

# The unbearable lightness of participating? Revisiting the discourses of “participation” in archival literature

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to investigate how archivists, records managers and scholarly literature in the field(s) analyse how “participation” is discussed in the context of archives and records management, and to explore practical and theoretical implications of the disclosed discursive practices.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The analysis is based on a discourse analysis of a body of archival literature and a sample of posts collected from the archival and records management blogosphere.

**Findings** – The analysis shows that instead of discussing one notion of participation, the archival science literature is referring to nine different and partly conflicting types of participation from three broad perspectives: management, empowerment and technology. The discourses have also conflicting ideas of the role of engagement and enthusiasm, and of that what do the different stakeholder communities see as real options.

**Research limitations/implications** – The analysed material consists of a limited sample of mainly English language texts that may not capture all the nuances of how participation is discussed in the archival literature.

**Practical implications** – A better understanding of how different claims of the benefits and threats endorsing “participation” in archives helps to develop effective and less contradictory forms of collaboration between different stakeholders.

**Originality/value** – In spite of the popularity of the notion of “participation”, there little, especially critical, research on how participation is conceptualised by archives professionals and researchers.

**Keywords** Participation, Records management, Archives, Archives 2.0, Participatory archives

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

“Participation” has become one of the central concepts in the recent professional and academic archival literature (Cook, 2013), and even more so, in archives related social media. Several authors including Theimer (2011a), Huvila (2008), Evans (2007), Yakel (2011) and Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) have discussed various approaches to “participation” in the context of archival work by introducing and exploring such concepts as participatory archives, participatory appraisal and Archives 2.0. Without elaborating a specific concept, participation with external communities and institutions together with its practical, ethical and theoretical implications has been scrutinised also by, for instance, Gilliland (2012) and Zhang (2012). The readings of participation range from perceiving it as a possibility to send feedback by email (Tató, 2012) to redefining the roles of archivists and the public within existing archival institutions (Evans, 2007) and acknowledging the *de facto* “archival” role of such digital repositories as YouTube (Pietrobruno, 2012) or Facebook (Miller, 2011, p. 139). The number of examples of how archives and archivists collaborate with different audiences leaves no doubt that participation is an empirical phenomenon. At the same time, however, the variety of its



forms and its connotations in the professional and academic discussion shows equally irrefutably the discursive nature of “participation” and the profusion of how it is conceptualised and practiced within the archival community.

In spite of the popularity of the notion and the obvious practical consequences of how participation is defined in archival work, there are only few attempts to review the field (e.g. Theimer, 2011c, b; Cook, 2013) and no critical research on how participation is conceptualised by archives professionals and researchers. The aim of this study is first to investigate how archivists, records managers and scholarly literature in the field(s) analyse how “participation” is discussed in the context of archives and records management, and second to explore practical and theoretical implications of the disclosed discursive practices. Because of the overlap of especially theoretically oriented literature, the notions archives management and records management are used interchangeably in the text. The study is based on a discourse analysis of a body of archival literature retrieved from LISA database ( $n = 185$ ), and a sample of key posts ( $n = 49$ ) gathered from the archival and records management blogosphere. The discourse analytical approach of the study draws on the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (2001) and the notion of subdiscourse of Foucault (2002/1969).

## 2. Literature review

Participation is a characteristic aspect of the contemporary digital practices (Mostmans and Passel, 2010). It has become one of the defining phrases of the societal debate even if there is a clear lack of consensus of its meaning and underpinnings (Huvila, 2012; Jenkins, 2014). In the earlier literature, participation (as a generic notion) has been discussed in a variety of contexts from societies (e.g. de Tocqueville, 1866) to arts and culture (Carpentier, 2010), commons (Ostrom *et al.*, 2002) and social exchange (e.g. Mauss, 1925). The origins of the contemporary discussion of participation as a defining principle of the “participatory culture” of the early twenty-first century is, however, commonly attributed to Jenkins (Williams, 2011). Jenkins and colleagues characterise participatory culture as of having low barriers to expression and engagement, strong support for creating and sharing, informal mentorship, belief in that contributions matter and a feeling of some degree of social connection (Jenkins *et al.*, 2006; Jenkins, 2014). This particular understanding of participation as a cultural category is often related to the notions of produsage (Bruns, 2008), crowdsourcing (Howe, 2006; Oomen and Aroyo, 2011), prosumption (Toffler, 1970) and Web 2.0 (O’Reilly, 2005) even if the making of parallels between these concepts is not entirely unproblematic (Chu, 2010). Shirky (2010) makes a further remark that emphasises the particularity of the (Jenkinsian) “participation” by emphasising that any culture needs to incorporate a degree of participation to exist. Similarly to the notion of sharing in the context of Web 2.0 (John, 2012), “participatory culture” has redefined “participation” to denote a particular set of “participatory” activities. A significant aspect of the remarks of both the proponents and critics of the notion is that they portray participatory culture as a relative otherness with, as Williams (2011) notes, apparent links to subcultures and fandom.

A central premise of the particular type of “participation” in the archives and related institutional settings is motivation. In simple terms all involved parties need to have aspirations and incentives to participate (Westas, 2005). The predominant explanations of the motivation of the users to participate have a tendency to explain the motivation in individualistic, social, rational and emotional terms as an aspiration for opportunities of social or material personal gain (e.g. Jafarinaimi, 2012; Smith-Yoshimura, 2012), reciprocity (Pelaprat and Brown, 2012), fun and altruism (e.g. Oomen and Aroyo, 2011).

From an institutional point of view, the motivation to engage in participation is often articulated in terms of its matter of factual nature (Robinson, 2007), a direct external pressure (e.g. Suchy, 2006), an opportunity for promotion and sharing content (Samouelian, 2009, pp. 62, 66-67) and as a possibility to assume a more active role in defining the present and future role of the institution in the society (UpNext, 2011; Bailey, 2007).

Even if the notion of “participation” has been discussed lively in professional and academic literature, no major analytical or critical analyses of the implications of participation have been published so far. Cook (2013) argues for a new paradigmatic mindset of participatory community archiving that pulls together earlier proposals of democratising archiving and orienting archival work towards empowering communities to look after their own records. Theimer (2010) has worked on the mapping of the different aspects of participation in archives in order to understand “what it means to build a ‘participatory archive’”. Her idea of participatory archives defined as:

[a]n organization, site or collection in which people other than archives professionals contribute knowledge or resources, resulting in increased understanding about archival materials, usually in an online environment (Dionne, 2011).

Builds on earlier discussion on participatory libraries and museums (Simon, 2010), participatory culture and the related notions of “citizen” culture (as e.g. in citizen journalism, Picone, 2011) and citizen archivists (Cox, 2008), participatory archives (Huvila, 2008), Shirky’s cognitive surplus (Shirky, 2010), community archives (Sheffield, 2011) and ideas of openness and transparency (as in Reggi and Ricci, 2011). She makes a distinction between the content and motivations of contributing and the ways of creating engagement (Dionne, 2011).

Other archival researchers have approached participation from slightly different angles. Nesmith (2014) argues in a position paper for a general strengthening of “partnership” with users of archives as both a premise of renewing archival work and its aim. Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) discuss participatory appraisal and organisation of archival goods. Stevenson (2008) and, for instance, the frequently cited pioneering participatory archive, the Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collections (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/polaread/>) developed by Yakel *et al.* (2007) sees participation as a way of engaging users primarily as informants. The Your Archives initiative of the UK National Archives was based on a similar premise of perceiving users as potential informants and developing a parallel ecology of participatory information with links to archival collections (Grannum, 2011). Huvila (2008) proposes a more radical idea of participation positing that the fundamental characteristics of participatory archives are “decentralised curation, radical user orientation, and contextualisation of both records and the entire archival process”.

