# Records Continuum Thinking and Postfoundationalism

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# Abstract

Recent archival and recordkeeping scholarship in the Australian express a desire for more participatory approaches in response to systemic challenges (Evans, McKemmish, & Rolan, 2019; McKemmish et al., 2020; Rolan, 2017a, 2017b). These challenges have been highlighted in a series of Government inquiries and royal commissions into residential institutional settings (AHRC, 2014; NT Royal Commission, 2018; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017; Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, 2019).

Unfortunately, there is a lack of clarity around what is actually meant by participatory or records continuum thinking. Reflecting on Terry Cook's call for 'clearly stated and well-understood theory that is continually evolving and relevant' (Cook, 2005, p. p.102). I aim to clarify records continuum thinking and explore avenues for its evolution drawing on social theory. My first research question asks:

> *What are the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory approaches to appraisal?*

I used a Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis to respond to this question identifying six key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking: monistic diversity, time-space, contextuality, relational becomingness, multiplicity, and agency. The conceptualisation of participatory approaches to appraisal led to 4 axioms. These axioms can be viewed as the conceptual conditions of possibility for participatory approaches to appraisal. They are:

1. Non-archivists can contribute to archives, records, and recordkeeping;
2. Records and archives have multiple meanings;
3. Records and archives are not, and never can be, completely neutral or objective; and
4. Records, archives and recordkeeping have impacts on people.

The need of theory to be constantly evolving and relevant leads to my second research question:

> *How might social theory extend and support records continuum thinking and what might this mean for participatory appraisal?*

This question was addressed through a diffractive analysis of broader social theory. Three key thinkers were identified as having ideas and theories relevant and applicable to both records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal. Karen Barad's concept of phenomena (Barad, 2003, 2007, 2010) which amplifies and extends records continuum concepts of time-space and relational becomingness. Hannah Arendt's exploration of plurality and action (Allen, 2002; Arendt, 1998; Topolski, 2015) which amplifies and extends records continuum concepts of multiplicity, power, and contextuality. And Emmanuel Levinas's alterity (Morgan, 2009, 2011; Rossiter, 2011; Topolski, 2015) which amplifies and extends

records continuum conceptualisations of agency and multiplicity. Three additional axioms were also identified that could be used to guide participatory approaches:

5. Our knowledge and records and archives are always incomplete
6. Human beings have a unique and fundamental alterity and as such recordkeeping needs, rights, and wants can never be assumed but are constantly evolving; and
7. Human beings are the central rationale for recordkeeping, records, and archives.

A third methodological research question emerged during this research. Recent archival theorising has involved the incorporation of non-archival methodologies such as Grounded Theory into the archival domain (Bunn, 2017; Mihelcic, 2016). To my knowledge no one has yet attempted to apply Foucauldian discourse analysis or diffractive analysis to an archival context. My final question is therefore:

*How might the adaption and use of Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis and diffractive analysis contribute to archival scholarly practice?*

The use of these approaches enabled the comparison of conceptualisations of participatory archives from across paradigmatic divides, the identification and clarification of key concepts and supported the clarification and extension of records continuum thinking.

This thesis contributes a clarified conceptualisation of records continuum thinking. This clarification is paired with a comparative analysis of different conceptualisations of participatory approaches to archives and their appraisal implications. Such comparison allowed me to identify the conceptual conditions of possibility for participatory appraisal and records continuum thinking as well as possible extensions and amplifications.

## Abstract: References


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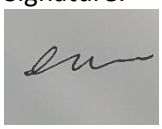
# Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature:



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Date: 19th February 2021

# Acknowledgements

I pay my heartfelt respects to the elders past, present, and emerging of the Wurundjeri peoples. This thesis was written on their unceded lands, lands that I have had the privilege to be nurtured on, grow on, and live on.

To my supervisors thankyou for your guidance, to my eSRC colleagues thankyou for your inspiration, to my family thankyou for your patience, to my friends thankyou for your encouragement, to my PhD peers thankyou for your solidarity, and to my pets thankyou for your comfort.

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# Opening Reflection and Introduction

## Opening Reflection

I have decided to begin this thesis with a opening reflection. My aim is for this reflection to clearly communicate my positionality and contextualise the perspective I am approaching the research from.

> 'It is known that the way that researchers perceive the social world is largely dependent on their position within it, which further impacts the way that the research is approached, interacted with, and interpreted … being explicit about our positions in our work allows those who read our work to better grasp how we produced the data' (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019, p. 2).

Without my past experiences and academic experience I would never have envisioned this thesis let alone created it as it is now. These reflections serve my own conditions of possibility, a concept I will return to repeatedly throughout this thesis. By conditions of possibility I mean the things, people, thoughts, and experiences without which something is not possible.

### Position Statement: Personal Background

Writing this thesis and conducting this research has been one of the most challenging things I have ever done, during one of the most challenging periods of my life. I have had numerous hospital admissions since I began in 2014 and like many PhD students have been plagued by an ongoing sense of doubt and shame regarding my work ethic and capability. If imposter syndrome is butter, my experience of various chronic health conditions is the perfect artisan sourdough bread, crusty and high functioning on the outside, soft and delicate on the inside with a slightly sour aftertaste. They go together well, strengthening the flavour and texture of each other in the most disheartening way possible. It has at times been a true sandwich of sorrow.

During a quick coffee that turned into a four-hour chat with a colleague who also has experience with sorrow sandwiches, it was suggested I should use my lived experience to contextualise this research. They suggested journaling. Everyone suggested journaling. I hate journaling.

Despite this I cannot deny my life situation has significantly shaped this thesis and the PhD research project. In a way the challenges I faced in my life before, and that I saw others face, have motivated my decision to even begin this work. My privilege has also shaped my thesis and research. It is important I acknowledge this too. I have never experienced religious, racial, sexual, or ability-based

discrimination. I have never experienced hunger, poverty, violence, or homelessness. I have not experienced the struggles of studying far away from home or family, nor have I experienced the challenges of working off-campus. It is important for me to provide this position statement. This is the perspective I bring and claim.

My colleague also eased one of my biggest concerns, who am I to say anything on the subject of archiving? I have never worked in a traditional archive. Who am I to say anything on the subject of ethics or theory in archives?

So, why am I telling you this dear readers? I'm telling you because my purpose here isn't to invent some new, perfect shiny gadget or tool. My purpose isn't to win world renown and construct a genius theory. This thesis is simply an expression of my own ideas, others can work out what to do with them and how to apply them. I just want people to treat each other with a little more kindness, a little more thought, and a little more compassion, and I believe archives and records could help us do this. I have seen and felt the negative potential of records, archives, and recordkeeping. My hope is that perhaps some of the ideas in the following pages can encourage reflection and small changes towards a better kind of archive and a better kind of recordkeeping.

## Position Statement: Academic Background

Most people have major life events that they use as markers in their lives. "Before I had children", "before I was married", "after I graduated". In terms of my academic life my marker is a book: Tzvetan Todorov's *The Conquest of America*.

Before Todorov.

I grew up with a family member with behavioural problems. I remember being frustrated with many of the adults in my life. They didn't get it. Adults tended to treat my relative as a bad kid. You could see the way they looked at them, at us. Others would ignore my relative's behaviour and assume there was no point saying or doing anything, as if my relative was incapable of change or comprehension. As in much of life the reality lay between these two extremes. My relative wasn't a bad person – but that didn't make it okay to let them engage in disruptive and potentially dangerous behaviours. They needed to be told what they were doing was wrong. Not to shame them but so they understood not to repeat that behaviour.

Why was that so hard to grasp? Why did no one take the time to think about how my relative felt? Why did some adults repeatedly yell and scream when the result was always the same? Did they not see they were escalating the situation? Did the people who said nothing and ignored the behaviour realise they were treating my relative as if they couldn't hear, see, or think? As if they were not a

person? What's more the people who I was frustrated with were not "bad" people, they were often people I loved and respected. So how could I make sense of this? It was confusing.

As I got older and went through my teens I noticed it wasn't just my relative that people responded to in this way. There were many people that others didn't seem to "understand". People with physical disabilities, people with limited English, people experiencing homelessness. I'd always had an interest in history and as I grew older and encountered the darker aspects of human behaviour this sense heightened. How is it that one human being can treat another as if they were worth less than the dirt under their feet? Where does the patronising assumption that there is no point engaging with someone come from? I always knew there were a few bad people, but a few bad people didn't explain genocide, or systemic sexism, or a host of other atrocities and bigoted behaviour. It felt like there was a similarity between all of these instances but I couldn't put my finger on it. It would be offensive to compare the murder of millions to people saying bigoted things about someone experiencing homelessness. But there seemed to be some grain of similarity, some resemblance between these acts. They seemed to exist in the same category although at very extreme ends of a spectrum. This is not to reduce instances to the same level, but there was something going on in all of this that was at least tangentially related.

Then I encountered Tzvetan Todorov during my undergraduate degree in Social Science (Policy and Research). Todorov gave me a concept to make sense of this, Othering.

After Todorov.

Othering does not originate from Todorov, but he is where I first encountered it. I completed my undergraduate and did my honours, focusing on the Spanish conquistadors Tzvetan Todorov explored in his 1984 book *The Conquest of America*. After graduating I worked for a year at a private social research company in Melbourne. They mostly worked on assessing government communications campaigns, things like the digital TV roll out and changes to the childcare rebate. While I enjoyed this work I burnt out. Being interstate at least two days a fortnight didn't suit me. I lost the job. Shattered, I still wanted to do research – I was still curious about the same questions, so I decided to do a graduate diploma in archives at Monash.

I expected history. I got information technology. I certainly didn't expect to learn how central records were to Othering as instruments of oppression and liberation. I was expecting to learn about these things through the content of records, not as outcomes of their creation, management, and use. I'd long been fantasizing about doing a PhD comparing Othering across times and places to look for similarities. I didn't end up doing that – it turned out records were one of the similarities!

Inadvertently I felt I'd struck gold, I'd stumbled upon one of the mechanisms through which Othering is created, enforced and perpetuated. From identity cards to social worker reports. Records were there.

When I began my archives course I arrived with a number of theoretical constructs, paradigms and methodological tools brought from the Social Sciences. A major component of the methodological tools were particular thinking styles and analytical strategies. Three of these strategies in particular shaped my interest in exploring records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal:

- If you can't explain something using plain language, you do not understand it. I could not confidently explain records continuum thinking or the social justice benefit of records and archives in plain language but believed it was there;
- That you need to be able to define all your terms, especially tricky concepts like "good", "empowerment", "participation", and "social". Records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal are awash with such concepts; and
- That you should try and think of a way to disprove every opinion you have (academically at least). So, while ***I*** believe records continuum thinking is a theoretical approach that can support better archival outcomes, how might I disprove myself? It turns out – I couldn't. Not because I was correct but because I couldn't explain records continuum thinking well enough to de-construct its basic arguments.

Sitting in lectures during my Graduate Diploma at Monash I kept seeing spaces where the concepts and theories from my previous life would fit, extend, and explain. Why then, where they not being included? Was this because records continuum thinking was based on more relevant or up-to-date theories? If so I wanted to learn about them. Or had I fundamentally misunderstood records continuum thinking, or the theorists I'd come across as an undergraduate? Was I making connections that weren't there to comfort myself in some kind of academic arrogance against new ideas? I am telling you this because without my earlier exposure to sociological and philosophical theory I doubt I would have understood records continuum theory and I certainly wouldn't have interpreted it in the way I do now. The thinkers from my undergraduate life formed a lens like a microscope or magnifying glass that allowed me to examine records continuum theory in a way my naked eyes alone couldn't have done.

Why wasn't George Simmel's stranger(Levine et al., 1976), or Herbert Meads self (Dunn, 1997; Hanson, 1986) being taught alongside discussions on records and identity? Why wasn't Bourdieu's field theory (Naidoo, 2004; Swartz, 2011) being taught in organisational informatics? Why wasn't Othering being explored alongside our examination of the power of records, the relationship

between knowledge and possession put forward by Greenblatt (1991)? What was meant by power in this context anyway? Why Anthony Giddens (1984) and not those who came after him? Why Hofstede (Upward et al., 2013) and not sociologists like Jack Katz (2002) and Benedict Anderson (1991)? I also struggled to reconcile my interpretation of key records continuum concepts with the methods (appraisal for one) I was being taught. Was I just not getting it? Was I just slow?

It wasn't until I started working at the eSRC (the University of Melbourne's eScholarship Research Centre) that some of the methods and the Information Technology focus began to make sense. My work there included exposure to the Find and Connect Project (Find and Connect Web Resource Project Team, 2011). Here was an example of records and archives being used to dismantle Othering, and to give people control over their own identities. It remains a major source of inspiration to this day. My boss there, Gavan McCarthy, also encouraged me to look at archiving from the perspective of the sociological and philosophical theorists so near and dear to me. One of these tasks was to examine alternative ontologies from the somewhat binary conceptualisation of Anthony Giddens who has significant influence on records continuum thinking.

At the same time, I became increasingly aware of the plight of refugee's and asylum seekers in Australia and offshore. The Australian Offshore Detention system disgusts me[1], and eventually I have

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[1] The practice of offshore immigration detention extends back to 2001 and has been supported by both the Liberal (conservative party) and Labour party Phillips, J. (2012). *The 'Pacific Solution' revisited: a statistical guide to the asylum seeker caseloads on Nauru and Manus Island*. , Phillips, J., & Spinks, H. (2013). Immigration Detention in Australia. The Australian Government has operated, and in many ways continues to operate (although some centres are now classified as "open"), offshore immigration detention centres in Papua New Guinea and the Republic of Nauru. It is almost impossible for media or others to access these sites and almost all reports have been negative. Many of the people in these centres have been held for many, many, years with no information about where their claims for asylum stand or when they will be freed. The Australian Government has consistently pressured these men, women, and children to return to their home countries despite the serious risk of persecution and death. The Australian Government has also refused offers from New Zealand to resettle the refugees.

Investigations by the United Nations Committee Against Torture. (2014). *Concluding observations on the fourth and fifth periodic reports of Australia* [Concluding Observations]. http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Shared%20Documents/AUS/CAT_C_AUS_CO_4-5_18888_E.pdf, UNAA. (2013). *Australia and the UN: Report Card 2013*. http://www.unaa.org.au/Australia%20and%20UN%20Report%20Card%202013.pdf, the Australian Human Rights CommissionAHRC. (2014). *The Forgotten Children: National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention*. https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/forgotten_children_2014.pdf, AHRC. (2017). Asylum seekers, refugees and human rights: snapshot report (2nd edition)

to hope there will be justice, a royal commission, and evidence required. I was inspired by the Find and Connect Project, for me a manifestation of records continuum thinking in a real-world setting and a participatory, empowering, glorious project. Would it be possible to do the same for asylum seekers and refugees?

## The evolution of this PhD Project

Like many PhD projects this project has changed significantly since it began, in terms of metatheoretical perspective, type of data, and research questions. It began with an extensive review of the literature relating to both the problem and the proposed solution of participatory archives. I embarked on initial data collection and conducted semi-structured interviews with archivists who were formerly or currently employed by Australian Government archival institutions. While these interviews are no longer the focus of my final thesis they were significant in shaping both the theoretical framing and my concern with appraisal.

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2017. In: Australian Human Rights Commission. and Amnesty International Amnesty International. (2013). *This Is Breaking People: Human Rights Violations At Australia's Asylum Seeker Processing Centre On Manus Island, Papua New Guinea*. http://www.amnesty.org.au/images/uploads/about/Amnesty_International_Manus_Island_report.pdf, Amnesty International. (2014). *This Is Still Breaking People: Update On Human Rights Violations At Australia's Asylum Seeker Processing Centre On Manus Island, Papua New Guinea*. http://www.amnesty.org.au/resources/activist/This_is_still_breaking_people_update_from_Manus_Island.pdf have found the conditions at the centres to be appalling. Citing inadequate water, sanitation, nutrition, security, and medical care. At great personal risk a number of ex-employee's and current workers from the various offshore detention centres have spoken out expressing shame, frustration, and outrage at the conditions Davies, J.-A. (2013, 15 November 2013). Abbott's new world order. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/abbotts-new-world-order-20131114-2xji4.html. To date 13 people are known to have died in Australia's offshore detention centres, and there is extensive evidence of sexual abuse by guards and other inmates against children and women held in the centres. The centres have also had negative impacts on the host countries of Papua New Guinea and Nauru who struggle to support their own populations with their existing infrastructure. While not proven there have been reports of Australian interference in the governments of these nations to ensure the continued operation and establishment of these centres  Sparrow, J. (2016 15 June 2016). In PNG and Nauru, Australia's immigration policy comes at the expense of democracy. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/15/in-png-and-nauru-australias-immigration-policy-comes-at-the-expense-of-democracy. As of October 2020 there were 145 people in Papua New Guinea and 146 people on Nauru Refugee Council of Australia. (2020). Offshore Processing Statistics. In..

There was far more going on than had originally been thought. As I manually transcribed the interviews and began to analyse them using a Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis I encountered difficulty in identifying key concepts that could be meaningfully interrogated. This eventually led to a refocusing of my research to explore what exactly records continuum thinking actually is. Such changes in research direction are not unheard of.

My analysis of the interviews was identifying a lack of conceptual clarity around records continuum thinking itself. This meant that I could hardly assess whether the practitioner discourses I had been exposed to were compatible with records continuum thinking if records continuum thinking itself was unclear. It seemed imperative to clarify records continuum thinking first, before any analysis of its interpretation or application. I was also getting feedback from records continuum thinking experts that some of the literature I was using for my own definitions was developed for a practitioner audience and therefore did not reflect the theoretical complexity or depth required for a scholarly analysis. This distinction worried me for a number of reasons. First off why were there two versions of this divided alongside theorist practitioner lines? Second, after being immersed in the literature for a number of years I could not easily distinguish between the two. How would someone dipping their toe in be able to?

These interviews thus became a pathway to my final research questions, they helped me understand that there was a need for more clearly articulated records continuum thinking. The interviews highlighted a need for a better distinction between methods and theory. What was revealing to me was to see the significant implementation issues flowing from a lack of theoretical understanding and clarity. If you don't understand why there are rules you are likely to either disregard them completely or enforce them so rigidly you miss the forest for the trees.

I hope to do justice to those who generously gave me their time and their stories in publications later on. I am beyond grateful for their time and trust. Maybe one day this thesis can be of use in helping people who have experienced detention and of explaining the point (or at least one point) behind records continuum thinking.

## Chapter 1.1: Introduction

> 'The central function of the archivist: the acquisition and appraisal of documentation. This function carries the greatest social significance, and unmistakably characterizes and defines the professional image of the archivist of today' (Booms, 1987, p. 71).

> 'Without clearly stated and well-understood theory that is continually evolving and relevant, appraisal practice soon becomes directionless, inconsistent, and, when challenged, undefendable to the wider public and unaccountable within larger archival mandates' (Cook, 2005, p. 102).

> 'But really, it is the system, the government, my parents that have failed too. Failed me, and thousands like me. That 60-year-old book contained hundreds and hundreds of lost children's names...and nothing else. . . I cried for all of the thousands and thousands of dysfunctional adults I have never met, who have experienced the same trauma as me' (Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat 2004, p. 268).

In the reflection I dwelt on my own personal motivations for this research project. In this chapter I begin the more formal introduction to this thesis with these three quotes as they encapsulate the heart of my theoretical and scholarly motivation.

According to Booms (1987) archivists are responsible for appraisal and appraisal has immense 'social significance'. To conduct appraisal successfully we need 'clearly stated and well understood theory' (Cook, 2005, p. 102). According to several inquiries and reviews, we are not getting appraisal right, as exemplified by the quote from the 2004 Australian Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care. An increasing body of literature shows we are faced with a number of situations where required records have not been created, or if they have been created not managed in a way that supports the needs of all stakeholders, particularly those that are the 'subjects' of records (AHRC, 2014; McKemmish et al., 2020; NT Royal Commission, 2017; Royal Commission, 2017). There are systemic recordkeeping issues.

Many archivists have been proposing participatory approaches as part of the solution to the problems identified in various Australian inquiries and reviews (Evans et al., 2015; Evans et al., 2019; Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014; McCarthy et al., 2012; McKemmish et al., 2020; McKemmish et al., 2006; Swain & Musgrove, 2012; Swain et al., 2012). However, it remains to be seen whether the conceptualisations of key elements in current archival theory are actually compatible with a shift to a participatory approach. By theory I am referring to the assumptions, concepts, and ideas that underpin and shape practice (Mortensen, 1999), and in an Australian context that purports to be

records continuum thinking. As indicated, while I initially wished to explore how records continuum thinking shaped and underpinned practice, the initial interviews I conducted raised questions about how well understood and communicated records continuum thinking was. I can hardly assess the relation between two variables (in this case theory and praxis) if I don't understand and can't clearly articulate one of the variables. My focus by necessity shifted to unpacking records continuum thinking itself rather than its impact on practice in Australian Government Archives.

## External Research Motivation

Alongside the theoretical and scholarly motivation provided by archival scholars, My PhD project is also motivated by the various inquiries and commissions into systemic recordkeeping failures across Australia, particularly in relation to people living in institutional settings. This includes child asylum seekers (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014), people with disabilities (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018), and children living in institutional care (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014; NT Royal Commission, 2017). There have recently been two further royal commissions  into institutional care of children including the Royal Commission and Board of Inquiry Into The Protection And Detention of Children In the Northern Territory (NT Royal Commission, 2018) and the Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission, 2017) and the Australian Human Rights Commission recently released a report on sexual abuse and harassment at Australian Universities (2017).

All of these reports point out systemic recordkeeping issues and make recordkeeping recommendations. By recordkeeping I am including all recommendations or issues identified relating to the creation, collection, management, sharing, use or destruction of information, records, documents and / or data. A lack of oversight and transparency is the most frequently cited recordkeeping issue in these reports:

> 'Maintaining accurate records in closed environments such as youth detention centres facilitates oversight, both internal and external, and helps to prevent potential abuses of power' (NT Royal Commission, 2017, p. 62).

> 'Key problems identified with the system include that the system: is inequitable, underfunded and fragmented; lacks early intervention; lacks clear responsibilities; disempowers people with disability and devalues families and carers; and has poor information management mechanisms' (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018, p. 86).

> 'Universities should ensure that information about individual disclosures and reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment is collected and stored confidentially and used for continuous improvement of processes' (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017, p. 13).

> 'The department has not maintained appropriate records of decisions and actions taken in the course of its contract management. As a consequence, the department has not been well placed to assess whether its service strategies were adequate or fully met government objectives' (ANAO, 2016, p. 8).

Reviews on the running of Australian Immigration Detention Centres also cite a lack of access to information and records as undermining asylum seekers right to due process and ability to claim for asylum (AHRC, 2017; Amnesty, 2013). These reports recommend individuals have more access to information required to claim asylum, as well as information about the status of their claim and any "adverse findings". Such recommendations would give asylum seekers more access to their own information and arguably more control over their futures and the ability to make more informed decisions.

It seems these systemic recordkeeping problems also extend to more "progressive" institutions such as Universities. The Australian Human Rights Commission inquiry into sexual assault and harassment in Australian Universities recommended that Universities should 'provide individuals with control over what happens to their report' (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017, p. 13). It seems any institution, particularly any space where people live (from prisons to University campus accommodation) places people in vulnerable situations were recordkeeping can both support or harm.

The consequences of poor recordkeeping can be devastatingly harmful, but it doesn't follow that they are always intentional. One of the explanations provided as to why recordkeeping was so poor in one of these many examples was that 'staff members did not understand the importance of creating records and were not adequately trained' (NT Royal Commission, 2017, p. 65). In this instance it was not lack of regulation or legislation, but a lack of implementation at an operational level that caused problems.

> 'At the legislative and policy level, there appears to have been an extensive framework for accurate records to be maintained. However, the evidence before the Commission in relation to record keeping revealed that in practice these standards were not always met' (NT Royal Commission, 2017, p. 63).

Similar findings were made in the 2014 Royal Commission interim report into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. This Royal Commission found that despite improvements in legislation and policy relating to recordkeeping and information sharing in recent years 'institutional leaders, staff

and volunteers lack[ing] understanding of the importance and significance of records and how to exercise good recordkeeping practices' (Royal Commission, 2014, p. 61).

Another recordkeeping issue identified by both the Northern Territory Royal Commission (2017) and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017) was the use of sanitised and euphemistic language to obfuscate and distance, intentionally or otherwise, the actions documented in any records that are created. This distancing undermines the ability of records and recordkeeping to serve as tools for transparency and accountability. For example:

> 'We heard several examples of older institutions using euphemisms in their records – effectively concealing the extent and seriousness of sexual abuse that perpetrators committed and the extent of institutional knowledge about those perpetrators' abuse of children' (Royal Commission, 2014, p. 49).

> 'The Northern Territory Government submitted that this part of the training materials [mandated terminology for incident reporting] was *"entirely appropriate"*, to encourage *"consistent, professional and accurate"* reporting. This submission is not accepted. In ordinary language, a report that said that a youth justice officer pushed a detainee and then used a take down manoeuvre carries a different meaning to one that describes the officer deflecting the detainee and then stabilising him. A sentence that read *"the detainee deflected the youth justice officer so the officer deflected him"* is also meaningless. The words "push" and "deflect" are not synonyms, and mandating that they be used as if they were prevents, rather than encourages, accurate reporting' (NT Royal Commission, 2017, p. 77).

Given the findings of these reports it seems fair to assume that a large degree of poor recordkeeping results not from malicious intent but a lack of understanding and foresight. A failure to consider the wants, needs, or even existence of the people records are created about. This lack of consideration is backed up by "care-leavers"[2] like Frank Golding (2016) who stress not only the absence of adequate records but also the absence of consideration about them in any records that do exist. This unintentionality sparked memories of Hannah Arendt, a theorist I had briefly covered in my undergraduate studies and who is one of three non-archival thinkers this thesis draws on extensively.

[2] The term "care-leavers" is used to refer to people who experienced institutional care as children. This includes children's homes, orphanages, fostering, and kinship care. The term is placed in quotation marks to acknowledge that many of these individuals do not feel care is an adequate descriptor for the treatment they receivedFind and Connect Web Resource Project Team. (2011). *Find and Connect*. eScholarship Research Centre The University of Melbourne,. Retrieved 19 February 2015 from http://www.findandconnect.gov.au/. For more information on language please see the Find and Connect web project.

In short, it appeared to me that we are faced with a number of situations where required records either have not been created, or have been created and managed in a way that does not support the needs of all stakeholders. Having worked alongside, and for a short period on, the Find and Connect project it became apparent that intervention was required before records creation, description or access, it was required in appraisal.

Appraisal, from a records continuum perspective, refers to the multilayered decisions made in each moment about the creation and management of records. I wondered if now was the time to intervene for asylum seekers and refugees. To attempt to make sure records and archives were created and managed appropriately as events unfolded rather than scrambling for evidence and documentation years later. The literature often proposes participatory approaches to archives as one way of achieving this.

I couldn't explore the records of asylum seekers directly, nor would it be ethical to contact them. I am not a qualified social worker or counsellor and many asylum seekers have endured extensive trauma from both their pasts and the Australian immigration detention system. There is a risk my interactions with asylum seekers could further or re-traumatise them. On a more practical level conversations with me could have undermined their claims, and getting to offshore detention facilities at Nauru and Manus simply wasn't feasible. I wondered if perhaps I could use the retention and disposal authority (RDA) to identify what records should exist, and then interview people from asylum seeker support groups to see if they felt the records in the RDA where adequate. I also wanted to speak to someone from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the National Archives. I soon set this plan aside too after being repeatedly redirected.

I realised that records and recordkeeping simply were not a priority for those trying to support asylum seekers, survival was. They did not have the luxury to worry about these things. This realisation changed not only the direction of my research but my views on participatory approaches to appraisal and archival (and other) professionals desire to help.

Sometimes what you can offer simply isn't as important as meeting other needs at that point in time. Was I being like those condescending people were to my relative? Deciding I held all the answers, that I could help if they'd only let me. That my contribution was what was needed right now?

I am not doubting the value of archival intervention, I am doubting the insistence that archival intervention is always a good idea – although I doubt very few archivists would argue archival assistance is more important than food or water! So how do we intervene without overbearing?

Without undermining the agency of the people involved? Participation involves a choice, a degree of freedom, people deciding to exert time and energy that could be otherwise spent. The lack of response I got from those I attempted to engage with needed to be respected. I could have called, begged, door knocked. My supervisory team and I choose instead to take this thesis down a more theoretical path.

Returning to Terry Cook's quote provided me with a more achievable, and arguably ethical goal. To clearly articulate what is meant by archival theory. In this case records continuum thinking and participatory approaches to appraisal. Perhaps in the future this 'clearly stated and well understood theory that is continually evolving, and relevant' can contribute in the "real world" to appraisal practices that are consistent, directed, accountable and defendable to the 'wider public'.

## Aims and Research Questions

The aim of this research project is to clarify what is meant by records continuum thinking, potential theoretical extensions to records continuum thinking and the implications this may have for the way participatory appraisal is conceptualised. To theorise as I intended, I needed to first identify and clarify what is actually meant by records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal, so my first research question is:

> *What are the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal?*

The second research question is framed around exploring the relationship between records continuum thinking and the sociology and philosophy I had been exposed to in my undergraduate studies and how this might shape participatory appraisal:

> *How might social theory extend and support records continuum thinking and what might this mean for participatory appraisal?*

To undertake this theorising I needed a robust methodological approach, and so my third research question emerged from the adaptation of Foucauldian discourse and diffractive analysis to this endeavour. In this thesis I pioneered the application of this research approach to explicating and extending records continuum theory. A third research question emerged from the adaptation, development and application of the methods and techniques within the broader theoretical frameworks for my research.

> *How might the adaption and use of Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis and diffractive analysis contribute to archival scholarly practice?*

There is an overview of my research approach below, with details in section 1 chapter 2 Methodology. The discourse and diffractive analysis methods and techniques I applied were adopted and adapted from the work of Michel Foucault (Andersen, 2003; Bacchi, 2000; Fadyl et al., 2012; Foucault, 1980, 2002; Graham, 2005; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002) and Karen Barad (Barad, 1998, 2003, 2007, 2010; Hinton, 2013; Murris & Bozalek, 2019b; Parkins, 2008; Seghal, 2014; Van Der Tuin, 2011).

## Key Terms

As discussed in my reflection I am approaching this thesis from a records continuum perspective, therefore my preliminary definitions of the key concepts I am exploring come from this space. In the table below the terms are presented to establish a shared starting point for the exploration of alternative conceptualisations. As one of the aims of this thesis is the exploration of existing, and proposal of new, conceptualisations of appraisal then the explication of some of these key terms will evolve. The third column points to where they will be discussed in more detail.

| Term | Preliminary Definition | Further Discussion See: |
|---|---|---|
| Records | 'Inscriptions or performances and which may arise within personal, familiar, community, organisational and societal contexts' (Rolan, 2017, p. 47). | Chapter 3.2 Records Continuum Thinking |
| Archives (Upper case A) | 'The (capitalised) term *Archive*, when used, refers to the gestalt of sociomaterial archival systems, recordkeeping practices and stakeholder behaviours' (Rolan, 2017, p. 47). | Chapter 3.2 Records Continuum Thinking |
| archives (lower case a) | 'Any jurisdictionally bounded recordkeeping system that deals with records or recordkeeping metadata — whether historical or current' (Rolan, 2017, p. 47). | Chapter 3.2 Records Continuum Thinking |
| Recordkeeping | 'All of the activity of the conceiving, creating, managing, and deriving utility from records in a continuum of use (Upward et al., 2013). | Chapter 3.2 Records Continuum Thinking |
| Recordkeepers and Archivists | Anyone who is employed in an official capacity to manage records, archives or carry out any recordkeeping activities paid or voluntary. | Chapter 3.2 Records Continuum Thinking |
| Appraisal | Decisions made about what records to create, keep and destroy | Chapter 3.2 Records Continuum Thinking |
| Participation | The Cambridge Dictionary defines participation as 'the fact you take part or become involved in something' ("participation," 2020). At a minimum participation refers to the meaningful engagement of people in a process or project. This engagement may include the sharing of opinions or more physical involvement in building, designing or implementing | Chapter 3.3 Participatory Literature and Participatory Appraisal |
| Theory | Theory is about the assumptions, concepts, and ideas that underpin and shape practice. This type of theory involves uncovering and trying to make explicit how people conceptualise, and the meaning they attribute to themselves, others and the phenomena surrounding them. This theory doesn't need to be generalizable or universal. In fact it is always contextually bound and specific (Mortensen, 1999). | Chapter 2.2 External Theorists |
| Conceptualisation | Our understanding of what things are, can do, etc | Chapter 2.2 External Theorists |

*figure 1. Preliminary Key Terms*

## Research Approach

Taking a lead from the authors who contributed to the manuscript *Research in the Archival Multiverse* I have drawn on approaches from fields outside of archival science to theorise on recordkeeping.

> 'Epistemological frameworks and textual and anthropological methods being applied by postmodern, postcolonial, and race, ethnicity and gender studies scholars, among others, that eschew the positivist claims of validity that underpin methodological approaches employed in scientific history, diplomatics or legal theorising about evidence' (Gilliland, 2017, p. 47).

I used discourse analysis to address my first research question and diffractive analysis for the second research question. Details of these approaches can be found in section one chapter 3 Methodology. figure 2 below shows an outline of the research approach, beginning with the meta-theoretical

frameworks (interpretivist / critical paradigm and Postfoundationalist paradigm) at the top of the diagram, moving through the methodologies and methods (hermeneutics, phenomenology, discourse analysis and diffractive analysis).

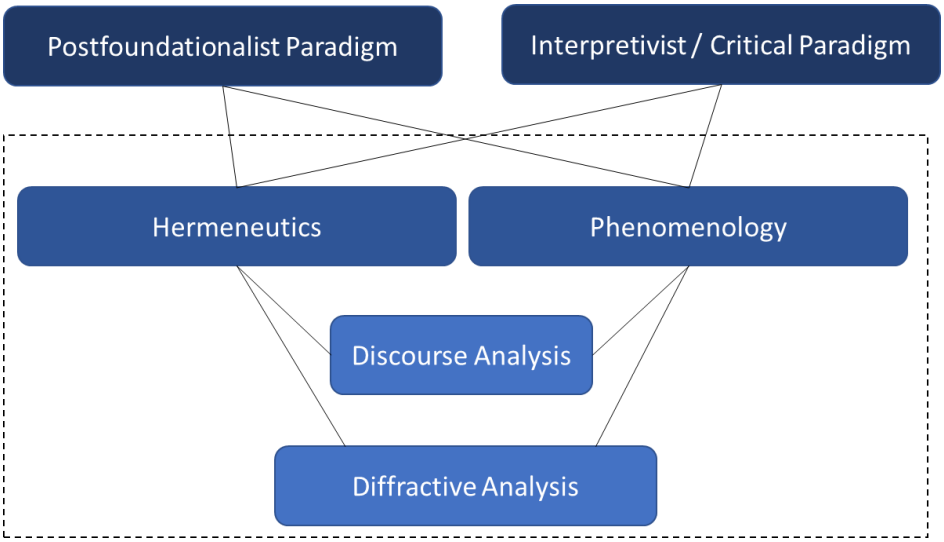


*figure 2. Approach Overview*

The two boxes at the top of figure 2 refer to the metatheoretical paradigms I embraced in this PhD project. Interpretivist / Critical paradigms generally come from a social constructionist position and focus on the meaning people attribute to the world around them. Personally, I'd argue most critical paradigms are an extension of interpretivist paradigms in that they seek to interpret and uncover how meaning is constructed in the world (like interpretivist paradigms) but then seek to challenge that meaning or at the very least uncover it. The aim behind this uncovering and challenging is often to empower a particular social group or transform social practices, attitudes, or manifestations.

Postfoundationalist paradigms also aim to explore meaning but challenge the existence of any ultimate truths or foundations. As Topolski explains:

> 'It [Postfoundationalism] does not aim to affirm a particular foundational claim but rather to question the possibility of certainty with regard to all forms of foundationalism. First and foremost, what characterises a post-foundational approach is the recognition of, and refusal to fear, its own limitations and contingency. Second, post-foundationalism differs from anti-foundationalism in that it does recognise the human need for partial "foundations", all the while recognizing the contingency and questionability of these "grounds"' (Topolski, 2015, p. 182).

Both critical and interpretive paradigms can be associated with the hermeneutic and phenomenological tradition. Hermeneutics refers broadly to the study of texts and phenomenology

to the study of how individuals and communities experience the world (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Williamson & Johanson, 2013). These are of course very basic definitions and more detail can be found in the methodology chapter (chapter 1.2).

The remaining two boxes in the diagram relate to the analytical approaches used. This thesis employed a Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis (Diaz-Bone et al., 2007; Graham, 2005) that sought to identify the key concepts without which participatory appraisal and records continuum thinking would not make sense. Diffractive analysis is a relatively new approach associated with postfoundationalism. Diffractive analysis seeks to read theories through each other and rather than comparing them observes what emerges from their interaction (Mazzei, 2014; Murris & Bozalek, 2019a; Seghal, 2014; Taguchi & Palmer, 2018).

## Thesis Structure

My thesis has been organised into five parts as illustrated in figure 3:

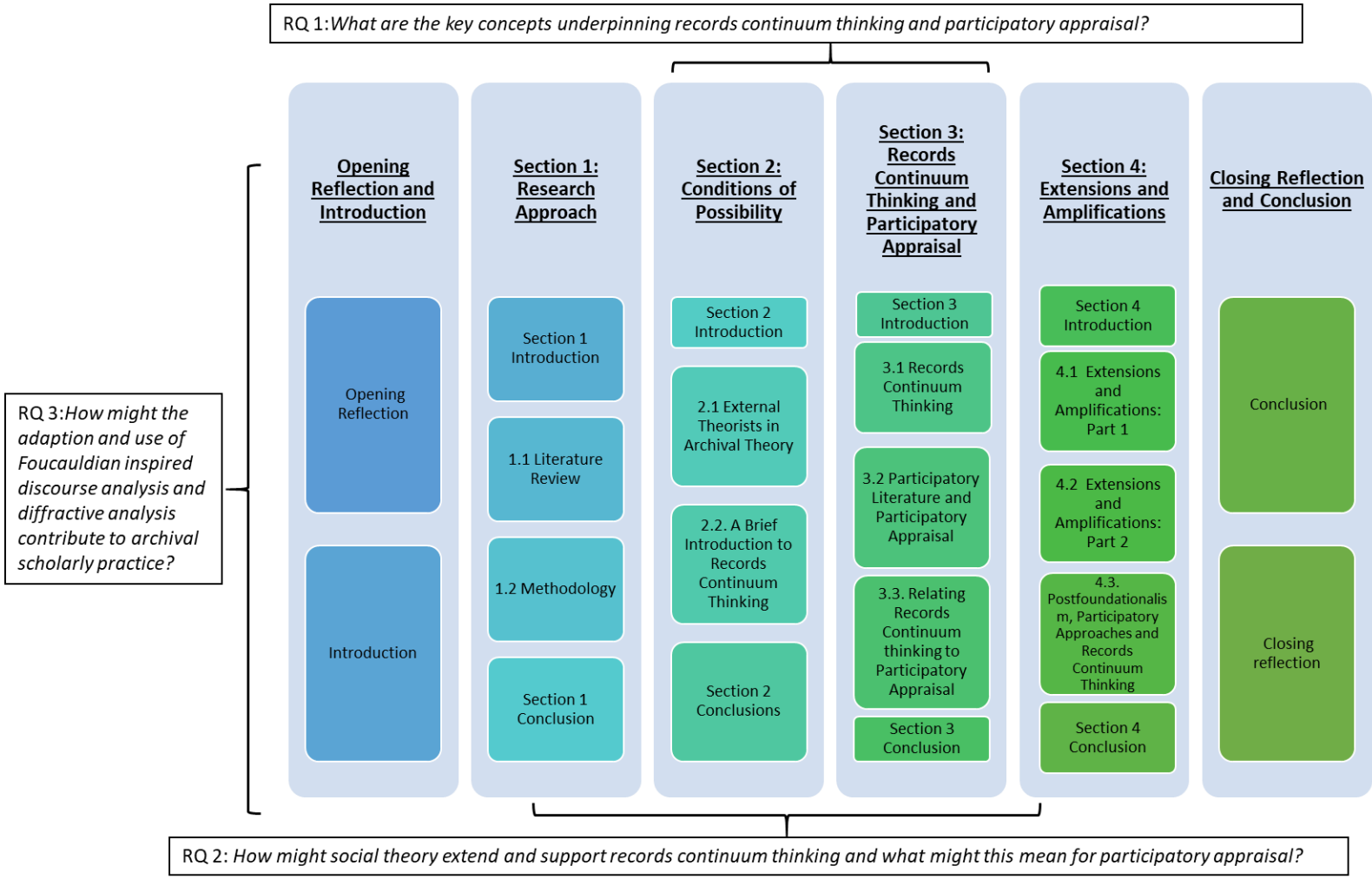


*figure 3. Thesis Structure*

### *Section 1: Research Approach*

Section one of my thesis includes a literature review and a methodology section that set out my research approach and ground this project in a broader context of recent archival theorising.

### *Section 2: Influences and Conditions of Possibility*

The focus of chapter one section two is on the thinkers external to the archival discipline that have a relationship with records continuum thinking. In some instances; they directly informed the development of records continuum thinking, in others these philosophies emerged in tandem being brought together in the 1990s and 2000s by records continuum scholars. The second chapter in this section outlines basics about records continuum thinking in preparation for the more extensive theoretical discussion in chapter 3.1. Both chapters in section 2 involved the first part of the analytical cycle depicted in figure 5.

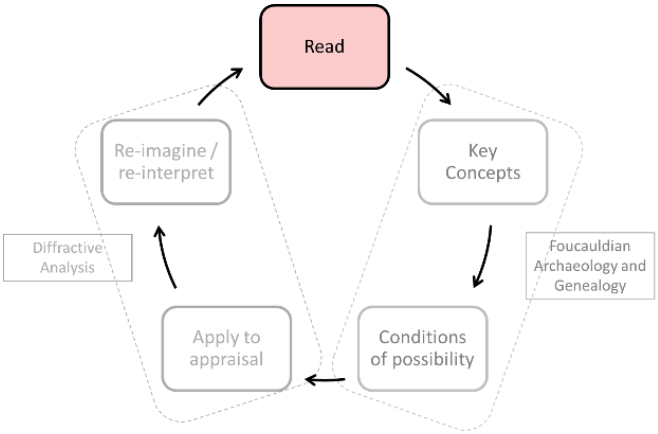


*figure 4. Section 2 Analytical Approach*

While the analysis here does not quite extend to a full discourse analysis it is the result of extensive reading and summarising. Exploration of the knowledge required to make sense of records continuum thinking, setting the necessary groundwork to address the first research question in section three.

## *Section 3: Records Continuum Thinking and Participatory Appraisal*

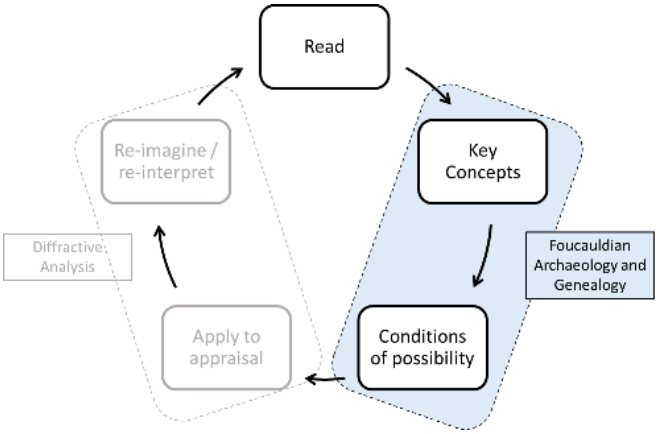


*figure 5. Section 3 Analytical Approach*

Part three of this thesis analyses records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal themselves. As shown in figure 5 above I employed a Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis here. By closely reading and summarising the literature, then identifying key concepts and condition of possibility I was able to address the first research question:

> *What are the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal?*

This part of the thesis examines the literature to explore the discourses and key concepts that influence and underpin both records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal. It initially focuses on records continuum thinking. This exploration is organised by the key concepts identified in the records continuum literature including spacetime distanciation, monistic diversity, multiplicity, relational becomingness, and agency, and contextuality.

The second chapter in section 3 explores participatory approaches to recordkeeping with a focus on appraisal through select conceptualisations. In total 11 conceptualisations were explored leading to the identification of four core assumptions that appear essential in supporting participatory approaches to archives and appraisal in particular.

The third chapter of section three brings together the key records continuum concepts and the four assumptions identified in the conceptualisations of participatory archives. Examining how the two compliment and support each other.

### *Section 4: Extensions and Amplifications*

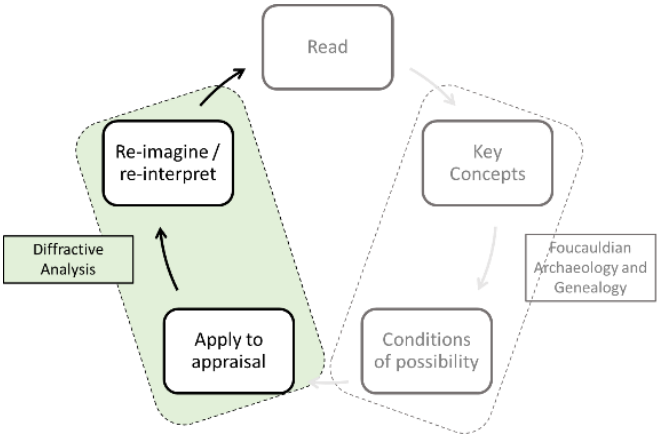


*figure 6. Section 4 Analytical Approach*

Once the key concepts and discourses that influenced records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal had been identified, part four of this thesis looks at how these might be extended and amplified. A diffractive analysis was conducted as shown in figure 6, addressing the second research question:

> *How might social theory extend and support records continuum thinking and what might this mean for participatory appraisal?*

This question is addressed across three chapters. Although they are interrelated I have divided the extensions and amplifications into two chunks. The first chapter relate to more physical and metaphysical amplifications and extensions and the second chapter addresses the extensions and amplifications that have a social impact with special focus on a reconceptualization of agency.

The outcome of these two chapters and the diffractive analysis conducted through them are an additional three assumptions. The relationship of these three assumptions with the key records continuum thinking concepts and four assumptions from the participatory literature are discussed in the third and final chapter of section four.

## Conclusion

The final part of this thesis aims to explore and relate the previous sections of the thesis. In particular I explore how the amplifications and extensions discussed in across all three chapters in section 4 might support participatory appraisal from a records continuum thinking perspective. What results are seven axioms from which to commence archival thought and praxis. I also re-affirm the identification of monistic diversity, phenomena (inclusive of time-space and relational becomingness), multiplicity, agency, alterity, contextuality, and power as key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking.

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# Section 1: Research Approach

## Contents

# Section 1: Introduction

This section of my thesis consists of two chapters. Chapter 1.1 is the Literature Review and examines literature I have grouped into two broad categories: sociological and philosophical and archival. My thesis sits at the intersection of these two groups of work and thought, attempting to draw on additional external theory to clarify, extend and amplify records continuum thinking especially in relation to participatory appraisal.

The second part of section 1 chapter 1.2 is a methodology chapter in which I provide a detailed explanation of the paradigms, methods, methodologies, techniques and tools used to approach this PhD project. The methodology chapter leads to my third primary research question which is explored throughout the thesis:

> *How might the adaption and use of Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis and diffractive analysis contribute to archival scholarly practice?*

# Chapter 1.1: Literature Review

## Introduction

In this chapter I will explore the literature that led to the formation of my research questions and wider methodology. I also aim to provide sufficient background information to contextualise where my thesis and research sit within the wider body of archival literature.

There are fundamental tensions between postfoundationalist approaches and traditional literature reviews. Traditional literature reviews often focus on taking a "birds' eye" view of the literature, implying a degree of separation and objectivity. Postfoundationalism sees the researcher as part of the research apparatus, actively shaping what is measured.

> 'As a researcher one is part of the world, hence a diffractive reading is unlike a literature review as the latter assumes that you are at a distance of the literature, having a bird's eye point of view – creating an overview by comparing, contrasting, juxtaposing or looking for similarities and themes. A diffractive reading, on the other hand, does not foreground any texts as foundational, but through reading texts through one another, comes to new insights' (Murris & Bozalek, 2019a, pp. 1505 - 1506).

This literature review does not aim to harmonise definitions of key concepts or terms, but rather to problematize them. Where definitions are provided they serve as place holders, to ensure you, the reader, are on the same page as me and starting from the same conceptual position. In order to do this, I feel the need to begin with the literature I brought with me from the social sciences. The social science literature profoundly shaped how I interpret and read archival texts. My interest in issues of accountability, power, and government more broadly were laid by these sociological texts. This background primed me to lean towards particular conceptualisations of how these issues might interact with archives and records.

This literature review is broken down into three parts as shown in figure 7 below. The first part is sociology and philosophy literature, the second archival theory. I have used a Venn diagram because a significant amount of the work in, and drawn on by this thesis relates to the intersection between the two and forming the third part of the literature review.

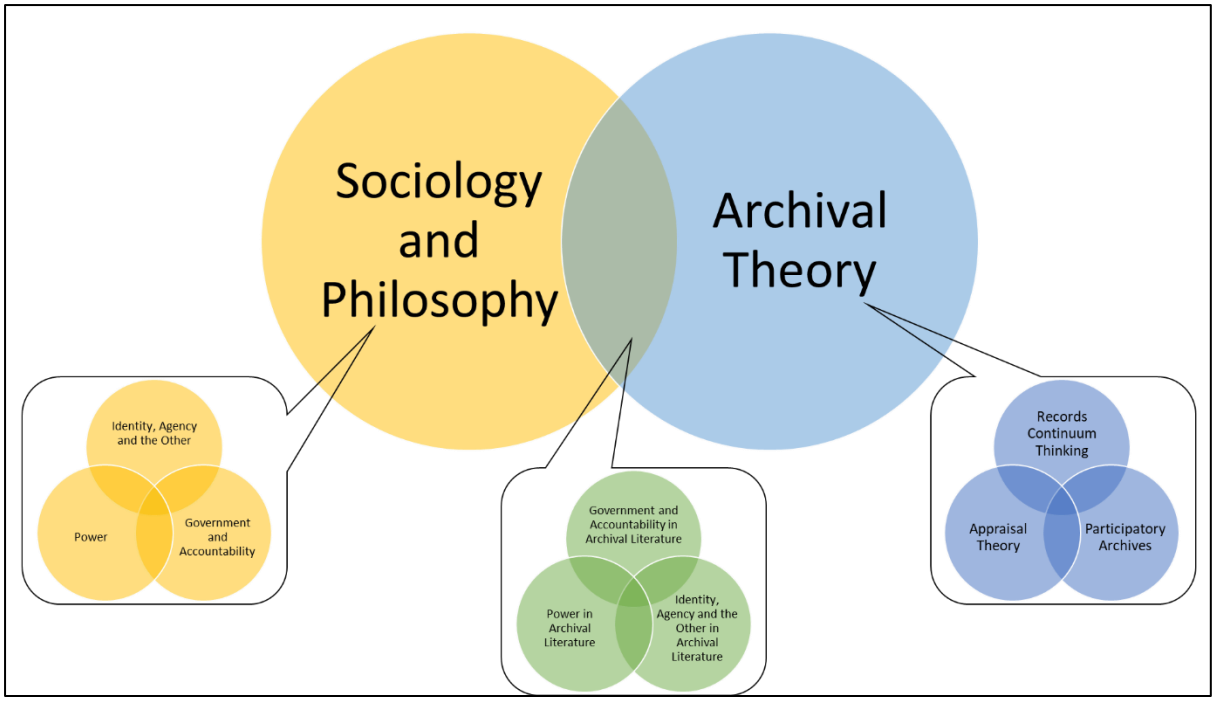


*figure 7. Literature covered*

These three (remembering the intersection) areas of focus can be further broken down. The three areas of focus in relation to the Sociology and Philosophy literature shown in figure 8 below are Identity, Agency, and the Other; Power; and Government and Accountability. I will be describing key concepts and thinkers from sociology and philosophy that I think are relevant to archival theory more broadly and making sense of archives, records and recordkeeping. I will then be justifying why I feel these concepts are relevant and commenting on whether and how they appear in the archival literature.


*figure 8. Sociology and Philosophy Literature*

The intersection of figure 8 is represented below in figure 9. The intersection represents the entanglement of Sociology and Philosophy with Archival Theory.

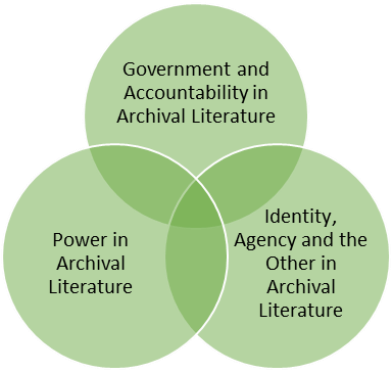


*figure 9. Overlapping Literature*

In terms of the archival literature, my focus is on records continuum thinking; appraisal theory; and participatory archives as shown in figure 10. Having already examined how the archival literature at large deals with issues of power, identity, agency and the other, and government and accountability, this final discussion will narrow the focus and provide background context in relation to records continuum thinking, appraisal theory, and participatory archives.

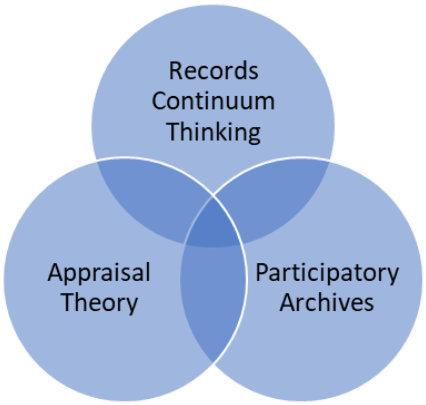


*figure 10. Archival Literature*

The literature dealing with these issues is complemented by numerous recent Australian reviews and inquiries, particularly in the field of child welfare (AHRC, 1997, 2014, 2017; NT Royal Commission, 2018; Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2001, 2004). These reviews and inquiries have identified systemic archival challenges and limitations in an Australian context. As discussed in my opening reflection, these reviews and inquiries were a major motivating factor for me to conduct this research project.

The scholarly responses to these inquiries and reviews from within the archival field and the wider academy (social workers, youth workers etc) have called for more participatory approaches to records, archives, and recordkeeping. or at the very least consideration of those whom records and archives document (Humphreys & Kertesz, 2012; Kertesz, Humphreys, & Carnovale, 2012; O'Neill,

Selakovic, & Torpea, 2012; Wilson & Golding, 2015). Many of these same individuals also advocate for participation to occur as early as possible including the creation of records (Evans, McKemmish, Daniels, & McCarthy, 2015; Evans, McKemmish, & Rolan, 2019; Wilson & Golding, 2015). From a records continuum point of view, this would mean participation in appraisal. Appraisal is therefore of central importance, but what exactly is meant by appraisal? For that matter what is meant by participatory? Let alone what is meant by appraisal from a records continuum point of view.

My understanding of appraisal and therefore my answers to the questions posed above is developed through the lens of social science literature. In the next section I will lay out this literature that so profoundly shapes my interpretation of archival concepts and ideas.

## Sociology and Philosophy Literature

As discussed in my opening reflection I came to this PhD project with a background in social science. This included a body of literature that informed the formulation of both my research topic and research questions. The question of the Other is what motivated me to begin both my honours thesis and this PhD project; how can we understand and know someone different from ourselves, and why do we so often get it so wrong? While studying for my graduate diploma in archives it became clear that records could be used as a tool for Othering and to liberate people from being Othered. While not always explicitly discussed it appeared that records continuum thinking could remedy Othering in records by affording agency to all stakeholders of records. This hypothesis was central to my initial PhD research proposal.

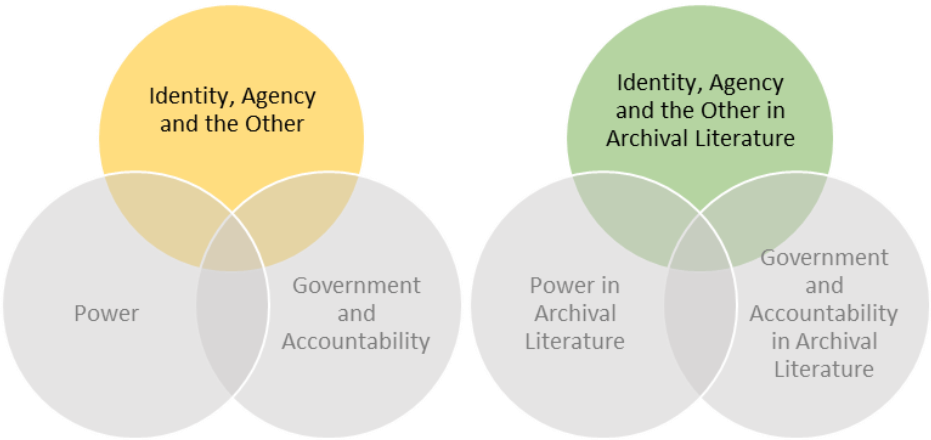


*figure 11. Identity, Agency and the Other in the literature*

### *Identity, Agency, and the Other*

As discussed in the opening reflection participatory approaches to archives have been recommended by many archivists as a solution to systemic recordkeeping problems because, in part, they bring agency to subjects of records. Participation, it is argued, allows people to develop their

own identity. But what exactly is meant by agency and identity? What is the problem when agency and identity are absent or ignored?

My social science background provides me with theoretical conceptualisations of identity, agency and the related concepts of the other and the self. My early understanding of Othering, self and identity was shaped by the work of Edward Said on Orientalism (1979), Stephen Greenblatt on knowledge and possession (1991), Tzvetan Todorov on Othering (1984) and Herbert Mead on the self (Dunn, 1997; Hanson, 1986).

According to George Herbert Mead (1929) the Other plays a vital internal role. He argues that to know the self, it is necessary for the individual to see themselves as an object, and that this can only be done through the taking in of the perspective Others have of us. This perspective taking can occur internally through self-talk or sometimes out loud as a response mimicking to how an individual feels Others will react. The self is therefore rehearsed and action is thought out in relation to how the Other will respond (1929). Mead paved the way for my comprehension of performativity and the requirement for people to be involved in the creation and management of records about them – that identity is not just something given to us by external individuals and groups but something we explicitly perform ourselves. Furthermore, Meads work illustrates that there is power in shaping and re-shaping identity.

Edward Said's Orientalism describes the often stylised and exaggerated way westerners of the eighteenth and nineteenth century depicted the cultures and peoples of Asia and the Middle East. These depictions sought (unconsciously or consciously) to highlight differences between westerners and non-westerners, thereby establishing western identity (Elouafi, 2010, p. 253). This definition through difference necessitated, or at the very least facilitated, a de-humanisation and de-valuing on the other. If I am defined by who I am not, (the other, the oriental), then the other must be the opposite of what I am, and what I value. To see myself as valuable and good, implies that the other, what I am not, is bad. In reality Orientalism 'tells us nothing about its ostensible subject, the East, but reveals much about the West, whose self-perception requires the contrasting "Other"' (Thomas, 2010, p. 999). Orientalism and the work of Stephan Greenblatt described below opened my mind to the relationship between knowledge, power, and representation. For Said representation of the Other was a way to establish the self. The creation of records about others, can be seen as a way to define the self, as it involves the creation of representations in paper, digital, or other forms.

The work of Edward Said has not been drawn on heavily in the existing archival literature, despite extensive focus on the relationship between records and archives and identity (Bastian, 2009, 2013; Iacovino, 2015; Jones & O'Neill, 2014). An exception to this is Beverly Butler (2009) who examines

how Edward Said's work can be applied to an archival context. Her article goes beyond the concept of the Other to include:

> 'Said's vision of a 'right to a remembered presence' in order to capture the 'healing mode' of thought and aspiration, that is neither naive or uncritical, but bound up in a belief in the capacity of archival memory, heritage and certain modes of representation to bring comfort, cure and healing to situations of conflict, containment, displacement and exile' (Butler, 2009, p. 58).

The Other and Othering is often studied in situations of conflict. For Butler (2009) this conflict was located in Palestine. For Stephan Greenblatt and Todorov (1984) the Other is explored through the Spanish conquest of America (Greenblatt, 1991). An integral component of this conquest was the naming, recording and therefore re-identifying of the land, flora, fauna and people.

> 'The founding action of Christian imperialism is a christening. Such a christening entails the cancellation of the native name – the erasure of the alien, perhaps demonic, identity – and hence a kind of making new; it is at once an exorcism, an appropriation, and a gift. Christening then is the culminating instance of the marvellous speech act: in the wonder of the proper name, the movement from ignorance to knowledge, the taking of possession, the conferral of identity are fused in a moment of pure linguistic formalism' (Greenblatt, 1991, p. 105).

With the minor exception of Said in the work of Beverly Butler I could find no trace of Greenblatt, Todorov or Mead in the archival literature. I was not so surprised by the absence of Greenblatt or Todorov. These two thinkers seem to be fairly niche even within sociology and philosophy. Mead however is often regarded as one of the founders of an entire sociological paradigm: symbolic interactionism (Dennis & Smith, 2015; Dunn, 1997).

The concept of agency had never been a central concept in the sociology and philosophical literature I was exposed to prior to my transition to archival theory. The concepts of the self and the other have dominated my academic past. The phrase to "give someone agency" from the perspective of Mead's sociology simply does not make sense. Agency is developed through interaction and self-reflection, through our ability to place ourselves in the shoes of another and observe ourselves from outside. It emerges through structures, not in opposition to them. It includes free will but also internalization and conditionality (Martin, 2006). It is not something you can give or take, it is something that emerges through social interaction. This conceptualisation of agency appears very different from that described in archival literature as will be discussed in chapter 4.2. One similarity between archival and sociological interpretations of agency is their

relationship with the concept of power. Despite this acknowledgement of the relationship between power and agency it seemed that most archival literature does not explicitly define what is meant by terms like agency, self or the other.

Records continuum thinking is one of the few archival approaches that explicitly defines agency. Records Continuum thinkers alongside those who explore documentation strategy (to be discussed in section 3 chapter 2) draw on Anthony Giddens conceptualisation of agency (Rolan, 2017a; Samuels, 1986, 1991 - 1992; Upward, 2009). Anthony Giddens defines agency as the capacity to have acted otherwise (Giddens, 1984). Like the concept of power, a shared understanding of what is meant by agency, identity and the Other seems to be assumed in most archival literature. This is one of the assumptions I will be problematising, attempting to unravel the archival literature to arrive at what exactly is meant by agency (see chapter 4.2).

### *Power*

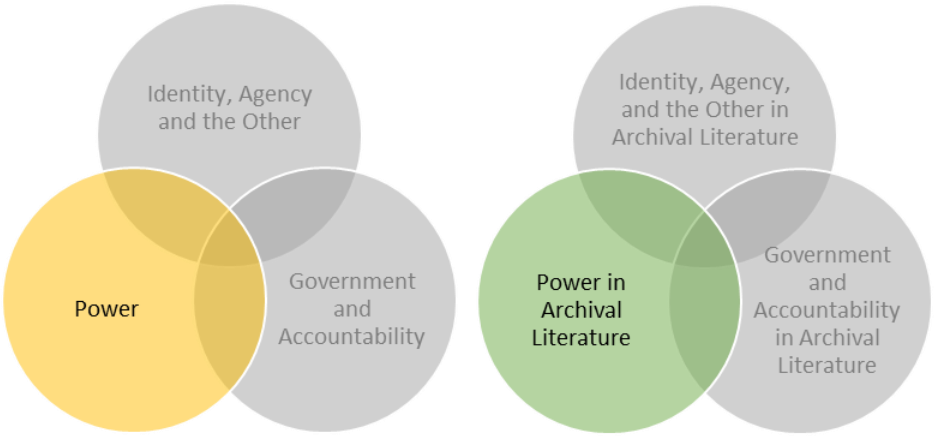


*figure 12. Power in the literature*

The concept of power and its different philosophical conceptualisations is raised frequently in the archival literature, and will be dealt with in detail in chapter 4.3. The archival literature often turns to Jacques Derrida's conceptualisation of power, reflecting the way power and knowledge are intertwined (Brothman, 1999; Cook & Schwartz, 2002; Harris, 2005; MacNeil, 2001). Having been exposed to the work of Greenblatt (1991), arguments in the archival literature about the power archivists hold through the labelling, naming, categorisation, and creation of records is compelling. The way that this can be an act of dominance is a Derridean idea – but for me Greenblatt was far easier to digest and provided a scaffolding on which to read and understand Derrida.

Jacques Derrida's (1996) *Archives Fever* is a key philosophical piece of work that has perhaps seen the most detailed exploration in the English language archival literature. Derrida's work not only generates new conceptualisations of archives, records, recordkeeping and archivists but challenges

the very veracity of conceptualisations in and of themselves. Derrida provided a revolutionary new take on what archives are, can, and might be.

Brien Brothman (1999) explored why this new take has not been engaged with on a large scale by archivists. He argues there are three reasons for this and hints at a fourth. First that:

> 'only a very small minority of archivists have ever found that philosophy of any kind offers them much theoretical interest or practical utility' (Brothman, 1999, p. 67).

Second that Derrida's work isn't an easy read to say the least, and third that Derrida's conceptualisation of textuality, archives and related ideas are not compatible with how many archivists view themselves, records, archives and recordkeeping.

> 'Indeed, the third reason for the archival community's disregard of deconstruction concerns the apparent divergence of two perspectives on writing: the intimately connected notions of writing as *textuality or textual play*, which preoccupies Derrida, and writing as *record formation* or *archive*, which preoccupies archivists' (Brothman, 1999, p. 76).

The fourth reason that Brothman (1999) hints at is the critical outlook and engagement which Derrida's ideas requires of us. Derrida requires us to be constantly questioning ourselves, our beliefs, practices, technologies, and decisions. One of the consequences of this constant questioning is that archivists cannot rely on predetermined conceptualisations of what the "right" way to practice archiving or recordkeeping is.

Brien Brothman's (1999) work is a descriptive piece, outlining the relationship between Derrida and Archival theory and archivists. Verne Harris (2002, 2005, 2011) advocates for aspects of Derrida's philosophy as a way to improve archival practice and outcomes in a South African context. Of particular significance to Harris is Derrida's concept of hospitality. Harris (2005) describes the impossibility of Derrida's challenge to practice hospitality.

> 'The challenge, clearly, is an impossible one. We can close our ears to the call of justice, set ourselves manageable yardsticks, busy ourselves with standards and methodologies and procedures. Or we can reach for the impossible, in doing so understanding why the work of the archivist is mourning' (Harris, 2005, p. 137).

Derrida's more metaphysical ideas can also be seen in Harris's concept of the archival sliver. The archival sliver refers to incompleteness and impossibility of an archive ever reflecting reality in a positivistic sense (Harris, 2002). For me the concept of the sliver prompts us to question our ability to ever access let alone unproblematically represent concrete reality in all of its complexity and

contingency. The five 'tenants' of Harris' (2011) archives for justice also draw heavily on deconstructionist and Derridean philosophy. These include:

1. The framing of power as the defining of contexts and meaning;
2. The selection of certain contexts at the expense of others;
3. The political nature of archives, as the archivist has a role in the selection, and contextualisation of archives and records;
4. The need to create a space for repressed and othered narratives (hospitality), challenging dominant metanarratives and constructing new ones while simultaneously problematising metanarratives themselves; and
5. Acknowledging that archival work is always positioned at "the end game".

I am less clear about exactly what Harris means by "the endgame". Possibly he is referring to the fact we are always already on the precipices of the "end", that our actions have impact, a play on the temporal elements of Derridean philosophy. Perhaps Harris is simply referring to the end of the lifecycle. Another alternative is that we should be focused on preservation of the sliver instead of engaging with appraisal in a records continuum sense where archivists intervene in decisions about what records should be created and kept.

The temporality of archives has also been explored by Eric Ketelaar, however rather than looking at the "end" he explores the beginning, archivalization. Archivalization is a term inspired by the work of Jacques Derrida, Karl Popper, and Michel-Rolph Trouillot:

> 'Which I [Ketelaar] invented, meaning *the conscious or unconscious choice (determined by social and cultural factors) to consider something worth archiving.* Archivalization precedes archiving. The searchlight of archivalization has to sweep the world for something to light up in the archival sense, before we proceed to register, to record, to inscribe it, in short before we archive it' (Ketelaar, 2001, p. 133).

Ketelaar (1999, 2001, 2002, 2005b, 2012) explores Derrida's Freudian inspired concept of inscription - the idea that what we write is shaped not only by our intent but the technologies at hand, and the impossibility of ever fully transcribing what sits in our unconscious into our conscious, outside of our minds, onto a physical surface.

> 'The technologies of records creation, maintenance, and use colour the contents of the record, and also affect its form and structure. To quote Jacques Derrida "the mutation in technology changes not simply the archiving process, but what is archivable – that is, the content of what has to be archived is changed by the technology' (Ketelaar, 2005a, p. 73).

The conditions under which a record or archive emerges, prior to creation is influenced not only by the technology available, and social situation but also by Anthony Gidden's distanciation. With changes in distanciation shaping the power and influence of records and archives (Ketelaar, 2005b), and in turn shaping reality itself.

The changes wrought about by archivalization are not the only shifts. Once created and archivalization has occurred (arguably it never stops), changes in meaning continue. Drawing on Michel Foucault, Ketelaar explores how meaning not only changes with each recontextualization but shapes identity with records themselves having panoptical effects (Ketelaar, 2002).

Ketelaar's work alongside other highly respected archival scholars like Terry Cook can be seen as part of the postmodern turn in archival science. Postmodernism refers to a broad array of intellectual, cultural, and social movements that emerged from the mid-19th to mid-20th century in fields as diverse as architecture, art, social science, and literature (Linstead, 2010). Postmodernism tends to reject modernist conceptualisations of representation which views a clear and unproblematic relationship between things in the world and how we represent / perceive them. Postmodernism also rejects grand narratives instead preferring to focus on the role of context in specific instantiations of phenomena (Linstead, 2010). Much postmodern philosophy explicitly explores the relationship between knowledge, archives, power and identity (Cook, 2001a, p. 6). Perhaps the most prominent of the Postmodern archivists is Canadian Terry Cook. Many of Terry Cooks seminal works appear to begin from the assertion that the world we live in, including archivists, is now postmodern (Cook, 1997, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2013; Cook & Schwartz, 2002; Schwartz & Cook, 2002). As such we must either catch up or become relics. Cook is not saying traditional archivists will no longer be needed but rather that traditional archival mindsets rooted in the paper based realm of modernity limit archivists and do not prepare them for future relevance or success. This change means more than updating technology and methodology, extending to the updating of our very world view.

