Archives in CCO Research: A Relational View

Author(s): Basque, Joëlle; Hirsto, Heidi; Wagnac, Régine

Title: Archives in CCO Research: A Relational View

Year: 2022

Version: Accepted manuscript

Please cite the original version:

Chapter 15

Archives in CCO Research: A Relational View

Joëlle Basque[1], Heidi Hirsto and Régine Wagnac

Introduction

CCO research is typically premised on detailed analysis of communication in situ to study how organizations and organizational phenomena come into being (Cooren et al., 2011). In contrast to other streams of organizational communication and discourse studies, which often turn to organizational texts to learn about their content and meaning, CCO research draws attention to the interactional work or functions of texts and other symbolic objects – i.e., how they are used and what they do as they participate in interaction and communication networks (Bencherki et al., 2019; Cooren & Matte, 2010). Indeed, documents and other archival objects are interesting for CCO research primarily when they are evoked directly or indirectly by participants in the course of interaction and, in this way, "presentified" and made to speak for something or someone, like a rule, a principle, or a person in authority that is not physically present in the situation (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009). More broadly, texts are seen to act "across space and time from a distance" (Koschmann, 2013, p. 66), as they crystallize past conversations into a representation of what was previously discussed, and make it available as a basis for current decisions. This orientation leads to an interesting stance towards utilizing archival texts and objects, which are typically understood as remnants of communication from a distant past, detached from their original context of use.

---

[1] Authors listed in alphabetical order; all contributions were equal.

In this chapter, our aim is to elaborate on the role and potential of archives in CCO research. Our starting point is that archives may be expected to be of value for CCO research, because they invite us to engage with the material aspects of time and temporality in organizations, such as the various ways in which traces from the past are mobilized to shape organizational present(s) and future(s). At the same time, however, the detached and power-laden nature of archives seems to contradict some of the basic premises of CCO, creating methodological challenges.

We start by defining the notion of archive and discussing some methodological considerations of working with archives in social and history studies. We then proceed to discuss how a "relational view of organization" (Bencherki & Elmholdt, 2020, p. 2) may inform and shape the meaning and use of archives, and finally provide our own definition of archive for CCO research. After that, we propose a typology of 5 ways of using archives in CCO research, discussing methodological implications and challenges along the way by referring to studies that use CCO or a compatible theoretical frame. This allows us to reflect on the role of the researcher in studying archives in a CCO perspective, and to provide useful insights for researchers wanting to use this type of material in their work.

Perspectives to archives

In the Meriam Webster dictionary, the archive is defined as "a place in which public records or historical materials (such as documents) are preserved […] also: the material preserved." It is further defined as "a repository or collection especially of information." According to Manoff (2004), most writers subscribe to the latter definition, and while some researchers differentiate archives, libraries and museums depending on the repository's content, the distinction remains ambiguous. For those looking past these distinctions or nuances, an archive is a repository of many things such as documents, books, newsletters and other media; or of objects, artefacts, and even bodily remains, which may have been preserved for a variety of reasons (Cifor, 2017; Manoff, 2004).

Within organization studies, Schultz and Hernes (2013) make a distinction between textual, material and oral forms of memory, inspiring us to say that different types of archival objects present themselves to actors through different processes. For example, written texts often present themselves through "symbolic" or interpretational processes, whereas artifacts may present themselves primarily through their sensory and physiological aspects. According to them, "the form in which [a memory] is evoked shapes the meaning of an experience" (Schultz & Hernes, 2013, p. 4). With the digital age, we have come to talk about the digital archive, which, for some scholars, means "everything currently existing in digital format" (i.e. documents, manuscripts, images,

sound, multimedia, text, etc.), while for others, it refers to a "discrete collection of related electronic documents" (Manoff, 2004, p. 10).

Regarding the authenticity of archives, historians have traditionally been "seeking to gain some certainty as to the facts of the past" (Bricknell, 2008, p. 2). With skepticism towards historical record at its core, source criticism is one research method that is used to establish "[the] 'original' context or [the] 'original' setting against which to read a text" (Mathewson, 2002, p. 15). According to Alvesson and Sköldberg, "the source critic is, at least to some degree, a knowledge realist, believing in the existence of an underlying reality, which is expressed, albeit in an incomplete, opaque way, in the sources" (2017, p. 172). Thus, historians usually regard archives primarily *as data* that offer evidence about the past and may do so more or less reliably. Archives may be interpreted as "remnants", i.e., as signs that something has happened (for instance, that a statue has been built or a report published), or as "narrative sources" that tell a version of past events (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, p. 174). However, this is not the only way to use archives in research. Kjellstrand and Vince (2020) provide an example of using archival photographs as elicitation material whose purpose is to trigger discussion and reflection about organizational phenomena in an interview, that is, to help *generate data*. In the latter approach, the traditional idea of source criticism, including the evaluation of the authenticity of a document or object, needs to be reconsidered, as the relevance of archives relates not to the past, but to the present or to the future.

