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Documenting resistance, conflict and violence: a scoping review of the role of participatory digital platforms in the mobilisation of resistance

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Abstract

In recent years, grassroots movements have gained traction and significant numbers globally. Against longer histories of resistance and protest movements' mobilisation of documentation, mechanisation and digital technologies, this scoping literature review seeks to understand how resistance and social movements have drawn upon the participatory and easily accessible nature of social media and digital platforms to mobilise new generations of activists, create new archives, document activities and abuses, call for accountability and overwrite or challenge the narratives put forward by mainstream media outlets and state archives. We identify relevant projects, explore the activist potential and threats of the combination of digital technologies, social movements, and documentary or archival practice, before concluding by identifying open research questions in relation to digital technologies, social movements and archival practice.

Keywords Archives · Social movements · Activism · Digital activism · Digital archives · Community-led archives

Introduction

In recent years, grassroots movements have gained traction and significant numbers globally. This growth is at least partially enabled by use of digital tools by activists for mobilisation, organising and communication (Dumitrica and Felt 2020). Digitally mediated activism has generated a diverse, political and personal body of records which pose new challenges to archival practice. The interfolding of digital

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platforms and infrastructures with social movements requires understandings of the liberatory and/or oppressive potential of the archive to be refracted through new and emerging interdisciplinary debates and technopolitical claims and contestations. Recent digital humanities, data science and critical infrastructure studies scholarship has demonstrated that the digital code, tools and platforms that co-constitute digital archives are neither neutral, apolitical nor merely technical. This technology has largely been built by hegemonic groups, and "despite the democratizing promise… [is] likely to reflect and perpetuate stereotypes, biases, and inequalities." (Bourg 2015; see also Hicks 2013, p 85 on the 'brogrammer'). Scholars including Safiya Omuja Noble and Marie Hicks have drawn attention to practices of racial profiling, misogyny, sexism and homophobia embedded with the development of technologies and in the development of computing industries and workforces. As Noble writes, "on the internet and in our everyday uses of technology, discrimination is also embedded in computer code and, increasingly, in artificial intelligence technologies that we are reliant on, by choice or not" (Noble 2018, p 1).

Moreover, as digitisation transforms analogue records from 'boundary objects' to 'open sets of data' (Thylstrup 2018: p 3), the actions that can subsequently be performed on those datasets, and the processes in which those datasets can be implicated, can be unforeseen (by some), and retrograde (see e.g. O Neill 2017). Digital activist archives can be exposed to new forms of threat from state forces (including law enforcement), working through and in alliance with social media platforms (Dencik and Leistert 2015). Biometric technologies, for example, like automated facial recognition, can be used on digital archives, in ways that their creators cannot absolutely preclude (cf. Horstmann 2020). This raises archival questions about choice of platform, encryption and information opacity and their imbrications with evolving concepts and politics of surveillance, privacy and consent. Linked to this is the ethics of social movement digital archiving, especially that founded on the incorporation of personal testimony. In what way is it possible to prevent such sites and materials becoming unintentional tools of state agencies for identification of activists? Technology, then, as an industry, workplace, tool, structure, economy and instrument of the techno-military complex, should be understood through the people and organisations who control its development and not positioned as neutral or an unqualified good.

Against longer histories of resistance and protest movements' mobilisation of documentation, mechanisation and digital technologies, this article seeks to understand how resistance and social movements have drawn upon the participatory and easily accessible nature of social media and digital platforms to mobilise new generations of activists to create new archives, document activities and abuses, call for accountability, and overwrite or challenge the narratives put forward by mainstream media outlets and state archives. This kind of birds-eye synthesis is difficult to distil because the relevant literature is currently disjointed and published across many fields and outlets. This review article accordingly:

1. Explores the community-led use of digital platforms to document (often state-sponsored) violence and conflict and its impact on individuals and communities,

preserve and make accessible the archival traces of resistance movements, activism and individual struggle against violence or conflict;
2. Analyses the activist potential and danger of the combination of digital technologies, social movements and documentation or archival practice;
3. Following from 1 & 2, identifies open research questions in relation to digital technologies, social movements and archival practice.

Before elaborating further, we would like to situate ourselves in relation to the context of study. This paper is authored by scholars in the fields of Archival Studies, Public History and Digital Humanities, with backgrounds in practice as historians and/or archivists. Individually, we also have experience in social movements including organising and creative production in DIY culture, archival activism in labour and social movement contexts, independent and community-based archiving. Our interest in this field of study is informed by experiences within each of these capacities and communities.

We are motivated to do this research because of a belief that the activities of social movements matter, both to those originally involved in movements and to future organisers. Social movements now predominantly document their activities in digital formats and on digital platforms (Velte 2018; Jarvie et al. 2021). The use of digital technologies and platforms by groups is not just an inconsequential, neutral add on but instead has a transformative impact on the form, nature and remediation of activist histories and archival traces. The resulting digital records confront and disrupt traditions of archival practice, requiring different approaches to existing workflows. To assess the current and potential future impact of digital technology on activist records and archives, it is important to critically reflect on the collocation of activist work with digital technology, ultimately also in a historical perspective. This must be done so that the digitally mediated work of resistance and social movements can unlock its potential and also get the professional and social responsibility needed to support it, as other activist modalities have received. By publishing this article in *Archival Science*, we wish to reach information professionals and digital humanities specialists concerned with the preservation, interpretation and collection of materials, as well as those working with and supporting social movements in professional capacities.

We proceed to summarise the background to this review and define the key terms used in this study, before briefly outlining the methodology used to identify and analyse sources. Following this, we conduct an environmental scan, identifying a number of community-led digital archival projects (Flinn et al. 2009) that are of relevance and interest to this research, providing a brief overview of each individually. Using both the identified projects and academic literature from our search, we explore a series of emerging themes identified from this area of research. Finally, we present a set of urgent research questions that has emerged from this review, then conclude by reflecting on the current state of the field, and suggested methodologies for moving forward.

Background context

In considering the intersection between activism and archival practice (or activist archiving / archiving activism) (Flinn and Alexander 2015), it is worth noting three broader contexts within which such activities are situated and must be understood: digital archival activism as part of broader digital activism practices; the relationship between digital activism and other forms of activism; and the relationship between archives and records and social movements. This section explores these contexts before outlining the precise scope of our research.