A second element of Terry Cook's argument in support of postmodernism is the alignment of some key archival concepts with postmodernism. Not only is postmodernism a pervasive intellectual paradigm in our world, but its core areas of interest are in many cases explicitly archival.

The reverse is also true with many existing archival concepts having significant parallels with postmodern pre-occupations, the chief example of which is perhaps provenance.

> 'Postmodernism's concern with the "semiotically constructed contexts" of records creation reflects the long-held archival concern for contextuality, for mapping the provenance

> interrelationship between the creator and the record, for determining context by reading through and behind text. In this way, archivists may have unknowingly been the first postmodernists – and decades before the term was even invented!' (Cook, 2001a, p. 17).

Archivists therefore, according to Cook (2001b) have a responsibility to engage with postmodernism. This responsibility comes, according to Cook with significant benefits for ' a wider discussion about what archivists do and why' (Cook, 2001b, p. 22). It provides archivists with the opportunity to see beyond the ideological barriers and limitations developed and maintained by adherence to modernist metanarratives.

The implications of a postmodern lens on archival theory are described by Cook as a shift:

> 'from product to process, from structure to function, from archives to archiving, from the record to the recording context, from the "natural" residue passive by-product to the consciously constructed and actively mediated "archivialisation" of social memory' (Cook, 2001a, p. 4).

This transition isn't static but rather demands constant re-invention questioning and critique (Cook, 2001a). A lot has happened in the postmodern space since Terry Cooks ground breaking work. This thesis is deeply indebted to the work of archivists like Cook and Ketelaar as it attempts to further explore the possibilities for archival theory that lay beyond postmodernism, or at least beyond the postmodernists that have already been explored. In keeping with this spirit of exploration no postmodern discussion of power would truly be complete without touching on government and issues of accountability.

### *Government and Accountability*

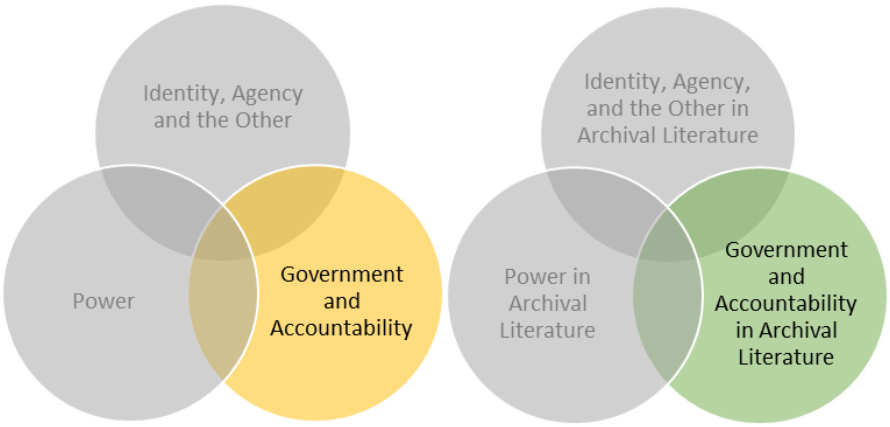


*figure 13. Government and Accountability in the literature*

Power in archival literature is not just tied to identity, but also strongly linked to government and accountability. Here I am of course focused on the intersection between archival literature and

sociological and philosophical literature. Australian authors Chris Hurley (2005a, 2005b, 2005d), Livia Iacovino (2005, 2010) and Adrian Cunningham and Margaret Phillips (2005) have published extensively on the role of records in accountability, governance and judicial systems.

Hurley (2005c) describes recordkeeping as a necessary, but not sufficient, component in accountable government. This view is not just theoretical but extends to Australian archival practice and its role in accountable government. In particular Hurley makes significant critiques of Australian practice, particularly in relation to appraisal.

> 'Archivists in Australia and elsewhere who regulate disposal are almost wholly unaccountable, in any meaningful way, for their administration of appraisal because:
>
> - There is no 'forum' within which they are accountable for appraisal;
> - There are no criteria worth speaking of by which their actions can be judged; and
> - Their own articulations of their responsibilities for appraisal fail to get the balance right between the moral purpose of appraisal and its method of execution' (Hurley, 2005c, p. 230).

While records, archives and recordkeeping can be used to ensure evidence of government action, and as such accountability they can also be used by governments and repressive groups to dominate and control. This has led to some theorists questioning the limitation of archival conceptualisations of authenticity and accountability, challenging the modernist separation of observed and observer embedded in such assumptions (MacNeil, 2001). This is not to reject the accountability potential of records and archives, merely to contextualise it and the uses records and archives can be put to.

Some of the most extreme examples of governments using records to control and dominate include the East German Stasi files, the Khmer Rouge and reliance of the Nazi regime on genealogical records (Ketelaar, 2005b). Even though such examples may seem extreme and unlikely (possibly unworthy of our attention) archival scholars like Michelle Caswell have examined the space philosophers like Hannah Arendt can fill in helping archivists makes sense of and prevent archives and records being used for such ends in the future (Caswell, 2010a). Caswell's (2009, 2010a) work demonstrates the relevance of broader social theory in making sense of the role of records and archives in government.

Moving closer to home, archives and records enable government of all kinds, including democratic and colonial (Stoler, 2002), not just totalitarian (Ketelaar, 2005b). As mentioned earlier a recent NT (Northern Territory) inquiry into the treatment of children in youth detention centres found that a

lack of recordkeeping in the context of youth detention undermined the accountability of both the institutions involved and any faith in the accuracy of existing records. I have included a long quote from this inquiry below because it illustrates how the solution to the abuse of records isn't necessarily to simply create fewer records. In fact an absence of adequate records can cause just as many problems.

> 'These failings have created a situation where records of the activities that occurred in youth detention centres about very serious matters, such as the use of force against detainees, cannot be assumed to be complete and accurate accounts of the events. Further, the absence of a record about a particular event cannot be assumed to indicate that the event did not occur. Mr Vita summarised the issue:
>
> > *"Record keeping is an important part of procedures and it serves to maintain and substantiate the actions of staff. Accurate records also provide transparency; their absence provide[s] suspicion'"* (NT Royal Commission, 2017, p. 63).

Publications about the role of records and archives in support of and recovery from totalitarian and repressive regimes include work on post-apartheid South Africa (Harris, 2002, 2011), East Germany (Ketelaar, 2005b), Guatemala (Weld, 2014), post-genocide Rwanda (Wallace, Pasick, Berman, & Weber, 2014), and Cambodia after the fall of the Khmer Rouge (Caswell, 2010b, 2013, 2014). This potential is not limited to overthrown regimes but extends to justice for people who have experienced various types of discrimination and mistreatment at the hands of institutions and governments including Indigenous Australians (Iacovino, 2010; McKemmish, Ross, & Faulkhead, 2006). These records and archives once used to dehumanise, delegitimise, control and abuse can also be used as evidence of wrongdoing, validation of experience and accountability. Some writers have suggested participatory approaches to archives are a good way to capitalise on the potential of archives of former records of oppression to be used for accountability, restitution and redress (Caswell, 2013; Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014).

The discussion above demonstrates that social theory has much to contribute to understandings of records, recordkeeping, and archives. Archival theory and literature is good at showing us how power operates in society through specific instances, but social theory examines power in and of itself. Whether that be the clarification of terms like agency and power, or a deeper understanding of how records relate to the operation of power, government, and accountability. Furthermore, much existing archival theory and thinking already builds on and engages with broader sociological and philosophical literature. In the next half of this literature review archival theory itself will be explored.

## Archival Theory

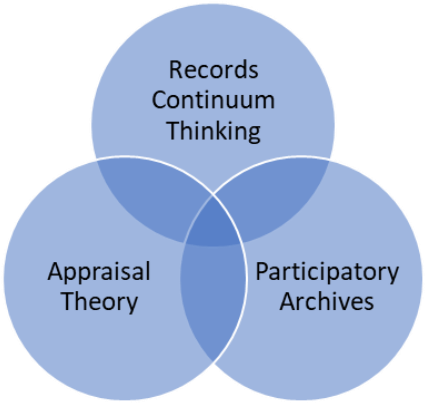


*figure 14. Archival Theory*

This second part of the literature review will focus on archival theory. One of the core assumptions this research project is based on my assumption about the relationship between theory and practice. Much like MacNeil I believe:

> 'That we have to change the way we think about the nature of archives before we can change the way we act in relation to that nature' (MacNeil, 1994, p. 7).

Theory, for me, is an exploration of how we understand, conceptualise, and think about the world around us. Our starting point in this literature review is therefore to outline existing archival theory.

It would, of course, be impossible to look at all archival literature and thinking, therefore my focus has been narrowed to three areas. First records continuum thinking and Australian archives, second appraisal theory (or some may argue methodology) and third participatory archives. These three areas are all explicitly mentioned in my primary research question and this section of the literature review aims to provide some basic background information and preliminary definitions to make navigating this thesis easier.

## *Records Continuum Thinking and Australian Archives*

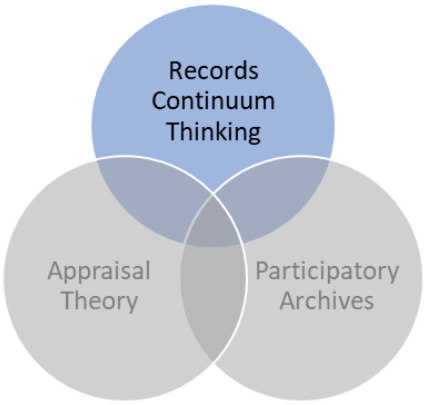


*figure 15. Records Continuum Thinking*

Records continuum thinking, notoriously difficult to briefly define due to its embrace of complexity, will be discussed in detail in chapter 3.1. Before attempting this it is worth providing some context about recordkeeping in Australia, where records continuum thinking emerged.

As a colonial nation state, Australian practice has drawn heavily on British and European recordkeeping traditions, especially registry systems[1] involving a centralised unit or group who were responsible for the management of organisational correspondence and other records. These groups would draw up registrars or lists of all ingoing and outgoing documentation, often assigning each a code or number often ordered on when the document was accessed or used by the central body. These registries were built into the business process and guided workflow and action, they were not passive ad-hoc resting places or filing systems. This is in opposition to cataloguing and more descriptive systems where documentation is organised by their subject matter or other content attribute, post-hoc (Reed, 2005).

Scholars such as Ann Laura Stoler (2002) have examined the role of archives and recordkeeping in colonial systems of power, governance, and knowledge production, revealing how they were and continue to be tools to both create and legitimise colonial structures of power often at the expense of Indigenous peoples. This realisation has been significant in the shaping of records continuum thinking over the past decade.

Australian archival scholars have charted the evolution of Australian archival praxis and records continuum thinking (McKemmish, 2017; McKemmish, Upward, & Reed, 2009; Piggott, 2008; Upward, 1994). Out of the many significant figures in the history of Australian archival praxis and

[1] For more information on registry systems please see (Hurley, 1994; McKemmish, 2016; McKemmish, Piggot, Reed, & Upward, 2005; Piggott, 1994, 2008; Stuckey, 1994; Upward, 1994)

theory, two are especially relevant to any understanding of records continuum thinking; Ian Maclean and Peter Scott. Ian Maclean was an early, if not the first Australian archivist on record, to challenge the dichotomy between record managers and archivists (both referred to as recordkeepers from an records continuum perspective), and as a consequence the distinction between records and archives. After embarking on an international tour and paying especially close attention to the similarities and differences between British, European, and American systems Maclean answered the question:

> ‘What should be the relation between archivists and record managers?" - it seems that they are or should be the same people, all with similar training but dealing according to personal inclination and aptitude with different personal inclination and aptitude with different problems and periods’ (Maclean, 1959, p. 417).

Maclean’s exploration of a hybrid approach drawing on American, European, and British recordkeeping traditions forms a key condition of possibility for records continuum thinking.

Contemporary records continuum thinking is also difficult to imagine without the work of Peter Scott. Scott developed the Australian Series System, which also serves to unify records and archives management, revolutionising the way records are described and managed in an Australian, and arguably international context (Hurley, 1994; Scott, Smith, & Finlay, 1980). Suffice to say that without MacLean and Scott it is difficult to imagine records continuum thinking as it was expressed by theorists in the 1990s up to the present day.

Upward, one of those key theorists, developed the records continuum model in the 1990s as a tool with which to map records, archives, context and people (Upward, 2005). The records continuum model is not the same as records continuum thinking. It is one, albeit very popularised, manifestation and representation of a broader theoretical approach. It is a depiction of the way records continuum thinking allows for the aggregation and exploration of records as multiple things at the one time; as individual items, as parts of collections, as evidence, as culture, as identity. The model, and records continuum thinking more broadly, draws on Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory and time space distanciation to allow for this oscillation between micro and macro, old and new.

Despite the broad potential of records continuum thinking and its many possible permutations, it appears not to be widely understood. This lack of understanding is built on anecdotal evidence but is supported by the limited number of scholarly publications from outside of Australia and New Zealand on the topic. It would certainly be fruitful to examine how records continuum

thinking is understood by international audiences in a more rigorous and scholarly way, perhaps a space for future research.

Further, anecdotal evidence from teaching the records continuum myself, along with my conversations with Australian archival professionals, indicates that many people struggle with records continuum thinking. As discussed in the introduction it was this lack of clarity that directly informed a shift in my research questions and the emergence of a key aims of this thesis to identify and articulate the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking.

> *What are the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal?*

Records continuum thinking has also informed particular approaches to archival practice including appraisal. In particular Adrian Cunningham has written extensively on what records continuum styled appraisal would look like (Cunningham, 1998, 2000; Cunningham & Oswald, 2005) and played a key role in the development of the DIRKS methodology in support of such an approach. DIRKS can be seen as a re-imagined registry for a digital world. DIRKS, which stands for Designing and Implementing Recordkeeping Systems aimed at 'building more efficient and accountable business practices through the design and encouragement of good recordkeeping' (NSWSAR, 2007, p. 2).

## *Appraisal Methodology and Appraisal Theory*

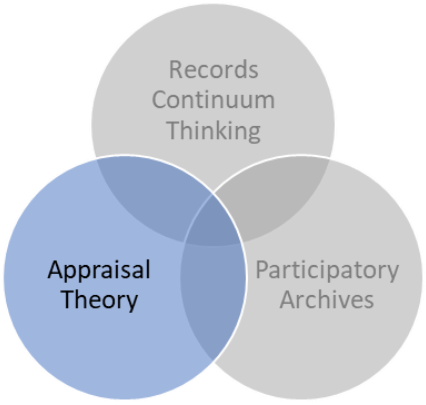


*figure 16. Appraisal theory*

Appraisal has been a subject of much disagreement amongst archival scholars and practitioners. Records continuum thinking defines appraisal quite broadly, as decisions around what records to create, keep and destroy (McKemmish et al., 2005; Reed, 2009; Rolan, 2017b). This is the definition I will be using throughout this thesis. More traditional approaches conceptualise appraisal in relation to the archival threshold. From a life cycle perspective, appraisal signifies the crossing over of a

record into an archive, the decision that a record is worth long-term preservation and its transformation into an archival entity (SAA, 2015).

Much has also been written on archival history by scholars like Terry Cook (1997, 2011), Eric Ketelaar (1996), Paul Desalle and Margaret Procter (2017), Marcus Robyns (2014) and John Ridener (2009a). While not always focused on appraisal they provide a good overview of the theoretical and methodological context from which appraisal was born. The coverage of archival history is generally split into eras organised around influential archival figures and their manuals (Fisher, 2009).

Given the diversity of views on which activities are constituted as appraisal (creation decisions for some and not others) it is hardly surprising that there are various approaches to appraisal. If the influential manual produced by British archivist Hilary Jenkinson (1922) is to be taken literally, any intervention by the archivist in decision making about what records are received or preserved undermines the evidential value of the records. For this and other reasons many argue appraisal began with Theodore Schellenberg in his 1956 manual.

I argue appraisal (decisions about what records to create, keep, and destroy) has always occurred. It simply hasn't been called that and early on was the domain of records creators not archivists or recordkeepers (think Jenkinson). Theodore Schellenberg broke new ground with his explicit call for archivists to engage in active appraisal (Fisher, 2009; Hardesty, 2007; Ridener, 2009b; Schellenberg, 1956). For explicitly articulated appraisal it seems necessity really was the mother of invention. Schellenberg's approach to appraisal was a direct response to the explosion of modern records and archives (Ridener, 2009b). At the heart of most approaches to appraisal I came across is the assessment of value. One of the key differentiating features of different appraisal approaches is what is seen to be valuable.

For Schellenberg value was derived from the content of records (informational and evidential) (Ridener, 2009b; Schellenberg, 1956). Schellenberg breaks value down into two categories, primary and secondary. Primary value refers to the utility of records or archives to the people who created them. Secondary value refers to the research and scholarly utility of records or archives for future groups and individuals (Ridener, 2009b; Schellenberg, 1956). Functionalist appraisal assesses value based on the functions the records creators perform (Reed, 2009). If the importance of the functions carried out is transferred to the records themselves, then records documenting important functions become important themselves. Macro-appraisal finds value in records that are created by or document interactions between the state and communities (Cook, 2004, 2006; Reed, 2009). Documentation and documenting strategies assess value against the contribution of archival materials to documenting a particular issue,

event, community, or place (Booms, 1987; Cox, 1994, 1996; Cox & Samuels, 1988; Samuels, 1986, 1991 - 1992). In contrast to documenting strategies more pragmatic approaches assess value based on use of records (Eastwood, 1993; Reed, 2009).

These differing conceptualisations of value provide insights into how different archivists conceptualise the purpose of records and archives themselves, and the activities that archivists should be engaged in to ensure these purposes are met. They place the very role of the archivist and archival institution in question. I will touch further on three appraisal approaches here: documentation strategy, documenting society, and macro-appraisal. I will discuss documentation strategy and documenting society together, as while slightly different, they share an intentionality and aim to, as the name of the latter suggests, document society.

Documentation strategy as an official appraisal practice in the English speaking archival world can be traced back to the 1980s and Helen Samuels (Reed, 2009; Samuels, 1986, 1991 - 1992). A similar approach was described by the German archivist Hans Booms in the 1970s but not published in English until 1987. Documentation strategy aims to document a specific event, era, place, people or phenomena (Cook, 1992; Cox, 1994; L. Hackman, 2009; L. J. Hackman & Warnow-Blewett, 1987; Samuels, 1991 - 1992) whereas documenting society aims to create an archival record that documents an entire society (Booms, 1987; Reed, 2009). For archivists operating under either of these strategies the value of records is to be found in how well they represent the society that created them, and how significant the event, person or phenomena they document is to that society.

Macro-appraisal, developed in the 1990s and 2000s by Canadian archivists seeks to combine postmodern theory and practice to form a theoretically supported, planned and systemic approach to appraisal (Cook, 2004, 2005; Cunningham & Oswald, 2005; Ridener, 2009c).It draws explicitly on Anthony Giddens structuration theory and seeks to identify value by analysing the components that Giddens' sees as making up society (agents and structures and their interactions) as well as Mary Douglas's routinized functions of organisations (Cook, 2005).

> 'Macro-appraisal correspondingly seeks to suggest how such societal values may be determined in working reality by the archivist by analysing the attributes, and points of special intersection (and sometimes conflict), between three interrelated entities: (1) the creators of records (that is, structures, agencies, people); (2) socio-historical processes (that is, functions, programmes, activities, even transactions which the creators make on behalf of citizens); and (3) citizens, clients, customers or groups upon whom both function and structure impinge, and

> whom/which in turn influence both, directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly' (Cook, 2004, p. 8).

Functional analysis is a central part of macro-appraisal, identifying the functions, transactions, and activities then relating these back to people and wider processes. Functional analysis is also central to most records continuum approaches to appraisal. In an Australian context functionalist approaches to appraisal dominate the literature with authors like Chris Hurley writing extensively on different aspects of it (Hurley, 1993, 1995a, 1995b; Hurley & McKemmish, 1990). Hurley has also explored provenance in-depth (2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d) and its relationship to appraisal. One major contribution of Hurley's work has been the concepts of ambient function, multiple simultaneous provenance and parallel provenance. Ambient functions refer to 'functions' that validate provenance by referring to a phenomena outside of the recordkeeping system. Multiple simultaneous provenance refers to the existence of multiple, differing, sometimes incommensurable provenances. Both these concepts will be discussed in more detail in the chapter 3.1 and chapter 3.2.

One way to frame records continuum approaches to appraisal is a shift from the focus on preservation to the creation of infrastructure to allow for the creation and preservation (if required) of records. Arguments from archivists like Glenda Acland in the 1990s frame appraisal as 'the essential element of archival intellectual control (Acland, 1991, p. 11) over and above the more passive physical defence of records. A similar argument is put forward by Alexandra Eveleigh in her doctoral thesis nearly 30 years later, and although I do not think she identifies as a records continuum theorist it speaks strongly to a records continuum perspective. Eveleigh describes a future where 'archivists [are] focusing less on organising and describing archival content, and more on creating the "structure to allow people to make their own structures" (Hinton 2009, p.44)' (Eveleigh, 2015, p. 65).

The purpose of appraisal according to some commentators (Cook, 2005; Cunningham, 2000; Cunningham & Phillips, 2005) goes beyond an instrumentalist one of selecting or creating records, with transparent and clearly articulated appraisal conceptualisations and methodologies also supporting the accountability of the archival institution itself.

> 'Without clearly stated and well-understood theory that is continually evolving and relevant, appraisal practice soon becomes directionless, inconsistent, and, when challenged, undefendable to the wider public and unaccountable within larger archival mandates' (Cook, 2005, p. 102).

To use a cliché transparent appraisal ensures someone is watching the watcher. It is worth us remembering the role of archives and records in 'provid[ing] a means of democratic accountability, a means of empowering citizens against potential maladministration, corruption and autocracy' (Cunningham & Phillips, 2005, p. 303). It seems from the various inquiries and commissions mentioned in the reflection of this thesis something is going wrong. Evidence from these inquiries and commissions suggest that the records required for oversight and accountability are not being created (NT Royal Commission, 2018; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017).

The literature dealing with issues of postmodernism, power, identity, governance, and accountability also fundamentally speak to the role and responsibilities of the archivist. This in turn raises questions about who is responsible for tasks related to records outside of the archivist's remit, however defined. One response to both the questioning of the power of archivists, the responsibilities of archivists, and systemic issues identified in the reflection chapter has been participatory approaches to archives. Presumably this includes appraisal. Described by Booms as 'the central function of the archivist' one that 'carries the greatest social significance, and unmistakably characterizes and defines the professional image of the archivist of today' (Booms, 1987, p. 71), and by Cook as 'the only archival endeavour, a continuing activity without end, the heart of archives' (Cook, 2004, p. 7).

Despite this there is limited discussion of contemporary appraisal theory in the literature, or how the ideas and concepts of postmodernism so widely embraced by many in the archival field may influence not just the concept of appraisal but associated methodologies. In particular, the concept of participatory archives has been explored in regard to description, organisation, and collection of archival materials, but not appraisal in a records continuum sense (Caswell & Mallick, 2014; Eveleigh, 2012; Huvila, 2008; Pang, Liew, & Chan, 2014; Sexton, 2015; Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007; Theimer, 2014). There is an opportunity here to further explore and render explicit the theory underpinning appraisal. My first research question aims to address this gap.

> What are the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal?

## *Participatory Archives*

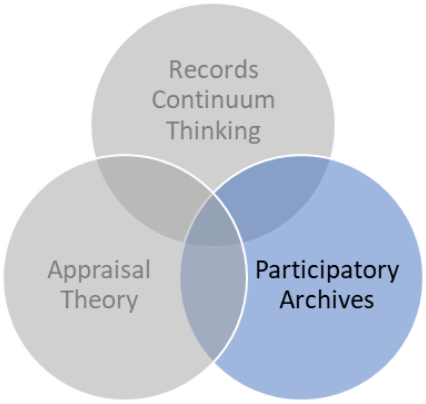


*figure 17. Participatory archives*

The third and final area of archival theory to be examined is the idea of participatory archives. I am using this term to apply broadly to participatory approaches to archival and / or recordkeeping praxis, theory, or methodology. As there are countless definitions of participatory from numerous disciplines, a more concrete definition will be attempted in chapter 3.2 and chapter 3.3 of this thesis. For now, when I use the term participation I simply mean non-archivists or recordkeeping professionals being involved in activities traditionally viewed as archival. This involvement may be merely symbolic or much more conceptual, active, or explicit. Regardless it is worth starting from the broadest possible base so as to explore what is actually meant by participatory archives. As I progress along in this thesis the scope of what is "true" participation can be narrowed and defined.

This definition is very similar to the one provided by Eveleigh:

> 'Participation in this thesis is taken to mean the active involvement (for the purposes of this research, usually taking place online) of an individual in some task or pursuit which results in the creation or digital reproduction of descriptive, contextual or affective metadata about archives' (Eveleigh, 2015, p. 19).

There are innumerable ways to group, dissect and discuss the literature on participatory appraisal. Anna Sexton (2015) explored the literature in her PhD thesis with the help of paradigms, Eveleigh groups the literature into more grounded sets based on the implied or explicit aims espoused by their authors, resulting in groups like the archival commons and the learning machine (Eveleigh, 2012). Greg Rolan sums up the participatory in the literature as follows:

> 'Definitions appear to encompass the management of records under community control (Flinn 2011); consideration of community or crowd-sourced submission and annotation of content (Haythornthwaite 2009); and the acknowledgement of the rights of multiple stakeholders in

> records—irrespective of the records' physical location or custodial arrangement (Gilliland 2014a)'(Rolan, 2017a, p. 196).

There are a number of rationales embedded in the participatory archival literature to justify a participatory approach. Some question the capacity of archivists, recordkeeping and archival systems to ethically and accurately represent individuals and communities (Caswell & Mallick, 2014; Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007). Some theorists point out the tendency of archives and archival practice to 'overwhelmingly privilege the voices of those with power and influence in society' (Flinn, 2010). This privileging often occurs alongside the transformation of those without such power and influence into objects of the record (Flinn, 2010; Sexton & Sen, 2018).

The consequences of this objectification have been described and studied. Some claim this practice can result in a denial of individuals agency and autonomy and therefore rights (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014). Iacovino's (2010) participatory approach involves reframing the subjects of records as active agents. As agents people have rights and responsibilities which may include participation in recordkeeping and archives.

> 'In a fully implemented participant model, every contributor, including the person who is the subject of the document, has legal and moral rights and responsibilities in relation to ownership, access and privacy' (Iacovino, 2010, p. 362).

Additionally the literature warns about the damage done by archivists who perpetuate Othering by creating 'incomplete and decontextualized representations of entire communities or social groups (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007). Michelle Caswell and Samip Mallick 's (2014) work also raises concerns about the capacity of archives to accurately and ethically represent people without their input, citing the paucity of formal systems to capture the emotional elements of people's stories.

At a more practical level the participatory literature also points out the financial and resource benefits of allowing the public to participate in archives, records and recordkeeping (Anderson & Allen, 2009).

> 'Such a commons could support the goals of a documentation strategy by relying on a decentralized market-based approach to archival representation, appraisal, and retention rather than the more centralized approach that has proven to be pragmatically unworkable' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, p. 384).

Anderson and Allen's (2009) vision of a archival commons draws on economic theory and re-frames records as non-rival goods, a type of resource that 'is not consumed by use and can be infinitely repurposed in numerous settings' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, p. 387). This re-use not only saves

resources but each re-use or re-engagement is seen as potentially adding to the archive. Flinn also makes this point, but from a socio-political rather than purely economic perspective. 'All who come into contact with the archive (directly and indirectly) the 'community of the record', can and do affect our understanding and knowledge of that archive' (Flinn, 2010).

The question of who can and should create and manage records is taken a step further in some of this literature where the very purpose of records, recordkeeping and archiving is questioned (Huvila, 2008) proposes a 'radical user orientation' where the central aim of archives is not preservation but accessibility and use.

The literature that emerged surrounding participatory archives appears to focus on participatory archiving as a whole rather than any individual aspect or process. Although there is some talk about the theoretical foundations of participatory appraisal and the theoretical 'fit' of participatory archives within the archival realm, there doesn't appear to be extensive and exclusive investigation into the theoretical principles, justifications and implications of participatory approaches to archives. Perhaps the closest attempts to theorise agency and participatory archives has been the work of Gregory Rolan (2017a). One of the aims of this thesis is to do just that – explore the theoretical principles, justifications and implications of participatory approaches to archives (appraisal in particular). This aim in encapsulated in my second research question:

> *How might social theory extend and support records continuum thinking and what might this mean for participatory appraisal?*

## Conclusion

While the archival literature has engaged with issues of power, government and accountability and agency there is scope to explore further, utilising some of the sociological and philosophical theories and theorists who deal with these issues. The lack of clear definitions of key concepts like power and agency in much of the archival literature alongside Cook's (2005) call for archival theory to be constantly evolving has reinforced my aim to clarify and extend existing records continuum thinking. The literature also demonstrated precedence for the examination of archives and records through a postmodern lens, drawing on external thinkers and figures (Brothman, 1993; Caswell, 2010a; Harris, 2011; Upward, 1997). Alongside these I also found a gap. While participatory approaches to archives at a conceptual level had been studied extensively in the literature (Caswell & Mallick, 2014; Evans et al., 2019; Eveleigh, 2012; Findlay, 2017; Flinn & Sexton, 2013; Huvila, 2008, 2011; Iacovino, 2015; Newman, 2012; Pang et al., 2014; Rolan, 2017a, 2017b; Sexton, 2015; Sexton & Sen, 2018; Theimer, 2014) missing is an extensive examination of the implications for appraisal.

Hans Booms justifies why appraisal is so significant, describing it as central to the archival endeavour and as the archivist's greatest responsibility (1987, 1991 - 1992). This thesis seeks therefore to examine how social theory could extend and support conceptualisations of participatory appraisal within a records continuum thinking framework. First however what is meant by both records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal need to be clarified. In the next chapter of this thesis the methodology which I have used to address these two questions will be explained before section two and the unpacking of these key concepts begins.

# Chapter 1.2: Methodology

## Paradigms and Research Design

I strongly relate to Sir Terry Pratchett's "*Valley Filled With Clouds Technique*":

> 'You're at the edge of the valley, and there is a church steeple, and there is a tree, and there is a rocky out-crop, but the rest of it is mist. But you know that because they exist, there must be ways of getting from one to the other that you cannot see. And so you start the journey' (Pratchett, 2014 p. 88).

Although Pratchett was speaking of writing fantasy novels I felt his description would apply just as well to my research process. Throughout this research project, and particularly during research design and the early phases of data collection, reading, and analysis, 'landmarks' stood out above the clouds. The challenge for me as a researcher was to ascertain the veracity of these landmarks and their relationships to each other. It would be dishonest to say I knew why all the landmarks stood out, whether they be concepts, themes, people, or documents. But I knew they were important.

I have explained some of the early landmarks for me; Work surrounding records and people who have experienced out-of-home 'care', Records continuum thinking, the concept of the Other, the work of Karen Barad, Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Levinas and Tzvetan Todorov, appraisal theory, the concept of discourse (Foucauldian), the Retention and Disposal Schedule for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the mandatory offshore detention of asylum seekers by the Commonwealth Government of Australia. I have also explained the number of reasons why I have to moved away from my original focus on records of people who experienced or were experiencing offshore immigration detention to theorising participatory appraisal in the records continuum.

This chapter will discuss the four interrelated concepts that describe how I did my research and addressed my third research question:

> *How might the adaption and use of Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis and diffractive analysis contribute to archival scholarly practice?*

Like archival scholars before me I am taking external theoretical frameworks and methods and applying it in an archival context (Bunn, 2017; Dunbar, 2006), in this case discourse and diffractive analysis.

The metatheoretical paradigms, research approaches, and methods brought together alongside the research design, rationale, and research questions form my methodology. These can be seen in figure 18 below

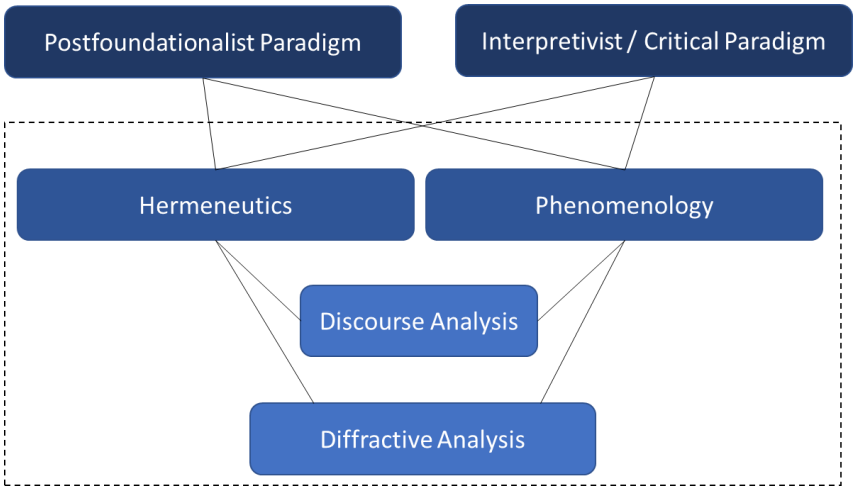


*figure 18. Meta-theoretical positions, Methodology, and Methods*

Certain metatheoretical paradigms support different research approaches, which in turn form the inspiration and basis of different methods. By research approaches I am referring to high level methods, in this instance, hermeneutics and phenomenology. Methods refer to the 'design for undertaking research, which is underpinned with theoretical explanation of its value and use' (Williamson & Johanson, 2013a, p. xxi).

The metatheoretical paradigm was originally a mix of interpretivist and critical paradigms before it shifted into a postfoundational one. The shift in paradigm necessitated a change in my approach to the methods, tools, and techniques I had selected. While nominally the methods remained the same my interpretation of them and thus application of them differed. These changes emerged in response to difficulties with applying the original research methods and techniques and findings from the philosophical literature.

The primary methods were discourse analysis and diffractive analysis which drew on hermeneutic and phenomenological research approaches. Diagram 18 does not include the tools and techniques used to carry out the discourse and diffractive analysis. This is because of how fluid such tools and techniques often are, including very general tasks such as reading, note taking, and writing. Citation analysis was a tool used to scope the literature, and mapping to organise my thinking in terms of both analysis and writing. I will now go over the metatheoretical paradigms and research approaches before explaining the methods used and associated tools and techniques.

## Metatheoretical paradigms and research approaches

The metatheoretical evolution that occurred in this thesis is significant because different metatheoretical paradigms have close relationships with specific research approaches and methodologies. I will be discussing these high-level research approaches alongside the paradigms

they are most strongly associated with, beginning with interpretivist and critical paradigms before moving on to postfoundationalist ones.

### *Interpretivist and Critical Paradigms*

Interpretivist paradigms embrace social constructionism. This ontological and epistemological position means research is focused on understanding how people construct and experience the world, themselves, and each other (Williamson & Johanson, 2013b). Critical paradigms also tend to be constructivist and focused on meaning but extend beyond description to a critique of meaning including a type of self-critique often described as reflexivity. While both interpretivist and critical paradigms begin with description and often draw on hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches, critical research generally has an additional transformative goal (Bessant & Watts, 2007). The aim is often to empower a particular group through the description, uncovering, understanding, and sometimes challenging of the meanings ascribed to the social world (Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2001; Williamson, 2013).

The origins of interpretivist and critical paradigms and the research approaches commonly associated with them can assist in drawing out the distinctions between them. Interpretivism can be traced back to hermeneutics, historically the study of religious texts, now encompassing secular texts and human communication and meaning more broadly (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998).

> 'The term *hermeneutics* refers to the interpretation of a given text, speech, or symbolic expression (such as art). However, it is also used to designate attempts to theorize the conditions under which such interpretation is possible'(Gjesdal, 2019).

Hermeneutics dates back to when humans started writing, and in particular the analysis of religious texts in Europe during the middle ages. Phenomenology emerged far more recently and is focused on the understanding of lived human experience rather than the 'interpretation of a given text, speech or symbolic expression'(Gjesdal, 2019).

The turn of the 20th century saw a radical shift in many western European societies. During this time period there was a transformation from rural to urban, agricultural to urban, and religious to secular. This urbanisation and secularisation occurred alongside the emergence of the idea of the individual self and the subsequent birth of new intellectual traditions like Marxism. The urban, secular, culture that emerged during this period forms the backdrop for the emergence of phenomenology and later critical theory. The emergence of the idea of the individual as a distinct entity was the result of and resulted in a burst of interest in our internal lives. Phenomenology follows this interest by 'stud[ying] structures of conscious experience as experienced from the first-person point of view, along with relevant conditions of experience' (Smith, 2008). In the early to mid-20th century many

phenomenologists and other thinkers began questioning the ideas of their intellectual forefathers. This led, in part, to the emergence of critical theory.

> '[The] first generation of critical theorists was trying to understand what was preventing the European working class in advanced capitalist societies from waging the revolutionary struggle Marxism had predicated' (Bessant & Watts, 2007, p. 87).

As outlined in the citation above a key concern of critical theorists was the perceived failure of prediction made in Marxist political theory to materialise. Beyond Marxist political theory and praxis a lot of phenomenologists were trying to make sense of the horrors of the second world war especially the holocaust and perceived failure of an entire generation (and in some cases, that of respected academics like Martin Heidegger) to fully comprehend and respond to the dangers of fascism. The Frankfurt school was not only the focal point for the birth of critical theory – and by extension critical paradigms – but of prominent phenomenologists responding to Heideggerian theory in light of Heidegger's membership of the Nazi party.

A central tenet of critical paradigms is reflexivity (Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2001; Williamson, 2013). In my past academic life (as a Social Science student) I had been encouraged to attempt to disprove or imagine a situation where any statement I made might be false before I committed it to paper. This reflexive and critical questioning ironically led me to question critical and interpretivist paradigms themselves. Through my research, as Cecez-Kecmanovic (2001) did, I stumbled across a theory that better explained the phenomena I was studying. Although for me it wasn't just a theory but an entirely new paradigm – Postfoundationalism.

### *Postfoundationalist Paradigm*

Jumping back to Terry Pratchett's *Valley filled With Clouds*, I came to identify the theorists and theoretical concepts as my landmarks, and postfoundationalism as the pathway between them. What I first felt was a grab bag of concepts, methodologies and thinkers turns out to be part of an emerging paradigm. While many of the theorists did not self-identify, those that came later have labelled them postfoundationalist. This includes Hannah Arendt's and Emmanuel Levinas's work on othering, alterity and plurality (Topolski, 2015), Michel Foucault's work on discourse, phenomenology and the self (Mensch, 2001), deconstruction and the idea of difference (Marchart, 2007).

Postfoundationalist's reject what they call foundationalist theories and paradigms. Foundationalist theories and paradigms are defined as those that 'attempt to get to the roots of things, to their foundations or origins' (Mensch, 2001, p. 4). Postfoundationalist's are not anti-foundationalists (Marchart, 2007) they don't reject the possibility or even the need for foundations.

Postfoundationalism questions whether a final universal and static ground can actually be reached (Topolski, 2015).

This uncertainty around a static absolute essence or truth can be found in Derrida's critique of the drive to find the origin in *Archive Fever* (Derrida, 1996), Michel Foucault's shifting of focus from the meaning of discourses to conditions of possibility (Foucault, 2002), and how records continuum thinking focuses on the process of becoming rather than a "finished" record (McKemmish, 1994).

One manifestation of postfoundationalism is Karen Barad's (1998, 2003, 2007, 2010) theory of agential realism. This theory focuses on a shift from foundationalism to performativity. My interpretation is that representationalism is a specific type of foundationalism and performative approaches are a specific type of postfoundationalism. I bring these concepts up not only because I will be drawing extensively on Karen Barad throughout this thesis but also because she provides, what I feel, is the clearest explanation of the differences between foundationalist (focusing on representationalism) and postfoundationalist (especially performative) paradigms:

> 'The move toward performative alternatives to representationalism shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices/ doings/actions' (Barad, 2003, p. 802).

The focus is not on the essence, attributes or agreed nature of a phenomena, but on how it came to be so. 'Its attention to the phenomena is an attention to the connections it manifests, the very connections that must be present for presence to be constituted' (Mensch, 2001, p. 17). This focus calls back to elements of both hermeneutics and phenomenology that seek not only to describe meaning and experience but the conditions that render meaning and experience possible.

Such a paradigm has several methodological implications. I understand it to mean there is a need to study the development of ideas and phenomena to identify how they emerged and what made them possible. I also take away the idea that studying specific instances of things is better than generalised groupings, since human understanding is limited to the manifestation of instances rather than universal essences.

These metatheoretical positions lend themselves to an exploration of discourses and conceptualisations. This is reflected particularly in my first research question that seeks to identify the key concepts and discourses that underpin records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal. The findings of the exploration, iterative adaptation and application of discourse and diffractive analysis methods and techniques, and the outcomes of the analyses address my third research question:

*How might the adaption and use of Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis and diffractive analysis contribute to archival scholarly practice?*

## Identifying the Units of Analysis

The postfoundationalist paradigm I have embraced in this PhD project impacted on how I identified and analysed my data, the relevant scholarly discourse. Postfoundationalist theorists generally question the existence of a universal ultimate truth, and argue that all research has subjective elements (Graham, 2005). As a result many thinkers from this school avoid giving a set of methodological or analytical instructions to be followed like a formula. Instead thinkers like Foucault recommended a more "ad hoc" approach where the researcher takes what is needed and appropriate from different sources and applies them to their own research projects (Goodwin-Smith, 2010).

I could still use the building blocks of the paradigms postfoundationalism emerged from: interpretivism and critical paradigms. After all, postfoundationalism is concerned with tracing back the conditions from which things emerge. As discussed earlier phenomenology and hermeneutics are central methodologies that sit comfortably within interpretivist and critical paradigms. However, I had to keep in mind the contingency of findings if a truly postfoundationalist paradigm was adopted.

I had been exploring thought provoking and inspiring emerging literature around participatory appraisal. However, in line with critical paradigms I wanted to take this exploration further than providing a description. My task became identifying the core conceptual conditions of possibility required for the kinds of archival outcomes advocated for by the participatory archival literature. Part of that identification was through comparison with current discourses where participatory approaches were not emergent. The work of Michel Foucault provides a set of tools to identify these conditions of possibility through his Archaeology (Andersen, 2003; Fadyl, Nicholls, & McPherson, 2012; Foucault, 2002; Goodwin-Smith, 2010; Graham, 2005; Topp, 2000).

In this way, the essential concepts were identified. A very similar goal, to identify the conditions of possibility, is also ascribed to phenomenology:

> 'Phenomenologists search for essential or fundamental structures underlying experience. To locate these structures, one must be able to manipulate components to find out what must be there in order for such experience to occur. This variation in the structures of experience is usually done imaginatively – that is, within the consciousness of the phenomenologist' (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 98).

I assumed however that I would come across more than one discourse, so I needed a way to bring these discourses together. Foucauldian archaeological discourse analysis provided me with a way to describe and uncover discourse, but no way to imagine new possibilities, compare or integrate theory. For this I turned to Karen Barad's Diffractive Analysis.

### *Identifying the discourse*

To address my first research question I needed to identify the key concepts and discourses underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal. These key concepts form the conceptual conditions of possibility for records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal. As discussed above, postfoundationalism does not seek the "truth" or "origin" but explores the conditions that make something possible.

Once I had identified these conceptual and discursive conditions I used them to filter the social theory and philosophical literature. I excluded literature (theory, theorists and concepts) that did not address the underlying conditions of possibility for records continuum thinking or participatory archives. This process was not completely linear, some of the philosophical literature assisted me to better analyse and identify the core concepts of the archival literature. This then addressed the second research question:

> *How might social theory extend and support records continuum thinking and what might this mean for participatory appraisal?*

The data for this PhD research project originally included interviews, scholarly literature, government reports, inquiries and professional publications. After the evolution explained in the reflection at the beginning of this thesis I ended up focusing solely on the scholarly literature. Because the volume of scholarly literature is virtually limitless, I needed a way to scope and select the material I would focus on. Figure 19 shows the filtering process I went through.

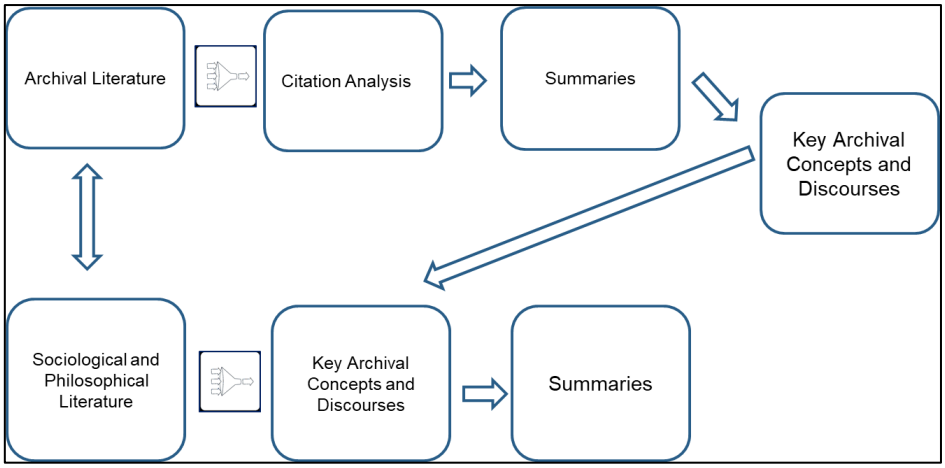


*figure 19. Identifying the discourse*

## *Citation Analysis*

Citation Analysis is a technique drawing on bibliometric data to analyse and compare the citation of scholarly publications (Williamson & Johanson, 2013b). In this context it was used to select publications from the large body of archival literature surrounding my topics of interest.

As can be seen in figure 19 the archival literature was filtered through a citation analysis, the results of which were then summarised. It was these summaries that led to the identification of key archival concepts and discourses. These key archival concepts and discourses where then used to filter the sociological and philosophical literature in turn creating another set of summaries. During this process I also had to keep in mind the pre-existing relationships between the archival literature and the sociological and philosophical literature.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of citation analysis. There is an assumption built in to this methodology that people cite authors / papers that influenced their work, and that people cite authors / papers they feel are of good quality. While academic integrity requires all scholars to cite the work that they draw on it cannot be assumed that everyone follows these rules. It is also possible scholars may cite work as they feel it is an example of poor research, to refute an argument, or because they feel they 'have to'. It is also possible some influential works may not be picked up by this software especially if it is published in non-traditional formats. Extensive discussion with my supervisors and with practicing archivists helped me check for missing works.

I used the citation software program Publish or Perish to carry out my citation analysis. My sample was therefore limited to those journals covered by Google Scholar (the source of *Publish or Perish's* data). The rationale for selecting *Publish or Perish* over some of its competitors was that it sources its data from Google Scholar, which in turn is more inclusive than other citation software packages

that may be locked into smaller datasets based on affiliations to certain publishing companies (Harzing, 2011).

The collection process involved the following steps:

- A series of key word searches using the names of members of the records continuum research group and key thematic terms such as appraisal, participatory, records continuum, and archival theory;
- Where too many results were found the key word archive was included, then the key word record; and
- Results were copied and pasted into excel where duplicates were removed as well as publications by individuals from other fields who happened to have the same name.

Once the citation analysis was completed I began to analyse the publications identified[2]. This analysis alongside discussion with my supervisors and archivists led me to supplement the selection of articles with 5 additional publications. The almost doubling of the publication count reflected the volume of academic work that has gone into participatory approaches to archives since the original citation analysis was conducted in 2014, the first year of my enrolment as a PhD student. It also includes two doctoral thesis that contain important conceptualisations that cannot yet be found, in full, in journal articles.

## Analytical Approach

### *Foucauldian discourse analysis and diffractive analysis.*

What followed (see figure 20. Data Analysis) was an iterative and recursive process drawing on two methodological and intellectual traditions: Foucauldian discourse analysis and diffractive analysis. The first stage was extensive reading, followed by Foucauldian style discourse analysis to identify key concepts and conditions of possibility. For me the identification of key concepts and conditions of possibility involved:

> ‘A deconstructing and reconstructing process somewhat similar to grounded theory analysis. Through imaginative variations, the researcher asks if all constituents, distinctions, relations, and themes could be different, or even absent, while still presenting the participants psychological reality’ (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 99).

[2] A list of the publications analysed in detail can be found in section 3 chapter 2 pp.175 -176.

The concepts and conditions of possibility I identified were used to scope my theoretical focus, creating the kind of back and forth that Bentz and Shapiro (1998) associate with hermeneutic[3] research. This process involves balancing a fine line between reducing things down to core essences – the antithesis of postfoundationalism - and relativism.

The next two stages drew on diffractive analysis to apply the social and philosophical theory to appraisal and archives, to analyse archival theory and practice through the lens of selected social and philosophical theory and vice versa. This led to the identification of potential extensions and amplifications of records continuum thinking and a series of acknowledgements to contextualise and frame participatory approaches.

In summary the analytical process involved reading, identification of key concepts, identification of conditions of possibility, application of these conditions and concepts to appraisal and finally a re-imagining of records continuum thinking and participatory approaches through postfoundationalist theory. These steps are depicted in the diagram below:

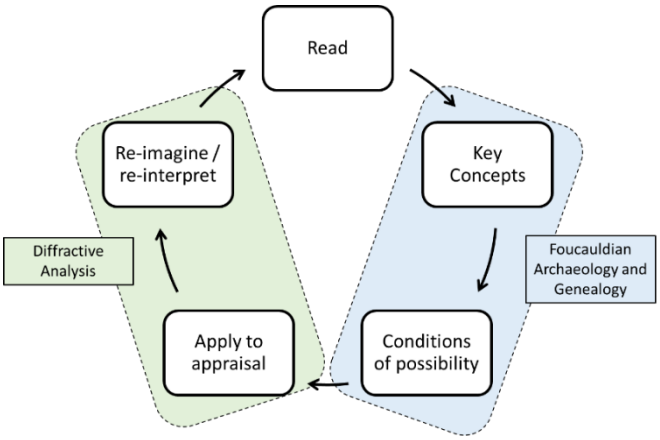


*figure 20. Data Analysis*

I will now step through each of these stages, while I am discussing them sequentially here for clarities sake, in reality they were often co-occurring and recursive.

[3] 'hermeneutics involves a movement back and forth between looking at an object of inquiry – texts – and analysing their meaning' (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 107) 'The aim of hermeneutic analysis is to reveal the meaning of human expression within a contextual awareness and perspective' (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 112)

## *Data Analysis: Read*

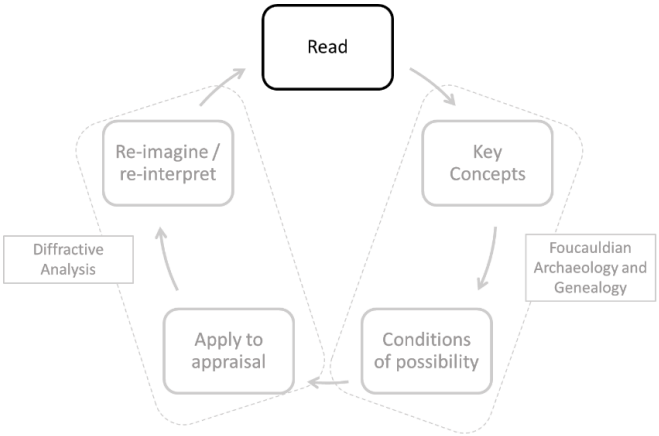


*figure 21. Data Analysis: Read*

While it may seem obvious the first step in my analysis was in-depth reading and note taking. My notes took the form of summaries and copies of quotes that stood out. I also engaged in mind and concept mapping. This mapping involved good old pen and paper as well as experimentation with various kinds of software. In the end I used Coggle[4] because it allowed for non-hierarchical concept mapping and the creation of multiple "starting" nodes. Figure. 22 shows a screen shot of one of the Coggle diagrams I developed to organise the various conceptualisations of different key terms in the archival literature across various articles. This mapping occurred both in the preliminary stage of analysis and during the write up phase to help organise my own thoughts.

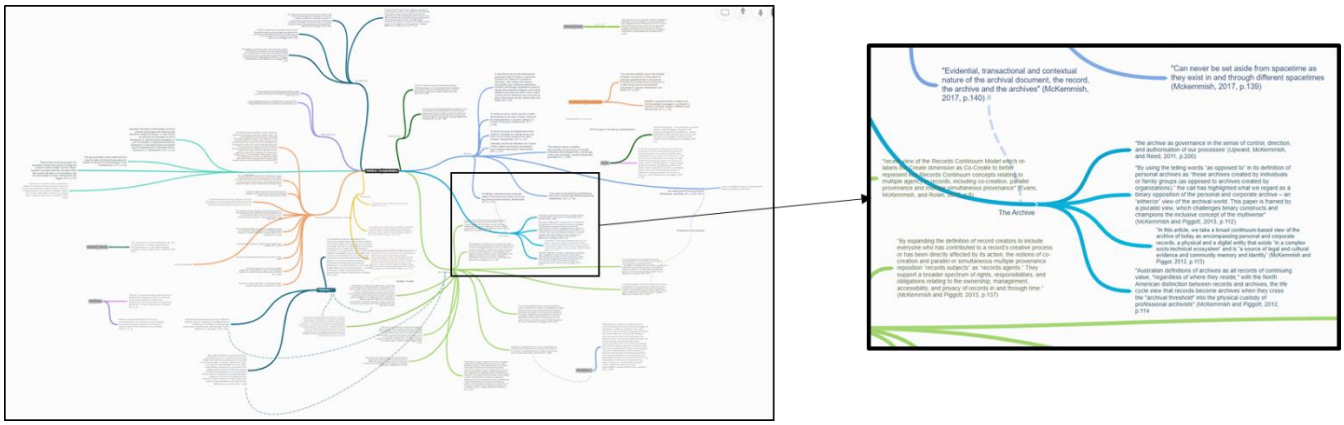

*figure 22. Coggle Mapping*

[4] https://coggle.it/

## *Data Analysis: Key Concepts*

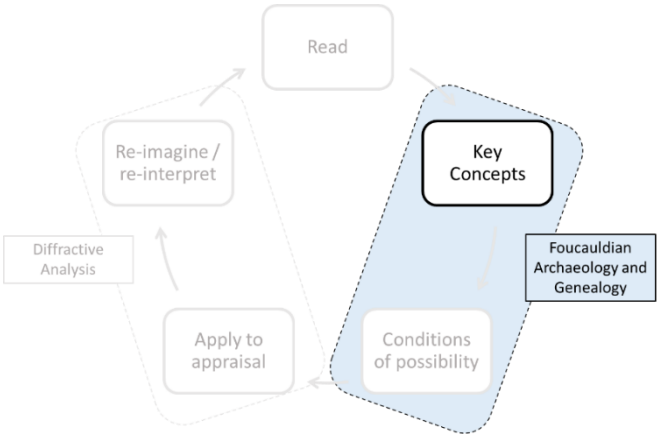


*figure 23. Data Analysis: Key Concepts*

The work of Michel Foucault[5] provided tools to assist me in the hermeneutic, phenomenological and theoretical aspirations of this research project. Theoretical work ' brings into coherent form the concepts and principles used in the explanation and conceptual organisation of reality' (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 140). Foucault's discourse analysis provided a tool for identifying and articulating the key concepts in records continuum thinking and participatory approaches to archives (hermeneutics) as well as their conditions of possibility (phenomenology). Furthermore, it enabled the kind of analysis that recognises the situated nature of phenomena in line with a postfoundationalist paradigm.

Foucauldian approaches attempt to establish who has authority to speak and be taken seriously, what they can speak about, and what is considered 'relevant' (Andersen, 2003; Bastalich, 2009; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Foucault, 2002; Goodwin-Smith, 2010; Rouse, 1994). Foucault argues that the way people define and distinguish between things not only helps us to make sense of the world but can actually marginalise or even outright deny certain experiences, identities and realities. Each discourse and narrative can be seen as a universe, populated with things and concepts with set meanings, and people who play different roles, all intertwined and inseparable. A way of exercising

[5] This research does not intend to imply expertise with Foucault, rather is seeking, as others have done before, to employ some of the methodological strategies and tools he and those inspired by him have created and documented.

power in these universes is by controlling the meaning of and defining the relevance of objects, concepts, and people (Andersen, 2003; Graham, 2005; Howe, 2008)[6].

There are two commonly identified types of Foucauldian discourse analysis, archaeological and genealogical (Gutting, 2019). Archaeological analysis is focused with discourse as it exists at a specific point in time and genealogy looks at the way certain concepts have evolved through time. Archaeology aims among other things to 'reveal the ways in which discourse imposes restrictions on what can be thought, said and done and show how the subject who 'speaks' discourse is constructed by it, rather than being its originator' (Fadyl et al., 2012, p. 480). Archaeology is not interested in the logic of a discourse, whether it makes grammatical sense, or in the 'truth' of a discourse. As such Archaeology does not aim to identify the meaning of a particular discourse. Rather, discourse analysis aims to identify the conditions that make a particular discourse possible, that render it meaningful and worthy of attention (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983). Archaeology is about identifying discourses as they exist in the here and now and, to a degree, the conditions that made them possible.

At the heart of this analysis is the statement, discourse, and discursive formation. Statements are 'units' of discourse (Andersen, 2003), the term discourse refers to 'the final, actually demarcated body of formulated statements – it is the archive of the discourse analyst' (Andersen, 2003, p. 8, p.8), and discursive formation refers to the way statements are ordered and dispersed. Each statement has a enunciative modality, objects, concepts, and strategies. I began my analysis by mapping these elements out including examples, sub-categories and definitions.

[6]An expert in Foucauldian discourse analysis, Professor Adrian Howe[6], was consulted with during the project for advice on how to translate Foucauldian theory into practice. Professor Adrian Howe taught me in my Undergraduate Degree (Social Sciences Policy and Research 2007 – 2009) at RMIT University. She had since moved to London but I managed to reach out to her in 2017 and we had a coffee and chat in Melbourne when she was visiting.

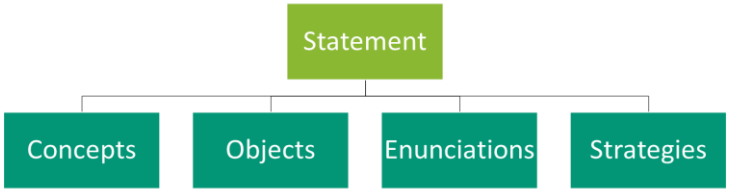


*figure 24. Elements of a statement*

Every statement consists of concepts, objects, enunciations (speakers), and strategies (the way the statement is formed). What identifies a statement is its active nature. Statements create, distribute and support objects, concepts, and strategies. To look at all statements in all the archival discourses would be impractical. There are too many and some are irrelevant. What is of interest here are the statements that contribute to the creation, dispersion and maintenance of archival objects and practices, what Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) would term *significant* statements.

Significant statements not only contribute to the creation, dispersion, and maintenance of archival objects and practices but they carry authority or a certain level of truth value. These statements push forward specific ways of thinking and discredit others (Graham, 2005). I found myself returning to the following three questions to identify whether something was a significant statement or something that could be passed over.

- If I had to summarise what the author is saying what would it be, would this statement be included?
- What concepts are essential for this statement to make sense? and
- Why might the author feel the need to tell me this?

At this stage I identified the key concepts, objects and speakers (enunciations). I had great difficulty untangling concepts from objects. In the end an expert on Foucauldian discourse analysis, Adrian Howe, reassured me that the difference is not really that important. That most objects have conceptual elements, although I suppose some concepts have no physical (object) elements. After this discussion I simply treated objects and concepts as the same type of entity and asked the same questions of each. Howe directed me to a translation of two essays by Michel Foucault titled *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972 – 1977* (Foucault, 1980) and her

book *Sex, Violence and Crime: Foucault and the "Man" Question* (Howe, 2008). Howe provides an explanation of the main focus of Foucault's methodology, identifying and questioning the relationships between knowledge and power. This means paying attention to 'who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said' (Howe, 2008, p. 22).

Whether something is an object or concept is to a degree irrelevant. Foucault's own description of his archaeology describes it as a way to identify 'local' discourses. Local discourses are those specific to a certain time and place, in this case, selected academic publications. This can then be extended by genealogy which allows other alternative discourses to come to light, through the questioning and problematisation of the existing local discourses.

> 'It [a genealogy] is based on a reactivation of local knowledges – of minor knowledges, as Deleuze might call them- in opposition to the scientific hierarchisation of knowledges and the effects intrinsic to their power: this, then, is the project of these disordered and fragmentary genealogies. If we were to characterise it in two terms, then "archaeology" would be the appropriate methodology of this analysis of local discursivities, and "genealogy" would be the tactics whereby, on the basis of the descriptions of these local discursivities, the subjugated knowledges which were thus released would be brought into play' (Foucault, 1980, p. 85).

It was challenging to identify what was actually important. I began by including almost everything. I spent much time attempting to conduct discourse analysis from the bottom up, that is from the elements that form a 'statement'. I found this approach ineffective; confusing attributes of a thing with things themselves. I had hoped it would take me one to two days to analyse each of the archaeological discursive entities (enunciations, objects, concepts, and strategies). As I went through, it became clear that some of the objects or concepts on my list were not really all that significant.

I used the same list for my concepts. In some instances, I had to split what could be queried as an object into two concepts. This was also taking a very long time. It was decided to no longer explore each of the sub-sub-questions I had mapped as often they were not relevant, but instead to treat them more as a checklist. The table below shows how I transformed each of the elements of a statement into a question.

| **Archaeological Discourse Analysis Term** | **Reframed as a Question** |
|---|---|
| Objects | What are the things spoken about in the discourse? |
| Enunciation | Who is able to speak? |
| Concepts | How are things spoken about it the discourse? How are they defined? |
| Strategies | Why are these things and not others spoken about and why do they mean x and not y in this discourse? |

*figure 25. Archaeological Questions*

I attempted analysis in NVivo, Excel, Lucidchart, Gephi, and a number of other programs. I eventually settled on simply using Word and physical index cards. The index cards were useful as I could physically rearrange them to look at how one concept, object, or enunciation had been discussed across publications. I then compared these and shortened the list of terms down again.

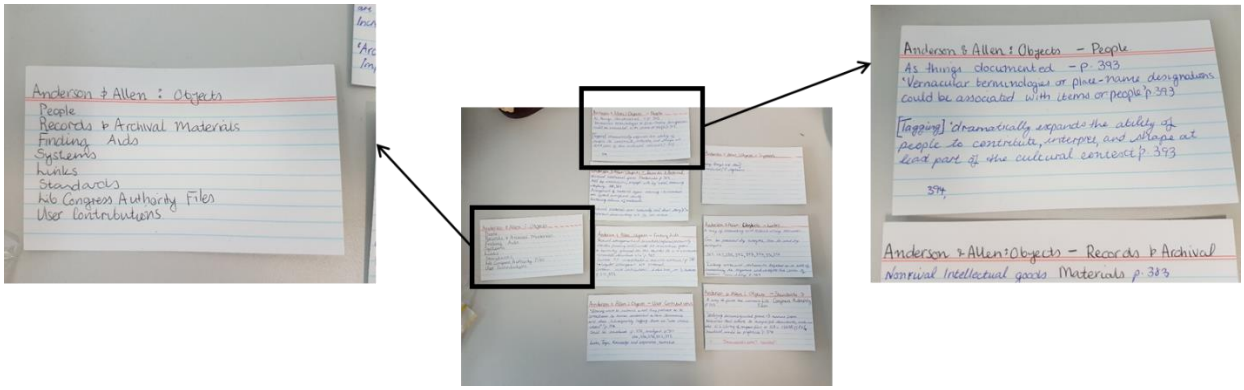


*figure 26. Selection of Index Cards from a Publication*

For each of the top articles identified in the citation analysis I created a series of index cards. First I created a card with a list of all the objects in an article. I later combined the objects and concepts into one list. For Anderson and Allen (2009) this included: People, Records and Archival Materials, Finding Aids, Systems, Links, Standards, Library of Congress Authority Files, and User Contributions. The concepts identified in Anderson and Allen (2009) included: Networks, Relationality/Contextual Meaning, Folksonomy, Classification Systems, Non-Rival Intellectual Goods, Commons, Structure, Agency, Access, Documentation Strategy, Functionalities, Decentralized, (Re) Arrangement, Structuration Theory and Postmodernism. A separate card was then created for each concept / object with a citation from the publication and some notes on the role that concept or object seemed to play in the discourse formulated by the article.

For example the index card for People reads:

As things documented – p.393

'Vernacular terminologies or place-name designations could be associated with items or people' p.393

[Tagging] 'Dramatically expands the ability of people to contribute, interpret, and shape at least part of the cultural context' p.393

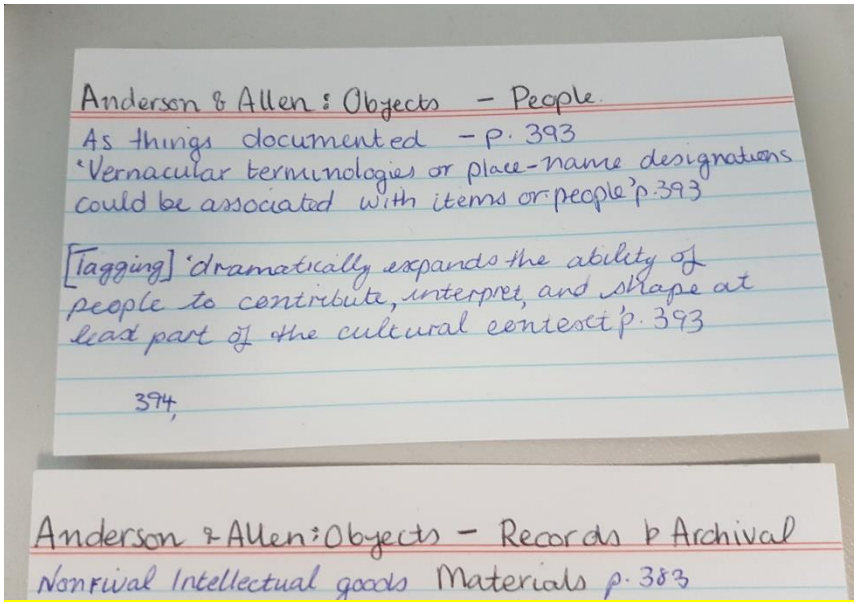


*figure 27. Close up of index cards*

One citation in Anderson and Allen (2009)'s article appeared to frame people as passive subjects to be documented. However, on the same page people were also discussed as having a degree of intellectual influence and engagement. I could then compare how the concept or object of People was used or conceptualised across the literature by re arranging the cards. Using the index cards with lists allowed me to identify objects or concepts that were raised in multiple publications at a glance.

## *Data Analysis: Conditions of Possibility*

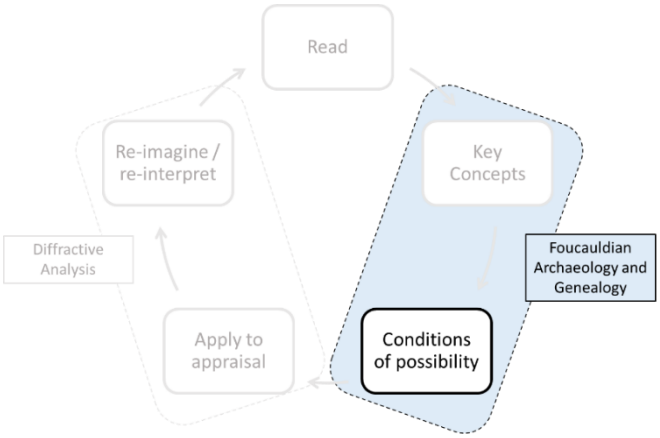


*figure 28. Data Analysis: Conditions of Possibility*

Conditions of possibility are the concepts, objects, strategies, people, and events that make certain conceptualisations and as a result practices possible. As I more fully embraced this postfoundationalist paradigm I realised that these were what I was seeking in the literature. I am not interested in finding the 'best way' to conceptualise appraisal, or to justify the applicability of participatory appraisal. To do so would be impossible and arguably clash with a postfoundational paradigm itself where nothing is fixed forever and everything is context dependent. My reengagement with Foucault's theory via his methodology really brought home to me this epistemological argument – people can only know about things as they appear in front of them, and people learn more about things by studying the process of their formation than any attributes they assume they have. Everything is constantly becoming (McKemmish, 1994), therefore the only way to explore the world is through specific manifestations of phenomena. In this instance this means exploration through a number of specific publications.

There are infinite possibilities; to try and find the foundation stone is like the quest for origins in Derrida's work on archives, fruitless, frustrating and impossible (Derrida, 1996). There are no totalities. 'In each case, the attempt to think in terms of a totality has in fact provided a hinderance to research' (Foucault, 1980, p. 81). This is perhaps why I found identifying the exact concepts, objects and speakers so difficult, I only have the trace, the imprint. What is possible however is to study how things came to be as they are, to explore what is necessary to enable certain outcomes to emerge. In section 4 I will describe the discourses identified and the pathways these open up to us, as well as the ones they make more challenging to travel.

> 'In general terms, Foucault's genealogies investigated history to provide clues as to why our present discourses are as they are (and not otherwise); how we come to know ourselves and others as subjects of our present discourses (e.g. the roles and identities that we take on) and

the relations of power that produce and maintain our present discourses' (Fadyl et al., 2012, p. 481).

The key concepts identified through the archaeological analysis were used as criteria for assessing the relevance of wider philosophical literature. I also traced the genealogy of records continuum writing of the 1990s, beginning with the theorists from outside of the archival oeuvre that were directly cited by records continuum thinkers. I then traced the genealogy of these thinkers. I Focused on those thinkers who dealt with the key concepts that came up through the analysis of the archival literature.