Even if there are many examples of participatory initiatives, the existing participatory archives are still exceptions rather than an established part of mainstream archival practices (Bergervoet, 2011). Similarly to librarians, also many archivists are reluctant to let others to interfere with the established professional work processes (Flinn *et al.*, 2009). Communication and the development of workable approaches for cooperation with others (including IT-professionals, indigenous populations, immigrants, e.g. Kallberg, 2012; Shilton and Srinivasan, 2007; Davis, 2012) have proven to be challenging. Frusciano suggests that a major obstacle is the difficulty of learning “archival intelligence” (Frusciano, 2012), a form of archival “literacy” (as in information literacy) needed to understand historical and contemporary archival collections. The challenge of understanding archives is not (only) a

question of the unnecessary complexity of the archival information systems and practices but as Zhang (2012) emphasises, a genuine need to understand archival materials and their original contexts.

In spite of the interest in participation as a phenomenon and the number of published examples of practical initiatives, very little user research on (participatory) archives has been published (Sundqvist, 2007). One apparent reason is that the outcomes of individual, often smallish, projects have varied greatly in terms of participant activity and measurable impact (e.g. Theimer, 2011a). Adams' (2007) findings suggest that the efforts to meet user expectations related to digital data can lead to a significant expansion of the community of the users of archival records, but as the experiences from other projects demonstrate, the participation can be very sporadic (Flinn, 2010b). There is also very little systematic data on how archivists perceive the phenomenon of participation. Bell (2008) presents a short summary of the web discussion of a group of (participation-minded) archivists and records managers from October 2008 on the role of "2.0" in archives and records management. He notes that all agreed that Web 2.0 cannot be ignored by archivists and they should be more active in taking into account the practices of record creators and information managers. Moreover, even if the Web 2.0 technologies have a potential to improve record keeping practices and they should be exploited, archivists should also be reflective in their engagement with the Web 2.0. Kallberg (2012) conducted an interview study of Swedish archivists from nine municipalities with a focus on the future role of archivists "in the digital age". Not unsurprisingly considering the focus of her study, the participants underlined the transformative role of technology and the need to be more proactive in cooperating with IT-professionals in the development of new information and record systems. Finally, as noted already in the introduction, there is no earlier comprehensive empirical critical research on the notion of participation itself.

### 3. Discourse theoretical approach

The discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe posits that many fundamental societal "constants" such as class, (political) identity and social self-understanding are in fact discursive constructs that come into being through articulations. An articulation can be any practice that establishes a relation among elements and has a capability to influence its identity i.e. alter the identity of a thing to another. In the conceptual vocabulary of Laclau and Mouffe, a differential position that belongs to a discourse (a stabilising system of articulations) and is expressed as a sign (a combination of the content and expression of a word) is called a moment. Following Hedemark *et al.* (2005), even if a sign is a combination of an idea and its expression, an individual sign can be referenced by using multiple designations (e.g. a sign "user" can be represented by designations "the public", "local citizens" or "the people"; see Hedemark *et al.*, 2005). In contrast to an articulated moment, an unarticulated difference is called an element (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, p. 105). Further, Laclau and Mouffe call moments of particular significance that partially fix meanings in discourses as nodal points. Elements that are continually antagonised because of their diverse meanings in competing discourses are called floating signifiers. The totality of alternative elements and discourses that do not fit within a particular discourse is called the field of discursivity (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001).

The underpinnings of the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe is in the articulation of power relations and conflicting relations with an emphasis on the Gramscian notion of hegemony. The dominant group or ideology is in a hegemonious position to impose their moments over other groups and viewpoints that represent less comprehensive forms of influence and dominance within and between communities and individuals. A precondition

of the emergence of hegemony is a conflict, antagonism, between competing viewpoints. Hegemonic intervention is an articulation that dissolves antagonism and re-establishes unambiguity. When unambiguity is reached, the discourse comes to a closure (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001).

In addition to the conceptual apparatus of Laclau and Mouffe, the present study makes a distinction between discourses and sub-discourses. According to Foucault (2002/1969), when discussing about sub-discourses “we are not dealing with a silent content that has remained implicit, that has been said and yet not said, and which constitutes beneath manifest statements a sort of sub-discourse that is more fundamental, and which is now emerging at last into the light of day” (Foucault, 2002/1969, p. 75). In contrast to a discourse, a system of articulated statements, a sub-discourse is constituted by an additional layer of unarticulated but identifiable differential positions. In terms of Laclau and Mouffe, the sub-discourse can be argued to function primarily on the level of (unarticulated) elements whereas discourses can be assumed to contain articulated moments.

The relevance of the discourse theoretical approach and the conceptual apparatus of Laclau and Mouffe (2001) is that they are posited to shed light on explicit and implicit contrasts between the different conceptualisations of participation. In contrast to the original work by Laclau and Mouffe, it is not claimed that all antagonisms are supposed to be as radical or that the political nature of “participation” would be as literally political (pertaining to organised forms of government) as the ones discussed in their *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. It is also necessary to stress that in this study the explicated antagonisms reside on a discursive and analytical level and do not imply the presence of manifest conflicts between individual authors or institutions. What is claimed, however, is that even as divested of its original societal aspirations, the conceptual apparatus provides a useful framework for analysing antagonising tendencies even in the context of incompatible or disparate rather than openly hostile conflicting ambitions.

#### 4. Methods and material

The material used in the discourse analysis consists of two sets of documents. The both sets were generated using database and web retrieval of documents to avoid elementary selection bias. The analysis followed the principles of the discourse analytical approach of Laclau and Mouffe complemented with a Foucauldian distinction of discourses and sub-discourses. Further, following Foucault’s two analytical approaches (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002), the reading of the texts was done both “archaeologically” and “genealogically” to explicate the inertia and change of the discourses during the investigated decade.

The first set was collected from the Library and Information Abstracts (LISA) database using the query `all(participat*) AND all((archives OR archivists))`. The original set was further narrowed down to cover literature from 2001 to 2012. The data set of 288 records was cleaned of records with no apparent relation to the topic of the study including reports of how archivists had participated in a conference. However, all records in which the term `participat*` did not refer to the topic, but were otherwise describing participation in the context of archives were retained. After the thematic screening of the data, all records with no access to full text at the author’s home university or an abstract with clearly articulated differential positions were discarded. The final set of documents consisted of 185 references.

The LISA database ([www.csa.com/factsheets/lisa-set-c.php](http://www.csa.com/factsheets/lisa-set-c.php), 2013-01-31) covers international archival science and records management literature and relevant literature

from related disciplines (mainly information science and library science). Some potentially relevant national journals are not included, but in general, the database can be argued to cover the core literature in the field (compare to Anderson, 2009).

The second set of documents was collected by querying for “participation” (11 hits) and “participatory archives” (906) in 263 blogs listed by ArchivesBlogs.com, a syndicated list of archives related blogs. The coverage of the list was tested by comparing and complementing it with a list of 42 central hand-picked archival blogs known by the author and blogs mentioned in their blog rolls. The blogs were searched using a custom Google Search engine created for the purpose. The first 20 results for each search and the 5th result starting from result No. 25 were selected for analysis. The number of posts in the sample was 917 of which 49 retained as relevant after the result set was cleaned of duplicates, non-relevant posts (e.g. “participation in a conference”) and posts citing other posts.

