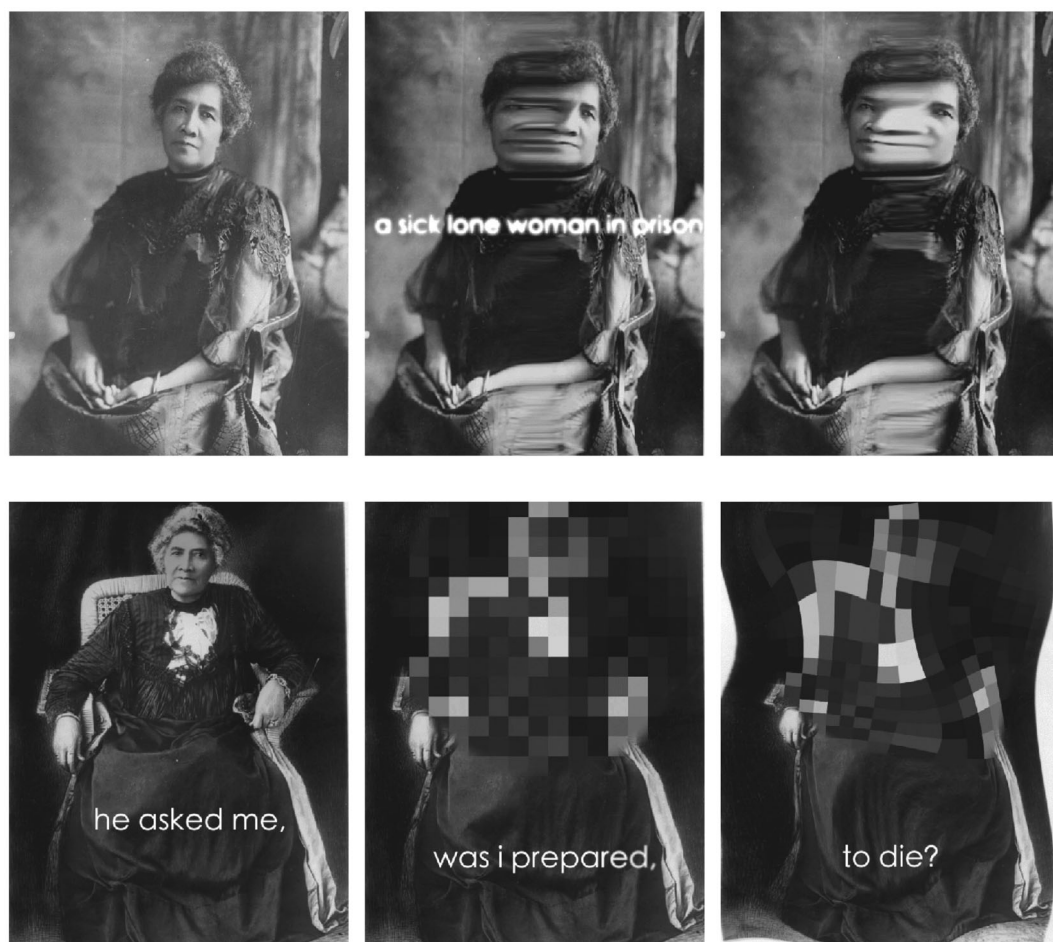


**Figure 2.** *Bark and Butterflies* Installation, Klangland Sonic Art Festival, Kassel, Germany, April 2014. Photo courtesy of Adrian Palka. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

installation, an Augmented Reality (AR) app was used to access videos tagged to images projected around the environment and the artist's moving body while she performed. The Aurasma application supported the ability to blend improvised dance, drawings and video and activated them through audience actions to stage the collective experience of recollecting and sharing the artist's memory (Ginslov, 2017). The artist played with the metaphor of 'body of experience' and 'body as archive', showing how the body hosts somatic memory, and can become at the same time a platform for sharing memory during a staged performance. The artist's 'body of work' included an archive of documentary footage and live performance captured over 25 years (Ibid.).

