Regimes of participation: theorising participatory archives from the outset of archivists' views on archival institutions and user participation in Scandinavia

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Abstract

Introduction. In spite of the prominence of the notion of participatory archives, there is no consensus of what participation entails in archival contexts and a lack of theory to explain the mechanisms underpinning the diversity of views.

Method. Norwegian and Swedish archivists were surveyed as a part of the international ALMPUB research project for their views on user participation and how these views relate to their understanding of the role and the raison d'être of archives and archival institutions. The survey findings were used as a basis for theory development.

Analysis. The data were analysed using exploratory factor analysis and descriptive statistics. The results of the factor analysis theorised as subject positions relating to views pertaining to archival participation and the societal role of archival institutions.

Results. The analysis shows that the professionals' perceptions of the rationale and impact of participation and the societal role of archives and archival institutions forms clusters were interpreted as relating to regimes of participation.

Conclusion. Drawing on the theorising of Boltanski and Thévenot, the alignments of the perceptions to archives' raisons d'être and archival participation are explained in terms of four regimes of participation: 1) participation as an intrinsically valuable activity; 2) participation as a complement to professional work in the records continuum; 3) professional work as an auxiliary activity to participation of experts; and 4) participation as a means of producing additional value for archival institutions, i.e., arrangements of framing the justification and value of participation in, with and for archival institutions. It is, however, possible to imagine additional regimes that correspond with the social worlds of Boltanski and Thévenot not represented by them, including the inspired (participation as a source of inspiration) and domestic worlds (domiciliary participation), and the world by project (participatory project). The study suggests that inquiring into the justifications and regimes of worth attached to participation helps to refute simplistic assumptions of what participation entails and recognise the variety of participatory engagements and their diverging implications for different types of archival institutions and their diverse stakeholders.

Introduction

Much has happened during the past one and a half decades in how user studies and the discussion on the respective roles of archivists and archive users have made their way from the margins of archival studies and practice to become a major topic of debate and inquiry (Hellmer, 2023; Sundqvist, 2007). *Participation*, with the idea of positive impact of engaging with the world outside of archives, has become one of the central keywords in the user discourse, especially in the context of public and societally relevant archives and archival institutions (Benoit III and Eveleigh, 2019a). In spite of the prominence of the term, there is hardly a consensus of what is a *participatory archive*, or a participatory archival institution. While a lack of general agreement is not a problem *per se*, each conception comes with different implications to the aims, prerequisites, opportunities and limitations of participation. Similarly, the respective roles of archivists and participants in archives and recordkeeping differ depending on what participation is assumed to mean (Huvila, 2015b; Benoit III and Eveleigh, 2019a). The problem is rather a lack of theory to describe and understand the mechanisms of the different concurrent ideas of participation, their underpinnings and implications. Without such a framework, there is a risk that the participatory archival discourse continues to refer to participation as if it was a monolith and it would be possible to attach similar expectations to all forms of engagement and partaking.

This article approaches the problem of how to understand different views of what archival participation entails, by investigating to what extent diverse understandings of participation in relation archival institutions could be explained in terms of the presence of different normative social arrangements, with their corresponding sets of rules and social norms, or regimes (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2022; Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006), relating to what is considered to be the perceived value of archival participation and archival institutions in the society. The theorising in this study draws from an analysis of survey data, asking Norwegian and Swedish archives professionals' views of the value of user participation in archives and the raison d'être of archival institutions in society. Rather than pursuing a theory of the opinions of Norwegian and Swedish archivists, the purpose of the exercise was to explore and show that 1) there are different types of views of the value of archives and participation; that 2) they are linked to each other and broader normative social arrangements forming clusters; and 3) it is possible to see parallels and connections between the clusters and views expressed in the literature on archival participation.

The empirical focus of this study is explicitly on public and private archival *institutions* (acknowledging that in the participatory discourse the demarcations between metaphorical, formal and informal archives are all but clear) and archival participation (or participatory archives) in relation to them. Participation, and for example participatory design, relating to informal archives or organizational archival and record-keeping functions forms separate, albeit equally interesting fields of discourse. Especially the latter has remained somewhat detached from the mainstream discussion on *participatory archives* (exceptions *e.g.*, Engvall, 2019; Huvila, 2009), and warrants further attention in future studies. However, as this study aims first and foremost at theory development rather than reporting new empirical knowledge, it is important to stress that the key theoretical ideas are not specific to particular types of archives or forms of participation even if, as the findings show, certain conceivable themes are not visible in the analysed empirical material.

Participation

Even if *participation* is often portrayed as characteristic to the contemporary human condition, the prehistory of the participatory or participative turn and *participatory culture* (Delwiche and Henderson, 2012) dates back several decades. The underpinnings of the notion of participation and related concepts are in the cultural and policy discourses that advocate for participation through promoting the ideals of individual responsibility (Virolainen, 2016), excellence, creativity,

democracy and democratisation (Bonet and Négrier, 2018) in cultural and societal action (see *e.g.* Saurugger, 2010). The notion has spread across the cultural sphere to become a generic label for aspirations to reorganize social life from politics (Coelho et al., 2022) to healthcare (Glasdam et al., 2015), and heritage (Neal, 2015). Participatory design has popularised the notion with considerable success in the development of new systems and services (*e.g.*, Schuler and Namioka, 1993; Bødker et al., 2021).

In practice, however, even if a participatory shift in the social-political vocabulary is clear (Virolainen, 2016) and a plethora of methods of how to engage with specific forms of *participation* exist, it is not always defined on such a level of specificity that would make it meaningful in practice and save it from turning into an empty word. This applies to participation discourse in cultural policy (Sigurjónsson, 2021) and beyond (*e.g.*, Egher, 2023). A parallel tendency in the discourse is to recognise active and to neglect hidden, informal and anti-normative forms of participation by omitting them altogether or categorising them, as Zvonareva and colleagues (2022) note, for example, as acts of vandalism. The same applies to failures of enacting participation that are seldom reported or reflected upon (Jancovich and Stevenson, 2023). A further hindrance to apprehending and acting out participation is incompatible ideas, values and limits related to participation between, for instance, professional and non-professional participants (Ryan, 2018; Mayes, 2023).

A parallel cause and symptom of the conceptual and practical tangle is that participation is a fluid term used to refer to a vast range of different understandings and ideals of what *participating* means. Carpentier (2016) distinguishes simple acts of part-taking from proper participation that always underpinned by power-sharing, and participation (co-deciding) from access and interaction (Carpentier, 2015). Andresen et al. (2020) recognise a parallel distinction between conceptualising participation as a means to veer from institutionalised and hegemonic, to inclusive society-wide knowledge production (Nowotny et al., 2001) and as a form of giving voice to participating individuals and communities for fostering belonging, personal expression and accomplishment (Ivey, 2009). Boersma (2022) makes a further distinction in museums between a dominant output-oriented participation versus outcomes-oriented participation, that puts emphasis on sustaining what is achieved through and with participation.