The both sampling methods have obvious limitations. The two sets of documents contain primarily English language blogs and texts that limit the representativity of the sample and needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results. It is also apparent that the two sets of documents are not exhaustive. Another limitation is that the notion of participation is not exclusively related to the idea of participatory archives and at the same time, archival literature has referred to the notion of participation using a wide range of synonymous and quasi-synonymous terms. For instance, reference [1] of the first dataset, shows that even if the word “participating” in the reference refers to the participation of archival institutions (instead of participatory archives), the article described a project Archiveit that essentially is participatory by its nature.

In spite of the limitations and a consequent unknown bias, the similarity of the results of the analysis of the two sets of documents and the recurrence of the identified discourses throughout the material suggest that material is useful for capturing the broad patterns of how participation has been discussed in the archives literature in 2001-2012. Further, its relative coherence makes it plausible to argue that the bias is unlikely to have a significant effect to the general reliability of the findings.

## 5. Analysis

The analysis of the two sets of documents revealed nine discourses and three sub-discourses relating to participation (Table I). The texts contained two reoccurring signs. First, participation was articulated as an activity assumed to benefit users, archives or external entities and conducted by end-users, record creators or archivists (or archival institutions). Second, the texts made a clear distinction between archivists and the others who might participate in archives. Others were typically seen as needy individuals/organisations, potential contributors or conceivable managers of archival holdings, and were sometimes, although rather seldom categorised further as end-users or record creators. In contrast to the explicitly articulated sign of participation, the texts use different designations, for instance, users, researchers, participants and citizens to refer to the others.

The discourses were identified on the basis of how participation was described in the analysed documents. Categories are not exclusive and it was typical that a single text contained articulations of multiple discourses. For instance, it was common to argue that the participating users (called donors or information providers) benefited them as users (i.e. as “consumers”) of the archives (e.g. Yakei *et al.*, 2007; Huvila, 2008). The overlap suggests of a possibility of hegemonic interventions and reaching

Sub-discourse	Discourse	Description	References in the material (examples)
Management	Participatory context	Participation is an external phenomenon, a challenge the archivists and archival institutions have to meet by deciding how to archive and document the (primarily digital expressions of) participatory culture, and whether/how to professionally engage in the participatory culture	B2, B4, B15, B18, B20, B24, B26, B27, B41, B42, B43, B44, Crymble (2010), Garaba (2012), Kalfatovic <i>et al.</i> (2008), Körmendy (2007)
Management	Archivists as participants	Archivists need to be more proactive in participating in records management in organisations and in collecting archival materials	B3, B7, B34, Thibodeau (2001), Gladney (2009)
Management	Participation as new “use”	Participation is a new term or mode for “using” archives and implies an opportunity for outreach and publicity	B2, B14, B19, B29, B35, B37, B40, Adams (2007), Körmendy (2007) Shoemaker (2005)
Empowerment (Management)	Others as archivists	Participation means that others will be given an opportunity to participate directly in the management, description and organisation of archives	B6, B17, B23, B25, B31, Edney (2010), Kennedy (2009), Frogner (2010)
Empowerment	Others-oriented participation	Participation is about listening to the others and giving them an opportunity to benefit of the archives as they themselves need and desire	B23, B13, B36, B38, Samouelian (2009)
–	Non-participation	(A largely implicit discourse of) “earlier” archival practices (as opposed to participatory discourse)	B7, B19, Theimer (2011c), Huvila (2008)

**Table I.**  
Categories of  
discourses relating to  
participation

a closure when individual discourses and their differential positions are overridden and subordinated to those of the conflicting discourses.

A general observation of the broad field of discursivity of the participation in archives is that much of the articulation of different perspectives is exploratory and characterised by uncertainty of positions. It is mostly impossible to identify polarised articulated moments or explicit hegemonic interventions. The potential conflicts between differential positions are embedded in elements as unarticulated juxtapositions.

A similar dominance of unarticulated positions is apparent also in the genealogical reading of the texts. Even if it is possible to trace certain longitudinal changes, the changes tends to be related to how the discourses are articulated in the texts rather than to the discourses per se. From the perspective of the number of references in the analysed texts, it would be possible to claim that the participatory context discourse dominated the studied field of discursivity during the mid-second half of the studied decade. In spite of this “quantitative dominance” and the genealogical evolution of articulations (how participation is defined, how different

articulations are related to other articulations), there are no signs of explicit hegemonic interventions or closures.

### 5.1 Discourses

*5.1.1 Participatory context.* The discourse incorporates moments externality, opportunity and threat. The participatory context discourse sees participation as a social and technological phenomenon that is basically external to the archives. New modes of participatory creation, management and use of information and documents challenge archives to find appropriate methods to process and preserve the resulting new types of records. In the context of this discourse the notions of “culture”, “technology” and “participation” refer to a contextual externality in which “participation” has become a universal premise in the context of a “culture” that covers all conceivable varieties (as e.g. in Burke, 1997) of (cultural) expressions. The articulation of “participation” as a part of the context of archives (rather than being a part of the core) is also present in the notion of Archives 2.0 and its predecessor Library 2.0 (B15) cf. e.g. Holmberg *et al.*, 2009). Even if the articulations of Archives 2.0 are situated within the frame of archives and archival work, the “2.0” comes from outside and is presented as something that is a part of the contemporary context of archives and has to be taken into account.

The participatory context discourse sees participation both as an opportunity and a threat. The new modes of information creation in the participatory context provide new opportunities for the archival community. Bailey portrays the emergence of participation as a fundamental change (2008 and (B27)). Many others tend to be more restrictive even if they would seem to share the principal point of view with him. Schnapp (2008) articulates the research task of his article “Animating the archive” by positing that “Internet 2.0 offers new possibilities for institutions of memory”, including “participatory models of content production and curatorship”. Citing, for instance, O’Reilly (2005), for Dufour (2008), Web 2.0 is a “participatory Web” and its capability to “make participation once again easier” than on the “original” Web ([4]; Dufour, 2008). She continues by arguing that the outcomes of the participatory culture should be positive if it is “understood and exploited well” (Dufour, 2008). Samouelian (2009) refers similarly to the Web 2.0 as a “shared environment” that embraces collective intelligence and “participation”. Crymble (2010) writes that “[b]y understanding how others have chosen to employ these free broadcasting tools [social media], archivists and archival organizations can strategize their use for meeting their own outreach goals”. Also Garaba (2012) is positive to the idea of embracing the technological means of the participatory culture and notes that “social media technologies can have [positive] a transformative influence” for archival institutions as means “to improve their public image”.

Even if any authors are optimistic, the participatory context is also articulated as a threat. The transition and adjustment to a participatory culture is not necessarily an entirely trouble-free process. Kalfatovic *et al.* (2008) describe the Smithsonian participation in the Flickr Commons and the anticipated difficulties in addressing hesitation and concerns and the institutional boundaries in the project. Also others, including Flinn (2010a), Moss (2008) and Stevenson (2008) are careful and remind of the possible threats of opening up archives to the general public.

A third, a reactionist, moment in the discourse is related to the emphasis of the moment of externality. Körmendy (2007) writes “The archives have been influenced by media culture. They have selected popular subjects for the aforementioned publications and home pages and events capitalise on current events to interest the most people”. Samouelian (2009) makes similar articulations of the externality of the pressure to



engage in participatory culture by making a remark that “the struggle” between “traditional archival duties” and “maintaining and staying current with these Web applications” “continues as the quantity of records to appraise, accession, and process grows, and the public increases its expectations of accessing and interacting with content on the World Wide Web”.

*5.1.2 Archivists as participants.* The archivists as participants discourse is dominated by management oriented articulations that archivists should seek themselves to organisations and proactively work for a better management and description of existing and forthcoming archives. The discourse is common in records management contexts (e.g. (B34)). The nodal point of the discourse is the active role of archivists. The discourse incorporates also two other moments relevance of archives and economy that are articulated frequently as motivations for the proactive participation.