Palka's journey and Ginslov's performance play with ideas of live and mediated experience, which reflect a long-standing debate in performance studies around liveness and mediation. In its most immediate sense, liveness points to the co-presence of performers and spectators at the time of the performance, and its opposite can be 'mediated', or 'recorded', or even 'digital'; thus referring to an antagonism between live and digital performance (Kim, 2017). Phelan (2003) puts forth the thesis that performance is irreproducible; that is, it happens only once while everything that can be recorded, re-enacted or re-staged afterwards is another performance. Liveness, then, captures this immediacy of co-presence. Matters are complicated when expanding the meaning of the term to different temporalities and the involvement of technology in ways that afford mediated co-presence – same time, different places, as in the case of distributed performance. Auslander (2012, 3) contests Phelan's thesis, and suggests that we can speak about liveness in mediated ways, and that "the idea of what counts culturally as live experience changes over time in relation to technological change". Palka's performative journey and Ginslov's performance mirror Auslander's view, and are illustrations of how mediatisation and liveness can co-exist and work together in acts of transmission of memory.

*liveness  
preserved  
in the  
mediation?*



**Figure 3.** Video stills from the interactive installation *Liliuokalani: Archival Experimentations* (Vancouver, Canada, 2015). Original video and image by Rachel M. Ward. Photo courtesy of Rachel M. Ward.

### Participatory experiences of memory

In their work '(Ukulele) Strings of Knowledge: Tactile and Digital Interactivity with Archives and Ethnography', Ward and Hennessy (2018) explore the social sharing of memory through sensorial modes of transmission. The exhibition *Liliuokalani: Archival Experimentations* (Vancouver, Canada 2015) offered interactive, sensorial modes of exploring the biography of the last reigning Queen of Hawaii, Liliuokalani. The audience engaged with the memory of Queen Liliuokalani through one of the most beloved musical instruments in Hawaii, the ukulele. By plucking the strings of the ukulele, visitors generated short video sequences that narrated significant moments from the Queen's life. While the exhibition centred on an individual's (the Hawaiian Queen's) memory, community was created through the participatory experience of memory, where the audience becomes an active agent bringing Queen Liliuokalani's memory to life, by strumming the strings of the ukulele to trigger biographical videos (Figure 3).

The concept of 'archival performativity' that I associate with living archives includes notions of identity making through performative practice and social participation. The relationship between performativity and identity has been treated theoretically in the work of Judith Butler, drawing on the thinking of language philosopher John L. Austin. According to Butler (1996), identities are created and constantly shaped and redefined through discursive performances, including regular verbal and non-verbal acts of communication. Sociocultural norms guide these practices and reinforce the power of speech acts to make things happen. Discursive acts and sociocultural norms are thus inscribed on the body and guide the constitution of an external self that participates in the interactions with the others. While Butler's theory concentrates on individual making of identity, with a focus on speech acts, in living archives it is interesting to trace how identity and social bonds are shaped by participatory experiences of memory using embodied modes of knowledge transmission.