There is also country-specific variation in what is emphasised in the participatory discourse. For example, in Sweden, the emphasis of democracy in cultural discourse and the shift of emphasis from corporatist to autonomic cultural participation have been suggested to have an impact of Swedish perceptions and rationales of participation (Lindström Sol, 2019; Huvila, 2020).

A further complication to understanding participation and its diverse underpinnings is that the different forms of participation and part-taking do not need to exclude each other in any other than analytical sense. They, and their different intrinsic and instrumental logics, can co-exist (Lindström Sol, 2019; Huvila, 2015b). This paradoxal-sounding observation could suggest, what Miessen (2010) has proposed, of the general logic of the desirability of consensus as a fundamental underpinning of the participatory discourse as a whole. Rather than fostering open debate and political action, it has, according to him, lead to pseudo-participation and hollow-rituals, rather than critical and productive action. It has also opened the way for exploitation of consensualism in global politics by actors who see *participation* as a means of driving their individual political and economic agendas.

Participatory archives

Participatory archives are a part of the broader cultural and societal drift that besides participation form a backdrop for such parallel archival movements as community archives, and archives and social justice (see *e.g.*, Evans et al., 2015). However, even if sometimes used in an essentialising manner to describe a specific archive as a participatory archive (*cf.* a

national archive or community archive), the notion is broader and rather than being a label of a particular (type of) archival institution, it is better described as a referent to a certain constellation of ideals of how archives could (or should) be managed (*cf.* Shilton and Srinivasan, 2008; Huvila, 2008; Benoit III and Eveleigh, 2019a). The references to participation in archival contexts is further complicated by the fact that the participatory discourse often makes no distinction between metaphorical and informal *archives* (*i.e.* collections, repositories), historical archives and management of contemporary records (Huvila, 2017; Edquist, 2021). At the same time, however, the influence of the broader cultural participatory discourse and metaphorical participatory archives is clearly visible in the literature relating to participation, even in the formal archival contexts (*e.g.*, Huvila et al., 2023 *cf.* Huvila, 2015b; Benoit III and Eveleigh, 2019a). Benoit and Eveleigh (2019a) link the concept of participatory archives appropriately to postmodernism, which emerged as the dominant post-positivist theory in archival science from the 1990s onwards (Ridener, 2009). It has shifted attention from the traditional focus of archival theory in the becoming and accumulation processes, to the use of archives (*e.g.*, Lemay and Klein, 2014; Dearstyne, 1987), sometimes to an extent that loses sight of the nature of archives and records as evidence and remains, rather than consumer goods (Huvila, 2017; Edquist, 2021). Initially much of the participatory archives discourse focused predominantly on the cultural use of archives (see *e.g.* Benoit III and Eveleigh, 2019b; Theimer, 2011), but has since extended to the civic sphere, especially under the influence from community archives and social justice movements (Evans et al., 2019).

Besides the impact of the predominant Western political, economic and cultural discourse of the past decades, the contemporary participatory archival discourse has been heavily influenced by the digitalisation of the social sphere and information processing. Especially the social media technologies of the mid and late 2000s were pivotal to the formation of the idea of *participatory archives* (Benoit III and Eveleigh,

2019a). They provided a foundational technological infrastructure for experimenting with participatory ideas and exploring how to put them into practice in many of the early participatory archival projects including the Polar Bear Exhibition Digital Collections (Krause and Yakel, 2007), Saari Manor Archive (Huvila, 2008), Your Archives (Grannum, 2011) and Flickr Commons (Zinkham and Springer, 2011).

Even if the different participatory archives and ideas of archival participation share certain foundational premises, *participation* has been appropriated in archival discourse to denote a remarkably broad spectrum of engagements. This applies also to what specific practices are considered participatory in archival context (Alaoui, 2021; Eveleigh, 2017). Kortbek (2016) criticises Danish cultural policy for appropriating participation as a form of outreach, rather than power-sharing. Huvila (2015b) identifies a largely implicit discourse of non-participation and eight discourses related to participation: *participatory context* (participation characterises the context where archives are operating); *archivists as participants* (archivists should be more proactive); *records creators as participants* (importance of engaging with records creators); *others as informants* (participants as contributors to and about archival collections); *participation as new 'use'* (participation as a new term for using archives); *others as archivists* (non-archivists should be allowed to participate in archival tasks); and *others-oriented participation* (participation is about listening to participants and giving them opportunities to benefit from archives). Correspondingly, when asked about the rationales of engaging with participants, archivists, like their colleagues in museums and libraries, show a variety of views of why and how participation can be helpful (*e.g.* Andresen et al., 2020) that perhaps unsurprisingly correspond closely with different takes of how participation is framed as archives-, archivist-, organization-, user-, society-, or community-centred undertaking.

The raison d'être of archival institutions

A related question to why participation is argued to be needed and why it is assumed to be helpful in varying terms in different contexts, is the broader rationale of why archival institutions are considered to be needed in the society. The question is pertinent, even if the relation of these two issues is not necessarily as perfectly straightforward as it perhaps appears to be. A rudimentary cultural rationale of keeping (historical) archives builds on what has been called archival optimism: that history is a necessary context for the present (Sheffield, 2020). A comparable contemporary political raison d'être links keeping archives to obtaining and maintaining power (Delsalle, 1998). Archives and archival institutions have also been considered, to varying degrees, as civic and private goods (Delsalle, 1998). From this perspective, the mandate and raison d'être of public national and regional archival institutions both differs from and overlaps with that of private (Svärd, 2017) and community archives (Bastian and Flinn, 2020b).

Historical overviews trace the trajectory of archival institutions and record-keeping in society from functioning as predominantly administrative and legal instruments of government, management and control turning, to serve research, national and public interests, and later on, cultural and informational needs of individuals and increasingly those of smaller communities (Delsalle, 1998; Duchein, 1992). In the Nordic context (*i.e.*, Scandinavian countries, Finland and Iceland) a factor that has influenced raison d'être of archives is the internationally strong local self-government, comprehensive freedom of information legislation dating back to the eighteenth century (Norberg, 2003) and an archival model where archives management covers the entire records continuum from contemporary records to archival heritage (Orrman, 2019a). The Nordic model is also incontrovertibly influenced by the pronounced role of societal institutions as a part of a neutral and legalistic public service. A related characteristic is to consider government workers as civil servants of society as a whole that follow a set of accepted norms, rather than as holders of state power external to the society and (potential) representatives of an oppressive mainstream (Raadschelders, 2015; Brachem and Tepe, 2015 also Crittenden, 1949; Jimerson, 2009 *cf. e.g.* Rothstein and Stolle, 2003; Pierre, 2004; Temmes, 2008). Probably for this reason, the widespread declining trust in public authorities, authoritativeness of records (Yeo, 2013) and archivists (Duranti, 1996; Lemieux, 2019) has perhaps been less pronounced in the Nordics than in many other countries. Still, in their role of custodians of both historical and current records, the Nordic archival institutions are empathetically administrative entities with a national mandate for supervising records keeping in their respective countries. This is comparable to the mandate of the National Archives in the UK and differs from the US, where the distinction between archival and records management is clear (Englund et al., 2018). Especially in Sweden, but increasingly also in Norway, the national archival institutions have a tradition of cooperating closely with records creating bodies in state administration. The local self-government means that this happens to much less extent with local and regional administration (Orrman, 2007; also Englund et al., 2018).

