

# DECOLONISING ARCHIVES



A PUBLICATION OF L'INTERNATIONALE BOOKS

# DECOLONISING ARCHIVES

COVER CREDIT

Footage for unfinished film about Guinean women. Labels on the reels: women at work, women at school, women in politics, women mother, farming women. INCA, Sana na N'Hada and Flora Gomes, 1979.

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# INTRODUCTION

*Decolonising Archives* is a second publication in the L'Internationale Research strand of Decolonising Practices. Following *Decolonising Museums*, the current publication focuses on the archive and the ways of recovering its political potential not only in relation to history but, more urgently, to the present. In a similar way to museums and other traditional institutions of the European nation states (though their roots are of course much older), the archives have in the last decades undergone significant changes towards higher accessibility and transparency, facilitated mainly through the advances of the digital technologies. These changes have resulted in new challenges which offer unforeseen possibilities for democratisation both in terms of access and knowledge production by new, often marginalised, voices. At the same time, many archives around the world inhabit a fine line between the risks of neglect and decay on one hand, and privatisation and fetishisation due to their rising market value on the other hand. The archival treasure hunt to satisfy the growing demand of institutions in the old and new imperial centres is just one

example of coloniality as a condition outliving colonialism itself and continuing to discipline archives in terms of access and political instrumentalisation.

The decolonisation of archives has a broader meaning beyond interrogating the colonial legacy and existing, or even emerging, neo-colonial power relations. For the purpose of this publication, we have chosen to address decolonisation on two levels. The first level challenges the commodification of the archive and attempts to manage it as capital. The second level dwells in recognising that the seemingly neutral Western criteria and classifications are in fact tools for maintaining the role of an archive as an imperial project of domination and affirmation. While the former addresses mainly the issues of ownership, accessibility and control, these also regulate the conditions for the latter, i.e. understanding the archives as sites of knowledge production and political resistance, interpretation and challenge to the ruling exclusive classifications.

In recent years, we have witnessed the revolutionary redefinition of archives through digitisation



and online sharing. Digitisation and online sharing of vast amounts of archival documents can however, when they are done with no reflection, easily turn into a pseudo-democratic end in itself, resulting in an overload of the material available online. Such misguided generosity can solidify rather than challenge the established Western narratives when colonised archives merely supplement and thus confirm their primacy. Yet, if understood as a creative chance, digitisation can become a true decolonial tool. As navigation and retrieval become of critical importance due to the abundance of digitised material, scholars within the field of digital humanities, as well as artists, point out new algorithms and semantic search as new more welcoming guides rather than obsolete gatekeepers. While progressive code writers will undoubtedly continue to play an indispensable role in making the archives more accessible and democratic, most of the decolonisation is, however, to be done on the epistemological level. It is precisely here that artists play a crucial role when they engage with archives and unearth testimonies which put the official historical narrative into question or reframe what is seemingly known and highlight its inner contradictions to resist simplifying homogenisation.

The contributions in this publication can be split into four sections. The three opening texts

are dedicated to the critical potential of the digital. Wolfgang Ernst argues for the understanding of the archival order as an alternative to the dominance of the narrative history of the traditional nation state; while Jeffrey Schnapp sees as the priority for digital humanists the design of an effective mechanism to activate or sustain cultural memory, as well as the urgency of so-called “crisis archiving”. Lawrence Abu Hamdan points out the biased nature of surveillance technologies that establish new hierarchies of information as well as “noise” which is disregarded for its incompatibility with the dominant narratives of violence in “troubled” neighbourhoods.

In the following section, Ana Longoni (Red Conceptualismos del Sur), Crystal Fraser and Zoe Todd, and Karol Radziszewski describe three different geo-political situations where the authors themselves belong to the communities they speak for. Ana Longoni presents the Southern Conceptualisms Network’s sustained efforts to reactivate the disruptive power and catalysing potential of the Latin American conceptual practices (which are continuously neutralised by both state violence and market logic) as an antagonistic force within contemporary cognitive capitalism. Crystal Fraser and Zoe Todd confront the reader with the difficulties of gaining access to the archival material connected to the

Indigenous populations guarded by the institutions of the settler state of Canada. Karol Radziszewski proposes strategies for resistance against homophobia on one hand and rainbow colonisation from the West on the other, by revealing daring queer ancestors in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in other “peripheries” worldwide.

The third section consists of three contributions by decolonial advocates self-reflecting on their privileged positions with regards the material they have access to. The common question for Rona Sela, Filipa César and Andrea Stultiens concerns undoing, or at least avoiding perpetuation, of the neo-colonial epistemologies. Rona Sela reflects on projects by both Israeli and Palestinian artists, including herself as an Israeli scholar, de-masking the ideological framing of Palestine-related archival material in Israeli archives. The contribution by Filipa César, based on her work with film archives from Guinea-Bissau, continuing the work begun by Chris Marker and others decades ago, points to ongoing battles for the recognition of certain materials as relevant, despite continuous dismissals by the authorities. Andrea Stultiens shares with the reader her eye-opening experiences during her long-term engagement with photographic legacy in Uganda leading to the *HIP Uganda* project.

In the closing section, two essays were written in connection with the *Archives of the Commons* seminar (Madrid, 11 and 12 December 2015) organised by Museo Reina Sofía, Fundación de los Comunes (Commons Foundation) and Red Conceptualismos del Sur (Southern Conceptualisms Network). A collective text by Mela Dávila and Carlos Prieto del Campo (Museo Reina Sofía), Marisa Pérez Colina (Fundación de los Comunes) and Mabel Tapia (Red Conceptualismos del Sur) offers an overview of the core areas touched upon during the conference such as the politics of the archives, archive economies, and techno-political devices. Carlos Prieto del Campo expands on this by unpacking the Museo Reina Sofía’s vision of the archive as “an engine for political activation in the present”. He discusses how archives of the commons can serve as a vessel for collective memory and how they can be opened up to the general public.

The collective project *Luta ca caba inda* discussed by Filipa César acknowledges that the struggle is not over yet; similarly, this publication is considered as the beginning of a series rather than a final word. Archives play a crucial role for L’Internationale and its institutions who hope not only to develop progressive institutional practices for their own archives but also to raise a discussion



beyond this first and therefore necessarily limited account. New voices overcoming the Eurocentric legacy of L'Internationale will be invited in the future to contribute to, and continue, the discussion started here.



**RADICALLY  
DE-HISTORICISING THE  
ARCHIVE. DECOLONISING  
ARCHIVAL MEMORY FROM  
THE SUPREMACY OF  
HISTORICAL DISCOURSE**

WOLFGANG ERNST

## Unfolding the layers of the “colonised” archive

In cultural discourse, in the art world and in political activism, the term “archive” has mostly become a generalised metaphor for different kinds of collections of traces from the past. While in public discourse the archive is mostly (mis-)understood as the “content” of the archive (its records, its data banks), in archival sciences the term rather refers to the organising structure. Against intellectual or artistic fantasies of “the anarchival” (Fürlus & Giannetti 2014), the digital archive is still rigorously rooted in its techno-mathematical structure, while the dynarchive lies between the archival and the anarchival spheres.

The administrative archive in the strict sense is a read-only memory. One cannot simply take out archival records because they are politically incorrect, neither can the archival order as such (key term “tectonics”) be easily changed according to a new

discursive will. Just like in computing, a rewriting of code in the operating system would make the whole function collapse. It is exactly the non-discursive and non-narrative structure of the archive which makes it such a uniquely powerful institution. Therefore, acts such as revealing the genealogy of the institutional archives as grounded in the imperial nation states have to operate on an epistemological level, through non-invasive re-reading, un-covering the ties between archive and narrative history as master discourse of the traditional nation state.

Digital archiving, as Friedrich Kittler has pointed out, could break up the alliance that the institutional archives have maintained with historiography and historicism since 1800. Moreover, the chronological sequence could be replaced by an order of co-presence once their combinatory connections were located (Kittler 1996, p.75).

The digitisation of vast amounts of archival records brings a creative chance. Applying creative algorithms to experiment with new forms of navigating enormous amounts of archival signals and data



(textual or audio-visual) results in new insights by mathematical intelligence like entropy values, stochastic analysis and similarity-based retrieval. Such operations are possible in computational space without destroying the material and symbolic order of the existing archive.

Similar media-archaeological approaches to the digitised archive allow new readings of the archive. Yet the archive – with the new digitised infra-structures linked online to data circulation, storage, processing and surveillance on the Internet – is at the same time colonised in new and unexpected ways by non-human agencies like the NSA (National Security Agency). What look like creative applications of software in big data research by digital humanities are nothing but a side-product of data processing avant-gardes developed by intelligence services.

## **De-historisation: De-coupling the archive from the nation state**

The modern archive is closely related to the territorial nation state. With scholars like Jules Michelet in France and Leopold von Ranke in Germany, the

rise of research-based history as an academic discipline co-originated with the new impulse to go (back) to the archives. The rise of the modern nation state required a foundational narrative of its temporal genealogy, resulting in a re-organisation of the archives “in the name of history” as a new discourse – provided by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in the case of Prussia, with a proper philosophy of history which gave the state a deep-temporal sense and teleological (“metahistorical” in Hayden White’s sense) justification, with the present state as its happy end. Via the historical discourse, the administrative state which is an infra-structural function (and represents the symbolic order of power) could be transformed into an imaginary called “nation”.

## **Archival order as non-narrative alternative to historiography**

Beyond the “cultural turn” of the last two or three decades concerned with cultural and collective memory, the critical focus has now shifted to the analysis of techno-cultural temporal dynamics of social, administrative and technological systems. The



archive is set in motion (Ernst 2010). Let us therefore address the archive not as a coherent depository for memory supply but instead identify its multiplicity of temporal layers with and within memory technologies. Since the notion of the archive has been extended from the symbolic order (alphabetical texts) to the storage of signals (like physical sound and imagery), a memory has emerged which is capable of addressing human perception in a kind of repeatable hyperpresence. This does not only re-present, but actually enacts different aggregations of the past.

My epistemological intention is to liberate archival memory from its reductive subjection to the discourse of history and re-install it as an agency of multiple temporal poetics in its own right. In the context discussed here, (media-) archaeology is not just an auxiliary discipline to history, but as well a genuinely alternative model of processing data from the material archives of the past. While historical discourse strives for narrative coherence, the archaeological aesthetics deals with discrete, serial strings of information which – in an age of computing – gains new plausibility against literary forms of historical imagination developed in the nineteenth century.

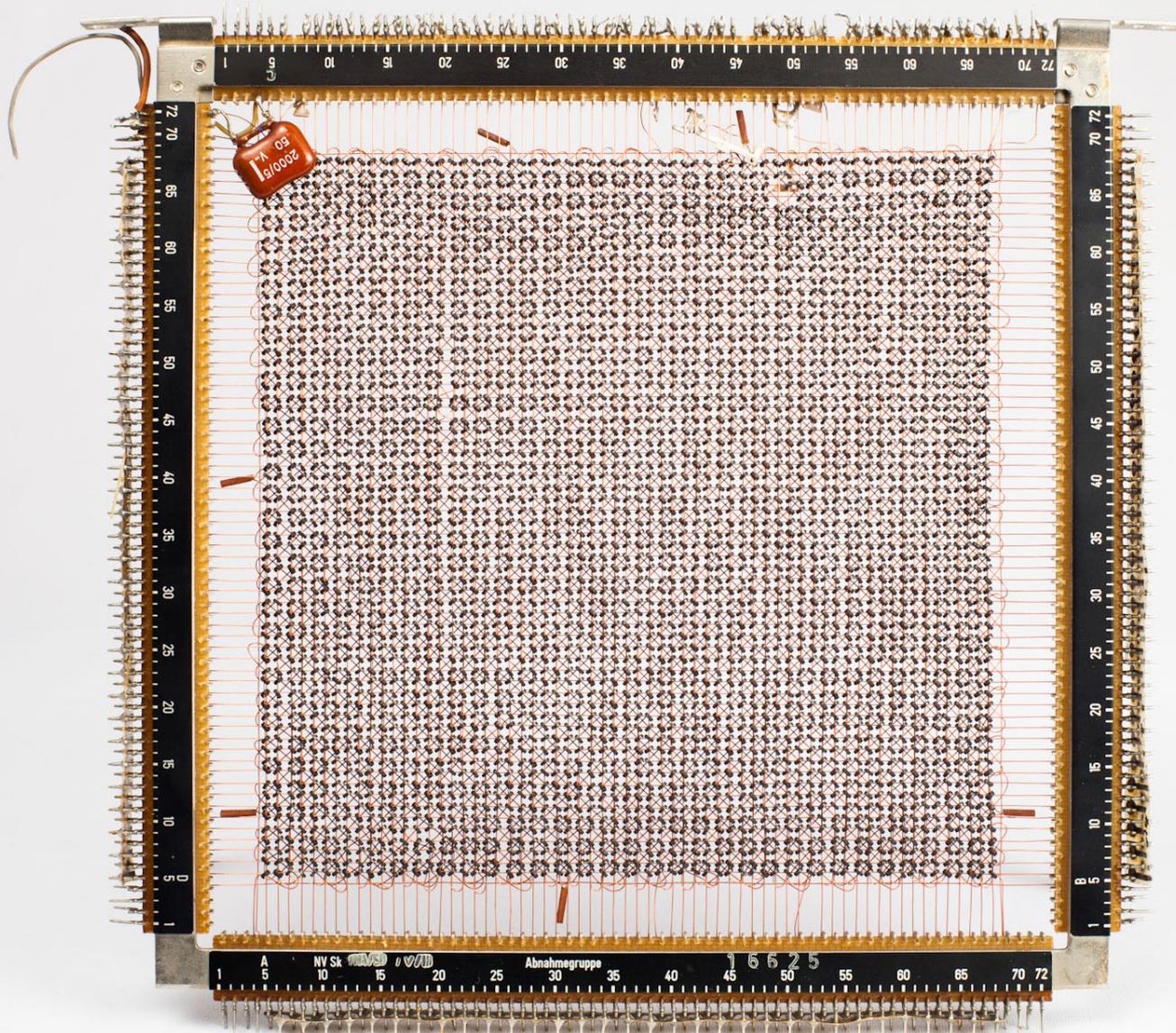
As data bank structures, the archival mode of memory (record management) is a non-narrative alternative to historiography, in the best tradition of

early twentieth century avant-garde which “questioned all models of memory (especially narrative ones), favouring openly dynamic, discontinuous forms contiguous with the modern means of technological reproduction – especially photography and film” (Ernst 2010). An archival collection of photographs as accumulation (different from private photo albums) does not yet constitute a meaningful story; on the contrary, it rather deconstructs narrative. Archival logistics of ordering images undercut the iconologic narrative by discrete counting (alphanumeric metadata). Here, the tight coupling of symbolic evidence in forms of oral or literary “history” is being replaced by a loose archival coupling (truly “mediatic” in Fritz Heider’s terms), a process that – according to Allan Sekula’s analysis – started already in the nineteenth century (Sekula 1986, p. 58).

## **Monumentality as suspense (epoché) from the temporal economy**

Against the background of archives which are increasingly in motion, let us try a counter-analysis





Magnetic core memory, a technological form of dynamic short-time archiving in early digital electronic computing. Photo: Benjamin Renter. Copyright: Media Archaeological Fundus at Humboldt-University, Berlin (Media Studies).



which defends archival resistance. The archive might now – as a retroactive effect – re-discover its virtue as institutional monument: to take out values from the ever-accelerating circulation and electronic economy, to arrest, fix and maintain chosen items; thus turning floating records from contextual documents (files) into discrete monuments (as defined in the “Introduction” to Michel Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge*), into spatio-temporal “chronotopes” (Mikhail Bakhtin), epoché as sublation, taken out of time.

Contrary to the archives of physical memory media (paper records, celluloid film, magnetic tape) characterised by limitations of access due to the fragile nature of these documents (Prelinger 2009, p. 271), the current liberal, broadened, electronically-biased (thus liberated from spatial and material restrictions) use of the term archive, the online data collections labeled archives could in fact, as Frank Kessler and Mirko Tobias Schäfer proposed, be better characterised as perpetual transmission rather than permanent storage (Kessler & Schäfer, p. 276). What used to be sacred spaces, secluded from public insight – the arcana of political administration and of their archival memory – is now directly wired to the communication circuit of the present. The archive loses its temporal exclusivity as a space remote from the immediate present.

With increasing mobility and acceleration, should we rather value the immobile archive for its time-resisting virtue? Archival resistance against change is indeed a virtue in the age of networked documents which dissolve into memory-buffered streaming data. The acceleration counter-reactively leads to a wish to arrest movement for longer intervals or at least for moments – a “katechontic” counter-aesthetics usually associated with the archive. But archives of movement, in the age of YouTube and UbuWeb, themselves get in motion (Knörer 2011).

The idea of an archive in motion is a paradox: the archive is traditionally that which arrests time, which stops all motion. For nineteenth century historians, the archive was in its essence an institution that made it possible to access “frozen” sections of past time. But the technological developments in the twentieth century – the introduction of the phonograph and film – have inevitably forced the archive to confront the question of mobility, both practically and conceptually. Later, the transition from an archive of motion to the notion of an archive in motion is associated with the advent of computer technologies and ultimately, the Internet, where constant transfer and updating functions as well as “live” communication and interaction redefine the temporality of the archival document itself.



## *Eigenzeit*: Archival resistance against historical time

Archives have their inherent temporality, their *Eigenzeit* as memory institution and storage technology. The archive oscillates between “temporalities” and “tempo-realities”.

Emphatic storage waiting for (re-)circulation belongs to the logic of late capitalism and thus is part of a memory economy. In a contrary way, a virtue of the traditional archive has been exactly that it was outside (historical) time. This refugium, this temporal exile from history, is in fact a kind of archival resistance against complete mobility which is the signature of modernist discourse. The old institutional archive served as a bedrock against the complete mobilisation of records, as opposed to distributed digital archives and their open access on the Internet today. More and more, archives find themselves both inside and outside the “Web 2.0” or “social Web” economy. A gap opens between the necessity for archival services for the public versus defending archival secrecy (the arcanum).

By becoming electronically-accessible “online”, the archive is being deprived of its traditional power.

As long as the archive has been distanced from public discourse, archival knowledge has been an internal privilege of governmental agencies. But such traditional archival secrecy is not just an old-fashioned power instrument to be overcome in favour of open access, but actually there is a kind of archival secrecy of a new kind, hidden in technology itself (van Tijen 1994).

## Conclusion: Archive in the age of dynamic user culture

While Émile Durkheim suggested a society based on emphatic memory, Niklas Luhmann replaced this sociological perspective for the age of communication media by defining society rather as a form of communication. Applied to memory agencies and especially the “digital archive”, this demands a new interpretation of its epistemological and aesthetic dimension as well. Although the traditional archival format (spatial order, classification) will in many ways necessarily persist, the new archive is radically temporalised, “ephemeral” (Chun 2011), multi-sensual, corresponding with a dynamic user culture which is



less concerned with records for eternity than with order by fluctuation. As a result, new challenges arise: what if the public will prefer to use Google rather than institutional Internet portals to get access and information on national, academic and cultural memory? In other words, will the World Wide Web, Web 2.0 and the emerging Realtime Net replace the traditional guardians of memory such as archives, libraries and museums, just as Internet radio and IPTV (Internet Protocol Television) are replacing the traditional broadcasting media?

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# BURIED (AND) ALIVE

JEFFREY SCHNAPP

Like the royal burial grounds with which they were once associated, archives were born as sites of long-term conservation whose contents were thought to have transcended temporal bounds. Few categories of materials were believed to be worthy of elevation into their supratemporal ether. There was little space for documenting the evanescent or contested features of human existence, not to mention the actions of contemporaries or peripheries, in the *archivum*.

In the course of their modern history, archives have undergone a democratisation that touches every aspect of their existence, from the nature of the documents collected to practices of organisation and consultation to the design of the edifices that house them. Archives now collect more varieties of media and materials than in any preceding epoch. These materials are increasingly accessible both on-site and off-site. Analogue objects lead double lives alongside digital surrogates surrounded by growing haloes of metadata, data, and *capta*. They do so in an array of media that extends cultural memory beyond the hand and eye to, for instance, the ear. Last but not

least, this expanded sensorium of cultural memory is accompanied by new forms of capture that allow for time-scales that would have been inconceivable only a century ago: from documentation of macro-events that occur over centuries (like environmental changes) to that of micro-events that occur on the scale of seconds (*viz.* snapshots and tweets).