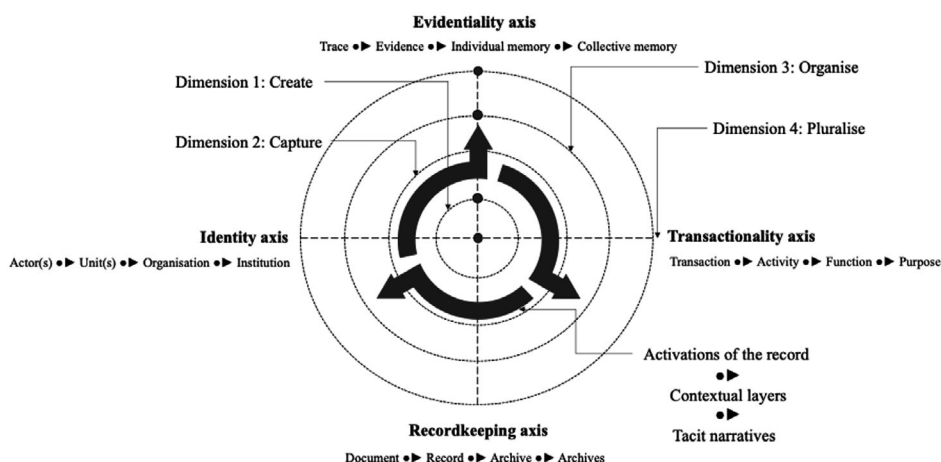
This bridge from personal to social in the transmission of memory is explored in the Living Archives performance project *AffeXity: Passages & Tunnels*, created by Jeannette Ginslov in collaboration with Susan Kozel and staged in the *Re:New Digital Arts Festival* in Copenhagen (2013). The project sought to offer novel, engaging ways for people to interact with and experience archives, using AR technology and an experiential approach based on affect and rhythm. A range of historic and newer archival material was used, including material from the Royal Danish Theatre, the Swedish Film Archive and more recent videos of dance improvisations. Participants were engaged through guided tours, one live performance event and locative media, for which they could download an AR app on their smartphones or use a device provided on the spot (Kozel, 2017). Kozel (2013, 156) comments that the project had "the goal of sliding from somatic activity (tapping into affect in our bodies and in the city) to social activity (creating a social practice where people will want to add their expressive physical movement to the cities in the form of short videos in their cities)". This passage unfolded on spatial, relational and temporal axes: memory was evoked through archival material from the past, was vivified into performance and took multiple trajectories – spatially and relationally among the performers and the audience.

### An archival science lens: Tacit narratives and collective remembering

In this section I use a conceptual lens drawn from archival science to afford a different perspective on the social function of living archives and their role in memory transmission. The Records Continuum Model (RCM) was initially designed by Upward (1996, 1997) as a framework that unifies recordkeeping and archival practice. It has continued to be shaped and evolved through joint work by Upward and his colleagues in the Records Continuum Research Group at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. Theoretically, RCM has been influenced by the work of British sociologist Anthony Giddens and his structuration theory and postmodern thinkers such as Jean-François Lyotard. The model encountered wide-spread recognition and has been seen by many as the best articulated alternative to the traditional lifecycle approach widely used in archival and records management.

The model describes the trajectory of the record or evidentiary text represented as a series of concentric rings outlined by four dimensions (Create, Capture, Organise, Pluralise) and four axes (Evidence, Recordkeeping, Transactionality, and Identity). The first dimension, *Create*, focuses on the

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central



**Figure 4.** An interpretation of the Records Continuum Model (Upward, 1996, 1997, 2000) that integrates the thinking of Ketelaar, 2001, 2005). This representation of the RCM draws attention to how multiple activations of the record result in layers of tacit narratives that are ingrained in the record. These activations mark critical points of transition on the Evidentiality axis, from the object as trace to the object as mediator of collective memory. Source: The author.

① creation of archival documents, which become “documents-as-trace of the act in which they participate” (McKemmish & Piggott, 2002, 10) or “proto record(s)-as-trace” (McKemmish, 2001, 335). In the second dimension, *Capture*, “records-as-trace” are captured by linking them with the realities they document and their organisational or group context (Ibid.), making them consistent sources of information (Upward, 2000). In the third dimension, *Organise*, “navigable structures and understandings” are forged for the organisation and management of records (Upward, 2000). The fourth dimension, *Pluralise*, deals with the use, re-use and re-interpretation of the record in multiple contexts, by multiple audiences/users, where new meanings are thereafter associated. ② ③ ④

The evolution of the RCM and the echoes in archival science scholarship and beyond are too broad to be adequately summarised here. Below, I will use RCM as a lens to shed new light on those features of living archives that support the social transmission of memory by focusing on two key aspects: firstly, the layers of tacit narratives that are infused in the record through successive activations (Ketelaar, 2001); and secondly, the acts of collective remembering (Ketelaar, 2005) which make possible the transitions from individual to social transmission of memory.