Moreover, similarly to, for instance, Canada and unlike the US, the Nordic tradition does not make a strong distinction between different types of materials (*i.e.*, public and private) and both are to varying degrees deposited in the public archives (Englund et al., 2018). The Nordic countries also have comparatively comprehensive public, publicly supported and membership-based infrastructures for keeping societally relevant private and popular movement archives, and a long tradition of non-academic use of archives for genealogy and amateur research (Orrman, 2007). In addition to such traditional forms of non-academic collaborations, more recently, the Nordic archival institutions have increasingly embraced archival pedagogy and outreach (Englund et al., 2018; Ilshammar, 2019), even if the volume of such activities is still modest in comparison to other memory institutions. As a whole, even if the Nordic archival sphere has

country differences, especially between the eastern (Sweden and Finland) and western (Denmark and Norway) administrative traditions, stemming from an earlier state connection between the respective pairs of countries, the similarity of Nordic legal and archival models, conceptual similarities and a long tradition of cooperation have made it reasonable to talk about a Nordic archival tradition (Norberg, 2003; Svenson, 2004; Orrman, 2019b) also in relation to the raison d'être of archives and archival institutions.

Relating to the raison d'être of archival institutions, an earlier study with Nordic archivists (Huvila, 2015a) identified five broad orders (cf. Boltanski and Thévenot, 2022) of archival work. The *archival* order refers to a principle that archives serve the public sphere in the society; *organizational* to the office of origin (records creating body) determines the priorities of archival work; *antiquarian* to an intrinsic historical and cultural usefulness of records; *pluralistic* to the catering of the explicit needs of current and future users; and *digital* to framing digitalisation as a key driver of the contemporary archival work. The prioritisation of functions that fall within Huvila's archival, organizational and pluralistic (roughly, administrative, evidentiary and informational functions) versus antiquarian (culture and heritage) orders has turned to a major point of friction in the contemporary archival policy debate (Gilliland-Swetland, 2000; Bogefeldt, 2005). In the Nordic countries, there is a visible tension to what extent the raison d'être of public archives and archival institutions should be formulated in terms of the one or the other (Kilkki, 2020; Edquist, 2019).

In parallel to the contrasting of cultural and civic uses of archives, there has been a general shift from emphasising collecting and long-term preservation, to outreach, contemporary public benefit and use of archives at all public collection institutions (Vassilakaki and Moniarou-Papaconstantinou, 2017; Larsen, 2018; Edquist et al., 2022). However, the need to cope with the escalation of the quantity of digital records, together with increasing demands for accountability and societal transparency demand robust and reliable means to preserve archival records for administrative and evidentiary purposes (Kallberg, 2012). This underlines the continuing relevance of archival management competencies (Buchanan et al., 2017) and the significance of records and fonds as a cornerstone of archives and archival practice (Edquist et al., 2022). Perhaps unsurprisingly, long-term preservation is also repeatedly emphasised by archivists as a key raison d'être of archival institutions (Audunson et al., 2019).

Explaining diversity of perceptions

While much of the earlier literature has focused on describing the variety of views and practices of participatory engagements, some attempts have been made to explain their diversity. Huvila (2015b) links the discourses of participation identified in the archival literature to contemporary archival and societal debates. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (2022) makes the linkage between societal discourse and public participation explicit in the museum context by drawing on Bourdieu's (1986) notions of economic, cultural and political fields (Fr. champ) and their distinct imperatives.

While following Bourdieu's idea of fields directs attention to the settings, rules, habitus and forms of capital associated with social action (*cf.* Susen, 2014), Boltanski and Thévenot (2022) outline an approach for framing imperatives and their associated arrangements from the perspective of justifications and values. The work extends Boltanski's broader project of inquiring into the regimes of action *i.e.*, ways of how human-beings *adjust* to the world (Boltanski, 2012). Boltanski and Thévenot propose that there are normative social arrangements or *orders* of worth, with their corresponding sets of rules and social norms, or *regimes* of justification, and modes of evaluation.

Initially Boltanski and Thévenot identified six social realms or *worlds* with their associated polities (or arrangements of requirements and ideas of what counts as higher common good) in which the value of people and objects is

measured according to their corresponding orders of worth. They are: 1) inspired world (of vision, passion and imagination that values symbolic role and originality); 2) domestic world (of traditions, customs, conventions that values how much objects can contribute to establishing and maintaining hierarchical relations between people); 3) civic world (of solidarity, group membership and collective interest that values capability to serve collective good); 4) the world of opinion and fame (of attention, persuasion, presentation that values attention, reputation, and respect for objects); 5) the world of the market (of desire and competition over the possession of valuable things that values the capability to satisfy desires); and 6) industrial world (of science, technology, efficiency, performance that values objects as instruments and means of production) with both quotidian and metaphysical dimensions. Boltanski and Chiapello (2017) introduced later one more, the world by projects (Fr. cité par projets) of flexibility, adaptability, creativity, and mobility. Each order of worth is defined by a higher form of common good (*e.g.*, domestic values in domestic order, and market in the market order).

In a comparable manner as Huvila (2015a) used Boltanski and Thévenot's theorising to identify five orders of archival work (archival, organizational, antiquarian, pluralistic, and digital), this study proposes that it is possible to identify regimes of participation with their corresponding worlds and orders of worth. They are different arrangements of framing and justifying the worth of participatory engagements. In this study, it is further hypothesised that it is possible to identify links and affinities between the worlds proposed by Boltanski and colleagues and the worlds underpinning the regimes of participation.

A major rationale of turning to Boltanski and Thévenot in theorising participation is to turn attention from describing the diversity of participatory actions, to inquiring into their underpinning values and how they are justified. As a consequence, as Bacevic (2021) notes, inquiring into justifications turns attention to what can be evaluated but even more so,

emphasises that acts, like participation in the present study, can be evaluated to begin with. Discussing Boltanski's *On Critique*, Stones (2014) underlines the testing of imagined worlds through colliding them with experienced worlds, as a key aspect of the making of the social life.