The authenticity of archives is also a concern for postmodernist, feminist and postcolonial researchers, who have been "suspicious of the historical record" and denounced "[the] absences and the distortion of the archive" (Manoff, 2004, p. 14). Also, as Manoff writes: "Derrida's work has contributed to scholarly recognition of the contingent nature of the archive—the way it is shaped by social, political, and technological forces" (2004, p. 12). Absences, exclusions, gaps and distortions of the archive can all be seen as the result of different dominant forces. Some postmodernists like Foucault have entirely redefined the notion of archive. Foucault does not use this word to refer to a collection of texts that reflect parts of history; instead, he defines the archives as: "the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events." (Foucault, 1972, p. 145).

In line with postmodernist theory, as well as with recent works emphasizing the contingent and productive dimensions of archives (Howard-Grenville et al., 2013; Kjellstrand & Vince, 2020), a CCO mindset invites us to see archives as *performative*, while not putting aside the idea of the archive as a repository. Considering heterogeneous traces of the past from this perspective allows us to highlight their relations to other things and beings such as (other) archives, spaces, and people. In line with a CCO approach, our focus is on how archives, within networks of relations, participate in organizations and organizing. We therefore ask: How do archives come to make a difference? How do they "make themselves present throughout space and time" (Cooren, 2020, p. 2) and, in that way, make a difference for organizing processes?

A CCO perspective would consider the archive as an agent, as Cifor (2017) aptly puts it:

> Conceptualising the archives as agential in the relations that co-constitute matter and meaning leads to novel understandings of them as vigorous and changeable. This perspective challenges the common conceptualisation of the archives, even by scholars deeply engaged in them, as static, dusty, and the collectors of dead things and past times. Through new materialism, it is possible to understand that archives are actually in a state of constant flux, shifting with each new intra-action of the various and changing actors that constitute it." (2017, p. 18)

Relational ontology and methodological implications

Among the CCO tradition, the Montréal School is unique in presenting a "decentered vision of agency" (Cooren, 2020, p. 7), where agents of different ontologies act in relation with each other. Research in this perspective has shown that communication is not only performed by humans, but also by non-human actors. This is often (but not only) done when people mobilize elements such as principles, previous agreements, contracts, tools and so on, and refer to them in their conversations, allowing them to produce structuring effects (Cooren et al., 2006) and to participate in the performance of authority (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009) or power (Cooren & Matte, 2010). In addition, CCO scholars, inspired by actor-network theory and Latourian philosophy, have shown how tangible agents (such as human bodies, spaces and objects), are imbricated in complex relationships with immaterial agents (such as rules, work habits, laws, and so on) (Wilhoit & Kisselburgh, 2019).

Embracing such a view of distributed agency means relying on a *relational ontology*, that is the idea that "everything or everyone is literally made of relations" (Cooren, 2020, p. 4), and that "agents always act with and through other agents" (Wilhoit & Kisselburgh, 2019, p. 874). Working with archival material implies starting with specific tangible traces from the past, which may be, as we have mentioned above, texts, but also artifacts, photographs, buildings, and sometimes bodily remains (Cifor, 2017). These objects can be said to have *materiality*, an attribute that is often taken for granted by researchers and historians, and distinguished from "immaterial" elements such as discourse, ideas, principles, and emotions. Adopting a CCO perspective, however, means that the dichotomy between materiality and discourse should not be assumed or taken for granted. As Cooren (2020, p. 2) points out, materiality is a necessary property of all phenomena – including communication – and, indeed, of their very existence. Drawing from this, we suggest that researchers should focus on *materialization effects*. In term of materiality, abstract entities and other things need other actors to exist. They continue their existence through others, so to speak. Therefore, research from a CCO perspective should explain the relations that unite the agents and allow them to act and,

4

thus, to have an agency: that is, "to make a difference" in the course of action (Castor & Cooren, 2006, p. 573).

In other words, we embrace Bencherki and Elmholt's vision according to which, relying on Spinoza's thinking, "to exist, a being must find others that can continue its action through their own, taking it up and continuing it; hence, existence is inherently relational." (2020, p. 6). Following these premises, existing is a matter of degree, meaning that a thing can exist more or less depending on the number of other things that materialize its existence (Cooren, 2020, p. 3).