Firstly, the employment of archives and records in digital activism is part of a much larger set of well-established and documented digital activist practices engaging in information politics sometimes known as information activism or hacktivism, dating back to the 1980s and 1990s. The social media and digital platforms that are examined here are not framed as being *sui generis* but rather are understood to be part of a longer trajectory of computationally mediated social media activism, memory, and collecting. From the origins of the internet in Arpanet, which was connected with US military and conceived as a networked data-exchange infrastructure for scientists and academics, the constituency of individuals who could potentially participate in networked communication was widened beyond professional communities and institutions with the invention of Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) and Usenet towards the end of the 1970s (e.g. Naughton 2000, pp 185–193) and other virtual communities, like the WELL that followed (e.g. Rheingold 2000). Though Tim Berners Lee's World Wide Web, invented in the mid-1990s, was perhaps rightly dismissed by hypertext luminary Ted Nelson as just "another imitation of paper" (cited in Ryan 2010, p 137), it further broadened, through simple, open source technologies like HTML and browsers, the potential constituency of participants in digital-mediated communication from the "Wizards" of the early internet (Hafner and Lyon 1998) to the apparently limitless cybercommunities evoked in texts like those of Negroponte (1996). Despite earlier associations of computing technology with "the unfeeling industrial-era social machine" (Turner 2010, p 1), a new cyberutopianism was ascendant by the mid-1990s. John Perry Barlow's 1996 'Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace', is emblematic of this, informing the "Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel …I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us. You have no moral right to rule us nor do you possess any methods of enforcement we have true reason to fear" (Barlow 1996). The second wave of the world wide web (often termed Web 2.0) reconceptualised webpages from largely static entities to be served and passively consumed into recombinant and combinatorial artefacts that could unleash the democratisation, de-personalisation, globalization and deregulation envisaged by the cyberutopianists. As will be explored in this article, this opened new possibilities to document the unrest, violence and conflict of the 2000s and 2010s, whilst also leading to difficult questions about the darker dynamics of the technological platforms and infrastructures that were often discussed in radical and liberatory terms. The contestation

of digital spaces by both activists and governments / corporate bodies therefore underpins the development of the web (Jordan 2015).

Secondly, whilst digital activism is sometimes the main focus of the projects and endeavours described here, it never describes the totality of the activism and it frequently represents a supplement or addition to a wider programme of activism operating in the broader context of multiple local, national and international political and social struggles—this is as true of information activism as it is of any other form of digital activism (Jordan 2015, p 190). Instead of viewing digital and "offline" activism as a dualism, it is instead more productive to consider how the two are integrated—as Greijdanus et al. write, this is "either because people's online and offline behaviours are intertwined or because one person's online activism can mobilise others for offline protest" (Greijdanus et al. 2020, p 51). In acknowledging this to be true, we are also reflecting a critique of possible limitations and ineffectiveness of some digital activism which is sometimes dismissed as 'clicktivism'.

Finally, the use of records and archives and recordkeeping technologies in supporting social movement and anti-state struggles (understanding information, documentation and heritage as both a tool in such conflicts as well as location for those struggles) is a long established one, both pre-dating and incorporating early digital technologies and records (Flinn 2008). Social movement archives are explored as sources (archives of activism) or through the practices of institutional collecting (archiving activism) or activists engaging in archival activity (activist archiving) (Flinn and Alexander 2015, pp 331–332). Movements represented in this way include the animal rights movement (Howard et al. 2021; Jarvie et al. 2021), Hong Kong's umbrella movement (Tong 2022), New York's Interference Archive (Sellie et al. 2015), UK-based Asian youth movements (Ramamurthy 2006), labour movements (Howard 2019), feminism (Jolly et al. 2012), the Baltimore Uprising (Douglas 2019), the Occupy movement (Gledhill 2012), and queer activism (Lee 2020). This small selection of examples is a snapshot of many diverse engagements between social movements and archiving stretching back many decades.

Members of social movements are involved in the instigation of community-led archives as activist archivists. Community-led archives are defined by Flinn as "the grassroots activities of documenting, recording and exploring community heritage in which community participation, control and ownership of the project is essential" (Flinn 2007, p 153) and are often either politically aligned with social movements, or positioned as social movements in themselves (Flinn 2011; Crooke 2010). The term "radical recordkeeping" is also used to refer to disruptive or revolutionary forms of records management and archival practice (Jarvie et al. 2017, p 173). Radical organisations can harness archival traditions (for example, concepts of value and evidence) in environments which are not otherwise conceived of as archival spaces (for example, social media groups), showing potential to reinvigorate and radicalise these traditions by use in new hands.

For others, archival traditions are practices intertwined with oppressive structures which hide or invalidate the histories of marginalised people (Caswell 2014; Ishmael 2018; Caswell et al. 2016). Instead, theorists and practitioners have called for models of archival practice which prioritise feminist, anti-colonial, anti-violence, queer, anarchist and radical politics over traditions of professional practice (Allard and

Ferris 2014, 2015; Ghaddar et al. 2016). Allard and Ferris seek a model of archiving "that not only captures but also uses these knowledge(s) as the organisational scaffolding upon which to build socially just and representative archives for specific marginalised communities" (Allard and Ferris 2015, p 361). Archives can be spaces for 'liberatory memory work' focussed on social transformation and justice in the present and the future (Caswell 2021). The archive is widely understood as a site for potential liberation or potential marginalisation, depending on how it is managed, accessed and used and the histories, knowledge and language that it centres.

This section has outlined the background to this research, identifying bodies of research coalescing around intersections of digital technologies, activism and recordkeeping. Although separate bodies of research exist which explore archival activism/activist archiving and digital activism, the adoption of digitally mediated archival approaches across these contexts is still an emergent area of research. Digital projects and records have been explored in a small cluster of texts exploring social media in an archival context (Lindström 2019; Velte 2018) and others focused on digital recordkeeping through a records continuum framework (Jarvie et al. 2021; Howard et al. 2021). It is important that the conversations begun by these projects are developed and continued by scholarship equally concerned with the impact of digital shifts on social movement communities *and* on professional practice. As Ghaddar, Allard and Hubbard write, more research is needed to understand the specific implications of "archiving difficult knowledge in situations of ongoing violence and insecurity" (Ghaddar et al. 2016, p 2).

Scope

The scope of this review article is digital archival projects developed by members of social movement groups and communities who are experiencing or have survived circumstances of violence and/or conflict. When using the term violence we write with a shared understanding that violence itself is a contested term. As Muehlenhard and Kimes propose, "what counts as violence is socially constructed, has varied over time, and reflects power relationships" (Muehlenhard and Kimes 1999, p 234). For example, violence against women has historically been condoned as acceptable within certain limits that are determined by those in positions of authority. Violence is additionally enacted through structures, processes and institutions. In the context of trans studies, Dean Spade refers to administrative violence and state violence, through which "state programs and law enforcement are not the arbiters of justice, protection, and safety but are instead sponsors and sites of violence" (Spade 2015, p 2). In focusing on community-led projects that are often also led by survivors of violence and conflict, we hold in the centre of this research the rights of survivors (whether named or anonymous) to name and articulate their experiences as forms violence.