### Tacit narratives

Ketelaar (2001, 2005) calls every interaction, manipulation and interpretation of the record an activation of the record. These activations can be performed by creators, users and archivists, and are distributed among agents and memory texts. Successive activations cumulate in tacit narratives, which need to be deconstructed in order to grasp the meanings of the archives. All meanings that are conferred through successive contexts of use, re-use and modification are imprinted on the records. Anyone reading or looking back cannot ignore those ingrained stories (Ketelaar, 2001). And as McKemmish and Piggott (2002, 9) argue, it is not the record on its own, stripped of context that tells

*both offline and online*

a story, rather “it is the record in the evolving context of the records creators and their successors that tells this particular story” (Figure 4).

The accompanying diagram (Figure 4) offers an interpretation of the RCM that evidences two aspects: Firstly, how successive activations of the record (Ketelaar, 2001, 2005) infuse it with layers of tacit narratives. Second, the representation highlights the contextual value of records. The notion of contextual layering suggests that there is not one unique reading of a record. Rather, each context of use confers new meanings and interpretations upon it. Furthermore, the actors that manipulate, interact with or otherwise make sense of the record at any one given time can be very diverse and their meanings and interpretations may align, complement, contradict, or oppose one another. For instance, diverse meanings can be conferred upon records not only by recordkeepers, archivists and government officials but also by members of a community, their offspring and following generations. Thus, the tacit narratives ingrained in the record become meaningful in association with the contemporary context that frames their creation or transformation.

This lens opens up several interpretive routes for living archives. It enables us to see living archives as sites of multiple interpretations spread across time and space, and between human agents and memory objects. These interpretations can hinge on matters of politics, inclusion and exclusion, identity building or denial. Through purposeful selection, documentation and interpretation of archives, the ideologies of archivists, historians or powerful groups are perpetuated and strengthened, advancing specific missions and values (Kaplan, 2000). Just like performance records can also serve to strengthen or deny identity. For instance, the use of European names for Aboriginal places and people in archival and recordkeeping indexes denied their identity and hampered accessibility (McKemmish & Piggott, 2002). In living archives, these interpretations are brought to light in a space of presence, where they can be traced back, understood, accepted (or contested) and come to terms with.

### Acts of collective remembering

In his 1997 articulation of the RCM, Upward describes the influence of Giddens on the model structure and in line with his thinking, proposes a reading of the model focused on the transmission of memory in society. This process is not limited to psychological remembering, but recognizes the role of institutional memory-keeping, storage and reproduction (Upward, 1997). The fourth dimension of the continuum (Pluralise) brings it into closer dialogue with collective memory. In this dimension the knowledge associated with the records is shared across communities (Reed, 2005).

It is in the Pluralise dimension that we can also locate living archives, with attention however to the fact that the movement of the records across dimensions is fluid and iterative, even recursive (Reed, 2005), as is suggested by the dotted lines of the circles representing the dimensions in Figure 4. Inspired by Maurice Halbwachs' works 'The collective memory' (1950) and 'The social frameworks of memory' (1925), Ketelaar (2005, 45) looks at “the possibility of mapping a memory continuum onto the records continuum, in which memories of the individual, the family, the organisation, the community, and society function, not in isolation, but in a flow of continuous interaction”. Ketelaar draws on Actor-Network-Theory to put forth a view of communities as interacting networks of human agents and cultural tools.

↳ network of the Duda Keste

Collective memory is created and transmitted in these networks through various means, such as physical objects, human bodies or performances. It is this process of collective remembering through selective archival, recordkeeping and sharing practice, that contributes to building a community's collective identity. Affirmation of identity requires an active process of searching for roots, for the common past. The role of living archives can be positioned here, as agent-driven, conscious and purposeful revival of the past and affirmation of identity.