Material and methods

To be able to approach the theoretical question of the nexus of rationales underpinning participation and archival institutions from an empirical perspective, a dataset collected using an online survey submitted to archives professionals in Norway and Sweden was analysed. The data collection was a part of a multinational Norwegian Research Council funded research project ALMPUB (Vårheim et al., 2018). Comparable survey studies were also conducted with librarians and museum professionals in six European countries in total. The survey questionnaire was developed on the basis of earlier literature and enquired into archivists' perspectives and experiences of management, organization and preservation of collections, mediation and public engagement in contemporary archives, on the societal role (including Hedstrom and King, 2003; Usherwood et al., 2005; Lidman, 2012; Huvila, 2014) and participatory practices in archives, libraries and museums (including Kidd, 2011; Huvila, 2015b; Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2015). The questionnaire was reviewed by members of a large international research team and both linguistically and culturally translated to Swedish and Norwegian. The survey was distributed and managed locally in the two countries using locally available online survey software at the participating research institutions. A subset of the data (Tables 1 and 2), including questions (statements P1-P20) regarding user participation, the raison d'être of archives (R1-R16) and demographics were selected for analysis for this chapter.

Respondents were recruited using the most appropriate measures to contact as many archives professionals in the two countries. Invitations were distributed, for instance, to professional mailing lists, web sites, social networks and by contacting national archives associations. Demographics of the sample are

summarised in Table 1. One third of the Swedish respondents were males, while in Norway there were approximately as many males and females. In Sweden a large majority of respondents had education in archival studies, where in Norway almost two thirds lacked it. The average age of respondents was almost the same, 46.43 for Sweden and 47.96 for Norway, with a similar standard deviation. The distribution of respondents between different types of archival institutions was almost the same in both countries, with a majority representing regional archival institutions, national archival institutions well-represented and only a few respondents from membership-owned and private archives.

As there are no comprehensive lists of archivists and other archival professionals available for Sweden or Norway, the survey data represents a convenience sample. For the same reason, it is impossible to conduct a systematic assessment of the representativity of the sample. The sample also includes other archival professionals, not merely archivists. The higher number of women among the respondents corresponds with ideas that been suggested on the feminisation of the profession (e.g. Ekelöf, 2017). It also seems obvious that private archival institutions are probably underrepresented in the sample, even if a large part of the workforce in both countries is employed in public institutions (Englund et al., 2018; Ilshammar, 2019). However, in spite of the consequent presence of an unknown bias, it is argued that the data is useful for the present purpose to explore the variety of perspectives, rather than to confirm their distribution in a population.

	Sweden	Norway	Complete dataset
Sex			
– Male	60	64	124
– Female	109	69	178
– Other	2	2	4
– N/A	2	–	2
Education in archival studies			
– Yes	129	49	178
– No	44	86	130
Age (in years)			
– Mean	46.43	47.96	47.11
– SD	11.60	11.01	11.35
Workplace			
– National archival institution	52	54	106
– Local/regional archive	88	64	152
– Membership owned archive	15	14	29
– Private archive	4	3	7
– Other	14	–	14
N	168	134	308

Table 1. Demographics.

#	Statements related to views on participation	#	Statements related to views on the reason d'être of archives
P1	It is very important to engage the public to work together with professionals in archives	R1	Archives make it possible for public bodies and institutions to keep track of their activities.
P2	The public can enrich archive collections by providing additional information	R2	Archives promote transparency, making it possible for media and citizens to be informed on the activities of public bodies and institutions.
P3	Engaging the public as volunteers helps archives to deliver high quality services with smaller financial resources	R3	Archives make it possible for knowledge about private citizens and private companies to be managed and made accessible.
P4	Engaging the public reduces the number of professional staff needed in archives	R4	Archives provide research with data.
P5	A major reason for engaging people to participate in the work of archives is to get more visitors and users to the institutions	R5	Archives provide citizens with information they need for leisure time activities.
P6	Managing archive collections in the future is impossible without contributions made by the public	R6	Archives provide citizens with information they need to take care of their rights as citizens.
P7	The high number of passive, non-contributing members of the public is a problem, we should expect more from our users	R7	Archives provide citizens with information they need to participate actively in democracy and society.
P8	Engaging users as contributors provides important support for the public discourse in the society	R8	Archives are arenas for learning.
P9	Engaging users as contributors is a democratic responsibility of archives	R9	Archives are arenas for public debate.
P10	Letting the members of the public contribute is a form of listening to them and giving them an opportunity to experience benefit of archives from their own premises	R10	Archives are arenas where national, ethnic, cultural, sexual etc. minorities can present their histories and cultural expressions and build their identities.
P11	A major reason for engaging people to participate in the work of archives is to empower them as individuals	R11	Archives are user oriented experience centres.
P12	Many users are more knowledgeable of the collections than archive professionals, both as subject experts and as the users of the collections	R12	Archives promote integration by including the history of minorities in the common cultural heritage.
P13	User engagement at archives should be a user-driven activity (*i.e.*, decisions should be made by users)	R13	Archives promote the cultural heritage.
P14	User engagement at archives should be marshalled by professionals	R14	Archives promote equality by making archival material digitally accessible.
P15	Additional information supplied by users should be re-examined by professionals	R15	Archives are research institutions in the respective subject areas.
P16	The most important contributors are earlier owners or stakeholders of collection items	R16	Archives facilitate public debate by means of digital discussion forums.
P17	The members of the public who are contributing should be treated as equals to the professionals		
P18	New digital technologies allow archives to engage users in the management of collections		
P19	A significant aspect of participation is to engage users within their own fields of interest, or in ways that are relevant to their own life situations		
P20	Engaging the public to contribute is how archives should work with their users today		

Table 2. Statements used to measure the perceived importance of user participation for the surveyed archivists.

In total 20 statements (Table 2) relating to participation and 16 statements relating to the role of archives measured on an 11-point Likert-like scale (from disagree completely to agree completely) were analysed in R 4.0.4 statistical software using the package *principal* to carry out an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the data with principal component analysis (PCA) as a method of extracting factors. The purpose of factor analysis was to identify preference-related patterns relating to user participation and the raison d'être of archives. The data fulfil the commonly accepted criteria of EFA for the sample size (N), the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin test of sampling accuracy (0.88 for participation and 0.8 for the raison d'être), and significance (Sig.) by the Bartlett test (<.0001 for both). In each case, a four-factor

model was selected on the basis of the analysis of Scree plots and the non-triviality of the factors (*cf.* Costello and Osborne, 2005). The solutions fulfil Hatcher's (1994) recommendation of a 5:1 subject variable ratio. Descriptive statistics were calculated using stat.desc function from the package pastecs. Means between Swedish and Norwegian responses were compared and their significance tested using Wilcoxon test (function wilcox.test).