The discourse revolves around an articulated unavoidability and a matter-of-factuality of archivists assuming an “active” (in contrast to “earlier” “passive”) role. Luksaite (2004) writes in an abstract about the changes in how appraisal is discussed in the English language literature and notes that “[a]t the turn of this century there is no doubt about archivist’s active participation in records management processes during records life cycle as well as in participation in designing, implementing records management systems”. According to Mason and Zanish-Belcher (2007) the participation of archivists in “proactive collecting” is argued to be able to “fill gaps in the historical record”. Another frequent argument relates to the moment of economy and the possibility to benefit business and cut costs by involving archivists in the management of information and documents (e.g. James, 2010; McLeod, 2012).

The discourse incorporates a moment that the active engagement enhances the quality and relevance of archives (archival collections) and the perceived societal relevance of archives (archival institutions). Participation can be an “opportunity to gain new appreciation of the actors and activities whose documentation is preserved and used in the archives” as stated in a passage from the 1960s quoted in a recent blog post [3]. The same theme is present in multiple texts as in the passage of Hill in [9]. A quote from Mannon (B8) illustrates the nexus of the moment of enhanced relevance of archives that simultaneously distinguishes this discourse from the discourse of others-oriented participation and the empowerment sub-discourse:

Rather than creating the programs FOR an audience first and hoping they will come, this shift in thinking will allow us to create programs WITH our audience, truly democratizing what we do, while highlighting our community and civic roles, and ultimately strengthening us and our purpose (B8).

*5.1.3 Record creators as participants.* According to this discourse, the essence of participation is in delegating responsibility and engaging record creators in a closer cooperation with archivists and records managers. This discourse seemed to be typical in the texts relating to community archives, personal archives and the archiving of research data. Unlike other participatory discourses, the record creators as participants discourse makes a distinction between users and record creators by giving primacy to the latter group. The distinction is articulated in the moment primacy of record creators. At the same time, however, the discourse does not explicitly antagonise itself with other participatory discourses that do not tend to attempt to make a clear distinction between creators and users.

The record creators as participants discourse is typical in texts related to digital preservation. Thibodeau (2001) emphasises that records management systems “should contain and convey” implied knowledge that is common to “participants” (i.e. record creators and their peers). Also Gladney (2009) articulates the role of the creators of records as “participants” in the process of creating trustworthy digital objects. The articulations underline the central role of stakeholders even if the statements, at the same time, draw a clear yet somewhat implicit boundary between archivists and the others. Besides portraying individuals as stakeholders, the broader digital preservation initiatives have a tendency to emphasise the central role of institutions and a need to “encourage” them to participate (e.g. Kirchhoff, 2009).

The scholarly digital repositories are another context of discourse, which places emphasis to the primacy of record creators. In contrast to digital preservation, the repository related texts tend to see the participation of record creators in more practical terms. In contrast to the archives of public authorities, the challenge with digital repositories is that a few scholars see themselves as record creators. Demands for an open access to publicly funded scholarly literature and research data and the political emphasis of the quantitative evaluations of research “output” have only rather recently began to emphasise the scholarly data and literature as “records” in a archival and records management sense (Akmon *et al.*, 2011; Shankar, 2004; Borgman, 2007). It is conceivable that the change is one of the principal factors that influences the discourse that put considerable emphasis on articulating scholars as “record creators”, underlining their role as “participants” (as e.g. in Kim, 2011) and highlighting the need to make “make faculty participation as effortless as possible” (Royster, 2007). The explicit appropriation of scholars as record creators is apparent even when Dijk (2005) writes about the “great” advantages of digital archives which allows authors and managers of grey literature archives to “unlock, edit, supplement, combine and archive metadata and data (objects) in digital repositories”.

*5.1.4 Others as informants.* This discourse portrays others as informants that can give archivists valuable input for their work in describing and managing records. “Others” can be used to refer to the general public (e.g. Kalfatovic *et al.*, 2008) or explicitly to individuals with expert knowledge such amateur or professional historians or fellow archivists (e.g. (B21)) but in most cases the articulations seem to incorporate an assumption of the “others” as somehow informed individuals. Others can function as donors, and especially as contributors of local knowledge and oral histories (Flinn, 2010b), as helpers in identifying the places and people represented in old photographs (e.g. Kalfatovic *et al.*, 2008) and as contributors of contextual information on the existing archival holdings (Yakel *et al.*, 2007). The main outcome of the participation is the possibility to enhance the quality and extents of archives, finding aids and descriptions. The discourse incorporates moments crowdsourcing, economy and enhanced quality of services. An anecdotal, but illustrative example of referring to others as informant-participants and of articulating participation as feedback was the campaign of the Library and Archives Canada to collect opinions from the public using an email address [participation@lac-bac.gc.ca](mailto:participation@lac-bac.gc.ca) [5].

The others as informants discourse is also typical in Web 2.0 and Archives 2.0 related texts. The definitions of Archives 2.0 by Yakel (2012) and participatory archives by Theimer (2011b) and their focus on others as contributors exemplify this discourse. Similarly, many of the practical examples quoted in the texts invite others to contribute their time and knowledge to identify photographs (Zinkham and Springer, 2011) or, for

instance, transcribe scanned documents [B16]. Kalfatovic *et al.* (2008) describes the Smithsonian Institution Flickr Commons project in similar terms. Users are given an opportunity to comment (Yakel *et al.*, 2007), tag (Kalfatovic *et al.*, 2008; Sroka, 2011) or to “participate in the indexing of materials” (Kilkki, 2011). For the Smithsonian Institution, a presence in Flickr Commons gives opportunities to “enrich” archival holdings (Kalfatovic *et al.*, 2008). Samouelian (2009) describes a university archive web site that employs ratings and reviews by articulating that it “invites user participation and contribution by allowing users to input written content”. A post “Join the Chorus” in the NARA blog AOTUS [B2] claims similarly that “[o]ur customers want deeper access to our staff” and “[t]ogether we can provide greater access to the records, and a deeper understanding of those records. Together we’ll amplify each other’s messages”.

The significance and necessity of getting input from others is articulated also, for instance, in [B10], and by Shilton and Srinivasan (2007): “archivists [...] must be aware of the need to collect diversely should they hope to come anywhere near representing diverse societies”, and, for instance, by Frogner (2010) when he describe oral history “testimonies” and the “important facts” that inform them. Shilton and Srinivasan continue by arguing that “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”. The input in terms of acquiring new archival materials is probably the most traditional contexts of the discourse. Mason and Zanish-Belcher (2007) writes about informants as “donors” that can “participate in building and using diverse archival collections”.

The most commonly articulated moment of the discourse is the enhanced quality of archival services, often motivated by the new information brought by the participants (e.g. Zimmerman in [9]). Besides the tendency of articulating participation in terms enhanced quality, the discourse carries also a somewhat seldom explicitly articulated element/moment of economy. Blog post [9] quotes Hoitink who states that:

[s]imilarly, all of them [people] may have knowledge that can contribute to an understanding of the document. Tapping into that wealth of knowledge out there will make archives far more usable and relevant to the public.

She continues her reflection by adding:

So that was the ideological answer, here’s the mundane one: because we have way too many records to ever be able to describe them on all on the level that answers our users’ questions. We simply lack the funding. We can only hope our visitors will help us, if we provide the tools.

*5.1.5 Participation as new “use”.* In this discourse, participation is portrayed as a synonym or quasi-synonym of using archives. The discourse refers to the participation in social media services as an opportunity for providing access (nodal point of the discourse). In contrast to the societal discourse of participation, the participation as use sees use from the perspective of the archival institutions rather than as a societal question. Körmendy (2007) notes that “in democratic societies there is a competition for financial sources. Those institutions which are better able to sell their (intellectual) goods have had an advantage”. In some cases such as (B14), participation (in terms of interactive exhibitions) is discussed matter-of-factly as a way of how a museum and archive should and could work.