The above narrative might smack of triumphalism if the march towards democratisation, proliferation, and an expanded concept of the cultural record didn't have nested within it a series of challenges that are also opportunities for renewal. The latter encompass a rethinking of uniform processing and conservation practices; new models of search, discovery, and retrieval, as well as information use and sharing; outreach to audiences that are infrequently served by traditional brick-and-mortar archives; an augmented approach to description and cataloguing that treats every cultural object not as a singular entity but as a web of relations; and even a rethinking of the very notion of "archive" along more flexible and fluid lines. In short, a seismic shift well beyond



the scope of these brief reflections in which I would like to consider three specific challenges: questions of quantity, scale and fragility.

First, *quantity*. By their very nature, modern institutions of memory have always been hoarders. Added to the ever-growing mass of the analogue and often duplicating them, digital archival assets have driven home a point that already applied to their analogue predecessors: namely, that mere aggregation of materials and/ or their digitisation is not, in and of itself, a gesture of conservation, not to mention an effective mechanism for activating or sustaining cultural memory. Storage is easy; activation is difficult. But a cultural heritage that lives on only as storage, whether in warehouses or in server farms, is not a living cultural heritage in any meaningful way. So how to manage the inevitable and, indeed, welcome overflows?

There is no single or simple answer because archives come in multiple shapes and sizes. One thing, however, seems certain: however invaluable, traditional top-down approaches to the processing of materials and the construction of archival repositories are, at best, an incomplete solution. This, because of the quantities and variety of materials involved as well as the fragility of their “qualities.” As the Digital Archive of Japan’s 2011 Disasters<sup>1</sup> suggests, much of

the fine-grained knowledge that has the potential to make contemporary materials matter is associated with the lived experience of participants and witnesses, as well as communities of expertise such as researchers and scholars. To delay their access until some hypothetical future moment when professional archivists will have had the time and (hypothetical) resources to process them can amount to a de facto death sentence. A better option, particularly in the case contemporary multimedial repositories, is to involve such interested communities in the construction and design of such animated archives right from the start. Archives live or die, are remembered or forgotten as a function of being sustained by living communities, and it is those communities themselves that must be brought into the picture in order to reduce the loss of living knowledge (which is, in turn, one significant key to future value and use). To clarify: it is not a matter of simply crowdsourcing the labour of processing, but rather of embracing database designs that balance inreach with outreach, the development of rigorous and reliable core records with the input of communities of expertise and other interested/ affected parties.

1. The Digital Archive of Japan's 2011 Disasters (JDA) is an online portal to digital materials documenting the natural and man-made disasters that began in Japan on 11 March 2011: [www.jdarchive.org/en/home](http://www.jdarchive.org/en/home)



2. For more information on metaLAB: <http://metalab.harvard.edu>

metaLAB<sup>2</sup> played a key role in shaping the Digital Archive of Japan's 2011 Disasters into a pro-

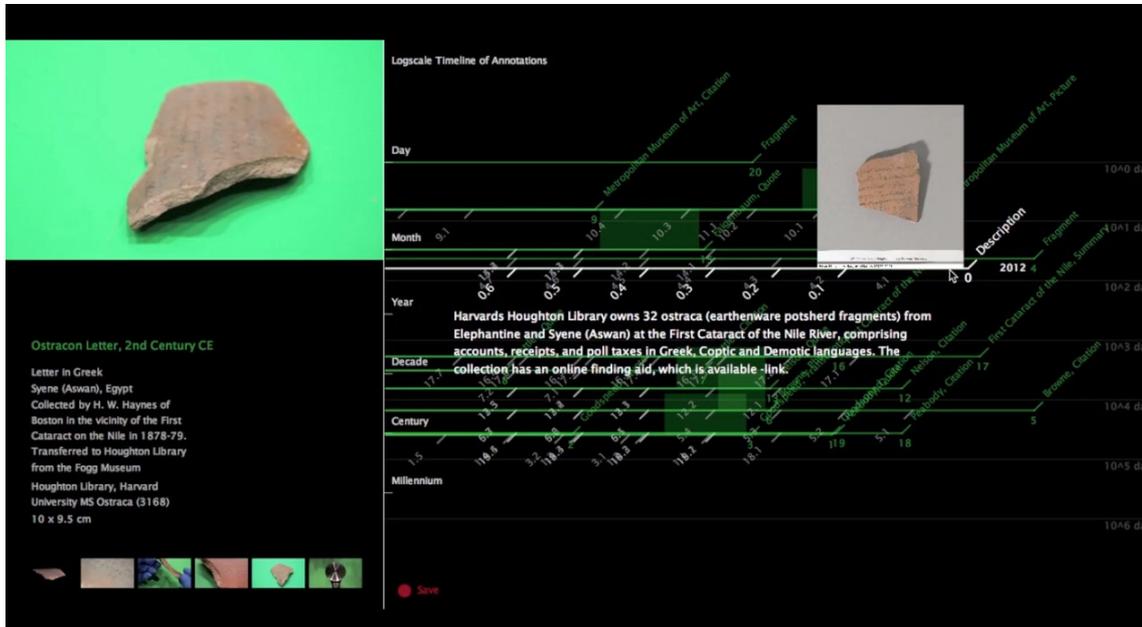
tototype of what my colleagues and I like to call “crisis archiving”. Known as the JDA, the project seeks to expand the compass of how memories are built in, attend to, and serve the *present* while, at the same time, ensuring the transmission of the past to future generations. Participatory in character, federative in design (involving partners from Yahoo! Japan to the National Diet Library and Archive.org), encompassing media types from tweets and photographs to testimonials generated on-site to websites and video, the JDA is made up not only of documents but also and most of all of the beehive-like curatorial and interpretive activities of the community that animates it: a community that includes everyone from victims and activists to policymakers and journalists to students, scholars, and environmental scientists.

A second challenge is *cognitive* and pertains to both the macro and micro scales of experiencing cultural objects. Of course, it goes without saying that archives assume the form of extremely large assemblages. Navigating them would lie well beyond the capabilities of the human mind were it not for supports such as inventories and finding aids which allow researchers to burrow in, locate and retrieve

information, and build the sorts of human-scale arguments that contribute to the advancement of knowledge.

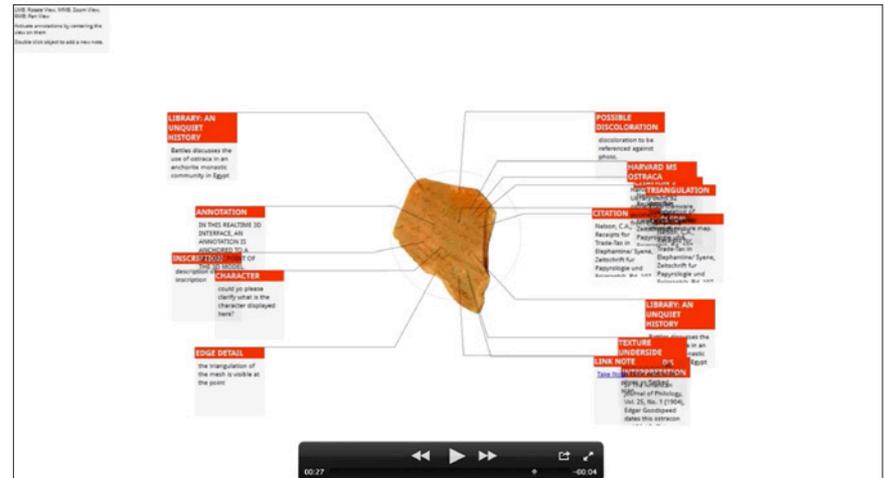
The challenge intensifies in the case of vast, interconnected, multimedial digital repositories. There was already far too much to sift through and make sense of; now there is exponentially more. But here a new set of inventorial affordances (based upon data, metadata, and *capta*) makes it possible to operate on new and expanded scales thanks to computational techniques. Among these are tools that translate vast numbers of objects into aggregate visualisations that can be viewed from the perspective of a multiplicity of data fields. The resulting representations tell new stories on macro scales about matters such as the history of collecting practices or institutions or taxonomical shifts. But they are not self-evident objects of human experience. On the contrary, they are technical constructs, abstractions that have to be critically crafted by means of a multitude of tools and techniques in order to generate artefacts that enhance knowledge, persuade, or make sense. This is not merely a technical task: it is the sort of cultural task being undertaken by digital humanists that involves technology, design, and a clear-headed sense of how to reconnect the world of open archives back to that middle stratum where





A still from metaLAB (at) Harvard's *Teaching with Things* demonstration project (2013; project PI's Battles/Loukissas/Schnapp) with a multimedia descriptive record on the left and a timeline of annotations on the right.

A still from metaLAB (at) Harvard's *Teaching with Things* demonstration project (2013; project PI's Battles/Loukissas/Schnapp) showing an "artifactual interface" that allows visitors to annotate features of a three-dimensional scan of an ancient Greek ostrakon.



culture resides and where human experience finds its home.

Integral to that task, but at the micro level, is the need for a relational approach to the description of objects, which is to say, the need for a concept of search that focuses upon the retrieval, not of individual items, but of the networks of interconnections that run through them. For much of the history of modern cultural institutions, the conventional acts of reduction of works to title, creator, date, snapshot, etc. were viable because the data were only visible on the inside. Collections data served the needs of inventory management and were the near-exclusive province of museum staff. But even as inventories have migrated out into public view on the World Wide Web, modes of description and representation remain much as they were in the pre-digital era: top-down, tethered to standardised schemes, based upon atomised approaches to objects.

A third challenge has to do with *fragility*. Digital materials may occupy little space and be readily resizable, sharable, and reproducible; the metadata, data, and *capta* that swirl around them may allow for new modes and scales of argument; the conditions of use and access that they enable may make it possible for everyone from high schoolers to local historians to become archive builders and archival

researchers. But, for the very same reasons, digital assets are volatile, menaced by bit rot, and subject to misunderstanding and manipulation. Digital-specific techniques of conservation are still in their infancy. The oldest digital files currently preserved date back less than half a century: a mere drop in the bucket from the standpoint of cultural record.

The challenges we face today are multiple: to layer a diversity of representations on top of the standard descriptors so as to better approach the full sensorium – the weight, the texture, the feeling – of cultural objects; to unjam data resources through open APIs (Application Programme Interface) and linked data environments so as to give rise to virtual realms of curation where researchers can work with open collections data and stories can be told through and with individual objects (excavated down to the nano scale) as well as with collection-sized aggregates. Every object is a collection. Every collection is a social network of things. Objects and collections have friends. It is time to mobilise them as well as to “describe” them through representations that attend to the acoustical and haptic (not just the ocular).

Every burial ground needs to be cared for continuously if it is to endure.



# H[GUN SHOT]OW C[GUN SHOT]AN I F[GUN SHOT]ORGET?

LAWRENCE ABU HAMDAN

The contribution by Lawrence Abu Hamdan is to be found [here](#).



ANOTHER MAPPING  
OF ART AND POLITICS.  
THE ARCHIVE POLICIES OF  
RED CONCEPTUALISMOS  
DEL SUR

ANA LONGONI / RED CONCEPTUALISMOS DEL SUR

Red Conceptualismos del Sur (known as RedCSur or the Southern Conceptualisms Network)<sup>1</sup> is an international platform of work, thought and collective positioning that currently has over fifty members in different countries of Latin America, Canada and Europe. It was founded at the end of 2007 by a group of researchers and artists with concerns about the need to intervene politically against the processes neutralising the critical potential of a set of what we could call conceptual practices that took place in Latin America from the 1960s onwards. Today, the network functions in four nodes (Research, Archives, Publications and Web), which enable us to operate in diverse formats or spaces of collective work. The network has held so far three plenary meetings (Brazil, 2007; Argentina, 2008; and Chile, 2009) to discuss our Founding Manifesto, and outline our major working guidelines. Due to the difficulties of gathering so many people, we have opted for virtual meetings (plenary once a year, and node meetings once a month) and the annual election of delegates charged with the general coordination of the Network. We have

1. See [redcsur.net/](http://redcsur.net/)

also carried out several collective projects, such as a collective research project on art and politics in Latin America in the 1980s called “Losing the Human Form” (including an itinerant exhibition in Madrid, Lima and Buenos Aires, and a “glossary” volume published in Spanish and English), among others.

RedCSur considers that, as is the case in other emancipatory projects, the catalysing potential of the so-called “conceptual practices” was broken up by the force of State violence and market logic. The different attempts to reactivate this disruptive power have been interrupted by the continual overlap of diverse mechanisms: the inoculation of collective memory from State systems; the defensive oblivion assimilated by civil society; the depoliticisation of subjectivities in restructuring neoliberal economies; the aestheticisation of counterculture, etc. More than forty years on from the outbreak of dictatorships in a significant part of Latin America, the ensuing traumatic effect still smothers intellectual life in our societies and immunises the poetic-political potential of those experiences.





Archives which RedCSur is currently working on.



“R. Archivo de la Resistencia Visual” 1973-1989, Chile. (*R. Archive of Visual Resistance 1973-1989, Chile*). Inventory, digitalization, preservation (Project in progress).



“R. Archivo de la Resistencia Visual” 1973-1989, Chile. (*R. Archive of Visual Resistance 1973-1989, Chile*). Courtesy: Antonio Cadima (Tallersol), Havilio Pérez (APJ), Cucho Márquez (APJ).

RedCSur stemmed from the will to contribute to this critical power. Our main objective, therefore, is to vindicate the presence of sensitive memory in those experiences in order for them to become an antagonistic force inside the framework of contemporary cognitive capitalism.

RedCSur is aware that museums, collectors and public and private art institutions participating in the international contemporary art system are in the midst of a strong dispute over visibility, belonging, the management of such artistic and political experiences and the accumulation of cultural heritage. Therefore, it is no mere coincidence that for some years now we have been witnessing a general process of institutionalisation and canonisation of archives, documents and other material and immaterial remnants from these conceptual practices. Our aim is to reconnect the aforementioned experiences in order to reactivate their catalysing potential, and as a starting point in the need to influence this area so as to revert these and other neutralisation strategies.

Faced with the pressing need to critically influence the current situation, RedCSur upholds an ethical and political commitment to the revaluation of all archives on critical artistic practices from Latin America (placing particular stress on those from the period spanning the 1970s and 1980s), which, due to

their material conditions, are placed in a precarious position, or are dispersed and cannot be consulted publicly. We set out to defend their inalienable state – namely, their integrity and indivisibility – to generate conditions for their preservation and their availability for consultation by all interested parties, in addition to fostering their local registration wherever experiences occur that are encompassed in the archive by way of alliances with public institutions with an unflinching commitment to the same principles.

In association with diverse local and international agents (universities, museums), these principles have enabled us to set in motion the institutionalisation of diverse artists' archives, for instance those from the Uruguayan artist Clemente Padín, the Chilean group CADA (Colectivo de Acciones de Arte / Art Action Collective), the Argentinian artist Juan Carlos Romero (which joins documentary holdings from various other artists), the Argentinian artist Graciela Carnevale, the archive "Memories of Resistance", which brings together a series of graphic art practices in opposition to General Pinochet's dictatorship, and the Paraguayan artist Cira Moscarda, to name a few.

This is the way in which we seek to generate and support initiatives for the establishment, preservation and right to use document archives linked to



the said experiences, and we aim to set in motion a circuit of Network Archives that share and facilitate public access to documents. We believe in the pressing need for collective and decisive intervention to put a stop to the continual expropriation, dispersion and destruction of documents and collections. We feel that the policies for forming archives must not only be concurrent with an acknowledgement of the effects of colonialism, but also with the persistence of colonialism in Latin America.

We lay stress on – even more so in the current political climate across a number of the continent’s countries – the urgent need to generate State policies and common efforts that are synchronised and coordinated and strive to establish a network of public and decentralised archives.

These objectives of our archive policies cannot be taken into consideration without interactions with other approaches in our work that are inseparable from one another:

- Research policies. We take research to be, above all else, a political and not merely an academic exercise. For us research is to restore, name and generate meaning around a set of poetic-political experiences whose critical power has been nullified. This means facing up to and taking charge of the tensions brought about by policies of neglect,

and also addressing the implementation of thought and creation in a context of cognitive capitalism. Therefore, RedCSur endeavours to undertake a critical and active part in the geopolitical diagram of global forces in the cultural economy.

- Producing the memory of experience. Tracing, joining, organising and reinterpreting the documents produced by the aforementioned experiences is necessary but not enough, for these tasks by their very nature only enable access to formal outward appearances and commonplace representations. To unblock their interrupted critical power, there is a need to confront their immaterial memory; therefore, it is essential to recover the sensitive register of the experience and the attachments that arise as a direct form of intervention in neglect. This also entails rehabilitating the disruptive force from the cultural context containing the conditions of possibility.
- Activation experiments. We want to generate action strategies that update the polluting and catalysing power of these experiences, which involves moving beyond their mere visibility, not solely because these practices are irreducible in their mere objectuality, but because we are more concerned with vividly connecting them to the present. We want to create a new laboratory of experimentation with



**archivos en uso**  

Buscar...

Revistas Culturales subterráneas en la última dictadura argentina



Colectivo de Acciones de Arte (CADA)



Prácticas creativas del movimiento de Derechos Humanos en la Argentina



Roberto Jacoby



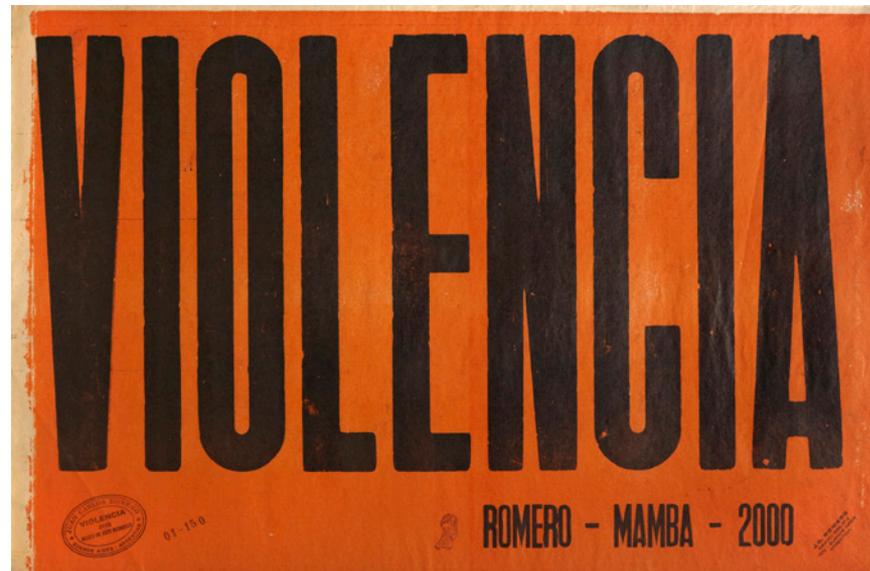
**RedCSur**  
RED CONCEPTUALISMOS DEL SUR

Archivos en uso es un proyecto colectivo impulsado por distintos grupos de trabajo de la Red Conceptualismos del Sur y del "Grupo de Estudios sobre Arte, cultura y política en la Argentina reciente", radicado en el Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires.  
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Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani

Archivos en Uso platform [www.archivoenuso.org](http://www.archivoenuso.org)



Juan Carlos Romero, *Violencia (Violence)*, poster, 2000. Parte del Archivo de Artistas Juan Carlos Romero (Part of the Archive of Artists Juan Carlos Romero).

the ability to encompass publications, exhibition projects, public discussions and museum initiatives. Regardless of the format, these interventions endeavour to set up different notions of history, heritage and the transmission of knowledge and duly questioned powers.