Analysis
Descriptive statistics

	Sweden		Norway		Complete			Sweden		Norway		Complete
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean
P1	6.80	2.76	6.76	2.61	6.78	2.69	R1	8.08	2.59	8.74	1.89	8.37	2.32
P2	6.65	3.34	7.24	2.57	6.91	3.03	R2	8.98	2.35	9.26	1.39	9.11	1.99
P3	5.41	3.19	6.28	2.90	5.79	3.09	R3	8.04	2.76	7.64	2.41	7.86	2.62
P4	2.20	1.70	2.04	2.61	2.13	2.15	R4	10.33	1.19	9.09	1.44	9.79	1.44
P5	6.13	2.85	6.09	2.68	6.11	2.77	R5	6.47	2.68	5.67	2.67	6.12	2.70
P6	3.11	2.42	3.68	2.75	3.37	2.58	R6	8.89	2.38	9.32	1.41	9.08	2.02
P7	3.67	2.50	2.68	2.36	3.23	2.49	R7	8.35	2.42	8.29	2.19	8.32	2.32
P8	6.45	3.06	5.47	2.64	6.01	2.91	R8	8.99	2.28	7.58	2.19	8.37	2.34
P9	5.50	3.05	4.62	3.08	5.11	3.09	R9	6.34	2.90	6.74	2.54	6.52	2.75
P10	7.04	2.81	6.12	2.67	6.63	2.78	R10	7.49	2.88	7.02	2.72	7.28	2.82
P11	4.88	3.06	3.02	2.68	4.06	3.04	R11	5.81	2.95	5.29	2.72	5.58	2.86
P12	5.26	3.14	5.75	2.85	5.48	3.02	R12	7.27	2.84	6.35	2.50	6.86	2.73
P13	3.43	2.58	2.48	2.44	3.01	2.56	R13	10.22	1.32	8.52	1.79	9.48	1.76
P14	9.13	2.38	8.11	2.13	8.67	2.32	R14	7.49	2.62	7.53	2.50	7.50	2.56
P15	9.40	2.22	7.49	2.42	8.55	2.50	R15	7.69	2.85	7.30	2.47	7.52	2.70
P16	7.15	2.82	5.37	2.86	6.36	2.97	R16	4.36	2.94	5.85	2.79	5.00	2.97
P17	3.96	2.73	4.14	2.89	4.04	2.80						
P18	5.36	2.96	4.45	3.31	4.96	3.15						
P19	6.29	2.96	6.01	2.88	6.17	2.92						
P20	5.27	2.76	4.93	2.60	5.12	2.69						

Table 3. Means of the responses to the survey questions P1-t on participation and R1-p on the raison d'être of archives.

An analysis of the mean values of the responses to questions on participation and the role of archives (summarised in the Table 3) shows that the respondents considered that while user contributions and participation can be valuable (*e.g.* P1, mean 6.78; P2, mean 6.91), they emphasised that participation should be guided (P14, mean 8.67) and user contributions controlled (P15, mean 8.55) by professionals. Participation was seen as a means to attract users to archives (P5, mean 6.11), but the respondents also tended to put weight on users' own personal interests and stake in the process (P16, mean 6.36; P19, mean 6.17). In contrast, the respondents were sceptical that participation would reduce the need for archival staff (P4, mean 2.13). Regarding the role of archives, the respondents considered that their most important raison d'être is that they provide research with data (R4, mean 9.79);

promote cultural heritage (R13, mean 9.48) and transparency; help the media and citizens be informed on the activities of public bodies and institutions (R2, mean 9.11); and care for their civil rights (R6, mean 9.08). The least emphasised roles for archives were to function as experience centres (R11, mean 5.58) and to facilitate public debate (R9, mean 6.52) in the digital sphere.

Some of the individual country differences warrant specific attention. The Swedish respondents were more inclined to think that empowering individuals (P11, mean 4.88 *cf.* 3.02; W=14661, p<.0001) and the knowledgeability of participants as users and subject experts (P16, mean 7.15 *cf.* 5.37; W=15194, p<.0001) are important rationales for participation. Simultaneously, however, the Swedish respondents were more inclined to believe that

additional information supplied by users should be re-examined (P15, mean 9.40 *cf.* 7.49, W = 17342, p<.0001) and participation marshalled by professionals (P14, mean 9.13 *cf.* 7.49, W = 15052, p<.0001). Comparably, the Swedish respondents were also more inclined to think that archives promote cultural heritage (R13 mean 10.22 *cf.* 8.52, W = 18298, p < .0001), are arenas for learning (R8 mean 8.99 *cf.* 7.58, W = 15860, p<.0001), and provide research with data (R4, mean 10.33 *vs.* 9.09, W = 18542, p< .0001).

Factor analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to reduce the dimensions of the complete data (Sweden and Norway) and to identify preference-related patterns relating to user participation and the raison d'être of archives where the respondent was working. The EFA produced, in both cases, four factors (Tables 4 and 5) that were interpreted as subject positions with associated interpretative repertoires (Huvila et al., 2016) i.e., different general perspectives to archives' raison d'être and user participation. Each interpretative repertoire was given an identifying name that corresponds with the characteristics of the principal component (summary in Table 6).

	Factors				
	Core tenet	User expertise	Professional control	Resource	com
P9	0.82				1.3
P1	0.81				1.1
P10	0.77				1.2
P8	0.71				1.3
P2	0.71				1.4
P3	0.63				1.7
P5	0.58				1.9
P11	0.55				1.9
P20	0.50				1.6
P12		0.72			2.6
P18		0.71			1.2
P19		0.65			1.9
P13		0.60			1.2
P15			0.88		1.8
P14			0.81		1.0
P16			0.56		1.1
P4				0.77	1.5
P7				0.59	1.1
P6				0.54	2.1
P17					2.1

Table 4. Results of the exploratory factor analysis of views about participation.

| | Factors | | | | |
	Arena of public discourse and learning	Manager of private information	Research and heritage resource	Manager and provider of public information	com
R16	0.87				1.1
R9	0.80				1.1
R11	0.69				1.6
R14	0.65				1.8
R10	0.64				1.7
R12	0.63				1.2
R15	0.50		0.46		2.2
R8	0.45				2.7
R2		0.82			1.1
R6		0.79			1.1
R1		0.69			1.1
R7		0.60			2.4
R4			0.89		1.1
R13			0.81		1.1
R5				0.68	1
R3				0.67	1.3

Table 5. Results of the exploratory factor analysis of views of the raison d'être of archives.

The first subject position (Table 4), relating to participation, *core tenet*, sees participation as the modus operandi of how archival institutions should work and a key aspect of their democratic and public role. The second, *resource*, approaches participation from the perspective that participants and their contributions are a vital resource for archives to survive. The third subject position, *professional control*, emphasises that in participatory work, participants need to be guided by professionals and that the offices of origin of the archival records are the most significant contributors in such engagements. While the fourth and last, *user expertise*, highlights users as expert stakeholders and key participants who should drive participatory activities.