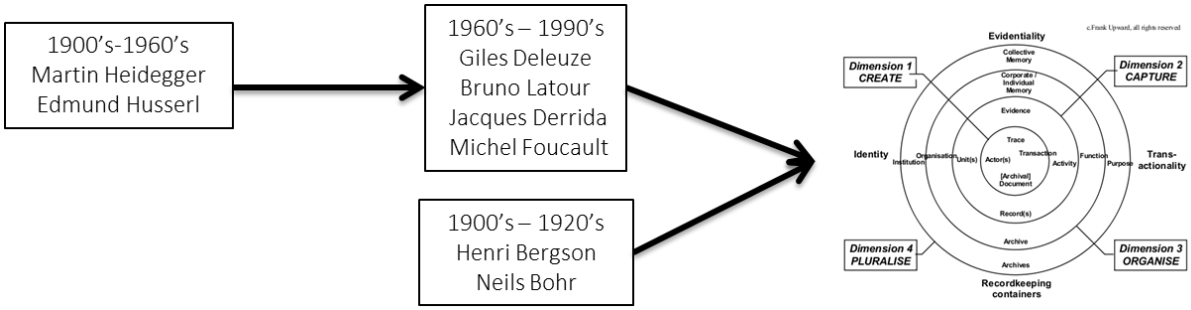


*figure 29. Records continuum thinking - related literature*

A second archaeology was then performed on the works that the genealogy surfaced. For example, the concept of distanciation is key in records continuum thinking, a genealogical analysis of this concept led me to Anthony Giddens, who in turn, led to Pierre Bourdieu. An archaeology of the key works of both Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu identifies another range of key concepts, objects and enunciations. Would records continuum thinking of the 1990s be possible without Anthony Giddens? Would Anthony Giddens be possible without Pierre Bourdieu? And so on.

I also traced the thinkers who influenced records continuum thinking forward through time. Exploring the thinkers who drew on the same ideas and approaches as records continuum thinkers but have not necessarily been referenced in current archival literature.

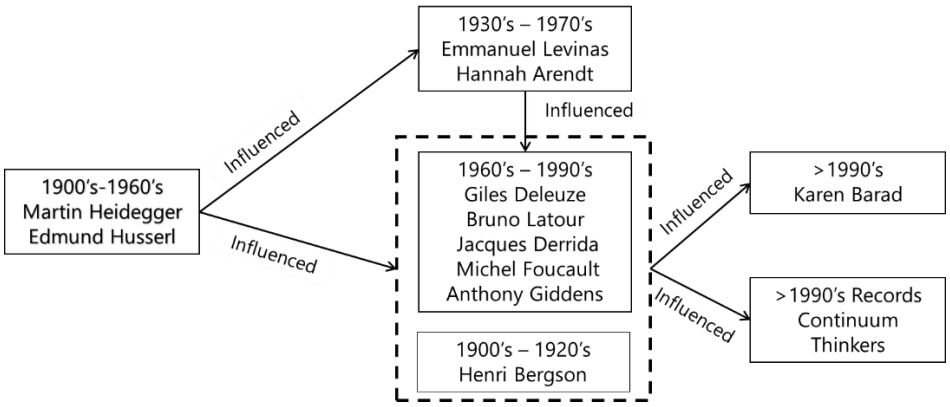


*figure 30. Social Theory and Philosophical Literature*

In this way I oscillated back and forwards through thinkers who offered concepts that were not only compatible with records continuum thinking but also provided a theoretical foundation that would support participatory approaches.

Theoretical research 'involves a interpretation of the meaning of, and intentions behind, prior theoretical work, theoretical inquiry is essentially hermeneutic. It always involves the interpretation and evaluation of existing theoretical or textual evidence for the generation of new theory' (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 144). Reflecting on this process now, it was likely influenced heavily by my grappling with archaeological discourse analysis and the drive to identify conditions of possibility and the hermeneutic focus on context.

## *Data Analysis: Apply to Appraisal*

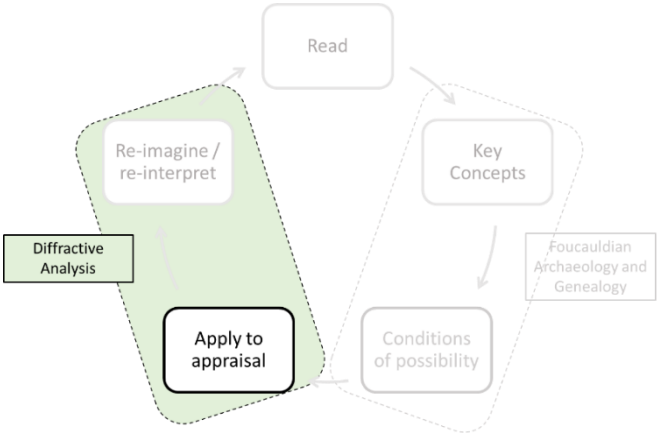


*figure 31. Apply to appraisal*

The final two stages of analysis for this project involved diffractive analysis, through which the data were brought together. This is a relatively new methodology based on performative understandings of the world and largely inspired by Karen Barad. It involves reading texts through each other rather than just looking at a phenomena from different perspectives (Barad, 1998, 2003, 2007, 2010; Parkins, 2008; Van Der Tuin, 2011). With diffractive analysis I am not just looking at archival practice

and events from another perspective. I am not rejecting archival theory in favour of another, but looking for points of alignment and coherence.

> 'My [Barad] aim in developing such a diffractive methodology is to provide a transdisciplinary approach that remains rigorously attentive to important details of specialized arguments within a given field, in an effort to foster constructive engagement across (and reworking of) disciplinary boundaries' (Barad, 2007, p. 25).

My interpretation of this method is to use social theory like a grate or two boulders. When waves (records continuum thinking and participatory approaches) pass through the theory they are disrupted and diffracted causing the emergence of new patterns. In implementing the diffractive analysis I used the social theory and philosophical literature as lenses through which to view the key concepts identified in the archival literature. Like a fun house mirror I was interested in the way such perspectives stretched and distorted these concepts and the possibilities they opened. Karen Barad's diffractive analysis extends the imaginative component of phenomenological research to enable the conversation of multiple different conceptualisations leading to new possibilities (Murris & Bozalek, 2019a, 2019b).

While I have written little on diffractive analysis compared to other techniques this is not because it is simple or less important. The internal nature of this technique means it cannot be described in the way that citation or Foucauldian analysis can. I was not, as with my discourse analysis, looking for particular elements or entities. I was looking for contradictions and clarifications. This involved revisiting the archival literature and imagining how the social theory I was exploring may explain the phenomena and discourses they depicted. In truth this process was a constant one from before I even began the PhD, one I think most of us regularly engage in. Trying to apply familiar frameworks to make sense of new information, trying to find an alternative perspective so you can see things from another angle.

### *Data Analysis: Re-imagine and Re-interpret*

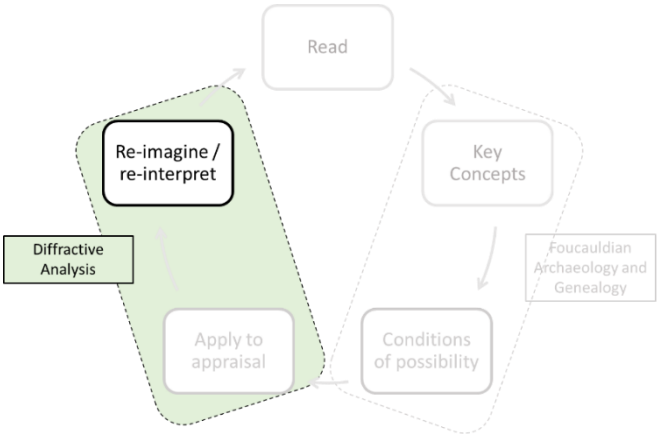


*figure 32. Re-imagine / re-interpret*

Re-imagining and re-interpreting the key concepts and conditions of possibility really pushed me beyond an interpretivist or critical paradigm. I was no longer describing what existed. I was imagining how an extended set of key concepts could change the way records continuum thinking and participatory approaches to archives are understood and therefore carried out in Australia. I was reflecting on the kinds of behaviours that were likely to emerge from different logical premises. If I assume only archivists have the relevant skills and knowledge to contribute to collections – there is little reason to consult outside of institutions. If this assumption is changed, and I assume I cannot know what other people know, or what skills they have, the argument for consultation becomes more logically persuasive.

## Conclusion

This research project began within an interpretivist / critical paradigm but ended up drawing on a postfoundationalist paradigm. The research methods used were iterative and recursive and included phenomenological and hermeneutic elements. The specific approaches included a Foucauldian styled discourse analysis, citation analysis and diffractive analysis. While much of the method was imaginative and conceptual, writing also played a large role in my analytical process. The concepts were too complex and nuanced to be coded using existing qualitative software, in part because I was not looking for essences but conditions and contexts. Writing section 2 helped me to identify key concepts and allowed me to compare and analyse these diffractively. Reflecting on the methodology, the process of actually writing the thesis was in and of itself a method.

## Section 1: Conclusion

This section of my thesis has established the research aims, questions, and approaches laying the foundation for the analysis to commence in section 2. As discussed, I will be addressing three research questions throughout this thesis, the first of which will be addressed by section 2 and section 3. In the next section I present my analysis of the key thinkers who influenced records continuum thinking and provide an introduction to records continuum thinking itself. Section two functions to provide you, the reader, and me with enough context to launch into a more nuanced discussion of records continuum thinking and participatory approaches to appraisal.

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# Section 2: Conditions of Possibility

## Contents

# Section 2: Introduction

The first primary research question of this thesis aims to identify the key concepts and discourses underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal. As discussed in the methodology chapter, I have adopted a postfoundationalist approach to analysis in identifying these key concepts and discourses. In making sense of a phenomena postfoundationalism explores how it came to be. Referred to as conditions of possibility, this section identifies the thinkers and theories that, if we were to travel back in time and erase, would significantly alter the emergence of the phenomena under study – perhaps even prevent those phenomena from existing at all.

The two phenomena under study here are records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal which themselves will be analysed in section three of this thesis. I argue the intellectual genealogy of these phenomena form a significant part of their conditions of possibility. We cannot know exactly what caused the emergence of these phenomena, but we can know the intellectual lynch pins without which they would look radically different, if they would exist at all. For example, records continuum thinking draws explicitly on Anthony Giddens. It is unlikely we would have the same type of records continuum thinking if Anthony Giddens had not been a sociologist but had instead chosen a different career path[1]. Perhaps the same ideas underpinning structuration theory would have emerged from a different source, perhaps not.

This section consists of two chapters. The first describes the work of six thinkers who I argue serve as intellectual lynch pins supporting both participatory appraisal and records continuum thinking: Henri Bergson, Giles Deleuze, Bruno Latour, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Anthony Giddens[2]. I firmly believe that without an understanding of these thinkers, it is not possible to obtain a basic understanding of records continuum thinking. The second chapter provides a brief overview of records continuum thinking and records continuum models. The aim here is to provide you with enough background and contextual information so that section three of the thesis makes sense. Section three involves an in-depth discourse analysis of records continuum thinking and participatory approaches to archives.

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[1] This concept is humorously explained by Terry Pratchett as the "trouser legs of time", the universe is like a pair of trousers, and depending on how you act you might travel down the left leg or right leg. 'It's an image of a shape with one entrance and two exits. One may imagine falling continually into the waistband, not knowing from which leg one may emerge. So does history occur: in myriad, often unconsidered, minor decisions' Pratchett, T. (2001). *Theif of Time*. Harper Collins. https://doi.org/9781407035284, 1407035282

[2] There are of course many more and an extensive genealogical analysis (in a Foucauldian sense) would look far broader and likely include influences such as western archival theory, governance and political theory and a host of other strands. Not to mention factors such as geography, environment, technological capacity and major world events.

# Chapter 2.1: External Theorists in Archival Theory

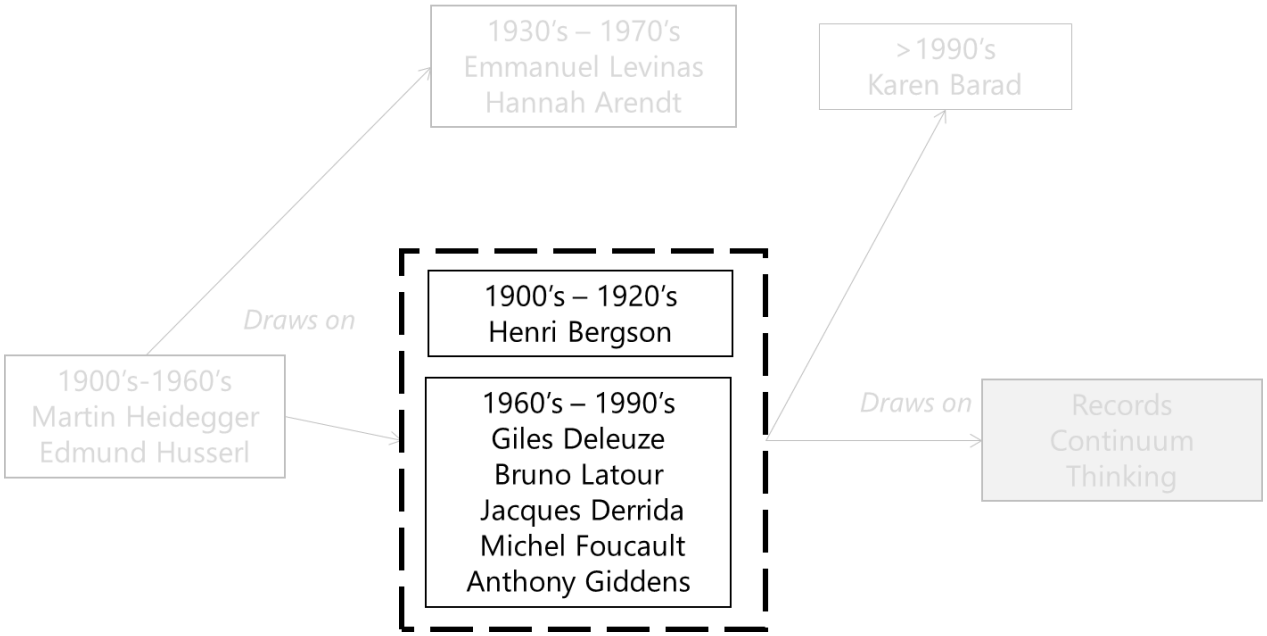



*Figure 33. Chapter 2.1 Road Map*

## Introduction

In order to understand the key concepts and discourses underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal, from a postfoundationalist perspective, I need to identify the intellectual foundations from which they were built. Archival literature hasn't emerged in a vacuum and has been heavily influenced by a number of sociologists and philosophers. Using figure 33 as a roadmap this chapter will present my reflections and interpretations of the key ideas put forward by Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, Bruno Latour, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Anthony Giddens. The theorists mentioned in the greyed-out sections will be addressed in section 4 of this thesis. These are obviously not the only external writers and thinkers to have influenced archival discourse but they seem to be the most commonly drawn upon. I am not aiming to identify the conceptualisations of archives, records and archivists in this chapter but to provide an overview that can be built on when we turn to records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal in section 3. Ending with a response to the first of my primary research question:

> *What are the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory archives?*

I will begin with Bergson and his concepts of multiplicity and duration. Followed by Deleuze's discussions on difference and morphonogenic process, then I will briefly cover Latour's actants.

These three thinkers provide an ontology and epistemology for understanding the material world. This is not to say they ignore other aspects, but the concepts traditionally attributed to Bergson, Deleuze, and Latour used by archivists tend to focus on what exists in the world and how we can make sense of it. The second set, Derrida and Foucault provide an ontology and epistemology of language, discourse, and meaning. They do not ignore the material but, their concepts related to materiality are not of major focus here. Instead the focus will be on Derrida's consignation, the archive, language and justice and on Foucault's discourse and power. I argue that the material ontology and epistemology described by Bergson, Deleuze, and Latour are not incompatible with Foucault and Derrida. The last theorist discussed here, Giddens, straddles the two groups in terms of focus. I will finish with a brief discussion of Anthony Gidden's structuration theory and writing on time-space distanciation. As we proceed I have inserted a copy of figure 33 with the theorist being discussed in bold font.

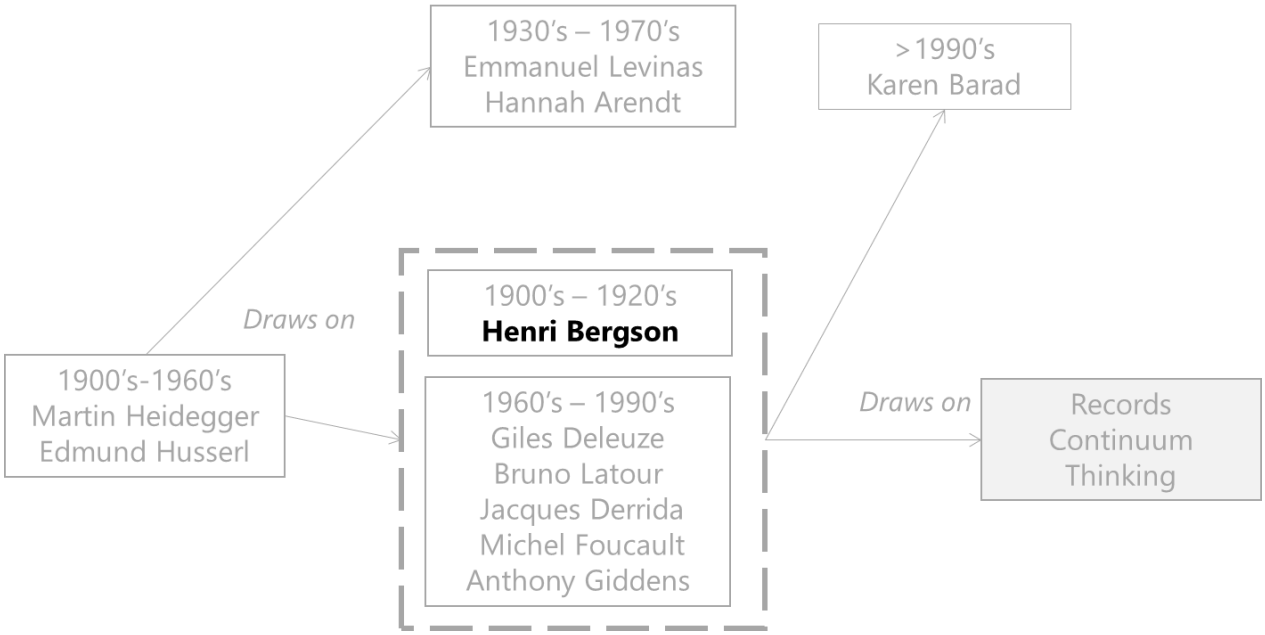



*Figure 34. Chapter 2.1 Road Map: Henri Bergson*

## Henri Bergson 1859 – 1941

The first thinker to be discussed is Bergson. My interpretation is that a question is being posed by Bergson, how can our experiences and the world be so diverse and different (heterogeneous) yet part of the same whole (continuity)? Multiplicity is the answer.

> 'Bergson's most enduring contribution to philosophical thinking is his concept of multiplicity. Bergson's concept of multiplicity attempts to unify in a consistent way two contradictory features: heterogeneity and continuity' (Klose, 2009).

Bergson talks about two types of multiplicity. Quantitative multiplicity and qualitative multiplicity. Quantitative multiplicity exists where there are multiple separable discrete entities of the same thing. Leonard Lawlor and Valentine Moulard Leonard (2016) draw on Bergson's example of a flock of sheep to explain quantitative multiplicity.

> 'When we look at a flock of sheep, what we notice is that they all look alike. We sense no qualitative change as we move from one to another. We also notice that we can enumerate the sheep. We are able to enumerate them because each sheep is spatially separated from or juxtaposed to the others; in other words, each occupies a discernible spatial location. Therefore, quantitative multiplicities, as Bergson says, are homogeneous and spatial. Moreover, because a quantitative multiplicity is homogeneous, we can represent it with a symbol, for instance, a sum: "25"' (Lawlor & Moulard Leonard, 2011).

The sheep form a quantitative multiplicity because they exist in different physical spaces (heterogeneity) but together form part of the same thing, and an untrained eye might see each individual sheep as being identical (continuity). Whether we are looking at ten sheep or twenty-five sheep we still perceive them as sheep. Having spoken with people who grew up in rural communities this analogy is not perfect, I'm sure many farmers and animal lovers know the personalities of the members of their flocks. My interpretation is that quantitative multiplicity allows us to differentiate things because they take up different spaces in the world. Perhaps a better example would be an inanimate object like a bunch of fruit. For a quantitative multiplicity It doesn't really matter what order I put five apples into a bowl, I will still end up with a bowl of apples. The existence of multiple apples does not turn them into something else.

In qualitative multiplicity there is a qualitative difference between multiple entities that cannot ever be fully articulated. Klose (2009) provides the example of a melody. A melody is a series of notes, but the notes themselves cannot be swapped around, added or subtracted, without changing the melody. You could add or subtract sheep from the flock and you would still be looking at sheep. If you add or subtract notes you have a qualitatively different melody. With qualitative multiplicity the order is essential.

> 'A melody or a symphony is to be experienced only as a whole. Its wholeness possesses an immediacy that cannot be broken up into its elements without losing its qualitative characteristics. Its temporal extension is pure duration' (Klose, 2009, p. 82).

These elements form a whole that exists through time. Qualitative multiplicities make sense to us, in part, because of memory and duration. If I instantly forgot each note as I heard it, I wouldn't be able to hear the melody.

Duration is the way we experience time as flowing rather than as compartmentalised isolated chunks, the past blends into the present and vice versa. One of the things that makes my experience of every moment unique (heterogeneous), is that it includes my previous experience. Duration is a key part of qualitative multiplicity. It is what allows us to perceive the melody rather than just single notes, because we can remember what came before and integrate it into what is happening in the present and carry that past and present into the future. Linked to Bergsonian space-time are relativistic understandings of space and time.

Relativistic understandings of space and time argue there is a complex interrelationship between space and time, that the two are not separate but singular and co-dependent[3]. There are two main

[3] The mathematics and details of such time-space are far beyond my capacity, and the limits of this thesis

theories about how objects and people exist through time-space. Endurance and Perdurance (Hales & Johnson, 2003).

> 'Roughly put, endurantism claims that objects persist by being wholly present at each moment at which they exist, while perdurantism claims that objects persist by having temporal parts at each moment that they exist' (Magidor, 2016, p. 509).

Bergson's qualitative multiplicity frames the world as becoming, interconnected, and quantitatively inseparable.

> 'He [Bergson] focused on the image of the universe as "becoming" rather than "being" and recognized that what is real is the continual change of form: form is only a snapshot view of a transition' (Boulton et al., 2015, p. 18).

## Bergson and Archival Thinking

From an archival perspective the consequences of Bergson's theory of qualitative multiplicity support shifts to understand archival material as existing in context and as ever changing. Each inscription, crinkle, fold or Fringerprint adds to a qualitatively different record or archive. A collection of records and / or archives is not like a flock of sheep. Our understanding of the nature of any collection is constantly shifting and changing depending on which record(s) and / or archive(s) are visible, and how they are described.

Frank Upward makes particularly heavy reference to Bergson and Bergsonian time in his archival writing. Explaining that like Bergson's qualitative multiplicity records exist through time, and cannot be made sense of as isolated individual entities (Upward, 1996, 1997, 2005, 2009). It is difficult to imagine records continuum thinking without this definition of records as existing through time. The Bergsonian idea of multiplicity is a conceptual condition of possibility for the emergence of records continuum thinking.

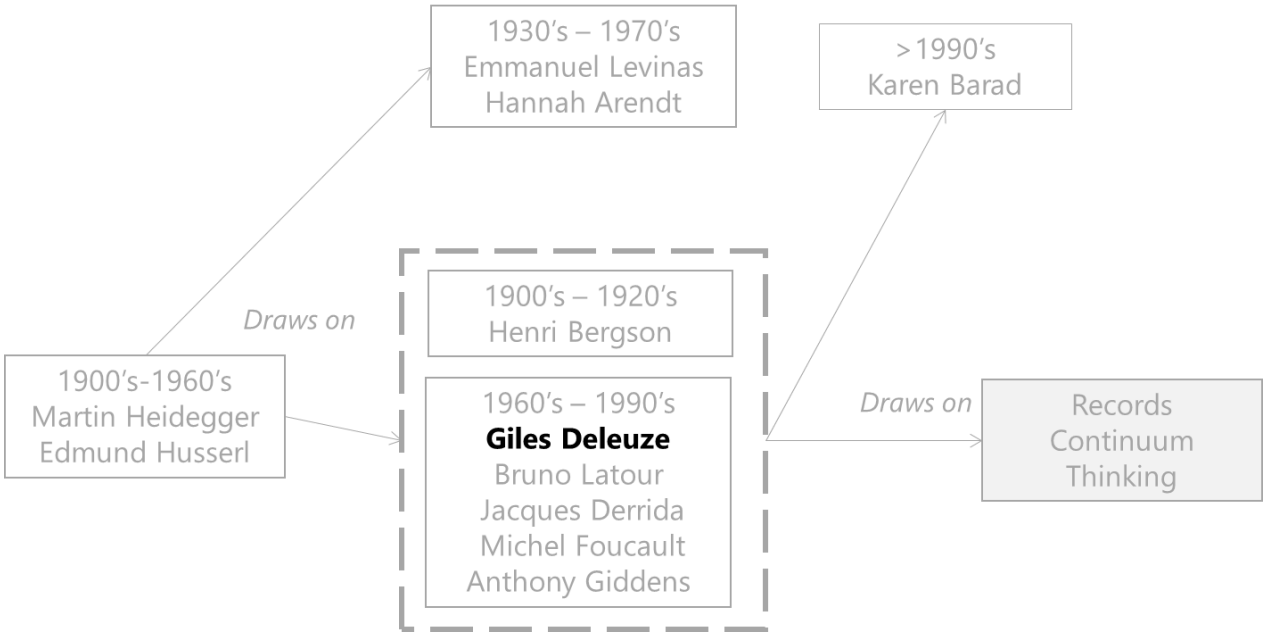



*figure 35. Chapter 2.1 Road Map: Giles Deleuze*

## Giles Deleuze 1925 – 1995

Like Bergson Deleuze also saw the world as an ever-evolving non-static process. The concepts of morphonogenic process and difference put forward by Deleuze have been cited by archivists such as Frank Upward and Eric Ketelaar (Ketelaar, 2002, 2005; Upward, 2009). Deleuze was heavily influenced by Bergson and saw the world as being made up of decisions, possibilities, and becomings (Colebrook, 2003; De Landa, 2004). His work is often referred to as transcendental or pluralist empiricism (Eriksson, 2005). Transcendence refers to 'what we experience as outside of consciousness or experience. We experience the real world as transcendent, as other than us or as external' (Colebrook, 2003, p. Xxix). There are, like anything, multiple ways of understanding empiricism. On the one hand is a school of thought that believes all possible knowledge is derived from the senses. According to Gane (2009) Deleuze adopts a definition of empiricism (traditionally opposed to rationalism)[4] that includes phenomena we cannot perceive with our physical senses (Gane, 2009). In this reading Deleuze's empiricism is based on two principles. First, that theory, or the abstract, does not un-problematically explain some world "out there". Theory, itself, also needs explaining.

[4] Traditionally empiricism refers to a belief that knowledge comes from the senses, while rationalism refers to a belief that knowledge comes from our thinking, often via mathematics or geometry Markie, P. (2017). Rationalism vs Empiricism. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. The Metaphysics Research Lab, Centre for the Study of Language and Information (CSLI), Stanford University. .

Second, the goal of "explaining" is not to find a substance, essence, or core entity, but rather to understand the conditions under which the thing in questions existence is possible (Gane, 2009).

> 'In Deleuzian ontology, on the other hand, a species (or any other natural kind) is not defined by its essential traits but by the *morphonogenic process* that gave rise to it' (De Landa, 2004, p. 10).

This morphonogenic process involves a never-ending chain of decisions and possibilities. To understand something, it is necessary to understand the decisions or branches that it travelled down to become what it is today, and to look at it from as many perspectives as possible.

If we take the example of my friend's cat Arthur, to fully understand what Arthur is we need to consider the many morphonogenic processes that led to his existence. We cannot focus solely on the genetic evolution of felines in response to environmental factors, because this leaves out the effects of generations of domestication and selective breeding. And while these factors help explain cats in general, why they have four legs not two, teeth designed to eat meat and not to grind grains, why they purr as adults not just as infants, it doesn't allow us to fully understand Arthur as a unique cat. There were obvious and conscious decisions made by his owners to adopt him, to take him to the vet regularly, and to socialise him in particular ways. These interactions also no doubt shaped his personality and behaviours which in turn shape the behaviour of his humans. There was also the decision made by his original owners to abandon him, so he was taken to the RSPCA and eventually adopted by my friends.

Deleuze probably wouldn't see Arthur as just a cat, but a series of decisions (genetic, environmental, social etc.) that led to relations (between Arthur and his owners, veterinary professionals, other animals in the neighbourhood etc.) and constantly shifting becomings. Decisions are not necessarily conscious in the sense of deciding what to eat for tea, but range from the "decision" of the cat's genes to be connected in a particular pattern amongst infinite possibilities to the "decision" of humans to domesticate cats. In this sense the cat is made up of all these decisions, which form relations between entities and break relations between others, from a subatomic to a meta-cosmic level.

The multiple perspectives required reflect Deleuze's argument that everything exists in an interconnected way. This interconnection was expressed by Deleuze and his colleague Guattari as a rhizome. A rhizome provides an analogy for how the world exists beyond a hierarchy. Rather than clear, linear, relationships between demarcated entities, there are connections at all levels which are both overt and subtle. These connections have no centre, no fixed boundaries or limitations.

> 'There are no singular positions on the networked lines of a rhizome, only connected points which form connections between things. A rhizomatic plateau of thought, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, may be reached through the consideration of the potential of multiple and relational ideas and bodies. The rhizome is any network of things brought into contact with one another, functioning as an assemblage machine for new affects, new concepts, new bodies, new thoughts; the rhizomatic network is a mapping of the forces that move and/or immobilise bodies' (Colman, 2010, p. 233).

Everything is all part of the one whole, despite the ever changing nature of what we perceive to be individual things. For example I am still the same me, despite my cells dying and reproducing, new neural pathways forming in my brain and changing tastes and a myriad of other changes. What I am today, as I write this is not the "final" product, I will never stop becoming and changing, and there is, at a meta level according to Deleuze no key goal or "finished" state for me to be in, so there is little point appealing to the end 'product' to understand me.

These "decisions" are based on desire. Desire for Deleuze is not the wanting of something one doesn't possess but 'a productive and creative energy' (Colebrook, 2003). Deleuze advocates looking at the array of possible outcomes, that did not happen, or the virtual, rather than just those relations and decision that did come to pass, to develop an understanding of the best possible way to be (Colebrook, 2003).

This focus on process, from all possible perspectives, places entities in a theoretical concept of time similar to Bergson's. Entities are never static, as they are made up and defined by their becoming, therefore they exist through time, rather than in a specific time (Borradori, 2001). This also means that non-physical subjective forces such as attitudes, and values are just as real as physical forces such as genetics because they both shape and influence the becoming of an entity.

An interesting outcome of Deleuze's theory is that relations can be drawn between entities that would otherwise be incomparable. De Landa (2004) provides the example of a salt crystal and soap bubble being comparable because their shape is an outcome of the same process, a process that attempts to use as little energy as possible (De Landa, 2004). Because the way things are now is not a stable point from which to understand or make sense of entities, a different marker is needed. Deleuze proposes difference.

Deleuze's concept of difference is complex to say the least. Hayden (1998) uses the qualitative/quantitative divide to define two kinds of differences in Deleuzian philosophy, reflective of Bergson's quantitative and qualitative multiplicities. Differences in degree or space are

quantitative, for example a lump of sugar has a different number of granules when melted and when raw, despite this it is still sugar. On the other hand is duration, or the qualitative experience of all the variations and processes under which sugar is and becomes sugar (Hayden, 1998). There is a qualitative difference between toffee and sugar cubes.

## Deleuze and Archival Theory

Once again the focus is not on a static end product or object (say a record) but on the becoming of that thing. The way it was formed and shaped. The conditions that made it possible and the hundreds of alternative versions that could have come to be. It is these processes of formation and interaction that tell us more about the record than any universal archival essence possessed by all records. Deleuze's ontology lends authority to records continuum thinking around the record as always becoming and never complete. In Deleuze's work physical things that are often seen as static and fixed are seen as fluid and in flux. This fluidity can also apply to the material aspects of records.

Outside of records continuum thinking Brien Brothman also drew on Deleuze, borrowing his concept of the rhizome as a more adequate analogy for the process of records formation.

> 'The process seems to us less like a cycle or continuum and more like a web – a web of relationships with neither centre nor margin, neither beginning nor end, and no predictable sequences of actions or phases. It is more like a hidden tangled network of rhizomes flourishing beneath a simpler documentary landscape of visible trees and individual blades of grass' (Brothman, 2006, p. 241).

Such an understanding of the nature of relationships between entities is also reinforced by Latour with his Actor Network Theory.

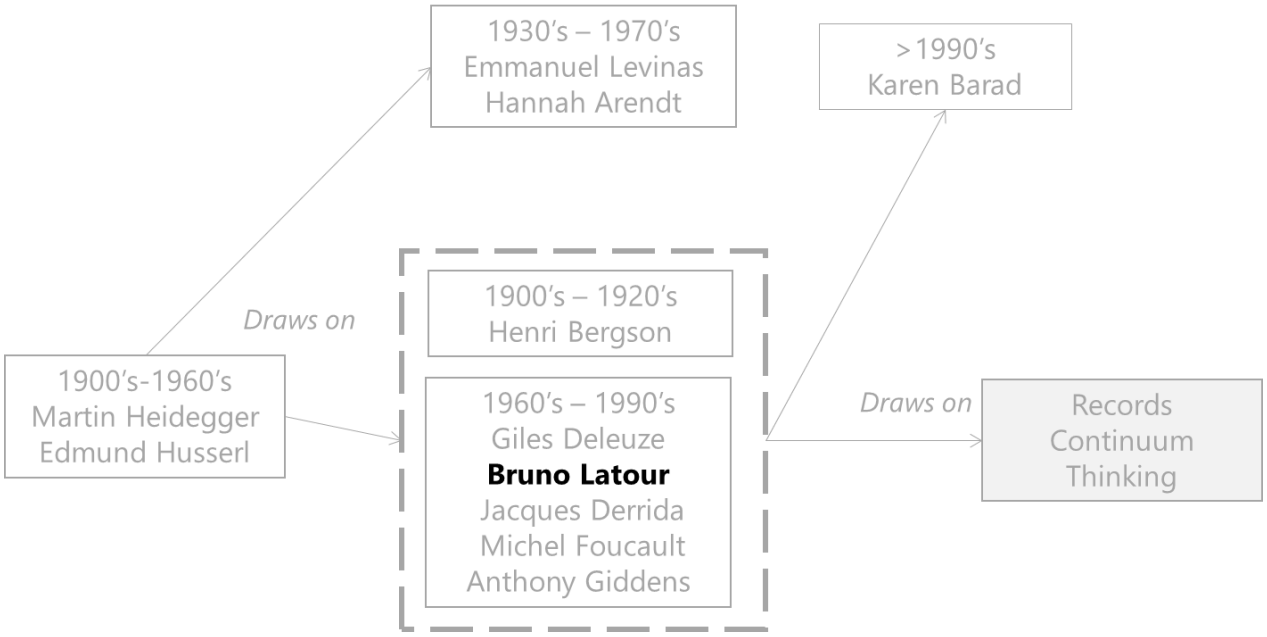



*Figure 36. Chapter 2.1 Road Map: Bruno Latour*

## Bruno Latour 1947 -

Latour is perhaps best known for his Actor Network Theory. A key facet of this is his dismantling of the subject/object dichotomy. In much western philosophy the world and the things that exist in it (ontology) have often been viewed categorically. Things are categorised based on their attributes, features, or functions. They fall into fixed predetermined categories and this is how we make sense of them. In contrast Latour looks at ontology procedurally (Durepos & Mills, 2011). Things are grouped by how they came to be, and they come to be via relationships.

This shifts the focus from static objects and subjects to the relationships between things in the world. It is in these relationships that meaning and understanding is to be found, not in some overarching category or attribute of things in themselves.

> 'Making sense of relations that tie actors together, rather than making sense of the actors themselves, thus become constitutive of actor-networks. Networks, then, do not consist of stable nodes and links, but consist of relations that shape actors recursively' (Hernes, 2008, p. 70).

This view provides objects with some level of agency, relational agency, despite agency traditionally being reserved for subjects (Pollini, 2013). It is the relations of entities that make them agents, not any specific qualities. This means non-human or animal entities can be viewed as agents. These are called actants by Latour (Fraser, 2006; Krarup & Blok, 2011). They have agency because they shape and impact the world around them.

In a further dismantling of the subject – object dichotomy Latour attempts to analyse the makeup of relations, the connections that make the world (Fraser, 2006). These relations are not links, but rather circulating references, human and non-human mediated chains of transformation (Hernes, 2008). If entities are always in a state of becoming then the concept of a static link, for example because both of these things are blue they are related by their blueness, is redundant. Instead the link is the way both things mediate and provoke becoming in each other (Hernes, 2008). As Latour is so fervently against levels of analysis, theory, or categorisation, the way to understand which things seem to have the most influence is refreshingly simple, to look at those entities that are persistent in the network through time (Hernes, 2008).

## Latour and Archival Theory

This focus on time is logical for those in fields such as archival science, where the time in which something occurs or happens is generally seen to significantly relate to its meaning and consequences. As an entity moves through time these meanings build up like archaeological layers of sand. To understand an entity you need to understand the history it carries with it.

> 'Subjects and objects, or more accurately propositions, are characterised by a dynamic historicity, where historicity refers not simply, for example, to evolution but to "*the whole series* of transformations that make up the reference"' (Fraser, 2006, p. 19).

Latours Actor Network Theory has repercussions for how archival materials are described and managed.

> 'The archival networks that are needed to manage the web of relationships can be modelled on those described in the actor-network theory (ANT), at least as it has been described more recently by Bruno Latour' (Upward, 2019, p. 269).

It provides a way to place archives in context and make sense of their power.

Archival thinker Verne Harris drew on Latour to evidence his arguments around the power of records and need for hospitable archives. It appears that Harris (2001) is taking Latour's challenge around agents seriously and exploring not just how people construct records and archives but how records and archives construct people. 'He[Latour] does so by foregrounding the capacity of the record to structure cognition. The domination of any scene by macro-actors is never natural; it is constructed. And a key role in that construction – *the* key role according to Latour – is played by records' (Harris, 2001, p. 12).

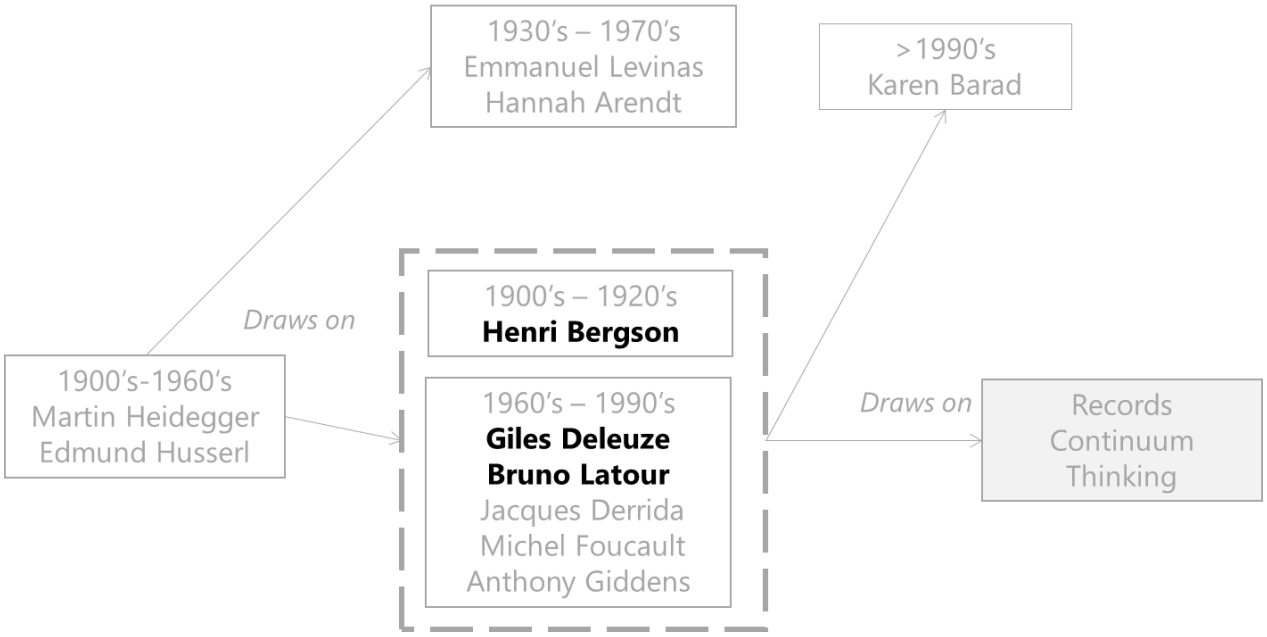



*figure 37. Chapter 2.1 Road Map: Henri Bergson, Giles Deleuze, and Bruno Latour*

## Bergson, Deleuze, and Latour

These three thinkers all, to greater or lesser extents, espouse ideas of multiplicity, relationality, and becoming. They challenge the notion of static or fixed entities and as a result of hard boundaries between entities and ourselves, between past and present. The ideas I take away from them are:

- Things that exist in the world, including records, recordkeeping, and archives, are never fixed or static. They are constantly evolving and changing;
- Traditionally western thinkers have made sense of the world by categorising things into groupings perceived to be related to natural pre-existing attributes;
- If things are not fixed, then grouping them by attributes doesn't make sense as these attributes are likely to evolve and change;
- Therefore a better way to understand things is to look at how they came to exist. A key part of this becoming is their relationship with other things.

The thinkers discussed above provide an opportunity to engage with a different type of ontology. While these authors didn't focus on archives or records (Latour mentioned them but they weren't his central concern) their ideas have nevertheless been incorporated by some archival scholars including Terry Cook (2001a, 2001b), Brien Brothman (2006), Verne Harris (2001), Eric Ketelaar (2005), and Frank Upward (2009, 2019). Unlike Bergson, Deleuze and Latour the next two thinkers to be discussed have dealt explicitly with concepts of Archive and Record: Derrida and Foucault.

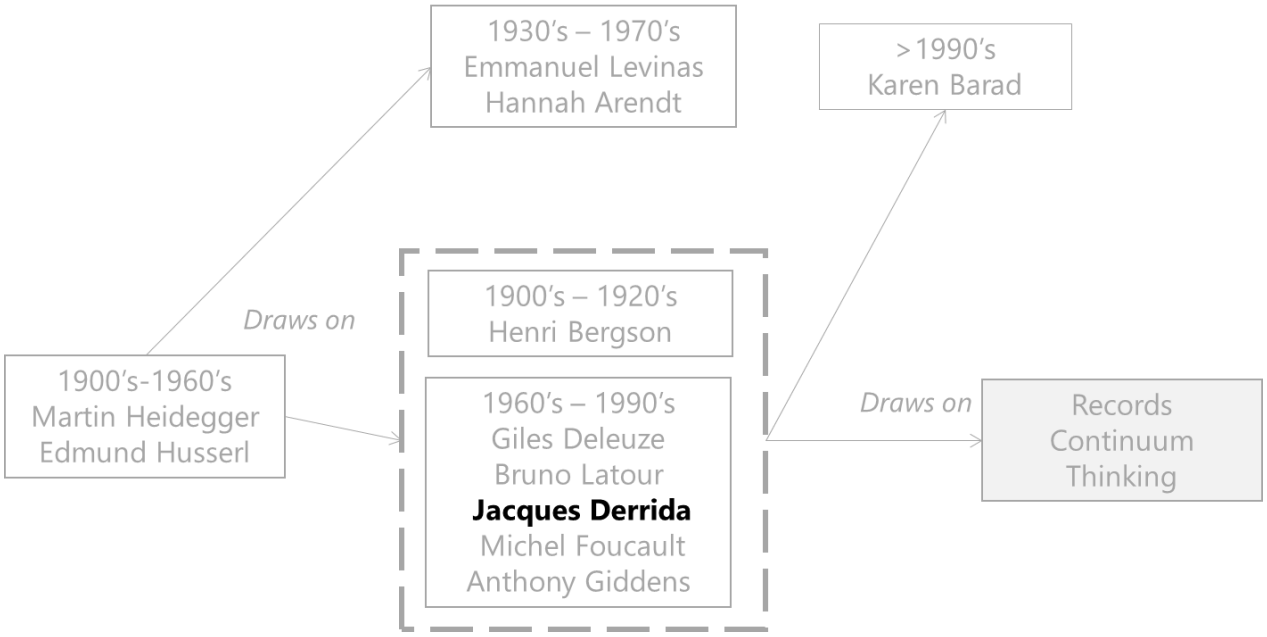



*figure 38. Chapter 2.1 Road Map: Jacques Derrida*

## Jacques Derrida 1930 – 2004

Derrida views language as incredibly complex. Structuralist's like Ferdinand Saussure saw words as composed of signs and signified. A sign represents something in the world – whether that sign is a sound or a mark on some paper. The signified is the thing the sign represents (Radford & Radford, 2005). Derrida problematizes the relationship between sign and signified.

Each of these signs exist alongside other signs and symbols. The word bird exists alongside the word for dog, cat, and table. Words make sense to us because of the position they hold within a larger framework or linguistic system. They are defined relationally. They often exist in dichotomies and opposites defined by what they are not. For example darkness as the absence of light. Rick Roderick (1993) points out the somewhat absurd fact Derrida recognised, the way we define words, is always with more words.

Another observation Derrida had about words was that words can be used to refer to things that are not physically present. The word horse still makes sense even if no horse is present. An inherent feature of language and meaning is therefore absence. A tool to refer to what is not present. 'Words do not stand for things, they stand in for things' (Roderick, 1993). A similar point could be made about records. They stand in for events as evidence, memory, or identity.

Derrida points out that not only do meanings exist in language systems, but that meaning changes through time. When we use words to communicate we have to make assumptions (both as a listener and communicator) that a certain interpretation of that word will be taken, despite many terms

having multiple meanings depending on time and place. For example, the word awesome. The word awesome used to simply refer to anything that filled someone with awe, good or bad. Generally, when it is used today it has positive undertones.

Because meaning changes, and humans cannot time travel, we can never truly know exactly what we write or record will mean in the future. The meaning of words is not reliant on our intention, nor can we ever fully control it (Roderick, 1993). So, if meaning doesn't come from a special relationship between a word and what it represents, or from our intent, and if the same symbol can have multiple meanings in the same language system, where does it come from? Does it even make sense to talk of an origin of meaning? Perhaps not. Instead Derrida talks about Différance as a way of making sense of meaning. There are strong parallels here with Deleuze.

> '***Différance*** includes not only the meaning to **differ** to be different from something else – but to **defer**, to delay, to put off till later' (Powell, 1997, p. 118).

Meaning is always based on difference to other words, not on some essence or characteristic. The meaning of the letters H-O-R-S-E are not based on some essential horsiness, but on their difference to other words in the English language system. At the same time the final meaning of the letters H-O-R-S-E is unknown to us, because we cannot assume how we understand H-O-R-S-E and how our ancestors understood it is the same as the meaning the word will have for future generations (Roderick, 1993). Maybe it will become slang for something else, a compliment or a put down like the word pig. There is an inherent contradiction at play here. The meaning of words is never certain or finished, but to communicate we have to pretend it is.

> 'Never referring only to ***itself*** - because it is emerging from the ***trace*** of a "past" configuration and is always already being dissolved into a "future" configuration – leaving only a ***trace*** of itself. So there is never anything **present** only ***traces*** of ***traces***' (Powell, 1997, p. 119).

Like Deleuze Derrida stresses the importance of the historicity of words, the layers of meaning that are carried by them, that make them what they are in the present.

These layers of meaning undermine the concept of singular, ultimate, or final definitions. Derrida gleefully pulls apart dichotomies pointing out that you can never have the complete 'opposite' of something. You can never have a concept of complete darkness without also having the concept of light. This means you can never clearly separate concepts, ideas or things from each other. They are constantly mingling and infiltrating each other. When Derrida makes the claim that there is nothing outside of the text, nothing outside of the archive, he could mean one of two things. He could be

referring to the problematization of hard boundaries that are associated with meaning especially dichotomies. There is no darkness outside of light (Roderick, 1993).

A second explanation of this statement could be that we not only communicate through language but we understand and experience the world through language. It is therefore impossible for us to look at things without language, without the text to mediate our lived experiences. The definition of text I am drawing on is inclusive of all communication, written or oral. "Humans" only access to knowledge and only connections with anything is through their language. Indeed, even what emerges in consciousness, even our thoughts and ideas, ineluctably do so as a form of writing. Consciousness itself is something made in and through language' (Brothman, 1999, p. 78). We can never get outside of this language, this text.

It is difficult to pin down exactly what Derrida means by language and the text, what is clear is his critique of traditional conceptualisations of written text as able to unproblematically represent spoken communication and vice versa. My understanding is that Derrida's conceptualisation of the text extends to include that which it excludes, that which it cannot contain. The phenomena it intentionally rejects as well as what it embraces. This questioning of distinct edges blurs the limits of a text so any boundaries we draw are our own. There is nothing inherently outside of the text unless we put it there. Such a worldview can be problematised by non-linguistic communication, such as touch or the bonds formed between infants and caregivers or even companion animals.

If language shapes all of our experiences and can never be fully defined, then what happens when you put a lot of texts together in an archive? Derrida discusses this extensively in one of his most famous works *Archives Fever: A Freudian Impression*. For this thesis I used the 1996 translation by Eric Prenowitz (Derrida, 1996).

*Archives Fever* begins with an etymology of the term archive, in line with Derrida's assertion that when considering the meaning of a word you need to consider its historical layers. Arguably though a definition is never, and can never be reached.

> 'What is an archive? This is a difficult philosophical question. My impression is that Derrida is not certain. My impression, too, is that Derrida does not give readers an answer' (Morris, 2003, p. 299).

Derrida (1996) relates archives to commandment and commencement, Location and materiality or substrate. He recalls the Ancient Greek Archons (magistrates) and the homes of these powerful individuals were the official documents of the state where kept. The Archons provided a physical location for records. They were tasked with the right and responsibility of caring for the records and

interpreting the records. Being magistrates, the Archons literally commanded the populace using records as a key tool to do so:

> 'They [Archons] do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They [Archons] are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect state the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law. To be guarded thus, in the jurisdiction of this stating the law, they needed at once a guardian and a localization. Even in their guardianship or their hermeneutic tradition, the archives could neither do without substrate nor without residence' (Derrida, 1996, p. 10).

I think what Derrida means by substrate is the material or virtual surface that information is inscribed on: the paper, the USB, the scroll. In his discussion of the substrate Derrida draws heavily on the work of Sigmund Freud, in particular, the way that surfaces shape the signs we make on them (Arvatu, 2011; Derrida, 1996; Lawlor & Moulard Leonard, 2016; Morris, 2003; Powell, 1997). Different materials and technologies engender different affordances. Creating different conditions of possibility. You are more likely to write an essay on paper than small clay tablets.

> 'Mutation in technology changes not simply the archiving process, but what is archivable - that is, the content of what has to be archived is changed by the technology' (van Zyl, 2002, p. 46).

The archive is also associated with commencement. The origins, or beginnings. But because nothing is contained fully in itself, and archives are composed of substrates with signs that stand in for things, whose meaning is not yet complete, it is impossible to reach this origin, if it even exists at all.

> 'It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement' (Derrida, 1996, p. 57).

Perhaps the only way to get to an origin is to erase or kill something. To freeze it so no more meaning can develop. Even if this were possible, any reading of the archives will be filtered through language. Not to mention that many archives themselves are in their very format, written language. So, each new reading gives rise to a new meaning.

As mentioned earlier, to communicate we need to make assumptions about what meanings words have, which means we have to exclude or repress alternative meanings. This leads to another tension; between archives as the whole and archives as limited.

Archives often present themselves as collections, as a whole body of stuff. A key 'function of the archive is to consign – to gather together. The archive is gathered together as a story under house arrest (perhaps psychologically) by the "archons", the guardians. This "single corpus" is kept' (Morris, 2003, p. 301) to be meaningful however there needs to be repression of alternatives, the archive therefore cannot be whole.

This becoming and complexity is not linked only to the archive but, according to Derrida, also to concepts of justice. Because things and people are in constant flux, laying down a rule, law, or code of values for perpetuity doesn't make a lot of sense, and it certainly doesn't ensure universal and timeless good outcomes. The ethical implications of Derrida's thinking is an argument for a kind of contingent justice, a justice that is never quite finished.

> 'Derrida, the law will always exceed that future interpretation. This excess occurs because the law only exists if it is established by a performative act and it must therefore always be established in every moment. As Derrida writes, "The law is transcendent and theological, and so always to come, always promised, because it is immanent, finite and so already past" (FL 993). The law is produced by human creation yet the instance of that creation does not last and the law must be re-created in the future' (Eisner, 2015, p. 15).

## Derrida and Archival Theory

Derrida's philosophy challenges the idea of archives as complete and naturally formed. Records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal both appear to be premised on the idea that archives do not spring into being from nothing as naturally occurring phenomena. If records and archives aren't natural then arguments about the need to avoid external influences that might bias or undermine the records neutrality don't make as much sense. The record or archive has already been influenced by the fact of its creation, it is not neutral.

Further because language stands in for things in a way that can never be entirely anticipated, any language in records or archives (or arguably records and archives themselves) will always fall short of completely representing what it refers to. Hence Harris's archival sliver (2002), underpinned in part by Derrida's concept of the archive and the impossibility of ever reaching back to an origin. The sliver refers to the fact that records can never capture all of reality, only a slice, a sliver.

> 'In any circumstances, in any country, the documentary record provides just a sliver of a window into the event. Even if archivists in a particular country were to preserve every record generated throughout the land, they would still have only a sliver of a window into that country's experience' (Harris, 2002, pp. 64 - 65).

What this representation is and means will also be in constant flux. The record becomes more than a physical object but a layering of always incomplete representations that build up over time. They accrete like a mineral deposit, slowly building up layer after layer over time and space. It is difficult to imagine records continuum thinkers arguing for participatory approaches if they did not see the record as always becoming, as accreting in both physical and logical ways.

In addition to the concept of records as always becoming, which shares many parallels with Derridean ontology, is what Frank Upward described in his thesis as the third point technique. The third point technique drew on Derridean deconstruction, disrupting dualities by entering a third point.

> 'When you are dealing with two points like archives and records which are being separated artificially, interpolate a third point in the hope that the different observation point will disturb existing relationships and open up a better exploration of what Derrida might call their différance' (Upward, 2009, p. 108).

The third point technique eventually led to some of the earliest records continuum models when combined with Bergsonian time and Giddens structuration theory (Upward, 2009).

Derridean philosophy has challenged the idea of records as complete -through the archival sliver. It has laid important foundations to the records continuum model through the third point technique and it has also influenced archival ethics. Anna Sexton (2015) and Verne Harris (2005, 2011) both take Derrida's ethics and apply it to an archival context, advocating for the establishment of a radical hospitality within archives. For Sexton this hospitality and the impossibility of including everything forms a central pillar in her approach to participatory archives (Sexton, 2015).

Brien Brothman (1993, 1999) also joins in, alongside postmodern archivist Terry Cook (2001a, 2001b) in exploring what archives mean from a Derridean perspective. It is difficult to imagine postmodern archival theory of any kind without the work of Derrida. As discussed in the literature review and as will be laid out in coming sections, many participatory approaches to archives can be placed firmly within a postmodernist paradigm.

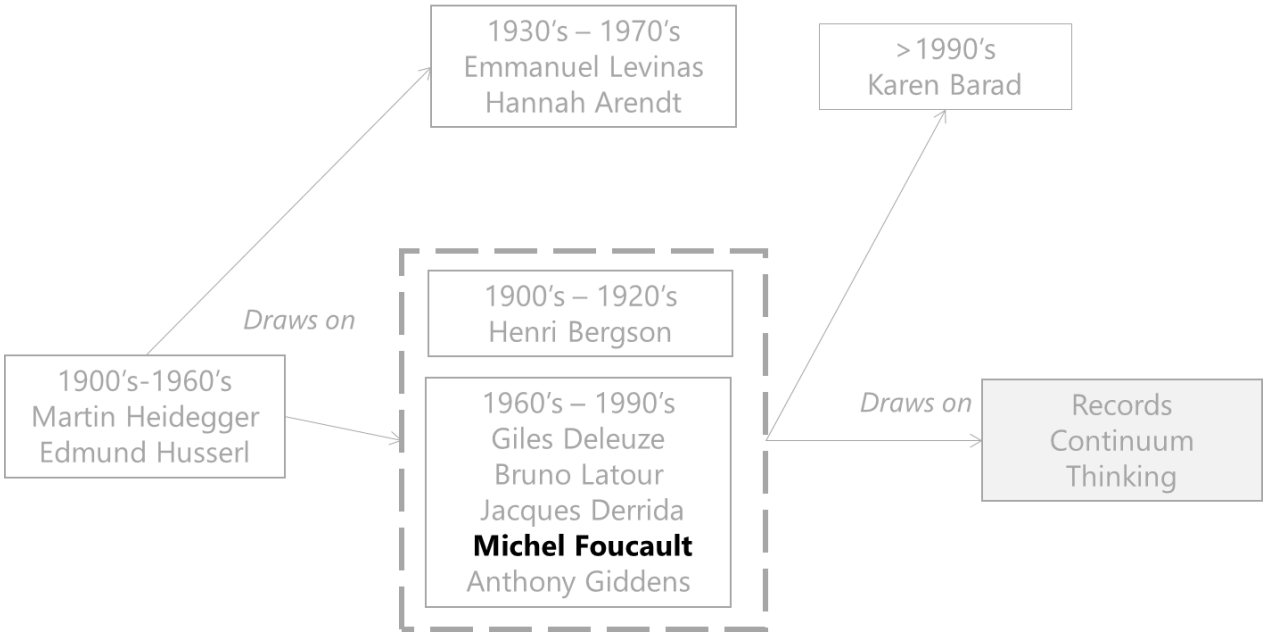



*figure 39. Chapter 2.1 Road Map: Michel Foucault*

## Michel Foucault 1926 – 1984

Like Derrida Foucault has written explicitly about the archive, is wary of categories, and has been classified by some as being a poststructuralist. Much of his work focuses on discourse, and acknowledges a similar (although not identical) belief in the fluidity of meaning and the privileging of certain meanings over others.

The ideas of Foucault have already been briefly touched upon in the Methodology chapter of this thesis. There I focused on his conceptualisation of discourses and archaeological methodology. To recap, from a Foucauldian point of view discourses are 'the final, actually demarcated body of formulated statements – it is the archive of the discourse analyst' (Andersen, 2003, p. 8, p.8). These formulated statements form a body of knowledge or world view in which certain things make more sense than others.

Like Derrida, Foucault acknowledges the existence of many meanings, his focus is on working out the conditions of possibility (discursive and non-discursive) that lead to the dominance or privileging of a particular meaning over another.

> 'The term discourse suggests that the culturally embedded linguistic patterns that people use to speak and write about management influence the possibilities for management action and decision-making. Here words are not seen as being in opposition to action or practice, but rather it is through language that meaning is constructed and that the possibilities of practice emerge from that meaning' (Rhodes, 2015).

To repeat the last phrase from that quote: 'the possibilities of practice emerge from that meaning' (Rhodes, 2015), how we can act, our agency, is dependent on the meaning we construct about the world and people around us. Power is tied not to just the capacity to act but to shape meaning.

Foucault wrote extensively on power. It is these concepts of power that are most frequently drawn on by archivists.

> 'Foucault's early scholarship rejected the idea of individuals having universal characteristics and focused instead on the manner in which human beings are made into subjects' (Lovell, 2011, p. 2).

This process is referred to as subjectification and is described as:

> 'the constitution of the subject as an object for himself or herself. Subjectification refers to the procedures by which the subject is led to observe herself, analyse herself, interpret herself, and recognize herself as a domain of possible knowledge' (Stewart & Roy, 2014).

Foucault's understanding of power is complex, and can be interpreted in various ways (Townley, 1993). Foucauldian power is relational, he begins his exploration of power not with individuals or institutions (agency or structure) but within the small everyday relationships people have with each other and the organisations they interact with. Anything or anyone within a given social context that influences another is referred to as a force relation.

This does not mean Foucault rejects the concept of people as agents (agency being the capacity to act), it just isn't where his attention is focused. Because there are always multiple co-existing, even conflicting, force relations no individual or group ever has complete control, because they are in turn influenced by other forces. Furthermore the final result or consequence of a person influencing others or their environment can never be fully predicted (Heller, 1996).

> 'This means that local actions often have unintended macro- consequences, and that one's control of macro- processes will always be limited and incomplete. Macro- phenomena result from the concatenation of many micro- events, but they are not the direct result of any *particular* individual action or choice' (Lynch, 2014, p. 23).

Power relations, and power, are never the result of a single person or social structure, what they are a result of is tactics and strategies. Tactics are the micro, local, decisions we make every day. It is the layering and intertwining of these that result in strategies or the macro level emergence of power that then recursively shapes future tactics.

> 'Relations of power can best be understood as the product of tactics that were employed in historical situations of conflict or competition between communities or groups. These tactics are accompanied by the development of ideologies, theories, and forms of knowledge that morally justify those tactics' (Lovell, 2011, pp. 2 - 3).

To add to the complexity Foucault argues these strategies and tactics only make sense in their own context, they are fluid and temporal not fixed laws.

> 'It is only if we grasp these techniques of power and demonstrate the economic advantages or political utility that derives from them in a given context for specific reasons, that we can understand how these mechanisms come to be effectively incorporated into the social whole (Foucault, 1980, p. 101).

Because of the fluid nature of power and power relations Foucault studies power in its specific historical and social context. Foucault refers to these specific instances of power as modes. Three of the key modes of power Foucault identified in modern western democracies were: sovereign power, disciplinary power, and bio power (Heller, 1996; Lynch, 2014; Olsson & Heizmann, 2015; Rouse, 1994; Wang, 2011). One of the techniques explored by Foucault in relation to power is governmentality.

Foucault's term Governmentality is a compound word meant to represent Government and Rationality. Government refers to 'the conduct of conduct: a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons' (Gordon, 1991, p.2 cited inTownley, 1993, p. 520). This definition of government is combined with an understanding of rationality as 'the idea that before something can be governed or managed, it must first be known' (Townley, 1993, p. 520). Governmentality explores the relationship between the way things including people can be regulated, changed or controlled through specific conceptualisations (Townley, 1993). This reminds me of policy as discourse approaches where the way something is conceptualised affects the likelihood of certain "solutions":

> 'The problem is represented to be the Aborigines' way of life and the solution, by implication, was for them to change their lifestyle. Consider by contrast a suggestion that the medical system adjust its delivery facilities to keep up with aboriginal migration. Here the problem becomes the mode of delivery of the medical system and this is what must change. It is apparent that one of these options is more expensive than the other and this might explain the framing of the problem in the way it appeared. The point is to recognize that this might indeed be the case whereas the language of the report made the conclusion reached seem self-

> evident. The politics of funding was hidden in this language. The purpose of a policy-as-discourse approach is to bring such silences in problematizations out into the open for discussion' (Bacchi, 2000, p. p.50).

Bacchi in the quote above is talking about what Foucault might call hegemonic or dominant discourses and subjugated knowledges. It is through the subjugation, dismissal and suppression of some ways of knowing, of seeing the world, that power can operate. It is also through the advocation and support of specific knowledges that power can have a creative and constructive force (for good or ill). This is why in chapter 3.2 different ways of conceptualising or different "knowledges" of participatory approaches will be explored. I would argue this power/knowledge could be present in sovereign and disciplinary power and may even shape the way power manifests. Furthermore, records and archives can be seen as a instrument of power/knowledge.

> 'It is the production of effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge—methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses of control. All this means that power, when it is exercised through these subtle mechanisms, cannot but evolve, organise and put into circulation a knowledge, or rather apparatuses of knowledge' (Foucault, 1980, p. 102).

## Foucault and Archival Theory

Foucault's impact on archival theory is hard to measure, his work has become a part of the general zeitgeist and most who write from a postmodern, poststructuralist, or critical paradigm will refer back to him. This of course includes archivists. The work of Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz (2002; 2002) in particular embodies Foucauldian challenges to the concept of knowledge and the archive.

> 'The result is that archivists and historians alike have questioned established concepts of archival records. (Brothman, 1991). These questions, according to Schwartz and Cook (2002), stem from a collective memory approach and include: "who is doing the documenting, what are the impact of changes in theory on records management and archival practice?" p. 5). These questions map to Foucault's (1972) poststructuralist questioning of knowledge, designed to illuminate gaps in knowledge: "Who is speaking (who has the right to speak and why?); what are the sites from which the discourse emanates? (physical and metaphysical); what are the positions of the subject in relation to the various domains or groups of objects?"(p.50)' (Ridener, 2009, p. 126).

From a records continuum perspective the lines that compose the records continuum model represent 'thresholds that may or may not be crossed in the same way that Foucault's thresholds

in discourse (of which there are four) behave' (Upward, 2005, p. 201). It appears the thresholds Upward is speaking of here are the concepts Foucault uses to explore time and temporality in relation to discourses. To challenge the idea of a linear progression and formation of phenomena.

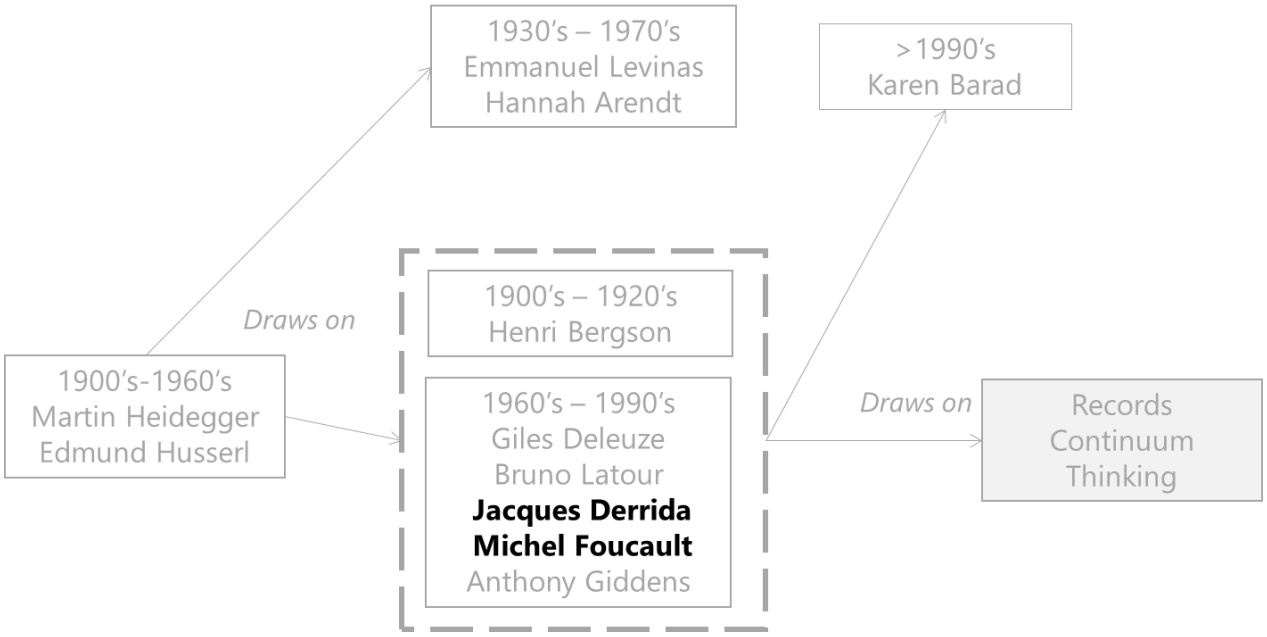



*figure 40. Chapter 2.1 Road Map: Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault*

## Foucault and Derrida

Foucault and Derrida present a number of complex ideas. The key things I take away from them are understandings of the relationship between archives and power, the fluidity and temporality of meaning, and consequent responsibility of archivists. Some have accused both Derrida and Foucault of being completely relativistic. This isn't necessarily the case. I do not believe either thinker is advocating that any interpretation of a situation is as good as another, nor that nothing is really "real". Rather my impression is that there are simply no perfect interpretations, there are better (more accurate) interpretations and worse interpretations. There are interpretations and frameworks we can use that encourage us to engage with others in a compassionate, respectful, and ethical manner. There are also interpretations and frameworks that can be used to support hate, fear, and cruelty.