A key commitment for RedCSur is advocating the collectivisation of materials, and we look to devise collectivisation devices and to disseminate archives that flow beyond artistic realms. As a result, we have promoted Archives in Use, an experiment that strives to grant availability and public access to archives from research projects set up by RedCSur, and those that are in collaboration with other platforms, for instance the Study Group on Art, Culture and Politics in Modern-day Argentina, from the Gino Germani Research Institute of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires. In addition to online consultation, Archives in Use are also free of charge and available either temporarily or permanently on computers in libraries, documentation centres, sites of memory, exhibition spaces and education centres by simply ordering through a contact email. We have already collectivised four document archives in this format: the archive on the Argentinian artist and sociologist Roberto Jacoby (his divergent

productions between 1965 and 2010), the archive of creative practices from the human rights movement in Argentina since the last military dictatorship, the archive belonging to the Chilean group CADA and, finally, the archive of underground magazines produced during the last dictatorship in Argentina (1976-1983). Numerous other archives are also being prepared, and are all the outcome of lengthy research processes.

Consequently, through its actions RedCSur seeks different possibilities in thinking, doing, positioning, conceiving, exhibiting and politically historicising the disruptive force and the critical capacity of the artistic-political practices that have taken place in Latin America.

*Translated from Spanish by Neil Fawle*



**DECOLONIAL  
SENSIBILITIES:  
INDIGENOUS RESEARCH  
AND ENGAGING WITH  
ARCHIVES IN  
CONTEMPORARY  
COLONIAL CANADA**

CRYSTAL FRASER AND ZOE TODD

During recent months, the idea of reconciliation has been brought to the forefront of the Canadian socio-political terrain, largely ensuing from efforts to examine the historical experiences of Indigenous peoples in the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) system. This was a system that sought to eliminate Indigenous cultures, in part, by forcibly removing children from their families to obtain a state-based education, often far away from their homes to institutions characterised by substandard and abysmal living conditions. The shift to reconciliation and efforts to achieve a “nation-to-nation relationship” has prompted a great deal of attention and new questions of access, content, and ownership of historical documents dealing with the history and legacies of IRS. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) battled the federal government for access to files and documents in possession of the Government of Canada pertaining to the centuries-old history of IRS in Canada, illustrating some of the nuances and complexities inherent in the question of ‘decolonising the archives’. For Indigenous peoples, access to state or

church archives is complicated, given ongoing settler-colonial realities that frame and govern archives in Canada. To decolonise the archives requires an erasure or negation of the colonial realities of the archives themselves. Given the inherent colonial realities of the archives as institutions, any effort to decolonise or Indigenise the archives in Canada can therefore only ever be partial.

In theorising the idea of ‘decolonising’ the archives, we are faced with a number of structural issues that must be unpacked and we do so in the Canadian context. In this short piece, we first question *who controls* these archives? Second, we examine the *archival holdings* themselves, pointing to both the absent within the holdings themselves and the gaps in our knowledge about archival holdings. A final question asks: should we have the goal of ‘decolonising archives’? Acknowledging the inherent colonial paradigms that inform and shape the archives as institutions, we propose moving away from the question of decolonising the archives themselves and suggest instead applying a *historically-informed*



*critical decolonial sensibility* in our engagement with the archives.

## Who Controls the Archives?

In Canada, there are a variety of archives which contain information pertinent to Indigenous nations, peoples, and communities. Historical records are housed in a variety of locales: state archives (national, provincial/ territorial, and municipal); church archives (curated and controlled by religious orders, such as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Church of Canada); university archives; Indigenous governance organisations; and a variety of corporate and private archives.

There are numerous ways that access to archives and materials is restricted. The Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) Act regulates how individuals may access archival holdings. Ironically, there are numerous claims that the implementation of privacy acts by government agencies is in fact heavily *restrictive*. In recent years, the experiences of scholars, journalists, lawyers, and others filing ATIP (or provincial variations) and Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) Act, have been to wait for onerous periods of time to

access materials. Once documents are received, they are often heavily redacted to the point of being useless. Fraser's own experience accessing records from Library and Archives Canada (LAC) for her doctoral research on the history of IRS in the Canadian Arctic was characterised by persisting roadblocks. Spanning over 2013 and 2014, an ATIP application was lost (and re-submitted), heavily-redacted electronic files were provided and rendered almost obsolete, and the remainder of the requested collection was placed on hold, for review, in Ottawa. But upon travelling nearly 3,000 kilometres to access the collection, Fraser was informed that the files had been checked out by another researcher for an undetermined amount of time.

Due to the tenuous and highly sensitive nature of these documents, coupled with the fact that very few researchers have analysed documents reflecting this modern history, the boundaries imposed around 'sensitive' research are troubling. To access archival materials in Canada is to move across geographic, political, and even linguistic boundaries. It is to contend with the structures and rules that govern each organisation; researchers are forced to grapple with power structures that trickle down from bureaucracies to individuals that hold sway over the materials, facilities, and accessibility. The new National



Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Archive housed at the University of Manitoba, which opened in late 2015, is an adequate starting point for conversations about re-defining archival challenges and its political burdens, especially with its extensive online and digitised records, but, in all its innovation, there are limitations even to this collection.

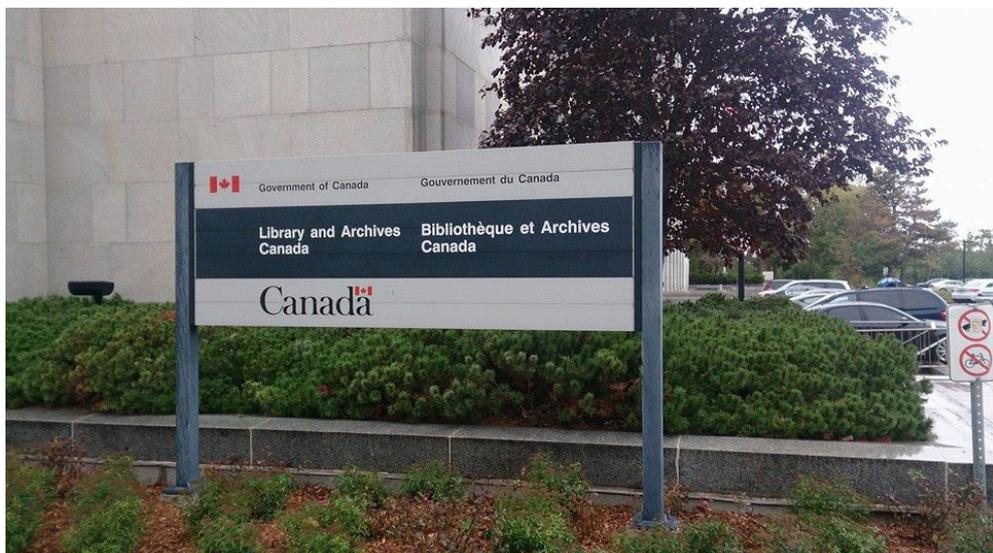
In addition to restricting access to public documents, there are questions about the ownership of these materials. In 2008, LAC announced a partnership with the corporate entity Ancestry.ca to digitise LAC's holdings. This move raises serious concerns about the vulnerability of people's information to exploitation by private interests, as well as questions about corporations charging citizens for access to public documents. In a time when a) Indigenous peoples in Canada are defending land rights against the operations of national and multi-national corporations that seek to extract and profit from non-renewable resources in unceded Indigenous territories and b) when Indigenous nations in Canada rely on access to archival materials to articulate court cases affirming existing legal rights to their territories *against* large-scale resource extraction projects, the question of third-party corporate incursions into management of sensitive personal and community information is both pertinent and troubling.

## Archival Holdings: The Unknown and Missing

A fundamental challenge lies in the fact that the majority of archival documents in Canadian archives have been produced by non-Indigenous people: namely white men who dominated exploration, political and other 'great men' tropes of Canadian history. Inspired by the well-known and provocative article by Gayatri Spivak, Canadian historians have questioned if other less-known historical actors – such as Indigenous people, women, and children – are able to “speak” in archival documents. Archival records produced by Indigenous people prove to be far and few between. We know very little about the lives of Indigenous women, apart from a few celebrated heroines, such as Thanadelthur, Kateri Tekakwitha, and E. Pauline Johnson. Even less is known about Indigenous children, two-spirited individuals, and liminal figures such as medicine men and women. Further, the three constitutionally recognised Indigenous groups in Canada (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) are not represented equally in Canadian archives, owing to the different relationships and histories between the Crown and each Indigenous group. For example, accessing materials pertaining



View from Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, October 2014. The presence of Indigenous people persists, despite the tenacity of the settler state. Photo credit: Crystal Fraser.



Library and Archives Canada, October 2014.  
Photo credit: Crystal Fraser.

to Métis histories at LAC is difficult, as these materials are held in a decentralised manner. If Indigenous people are present in historical records, they are often depicted as passive bystanders, rarely free agents in their own right and far removed from narratives that highlight agency or sophistication.

To their credit, some scholars have attempted to uncover Indigenous voices through creative reading of state documents and by beginning with the premise that, as historian Elizabeth Vibert explains, “meaning, value, and knowledge itself [is] unstable, uncertain, and open to multiple understandings”. While poststructuralist approaches have recently dominated historiographical analyses, scholars studying colonialism and post-colonialism in North America have become increasingly invested in reading historical documents in creative ways that allow for deep and fluid understandings of the past. For example, in her work, Todd strives to understand the role that fish played in mediating relationships between Hudson’s Bay Company clerks, Oblate Missionaries and Inuvialuit in the Paulatuuq region in the 1920s-1950s. Reading the archives through the lens of Indigenous legal orders and sentient more-than-human agency brings a different perspective to the role of animals like fish in shaping and responding to colonial encounters in Arctic Canada. For the

most part, however, academics continue to be limited by the overtly biased and one-sided nature of archival records.

## The Question of Decolonisation: Transforming the Archives?

In light of these challenges, we wonder what ‘decolonising the archives’ would look like? Is it a worthy goal for Indigenous peoples? To reclaim, reshape, and transform the archives to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples requires an honest and blunt engagement with the bureaucratic and arcane structures that govern and shape research today. Church, State, and Corporate archives must be acknowledged as enmeshed in the specific nation- and history-making endeavours they foment. Reconciling the needs and goals of a) Indigenous communities, nations, and b) Indigenous scholars and c) others accessing and using the archives will require ongoing and nuanced conversations about the broader relationships between the Canadian state and Indigenous nations/societies. This necessitates responses that are far deeper than simply digitising content or hiring Indigenous archivists. It also requires us to question how Indigenous



peoples can meaningfully access, and *hold accountable*, the institutions running the nation's archives. This engages several simultaneous and sometimes contradictory issues: the structure and function of archives remain bound to National imaginaries and histories. Decolonisation of these structures and processes can only ever be partial.

Cultural historian Catherine Hall asserts that a fundamental part of the project of decolonisation must begin with a settler desire to understand cultural difference. She writes that we must “decolonize the cultures through which those systems of representation were produced”. To achieve this, however, settler Canadians – scholars included – must be eager to have transparent discussions around white privilege, settler colonialism, and structural oppression that characterise post-secondary institutions and Canadian society more generally. Through embracing methodologies of discomfort, we must engage in conversation that hinge upon the hard questions: how we have benefitted and continue to benefit from the dispossession of Indigenous people; how Indigenous communities continue to be the objects of academic research with little consultation and few partnerships; and how we uphold structures of oppression that privilege white supremacy over fair, just, and lawful relationships.

There is no single approach in decolonising or Indigenising the archives. It will require nuanced, thoughtful, and contextual approaches that tend to specific relationships, locations, histories and legal-political realities. Historian Adele Perry writes that “Canadian Indigenous people have routinely pointed to the disjunctures between the written and oral records of treaties and to the colonial state’s selective and self-serving interpretation of their meaning”. Indeed, one way of bring greater diversity to archival spaces and feature Indigenous voices is to prioritise and expand historical collections to include a greater number and range of oral history, whether in the form of transcripts, audio or video files, or previously published works.

Overhauling archival spaces so they are more attentive to Indigenous needs and desires requires a nuanced approach that must be attentive to the plurality of Indigenous legal orders, nations, and temporal and spatial experiences that characterise the Canadian settler state. But the question remains whether state, church, institutional, or private archives should be Indigenised or decolonised in the first place. We argue that rather than decolonise the archives, the application of a decolonial sensibility is necessary to attend to the complex relationships between archives, and Indigenous peoples. Making archives friendlier to Indigenous people and pursuits



is essential, but given the complex and sometimes troubling history of the Canadian nation state and its draconian and oppressive approach to and relationship with Indigenous peoples, it is essential that we continue to recognise archival spaces, especially state archives, for their original intent: to create national narratives that seek to legitimise the nation state by excluding Indigenous voices, bodies, economies, histories, and socio-political structures.

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# IN SEARCH FOR QUEER ANCESTORS

KAROL RADZISZEWSKI

In a private apartment in Warsaw in 2005, I opened my solo exhibition titled *Fags*, which was my artistic coming-out and, at the same time, the first openly homosexual exhibition in Poland. Of course, some gay themes had appeared in the works of other Polish artists before, but never in such a direct and conspicuous manner. In the same year, I began publishing an irregularly-issued *DIK Fagazine*. It is the first, and so far the only, art magazine from Central and Eastern Europe devoted entirely to the subject of masculinity and homosexuality in the broad context of culture and art, with particular focus on the region. For a long time, in Poland, as well as in many other post-socialist States, homosexuality remained taboo after the political transformation; and it was often treated as something that “had arrived from the West”. For example, in Ukraine, which is trying to acquire European Union membership, it is not unusual to hear arguments against this accession saying that as a result the country would turn into a “Sodom”. This argument is largely present in the region, especially in those countries still under strong influence of the Roman

Catholic or Orthodox Church. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Warsaw hosted “Europride” in 2010. This could be perceived as an element of a “rainbow colonisation”, in which “Western gays” brought their rainbow flag to Eastern Europe, while a conference accompanying the event was devoted to so-called “pink money” – the purchasing power of the exclusive gay community. As a result, I concluded that there was a serious need to prove that queer culture existed in Poland already during the socialist era, that we were “queer before gay”. Consequently, my goal has been to recover this aspect of the past as part of Poland’s cultural history in general, not just as an element of queer history.

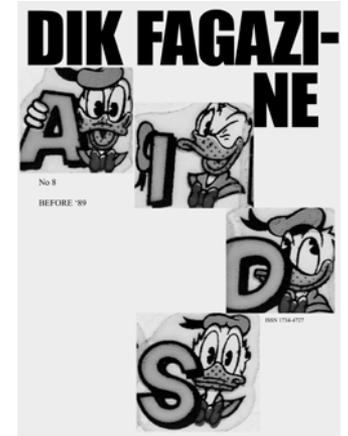
## DIK Fagazine

The beginning of my archival research was connected with *DIK Fagazine*. The magazine gradually evolved from a periodical addressing the current situation in Poland and the Central and Eastern European region, to a platform exploring queer archives that is





Karol Radziszewski,  
*Kisieland*, installation view, Centre of Contemporary Art Znaki Czasu in Torun, 2014.  
Photo: Wojciech Olech.  
Courtesy of the artist and CoCA in Torun.



*DIK Fagazine*, Issue No. 8 "BEFORE '89", 2011.  
Courtesy of the Queer Archives Institute.



Karol Radziszewski,  
vitrine (*Filo*, 1986-1990 and *DIK Fagazine*, 2005-2014 magazines). Photo: Wojciech Olech. Courtesy of the artist and CoCA in Torun.

determined to discover our “queer ancestors”. In 2008, I began work on an almost three-year-long project that was a special issue entirely focusing on the life of homosexuals in Central and Eastern Europe before 1989. In the process of researching sources and travelling, I reached many people whom I interviewed. From the outset, it was important for me to confront the Polish experience with that of our neighbours, to sketch a wider panorama of the region. With my collaborators Paul Dunca, Kamil Julian, Pawel Kubara and Jaanus Samma, I looked at several selected countries (Poland, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Serbia, the Czech Republic and Hungary) in order to trace and compare cruising areas, gay nude beaches, groundbreaking publications as well as reactions to the beginnings of the AIDS epidemic. Despite specific local circumstances in these countries, many of the described experiences proved to be similar, such as a lack of an organised community (with a few exceptions), similar cruising areas (almost always railway or bus station toilets, main city parks, and men’s bathhouses), non-existent or very few places addressed exclusively to homosexual clients (clubs or bars), and the emergence of the first publications on the authorities’ actions in the effort to prevent the spread of HIV-AIDS.

My primary method was conducting interviews with older people and consulting their private

archives (photographs, personal writings) which had usually never been shared before. My work rarely involves visits to libraries; I prefer to focus on direct contact with the witnesses to events and gather their memories. Typically, I would first meet local activists, who would give me information about people I could potentially talk to, and they often suggested new avenues where I could find further material. Thus obtained and recorded audio or video interviews become documents, and the beginnings of an archive.

## Alternative Sexual History as an Art Practice

Thanks to work on the issue entitled “BEFORE ‘89” (published in 2011), I met Ryszard Kisiel and discovered the existence of *Filo* – the first socialist-era gay magazine devoted to non-heteronormative issues in this part of Europe, founded by Kisiel and distributed semi-legally among his friends and acquaintances<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, *DIK Fagazine* reprinted original mock-ups from *Filo*, our “newly-discovered ancestor”. During consecutive meetings with Kisiel in his tiny flat in Gdańsk, I was able to explore his vast archives, and learn new facts and various aspects of his activity. On one

1. *Filo* was published between 1986 and 1990.



2. For more detail about this point, see article by Tomasz Basiuk (2011).

occasion, he produced a plastic bag full of meticulously labelled little boxes with a collection of nearly 300 coloured slides. These contained documentation of the photo shoots which Kisiel realised with his friends in someone's private apartment. The slides dated from late 1985 and early 1986, as a direct response to Operation Hyacinth (a comprehensive campaign carried out by the Civic Militia in the Polish People's Republic, which consisted in the gathering of data on Polish gay men and their community, as a result of which approximately 11 000 personal files were registered). The discovered slides provide specific visual evidence and contradict the stereotypical way of thinking about life in the Polish People's Republic. They counter the image of a homosexual as a persecuted victim, revealing a large potential of positive energy, uninhibited sexuality, invention, irony and self-irony (even towards such taboo topics as AIDS). Kisiel's archive also allows us to take a fresh look at the reality of the socialist era, because despite obvious contradictions between the East and the West in that period, strikingly cosmopolitan references and similarities can be noticed in the international "sexual avant-garde" and its iconography<sup>2</sup>.

For the last few years, I have been working on an art project titled "Kisieland" which is a long-term

undertaking drawing on Kisiel's archive. It began with recording conversations and ordering the digitisation of Kisiel's slides, which have since been presented at lectures and in printed form as part of several exhibitions<sup>3</sup>. A publication presenting the entire collection is planned in the future. In 2011, I invited Ryszard Kisiel to my studio, where he decided to return to the role of creator after twenty-five years. The film (*Kisieland*, 2012, 30min) which recorded this action confronts memories with Kisiel's present image, as he confronts a young model face-to-face. In addition to telling the story, the documentary presents a large number of digitised archival photographs. The "AIDS" cycle (wallpaper, paintings, graphics, and posters) of this project echoes Ryszard Kisiel's collage of Donald Duck stickers included in an issue of *Filo* in the late 1980s as well as the "Imagevirus" project by the collective General Idea, which travestied Robert Indiana's iconic work called *LOVE*. As part of the *Kisieland* project, I organised a special event during PERFORMA 13 in New York – a discussion to which I invited both Ryszard Kisiel and Avram

3. Exhibitions include: *Rosa Arbeit auf goldender Strasse*, exhibit Gallery, Vienna, 2012; 8th Photography Biennial, Poznan, 2013; PERFORMA 13, New York, 2013; *The Prince and Queens. The Body as an Archive*, Center of Contemporary Art Znaki Czasu, Torun, 2014; *Tomorrow will be different*, Fotograf Gallery, Prague, 2015; *Travestis*, ZPAF Gallery, Krakow, 2015.





Ryszard Kisiel, Bulgaria, 80's.  
Courtesy of the Queer Archives Institute.



Ryszard Kisiel, 1985/1986.  
Courtesy of the Queer Archives Institute.