This review explores digitally mediated archival activities that engage with political struggle and conflict from a grassroots perspective rather than those important yet often top-down projects which seek to memorialise the impact of conflict, terrorism and war. Of course, many of the projects described here seek to do both,

documenting the impact of violence and conflict (and in doing so memorialise the victims) and contributing to struggles for justice arising from the same conflicts and violence (Saber 2020, p 391). Our articulation of archiving and recordkeeping has synergy with critical interpretations of records continuum theory, which acknowledge "broad conceptualizations of the record… archiving and recordkeeping processes, the nature of the Archives, and the role of archiving and recordkeeping in society" (Evans et al. 2017, p 11) and through which framework records are formed before formal acquisition into archival collections. This emphasis also highlights archival dimensions of practices including citizen documentary, journalism and digitally mediated witnessing (Horsti 2019).

Methodology

This article is a scoping literature review, which Grant and Booth describe as "a preliminary assessment of the potential size and scope of available research literature" (Grant and Booth 2009, p 101). Arksey and O'Malley identify multiple uses of scoping literature review—they enable researchers to "examine the extent, range and nature of research activity", to determine whether further research is warranted, to summarise findings across a range of research activity, and to identify research gaps (Arksey and O'Malley 2005, p 21). The format of review utilises a narrative format to synthesise research relevant to the identified topic, which benefits not only the authors but, when published, a wider scholarly community.

The research conducted for this review followed Arksey and O'Malley's methodological framework:

Stage 1: identifying the research question
Stage 2: identifying relevant studies
Stage 3:study selection
Stage 4: charting the data
Stage 5: collating, summarising and reporting the results (Arksey and O'Malley 2005, p 22).

To identify relevant scholarship, we used search strings including (but not exclusive to) combinations of internet; conflict; violence; state; archive; records; recordkeeping; archiving; digital; war; abuse; community; community-led; memory; digital activism; activism. Boolean vocabulary was used in combination with keywords to undertake thorough and precise searches. Targeted searches were undertaken in general and subject specific databases (Library Science Database; Library and Information Science Abstracts; Proquest; Legal Journals Index; JISC Journal Archives; Google Scholar; Humanities International Index; Social Sciences Citation Index). This was combined with manual browsing of key journals to identify studies outside of the remit of these search strings. In some cases, the strategy of backward and forward searching through citations (Paulus et al. 2014, p 53) was used to identify further publications.

In some cases, links were drawn between identified scholarship and areas familiar from previous research projects, particularly one of the authors' current and previous research into DIY cultures (Fife 2019; 2022). The scholarship identified during this process is being published in a variety of fields including archive studies; history; media studies; social movement studies; digital humanities; geography; computing; library studies; women's/gender/feminist studies; heritage studies; politics/radical politics; autobiography studies. Whilst heavily weighted towards the Information Studies field, the variety of disciplines encountered in the literature review process indicates the potential interdisciplinary nature of this research area. The connections between these digital projects and radical, queer, human rights, social movement and/or feminist politics are particularly clear (Allard and Ferris 2014; 2015; Palma-Mehta 2018) and will inform the analysis of the sources that we identified.

To identify relevant digital projects and journalism, we undertook targeted searches via search engines using similar search strings. We looked for digital projects which were led by communities who had experienced conflict and/or violence and which utilised record keeping/creation or archiving as a method of resistance and/or source of evidence. In identifying these projects, we did not only identify projects involving archival organisations or qualified archivists, although many of the sites use terminology and roles which align to those which exist in more traditional archive services. The projects identified in the environmental scan were American; European; African; and Asian. The projects highlighted in the following environmental scan are by no means *all* of the relevant projects but are selected as a representative sample to allow for an initial exploration of content and themes.

There are limitations to our search methods which should be noted. Our searching was limited by language barriers experienced by the researcher undertaking searches. Therefore, we could only consult resources published in English and available in the Western world—as a result, there will be relevant sources that are omitted from the review. Although the strategic use of keywords allows the refinement of searches, this method of searching will exclude some relevant materials using different phrases to describe similar work—for example, "recordmaking" (Sheffield 2018) instead of record creation. For the purposes of this review, we have not surveyed material or projects on the dark web (or websites accessible through Tor, I2P and similar software) for this study, given the requirement for anonymity that the use of such systems indicate and can require (see e.g. Gehl 2018).

After sources were identified, they were analysed following Braun and Clarke's phases of thematic analysis: becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing the final analysis (2006, p 87). Tables were used to summarise identified literature during the process of review, and codes were generated from these summaries. Themes were generated, reviewed and written up into the thematic sections explored later in this article.

Environmental scan

This section introduces a selection of digital projects that were identified during the course of this scoping review. These are explored in conjunction with another,

allowing for the comparison of aims, objectives and key activities across projects rather than introduction of each in isolation.

A number of different projects are referenced in the next analysis section but are not included in the environmental scan because they are not currently publicly available online. These include the Trans Memory Archive and the Sex Work Database. These are also considered important projects but require a level of access that it was not possible to gain or appropriate to seek during this short-term period of research. However, further research in this area should engage with projects that are not publicly available, but nonetheless utilise digital technology for similar purposes.

The first goal of digital projects identified is the compilation and preservation of existing archival materials relating to a community who experience or continue to experience violence/conflict. For example, Talking Syria, a digital project founded by Juan delGado and Dima Mekdad and run by Qisetna, seeks to compile stories and images submitted by users. The focus of the materials and narratives gathered is highly personal, with stories shared ranging from experiences of leisure life (coffee shops, art, television), food, cultural heritage, landscapes and city environments. This work builds upon oral traditions of storytelling within Syrian cultural heritage. As well as publishing stories, Qisetna facilitate storytelling workshops within Syria the UK to encourage young people to share and add their stories.

A People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland "collects, preserves, and shares the stories, memories, and accounts of police violence as experienced or observed by Cleveland citizens" (People's Archive of Police Violence n.d). The project was coordinated by a collective of Cleveland residents and professional archivists based across the USA. Items collected include police reports, oral histories, press coverage and records created by The People's Tribunal on Police Brutality.

Objects of Desire is led by a collective of anonymous sex workers and artists, and aims "to preserve sex workers' stories through archiving and exhibiting the artefacts of sex workers" (Objects of Desire n.d.). The project was instigated in response to the erasure of sex worker voices, who have to work "in secret" due to criminalisation, stigma and ongoing threats of violence and judgement from society (Objects of Desire n.d.). Similarly to Talking Syria, Objects of Desire does not focus narrowly on materials which directly document conflict or violence but instead emphasise the lived experience of those undertaking this work.