According to the first subject position, relating to the raison d'être of archives (Table 5), *arena of public discourse and learning* archives are considered to form an arena for public discourse, learning, cultural expression and a site of research. The second subject position, *manager of private information* emphasises

archives in managing and making information on individuals and private organizations accessible for their users. While the third, *research and heritage resource*, frames archival institutions' role as repositories that provide research with data and as promoters of cultural heritage. The final subject position, *manager and provider of public information*, sees the task of archival institutions in management and making information on public organizations available to the organizations and citizens to promote transparency, democracy and civil rights.

In EFA, the order of subject positions in the analysis (first to fourth) also indicates their order of strength. This means that for participation the *core tenet* is the strongest participation-related subject position in the analysed material, with *user expertise* the weakest. Respectively for the raison d'être, the strongest position was to perceive archival institutions as an *arena of public discourse and learning* and the weakest to see them as a *manager and provider of public information*.

Factor	Description
Participation	
Core tenet	Participation is how archives should work and a key aspect of their democratic and public role.
Professional control	Participants need to be guided by professionals. Offices of origin are the most significant contributors.
Subject expertise	User stakeholders are key experts and participants who should drive the participatory activities.
Resource	Participants and their contributions as a vital resource for archives to survive.
Raison d'être	
Arena of public discourse and learning	Archives are arenas for public discourse, learning, cultural expression and sites of research.
Manager of private information	Archives manage and make information on individuals and private organizations accessible for its users.
Research and heritage resource	Archives provide research with data and promote cultural heritage.
Manager and provider of public information	Archives manage and make information on public organizations available to the organizations and citizens to promote transparency, democracy and civil rights.

Table 6. Description of factors.

To understand how participation and raison d'être related subject positions were associated with each other, the relationships between the two sets of interpretative repertoires represented by factors were studies using linear models with *lm* package in R. This analysis shows how specific ideas of participation are linked to the ideas of the role and purpose of archives. The results (Table 7) show significant associations between several of the interpretative repertoires. *Core tenet* is linked to three subject positions, whereas the other participation related subject positions are linked to a single raison d'être each. Perceiving participation as a *core tenet* had a statistically significant association with framing the raison d'être of archives in terms of *arena of public discourse and learning*, *research and heritage resource*, and *manager of private information*. *Core tenet* was not linked to considering archives as *manager and provider of public information*. The *Professional control* subject position, in relation to participation, had a significant correlation with perceiving archives as a *research and heritage resource* whereas focusing on *user expertise* in participation was linked to a view of archives as *manager of private information*. Finally, seeing participation as a *resource* for archives was significantly linked to framing the raison d'être of archives as a *manager and provider of public information*.

	Arena of public discourse and learning	Manager and provider of public information	Research and heritage resource	Manager of private information
Core tenet	Adj. R^2=.1846, F(1,216)=50.13, p<.0001	ns	Adj. R^2=.0298, F(1,216)=7.665, p<.01	Adj. R^2=.0867, F(1,216)=21.6, p<.0001
Professional control	ns	ns	Adj. R^2=.0924, F(1,216)=23.08, p<.0001	ns
Resource	ns	Adj. R^2=.0251, F(1,216)=6.584, p<.02	ns	ns
User expertise	ns	ns	ns	Adj. R^2=.0133, F(1,216)=3.925, p<.05

Table 7. Relations between interpretative repertoires (ns non-significant correlation).

Discussion

Participation and the role of archival institutions

The analysis of the survey data shows links between how the surveyed archivists think about the role of participation and the raison d'être of archival institutions in society. When interpreting the results, some caution is obviously necessary. The data available for analysis limits the general applicability of the results beyond the survey respondents and the two studied countries. This means that the views and regimes of participation identifiable in the analysis are those found in the study sample. Against that background, it is obvious that perspectives pertaining to institutional, rather than metaphorical archives, are foregrounded. Moreover, an analysis of the relationships between factor loadings is helpful only to show high level patterns in the data and does not rule out individual variation of views even in the study sample.

However, whilst considering the limitations, it is apparent in the analysis results that while the respondents perceived participatory practices as valuable to archival institutions, they made a clear distinction between professionals and participants and their respective roles (Table 3). According to the respondents, participation and its outcomes should be managed by professionals. They were also not expecting that participation would reduce the need of professional staff at archives. In broad terms this aligns with the earlier observations on how archivists' perception of their role has broadened (e.g. Kallberg, 2012; Huvila, 2012; Huvila, 2016; Buchanan et al., 2017), shifted towards becoming more proactive (Borglund, 2015) and oriented towards guiding users, rather than acting as experts (cf. Duff and Fox, 2006). Similarly to Vilar and Sauperl (2015), the findings also, to a certain extent, point towards a view of participants as active participators, rather than passive recipients. Concerning the underpinnings of participation, interestingly, the respondents were rather moderate in their views of the direct potential of digital technologies to catalyse participation (P18). This does not necessarily mean that digitalisation would not affect participation,

but that its direct impact is perhaps considered to be less direct than suggested, especially in the early literature (*cf. e.g.* Krause and Yakel, 2007; Huvila, 2008; Zinkham and Springer, 2011; Grannum, 2011; Benoit III and Eveleigh, 2019a) on participatory archives.

The raison d'être of archival institutions was conceptualised in terms of serving research, promoting cultural heritage and transparency in relation to public bodies and institutions and individual civil rights (Table 3). Archives were to a lesser extent seen as experience centres and facilitators of public debate. Here the surveyed archivists' views are closer to established views on the societal role of archives, rather than to the cultural and heritage emphasis on the participatory archives discourse (see *e.g.* Benoit III and Eveleigh, 2019b; Theimer, 2011). The diversity of respondents and their backgrounds with different roles in different types of archival institutions explains the spread of views (cf. e.g. Delsalle, 1998; Svärd, 2017; Bastian and Flinn, 2020a). The prominence of societal, rather than private and governmental raisons d'être aligns with the Nordic archival tradition that does not externalise public institutions, but sees them as a form of public service for the citizens. The majority of the respondents coming from public archival institutions is also a reasonable parallel explanation to the prominence of this tendency.

The raison d'être specific subject positions show obvious kinship to the orders of work identified by Huvila (2015a). The pluralistic order of work has much in common with framing archival institutions as an *arena of public discourse and learning*, organizational order with *the manager and provider of public information* and the *manager of private information*, and antiquarian with the *research and heritage resource*. Unsurprisingly the archival and digital orders of work that focus more directly to the enactment of archival work and its underpinnings, rather than its rationales, lacked corresponding subject positions.