Finkelstein (the founding member of Gran Fury and ACT UP, the AIDS advocacy group), thus confronting Eastern European and American narratives on the beginnings of the AIDS epidemic. The meeting also included a performative reading of excerpts from Boris L. Davidovich's *Serbian Diaries*, which describe that moment in history from the perspective of early 1980s Belgrade.

Locating Kisiel's archive in the context of art is an opportunity to restore/reveal the past, and recover its critical potential. It also complements Polish visual history by supplying it with hitherto ignored material.

## Broadening perspectives — Queer Archives Institute

My work with archives has expanded from the initial highly local, Polish, context, to the gradual inclusion of neighbouring countries in search for commonalities, and the current attempt to reach a broader perspective. Travelling to Brazil and exploring the question of Brazilian queer archives, I found some similarities with the results of my research conducted so far. The particularly topical subject of the “Global South” repeatedly overlaps, criss-crosses and dovetails with

the “Global East”. What emerges is a story of a “global province”, timidly trying to discover its own language and create its own independent identities. There have been previous projects comparing Eastern Europe with Latin America, for example the recent exhibition *Transmissions: Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America, 1960–1980* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2015, that focused on parallels and connections among artists. However, so far I have not come across any similar attempt to assemble queer archives in a specific given context. Such juxtapositions seem to me to be an interesting experiment. What I concentrate on is rather a similar context, certain limitations, as well as often a vestigial character of (hi)stories that are yet to be told.

It is to subject matter of this kind that I would like to dedicate my newest project, “Queer Archives Institute” (QAI)<sup>4</sup>. On one hand, it is intended to sum up my practice so far, and, on the other, to try and establish permanent co-operation with partners (such as artists, activists, academics, and local non-governmental organisations). The aim of the project will be to gather queer archives from various geographic regions, especially those which

4. The Queer Archives Institute was established on 15 November 2015, that is to say on the thirtieth anniversary of Operation Hyacinth in Poland. Its official inauguration will be the exhibition I am preparing for Videobrasil in São Paulo in April 2016.



5. Hopefully, the first documents and texts will soon appear on [queer-archivesinstitute.org](http://queer-archivesinstitute.org).

Of course, all this assumes a very long-term perspective, in principle open to a multithreaded development. For this reason, at present it is difficult to precisely define the outline and structure of the initiative. One thing is certain, however: it will evolve.

6. In 2015, I presented a paper during a conference titled “Sex and Sexuality in East-Central Europe, Past and Present” at the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, and a lecture during one of the events at the Queer Forum Sofia, Bulgaria.

are “peripheral”, either literally or symbolically colonised, and make them accessible as well as subject to artistic interpretation.

QAI’s main platform will be a website<sup>5</sup> gathering digitised materials ranging from scans of archival photographs, magazines and publications, through audio and video interviews, to texts analysing related concepts and methodologies. Owing to the entirely private character of the initiative, at first, by necessity, the scale of the undertaking will be limited; however, eventually it is meant to be more far-reaching.

Importantly, in addition to the process of cataloguing and geographical/ chronological ordering, I will create a system to enable thematic searches which will form

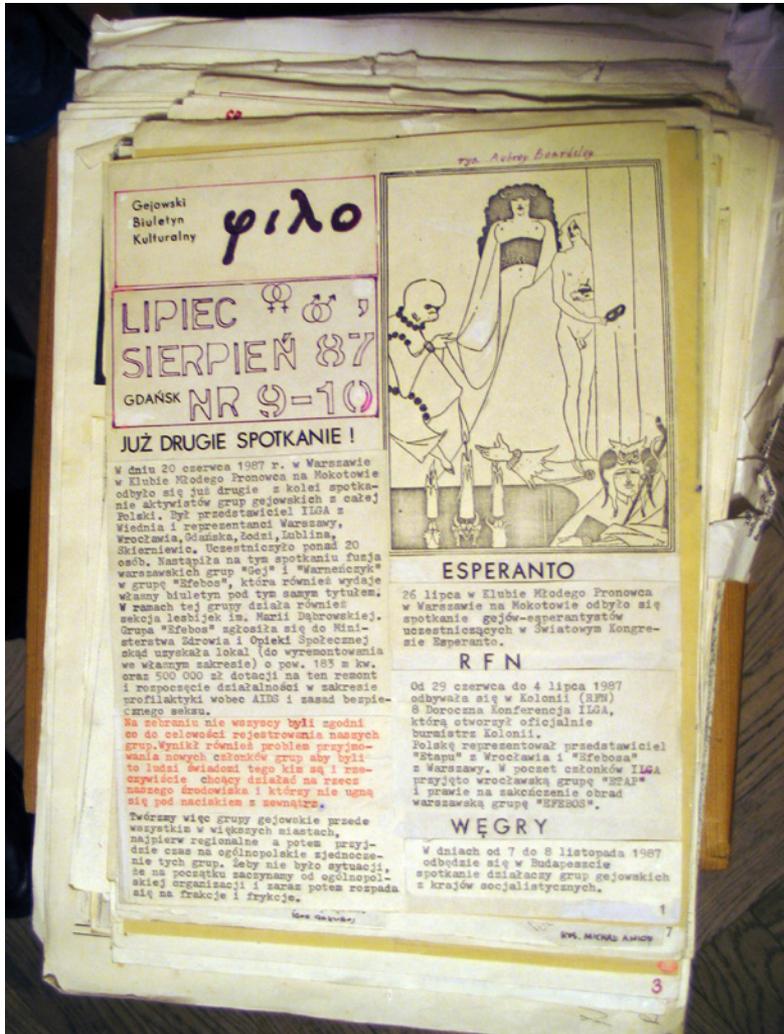
multi-level hypertextual connections between materials from geographically distant places. Thus the digital dimension of QAI needs be complemented by a “material” one: by organising or co-organising exhibitions presenting the collected materials, sometimes

with the participation of invited artists. On a smaller scale, I have already started to use such strategies in various presentations<sup>6</sup> where archival visual materials, such as voyeuristic photographs from very different beaches, are juxtaposed side by side. Similarly, I have showcased the first LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer) publications to be issued in various countries, or artefacts (posters, leaflets, graphics, books) related to the beginning of the AIDS epidemic.

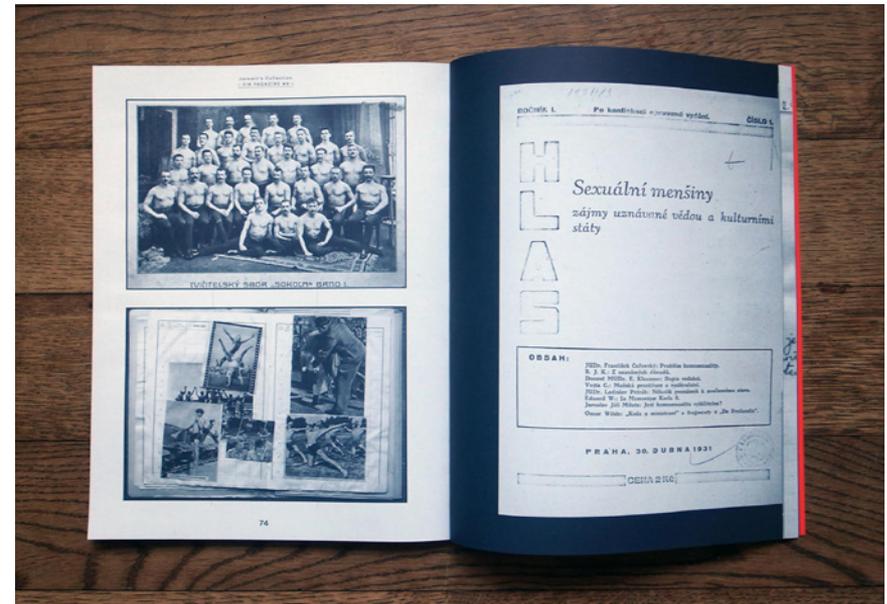
## Parallel With the Global Canon

In the post-socialist states particularly, or other contexts marked by dictatorships for example, where some historical threads were broken or could never emerge, there has been an attempt to build new national narratives. Recent history is being largely constructed today, and sometimes manipulated. I am interested in this appendicising, rewriting, revising, but from a very personal perspective. Decolonising history through queer archives has become for me a mission, an “identity project”. The work has political, or even activist potential for me. I often feel that by working on every next project, text or exhibition,





Mockups of the *Filo* magazine, 80's.  
Courtesy of the Queer Archives Institute.



Archival images and the first issue of *Hlas* magazine (1931) reproduced in the *DIK Fagazine* No. 9 "Czechoslovakia" issue (2014).  
Courtesy of the Queer Archives Institute.

7. *Hlas sexuální menšiny* (*Voice of the Sexual Minority*) was published fortnightly between April 1931 and April 1932. It was followed by *Nový hlas* (*New Voice*) published until 1934.

I can do more than by marching and demonstrating in the streets. I am interested in alternative versions of well-known stories and questioning canonical narratives. This subversive strategy aims to change the future image of the

hitherto-created reality. This is connected with discovering the local Eastern-European identity, shaped in parallel with the global canon: the first Czech magazine dedicated to homosexuality was published in 1931<sup>7</sup>, so why should we always have to rely primarily on American or British zines from the 1960s and 1970s?

— *Translated from Polish by Ewa Kowal*

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THE HUMPH  
OF COLONIALISM,  
OR THE ARCHIVE  
AS A SITE  
OF RESISTANCE

RONA SELA

In the following article, I focus on contemporary artistic and research practices which challenge archives in colonial countries and zones of conflict. It continues my research on colonial archives, their characters and histories and concentrates on contemporary works by Israeli and Palestinian artists and researchers which re-read official colonial Israeli archives, or archives with colonial features. I will demonstrate that the use of these colonial archives enables us to work against their original objectives, “against their grains” as defined by Ann Stoler (2002, p. 99), transforming them into sites of resistance.

Zionist colonialism in the land of Israel/Palestine began in the late nineteenth century and developed in various stages. In 1948 the Nakba launched the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population, the prevention of their return to their lands and homes, the occupation and Judaisation of Palestinian villages, towns and neighbourhoods. Subsequently, the Military Government (which was finally terminated in 1966) controlled the Palestinians who remained in Israel and exploited them economically. This

continued during the War of 1967, with the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which became increasingly violent, oppressive and exploitative as the years went by<sup>1</sup>, and which involved the violation of human rights and dispossession of Palestinian lands for the benefit of Jewish settlements. Israel continues to systematically expand its direct control over the entire land, resources and population between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan while deliberately excluding the Palestinians by using a complex apparatus of oppressive mechanisms.

While one major aspect of the Zionist-Israeli colonial mechanism is physical, another involves the judicious and deliberate construction of a Zionist imagery system. From the earliest days of the Zionist movement, the colonisation of Palestine was described – often with the use of visual aids – in ethical, softened and euphemistic terms aligned with and constitutive of an official narrative. Discriminatory, immoral and oppressive mechanisms have been whitewashed ever since. Thus, for example, the propaganda

1. See for example: [www.whoprofits.org](http://www.whoprofits.org).



departments of pre-Statehood institutions have instilled the narrative of “making the desert bloom”, a desert supposedly empty of indigenous inhabitants, as well as the biblical ideology designed to establish the Jewish people’s “historical right” to the land (Sela 2000). A prime example is the opening scene of Helmar Lerski’s film *Work* (1935), in which the Zionist pioneer marches in a desolate and uninhabited landscape. Later on, the film describes his efforts to develop and inhabit the land, while biblical verses provide moral ground for colonisation. Erasing the pre-1948 Palestinian existence from the coloniser’s mind or presenting it in a backward, “biblical” light, have laid the groundwork for the physical erasure and ethnical cleansing of the Palestinians in 1948 and thereafter.

Propaganda departments gave birth to national archives of organisations such as the Jewish National Fund and Keren Hayesod (United Israel Appeal) which now serve as evidence of the development of colonialism both in terms of their content and in terms of their structure. The Israeli authorities developed a sophisticated mechanism, aided by the War of 1967, that continued to structure the supposedly moral aspects of the occupation and the “historical right”. Many civilian sectors – like the press, the crafts and cultural spheres – collaborated with this

institutional mechanism which not only legitimised the occupation, but also sought to justify the settlement project which entered into high gear following the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 (Sela 2007).

Importantly, the national archives in Israel – among them Israel State Archives, Central Zionist Archives, Jewish National Fund archive, Keren Hayesod archive and the various military archives – are but one component of a complex set of physical and discursive colonial mechanisms operating in such diverse areas as education, media, law, planning, and finance (Sela 2015)<sup>2</sup>. The effect of these mechanisms – which take part in human rights abuses, or in presenting them in a brighter or more positive light – on Palestinian and Israeli lives is destructive. Therefore, researching, exposing and criticising these mechanisms, as well as writing alternative narratives, are among the key duties of decolonial research and activism (Sela 2013).

In what follows, I focus on a limited number of examples of contemporary artistic and research activities that have a potential to write a history that subverts colonial-biased representations by using colonial archives in two ways. The first, to expose the colonial mechanism of the Israeli national archives, the second, their

2. See also for example: *The Law in These Parts* (Ra’anan Alexandrowicz 2011), [here](#).





Kamal Aljafari, *Not without Me*, Radcliffe Gallery, Harvard (2010), Courtesy of the artist.



Kamal Aljafari, Still from *Port of memory* (2009, 35mm, color, 58 min), Courtesy of the artist.

alternative readings. Thus the tendentious methods of colonial representation are revealed, their initial essence cracked and unofficial layers of knowledge are released. Such actions, I believe, undermine the archives' original purposes and contents and seek to unearth and decode repressed / hidden contents (Sekula 2003; Sela 2013).

*Not Without Me* was an exhibition of work by Kamal Aljafari, a Palestinian filmmaker based in Berlin, at Radcliffe Gallery in Harvard in 2010. It presented postcards featuring images freeze-framed from Israeli and American films produced in Israel in the 1970s and 80s, in which Jaffa is used as an oriental setting. The movies themselves include no explicit reference to the city's Palestinian population – apart from “errors”, i.e. shots in which Palestinians were captured inadvertently in the frame. Despite a Western, patronising point of view, these films are almost the last remaining documentation of neighbourhoods and buildings in Jaffa which have been destroyed and Judaised over the years by Israeli authorities. Therefore, these movies are – completely unintentionally – a source of significant historical information about the Palestinian characteristics of Jaffa which are consistently being erased by Israel and overwritten in the form of a gentrified and romanticised Tel Aviv suburb<sup>3</sup>.

3. See also the famous hit by Shalom Hanoach and Arik Einstein, *The Deeper the Blue* (Hebrew, 1970). The clip was filmed with the ruins of the Manshiyha (former Palestinian neighbourhood of Jaffa) in the background – just before it was completely flattened by the Tel Aviv Municipality. I thank Ami Asher for this reference. Asher guides alternative tours in Jaffa that treat its post-Nakba landscape as a spatial archive that reveals more than meets the eye.

In his 2009 film *Port of Memory*, Aljafari also embedded cuts from *Kazablan* (1973), an Israeli blockbuster originally documenting the struggle of Jews of Asian and African descent against the European-Jewish establishment. In those excerpts – which document the city’s post-Nakba landscape – Aljafari planted actors and scenes that tell the story of Palestinian Jaffa, thereby creating a new narrative for the movie: the Palestinians’ struggle against their evacuation, the destruction of the Old City and ongoing

municipal neglecting. As Aljafari stated: “The Israelis expropriated not only our homes and lands, but also our struggle. I therefore re-appropriate cuts from the movie in order to reconstitute the city, its history and its identity to the Palestinian population” (Sela 2013, p. 243).

Israeli artist Meir Gal’s series *Untitled* (1994) deals with cases of looting, rape and unlawful killing in 1948 as documented in official Israeli archives. Gal used Israel Defense Forces’ issued blankets – objects strongly connoted with the Israeli military

experience – on which he printed minutes from government discussions concerning these cases. One of the works in the series, *Tales of Rape and Worse*, includes quotes by Aaron Ziesling, the Minister of Agriculture in the first Israeli government: “They say there were cases of rape in [recently occupied] Al-Ramlah. I can forgive acts of rape, but I will not forgive acts that seem more serious to me. When [soldiers] enter a city and take rings off fingers and jewelry off necks – that’s a very serious matter”<sup>4</sup> (Segev 1984, p. 85; Sela 2013). This work was made possible thanks to the efforts of Israel’s so-called New Historians who have been exposing, since the late 1980s, previously unused materials in official Zionist historiography. Forty years after the establishment of the State of Israel, historians began accessing materials that had been restricted in the national archives, allowing them to write alternative histories<sup>5</sup>.

4. Government meeting, 21 July 21 1948, Hakibbutz Hameuchad Archive, Division 9, Box 9, File 3.

5. This term was coined by Benny Morris in 1988 in his article “The New Historiography: Israel Confronts its Past” (*Tikkun*, 3:6, November-December, pp. 19-23, pp. 99-102) in which he identified a new group of historians who re-examine the Israeli official historiography. They were perceived in Israeli society as Post-Zionists and their work provoked many reactions and rejections in Israel. About the New Historians see for example the article by Avi Shlaim, a New Historian, on the subject: “The War of the Israeli Historians”, *Annales*, 59:1, January-February 2004, pp. 161-67:





Meir Gal, *Untitled*, 1994. Silkscreen on military blankets, sand and bulbs. Installation shot, *Fawaran (Unrest) – Housing, Language, History – A New Generation in Jewish-Arab Cities*, Nachum Gutman Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, April-August 2013, Curator: Rona Sela. Courtesy of the artist.



Meir Gal, *Untitled (Tales of Rape and Tales Far Worse)*, 1994  
In Hebrew: "It has been said there were acts of rape in Ramleh. I can forgive acts of rape, but I cannot forgive acts that appear to me more severe. When entering [soldiers] a city and removing a ring from a hand and jewelry from a neck. That is a very serious matter". Silkscreen on military blankets. Courtesy of the artist.

6. Association for the History of Haifa, 39-2-8, 16 January 1949, Haifa Municipality Archive 15/95.

Another project which sought to challenge the official Israeli archival materials is a project I worked on called *Haifa: 1948-2013* (Sela 2013, pp. 243-244). This was

based on the research materials used by “official” historian Tamir Goren for his book *Arab Haifa in 1948* published in 2006. I presented the documents that he collected but were not eventually included in this book. Goren’s book, written from a Zionist perspective, largely avoids any issues that are inconsistent with the official national narrative, such as acts of aggression towards Palestinian civilians, massive dismissals of Palestinian workers, looting, refusal to let families reunite, or Jews who squatted in Palestinian homes. These findings, which were collected by him in his research but not exposed, were presented in *Haifa: 1948-2013*. For example, a certain Mr. Shehade complains in a letter to the Director of the Department of Minorities in Haifa that during his sister’s absence:

“Ms. Hoffman Anna and Ms. Rosner Barina squatted in her apartment without receiving permission from me or from any authority, and since they have refused to vacate the apartment I contacted the Jewish Agency in Haifa... but unfortunately... those two ladies told me they would not leave the apartment”<sup>6</sup>.

This project exposes just a few of the countless letters written by members of the Palestinian Nakba generation who remained in the country and had to cope with the impossible conditions imposed by the new Israeli rulers. Stored in official archives, these letters were mostly written by Hebrew-speaking lawyers on their behalf, and accordingly their tone is apologetic if not subservient. Beyond this facade, however, the letters – now exposed to the public for the first time – clearly voice the tremendous hardships and insults experienced by the Nakba generation. They also provide detailed information about the looted property, ethnic cleansing and more – information that is essential for the future writing of Palestinian history.

In 2009, following the exhibition *Made Public – Palestinian Photographs in Military Archives in Israel* at Minshar Gallery in Tel Aviv and the publication of the accompanying book (Sela 2009), I presented at Pecha-Kucha Jerusalem a series of aerial photographs, taken by pre-State Jewish military forces, of Palestinian villages and towns from this project. Taken by the Palmach Squadron as intelligence gathering for surveillance, control and occupation purposes, from 1946 to early 1948, these photographs were accompanied by extensive textual surveys and photographs (“village files”) of Palestinian



villages and towns collected by Jewish scouts on the ground for the same targets. They were declassified in the last decade. In the event I claimed that these images and surveys, can today change their colonial functionality and original targets and expose the Palestinian geographical deployment that Israel ruined in 1948 and after. They are, therefore, the last evidence of the Palestinian entity before the Nakba. A member of the audience asked whether I was not afraid that these hundreds of aerial photographs in military archives in Israel would be classified again. People laughed, but eventually this is what happened.