The discourse is typical in texts that describe practical social media implementations of archival institutions similarly to the studies of the users and use of archives. Adams (2007) writes that “NARA’s electronic records programme indicates

that efforts to meet user expectations related to digital data have led to a significant expansion in the communities of users of primary source archival records” making a statement of the relation of users and archives.

Kalfatovic *et al.* (2008) account of the Smithsonian Institution Flickr Commons project articulates the participation-use in terms of making archival collections available on platforms users are already using. Archer and Cianconi (2010) argues that Brazilian archives should implement collaborative and interactive features on their web sites and embrace web technologies to provide users an access to their collections. Also Garaba (2012) and (B35) refers to the possibilities of social media technologies as a means to “make [heritage] available” (Garaba, 2012) to the public. Mannon’s [8] articulation of the necessity of archivists to assume an increasingly active role (quoted earlier) that relates to the archivists as participants discourse incorporates also elements from the participation as use discourse. The passage portrays participatory activities as the desirable mode of engaging with archives.

A particularly sophisticated articulation of the same discourse can be found in the text of Shoemaker (2005), in which he discusses a local history project in London. “We decided to allow users to decide for themselves” which unspecific place names correspond with particular places in the digitised archival material. “In the end, it is up to the end-users to exercise their own historical judgement about which trials are linked to that particular place”. The conceptualisation of participation as use and decision-making is motivated “[n]ot only is this the most practical thing to do, but also, in terms of historical scholarship, it is the most appropriate approach”.

*5.1.6 Others as archivists.* In the context of this discourse, participation means that the others will be given an opportunity to participate directly in the management, description and organisation of archives as peers of archivists. The discourse incorporates the moment archivist. The differential position articulated in the discourse relates to a need or possibility to redefine the traditional notion of archivist. The precise meaning of letting others to act as archivists varies in different texts. On one hand, the entire process of managing an archive may be seen as a task of the others. Arguments for a comprehensive involvement of others is typical in “radical” participation or user-oriented literature and in the context of private and community archives. In spite of the “radicality” of some of the proposals, archivists may be suggested to retain a consultative or supervisory role in the management process (e.g. Huvila, 2008). The most radical articulations tend to originate from outside the traditional archival community. Schnapp (2008) writes about community based archiving by concluding his walk-through of two examples by positing that “the name of the game here is participatory archiving: archive yourself or, as I’m calling it, archive you”.

The discourse that bestows others with the role of archivists depicting as “passionate amateurs” (B17) is common in local history and community contexts. Edney (2010) describes a study of the records-keeping practices of local New Zealand rugby clubs and how archivists could “help” (i.e. participate by helping) clubs in their archival work by providing education and guidelines. Lin *et al.* (2006) discusses (according to the abstract) a Wiki-based collaborative archive of Taiwanese Baseball News and the need to “encourage group interaction and participation from the operational and managerial point of view”. Another context of referring to others as archivists or managers of archival collections is private archives. Hakala (2011) discusses a Finnish initiative with an aim of “encouraging” manor owners, both individuals and organisations, to actively “manage” their archives.

In addition to community archives, the role of others as archivists has been an especially frequently articulated moment in the texts describing work with indigenous people. Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) describe their work with Mexican population of Southern California. They “suggest that archival principles traditionally employed in the service of both appraisal and arrangement and description can use participatory processes to facilitate the preservation of representative, empowered narratives”. Frogner (2010) makes similar remarks in the context of Canadian aboriginal population by arguing “Aboriginal participation in the appraisal of Aboriginal records is vital”.

Kennedy (2009) discusses the possible problems related to the notion of Archive 2.0 and user participation in the context of diplomatic documents. He warns of the controversy of letting users to have a possibility to directly intervene with politically sensitive archival records and the “requirement placed upon diplomatic document editors to provide a neutral environment for the documents they are publishing with care and expertise”. Henriksen *et al.* (2009) raises a similar concern by asking in the title of a conference report “[N]ow Who is the Archivist”.

*5.1.7 Archives in society.* In contrast to other discourses that focus on participation as an activity related to the management and use of archives, the societal discourse emphasises participation as a potential, and often significant, outcome of the existence of archives. The nodal point of the discourse is the societal relevance of archives with an additional moment access to information. The third moment in the societal discourse is the societal role of archives and archivists. According to the discourse, archives and the work of professional archivists gives and guarantees others (both individuals and organisations) an opportunity to participate in society and democratic decision-making process. The discourse posits archives as participants in the society and participation as an inherent task of the present day democratic archival institutions. The societal discourse is often articulated without making explicit references to the notions of participatory archives or Archives 2.0. Adams (2006) exemplifies the nodal point of the discourse by emphasising the significant role of records management in ensuring an access to information and access to information as a “necessary tool in ensuring the participation of the citizenry in democratic governance”. The discourse makes frequent references to such notions as open government and e-democracy (e.g. in [1]). Cunningham and Oswald (2005) emphasises the nodal point and the third moment of the discourse by underlining “the vital role that information management agencies such as libraries and archives have to play in supporting transparent and accountable governance in the digital age” and make a case for the access to information by underlining the critical importance of preserving and providing access to “information that is critical to e-governance and e-democracy” and “is in danger of being lost”. Jaen Garcia (2007) makes similar remarks in the Argentine context by linking the effectiveness of archival systems, democracy, freedom of information, transparency and “effective mechanisms of participation”.

Hatang (2005) articulates the differential position access to information by suggesting that archivists should participate in “striving for greater transparency” and freedom of information in the society. Ketelaar (2006) presents similar views in his text “Access: A democratic imperative” using even stronger expressions like “full participation” and that the link between “access to archives and human rights” is “crucial”. Zipsane (2011) assumes a similar discursive position by underlining the “importance” of engaging children and young people “from a societal perspective” in a text about the strategy of the Swedish National Archives for children’s and youth activities for the years 2012-2014.

The moment societal role of archives and archivists is expressed typically in terms of the desirability of closer engagement with societal events and practices and collaboration with other professional groups. For instance, the journal *Nordisk Arkivnyt* has repeatedly reported on how the Nordic archives have participated in local cultural and popular science events (e.g. Bogadottir, 2006; Floater, 2009; Eyporsson, 2012). Participation is a key to engaging the public, creating “strong links” to them and working for an increased understanding of the importance of archives (B12). Floater (2010) takes the argument further by proposing that archivists are sometimes “frustrated” that most of the funding is used for preservation and archives instead “informing” and how her institution was “naturally excited” when it was granted additional funding for educational programmes and exhibitions. Another aspect of the same moment is articulated in the stipulations of broadening the societal role of archivists. For instance, Carini (2009) writes how “archivists [are] faced with the expectation that they participate as educators”.

*5.1.8 Others-oriented participation.* The others-oriented discourse of participation emphasises participation as a form of listening to the others and giving them an opportunity to benefit of the archives from their own premises. Even if the discourse is in discourse theoretical sense antagonistic to the archives-oriented participation, the opposite view is seldom articulated as an explicit differential position. In contrast, the other-oriented discourse appears in parallel with several other discourses as a position that is used to legitimise the different forms of participation. The nodal point of the discourse is others needs that functions as the principal argument of the others-oriented point of view.