To explain how living archives can function as sites of collective remembering or social sharing of memory, it is useful to introduce another significant concept associated with the RCM: the notion of 'spacetime'. In 'The constitution of society', Giddens (1984) describes the 'disembeddedness' of contemporary ways of social life and interaction. This is analysed in terms of "time-space distancing – the conditions under which time and space are organised so as to connect presence and absence" (Giddens, 2004, 14). In pre-modern societies, time-space distancing is low since social interaction takes place in co-located contexts that are dominated by 'presence' (Giddens, 1984, 18). In industrialised and contemporary societies, "the level of time-space distancing is much greater than in even the most developed of agrarian civilisations" (Giddens, 2004, 14). This manifests as a move out from co-located contexts of interaction and towards interactional situations with "absent" others, locationally distant from any situation of face-to-face interaction" (Giddens, 1984, 18). Upward was inspired by this concept and its analytical unfolding, which he used to develop the space-time model of the records continuum by applying the pattern of sequential distancing from original action in information management (Upward, 2000).

Using this analytical lens, living archives can thus be seen as sites of collective remembering in that they align different temporalities to bring participants as well as memory-mediating texts into a shared, co-located space. All sorts of cultural tools can serve this function of memory mediation, ranging from buildings and printed records to information technology, but also bodies and performances. Thus, drawing on the thinking of Ketelaar (2001, 2005) explained above, living archives can be seen as sites of 'archival performativity', they marry the attributes of performance and archives to become powerful, complex means for memory transmission and community identity building.

## CONCLUSION. INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPLORATIONS OF LIVING ARCHIVES

In this article I have unpacked the value of living archives towards fulfilling the potential of cultural heritage for building collective memory, community and identity, using two analytical angles: one coming from performance studies, the other from archival science. These two readings brought to light different characteristics of living archives, which I conflate in the notion of 'archival performativity'. This concept points to how the features of the archive and performance are integrated in living archives, making them particularly effective vehicles for knowledge and memory transmission. In these processes archives and performance come to fulfil similar roles as 'memory texts'; as whether through record, body or ritual, the passage from personal to social requires mediation, the use of cultural tools. As Eric Ketelaar writes:

Individual memory becomes social memory by social sharing of experiences and emotions. Social sharing is mediated by cultural tools. These tools are 'texts' in any form, written, oral, as well as physical. The

landscape or a building or a monument may serve as a memory text, while bodily texts are presented in commemorations, rituals and performances (2005, 44).

Performance and archival records are both cultural tools, acting as mediators for the social transmission of memory. Performance endows the living archive with qualities of embodied knowledge, liveness and sociality. It supports the staging of participatory experiences of memory, through which identity is performed and shaped, collective understandings are forged and social bonds are created and strengthened. The archive contains 'tacit narratives' (Ketelaar, 2001) that create rich layers of knowledge and memory through each and every act of manipulation and use. But the meaning of these narratives is entrenched with information about the context where they were originated and shaped (as illustrated in Figure 4 above), and they remain hidden from the uninitiated viewer. It takes acts of 'collective remembering' (Ketelaar, 2001, 2005) to decipher, understand, share, or even debate and contest these silent, tacit narratives.

The performative and the archival function of living archives contribute to their role in shaping, strengthening or, on the contrary, denying identity. Performance achieves this function by allowing performative acts, guided by sociocultural norms, to sediment into externalisations of the self (Butler, 1996). Through acts of social participation in memory sharing, we witness the shaping of collective identity, as is the case in communities celebrating their common past and culture through rituals and commemorations. The archive, on the other hand, serves to create and strengthen identity through the evidentiary role of the archival record and its capacity to store narratives about its creators, manipulators, or the events and happenings it witnessed. When revealed in acts of collective remembering, these narratives are invested with the power to communicate and at times reinforce knowledge and truths, but also attest to cultural norms and values that further shape identity.

I will conclude by drawing attention to the role of different disciplinary lenses for analysing complex social phenomena and events, and the implications of using these lenses for the bodies of knowledge that analyse and interpret them. Living archives are multifaceted events that require an interdisciplinary lens to be properly understood, as their complexity cannot be easily grasped by a single disciplinary perspective. They point to syncretisations of practices – often hybridised or blended – that may feature the performer and the performing act in the museum (Psarologaki, 2018; Whatley, Cisneros and Sabiescu, 2018); bring the digital archive to the dance floor (Whatley, 2013); or re-instate the body as holder of knowledge and safe-keeper of memory (Kozel, 2013). This blurring of domains of practice and research generates the rationale for conducting an interdisciplinary investigation (Repko, 2012), but there are two other aspects that augment complexity. Firstly, very different epistemologies are involved in such processes. For example, embodied practice and research such as performance adhere to epistemologies that reject the distinction between a thinking mind and a performing body, and instead bring forth notions of thinking through the body (Kozel, 2013) and 'kinaesthetic intelligence' (deLahunta & Zuniga Shaw, 2006). Secondly, many of these practices are action-oriented and involve creative acts; in living archives as sociotechnical environments (using a broad understanding of technology as cultural tool), research is often used not only to observe and understand practice *post-factum* but also to shape practice before or during the process, through experimental