The significant differences between the Swedish and Norwegian respondents pertained to the perception of the participants' expertise and archives' role in empowering them. The

Swedish archives professionals put more emphasis on both, however, at the same time they were more inclined to believe that participants and their contributions require supervision. The Swedish respondents also scored higher in how they valued the role of archives as promoters of cultural heritage, arenas for learning and providers of research data. These differences could be explained in terms of earlier observations that the Swedish cultural (policy) debate is more inclined to emphasise democracy and higher participant autonomy, whereas in Norway the emphasis has been more on moderate corporativist and *bildung* perspectives (Bjørnsen, 2012; Lindström Sol, 2019; Huvila, 2020) to cultural participation and archives.

The factor analysis (Tables 4 and 5) further shows that the paradigmatic view of participation as a *core tenet* of archival institutions' work is linked to more raisons d'être than the public administration-oriented view of archives as a *manager and provider of public information.* A plausible explanation can be that the participatory archival discourse is heavily oriented towards culture and heritage, rather than administration, but also the Nordic tradition of public, non-academic use of archives (see Orrman, 2007). The finding links participation to general archival optimism (Sheffield, 2020), cultural-antiquarian and pluralistic values of archival work in Huvila's (2015a) work and the broader idea of archives as cultural institutions (Edquist, 2019). It also encompasses the most prominent raison d'être of archival institutions according to the analysis, the functioning as an arena for public discourse and learning, but excludes the management and provision of public information. In this sense it manifests the tension between participation, as a core tenet of archives, and the administrative civic role of archives (*cf.* Kilkki, 2020; Edquist, 2019).

Otherwise, the participation-related subject positions are more specifically related to particular institution and function specific views of the role of different types of archival institutions. The *resource; manager and provider of public information* combination frames participation as collaboration and co-

work for managing public archives that are relevant for the civic society. The subject position assigns value to records creators as participants (Huvila, 2015b), the organizational value of archival work (Huvila, 2015a) and the role of archives as administrative, rather than cultural institutions (*cf.* Kilkki, 2020; Edquist, 2019; Gilliland-Swetland, 2000). Rather than suggesting extending radical participation to the civic domain (*cf.* Evans et al., 2019; also Boudjelida et al., 2016; Barber, 2003), the link between user experts and management of public information is probably best explained by an interest to engage records creators and professional users. *The professional control; research and heritage resource* association does for its part unfold a view of archival institutions as expert organizations that govern heritage and provides reliable data for research purposes. Here, it is possible to sense echoes of the historical-antiquarian value described by Huvila (2015a) and the others as informants and possibly participation as new *use* participatory discourses (Huvila, 2015b). This covers also undoubtedly the non-academic use of archives (*cf.* Orrman, 2007) for, for example, amateur research and genealogy. Finally, *user expertise; manager of private information* acknowledges the limits of archivists' expertise on content of the archives in the role of the archives as custodians of private specialist information and records. This perspective can fairly confidently be explained through the distinct influence and interests (Svärd, 2017) of the fairly extensive (Orrman, 2007) Nordic publicly funded non-governmental archives sector and the tradition of managing private archival collections in public archival institutions (*cf.* Englund et al., 2018). With heterogeneous private archives, specific expertise of stakeholders and expert users is more obviously necessary than with often more standardised series of public administrative records.

Regimes of participation
In parallel to providing empirical insights in the thinking of the surveyed archives professionals, the theoretical significance of the results of the factor analyses lies in to what extent the intersections of factors make sense as theoretical constructs. Table 8 maps the participation related interpretative repertoires,

interpreted as expressions of specific archival participation related orders, with their corresponding sets of rules and social norms to the worlds of Boltanski and Thévenot (2022), where the justification of participation is based on a particular higher form of common good. For *core tenet*, it is the intrinsic value of participation; for *professional control*, its capacity to support professional work; for *user expertise*, the expertise of (some knowledgeable) participants; and for *resource*, its capability to act as a resource for archival work.

Order of participation (Interpretative repertoire)	Major world(s)	Description of the Order of participation	Regime of participation
Core tenet	Civic	Participation is how archives should work and a key aspect of their democratic and public role.	Participation as an intrinsically valuable activity.
Professional control	Industrial	Participants need to be guided by professionals. Offices of origin are the most significant contributors.	Participation as a complement to professional work during the records continuum.
User expertise	Opinion and fame	User stakeholders are key experts and participants who should drive the participatory activities.	Professional work as an auxiliary activity to participation of experts.
Resource	Market	Participants and their contributions as a vital resource for archives to survive.	Participation as means of producing additional value for archival institutions.

Table 8. Participation-related polities and their corresponding regimes of participation.

According to Boltanski and Thévenot (2022), people are simultaneously immersed in multiple worlds and regimes of action. Similarly, looking at how the orders of archival work in Huvila's (2015a) earlier study mapped to varying extents to Boltanski and Thévenot's worlds, it is possible to identify links between the worlds and participation-related orders and regimes, when the latter are cross-read with their associated raisons d'être as indicated in Table 7. The participation related subject position *core tenet* has closest affinities with the civic world, through its orientation towards group membership and collective good. The focus is on how participation benefits the masses directly and indirectly through their engagements with archival institutions and collections. *Resource* ties with the world of market and its focus on possession and commodities. Within this polity, participation unfolds as a commodity-like resource necessary for archives to attain their ends. *User expertise* connects with the world of opinion and fame that focuses on esteem people have on one another, reputation, actions, gestures, countenance and speech, persuasion and respect for objects. While the subject position does not dismiss the idea of factual knowledge

of the industrial world, its focus is on users as experts and key stakeholders, rather than on the essence of their expertise. Finally, *professional control* aligns with the industrial world through its focus on performance and instrumentality. Rather than prioritising participation and accepting diversity and heterogeneity as inherent to archives and archival work, the focus is on objectivity and control.

Upon closer consideration of the factor loadings (Table 3) of each interpretative repertoire, the rest of the worlds(inspired, domestic and the world by project) are also present, although not as dominant underpinnings of the interpretative repertoires as the rest. While user expertise leans most towards the world of opinion and fame, it lingers somewhere between it and the industrial world. In addition, while the *core tenet* as an order of participation is closest aligned with the civic world and polity of Boltanski and Thévenot, with underpinnings in classical philosophy, through its associated statements it has affinities with other polities that are an integral part of the contemporary civic sphere, including the worlds of market, industry, and opinion and fame. Beyond the

survey data analysed in this study, it is also possible to conceive the inspired world regime (perhaps, *participation as a source of inspiration*) underpinning archival participation for those seeking inspiration and creative input from archives (*e.g.*, Radick, 2016). Similarly, domestic world (perhaps, *domiciliary participation* referring to personally significant traditions, customs, conventions) can be envisaged in engagements with family and community archives, traditions and personally significant records (*e.g.*, Cox, 2008; Dever et al., 2011); and the world by project (perhaps, *participatory project*, a lieux Zwart's 2023 concept in the context of museum participation) not least in community archives benefiting of affordances of digital technologies, but also struggling with sustainability problems (Paschild, 2012; Fife et al., 2023). It is unsurprising that these additional regimes did not surface from the analysed data composed of archives professionals.