Foucault in particular offers us an opportunity to question the conditions that made certain discourses, narratives, and meanings possible. They present us with alternative ways to reach understandings and more awareness of the consequences of our knowledges. They also present a way to understand language that compliments the more material oriented assertions of Bergson, Deleuze, and Latour

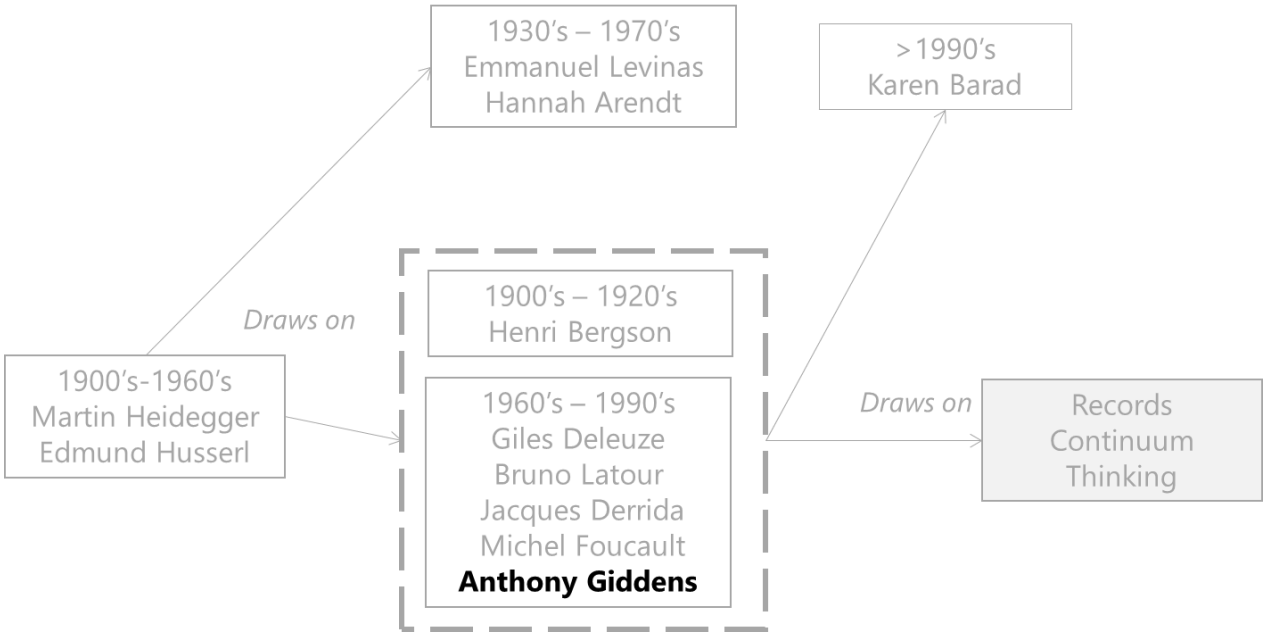



*figure 41. Chapter 2.1 Road Map: Anthony Giddens*

## Anthony Giddens 1938 –

The last theorist to be discussed in this chapter is Giddens. Gidden's draws on the work of many others to construct his sociological position about how the world and people can be studied and understood. His thinking has been referenced by a number of archival thinkers including Allen and Anderson (2009) who propose an archival commons approach to participatory appraisal and of course records continuum thinking. The records continuum model is itself inspired by Gidden's ideas of time space distanciation and structuration theory.

There has been an ongoing debate in social sciences, psychology, and other behavioural studies pitting ideas of agency against those of structure. A grossly simplified version of the debate is that some believe human action and culture is the result of individual decisions, free will and thought out behaviours (agency), as opposed to human action and culture being the result of social norms, resources, institutions, and belief systems (structures). Giddens tries to over-come this debate with his concept of structuration theory. Structuration theory acknowledges that individuals have a degree of free will and autonomy, but that they are also influenced and act within larger social structures. These social structures are in turn built, reinforced, and constantly changed through human action. A similar idea is at work within Foucault's discourses, which could be seen as having both agential and structural elements. The discourses shape the subject, and are also shaped and created by humans as subjects. For Giddens the capacity to make changes to structures is power. The use of authority, in a transformative capacity in relation to the resources to which it is applied, is

a demonstration of power. Power is therefore the capacity to transform or 'make a difference' to structures (Giddens, 1984).

Giddens describes three types of structures: structures of domination, legitimation, and signification. Structures of domination refers to control over resources. These resources are further split into two groups allocative resources (control over economic resources) and authoritative resources (control over people, time, and space). Structures of legitimation refer to social norms and structures of signification refer to the way meaning is created. When people use resources (allocative or authoritative) to change structures (domination, legitimation or signification) they are engaged in modalities (Stones, 2009, p. 5).

> ‘Thus, he [Giddens] distinguishes, for example, between the overall structure of domination that is potentially available within the memory traces of individuals and then the more limited and task-specific facilities that these agents subsequently, and actually, draw on, on the basis of the prior availability, when they engage in a definite interaction. The agent's use of facilities within a social practice or interaction is said to be an exercise of power’ (Stones, 2009, p. 6).

Giddens writes extensively about time-space distanciation, but what is time-space? Time-space, as the name suggests is a way of understanding what space is, what time is, and how they relate to one another. Traditional understandings (Galilean) of time and space saw them as distinct phenomena or dimensions. Time in particular was measurable and quantifiable using tools such as clocks, calendars, or environmental changes (e.g. winter, summer, day or night)(Reinecke & Ansari, 2016). Time was a way of measuring change in a fixed space (before and after). Time had a direction, forward, and was universal, it didn’t speed up or slow down. It existed externally and independently of human beings (Reinecke & Ansari, 2016). In the pre-modern era understandings of time were spatially bound, and understandings of space where temporal. Technological development means we experience time and space differently. We are able to understand spaces without ever being in them (Gabbert, 2007).

> ‘Giddens succinctly defines time-space distanciation as “the conditions under which time and space are organized so as to connect presence and absence “(1990:14). What he means by this is that time-space distanciation separates or “stretches” relations of time and space so they no longer adhere to an actual locale’ (Gabbert, 2007, p. 182).

Space was of a similar nature. It existed independently of human beings and physical things and had no direct impact on time. Space was also limited, only one ‘thing’ could be in one space at any given time. The measurements humans make of space (meters, centimetres etc) are direct

representations of reality. There ***are*** three meters between two points, and unless the points move, there always will be three meters between the points (Gabbert, 2007).

> 'Temporal duration is well defined there: for any time-space points p and q in a Galilean time-space, there is a fact as to the number n of minutes (e.g.) by which p precedes q: if n is positive p precedes q (by n minutes), if n is negative, q precedes p (by n minutes) and if n is zero, then p and q are simultaneous (so absolute simultaneity is also well defined in Galilean time-space). As a result, there is always exactly one way to divide up a Galilean time-space into a set of non-overlapping maximal hyperplanes of absolute simultaneity, or 'global time slices. For any two points within a given hyperplane, spatial distance is well defined: there is a fact as to the number of feet (e.g.,) by which those points are spatially separated. Indeed, simultaneous time-space points in Galilean are governed by Euclidean geometry' (Gilmore, 2008, p. 1226).

Structuration occurs across and within time-space. It is shaped by time-space. Agents interact with structures that then influence them and vice versa, but how does this interaction actually work? Gidden's concepts of routinisation and practical consciousness are two interrelated ways of explaining the "mechanics" of structuration. Practical consciousness seems to refer to a state of consciousness somewhere between consciousness and subconsciousness.

> 'What agents know about what they do, and why they do it -- their knowledgeability as agents -- is largely carried in practical consciousness. Practical consciousness consists of all the things which actors know tacitly about how to `go on' in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression' (Giddens, 1984, p.xxiv).

Practical consciousness generally refers to routine, every day activities. It is the repetition of these activities which human beings do not necessarily have explicit knowledge of that leads to the development of structures which in turn themselves shape future routine activities. Recordkeeping can be viewed as one of these activities that shapes both the people who are engaged in it as well as being shaped by them.

> 'The repetitiveness of activities which are undertaken in like manner day after day is the material grounding of what I call the recursive nature of social life. (By its recursive nature I mean that the structured properties of social activity -- via the duality of structure -- are constantly recreated out of the very resources which constitute them.)' (Giddens, 1984, p.xxiv).

Routinisation and practical consciousness feed into the double hermeneutic or duality of structure. The idea being that the elements that create structure are also created by structure

across and through time-space. The individual agent and social structure interact and intertwine in a mutually co-creative cycle feeding into one another.

Giddens refers to three "types" of structures, structures of signification, structures of legitimation, and structures of domination (Giddens, 1984). Structures being:

> 'rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems. Structure exists only as memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgeability, and as instantiated in action' (Giddens, 1984, p. 377).

Structures of signification impact meaning, structures of legitimation impact social norms and structures of domination impact resources. Structures of domination are further broken down into two types of resources. Authoritative resources such as time, space, opportunities etc and allocative resources such as financial and material resources (Giddens, 1984).

## Giddens and Archival Theory

The thinking of Giddens provides a clear example of how different elements of the world are interconnected and affect one another. His work also forms part of the intellectual conditions of possibility for the records continuum model (Upward, 2000a), which would be unlikely to exist in its current form without Gidden's concepts of time-space distanciation and structuration. Structuration theory allows for the integration of the interaction and mutual constitution of the micro and macro elements of society. This is reflected in the records continuum models axes which radiate out from the micro, the individual to the collective, the individual record to the archival multiverse. Records become part of the structure that enable this entire process. They serve a dual purpose as allocative and authoritative resources. Remembering allocative and authoritative resources compose structures of domination within Gidden's theory of structuration.

Beyond records continuum thinking, structuration theory also serves as part of the theoretical basis for the archival commons. A participatory approach to archives put forward by Allen and Anderson (2009) that will be analysed in section 3 of this thesis.

## Conclusion

These thinkers, although only a small selection of those drawn upon by archival scholars, provide a particular perspective for us to exploit. This perspective stresses ideas of the complexity of language, the power of the text, the interrelationship of things and ideas, and the benefits of examining the conditions of possibility over an artificial essence in attempts to make sense of the world. These ideas can be seen in records continuum thinking and participatory approaches to archives.

The next section of this thesis will unpack how these thinkers have been drawn on, amongst other influences, to manifest records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal. Hopefully the theoretical exploration in this chapter ensures you the reader are not stuck in the spiral I often found myself in, of looking up chains of thinkers. During this research project I would often begin with records continuum writing and end up stumbling across a reference to one of these six thinkers. Before I could comprehend what was being spoken about within the records continuum writing I had to go out and learn about the referenced thinker, and sometimes back another step to those that thinker in turn referenced. This cascading and seemingly never-ending spiral of concepts is ironically one of the best analogies I have for Derrida's Archive Fever and the way meaning collects like dust. Tracing back to find a conceptual foundation that is always already based on someone else's work.

# Chapter 2.2: A brief introduction to records continuum thinking

## Introduction

Records continuum thinking has a long history and can be traced back to the origins of government archives in post-war Australia (McKemmish & Piggott, 2013). In this thesis I am focused primarily on records continuum thinking from the 1990s onwards. The 1990s saw records continuum thinking coalescing into the records continuum model. Records continuum thinking was influenced by historiographical philosophy and:

> 'a preoccupation with the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commissions and other inquiries into the role of recordkeeping in good governance and democratic accountability, the role of public archival authorities as agents of accountability in democratic societies, and the part played by poor or negligent recordkeeping in failures in public and corporate accountability and corruption' (McKemmish, 2017, p. 134).

This thesis has been scoped to explore the intellectual conditions of possibility for records continuum thinking – not the political. Although arguably any distinction is artificial there is only so much space. In the last chapter the historiographical and philosophical roots of records continuum thinking were explored. These included Bergson, Deleuze, Latour, Derrida, Foucault, and Giddens. Without a basic understanding of these thinkers I do not believe it is possible to have a basic understanding of records continuum thinking. This chapter aims to provide enough background on records continuum thinking to carry you the reader through to section 3 where the key concepts and discourses underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory archives will be identified.

The literature used to inform my analysis and interpretation of records continuum thinking was drawn from a group of self-identified records continuum theorists publishing from the 1990's to the present day. The publications that dealt with records continuum thinking, appraisal, and issues of agency or power were then more closely read. This criteria provided me with a manageable volume of literature that was explored to achieve saturation. A preliminary citation analysis of this literature was also conducted but found to be unnecessary because of the smaller number of publications (it was reasonable to read all the identified material). The selection of publications on participatory appraisal came from a much wider pool and it was therefore necessary to be more selective.

To ground the discussion, I will begin by covering records continuum conceptualisations of familiar archival terms: records, archives, recordkeeping, and archivists before turning to the records continuum models. At times I will use the life-cycle model as a point of comparison to illustrate

records continuum definitions. These comparisons are for explanatory purposes only and this thesis does not intend to provide a comparative analysis of records continuum approaches and life-cycle approaches nor set one against the other. I have no interest in reducing records continuum thinking and life-cycle approaches into absolutist competing dichotomies. Instead the aim in this section is simply to clarify and articulate records continuum thinking. For the purposes of this thesis I am drawing on the Society of American Archivists definition of life-cycle[5]. The life-cycle approach is generally attributed to the work of Theodore Roosevelt Schellenberg (SAA, 2015a).

I will also be referring to "traditional" archival approaches. Within this term I include the principles of original order, provenance, respect des fonds and the moral defence of archives as defined in the three manuals by the Dutch trio (Muller et al., 1898), Hilary Jenkinson (1922) and Theodore Roosevelt Schellenberg (1956). While there are of course differences between how all three of these thinkers conceptualised records, archives, original order, provenance, and respect des fonds, for the most part these thinkers saw records as physical objects. Records were to be managed through physical custody, kept in the same order as they had been when created (respect des fonds / original order), and kept separate from the materials of other creators (respect des fonds / provenance). The moral defence of the archives is a Jenksonian concept and refers to the importance of continuous custody in order to protect the evidential value of records and archives. The creator was generally seen as a singular organisational entity or individual, and access to records and archives was to be balanced against the need to ensure preservation.

## Records, Archives, Recordkeeping, and Archivists

Records continuum thinking sees records as consisting of constantly evolving, intertwined, and co-constructed phenomena (McKemmish, 2017; McKemmish & Piggott, 2013). Such a perspective is incompatible with assumptions about the natural and fixed nature of records found in many life-cycle interpretations of records and archival theory (SAA, 2015a). Early Australian archival thinkers such as Ian Maclean who explored European and American archival traditions came to conclusions that rejected the "naturalness" of records:

[5] 'The distinct phases of a record's existence, from creation to final disposition. Different models identify different stages. All models include creation or receipt, use, and disposition. Some models distinguish between active and inactive use, and between destruction and archival preservation.' SAA. (2015a). Archival Threshold. In: Society of American Archivists..

> ‘An archive in the Dutch definition is a creation built up in the conduct of business, not a collection, as most people understand the term. Maclean's concept of incorporation into the official record is much closer to the original meaning. An archief of the type described in the Dutch manual is produced. It is never collected. The intention of keeping the record at the time of creation matters, which in a sense denies the naturalness of the process’ (Upward, 1994, p. 114).

Another distinguishing feature of traditional conceptualisations of archives and records is the age of a record. The idea that at some point records cross from active to inactive, and this passage marks their transformation into archival documents (SAA, 2015a). Records continuum thinking also rejects this distinction (McKemmish, 1994; McKemmish et al., 2009; Reed, 2014; Upward, 1994, 1996, 1997), instead arguing that:

> ‘the defining criterion [of records and archives] is whether the processes provide access to recorded information about situated action, not the age of the object accessed’ (Upward et al., 2011, p. 199).

The information being provided is an evidential and contextual representation of a transaction (McKemmish, 2017) consisting of relatively stable content and structure and a constantly evolving context (McKemmish, 2017). Sue McKemmish explains the conceptual nature of archives and records and the multiple views they can be used to represent.

> ‘The object of description ceased to be the creation of a surrogate (‘word photograph’) of the physical grouping of records in the repository. It became instead the creation of knowledge representations in the archival system of contextual an recordkeeping relationships’ (McKemmish, 1994, p. 191).

Rolan further unpacks records continuum thinking on records by exploring the relationship between a record as a representation of an activity or other phenomena, the activity or phenomena being represented, and the people or communities that use it (Rolan, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c).

> ‘**A record is always the representation of a Performance**, possibly involved in other Performances, and certainly subject to recordkeeping Performances. It is the existence of Representation (and the association Reference) relationships that imbues ‘record-ness’ to a Substantial or Performance entity’ (Rolan, 2017c, p. 174).

This redistributes the power of archival authorities and institutions to decide what is, and what is not, a record or archive. The way power is conceptualised in records continuum thinking and theorising will be discussed later on in chapter 4.3. In the previous chapter Derridean and

Foucauldian conceptualisations of power that contributed so significantly to records continuum thinking were explored. For both Foucault and Derrida, power is linked not just to the coercive influence an individual or group might have over another, but to the construction of meaning, selfhood and reality. Records can be a tool in this constructive power, in particular to power/knowledge.

If records and archives are seen as co-constructed, created, and formed – not as an unproblematic outcome of administrative function then you have to take into account the intention and perspectives of records and archives creators. If the process is not automatic and humans are involved, you must consider agency. Records Continuum Thinking draws on Giddens conceptualisation of agency. 'Agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place' (Giddens, 1984, p. 9). Records become part of the wider structuration of society discussed in the previous chapter. Shaping and being shaped by other structures and human agents. Serving as both allocative and authoritative resources at a micro and macro level.

If people can act differently, and people are responsible for the creation of records, it cannot be assumed that adequate records of appropriate quality will appear. There is a place for intervention by archivists before records are ever even created. If then, archivists need to intervene before the creation of records, the grounds for a clear distinction between records managers and archivists are no longer as clear. Not only did Maclean reject the naturalness of records but he also rejected this distinction between records and archives, archivists and records managers :

> 'It seems to me that the archival profession is undergoing significant change. The so-called records managers are really the archivists of the twentieth century. It is really necessary to start to think of archivists as we have known them to date as becoming what I might call, for want of a better term, historical archivists. I say this for two reasons. In the first case, the records of the mid-twentieth century are considerably different in form, quality and quantity to the records of the nineteenth century. In the second case, many archivists have ceased to be concerned primarily with collecting the records of the past for use by the present generation and are now concerned with organising the records of the present for use in the immediate future' (Upward, 1994, p. 113).

Many records continuum thinkers use the term recordkeeping to refer to this combination of records management and archival work. Recordkeeping is:

> 'A form of witnessing and memory making, a particular way of evidencing and memorializing our individual and collective lives' (McKemmish, 2005, p. 3).

The activities carried out in recordkeeping are not seen as sequential administrative tasks but rather can occur at any point, and many times, across the life span of a record. Recordkeeping serves to:

> 'fix the content and structure of records, preserve their integrity by ensuring they are tamper proof, and link them to ever-widening layers of rich metadata about their multiple contexts of creation and use' (McKemmish, 2017, p. 139).

Recordkeeping as a conceptualisation has profound effects on the design of archival and records systems and processes, as well as what it means to be a recordkeeper. The description of recordkeeping, context, and relationships does not, according to Hurley, result in a final product.

> 'Since the system can be regarded as a kind of relational database, it has no "products" – on the principle that a particular view of the data is created not upon capture but in response to user query' (Hurley, 1994a, p. 169).

This idea of a product developed and re-developed upon use and the importance of relationships are themes that pop up in many records continuum thinkers' writing. The importance of relationships and the constantly evolving nature of any final description is evidenced in the Australian Series System (Hurley, 1994b)[6]. At its heart the Australian Series System describes recordkeeping and context separately, it then reunites these entities through relationships.

> 'It is by accurately and faithfully depicting relationships from the administrative (or other) context in which [records] were originally created: that we fulfil our great twin mandate to maintain order and provenance' (Hurley, 1994a, p. 167).

The Series System is designed to acknowledge the way the meaning and context of records changes through time. It allows for multiple perspectives and a multiplicity of views. This aligns with postmodern rejections of metanarratives, although the Series System was developed well before the postmodern turn, and with records continuum conceptualisations of records and archives as 'always becoming' (McKemmish, 1994, p. 200). The Series System was developed by Peter Scott who:

> 'rejected the record group as an inappropriately physical way of preserving and representing records in their contexts of creation. In abandoning the record group, Scott was driven by his

[6] It should be noted that Hurley advocates for the term 'Australian System' not Series System to stress the flexibility of the system. For simplicity's sake in this thesis I will refer to the Australian Series System.

> understanding of the dynamic nature of the relationships amongst records and between records and their contexts of creation and use' (McKemmish, 1994, p. 187).

The Series System sits in opposition to the life-cycle's organically formed fonds and records group. Each of which is defined by their association with a singular provenance. A record group being defined as:

> 'a collection of records that share the same provenance or were created in the same administrative unit' (SAA, 2015c).

While a fonds may consist of multiple record groups representing 'everything created by a particular individual or organisation (provenance)' (SAA, 2015b). Records continuum thinking doesn't deal in such absolutes. Instead it uses a series of analytical tools to address each situation as it exists, as it is, rather than creating generalizable methods or definitions.

Because, in part, as Sue McKemmish states – 'records are always in a process of becoming' (McKemmish, 1994, p. 200) from a continuum perspective, and because the meaning of records comes in part from their relationships, records continuum thinking requires flexibility in archival description and documentation. McKemmish explores the way in which the Australian Series System allows for such flexibility by un-coupling the physical organisation of records and archives from their description and the relationships depicted. This means one record can have multiple relationships with other entities and records, something that may be impossible to represent in the physical ordering of boxes on shelves.

> 'He [Peter Scott] also rejected the corollary notion that the description of records and their contexts should mirror the arrangement of the records in the physical custody of the archives authority' (McKemmish, 1994, p. 192).

The potential for a multiplicity of relationships which may or may not come to be can also be seen in Deleuze's work through the concept of the virtual. The Series System and its successors leave room for the virtual to manifest. For different relationships and processes of becoming. Building on the work of Peter Scott, Chris Hurley[7] has proposed a system of terminological and contextual control.

Terminological classifications and terms are somewhat arbitrary. They don't mean anything in themselves, and cannot be found as observable phenomena. These classifications are hierarchical and independent of time. Relationships between terminologically defined entities are often limited

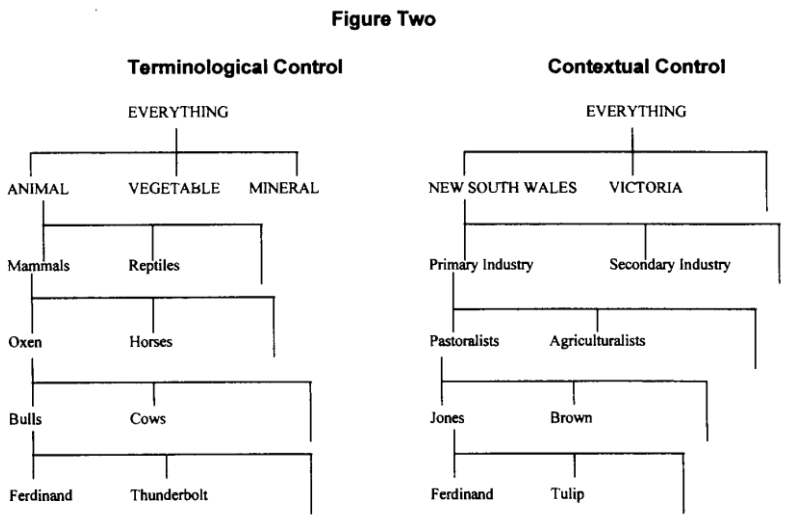
[7] According to a close colleague of Hurley, Hurley worked under Scott for a significant period of time. This relationship makes sense given Hurley's focus on issues of provenance and the Series System.

by the type of entities. Terminological control supports the enduring elements of records and archives, but cannot support the perduring elements. Hurley uses the example of bulls in his paper, and I will follow his lead in my attempts to explain terminological control. They support:

> ‘relationships that are themselves impervious to external change. If Ferdinand is a bull then he is necessarily a mammal and no power on earth can ever change that’ (Hurley, 1995, p. 25).

> ‘Terminological control establishes Ferdinand's identity as a particular representative of a defined class or category. Contextual control establishes Ferdinand's identity as an individual by nominating the relationship Ferdinand has with other entities. Herein lies the essential difference between terminological and contextual control’ (Hurley, 1995, p. 24).

For me the easiest way to make sense of terminological control and contextual control is by visually mapping it out. I have included below in figure 42 a copy of the diagram created by Hurley doing just this.




| Terminological Control is ... | | Contextual Control is ... | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A TRUE HIERARCHY | - Yes | A TRUE HIERARCHY | - No |
| MULTI-LEVEL | - Yes | MULTI-LEVEL | - No |
| TIMEBOUND | - No | TIMEBOUND | - Yes |
| CONTINGENT | - No | CONTINGENT | - Yes |

*figure 42. Terminological and Contextual Control (Hurley, 1995, p.25)*

You could assign the cows a unique identifier or name. This works within a limited field of reference, but everybody doesn’t follow this rule. Everybody who owns a cow cannot know the names of everyone else’s cows. Some cows are likely to end up with the same names. Limiting the use of names or assigning unique identifiers is a type of terminological control, and conceptually these

identifiers could be anything. You might decide to classify cows using colours, numbers, names or a combination of all three.

On the other hand:

> 'contextual relationships are meaningless unless they are fixed in time and circumstance, unless they show when the relationship exists. Terminological relationships exist outside of time' (Hurley, 1995, p. 25).

Contextual approaches to identifying which cow you are talking about involve placing the cow in relation to its context. This may mean its geographical location, the time period it was born in, or the farmers that care for it. This additional information is not arbitrary but empirical. Based on observable and verifiable phenomena. This kind of control enables us to make sense of records from outside of their original context, it supports and communicates perduring elements of records. Documenting the time-space of entities, it is the role of the archivist to document and impose contextual and terminological control.

Discussions on the role of archivists still continue in the present day (2020). A records continuum approach to the role of the archivist is post-custodial, meaning unlike traditional conceptualisations of archives records continuum thinkers do not see the physical custody of records as necessary. Rolan (2017b) develops the concept of Jenkinson's moral defence to fit within a universe where "record-ness" emerges from the relationships between records as representation and their recursive use as evidence by multiple individuals and communities.

> 'Such moral defence, then, can be couched not in terms of a single unbroken chain of custody and interpretation (though that may well be a significant strand in the fabric of evidence), but in terms of ensuring sufficiently interoperable sociomaterial systems that facilitate participatory engagement with records. Moral defence then shifts from admonishment (don't be negligent or hasty in arrangement and description) to an imperative for proactive engagement with the Archival Multiverse' (Rolan, 2017b, p. 269).

Returning again to the last chapter, it is not the attributes or location of an object that defines it but it's relationship with other entities and the process of its becoming. Therefore, an archive may not necessarily be located in a singular space-time. In the records continuum paradigm the term archives does not simply relate to multiple records with archival value. Nor does it refer to institutions that collect archival records. Instead:

> 'the (capitalised) term ***Archive***, when used, refers to the gestalt of sociotechnical archival systems, recordkeeping practices, and stakeholder behaviours. From a continuum perspective, the Archive embraces the whole archival multiverse' (Rolan, 2017b, p. 118).

The archival multiverse was a concept first proposed by an Archival Education and Research Initiative (AERI) working group, *Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group (PACG)* and seeks to acknowledge:

> 'the pluralism of evidentiary texts, memory-keeping practices and institutions, bureaucratic and, personal motivations, community perspectives and needs, and cultural and legal constructs' (PACG, 2011, p. 73).

The archival multiverse can be traced back to the work and thought of Indigenous American archivist Ally Krebs and her Indigenous Australian colleagues Kirsten Thorpe and Shannon Faulkhead. Despite coming from opposite parts of the globe these three archivists and scholars identified similarities in indigenous worldviews. These shared premises included the belief of an interconnected world, an ecosystem not a ordered hierarchy and the importance of yarning and relationships.

> 'It was Ally who first brought the concept of the multiverse and its possibilities for archival thought, practice and education to others working with her in the Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group. She shared her deep understanding of the emotional and spiritual dimensions of archiving' (Faulkhead & Thorpe, 2017, p. 13).

Recordkeeping practices and systems inspired by records continuum thinking have manifested in a number of ways including the series systems and from the 1990s onwards in a series of records continuum and information continuum models. These models draw on and inspire the future development of recordkeeping inclusive of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing including the archival multiverse.

## Records Continuum Models

The records continuum models are a series of topological imagining of records continuum thinking. They are not meant to be used as a prescriptive representational diagram but a descriptive and analytical tool to assist the exploration of recordkeeping from a continuum perspective (Upward, 2000b). These models can be used to expand on theory and inform practice.

> 'My own continuum model, not discussed in any consequential detail until part three of this thesis, was a direct response to an understanding that we needed models that could help me in topographical analysis. We needed a tool, I thought, that could cater for different

perspectives within any complex analysis of the web of relationships in which archival practices will be embedded' (Upward, 2009, p. 45).

Records continuum thinking employs a network metaphor, not a life-cycle one. Following on with the network paradigm, records are seen as always in a state of becoming, forming and being formed by new relationships, existing as logical objects rather than physical "products". Records are defined not by their physical make up or age but by their 'evidential qualities, purposes, and functionality'(McKemmish et al., 2009, p. 4447).

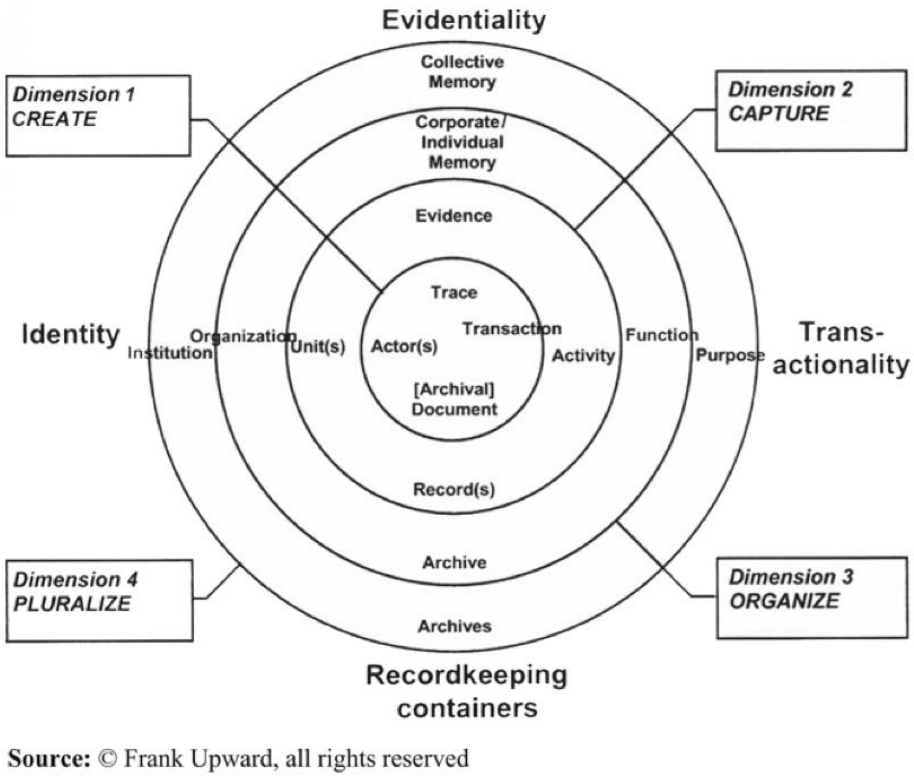



*figure 43. The Records Continuum Model*

The model, shown in *figure 43. The Records Continuum Model* above consists of four dimensions and four intersecting axes (McKemmish et al., 2005). These non-linear dimensions and axes can never be fully separated from one another and they gain their definition from their relationships to each other (Upward, 2000a).

Remember records continuum thinking focuses on transactions and processes, not static objects (Upward, 1996). The dimensions are not distinct things. Take for example a wooden cube. It exists in three dimensions, it has width, height, and depth. In examining the cube all of these parameters exist at the same time. The cube doesn't have height, then depth, and perhaps tomorrow width. The separation of these three parameters is made by humans to allow us to measure and understand the cube. In other words, the focus of the individual observing the cube is moving not the cube. The

dimensions in the records continuum model operate in a similar way. They are always all present in a record, but the model draws boundaries between them to enable us to more easily make sense of the world.

This inseparability means you cannot have one dimension without another. What the records continuum model does is allow you to situate yourself in one dimension to take on that perspective (Reed, 2005), rather than having to try and engage with multiple perspectives at the same time. The dimensions are not linear and are not singular. Because records and archives aren't fixed and are constantly becoming (McKemmish, 1994) they are always situated "in" each dimension at the same time.

The four dimensions - create, capture, organise and pluralise- are explained in direct alignment with four of Anthony Gidden's key concepts (Upward, 2005). The first dimension labelled create is associated with 'intersections of regions and a spatial spread away from the immediate contexts of interaction . . . It is from a sociological perspective, the dimension of doing things, where-as the other dimensions represent zones of influence upon actions' (Upward, 2005, p. 199). The records continuum model is a topological tool to make sense of events, people and phenomena. My interpretation here is that the first dimension is the event, performance, or action itself. According to records continuum thinking this does not render the following three dimensions inactive but places them in relation to the focal event. The first dimension draws our attention to creation but does not preclude activity in other dimensions. It is a messy, active space where actors are engaged in a transaction or activity. Although technically always a place of co-creation recent publications have seen this dimension explicitly re-named to reflect its plurality and multiplicity as well as the plurality of agents involved in records creation (Frings-Hessami, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019).

The second dimension refers to capture and is associated with Giddens concept of routinization. Broadening our focus out from the original transaction, and involves the provision of metadata and form to give the record or archive structure. Through the third dimension, organise, records are part of an organisational aggregate, they are within a system or collection and are managed according to organisational policy and procedure. The third dimension is associated with Giddens concept of time-space distanciation. The fourth dimension draws our attention to acts of pluralisation and Giddens societal totality. This dimension encourages you to step as far back from the original transaction or activity as possible. It encourages us to look at society as a widely as possible, the broader context and becoming of the record and organisations and individuals impacted by it.

Alongside the dimensions are four axes which scale along structuration lines from micro to macro. The axes include a transactionality axis which traces the evolution of a single transaction to an

activity, a function and societal purpose. The evidential axis represents the way the evidential nature of a record can be interpreted as a trace to collective memory. The Identity axis encourages us to reflect on how records impact identity, and whose, at different levels of distance from the original transaction. The recordkeeping containers axis concerns the material manifestation and /or logical make up of records and archives as they move further from the transaction they represent. The focus of the model on transactions, evidence, and process rather than records as artefacts injects a performative element into records continuum thinking.

For example, if I were to buy a packet of tofu the transaction might be me tapping my card at the register. The next level of distanciation might be the creation of a receipt documenting this activity. Transactions can be understood as part of a wider number of activities, including for example commerce. People who were not present at the moment of the transaction would know what happened based on the receipt. In dimension three the receipt may form part of my financial records, or the sales records of the shop. It can be understood as evidence of the function of retail and exchange. In the fourth dimension it may form evidence of dietary preferences or commerce in the early 21st century. This is of course just one of many examples[8] (Reed, 2005).

Not only is the records continuum model an important representation of records continuum theorising but it has also served as a conduit and tool for a generation of archival researchers, providing something tangible through which to grasp and interrogate records continuum thinking. Multiple researchers like Joanne Mihelcic (2016), Viviane Frings-Hessami (2017, 2018), Lisa Gibbons (2009, 2014, 2017), Gregory Rolan (2017a), and Belinda Battley (2013) have used the records continuum model as an analytical research tool. In Battley's (2013) case the records continuum model was used to analyse descriptive practices from multiple perspectives. Her work also identified the core role of place in records and the records continuum. For all the records continuum's exploration of contextualisation, geographical place had not been addressed as explicitly as could be hoped.

> 'For the records to continue their function as an active part of the life of the club, they must remain within the complex, adaptive system of the Club's collective memory maintaining process. Vital to that process are the places in which the Club carries out its activities: the wilderness areas, the Club noticeboard, the Facebook page, the Hut; the other non-physical records which link to the physical ones: the stories and songs, the embodied skills and

[8] Barbara Reed Reed, B. (2005). Reading the Records Continuum: Interpretations and Explorations. *Archives and Manuscripts*, *33*(1), 18 - 43. provides very insightful and clear examples of how to map the records continuum model if you wish to explore this further.

> knowledge; and the relationships and shared understanding that all in combination give meaning and context to the records' (Battley, 2019, p. 11).

Viviane Frings-Hessami's (2017) also explores different contextualisation's of records, in particular records that were / are intentionally re-contextualised for political reasons. Her addition of an appropriate dimension aims to represent the unique context of the former Khmer Rouge archive. Frings-Hessami's (2017, 2019) Appropriates Archive Continuum Model adds the prefix "re" to three of the Information Continuum Models dimensions of create, capture, and organise. The term pluralise is left as it is. The "re" is used to indicate how the:

> 'political appropriation and this reinterpretation of the archive are fundamentally different from ordinary curatorial processes' (Frings-Hessami, 2019, p. 260).

Much like the addition of "co" to the create dimension records continuum thinking at its heart implies a multiplicity of recursive creations, recreations, and other activities. The record is always becoming (McKemmish, 1994). Decisions to introduce an appropriate dimension, or to add prefixes like "co" and "re" do not necessarily add anything new to the records continuum model or theory. What they do is make the multiplicity implied by the model explicit. This perhaps hints to a limit in the way records continuum thinking and the records continuum model have been communicated. Arguably all archives are politically appropriated and reinterpreted in an archival multiverse with a plurality of agents. Some situations however result in more politicised records than others.

Records content is stable, but the context in which they exist is constantly growing, morphing and becoming. The use of records is also always in flux, and more often than not, politicised. Frings-Hessami (2019) is using the records continuum model to draw out the relationships between context and issues of power and agency at a societal level. Joanne Mihelcic's work explores this relationship at a more granular level through the person centred record. She demonstrates the link between records continuum understandings of the importance of contextualisation and agency. Her work stresses the importance of engaging with the unique context of every human being. Highlighting an important element of records continuum thinking that is often overlooked, the intertwining of individuals and the larger structures they contribute to and are shaped by. Mihelcic (2016) does this without reducing the individual to a part of a larger whole or turning them into a passive subject. Her research demonstrates how records continuum thinking and modelling can support not just the mapping of the world around us but active creation of individual identities and narratives.

## Conclusion

Records continuum thinking and records continuum models provide postmodern inspired conceptualisations of records, archives, and recordkeeping. Staying true to the broader postmodernist thinkers discussed in the previous chapter records are always becoming (McKemmish, 1994), relational, evolving through space-time. The boundaries between records and archives in a life-cycle sense are deconstructed and dismantled. Replaced instead with the concept of recordkeeping that describes a much broader range of activities and phenomena than traditional concepts of records or archives alone. In the next chapter I will delve deeper into records continuum thinking identifying some of the key concepts and discourses that are not always explicit.

## Section 2: Conclusion

This is the shortest section of this thesis, but one of the most important. It aims to achieve two things. First to provide the reader with sufficient background information about the theorists that are frequently named in records continuum and postmodernist / critical archival literature. Second to demonstrate how the thinkers discussed here form the intellectual roots of records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal from postmodernist / critical archival paradigms. Both of these aims assist in addressing what the key concepts and discourses are that underpin records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal.

To summarise the thinkers examined in this section of the thesis can be split into three groups. The first explored Bergson's concepts of duration and multiplicity, Deleuze's morphonogenic processes and difference and Latour's challenging of the subject object dichotomy. Together this first group is drawn on by records continuum thinkers in relation to the multiplicity, relationality, and becoming of records and archives. The second group covers Derrida's différance and of course archives fever alongside Foucault's concepts of knowledge/power, governmentality and discourse. The second group is often drawn on by both records continuum thinkers and postmodernist/critical archivists in exploring issues of power and agency in archives and records. The third and final group consists of a single theorist: Giddens. Giddens work on structuration theory and time space distanciation serves a central role in records continuum thinking especially the records continuum model. It is also drawn on by some of the participatory archives literature.

Now that the intellectual foundations have been laid, records continuum thinking and participatory archives can be discussed in detail in the next section.

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# Section 3: Records Continuum Thinking and Participatory Appraisal

## Contents

## Section 3: Introduction

This section of the thesis identifies the key concepts and discourses underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory approaches to archives. Previously, in section 2 of this thesis, a basic introduction to records continuum thinking was provided alongside a description of six theorists who have significantly influenced records continuum thinking. This section addresses the first primary research question:

> *What are the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal?*

I argue the key concepts and discourses underpinning records continuum thinking include: monistic diversity, time-space, multiplicity, contextuality, relational becomingness, and agency. Rather than being underpinned by distinct concepts, it appears that participatory appraisal rests on a number of axioms. These axioms concern the nature of records, archives, and recordkeeping, the role of non-archivists in recordkeeping, and relationships between individuals, communities, and records. In section four of this thesis the possibility of extending records continuum thinking drawing on social and philosophical theory to better support participatory appraisal, including a more explicit formulation of the underpinning participatory axioms, will be discussed.

As discussed in the methodology chapter, this section of the thesis draws on a Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis; identifying the roles that exist for subjects within the discourses and the various objects and concepts that are interacted with. Divided into three chapters the first chapter in this section examines records continuum thinking. The second and third chapters focus on participatory approaches to appraisal. While all of these chapters involve discourse analysis it has been applied differently across them. These differences are due to the nature of the unit of analysis.

For the first chapter, the unit of analysis is records continuum thinking, therefore all of the scholarly literature on records continuum thinking has been examined as a whole as shown in figure 44. Chapter 3.1. Unit of Analysis: Records Continuum Thinking.

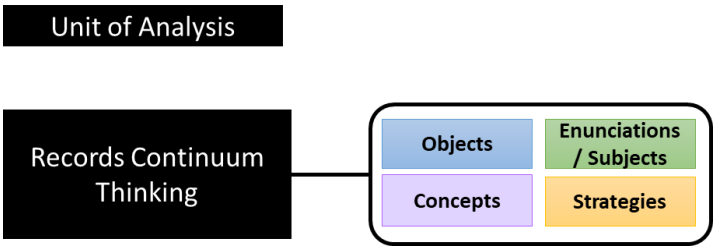


*figure 44. Unit of Analysis: Records Continuum Thinking*

The second and third chapters deal with a number of radically different conceptualisations of participatory archives. Therefore, each of these conceptualisations is treated as a unit of analysis in chapter 2 (see figure 45. Unit of Analysis: Participatory archives and figure 46. Unit of Analysis: High Level Participatory Archives) before they are brought together in chapter 3.3.

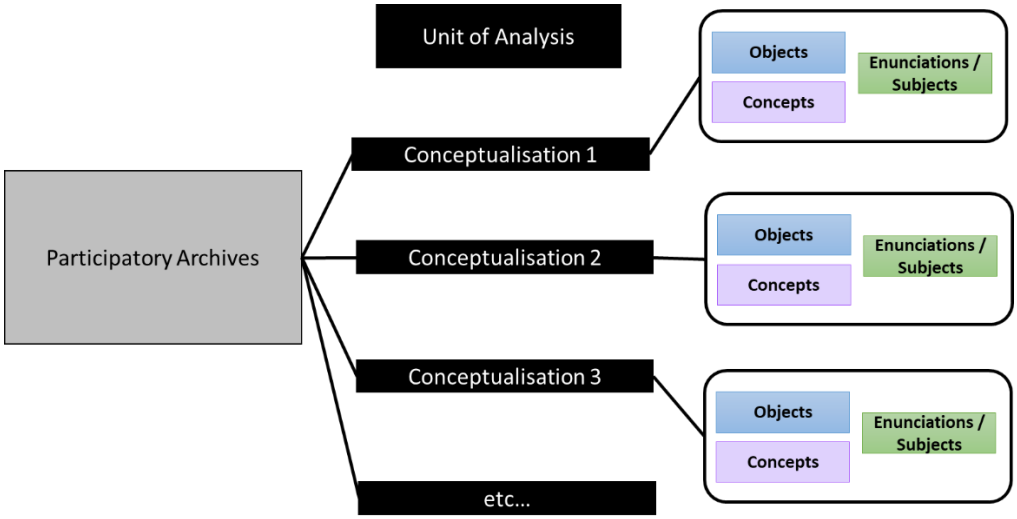


*figure 45. Unit of Analysis: Participatory Archives*[1]

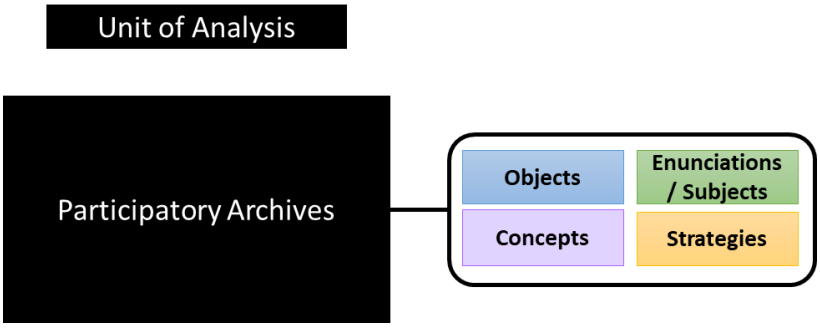


*figure 46. Unit of Analysis: High Level Participatory Archives*

This section identifies significant overlap between records continuum thinking and selected conceptualisations of participatory archives that emerged from postmodernist, critical, and post-custodial paradigms. Much of the participatory archives and records continuum literature raises issues of power and agency in records and archives, and rejects the idea of records as neutral natural occurring objects, and of a "completely" representative archive.

The process and outcomes of the analyses undertaken in sections 1 and 2 demonstrate how the adaptation and use of methods and techniques of discourse and diffractive analysis within a

[1] As discussed on page 175 there are 4 categories of analysis, the fourth category 'strategies' will not be discussed until chapter 3 as it requires a comparison of the individual entities analysed in chapter 2.

postfoundationalist paradigm can contribute novel research design and methods to archival theory making, thus addressing my third research question.

# Chapter 3.1: Records Continuum Thinking

## Introduction

This chapter forms an essential step in exploring my first research question:

> *What are the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal?*

It brings the influences explored in chapter 2.1 into the context of records continuum thinking and lays the foundations for potential amplifications and extensions of records continuum thinking and participatory approaches. This is achieved by describing and identifying the core concepts upon which records continuum theorising and thinking rests. If records continuum thinking could not be explained without a given concept – it was considered core.

I argue that a records continuum perspective is underpinned by concepts of monistic diversity, time-space, multiplicity, contextuality, relational becomingness, and agency. These conclusions were reached through the exploration of records continuum thinking as it existed at the time of writing this thesis. It intertwines narratives embedded in the archival literature targeting both academics and practitioners. Some of these narratives have already been articulated in chapter 2.1 of this thesis, the theories drawn on from external thinkers.

## Chapter Approach

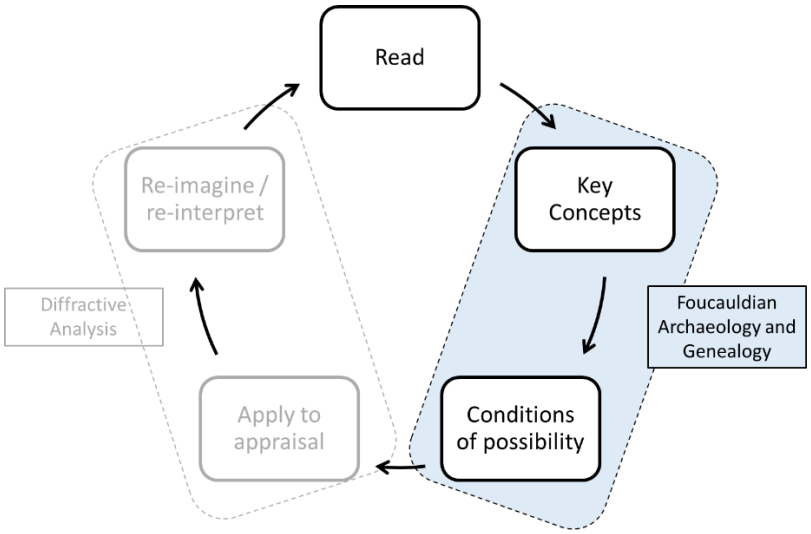


*figure 47. Chapter 3.1. Approach*

As depicted in figure 47 Chapter 3.1 Approach the broader approach taken in this chapter was Foucauldian analysis via reading, identification of key concepts, and investigation of conditions of

possibility. Foucauldian discourse analysis (Andersen, 2003; Bastalich, 2009; Foucault, 1980, 2002; Graham, 2005; Gutting, 1991, 2019; Howe, 2008) is the analytical framework that was used.

In part because of this entanglement, but also because of the collaborative nature of much of the records continuum literature, this chapter deals with records continuum thinking as a single unit of analysis as shown in figure 44. below. Rather than dividing records continuum thinking up into smaller chunks based on authorship (problematic because the authorship is often shared) or time (because of the way current thinkers draw on and work with past thinkers), this chapter is organised around the key concepts themselves. This chapter will begin with the challenging of dichotomies through monistic diversity and time-space, before moving onto multiplicity and contextuality, then relational becomingness and finally agency.

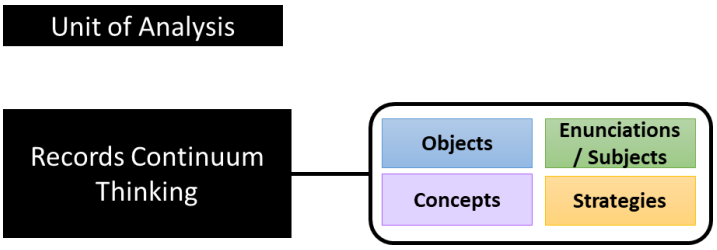


*figure 44. Unit of Analysis: Records Continuum Thinking*

I have followed the same Foucauldian inspired lines of inquiry for all six of these key concepts. First, where do these concepts emerge (surfaces of emergence and enunciations)? Second what do they mean? And third how do they manifest (surfaces of emergence)? After having addressed these key concepts I examine the strategies (points of diffraction, economies of discursive constellation and non-discursive constellation) that emerge in this space. Each sub-section begins with a diagram outlining the external theorists who can be related to the key concept under discussion. The nature of these relationships is complex and rarely linear. An example has been provided below in Figure 6. It consists of an icon representing an external thinker, an oval containing a concept attributed to that thinker and a box identifying the related records continuum concept.

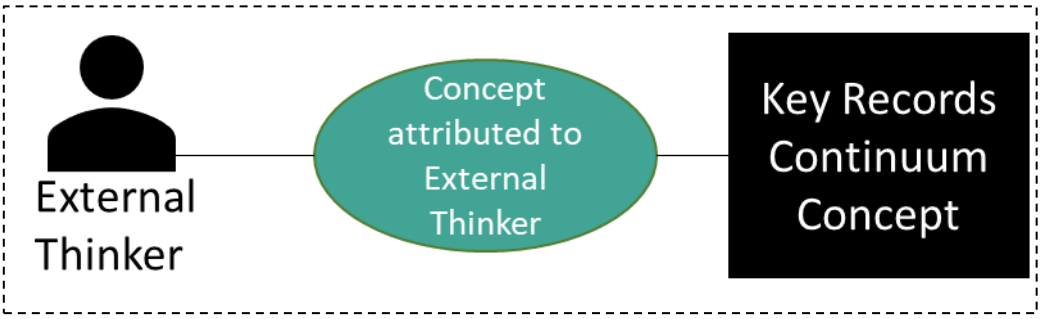


*figure 48. Example diagram: External Thinker and Records Continuum Concept*

Many of the external theorists drawn on spent significant time philosophising and studying the role of records and information on society. The most prominent examples include Foucault's power/knowledge and Derrida's archive fever. During the same period of time (the 1960s – early 1980s) many leading records continuum thinkers were employed at the National Archives of Australia, working with archives and information while embedded in a society being transformed by social and cultural change. Personal conversations with figures like Frank Upward and Sue McKemmish have revealed that many of the concepts explored below emerged before they had explicit or direct exposure to the postmodern / poststructuralist thinkers who I have related them to. The timelines between translation (mostly from French) to English and dates of publication simply do not add up. This complicates any attempt to create hierarchical relationships between these ideas and people.

It is possible some of these ideas, despite not being in English, were simply floating around in the cultural zeitgeist of the time It is also possible given that records and information were often shared subject matter of both records continuum thinkers and external thinkers referenced here that these ideas emerged in parallel, coalescing around each other in the 1990s and early 2000s. With this in mind I will begin with monistic diversity.

## Monistic Diversity

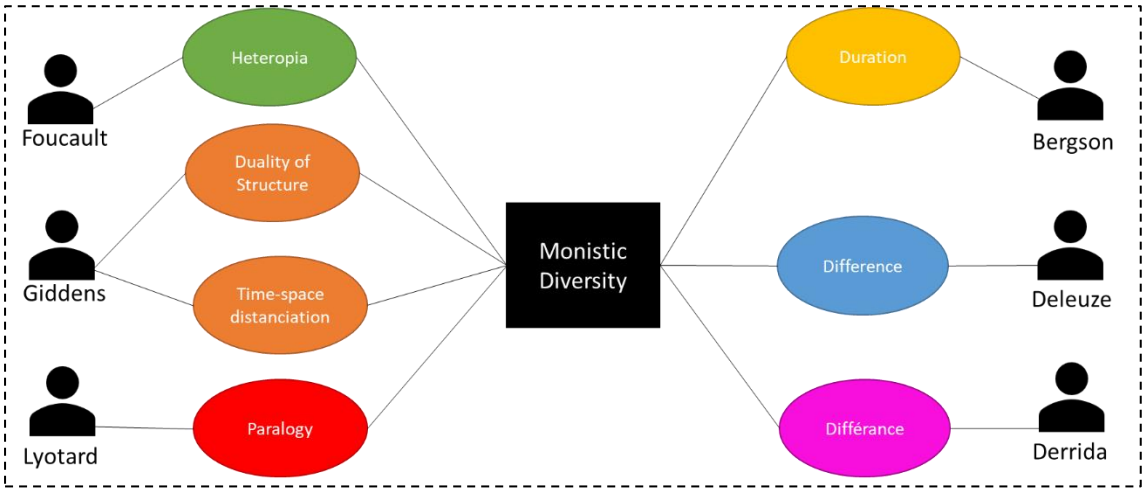


*figure 49. External Theorists and Monistic Diversity*

### Where does the concept emerge from?

The concept of monistic diversity in records continuum thinking comes from Frank Upward but, despite his arguments of its centrality, the term itself is only discussed in two publications (one of which is in a footnote)(Upward, 2019; Upward et al., 2011). In his doctoral thesis Upward explains how he:

> ‘Will keep hammering away, explaining the terms before raising the stakes and insisting in the manner of Lyotard that human survival will increasingly be in jeopardy if archivists (and all information professionals) do not lift their game and start promoting and using continuum concepts based on monistic diversity in order to address justice and the unknown’ (Upward, 2009, p. 133).

The earliest extensive mentions of monistic diversity are made by Upward in his 2009 doctoral thesis many years after he first began publishing on records continuum thinking, identifying Lyotard’s paralogies as a starting point. Paralogies are explained as phenomena:

> ‘Implying contradictions that are actually parallel in logic not paradoxes. They can disappear when the problems are differently expressed (the *differend*), more is known about them, or they are looked at from a fresh perspective. You can learn to live with them until some sort of resolution between them emerges. Better still, you can play with them creatively, giving full rein to the process of mechanic connectivity between ideas’ (Upward, 2009, p. 132).

This creative play could be a thinly veiled reference to deconstruction. Something Upward (1996) addresses in his very early publications on records continuum thinking:

> ‘the major unsettling techniques of the post-moderns was deconstruction of modern 'dualisms'. This has had its largest impact in English speaking countries where the method of 'rational' thought has been built upon divisions between related concepts. Archivists are only at the beginning of deconstruction. Much of the 'modern' archival thinking in the United States and to a lesser extent in Australia, for example, is based on such 'divisions' as those between archives and records, archives and manuscripts government and non-government records, information and records, or current records and historical records’ (Upward, 1996, p. 273).

Records continuum thinking and theorising draws heavily on postmodern paradigms, adopting postmodern conceptualisations about how the world and our relationship with it operates (Upward, 2000, 2009). Postmodernism while a debated and by no means unified school of thought tends to reject dichotomies and absolutes, embracing the messy complexity of the world. As discussed in chapter 2.1, postmodernists tend to question the ability of humans to unproblematically see and observe the environment and reality. They question enlightenment ideas around the categorisation of entities based on their inherent properties and instead focus on the processes of becoming. They also bring a critical eye to concepts of progress and the promises made by meta-theories such as Marxism (Bessant & Watts, 2007).

Rational thought or dichotomous thinking is a product of early scientific thinking and often attributed to René Descartes. Perhaps most famous for the cliched "I think therefore I am", this famous quip actually led Descartes to conclude that the physical world around him (which he could doubt) was different from the mind (the fact he could think) (Hatfield, 2018). Livia Iacovino eloquently explains how this split emerges in a recordkeeping context:

> 'The relationship of the external world (context) and how humans internalise it, of subject (human being) and of object (thing), and of changing social values, are ongoing ethical concerns that have also been raised in recordkeeping theory in relation to the relationship of the record (object or subject) with its creator (object or subject), and of the values placed on recorded information in different time-space settings. Descartes' division of the physical from the mental or spiritual, known as "Cartesian duality", is rejected by the ethical demand theory which sets out to destroy the epistemology of subject and object. Frank Upward in his records continuum model also rejects the subject-object duality in which the record is the object' (Iacovino, 2006, pp. 7-8).

Frank Upward identifies parallels between monistic diversity and concepts in the work of many postmodern and poststructuralist thinkers such as Deleuze's difference, Bergson's 'continuum modality (the diversity of the oneness of time)' (Upward, 2009, p. 144), Foucault's heterotopia, Gidden's duality of structure and time-space distanciation, and Jacques Derrida's Différance.

## What does the concept mean?

Monistic diversity is a response to the rational, dichotomous thought of the modern age. It can be arrived at through deconstruction and is set firmly by Upward in a postmodern frame of reference. But what exactly does it mean? I don't think it is quite as complex as it sounds. Monistic diversity simply refers to the idea that everything and everyone, every place and every time are all related. They all impact upon one another, to such an extent that they can never exist independently. They form one whole, a monistic clump. However, this does not mean that everything, place, time, and event are the same. Quite the opposite. They are all unique. Made up of unique relational constellations in a specific time and specific place. They are diverse, monistically so.

Monistic diversity is an instance where dichotomous thinking is being rejected. The name itself would, from a cartesian point of view, contradict itself. Mono meaning one and diverse meaning many. Because this cartesian approach is rejected, an understanding of archives as one (simultaneously both record and archive) holistic phenomenon consisting of many diverse parts is possible. Writing later in 2019 Upward re-explored monistic diversity explaining it as:

> 'The monism is the archival multiverse, a laterally interconnected universe of recorded information that is in a state of exponential expansion. Information governance exists as part of this simple whole but any simple solutions to deal with it are sure to be wrong. They will be confounded by the fact that the diversity of the parts are much more complex than the whole and are in motion, expanding in their complexity' (Upward, 2019, p. 260).

### How does the concept manifest?

While they do not necessarily use the phrase monistic diversity, other records continuum thinkers commonly draw on the idea behind it. Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott (2013) dedicated an entire journal article to the challenging of dichotomies. It forms a foundational aspect of a records continuum thinking world view impacting how the physical and social world is perceived. The questioning of binaries allows more room to be made for diversities of opinions, perspectives, and records. There is no longer a requirement to draw a line between personal and corporate records for example, or delineate responsibility for them.

> 'In this construct, evidentiary texts are inclusive of "records as they exist in multiple cultural contexts" and all forms of recordkeeping, including the institutional/bureaucratic and the personal' (McKemmish & Piggott, 2013, p. 113).

Perhaps the most obvious way this rejection of duality manifests in a records continuum perspective is through the conceptualisation of recordkeeping itself. Recordkeeping represents an intentional effort to deconstruct and dismantle hard boundaries between records and archives, records managers, and archivists (McKemmish et al., 2009). Recordkeeping extends across memory, evidence, and identity. Across "active" and "historic" to include all witnessing, evidencing, and memorialising individual and community experience. As can be seen from Iacovino's quote above, recordkeeping is not just a portmanteau uniting two archival concepts, but represents a fundamental world view applicable to all processes, concepts, and objects in a records continuum paradigm.

The records continuum incorporation of Anthony Gidden's structuration theory and time-space distanciation is another way monistic diversity manifests in records continuum thinking. Both of these theories take two dualisms (agent/structure and time/space) and attempt to reconcile them. A key example is the way structuration theory unites agency and structure, macro and micro, time and space (Giddens, 1984). Structuration theory allows for personal and corporate records to co-exist not as opposites but intertwined and becoming. The role of recordkeeper is also predicated on the idea that the dichotomies between records managers and archivists, professionals and lay persons, can be overcome.

Despite the complexity it is important to consider time-space in making sense of the social and material world. People, societies, and objects exist in and through time-space. It shapes them and assists us to identify them. If nothing else maps are used as a frequent analogy in records continuum thinking. The mapping of people, events, records onto the records continuum model. The records continuum model itself can be considered a topological map that allows us to navigate a monistically diverse world.

> 'Monistic diversity is such a fundamental concept for continuum thinking that I have begun in this chapter to serialize its discussion and will return to it regularly in what follows. No-one can really claim to engage with the continuum aspects of records continuum discourse in the archival profession if they have no understanding of the paralogy that we live in a singularly plural universe. This needs to be fully appreciated for its difference from other forms of thinking if one is to even begin to discuss the records continuum as a paradigm shift with any philosophical foundation' (Upward, 2009, p. 128).

## Time-Space


*figure 50. External Theorists and Time-space*

### Where does the concept emerge from?

The concept of time-space emerges from Frank Upward's (2009) engagement with Samuel Alexander, Henri Bergson and Anthony Giddens. Both Henri Bergson and Anthony Giddens were explored in section 2 of this thesis. It proved challenging to access the work of Samuel Alexander due both to the availability of the physical texts and mathematical nature of the content. I have set Samuel Alexanders work aside for the more technically minded.

The aspects of Giddens' concept of time-space drawn on by archivists like Frank Upward focus on the way the contemporary world allows people to engage differently in time-space, and to overcome past limitations of time-space, for example we can talk to another person using mobile phones even though we are in different countries. Communication is no longer dependent on being in the same geographical location. Giddens' theory of time-space distanciation is most often used to explore and explain globalisation. Time-space distanciation also explains the ability of increasingly sophisticated information technologies, including records and archives, to 'shrink' or disrupt associations between time and space by enabling communication to occur quickly over vast spaces

and in the universalising capacities which can serve to undermine or displace reliance on local knowledges and ontologies for conceptualising time and space.

> 'Our abilities to store and transmit information across time and space, from the development of writing through to information technology, have radically reduced the obstacles posed for system coordination by distances in space' (Stones, 2012, p. 1).

This distancing can lead to less traditional face-to-face interaction and a disembedding of contextual values, ontologies and epistemologies. Writing before Giddens, Hannah Arendt a key theorist to be drawn on in the next section of this thesis noted the role of bureaucratisation in enabling ordinary individuals to commit extraordinary acts. Other aspects of bureaucratisation apart from the physical distancing of individuals from those whom they are communicating with or contributing to actions against are also required to understand bureaucratisation in this context.

Bergsonian time or duration as explained in Chapter 2.1 of this thesis is understood by Upward as complemented by Giddens structuration theory. As discussed in the previous few paragraphs structuration theory provides a more accessible entry point to the complexity of Bergsonian time where:

> 'there are billions of moments and movements out from the moment, with no privileging of past, present or future moments. This rippling out can occur in any time in response to any acts of creation, but the inward pressuring of structuration theory, the way our information processes affect the creation of information, will always be spatially and temporally specific to the moment in accordance with what is available to us and what we choose or are forced to use' (Upward, 2005, p.201).

### What does the concept mean?

Both Bergsonian and Giddens' conceptualisations of space and time can be classified as relativistic. As discussed in chapter 2.1. relativistic conceptualisations of space and time see objects as both enduring and perduring. Enduring referring to objects that exist in the same way / form throughout space and time, and perduring objects as phenomena that exist in different forms through time.

Records continuum thinking sees archives and records as both enduring and perduring. The structure and content of records is fixed, but the meaning of a record, its context and relationships are 'always in a process of becoming' (McKemmish, 1994, p. 200). Because records exist through time as both perduring and enduring phenomena, our descriptions of them need to make sense through time. Such a belief has pressing implications for describing and identifying records. If the

context of a record perdures, and is constantly becoming, then how can archivists ever provide a description or appropriate metadata that will last into the future?

From a records continuum perspective time and space are not distinct entities we act against passively, they are not containers we sit within. Instead they are interrelated (monistic diversity again) phenomena that shape how people and the world comes to be. The concepts of space and time therefore are not to be held separately but seen as one ever present complex whole.

> 'Fixity and fluidity and the enduring and perduring perspectives on objects might be ferocious dualisms for biographers to resolve and for philosophers to debate in perpetuity, but for archivists they are only different views. Archivists should be aware of both perspectives, and never treat them as duelling concepts' (Upward, 2009, p. 163).

### How does the concept manifest?

Because time-space is acknowledged as impacting the world around us beyond mere geography, and because records are potentially both enduring and perduring, the management of records needs to take the impact of time-space into account. Unlike traditional life cycle models, time isn't seen as a simple linear progression. As such there is no assumption about the linear progression of records or archives. Some records continuum thinkers have added the pre-fix "re" onto dimensions of the records continuum model to highlight this fact (Frings-Hessami, 2019).

The nature of both time-space and monistic diversity mean it is feasible, if not logical, that recordkeeping practices such as appraisal, description or any other activity can happen multiple times, in any order, even co-currently. Because records, like people and other phenomena are impacted and shaped by time-space, they are not static items. They are dynamic and, in considering time-space they change both physically and conceptually.

Records continuum definitions of records as having relatively fixed content and structure and constantly evolving context reflect this idea. The way records are described needs to reflect this so that in different time-spaces they can be made sense of as authoritative and allocative information objects. Because the possibility of change is acknowledged, physical custody of records right now isn't enough to ensure management through time-space. Locking records in a box and throwing away the key is not adequate (in any archival paradigm!). The changing, evolving conceptual and contextual aspect of records needs to be considered as seriously as its physical makeup.

This requires extra effort to be put into contextual control and metadata, and less focus is required on physical location or order. Chris Hurley (1995a, 1995b) has written extensively on how to avoid the collapse of this metaphysical house of cards, of how to create systems that support records that

from a continuum perspective have two, seemingly binary and incommensurable, temporal natures (enduring and perduring). The Series System introduced in chapter 2.2. is perhaps the most explicit outcome of this shift away from a custodial frame and fixed space and time. The Series System also allows for multiplicity the next key concept to be unpacked.

## Multiplicity

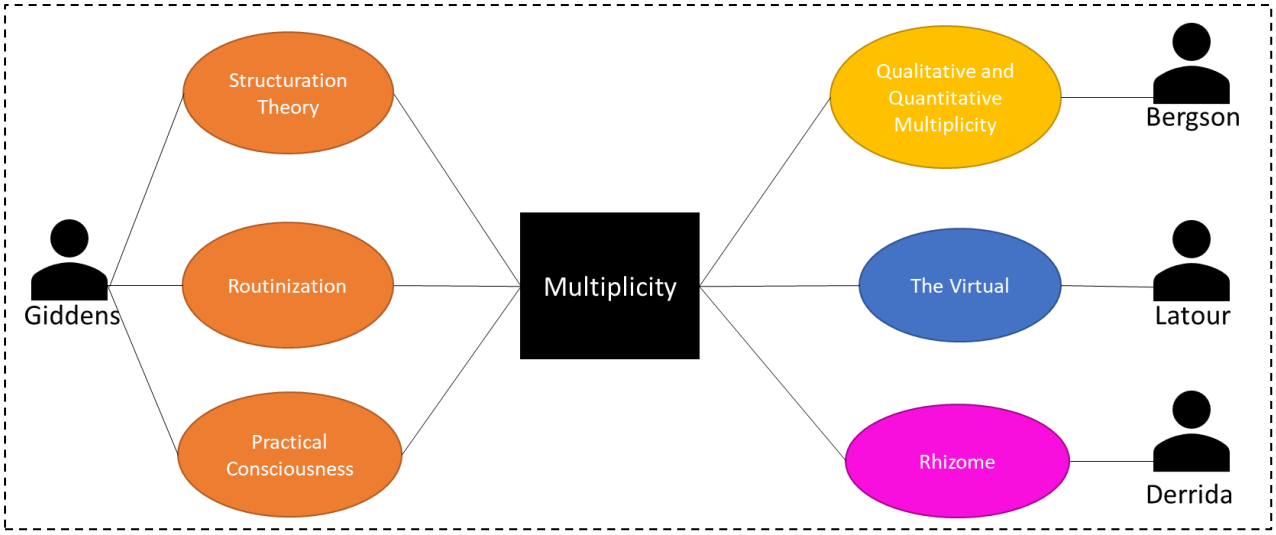


*figure 51. External Theorists and Multiplicity*

### Where does the concept emerge from?

The concept of Multiplicity in records continuum theory has been explored through Bergson's concept of multiplicity and can be aligned with Latour's concept of the virtual and Derrida's Différence. It emerges in some of the earliest (of the 1990s) records continuum writing by both Sue McKemmish (1994, 1997) and Frank Upward (1996, 1997) before the English translation of Derrida's work was readily available. Much like monistic diversity the connections to philosophy often aren't made until later publications. This suggests that the concept was developed prior to Upward or McKemmish encountering the formal theory. From conversations with my supervisors as well as publications that came before much postmodern literature (Upward, 1994) was available in English let alone written at all, it appears that records continuum thinking developed as a type of grounded theory (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2013; Upward, 1994). This theorising was based on the lived experiences and socio-cultural zeitgeist of key records continuum thinkers. The experiences of these archivists with registry and recordkeeping systems led them to identify links between such systems and emergent concepts of complexity and multiplicity. It was only later in his PhD thesis that Upward sought to find parallels between records continuum thinking and published postmodern philosophy that the conceptualisation of theorists like Derrida were layered over the original records continuum

ideas. The philosophy serves then to reinforce and articulate the concepts already embedded in records continuum thinking.

In earlier works, Upward (1997), in particular, links the concept of multiplicity to Giddens' structuration, the routinization, practical consciousness and distanciation discussed in Chapter 2.1. operate across and through time-space to create multiple realities.

> 'Duality, however, was a poor choice of terms on his part. It is a multiplicity of structuring. Routinization and distanciation processes also interact with the other regions as part of the process. It is a multi-directional process, not simply a movement inwards or outwards' (Upward, 2005, pp. 89 - 90).

### What does the concept mean?

In earlier writings the term "multiple realities" seems to be used interchangeably with multiplicity, a way to acknowledge the world as 'a dynamic, virtual place - a place of 'logical, or virtual or multiple realities' (McKemmish, 1997, p. 8). Such a definition differs somewhat from Bergsonian multiplicity which, as discussed in chapter 2.1, is a way to make sense of the heterogeneity and continuity of life (Klose, 2009). The fact that we experience objects as both enduring and perduring, the world around us as real and solid but also changing and evolving.

What it can be aligned with however is the idea of parallel universes, the importance of perspective, and Deleuzian interests in not just the actual outcomes of the world but the possibilities that did not come to be. There is not only a multiplicity of realities that currently exist but a multiplicity of possible realities.