Adopting such a relational view to understand archives does not deny the inherent material nature of archival data, but stresses that research using archives in CCO should focus on studying the productive relations of the archive with other agents that allow it to act, to make a difference, to make the past speak and change the course of action in an organization, or even constitute the organization itself. The archive also materializes through its (re)mediations: we could imagine the archive as a bunch of papers in a box, that can become a DVD, and then a website. A letter written by Mr. X in the 19th century takes on many material forms, and is again re-published in a book, quoted, and so on (Basque & Langley, 2018). Thus, starting with the relational perspective could lead CCO researchers to use a very broad yet simple definition of archives that defies the traditional view of historical studies and instead conceives of archives as an agent. For the purpose of this chapter, we propose the following definition of archives: they are *traces of the past that communicate through materialization effects*.

Drawing on the relational perspective inherent in CCO and especially in the Montréal School theoretical frame, this chapter focuses on situations where pieces of archive come in contact with other beings such as organizational members, spaces, and the researcher. We reflect on how archives gain agency and act through these relations and how they produce materialization effects, for example, by bringing some aspects of organizational identity or culture into (stronger) existence. We suggest a typology based on five different situations where archives can make a difference: archives in relation with organizational members in both naturally-occurring and facilitated settings (1 and 2); archives in relation with each other (3); with space (4); and with the researcher (5). These different situations, each presented as a research focus, can be combined (and often are) in the same research project, but we separate them here for heuristic purposes, starting with archives in naturally-occuring settings.

1. Archives and organizational members in naturally-occurring settings

One obvious way that CCO researchers may consider archives, such as documents or artefacts, is through observing references to or uses of such objects in everyday organizational settings. Participants in a meeting, for example, may refer to a painting of the company founder on the wall of the meeting room – or the bronze bust of the

school's founder, as Bruno Latour (2011) describes in his piece about organizing as a mode of existence – while discussing organizational practices or values, in a sincere or ironic sense. Organizational histories and memory may be evoked through rituals such as a weekly silent moment in front of a memorial wall (Koschmann & McDonald, 2015); and strategy processes may dig into archives in attempts to (re)define organizational identity or brand heritage (Schultz & Hernes, 2013, 2019).

In observing such cases, archives and archival objects become visible and relevant for study through their agency (Koschmann & McDonald, 2015), i.e., the performative effects they have, here and now, on the flow of discussion, in sensemaking processes, or in organizational identity work. In Hatch and Schultz's (2013) study, for example, researchers observed organizational members in the context of a strategic process of identity reconstruction, showing how organizational members evoked organizational histories and continuities through engaging with archival documents and artifacts, as well as oral narratives unfolding in social interaction. Similarly, Howard-Grenville et al. (2013) used observation and interviews to depict a process of identity resurrection, which was based on community leaders marshaling and orchestrating material and symbolic resources – including historical places and figures – and community members authenticating them through participation and lived experience.

The unfolding relation of archives and (human) organizational actors can work to transcend time and place in many ways. Archives may, for example, be used to presentify other times, other spaces, or other people and their voices (Benoit-Barné & Cooren, 2009). Reminiscences of history in their varied materialities may exert agency on human organizational members (Cooren et al., 2013), who may echo historical voices and discourses in more or less conscious or intentional ways (Ashcraft, 2020). For example, Ashcraft's (2007) study of airline pilots' occupational identity shows how normalized and non-conscious practices of workplace communication in the airline industry carry gendered and class-based meanings that can be connected to decades of cultural narratives and images across multiple cultural sites. From this perspective, everyday expressions such as *junior guys*, *rites of respect*, or *little soldiers* (Ashcraft, 2007, p. 22) enact relations to particular historical discourses, (re-)materializing them and thereby contributing to the production of broader-scale effects such as occupational segregation.

In this type of research, archival materials are not used (primarily) as data or evidence to inform researchers about past realities. Therefore, the main emphasis is not on analyzing the content of archival objects as documents (Prior, 2008, pp. 824–826) or assessing their authenticity as remnants of the past (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017). In contrast, archives are analyzed for their agential role in organizational communication.

In this section, we discussed a type of research that focuses on how organizational members themselves orient to and evoke archives in naturally-occurring organizational settings. In these kinds of settings, the reseacher's role, ideally, is to observe

organizational life as it occurs, in an unobtrusive way. However, the boundaries between naturally-occurring and facilitated settings are not clear-cut, which is evident in some of the studies we have referred to (e.g., Schultz & Hernes, 2013), where organizational members themselves organized events to deliberately tap into collective memories and sense-making processes. Researchers thus change their focus from considering how archives are mobilized and used in naturally-occuring settings, to facilitated settings.