However, the identified regimes of participation also have affinities with earlier categorisations of participatory practices, both those identified in the earlier literature pertaining to archives proper, and those proposed in the broader literature on cultural participation and metaphorical archives. The *core tenet* and *user expertise* -oriented regimes expect more power-sharing, whereas *professional control* and *resource* -oriented regimes frame participation more in terms of part-taking and contributions (*cf.* Carpentier, 2016). Considering dehegemonisation (Andresen et al., 2020; Nowotny et al., 2001) versus giving voice (Ivey, 2009; Andresen et al., 2020), the *core tenet* appears to combine both perspectives similarly to what Boersma (2022) describes as outcomes-oriented participation, whereas the rest of the regimes are more apparently oriented towards conceptualising the archive itself, as a major output of participation. Similarly, the rest of the regimes take an archives, records and records creation, rather than user or participant-oriented perspective (*cf.* Lemay and Klein, 2014) and lean towards justifying participation through material instrumentality than a pursuit towards power equity or democratic action. This is in obvious contrast to, for example, community archives literature (*cf.* Rolan et al., 2019; Flinn et al., 2009) and points to the absence of corresponding regimes of participation in the surveyed archivists' social worlds.

A comparison of the identified and conceivable additional regimes and their underpinning justifications can be approached from a critical perspective to identify preferred orders of participation, according to specific norms and regimes of worth. Within a particular regime, participation unfolds, at least in principle, as a coherent enterprise, with a distinct set of aims and means of how to achieve what is considered to be *participation*. In this respect, the perspective helps to elucidate participation as a patchwork of ideas and practices, rather than an amoeba-like monolith. It also follows the broader idea of the sociology of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2022) in pointing attention to the diversity of what participation is about in different instances, rather than what could be the smallest common denominator of all forms of participation. Another opportunity stemming from the inquiry in participatory regimes is how they can point to blank spots in how participation is framed in the contemporary archival literature. The regimes identified in the present study represent a perspective of archival professionals and point directly to the need to pursue identifying further regimes of participation, in both archival contexts and across the diverse circles of social life. At the same time, drawn from a limited sample of archives professionals, they also point to the *a priori* diversity of the conceivable orders of participatory engagements and their underpinning values and justifications.

First, while participation is conventionally framed in the literature through engagement with individuals, the regimes pointing to institutional participation, of the archival profession (*professional control*), *user expertise*; and individual participation oriented towards archival institutions (*resource*), remind of the significance of considering institutions not only as a framework or hindrance to participation, but also as participants proper in participatory engagements. Ideally this perspective could be

taken as a nudge for institutions to take a more active role in participatory engagements, reduce the general inclination to dichotomise between professionals and non-professionals, but also a temptation to what Miessen (2010) describes as outsourcing responsibility to the public.

Second, the diversity of regimes, even in the geographically and culturally rather homogeneous sample, point to how different participatory engagements can be justified and valuable in their own right. There is no need to pursue only one ideal of complete sharing of power, as other, sometimes less esteemed and invisible (*cf.* Zvonareva et al., 2022) forms of engagement, whether termed participation, access or interaction (Carpentier, 2015), can be equally relevant. Rather than antagonising between right and wrong participation, different forms of participation can also co-exist, if not necessarily as friends, at least as Miessen (2010) suggests, as agonistic *friendly enemies* to each other. Similarly, acknowledging participation as multiple can give perspective to failures (Jancovich and Stevenson, 2023) a means to learn from them, and perspective to the limits of legitimate and worthwhile participation (*cf.* Mayes, 2023), each in relation to a particular regime. This can also help archival institutions to embrace a form of participation that aligns with the purpose of a particular archive and institution. For example, power sharing can be an attractive approach for public historical archives, whereas contemporary administrative archives undoubtedly need to be more restrictive. Acknowledging the diversity and multiple values and justifications of different forms of participation could also reduce the risk of *over-particification* of the social life *i.e.*, the risk of dismantling the division of labour in society by expecting everyone to participate in everything, engaging wholeheartedly in all aspects of the management of everyday-life beyond what eventually goes beyond anyone's capabilities.

Third, by extending the perspective from mere justifications to broader regimes of action (*cf.* Boltanski, 2012), the analysis of the regimes of participation direct attention to how and through which different orders and regimes participation are constituted in relation to archival institutions and in society at large. This opens up possibilities a lieux Miessen's (2010) proposal, to pursue a reflexive rather than politically correct consensus through critical interventions, debating the regimes and their implications and the notion of participation in general. It can facilitate a shift, from a risk of engaging in a hollow ritual of pseudo-participation (Miessen, 2010) and essentially what Bacevic (2021) describes as the predominant neoliberal political epistemology of focusing only on *how* people do things and pushing (or *nudging*) them to act in particular ways, to consider *why* certain things are done and what the doing implies. Rather than assuming that archival participation, or the consensual underpinnings of the dominating ideas of participation, are inherently good and desirable, they need to be questioned, challenged, and as Boltanski and Thévenot (2022) and Stones (2014) emphasise, they have to be tested. It is crucial to spell out and recognise what regimes of worth different regimes of participation are enacting and enforcing, and to test to what extent normative worlds and their regimes correspond with experienced reality. Even if participation, both in terms of taking part and sharing power, is human, also assuming and executing authority is equally natural and a necessary ingredient of political process.

Conclusions

The present study shows how both participation and the raison d'être of archival institutions have multiple interlinked meanings. The understandings of the justifications of participation and archival institutions' existence knit together to constellations according to their perceived worth, how it is justified and evaluated. Using the terminology of Boltanski and Thévenot (2022), the sets of rules and norms associated with such social arrangements relating to archival participation can be termed *regimes of participation*. The analysis of archival professionals' views made it possible to identify four regimes with their associated social worlds, namely those of 1) participation as an

intrinsically valuable activity; 2) participation as a complement to professional work in the records continuum; 3) professional work as an auxiliary activity to participation of experts; and 4) participation as a means of producing additional value for archival institutions. It is, however, possible to imagine additional regimes that correspond with the worlds not represented by them, including, but not limited to, the inspired (participation as a source of inspiration) and domestic worlds (domiciliary participation) and the world by project (participatory project).

While the empirical findings do not suggest that the different regimes would need to be in a direct conflict, it is apparent that they represent different perspectives to the value of archives and archival participation. A critical implication of this observation and perspective to framing different practices and understandings of participation is to urge different participatory regimes to engage in a critical debate with each other, put into question each other's values, rationales, aims and implications. Participation makes sense only if its worth and justifications are acknowledged and understood. Otherwise, participation turns easily, as Miessen (2010) warns, to an empty word and a hollow ritual of pseudo-engagement and participatory archives to pseudo-participatory, and in the worst case, pseudo-archives.

Acknowledgements

About the author

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