The Syrian Archive was instigated by "a Syrian-led and initiated collective of human rights activists dedicated to curating visual documentation relating to human rights violations and other crimes committed by all sides during the conflict in Syria" (Syrian Archive n.d.). The collective utilise technological and archival expertise to enable "groups documenting evidence to preserve, organise, catalogue and make their data documentation accessible in a comprehensive way" (Syrian Archive n.d.), taking on a digital custodial role. The project has subsequently scaled up through the founding of Mnemonic, an interdisciplinary organisation which aims "to provide the tools and methodologies that enable human rights defenders to use digital information in the fight for justice and demand accountability" (Mnemonic n.d.). Mnemonic have subsequently been involved in the instigation of the Sudanese Archive, the Yemeni Archive and the Ukrainian Archive.

The second goal identified was to document experiences—or undertake "record-making", which Sheffield defines as "the use of any kind of media to communicate to others information about an individual or collective experience of action" (2018, p 101). In some cases, these projects may be simultaneously collecting existing materials, or documentary work becomes archival as material builds in volume. For example, Lawyers for Justice in Libya, an independent non-governmental organisation formed of a network of lawyers, activists and community members, work on and in Libya to seek reparations and accountability via legal structures. Within their Transitional Justice and Accountability Programme, the organisation collaborative with Libyans "to document a broad range of human rights violations committed in all geographic areas of Libya" (Lawyers for Justice in Libya n.d.).

858.ma is "an archive of resistance" (Mosireen Collective n.d.), established by the Mosireen Collective, a group of individuals involved in protest movements in the Egyptian revolution. The group, who formally came together in 2011, initially undertook activities to document and collect materials relating to the protest movement. Faced with hundreds of hours of footage, the collective later began working to make the material accessible via an online archive. The 858 Archive was launched several years later and makes the footage publicly available and accessible for anyone to view. The footage is now joined by photographic material and documents, represents "thousands of histories of revolt told from hundreds of perspectives" (Mosireen Collective n.d.). This abundance of archival traces exists in stark contrast to enforced silences otherwise perpetuated by the Egyptian government.

For most projects, documenting, collecting and preserving materials is important to enable information and testimonies to be used and shared in the future. In circumstances of state violence, the availability of resistance voices is critical in countering silences in mainstream media. For Objects of Desire, countering erasure and giving voice is a clear motivation articulated in their mission statement (Objects of Desire n.d.).

For other groups, their work is motivated by the anticipation of use of information and archives in legal proceedings. Lawyers for Justice in Libya aim for "recognition of people's right to truth, accountability, reconciliation and reparations for human rights violations" (Lawyers for Justice in Libya n.d.). The Syrian Archive similarly emphasise the importance of managing data in order to counter potential loss of data that could be used in future for reporting, advocacy and work towards legal accountability. Recent research and writing on the Syrian Archive has stressed the different priorities of those videographers who originally created and contributed many of the videos who are more concerned with the individual and collective memories of those individuals and communities who were lost as a result of the conflict and those human rights activists and stakeholders who stress the potential evidential value of the archive in seeking transitional justice (Saber 2020).

As the following section will explore, widespread accessibility of documentary footage can have negative consequences for those represented in film. For example, 858.ma refer to footage being used in court settings during the prosecution of protestors (Mosireen Collective n.d.). A People's Archive of Police Violence commits to providing the local community and survivors of violence "a safe and secure space to share any testimony, documents, or accounts that narrate or reflect on encounters

or effects of police violence in their lives and communities" (People's Archive of Police Violence n.d).

Emerging themes from literature

The previous section of this article identified a small selection of digital projects which engage archival methods and record keeping practices as a method of resistance against state violence, conflict or human rights abuses. The following section identifies themes which are drawn out across the research and projects identified previously. We have chosen to structure this section by themes rather than by research exploring archives established against a particular time of violence or conflict (for example, police violence or sexual violence), because of the interconnected nature of activisms (for example, a sex worker who is a victim of police violence due to legislation criminalising sex work).

Tensions between liberatory and oppressive potentials

The identified projects, diverse in motivation and geographical location, show the activist potential of the combination of digital technologies, social movements and archival practice. This is also echoed in the research of Michelle Caswell and Samip Mallick, who point to the liberatory potential of "widespread technologies such as the Internet, word-processing software and built-in recording devices" which "can be used to enrich archives and, in turn, empower the communities whose histories they seek to document and preserve" (Caswell and Mallick 2014, p 83). Archival theorists have long understood "recordkeeping and archiving as a form of witnessing and memory making" (McKemmish 2005, p 3). The projects in this review utilise technologies to create new forms of collective, affective and personal memory.

Social movements and acts of resistance against violence and conflict are increasingly documented by individuals with access to smartphone technologies, social media and other web-based platforms. In relation to the establishment of A People's Archive of Police Violence, Williams and Drake write about technologically diverse methods of citizen documentation:

> the rise of portable technology that facilitates the creation and storage of video was critical to documenting, distributing, and even reporting the images, either in the hands of citizen journalists or sent directly to mainstream media (Williams and Drake 2017, p 2)

Similarly, writing about documentation practices of citizens during the Egyptian revolution, Amir-Hussein Radjy writes that "the power to photograph, film, and broadcast protests across the Internet in real time seemed to prove the emancipatory power of technology" (Radjy 2018). The adoption of easily accessible internet-based technologies to construct archives and memories of resistance can be understood as a continuation of this application of technology for radical purposes. This is particularly significant considering media reporting about how the same technology has been used to prosecute dissenting voices (Amnesty International 2017).

In reference to protests that occurred following the shooting of unarmed teenager Mike Brown in Ferguson, Rik Smit, Ansgard Heinrich and Marcel Broersma discuss the role that social media sites served in processes of organising, memorialisation and commemoration:

> Social networking and microblogging sites—mainly Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Tumblr, Vine, and Twitter—served as public spaces in which people could commemorate Brown, vent their opinions, inform others about new developments, organize rallies, connect with similar-minded people, and aggregate and comment upon mediated material. (Smit et al. 2018, p 3120).

The authors point out the complex and often contradictory experience of undertaking memory work on Facebook. As they write, the moderator of individual page was

> an important agent for memory work on the site. He consciously set the agenda by providing the topics for discussion, moderating and deleting material, and drawing from experience or selecting from the vast amount of available (social) media content (Smit et al. 2018, p 3126).

However, whilst this role can be understood as holding power within the context of an individual page, the overall power over moderation of content lies with Facebook's moderation team, interface, algorithms and mechanics (Smit et al. 2018, p 3123).