Despite the “archive guards” who continue to control the official representation of the archives and the way they are loaded by meaning, the control over the history of the oppressed enables, in an unexpected manner, the emergence of new forms of “archival resistance”. While these “archive guards” control the various “stages of production” of meaning and strengthen their domination over the process of knowledge production; new creative and marginalised ways to define the boundaries of the archives and free them from biased contents are created by artists and researchers, consolidating the archive’s role as a site of resistance.

—Translated from Hebrew by Ami Asher.

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# A GRIN WITHOUT MARKER

FILIPA CÉSAR

“What made sense as an object of our propaganda in one particular context, can become a sturdy ‘friend’ difficult to appease in quite another.

It can become an obsession for us to want to control the image that one day we produced accidentally, saying ‘that’s for history’. [...] Yet the image gives itself a new life, a new destiny, with or without us. It frees itself of our guardianship.”

Sana na N’Hada,  
*Our image and ourselves*, 2015

This title derives from the English translation of Chris Marker’s film *Le fond de l’air est rouge*, (1977): “A Grin Without a Cat”.

“Well, I have no good news. It seems Chris has played one last prank on us”. These were Anita’s first words to me when I arrived at her apartment. The box with the Bissau documents was on the table – letters, pictures and journals damaged after recent flooding in the attic. “Maybe you just have to photograph Courgette [the cat] sitting on top of it – that would say it all”. Sunday 29 November 2015, I visited the French writer and filmmaker Anita Fernandez, to greet a dear friend and photograph some documents that she keeps from her experience in Guinea Bissau in 1980. This was one of the last stops on the journey of the *Luta ca caba inda* (*The Struggle is Not Over Yet*) project which has spanned decades through Paris, Boé, Berlin, Bissau, Guimarães, Conakry, Moscow, Cuba, Cacheu, London, Lisbon.





Box with documents at Anita Fernandez's place.  
Photograph by Filipa César, 2015.



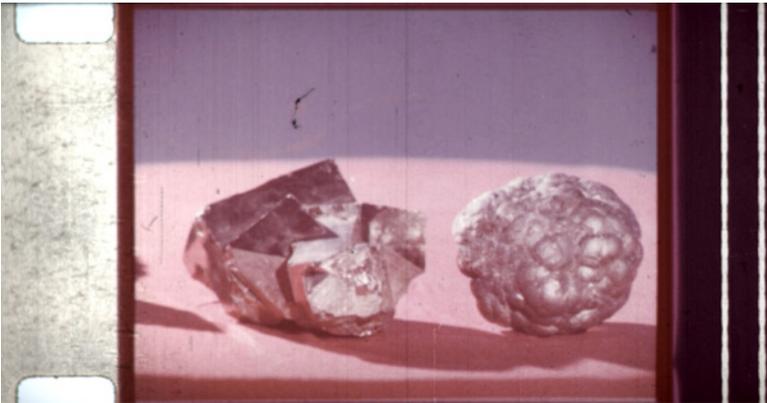
Voluntary work by Guinean students in Cuba. Sana na N'hada comments on these images – all four young filmmakers can be seen with a machete in their hands cutting couch grass, the aim of the voluntary work was to teach humbleness. Humility, fit on the ground, close to the soil, humble derives from humus. INCA, Dervis Spinoza, 1967.



Reels from the unfinished film *Luta ca caba inda*.  
Photograph by Filipa César, 2012.



XX Anniversary of the Liberation Party. Miriam Makeba emerges from the film ruin, the force of her embodied Pan Africanism fights the celluloid infection tainted by a neo-colonialist virus. INCA, Sana na N'Hada and Flora Gomes, 1976.



Chinese newsreel: China Today number 8110 – museum display of stones and minerals, title – valuable mineral resources. Found at the INCA archives, Bissau.

## Sunless

I first met Anita Fernandez in 2012 after an event at the Jeu de Paume cinema, presenting freshly digitised materials from the Guinean audiovisual archive. Fernandez came to re-encounter her old friend Sana na N'Hada, one of the four pioneers of Guinean militant cinema. Among many other young Guineans sent to Cuba in 1967 to be educated in various disciplines (mainly medicine, warfare and aviation), N'Hada was to be trained in the field of cinema and joined Santiago Alvarez's team at the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC) in Havana.

My involvement in the long-term collective project *Luta ca caba inda* was less dependent on my curiosity for these cinematic genres, but rather unintentionally, the result of a suction force, pulling me into the magnetic field of a web of conditions, urgencies and magical encounters. The Portuguese colonial war, despite ending just before my birth in 1975, was a latent presence in my childhood, casting shadows of fear, subversion and cryptic intensities. My father was the channel, after his failed desertion to Paris, he had served in the military in Portuguese Guinea between 1967 and 1969. I was introduced to an imagery of resistance to Salazar's

regime – underground subversive political literature, the illegal emigration of deserters and political activists and a revolution through the radio transmission of a coded song. But for many years I thought this was a story disconnected from the rest of the world. Something that resided in my apartment, animated by certain props – a military uniform, blue batik fabric, an African wooden sculpture. A tale, rather than history.

That changed in 2003 when I was bewildered by my first encounter with *Sans Soleil* by Chris Marker. There were images of Guinea and a spellbinding voice talking about the Portuguese / Guinean conflict: “Why should so small a country and one so poor interest the world?” – and further – “Who remembers all that? History throws its empty bottles out the window”. A French filmmaker knew about that war and also knew that the country inscribed in my fantasy did not interest the world. I knew that Guinea was the place where my father had fought on the wrong side – mistaken by the communist ideals that militants should infiltrate the colonial military and subversively undermine its power – with dignified intentions that didn’t prevent him from getting implanted therein a sunless gloom. Happiness is but awareness of misfortune. The stage of the haunted tale became a geopolitical spot – Peter Pan showing up at the window – hey, you can jump with the empty bottles.



Excerpt of undated anti-Apartheid film, educational film genre, image of various weapons, animated illustrations demonstrating their mechanisms and usages, documentation of corresponding injuries on human bodies. Found at the INCA archives, Bissau.



Inside a bank, bank notes, currency exchange process from Portuguese escudos to Guinean Pesos, images of a second emancipation – the financial independence from Portuguese control. INCA, Sana na N’Hada and Flora Gomes, 1976.

## The Potency of Irrelevance

In 2009, Colin MacCabe asked me if I would like to accompany him to visit Chris Marker, rue Courat. When asked about Guinea, Marker answered: “If you are interested, then go and meet Sana”<sup>1</sup>. That is how I came to Bissau in January 2011 to meet Sana na N’Hada, Flora Gomes and other people connected with Guinean cinema and literature such as Odete Semedo and Suleimane Biai. They showed me a room full of film canisters in a very wet and gloomy environment at the Institute of Cinema in Bissau. N’Hada told me that this was where their early work as the first Guinean filmmakers was stored, and how he, at the age of seventeen had been picked out from the middle of the jungle war and sent by Amílcar Cabral to Cuba to become a filmmaker – and how he had never seen a film before. N’Hada’s preoccupation with the imminent loss of the archive moved me and made me speculate about the promise of a militant cinema of emancipation, born from the struggle as a praxis of liberation and a possible deviation from my

1. I found Sana’s full name later in the credits of *Sans Soleil*. Sana na N’Hada is the author of the Carnival scenes that Chris Marker included in the film.

own imagery.

Later I got in touch with the Head of archives at the Portuguese Cinematheque. They knew about the Guinean

archive, and had even sent dozens of new canisters to Bissau to re-accommodate the films, but for many reasons, also connected with diplomatic tensions and the financial crises, they told me: “the archive is irrelevant”. Their arguments were the deeply fragmented and ruined state of the collection, holding mainly unfinished films or unedited footage, and finally most of its reels were eroded copies of foreign films existing in better state in other archives. They were right about everything. Nevertheless that sentence entered a resonance field in my mind.

“The archive is irrelevant” was in direct proportion to “History throws its empty bottles out the window”. Wasn’t that emptiness for history what fullness was for the subjects out of history? Were those bottles eventually full of the answers to give to “a worker who reads” (Brecht 1995)? A Benjaminian angel staring at ruins (Benjamin 1940/ 2007). Jumping with the empty bottles seemed an historical materialist take, to “contest the colonial archive” (Eshun 2003) through the replacement of a viewpoint, a chance to look at European myopia through the lenses of colonial resistance.

The disquiet latency in the statement “the archive is irrelevant” rendered the strangeness of the repeated sounds of words. Meaning gets lost and words gain in materiality, texture, volume and



Sana commenting on footage from the unfinished film *Guinea-Bissau: 6 anos depois*. Arsenal Cinema, Berlin. Image by Nuno da Luz, 2012.



For four weeks in November/December 2014, we toured through Guinea-Bissau with images and sound from the archive equipped with a simple cine-mobile unit and a seven-members entourage, Sana na N'Hada and I curated a programme for each stop. After the commented screenings, radio broadcaster Aissatu Seidi invited the public to intervene. Image by Jenny Lou Ziegel, 2014.



Refugee and human rights activist Napuli Paul Langa and Lennart Malmer at Visionary Archive Festival, Berlin. Image by Jenny Lou Ziegel, 2015.

2. Referring to Sana na N'Hada's comment about learning how to be humble through voluntary work in Cuba.

3. This made me recall film titles with the word "sun": *Soleil Ô* (Med Hondo, 1969), *Sans Soleil* (Chris Marker, 1982), *La petite vendeuse de soleil* (Djibril Diop Mambéty, 1999), *Mille Soleils* (Mati Diop, 2013), *In the Year of the Quiet Sun* (The Otolith Group, 2013).

4. João Mário Grilo during a discussion with the group of candidates for the PhD Art Studies course, FCSH, Lisbon, January 2015.

accident. "Irrelevant" became this rugged matter of rrr, raw, rough, rhythm. Material word-decomposition follows up on etymological break down. The prefix "i" in "irrelevant" is the resistance to relevant – I can visualise the "i" operating on the signifier, relevant both through the shape of "i" as serif font and through the negative meaning, as if a palm-oil press would squeeze the potential salience or elevation of "relevant" back to the ground, close to humus. The double "r" in the word produces the texture of an eroded soil or furrowed field. The sap extracted

from that "i" pressing relevant frees the nectar of power and immortality – ambrosia. "Irrelevant" is the becoming mortal, becoming humble<sup>2</sup>. "Irrelevant" became a word-energy, the frequency and intensity of the non-power. The word performing the gesture of throwing empty bottles out of the window, when meaning is not signification, but rather the very action performed by the signifier (Deleuze & Guattari 1980/ 2013).

Relevant, re-Levant, where the sun rises again, a Mediterranean land east of Italy. Irrelevant, no-Levant, no rising of the sun, *Sunless*<sup>3</sup>.

Etymologically unfolding the word "relevant" – it derives from prominence, distinctness, or vividness due to contrast; the projection of a figure from the ground or plane on which it is formed, as in a sculpture, giving the appearance of a third dimension. Adjectivised, "relevant" means pertinent to the matter at hand, depending upon, helpful, or to lessen, lighten, relating to relieve. The logic of relevance operates within a vertical, hierarchical, power relation system in which relevance always performs the task of sustaining this verticality through imposed stratification. Something is relevant to a system if something assists that system to fulfil a task. "The archive is irrelevant" is spellbound, it also means – this archive does not assist a certain system to achieve a certain goal.

However we were not interested in re-evaluating the relevance of the archive by shifting it into another system where it might become relevant. We were drawn to deal with the potency of that condemnation. The opposite of relevance is not irrelevance, but depression<sup>4</sup> or fold (Deleuze & Guattari 1980/ 2013). For the *Luta ca caba inda* operation, we were not searching for an opposition that functioned in the



5. In *Cosmologies: Perspectivism*, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro writes about the prosopomorphic agency – from the Greek *prosopopoiia*, “the putting of speeches into the mouths of others” or “an imaginary or absent person is made to speak or act”.

same inverted equation, we were interested in the horizontality, the relational potential of that flattening spell and in the “prosopomorphic”<sup>5</sup> ability of the material.

The other problem was the reverberation of the word “archive”, an irrelevant archive accommodates an intriguing

contradiction – archive derives from *arkhe*, meaning the commencement and commandment (Derrida 1995/ 1996), i.e. the source and beginning of power. “The archive is irrelevant” could mean a collection of never-ending powerless documents, or documents which operate a never-accomplished non-power. What we signposted as material of potency. We wanted to exercise a ritual of profanation of the archive power, stop using the word “archive”, to substitute it for collection, materials or assemblage, words of destitute power and collectivism.

During the rainy season of 1999, after the civil war in Guinea Bissau, the audiovisual material stored at the Film Institute was thrown out of the window into the streets of Bissau. Only weeks later the filmmakers themselves (Flora Gomes, Sana na N’Hada and Suleimane Biai) rescued what remained of it, escorting it as they could through years of neo-colonial

instability (Nkrumah 1965). Its ruined and fragmented state became a chance – instead of looking at the material as something precious, we thought of it as a moving body, a projectile that we were able to accompany in its flight – an aeronautic drive, a matter of nomadology, an abdication of history.

## Luta ca caba inda

*Luta ca caba inda* is a Creole expression which means “the struggle is not over yet”. It is also the title of an unfinished film in the collection, thus cursing the accomplishment of the film, of the struggle, and eventually of this project too. We appropriated the title and its curse for a series of screenings and discursive events used to channel the contents of the fragmentary corpus, and to welcome its conflicts. In this text, “we” always means the Guinean filmmakers and the crowd that built an alliance from the first cataloguing of the materials in Bissau, through the digitisation in Berlin, up to the participation in multiple screenings and discussions in dozens of locations in the past four years. *Luta ca caba inda* showed itself to us as an irrelevant irreverent force that claims: I am not from yesterday. It is a projectile that is travelling for decades, centuries and offered the chance to join the journey.





Sana na N'Hada, Jean Pierre Bekolo and Nuno Faria at "4th Encounters Beyond History: *Luta ca caba inda*, an archive in relation", Guimarães. Photograph by CIAJG, 2015.



Anita Fernandez reading a letter from Chris Marker, Arsenal Cinema, Berlin. Image by Filipa César, 2013.

6. “The essence of the archive is its gaps, its holey quality. Now, frequently, the gaps are the result of deliberate or unconscious censorship, of destruction, attack, of auto-da-fé. The archive is often grey, not just because of the time that has lapsed, but because of the ashes of all that surrounded it and has burned. It is in discovering the memory of the fire in each sheet that has not burned that we have the experience – described so well by Walter Benjamin... – of a barbarism documented in each document of culture.” (Didi-Huberman & Ebeling 2007)

The transfer of the film and audio reels onto digital matter was not an action of institutional preservation of the audiovisual material. The experimental digitisation occurred in 2012 in collaboration with the Institute Arsenal for Film and Video Art in Berlin and its copies are held both there and at the National Film and Audiovisual Institute in Bissau. The analogue material was sent back to Bissau in January 2013. Facing an otherwise irrelevant archive, we had to create our own techniques, rules, ethics and praxis as “new archivists” (Derrida 1995/1996). The digitisation of the archive was a process of documenting our

passage through that audiovisual matter – a dated molecular transfer. There was no attempt at restoring the material to any hypothetical original state<sup>6</sup>. None of these words – recovering, restoring, preserving – apply to *Luta ca caba inda*, which is about film materials as agents of today. Tobias Hering wrote: “This archive smells of vinegar, not ashes. It is not grey. It is white, hazy blue, pale green and a well-known sepia

tone” (2012). The fungus, the vinegar syndrome, the scratches, the dust, the absence left by the damaged emulsion on the celluloid reels are part of the aggregation of matter that produces an image – “disease is the evidence of relation” (Haraway 2003). These are no representations of the past, only matters of the present. We stopped calling it an archive and instead a collective milieu, an assemblage of shrapnel. To deal with the shrapnel of colonialism means to deal with all the violence that comes through it; it means embracing the conflicts related with a permanent “decolonisation of thinking” (Viveiros de Castro 2012) as a condition and as a never-accomplishable task.

## Images & Sounds As Present Matter

War is not only channelled through the representations in the image but also inscribed in the material condition of its support media. War wreckage and fractalisation used to look through and access a crystallised time, a lens that can reach a certain surface in contemporaneity and beyond – one not graspable to the naked eye. A kaleidoscope resulting from destruction – but also from resistance and alliance – as the becoming of





Footage for unfinished film about Guinean women. Labels on the reels: women at work, women at school, women in politics, women mother, farming women. INCA, Sana na N'Hada and Flora Gomes, 1979.

multiple visibilities. The operation of relevant works at the antipodes of the structure of the poetry of the haiku. In a haiku, sentences are placed in relation to each other, but they don't need to have a cause and effect link between them, they don't have to be relevant to each other – and yet they affect each other, they co-exist in the possibilities of aimless relation. The magnetism of the sessions activated with *Luta ca caba inda* produced an inversion too – the archive started to grow instead of shrink<sup>7</sup>. In order to communicate some sense of the work made with these materials, and because it is impossible to condense the mutilated body constituting this collection into a comprehensive

description here, a selected documentation of this cine-geography (Eshun & Gray 2011) and its activation is included in the attendant images and captions.

7. For example, *Un Balcon en Afrique*, a film shot collaboratively in Bissau in 1980, was also added by Anita Fernandez to the Guinean collection in 2013.

## Flaschenpost

Back to that November in 2015, rue des Maraîchers – 550 Google-meters away from Chris Marker's place. I wanted to photograph a couple of documents that Anita Fernandez had presented during a screening in Berlin in 2013. Two documents held particular accounts of this threat between Marker's engaged cinematic praxis and the Guinean militant cinema:

- A postcard from Paris dated 23 June 1980: the back was the Eiffel Tower photographed through a fish-eye lens. It was handwritten with comic-like onomatopoeic signs addressed to Anita Fernandez in Bissau (via Dakar). Anita unravelled Marker's postcard by recalling that early in 1980, Marker had asked her for a meeting. For one hour in a Parisian café, Marker spoke fast slurred words that Anita couldn't decode entirely, ending with: "You agree?" Anita was so taken by Marker's enthusiasm that she answered: "I didn't understand what you just

said, but I agree”. Marker was asking her to go to Bissau and continue his work helping to develop the recently founded National Film Institute and a cinema praxis with the young Guinean filmmakers<sup>8</sup>.

- A letter from Chris Marker in Paris to Anita Fernandez in Bissau dating 19 May 1980: “You can imagine how happy I was by reading your letter (just followed by another from Sana who confirmed the progress accomplished from his point of view – this produced an interesting stereo-euphoria in me). It is certain that the first obstacle has been overcome. There will be others, but that was truly the most difficult one to solve – that of, to do or not to do. [...] The problem is now ‘what next?’ or more exactly ‘who next?’ [...] I have volunteers, but generally more enthusiasts than experts – and among the experts, I have to admit that not everybody has kept the militant fiber. [...] (But eventually I’ll go to Japan again, where the unattended elections will take place in June: if I’m not there, Sarah [Maldoror] can respond, therefore also send her the information – doubly. Greet everyone, particularly the cats of the September 24”.

When Anita told me that precisely those two documents were damaged, I thought about the gesture of the thrown bottles. Theodor W. Adorno’s Flaschenpost

(Adorno 1951/1974), full of messages circulating in the underground, irrelevant, waiting to be found after a flood of *Black Atlantic* (Gilroy 1993) waters. A latent force resisted the grabbing, comprehending or fixing of these accounts. A chance to merge with the uncertainty of a temporary flight, to draw the line into a never-to-be-reached-point. Dribbling historical narrative into a multitude of untraceable encounters.

Marker’s epistolary remnants and analogous pranks prefaced many of the trajectories of the *Luta ca caba inda* project. The conflict with interference – to do or not to do. The problem of keeping the flame of militancy. This archive is defiantly irrelevant for the purposes of history writing, instead it expands a space to connect, discuss, and tangle a web of empathies, kinships (Haraway 2015) and cine-families<sup>9</sup>. Marker was pointing at flying empty bottles full of spectres of solidarity, subversive practices and other cocktails.