For records continuum thinkers this is not a lapse into relativism or nihilism. Instead the focus shifts from looking at the one, singular, 'true' record or representation to an investigation of the multiple perspectives that form reality. Each real and worthy of investigation. Much like Derrida's rhizome discussed in part two the recordkeeping profession is seen as:

> 'a ground cover, working across terrains rather than existing tree-like in one spot. Beneath the ground cover there are shafts of specialisation running both laterally and vertically. Perhaps we can, as archivists, rediscover something that a sociologist like Giddens has never forgotten. Societies, including their composite parts, are the ultimate containers of recorded information. As a place in society, as Terry Cook argues, the archives is a multiple reality. We can set in train policies and strategies 'that can help generate multiplicity without losing respect for particular mine shafts' (Upward, 1997, p. 28).

In most records' continuum thinking I interpret multiplicity to simply mean a rejection or questioning of singularity, of fixity. Of a modernist truth with a capital T.

## How does the concept manifest?

The multiplicity embedded in a records continuum perspective manifests through records continuum understandings of provenance and the concept of the Archival Multiverse. The Archival Multiverse literally refers to the existence of a:

> 'plurality of evidentiary texts, memory-keeping practices and institutions, bureaucratic and, personal motivations, community perspectives and needs, and cultural and legal constructs' (PACG, 2011, p. 73).

If there are no singular entities, only monistically diverse pluralities traditional conceptualisations of provenance become problematic. Provenance is concerned with documenting records creation and the people or organisational entities involved.

> 'From an archival point of view, the primary purpose of a provenance statement is to provide an externally verifiable context for documented recordkeeping activity' (Hurley, 1995b, p. 16).

Traditional models of provenance identify ***a single or unary*** agent. This causes problems when:

- Dealing with records at a series or group level (aggregate level) because you often then have multiple documents created by different people, then being managed by another group of individuals or an organisational entity;
- The creation process is ongoing from a continuum perspective so you may need to add creators; and
- People and corporations are not the same, there are inherent differences in the way they operate and behave.

By reformulating provenance as a relationship, you can incorporate multiple provenances, that more accurately reflect the ongoing creation and re-creation of records through time-space. Provenance can be used to communicate many things that assist us to document the perduring nature of records and archives.

> 'Ambience and provenance are not in other words, characteristics of entities but of relationships between entities. The provenance of records is established by showing relationships to (rather than identity with) their context. Provenance defines certain kinds of relationships between records and contextual entities. Ambience defines relationships between contextual entities. Thus, a function shows provenance when related to records and

> ambience when related to agencies. An agency shows ambience when related to a subordinate agency and provenance when related to records' (Hurley, 1995b, p. 14).

The solution proposed by Hurley is multiple simultaneous provenance. To make and use:

> 'accurate depictions of different things made up of the component parts of a single 'unit of description'. This, essentially, is the method given to us by Peter Scott: the ability to render alternative narratives about the same records' (Hurley, 2005c, p. 124).

Multiple simultaneous provenance rejects singular approaches to archival description, were the selected description (a selection must be made) is seen as the only correct description.

> 'We cannot describe all of the possibilities. A selection must be made. Having done so, archivists took the fatal step of convincing themselves that the selection they prefer is the only valid one when preserving evidence. They are wrong' (Hurley, 2005c, p. 121).

Rather than selecting one description, or one way of organising and relating records and archives parallel provenance allows for multiple individuals or organisations to be assigned provenance at the same time, in the same system, even if the provenances are incommensurable. Hurley argues the closest archivists currently get to this multiplicity is parallel provenance. While parallel provenance allows for multiple individuals or organisations to be assigned provenance status, this is done across multiple systems or across a period of time. For example, if provenance for a record is assigned to a state department and a community at the same time, in the same system, this would be multiple simultaneous provenance. If the provenance of a record was assigned one state department for 5 years and then a community for the preceding 5 years this would be multiple provenance. Finally, parallel provenance might involve two archival institutes, the first assigning provenance to the state department and the second to the community.

While Hurley does not identify as a records continuum thinker, his work has had a significant influence on records continuum thinking and theorising. He explores the ethical consequences of multiplicity and the power relations embedded in narratives. Hurley and others have explained how assigning provenance to a singular entity results in the marginalisation of other provenances, resulting in the exclusion of other perspectives and a limited view of the record.-The work of a significant body of continuum thinkers and their colleagues from the 1990's to today focuses on the social impact of excluding alternative perspectives, and explores ways to empower communities through the inclusion and recognition of these communities and individuals as participants with agency and rights in the archival process (Evans et al., 2015; Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014;

McKemmish, 1997; McKemmish, Faulkhead, et al., 2011; McKemmish, Iacovino, et al., 2011; McKemmish et al., 2006; O'Neill et al., 2012; Reed et al., 2017).

Records continuum thinking sees the world as monistically diverse, existing through and across time-space, in a multiplicity of realities and perspectives. How on earth then can we possibly navigate it? For records continuum thinkers the answer to this question is not to throw one's hands in the air and turn away, or to reduce things into artificial categories. Taking a lead from Hurley's book, context is the way forward.

## Contextuality

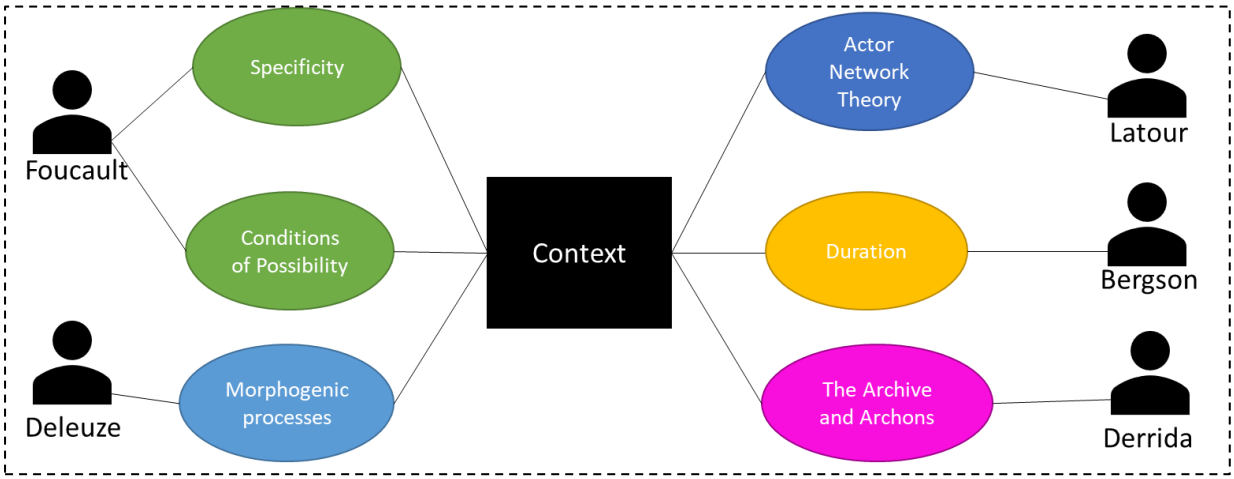


*figure 52. External Theorists and Context*

### Where does the concept emerge from?

Context is not a concept unique to records continuum approaches to archives and recordkeeping. It has been acknowledged as of central importance since the Dutch Manual of the 1890s.

> 'The pioneering work of the Manual lies in defining the archival fonds; in the formulation of the connection between the archive and the functions of those who create it, and in making archivists aware that the boundaries and structure of an archive need to be respected and that the components of which an archive consists can only be comprehended within their original context' (Muller et al., 1898, pp. xvii -xvi).

Layered alongside the concepts of multiplicity, monistic diversity, and time-space already discussed, context becomes slightly more complicated – it is no longer static, it changes through time-space, is plural (multiplicity) and yet at the same time enduring, building up like layers of sand or soil. Records continuum thinkers have turned to thinkers like Bruno Latour, Giles Deleuze, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida to make sense of context.

I would argue that Latour's actor network theory is about placing entities (human and non-human) in context, in relation to their environment (Krarup & Blok, 2011). Similarly Giles Deleuze's morphonogenic processes focus on the processes of becoming which cannot be understood without contextual factors that shaped the "desire" of the entity in question (Colebrook, 2003; Hayden, 1998). Foucault's focus on conditions of possibility and Derrida's Archives and Archons also both have significant contextual elements.

## What does the concept mean?

According to the Cambridge English dictionary context means 'the situation within which something exists or happens, and that can help explain it' ("Context," 2020). From a records continuum perspective this definition is pluralised (multiplicity) to include the situation(s) within which something exists or happens, and that can help explain it. Multiplicity means multiple contexts are presumed to exist and therefore there are multiple ways "that can help explain" phenomena including records.

In chapter 2.1 of this thesis we discussed a number of theorists who saw meaning as fluid and contextual. Always in flux, constantly moving and morphing. Context for Derrida is a way of "locking" meaning down, not permanently, but as a freeze frame we can investigate. This locking down of meaning also had ethical ramifications. Because there is a multiplicity of meanings, we must make a choice. All contexts cannot be provided at once, and by providing one we are excluding another. Unlike the multiplicity of meanings our capacities are finite.

While not identifying as a records continuum thinker himself Verne Harris provides perhaps the clearest explanation of why context is significant to a paradigm that is built on multiplicity, monistic diversity, and time-space:

> 'an understanding of "the archive" as the law determining meanings and significances; the law, if you like, determining contexts. (Harris 2007, pp. 244– 7) Here, beneath the surface whirl and clatter of information is where the instruments of power are forged. Instruments which in their most fundamental of operations create and destroy, promote and discourage, co-opt and discredit contexts. These are the instruments of what Derrida calls the archons. (Derrida 1996) In this reading all power, ultimately, is archontic' (Harris, 2011, p. 120).

While the inclusion of some contexts will always be at the expense of the exclusion of others, it is this very contextualisation that allows qualitative multiplicity in the Bergsonian sense, that allows us to experience records in and through duration (time-space).

> 'You can however, look for a point in this wave where recorded information freezes the frame, not the life. Intuitively, there seems nothing unusual in imagining that the photograph in a biography can be carried forward wholly and completely into different times. It is the reception that varies, along with the imprisoning and organising information around it' (Upward, 2009, p. 163).

This context, the imprisoning and organising information Upward mentions in the quote above, allows us to escape relativity by focusing on a specific instantiation or occurrence, akin to Foucault's specificity. We just have to acknowledge which contexts we are operating in, from and to, and which perspective we are taking. Because of this contextualisation it is impossible to know big universal truths, all that can be done is to seek out the:

> 'Small truths of occurrences in the complex and inter-connected flow and span of life, re-creation, and death' (Upward, 2009, p. 125).

### How does the concept manifest?

The records continuum models themselves can be seen as tools to map, navigate and identify the complex contexts within which records emerge, as can other records continuum tools like the SPIRT recordkeeping metadata model described in the quote below and the Australian Series System discussed in chapter 2.2.

> 'The SPIRT Recordkeeping Metadata Research Project takes a different perspective. It regards records as active participants in business processes and technologies, dynamic objects which need to be associated throughout their life span with ever broader and richer layers of contextual metadata in order to maintain reliability and authenticity, and to be meaningful and accessible through time and space' (McKemmish et al., 1999, p. 4).

A second way context manifests in records continuum thinking is through the very definition of records themselves. As discussed in chapter 2.2. a record from a records continuum perspective consists of structure, content, and context (McKemmish et al., 2005). Recordkeeping itself is often understood as the iterative and ongoing contextualisation and re-contextualisation of records.

> 'Thus recordkeeping processes fix the content and structure of records, preserve their integrity by ensuring they are tamper proof, and link them to ever-widening layers of rich metadata about their multiple contexts of creation and use' (McKemmish, 2017, p. 139).

This continual re-contextualisation is related to the enduring and perduring aspects of space time and the next key concept to be discussed, relational becomingness.

## Relational Becomingness

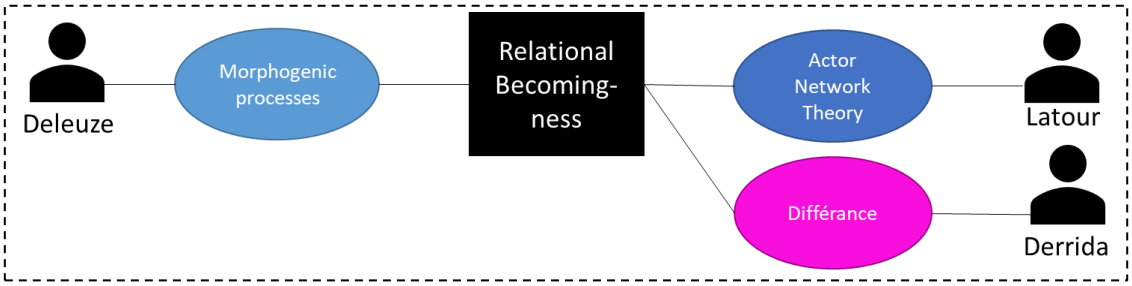


*figure 53. External Theorists and Relational Becomingness*

### Where does the concept emerge from?

The concept of records as 'always in the process of becoming' (McKemmish, 1994, p. 200) is central in records continuum thinking. While implied by the focus on time-space (it makes little sense to worry about time-space if entities are fixed and static) it was made explicit by Sue McKemmish in her 1994 discussion of the Australian Series System. Separating out what I describe as relational becomingness from time-space, multiplicity, and contextuality is difficult. The concepts are so interwoven it barely makes sense to speak of them independently. They exist as a monistically diverse whole.

The concept of relational becomingness[2] contributes two fundamental ideas to a records continuum ontology and epistemology. First that, as stated above, records are always becoming. They are never "finished" and are always subject to change. Second, this change doesn't come from some magical property inherent in records themselves but from their existence in a broader context, their relationships and interactions with other entities human or otherwise. McKemmish explains:

> 'Scott was driven by his understanding of the dynamic nature of the relationships amongst records and between records and their contexts of creation and use. This understanding was in part forced upon him by the type of jurisdictional and functional arrangements, organisational structures and recordkeeping processes common in mid-twentieth century bureaucracies, and the ways in which they were subject to change at an ever increasing rate. He therefore conceived a system capable of capturing and representing archival data about the nature of the 'logical or virtual or multiple' relationships that exist at any moment of time (and hence through time) amongst records, and between records and their contexts of creation and use' (McKemmish, 1994, p. 187).

[2] Yes yet another new term, but the two concepts are too tightly woven to be separated. The ideas of relationality and the "becomingness" of records are not mine but the term is my attempt to express them without needing a full sentence each time! One of the challenges of this thesis as been finding adequate language to plainly and clearly express ideas that often sit under layers of fancy philosophical terminology.

Although some of the early records continuum work predates the work (and translation into English of) Deleuze. Latour and Derrida parallels can be drawn. In particular between Deleuze's morphonogenic processes (Eriksson, 2005; Hayden, 1998), Latour's actor network theory (Fraser, 2006; Krarup & Blok, 2011; Pollini, 2013), and Derrida's Différence (Brothman, 1999; Harris, 2011; Lawlor & Moulard Leonard, 2016).

### What does the concept mean?

This concept can be taken quite literally. Records are always in the process of becoming, and this becoming primarily occurs through relationships with other things, people, and time-spaces. As discussed in section 2 records continuum thinking and many other postmodern approaches to archives rely on foundational postmodern ideas. One of which is that the world, including you and I, are not fixed, static and immobile but vibrant, living, evolving, and ever changing. Just like us records do not pop into existence fully formed and finalised. They age, their context alters as does our understanding of them. I am not the same person I was when I began this thesis in 2014, I have aged, grown, changed. Yet I still am me, monistically diverse across time-space. After reading this sentence, you are not the same as before. Because now you have the memory of this sentence – for good or ill. Sometimes records change more slowly than other objects but this is to a degree irrelevant. It may take a thousand years for a record's physical manifestation to decay, but it is still changing.

Relational becomingness is not limited to ontology, it crosses over into epistemology. Understanding the way that records come to be and are related to other entities, from a records continuum point of view, is a central key in making sense of them. As discussed earlier on one of the key archival concepts, provenance, is about relationships. Whether from a records continuum paradigm or a life cycle approach. If two records originate from the same organisational entity they are generally considered to be of the same "collection" or "group". It is not the content or attributes of the records that groups them together, but rather their relationships.

Jumping back to the discussion of Deleuzian morphonogenic process in section 2, records continuum approaches to description including the Australian Series System are just as focused on the relationships between the record and its context as the content or physical properties of the record.

> 'A species (or any other natural kind) is not defined by its essential traits but by the *morphonogenic process* that gave rise to it' (De Landa, 2004, p. 10).

This morphonogenic process involves a never-ending chain of decisions and possibilities. When trying to understand a record, archivists ask questions about who created it, where it was kept, whether it is part of a larger group, and for how long it has existed in its current form. These

questions contribute to the context discussed above and help us to locate the record in time-space (where and how long) as well as the records relationships with other entities (creators etc).

### How does the concept manifest?

Relational becomingness manifests, like monistic diversity, multiplicity, context, and time-space in the way records continuum thinkers approach records. In particular through the Australian Series System (Hurley, 1994) and records continuum understandings of provenance (both of which are discussed in chapter 2.2) The concept can also be seen in Gregory Rolan's (2017b, 2017c) meta-model for recordkeeping metadata. Rolan's (2017b, 2017c) meta-model for recordkeeping metadata explicitly builds relational becomingness into recordkeeping, by embracing:

> 'A performative epistemology of recordkeeping that repudiates the one-time intellectual treatment of records' (Rolan, 2017, p.263).

In Rolan's (2017b, 2017c) meta-model records are not depicted as primary entities, because records from a records continuum perspective are not defined by their inherent properties or attributes (in the way a cartesian classificatory system would work) but by their relationships. The ontology of Rolan's (2017b, 2017c) model can be navigated by relationships between entities and whether entities have or lack temporality or spatiality. Whether they exist in a physical space or time.

> '[Records] embody communicative, informational, and evidential affordances that, together, we term a 'record' (Yeo, 2010). In a sense, then, this cluster of affordances, the 'record-ness', is a continuant. It may (and will) change over time, but at any point in time it is integral; a complete, constructed, up-to-point-in-time representation. From this perspective, records are also considered to be separate from both the occurrents they describe and the individuals that may comprehend them. This is the perspective of the Representation relationship in my conceptual model that imbues a given Substantial or Performance entity with 'record-ness' (Rolan, 2017, p.264).

Records are also experiential. When we experience a record for us at least we are contributing to its relational becomingness and it is contributing to ours. 'The experiential phenomena of interaction with records are occurrents. 'Record-ness', therefore, is not static; it is ephemeral and exists only in the eye of the beholder' (Rolan, 2017, p.264).

If taken to its logical conclusion this relational becomingness also forces a kind of open endedness on all records continuum practices. The record is always becoming so as discussed with time-space it does not make sense to treat activities like appraisal or description (for example) as one-off events. These activities can occur multiple times across the life span of the record.

Frank Upward and other records continuum thinkers have posited that records are resources that exists under structures of domination (Upward et al., 2013, 2018). Arguing that we should be managing them as authoritative resources not just as allocative resources. By managing them as authoritative resources and recognising records and archives as resources that are shaped by and shape social structure the impact of records on people, the power and influence of records and archives is recognised. Their becoming and relationality not only with other records but with individuals and communities is brought forward. Importantly from a records continuum perspective, this frames records, archives and archivists as political involved in issues of power and agency in society.

## Agency


*figure 54. External Theorists and Agency*

### Where does the concept emerge from?

The concept of Agency in records continuum thinking is drawn from Anthony Giddens and Bruno Latour. As discussed in chapter 2.1. agency is defined by Giddens (1984) as the ability to have acted otherwise. Agents form one half of the duality of structure, where agents and structures interact and influence each other, creating, reinforcing, and disrupting each other. For Latour the definition is far broader and includes his actants. Non-human entities that have agency because they shape and impact the world around them (Fraser, 2006; Krarup & Blok, 2011).

### What does the concept mean?

Human agency has been an ongoing concern in records continuum thinking and theorising. Chris Hurley's (1995a, 1995b, 2005b, 2005d) work on provenance broadens the criteria for who, in a recordkeeping context, is ascribed agency beyond institutional 'creators. Sue McKemmish related work in partnership with Anne Gilliland (2014) and Indigenous researchers on the relationship between agency and rights in records (McKemmish, Iacovino, et al., 2011; McKemmish et al., 2006). Livia Iacovino is another records continuum thinker who explores not just the consequences of having, or not having, agency but what it means from a legal point of view to have agency drawing on Kantian philosophy:

> 'The agent's purpose is only made intelligible as the expression of his desire and aims. Full ethical decision making requires a moral agent who can rationalise and analyse what he or she does, not only as defined in rationalist-based theories, but also in theories which include

> emotion and character as motivating factors for ethical action. The accountability of recordkeeping participants requires understanding their role not only as legal but also moral agents. In terms of recordkeeping participants, the question of their role as rational agents that operate on the basis of universally acceptable norms that require a person (physical or corporate) to be responsible for individual actions, is supported by the Kantian notion of the autonomous agent' (Iacovino, 2006, p. 7).

The explicit focus on the impact of archives, records and recordkeeping on individuals and societies is not completely new, however exploration of the empowering / disempowering impact of archives, records and recordkeeping has been a particular focus of recent continuum thinking. Drawing on postmodern literature and perhaps in part inspired by a shift to "history from below" the thoughts, experiences, and feelings of people who records document has not only been approached with increasing interest but been given more authority.

### How does the concept manifest?

Agency has manifested in a number of ways in records continuum thinking. It is represented in the SPIRT model as a key element of required metadata and been referred back to repeatedly in arguments for greater participation of non-archivists in recordkeeping. In line with these discussions of who is involved in cultural heritage and recordkeeping processes Gregory Rolan has developed a participatory recordkeeping model. In this model rather than distanciation radiating out from the transaction, it radiates out from the people involved in the event or phenomena being documented.

> 'If records are recognised as representations of human activity (Lemieux 2014; Upward 1996; Yeo 2007), then a continuum model may be constructed using dimensions that represent distanciation, not from a record's creation, but from the activity that it represents (Attwood 2008; Ketelaar 2012). Correspondingly, axis can be drawn that encompass the various manifestations of participatory agency' (Rolan, 2017a, p.208).

Like Gibbons (2014, 2018) model, Rolan's model also features different axes labels and dimensions, what unites them is their aim to demonstrate the patterning of phenomena across space time. In Rolan's case this phenomena is agency, which he argues is not explicitly addressed in relation to a pluralised view of recordkeeping (Rolan, 2017a). His Participatory Recordkeeping Model is not built to replace more traditional Information Continuum Models but to complement them. Making explicit the performative epistemological position that is possible from a Records Continuum perspective.

> 'It is this Representation relationship — the nature of which (or even its existence) can change over time — that leads to a performative epistemology of recordkeeping; which, in turn,

> explains previous continuum-thinking findings such as McKemmish's (1994) "records are always in a process of becoming" and Upward's (2011) "flicker". Importantly, that this performativity underscores the temporal nature of the Archival Multiverse and repudiates the prevailing paradigm of a one-time intellectual treatment of records. Such treatment is usually found within the archive perspective; involving 'set-and-forget' mechanisms such as record (disposition) schedules and accession-time description. Instead, a major ramification of this design is that such 'recordkeeping-business' is actually required to be perpetually, and iteratively performed over time' (Rolan, 2017, pp.311 – 312).

Rolan's Participatory Recordkeeping Model (PRkM) has, like traditional RCM's 4 axes and 4 dimensions. These are arranged to reflect distanciation of agency (2017a, 2017b). The dimensions are modelled off concepts of participation from development literature and include from first to fourth; experience, identify, relate and research. These dimensions are straddled by four axes, in a clockwise motion from 12 o'clock they are Inscription, Activity, Socio-technical Infrastructure and Agency (Rolan, 2017a; Rolan, 2017). Rolan's PRkM will be revisited in more detail in the next chapter of this thesis on participatory archives.

The PRkM presented in Rolan's doctoral thesis (2017b) is far from his only contribution to records continuum thinking. Rolan also contributes to the discussion on co-creation we find imbedded throughout Gibbon's(2009, 2014, 2017, 2018, 2019) work. Rolan argues while co-creation is a step in the right direction it risks conflating creation with rights in records. There are some individuals and communities who wouldn't identify as creators, but who nevertheless still need rights in records. Although not explicitly stated the PRkM could be interpreted as a statement about the universality of rights in records. That rights are not dependent on the status of individuals as creators but exist simply because individuals are human. Their relationship to the event being represented in the records is then what mediates these rights.

The incorporation of non-traditional agents explicitly into archives and recordkeeping has conceptual consequences across a range of key archival ideals such as Jenkinson's moral defence of the archive, the archival threshold and what exactly is meant by provenance. Without a central authoritative point of view, incommensurate interpretations and conceptualisations are free to mingle. From a Foucauldian perspective subjugated knowledge are invited in the front door! As Rolan (2017b) points out this can lead to a problem, if all perspectives are welcome, how do you make decisions around which perspectives to trust and at an even more basic level which materials to consider archival?

The concept of archival autonomy turns these decisions over to communities and individuals who are often viewed as the subjects of records.

> 'Archival autonomy is tentatively defined as the ability for individuals and communities to participate in societal memory, with their own voice, and to become participatory agents in recordkeeping and archiving for identity, memory and accountability purposes' (Evans et al., 2015, pp. 337 - 338).

The term autonomy was used as complementary to agency. As will be discussed in chapter 4.2. the use of the term agency in a records continuum context can refer to both human and non-human actors. I argue humans need to be recognised as fundamentally different from non-human agents and therefore terms like autonomy and alterity are required.

## Conclusion

As part of this thesis I attempted to follow the lineage of ideas and conceptualisations. While acknowledging it can never be known with certainty exactly where one idea originated, or the degree of influence between two bodies of work, I have used the references in records continuum theorising as clues. Tracing back to prior writing, and then recursively repeating this process. As stated by Upward in regard to Foucault's methodology:

> 'Even if you cannot know the past in the way positivists once imagined could be done, you can explore how it was constructed so long as your concentration is on small occurrences within planes of emergence' (Upward, 2009, p. 117)

Much like recordkeeping from a records continuum perspective this chapter has been an exercise in disembedding and re-contextualisation. In pulling apart the elements that make up records continuum thinking and asking whether records continuum theorising would dramatically change without them. Would it be possible to talk about records as always becoming without the idea of perdurance? Possibly, but unlikely. I think it is fair to say that records wouldn't be as likely to be conceptualised as "always becoming" without the concept of perdurance. Perdurance is subsumed within monistic diversity and time-space. These two concepts alongside human agency, contextuality and multiplicity underpin records continuum thinking.

Monistic diversity, time-space, human agency, contextuality, relational becomingness and multiplicity become the key objects / concepts that exist within a records continuum discourse. Because these key concepts are tied to the very epistemology and ontology of records continuum thinking they shape the conceptualisation of more archivally universal objects / concepts such as records, archives, archivists, archival institutions, and provenance. This chapter has shown how

monistic diversity and Gidden's spacetime have influenced provenance in records continuum thinking. Resulting in and reinforcing Hurley's parallel and multiple simultaneous provenance. Multiple simultaneous provenance doesn't make sense if records are singular, if there is no multiplicity and they exist as static objects frozen in time rather than through time-space.

Turning to enunciations it can be argued that records continuum thinking expands who is given authority to speak. The speaking positions in records continuum thinking, particularly more recent work, include those mentioned in records as well as traditional records creators (Evans et al., 2015; Gilliland, 2017; Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014; McKemmish et al., 2020). Rolan's (2017a) participatory records continuum model is a prime example of this expansion of agency. Records continuum thinking also includes more individuals in the category of creators. The very definition of records opens up space for more material and even performances to be considered records. These broadened conceptualisations also make space for more speakers and speaking positions.

> 'The records continuum concept of records encompasses records of continuing value (archives) and records in any form. Continuum ideas therefore challenge understandings which differentiate 'archives' from 'records' on the basis of selection for permanent preservation in archival custody, and definitions of records as physical artefacts in terms of their format or media. Adopting a pluralist view of recorded information, continuum thinking characterizes records as logical objects, belonging to a special genre of recorded information made up of the documentary traces of social and organizational activity' (McKemmish et al., 2009, p. 4447).

There may be something behind Australia's early adoption of two seemingly incompatible theoretical lenses (Schellenberg and Jenkinson). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to hypothesise further, but it is worth noting the shared principles that can be identified in much postmodern or poststructuralist archival thinking regardless of whether these authors identify as records continuum theorists. From Terry Cook to Verne Harris, from Michelle Caswell to Andrew Flinn, from Brien Brothman to Hans Booms the power of the record and archive, however conceptualised, is significant. Records and archives are not neutral but exist in a relational world and have significant impacts on individuals and communities. Archivists must therefore take responsibility. I believe it is possible to group different archival perspectives in this way because despite their differences, they often belong to the same higher-level intellectual paradigm: Representationalism with a social constructionist or postmodern flavour. Representationalism is defined by Karen Barad, a key thinker to be explored in section 4 as:

> 'The idea that beings exist as individuals with inherent attributes, anterior to their representation, is a metaphysical presupposition that underlies the belief in political, linguistic, and epistemological forms of representationalism. Or, to put the point the other way around, representationalism is the belief in the ontological distinction between representations and that which they purport to represent; in particular, that which is represented is held to be independent of all practices of representing. That is, there are assumed to be two distinct and independent kinds of entities—representations and entities to be represented' (Barad, 2003, p. 804).

From a methodological perspective this social constructionist or postmodernist approach might be labelled interpretivist or critical. An overview of critical and interpretivist paradigms can be found in the Methodology Chapter. From a records continuum perspective it appears records are representations (albeit incomplete and always becoming) of transactions and performances through space time. There are performative and thus postfoundationalist elements already germane in records continuum thinking and theorising. Monistic diversity is one, the focus on multiplicity and contextuality, the rejection of dichotomies another. However, some elements of records continuum could be extended further into a postfoundationalist frame of reference. These include conceptualisations of agency and time-space.

The remnants' of representationalism can be seen in the way records continuum thinking has sought to broaden the category of creator by adding the prefix co-, arguably a postfoundationalist paradigm would challenge the category of creator itself. Records continuum conceptualisations of time-space are drawn from a modernist thinker: Anthony Giddens. Just because ideas are drawn from a modernist thinker doesn't mean they are themselves modernist, but it does raise questions. There are more recent developments in postfoundationalist theory that would gel better with the existing postfoundationalist elements of records continuum thinking such as monistic diversity. That would provide greater high-level cohesion.

Current records continuum conceptualisations of agency also offer an opportunity for expansion. Agency in records has become a common refrain from within records continuum writing (Evans et al., 2015; Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014; McKemmish et al., 2020), but what exactly is meant by agency? And how might agency relate to multiplicity, monistic diversity, contextuality and time-space? These questions will be addressed in section 4 of this thesis, but before we get there we need to unpack participatory approaches to archives. What is meant by participatory and is it compatible

with records continuum thinking? The next chapter will dive into the key discourses and concepts underpinning participatory approaches to archives, in particular appraisal.

# Chapter 3.2: Participatory Literature and Participatory Appraisal

## Introduction

In the previous section of this thesis the key underpinning concepts behind records continuum thinking were identified: monistic diversity, human agency, contextuality, multiplicity, relational becomingness and spacetime. This section seeks to do the same for the discourses around participatory archives, records, and recordkeeping with a focus on appraisal. It is acknowledged that there are many definitions and conceptualisations of participatory, let alone archive. Participatory approaches are often recommended as a solution to systemic recordkeeping issues identified by recent Australian commissions and inquiries, particularly those into institutional care. Outside of Australia a number of other archival scholars have also called for participatory approaches alongside a more postmodern, critical approach to archives and recordkeeping.

The aim of this chapter is to address the second part of my first research question:

> *What are the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal?*

I aim to present how participatory appraisal is conceptualised in the scholarly archival literature. The unit of analysis in this chapter will be eleven conceptualisations of participatory archives. This means my analysis of participatory archives will take up a lot more space than my analysis of records continuum thinking in the previous chapter. Because of this my exploration of participatory approaches to archives has been split over two chapters. This chapter will provide a description and analysis of each of the participatory approaches. In the next chapter I will present a discussion and my conclusions in relation to participatory approaches as a whole.

I will be arguing that there is a problem not with just how we do recordkeeping but the worldview or paradigm from which we do it. At a metaphysical level world views are often analysed and defined based on their ontologies and epistemologies:

> 'A *paradigm* or *worldview* is used to refer to the fundamental set of (conscious or unconscious) assumptions from which the researcher and researched are positioned. Guba and Lincoln (2005), who favour the term *paradigm* rather than *worldview,* sum up the characteristics of a *paradigm* as the overarching system that 'guides the investigator, not only in choices of method, but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways' (p.190)' (Sexton, 2015, p. 34).

In identifying the paradigms, I will be taking a leaf out of Anna Sextons thesis. As Sexton explains in a footnote on page 34:

> 'When making broad distinctions between worldviews, there is no one singular or 'right' way to cut across the complexity of the landscape. I hold to the system's philosophy that "everything is connected to everything else". Yet to aid understanding and draw together commonalities, attempts at distinctions are both helpful and fruitful as long as we understand the arbitrary nature of the boundaries that we are setting' (Sexton, 2015, p. 34).

While I will be making claims about the paradigms embedded in the publications analysed here, and comparing the key conceptualisations, it must be noted that these paradigms and conceptualisations are not diametrically opposed. For the same reason I have decided to leave this chapter as one long whole.

I feel, like Sexton, that comparisons across records continuum and other approaches can be fruitful, that there is in fact variation within paradigms and commonalities across paradigms that we risk missing if we stick too rigidly to categorisations. There are differences between custodial and post-custodial approaches, between records continuum approaches and critical postmodern approaches. These differences are important. By seriously considering and comparing records continuum literature and other critical and postmodern archival literature important similarities shine through. It becomes clear that both continuum thinkers and non-continuum thinkers operating in this area share some of the same principles and ideas. Both records continuum thinkers and those coming from critical, postmodern and / or post-custodial paradigms share a concern with issues of power and justice, a desire to challenge the boundaries of the role of the archivist and archive in society.

## Chapter Approach

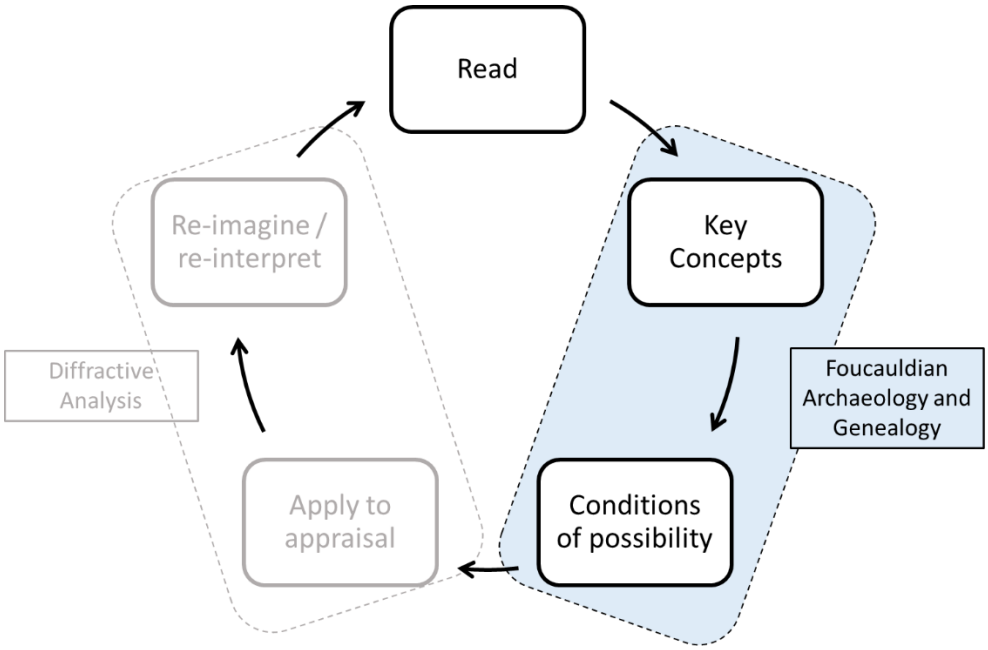


*figure 55. Chapter 3.2. Approach*

As depicted in figure 55. chapter 3.2 approach the broader approach taken in this chapter was Foucauldian analysis via reading, identification of key concepts, and investigation of conditions of possibility. Foucauldian discourse analysis (Andersen, 2003; Bastalich, 2009; Foucault, 1980, 2002; Graham, 2005; Gutting, 1991, 2019; Howe, 2008) is the analytical framework that was used. For a more detailed review of my approach to this analysis please see the Methodology chapter. Of primary importance in Foucauldian approaches is to establish who has authority to speak and be taken seriously, what they can speak about, and what is considered “relevant” (Howe, 2008). Each discourse and narrative can be seen as a universe, populated with things and concepts, and people who play different roles, all intertwined and related in different ways. A way of exercising power in these universes is by controlling the meaning of and defining the relevance of objects, concepts, and people (Foucault, 1980; Olsson & Heizmann, 2015). Figure 56 below shows my interpretation of how to utilise a Foucauldian analytical frame work identifying objects, concepts, and people. Figure 56

also shows how each of the analytical entities were identified, what they mean, and provides an example of the kind of questions they may entail.

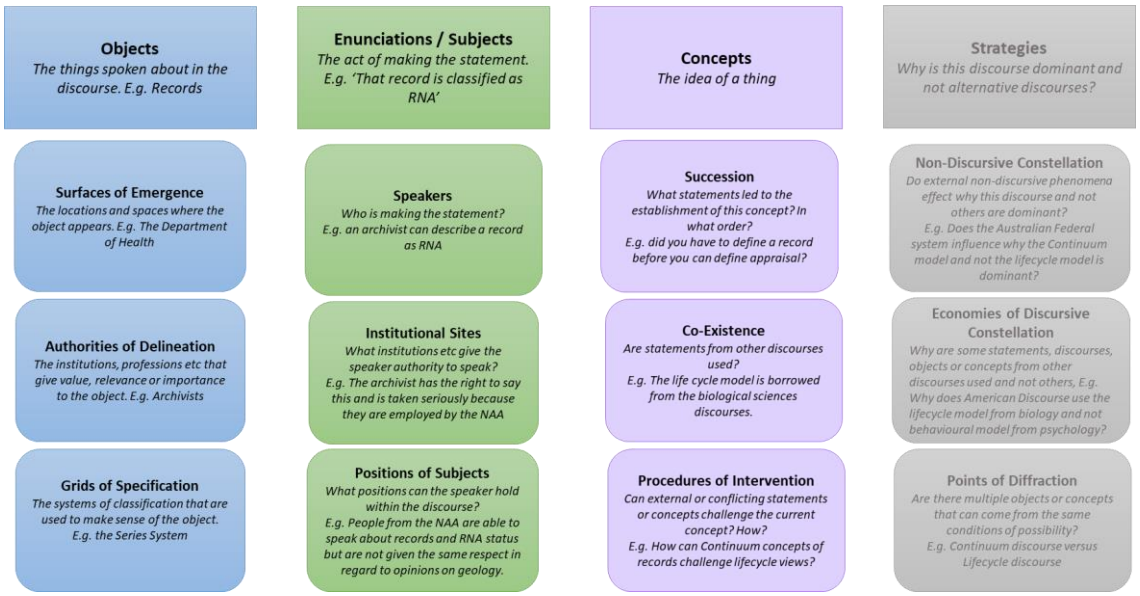


*Figure 56. Foucauldian Analytical Framework: Objects, Concepts, and Enunciations / Subjects*

There is of course a fourth category: strategies. While this will occasionally be raised it will be explored in far more detail in chapter 3.4. where it is possible to step back and discuss the literature at a higher level. It seems this fourth analytical stage is well suited to analysing paradigms rather than elements of a discourse or discursive statement.

## Participatory Archives Literature

A citation analysis conducted in 2014 identified six key publications on participatory archives, records, and recordkeeping. As discussed in the methodology section this citation analysis only identified the most cited publications, the list is not exhaustive and instead aims to provide a broad overview of the most popular articles that are floating around the archival zeitgeist. The point of a Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis is not to find every discourse, the best discourse, or the most factually accurate discourse, but to find the most dominant ones. The ones that get the most "airtime" so to speak. These publications do not, and where never intended, to provide comprehensive coverage of every nook of records continuum approaches to participatory appraisal or archives. The six publications include:

- Scott Anderson and Robert Allen's (2009) *Envisioning the Archival Commons*;
- Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan's(2007) *Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections*;

- Isto Huila's (2008) *Participatory archive: towards decentralised curation radical user orientation, and broader contextualisation of records management;*
- Andrew Flinn's (2010) *'An attack on professionalism and scholarship?': Democratising Archives and the Production of Knowledge*;
- Livia Iacovino (2010) *Rethinking archival, ethical and legal frameworks for records of Indigenous Australian Communities: a participant relationship model of rights and* responsibilities; and
- Anne Gilliland and Sue McKemmish (2014) The Role of Participatory Archives in Furthering Human Rights, Reconciliation and Recovery.

These were supplemented with more recent publications in the area of participatory archives including:

- Michelle Caswell and Samip Mallicks (2014) *Collecting the easily missed stories: digital participatory microhistory and the South Asian American Digital Archive*;
- Gregory Rolan's 2017 Doctoral Thesis *From Archives to Participatory Recordkeeping Transforming Recordkeeping for Interoperability* and his 2017 article *Agency in the Archive: A Model for Participatory Recordkeeping*;
- Anna Sexton's 2016 Doctoral Thesis *Archival Activism and Mental Health: Being Participatory, Sharing Control and Building Legitimacy* and her 2017 article published with co-author Dolly Sen *More Voice, Less Ventriloquism – Exploring the Relational Dynamics in a Participatory Archive of Mental Health Recovery*
- Sue McKemmish, Jane Bone, Joanne Evans, Frank Golding, Antonina Lewis, Gregory Rolan, Kirsten Thorpe and Jacqueline Wilson (2020) *Decolonizing Recordkeeping and Archival Praxis in Childhood Out-Of-Home Care and Indigenous Archival Collections;*

The methodology of this thesis is recursive. After the preliminary analysis of the publications above was completed it became apparent that there were four further publications that, while not coming up in the citation analysis, were essential for an understanding of approaches to participatory approaches to archives and appraisal. These four publications are:

- Helen Samuels (1986) *Who controls the past* and (1991 – 1992) *Improving our disposition: Documentation Strategy*, Richard Cox and Helen Samuels (1988) *The Archivists First Responsibility: A Research Agenda to Improve the Identification and Retention of Records of Enduring Value*; and
- Hans Booms (1987) *Society and the formation of documentary heritage issues in the appraisal of archival sources.*

This is obviously not a comprehensive list of every single publication on participatory archives or recordkeeping. More can be found by authors such as Kathy Carbone (Carbone, 2015, 2017, 2020), Michael Piggott (Piggott, 2020), and the more recent work of Isto Huvila (2009). Being one thesis, the line had to be drawn somewhere. I am reminded of Anna Sexton's comments about Derridean choice, by choosing to include some publications I am excluding others. The articles selected were chosen because they focus heavily and centrally on the topic of participatory appraisal, and because they represent a variety of conceptualisations. It is also worth noting my inclusion of two doctoral theses. Both Anna Sexton and Gregory Rolan have completed doctoral dissertations that deal with participatory approaches to archives. The depth of work and discourses embedded in these is not yet (and arguably given the size of a thesis can never be completely) reflected in journal articles.

I have grouped some of the later works together, especially those publications that emerged as part of Doctoral Theses, as conceptually they can be read as part of one larger whole containing similar arguments but in different formats. I have also grouped a number of publications on documentation strategy for the same reason. While the authors are varied I am far more interested in the concepts than the individuals. While Anderson and Allen's (2009) concept of the archival commons can only be found in their journal article, the concept of documentation strategy is spread widely across the literature. The enunciative modalities shape the concepts, but are not my primary focus.

The analysis is grouped around these concepts and ordered chronologically in terms of the earliest publication for that concept. The resulting eleven conceptualisations are:

- Booms, Samuels, and Cox's (1986 – 1992) Documentation Strategy;
- Shilton and Srinivasan's (2007) Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections;
- Huliva's (2008) Participatory Archive;
- Anderson and Allen's (2009) Archival Commons;
- Flinn's (2010) Democratised Archive;
- Iacovino's (2010) Participant Model of Rights and Responsibilities;
- Gilliland and McKemmish's (2014) Archival Third Way;
- Caswell and Mallicks (2014) Digital participatory Microhistories;
- Rolan's (2017) Participatory Recordkeeping;
- Sexton and Sen's (2016 – 2017) Participatory Archive of Mental Health Recovery; and
- McKemmish et als (2020) Decolonizing Recordkeeping.

Each conceptualisation has been assessed against the following questions:

- Who can speak / has authority?
- What is the point of archives, records, and recordkeeping? What are they?
- What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?
- What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?
- What about appraisal?

These questions seek to identify and document the key enunciations of each conceptualisation and how the key terms archives, records, recordkeeping, participatory and appraisal have been conceptualised as Foucauldian objects and concepts in each grouping (see figure 57. Mapping Questions to Enunciations / Subjects and figure 58. Mapping Questions to Objects and Subjects).

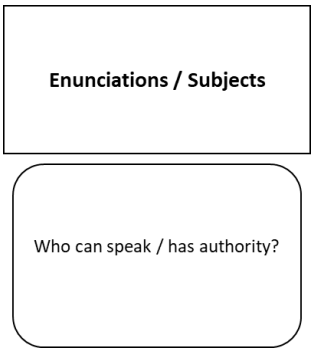


*figure 57 Chapter 3.2. Mapping Questions to Enunciations / Subjects>*

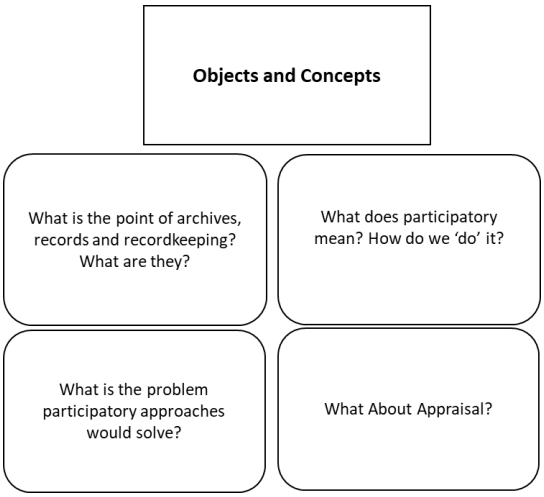


*figure 58 Chapter 3.2. Mapping Questions to Objects and Subjects*

Each conceptualisation also has an overview, conclusion and two tables summarising them. The first table provides a summary of the first four questions, as well as a summary of the paradigm or context within which this conceptualisation sits. An example of the first table is provided below.

| Conceptualisation (Year) | |
|---|---|
| **Speakers** | Who can speak / has authority? (Enunciations / Subjects) |
| **Archives, Records and Recordkeeping** | What is the point of archives, records, and recordkeeping? What are they? (Objects and Concepts) |
| **Problem Participatory Approaches Address.** | What is the problem participatory approaches would solve? (Objects and Concepts) |
| **What is Participatory?** | What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it? (Objects and Concepts) |
| **Records / archival activities that become participatory** | What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it? (Objects and Concepts) |
| **Paradigm** | (Context) |

*figure 59. Example conceptualisation table*

The second table provides a summary of the conceptualisations discussion of appraisal including any definitions of appraisal provided by the author and any reference to established and known appraisal approaches (e.g. macro-appraisal, functional analysis). It is important to clarify the distinction between conceptualisations of appraisal and appraisal approaches. By conceptualisations of appraisal I am referring to what the term means in that particular publication. Appraisal approaches refer to methodologies of appraisal. While intertwined these are separate phenomena. The reason I am using the term approaches rather than methodologies is because I have already used methodology to mean a very specific aspect of research design[3]. Because the conceptualisations of appraisal varied so much in the tables I have sought to use records continuum thinking conceptualisations as a comparison. An example of the second table is shown below.

[3] Methods being techniques or procedures and methodologies being the higher level strategy or plan guiding the methods. Williamson, K., & Johanson, G. (2013). Forward. In K. Williamson & G. Johanson (Eds.), *Research Methods: Information, Systems and Contexts* (pp. xix - xxiv). Tilde Publishing.

| Conceptualisation (Year) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Authors definition of appraisal** | | (Objects and Concepts) |
| **Appraisal approaches mentioned** | | (Objects and Concepts) |
| **Records Continuum Conceptualisations of Appraisal** | Records / archives creation. | (Objects and Concepts) |
| | Identifying and assessing records/ archives value. | (Objects and Concepts) |
| | Deciding which records / archives to keep. | (Objects and Concepts) |

*figure 60. Example appraisal conceptualisation table*

## Booms, Samuels and Cox's (1986 – 1992) Documentation Strategy

| Booms, Samuels and Cox (1986 – 1992) | |
|---|---|
| **Speakers** | Archivists, historians, researchers, records creators (governments and administrators), and the general public. |
| **Archives, Records and Recordkeeping** | Exist to document important aspects of society. Have plurality of meanings and should represent a multiplicity of views. Can be used to empower and disempower. |
| **Problem Participatory Approaches Address** | Gaps and absences in the representativeness of records and archives. |
| **What is Participatory?** | The active engagement of people in archival appraisal and records creation. |
| **Records / archival activities that become participatory** | These approaches are focused on appraisal, but would likely have impacts on description and organisation as well. |
| **Paradigm** | Postmodern / Critical Archives / Life Cycle |

*figure 61. Conceptualisation: Booms, Samuels, and Cox*

### Overview

> 'The goal of such a new appraisal model would not be the search for research value per se, but rather the attainment within the collective archival record of a comprehensive reflection of the most important societal functions, records creators and records-creating processes. Such a "macro-level model would posit certain generic characteristics of the records creators and the records-creating process likely to produce records of high archival value, **before** the resulting records themselves are actually appraised using more traditional criteria' (Cook, 1992, p. 184).

While slightly different I will discuss documentation strategy and documenting society together. These approaches share an intentionality and aim to, as the name suggests document society. Documentation strategy aims to document a specific event, era, place, people or phenomena (Cook, 1992; Cox, 1994; Hackman, 2009; Hackman & Warnow-Blewett, 1987; Samuels, 1991 - 1992) whereas documenting society aims to create an archival record that documents an entire society (Booms, 1987; Reed, 2009). For archivists operating under either of these strategies the value of records is to be found in how well they represent the society that created them, and how significant the event, person or phenomena they document is to that society.

Documentation strategy as an official appraisal practice in the English speaking archival world can be traced back to the 1980's and Helen Samuels (Reed, 2009; Samuels, 1986, 1991 - 1992). A similar approach was described by Hans Booms, a German archivist, in the 1970s but not published in English until 1987.

## Who can speak / has authority?

The speaking position in discourses around documentation strategy and documenting society include archivists, historians and researchers, records creators like governments and administrators, and in some cases, the general public. Documentation strategy was in part a response to what authors like Hans Booms (1987) saw as the limitation of voices and speaking positions in appraisal to the state and organisational entities:

> 'The idea that organizational activity is inherently of archival value was anchored in prevailing societal opinion; even up to the 1950s, it continued to reflect the excessive ideological significance which was attached to the institutional or formal public realm at the expense of the informal, and the degree to which the state, as only a part of society, has traditionally been absolutized' (Booms, 1987, p. 90).

Cox also notes the shift in authority and decisions making around what is archival from institutions and states to archivists (it must be acknowledged however that archivists are often part of institutions and states).

> 'This conclusion argues against the more traditional view of the archivist waiting for relatively long periods of time **before** receiving the records from the creator; it also poses some interesting questions about allowing the creator to determine what should be preserved, as the Jenksonian contend." We are led, instead, to a more activist stance of archivist interacting with records creator. Hugh Taylor, in his study of diplomatics, has said as much: "If the record is to be of maximum value to the administrator and where appropriate, to the general public as user, then archivists must be far closer to the point of creation and original use' (Cox, 1994, p. 17).

From a Foucauldian perspective this could be understood as an expansion of the subject position "archivist" and a shrinking of the subject position "creator". A new category of subject positions is also introduced, the:

> 'wide spectrum of users – scholarly and otherwise, historical and administrative – as necessary to brining the requisite knowledge for the solid appraisal of records' (Cox, 1996, p. 147).

It still appears a distinction is being made between records creators, the general community, and archivists, but at the very least windows are being built into the walls separating out these spheres of influence.

## What is the point of archives, records and recordkeeping? What are they?

As the name of this appraisal approach suggests, the point of archives, records and recordkeeping is to document (represent and reflect) society (Booms, 1987, 1991 - 1992; Cox, 1994, 1996; Samuels, 1986, 1991 - 1992). This representation is somewhat similar to Verne Harris's (2002) archival sliver, in that archives are seen as incomplete representations of the world. Because advocates reject the idea of a complete record there needs to be a way to guide and justify decision making, for documentary strategists that justification emerges from an analysis:

> 'not on unpredictable future research practices and trends but upon the more predictable sense of determining what are the salient and important features of contemporary institutions and society' (Cox, 1994, p. 24).

As Cox (1994, 1996; 1988) and Samuels (1986, 1991 - 1992) both advise involvement of archivists in the creation, or pre-creation of records and archives little time is spent on distinguishing these two concepts. Traditionally their definition has been associated with the age or use of documents. Perhaps because the focus for documentation strategy is on the significance of what is documented, not the age or use of materials by a creator, the need to distinguish between archives and records is not quite so urgent.

Hans Booms however offers a lengthy explanation of the distinction between what he calls societal data and documentary heritage the 'totality of the existing evidence of historical activity' (Booms, 1987, p. 76). Preservation in an archive transforms societal data into documentary heritage in a similar way that the life cycle depicts the transformation of records into archives upon crossing into the archival repository. It is worth noting that Hans Booms does not seem to advocate for archivists to be involved in the creation of records, archives, or societal data.

> 'In appraising the archival value of such material, and thereby determining whether it should be preserved permanently in the archives, the archivist performs the constitutive act by which societal data are converted into "historical sources." This act, which involves "transforming the heterogeneous continuum of real events into an interpretable, discrete form," as Artur Zecher has described it:' is the archetypal activity of the archivist; it is the act of forming the documentary heritage - a function that has been assigned to the archivist by the respective social groups which he or she serves' (Booms, 1987, p. 76).

## What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?

Hans Booms, Helen Samuels and Richard Cox's documentation strategy doesn't appear to have been formulated from a desire for more participatory approaches to archives. The participatory elements

seem more like an outcome of their goal to create a more representative archive. For Booms participation would come from social scientists and those they survey and interview. While for Cox and Samuels participation is more likely to emerge from the general public under less direction. Documentation strategy has been included in this analysis of participatory approaches to archives because, despite not using the key words "participation" or "participatory" in relation to the general public their approach opens up space explicitly for genuine engagement and participation outside the archival institution.

> 'The key elements of documentation strategies are an analysis of the universe to be documented, an understanding of the inherent documentary problems, and the formulation of a plan to ensure the adequate documentation of an ongoing issue or activity or geographic area. The strategy is designed, promoted and implemented by records creators, administrators (including archivists) and users. It is an ongoing cooperative effort by many institutions and individuals to ensure the archival retention of appropriate documentation through the application of redefined archival collecting policies, and the development of sufficient resources. The strategy is altered in response to changing conditions and viewpoints' (Samuels, 1991 - 1992, p. 126).

Proponents of documentation strategy also advocate for greater participation on the part of archivists themselves. Spelling out the need for archivists to take a more active role in not just appraisal (understood here as decisions about the value of materials) but records creation.

## What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?

Participation in appraisal extends to archivists becoming more actively engaged in creation.

> 'This also requires that archivists have as an appraisal mission the documentation of society, and that they participate in a team oriented, multi-disciplinary appraisal process' (Cox, 1994, p. 15).

Helen Samuels provides explicit instructions on how to carry out documentation strategy. The general public or people who records are about are not listed in these instructions, but experience has shown this is a possibility.

> 'A strategy is launched by an individual or institution to remedy the poor documentation for a specific sector of society. The institution that launches the effort need not be an archival repository, and the prime mover does not have to be an archivist. Once the topic is identified, advisers and participants are assembled to guide the effort. Creators (legislators, ministers, scientists, administrators), users (historical researchers, lawyers, architects), and custodians of

> the records (archivists, librarians, museum staff) are needed to provide historical knowledge about the topic and its documentation, and to influence those who create, house and fund archives' (Samuels, 1991 - 1992, p. 126).

The director of the former eScholarship Research Centre described the influence Helen Samuels work had on the development of the find and connect project. People who had experienced out of home care were explicitly involved in the process using the knowledge diamond[4]. A way to bring people together not only from various institutional sites but individual stakeholders who were documented in the records. It appears that participation from a documentation approach would take whatever form was required based on the aspect of society being documented.

## What about appraisal?

| Booms, Samuels and Cox (1986 – 1992) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Authors definition of appraisal** | | 'Cultural representation of society, in so far as this is reflected by the public record, will be handed down to future generations' (Booms, 1987, p. 78).<br><br>Appraisal serves two roles: To cull excess records and identify what records need to be kept and created. |
| **Appraisal approaches mentioned** | | Documentation and Documentary strategy |
| **Records Continuum Conceptualisations of Appraisal** | Records / archives creation. | 'Documentation strategies, however, are ongoing activities and provide the opportunity to intervene in the records creation process and assure the creation and retention of required information' (Samuels, 1986, p. 122). |
| | Identifying and assessing records/ archives value. | The phenomena being documented is assessed and as such the records. |
| | Deciding which records / archives to keep. | Because appraisal involves active creation and selection, and it is impossible to select everything, it necessarily leads to the disposal of some records. |

*figure 62. Appraisal Conceptualisation: Booms, Samuels, and Cox*

These perspectives see appraisal as not only important but as the:

> 'central function of the archivist: the acquisition and appraisal of documentation. This function carries the greatest social significance, and unmistakably characterises and defines the professional image of the archivist of today' (Booms, 1987, p. 71).

Archivists at least from Boom's perspective will be responsible for the:

[4] I worked at the eSRC for seven years and had many conversations with the Director Gavan McCarthy.

> 'cultural representation of society, in so far as this is reflected by the public record, will be handed down to future generations' (1987, p. 78).

Appraisal is a subjective process, but this does not mean it needs to be haphazard. It draws on social-constructionist and postmodern ideas about the relationality of meaning and the impossibility of absolute certainty.

> 'In our consideration of the relationship of the individual to society we established initially that is not possible for human beings to designate a certain thing - considered in itself and thereby isolated - as valuable or not valuable in any absolute sense. The value of a particular item only becomes apparent when it is set in relation to something else and compared with that other item' (Booms, 1987, p. 82).

From a documentation point of view appraisal's function is twofold. First it aims to cull records and archives:

> 'to create, out of this overabundance of information, a socially relevant documentary record that is, in spatial terms, storable and, in human terms, usable' (Booms, 1987, p. 77).

Secondly and more radically for some who ascribe to documentation strategy, appraisal extends to ensuring the right records are created (Cox, 1994; Hackman & Warnow-Blewett, 1987; Samuels, 1986).

> 'Documentation strategies, however, are ongoing activities and provide the opportunity to intervene in the records creation process and assure the creation and retention of required information' (Samuels, 1986, p. 122).

The task of identifying and assessing the value of archives and records is not left to the archivist alone. Instead two options emerge in the literature. The first would involve sociological or historical analysis of a society's values.

> 'Measuring the societal significance of past facts by analysing the value which their contemporaries attached to them should serve as the foundation for all archival efforts towards forming the documentary heritage' (Booms, 1987, p. 104).

This approach from Booms is supported by a conceptualisation of archives as "old" and assumes records that represent these values exist, and that these values are relatively homogenous amongst a given community. The second option involves identifying events, experiences or other phenomena that people feel are significant. This can be done drawing on sociological and historical analysis but should also include wider consultation and engagement with the community itself. No assumption is

made about the apriori existence of records, instead the archivist has a role in ensuring these records and archives are created.

Documentation strategy especially of the type advocated by Samuels and Cox (Cox & Samuels, 1988; Samuels, 1986, 1991 - 1992) could support participatory appraisal. It would also support a records continuum definition of appraisal that extends to creation. As will be seen with the participatory approaches below, I do not personally feel there is any need to re-define appraisal from a records continuum perspective. I do however think there could be some benefit in re-conceptualising or clarifying the terms embedded in current records continuum definitions of appraisal and the broader theoretical context within which these definitions make sense. This conceptual work may seem pedantic but it could perform a similar function to the work of documentary strategy theory in establishing what exactly archivists mean by concepts like “value” and “representation”. An example of the importance of context is the statement “I have a cat appoint”. Coming from a Veterinarian this may mean a wellness check-up, from a Radiologist this may refer to a C.A.T. scan of a human patient.

## Conclusion

Documentary strategy and Documentation assign archives value based on the perceived societal value of the people, places, events, or era’s they represent. The aim of archives and records here is to accurately represent important elements of our past into the future. There is an acknowledgement that such representation can never be total, and therefore that archivists have power and responsibility. Archivists are also limited in their capacity to decide what is and isn’t significant. Documentary strategies are designed to include non-archivists in appraisal. Whether these non-archivists be sociologists, historians, or the general public. Some forms of Documentary Strategy argue not just for inclusion of others with professional or experiential knowledge but for archivists to widen their activities to include records creation.

Documentary strategy and its conceptualisation of archivists, records and archives has strong conceptual links to participatory archival approaches. In a sense the very epistemological and ontological premises that documentary strategy rests on demand participation. That we always have to choose what to represent, that these decisions should be justifiable and based on evidence not just from creators but the societies within which these creators live. Whether that means academic sociological analysis or consultation with individuals and communities.

## Shilton and Srinivasan's (2007) Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections

| Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) | |
|---|---|
| **Speakers** | Information / Memory Institution Professionals (Staff, Curators, Archivists), Information / Memory Institutions (Archives, Manuscript Libraries, Special Collections), and Communities (Creator Communities, Community Members, Community Representatives, Marginalised Communities). |
| **Archives, Records and Recordkeeping** | Collections with embedded narratives that can empower and disempower. Preserved for future use and identity expression. Should be representative of everyone in their relevant community(ies) and a plurality of perspectives in a constructive way. |
| **Problem Participatory Approaches Address.** | Prevent "Othering" through misrepresentation and decontextualized representations. |
| **What is Participatory?** | Creation and preservation of "Empowered Narratives". |
| **Records / archival activities that become participatory** | - Creation<br>- Appraisal<br>- Arrangement<br>- Description<br><br>'Create, upload, and share documentation of their heritage and identity' (Shilton and Srinivasan, 2007, p.98). |
| **Paradigm** | Life cycle / Critical archives. |

*figure 63. Conceptualisation: Shilton and Srinivasan*

### Overview

Shilton and Srinivasan's participatory appraisal model:

> 'encourages community involvement during the appraisal, arrangement, and description phases of creating an archival record' (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007, p. 98).

so as to avoid the potential harm caused:

> 'by applying arrangements and description of the "other" to form incomplete and decontextualized representations' (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007, p. 89).

### Who can speak / has authority?

I am using the term speaking positions to collapse in the ideas presented by Foucault about enunciative modalities, one of the four elements of a discourse to be analysed (Foucault, 2002). Enunciations refer to the act of making statements, and these acts are carried out by speakers. Speakers are given authority by institutions and social structures, and are generally assigned specific positions or roles within a discursive field. These roles shape how people are expected to behave

and interact. Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) identify three key speaking positions (Enunciations) that in turn have sub-positions.

1. Information / Memory Institution Professionals (Staff, Curators, Archivists);
2. Information / Memory Institutions (Archives, Manuscript Libraries, Special Collections); and
3. Communities (Creator Communities, Community Members, Community Representatives, Marginalised Communities).

Information / Memory Institution Professionals speak through the medium of their institutions. Archivists create narratives and make statements through:

> 'the power of appraisal to consciously or unconsciously assert chosen narratives as truth while ignoring or reframing others. And through arrangement and description of their acquisitions, archivists impart or relay narratives and knowledge structures to explain the relationships among records in a collection' (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007, p. 90).

Employment and training gives them the authority to speak (institutional sites) and they can hold multiple roles (positions of subjects) within these narratives. Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) problematize the role of information / memory institution professionals and their institutions as the sole providers of representations, access, description, and curation of records and archives, not to mention the sole participants in recordkeeping activities:

> 'For the archivist, successful appraisal decisions rest on understanding the value of particular narratives and records to a community. In a sense, this is an expansion of arguments developed since the time of Booms, paraphrased by Couture, that "the archivist must have a thorough knowledge of the institution and/or person who created the records," and that the archivist should "appraise records by using a scale of values contemporary to the time of creation of the records." In order to gain "thorough knowledge" of how to appraise community records, archivists must have participation from experts: the community members responsible for record creation' (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007, p. 93).

### What is the point of archives, records, and recordkeeping? What are they?

In Shilton and Srinivasan's (2007) article records (as objects) emerge from communities (surfaces of emergence), and should be included in a narrative or discourse (authorities of delineation) if the communities that created them feel they are relevant and contextualised in a way that these same communities would support (grids of specification). A key facet of this conceptualisation of records, institutions, institutional employee's and communities is the argument that communities have unique knowledge about records that institutions and their employees do not. Further-more that

this knowledge is tied to the use and creation of records and archives. Recordkeeping practices therefore need to take this into account. This argument only makes sense if the agency (ability to act) and alterity (emotional and cognitive experiences unknowable to outsiders) of communities is acknowledged.

Archives are framed as either collections of records or physical institutions in this article. Their aim is to form "representative collections". Regardless of which they are seen as having impacts (positive and negative) on people, and are seen as embodying the potential to both empower and silence (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007). From a Foucauldian perspective archives and records can be seen as both concepts and objects. As a concept the record is first mentioned (succession) in the abstract as a subject of archival theory.

> **'**Archival theory has a long history of utilizing principles designed to preserve contextual value in records' (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007, p. 87).

### What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?

Participation is theorised to prevent the harm caused to marginalized communities when records do not represent them well, or at all. The problem is located in the way collections are described and understood by archival institutions and their employee's. Not with the creation of records and archives per se, or the involvement of institutional actors.

> 'By broadening their traditional tools to actively engage marginalized communities in the preservation process, archivists can preserve local knowledge and create representative, empowered archives' (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007, p. 87).

### What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?

The main method advocated for to achieve these participatory outcomes is the preservation of "empowered narratives".

> 'What we define as empowered narratives: records and histories spoken directly by traditionally marginalized communities, embedded within the local experience, practice, and knowledge of that community' (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007, p. 90).

Participation in this process assumes a degree of pre-existing infrastructure and roles. Communities would be involved in contributing to archives, being consulted by archival professionals, and speaking through archives.

While communities would be involved in informing appraisal decisions (in this case assessing the value of representations) the role of ensuring such records and archives are created in the first place seems to lie outside of the archivist.

> 'Oral historians, artists, social leaders, and systems designers have begun to actively record the documentations of marginalized communities that have gone missing in the historical record' (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007, p. 92).

Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) put forward a Participatory Archiving Model that see's communities engaged in the:

> **'**appraisal, arrangement, and description phases of creating an archival record' (p. 98).

What is considered a record, and the creation, organisation and description of records is left up to community members.

> **'**We will not seek to define "records" or content to be included; these appraisal decisions will be left up to the participating community members' (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007, p. 99).

Allowing communities to define these terms for themselves is one way that Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) seek to open up and make explicit the voices of communities.

## What about appraisal?

| Shilton and Srinivasan (2007): Appraisal | | |
|---|---|---|
| Authors definition of appraisal | | Archivists choose which records to preserve and discard, using the power of appraisal to consciously or unconsciously assert chosen narratives as truth while ignoring or reframing others' (Shilton and Srinivasan, 2007, p.88).<br><br>'Create, upload, and share documentation of their heritage and identity' (Shilton and Srinivasan, 2007, p.98). |
| Appraisal approaches mentioned | | Documentation strategy. |
| Records Continuum Conceptualisations of Appraisal | Records / archives creation. | Discussed but not framed as an appraisal activity. |
| | Identifying and assessing records/ archives value. | Discussed and tied directly to decisions to keep records. An appraisal activity.<br><br>'For the archivist, successful appraisal decisions rest on understanding the value of particular narratives and records to a community' (Shilton and Srinivasan, 2007, p. 93). |
| | Deciding which records / archives to keep. | Discussed and tied directly to decisions of what records are valuable, and to which records are discarded. An appraisal activity. |

*figure 64. Appraisal Conceptualisation: Shilton and Srinivasan*

The aim of appraisal as conceptualised by Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) is directly aligned with documentation strategy: representative collections. Like the discourses around documentation strategy Shilton and Srinivasan argue input from people who are not archivists is necessary to achieve this goal. Some advocates of documentation strategy argue for the involvement of professionals like historians and sociologists to provide information about what is most important to communities and individuals, and as such what has appraisal value (Booms, 1987, 1991 - 1992). This acknowledgement of experiential knowledge is central to genuine participatory processes. It simply doesn't make sense to consult if you do not believe those you are consulting have anything to contribute. This is taken one step further by Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) who claim it is essential to get this information from the people and communities being documented themselves.

> 'For archivists to achieve this reconciliation of efforts, Johnston's argument for archival "activism" cannot just occur on behalf of groups (acquiring so many Asian American collections, for example), but alongside groups. As part of the appraisal process, cooperation between creator communities and archivists affords the opportunity to actively learn which community representations hold the most cultural value' (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007, p. 93).

The quote above and discussion later on in the publication about focus groups and community meetings:

> 'to view material as it is added to the online archive' (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007, p. 99).

appear to imply an assumption that records exist before appraisal, and that appraisal is then carried out on these representations in whatever format they may be. This is a significant assumption as we have seen in earlier sections of the thesis, one of the problems participatory archives seek to address is the absence, not just in the archive but in the world, of records and archives. From a records continuum perspective appraisal involves the creation of records for this very reason.

## Conclusions

There are nods throughout this paper to postmodern world views and paradigms. In particular the discussion at the beginning of the article around power and representation, the impossibility of selecting all records for preservation, of representing all narratives. Archivists are framed as agents making choices around what is preserved and what is silenced. The record is not seen as neutral. The concept of a record and archives themselves are even problematised, with the authors choosing to let communities themselves decide what fits into these categories. By espousing a need to hear the voices of participants or "creator communities" Shilton and Srinivasan acknowledge the internal cognitive and affective worlds of these communities and individuals. Of the limitations of their own knowledge and of the archive.