The use of social media and corporate digital technologies for community-led archival projects indicates that these platforms can be and are often used for transgressive and radical purposes, but that they nonetheless exist in a precarious position in which content, memories and archival traces are frequently removed by technological corporations through moderation processes, or lost when sites close or servers malfunction (Hern 2018; Perzanowski and Schultz 2016). The preservation and/or erasure of content thus rests with human–machine processes rather than either the content creators or information professionals (Thylstrup et al. 2021, p 5). In turn, processes of datafication and digitisation of large-scale bodies of materials can "subject already vulnerable individuals and communities to new harms and exclusions [and] disproportionate visibility" (Thylstrup et al. 2021, p 10). Thylstrup et al. propose that this climate of technological instability should be understood as part of a broader global climate of cultural, social and technological uncertainty embraced and enforced through technocapitalism (Thylstrup et al. 2021, pp 11–12).

Although technology has liberatory potential in the context of this research, it should not be understood as neutral or created outside of the state regimes that many of these projects seek to resist. Writing about the development of the Sex Work Database, for example, Allard and Ferris discussed their contributors articulating unease around hosting of archival records on US-based servers because of risks of surveillance and investigation under the Patriot Act, which made it easier for the US government to access and monitor online communications (Allard and

Ferris 2015). Digital Humanities scholar and co-author of the Documenting the Now white paper, Bergis Jules, calls for those working with digital collections to consider not only the contents of collections, but the technological structures in which they are held/generated:

> for digital collections, who gets represented is closely tied to who writes the software, who builds the tools, who produces the technical standards, and who provides the funding or other resources for that work (Jules 2016).

Centring personal narratives

The reliance on personal narratives was identified as another crucial theme across multiple sites and articles. Giving voice, life and personality to the otherwise voiceless or invisible. In her book *Dispossessed lives: enslaved women, violence and the archive,* Marisa J. Fuentes explores representations of enslaved women in archival records, writing that in many cases these women only "become visible [in the archival record] through violence, and this is the state in which they remain in history" (Fuentes 2016, p 126). Fuentes asks of her reader "how do we write a history of the voiceless and violated?" (Fuentes 2016, p 126). When traces of survivors of violence only materialise via reports of that violence (and generally written in the voice of legal institutions, or the perpetrators of violence themselves), it is important to make visible the lives and subjectivities of these survivors. This can be understood as an act of resistance against the alternative—distanced, two dimensional, fleeting and emotionally cold representations of people and communities.

Cati and Piredda, writing about refugee and migrant memory in digital archives, refer to the use of personal narratives as a "testimonial apparatus" (Cati and Piredda 2017, p 628), a structure which enables the preservation of "the memories of mutilated minorities who are suffocated by the violence of past and present history" (Cati and Piredda 2017, p 628). As the authors write, the use of personal narrative in the archives of grassroots and resistance centres both the politics of self-expression and bottom-up histories. Using the case studies of two web archives—Sciabica and Archivio delle Memorie Migranti (Archive of Migrant Memories or AMM)—the authors seek to understand the motivations and politics of this mode of memory practice and representation. Similarly, in reference to a Facebook group that was initially created to reconnect people with shared histories of living in a refugee camp formerly based in Lebanon, Nadia Yaqub refers to these spaces as enabling users

> to elicit, store, and organise a range of materials. Group members use Facebook to remap both the geography of the destroyed camp and networks of affiliation. (Yaqub 2016, p 109)

For many of the videographers interviewed by Saber whose materials were uploaded to YouTube and became part of the Syrian Archive the videos were, quoting McKemmish, both "evidence of me" and "evidence of us", the footage representing the "last available record and testimony of some people, places and things that have been destroyed by the war" (Saber 2020, p 394).

This emphasis on the use of personal materials as disruptive to otherwise those only represented via violence is also articulated by Objects of Desire. In the following quote, the group articulate the motivations behind the project's personal focus:

> Through focusing on the connections between personal narratives and material objects, OoD purposefully shifts the conversation on sex work from one that focuses on the objectification of people to an examination of the social relations seen through the lens of physical things. (Objects of Desire n.d.)

This centring of personal records of sex work utilises

> everyday experience of sex work as a way of disrupting binaries that categorise sex workers as either too privileged or too victimised to exercise their own agency… It is not merely an attempt to 'humanise' sex workers through providing outsiders with a glimpse into their lives. Rather, sex workers' stories about materiality and exchange challenge the wider public to reflect upon the dynamics of gendered labour, complex hierarchies of power and care under capitalism, as well as the interplay of the emotional and the material in all relationships (Objects of Desire n.d.).

In the case of Objects of Desire, the use of personal objects is a deliberate intervention in processes of silencing, categorisation, pathologisation and dehumanisation of sex workers in research, media and policy documents. The use of mundane or ordinary material objects also emphasises the everyday experience of sex work, as opposed to the salacious or invasive narratives often otherwise created (which can often be a form of violence in themselves via the transgression of media ethics) or used to control narratives about sex work.

In a recent article, Correa et al. explore the establishment of the Trans Memory Archive, a digital archive which began in the context of a closed Facebook group, also drawing attention to the importance of personal stories in representing those who have faced or been killed by transphobic violence. The motivations underpinning the establishment are deeply intimate—for the authors, the archive is a way of rewriting violence and instead recentring community and love in relation to trans identity and memory. As they write,

> The photos we've taken have more feeling. We take them in a nice, joyous moment, in a moment where we are happy, even if they're inside a house, but we were happy, celebrating a birthday, or having a drink, or smoking a joint, whatever ... For us, they were happy moments. They were photos taken with tenderness, with love (Correa et al. 2019, p 161).

Like Objects of Desire, the Trans Memory Archive uses personal records and archives to represent trans community without an overemphasis on violence and death. Whilst this project is preserving historical photographic materials, the use of personal politics to resist narratives of trans memory which are only represented via the police, media or state reports of violence connects to ongoing current struggles against increasing attitudes of transphobia and transphobic

violence. According to UK-based LGBTQ charity Stonewall's report *Trans in Britain,* trans people in the UK are likely to regularly experience numerous forms of violence in the form of hate crimes (experienced by 41% of trans people and 31% of non-binary people), domestic violence (28% of trans people), physical violence at work (12%) and abuse or negative comments from university staff (36%) (Stonewall 2018). This is also echoed media reporting which suggests that trans women (and trans women of colour, in particular) face continuing police violence, a higher likelihood of incarceration and sexual violence (Kacere 2014). The focus on personal lives of projects like Trans Memory Archive means that violence, whilst very present in the lives (and sometimes deaths) of the community, is not held in the centre of the construction of trans memory.

Questioning the record

The nature of the record has long been a focus of archival research (Yeo 2007; McKemmish 2005; Ketelaar 2017). Sue McKemmish proposes that archival traces

> become records, in the sense used in the recordkeeping professional community, when they are stored by record keeping and archiving processes in ways which preserve their content and structure, link them to related documents, and record information about related social and organisational activities. (McKemmish 2005, p 9).