8. Interviewed in 2010 by Colin MacCabe about *Sans Soleil*, Marker said: “This is the moment [1979] when my friend Mario de Andrade [Angolan writer who at the time was the partner of the director Sarah Maldoror] asked to help them build the pompously named Film Institute in Bissau.

(...) I spent six months in a very comfortable hotel in Tokyo - a real palace - and six months in a former military barracks in Guinea-Bissau.” (MacCabe 2012)

9. The idea of “cine-fils” by Serge Daney, a son of cinema, a family without genetic roots and their implicit exclusions, based on alliances, common interest and preoccupations.



6. Mais s'il n'y a  
Mais s'il n'y avait la terre  
Mais s'il n'y avait la terre  
Mais s'il n'y avait la terre

FILM SUR LES FEMMES

Musique

1. Le soleil éclaire le monde  
Le vent défait la ceinture  
Femme, jeune fille, dame...
2. Oh, celle qui a été donnée en triste mariage  
Si elle était vierge seulement... Joie.  
Joie de famille, parents qui marchent la tête haute
3. Au cours des temps antiques  
Le monde était paré de la présence  
Ils connaissaient le monde  
Ils sentaient le monde  
Les maîtres de rations amers  
Oh jeune fille  
Oh femme  
Oh mère
4. Faible et forte  
Vaillante et triste  
Femme de sa terre  
Femme du monde  
Elle pleure sans douleur  
Elle pleure sans larmes
5. Qui unit le monde  
Qui ouvre les hommes  
Fillier de la terre  
Médiant de notre lutte  
Meuble à chair  
Dans la grande gala  
Essence de la vie

.../...

Carbon copy of the lost script for the Guinean film about women. Anita Fernandez's private archives.



Postcard from Chris Marker, June 1980 after flooding in Fernandez's place in 2015. Anita Fernandez's private archives.

After photographing the faded documents, I packed everything into the Bissau box. I moved towards Anita cooking us lunch, and when I looked back, Courgette the cat, was just making himself comfortable on top of the box, like a pilot preparing for take-off.

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# PRESENTING PASTS

ANDREA STULTIENS

In August 2011, Ugandan artist Rumanzi Canon and I started what I called an “archival platform” for lack of a better term. To express the unfixed nature of history, we called it *History In Progress Uganda*, or *HIP* in short. In an attempt to avoid any current affairs, we decided to only engage with documentation of historical moments that are at least two decades old. We looked for collections of photographs in Uganda: in cultural, educational and governmental institutions and in people’s homes, including those of photography professionals. Most collections were neglected, covered in dust, mouldy, or partly eaten by insects. We digitised the material simply by photographing the photographs. With permission of the owners, we started to share these photographs online, without any particular selection process, on a daily basis on the [HIP Facebook](#) page. We also started to present curated selections of the images in exhibitions and publications that include contemporary responses to historical material.

*HIP* led to research towards my practice-based PhD, and to me living some considerable time in

Uganda. My role is a hybrid one, but in the end, as an artist, I develop forms (in books and exhibitions) to present collections encountered in Uganda and the micro-histories embedded in them to audiences both in and outside Uganda. L’Internationale’s request for a contribution to their publication on “Decolonising Archives” made me trace back the progress made and some of the insights that emerged.

We all have stories about origins that help to understand what and who we are. Media also have histories. Photography has several. One of them tells the story through technology, of people using optical instruments, and an interest and insights into chemistry, adding to what was known about the projection of the world through a lens. Another story considers that painters, developing a photographic gaze, led the way, creating the necessity for the invention of photography. Both stories are set in Europe.

It seems to have taken a couple of decades from the moment of its inception before photography was practiced for the first time in Buganda, the Kingdom



1. I have a preference for the use of the verb “to make” in relation to photography as recommended by Ansel Adams and Alfredo Jaar. See Nedo, K. 2014, “(Mis)Understanding Photograph. Museum Folkwang, Essen”, *Frieze*, no. 16, November, [viewed 18 January 2016](#).

in the south central part of the territory now known as Uganda. In the early 1860s, the explorer John Hanning Speke sent his camera back to the coast while he went on to Buganda (Speke 1864, p. X). He met the Kabaka (King) of the Baganda (the people of Buganda) and showed his books with drawings whenever he felt that might

be opportune. These were met, here and elsewhere during his explorations, with great interest (Speke 1864, pp. 306–7, 359, 423, 525). Just over a decade later, in the mid-1870s, Speke’s colleague Henry Morton Stanley did bring his camera to the court of Buganda. A photograph was made<sup>1</sup> of the Kabaka and his chiefs. This photograph is not known in present day Uganda, but other versions of the picture are.

There is little material proof available of a visual culture in Buganda before the middle of the nineteenth century. That does not mean there were no images. If something does not exist, then why have a word for it?

I worked for seven years in Uganda before I became aware of the fact that there is no specific word for photographs in Luganda, the language of the Baganda. The noun *ekifananyi*, that is related to the

verb *kufanana* (to be similar to), can refer to a painting, a drawing, a photograph or any other two dimensional likeness. I was rather embarrassed it took me so long to work this out, since photographs held a central position in everything I was doing. On a number of occasions, people had brought me paintings when I thought the conversation was about photographs. I had failed to ask the right question.

It is easy to explain this. The official language in Uganda is English. Most people, especially in urban centres, are comfortable speaking it, even if this is a version that is locally known as Uglish. The use of Uglish is a necessity in a country with as many languages practiced within its borders. When I mentioned my “discovery” to Luganda-speaking friends, they shared my wonder since they had never given it much thought and agreed this was an interesting point. When I asked non-Ugandan friends working in the country’s cultural sector whether they had noticed something odd happening in the language around images, they all said they had not.

It could be argued that a photograph in Uganda is not the same as a photograph in the Netherlands. There are of course overlaps in the way the photographs function, but they are conceptualised differently. I assume for now that this has to do with the origins of picture-making, materialised images that



PRESENTING PASTS – ANDREA STULTIENS



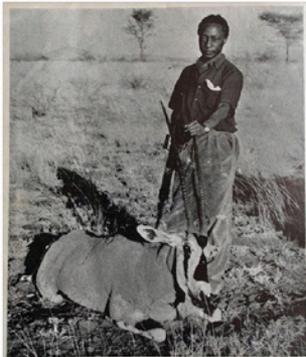
History In Progress  
Uganda  
Community

Timeline About Photos Likes More ▾

History In Progress Uganda added a new photo to the album: **The Royal Visit of His Highness the Kabaka of Buganda to Ethiopia.**

Published by Andrea Stultiens [?] · December 6 at 5:38pm · 🌐

'His Highness the Kabaka with one of the gazelle secured during a hunting expedition in Ethiopia'  
December 1962



KABAKA KAMEKA NENI NI NGOLO ENO KWIZO ZIVANTA NI  
MUTOGGO CIVE NI ETHIOPA.  
His Highness the Kabaka with one of the gazelle secured during a hunting  
expedition in Ethiopia.

3,854 people reached

Boost Post

Like Comment Share

Kay Agbeyogbe, Daniel Kyeyune Muwanga, Graham Mill and 55 others like this.

17 shares

History In Progress Uganda added a new photo to the album: **Uganda Prisons Services.**

Published by Andrea Stultiens [?] · 22 hrs · 🌐

With a set that has two captions that do not fully agree with each other. One says 'Minister Visits 5000 acres prison farm at Adjumani, May 1964', the other 'Adjumani prison farms opened in May 1966'. Minister = the Hon. Mr. B.K. Batarinya, on the tractor.



1,732 people reached

Boost Post

Like Comment Share

History In Progress Uganda, Daniel Kyeyune Muwanga, Akire Simin, Makavelli Kayinga Franq III and 22 others like this.

1 share

Screenshots from *History In Progress Uganda*'s Facebook page made by Andrea Stultiens, December 2015.

*HIPUganda* acknowledges copyrights and tries to credit sources whenever possible, but believes that a right to a shared history also needs to be recognised. Images are therefore shared free of copyright claims unless clearly stated otherwise.

History In Progress Uganda added a new photo to the album: **Musa Katuramu prints.**

Published by Andrea Stultiens [?] · December 2 at 9:03am · 🌐

Family portrait, unknown place and date. By Musa Katuramu, who lived most of his life (1913-1986) in Ankole.



588 people reached

Boost Post

Like Comment Share

History In Progress Uganda, Cecilia Pennacini, Daniel Kyeyune Muwanga, Carola Knust and 16 others like this.

Top Comments ·

1 share

Write a comment...

Grace Kemirembe Oh my goodness???? This is so amazing and breath taking!!!!

Like · Reply · Message · 🗨️ · December 2 at 6:22pm

View 1 more reply

History In Progress Uganda Dear Grace Kemirembe and Marita Karungi, could you tell us then who the people on the photo are? Why it is amazing and breath taking? When you think the photo must have been taken? Whether you know if and how the people posing and photographer Musa Katuramu knew each other? We'd love to know. And will be happy to provide you with higher resolution file of the image.

Like · Reply · Commented on by Andrea Stultiens [?] · December 3 at 8:45pm

Timothy Favourite I hve hahaad where did you get this

Like · Reply · Message · 👍 1 · December 2 at 3:49pm

History In Progress Uganda We have been working with Musa Katuramu's son and have digitized his whole collection. Who is Ziggy? And why do you think he must have posted?

Like · Reply · Commented on by Andrea Stultiens [?] · December 2 at 4:14pm

were initially drawings and then also photographs, in this specific culture.

In 2010, *The Kaddu Wasswa Archive* was published by three authors: Kaddu Wasswa himself, Arthur C. Kisitu, Kaddu's grandson, and me. Kaddu's face is on the front cover and the back of his head on the rear. The book suggests that the archive is what is in Kaddu Wasswa's head. He creates connections, and makes the documents he kept as well as the photographs he made to prove his activities, readable.

Kaddu was very proud of the result of our work and adopted me into his family. He kept referring to the man on the cover of the book as if he was someone else: as “this man” who was finally given some recognition for everything he had done and tried to do. But as time went by, he also started to share concerns. Achievements that were important to him and his people were omitted from the book. Someone brought to his attention that there was too much emphasis on failures, not finalising studies, not being able to build a clubhouse, not getting a job, not sustaining a business.

While working with Kaddu and Kisitu, I also came across other collections of photographs. Nobody I met ‘knew’ what the photographs were about, making it even harder for me to read them than some

of Kaddu's photographs. Most of the photographs lacked information concerning who shot what, when and where. The reasons why they had been made seemed to be more obvious. There were events and weddings. There are presidents and other performers. But understanding why the photographs were made does not provide clarity on why I or anyone else should be looking at them.

*HIP Uganda* has a mixed audience following and responding to the images shared. There are those who grew up, and used to live, in Uganda. There are Ugandans, mainly living in the capital city Kampala and other urban centres it seems. And there is a group with general interest in photography and archives. Let me brutally generalise here for a moment, based on observing the responses to photographs shared on the Facebook page. The first group is looking for recognition, to connect their memories to those of others through photographs. The second group is keen to compare pasts and presents, while the third group loves to discover beautiful images that do not necessarily say anything about historical events, but capture aesthetics in a cultural and sometimes historical perspective.

When I started to look for “old photographs”, I thought that what is *in* archives in Uganda, contrarily



to what is *in* the UK for instance, should give insights into all Ugandan society. How naïve (again). Most of the material relates to upper and middle class lives, before or after Uganda’s independence in 1962.

The most Frequently Asked Questions when sharing a photograph on the *HIP* Facebook page used to be along the lines of “why is there no information with the photograph? Who? Where?” I had thought this was obvious. If there is no information, then that does not need to be mentioned. I imagined it gave the person looking at the photograph the chance to be as open as possible. I failed to see that, when a picture is shown without context, it also suggests a gap between *HIP Uganda* who is sharing the photographs, and members of the audience who feel they are supposed to know what they are looking at. The context then *is* the lack of it, instead of a call *to create it* together. These questions resulted in a change to our strategy. The lack of knowledge as knowledge in itself is more explicitly added alongside the photographs. The little that is known is indicated, without being afraid that this might limit the freedom of association. *HIPUganda* and its audiences are co-creators of additions to specific histories at a time when it is no longer necessary, reasonable or acceptable, that pasts be told exclusively from outside or privileged positions.

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**THE ARCHIVES  
OF THE COMMONS  
SEMINAR,  
MADRID 2015**

MELA DÁVILA AND CARLOS PRIETO DEL CAMPO (MUSEO NACIONAL  
CENTRO DE ARTE REINA SOFÍA), MARISA PÉREZ COLINA  
(FUNDACIÓN DE LOS COMUNES) AND MABEL TAPIA  
(RED CONCEPTUALISMOS DEL SUR)

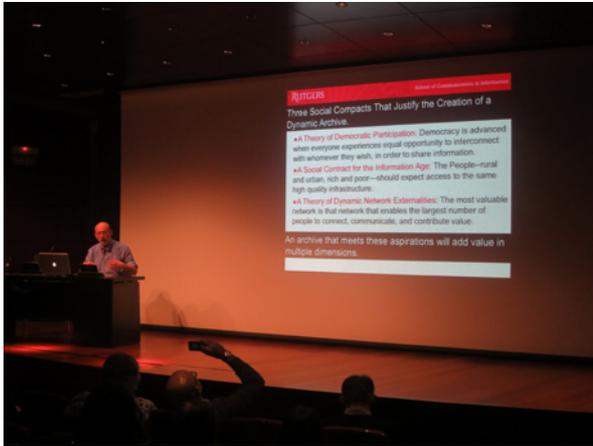
The *Archives of the Commons* seminar was held on 11 and 12 December 2015 at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid. It was conceptually developed through the joint work and dialogue of three institutions/ platforms: the Museo Reina Sofía, Fundación de los Comunes (Commons Foundation), and Red Conceptualismos del Sur (Southern Conceptualisms Network). The collaborative nature of the project was, in fact, the seminar's first distinctive feature: the conviction that these three agents, with their different histories, interests, and agendas, would be able to produce and share a space for dialogue and interaction on equal terms.

The objectives were: (1) to think about the meaning of the archive, in today's context of highly volatile information, memory and social communication, as a vessel for collective memory, particularly in terms of the knowledge and practices of dominated classes and subaltern groups; (2) to reflect on how *Archives of the Commons*, which sustain an important heritage based on collective memory, identity, and experiences, can be created, managed, conserved and

opened up to citizens and the general public as an exercise in civic and democratic culture, irrespective of nationality or of the availability of financial means to consult, use, and enjoy said archives, and (3) to discuss the possible role of public institutions in protecting these types of archives from the double threat of privatisation on one hand (for example, Latin American collections of political art that are the result of the work of individual artists and collectives), and of neglect and invisibility on the other (for example, the collective memory of struggles and major social events that are part of the experience of the present, but have been sidelined by the media, academic, and institutional establishments' modes of production of discourse and memory).

The second distinctive feature of the seminar had to do with the archives and repositories that were invited to participate, and with the working dynamic that was adopted. The conditions of emergence of each project, and their links to the socio-historic contexts in which they originated were taken into account. Almost all the selected participating





Conference by Jorge Reina Schement: *Meeting the Challenge of Meaningful Access: Connectivity, Capability, Content, and Context*, Museo Reina Sofía, 11 December 2015. Photo: Courtesy of Red Conceptualismos del Sur.



Workshop: *Archive Economies*, Museo Reina Sofía, 12 December 2015. Photo: Courtesy of Red Conceptualismos del Sur.



Workshop: *Archive Economies*, Museo Reina Sofía, 12 December 2015. Photo: Courtesy of Red Conceptualismos del Sur.

1. Further information on each archive and their website can be found at the bottom on this text after the references.

projects were created in response to historically-rooted needs and issues that their founders felt committed to. The participating archives<sup>1</sup> were: Archivo Contra

la Pared, Archivo de Estudios Campesinos, Archivo de la autonomía juvenil de Madrid, Archivo del Duelo, Archivo Digital de la Autonomía Obrera, Archivos en uso, Desmemoriados, El Recetario, Femicidio.Net, Human Costs for Border Control, PAD.MA, and Women in Black.

The seminar was structured around two types of working sessions. The first was a public event with lectures by Nancy Kranich, Ariella Azoulay, Jorge Reina Schement and William Gambetta. In the second session, the speakers and representatives of the archives worked together for a full day on three core areas: the politics of archives and forms of institution, archive economies, and techno-political devices.

## The Politics of Archives and Forms of Institution

The following statements by Georges Perec in “Think/Classify” (1974 / 1997) encapsulate the two core tensions that shape the boundaries of the archive:

“Behind every utopia there is always some great taxonomic design: a place for everything and every thing in its place.”

“My problem with sorting orders is that they do not last; I have scarcely finished filing things before the filing system is obsolete.”

On one hand, there is a utopian yearning for classification to burst the boundaries of the archive and embrace the whole of reality, given that to classify means to understand, or at least to “comprehend”. On the other, there is the impossibility of reducing reality to an orderly series of elements.

In institutional archives, these tensions are compounded by the complexities bound up with processes of legitimation, inclusion, exclusion, and the construction of the canon, which are inherent to and inevitable in “institutional” activities. To overcome these tensions, or at least reduce or counteract their impact, the museum probably needs to create larger



relational networks outside the institution, as well as increasing its flexibility, and publicly acknowledging its own weaknesses.

From this point of view, the relationship between institutional and non-institutional archives is complex – as is the relationship between the institution and anything that is not within its bounds – but all the processes and prospects that seek to increase its permeability and its openness to the outside world are beneficial.

Some initial questions arise at this point: How can we define the relationships between institutional and non-institutional archives? What are the main differences between them? How can institutional archives open up to the outside world? What expectations does an institutional archive raise, and how can it meet them?

## Archive Economies

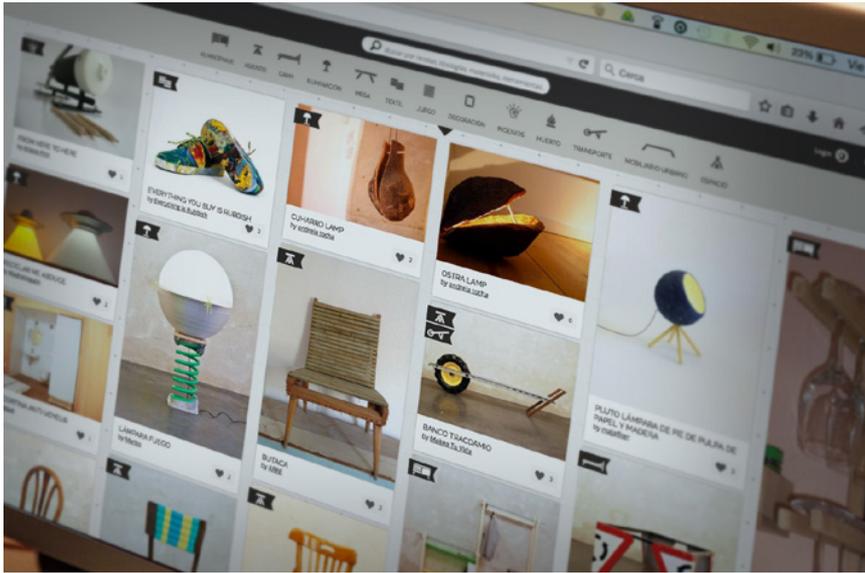
In Europe, the state has traditionally been the guarantor of the material and economic continuity of the archive, so much so that this permanence is one of its defining characteristics. Outside Europe, other geopolitical instances have had to deal with historical

structures in which the state abandons or blocks the development of archival policies for different reasons. At the same time, against a backdrop of global neoliberal policies, archives have become an object of desire for the market for some years now, partly due to their status as potential producers of knowledge. As such, we are seeing a significant process of privatisation of archives that may even end up influencing scientific and social agendas.