Despite these nods to postmodernism a clear and binary delineation appears to be implied by Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) between the outside and inside of archives. Postmodernism explicitly challenges the existence of hard boundaries between spaces and things. Hence the postmodernist conceptualisation of recordkeeping embraced by records continuum thinkers, challenging the reality of any hard distinction between records and archives.

## Huvila's (2008) Participatory Archive

| Huvila (2008) | |
|---|---|
| **Speakers** | Archivists, Researchers, Communities documented by the records, diverse users. |
| **Archives, Records and Recordkeeping** | Should be representative of everyone in their relevant community(ies) and a plurality of perspectives in a constructive way. Accepts incommensurable interpretations. Can both empower and disempower. Preserved and exist for accessibility and usability by a variety of users. Should serve needs of community. Always becoming.<br><br>'Archive as an evolving corpus of process-bound information with self-emerging ontologies' (Huvila, 2008, p.26) |
| **Problem Participatory Approaches Address.** | Past conceptualisations of participatory could serve communities better. |
| **What is Participatory?** | Decentralised curation, radical user orientation, contextualisation.<br><br>'Letting contributors and users to curate and to decide of the forms and frameworks of participation' (Huvila, 2008, p. 30).<br><br>'Radical user orientation means following the principle of post-modern archival science that the foremost functionality of an archival system is to make the contents of an archive available' (Huvila, 2008, pp. 32 - 33). |
| **Records / archival activities that become participatory** | - Creation<br>- Description<br>- Acquisition / Collecting<br><br>'In practice, an information manager or a group of managers (depending on their role, possibly elected among the participants or nominated by the hosting institution) are needed to supervise the system, but the role of the managers is technical maintenance rather than appraisal and value judgments or proactive facilitation (Shilton and Srinivasan 2008)' (Huvila, 2008, p.25). |
| **Paradigm** | Life cycle / Critical archives. |

*figure 65. Conceptualisation: Huvila*

### Overview

Huvila (2008)'s participatory archive has three key features:

1. Decentralised curation: Drawing extensively on the knowledge of archival users to curate and manage records and archives;
2. Radical user orientation: Re-framing the central purpose of archives not as the preservation of records but rather ensuring the availability and accessibility of archives; and
3. Contextualisation of records and archival processes: Going beyond provenance when contextualising records and archival processes.

### Who can speak / has authority?

Huvila's (2008) model for participatory archives identifies multiple speaking positions from outside of traditional archival institutions. The relationship between speakers (people) and speaking positions (roles) is fluid and open to change. Speakers are given authority (surfaces of emergence) by their experiential and subject matter knowledge.

> 'The curatorial responsibilities are shared between archivists (or information managers) and the participants in an archive, who as a collective have the most in-depth subject knowledge on the records, their contexts and uses' (Huvila, 2008, p. 25).

The speaking positions are not predetermined or assumed, and the multiplicity and plurality that exists within groups such as communities is explicitly acknowledged.

> 'In a participatory archive, there is no predetermined consensual community. The "community" is a sum of all individual structures, descriptions, orders, and viewpoints contributed by individual participating archive users whether they are users or contributors, archivists, researchers, administrators, labourers, or belong to marginalised communities or the majority' (Huvila, 2008, p. 26).

Archivists, and archival institutions seem to have more technical roles in Huvila's (2008) participatory archive, whereas communities and experts are actively engaged in every step of the recordkeeping process, including design and rationale. None of these individuals are expected to act neutrally.

> 'None of the participants, the person who created a record, an information manager, or a contributor, can be expected to be neutral' (Huvila, 2008, p. 25).

### What is the point of archives, records, and recordkeeping? What are they?

According to Huvila (2008) Archives, records and recordkeeping exist for people. Recordkeeping activities should aim to maximise the accessibility and usability of records and archives (Huvila, 2008).

> 'In a participatory archive, the usability and findability of the resources is the number one priority' (Huvila, 2008, p. 25).

The resulting archives, records, and recordkeeping:

> 'represent a plethora of viewpoints, which all contribute to the formation of common and individual understanding of archives and archival materials' (Huvila, 2008, p. 18).

Huvila argues that accessibility and useability can be enhanced by a focus on the:

> 'activities and phenomena behind individual records' (Huvila, 2008, p. 18).

and the wider context of the record beyond traditional conceptualisations of provenance.

> 'A participatory archive also acknowledges the importance of other than archival and organisational contexts of records, such as those of their originators, curators and users' (Huvila, 2008, p. 25).

The definition of what constitutes a record or archive is intentionally broad and includes traditional material artefacts such as manuscripts as well as archaeological finds and even the documentation of the records themselves. The archive becomes what the community wants, however it still retains its preservation responsibilities (Huvila, 2008). This makes the application of Foucault's taxonomy (for want of a better word) challenging. As objects records from this perspective can and do emerge from various places (surfaces of emergence) including communities and governments. Relevance is given to records through engagement by people (authorities of delineation), the same with meaning (grids of specification). As concepts records and archives emerge from the beginning as reflections of communities (succession). These reflections can be enriched and sharpened by participation form communities.

The world view presented by Huvila (2008) exists alongside more traditional archival perspectives (co-existence) which it seeks to challenge.

### What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?

Huvila's model is in part a response to earlier work on participatory archives and the limitations perceived therein, and the needs of two "user groups".

> 'From Anderson's point of view approaches such as those of Yakel et al. (2007) and Shilton and Srinivasan (2008) focus on creating participation around instead of within an archive. Their principal difference to the participatory archive approach is that they retain the a priori authority for archivists and focus on participatory information seeking rather than participatory management of the archive' (Huvila, 2008, p. 26).

Early on the problem of identifying what people actual want and need from archives is discussed. Huvila notes that this analysis has taken place in libraries and to some extent museums but not in the archival realm. The implication is archives could be better serving the communities and individuals around them (Huvila, 2008).

### What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?

Huvila's 2008 article is seeking to re-frame participatory. Participatory is a label given to archives which exhibit certain characteristics, decentralised curation, radical user orientation and contextualisation of both records and the entire archival process (Huvila, 2008).

The approach espoused involves engagement of non-archivist from the very beginning. However, this beginning appears to be predicated on an assumption of the a priori existence of records and archives however defined. This is possibly because Huvila (2008) conceptualises appraisal as "macro-appraisal" which does not extend the archival realm to the creation of records and archives.

Not only is the agency (capacity to act) of non-archivists acknowledged, and their unique perspectives (alterity) but non-archivist contributions are trusted as authoritative in their own right.

> 'The post-coordinated approach of the participatory archive differs from this proposition by letting contributors and users to curate and to decide of the forms and frameworks of participation' (Huvila, 2008, p. 30).

This type of participatory archive does not require a finished end point or mediated, consolidated conclusion. It encourages the existence of:

> 'a diversity of motivations, viewpoints, arguments and counterarguments' (Huvila, 2008, p. 25).

## What about appraisal?

| Huvila (2008): Appraisal | | |
|---|---|---|
| Authors definition of appraisal | | Not explicitly defined.<br><br>'Otherwise than from the technical point of view, information managers are equal to the other users of the archive. Their role is not to direct the process of how an archive emerges, how something is described or appraised or what provenances relate to the materials' (Huvila, 2008, p.26). |
| Appraisal approaches mentioned | | Macro-appraisal. |
| Records Continuum Conceptualisations of Appraisal | Records / archives creation. | Discussed as something non-archivists can do but not framed as an appraisal activity. |
| | Identifying and assessing records/ archives value. | Discussed as something non-archivists can do, appears to be an appraisal activity. |
| | Deciding which records / archives to keep. | Implies participant involvement in decisions to keep materials.<br>'A set of minimum requirements for new entries' (Huvila, 2008, p.25).<br>Not explicitly framed as an appraisal activity. |

*figure 66. Appraisal Conceptualisation: Huvila*

In Huvila's approach appraisal is shaped by a focus on the 'usability and findability of the resources' (Huvila, 2008, p. 25). Alongside this prioritisation and a brief nod to macro-appraisal little else is said on appraisal. Huvila's (2008) conceptualisation of participation allows space for appraisal to develop

in multiple directions, it is not locked down into a prescriptive methodology. It is hard to say how appraisal would actually manifest. There certainly appears to be room for non-archivists to be involved in appraisal. Archivists are framed as information managers whose role is:

> 'To maintain the technical platform, to provide adequate tools for working with the archive and to provide a minimum technical level of findability of individual records. Otherwise than from the technical point of view, information managers are equal to the other users of the archive. Their role is not to direct the process of how an archive emerges, how something is described or appraised or what provenances relate to the materials. Following McKemmish et al. (2005) there are an infinite number of possible parallel provenances, descriptions, orders, and pathways to the archival information. Participatory archive assumes no consensus on order, no first order' (Huvila, 2008, p. 26).

Like Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) Huvila's (2008) conceptualisation of participatory archives nods towards an emerging base condition of possibility for participation: Acknowledgement that non-archivists have something meaningful to contribute to archives and recordkeeping. The unfinished nature of the archive also suggests that this contribution needs to be recursive and repeated over time. Huvila (2008) also challenges the assumption of a homogenous community pre-existing the archives, in turn acknowledging that records and archives can have multiple meanings and values.

## Conclusions

Huvila's (2008) participatory archive depends on acknowledging the agency, alterity and diversity of communities and all those who come into contact with records. These concepts and the focus on archives as never being "finished" all point strongly to a postmodern paradigm. Without these assumptions it would not make sense to require participation by non-archivists.

> 'The radical user orientation is based on an understanding that together the participants are more knowledgeable about the archival materials than an archivist alone can be' (Huvila, 2008, p. 26).

## Anderson and Allen's (2009) Archival Commons

| Anderson and Allen (2009) | |
|---|---|
| **Speakers** | Cultural professionals, General public, Repositories, Institutions, Archives, other Cultural Heritage Organisations, and User groups (researchers, readers, volunteers, and students). |
| **Archives, Records and Recordkeeping** | Non-Rival Goods, Publicly accessible collections. Preserved for future use. Supports research and culture. Relatively neutral elements. Not necessarily located in one space. |
| **Problem Participatory Approaches Address.** | Scale of documentation (efficiency time and financial). |
| **What is Participatory?** | Mediated folksonomies, tagging, commenting, creating and expanding finding aids.<br><br>'A finding aid for specific buildings on a campus, community events, people, streets, groups of local interest, and the like without regard for where those materials reside in the extant records management or archival structures of the organization. The ability to virtually co-locate items and associations for specific purposes' (Anderson and Allen, 2009, p.392). |
| **Records / archival activities that become participatory** | - Description<br>- Arrangement<br>'Post-appraisal context and meaning to be socially formed' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, p.386). |
| **Paradigm** | Life cycle. |

*figure 67. Conceptualisation: Anderson and Allen*

### Overview

Anderson and Allen (2009) explicitly adopt a worldview based on the work of Anthony Giddens, concepts of networks and economic thinking in developing their archival commons.

> 'Using Giddens's theory of structuration and the roles of human agency and social structure, the authors propose basic functionalities to be provided by an archival commons. These functionalities would broaden the ability to form social memory in a commons-based environment supported by the economic idea of archival materials as nonrival goods' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, p. 383).

### Who can speak / has authority?

There are four key speaking positions in Scott Anderson and Robert Allen's (2009) *Envisioning the Archival Commons* cultural professionals; the general public, repositories; institutions; archives other cultural heritage organisations; and user groups (researchers, readers, volunteers, and students).

The role of cultural professionals in this worldview is to contextualise records by 'contribut[ing] narrative and links among objects' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, p. 387). The institutions they work within (repositories, institutes, archives, and cultural heritage organisations) become the structural

forces that form part of Giddens structuration theory. These bodies shape access, organisation, interpretation, and use of archival materials.

> 'As a brief example, archival repositories are the legitimate long-term holders of records (setting aside how that came to be), therefore they are able to determine the norms of use and access, and therefore they have the ability to level sanctions against those users who do not abide by those rules' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, p. 385).

In addition to their role as structural forces these institutions also establish the importance and value of archival materials.

> 'Their [archival materials] presence in an archives indicates some importance, as do the subsequent care, handling, and effort that go into their maintenance and availability…those are covert signals not well understood by most users' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, pp. 394 - 395).

Institutions perform the three functions of structures: signification (through the organisation of archival materials and how they are interpreted), domination (by controlling access to archival materials) and legitimisation (by establishing the norms and behaviour when interacting with archival materials).

The second half of Giddens structuration theory, agency, is framed as the way people make sense of archival materials.

> '*Agency* is the human ability to interpret information, which may include software-based applications working on behalf of humans' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, pp. 383 - 384).

Structuration occurs then when archival materials gain new meaning through use. People can do this, according to Anderson and Allen (2009) through tagging, the creation of folksonomies and linking of materials. The people spoken about are interested members of the general public, researchers, readers, volunteers, and students.

### What is the point of archives, records, and recordkeeping? What are they?

Archival materials are seen as goods implying, intentionally or not, a certain physicality to them, which can be used by people, held by institutions and organised in different ways. The value of archival materials is assigned to them by archival institutions and archival professionals and tends to be based on use. The universe that archival materials exist within is seen as a network, where meaning is generated through use and their relationship with other entities. Changing the links and relationships therefore changes the meaning of the archival material.

People are not seen as having the same authority to speak about records as the institutions and institutional employees described earlier. The contributions of those outside of the listed institutions are described as "perceptions", and require differentiation from the official narrative. The commons works by:

> 'allowing users to submit what they perceive to be corrections to names embedded within documents and then subsequently tagging them as "user contributions"' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, p. 394).

These contributions need to be managed through resources like the U.S. Library of Congress files or ICA ISAAR (CPF) standards (Anderson & Allen, 2009). The participation envisioned by Anderson and Allen is decidedly limited.

The appropriation of a commons, and economic terms such as "non-rival goods" (co-existence) frames records as somewhat neutral things. While explicitly trying to move away from the idea of ownership and physicality (non-rival) they are still objects and are still tied to place – virtual or real-in the form of institutions. This paints records and archival materials as playing a very specific role, that can be open and public.

> 'While an archival setting is not (for the most part) the e-commerce setting that they address, the three requirements to make a reputation system work still apply. First, an archives is a "long-lived entity" that will be around to support this service long enough (at least within the retention schedule) to facilitate future interaction. Second, it is able to "capture and distribute" the fact that current or past visitors have actually made use of materials. Even the generic "downloaded N times" could be informative to future users. Third, it presents the information collected by the two previously noted mechanisms to inform and guide "trust decisions" by future users' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, p. 396).

### What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?

The problem Anderson and Allen's (2009) archival commons would solve is a practical one. The archival common's is framed as offering greater efficiency and lower costs for archival institutions.

> 'The commons will expand involvement of users, leverage existing discovery tools, and reduce the cost of coordination associated with the documentation strategy' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, p. 383).

The commons has two motivations, first recognition that it is not feasible for archivists to manage the sheer quantity of archival materials being created in the same way they used to be and:

> 'a desire to see archival materials of all types integrated into the general social, cultural, and educational discourse by improving opportunities for exposure, interpretation, and inclusion' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, pp. 386 - 387).

## What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?

Anderson and Allen (2009) identify a number of features their archival commons would have: linking in and out, continuous (re)arrangement, tagging and folksonomies, names service, and annotation and contribution using narrative tools. They discuss an online platform complying with existing metadata systems and other schemas (e.g. ISAAR (CPF)). Participation in this discourse involves open, public knowledge resources and controlled and mediated contributions. This all aligns with their conceptualisation of records and archives as resources to be used and engaged with. 'Doing' participatory practice is in their article framed as a technical and logistical issue.

## What about appraisal?

| Anderson and Allen (2009) | | |
|---|---|---|
| Authors definition of appraisal | | Not explicitly defined.<br>'Such a commons could support the goals of a documentation strategy by relying on a decentralized market-based approach to archival representation, appraisal, and retention' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, p.384) |
| Appraisal approaches mentioned | | Documention strategy. |
| Records Continuum Conceptualisations of Appraisal | Records / archives creation. | Not discussed. |
| | Identifying and assessing records/ archives value. | Value based on use. |
| | Deciding which records / archives to keep. | Included but not a participatory activity. Decisions appear to be made by archivists and archival institutions. |

*figure 68. Appraisal Conceptualisation: Anderson and Allen*

Anderson and Allen mention that their:

> 'commons could support the goals of a documentation strategy by relying on a decentralized market-based approach to archival representation, appraisal and retention rather than the more centralized approach that has proven to be pragmatically unworkable' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, p. 384).

Despite referring to documentation strategy Allen and Anderson's (2009) archival commons draws on the work of Anthony Giddens and use to demonstrate value.

I am left to imagine what kind of records, in the records continuum sense, would fit within an archival commons. It seems unlikely records or archives containing sensitive or personal information would be appraised as fitting in a commons. This could lead to the exclusion of records like case files and sensitive government materials.

## Conclusions

The functionalities of the archival commons, in particular the constant re-contextualising of archival materials by the public, spreads to a post-appraisal archival world.

> 'The functionalities outlined below allow post-appraisal context and meaning to be *socially* formed, and then systematically capture (or at least allow for the possibility of) the "discourse formations" that develop over time' (Anderson & Allen, 2009, p. 386).

Anderson and Allen (2009) do not provide a definition of appraisal, despite referring to documentation strategy, but their use of the term "post-appraisal" could be understood as implying they are taking a life cycle approach to records and archives. On the other hand, their acknowledgment of continuous contextual change is far more postmodern than a modernist life cycle approach, and as discussed in the previous chapter Giddens is a key point of inspiration for records continuum thinking. It seems they sit between worlds, acknowledging the changing meaning of records but (possibly) seeing archival processes as linear.

## Flinn's (2010) Democratised Archives

| Flinn (2010) | |
|---|---|
| **Speakers** | Archivists, communities (self identifying groups of people), formal or traditional archival institutions and community archival institutions. |
| **Archives, Records and Recordkeeping** | Archives without walls. Should be representative of everyone and a plurality of perspectives in their relevant community(ies) in a constructive way. Can both empower and disempower. May exist across a distributed network. |
| **Problem Participatory Approaches Address.** | Problematises the privileging of some voices over others. "Othering". |
| **What is Participatory?** | How participants are treated, a sense of ownership. |
| **Records / archival activities that become participatory** | - Presumably all activities.<br><br>'For archivists, it means that the full range of decisions and duties undertaken by the archive need to examined – for instance decisions about collection and accession; about what is included and what is excluded, but also about how things are described and by whom; about how and to whom archive collections are made accessible; and the extent to which commercial imperatives should drive what is to be made available digitally and how that digitisation is to be paid for?' (Flinn, 2010). |
| **Paradigm** | Post-custodial / Critical archives. |

*figure 69. Conceptualisation: Flinn*

### Overview

Flinn's (2010) democratic archive has significant participatory components. In particular the source of information about records and the impact of non-archivists on records and archives, envisioning an archive:

> 'which recognises that all who come into contact with the archive (directly and indirectly) the "community of the record", can and do affect our understanding and knowledge of that archive' (Flinn, 2010, p. 2).

### Who can speak / has authority?

The speaking positions mentioned in Flinn's (2010) article *An attack on Professionalism and Scholarship? Democratising Archives and the Production of Knowledge* include archivists, communities (self-identifying groups of people), formal or traditional archival institutions and community archival institutions. Not only does Flinn recognise the agency of all of these groups, their hegemony is not assumed. The diversity of views and opinions amongst archival professionals, institutions and communities is acknowledged.

> 'However the strength of the earlier reviewer's criticism of these endeavours indicates that there is still strong resistance to such ideas within the archive profession and perhaps in academia more generally' (Flinn, 2010, p. 8).

Flinn argues that currently only certain groups are given authority to speak, and even fewer are acknowledged as "authoritative".

> 'In essence, the call for a democratisation of archival practice arises from an understanding that the archive (and broadly speaking that means public archives, notably national archives) and archival practice overwhelmingly privilege the voices of those with power and influence in society' (Flinn, 2010, pp. 1-2).

From a Foucauldian perspective Flinn (2010) is asking us to question the institutional sites where speakers gain their authority and relevance. Rather than assessing somebody's knowledge about a collection, archive or record as "fact" based on their association with an archival institution, we should perhaps widen this to include "enthusiasts", "volunteers", and subject matter experts. Including the kind of expertise that comes from lived experience. The positions (roles) that subjects can take are widened and far more fluid.

### What is the point of archives, records, and recordkeeping? What are they?

Although not explicitly stated it is implied that records are component parts of an archive. Recordkeeping processes are activities carried out by both people employed at formal archival institutions, community archives and in terms of creation – in the wider community. Archives perceived as collections, although not necessarily of material objects. Flinn (2010) pushes a post-custodial image of the archive where formal archival institutions support "community archives" 'in creative and in post-custodial ways' (Flinn, 2010, p. 5). In ways which do not require community archival collections to become part of formal repositories. What exactly a record is, is never explicitly defined but is closely linked to ideas of narrative and story.

> 'Fundamentally however, what is required is an understanding of a national "archive" which is not just a building or an institution down in Kew but an idea, a concept. Not a "total" archive necessarily, but an "archive without walls" which conceptually at least holds within its remit the obligation to reflect the archival heritage of the whole nation or relevant community, including but not confined to, only government and other official records. This means an archive that acknowledges and seeks to make available the traces of other voices and other stories which might be held outside the walls of formal established archives, located in other physical and virtual spaces' (Flinn, 2010, p. 3).

The purpose of archives and records is to tell stories, and ideally the stories of everybody. The purpose of telling these stories is to build a shared identity that supports social inclusion and provides a sense of belonging (Flinn, 2010).

## What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?

In this article Flinn argues that archives currently do not reach their full potential and instead archives privilege the voices and stories of the powerful at the expense of others. This matters because it not only results in a distorted record of the nation or community but causes social harm.

> 'Exclusion, absence from, or misrepresentation in those narratives can engender a sense of alienation and non-identification' (Flinn, 2010, p. 2).

When the stories of people not in power are told they are othered, objectified and not humanised.

> 'When these "others" do appear in the archives, they rarely speak with their own voice, but rather appear as the objects of official interest and concern' (Flinn, 2010, pp. 1-2).

The solution is participation by these "others".

## What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?

Participation can mean many things:

> 'levels of participation (both in terms of numbers and activity) may also vary greatly depending on the project and the community which the project seeks to engage' (Flinn, 2010, p. 7).

It is not so much the form of participation that Flinn (2010) focuses on but the way participants are treated and acknowledged. Flinn (2010) criticises other conceptualisations of participatory approaches where archival institutions and archivists still have high levels of control and mediation over participant contributions. This concern is possible linked to the problem of "othering" in archives. He is also critical of any participatory approaches that lean too heavily on technology. Instead he argues:

> 'It is essential that users feel some sense of ownership before they will share and actively contribute' (Flinn, 2010, p. 7).

and that the processes of shifting towards a democratic archives (where more people participate and have access) is a never-ending ongoing task.

## What about appraisal?

| Flinn (2010): Appraisal | | |
|---|---|---|
| Authors definition of appraisal | | Not explicitly defined.<br><br>'Indeed the collection and utilisation in professional areas such as appraisal and cataloguing of such 'community' knowledge has been further advocated and formalised in other recent face-to-face participatory models such as the Revisiting Collections and Revisiting Archive Collections in the UK, and those described by Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan in the USA. In both these cases, the aim is to provide richer and thicker description by involving non-professionals in the professional practice, ultimately aiming to support the creation and description of multicultural archive collections more effectively ' (Flinn, 2010). |
| Appraisal approaches mentioned | | N/A |
| Records Continuum Conceptualisations of Appraisal | Records / archives creation. | Discussed but not framed as an appraisal activity, undertaken by communities.<br><br>'Recently designated as independent or community archives, the grassroots activity of collecting and sometimes creating materials relating to the history of a particular community' (Flinn, 2010).<br><br>'The opportunity to share memories and build upon that would otherwise most likely remain uncaptured' (Flinn, 2010). |
| | Identifying and assessing records/ archives value. | Communities seen as adept at identifying items of archival value. Not discussed as a appraisal activity. |
| | Deciding which records / archives to keep. | Discussed as something participants can contribute to. Not discussed as an appraisal activity. |

*figure 70. Appraisal Conceptualisation: Flinn*

While not explicitly discussed in Flinn's 2010 article outside of Shilton and Srinivasan's conceptualisation the creation of records and archives by communities is discussed. Remembering that a records continuum definition of appraisal, and the base from which this thesis operates, is decisions around what records to create, keep and / or destroy. Unlike Allen and Anderson's (2009) approach because the archives Flinn discusses are created by and for communities appraisal isn't necessarily limited by considerations of publicity. It is conceivable that a community archive could collect and create (appraise) or document materials that are never made public. While Flinn himself may not refer to the creation of records as appraisal – creation is still an important factor. Records and archives do not spring up out of nothing. Archivists and archives still have a role to play in the creation of records. Furthermore, because Flinn is taking a post-custodial stance, these materials may never even leave the individuals who created them. Their inclusion may be virtual or sign posted in a distributed system.

Flinn's democratic archives paint a picture of archives as having profound impacts on individuals, organisations and communities due to the way records and archives are tied up with issues of power

and identity. Without these conceptual acknowledgements there is no sense of urgency or rationale to establish community or participatory archives. There is no need to invest time and energy into something if it doesn't have any impact. Taking this to the next logical step, if it is argued that archives and records have impact this implies they are tied up with issues of power.

## Conclusions

Andrew Flinn makes a number of arguments in support of his democratized archive. Firstly, that the ability to create, manage and use records is not limited to archivists and archival professionals. For someone to be able to act they must have a degree of agency, so agency is assumed. Secondly Flinn (2010) argues the input of non-archivists is valuable and useful to archival institutions and society as a whole. This argument assumes that non-archivists have something to contribute that archivists do not, and that cannot be accessed without engaging with non-archivists. This points to the acknowledgement of non-archivists having unique internal emotional, spiritual, physiological and intellectual experiences. Agency is not enough. If it were just agency then archivist could simply take the records created by communities. The meaning and context of these records would require no investigation. The third argument of particular interest here is that allowing this participation to happen would change things, that it is not currently happening because archives are seen as the preserve of professionals. There are a multiplicity of individuals and communities that can contribute, not just one select group.

## Iacovino (2010)'s Participant Model of Rights and Responsibilities

| Iacovino (2010) | |
|---|---|
| **Speakers** | The Australian Government (federal and state), archival institutions, other non-archival institutions that hold records, The United Nations, archivists and record owners / creators, subjects of the records (communities and individuals). |
| **Archives, Records and Recordkeeping** | Contain information to support an inclusive and democratic society and enable people to manage their own cultural knowledge and identity.<br>Can both empower and disempower. May exist across a distributed network. Exist in any material configuration. Always becoming. |
| **Problem Participatory Approaches Address.** | Lack of rights held by "subjects of records". Explicitly acknowledge the contribution of everyone who is actually involved in records creation and associated recordkeeping processes. |
| **What is Participatory?** | 'In a fully implemented participant model, every contributor, including the person who is the subject of the document, has legal and moral rights and responsibilities in relation to ownership, access and privacy' (Iacovino, 2010, p. 362). |
| **Records / archival activities that become participatory** | Presumably all activities. |
| **Paradigm** | Records continuum / Post-custodial |

*figure 71. Conceptualisation: Iacovino*

### Overview

Iacovino (2010)'s approach involves reframing the subjects of records as active agents, as agents people have rights and responsibilities which may include participation in recordkeeping and archives.

> 'In a fully implemented participant model, every contributor, including the person who is the subject of the document, has legal and moral rights and responsibilities in relation to ownership, access and privacy' (Iacovino, 2010, p. 362).

### Who can speak / has authority?

Livia Iacovino (2010) identifies a number of speaking positions that already exist in traditional archival discourse, and they she envisions for her participatory approach to archives. Existing speakers include:

- The Australian Government (Federal and state);
- Archival Institutions;
- Institutions that hold records;
- The United Nations;
- Archivists; and
- Record Owners / Creators.

Subjects of records are recognized as having an extremely limited speaking position in traditional archival discourses.

The Australian Government makes decisions about who can speak in the current model, and how much agency they can have based on a raft of legislation. The law courts and legal aspects also hold positions and when making comments on legislation are respected. The United Nations is the other institutional speaker who is acknowledged as authoritative in relation to legislation.

Institutions that hold records and the individuals who work in them, including but not limited to archives are given authority and control over records, and what can be taken as authoritative based on Western juridical concepts of ownership.

> 'Western jurisprudence the right of ownership is not a single right but a set of rights over things a legal person may be endowed with. Rights of ownership are the extent of powers to exclude others from enjoyment of the thing owned' (Iacovino, 2010, p. 357).

This right comes from the Australian legal and government system (institutional site).

Records "creators" are also afforded authority and a speaking position as active agents by Australian Government legislation (Institutional sites). Creators can also hold positions as "owners" (positions of subjects). The people or communities' records are about have a passive position in traditional archival discourse. It could be argued that the record is in many cases given more authority and trust than these individuals. People or communities records are about are limited to a role of passive acceptance, or at the most active "users" of records and archives (Iacovino, 2010).

### What is the point of archives, records, and recordkeeping? What are they?

The purpose of archives, records, and recordkeeping in Iacovino's 2010 article is to support the reconciliation process of Indigenous Australians removed from their families and support an inclusive and democratic society (Iacovino, 2010). Based on the problems Iacovino (2010) identifies records and archives should be accessible to the people they are about enabling them to manage the knowledge of themselves and their communities. Being able to manage your own knowledges is seen by Iacovino (2010) and others as essential for the preservation of identity and culture:

> 'as well as providing evidence of dispossession and potential legal claims' (Iacovino, 2010, p. 354).

If we were to look at records and archives in Iacovino's 2010 article through a Foucauldian archaeological lens we would see them as both objects and concepts. As objects they emerge from communities, individuals, and complex social interactions (surfaces of emergency), in traditional

approaches they are given value and importance by the institutions who hold and manage them, not by the people they are about (authorities of delineation). It seems Iacovino (2010) is arguing that these authorities of delineation should come from everybody the records relate too not just the institutional organisations.

In the traditional model institutions and "creators" also dominate the way records and archives are classified and organised (grids of specification), Iacovino (2010) would also like to see these grids of specification opened up.

Conceptually in this discourse records and archives are primarily about rights of subjects (succession) competing with traditional conceptualisations of records and archives from western perspectives (co-existence). Iacovino draws on Human Rights discourses from outside of the archival realm (co-existence) to challenge traditional archival discourses and re-position records subjects as agents in their own right (procedures of intervention). Recordkeeping is framed as an activity that everyone participates in but only a few are recognised in by traditional models.

## What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?

Livia Iacovino (2010) identifies a host of problems facing Indigenous Australians in relation to archives.

> 'Significant archival and legal barriers to Indigenous Australians' control over ''their'' Indigenous knowledge in records kept by non-Indigenous people and organisations. The barriers were exacerbated by the recognition that as ''record subjects'' they were afforded few rights, in particular ownership rights which stem from legal notions of authorship, and consequently no rights over the record's disclosure, use and disposition' (Iacovino, 2010, p. 354).

Records and archives are not accessible or adequate to fulfil their potential as reconciliation aids and supporters of an inclusive and democratic society. This problem stems in part from the failure of western conceptualisations of ownership and legislation to acknowledge collective authorship and ownership. According to Iacovino (2010) this results in an oversimplification of the creation process that not only harms Indigenous Australians but undermines archival practice which traditionally focuses heavily on provenance and creation.

## What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?

The approach recommended by Iacovino (2010) is a:

> 'participant relationship model which acknowledges all parties to a transaction as immediate parties with negotiated rights and responsibilities' (Iacovino, 2010, p. 353).

Such an approach emerges from within a records continuum paradigm. This means changes to the conceptualisation of creation, ownership, record and record subjects. Effectively pluralising creation and ownership so multiple owners and creators can be acknowledged.

This shift also requires a breakdown in hard barriers between creators of records and subjects of records, blurring the boundaries between the two. A consequence of this blurring is an explicit acknowledgement of the agency of records subjects, and the logical provision of certain rights and responsibilities (such as correction and amendment of records and access control).

> 'The model involves repositioning record subjects as records agents—participants in the act of records creation through time and space. In this model, any set of rights requires the recognition of a reciprocal set of duties to the community and to others that arise from one to one or multiple socio-legal relationships (Iacovino 2006). If Indigenous Australians as collectives and as individuals are recognised as participants rather than as mere records subjects, they may engage in the creation, capture, systemisation, preservation and access to records over time and space' (Iacovino, 2010, p. 362).

## What about appraisal?

| Iacovino (2010): Appraisal | | |
|---|---|---|
| Authors definition of appraisal | | Not explicitly defined. |
| Appraisal approaches mentioned | | N/A |
| Records Continuum Conceptualisations of Appraisal | Records / archives creation. | Records Continuum paradigm so likely seen as an appraisal activity despite not being discussed explicitly. |
| | Identifying and assessing records/ archives value. | Records Continuum paradigm so likely seen as an appraisal activity despite not being discussed explicitly. |
| | Deciding which records / archives to keep. | Records Continuum paradigm so likely seen as an appraisal activity despite not being discussed explicitly. |

*figure 72. Appraisal Conceptualisation: Iacovino*

Operating from a records continuum perspective Iacovino's (2010) conceptualisation of participatory archives is compatible with records continuum conceptualisations of appraisal. The

description of "gaps" opens the possibility of records creation to form part of the overall process. The focus on Indigenous self-determination also leads me to assume indigenous peoples themselves would be involved in both the creation of records (whether directly or through additional requirements for traditional bureaucratic records creators) and decisions around their value. Such an appraisal approach would stress the agency of those involved or mentioned in records from a legal perspective as legal persons with all the rights and responsibilities that go with that.

Iacovino's framing of the purpose of records and archives as supporting the needs of people who exist now, as opposed to the need to document communities for the future also alters the kind of participation that becomes possible. If future generations are not your sole purpose then you can empower people to make decisions that privilege their needs over the imagined needs of future users. Presumably these would include appraisal decisions. Here human beings become the central rationale for recordkeeping and archives. Not preservation, not representation, but people as they exist now.

## Conclusions

Livia Iacovino's participant model draws on legal human rights discourse to disrupt dominant conceptualisations of records, archives, recordkeeping and the roles individuals and communities can play. This disruption introduces plurality and multiplicity into archival practice and records, it also expands the degree of agency and authority afforded by the different roles in traditional approaches to recordkeeping.

As discussed in the previous section Iacovino is operating from a records continuum paradigm. This can be seen in the conceptualisation of records and "creators". Like many records' continuum thinkers (Evans et al., 2015; Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014; McKemmish & Piggott, 2013) Iacovino is advocating a shift in the way relationships between records and subjects of records are conceptualised. The use of the term recordkeeping also places Iacovino squarely within a records continuum frame. Iacovino also borrows (co-existence) Hurley's work on parallel provenance incorporating this concept into her approach to participatory archives. As we will see, the next publication also emerges within a Records Continuum paradigm.

## Gilliland and McKemmish (2014)'s Archival Third Way

| Gilliland and McKemmish (2014) | |
|---|---|
| **Speakers** | All people mentioned in, affected by a record or involved in the creation of a record. |
| **Archives, Records and Recordkeeping** | 'Serving a designated community in terms of addressing its ongoing interests, recordkeeping and identity needs, and historical memory'(Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014, p. 81).<br>Can both empower and disempower. May exist across a distributed network. Exist in any material configuration. Always becoming. |
| **Problem Participatory Approaches Address.** | Enable archives to fulfil their ideal purpose as specified by the ICA's *Universal Declaration on Archives.* Supporting self-determination, rights, and healing of inter-community conflict. |
| **What is Participatory?** | 'Participatory archives acknowledge that multiple parties have rights, responsibilities, needs and perspectives with regard to the record. The archives consequently become a negotiated space in which these different communities share stewardship—they are created by, for and with multiple communities, according to and respectful of community values, practices, beliefs and needs' (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014, p. 78). |
| **Records / archival activities that become participatory** | Presumably all activities. |
| **Paradigm** | Records continuum / Post-custodial / Critical archives. |

*figure 73. Conceptualisation: Gilliland and McKemmish (2014)'s Third Way*

### Overview

The archival third way put forward by Gilliland and McKemmish (2014) has a number of features. At its centre it recognises the agency of records subjects and recommends a suite of rights in records. This is coupled with concepts of multi and parallel provenance, co-creation, the archival multiverse (the pluralism of not only archives and recordkeeping but the social, institutional, legal and conceptual context in which they exist) (Gilliland and McKemmish, 2013), and the idea that participation should occur at all stages of the recordkeeping process and all levels of the archive.

### Who can speak / has authority?

Gilliland and McKemmish (2014) argue that anyone affected by a record or involved in the creation of a record (including those mentioned in a record) should have a speaking position with authority. They critique traditional archival approaches where these roles (subject positions) are limited to those deemed "records creators". The authority to speak in this paradigm (institutional sites) does not come from institutional backing, membership or academic qualification but degree of impact and involvement in archives, records, and recordkeeping.

## What is the point of archives, records, and recordkeeping? What are they?

The International Council on Archives (ICA)'s *Universal Declaration on Archives* is drawn on as a starting definition of archives, records, and recordkeeping and their purpose. Ideally institutional and community archives:

> 'priority is serving a designated community in terms of addressing its ongoing interests, recordkeeping and identity needs, and historical memory' (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014, p. 81).

However, these institutions are often sources of oppression, control and harm.

> 'Of course, the reality is that any archives may be all of these things at different moments or at the same moment when viewed through different lenses' (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014, p. 79).

The postmodernist ontology implied by the possibility of an archive being both a space of empowerment and oppression by Gilliland and McKemmish pluralises the potential meaning (grids of specification) and value of archives, records, and recordkeeping (authorities of delineation). It also opens up multiple places in which records and archives can come to be (surfaces of emergence).

## What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?

The participatory third way set out by Gilliland and McKemmish (2014) addresses the failure of archives, records, and recordkeeping to "live up" to the ICA's *Universal Declaration on Archives,* and recognises the harm caused by traditional approaches to archives, records, and recordkeeping. It is further argued that a participatory approach could:

> 'further human rights agendas in relation to identity (including language, culture and religious practices), self-determination, the exercise of cultural rights, redress and the support of reconciliation and recovery after inter-community conflict' (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014, p. 78).

By offering a "third way" to resolve inter-community conflict and support healing especially in situations where existing archival institutions are seen as complicit in harms and trauma experienced by communities.

It is noted that communities and people who have experienced major trauma often have specific recordkeeping needs, and that the records and archives they need are often dispersed over a

number of archives, institutions and in a number of countries if the required records exist at all (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014).

## What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?

> 'Participatory archives acknowledge that multiple parties have rights, responsibilities, needs and perspectives with regard to the record. The archives consequently become a negotiated space in which these different communities share stewardship—they are created by, for and with multiple communities, according to and respectful of community values, practices, beliefs and needs' (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014, p. 78).

Participatory archives emerge from genuine engagement between two or more communities. They are seen as relative to archival discourse by the authors because they address systemic archival and recordkeeping issues (authorities of delineation), they are identifiable and classifiable (grids of specification) based on their adoption of principles such as self-determination, their repositioning of subjects of the records as agents and the inclusion of:

> 'records continuum concepts of co-creation, parallel and multiple simultaneous provenance (Hurley, 2005:1; 2005:2, McKemmish, 2011)' (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014, p. 82).

This approach could be seen as a Foucauldian "procedure of intervention", a way to challenge hegemonic (traditional) ways of understanding archives, records, and recordkeeping. As a way of radically altering the possible subject positions and who can hold them. Such a radical challenging is in line with Records Continuum thinking which, as discussed in the previous section, embrace a postmodern ontology and epistemology. Rejecting hard boundaries and dichotomies, encouraging us to constantly question, and for some records continuum thinkers, even deconstruct hegemonic narratives and discourses.

## What about appraisal?

| Gilliland and McKemmish (2014) | | |
|---|---|---|
| Authors definition of appraisal | | Not explicitly defined. |
| Appraisal approaches mentioned | | N/A |
| Records Continuum Conceptualisations of Appraisal | Records / archives creation. | Records Continuum paradigm so likely seen as an appraisal activity despite not being discussed explicitly. |
| | Identifying and assessing records/ archives value. | Records Continuum paradigm so likely seen as an appraisal activity despite not being discussed explicitly. |
| | Deciding which records / archives to keep. | Records Continuum paradigm so likely seen as an appraisal activity despite not being discussed explicitly. |

*figure 74. Appraisal Conceptualisation: Gilliland and McKemmish (2014)'s Archival Third Way*

Gilliland and Mckemmish's (2014) archival "third way" explicitly involves appraisal, although the term is not defined in this particular paper. It can be assumed however that McKemmish at least is coming from an Australian Records Continuum perspective. This perspective defines appraisal as decisions made about what records to create, keep and destroy. As such it is likely that the "third way" would involve participation prior to records creation. Further evidence to support this can be found in various scoping statements made throughout the paper about what archives the "third way" applies to, both existing and new archives as well as the process of building archives and:

> 'developing principles. Policies, strategies and tools' (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014, p. 82).

It is also hard to imagine how prior informed consent could operate in a participatory archives without involvement in appraisal. If the records and archives already exist then a degree of self-determination has already been fenced in, limiting the possibilities of co-creation. While co-creation renders a new speaking position possible for subjects of archives parallel and simultaneous provenance provides archivists with ways to formally acknowledge the pluralisation of participants.

The archival "third way" tells the reader who would be involved in appraisal, and implies appraisal may occur prior to creation. How this would occur isn't clear, arguably for good reason as different communities and individuals will likely want and need to approach appraisal in different ways. Self-determination being a central principle flexibility is required. This fluidity brings a risk of misinterpretation or misapplication.

The same risk is true for rights. Most people have heard anecdotal stories about concerns around privacy preventing people from accessing essential information. For example, although obviously not the intention the:

> 'right to have one's role vis-à-vis archival description or archival content acknowledged (e.g., creator/author, co-creator, community of origin)' (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014, p. 85).

If taken too literally by an overly zealous group this may lead to the inappropriate identification of individuals in and around records. This is not to say the right is flawed, but that the context of self-determination within which it exists must be understood.

The list of rights developed by Gilliland and McKemmish (2014) and the danger of misappropriation inspired me to reflect on how to frame or contextualise the use of such rights. What assumptions are these rights based upon? Primarily they seem to be premised, like Iacovino (2010), that the purpose of archives and recordkeeping, and the rights developed is to support human beings whether they be individuals or communities. The very existence of rights alludes to the impacts archives and records can have on individuals and communities as well as the power that can flow through archives, records, and recordkeeping. In a similar way to Flinn (2010) and Huvila (2008), Gilliland and McKemmish's (2014) conceptualisation of the third way also acknowledges that records can have multiple even conflicting values, meanings, material configurations and uses through time-space.

## Conclusions

> 'Acting upon such principles would first and foremost involve acknowledging and affirming that creator and co-creator communities and communities of origin have rights in terms of how they and their materials are acquired, managed, represented and made accessible, that they can be negatively affected through current and historical archival practices, and that they also have distinctive expertise that should be sought out and incorporated into decision making about how archival materials are managed and described whenever possible' (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014).

The "third way" proposed by Gilliland and McKemmish (2014) draws on human rights discourses (co-existence), and uses various United Nations (UN) statements to add more weight to their argument, drawing on the authority of the UN (procedures of intervention). The argument is pinned on an acknowledgement of the inalienable rights of creators, co-creator communities and communities of origin. To have these rights requires these groups to be seen as individuals who may or may not belong to larger groups that are impacted by archives, records, and recordkeeping and have the capacity to act (agency). It also requires an acknowledgement of the diversity and plurality of

peoples. All communities while equal under the UN have their own responses to and archives, records, and recordkeeping needs. The very idea that there must be two or more communities' further rests on the acknowledgement of human diversity.

It is hard to imagine self-determination being advocated for a group who have no internal cognitive, emotional, physiological or spiritual experiences. Self-determination requires an acknowledgement that we should not decide for others the direction to take in life, who to be or how. If we shouldn't, perhaps it is because we cannot. Because people have these complex internal experiences we are not privy to unless we engage in genuine partnership. Even then arguments could be made about the level of self-awareness and ability to communicate the deepest emotional, psychological, and spiritual drivers of humans.

## Caswell and Mallick's 2014 Digital Participatory Microhistories

| Caswell and Mallick (2014) | |
|---|---|
| **Speakers** | Archivists, Communities documented by the records, historians. |
| **Archives, Records and Recordkeeping** | Should be representative of everyone and a plurality of perspectives in their relevant community(ies) in a constructive way. Preserve knowledge and facts and are 'about sharing stories with people in the present to increase understanding in the future' (Caswell & Mallick, 2014, p. 83).<br>Can both empower and disempower. May exist across a distributed network. Exist in any material configuration. Never complete. |
| **Problem Participatory Approaches Address.** | 3 problems: 1. Exclusion of some groups from archival representation, 2. failure of affect and emotional communication in archives, 3. Communities are not engaged in the "archival endeavour". |
| **What is Participatory?** | Archivists reaching out to communities and historians to create records and fill in gaps. |
| **Records / archival activities that become participatory** | - Creation<br>- Collection and Acquisition<br>- Description |
| **Paradigm** | Critical archives / Post-custodial / Life cycle. |

*figure 75. Conceptualisation: Caswell and Mallick*

### Overview

Michelle Caswell and Samip Mallick's 2014 article *Collecting the easily missed stories: digital participatory microhistory and the South Asian American Digital Archive* explores a digital microhistory project with South Asian migrants in the United States of America called the *First Days Project* and a related archive the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA). The article blurs the lines between historical action research and participatory archives. Both SAADA and the *First Days Project* involve archivists and historians actively seeking out archival resources that exist in South Asian American communities and encouraging and facilitating the creation of new archival material by South Asian Americans. These resources are then made publicly available by SAADA online.

### Who can speak / has authority?

Caswell and Mallick (2014) argue that currently the voices of communities such as the South Asian migrant communities of the United States of America are silenced. That these voices have no authority and can only be partially inferred at best through bureaucratic records.

> 'Pre-existing material records surrounding immigration consist largely of bureaucratic documents like passports, visas and plane tickets. If we were going to rely solely on these administrative records to tell the stories of South Asian immigrants to the US, what stories would we be telling and what would we be missing? Whose voices would we be privileging?

> At whose expense? Bureaucratic records are created by bureaucrats; they do not (at least not straightforwardly) reflect the voices of the subjects whose lives they seek to administer. Soliciting participatory microhistories fills in this gap by generating records that give voice in the archives to those who have no voice in the pre-existing historical record' (Caswell & Mallick, 2014, p. 79)

SAADA and the *First Days Project* explicitly challenge existing enunciative modalities, identifying current speakers as gaining authority from their roles within formal institutions such as governments and archives. By seeking out the stories of people outside of these formal institutional sites they can be seen to be creating new subject positions based on experience not institutional affiliation.

## What is the point of archives, records, and recordkeeping? What are they?

The very fact that records are being consciously created for the sole purpose of archiving, to represent a particular group challenges traditional conceptualisations of archives, records, and recordkeeping. Rather than records being seen as neutral evidence, pluralist conceptualisations of records are used by Caswell and Mallick (2014) in particular they cite Shannon Faulkheads definition of records as:

> 'any account, regardless of form, that preserves memory or knowledge of facts and events. A record can be a document, an individual's memory, an image, or a recording. It can also be an actual person, a community, or the land itself' (Faulkhead, 2009, cited byCaswell & Mallick, 2014, p. 74).

Archives are framed as being:

> 'about sharing stories with people in the present to increase understanding in the future' (Caswell & Mallick, 2014, p. 83).

This statement and later comments related to Helen Samuels documentation strategy implies the purpose of Archives is to represent the experience of everyone in a given society (in this case the USA) both positive and negative. Records and archives can therefore emerge from practically anywhere (surfaces of emergence) as long as they represent the lived experience of someone (authorities of delineation). Value is not contingent on the location of records and archives, as can be seen by concerns raised about important materials existing in the community:

> 'We sensed an urgent need; with much of the material history from the early twentieth century in the possession of children and grandchildren of first-generation immigrants who lack the capacity to preserve them' (Caswell & Mallick, 2014, pp. 74 - 75).

This is not to say however that these should be simply collected and given to traditional institutions.

> 'We sensed a real need for these materials to remain under community control and not be subsumed under larger institutional repositories, where they could be undervalued, get lost in the shuffle or misinterpreted' (Caswell & Mallick, 2014, pp. 74 - 75).

The fear of misinterpretation speaks to a consciousness of how differing grids of specification could undermine the very thing that makes records and archives "valuable" – the way they represent people.

## What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?

> 'This paper will highlight three important functions filled by participatory microhistory projects like this one: the representation of groups not usually represented in the archive, the communication of affect and emotion as historically significant categories and the effective solicitation of community participation in the archival endeavour' (Caswell & Mallick, 2014, p. 74).

Caswell and Mallick are very explicit about the problem they are addressing, breaking it down into three parts. First that some groups are not represented in the archive. This is a problem because their conceptualisation of what an archive should be requires a multitude of perspectives. Drawing their inspiration from (co-existence) scholars like Helen Samuels and Shannon Faulkhead the archives are framed as spaces that can entrench power through silencing some voices at the expense of others.

> 'Traditionally, archivists have neither actively gone out to recruit donors of materials from marginalised groups, nor have they emphasised the importance of such records in their appraisal decisions. The result is a horribly lopsided archival record that amplifies the voices of the powerful and further silences the marginalised' (Caswell & Mallick, 2014, p. 79).

Second they argue a participatory approach would enable the 'communication of affect and emotion' (Caswell & Mallick, 2014, p. 74), which current bureaucratic records do not represent well, as a consequence limiting the types of stories held in archives. Third and finally they argue this approach is a way to engage communities in the "archival endeavour". While not defined explicitly the authors speak at multiple points about their focus on access, preservation (through encapsulation of originals or copies in a repository of some kind) and inclusion of various voices in archives.

## What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?

Participatory in Caswell and Mallick's (2014) discourse involves actively engaging historians and communities. Going out into the world and requesting the creation of new materials for the archive, to create the archive. Little is said about what happens after these records are created and captured. At the beginning of the article participatory approaches to archival activities such as description are discussed but the purpose of this discussion seems to be to point out the lack of work concerning creation and collection. This is not necessarily a limitation of the article but a matter of scope.

## What about appraisal?

| Caswell and Mallick (2014): Appraisal | | |
|---|---|---|
| Authors definition of appraisal | | Not explicitly defined.<br><br>'Traditionally, archivists have neither actively gone out to recruit donors of materials from marginalised groups, nor have they emphasised the importance of such records in their appraisal decisions. The result is a horribly lopsided archival record that amplifies the voices of the powerful and further silences the marginalized' (Caswell & Mallick, 2014, p. 79). |
| Appraisal approaches mentioned | | Documentation strategy and Macro-appraisal. |
| Records Continuum Conceptualisations of Appraisal | Records / archives creation. | Discussed as microhistories not as an appraisal activity. Archivists and participants encouraged to be involved.<br><br>'it was our duty as archivists to "intervene in the records creation process" in order to document an underdocumented Community' (Caswell and Mallick, 2014, p.78). |
| | Identifying and assessing records/ archives value. | 'When such records do exist, they have been undervalued and ignored by archivists, who have been and still are disproportionately drawn from positions of privilege. Traditionally, archivists have neither actively gone out to recruit donors of materials from marginalised groups, nor have they emphasised the importance of such records in their appraisal decisions' (Caswell &Mallick, 2014, p.79). |
| | Deciding which records / archives to keep. | Decisions to keep materials discussed, as are decisions to ensure materials remain in community control. Not explicitly linked to appraisal. |

*figure 76. Appraisal Conceptualisation: Caswell and Mallick*

Caswell and Mallick's (2014) article could be seen as focused on the problem of appraisal, from both a traditional definition of appraisal (what to keep) and a records continuum perspective (what to create, keep and destroy). Drawing on archival discourses around documentation strategy, macro-appraisal, and more recent publications on participatory archives they identify the lack of representative records as a key problem, and encourage a more active appraisal approach to address this. Appraisal here involves the identification of gaps in a collection, and then engagement with non-archivists (whether through historians or communities themselves) to address this problem. As mentioned in both the introduction to this thesis and previous discussion on some of the participatory approaches in this chapter, the assumptions that archives and records (however

defined) exist is problematic. If the records do not exist it does not matter how good your selection process is. Records continuum thinkers address this problem by incorporating creation into appraisal, and in Australian practitioner spaces through a focus on analysing functions not records. Caswell and Mallick (2014) address this through their microhistories.

Unlike some of the previous conceptualisations lack of representation is a problem because of the impact this has not on future generations ability to conduct research, although presumably this is a small consideration, but because of the way archives are entangled with power and agency. Like Flinn (2010), Huvila (2008), Iacovino, and Gilliland and McKemmish (2014) archives and records are not seen as neutral, and are understood to have significant impacts on human beings, their agency, identity and sense of empowerment.

## Conclusions

Caswell and Mallick's concept of participatory microhistory, from a records continuum perspective, overlaps significantly with appraisal. Their concept of participatory microhistories can be challenged directly by records continuum conceptualisations of appraisal (procedures of intervention) especially as they draw on a records continuum definition of records themselves (co-existence). From a traditional life cycle perspective, the creation of records and archives is squarely outside of the archivist's domain. While a feature of the life cycle approach is a binary between the roles of archivists and records managers Caswell and Mallick (2014) argue for more involvement of archivists in records creation, something that is traditionally outside of the archivists domain.

> 'As creators of the First Days Project, we were also inspired by Helen Samuels' work on documentation strategy in the sense that we thought it was our duty as archivists to 'intervene in the records creation process' in order to document an under documented community' (Caswell & Mallick, 2014, p. 78).

The very existence of participatory microhistories is dependent on an acknowledgment of the power of both archives and archivists and the responsibility of archivists to intervene without taking over, to ensure the creation and capture of records. Appraisal by any other name is still appraisal, there is no reason this approach couldn't be interpreted as participatory appraisal (points of diffraction). It is possible that one of the reasons it hasn't been discussed in this way is because Caswell and Mallick are operating under more traditional definitions of appraisal, making the language of participatory microhistories more fitting.

## Rolan (2017) Participatory Recordkeeping

| Rolan (2017) | |
|---|---|
| **Speakers** | Archivists, communities and individuals documented or impacted by the records, researchers. |
| **Archives, Records and Recordkeeping** | Representations of performances that exist to support rights, memory, and identity. Represent a plurality of perspectives and have a plurality of meanings in different contexts. Exist across a distributed network. Exist in any material configuration. Always becoming. |
| **Problem Participatory Approaches Address.** | Some people who should (especially people / communities documented in the records) do not have rights or agency in relation to records, archives or recordkeeping. A lack of interoperability across recordkeeping systems. |
| **What is Participatory?** | Building interoperable systems that recognise and give rights and agency to everyone documented by records and archives. |
| **Records / archival activities that become participatory** | Presumably all activities. |
| **Paradigm** | Records continuum / Post-custodial / Critical archives. |

*figure 77. Conceptualisation: Rolan*

### Overview

Gregory Rolan's (2017a) conceptualisation of participatory archives and recordkeeping builds upon records continuum thinking and theorising. His 2017 doctoral thesis *From Archives to Participatory Recordkeeping: Transforming recordkeeping design for interoperability* focuses on the 'design of recordkeeping systems to support participatory approaches to records and archives', and presents the Participatory Recordkeeping Continuum Model depicted below in figure 78.

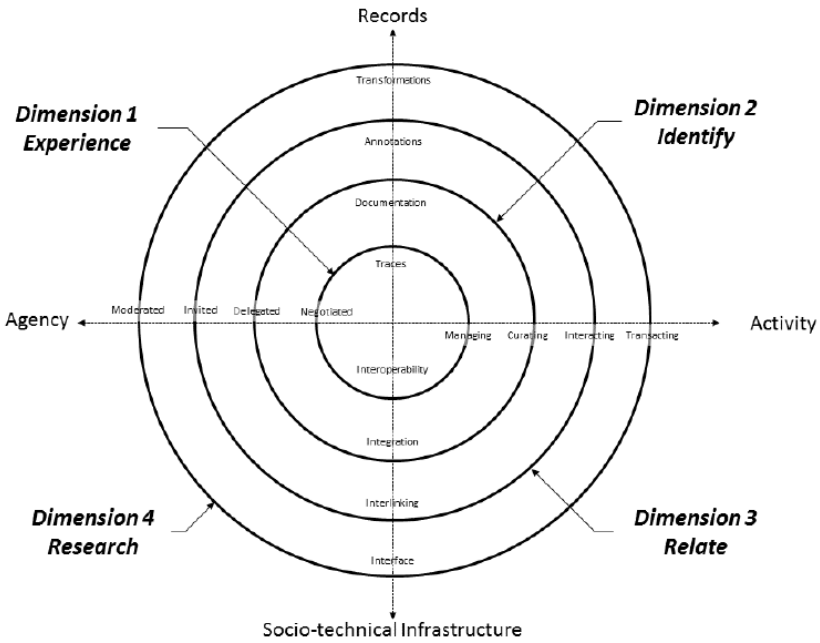


*figure 78. Participatory Recordkeeping Continuum Model Rolan, 2017, p.127*

Rolan also further refines and reframes the ontology of archives, records, and recordkeeping and the activities they depict.

## Who can speak / has authority?

As discussed in the previous chapter Rolan's work like much records continuum thinking seeks to expand who is considered a speaker in archives, records, and recordkeeping. His Participatory Recordkeeping Continuum Model extends the institutional sites that give authority to speak from more traditional structures like organisations and occupations to a person's relationship with the event a record or archive represents. His model explicitly articulates and acknowledges positions that subjects in the discourse can fulfil that do not depend on traditional structures. These subject positions can be mapped to the dimensions of the Participatory Recordkeeping Continuum Model: Experience, Identify, Relate, and Research.

## What is the point of archives, records, and recordkeeping? What are they?

In Rolan's (2017a, 2017b, 2017c) work archives, records, and recordkeeping are approached from a records continuum perspective. There are as such major similarities between his conceptualisations and those of Gilliland and McKemmish (2014). In other sections of his thesis and a 2017 publication Rolan explores the ontological nature of records and recordkeeping systems. Looking for ways to enable the interoperable representation of records across institutions, time, and space.

This goal leads him to conclude that:

> '*A record is always the representation of a performance*, possibly involved in other performances, and certainly subject to recordkeeping performances. It is the existence of representation (and the association reference) relationships that imbues "record-ness" to a substantial or performance entity' (Rolan, 2017b, p.139).

The surfaces of emergence and authorities of delineation from a Foucauldian perspective completely unravel, as under this framework a record could emerge from anywhere and be given value by anything. The system of classification Rolan introduces in his ontology (grids of specification) lifts these concepts to a far higher conceptual level allowing this explosion of possibilities. At a high-level entities are identified as substantial, non-concrete, performance entities and setting entities. Substantial entities are physical things that make up the world including people (corporal agents) and objects like tree's, cups and animals. Non-concrete entities are non-physical 'social objects' like organisations or mandates. Performance entities exist as spatiotemporal occurrents. They are linked to multiple specific spaces (spatial) and times (temporal) but do not last forever, they are also often linked to specific substantial and non-concrete entities. The example provided by Rolan is the

Second World War. The Second World War is linked to specific spaces (the Western front, Berlin, Japan, Papua New Guinea etc) and times (1939 – 1945). Setting entities are spatiotemporal like performance entities but do not need to be linked to substantial or non-concrete entities.

So, what does this mean for archives, records, and recordkeeping? It means these things exist as the result of a combination of entity types. They likely have spatiotemporal properties or at the very least relationships. They come into being through the interaction of these phenomena, including participants as substantial corporal entities whether formally recognised or not.

> 'It is our records that bind the evidence and memory of human activity that unfolds through time into either the spatial dimensions as artefacts, or as performances in their own right (that have their own temporal parts). Records have agency too, manifesting as their ongoing entanglement in human (spacetime) activity (Gilliland 2014b; Wilson and Golding 2016)' (Rolan, 2017a, p. 206).

### What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?

Along the same vein as Gilliland and McKemmish (2014) participatory approaches would provide people who have been subjugated by records, silenced, and ignored with agency and rights in recordkeeping. Rolan's Participatory Recordkeeping Continuum Model and ontological conceptualisation aim to address specific aspects of these high-level problems. First the interoperability of archival systems, the lack of which is seen by Rolan as a barrier to achieving participatory archiving, and by addressing the question of agency which he argues the Records Continuum Model does not explicitly address in relation to pluralism (Rolan, 2017a).

### What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?

Rolan breaks down what participatory means using Farrington and Bebbington's typology of participation (Rolan, 2017a).

> 'In the recordkeeping context, the depth of empowerment concerns the degree to which stakeholders may possess and exercise agency in relation to recordkeeping activities defined above. In other words, the ability of participants to act effectively (Giddens 1984, p. 9) in relation to in the appraisal, creation, documentation, preservation, access control, and disposal of records' (Rolan, 2017a, p. 201).

Rolan explains that different individuals and communities may require different levels of participation – or agency. The Participatory Recordkeeping Continuum Model becomes a way to identify the level of participation an individual or community should be afforded.

There are also structural provisos to be considered. According to Rolan:

> 'any treatment of participatory engagement with records that attempts to solve problems of severe disenfranchisement requires a continuum approach' (2017a, p. 195).

An interoperable system is also required:

> 'The starting point has to be interoperable, networked systems that enable participants to access a layered infrastructure that, in toto, provides required breadth and depth. Record-holding organisations that are not able to support all participatory recordkeeping functionality or be arbitrarily hospitable, could interoperate with others in the network such that, in combination, participant requirements are met' (Rolan, 2017a, p. 219).

## What about appraisal?

| Rolan (2017): Appraisal | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Authors definition of appraisal** | | 'Defining which records should be created or brought under control and identifying those that have enduring value' (Rolan, 2017, p.198) |
| **Appraisal approaches mentioned** | | N/A |
| **Records Continuum Conceptualisations of Appraisal** | Records / archives creation. | Discussed as an appraisal activity. |
| | Identifying and assessing records/ archives value. | Discussed as an appraisal activity. |
| | Deciding which records / archives to keep. | Discussed as an appraisal activity. |

*figure 79. Appraisal Conceptualisation: Rolan*

Rolan's work is coming from a records continuum perspective and as such his definition of appraisal reflects this.

> 'A major implication of the continuum approach is that all of the intellectual treatment of records, including the appraisal and documentation of records, occurs consistently and iteratively over the life of a record. Ideally this intellectual treatment can commence before a record is created, involving the planning of what records should be created in the first place, with a view for their ongoing retention and management for as long as they are needed' (Rolan, 2017b, p. 45).

Alongside the Participatory Recordkeeping Continuum Model Rolan also developed a conceptual recordkeeping metadata meta-model (Rolan, 2017b, 2017c). Some clues to how appraisal would operate under Rolan's approach can be found in his description of the metadata model's requirements.

> 'The system needs to support archivists to proactively engage with communities to seek out appraisal participants and support them in all appraisal activities — determining which records should be created, preserved for their enduring utility and, possibly, destroyed when they are no longer needed. The system needs to support the pluralistic documentation of records and recordkeeping processes as described below that facilitates appraisal decision-making. Such decision-making is highly dependent on the level of trust that exists between record-holding organisations and other participants' (Rolan, 2017b, p. 107).

Further describing the requirements to support a participatory recordkeeping system Rolan goes on to point out a potential problem with current Australian government recordkeeping policy, that it focuses at too high a level. When in fact:

> 'appraisal processes, systems, and policy/process outputs need to be nuanced, granular, and dynamic in order to support the needs of first-dimension participants' (Rolan, 2017b, p. 136).

By first dimension participants he is referring to those who have direct experience of the event that leads to records creation in his Participatory Recordkeeping Continuum Model.

The Participatory Recordkeeping Continuum Model could be used to identify and prioritise the participation needs of different stakeholders. Rolan's model also highlights the time-space distanciation of participation, whether it be in appraisal or other aspects of archival praxis. This means what an individual's needs are today, may not be the same tomorrow even in regard to the same record or archive. Appraisal therefore, like all recordkeeping processes from a records continuum perspective must be iterative and recursive. So, must participation.

## Conclusions

Rolan's conceptualisation of participatory approaches to recordkeeping can be seen as emerging from a records continuum approach (succession) to archives and records. It builds on arguments made by Gilliland and McKemmish (2014) and borrows discourses from the international development sector in the form of Farrington and Bebbington's typology of participation (co-existence). Rolan's approach see's records as representations of events or activities that emerge out of interactions between various entity types. His ontology focuses not on the ethics of allowing room for a variety of agents but ties these agents to the very possibility of archives, records, and

recordkeeping. This makes it hard to make certain arguments against participation (e.g. the impartiality of records). It is however possible that those who subscribe to postmodern conceptualisations of archives and records could come to similar conclusions around the involvement of agents in records and interoperability without ascribing to a records continuum perspective.

## Sexton and Sen (2018) Participatory Archive of Mental Health Recovery

| Sexton and Sen (2018) | |
|---|---|
| **Speakers** | Archivists, communities and individuals documented by the records, institutional / medical records creators. |
| **Archives, Records and Recordkeeping** | A process resulting in the (always temporary / fluid) (re)production of representations, narratives, discourses and selves. This process is shaped by decisions of inclusion and exclusion. Always becoming. |
| **Problem Participatory Approaches Address.** | Imbalance of voice in mental health archives, specifically subjugation of patient / survivor narratives and selves. |
| **What is Participatory?** | Providing infrastructure and support for people and communities to create and manage their own archives. Disrupting and deconstructing existing power relations and narratives in archives. |
| **Records / archival activities that become participatory** | Presumably all activities. |
| **Paradigm** | Critical archives / Postmodernist / Life Cycle. |

*figure 80. Conceptualisation: Sexton and Sen*

### Overview

Anna Sexton and Dolly Sen published an article reporting back on their:

> 'shared experience of using participatory methodology when working together on the construction of an archive of mental health recovery stories' (2018, p. 874).

In this article and Anna Sexton's doctoral thesis (2015) participatory approaches to archives are explored drawing on a Derridean and postmodernist paradigm using mental health as a case study. Alongside Stuart Baker-Brown, Andrew Voyce and Peter Bullimore Dolly Sen and Anna Sexton built the Mental Health Recovery Archive:

> 'to make a contribution to addressing the imbalance of voice within those [Mental Health] collections' (Voyce et al., 2013).

### Who can speak / has authority?

Like many of the previous authors, Sexton and Sen (Sexton, 2015; Sexton & Sen, 2018) begin from a critique of who can and cannot speak in current archives, records, and recordkeeping.

> 'Within the existing archive collections, case notes of individuals enable us to gaze in at the patients within the system picking up details about pervading views on behaviour and treatment. However, what we can see, know, and construct about this past begins with us gazing through a heavily filtered lens controlled by those with power over the patient' (Sexton & Sen, 2018, p. 874).

According to Sexton and Sen (Sexton, 2015; 2018) it appears that those who can speak in current discourses as embedded in mental health records are those who come from specific (medical) institutional positions and sites. This includes doctors, psychiatrists and other professionals. One's authority to speak and be heard appears to be based not on experience but on formal roles. Like the other approaches discussed here it appears a key part of a participatory approach is to transform the institutional sites (the things that give speakers authority and weight) from formal structures like organisations or professional identity to experience.

### What is the point of archives, records, and recordkeeping? What are they?

Sexton and Sen do not provide explicit definitions of records, archives or recordkeeping. Unsurprisingly not coming from a records continuum perspective the term recordkeeping is not a feature of their discourse. However, arguably the concept of things people do, with, to, and as a result of, records and archives is explored. The explicit focus of Sexton's (2015) is on archiving as a participatory process.

> 'Therefore, my focus throughout this thesis remains fixed on the process rather than the product. This is calculated and deliberate. It is intended to act as a subversion of discourse and theory within the archival field that is normatively 'record-centric'. The way I will speak of the process also deviates from the norms that have evolved within my field. My means of unravelling the processes of record creation stands in contrast to the usual structural-functional starting points used within my field' (Sexton, 2015, p. 13).

From my analysis I feel it is fair to infer from Sexton's (2015) discussion that records and archives are seen as representations of narratives, discourses and selves. The rationale for the Mental Health Recovery archive is filling in the gap's current mental health archives and records. There is an acknowledgement of the power that is wedded to representation, and therefore the power of records and archives. Drawing on Derrida Sexton (2015) explains how each act we make in the archive is a decision, a decision to include one and therefore, as a point of necessity, to exclude another. You cannot capture everything.

> 'To accept that responsibility towards others and for others involves choice requires an acceptance of the inevitable irresponsibility of any course of action I might take. As soon as I determine and choose a course of action I must betray some others and the infinity of others. As Derrida makes clear 'I cannot respond to the call, the request, the obligation, or even the love of another without sacrificing the other, the other others (Derrida, 1995, p.68-69 in Thomson, 2005, p.16). Thinking this through in an archival context means accepting that there

> is no stance or position that can get round or transcend the inevitable irresponsibility in all archival choices, all archival processes, all archival representations and beyond' (Sexton, 2015, p. 319).

This doesn't mean archivists should retreat, rather that as archivists we need to take responsibility for our choices and operate in a space of continual contestation and deconstruction.

> 'As an archivist I am committed to developing archival practices that challenge the lines of authority and control sitting around archives as sites of knowledge (re)production' (Sexton & Sen, 2018, p. 876).

## What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?

Sexton and Sen's (2018) conceptualisation of participatory approaches to archives, and the problem it addresses is not designed to be generalisable.

> 'I am left arguing neither for or against participatory praxis as a means to work towards social justice. This is to say that all our modes of acting and being hold potential for "good" and "evil" and therefore must be exposed to continual critique in the embrace of the *perhaps'* (Sexton, 2015, p. 328).

This conceptualisation of participatory approaches is tailored and contingent. Participatory approaches in this case were both a "solution" to the gap in the archival narrative and a way of radically subverting, challenging, and deconstructing established archival praxis:

> 'Anna [Sexton] came to the project as an archivist with years of experience working with individuals and communities in archival spaces, and as a PhD researcher interested in using participatory methodology as a means of disrupting the power relations that can sit within and around archives' (Sexton & Sen, 2018, p. 875).

Like Rolan's acknowledgement of the dangers of poorly thought through participatory approaches[5] Sexton and Sen warn that in some circumstances participatory approaches would simply be inappropriate (2018). This is in part because of what participatory means to Sexton and Sen (2018).