In the context of this definition records are authorised by those occupying professional positions, and via transfer to an archive store. Literature exploring community-led archives, and particularly those established by communities mobilised to do so via shared experiences of marginalisation, have called for diverse and multiple understandings of "the record" particularly those created via oral, audio, visual and born digital methods of record creation (Flinn 2007; Gilliland and Flinn 2013). Similarly, in relation to community-led popular music heritage, Paul Long, Sarah Baker, Lauren Istvandity and Jez Collins point to the "promiscuous deployment of the title archive, the exploration of it as idea and its ontological status" which "presents particular challenges to conventional practice for both archivist and user" (Long et al. 2017, p 63).

The terms "archive" and "record" are used by many of the sites identified, either in the title (for example, A People's Archive of Police Violence, 858 Archive, Daraa Archive) or in the functions or nature of the organisation (Qisetna). In the literature surveyed, theorists have proposed that archives are created through further unconventional tools—Twitter hashtags (Rikam 2015; Jules et al. 2018); Facebook groups and pages (Smit et al. 2018; Yaqub 2016); media articles (Palmer-Mehta 2018); YouTube videos (Kølvraa and Stage 2016), and even that the whole internet itself can be understood as an archive of sorts (Block 2001). Discussing the Daraa Archive, Dima Saber and Paul Long ask "does a citizen-generated capturing of the first public declaration of the Syrian uprising constitute a record or an archive? Who gets to decide?" (Saber and Long 2017, p 84). In the context of the Daraa Archive,

Saber and Long seek to re-centre the archive's creators or those represented in the process of establishing or naming an archive.

As well as complicating existing definitions of a record or archive, many of these sites challenge the notion of *the* record, pointing to the value of partiality and specifically positioned archival practice (in these cases, situated from lived experience and activism). The Mosireen Collective point to the situated nature of their archive, writing that

> 858 is, of course, just one archive of the revolution. It is not, and can never be, *the* archive. It is one collection of memories, one set of tools we can all use to fight the narratives of the counter-revolution, to pry loose the state's grip on history, to keep building new histories for the future (Mosireen Collective n.d.).

By making explicit their own position, the collective call attention to the situated position from which *all* archives are established. This collective ownership and involvement in the archive from multiple parties connects to writing by Roopika Risam about the concept of a postcolonial digital archive, which "renders consumer of the archive a co-creator, displacing the archivist in favour of multiple curators and interpreters" (Risam 2015, p 39). Similarly, Saber and Long point to the potential of "digital technologies, and of the democratisation of image production and dissemination for rethinking the ways in which our societies bear witness, and remember." (Saber and Long 2017, p 81).

However, many of the sites surveyed also utilise and engage with the traditional language of archival practice (for example, record, archive, archivist, collecting/collection, catalogue). For example, Qisetna refers to itself as "an important archive of Syrian experience" (Qisetna n.d.), and Objects of Desire utilises traditional archival functions (cataloguing, exhibition and collection) of objects to represent lived experiences of sex work. This playful engagement with and re-envisioning of archival traditions and language destabilises the "borders" or archival theory, practice and discourse (Ishmael 2018, p 270), instead re-producing archival traditions from new and different positions. The reclaiming of these terminologies by those who may otherwise have been harmed or excluded should be understood as different to the use of archival traditions to reinforce the borders of our practice.

Strategic ephemerality, precarity and privacy

Using digital platforms to host records enables organisations and groups to operate "rogue archives" (De Kosnik 2016) which produce historical narrative and models of memory which can work against state-established and authorised heritage stories. These platforms can be understood as action taken against what McKemmish refers to as "acts of "memoricide" that have occurred throughout history" (McKemmish 2005, p 2) through actively establishing persistent representations of people and movements which governments and ruling classes may wish to or be taking action to suppress. Digital platforms offer a significant potential for establishment of and control over these narratives, but as De Kosnik also points out, memory constructed and

documented by radical and marginalised groups on these social platforms remains "vulnerable to sudden and massive takedowns or closures" (De Kosnik 2006 p 14). The following section of this review engages with themes of ephemerality, precarity and privacy in relation to the construction of online memory in these projects.

Some literature identified in this survey identified challenges relating to the precarity and potential risk of materials held online. In reference to the development of an internet-based conflict archive within the context of a university class, Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Derek McCormack point to the practical issues relating to the infrastructures of websites, particularly including hypertext links and URL changes, writing that

> Books, magazines, and journals may go out of date, but they are not liable to disappear without a moments notice, as is the case with online resources. Seriously maintaining and managing such on-line resources entails considerable time investments by instructors (Tuathail and McCormick 1998, pp 4-5).

The unexpected labour involved with keeping links live, migrating materials from servers and/or updating files as needed is often not thought about in the establishment of online archives. This also affects their long-term sustainability. Saber and Long also point to the unstable nature of a digital archive when discussing the Daraa Archive, highlighting "the changing nature of this archive, in the light of recent debates on the volatility and precariousness of the digital" (Saber and Long 2017, p 81).

However, the ephemerality of web-based platforms can also be a useful tool for working with records that may need to be destroyed or made inaccessible due to potential for further harm, violence or stigmatisation of the record subject or creator. Ferris and Allard (2016) explore the establishment of an online archive of born digital and digitised materials relating to sex work in "Tagging for activist ends and strategic ephemerality: creating the Sex Work Database as an activist digital archive", referring to the importance of the right to restrict access or remove records:

> we have begun to consider whether some activist-produced materials might need to be strategically ephemeral, or be allowed to "disappear"/be forgotten/ drop out of public circulation. (Ferris and Allard 2016, p 197).

This is also echoed in Stacie Williams and Jarrett Drake's writing about the establishment of A People's Archive of Police Violence. Williams and Drake articulate concerns about privacy and naming that were raised by contributors providing oral histories and other archival materials. The authors call for a "do no harm" approach to archival work:

> Ensuring that the archivists' actions did no harm to the very people most impacted by police violence became the focal point of the website's technical development. Specific pitfalls the archivists sought to avoid included defamation lawsuits by police officers against victims, retaliation or reprisal by law enforcement based on the nature of the content, or surveillance and tracking information that might be requested via a subpoena (Williams and Drake 2017, p 13).

Conscious of the potential for further harm, researchers prioritised the right to anonymity and privacy of contributors over the need for archival authenticity or provenance that the collection of personal data can enable. This is also picked up in the Documenting the Now white paper—the authors cite one of the challenges for archivists working with these records is the

> reality of the heightened potential of harm for members of marginalised communities using the web and social media, especially when those individuals participate in activities such as protests and other forms of civil disobedience that are traditionally heavily monitored by law enforcement (Jules et al. 2018, p 3).