One of the most illustrative examples of this discourse is “Archivist’s 2.0 Manifesto” (B23) and “A Records Manager’s 2.0 Manifesto” (B25) both based on Cohen’s (2006) “A Librarian’s 2.0 Manifesto”. Samouelian (2009) articulates the moment of others needs by stating that “[a]rchivists must explore whether their profession is meeting the changing needs of its users through implementation of the latest Web technology”. Red Kite [5] discusses the same issue by questioning the typical premise of records management systems to rely on active user participation and its management on microscopic level, and by urging for more “intelligent” and automatic procedures of managing records. The comment of Flinn in [7] takes the discussion to a broader societal level by underlining how participatory archives is “not a technology but a cultural shift to greater openness and collaboration in archival practice” and by placing emphasis on accountability and democracy perspectives. Trevor Owens (B13) makes a similar remark by underlining the intrinsic significance of crowdsourcing and participation as a means of letting others to engage (from their own point of view) in a meaningful interaction with collections: “if the goal [of crowdsourcing/participation] is to get people to engage with collections and engage deeply with the past then the transcripts are actually a fantastic by-product that is created by offering meaningful activities for the public to engage in”. Joachim Kemper (cited by KlausGraf (B36)) is similarly optimistic about the opportunities of a closer cooperation with the public and the need and benefits of a total digitisation of archives even if he acknowledges that the present participatory approaches have a tendency to focus on archival documents as collection items instead of records.

*5.1.9 Non-participation.* The non-participation discourse is an implicit discourse that is articulated as an antithesis of the participatory discourses. The nodal point of the discourse is the novelty of the participatory “paradigm”. The contradiction of participatory and non-participatory approaches is epitomised in the title of the book “A

different kind of web” (Theimer, 2011a) that endorses a “different”, unconventional use of the Web. Also Huvila (2008) presents user orientation as “radically” different from the conventional paradigm of archival work. Canadian archival students’ blog quotes an old article according to which “the one primary distinguishing characteristic of the successful modern archivist” [3]. The same idea is apparent in other passages such as in how [7] refers to a “cultural shift”.

### 5.2 *Sub-discourses*

In addition to the nine discourses identified in the texts, the analysed material contain articulations of three sub-discourses. In Foucauldian (Foucault, 2002/1969) sense, these sub-discourses are not merely silent content but sub-discourses beneath manifest statements that suggest of differential views of the role of participation as an instrument of management for the archives, as a means of empowerment of the users, and as an outcome of the use of certain technologies.

*5.2.1 Management.* The management sub-discourse is a typical element of the participatory media, records creators as participants, participants as informants and participation as use discourses and as a partly underlying assumption behind the participants as archivists discourse.

The sub-discourse is present in indirect articulations of how the Web 2.0 tools should not be used only for communication and marketing, but also for the management of archives that should be the preferred mode of engagement (Dufour, 2008). Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) link their proposal of participatory appraisal and arrangement of archival collections to a management sub-discourse by referring to the impossibility of the task that archivists would be “choosing all documents, describe all knowledge in a collection, and represent all truths and experiences”. Shoemaker (2005) uses a management argument to motivate why users were given an opportunity to make historical judgments as “the most practical thing to do”.

*5.2.2 Empowerment.* Empowerment sub-discourse is typical in participants as archivists, archives in society and others-oriented discourses. It is, however, noteworthy that the discourse-sub-discourse relations are not exclusive and the moments of both management and empowerment sub-discourses can be found as articulations for the all described discourses. Robinson (2007) refers explicitly to the idea of empowerment in her text where she discusses two contrasting views of user involvement as “abdication” and “empowerment”. The empowerment sub-discourse is also present in the articulations of the societal discourse where the participation of archives in freedom of information and democracy initiatives is seen as an opportunity for citizens. Besides referring to the limited possibilities of archivists to manage everything, Shilton and Srinivasan (2007) make an explicit argument for the empowering potential of redefining appraisal, arrangement and description as participatory processes. Shoemaker (2005) makes a similar double argument by motivating the participation of users by referring to educating users: “[n]ot only is this the most practical thing to do, but also, in terms of historical scholarship, it is the most appropriate approach”.

Even if the empowerment sub-discourse is more common in the others-oriented discourse, it is not absent from the managerialist discourses that tend to refer to participation as an opportunity for archives to exploit others for enhancing the archives and, for instance, description of the holdings. For example, even if Kalfatovic *et al.* (2008) articulate their positions primarily in managerial terms, the text articulates at the same time for the empowering potential of the better availability of the collections.

5.2.3 *Technology*. The technology sub-discourse underpins much of the argumentation for and against participation in archival contexts. Technology is articulated as a premise or enabler of a closer engagement with users, both in a positive and negative sense. The sub-discourse is present in all discourses even if not entirely apparently in all arguments used especially in the others as archivists and archives in society discourses. Schnapp (2008) refers to the “new possibilities” offered by the “Internet 2.0”, Samouelian (2009) contrasts the traditional archival duties and the need to keep up with “Web applications”. Also Zimmerman (in (B9)) sees technology as the principal propeller of positive change in archives. Accidental archivist (B22) remarks that “I know one ought to be critical of notions of Library 2.0 and whether Web 2.0 practices will make life better, but the benefits are often very clear to me”. Kemper (cited in (36)) is similarly in favour of the positive outcomes of technology adoption. The presence of technology sub-discourse is particularly obvious in texts describing practical social media implementations (e.g. Pearce-Moses and Yakel, 2007; Yakel *et al.*, 2007), but even the archives in society discourse has a tendency to highlight the role of technology by dichotomising earlier societies and the new digital societies (e.g. Cunningham and Cunningham, Inc., 2005).

### 5.3 *Antagonisms*

Considering the number of different articulations of the notion of “participation”, the different discourses contain relatively few direct hegemonic interventions. A summary of clearly identifiable antagonisms between the discourses is presented in Table II together with short descriptions of the fields of discursivity.

Fields of discursivity	Discourses with antagonising tendencies (a)	Description of the field of discursivity (b)	In texts (e.g.)
A	Others as archivists	Others as informants	Archivists and archival institutions are unsure about the distinctness and/or convergence of their roles and the roles of users and offices of origin Theimer (2011b), Yakel (2012), Huvila (2008), (B2).
B	Participation as new “use”	Others as archivists; others as informants	Participation can be conceptualised either as participation in distinct participatory activities or as a participation in the work of the archivists [B14]; Archer and Cianconi (2010), Shoemaker (2005)
C	User-oriented discourse; Participatory context	Other discourses (except Non-participation)	The premiss of participation is to engage users from an archives point of view (archives have users) or users' point of view (archives are a potential resources for users) (B25), (5), (B13), Crymble (2010)
D	Participation as new “use”	Archives in society	The significance of participation is articulated from the perspective of the intrinsic importance of archives (a) or the needs and wishes of their “users” i.e. people (b) Garaba (2012), Cunningham and Cunningham (2005), (B12)

**Table II.**  
Examples of antagonising tendencies between different discourses



The floating signifiers of the antagonising discourses are summarised in Table III and examples of the conflicting articulations are given in Table IV. On the level of the sub-discourses, the floating signifier of the management and empowerment discourses is the definition of archive either as an institution (the nodal point of the management discourse) or as an (open) resource (in the empowerment discourse). The texts did seldom make specific remarks on the possibly controversial or debatable nature of the notion of archives or of their significance.