---

[5] 'without deliberate understanding of the needs of participants, initiatives that fall-short of transformative participation can have negative consequences for participants beyond the obvious silencing of voices and the withholding of power' Rolan, G. (2017a). Agency in the archive: a model for participatory recordkeeping. *Archival Science*, *17*(3), 195 - 225. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-016-9267-7 .

## What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?

Sexton and Sen (2018) draw heavily on postmodernists like Derrida to inform their conceptualisation of participatory and incorporate a sense of radical alterity. Participation in as it emerges in the Mental Health Recovery archive is based on friendship and acceptance of difference, undecidability and indeterminacy.

> 'Embracing the deconstruction of our ideals enables us to develop a political practice of negotiation with our own prior political circumscriptions. To negotiate and make decisions at, and in recognition of, the borders and limits of our ideals requires the embrace of undecidability and indeterminacy. It requires an opening to continual and infinite contestation where no action is simply given as legitimate but can always be interrogated with regard to its presuppositions and its context' (Sexton, 2015, p. 328).

Participation will look different, should, must, look different in each instance. In the case of the Mental Health Recovery archive participation involved the establishment of long-term interpersonal relationships, the sharing of personal narratives and self on the part of both the researcher and the participant, a challenging of the boundaries between the two without a reduction to the same.

## What about appraisal?

| Sexton and Sen (2018): Appraisal | | |
|---|---|---|
| Authors definition of appraisal | | Not explicitly defined.<br><br>Does mention Acquisition as a step grammatically prior to appraisal. Could imply appraisal does not include creation.<br><br>'Acquisition, appraisal, description and access' (Sexton, 2016, p.128). |
| Appraisal approaches mentioned | | Documentation strategy. |
| Records Continuum Conceptualisations of Appraisal | Records / archives creation. | Speaks about the creation of the archive, and creation of individual stories by participants. Not linked explicitly to appraisal. |
| | Identifying and assessing records/ archives value. | Discussed but not explicitly linked to appraisal. |
| | Deciding which records / archives to keep. | Discussed in relation to appraisal, as a limitation of current institutional appraisal practices that participants could contribute to. |

*figure 81. Appraisal Conceptualisation: Sexton and Sen*

The Mental Health Recovery Archive involved participants creating and selecting their own materials. Appraisal in this sense was carried out by the participants. However as noted by Sexton (2015) in her thesis, this participation and the choices around what to create were shaped by the systems used by the institution who would be hosting the archive. Her work demonstrates the impossibility of complete participation, after all we exist in relation with others and in our own contexts. These relations and contexts will always shape how we engage with the world whether they be technological, social, or physical. I find her inclusion of Derridean philosophy compelling and comforting. As will be discussed in the coming chapters of this thesis humans create meaning and make sense of the world through creating categories, boundaries and delineations. By assigning meaning and labels. This does not mean we should give up, but that we should be open to constantly questioning and interrogating how our decisions, like Sexton's decisions about the platform, impact ourselves and others.

Such a stance means we cannot create prescriptive rules around what participatory appraisal is or looks like. This will depend on the context, the needs and wants of the communities, access to technologies and a host of other factors. This would mean approaching appraisal each time anew with a critical eye to explore how to proceed. There is a tension here however because I believe people need some direction. It is not feasible for archivists (or any humans) to make everything up as we go along, ignoring what went before, rejecting all boundaries. While these things can and do cause harm, they also allow us to operate in a shared space, to collaborate and communicate. I feel the rights discussed in Gilliland and McKemmish's (2014) could be seen as a way to resolve this issue, proposing high level universal rights to give us enough guidance without being prescriptive so archives can take shape as and how communities want.

## Conclusions

Participation was not something that could be tacked onto the end of the project but was embedded in archival practice from the creation of records and archives, the selection (to an extent) of the archival infrastructure and to "strategic" decision making about the future of the archive.

While appraisal is not discussed in detail, if appraisal is taken to mean decisions about what to create and keep, Sexton and Sen's (2018) work certainly incorporates this. Participatory appraisal could very well emerge from this discourse (points of diffraction).

## McKemmish et al (2020) Decolonizing recordkeeping

| McKemmish etal (2020) | |
|---|---|
| **Speakers** | Archivists, communities and individuals documented, involved in the creation of, or impacted by the records. |
| **Archives, Records and Recordkeeping** | Support memory, identity, rights and accountability through their evidential nature. Represent a plurality of perspectives and have a plurality of meanings in different contexts. Can empower and disempower. Exist across a distributed network. Exist in any material configuration. Always becoming. |
| **Problem Participatory Approaches Address.** | Records, archives and recordkeeping do not currently meet the 'identity, memory, cultural, information, and accountability needs' (McKemmish et al., 2020, p. 41) of those they document and the communities they relate to. |
| **What is Participatory?** | Re-framing everyone who is involved in the creation of records or documented in records as agents with rights.<br><br>'Multiple rights in and to records are represented and enacted in recordkeeping and archiving frameworks, processes, and systems' (McKemmish et al., 2020, p. 22). |
| **Records / archival activities that become participatory** | Presumably all activities. |
| **Paradigm** | Records continuum / Critical archives / Post-custodial. |

*figure 82. Conceptualisation: McKemmish et al*

### Overview

In 2020 Sue McKemmish, Jane Bone, Joanne Evans, Frank Golding, Antonina Lewis, Gregory Rolan, Kirsten Thorpe and Jacqueline Wilson published a paper drawing together the threads from two research projects that explored participatory approaches to archives: *Rights in Records by Design* and *Indigenous Archiving and Cultural Safety.*

> 'Together, these transdisciplinary projects spanning archives and recordkeeping, information technology, education, social work, Indigenous, and historical studies, are seeking to investigate requirements for participatory recordkeeping where multiple rights in and to records are represented and enacted in recordkeeping and archiving frameworks, processes, and systems' (McKemmish et al., 2020, p. 22).

The two projects discussed by McKemmish et al (2020) come from a rights framework and seek participatory approaches to support the decolonization of the archive. The work builds significantly on that put forward and analysed previously in this chapter by Gilliland and McKemmish (2014) on the "archival third way".

## Who can speak / has authority?

Both the projects explored by McKemmish et al (2020) problematise the speaking positions available in their respective spaces. They argue that there needs to be a shift from seeing children and subjects of records:

> 'from powerless subjects of records owned and controlled by government, Care organizations, and archival collecting institutions, to "active participatory agents" with an extended suite of rights in records and recordkeeping of their childhood' (McKemmish et al., 2020, pp. 22 - 23).

Similar arguments are made around:

> 'reframing records to enable Indigenous voice and ways of knowing, and archival autonomy' (McKemmish et al., 2020, p. 23).

The "new"[6] speaking positions envisioned by McKemmish et al (2020) consist of a shift in the authority accorded to an existing subject position within archival discourses; that of records subject. As seen repeatedly above an argument is being made to shift the institutional sites (structures and institutions that infer authority and importance on people's voices) from professional roles such as archivists to lived experience. Peoples voices should be heard not because they are archivists or historians, not because they are associated with a particular government organisation, but because the record contains information about them and their communities, it impacts upon them and their communities.

## What is the point of archives, records, and recordkeeping? What are they?

Writing from a records continuum and critical theory perspective McKemmish et al (2020) appear to argue that archives should have an impact on individuals and communities. But that the impact should be of a very different nature to what is currently the case. For these archival scholars:

> 'recordkeeping systems continue as institutional instruments of power and control and do not yet meet the identity, memory, cultural, information, and accountability needs of children caught up in the out-of-home Care and Indigenous child welfare systems (Evans et al. 2015; Royal Commission 2016)' (McKemmish et al., 2020, p. 41).

Drawing back on the last chapter (records continuum theory) it has been shown that records continuum theorising understands records and archives as always in a state of becoming, with enduring structure and content and perduring context, as existing in structured spaces, in a

[6] These speaking positions have always existed, but have not been given authority or weight, not been taken "seriously".

monistically diverse universe. Recordkeeping as a concept represents the inseparability of records and archives, the blurring of boundaries and rejection of dichotomies.

Records come in many forms and should do more than simply reflect reality or represent a particular worldview, they serve the dual function of supporting memory and identity and evidence and accountability. One of the problems identified by these authors is that these functions simply weren't of importance to people creating records. Instead records and archives become:

> 'instruments of colonization and the subjugation of Indigenous peoples, records and archives embody, bear witness to, and perpetuate the colonial structures and legacies in the Indigenous out-of-home Care sector and the continuing removal of Indigenous Australian children from their families' (McKemmish et al., 2020, p. 33).

### What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?

This problem around the function of records is only possible because of the inherent fluidity of records. Because records have power and have impact. The participatory approaches put forward by McKemmish et al (2020) aim to address a number of problems. First, they aim to address the harmful and "deficit-oriented" identities constructed around children and Indigenous Australian's in current archives and records. By including the voices and perspectives of multiple stakeholders' archives and records can better serve their functions in relation to evidence and memory. The very reason for archives and records to exist.

> 'Colonial perspectives and narratives reflected in official recordkeeping systems continue to dominate, perpetuating a silencing of Indigenous Australian voice that can lead to historic erasure, a denial of memory, and a concealing of the past that underpins a continuation of injustice (Rose 1991, p. 259)' (McKemmish et al., 2020, p. 25).

### What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?

McKemmish et al (2020) discuss a number of ways to "do" participatory archives and recordkeeping. At a conceptual level they discuss shifting both the role of "subjects" of the records and broadening the definition of what constitutes a record or archive. Alongside these conceptual shifts come the development of "rights" charters and collaborative involvement of people whom records and archives are about. This collaboration needs to extend to all recordkeeping activities, not just description or amendment.

> 'We must recognize our fragility and become comfortable with complexity, multiplicity, and incommensurability. We need to become able to cultivate respectful relationships with

communities so impacted on by colonial recordkeeping processes and systems. We also need a technological and process infrastructure co-designed for participation. Otherwise, we will forever be in a fractured archival multiverse that continues to visit trauma upon powerless participants in records' (McKemmish et al., 2020, p. 41).

## What about appraisal?

| McKemmish et al (2020): Appraisal | | |
|---|---|---|
| Authors definition of appraisal | | 'The iterative decision-making about what records to make; their form and content; and how long they need to be maintained to meet the short- and long-term needs of multiple stakeholders' (McKemmish et al, 2020, p.23). |
| Appraisal approaches mentioned | | N/A |
| Records Continuum Conceptualisations of Appraisal | Records / archives creation. | Discussed as an appraisal activity. |
| | Identifying and assessing records/ archives value. | Discussed as an appraisal activity. |
| | Deciding which records / archives to keep. | Discussed as an appraisal activity. |

*figure 83. Appraisal Conceptualisation: McKemmish et al*

Appraisal from a decolonialising bent is defined in the same way as records continuum approaches. It is the:

'iterative decision-making about what records to make; their form and content; and how long they need to be maintained to meet the short- and long-term needs of multiple stakeholders' (McKemmish et al., 2020, p. 23).

Such appraisal would likely embrace not only records continuum concepts of parallel provenance and co-creatorship to facilitate multiple stakeholders, embracing a rights approach, but acknowledge and challenge archival fragility. Derridean theory could be used, in a similar way to its use by Sexton (2015), to disrupt archival fragility. Derridean theory would complement this by challenging the presumed knowability and rationality implicit in Gidden's conceptualisations of agents. Adopting a records continuum ontology that see's records, archives and stakeholders as relational, always becoming and open to infinite possibilities of emergence. Shifting into formations before breaking away again, creating something new, living, morphing, breathing.

Based on the projects described in the article appraisal would involve extensive partnership with people who are traditionally seen as subjects of the record and archive. An inversion of the archival

gaze away from those documented to those performing the documentation. Appraisal would be opened up to be reformed and redefined by each community as required. It is impossible to say, perhaps even unethical to say, what this would look like. It would depend on countless factors. The challenge of allowing the creation of something comprehensible (the need for some boundaries, rules, definitions) without setting these in stone or allowing them to become oppressive will be great. It seems that tools like Rolan's Participatory Recordkeeping Continuum Model (2017b) and Gilliland and McKemmish's rights in records (2014) can serve as good starting points.

## Conclusions

The decolonizing participatory approaches outlined by McKemmish et al (2020) are premised on a records continuum understanding of what archives, records, and recordkeeping should be and should do. The focus on a rights-based approach could be challenged (procedures of intervention) by the very discourses drawn upon to inform records continuum theorising (especially the postmodern), as could the argument that participatory approaches in quite broad contexts will resolve complex problems. By including discussion of two projects in one article it could be interpreted by readers as a claim that participatory approaches are suitable at a generalisable level. This is problematic for a number of reasons. While these approaches no doubt had an overwhelmingly positive outcome for the communities and individuals involved the radical alterity of the other and ourselves is always lurking around the corner. The impossibility of knowing the full context, because records and archives are becoming, because we are human, makes any definitive statement for or against a certain approach at a high-level problematic. These postmodern headaches could be used to unravel so much (procedures of intervention), but they do not have to.

## Conclusion

In the next chapter of this thesis the conclusions from the analysis of these publications will be discussed, exploring the common underpinning concepts behind participatory archives and appraisal in particular. Some of these concepts are explicit, while others emerge from within the logic of the arguments made by the authors for participatory approaches.

# Chapter 3.3: Relating Records Continuum Thinking to Participatory Appraisal

## Introduction

In the previous chapter, eleven conceptualisations of participatory approaches to archives, records, and recordkeeping were discussed and I hypothesised on the implications for appraisal of these conceptualisations. I was expecting to find specific concepts and objects underpinning participatory approaches to archives, records, and recordkeeping. Instead what came to light were four underpinning axioms or beliefs about the world that frame and provide a justification for participatory approaches to archives[7]. In this chapter I first compare all eleven conceptualisations looking for commonalities across these axioms. Then I turn to the analysis presented in chapter 3.1 where I identified the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking (monistic diversity, time-space, multiplicity, contextuality, relational becomingness, and agency). I argue the axioms embedded in most of the eleven conceptualisations of participatory approaches are supported by, or at the very least compatible with, the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking.

This chapter begins with a Foucauldian inspired analysis of the eleven conceptualisations as one unit of analysis. Identifying the four axioms. These are:

1. Non-archivists can contribute to archives, records, and recordkeeping;
2. Records and archives have multiple meanings;
3. Records, archives, and recordkeeping are not, and can never be completely neutral or objective; and
4. Records, archives, and recordkeeping have impacts on people.

The second part of this chapter then examines how the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking align with these axioms.

As a reminder of the extensive discussion in the previous chapter please see figure 84 below.

[7] I am only looking at the eleven selected conceptualisations. It is possible there are other less well known conceptualisations and likely that in the future new conceptualisations will be developed.

Section 3: Records Continuum Thinking and Participatory Appraisal

| Conceptualisation | Paradigms | Mentions Appraisal | Mentions participation in… | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Appraisal | Creation | Description | Arrangement & Organisation | Access | Disposal | Collection & Acquisition | Preservation |
| Booms, Samuels, and Cox (1986 – 1992) | Life cycle | Extensive, Documentation Strategy and Documentary Strategy. | | | | | | | | |
| Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) | Life Cycle / Critical Archives | Extensive, Documentation Strategy. | | | | | | | | |
| Huvila (2008) | Life Cycle / Critical Archives | In passing, Macro-appraisal. | | | | | | | | |
| Anderson and Allen (2009) | Life Cycle | In passing, Documentation Strategy. | | | | | | | | |
| Flinn (2010) | Post-Custodial / Critical Archives | In passing. | | | | | | | | |
| Iacovino (2010) | Records Continuum / Post-Custodial | In passing. | | | | | | | | |

| Conceptualisation | Paradigms | Mentions Appraisal | Mentions participation in… | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Appraisal | Creation | Description | Arrangement & Organisation | Access | Disposal | Collection & Acquisition | Preservation |
| Gilliland and McKemmish (2014) | Records Continuum / Post-Custodial / Critical Archives | In passing. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Caswell and Mallick (2014) | Critical Archives / Post-Custodial / Life Cycle | In passing, Documentation Strategy and Macro-appraisal. | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Rolan (2017) | Records Continuum / Post-Custodial / Critical Archives | In passing. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Sexton and Sen (2018) | Critical Archives / Post-Custodial / Postmodernist Archives | In passing, Documentation Strategy. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| McKemmish et al (2020) | Records Continuum / Post-Custodial / Critical Archives | In passing. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

*figure 84. Participatory Archives Summary*

## Chapter Approach

Having identified and described the objects, enunciations/subjects and concepts in the previous chapter for each individual conceptualisation of participatory archives as seen in figure 45 this chapter will address the eleven conceptualisations as a single unit of analysis.

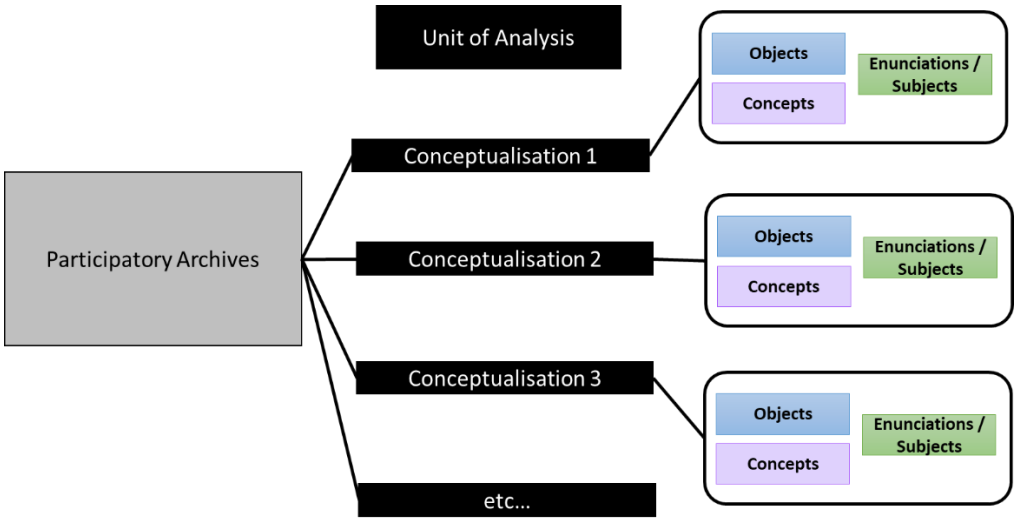


*figure 45. Unit of Analysis: Participatory Archives*

This section will also explore the objects, concepts and enunciations / subjects in addition to the strategies.

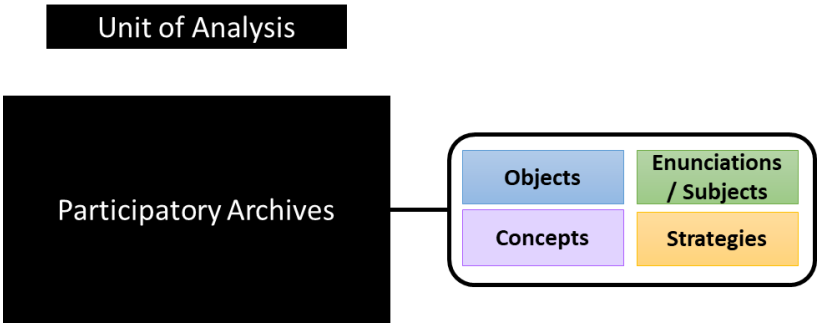


*figure 46. Unit of Analysis: High Level Participatory Archives*

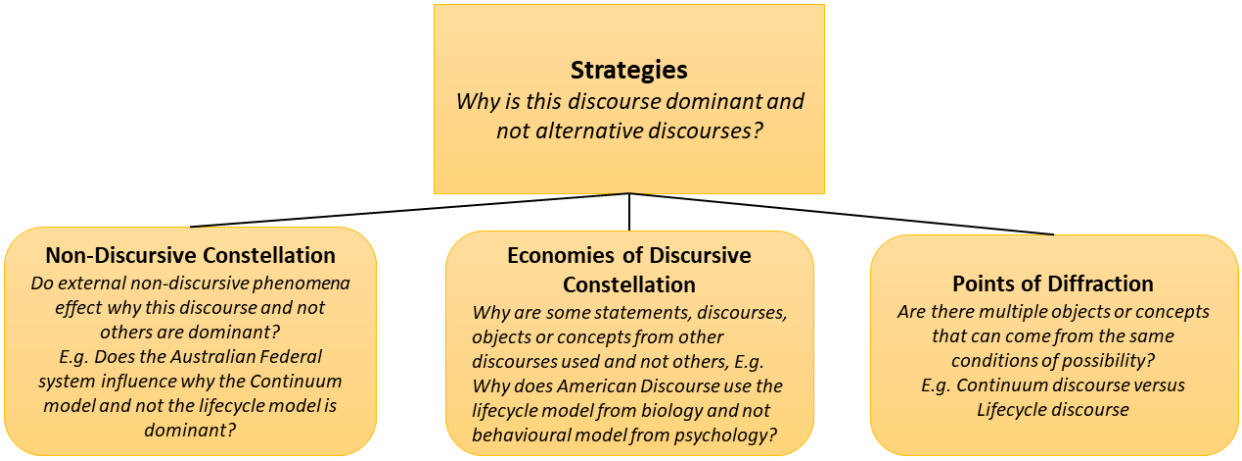


*figure 85. Strategies*

As shown in figure 85 strategies involve exploring three features of a discourse: non-discursive constellation, economies of discursive constellation, and points of diffraction. Non-discursive constellation refers to external non-discursive phenomena that have an impact on why some discourses emerge as dominant rather than others. This is outside of the scope of this thesis but might include factors like the structure of government, the professional training of archival practitioners, the physical space or funds available to archivists etc. As discussed in section 2 of this thesis we are concerned with the intellectual conditions of possibility.

Economies of discursive constellation refer to reasons why some statements, concepts or objects may be borrowed from other discourses and not others. For example the concept of micro-histories is borrowed from an external (albeit related) discourse to archives by Caswell and Mallick (2014). Why this and not a concept from business information systems?

Finally points of diffraction refer to instances were the same conditions of possibility (intellectual) could lead to multiple conceptualisations. For example the archival commons of Anderson and Allen (2009) is inspired by Anthony Giddens. As discussed in section 2 and chapter 3.1 of this section, Giddens also inspired significant aspects of records continuum thinking. How did two very different ideas come from the same conditions of possibility?

## Participatory Appraisal

### Who can speak / has authority?

Across the eleven conceptualisations all mentioned archivists or other information professionals and their associated institutions as having the authority to speak. Although in many cases (Caswell & Mallick, 2014; Flinn, 2010; Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014; Huvila, 2008; Iacovino, 2010; Rolan, 2017a; Sexton, 2015; Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007) archivists and archival institutions were mentioned

because of the disparity in authority to speak provided to them versus the individuals and communities documented in records.

Across all the conceptualisations there appeared to be a desire to expand the institutional sites (the institutions etc that give the speaker authority to speak) beyond archival and governmental organisations to lived experience. In some cases, this was put forward as an explicit re-positioning of subjects of records as agents in recordkeeping (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014; McKemmish et al., 2020; Rolan, 2017a, 2017b). **The first underpinning axiom[8] beneath all of these conceptualisations was that non-archivists can contribute to records, archives, and recordkeeping.** While this seems, obvious participation doesn't make sense if you don't believe the participants have anything meaningful to offer.

The role of the archivist was also challenged with some conceptualisations seeing the archivist stepping back and simply being a technical facilitator (Huvila, 2008) and in other instances the archivist is encouraged to become more actively involved (Caswell & Mallick, 2014; Cox & Samuels, 1988; Samuels, 1986, 1991 - 1992).

### What is the point of archives, records and recordkeeping? What are they?

Before proceeding further, it is important to remember that recordkeeping as a term is generally not used by archivists outside of a records continuum paradigm. While the terminology may be different the actual activities engaged in (while perhaps split across two professions rather than one) are similar. Whether using the term recordkeeping or not archivists still make decisions about how and if to manage, describe, provide access too, and preserve materials through spacetime. A decision to physically hold materials or to create a post-custodial set up is still a decision about how to manage records and or archives. While many of the conceptualisations speak about the creation of materials the explicit rejection of the archival threshold is only made by those within a records continuum paradigm.

The desire to expand the speaking positions open to subjects of records was complemented by a desire to expand the surfaces of emergence, authorities of delineation and grids of specification of records. Remembering that surfaces of emergence are the locations and spaces where objects appear, and authorities of delineation are the groups and individuals who give relevance to objects in a particular discourse. More "things" from more places and classified as records or given consideration.

[8] I am using the term axiom rather than assumption due to the potentially negative connotations it has. I do not mean a universal law by axiom, rather a intellectual premise from which to begin, a basic acknowledgement that then frames further thinking.

Particularly for those taking a post-custodial approach the traditional surface of emergence for records (archival institutions / recordkeeping bodies) are no longer a pre-requisite. For example, Caswell and Mallick (2014) speak about the need to leave records with communities. Many of these thinkers also discuss the role of communities themselves in ascribing value and "archival / records status" to materials not just traditional archival and cultural heritage institutions. Similarly, recordkeeping or archival activities are opened up to non-archivists, particularly descriptive practices.

Distinctions between records and archives are blurred in a number of the conceptualisations. Obviously, those coming from a records continuum perspective have already deconstructed these, however the push for greater archival intervention by advocates of documentation strategy and digital micro-histories also muddy the distinction by placing archivists in an active role in regard to records creation.

Records and archives themselves were generally seen as having multiple meanings to varying groups, this assumption was made explicit in Rolan's (2017a) work. **This is my second axiom: that records and archives have multiple meanings.** A central aim of those focused more on collecting archives was the representativeness of records and archives and a drive to create a "complete" picture. More postmodern, critical and records continuum approaches acknowledged the impossibility of ever having a complete or totally representative record or archive. While the risk of outright exclusion was acknowledged, concern coalesced around the consequences of misrepresentation (Huvila, 2008; Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007).

The postmodern conceptualisations in particular, including the records continuum approaches raised the need for a multiplicity of representations. From this perspective records and archives become performative and fluid supporting multiple view-points. In these conceptualisations a straightforward relationship between records and archives as representations and an external objective reality is problematised. **Leading to my third axiom: Records, archives and recordkeeping, are not, and cannot be neutral and objective representations of reality.** This is because reality itself is neither neutral or objective. Records and archives are created in social contexts with all the messy complexities of power and identity that come with that.

The purpose of records, archives, and recordkeeping varies across the board but can be grouped as follows: to create an accurate reflection of society into the future, to provide evidence of activity, to support identity at both an individual and community level, to support individual and community rights, memory, accountability and entitlements. These are not mutually exclusive aims and many of the conceptualisations frame the purpose of records, archives, and recordkeeping as all of these.

## What is the problem participatory approaches would solve?

Some of the literature on participatory archives attempts to solve the "problem" of technological change and the sheer volume of records and archival materials, some are more interested in addressing and taking responsibility for the societal impact of records, archives and recordkeeping. Regardless all these approaches acknowledge to a greater or lesser extent that non-archivists can contribute (agency) to archives, records, and recordkeeping. This does not mean recordkeeping is the ultimate goal, I would argue humanity should be. From a Foucauldian lens many, if not all, of these approaches to participation attempt to shift the institutions that give speakers authority from formal structures like professional roles and archival organisations to experience. It is the experience of the world that authorises voices to be heard in records, not the experience of administration.

If the problem is that certain people do not have adequate access to archives, then ideas like the Archival Commons (Anderson & Allen, 2009) would no doubt be helpful. But this does not take into account issues of privacy, it also assumes the records required by individuals and communities already exist, and are held by an organisation people would feel safe enough to approach. We know this is not the case '". . . it was you bastards who done this to us. And now you're the protector and guardian of my information. How do I trust you?" (Russell, 2005)' (Rolan, 2017b, p. 6). There is a similar issue with Huvila (2008) and Shilton and Srinivasan's (2007) approaches. Trust is an issue, as is the existence of the records in the first place. The problem of access led me to the **fourth axiom: records, archives, and recordkeeping impacts people.** If it had no impact on people there would be no need for access. Nor would the content be problematic.

## What does participatory mean? How do we 'do' it?

Participatory, unsurprisingly, meant different things for different authors. While community consultation is an important part of Documentation Strategy for Cox and Samuels (Cox, 1994, 1996; Cox & Samuels, 1988; Samuels, 1986, 1991 - 1992) yet they do not describe it as participatory. For archivists like Flinn (2010) participatory seems to have as much to do with the attitude towards contributors or communities as any specific activity. Other conceptualisations are very clear about what activities participation would include. For example Anderson and Allen (2009) list tagging and folksonomies as specific participatory activities.

As records continuum thinking sees archival 'activities' and recordkeeping (e.g. description, appraisal etc) as recursive and ongoing it is likely participation would span all archival activities. For the records continuum thinkers and the critical and postmodern archivists, participation involves reaching out and being reached out to by communities and individuals and building genuine engagement (if that is what that community or individual wants). For records continuum thinkers who reject the binary between archives and records this participation spans the creation of records,

recordkeeping systems, policies and frameworks. The level and type of engagement is tailored to suit the needs of the group or individual in question. This tailoring can be seen in Rolan's Participatory Recordkeeping Model (2017a).

### What about Appraisal?

Only three of the conceptualisations explored in the previous chapter explicitly define appraisal:

> 'Archivists choose which records to preserve and discard, using the power of appraisal to consciously or unconsciously assert chosen narratives as truth while ignoring or reframing others' (Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007, p. 88).

> 'Defining which records should be created or brought under control and identifying those that have enduring value' (Rolan, 2017a, p. 198).

> 'The iterative decision-making about what records to make; their form and content; and how long they need to be maintained to meet the short- and long-term needs of multiple stakeholders' (McKemmish et al., 2020, p. 23).

The second and third definitions above define participation as inclusion in decisions around creation. As records continuum approaches challenge the records manager / archivist dichotomy it becomes possible to speak of archival activities that cross what, in traditional life cycle approaches, is a fairly firm threshold. As stated by Rolan (2017b) the nature of these thresholds change when a postmodern (participatory) or records continuum paradigm is adopted. Most of the conceptualisations raised concerns about records creation but rarely framed it as an appraisal issue. Rather than advocating that archivists or records managers reach out to become involved in creation they seemed to be advocating for the creators of records to be enfolded into the archive. One exception to this was Caswell and Mallick (2014) who referred to records creation as microhistories rather than appraisal as a way of advocating for archival involvement.

In terms of appraisal methodologies or approaches macro-appraisal and documentation strategy were most frequently mentioned. Documentation strategy is significant because it has inherently participatory components. Documentation strategy also emerged from similar intellectual roots as the records continuum thinking of the early 1990's.

It would appear that documentation strategy provides an approach to appraisal that would support not only all of the acknowledgements in the participatory archives literature but also address the problem of required records not being created or created and managed in ways that don't meet everyone's needs. However as discussed in the previous chapter my aim is not to champion one

approach over another, but to explore the conditions that make a solution to the systemic issues identified possible. As Sexton eloquently stated:

> 'I am left arguing neither for or against participatory praxis as a means to work towards social justice. This is to say that all our modes of acting and being hold potential for "good" and "evil" and therefore must be exposed to continual critique in the embrace of the *perhaps'* (author emphasis, Sexton, 2015, p. 328).

While most of the time participatory approaches are likely to be beneficial, we cannot know ahead of time that they always will be. To assume this is to deny the uniqueness of all communities, individuals, and contexts.

## Paradigms and Strategies

Five broad paradigms were identified across the eleven conceptualisations:

- Life Cycle;
- Records Continuum;
- Critical Archives;
- Post-custodial; and
- Postmodern.

These paradigms are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Records Continuum, Critical Archives, Post-custodial, and Postmodern all draw on similar intellectual traditions. All these paradigms refer to external discourses (economies of discursive constellation) like the ones discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis some explicitly (as is the case of the Mental Health Recovery Archive and Derrida (Sexton, 2015)) and some through postmodern or critical concepts like Othering and power (Huvila, 2008; Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007).

It would be worth future research to identify exactly why some approaches that share intellectual inspiration turned out so differently (points of diffraction). For example Anthony Giddens is of central importance to both records continuum thinking and the archival commons proposed by Allen and Anderson (2009). The aim of the archival commons appears to be to address technical and logistical challenges. Taking the eleven conceptualisations as a whole the archival commons differs from the other conceptualisations.

The idea of establishing community archives as put forward by Flinn (2010) and others could complicate the technical challenge by creating silos rather than resolving them. Although it does acknowledge the existence of a plurality or multiplicity of voices and ways of knowing. Creating a separate archive won't necessarily protect individuals or communities from the harm caused by

records created and managed by less benevolent institutions. Governments and others will continue to create, manage and keep records and archives. We live in an interconnected world, full of diversity but one whole nonetheless. Records Continuum concepts of monistic diversity require this to be considered.

## Records Continuum Key Concepts and Participatory Appraisal

### What is the point of archives, records and recordkeeping? What are they?

Recalling chapter 3.1. the key concepts identified as underpinning records continuum thinking are: monistic diversity, time-space, multiplicity contextuality, relational becomingness, and agency. These concepts all complement participatory approaches to archives and appraisal.

As discussed in chapter 2.2. Records continuum thinking defines records as:

> '**The representation of a Performance**, possibly involved in other Performances, and certainly subject to recordkeeping Performances. It is the existence of Representation (and the association Reference) relationships that imbues 'record-ness' to a Substantial or Performance entity' (Rolan, 2017b, p. 174).

Records and archives are not differentiated by age or use instead the term archive is refers to the much broader concept of the archival multiverse. The purpose of records and the archival multiverse is to support the rights and memory, accountability and identity needs of communities and individuals (McKemmish et al., 2005).

### What about appraisal?

From a records continuum perspective appraisal refers to the multilayered decisions made in each moment about the creation and management of records. These decisions and the actions carried out to implement them should support the purpose of records, archives, and recordkeeping described above. There is nothing in records continuum thinking that assigns a particular class or profession of people to carrying out these actions or making these decisions. Indeed, if the purpose of appraisal is the creation and maintenance of records that support community and individual need the participation of communities and individuals makes sense. To not include these communities and individuals and to instead assume you, as a recordkeeper, know what they need would be paternalistic at best.

### First axiom: Non-archivists can contribute to archives, records, and recordkeeping.

Records continuum conceptualisations of agency, monistic diversity, and recordkeeping all support the idea that non-archivists can contribute to archives, records, and recordkeeping. Monistic diversity rejects dichotomies, blurring the lines between groupings that are often taken advantage of. One of these binaries that monistic diversity challenges is archivists and non-archivists, or

recordkeepers and non-recordkeepers. The relaxation of these roles opens up space for more people to be involved in recordkeeping. If taken to its logical conclusion this includes people who are subjects of the records, people who are not archivists, records managers or information professionals. Monistic diversity therefore complements the first and only axiom made by all eleven conceptualisations of participatory approaches, that non-archivists can contribute to archives, records and recordkeeping.

As discussed in chapter 3.1. records continuum thinking is heavily influenced by Anthony Giddens' structuration theory. A key element of structuration theory is an acknowledgement of agency, the capacity of people to act. In a records continuum paradigm this agency can also be extended to records (think of Latour's actants) because they affect and impact individuals and communities. The blurring of roles via monistic diversity provides the legitimacy for non-archivists to act, while agency provides a basis for non-archivist's capacity to act, by virtue of them being human.

In addition to these conceptual alignments many records continuum thinkers have advocated for people and communities traditionally seen as subjects of records to be given more opportunities to intervene in recordkeeping (Findlay, 2017; Golding, 2019; Hessami-Frings, 2015; Reed et al., 2017; Trust and Technology Project Team, 2008). Beyond the belief in self-determination and the capacity for non-archivists to contribute lies the second axiom, that records and archives have multiple meanings and values to different communities and individuals. Without the input of these communities and individuals these multiple meanings will not be identified.

### Second axiom: Records and archives have multiple meanings.

The second axiom found in many of the eleven conceptualisations of participatory archives is that records and archives have multiple meanings. This axiom can also be found in three key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking: relational becomingness, context, and time-space. The manifestation of the Series System was in part a way to enable these multiple meanings to be acknowledged.

The concepts of relational becomingness and time-space are ways of explaining and exploring changes in records and archives through time and across space. Acknowledging that the meaning of records is never "finished" but always deferred in a Derridean sense. Records become and evolve when they interact with other records, people, times, and places. This shifting is perhaps best summed up by Chris Hurley's (2005a, 2005b, 2005d) multiple simultaneous provenance. Place a record in a different context (another key records continuum concept) and its meaning changes. In section 4 I will be exploring an alternative conceptualisation of time-space that will further this

shifting beyond time-space and context to explicitly include the virtual of Bruno Latour and the possibility of multiple simultaneous provenance.

Despite multiple simultaneous provenance already being an idea incorporated into much records continuum thinking, the understanding of time-space provided by Giddens does not necessarily open itself up to the level of multiple meanings embraced by many records' continuum thinkers.

### Third axiom: Records, archives, and recordkeeping, are not, and can never be completely neutral or objective.

As discussed in chapter 2.1. records continuum thinking rejects the idea of records as naturally occurring phenomena, instead seeing them as created by individuals, communities, and organisations. This creation is not always conscious or deliberate but it is never the less a result of human activity. Records continuum thinking draws on Anthony Giddens for its understanding of individuals and communities. Giddens conceptualisation of agency is not based on intentionality; therefore, people can act in unpredictable and unconscious ways. If we combine these two facts: that people can act in unpredictable and unconscious ways and that individuals, communities and organisations create records and archives it becomes difficult to argue that records and archives are completely neutral or objective.

Traditional conceptualisations of objectivity define it as observer-independent phenomena (Barad, 2007). As seen in axiom two, records and archives can have multiple meanings to different individuals and communities, these meanings also evolve across time-space and as context changes. The way we interact with records and archives alters them. The impact of this alteration on individuals, communities and individuals is often seen as the very rationale for participatory approaches to archives (Caswell & Mallick, 2014; Flinn, 2010; Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014; Huvila, 2008; Iacovino, 2010; McKemmish et al., 2020; Sexton, 2015; Sexton & Sen, 2018; Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007).

### Fourth axiom: Records, archives, and recordkeeping have impacts on people.

Records continuum thinking focuses heavily on the impact that records and archives have on individuals, communities, and organisations (observers). In a records continuum paradigm records are seen as structures (allocative and authoritative resources) in Giddens' structuration theory. They impact and are impacted by individuals and communities. Explorations of the power, social justice potential, and accountability affordances of records, archives, and recordkeeping abound in records continuum literature and thinking. The key records continuum concepts of agency, extending to records and archives, explicitly recognises the impacts records, archives and recordkeeping has on individuals, communities, and organisations.

The interrelated nature of monistic diversity and relational becomingness also highlight the way that records, archives, and recordkeeping are never separate from society, but form part of society. They are part of the monistically diverse whole we call society and our interactions with them shape society and vice versa.

## Conclusion

Each participatory approach discussed here has its own benefits and weaknesses. The sheer processing power of the Archival Commons is incomparable. The inclusion of multiple viewpoints and flexibility of the participatory approaches put forward by Huvila (2008) and Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) are fantastic, as is the empowerment that no doubt stems from creating your own community archive. These though, are not necessarily addressing the same problem as that targeted by Iacovino (2010) or Gilliland and McKemmish (2014).

I argue that all of these approaches provide us with useful tools, but that the real change isn't just methodological, it is conceptual, it is a paradigm shift. It is not just about participation for participation's sake. Participation appears to be a consequence of a reframing of what records and archives should be, what they should do, and who we see as important. It is no great coincidence that most of these publications draw on a critical perspective, whether they identify as records continuum thinkers or not. Traditional life-cycle models clash with critical paradigms. Life cycle approaches depend on an analogy of a neutral, natural, linear series of processes. They assign rigid roles to people inside the archive (archivists) and those outside. These roles are challenged by the assumptions that non-archivists can contribute to records and archives.

The beliefs that archives and records have multiple meanings, that they are not neutral and that they affect individuals, communities, and organisations justify participation. Those who hold these beliefs and assumptions must think about the consequences of the meanings they ascribe to records. Because there is an acknowledgement that the meaning ascribed isn't the only option, and that the meaning chosen could have serious impacts on individuals and communities.

As we have already discussed in chapter 3.1 records continuum thinking is underpinned by similar assumptions. The key concepts identified in chapter 3.1 (monistic diversity, time-space, multiplicity, contextuality, relational becomingness, and agency) all complement and are complemented by the assumptions identified in the selected participatory literature, these assumptions have been reframed as axioms. Of the eleven conceptualisations many could be aligned with postmodernism but, with exception of the records continuum paradigms, they do not necessarily form part of a broader, structured archival theory. In some ways this provides the writers and thinkers with more scope and freedom to explore and conceptualise. In saying this I wonder if the basis is there for the

various thinkers, but simply not articulated. I still believe the common elements including the axioms and intentions to do archives and records better unite these approaches are far more interesting than the distinctions that divide them.

Records continuum thinking does have benefits. Only the records continuum perspective radically tackles the records/archives dichotomy through monistic diversity. This is significant as a blurring of these concepts widens the remit of the archivist to intervene, and lays the logical ground work for archivists to be involved in creation, as well as non-archival stakeholders. Records continuum thinking also provides a solid foundation from which to begin exploring and conceptualisation, even if, as was argued in chapter 3.1. these foundations could be better excavated and more clearly articulated.

In Section 4, the next section of this thesis, I will outline the thinkers and theories who I feel could serve a role in this excavation. Who could assist us to develop a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of records continuum thinking and what participatory approaches to appraisal might mean.

## Section 3: Conclusion

The previous three chapters of the thesis have identified and discussed the key concepts and discourses that underpin records continuum thinking and participatory approaches to archives. To recap the key concepts in relation to records continuum thinking are monistic diversity, time-space, multiplicity, contextuality, relational becomingness, and agency. The paradigm records continuum sits within has at a high level postfoundationalist undertones especially in relation to monistic diversity, multiplicity and contextuality. As discussed in the methodology, literature review, and briefly in section 2 postfoundationalism is associated with a particular type of performativity, which in turn could support participatory appraisal.

There are hints of postfoundationalism in some of the discourses around participatory archives but much of it is still firmly within a representationalist frame. Seeing participation as a solution to gaps in the archive. Gaps in our representation of the world and people in it. Postfoundationalism forced me to question the inherent "good" of participatory approaches. Derrida is one of a number of theorists that can be labelled postfoundationalist. Derridean philosophy also shaped Sexton's views on the mental health recovery archive. Derrida's work on consignation can also be used to explore the performativity of records and archives as discussed in chapter 3.1.

In the next section of this thesis, section 4, records continuum thinking will be diffractively extended and amplified through three other postfoundationalist thinkers: Karen Barad, Emmanuel Levinas, and Hannah Arendt. These extensions and amplifications not only clarify what is meant by records continuum thinking, but extend and support participatory approaches to appraisal. This lays the foundation for the conclusions of this thesis that address the second research question by identifying how social theory could extend and support records continuum thinking and conceptualisations of participatory appraisal in particular.

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# Section 4: Extensions and Amplifications

## Contents

# Section 4: Introduction

In section 3, I addressed my first research question by exploring in depth the key concepts of records continuum theory (monistic diversity, time-space, multiplicity, contextuality, relational becomingness, and agency) and participatory appraisal, and the discourses that influenced them. To address my second research question, in this section, much like Upward (2009) did in his doctoral thesis, I have identified and analysed the work of social theorists that can be used to explain, underpin and extend records continuum theory and its conceptualisations of participatory appraisal.

As discussed in my introductory reflection I spent a lot of my time when first introduced to records continuum thinking wondering why theorists like Giddens had been drawn on and not those I was more familiar with from my Social Sciences undergraduate degree. This, in part, led to my second primary research question.

> *How might social theory extend and support records continuum thinking and what might this mean for participatory appraisal?*

After extensive reading and reflection of a broad array of social theorists and philosophers I identified the thinkers that most heavily influenced records continuum theory. The work of these thinkers was analysed in chapter 2.1. and included Henri Bergson, Bruno Latour, Giles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Anthony Giddens. In turn five of these six thinkers were influenced heavily by the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Henri Bergson is an exception because of his focus on physics and the fact his work emerged at roughly the same time as the phenomenological tradition. For Bergson important names include Baruch Spinoza and his contemporary Alfred North Whitehead.

Instead of following the chains of thinkers back indefinitely, I ended up only taking one step back in chapter 2.1. In this section I take one step forward. focusing only on those who directly influenced or were influenced by each other. Although simplified, figure 86 depicts where the threads of theory led me. From the postmodern / poststructuralists to the phenomenologists like Heidegger and Husserl.

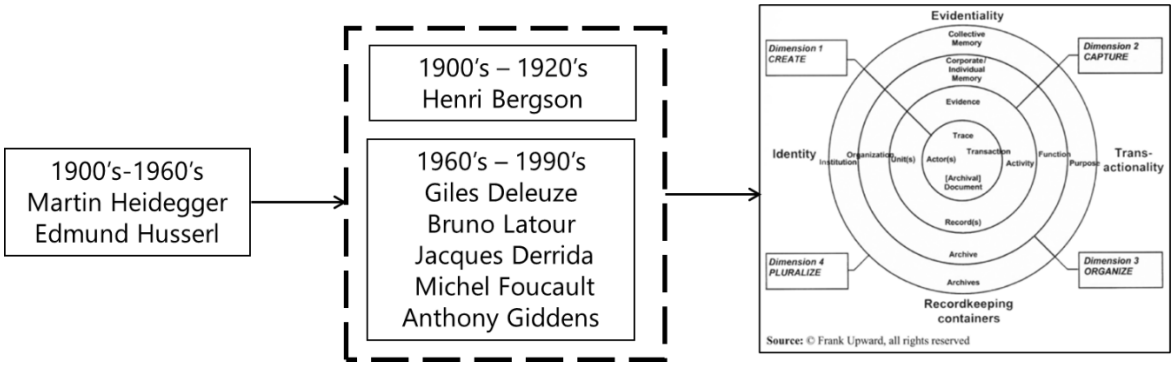


*figure 86. Section 4 Introduction: Stepping backwards*

I ended up with three thinkers who spoke to the underpinning concepts for records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal: Emmanuel Levinas, Karen Barad and Hannah Arendt. These three thinkers emerged from a similar intellectual tradition as those drawn on by records continuum thinkers. Their discourse is also compatible with the main discourses underpinning records continuum thinking while offering fruitful extensions and amplifications to existing records continuum key concepts. The key concepts of monistic diversity, time-space, multiplicity, contextuality, relational becomingness, and agency are all explored by Levinas, Arendt, and Barad. The theories of this trio also support and explain the axioms embedded in participatory appraisal as identified in chapter 3.3. These will be explored throughout this section of the thesis:

1. Non-archivists can contribute to archives, records, and recordkeeping;

2.Records and archives have multiple meanings;

3. Records, archives, and recordkeeping are not, and can never be, completely neutral or objective; and

4.Records, archives, and recordkeeping have impacts on people.

Broadly speaking, although only Barad refers to herself as such, these three can be described as coming from a postfoundationalist paradigm. figure 87 shows the theorists who significantly influenced the work of Levinas, Arendt, and Barad.

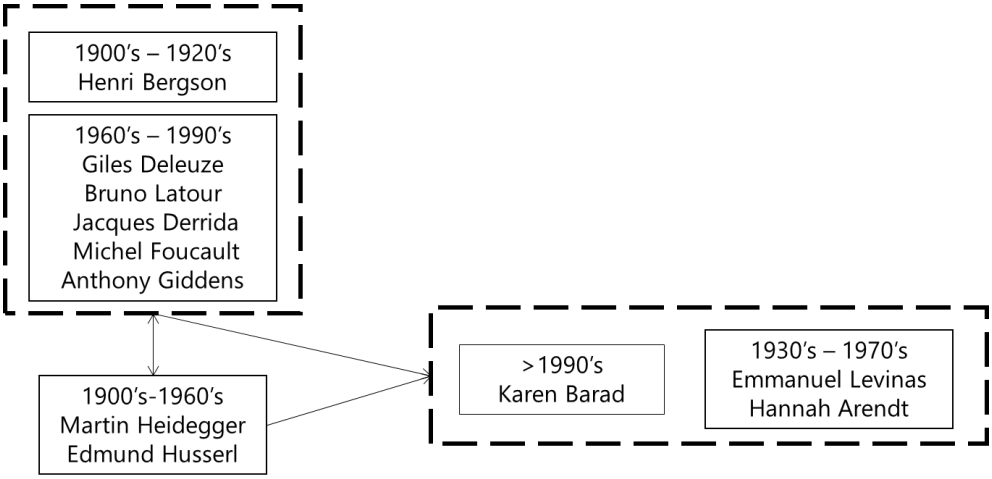


*Figure 87. Section 4 Introduction: Stepping forward*

As described in Chapter 1.1. postfoundationalism at its heart rejects representationalist worldviews, instead preferring more performative ones. As Upward (2009) saw glimmers of postmodern thought in records continuum thinking, I can see glimmers of postfoundationalist thought. In this section I bring this postfoundationalist thought to the surface and suggest ways in which it might enrich records continuum theory.

## Section approach

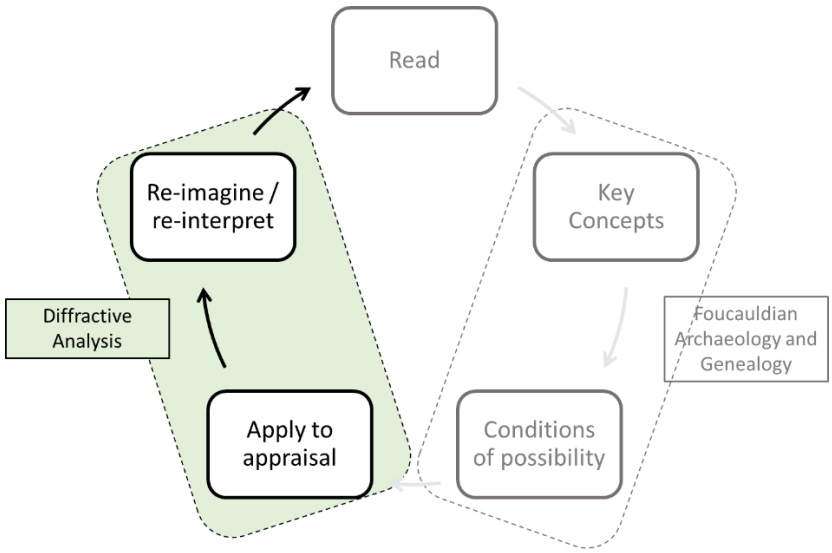


*figure 88. Section 4 Introduction: Research Approach*

This section of the thesis is the result of ongoing diffractive analysis (as seen in figure 88). The process and outcomes of the analysis demonstrate how the adaptation and use of methods and techniques of diffractive analysis within a postfoundationalist paradigm can contribute novel research design and methods to archival theory making, thus addressing my third research question.

*How might the adaption and use of Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis and diffractive analysis contribute to archival scholarly practice?*

Through the recursive and diffractive reading of the archival and postfoundationalist literature certain concepts, from certain thinkers, were identified that complement existing archival thinking. This resulted in seven key concepts that could enhance and extend records continuum theory, and support participatory appraisal. These concepts are monistic diversity, phenomena, multiplicity, agency, alterity, contextuality, and power. They emerge across the following two chapters. Chapter 4.1 focuses on the world and non-human entities (open for debate of course)[1] with chapter 4.2 examining people and the social world. The non-human world and social world are obviously inherently entangled and inseparable, but for clarity's sake I have chosen to address them separately. As Barad would say – I have made an agential cut.

Taking a postfoundationalist approach means I am not looking for universal foundations but conditions of possibility. Like a groove in the earth, conditions of possibility encourage archivists to flow in a certain direction, without being prescriptive or deterministic. I re-imagined how the trio of theorists might envision appraisal, how their theories might apply, and the logical courses of action that may result from incorporation.

These concepts are eventually melded into seven axioms in chapter 4.3. They create a number of grooves to enable – not enforce – the possibility of participatory appraisal.

[1] whether non-human animals particularly those who live in complex social realms should be included here is problematic. However since I am, sadly, only looking at people in this thesis I will leave this argument for another time. If by chance you are reading this and have a few minutes to spare, look up Alex the African Grey Parrott.

# Chapter 4.1: Extensions and Amplifications - Part 1

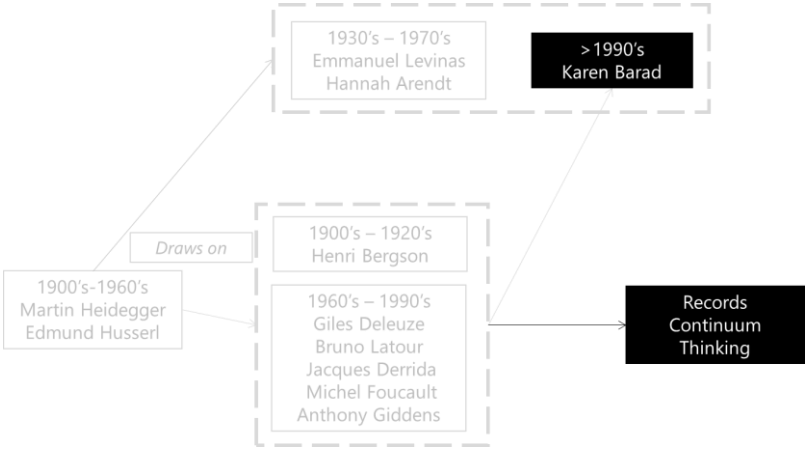


*figure 89. Chapter 4.1. Focus*

## Introduction

This chapter brings together some of the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking identified in chapter 3.1. aiming to clearly articulate how they fit together to form a coherent ontology and epistemology. There is a need for such an articulation in part because a substantial amount of the theory behind and used to explain records continuum thinking can be found in Frank Upward's (2009) doctoral Thesis. Some of the theorists and theories that influenced Upward's theorising emerged in parallel with records continuum thought and were drawn on later as an alternative way of expressing records continuum ideas. This incredible piece of work is not digitised, there is (as far as I am aware) only one copy available for reference and you would need to go through the Monash University Library to get it. It is not the most accessible piece of work. I am not proposing to replace one thesis with another, rather reflecting on which of the ideas seem to have broken free of the thesis and populated subsequent journal articles, conference papers and manuscripts, and which have decided to stay home snug between the covers.

There are elements of records continuum thinking that are obvious to some, but not necessarily explicit to others. One example of this subtlety is the plurality of the create dimension. Records continuum thinking focuses on plurality. It is rare in such thinking that any one thing is ever seen as having a single cause. This includes the creation of records, records are created in a context of plurality implying multiple creators. As someone who has spent the past few years exploring records continuum thinking I have noticed a few elements that, like co-creation, could be made more explicit; amplified if you will. A number of these concepts relate to the very ontological and epistemological premise from which records continuum thinking emerges. Without these key

construct's confusion will continue to dog those of us who seek to understand what records continuum thinking is, and how to implement it.

### *Chapter Approach*

In this part I analyse the work of Barad as highlighted in figure 89. Chapter 4.1 focus alongside the six thinkers introduced in chapter 2.1. of this thesis. As part of this ontology and epistemology I identify four components that could be amplified. The first of these is the concept of monistic diversity. The second, third, and fourth are epistemological and ontological positions that draw on a combination of the key concepts identified in chapter 3.1. The second component is the idea of a process based relational ontology and epistemology (drawing heavily on the concept of relational becomingness). The third and fourth components explain how this relational epistemology operates by focusing on conditions of possibility for sense making rather than categorisation and specific instantiations rather than general wholes. The reason for such epistemological positions is because of the ontology established by monistic diversity. This ontology is further extended by Barad's concept of phenomena.

Barad (2007) offers opportunities to extend the idea of time-space in records continuum theory from Gidden's conceptualisation to a performative one. Barad also raises possible ways existing records continuum concepts of context and multiplicity (Barad has similar concepts of plurality and objectivity) might fit alongside phenomena as an alternative to Giddens time-space (Barad, 1998). Some of the possible extensions provided by her work are a re-examination of neutrality and the idea that time-space is not something that is interacted with and through but that is itself enacted.

## Amplifications

### *Monistic Diversity*

If Monistic Diversity is important enough to warrant an entire section of Upward's (2009) thesis, why is it so rarely mentioned? I argue this concept is a foundational one in records continuum thinking in chapter 3.1, but that its communication and explanation needs to be amplified.

My reading is that, despite the complicated sounding name, monistic diversity is referring to a relatively easy to understand concept. The idea that everything that exists can be seen as one interconnected whole (mono meaning one – monistic), including space and time as time-space. However this whole is composed of an infinite number of parts that are constantly interacting, evolving, and morphing; it is diverse. The interaction of these parts leads to the emergence of new parts and new interactions in perpetuity. The reason these parts form one thing (despite their diversity from both a quantitative and qualitative point of view) is their interconnectedness, the parts affect the whole and vice versa. In fact it is through the relation of the parts into a whole that

the parts themselves are made. This idea is a metaphysical parallel with Anthony Giddens structuration theory where society as a whole is made up of diverse interactions between agents and structures. Prior to Giddens, Upward was heavily influenced by what is now often known as complexity theory, in particular the work of Samuel Alexander, Hermann Minkowski and Quienten Gibson (Upward, 2009). I would argue this metaphysical pedigree goes some way to explaining Upward's choice in language and attraction to structuration theory.

The concept of monistic diversity does not have to be onerous, it refers to something that many (if not all) records continuum thinkers and practitioners write and talk about. It is a central part of the records continuum worldview. It underpins the rejection of distinctions between records managers and archivists, and between records and archives. It nullifies the concept of singular provenance, of a singular creator, owner, or finished product because it sees the world as a complex whole made up of many parts that are always evolving.

Curiously for such a central concept a key word search of 28 articles with continuum in the title only found 2 articles that contain the phrase "monistic diversity"[2] (one of which was in a footnote) and one mention of the concept of something being monistic and diverse. While this idea has no doubt been expressed in other ways, language matters. I would argue that the Archival Multiverse is but one instantiation of monistic diversity. To truly understand records continuum thinking, models, and concepts it is necessary to comprehend the higher order ontology that makes the Archival Multiverse possible.

As well as providing us with a conceptual anchor to make sense of concepts like the Archival Multiverse, monistic diversity allows us to repeatedly return to and link between different theoretical positions. It links the time-space of mathematicians such as Hermann Minkowski and Samuel Alexander with the social theory of Anthony Giddens and postmodernists such as Bruno Latour. To a greater or lesser extent, for all these thinkers the world, be it social or material, is one whole made up of diverse parts that cannot be understood independently of one another. In his thesis Upward (2009) explicitly explores how key concepts such as Foucault's Heteropia, Derrida's différance, and Deleuze's Flicker can be seen as analogous to monistic diversity. Below a duplication

[2] See footnote 46 on page 216 of Upward, McKemmish and Reed Upward, F., McKemmish, S., & Reed, B. (2011). Archivists and Changing Social and Information Spaces: A Continuum approach to Recordkeeping and Archiving in Online Cultures. *Archivaria*, *72*, 197-237. ; Upward's Upward, F. (2019). The monistic diversity of continuum informatics: A method for analysing the relationships between recordkeeping informatics, ethics and information governance. *Records Management Journal*, *29*(1/2), 258 - 271. publication on monistic diversity and McKemmish, Upward and Reed's McKemmish, S., Upward, F., & Reed, B. (2009). Records Continuum Model. In *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences* (Third ed., pp. 4447 - 4459). Taylor and Francis. entry on the Records Continuum Model in the Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences page 4454.

of the diagram of monistic diversity and its relationship to external thinkers from chapter 2.1. can be seen (figure 49) where the focus was on Deleuze's concept of difference but as argued above Deleuze's flicker is also just as relevant.

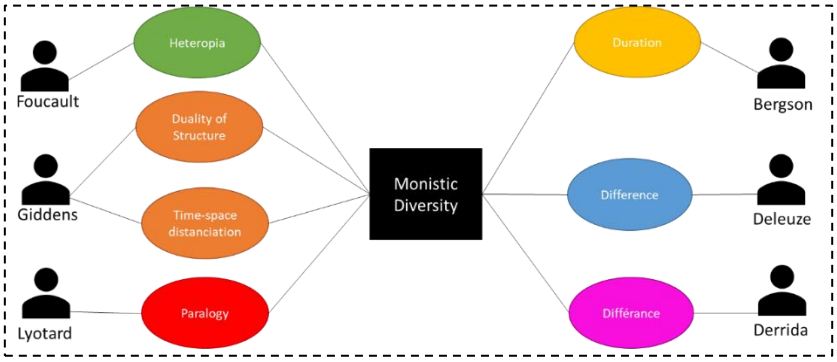


*figure 49. Monistic Diversity and External Thinkers*

Monistic diversity is only one of the six key records continuum concepts identified in chapter 3.1. it describes how the world is, but not how it came to be. The concept of relational becomingness provides us with a process based ontology and epistemology that explains how monistic diversity works "in the world". Relational becomingness highlights that the monistically diverse world we live in did not drop out of the sky fully formed, that it is not static or finished. Instead it is always in a state of flux, and this flux is a response to the relations between the diverse parts.

### *Performative ontology and epistemology*

The term relational becomingness is drawn from Sue McKemmish's statement that archives are 'always in a state of becoming' (McKemmish, 1994, p. 200). Records and archives are always becoming because everything is always in a state of becoming, records and archives simply become faster than say rocks or trees. The entire world is always in a state of becoming. Change and becoming implies the involvement of space and time or time-space. The world is not frozen, and as discussed in chapter 2.1. Bergson's multiplicity and duration is one way to make sense of this becoming through and across time-space. If entities are static (enduring) it doesn't matter when or where you look at them; they will be the same. If, however the world is perduring, time-space becomes very, very, important. This time-space becomes part of the context of entities we are looking at, interacting with, or trying to understand.

If entities are always in a state of becoming then the concept of a static link - for example because both of these things are blue they are related by their blueness - is redundant. Instead the link is the way both 'things' mediate and provoke becoming in each other (Hernes, 2008). What could be amplified in current records continuum discourse is that it is not only records and archives that are becoming, but the context and world within which they sit. As we know from our earlier discussion

on monistic diversity archives and records cannot be cleanly cut off from one another or their contexts. The very idea of dynamic context is itself an underpinning concept in records continuum thinking. Because everything is interconnected any cuts we make are artificial. Gregory Rolan's (2017c) work on ontologies proposes a series of high level categories to re-construct the messy, interconnected monistically diverse world around us and is inspired by socio-materialism – what I would argue is a type of monistic diversity blurring the distinctions between agent and object, social and material.

If monistic diversity is accepted as the ontological premise of records continuum thinking, this has flow on effects on epistemology, i.e. how things can be known. Latour's concept of the actant (Fraser, 2006; Krarup & Blok, 2011), which rejects the view that the world can be divided into things (objects) and people (subjects), or understood through unproblematic categories based on the attributes of things is an example of relational and process based ontology much like monistic diversity.

> 'Making sense of relations that tie actors together, rather than making sense of the actors themselves, thus become constitutive of actor-networks. Networks, then, do not consist of stable nodes and links, but consist of relations that shape actors recursively' (Hernes, 2008, p. 70).

It is the relationships between things and how they become that defines the world and our pathway into understanding, not things as they are. If we want to understand a record from this point of view we do not analyse the record itself. We explore the conditions that made the record possible and its relations with other records, people and phenomena. These conditions may be material as well as social.

### *Categorisation based on conditions of possibility not attributes*

In Newtonian and Cartesian sciences humans make sense of the world by classifying things; organising them into schemas based on attributes presumed to be inherent and definitive characteristics. One common example of this is the taxonomy used to classify animals. Mammals produce milk, reptiles do not. Apes are mammals, therefore they produce milk. Such a system of classification is conceptually at odds with a process based ontology and epistemology. Things are constantly changing and do not necessarily sit inside neat categories. The attributes may shift and evolve over and through time-space. Instead of making sense of things by classifying them (we know that an ape is a mammal because they produce milk) an alternative is to focus on how something came to be. How was it that apes evolved into their current form and why? What needed to happen for the world to be as it is now.

Peter Scott's Series System, discussed in chapter 2.1, can be seen as one way to cope with these ever changing relationships. If the way we understand a thing is through the relationships that created it, we need to document these relationships. There is never just one set of relationships to document, nor do these relationships stay the same through time and space. Despite this we still recognise an entity as "the same thing". A record of housing sales is still identifiably the same entity in 1908 as it is in 2019. Chris Hurley's (1995b, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c)work on multiple simultaneous provenance also deals with issues of multiplicity raised by a process-based ontology. The goal of "explaining" is not to find a substance, essence or core entity, but rather to understand the conditions under which the existence of the thing in question is possible (Gane, 2009). This means we have to take account of the multiple provenances and conditions of creation, we can never stop this accounting. Not only is the record always changing but its context is as well. It is possible additional layers of provenance and meaning will build up in, over and through time. These additional meanings and provenances are just as important in making sense of the record as the "original" (for want of a better term – Derridean work on *Archives Fever* describe it as the desperate attempt to get to an original state that never existed). Multiplicity allows for the acknowledgement of multiple, possibly even incommensurable, meanings and provenances.

As discussed in chapter 3.1. Hurley's work on multiple, simultaneous, and ambient provenance fits a paradigm where things are always becoming (1995b, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c). This ontological attribute has flow on affects to how we can make sense of the world. Traditional frameworks seek to make sense of things based on their attributes, they are defined by what they do or have. This is what Hurley (1995a) refers to as terminological control. For example if a chair is defined by its function (we can sit on it and it holds our weight) then all of a sudden various objects become chairs. Tables, beds, boxes, trees. If a chair is defined by its attributes (four legs) then a chair with a leg broken off is no longer a chair. As Hurley eloquently explains categorical definitions also fail in helping identify specific items at a universal level. Such a definition cannot communicate which chair we mean. Contextual control as suggested by Hurley shifts our focus from the thing we are describing to its relationships.

> 'A contextual relationship gives meaning to something through the contingent associations that are observed to exist (in a particular set of circumstances) between that thing and another. The relationship establishes (evidences) the circumstance--gives it its meaning. The significance for recordkeeping is obvious. Contextual control is the method we must use in order to preserve meaning in the midst of change' (Hurley, 1995a, p. 26).

It is of course likely in many circumstances that having both contextual and terminological control would be advantageous. The two are not mutually exclusive.

### *Specific instantiations*

Contextual control, and the understanding of things based on their relationships and becoming, places limits on the scope of our understanding. It limits our ability to generalise. Understanding the relationships and interactions that led to the emergence of one entity does not allow us to understand all entities of a similar nature, especially not complex social phenomena like records or archives. There will likely be some similarities but, borrowing Foucauldian and other French "post" approaches, the best we can realistically hope for is to understand what Upward (2009) refers to as the small truths, that is the specific and singular manifestations in front of us. While it would be foolish to claim to know all records or archives across all time we can claim to have some knowledge of specific manifestations of records or archives at a specific point in time by exploring their conditions of possibility and relations.

Layered upon the specificity of records is the specificity of the perspective we are taking ourselves. Much like we cannot see in front of ourselves and behind ourselves at the same time we cannot see all perspectives of a record at one time. The records continuum model provides us with a guide to the positions we can look from to see the way records and archives have manifested at specific points in time and space. Allowing us to articulate the perspective we are taking and therefore create a more self-aware representation or description of what we see and what it means. Remembering that the records continuum model is meant to be topological, it is a map where we can position ourselves and move to examine the multiplicity of angles of a record or archive. These perspectives do not exist in isolated boxes; there are no firm barriers between them, rather lines archivists have drawn themselves to enable comprehension.

So far the idea that different social and / or material entities interact leads to the (re)creation of records in a never ending process. Thus the best way to make sense of records is to try and identify some of these interactions that lead to their creation. But what about the impact that records have on their conditions of possibility? If a record is the result of say a restaurant reservation system, how does the record then go on to impact the restaurant reservation itself? Given the amount of metadata that is probably embedded in the booking system and the impact of its material makeup, e.g. a physical appointment schedule versus commercial software, does it even make sense to speak of the booking system and records as separate? What about the person creating the record itself?

## Extensions

### *Agential realism*

As a feminist physicist Barad (2007) draws on the same phenomenological roots as records continuum thinking as well as figures like Bergson. Barad helped me not only extend and support conceptualisations of participatory appraisal within a records continuum thinking framework, but to understand and clarify records continuum thinking itself. Her conceptualisation of time-space and phenomena were particularly helpful in resolving this challenge.

Best known for her theory of agential realism, Barad (1998, 2003, 2007, 2010) introduces a third element into the structure / agency equation found in Giddens structuration theory (1984), observation. Barad also deals explicitly with the embodiment of the world and its becoming, both physically and socially. The world doesn't become just through the interaction of agency and structure, but of agency, structure and observation. Barad (2007) draws on the work of physicist Neils Bohr, known for his radical questioning of Newtonian and Cartesian world views and his contributions to Quantum Physics. Similar to the way Bergson saw time (artificially cut up into seconds or minutes to allow human intelligibility) as one inseparable whole, Bohr rejected the existence of hard boundaries between the tools we use to see the world, ourselves and the things we look at.

> 'Bohr argues that no inherent distinction pre-exists the measurement process, that every measurement involves a particular choice of apparatus, providing the conditions necessary to give definition to a particular set of classical variables, at the exclusion of other equally essential variables, and thereby embodying a particular constructed cut delineating the "object" from the "agencies of observation"'(Barad, 1998, p. 90).

Barad takes this idea of a whole blob of reality (or as records continuum thinkers might say, monistic diversity) and runs with it. Instead of referring to individual things she refers to phenomena. Instead of referring to things happening in or through time-space as a kind of backdrop, space and time are also themselves emergent, not just shaping but being shaped ***by*** the world in its becoming. Phenomena are the result of these intra-actions, and phenomena, not an observer independent reality, is what we should be exploring (Barad, 1998, 2003, 2007, 2010; de Freitas, 2017; Hinton, 2013; Parkins, 2008; Van Der Tuin, 2011).

In addition to questioning the inherent separation of a thing studied in physics, like an atom, and the tools we are using to study it, Barad (2007) also questions the inherent distinction between social conventions and the world. She argues both positivists and social constructionists fall into the same trap: representationalism. Representationalism is grounded in the assumption that there exist,

before any interaction, two kinds of entities in the world, observation independent physical 'things' and social 'things' used by humans to make sense of the world (Barad, 2003). Social constructionist and positivistic thought only differ in what they see as the 'real' point of focus, or referent.