In reference to the 858 Archive, the Mosireen Collective also allowed contributors to upload content on public or private accessibility mode, particularly if that content could be used to prosecute the people portrayed in a record (Radjy 2018). As Allard and Ferris write, this process of strategic silences enables those in or who have created records to "enact agency by controlling access to their histories and records" (Ferris and Allard 2016, p 198).

These reflections connect to concerns raised by scholars exploring the archiving of queer or feminist cultures (Keenan and Darms 2013; Fife 2019; DiVeglia 2012), who similarly call for models of access which respect the right to privacy or complete anonymity, variety in access conditions, and to request data removal if needed. In the context of the archiving, potential digitisation and publishing of materials relating to queer feminist music subcultures, Elizabeth Keenan and Lisa Darms refer to "the willingness of these donors to make themselves vulnerable—to make their private lives public" (Keenan and Darms 2013, p 74). Whilst Keenan and Darms refer to personal materials rather than traumatic records created from violence, the experience of marginalisation and vulnerability is shared across both queer and feminist collections and survivors of violence (and indeed, in some cases the experience of surviving violence and/or abuse).

However, in some of the projects and research surveyed, naming itself became a radically political tool. Some research situates digital media reports of sexual violence as archives of testimonies otherwise unreported or concertedly written out of history (Palmer-Mehta 2018). In this context, "the sharing of survivor accounts has been a resource for identification and community building" (Palmer-Mehta 2018, p 166), which points to archiving as a method to be understood, seen, and believed even against a cultural context which is otherwise set up to discredit survivors and devalue individual testimony. The very public nature of these testimonies (which are hosted in the case on the website of the *New York Times*) means that the videos and testimonies are both

> an alternative community history that documents not only their private experiences of disbelief and despair … [and] also their public, collective movement to reclaim their stories (Palmer-Mehta 2018, p 175).

Whereas in other contexts, privacy and ephemerality are harnessed as political and ethical tools to manage records of violence (Allard and Ferris 2014; 2015;

Ferris and Allard 2016), in this context it is the widely visible and public presentation of these records which was understood as radical and transformative. As Palmer-Mehta writes, in this context "acts of public witnessing created a cascading effect" (Palmer-Mehta 2018, p 175), and a nontraditional archive platform (in this case, stored via a newspaper website) was able to use records to facilitate social change. Sexual abuse is also explored by Petro, who examines the website bishopaccountability.org as an online archive of sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic church. In this context, Petro points to the use of public and widely available records of abuse as a stance against the silence of both institutions and survivors. As he writes,

> Silence is a recurring theme in the history of Catholic sexual abuse. This includes the silence of the church hierarchy in responding to allegations of abuse, but also the silence of survivors, compelled to keep their abuse secret. Breaking silence becomes a key political act for a number of survivors and often their only means of recourse (Petro 2015, p 166).

Also emerging from research by Saber and Long is the concept of fluid anonymity for record creators:

> Operating in conflict areas and under authoritarian rule, archivists needed to stay anonymous to preserve their identity and security. Five years later, and as most Syrian activists and archivists found themselves scattered as refugees across the Arab region and the world, they've come back to claim authorship over their collective, anonymously produced digital archive. This shift from what we call a 'necessary anonymity' to a 'claimed ownership' speaks to the very fluid nature of these digital archives, whereby the rules underpinning the political economy of the digital are both reflected in, and affected by the changing contexts in which these archives are produced and disseminated (Saber and Long 2017, p 89).

Ownership and authorship of both records and archives need to be flexible in order to ensure security of creators and archivists, whilst also enabling the same people to later become more visible and named as central in the instrumentation of these projects.

Documenting from within and self-representation

The final emergent theme that we would like to explore is the role of self-representation and documenting from within in the context of community-led digital archival or memory projects. Many of the projects identified commented on their positioning as both record keeper/archivist/record creator and participant in a social or protest movement. As The Mosireen Collective articulate in relationship to the 858 Archive, "we weren't neutral observers, but actors within a wider struggle. We participated and documented at the same time" (The Mosireen Collective, no date). Smit, Heinrich and Broersma also comment on the emotional and connected nature of memory work in digital activism, which

allows protesters to connect personal experiences and interpretations of the past as a means to express discontent and advocate for change, now and in the future (Smit et al. 2018, p 3136).

The creators of these projects can be understood as what Lynn Thomas describes an "embedded curator", which is defined as someone who "uses his or her physical and virtual presence within a selected community to document that community whilst simultaneously serving as a resource to it" (Thomas 2012, p 38). In the context of these projects, documentation/record keeping/memory work is useful to activist groups, as it "may help mobilise individuals into action, legitimise their cause, historically situate their struggle, and create a collective identity" (Smit et al. 2018, p 3126). Writing about the establishment of the Our Marathon archive in Boston, Kevin Smith points to the archive's role as "both reactive—as a response to the attacks—and proactive—explicitly aimed to mend and strengthen the community. This creates a space where archive building is at once documenting, enabling, and creating the work of memory" (Smith 2016, p 117). Because of its value to *current* activism, it thus makes sense that archival work occurs on platforms that are commonly used in active organising, such as social media or otherwise online networked platforms, where it can be done alongside other functions of activist organising.

The connected and personal nature of these projects means that archivists are often occupying multiple positions whilst undertake this work (for instance, activist, record creator and archivist). As Bethany Nowviskie writes, "they depend, sometimes uncomfortably, on the vulnerability, subjectivity, and autonomy of the people who engage with them—foregrounding the ways that individual professional roles intersect with personal lives as they come together around shared missions and goals" (Nowviskie 2019). The affective dimensions of these projects connect to that which has been articulated by researchers in other community heritage contexts (Cifor 2016; Baker 2015; Long et al. 2017) and relates to the emotional impact of undertaking archival work to document, repair and witness the community in which you yourself are located. As Marika Cifor and Stacy Wood write,

> These archival impulses represent a larger pattern of techniques of self-representation which themselves formed a broader project of resisting the marked absence of minoritised populations from the historical record. (Cifor and Wood 2017, p 4)

This positioning, overlap, or lack of distance between archivist and record subject/creator is unconventional when compared to the traditional expectation that an archivist is a distant custodian. However, it also illustrates the potential and value of archival and documentation work undertaken from the position of what Jodie Taylor refers to as an "intimate insider" (Taylor 2011).

Emerging questions for further exploration

Following the preceding thematic analysis we have identified a series of research questions as especially pressing for activists, archivists and researchers. In this section, we present short summaries of emerging questions sorted in relevant to the

themes identified in literature. We synthesise these questions with themes as a call to action, to encourage the development of practice and scholarship engaged with these areas.