The incongruities between discourses were often related to the question of how open archives can be and what are the limits of letting others to work as archivists. The more

**Table III.**  
Floating signifiers and sub-discourse specific nodal points in antagonistic tendencies in participation

	Floating signifier(s)	(a) Nodal point	(b) Nodal point
A	Professional roles; Integrity of archival holdings	Many users are more knowledgeable of the archives than archivists both as subject experts and as the users of the archives	Users can provide useful information and help archivists in their work, but archivists have to retain a control of the archives
B	The nature of participation	Participation means that users are visiting and using archives	Participation means that users are engaged in the archives as contributors and/or archivists
C	The principal stakeholder of participation	Participation is a user-driven activity	Participation is an archives-driven activity

**Table IV.**  
Articulations used as (attempts of) hegemonic interventions in antagonising discourses

	Articulations used in antagonising discourses	
	(a)	(b)
A	New technologies allow archives to engage users in the management of archives E.g. “encouraging” manor owners, both individuals and organisations, to actively “manage” their archives (Hakala, 2011)	Participation is more than using archival holdings, it is engagement in developing and/or managing them E.g. “The participatory archive is about digital participation and the present projects used a technology commonly placed under the umbrella of Web 2.0. The central underpinning of decentralised curation, radical user orientation, and broader contextualisation of records management is a digital form of information” (Huvila, 2008)
B	Participation is about engaging others to come to archives and use them E.g. Technology is a means “to make [heritage] available” (Garaba, 2012)	New technologies allow archives to crowdsource information from the public E.g. Flickr Commons give opportunities to “enrich” archival holdings (Kalfatovic <i>et al.</i> , 2008)
C	The significant aspect of participation is engage users from their own premises E.g. “[a]rchivists must explore whether their profession is meeting the changing needs of its users through implementation of the latest Web technology” (Samouelian, 2009)	Participation in archives is an instrument for archivists to realise the purpose of archives E.g. “Rather than creating the programs FOR an audience first and hoping they will come, this shift in thinking will allow us to create programs WITH our audience, truly democratizing what we do, while highlighting our community and civic roles, and ultimately strengthening us and our purpose” (B8)

“radical” (e.g. Huvila, 2008) proposals did not generally deny the relevance and usefulness of less radical forms of participation. The antagonistic positions stemmed from differing opinions of the understanding of the notion of participation and the question of the principal stakeholders of the different types of participation. Many texts were critical to particular readings of what participation means (e.g. the limiting of the role of the others to function as informants or to allow them to participate in the management of the archives) (e.g. [36]; Theimer, 2011c; Yakel, 2011) and attempted hegemonic interventions on other competing definitions of participation, but were at the same time, reluctant to engage in a critical discussion of specific differential positions.

## 6. Discussion and conclusions

The texture of discourses emerging from the analysis shows the diversity of the ideas related to participation in the context of archives. In spite of the complexity of the field of discursivity, it seems that all discourses have a common nodal point, the meaning of “archives” in a “novel” era of participation that is characterised by three evolving but inertial premises (present in the three identified sub-discourses): archives and their management, users and their engagement or empowerment, and technology and its use. Similarly to the idea of “social technology” (Derksen and Beaulieu, 2011) which acknowledges the particularly social nature of certain technologies (at the same time it acknowledges the social nature of all technologies), it seems that the discourses of participation incorporate an idea of “participation” as a similar constituent of the contemporary culture than the social is in the context of social technology. The specific notions of participatory archives can be seen as a project of articulating the nature of archives in terms and in relation to participation in this particular context. The articulation of differential positions in the analysed texts is closely related to participatory discourses in library (Holmberg *et al.*, 2009; Mack, 2012) and museum literature (van Vliet and Hekman, 2012; Simon, 2010). However, unlike its close relative, the Library 2.0 discourse in library literature, the texts did not tend to put emphasis on the possibly controversial or debatable nature of the notion of archives (otherwise widely contested in cultural theory and scholarship, e.g. Derrida, 1995; Ebeling and Günzel, 2009; Lothian, 2012; Manoff, 2004) or of the general significance of archives or the archival profession (in contrast to the considerably debated significance of specific paradigms and conceptualisations of archives and that what should be archived, e.g. Cook, 2013; Samouelian, 2009), even if the frequent articulations of their continuing tenacity (e.g. Kallberg, 2012; Gilliland-Swetland, 2000) *per se* can be seen as an evidence of certain doubts.

Instead of the notion of archives, the analysis shows that a central tenet of the participatory discourses is a contrast between participation and non-participation. The dichotomy is articulated in highly similar terms than how the “new creative” industries are contrasted with Fordist mass production (Bachmann and Wittel, 2009). In contrast to industrial mass production (Bachmann and Wittel, 2009) and traditional archival work, the participatory discourses make implicit and explicit claims of the significance of enthusiasm in archival collections, “users” and the professional work of archivists as a major propeller of the practical archival work, and its societal relevance and legitimacy. The articulations of “passionate amateurs” (B17), and “courageous” and the enjoyment of “excitement and fun of positive change” (Theimer, 2007) seem to suggest that both archivists and others are expected to engage in affective labour which commodifies their enthusiasm as a productive force. Studies in the affective labour of flight attendants (Hochschild, 1983) and office workers (Cropanzano *et al.*,

2003) have shown the significance of displaying affects. Even if in these cases the authenticity of enthusiasm is not essential, Bachmann and Wittel (2009) have emphasised the difference between the productive capacity of “authentic” and “faked” enthusiasm. Authentically enthusiastic participants are more productive than fakers, but the variations in the timing (different individuals and groups are enthusiastic at different times), focus (enthusiasm on different things) and expressions of enthusiasm (and the subsequent difficulty to understand and appreciate them) may deteriorate its positive effects. The variety of suggested objects of enthusiasm, the diversity of the suggested approaches of engagement and their timing in the different phases of the creation, use and reuse of records indicate possible problems in managing the aspired enthusiasm and its positive impact on the legitimacy, effectiveness and relevance of archival collections and institutions.

An obvious barrier for exploiting enthusiasm in the sense discussed in the participatory archives literature is that the references to the practical forms of participation in almost all discourses (with the most apparent exception of the others oriented discourse) tend to be based on rather different types of incentives and rationales than enthusiasm. The texts tend to focus on articulating instrumental rather than emotional motivations. Further, record creators and the society at large are assumed to have similar or related rationales. In this respect, a distinction between engagement and participation is important, as Theimer (2011b) has suggested. There can be participation without (enthusiastic) engagement and vice versa, but unlike Theimer proposes, I am inclined to suggest that they are two different modes of involvement instead of activities with lower or “higher bar” (Theimer, 2011b). An engaging archive leverages enthusiasm on its stakeholder groups whereas a participatory archive is open for various levels of participation from external feedback and contributions to new approaches of conceptualising the archival function, how it can be organised and managed. Engagement can be useful, but not enough (as Hackman (2012) notes, “[l]ove is not enough”) or not as necessary as participation. Collaborations between records creators, archivists and informants can be based on enthusiasm and develop into engaging and thriving communities, but in daily forms of cooperation, a wholehearted passion is an unlikely and in many cases unnecessary ingredient.

Another aspect that frames the exploitation of enthusiasm stems from the subcultural underpinnings of the modes of engagement propagated in the context of the participatory culture discourse. Many of the participatory initiatives and ideals articulated by archivists seem to be based on implicit and explicit assumptions of the emergence and exploitation of a certain type of subcultural fandom with direct parallels to subcultures discussed within subcultural theory (e.g. by Williams, 2011). The articulations seem to suggest that an ideal enthusiastic archivist or “user” would share some of the level of engagement with punk rockers, Trekkies (Star Trek fans) or roleplayers. The juxtaposition of the institutionalised practices of archives and an increased level of engagement from the part of the users have similarities with the tensions between subcultures and entrepreneurs who engage in repackaging and commercialising them. As Williams (2011) notes, however, the contradiction between marketers and fans has begun to ease as enterprises have started to offer more flexible and diversified opportunities for the fans to develop their fandom.