> 'Representationalist assumptions that foster such endless debates: both scientific realists and social constructivists believe that scientific knowledge (in its multiple representational forms such as theoretical concepts, graphs, particle tracks, photographic images) mediates our access to the material world; where they differ is on the question of referent, whether scientific knowledge represents things in the world as they really are (i.e., "Nature") or "objects" that are the product of social activities (i.e., "Culture"), but both groups subscribe to representationalism' (Barad, 2003, pp. 805 - 806).

Agential realism is a performative approach, not representationalist. This means it rejects the idea that representations, or the things they represent, ever exist independently from each other or prior to intra-action with another (not inter as this implies between two things) (Barad, 1998; Hinton, 2013). These intra-actions involve both material and discursive elements. The material side of the equation is covered by Bohr's philosophy of physics, with discursive elements emerging from thinkers such as Michel Foucault. Barad's understanding of discourse is similar to that employed in the discourse analysis of this PhD project:

> 'Discourse is not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said. Discursive practices define what counts as meaningful statements. Statements are not the mere utterances of the originating consciousness of a unified subject; rather, statements and subjects emerge from a field of possibilities. This field of possibilities is not static or singular but rather is a dynamic and contingent multiplicity' (Barad, 2003, p. 819).

Discourses act like the tools of observation in Bohr's physics, they determine conditions of possibility, allowing us to see some things and not others, to create some things and not others, for reality to become some things and not others. Rather than getting bogged down in the complexity of agential realism there are three key points I wish to take from it. First that nothing exists in isolation. Nothing is fixed, instead everything is in a constant state of becoming through intra-actions.This first point is explicitly supported by the key records continuum concept of relational becoming. Second the distinctions made between things are not natural, that is they do not exist without some kind of human intervention. This intervention is likely to be material and discursive, and our interventions also shape us, there are no clear lines. And third, because of the previous two points, we can and

should take more responsibility and thought in how we create and enact distinctions between things, ourselves, and the world.

> 'How reality is understood matters. There are risks entailed in putting forward an ontology: making metaphysical assumptions explicit exposes the exclusions upon which any given conception of reality is based. Yet, the political potential of deconstructive analysis lies not in the simple recognition of the inevitability of exclusions, but in insisting upon accountability for the particular exclusions that are enacted and in taking up the responsibility to perpetually contest and rework the boundaries' (Barad, 1998, p. 94).

While records continuum thinking rejects the naturalness of any distinction between archives and non-archives, decisions and distinctions are still made. This extends to appraisal, which, from a records continuum perspective, includes decisions about what to create and keep. In more traditional life cycle approaches this may be decisions around records crossing the archival threshold. Anna Sexton (2015) was very explicit in her thesis about the responsibility archivists should take in relation to their decisions.

> 'Thinking this through in an archival context means accepting that there is no stance or position that can get round or transcend the inevitable *irresponsibility* in all archival choices, all archival processes, all archival representations and beyond. We choose 'friends', and in doing so we privilege. We fraternize with a select few against the infinitude of our responsibility. I/we are caught in the contradiction inherent in responsibility' (Sexton, 2015, p. 319).

### *Time-space and Phenomena*

If we conceptualise records, archives, recordkeeping, appraisal and participation through Barad's agential realism what might it look like? What would the ontology and epistemology be? Lets begin with the concept of time-space.

Records continuum thinking views space and time as entangled and inseperable forming a single dimension which impacts on the world, including of course records, archives, and recordkeeping. As discussed in chapter 3.1, time-space is a consideration that must be taken by archivists or other actors when engaging in recordkeeping, it contributes to the context of existing material and like records themselves is always becoming.

Such a conceptualisation of time-space belongs to a representationalist paradigm because space and time, time-space, still exists out there in the world. It is something that we move through, in and of. It shapes us. A performative agential realist account argues that time-space is not only some immutable force we move through that shapes us but something we shape as well.

> 'Barad's major contribution to transdisciplinary and feminist studies is the key idea that there are no bounded entities that exist in, and move through time and space before they are measured. Bodies (human, nonhuman and more-than-human) are performances, not things, and relationally produced at the very same time. This is not an event 'in' time-space, because "[s]pace and time are intra-actively produced in the making of phenomena"(Barad, 2014, p. 181) and not 'givens' outside of phenomena' (Murris & Bozalek, 2019, p. 877).

If an agential realist conceptualisation of time-space was adopted it would no longer make sense to explore or explain how records and archives move through or across time. Instead records and archives shape and become with time-space.

> 'Space and time (like matter) are phenomenal, that is, they are intra-actively produced in the making of phenomena; neither space nor time exist as determinate givens outside of phenomena' (Barad, 2007, p. 383).

This is radical monistic diversity. Time-space matter (physical records) and meaning are one diverse whole. They are phenomena. To recap briefly, the world is made up of interactions. These interactions lead to the emergence of subjects, objects, time-space etc. Not the other way around.

> 'According to Bohr, *theoretical concepts* (e.g., "position" and "momentum") are not ideational in character but rather *are specific physical arrangements*. For example, the notion of "position" cannot be presumed to be a well-defined abstract concept, nor can it be presumed to be an inherent attribute of independently existing objects. Rather, "position" only has meaning when a rigid apparatus with fixed parts is used (e.g., a ruler is nailed to a fixed table in the laboratory, thereby establishing a fixed frame of reference for specifying "position"). And furthermore, any measurement of "position" using this apparatus cannot be attributed to some abstract independently existing "object" but rather is a property of the *phenomenon*—the inseparability of "observed object" and "agencies of observation." Similarly, "momentum" is only meaningful as a material arrangement involving movable parts' (Barad, 2003, p. 814).

## Conclusion

So if we accept these ideas, what then? Why does this matter? At the end of the day, how does this assist us to do recordkeeping better? For Barad this has implications for the concept of objectivity. If records and archives are evidential, surely there needs to be a degree of objectivity for them to function, a degree of stability and coherence. Quoting Barad again at length, this matters because:

> 'It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the "components" of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts

> become meaningful. A specific intra-action (involving a specific material configuration of the "apparatus of observation") enacts an *agential cut* (in contrast to the Cartesian cut—an inherent distinction—between subject and object) effecting a separation between "subject" and "object." That is, the agential cut enacts a *local* resolution *within* the phenomenon of the inherent ontological indeterminacy. In other words, relata do not pre-exist relations; rather, relata within-phenomena emerge through specific intra-actions. Crucially then, intra-actions enact *agential separability*—the local condition of *exteriority within-phenomena*. The notion of agential separability is of fundamental importance, for in the absence of a classical ontological condition of exteriority between observer and observed it provides the condition for the possibility of objectivity' (Barad, 2003, p. 815).

My translation of this is that it is through our attempts at sensemaking that we literally make the world, and are made by the world. Objectivity or "truth", shared reality, and evidence are not found but made. We have a responsibility to see that this making doesn't do unnecessary harm. It is important to ensure that we are not making subjects of records into objects, into things. That this making is transparent, that we tell, in as much as we can, how we drew the lines between subjects and objects, observer and observed, space and time.

What does it mean if we view appraisal and recordkeeping as phenomena, not as distinct processes? We of course need to create some distinctions between things to make sense of them. However, we need to acknowledge that ***we*** are the ones making these distinctions. They are not pre-existing or natural. Arguably to an extent the concept of recordkeeping, when examined in the context of monistic diversity already does this. But why do we discuss appraisal as separate to description? How do we, could we, and should we justify this partitioning of activities? A similar question can be posed of the thinkers in the chapter on participatory appraisal who discussed the need for archival influence in records creation, but did not seem to consider this appraisal. Why not? This is not to say it is a problem that it is seen as distinct, but that the rationale for creating any such distinction should be made explicit.

Barad's agential realist approach also complements records continuum thinking's overall epistemological position. As discussed in the chapter on records continuum thinking (2.1) records are not fixed static objects but evolving becoming things. Therefore, we cannot know everything about them, because they are forever changing and emerging through new contexts. Barad argues meaning 'is only locally resolvable through specific intra-actions' (Barad, 2003, p. 819). This would also apply to records. The meaning of a record is always specific to the context it emerges from, within and alongside. As Upward says, we can only know the small truths. A similar premise is woven

through much postmodern thought (Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault) where our knowledge of the world is always incomplete not just because we are human and therefore limited, but because the world itself is incomplete.

# Chapter 4.2: Extensions and Amplifications – Part 2

## Introduction

In the last chapter (4.1) the performative ontology and epistemology of records continuum thinking was made explicit. This framework was then extended by Barad's concept of phenomena and time-space. Like the previous chapter this one addresses my second research question:

> *How might social theory extend and support records continuum thinking and what might this mean for participatory appraisal?*

Instead of focusing on the physical world covered in the previous section, this chapter explores the social world and far less concrete, but no less important issues of agency, identity, and power. These concepts are far from new in the archival literature (Caswell, 2009, 2010; Harris, 2002; Iacovino, 2010; McKemmish et al., 2020; McKemmish et al., 2011; Stoler, 2002) but what is missing is a high-level overview of what power and agency actually mean. Much of the current literature starts with a specific historic event or instance, not with agency, identity, and power in a more abstract form. While keeping hold of our focus on the "small truths" of the world it helps to know what exactly we are looking for in specific instantiations when terms like power are used.

Exploring the way power and agency was conceptualised by those who had directly inspired records continuum thinking (Deleuze, Latour, Derrida, and Foucault) was a good first step. To understand these thinkers, I needed to understand those who they cited and referenced. After enough mentions were made to how Foucault challenged Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl, it became essential to understand the work of these thinkers too. I am not claiming a direct chain of intellectual transmission between these thinkers, but their work often builds on, or is a response to predecessors. Once I managed to pull myself out of the rabbit hole that is western continental philosophy I wondered if there might be conceptualisations of agency, identity, and power from thinkers of the same pedigree that could complement records continuum thinking. What would appraisal look like from their eyes? In this process I stumbled on Levinas and Arendt. Their thinking captured my imagination. I argue that Levinas' concept of alterity and Arendt's concept of plurality can extend the records continuum concepts of agency, multiplicity, and relational becomingness discussed in chapter 3.1.

The work of all of the philosophers and sociologists could also amplify, or perhaps clarify, what is meant by power in a records continuum context. I will be drawing explicitly on Foucault and Derrida to inform this clarification. Foucault's work also ties power to subjectivity and ideas of identity and agency.

## *Chapter approach*

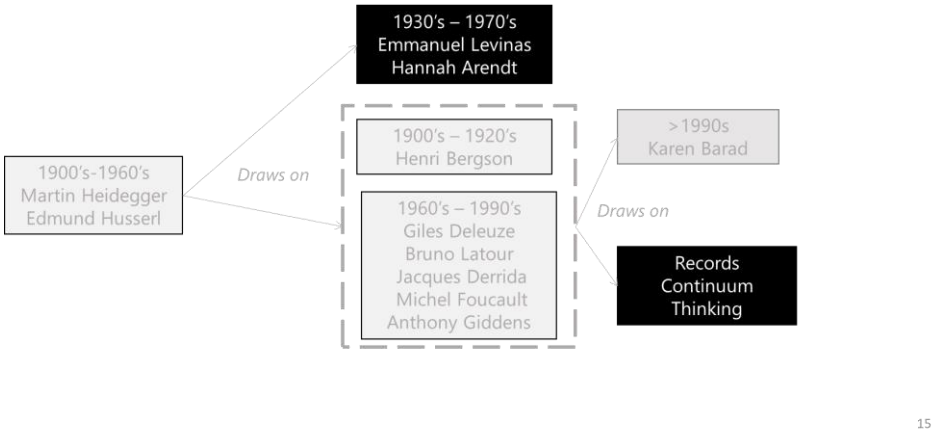


*figure 90. Chapter 4.2. Focus*

This chapter focuses on the ways in which the work of Levinas and Arendt (as highlighted in figure 90) can extend and amplify records continuum thinking and the consequences this might have for participatory appraisal. Using a diffractive methodology, records continuum thinking is read through Arendt and Levinas and vice versa in search of complementary concepts, parallels and differences.

Levinas's philosophy, much like Arendt's, is in many ways a response to Martin Heidegger's phenomenology and the horrors of the 20th century (Topolski, 2015) in particular the crimes of the Nazi and Stalinist regimes. Martin Heidegger is perhaps one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century, but also one of the most controversial. He built on Edmund Husserl's phenomenology developing an existential approach to philosophy. Phenomenology:

> 'Studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view. This field of philosophy is then to be distinguished from, and related to, the other main fields of philosophy: ontology (the study of being or what is), epistemology (the study of knowledge), logic (the study of valid reasoning), ethics (the study of right and wrong action)' (Smith, 2008).

Phenomenology is an attempt to understand what it is to be conscious, to be aware of the world, and to exist in it (Smith, 2008). It is distinguished from other fields of study because it does not explore a particular phenomenon (for example chemists exploring chemical reactions, geologists studying rocks etc). Instead phenomenology explores how it is possible for us to experience phenomena at all. Historically the concept of a thinking autonomous individual subject has been the starting point of most phenomenology, the unit of analysis as it were. This foundation led to a focus on how individuals relate to and make sense of the world. Heidegger referred to this self as Dasein (Inwood, 1997).

The existential element of Heidegger's philosophy relates to the fact that Dasein has no set purpose or nature. We have to make our own. There is no God or universal law, just us and our experiences with the world (Inwood, 1997; Watts, 2011). Dasein is unique because there is no shared purpose or essence sitting behind us, because we are free to choose how to be, whether butchers, bakers, or candlestick makers. This Being, with a capital B, is the focus of phenomenology as opposed to individual lower-case 'being's, which refer to the objects and people that exist in the world. We are not completely free, we are still constrained by the circumstances we find ourselves in, both contextual and physical, but we are free in how we respond. As a consequence, Heidegger put a lot of emphasis on what he called authenticity.

> 'Authenticity refers to a mode of existence in which I become aware of my *own* self and own possibilities and "choose to choose" my *own* way of life: to *myself*' (Watts, 2011, p. 85).

While he denies taking an ethical position, it appears that Heidegger is advocating for us to be authentic rather than inauthentic and living 'in the way others think I should be' (Watts, 2011, p. 85). Agency, the individual, and choice are essential concepts for Heidegger. Heidegger does acknowledge we exist "in" the world and have relationships with other people and the things around us, but for him the starting point is the individual.

Both Levinas and Arendt question Heidegger's focus on the self, on Dasein and Being (Topolski, 2015), not least of all because of Heidegger's brief period as a member of the Nazi party (Inwood, 1997; Watts, 2011). How could Levinas or Arendt (both Jewish thinkers) accept his phenomenology as unproblematic? While Heidegger maintained all his life that his thought was "apolitical" and "pre-ethical" his focus on the conditions that make Being possible, his wonder that something exists rather than nothing, and his focus on authenticity did not prevent him from forming a damning alliance with some of the worst criminals of the 20$^{th}$ century. Even worse, until his dying day he supported the "theory" of National Socialism while claiming its implementation was the problem (Watts, 2011).

Levinas and Arendt did not reject all of Heidegger's thought. Arendt in particular had a close relationship with Heidegger as her teacher, lover, and friend (Topolski, 2015; Watts, 2011). What they questioned was the centrality of Being, of the self, of introspection rather than relationships with others. In particular Levinas questioned the:

> 'validity of Heidegger's affirmation of the *priority* of Being over beings. Levinas suggests that to do this is to subordinate the relation with *someone*, who is a being (the ethical relation), to a relation with the *Being of beings* which is impersonal' (Watts, 2011, p. 262).

They can both still be viewed as phenomenological thinkers, exploring the conditions of possibility of experience but they add an ethical and moral edge. A major component of this edge is the shift from viewing the unit of analysis, the very condition that makes humanity possible, not as agency or the self, but as our relations with other human beings (Topolski, 2015). The existence of other people, and the radical uniqueness of every single person is what makes us human not any individualistic attribute.

In a similar vein to Barad, Levinas and Arendt argue we cannot exist, let alone make sense of the world starting from individual entities (Heidegger's self or Dasein's Being). They argue we must begin with entangled relational phenomena (our relationships with others). This is not only a more factually accurate perspective but an ethical imperative.

## Amplifications

### *Power*

Power and related concepts of empowerment, comes up repeatedly in the wider archival literature (Harris, 2002; Kaplan, 2002; Ketelaar, 2002, 2005; Schwartz & Cook, 2002), records continuum literature (McKemmish & Piggot, 1994; McKemmish et al., 2005; Upward et al., 2018), and literature on participatory approaches to archives (Caswell & Mallick, 2014; Flinn, 2010; Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014; Huvila, 2008; Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007). Many of these publications refer back to Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault when speaking of power. Perhaps one of the most extensive discussions to date on power as a theoretical concept in an archival context can be found in Sexton's (2015) doctoral thesis. Sexton's focus in her thesis is the creation of a mental health recovery archive, working closely with survivors of mental illness. The theoretical aspects appear to be grounded in her participatory endeavour. In this thesis theory is the primary focus. Sexton's doctoral thesis offers extensive discussion on Derridean and Foucauldian concepts of power. These same concepts are of relevance to records continuum thinking as discussed in chapter 2.1 and chapter 3.1. In addition to Foucault and Derrida I will also briefly touch on Arendt's and Levinas's definitions of power.

Derrida and Foucault both provide conceptualisations of power that can clarify and extend both records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal. What could be coined postfoundationalist conceptualisations of power also speak to responsibility. A postfoundationalist approach would

require the taking of responsibility for the choices archivists make in including or excluding material, in assigning value, in appraisal.

> 'Archival methodology's focus on context stems from a responsibility to exclude, or to at least minimize the tensional possibility of alternative readings and meanings. This is why archivists work to identify or select – to impose – a single context on content. Context conditions the evocation of meaning; it disciplines textual content' (Brothman, 1999, p. 80).

Because of the contextual nature of meaning, the definition of words is never fixed, never complete. Meaning is constantly created and re-created, it is never "finished". This speaks to the relational becomingness of records continuum thinking and the argument by many archivists that it is context, not content, that is core to a record. Like Derrida's language which is defined by what it differs from, by what it is not, by what it stands next too, and even by what is absent – recordkeeping metadata is often a way to communicate this difference.

If archivists and recordkeepers are to take responsibility for these choices and how records become, the Foucauldian concept of governmentality and power as discussed in chapter 2.1 becomes highly relevant. Power from a postfoundationalist, Foucauldian or Derridean sense is not limited to the ability to control others and to demand they obey. Power can also be productive. Power is dispersed, not something possessed by one and not another. Like a liquid or gas it floats and flows through relationships with other human beings. Power manifests in many forms. As discussed in chapter 2.1 this includes tactics - the micro, local, daily decisions which - may seem unimportant or insignificant but add up to strategies that shape the conditions of possibility for the emergence of other manifestations of power. Power emerges where instances of "power/knowledge" occur contributing to the constitution of subjects and discourses. This "power/knowledge" can be seen as enabling varying degrees of governmentality (the way things and people can be regulated, changed and controlled through our knowledge and representation of them). Perhaps this is why participatory approaches are often assumed to be a good solution to communities or individuals understood as disempowered.

Rather than focusing on disempowerment Hanna Arendt examines empowerment. Like Foucault Arendt sees power as productive and constructive; unlike Foucault Arendt argues this is the only type of true power.

> 'Power in an Arendtian sense is directly opposed to the type of "power" that totalitarianism sought. She refers to the latter in terms of strength, force and violence. Strength, for Arendt, is always connected to singularity, as an individual can possess it. By contrast, force, often

> confused with violence, is a physical descriptor and can be applied to nature. Violence is unique for Arendt, because of its specifically instrumental character' (Topolski, 2015, p. 66).

Arendt's power is the ability for people to act together; that action leading to change in both the world and ourselves (Topolski, 2015). Power is constructive and like monistic diversity a paralogy.

> 'While power is rooted in plurality, it does not exist without particularity; every actor is a distinct and irreplaceable human being. By participating in the *polis*[3], one discovers – by learning from the other – who one is and – at the same time – helping to create a shared world' (Topolski, 2015, p. 67).

Levinas does not appear to explore power as explicitly as Arendt but does speak about violence. For Levinas failure to recognise the radical uniqueness (what he calls alterity) of the other is a fundamental act of violence. Alterity will be explored as complementary to, and amplifying of, records continuum conceptualisations of agency later on in this chapter.

## Extensions

### *Agency and Subjectivity*

Agency is a concept that comes up repeatedly in the participatory archival literature, particularly through records continuum literature (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014; McKemmish et al., 2020; Rolan, 2017a, 2017b). But what exactly, does it mean? Previous chapters have demonstrated the central importance of Anthony Giddens to records continuum thinking. Unsurprisingly many current records continuum thinkers seem to draw on Giddens definition of agency; agency being the ability to have acted otherwise (Giddens, 1984). The idea of agency as the ability to act is quite common in the philosophical literature (Schlosser, 2015). In the archival literature agency, is used as a term to describe the ability of individuals to act and make decisions around recordkeeping, records and archives. Agency is often framed as a rights issue, something discrete individuals or communities are entitled to and either possess or do not have (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014; McKemmish et al., 2020; Rolan, 2017a, 2017b).

[3] 'This [Polis] is indeed a 'metaphor' because in employing this term Arendt is not simply referring to the political institutions of the Greek city-states, bounded as they were to their time and circumstance, but to all those instances in history where a public realm of action and speech was set up among a community of free and equal citizens'd'Entreves, M., & Passerin. (2018). Hannah Arendt. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Online: The Metaphysics Research Lab, Center for the Study of Language and Information (CSLI), Stanford University.

The ability of people to act, while being common, is not the only definition of agency. As discussed in chapter 2.1 some theorists, such as Bruno Latour, also assign agency to non-human entities. The same goes for records continuum theorists who often also ascribe records with agency, seemingly at odds with Giddens definition.

> 'Records have agency too, manifesting as their ongoing entanglement in human (time-space) activity' (Gilliland 2014b; Wilson and Golding 2016)' (Rolan, 2017a, p. 206).

In this context the focus is not on an individual who could have acted differently but on the impact and entanglement between humans and non-human entities. The way they shape each other. Non-human agency is a key part of Agential Realist theory put forward by Barad and discussed in chapter 4.1., which seeks to challenge the givenness of all boundaries, even human and non-human.

What I find problematic about non-human agency is the risk it could be interpreted as bringing people down to the level of objects. My own personal anthropocentrism has been shaped by the thought of postfoundationalist thinkers like Arendt, Levinas, and Tzvetan Todorov who warn of the dangers of treating people like things, as tools or means to an end (Arendt, 2006; Barnes, 2016; Bergo, 2017; Castleberry, 2013; Rossiter, 2011; Todorov, 1984, 1996, 2001, 2003, 2009, 2010, 2011; Topolski, 2015). I doubt that the intention of acknowledging the agency of non-human entities is to do this, but I fear it opens that doorway a little too wide. Something non-living objects do not have is cognitive or emotional agency.

Thinkers like Tipler and Ruscher (2014) and Schlosser (2015) have explored agency from affective, cognitive, and behavioural perspectives. If, as I suspect they often are, archivists are advocating for agency in records in part because it recognises the humanity of subjects of records, then by limiting ourselves to behavioural aspects of agency there is a risk of ignoring affective and cognitive agency. Ignoring affective and cognitive agency could mutate into treating people like things. Equating people with records. The very thing records continuum thinkers are trying to avoid.

Rights are important, but they have been criticised by authors such as Arendt (Fry, 2009) for focusing on individual subjects or in rare instances communities. It is important to note a lot has changed since Arendt's work in the 1950s. Rights as social-legal constructs are rarely absolute and there is diversity in the way rights are manifested across different nation states. Within the philosophical literature there are also important preconditions for action and agency that could complement current records continuum thinking. One such precondition is subjectivity.

> 'Subjectivity is a precondition for agency; after all, one cannot have the ability or capacity to act without having the ability or capacity to deliberate, that is, without being a thinking subject' (Allen, 2002, p. 135).

Arendt and Levinas both explore how to untangle agency and the related concept of subjectivity. For them, agency is important, but is itself based on pre-conditions. In Arendt's case the precondition is plurality and for Levinas it is alterity (Topolski, 2015). Plurality is a complementary concept that stresses the self can only exist through interaction with different others. There is always more than one person. People do not, and cannot, exist in complete isolation or replication (Arendt, 2006; Fry, 2009). Arendt's thought on plurality can be translated into records continuum concepts of multiplicity and relational becomingness. People come to be agents through interactions (relational becomingness) with others (multiplicity).

In order to fully understand Arendt's conceptualisation of agency it is necessary to briefly cover her conceptualisation of action. For Arendt action is one part of a triad of human behaviour, people act, work, and labour. These fulfil needs created by six conditions that all human beings experience. These are natality (birth), mortality (death), biological survival (the need to eat, drink, and sleep), worldliness (the desire for permanence in the world), plurality, and an unnamed condition described by some as a kind of recursive 'self-interpreting' (we make things – Worldliness – and are shaped by them) (Arendt, 1998; Higgins, 2010).

Labour fulfils the needs of biological survival and includes activities like growing and preparing food, building and maintaining shelter etc (Higgins, 2010, p. 282). Work fulfils the need for worldliness and the unnamed sixth condition, by creating an environment with "things" more permanent than ourselves. Work also helps us cope with our own mortality. Records can be seen as a kind of work from this perspective, as for Arendt action enables us to disclose ourselves.

> 'This beginning something anew that Arendt calls action is constitutive of the individual as an agent. Action discloses who (as opposed to what) the actor is' (Allen, 2002, p. 137).

The capacity to act does not only disclose the individual's identity as an agent but constructs the identity of the agent at the same time. Because action is an exercise of disclosure it requires an agent to disclose to, and according to Arendt, a focal point (often a worldly object created by work such as a table or painting) in relation to which agents can express themselves (d'Entreves & Passerin, 2018).

> 'For Arendt, action always takes place within a web of relationships with other actors, and it serves to establish and maintain that web of relationships. Arendt's agent is always at the same time both sufferer and doer, both subject to the constraints of the actions of others and made into a subject with the capacity to act by the web of social relationships within which one must act' (d'Entreves & Passerin, 2018).

In this conceptualisation agency is not just the capacity to act, it is a key aspect of how we become as subjects. It is something humans do with each other. It is a relational becoming. Denying the ability to act is then, by extension, denying the subjectivity of a person. Archives, records, and recordkeeping have the potential to serve as the focal point (work) through which agents can perform their own subjectivity. Participation creates the subject. This participation can only take place within a relational space with others. Without living in a multiplicity of people, action cannot occur[4]. Without others around us, without some degree of participation, actions, and words are meaningless.

> 'Words and deeds, which together constitute action, can only be actualised in the presence of others; action thus requires plurality and cannot occur either in the private realm or in isolation from others. It is, as it were, a second birth into the world where beings become unique, irreplaceable human beings' (Topolski, 2015, p. 58).

From a records continuum perspective records and archives, in their material form, consist in part of words and representations of actions. Words and language do not crop up in isolation either, there is always an audience, even if that audience is the self.

> 'Language requires two elements that are both grounded in the face-to-face: first, the otherness or separateness of a dialogical partner or interlocutor, another person to talk with; and second, universality or commonality. For Levinas there is no private language, and there is no universality not grounded in the encounter with the other's plea and demand' (Morgan, 2011, p. 73).

In the above quote Morgan (2011) describes a tension at the heart of Levinas's philosophy that is familiar to records continuum thinking. The tension between the coexistence of uniqueness and universality. A tension between unique individuals as interlocutors, and universality through the necessity of shared meaning to allow comprehension via language. Such a tension is similar to the

[4] It is worth noting that Arendt objected to the term multiplicity preferring plurality but this will be discussed further on.

idea of monistic diversity which also brings together to seemingly incompatible concepts and underpins, if not demands we recognise the existence of an Archival Multiverse.

### *Arendt – Plurality and Monistic Diversity*

Arendt's concept of plurality applies to human beings. Plurality and agency are for Arendt intertwined.

> 'Humans are the same because they are members of the human species, they share a common world, and they are equal. Humans are different from one another because they are all unique, distinct individuals and there are no two human beings who are exactly alike' (Fry, 2009, p. 44).

Arendt's plurality also has strong similarities with a records continuum concepts of monistic diversity and multiplicity. Humanity is one diverse inseparable whole. Arendt does however take issue with the term multiplicity. For her it implies multiples of the same, not the kind of diversity she feels is the basis of plurality. It appear that records continuum thinkers and Arendt are both talking about roughly the same concept whether they call it multiplicity or plurality. In this chapter I will refer to plurality as here we are discussing Arendt's work. Our capacity to act also mirrors this plurality, we can all act (equality) and we can never replicate the exact same action (due to its interpersonal nature) twice (unique).

> 'However, while engaging in speech and action individuals can never be sure what kind of self they will reveal. Only retrospectively, that is, only through the stories that will arise from their deeds and performances, will their identity become fully manifest. The function of the storyteller is thus crucial not only for the preservation of the doings and sayings of actors, but also for the full disclosure of the identity of the actor' (d'Entreves & Passerin, 2018).

I argue archives can be seen as a space of speech and action in the Arendtian sense, that they therefore facilitate story telling. Thus if archives are spaces that facilitate storytelling and archivists in turn manage and facilitate archives, they are responsible for ensuring no-one is barred from disclosure and therefore realisation of their own subjectivity. Archives can then be a space in which people can become, by revealing parts of themselves as they choose.Additionally archives could facilitate the linking up the different "selves" disclosed in multiple archives by the one community or individual, further underpinning the formation of identity. This revealing cannot be done on others behalf. Archivists cannot document everything about individuals, because individuals are unique, unknowable and new. Participation is a logical necessity if an archive is to claim to represent people or share their stories.

In her later writings, particularly after the publication of her 1963 book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil,* Arendt explores the importance of this plurality to our capacity to think (Pack, 2017). Only some cognitive phenomena are classified by Arendt as "thinking". Thinking is a conversation with yourself, and like the plurality of society requires multiple perspectives. These come from the duality of the self. The inner dialogue that we hold within ourselves when we think. The reflective part of our selves that is aware of ourselves, that observes ourselves and judges ourselves. Arendt contends that we can never escape this observing self, we have to live with ourselves. Thinking reminds us that we are reliant on this plurality for our very existence, therefore to act out and harm another is tantamount to harming ourselves as Judith Butler, an expert on Arendt, eloquently explains:

> 'Does thinking implicate each thinking 'I' as part of a 'we' such that to destroy or divide some part of the plurality is to destroy not only oneself (understood as linked to that plurality) but also the very conditions of thinking itself?' (Judith Butler cited in, Burdon, 2015, p. 227).

While thinking and the plural self alone cannot be our sole pathway to ethical decisions, in light of this realty Anya Topolski proposes a Politics of Relationality which draws on Levinas's idea of alterity to compliment Arendt's concept of plurality.

> 'Levinas's thought has a depth in terms of the self-other relation that Arendt's thought lacks because of its attention to plurality' (Topolski, 2015, p. 116).

As seen above Arendt's idea of plurality ties in directly with the concept of not only the ability to act in a unique, and new, way but our ability to think. Incorporating cognition and an inner dialogue into agency and extending the multiverse to include humanity as monistically diverse. Taking such a position adds theoretical weight to the argument that records and archives are always becoming, that they are never complete.

### *Levinas – Alterity and Small Knowledges*

Levinas uses different language from Arendt but, as Topolski argues, also understands plurality as essential to the formation of the self, subjectivity, and agency (Topolski, 2015). While he does not use the term plurality, his concept of alterity exists in a similar vein. Alterity refers to the radical distinctness and difference of all human beings.

> 'Now to apprehend directly the other in himself is to apprehend his present perceptions, his memories and anticipations. It is to immediately grasp the content of his consciousness. Such a grasp, however, is not given to me by my sensuous, outer perception of the Other.

> Moreover, were I to have such inner access to him, his consciousness would merge with my own' (Mensch, 2001, p. 30).

To fail to recognise this is commit an act of violence and dehumanization. This otherness is beyond language, beyond explanation. We can never reach it or capture it. This means life is inherently unpredictable, and so are other people. A significant element of the violence of totalitarianism governments is its desire to make use an ideology to "make sense" of people, to have complete knowledge of human beings. This complete knowledge erases any distinction between people, it extinguishes both alterity and the possibility of plurality (Morgan, 2009). This violence is not unique to despotic tyrants but can also emerge within bureaucracies:

> 'Bureaucratic regimes often fall prey to the tendency to see all individuals as numbers, a tendency that remains tangible in today's liberal democracies' (Topolski, 2015, p. 119).

This alterity has profound epistemological consequences. It adds theoretical support to Frank Upward's (2009) argument around small knowledges and Verne Harris's (2002) concept of the archival sliver. If the other is radically unknowable, is infinite, then no archive, no record can ever truly and fully represent them.

In chapter 3.3. a number of underpinning assumptions were unearthed, that led to the development of 4 axioms. One of these was that non-archivists can contribute to records, archives, and recordkeeping. I argue the reason for this has far more to do with people than archives, records, or recordkeeping. Participation does not make sense if the participants have nothing to contribute that could not be found by studying them like rocks or chairs. The reason they have, always will, and always do have something to contribute is because of their alterity. Because we can never know the full story, we can never ever reach inside someone and know all their thoughts, experiences, memories. Agency extends beyond action into complex inner lives.

Levinas takes this idea even further with the idea of particularity. It is not only my internal world that renders my alterity manifest, but the relations I have with other people. The relationships I have with others is what makes me completely particular. Two radically different beings coming together, interacting, and creating each other. Relational becomingness at work.

> 'For Levinas the significance of our lives arises for us as particular, unique individuals, and that particularity is tied to our responsibility in each and every situation, with respect to each and every situation, to each and every other person. Hence, Human life is meaningful insofar as each of us responds out of kindness and generosity at each and every instant' (Morgan, 2011, p. 171).

What then does this mean for archives? How might this concept of responsibility apply to archives as institutions and collections? As discussed earlier in this thesis the concept of taking responsibility is prominent in Anna Sextons writing on participatory archives.

> 'For Derrida, responsibility cannot be responsibility without choice, otherwise it is only obeying a rule, and in rule following responsibility is disavowed. To accept that responsibility *towards* others and *for* others involves choice requires an acceptance of the inevitable *irresponsibility* of any course of action I might take. As soon as I determine and choose *a* course of action I must betray some others and the infinity of others' (Sexton, 2015, p. 319).

The thought of Derrida and Levinas are closely related. For Levinas responsibility is integral to our relation with the other. It is the first experience we have, before, he argues we even exist as an individual entity. This responsibility is limitless. We are responsible for everyone in every way (Morgan, 2009, 2011; Topolski, 2015). This sounds extreme, and it is. What is often missed is that institutions can serve an important role in limiting this responsibility so it is manageable rather than all consuming. Archival institutions could very well operate in that manner.

> 'Law, the state, and justice limit my responsibilities by subjecting them to calculation and regimentation, comparing them and determining whom I ought to serve, whom I ought to restrict; at the same time my responsibility to each and every other person is what "legitimizes" the state and gives it a sense of purpose and value' (Morgan, 2009, p. 112).

Like Levinas, I do not believe we can institute the "good". That is, we cannot rely on formal methodologies, processes or institutions to ensure ethical, good outcomes. Such outcomes can only ever exist in the everyday relation between one person and another; in the small truths as Upward would say and the instantiations of the world we can explore. Methodologies and organisations can facilitate ethics and the "good", support ethics and the "good", but they cannot institute ethics or the "good". Because of our plurality, particularity and alterity to assume we know how to assist someone, to assume we know what someone wants or needs is to disregard the particularity of each situation and each person. The disregarding of this particularity, whether well intended or otherwise is to dehumanize.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have taken a metaphorical step forward in time looking at two thinkers influenced by the work of Heidegger and Husserl. These thinkers, Arendt and Levinas share an intellectual heritage with those discussed in chapter 2.1. of this thesis. Many of them can be labelled Postfoundationalist's. They share a concern with issues of power and agency, a curiosity about how we "know" about the world and what the limits of human knowledge are, a curiosity about what it

means to be human. They also share a concern for ethics or social “good”. I think that Arendt and Levinas in particular offer us an extended conceptualisation of key records continuum concepts.

An extended conceptualisation of agency that includes action (in an Arendtian sense as plural), cognitively and affectively coupled with Levinas’s alterity provides a basis for the social world that incorporates records continuum concepts of multiplicity, monistic diversity, and relational becomingness. Arendt also extends records continuum concepts of multiplicity to more explicitly include people and communities. In the next chapter I will outline how these ideas along with a postfoundationalist understanding of power can extend and support records continuum thinking and in particular, the repercussions for participatory approaches to appraisal.

# Chapter 4.3: Postfoundationalism, Participatory Approaches and Records Continuum Thinking

## Introduction

In chapter 3.3 of this thesis, I identified four axioms that underpinned participatory approaches to appraisal and supported the six key records continuum concepts identified in chapter 3.1. In the first two chapters of this section I explored how the postfoundationalist theory of Barad, Arendt, and Levinas could extend and amplify records continuum thinking. Bringing together records continuum thinking, selected conceptualisations of participatory appraisal, and postfoundationalist theory, three additional axioms emerge. These axioms are:

1. Human beings are the central rationale for recordkeeping, records, and archives;
2. Our knowledge of records and archives is always incomplete; and
3. Human beings have a unique and fundamental alterity and as such archival and recordkeeping needs, rights, and wants can never be assumed but are constantly evolving.

I argue these axioms could be used to complement and implement the rights in records championed by archival scholars Sue McKemmish and Anne Gilliland (2014). There are countless pitfalls that could plague participatory approaches to appraisal as well if they are not similarly conceptually grounded. If people do not understand why they are doing something, there are greater chances of misapplication and unintentional consequences occurring. A lack of understanding also renders people unable to respond to special circumstances and take ever present context and contingency into account.

## The challenge of a rights approach

Both Arendt and Levinas are cautious about rights (Topolski, 2015). Rights are universal, as they should be, but if viewed through Levinas's perspective this universality could lead us to reject the alterity of human beings or from Arendt's point of view the plurality and relationality of humanity. It is important to acknowledge that Arendt, who was a critique of rights, was writing in the 1950s and 1960s. Much has changed since then, Arendt's concern that rights might require us to see everybody as the same, to ignore their inherent plurality has been addressed by more contemporary approaches to rights (Dupuy, 2018; Park et al., 2020). Indeed the potential risk of blind application of "rights" could be reframed as one familiar to archivists, contextualisation.

A solution proposed by Arendt is the employment of principles. Principles leave room for tweaks and personalisation and do not force a specific or totalizing solution, they support contextualisation. These principles should encourage engagement with other human beings and discussion. There is no

reason why these cannot underpin rights, in fact we can see such contextualisation in the Trust and Technology project report where it was acknowledged that:

> 'Koorie people are legally in exactly the same situation as everyone else. The ***effect*** of this framework, however, is not the same for everyone. When we take into account the extent to which Koorie people are documented in archives, the circumstances under which many records were created and the part that these records have played in their dispossession as well as in the recovery of identity, there is a strong argument that Koorie people have special claims over their knowledge in archives' (Trust and Technology Project Team, 2008, p. 24).

The acknowledgement of context and incorporation of principles to guide rights in records can be found throughout records continuum writing on Indigenous Australians, children or adults who have experienced institutional care and refugee populations (Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014; McKemmish et al., 2020; Trust and Technology Project Team, 2008). These principles are further supported by discussion of the need for an ethics of care to complement a more normative human rights approach (Carbone et al., to be published (2021))

> 'Justice is only possible through an encounter with the other that occurs via language. However justice - like ethics - cannot be "known"; it is beyond epistemology, a phenomenon to be experienced rather than calculated' (Topolski, 2015, p. 148).

An understanding of the principles supports the application of these rights in a multitude of ways beyond a proscriptive list of requirements. This is in line with the broader underpinning of postmodern archival thinking where each instantiation of an event or thing is sought to be understood through its context. To be clear, this is not an argument against rights, rather a discussion about the precursor to rights. Rights tend to be focused on actions, but even the most well intended actions can backfire if the purpose of them is not understood or they are applied blindly in extreme contexts.

Systems and processes built to ensure compliance with human rights can help, but they cannot replace the relationality of one human to another.  This why a blended approach is required. Human relationality is unlikely to provide the accountability and assurance mechanisms found in systems. Systems are totalizing, they treat everyone as if they were the same person, as if there was no plurality or alterity.

> 'Human beings cannot live without principles and institutions for regulating their interactions. At the same time, political institutions alone, unburdened by the requirements of generosity

> and assistance, can easily run amok and become distorted even corrupt and oppressive' (Morgan, 2011, p. 24).

Bureaucracies can also stifle an important aspect of this human relation – thinking. The mindless engagement in acts of box ticking, administration, and process can end up distancing us from the reality of what we are actually doing, of the people impacted (Arendt, 2006). Such systems can also be used as a way to give up responsibility. To say we were just following protocol or policy (Arendt, 2006).

Put simply, different people need different things in different contexts. For example, records warning of potential toxic nuclear waste may need to last for thousands of years, while the records of a group smuggling people to safety from a dictatorial government may need to be securely destroyed almost immediately. In both scenarios the recordkeeping is used to help protect people. However to fulfil this need the features of the records themselves need to be very different. This can make assessing how "Good" a recordkeeping system or record is on the basis of the features of the system problematic.

A postfoundationalist approach is focused on the conditions of possibility not a finished product. The same can be said for records continuum thinking where the world is always relationally becoming. Both of these approaches can provide us with Arendtian principles, or what I am cautiously calling axioms, that situate us in particular world view, shaping and framing how we see the world around us and therefore what actions "make sense".

## Axioms to underpin rights in records and participatory approaches to appraisal

Four of the axioms were identified in chapter 3.3. These were:

1. Non-archivists can contribute to archives, records, and recordkeeping;
2. Records and archives have multiple meanings;
3. Records, archives, and recordkeeping are not, and can never be completely neutral or objective; and
4. Records, archives, and recordkeeping have impacts on people.

These axioms were built around the six key records continuum concepts identified in chapter 3.1. (monistic diversity, multiplicity, time-space, agency, context, and relational becomingness). In chapters 4.1 and 4.2, we have seen how the postfoundationalist thought of Barad, Arendt, and Levinas can extend and amplify these six key records continuum concepts.

Barad's concept of phenomena replaces time-space, extending it to a performative level where, as in existing records continuum thinking, we approach the world as specific entangled instantiations of space, time, agents, objects, and observers. Time-space is no longer just something we travel through that shapes us, we shape it too. Replacing time-space with phenomena does not contradict the axioms identified in chapter 3.3; if anything it further complements them particularly the last three.

From Barad's perspective the act of observation adds to the emergence of phenomena. Therefore, it is logical that **records and archives have multiple meanings** as each instance of observation is transformative. Seeing as Cartesian conceptualisations of objectivity are premised on observer independence, with phenomena emerging through the intra-action of observers who are in turn shaped by their objects of observation (in this case records) **records and archives can never be completely neutral or objective** in a traditional sense. A postfoundationalist performative approach also acknowledges how humans create agential cuts to make sense of the world. The creation of agential cuts is not neutral work but like Derrida's différence always involves a degree of choice.

> 'Recall that an agential cut effects a local separability of different "component parts" of the phenomenon, one of which ("the cause") expresses itself in effecting and marking the other ("the effect"). In a scientific context this process is known as a "measurement." (Indeed, the notion of "measurement" is nothing more or less than a causal intra-action.) Whether it is thought of as a "measurement," or as part of the universe making itself intelligible to another part in its ongoing differentiating intelligibility and materialization, is a matter of preference. Either way, what is important about causal intra-actions is the fact that marks are left on bodies. Objectivity means being accountable to marks on bodies' (Barad, 2003, p. 824).

This leads directly into the fourth axiom, that **records, archives, and recordkeeping have impacts on people.** In making sense of the world we are altering it, and this includes other people. In creating, accessing, viewing or interacting with records, archives, or recordkeeping we are shaping people, impacting people.

> 'We are responsible for the world within which we live not because it is an arbitrary construction of our choosing, but because it is sedimented out of particular practices that we have a role in shaping' (Barad, 1998, pp. 93 - 94).

The responsibility that Levinas discusses is far more extreme than that quoted by Barad (1998) above but his concept of alterity nevertheless supports the four axioms identified in chapter 3.3. Alterity is about recognising the radical difference of each and every human being, and the

impossibility of ever overcoming this difference. Despite this impossibility we are forever responsible to each other. Because we cannot know another completely it does not make sense to rule out their ability to **contribute to archives, records, or recordkeeping**. Their, and our experience, of the world is at once unique and built on our interactions. It is likely therefore that any **records or archives that emerge from that experience will have multiple meanings**. Different people see things differently. Acceptance of our radical alterity is incompatible with observer independent objectivity or neutrality. We simply cannot know if observations of multiple people of the same object are identical. **Records and archives are not objective and neutral.** We therefore have a responsibility to provide space for the multiple meanings records and archives have. To fix the meaning based on our own experience is to ignore the alterity of the other. **One of the many way's records can impact people** is by documenting them, I argue from Levinas's point of view, this documentation (in the broadest possible sense, referring to the recording of information in any form) could transform unknowable agents into knowable objects. For Levinas to know something is to internalise and possess it, to know a person is to dehumanise them. It implies you have internalised them and literally possess them in your own mind. To know a person completely you need to assume they have no capability to surprise you, to act or respond. Arendt would likely have similar objections to documenting people in archives, as it is only through action with others that we can reveal and construct ourselves.

As this disclosure and any action involves others the outcome is never certain. We cannot in advance decide what something will mean**. Archives and records have multiple meanings** as they exist within human plurality. Humans are human through our interaction, our relationships, our relational becomingness. Archives and records could be framed as focal points for disclosure and construction of identity, if framed in this way archives and **records have profound impacts on people** and **are not neutral or objective**. This action of disclosure can also be seen as **a contribution to archives, records and recordkeeping by non-archivists**.

The next part in this puzzle are the axioms that emerged from the previous two chapters (4.1 and 4.2), bringing us to a total of seven axioms. The fifth, sixth, and seventh axioms are:

5. Human beings are the central rationale for recordkeeping, records, and archives;
6. Our knowledge of records and archives are always incomplete; and
7. Human beings have a unique and fundamental alterity and as such archival and recordkeeping needs, rights, and wants can never be assumed but are constantly evolving.

Levinas's work is often summed up as 'ethics as first philosophy' (Barnes, 2016; Bergo, 2017; Morgan, 2009, 2011; Topolski, 2015). He explicitly and repeatedly states that the other should

always be our starting point; the interaction of one person with another is the fundamental unit that makes up our social universe. We are radically and completely responsible for the other. Arendt's thought has a similar relational focus. She draws heavily on Kantian ethics, in particular the ideal that humans should never, ever, become means to any ends. Arendt refers to the kind of thinking where people often become means as instrumentalist thinking. Instrumentalist thinking loses sight of the overall goal of a task and instead focuses narrowly on completing the task itself. Imagine you are waiting for a train. The train is delayed, then flies past you not stopping. Those in charge having decided to bypass a number of stations so that the train arrives "on time" at the final destination. While this may make the metrics look better arguably it defeats the purpose of the train in the first place, transporting people from locations A, B, C, and D to location E. If it skips past locations B, C, and D it is useless to those individuals.

Participatory appraisal is certainly a means to a good end in many cases, but it is not an end in itself. The ends must be people. Like the train example above, timeliness is a good feature of a transport system but it is not the ultimate purpose of transportation. People have alterity and exist in plurality so there can be no universal ends, what is "good" for one community might not be "good" for another and vice versa. By extending records continuum conceptualisations of agency to include alterity and plurality, and by thinking about power as productive the trap of blindly applying participatory approaches is avoided.

People must always be ends in themselves. This insistence on the centrality of humanity as a plurality leads to the fifth axiom I identified that could support participatory approaches to archives. Human beings are the central rationale for records, recordkeeping, and archives. Full stop. Preservation, access or any other archival function are subordinate to the fundamental rationale of records and archives being ***for*** human beings. Preservation is carried out ***for*** people, not for preservations sake. Access is provided ***for*** people, not because that is what a standard requires of us.

It gets tricky here however. How can archivists know how to best do these things ***for*** people, and ***for*** which people? A good starting point from a postfoundationalist perspective is to be open about our inability to ever know with complete certainty, that **our knowledge of records and archives is always incomplete**. Our knowledge, records, and archives are always incomplete because it is impossible to ever fully know another person, because of their alterity. As such any record about a person will always have missing components, much like Harris's (2002) archival sliver. Furthermore as we discussed in chapter 2.1. from a Derridean perspective meaning is constantly evolving. What we know today may not be the case tomorrow or in one hundred years' time. Throw in the third factor of Arendt's plurality where we never know the exact outcome of a phenomena because other

people are always involved and it seems we are in a real mess. **Human beings have a unique and fundamental alterity and as such archival and recordkeeping needs, rights, and wants can never be assumed but are constantly evolving.**

Participation is likely going to be useful in resolving these issues. If we cannot know what people want or need, why not ask them? While not possible in every instance and downright undesirable in some, starting with these seven axioms could be useful. Forcing us to pause before leaping into an archival project and considering the "small truths" to be found. I argue these axioms can be applied just as well to appraisal as any other archival activity and have made a conscious effort to keep them open to non-records continuum paradigms despite being built on records continuum concepts of monistic diversity, phenomena (encompassing time-space), multiplicity, context, relational becomingness, agency (encompassing Arendt's plurality and action), and alterity.

## Conclusion

If as archivists we can approach a situation and acknowledge the agency of everyone involved; the alterity of everyone involved; the multiplicity and plurality of archives, records, and recordkeeping; and the impact of institutional structures, perhaps we can come up with a better understanding of what the problem is in the first place.

## Section 4: Conclusion

In this section of the thesis I explored the possible extensions and amplifications that postfoundationalist theory, specifically that of Barad, Arendt, and Levinas could offer to records continuum thinking. I identified Barad's concept of phenomena, Arendt's plurality and action, and Levinas's concept of alterity as useful. This section also built on the conclusions from section 3 of the thesis adding to the four axioms that emerged from records continuum thinking and the discourse analysis of participatory approaches to archives. As a result, records continuum thinking is underpinned by concepts of monistic diversity, phenomena (which is inclusive of time-space), relational becomingness, multiplicity, agency (inclusive of Arendt's plurality and action), alterity, contextuality, and power. The findings address my second and third research questions:

> *How might social theory extend and support records continuum thinking and what might this mean for participatory appraisal?*
>
> *How might the adaption and use of Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis and diffractive analysis contribute to archival scholarly practice?*

The seven axioms that could guide participatory archival practice are:

1. Non-archivists can contribute to archives, records, and recordkeeping;
2. Records and archives have multiple meanings;
3. Records, archives, and recordkeeping, are not, and can never be completely neutral or objective;
4. Records, archives, and recordkeeping have impacts on people;
5. Human beings are the central rationale for recordkeeping and archives;
6. Our knowledge of records and archives is always incomplete; and
7. Human beings have a unique and fundamental alterity and as such archival and recordkeeping needs, rights, and wants can never be assumed but are constantly evolving.

In the final section of this thesis I will recap the layers of theoretical exploration I have journeyed across and lay out potential future research that has emerged from this project.

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# Conclusion and Closing Reflection

In tying up this thesis there is much to reflect upon. This project has evolved from an exploration of the role of records in othering, to appraisal of records relating to people in Australian offshore immigration detention, to an exploration of records continuum thinking, participatory appraisal and the potential of postfoundationalist theory.

The rationale for this research can be found in a number of sources. One of the most pressing points for me is the following statement by Terry Cook:

> 'Without clearly stated and well-understood theory that is continually evolving and relevant, appraisal practice soon becomes directionless, inconsistent, and, when challenged, undefendable to the wider public and unaccountable within larger archival mandates'(Cook, 2005, p. 102).

My experience working alongside members of the find and connect team at the University of Melbourne further highlighted to me the significance of appraisal and the consequences of past appraisal practices in an Australian context. People were left without the records they needed, no amount of access, description, or support could change the fact the required records were never created or were destroyed(Golding, 2019; NT Royal Commission, 2017; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017). As discussed in the literature review and introduction to this thesis participatory approaches to appraisal were often advocated for as a solution to these problems(Frings-Hessami, 2018; Humphreys & Kertesz, 2015; McKemmish et al., 2020; Swain & Musgrove, 2012). But what was actually meant by participatory? In exploring what participatory appraisal might mean I came across an even bigger question. What was meant by a records continuum paradigm? I found I could not easily answer this question despite having been immersed in Australian archival research and practice.

## Records Continuum Thinking and Participatory Appraisal

Returning to the quote from Terry Cook I couldn't begin to explore how appraisal theory might be 'continually evolving and relevant' (Cook, 2005, p. 102) if it wasn't first 'clearly stated and well-understood'(Cook, 2005, p. 102). My first research question emerged from this need.

> *What are the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal?*

Only once records continuum thinking was 'clearly stated and well-understood' (Cook, 2005, p. 102) could I begin to engage in exploring the possibility for evolution. I clarified records continuum thinking and participatory approaches by conducting a Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis in section three of this thesis. This discourse analysis led to the identification of six key records continuum concepts:

1. Monistic Diversity;
2. Time-space;
3. Multiplicity;
4. Contextuality;
5. Relational Becomingness; and
6. Agency.

I also identified six thinkers in section two of this thesis who had a significant impact on records continuum thinking.

1. Henri Bergson;
2. Giles Deleuze;
3. Jacques Derrida;
4. Bruno Latour;
5. Michel Foucault; and
6. Anthony Giddens.

Moving onto participatory approaches to appraisal I assumed I would also find discrete concepts. I did not, instead what I found were four axioms that served as the basic conditions of possibility for participatory archives of any kind, not just appraisal. After analysing eleven conceptualisations of participatory approaches and reflecting on them through the six concepts underpinning records continuum thinking four axioms emerged. These included:

1. Non-archivists can contribute to archives, records, and recordkeeping

This first axiom requires acknowledgement of the **agency** of non-archivists. The second axiom nods towards the **multiplicity**, **contextuality**, **relational becomingness**, and **monistic diversity** of records archives. Every single one of the eleven conceptualisations of participatory approaches to archives rested on the implied or explicit belief that non-archivists could contribute to archives, records, and recordkeeping. It simply wouldn't make sense to have participation if there was nothing the participants could add.

A second axiom was also identified in an overwhelming majority of the eleven conceptualisations of participatory approaches to archives.

2. Records and archives have multiple meanings

From this perspective records and archives are not singular in their meaning. This meaning is shaped by their context and is constantly changing and evolving. Despite what may appear to be a single collection or document (monistic), the meanings are actually diverse and plural (diversity).

Because of this **multiplicity**, **contextuality**, and **relational becomingness** records, archives, and recordkeeping cannot be objective in the traditional sense of the term. Multiple people could look at the same records or archives and come to different and equally valid conclusions about their meaning. This leads to the third axiom:

3. Records, archives, and recordkeeping are not, and can never be, completely neutral or objective

Many of the eleven conceptualisations of participatory approaches to appraisal came from a postmodern perspective(Booms, 1987; Caswell & Mallick, 2014; Cox & Samuels, 1988; Flinn, 2010; Gilliland & McKemmish, 2014; Huvila, 2008; McKemmish et al., 2020; Rolan, 2017a, 2017b; Sexton, 2015; Sexton & Sen, 2018; Shilton & Srinivasan, 2007). Part of a postmodern world view is acknowledging the way meanings we ascribe to the world impact on people, meanings in this world view has power. Most of the conceptualisations of participatory approaches to archives went so far as to state the purpose of participation was to ensure meanings of vulnerable or under-represented groups were heard, arguing if an individual or communities were silenced or dismissed this causes great harm. The fourth axiom is therefore that:

4. Records, archives, and recordkeeping have impacts on people

## *What does this mean for appraisal?*

These assumptions guide the premises from which archival or recordkeeping work begins. If we assume **non-archivists can contribute to archives, records, and recordkeeping** it makes sense to turn to participatory approaches. If we assume that **records and archives have multiple meanings** then archivists are further compelled to look at archives and records from different perspectives, including asking non-archivists for their interpretations. An acceptance of multiple meanings also opens up space for conflicting or even contradictory interpretations and perspectives. In practice this may mean that contradictory meanings are not excluded from descriptions and catalogues, as an extension nor are those who hold to such beliefs.

An acceptance that **records and archives are not, and can never be completely neutral or objective** further justifies a need to engage with people outside of the institutions or organisations typically seen as the creators. Such an assumption challenges arguments that participation is a bad idea because it may "bias" the archives or records. This flows directly into the fourth assumption that **records, archives, and recordkeeping have impacts on people.** Because records and archives are not neutral or objective they have different impacts on different individuals and communities. As discussed in sections 2 and 4 power when viewed as coercive and restrictive is understood as something that shapes how people can act, impacts upon how they feel and experience themselves and the world around them.

## Extensions and Amplifications

My second research question picks up on the second part of Terry Cooks quote on the first page of this conclusion - the need for appraisal theory that is 'continually evolving and relevant' (Cook, 2005, p. 102). In section four the potential to extend and amplify records continuum thinking and the flow on effects this might have on participatory appraisal were unpacked. Through a diffractive analysis of the work of Karen Barad, Hannah Arendt, and Emmanuel Levinas extensions to the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking were identified. Areas in need of amplification were also identified, answering my second research question:

> *How might social theory extend and support records continuum thinking and what might this mean for participatory appraisal?*

In response to this question, records continuum thinking was explicitly reframed as belonging to a postfoundationalist paradigm, through the adoption of concepts from Arendt, Levinas and Barad. Barad's (2007) concept of phenomena can be used to extend Giddens concept of time-space embedded in much current records continuum thinking. The key takeaways from Barad's(2007) phenomena are that time-space is not just something we interact with and shapes us but something that is itself enacted. We create time-space-matter as much as we are created by it. For me this **relational becomingness** with time-space not through time-space is radical **monistic diversity**. For Barad(2007) time-space and matter are all one whole, they emerge together and do not exist independently of each other. The distinctions between them and the entities we see in the world (including of course records and archives) are artificial.

Barad's(Barad, 1998, 2003, 2007, 2010) theory of Agential Realism from which phenomena is drawn can be understood as postfoundationalist and performative. It is performative in that the world and everything in it is made up of interactions. It is postfoundational in as much as it

recognises our need to categorise and group things to make sense of them, to create origins and foundations, while simultaneously acknowledging that while helpful these categories, groups and origins are of our own making. Because the distinctions between things, between this record and that or even between a process like appraisal and description are created by us, we must take responsibility for them. A postfoundationalist paradigm requires we justify the distinctions we make and reflect on the potential impacts they may have on ourselves and the world around us.

Phenomena has therefore replaced time-space in my list of records continuum key concepts. It includes **time-space** and so much more. Records continuum thinkers famously argue that records are always becoming, so do many postmodernist archival scholars from other paradigms. Barad's(Barad, 2007) phenomena reminds us that records are always becoming because everything on earth is always becoming.

This **relational becomingness** doesn't only explain the physical world but also the social world. My diffractive analysis of postfoundationalist thinkers Arendt (Arendt, 1998, 2006; Caswell, 2010; Fry, 2009; Higgins, 2010; Topolski, 2015) and Levinas (Barnes, 2016; Morgan, 2009, 2011; Rossiter, 2011; Topolski, 2015) demonstrated how concepts of identity, agency, and power can be extended to more explicitly include this **relational becomingness** in a records continuum paradigm. Levinas' concept of alterity (Topolski, 2015) and Arendt's concepts of plurality and action(Arendt, 1998; Higgins, 2010; Topolski, 2015) also further extend records continuum conceptualisations of **agency** and **multiplicity**.

Arendt (1998) argues that men and not man exist. No person exists as an individual, we are constituted socially, physically, spiritually through our relationships with others. To deny this inherent **multiplicity**[1] is to deny our very humanity. From another perspective we are **contextual** beings, we are shaped by and shape our environment. Levinas also commented on what it is that makes us human with his concept of alterity (Topolski, 2015). Alterity refers to the radical unknowability of every person. No matter how hard I try I can never know everything about a human being in the same way I can know everything about a rock or a tree. This is in part because we exist in a **multiplicity** with others and are always engaged in **relational becomingness**. It is also because we have internal selves, thoughts, emotions, dreams that are uniquely our own. I can never know every thought, feeling, desire that runs through my own mind let alone someone else's. This alterity, this radical unknowability is what all humans share (Topolski, 2015). It is seen by Levinas,

[1] Arendt preferred the term plurality but it seems the way multiplicity is used by records continuum thinkers is almost identical to Arendts plurality

and me for that matter, as a beautiful acknowledgement of the inherent complexity of human beings, the uniqueness and inherent sanctity of people and communities.

What does this mean for records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal? It means a move beyond traditional definitions of **agency** as action alone. Alterity is added into the list of key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking and the development of another axiom:

5. Our knowledge of records and archives is always incomplete

It is therefore essential to ask others for their input because it is impossible for us to know everything. Even the most well read archivist cannot know everything about a human subject of a record. By engaging with those often seen as passive subjects of the record or archive we are acknowledging our own fallibility and their inherent alterity. A sixth axiom emerges here:

6. Human beings have a unique and fundamental alterity and as such recordkeeping needs, rights, and wants can never be assumed but are constantly evolving

By acknowledging this alterity archivists are sharing power, enabling subjects to emerge and become as they would like to. As discussed in relation to participatory approaches to archives, **records, recordkeeping and archives have impacts on people**, they have power. That power is not only restrictive but constructive, thinkers like Foucault and Derrida provide a nuanced exploration of the power inherent in meaning and representation (Allen, 2002; Brothman, 1999; Derrida, 1996; Foucault, 1980; Powell, 1997). Arendt (1998) too speaks on power, like Derrida and Foucault Arendt's power is linked to subjectivity, our ability to disclose ourselves. Disclosing ourselves is something we do in conversation or concert with others, revealing our thoughts, feelings, deeds and responding to others. This process of disclosure is never finished. It is **relationally becoming**, **contextual**, never ending and recursive.

This leads to the final, and for me most important axiom:

7. Human beings are the central rational for recordkeeping, records and archives

Arendt (2006) warns us of instrumentalist thinking where people become means to an end, individuals are sacrificed for some "greater good". If people are inherently plural (men not man) sacrificing one sacrifices everyone. Alterity means there is nothing more mysterious, complex and unknowable than other human beings, so how could we possibly assess some abstract goal or end as more important? Given these reflections I propose the following seven concepts as the basis for an extended and amplified approach to records continuum thinking.

1. Monistic Diversity;

2. Phenomena (inclusive of time-space);
3. Multiplicity;
4. Agency;
5. Alterity;
6. Relational becomingness;
7. Contextuality; and
8. Power.

## Discursive and Diffractive Analysis

The analytical approach adopted throughout this thesis was, as far I know, new to archival scholarly research. While Foucauldian approaches are common the literature review showed few explored how this translated into research in practice. The second component of the analytical approach was a diffractive analysis modelled off Barad's agential realism. Using these methods in combination proved fruitful in both clarifying and extending records continuum thinking. The discourse analysis assisted in identifying the key concepts underpinning records continuum thinking and participatory appraisal. Unlike some critical approaches a diffractive approach to extending theory does not require existing theory to be replaced by a different conceptualisation. Diffractive analysis extends and compliments. Because diffractive analysis is a postfoundationalist approach it does not assume there needs to be a singular definition or conceptualisation. Instead conceptualisation of key discursive elements should be fit for purpose.

My third research question was:

> *How might the adaption and use of Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis and diffractive analysis contribute to archival scholarly practice?*

I found that the application of the techniques of discourse analysis and diffractive analysis allowed for the pluralisation and contextualisation of key terms and ideas across different archival paradigms. Rather than framing discourses as competing the complementary elements can be mined and drawn on. Discourse analysis allows for an alternative kind of history of Archival thought and theory. While in no way minimising the centrality of Terry Cook (1997), Sue McKemmish (McKemmish, 1997, 2016) and other work on the history of archival thought[2] discourse analysis

[2] Desalle, P., & Procter, M. (2017). *A History of Archival Practice*. Routledge. , Ridener, J. (2009). Questioning Archives: Contemporary Records, Contemporary Discourses. In *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival Theory* (pp. 102 - 141). Litwin Books.

offers an exploration of the conditions of possibility that led to the emergence of the narratives so well documented by scholars like Terry Cook.

## An Exercise in Self Doubt: A Closing Reflection

So what does this all mean? What exactly are these axioms? How do I know I have developed something real and legitimate, not a far fetched fantasy.

I hope this thesis is the first draft of a primer on records continuum thinking. Teaching at Monash University over seven years has deeply influenced this project. A key motivator was to clarify what exactly records continuum theory meant, so I could explain it better to students. The starting point was often the records continuum model. I no longer believe this is a useful starting point. There is too much implied knowledge built into the records continuum model. It is like showing someone who has never seen water how to swim backstroke and being surprised when they are confused. I believe as an academic we have a responsibility to, in as much as it is possible, make our work accessible, we are paid and funded (at least in Australia) by the Government, a Government that is funded by everyone from public tax. Coming from a non-academic family the fact academics are being "paid for by my taxpayer dollars" was always an uncomfortable concern. Unlike fire departments or hospitals, the benefits of funding academia are not always so readily apparent. So, if I cannot explain my research to a group of postgraduate students, if I cannot explain records continuum thinking to them, a highly educated segment of the population – what am I doing? What is the point of having theory if it isn't useful let alone comprehensible?

In a discussion with my supervision team towards the end of this process we got chatting about my research approach. I flippantly described it as an extensive exercise in self doubt. At times this doubt left me crippled, unable to write for fear of getting it all "wrong". What if I didn't truly understand what was meant by terms like monistic diversity? How could I be sure. How could I know?

On the other hand this self doubt is part of what brings rigour to my process. I staunchly and stubbornly refused to move forward until I knew exactly what I was talking about. In part it inspired this thesis. Do I really understand what records continuum thinking is? What does Frank Upward actually mean by monistic diversity? What does Sue McKemmish actually mean by always becoming? Records continuum thinking concerns agency and power, but what ***IS*** agency and power? Am I blindly repeating words in the same way my budgies do? Perhaps what I experienced is a different kind of archive fever. Not a desperate desire to uncover the original, the commencement or commandment but to uncover meaning. Such a task is just as impossible, seeing as meaning accretes in layers over time, there is no final meaning, no complete understanding. As Levinas reminds us the world and people in it have a radical alterity that can never be fully captured.

I believe theory is practical, I believe at its heart it helps us decide what is right and wrong, how and when to act, and what is important in a world full of clutter and noise. It forces us to think about what we are doing and take responsibility for why we are doing it. I believe this is what makes intellectualizing worth public funding.

So, the task was set, how do I make records continuum thinking comprehensible? To complicate matters records continuum thinking is in a constant state of becoming, evolving and morphing. So how on earth do you summarise it? It will only change again. How on earth do you teach it let alone learn it? I believe you do these things by looking not at the finished product, there isn't one, but instead looking at the conditions of possibility. about For this research I have focused on the intellectual conditions of possibility that aligns with Foucauldian methodologies of archaeology and involves an almost radical description

. One of the contributions of this thesis is that it does this leg work, tracing through the "canonical" records continuum texts to identify the people and the theories that have explicitly and implicitly contributed its becoming. With these people and theories identified, my thesis has then established how they may have shaped records continuum thinking. Hence it is a partial genealogy, that points to the need reveal these foundations

I had to appraise these theories and people carefully, selecting only the ones that seemed most significant and acknowledging the exclusionary nature of this practice. Only those ideas and people without whom records continuum thinking would make sense were included. These ideas and people have been used to contextualise and translate records continuum thinking, through excavating implicit assumptions about what records continuum thinking is, unearthing the relationships between records continuum thinking and social theory, and providing some of the background (in the form of a bounded intellectual history) that sits in the minds of those who developed records continuum thinking. Much like any archive – without context meaning will always be out of grasp. This thesis is my attempt to make explicit the contexts required for records continuum thinking to make sense, to be comprehensible to those who weren't "there" when it was developed. It brings the theory into the third and fourth dimension of the records continuum model itself.

Description is an action, this description led to not just the clarification of records continuum thinking but its extension. After all what is theory if not new ways of looking and asking questions about the world and ourselves? In a sense the extensions really are no more and no less than systemic derivation. These derivations explore where these influential theories and figures led outside of archival domains.

The assumptions and axioms I have come up with are not conclusions, they are not facts or requirements. They are statements about a way of viewing the world, ourselves and each other. A perspective that we can choose to take. That I think might just lead to kinder, more inclusive, approaches to archives and recordkeeping. In total the seven assumptions are:

1. Non-archivists can contribute to archives, records, and recordkeeping;
2. Records and archives have multiple meanings;
3. Records, archives, and recordkeeping are not, and can never be completely neutral or objective;
4. Records, archives, and recordkeeping have impacts on people;
5. Our knowledge of records and archives are always incomplete;
6. Human beings have a unique and fundamental alterity and as such archival and recordkeeping needs, rights, and wants can never be assumed but are constantly evolving; and
7. Human beings are the central rationale for recordkeeping and archives.

## Future Research and Limitations

There are so many places I would love to travel from here. Having demonstrated the viability and relevance of Arendt's theory to archives and recordkeeping I would love to go back and examine the various inquiries and commissions discussed in the literature review of this thesis for evidence of what instrumentalist thinking. My gut tells me I would find a great deal of it. People keeping records as a tick box exercise. Not understanding or thinking through the potential consequences. The systemic nature of the issues in recordkeeping identified in all of these reports appear, to me, to point to more than a few "bad actors". I'd also like to believe most people are not acting to intentionally harm others. A further exploration of the way archives and records in these reports "other" subjects would also be of interest, once again a similar methodology combining Foucauldian discourse analysis and diffractive analysis could be used. Drawing on the postfoundationalist thought of Levinas and Tzvetan Todorov someone who sadly didn't end up featuring in this thesis.

This thesis focused on the way records, archives, and recordkeeping were conceptualised in the literature, but how are they conceptualised by practicing archivists? There is often discussion of the divide between practice and theory but I struggled to find publications exploring this. Perhaps an ethnographic study shadowing archivists. This was not the only gap found. A lot of the knowledge held by those who developed records continuum thinking as we know it today is tacit. The relationships between key players unknown and undocumented to the uninitiated. A history of

these ideas, people, and places would certainly help in any quest to understand what records continuum thinking means. Not including this “lore” in my thesis is a major limitation but arguably it would have led to two, even three theses not one!

## Conclusion and Closing Reflection: References

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