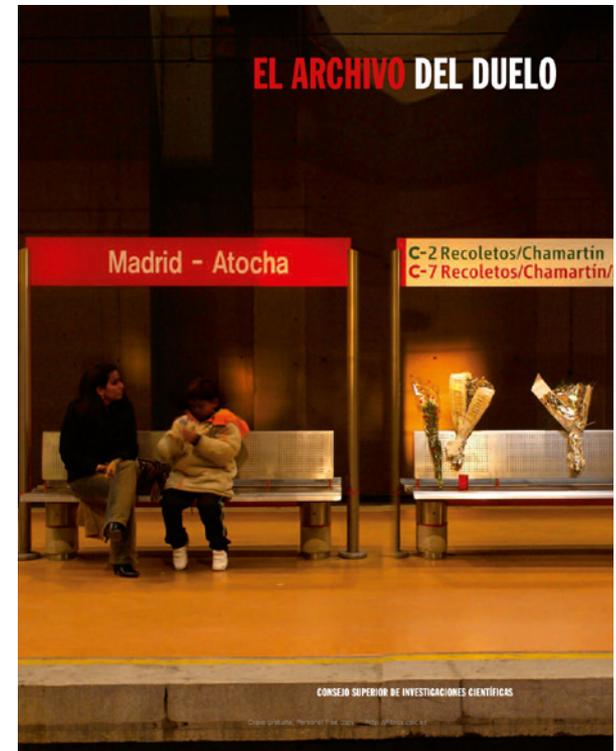
One of the main characteristics of a political economy of the “commons” is the attempt to move beyond the distinction between the state and the market, a distinction that is a constituent element of our legal and economic systems, as argued by Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2014). The values of mutualisation, reciprocity, and collective action, which are the bedrock of any concept of the commons, are framed within a reconfiguration of established economic theories, and seek to institute other models.

An archive of the commons would thus be based on giving up both the guarantee of the state and the logic of the market. As such, one of the challenges facing these models is to find forms of continuity and dissemination, in a context of institutional instability, economic precariousness, and discontinuity of the specific agents on which they are based.





Screenshot from *El-Recetario.net*. Photo courtesy of Makea Tu Vida.



*Archivo del Duelo* (Archive of Mourning). Photo courtesy: Archivo Histórico Ferroviario and CSIC.



*Archivo de estudios campesinos* (Rural Studies Archive). Photo: Abel Fernández López Courtesy: Rural Studies Archive.

One of the key issues obviously has to do with exploring the sustainability strategies that can be implemented by *Archives of the Commons*, while recognising that *Archives of the Commons* produce an economy at every stage of their existence, from their conditions of emergence to their modes of organisation, management and proliferation. In this sense, an archive of the commons produces an ecosystem that simultaneously allows it to exist and to open up to other actors, agents, and/or institutions. So instead of questioning archive economies, we should perhaps think about what economic-political ecosystems *Archives of the Commons* establish.

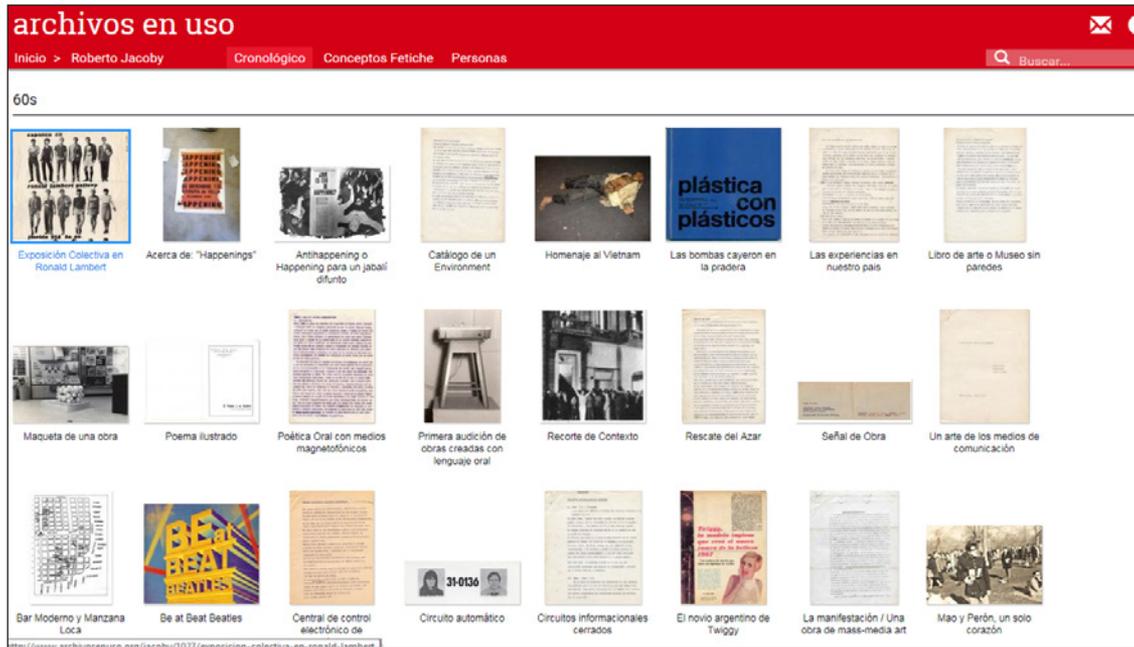
## Techno-Political Devices

The technological form of an archive is inseparable from its political dimension. With the introduction of the Internet, the archive has become one of the key battlegrounds of contemporary societies. The creation of technological devices that allow openness, as well as hybrid, mutable taxonomies, collective production, and universal accessibility, is the condition of possibility for *Archives of the Commons*. Key

questions in regard to an archive of the commons include: When was it created, in what context, and for what purpose? (Conditions of emergence). Who owns it? Who does it represent? Who does it target or address? Who determines its uses? (Ownership of the archive). What does it contain? What are the criteria for inclusion in the archive? How is the archive organised? What about the production of metadata? And interoperability markers? (Structure and classification criteria). How is it presented, disseminated, and activated? (Modes of activation: curatorial, research-related, and political. Modes of dissemination, interconnection, and access). How is it managed and how is its sustainability ensured? (Sustainable management models and strategies). What conceptual, archival, and technological devices are or should be used?

The structural, multifaceted debate that took place at the seminar sought to reconcile different registers of experience and thought by combining the local and international spheres, and the individual and collective domains. The rich debate and the fertile exchange of ideas showed that there is a strong need to open up spaces of this nature. The event became what we could call ground zero for a shared reflection that we hope will continue on a long-term basis, as a means of exploring new prospects





Archivos en uso (Archives in use) is a collective project initiated by various working groups of the Red Conceptualismos del Sur and of the “Grupo de Estudios sobre Arte, cultura y política en la Argentina reciente” (Recent Argentinian Art, Culture and Politics Study Group), based in the Gino Germani Research Institute, Social Sciences Faculty, University of Buenos Aires.



for building architectures that will contribute to the reformulation the meaning of “the common”.

*Translated from Spanish by Nuria Rodríguez*

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INFORMATION ON THE ARCHIVES

ARCHIVO CONTRA LA PARED (ARCHIVE AGAINST THE WALL)

A digital archive of graphic politics. The collection is made up of documents (posters, pamphlets, stickers, etc.) made by political and social collectives and initiatives from Seville, stretching from 1978 to the present day. The materials are from local movements, ecologists, anti-militarists, the libertarian movement, self-managed social centres, the student movement, feminisms, the labour and trade union movement, left-wing political parties, and citizen platforms, among others.

ARCHIVO DE ESTUDIOS CAMPESINOS (RURAL STUDIES ARCHIVE)

A project that organises and catalogues existing documents on trade union and political struggles in the rural world, and on social movements advocating food sovereignty, and agroecological research conducted from the second half of the twentieth century to the present day in the Andalusia region. The project was started and developed by the Juan Díaz del Moral Rural Studies Group.

ARCHIVO DE LA AUTONOMÍA JUVENIL DE MADRID  
(ARCHIVE OF YOUTH AUTONOMY IN MADRID)

This archive encompasses a broad documentary collection of youth collectives from Madrid, produced for the most part in the period spanning 1986 and 2003. It comprises a compilation of original documents (posters, stickers, conference minutes, pamphlets), primarily collected from activists' personal archives. The project is carried out with the support of the research group *Globalisation and Social Movements* from the Nomad University.



ARCHIVO DEL DUELO (ARCHIVE OF MOURNING)

A multidisciplinary research project that aims to preserve, catalogue and study the mourning that took place after the 11 March terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004. This initiative is promoted by Spain's Scientific Research Council (CSIC) and looks to recover materials that were destined to become ephemeral, for instance photographs, drawings, texts and placards, as well as other materials left in improvised shrines, to establish an archive of collective memory. The archive is deposited in the Archivo Histórico Ferroviario (Historic Railway Archive).

ARCHIVO DIGITAL DE LA AUTONOMÍA OBRERA  
(DIGITAL ARCHIVE OF WORKERS' AUTONOMY)

A project promoted by the Espai en Blanc Foundation that compiles experiences, publications and books on the assembly and anti-capitalist movements behind independence struggles during the Franco regime and the transition to democracy in Spain. The documents gathered in the digital archive largely hail from a clandestine archive compiled since 1965 in Barcelona by different activists from autonomy spheres.

ARCHIVOS EN USO (ARCHIVES IN USE)

A platform that assembles materials from research carried out on art and politics in Latin America, and developed by Red Conceptualismos del Sur (RedCSur), in dialogue with the custodians of the materials. The project aims to preserve and collectivise these materials, and the platform was initiated and is developed by RedCSur and promoted in collaboration with the Study Group on Art, Culture and Politics in Modern-day Argentina, from the Gino Germani Research Institute at the University of Buenos Aires.

DESMEMORIADOS (FORGETFULNESS)

An open platform in which information, documents, research, images and any form of content that contributes to building the Collective Memory of Cantabria are gathered. Without attempting to organise academic transience – for instance, bounded by epochs or time periods – the project started by the La Vorágine collective stretches from the time preceding the proclamation of the Second Republic in Spain (1931) to the initial years in the period starting from the death of Franco and the transition to democracy at the end of the 1970s.

EL RECETARIO (THE COOKBOOK)

A research platform in the sphere of ecological design, the re-use of waste and open-source, committed to promoting DIY culture in our society. This initiative by *Makea Tu Vida* constitutes a repository with which to promote the development of open design tools and strategies in recycling and using waste, thereby promoting collaborative work as a decentralised method of learning and empowerment.

FEMINICIDIO.NET

A website developed to give visibility to domestic violence in Spain and Latin America. The platform strives to create a social network by joining news, interviews, articles, special research and online training and promoting the search for appropriate legal regulations for femicide. It has also developed an online database, where all the information that is available can be consulted and is organised into different categories of abuse suffered by women.



HUMAN COSTS OF BORDER CONTROL

A database which organises information from official sources on people who died while attempting to reach southern European Union countries from the Balkans, the Middle East and North and West Africa. The project, started by a team of researchers from VU University Amsterdam, aims to develop this tool in order to promote greater research, new analyses and specific changes related to migration policies.

PAD.MA

An archive of video material, primarily footage and unfinished films. The entire collection can be downloaded, viewed, annotated and edited online as it puts forward different types of viewing and contextualisation as well as categorisations and descriptors. The project initiated by the platforms *camp* (Mumbai), *0x2620* (Berlin) and *Alternative Law Forumindian* (Bangalore) aims to free sequences (videos and images), as much as spectators, from the conventions of editing.

WOMEN IN BLACK

A feminist non-violent organisation against militarism, created in Serbia in 1991, which has built a worldwide solidarity network. Symbolically dressed in black, the organisers carry out interventions in public spaces in order to prevent and resolve conflicts through dialogue and to encourage women's active participation. The organisation produces a textual and visual archive of struggles, protests, actions, reminders and legal procedures.



ARCHIVES  
OF THE COMMONS:  
KNOWLEDGE COMMONS,  
INFORMATION,  
AND MEMORY

CARLOS PRIETO DEL CAMPO

The Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid seeks to produce a concept for archives, and possible models for its practical implementation by the museum, using the paradigm of the commons to: (1) reflect on matters relating to social, cultural, artistic, political, and historical memory in the present, with the work of the archives that produce, conserve, and transmit it; (2) analyse the importance of caring for the common heritage of the collective memory of minor and subaltern groups, so as to shape historical memory and the cultural perception of social time from the perspective of social, artistic, and enunciative practices that are not ordinarily part of the dominant public sphere and do not use the prevailing channels of social expression and communication, and (3) consider how these archival practices can contribute to a new framework of political and social imagination that will strengthen the democratic nature of our societies at a time when the homogenisation of discourse inevitably equates to the end of the democratic prospect of communicative action and, as such, of political constitution.

The idea is to extend the Museo Reina Sofía’s paradigm of the “museum of the commons” and apply it to the organisation and conservation of the countless types of archives that proliferate in the social field in the form of different models and forms of organisation, and that are essential to organising and making accessible the experience and historical perception of the present. This notion of the “museum of the commons” draws attention to the profound changes that have transformed the museum over the past few decades as a result of (1) the deconstruction – or rather, the irreversible and unmitigated destruction – of the paradigms of modernity and postmodernity; (2) the profound economic, social and political crises sweeping our societies and their forms of artistic, institutional, political, and cultural representation, and (3) the structural changes to cultural institutionality and its artistic vessels, its audiences, its reference groups, its constituencies, and its users in general, as a result of the modification of the processes of production of value and surplus value, and hence productive, artistic,



political, and economic changes, which have, in turn, affected countless perceptive, cognitive, aesthetic and artistic behaviours, and the products and artefacts derived from them.

Over the past few years, this interest in archives has taken the form of a complex networked ecosystem in which the Museo Reina Sofía, along with other agents (principally the Red Conceptualismos del Sur or Southern Conceptualisms Network, and also Fundación de los Comunes or Commons Foundation) and institutions in Spain and Latin America, has supported the implementation of archival policies extraneous to the logic of the market and to the nationalisation of artistic collections. Part of this process has entailed formulating a narrative from a position enunciated through the plurality of accounts generated by the agents involved (particularly the archipelago of initiatives that cluster around the Red Conceptualismos del Sur). It has also called for the use of public, social, private and communal shared resources, and the materialisation of conservation strategies and initiatives that are assembling a new “archive of the common” through the specific practices of recovery, conservation, and public dissemination, particularly in Latin America. The aim of these initiatives has been to reflect on the idea of “common heritage” based on the different possible shared

ownership models, and on the urgent need to prevent the expropriation, co-optation, and monopolisation of collective memory and of its different forms of social construction and expression.

This research initially involves: (1) the conceptualisation of the archive – in today’s context of highly volatile information, memory and social communication – as a vessel for collective memory, linked particularly to the knowledge and practices of the dominated classes and subaltern groups, who face increasing difficulties when it comes to creating narratives of contemporary practices of their situations, and of the interconnections between these, the experience of history and the creation of other forms of politicising their collective and individual lives; (2) the definition and description of the manner in which these archives – which sustain an important common wealth of shared memory, experience, and identity – can be created, managed, conserved, and opened up to citizens and to the public in general, in an exercise of civic and democratic culture, irrespective of the criteria of belonging to a particular nation, or of having sufficient financial means for their use and enjoyment, and (3) the creation of possible models for the co-participation of public and private bodies in organising, managing and protecting these archives, and in ensuring their feasibility



1. The Archivo del Duelo is a multidisciplinary research project that aims to conserve, catalogue, and study the expressions of grief after the Madrid train bombings on 11 March 2004. The CSIC (Spanish National Research Project) is running this project that seeks to recover public expressions that are ephemeral by nature, such as photographs, drawings, texts, banners, and other materials left at improvised alters, in order to compile a collection of collective memory.

the victims of gender violence in Spain and Latin America<sup>3</sup>).

The “archives of the commons” is based on the notion of the archive as an engine for political activation in the present. It also seeks to establish devices that do not annul or objectify the grassroots systems that gave rise to these exercises in the conservation of memory, which give the archive its value and the inventive potential of a new institutionality. The museum is aware of how terribly easy it is for them

given their vulnerability on two fronts: the threat of privatisation (for instance, the collective memory of certain struggles or major social events that have shaped the experience of the present but have been sidelined by the media, academic and institutional establishments’ modes of production of discourse and memory, as in the case of the collective memory of the Madrid train bombings on 11 March 2004<sup>1</sup>, of the cycle of struggles around the 15-M Movement, of the migrants who have died in the Strait of Gibraltar and the Mediterranean<sup>2</sup>, and of

to succumb to absorption by public institutions or to commercialisation by private institutions. In order to explore these problems further, the research will be organised around three principal core areas of reflection: (1) archive models and the institutional forms that make the archive possible; the idea is to present and analyse a broad survey of repositories created from the 1970s to the present, and to talk to the custodians of this material and immaterial collective memory about their aims and their forms of organisation; (2) archive economies and the methods and protocols that ensure the dissemination and sustainability of archives without sacrificing their idiosyncratic identity or their difference, while guaranteeing socioeconomic and political accessibility, as well as high standards of conservation, and (3) the techno-political tools that can be used to organise the archive, as instruments that guarantee openness, dynamic taxonomies and universal accessibility as a sine qua non of archives of the commons.

This research will be organised around the following theoretically-strong hypotheses that will

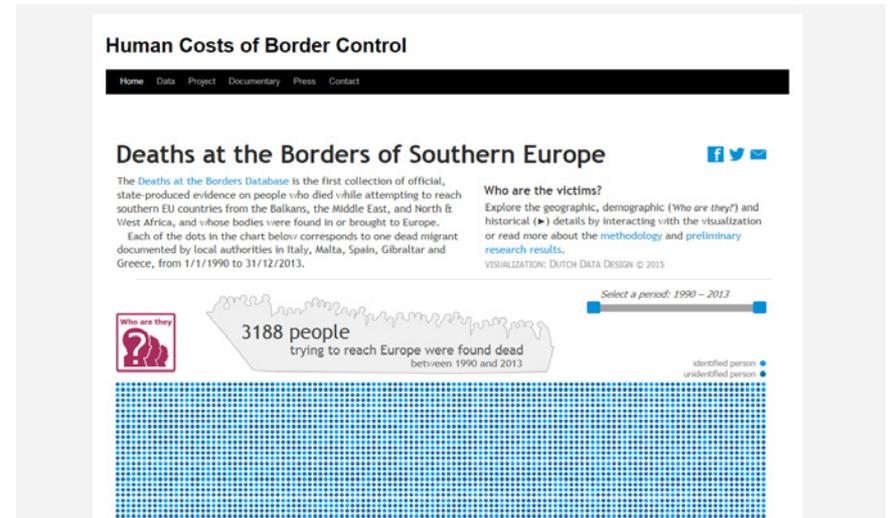
2. For example, Human Costs of Border Control is a database based on official, state-produced evidence on people who have died while attempting to reach southern European Union countries from the Balkans, the Middle East, and north-east Africa.

3. Such as Feminicidio.net, a web portal that puts the spotlight on gender violence in Spain.





Round-table discussion: *The Future of Memory and the Expropriation of the Political Sense of the Present*. Participants: Jorge Reina Schement, Nancy Kranich, Carlos Prieto, William Gambetta and Ariella Azoulay. Museo Reina Sofía, 12 December 2015. Photo: Courtesy of Red Conceptualismos del Sur.



Human Costs of Border Control

The Deaths at the Borders Database is the first collection of official, state-produced evidence on people who died while attempting to reach southern European Union countries from the Balkans, the Middle East, and North & West Africa, and whose bodies were found in or brought to Europe.

generate the working protocols and, at the same time, be tested as the research proceeds.