From a participation point of view, archives could possibly learn from commercial actors and to start to offer their users similarly diversified opportunities for engagement and to put emphasis on helping users to develop their own subcultural strategies for developing an emotional connection with something the archives can provide them rather than focusing on contributions and institutional objectives in their communication

with participants. The advice of Smith-Yoshimura (2012) to “motivate your users and leverage their enthusiasm to contribute” is undoubtedly a good practical strategy, but if the aim is to exploit the enthusiasm of real enthusiasts, the contribution they make will not be primarily a contribution to the archival institution but to their own participatory subculture. A mechanistic focus on outcomes and efficiency instigates a passive form of engagement (similar to that documented by Jafarinaimi, 2012, in his study of Google Image Labeler). In the context of an active engagement, archival materials and archives function as artefacts of certain participatory cultures rather than as passive objects of participation. As Lothian (2012) shows, the placing of artefacts in the context of subcultural realm and fandom changes their nature and contests the scholarly assumptions of what is significant or trivial, and what deserves to be archived and who has the right to do so. These dichotomies between engagement and participation, and the management, empowerment and technology-oriented sub-discourses correspond with the observation of Evelyn (in Dionne, 2011) that a fundamental question of participation relates to the tension of control and freedom. The aspirations to engage others in meaningful or useful (from either archivists’, users’ or both point of view) collaboration are constantly dichotomised with an urge of maintaining credibility of the archival profession. The question is phrased, as Yakel (2011) does, in terms of whether or not archives are getting value for the loosening of their grip of their collections.

Henttonen (2012) questions (for a good reason) the assumption of the nature of authority as a finite resource. The explicit articulations of the anxieties of losing and retaining professional and practical authority (e.g. Velios, 2011) suggest that the question is relevant for many archivists. The discourse analysis and some recent propositions in the literature (e.g. Cook, 2013; Yakel, 2011; Huvila, 2008) show, however, that the picture might be more nuanced. The baseline of the discursive hegemonic interventions is not necessarily the amount of authority but rather the authoritativeness of the competing epistemic assumptions underlying the fields of discursivity and the difficulties to cope with the new practices of negotiating credibility in the digital information culture (Francke and Sundin, 2012).

Koskinen (2011) has explored the problems of epistemic relativism in the context of relativistic research practices and the consequent clash of scholarly and non-scholarly knowledge. My suggestion is that the antagonism of the management and empowerment sub-discourses can be traced back to a similar dichotomy of incompatible epistemic beliefs. Considering the number of discourses within the field of discursivity it seems that the complexity of frictions is greater than the one suggested by a simple dichotomy between a “traditional” and “participatory”, Mode 1 and Mode 2 (Gibbons, 1994), or production and produsage (Bruns, 2008) type of the production of knowledge. Similarly to Kelty (2005), who discusses the Internet as a contest, “neither stable nor single but [as] constantly being rewritten and recompiled according to diverse, partially shared, shifting, and incomplete objectives”, and geeks (i.e. heavy-users) as a recursive public, a particular type of social imaginary, participation can be seen as a contest and different participant groups as recursive publics that advocate their own and others’ anxieties as universal concerns.

As Koskinen (2011) notes, the apprehension of different viewpoints does not need to extend to an epistemic relativism but can remain on a level of methodological conceptual relativism that acknowledges the differential viewpoints but does not imply that they are treated as real options in all communities. Overcoming the epistemic gap requires at the minimum, a conscious effort of establishing a set of boundary practices (Ramsten and Säljö, 2012) and use of relevant boundary objects (Star, 2010) that can

help archivists and others to collaborate and, on the level of discourses, to solve the antagonisms. This type of a reading of the participatory field of discursivity is similar to the findings of Samouelian (2009) and suggest that the discourses converge on the level of social practices:

Whether the incentive is sharing content with current patrons because they request it, eliciting help from patrons in describing collections, or wanting to use some of the emerging Web tools that their current patrons use, the data suggest that respondents are thinking about their patrons/users when considering the use of a Web 2.0 application. As one respondent commented: [...] we did hear a lot of feedback from people that when they work with images they wanted the ability to add comments, share information – and we certainly are very attentive to that – most of our photographic images come to us with little or no descriptive information, and although there are different types of descriptive information, we wanted an open system that gave and encouraged people to add comments to images and share information so that the next user would have more available information (Respondent 1 in Samouelian, 2009).

In practice, it seems that it might be possible to reach a closure of the currently antagonising sub-discourses that allows “others” and archivists acknowledge each others’ viewpoints, but at the same time, to operate with such tools and approaches that facilitate translation of knowledge between the different communities. The closure could remind of the fourth community paradigm proposed by Cook (2013), but instead of being a specific archival mindset, it would probably be more useful if such a hegemonic intervention would lead to a closure that acknowledges the complexity of how participation, archives and archiving are articulated from different discursive positions. Embracing an assortment of even dichotomising participatory approaches does not need to be a problem, but it takes more than willingness to form partnerships. Similarly to how Connolly and Tate (2011) argue that museums should not view volunteers as free labour, but consider participant engagement as integral to their mission, archives can integrate different modes of participation and interaction with various stakeholders to the established, evolving and new professional practices of, for instance, archival appraisal, description and management. It is undoubtedly useful that archivists work as translators between archival and non-archival knowledge. As Rotman *et al.* (2012) remark, it is important to integrate user-generated content to expert content, but at the same time it might be equally important to acknowledge (in the spirit of methodological conceptual relativism) the value of user-generated content as a real option for the non-experts and the need to translate expert information to the opposite direction. The initiatives relating to outreach, exhibitions, pedagogy and the development of user-orientated services are relevant in this respect, but in order to function as a form of cultural translation, it might be useful to put more emphasis on bringing archival knowledge into the context of the communities of non-archivists in addition to focusing on the pedagogical potential of archives (as e.g. Zipsane, 2009) or developing competences of using and understanding archives (as e.g. Yakel and Torres, 2003). As Beer and Burrows (2013) note, archived data tends to have a social life of their own both within and outside of the archive institutions.

The problem of the differential positions articulated in the antagonising discourses seems to be their conflicting epistemic viewpoints, which are often unnecessarily dramatised rather than toned down by dichotomising the real and imagined differences between users and archivists, a phenomenon that is common also to the contrasting of users and producers in the participatory culture discourse as van Dijk (2009) has shown.

The premise of the management subdiscourse is to perceive expert knowledge not only as a desirable type of knowledge, but also as the only real option, not only for professionals but also for an everyman. In contrast, the technology and empowerment sub-discourses articulate explicitly epistemic relativist ideals or fail to be explicit about how, when and for whom the different epistemic beliefs of archivists and various types of others are real options.

There is and very likely, there will be archiving beyond community engagement and communities (or “communities”) without a specific interest in their heritage or identity that manifests itself in terms of something that is easily accommodated in an archives and records oriented mindset. Considering the similarities between library, museum and archives related participatory discourses, this observation can be extended with some caution to these institutions as well. Participation works only if it stems from real options and sensitivity to others’ epistemic beliefs. Others can be used as informants, “broader and deeper curriculum” (Yakel and Torres, 2003) can be developed for users, the users’ epistemic beliefs can be embraced as a new gold standard or archival work can be oriented along the lines of the fourth paradigm or mindset of archival profession of “empowering communities [...] by partnering professional archival expertise and archival digital infrastructures with communities’ deep sense of commitment and pride in their own heritage and identity” formulated by Cook (2013) to an extent that particular “others” are willing to inform, or to show a “deep sense of commitment and pride in their own heritage and identity” (Cook, 2013). The crux is that none of these approaches helps to nurture participation if the participants are not conscious, explicit and hospitable about their and others’ epistemic beliefs and real options.

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