approaches. Thus, the methodologies used in archival versus artistic practice and research are very different, and may even appear radical when each is employed in the other field, oftentimes generating contradictions with established disciplinary epistemologies (Birkin, 2015, 1).

These strata of complexity do not make interdisciplinary investigations impossible; rather, I propose, they make every new interdisciplinary investigation a journey of discovery into potentially uncharted territory. Thus, while having discussed the usefulness of two conceptual lenses to make sense of living archives – performance studies and archival science, it is to be acknowledged that each of these carry their own historical, disciplinary, semantic and terminological weight. They can shed light on what is happening in a context, illuminate the way in another, but in essence they both carry the influence and at times the bias of their own making. These aspects are oftentimes obscured when we work within one discipline, but come into sharper focus when we attempt to use them in conjunction with lenses, perspectives and concepts coming from other disciplines. Yet, the very difficulties associated with interdisciplinary undertakings may be why practices such as living archives offer fertile ground for experimentation, adopting and shaping new approaches, ideas, and lines of thought. Such practices become synergetic places of encounter between diverse knowledges and ways of thinking, whether discipline-specific, scientific, kinaesthetic or popular knowledge, and moreover artistic and creative sensibilities.

Embedded in continuum thinking is a stance that encourages an enlargement of perspective from our disciplinary silos, to embrace the possibility of such diverse ways of thinking and knowledges coming together, and connecting the dots in what can otherwise be disparate, fragmented initiatives. Frank Upward and his colleagues showed that the continuum blueprint can be applied to other disciplinary areas that fall outside of archival science, such as information systems and publishing for instance (see Upward, 2000). Similarly, a broadened perspective of such interdisciplinary encounters is provided in the notion of ‘interdisciplinary artsapes’ and ‘interdisciplinary knowledgesapes’:

(S)paces in between which offer new premises, resources, tools, theories and methodologies for making and theorising art drawing on integrative perspectives bridging arts and technology fields. Analogous to the tight interplay between theory and practice in performance studies, interdisciplinary artsapes (as integrative spaces of creative possibility) and knowledgesapes (as integrative knowledge and meaning-making spaces) are tightly intertwined, mutually influencing each other’s evolution. Because of this quality of integration, their greatest potential is to develop and offer new languages, vocabularies, paradigms, and literacies, and in time configure radically new ways of making and theorising arts and culture (Whatley & Sabiescu, 2016, 33).

Interdisciplinary artsapes and knowledgesapes are created through the persistent configuration of collaborative spaces at the interface between disciplines and areas of practice and research. Initially applied to the crossroad of arts and technology fields (Whatley & Sabiescu, 2016), they capture even more widely the dual creative-analytical character of practice-based research in arts and creative domains. This duality is highly generative as well as challenging, due to its positioning at the interface of diverse disciplines. However, it is this differential edge that, in time, affords and catalyses the emergence of new ways of thinking, methodologies and creative practice.

END

## NOTES

1. This paper draws partially on the keynote address 'Archives as sites of (communal) experience, sociality and liveness' delivered at the 14<sup>th</sup> Community Informatics Research Network (CIRN) conference, 'Art as Archive: Archive as Art & The Imagined Archive' (25–27 October 2017, Prato, Italy).
2. For additional information about this work, See: <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-directories/current-projects/2014/bark-and-butterflies/>
3. For additional information about this work, See: <http://www.jginslov.com/participate.html>

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