Tensions between liberatory and oppressive potentials

The use of portable digital recording devices by citizens for documentation during conflict allows for immediate "recordmaking" (Sheffield 2018). Live streaming of events via platforms including Facebook live, Twitch and Youtube live enable access to critical moments in periods of unrest and conflict, along with capacity for dialogue through sharing, reacting or adding comments (Sheffield 2018, p 98). Numerous questions emerge from these practices, with implications both for those documenting and for those collecting and preserving the resulting records. What is the connection between these documentary practices and liberatory forms of archival work articulated by critical archival theorists (Drake 2019; Caswell 2021)? What impact does the reliance on portable digital devices and live streaming in citizen journalism/documentation practice have on record keeping and archiving of these movements?

Online web services can be used to identify key characteristics about websites, like where a site is hosted and whether it can be viewed from countries with oppressive human rights regimes like China. See, for example, just-ping.com to determine whether a site is accessible from a given country and myip.ms, which will provide information about, inter alia, the physical address of a website, IP address and web hosting provider. Reproductive justice activists in the United States have identified how "digital trails" created through smartphones collect combinations of data that evidence the need for and journeys to access abortion, which could be used in prosecution of individuals (Fowler and Hunter 2022). In circumstances where digital privacy is paramount, how does the state's oversight of digital storage platforms via legislation intersect with the ability to preserve born-digital archives from these movements? What steps are undertaken in the establishment of digital archives to mitigate potential of harm to those archiving or represented in archives?

Centring personal narratives

Our analysis of both identified scholarship and of individual projects identified emphasis on the value of personal testimony and lived experience as sources. Personal records and histories have traditionally been marginalised in archival theory, where, as Douglas argues, "ideas about what records and archives are and how they should be treated have tended to develop based on consideration of and experience with records created by public bodies" (Douglas and Mills 2018, p 257). The central role of personal narratives within digital activist archives warrants further exploration. Why are personal testimonies used regularly within digital recordkeeping work in this field, and what is the relationship between the personal and the collective in the construction of cultural memory of conflict through archival work? How do these materials interrelate with traditional archival concepts, including evidential

value? Who affords value to personal testimonies in projects, and do any particular types of personal testimony dominate across these collections?

Strategic ephemerality, precarity and privacy

The use of digital technology to undertake documentary and archival work must be considered alongside the privacy needs of communities experiencing conflict and violence. This is especially important due to the risks to safety afforded by enhanced online visibility and digitisation of historical records, and indeed through academic research practice (Cowan and Rault 2018). Given these risks, how do these archives navigate potential for prosecution or violence with desire to make resistant testimonies accessible? How can we ethically archive social media content from movements against state/police violence and conflict? What does informed consent look like in this context? How does the online visibility afforded through digital archiving intersect with legislation criminalising online activity and networks, or the use of such records in the prosecution of activists? What steps can be taken to minimise the potential for further harm to the record subjects/agents involved in these archives? What does a "do no harm" approach to archival practice look like? How can emergent work in the application of "ethics of care" approaches to digitisation (Caswell and Cifor 2019) inform the future direction of such practice? How do practices that may include anonymous submissions interact with the expectation of named record creators in archival standards?

Documenting from within and self-representation

Finally, the dynamics of self-representation and archiving from within social movements should be a key focus of future research. The archival profession has traditionally emphasised professional values of neutrality and objectivity in recordkeeping work—for example, Caswell writes that archivists "purport to be from nowhere, purport to serve no one but their employers, and purport to leave no fingerprints" (Caswell 2019, p 6). By archiving from within, digital activist archivists confront these traditions and instead produce situated archives built precisely through close involvement in ongoing action. Where is the record creator, record keeper and activist situated in these sites? Do these roles exist separately or are they blurred/combined? How does subjectivity/objectivity play out in discourse about/around these archives? Are state materials managed alongside activist materials, and if so does archiving allow for these sources to be reinterpreted by social movement members? If not, why are state records not engaged with? An example of a project currently engaged in the reinterpretation of sources is leftovers.rs, which seeks to look "beyond established categories and methods of defining documents instead choosing to explore how different archival collections and items operate within different

model [sic] of distribution, structures and platforms, as well as the different structural qualities of digital document formats".[1]

Conclusion

In many cases, the projects and research examined for this article began from a shared understanding that important evidence, testimony and experiences were not being documented, collected, preserved or made accessible, sometimes due to the deliberate masking or erasure of their narratives by the state and otherwise because the lives of the documented subjects were only made visible through narratives of violence. The act of pooling together and sharing these different perspectives often begins through community mobilisation and collective action. In other cases, the archival nature of these digital projects is clear from the moment of naming and conception of a project and is indeed part of the original motivations for undertaking memory or documentation work.

Any research emerging from this should centre the experiences, opinions and politics of survivors of violence, conflict and abuse, and should be led by those communities (who may or may not be doing the labour of research itself). Research in this developing field could adapt methodologies including participatory action research or education empowerment research (McGlynn et al. 2017). The latter, developed by McGlynn, Downes and Westmarland, proposed that research that engages with survivors of violence (in this case, sexual violence), should treat research participants or partners "not as "victims" but as "experts through experience"… [whose] participation drew on their lived experiences of sexual violence, part of an epistemic community with experiential knowledge" (McGlynn et al. 2017, p 180). Research methodologies which value lived experience and expertise gained through not professional qualification or academic background but instead personal history and motivation also aligns with the originating contexts and politics of the digital community-led projects that are the focus of this article.

Many of the projects in this survey seek to destabilise the concept of a single archivist via instead working through networked collectives of activists, archivists, lawyers, technologists and researchers. Bethany Nowviskie refers to grassroots communities in librarianship and digital humanities who "are focused on liberation, resilience, shared history, and restorative justice for marginalised people, and they are organised so that participants can bolster and support each other through frameworks of mutual aid" (Nowviskie 2019). Future practice and scholarship in this field should adopt the working methods and organisational structures of social movements, rather than enforce archival traditions and dichotomies of amateur/professional, academic/community, and institution/community, which have been used to previously enact power over social movements.

The projects and literature explored in this article have also highlighted how many varied models of justice exist across activism and community-led activist archives.

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[1] See https://archive.leftove.rs/about

What works for one collective (pursuit of accountability via legislative action, for example) may be at odds with the needs and wishes of other activist groups (who may be at risk due to the same legal structures or policing, for example those seeking decriminalisation of sex work). McGlynn, Downes and Westmarland utilise the term "kaleidoscopic justice" to describe

> justice as a continually shifting pattern; justice constantly refracted through new circumstances, experiences and understandings; justice as nonlinear, with multiple beginnings and possible endings; and justice as a lived, on-going and ever-evolving experience without certain ending or result. (McGlynn et al. 2017: p 181)

Whilst the nature of justice sought by each of these individual projects differs (and indeed, changes as time passes), they are joined by a collective motivation to mobilise memory, records, technology and archival practice and/or traditions to seek justice, accountability and community support for experiences of violence, trauma and abuse.

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