## Hypothesis 1

**Archives of the commons  
are common by nature,  
and defend the commons.**

The fight against new enclosures ties in with the defence of the archive as a commons, and as such its management models must simultaneously enable: (1) the construction of decentralised, open, diverse, democratic “exercises in memory” generated by subjects connected to the need to preserve the historical memory in question, and (2) a form of conservation and feedback that ensures that the growth, accessibility, conditions of use and quality of access of the archive are diverse, democratic, and universal. To this end, the research aims to explore the institutional strategies that guarantee the emergence of this new ecology of memory, as well as the common reconstruction of history through the creativity of modes of conservation of social experience. Unless collective memory has the opportunity to re-create and construct itself from the perspective of different groups, experiences of shared interests, political

orientations, intellectual sensibilities, and senses of historicity, there will not be the minimum diversity required to build the new fragments that make up the social imagination. And this new ecology of memory and construction of the social – and therefore political – imagination will only be feasible if the experience of historicity and of the archive of the commons can guarantee the distributed and decentralised production of the information commons, which is its bedrock. These information commons are thus the fundamental element that the archive initially produces or could produce. Today, the information commons are subject to powerful processes of enclosure that seriously hinder the creation of archives of the commons and their potential role as key devices for the distribution and interaction of social memory. From the perspective of the archives of the commons, the information commons contribute to building the knowledge commons of the historical sense of collective memory. Both types of commons must be specific areas of reflection within the field of the archive of the commons, and they must be at the centre of production of a new institutionality. This hypothesis could also be formulated as an affirmation by which the archive of the commons is a device that produces and guarantees access to and conservation of the new information and knowledge commons, and that,



in its operation, counteracts, opposes, or blocks the social, institutional, and technological enclosures that threaten these material and immaterial commons. This dual action is what guarantees the construction and democratic use of the archives of the commons.

## Hypothesis 2

**An archive of the commons must necessarily be decolonial and, by historical imperative, an object of decolonisation.**

Archives of the commons are archives organised around a critique of the violence of modernity vis-à-vis processes of memory construction, of the hierarchisation of different peoples, and of the creation of hermetic circuits of socioeconomic and cultural reproduction. They also encompass the plundering of the objects that have embodied this memory, both in the global sphere of modern imperialism – historically speaking – and in the politics and micropolitics of (post)modernity practiced in today’s national societies. There can be no archives of the commons, let alone “museums of the commons” unless the construction and operation of these new institutionalities are founded on decolonial criteria and on the

decolonisation of their practices and contents.

The decolonial criteria particularly tie into the possibility of organising the collective memory of ethnically invisibilised or racialised subaltern subjects who live in Europe and beyond, in countries that often deprive them of the right of citizenship and of basic civil and political rights. This is a huge obstacle to the possibility of producing archives of the memory of the different social, cultural, political, and existential situations that are so overwhelming and on such a large scale that they form part of the social experience tout court of the societies in which those populations without rights are present. The same applies in terms of access to these repositories of memory, which often focus on social groups made up of subjects whose life stories involve people who live and move through different national territories for family, cultural, or socioeconomic reasons. These subjects and these individuals may be interested in consulting, accessing, and using these archives, but they may find it difficult to do so due to the current structure of the system of states, in which borders, checkpoints and the lack of international mobility are obstacles to large sectors of the world’s population. The work of the Human Costs of Border Control archive is a paradigmatic example of this situation, given that its content and collective memory have to



do with individuals and communities whose lives are influenced and mediated by the existence of borders and mobility controls that drastically affect their existence, their lives, and sometimes their deaths.

## Hypothesis 3

**Archives of the commons must be democratic, non-discriminatory, and generally accessible to all actual and potential users; this accessibility must be built in to their design, their structure, and their operation.**

Archives of the commons must opt for technologies and forms of sourcing and accessing content that are as open as possible, so that their use is not filtered for financial, cultural, political or national reasons, either by institutional design or as a result of the technology architecture. This means that the physical and the virtual use of these archives must be conceived in accordance with the criteria of maximum access, from the perspective of connectivity, capacity, content, and context. The technology design should not limit the objective potential of the Internet, which is never neutral, by failing to take into account the limits affecting these four hypotheses for the use and

enjoyment of these archives. Archives of the commons are based on the hypothesis that technology is inherently social, and that this social dimension must be carefully taken into account to ensure that good technological strategies are not ruined by the failure to take into account the social inequality that affects the potential use of these tools by different social and economic groups due to the great variations in their cost and affordability.

Archives of the commons should thus think about Internet connectivity as a prerequisite that is essential but not sufficient to enable the production of information and knowledge commons. Similarly, archives of the commons must take into account that working on specific user profiles, and the ongoing attention to inequality in regard to the skills and the socioeconomic, educational, and cultural status of the population in general are essential for achieving equality in the use of these commons.





## Hypothesis 4

**An archive of the commons is a device for the reconstruction of memory and of the historical-political sense of the present; this is due to its process of creation and because of the possibilities it offers to interested parties, groups, collectives, and citizens.**

Given that collective memory is a means of building social domination in the imaginary and symbolic spheres, the archive of social movements – which have played a crucial role in history but have been defeated as political actors with the capacity to organise the dominant institutionality and its production and conservation – must operate under a different logic: one that is created, defined, and implemented in the specific conditions in which the struggle for the meaning of the past and the present is being played out today. In these socioeconomically turbulent times of huge technological innovations, and major changes in the political subjectivity of social actors, the archive of social movements becomes key to the invention of the future in terms of collective action and of the activation of social energies. This collective memory of social movements is essential

for debating possible lines of action that seek to invent alternative forms of institutional, social, and political organisation, and other models for human relationality and coexistence.

In 2016–2017, the Museo Reina Sofía’s main lines of work with regards to archives of the commons are: (1) to continue to explore the nature of archives of the commons, in order to gather and produce documentation and analyses that can encourage and begin a public debate on this new modality, actively involving as many agents as possible in the discussions. The idea is to bring about broad public debate on the statutes, models, financing, and management of the archives of the commons; (2) to define working methods and sequences of objectives that will ensure that the activities organised around this subject – based on ongoing public engagement – will generate a solid collection of materials that can be used in different forums and with the different agents that the project comes in contact with or that it sets up collaborations or working relationships with, through the museum.

During the next two years, the museum aims to achieve the following objectives: (1) to theoretically and sociologically define what an “archives of the commons” is in the present and what it could become, and the possible forms of operation and organisation, from the point of view of organisation,



conservation, access, and operation; (2) to specify the social needs that this kind of archive meets in the current social context, and the social objectives of this kind of “institution of the commons” in conserving, recreating, and expanding a democratic public sphere in times of social crisis and crisis of financialisation in the worlds of art, culture, and the economy, with the resulting impact on the modes of creating and recreating collective memory, and (3) to explore the right to collective memory, and to its conservation and study, of subaltern groups and subjects who have to deal with media, cultural, academic, and institutional realities that have been and are increasingly impermeable to their voices.

The programme of activities that the Museo Reina Sofía will organise will thus be oriented towards an accumulative, work-in-progress method in order to produce a series of “products” that could initially be as follows: (1) the conceptual design of the institutional model of the archive of the commons as a device for managing documents, artworks, and aesthetic and socio-cultural artefacts; (2) the definition of a model or models of statutes for archives of the commons, and modes of operation that can guarantee their stability, dynamism and accessibility in accordance with the hypotheses and premises explored in the research process so as to contribute

to the new social institutionality of the commons; (3) a debate on the archive’s forms of relations with private agents and with public institutions, in order to explore the possibilities of creating a new regime of organisation and operation that explores the commons statute of this type of institutionality; (4) the creation of training protocols for people who directly manage archives of the commons, and of educational tools for this purpose; (5) the sharing of management tools that can contribute to creating this institutionality of the archives of the commons, so that they can be used and shared by archives that work along these lines of organisation and operation; (6) the definition of models of financing and sustainability for archives of the commons that guarantee their continuity and ensure their high quality and social impact through general access; (7) the definition of employment sustainability models for the persons who work directly with archives of the commons, and sustainable models for financing, co-financing, or involving public and private organisations; (8) the creation of legal statutes for archives of the commons and the study of the possible implications of their existence within institutions, as well as possible models of legal regulation that guarantee their common nature; (9) the definition of the possible legal status of archives of the commons as an agency that is recognised and



supported by public institutions with a view to promoting the creation of a new public sphere that leads to innovative processes of democratic and social incorporation, and (10) the analysis of new intellectual property models that may be useful for allowing general access to the material contained within the archives of the commons.

The products resulting from these research dynamics will operate in the public sphere as artefacts and discourses, generating debates and lines of consensus on the issues underlying the institutional creation and definition of the archives of the commons.

*Translated from Spanish by Nuria Rodríguez*



# BIOGRAPHIES

## Lawrence Abu Hamdan

Lawrence Abu Hamdan is an artist, private ear and currently a fellow at the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at the New School, New York. His audio investigations have been submitted as evidence in the UK Asylum and Immigration Tribunal and most recently were part the *No More Forgotten Lives* campaign for Defence For Children International. The artist's forensic audio investigations are conducted as part of his research for Forensic Architecture at Goldsmiths College London where he is also a PhD candidate. His solo exhibitions include *Earshot* at Portikus Frankfurt (2016), *هيقت* (*taqiyya*) at Kunsthalle St Gallen (2015), *Tape Echo* (2013) at Beirut in Cairo and Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, *The Freedom Of Speech Itself* (2012) at Showroom, London, *The Whole Truth* (2012) at Casco, Utrecht. Additionally his works have been exhibited and performed at venues such as Shanghai Biennial (2014), Whitechapel Gallery London, MACBA Barcelona, Tate Modern London, M HKA Antwerp, Beirut Art Center and Taipei Biennial (2012). Abu Hamdan's writing can be found in *Forensis. The Architecture of Public Truth*, Sternberg Press (2014), *Manifesta Journal* and *Cabinet Magazine*.

## Filipa César

Filipa César's films and projects have been focused on the specters of resistance in Portugal's geopolitical past, questioning mechanisms of history production and spanning spaces for performing experimental knowledge. Since 2011, César has been researching the origins of cinema in Guinea-Bissau, its imaginaries and potencies, developing the collective project *Luta ca caba inda* (the struggle is not over yet). She was a participant of the research projects *Living Archive* (2011-13) and *Visionary Archive* (2013-15) at the Arsenal - Institute for Film and Video Art, Berlin. Selected Film Festivals include 59. Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen; 20.-23. Curtas Vila do Conde; 43. and 46. Forum Expanded, Berlinale; IFFR, Rotterdam; 9. DocLisboa. Selected exhibitions: 8. Istanbul Biennial; Serralves Museum, Porto; 29. São Paulo Biennial; Manifesta 8, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Jeu de Paume, Paris; Kunstwerke, Berlin; NBK, Berlin; SAAVY Contemporary, Berlin; Futura, Prague; Khasma, Paris; Tensta konsthall, Stockholm.



## Mela Dávila Freire

Mela Dávila Freire serves since January 2016 as the Director of Public Activities of Museo Reina Sofía. She has performed a number of roles in contemporary art institutions, which include the Galician Centre of Contemporary Art (Santiago de Compostela), MECAD / Media Centre d'Art i Disseny (Sabadell), MACBA, (Contemporary Art Museum of Barcelona), where she was in charge of the Publications Department between 2000 and 2005, and was director of the Study and Documentation Centre between 2007 and 2012, putting in place innovative formulas for managing and disseminating the museum's documentary collection, which spans a library and an archive of contemporary artistic practices. In 2012 she moved to Hamburg, working as a professor of Art History at the University of Hamburg, as well as an advisor and an independent author in relation to art archives, artist publications, bibliographic publications and other related areas. She has recently advised the Lafuente Archive (Santander), the Arts Libris book fair (Barcelona) and the documenta archive, for which she compiled an update project.

## Wolfgang Ernst

Wolfgang Ernst, Full professor for Media Theories at the Institute of Musicology and Media Studies, Humboldt-University, Berlin. Studied history, Latin philology, and (partially) classical archaeology. Ph.D. thesis on historicism and museology; habilitation on the technical and symbolic infrastructures of national memory. Teaching experience and guest professorships at several universities (Kassel, Leipzig, Cologne, Weimar, Bochum, Paderborn). Other publications in English: *Digital Memory and the Archive* (2013); *Sonic Time Machines* (forthcoming 2016); *Chronopoetics* (forthcoming 2016). Current research fields: time-based and time-critical media processes; implicit "sonicity" in techno-mathematical media; experimenting the writing of media time in non-historiographic ways.



## Crystal Fraser

Crystal Fraser is a PhD Candidate in the Department of History and Classics at the University of Alberta in Canada. Her research considers the everyday lived experiences of northern Indigenous people and the Indian Residential School system during the second half of the twentieth century, posing provocative questions about colonialism, critical race theory, and gender and sexualities. In 2014, she was declared a national leader and visionary, through [A Bold Vision](#), and is a former SSHRC doctoral fellow. Crystal, the granddaughter of Marka and Richard Bullock, is Gwichya Gwich'in and originally from Inuvik and Tree River, Northwest Territories.

You can find Crystal on Twitter at [@crystalfraser](#), on [academia.edu](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

## Rado Ištok

Rado Ištok is currently completing the programme in Curating Art at Stockholm University. His collaborative graduation project (2015) with Yvonique Wellen consisted of a strand of events concentrated around the issues of decolonising knowledge, self-organised art education as well as racialised structures of inequalities in higher education; and included artists Grada Kilomba, Dmitry Vilensky and Apichaya Wanhiang. He previously studied art history at Charles University in Prague. As a governmental scholar he conducted research at the University of Copenhagen (2012-2013) and in 2014 he participated in a curatorial course at The Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts supported by the Erste Foundation through the tranzit network. As an intern he worked for Tensta konsthall, Stockholm and SALT, Istanbul (2015), where research for the current publication was initiated and generously encouraged.



## Ana Longoni

Ana Longoni is a writer, researcher of CONICET and professor in Universidad de Buenos Aires. She received a BA in Literature and a PhD in Arts from the Universidad de Buenos Aires, where she currently lectures on graduate and postgraduate courses. She also teaches at the Programa de Estudios Independientes (Independent Studies Programme) of MACBA (Barcelona) and other universities. Her research is specialised in the crossroads between art and politics in Latin America since the 1960s. Amongst her publications, alone or in collaboration: *Del Di Tella a Tucumán Arde* (2000; 2008), *Traiciones* (2007), *El Siluetazo* (2008), *Roberto Jacoby. El deseo nace del derrumbe* (2011), *Leandro Katz* (2013) and *Vanguardia y revolución* (2014). As a playwright, she had written: *La Chira* (2003) and *Árboles* (2006). As a curator, she coordinated the exhibitions *Desire Rises from Collapse* (2011) and *Losing the Human Form* (2012), both at the Museo Reina Sofía (Madrid). She is an active member, since its foundation in 2007, of the Red Conceptualismos del Sur.

## Marisa Pérez Colina

Marisa Pérez Colina is a political scientist and political activist with ties to collective projects and experiences such as the feminist research-action space *Precarias a la Deriva* and the *Agencia de Asuntos Precarios Todas aCien*, and cross-border networks like *Ferrocarril Clandestino* and the *Asociación Sin Papeles de Madrid*. She is also an independent researcher on the impact of neo-liberal policies on welfare state institutions, and how they have been affected by the 2008 crisis and non-state public institution models and institutions of the common. She is currently part of *Ganemos Madrid* and *Ahora Madrid*, and works as a coordinator in the “Fundación de los Comunes”.



## Carlos Prieto del Campo

Activist in European social movements, Carlos Prieto del Campo has a PhD in Philosophy from the Complutense University of Madrid, and is an expert in accounting and public sector auditing after having worked as a civil servant for the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Finance between 1989 and 2010. He is also an independent editor and activist in the field of culture, and has been editor of the Spanish version of *New Left Review* since 2000, director of the publishing project *Cuestiones de antagonismo* (1999–2012) and *Prácticas constituyentes* since 2013. He has held different management posts in Spain's public sector and was dean of the Quito Institute of Higher National Studies (2013–2014) and an adviser to the Ecuadorian government. He is Director of the Study Centre at Museo Reina Sofía and is a member of the editorial board of L'Internationale Online.

## Karol Radziszewski

Karol Radziszewski (b. 1980) is a multidisciplinary artist, filmmaker and curator. Graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in 2004. He is publisher and editor-in-chief of DIK Fagazine and founder of the Queer Archives Institute. His multidisciplinary research, as well as his archive-based methodology, crosses multiple cultural, historical, religious, social and gender references. His work has been presented in institutions such as the National Museum, Museum of Modern Art, Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; New Museum, New York; Cobra Museum, Amstelveen; Wrocław Contemporary Museum; Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow and Muzeum Sztuki in Lodz. He has participated in several international biennales including PERFORMA 13, New York; 7th Göteborg Biennial, Gothenburg; 4th Prague Biennial and 15th WRO Media Art Biennale, Wrocław.



## Red Conceptualismos del Sur

Red Conceptualismos del Sur is a collective initiative bringing together a set of researchers and artists scattered around various parts of Latin America and Europe, which proposes to establish itself as a platform for common thought and action dealing with contemporary relations between art and politics. It was founded in 2007 by a group of researchers concerned with the need to intervene politically in the neutralisation processes of critical potential of a set of ‘conceptual practices’ that took place in Latin America since the early 1960s. Since its foundation, the network has been involved in a long-term reflection on the uses and politics of archives, working on the organisation and constitution of some of the most important artists’ archives in South America. The latest publications include *Desinventario* (2015) and *Arte y disidencia política : Memorias del Taller 4 Rojo* (2015).

## Jeffrey T. Schnapp

Jeffrey T. Schnapp is the founder/faculty director of metaLAB (at) Harvard and faculty co-director of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society. His most recent books include *The Electric Information Age Book* (with Adam Michaels [Princeton Architectural Press 2012]); *The Library Beyond the Book* (Harvard University Press 2014); and *Digital Humanities*, an essay on cultural heritage issues published in Italian in the Meet the Media Guru series.

Digging through dark abundance of media, material, and data collections, metaLAB embraces the processual artifacts buried within the lives of digital and physical objects. With a team composed of scholars, writers, designers, developers, and filmmakers, metaLAB projects manifest as experiments in publication, pedagogy, and curation showcased in print, on the web, and in exhibited spaces. By combining traditional modes of practice, metaLAB research infuses scholarship with the spirit of hacking, making, and artistic investigation.



## Rona Sela

Dr. Rona Sela is a curator, researcher of visual history and lecturer at Tel Aviv University and Shenkar College. Her work focuses on the visual representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and their political and social aspects, on human rights issues and the role of the archive in zones of conflict. She examines how the Zionist/Israeli systems, as one component in a huge mechanism of domination and conquest, control the visual sphere of both Israelis and Palestinians for ideological/national objectives. One of her projects exposes how, by various means of force, Israel looted Palestinian treasurers, have become a large reservoir of knowledge about the Palestinians, giving Israel control over their history and culture. Her recent work deals with the development of Palestinian civil society – among them artists and activists - who are fighting to reduce inequality and apply democracy to all residents of the state. She has curated numerous exhibitions and published many books, catalogues and articles on these topics.

## Andrea Stultiens

Andrea Stultiens studied photography on BFA, MFA and MA level in the Netherlands and is a PhD candidate at Leiden University. Her interest is not in the individual image, but in the development of a critical approach towards the tacit narratives that appear when sequencing and contextualising photographs from a specific cultural historical context for various audiences. Since 2007 most of Stultiens' work deals with images of Africa in general and Uganda in particular. In 2011 she initiated the archival platform History In Progress Uganda together with Ugandan artist Rumanzi Canon.



## Mabel Tapia

Mabel Tapia is an independent researcher (Buenos Aires, Paris). She is currently finishing a PhD at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA). Her research focuses on art practices from the twentieth century involving the use of archives, activism, political engagement that have as one of their main characteristics, the deactivation of the aesthetic function. Processes of legitimation, valorisation and visibility of contemporary practices in relation to the phenomenon of reification within new paradigms in both artistic and socio-economic fields are part of her investigation. As editor, she has coordinated the following: *Losing human form. A seismic image of the '80s in Latin America* (2013; 2014), *Really Useful Knowledge* (2014) and *Desinventario* (2015). She is member and 2015 coordinator of the Red Conceptualismos del Sur platform.

## Zoe Todd

Zoe Todd (Métis) is from Amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton) in Treaty Six Territory in Alberta, Canada. She writes about Indigeneity, art, architecture, decolonisation and healing in urban contexts. She also studies human-animal relations, colonialism and environmental change in northern Canada. She is a tenure-track lecturer in Anthropology at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada and a PhD Candidate in Social Anthropology at Aberdeen University. She was a 2011 Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation Scholar.



# Decolonising Archives

## eBook publication

### PUBLISHED BY

L'Internationale Online  
[www.internationaleonline.org](http://www.internationaleonline.org)

### PUBLICATION DATE

2016

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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