2. Archives and organizational members in facilitated settings

Sometimes, it is difficult to observe the use of archives in naturally-occurring settings, because not all organizations make frequent references to their past, even when archives are available, or researchers may have limited access to situation where they do. In the absence of such opportunities, researchers can create and facilitate encounters by organizing events such as workshops, focus groups, or interviews, where organizational members are exposed to archives of different forms. Researchers can then observe how participants interact with these archives, what such interactions create in the discussion, what feelings and memories particular artifacts convey, and so on. In this way, the archive's agency may be observed *in situ*, as people are invited to manipulate and discuss the material in a collective (or individual) manner. Hence, archival objects are used primarily as a device to generate data (Kjellstrand & Vince, 2020).

Focus groups and interviews are research methods that are less common in CCO, although interviews have recently been used and recognized as valuable settings for collecting data in a CCO perspective (Jahn, 2016; Koschmann & McDonald, 2015; Wilhoit, 2014; Wilhoit & Kisselburgh, 2019). Interviews, focus groups or other interactive discussions, where archives are deliberately made available as resources for meaning-making, can provide interesting insights into their potential agency in organizational life. For instance, Schultz and Hernes (2013), in their study on identity reconstruction at the LEGO Group, analyzed workshops and meetings that were co-organized by one of the researchers and that used archives to evoke organizational memory. Their study showed that the more organizational members engaged with different forms of memory, including archives, the more complex and elaborate the process of redefining an organization's identity became. As the authors put it:

> Bringing forward past experiences through a wider range of memory forms, such as reports on failures, stories from critical moments, artifacts from the origin of the company, and prototypes from fundamental innovations, enabled the top managers to include more identity claims in the conception of the future organization and to note a broader range of identity claims to be redefined or eliminated. (Schultz & Hernes, 2013, p. 15)

Archive photographs and objects are increasingly recognized in organization studies as valuable tools for eliciting reactions and reflection on organizational phenomena and

lived experience. Through photo and video elicitation methods, archives can become tools that "facilitate new forms of communication" (Wilhoit, 2017, p. 452), serving as a common denominator between participants and researchers during focus groups or interviews. For example, in their study on organizational change in Kazakhstan's transition from a Soviet to a post-Soviet economy, Kjellstrand and Vince (2020) used pairs of photos during interviews. They favored this photo elicitation method to generate projections of individual and collective experience and to facilitate engagement "with the possibilities and impossibilities of change" (2020, p. 51). What is crucial here from a CCO point of view is that archival photographs in these settings are considered "as much about the present as they are the past", stimulating "here and now reflection on the current state, and [...] helping the respondent to position him or herself emotionally within the social or organizational issues being investigated" (Kjellstrand & Vince, 2020, p. 42). Photo-elicitation may thus help the researcher ask different questions and the participants share thoughts and experiences that might not have been mentioned otherwise (Wilhoit, 2017, p. 450). In this way, researcher(s), participant(s) and archive(s) are jointly constructing the organizational phenomenon of study.

Shortt and Warren (2019) propose combining such "dialogical" approach to photographs with an "archeological approach" to image-sets. In their study of work space and identity construction in hair salons, they asked field-study participants to take (or in their words, "make") photographs of meaningful spaces, and used the resulting images both for prompting dialogue in interviews, and for recognizing recurring patterns across image-sets. Of interest to CCO research, the methodological combination grasped the constitution of organization on many levels. The taking/making of photographs rendered selected organizational spaces and practices meaningful for organizational members and materialized them in new ways, thus enhancing their existence, so to speak. At the same time, the photographs also materialized broader cultural and field-specific practices and values that were not necessarily recognized by individual participants but became visible through the analysis of image-sets. Similarly, in their study of a community-based organization fighting for the housing conditions of underprivileged residents, Bencherki and Bourgoin's (2019) analysis of a community-based photography project showed that images do much more than represent and remind viewers of past events: "Images and photographs are semiotic devices that attach us to places, organizations and identities" (p. 500). The image's materializaty thus intensifies the relations that substantiate social phenomena and actors (Bencherki & Bourgoin, 2019).

In addition to photographs, other types of (archival) objects may also be used for similar purposes in a way of "object-elicitation" (De Leon & Cohen, 2005). For example, in Everett and Barrett's study on the relationships of visitors to museums, the researchers used "works of art, cultural artifacts, and natural history specimens" (2012, p. 36) as a starting point from which to explore the participants' engagement with the museum and to create more reflective interviews.

These studies, while not necessarily dealing explicitly with archives, illustrate how introducing more agents, such as photographs and objects, to the research context increases the number of meaningful relations and encounters. These, in turn, have the potential to rearticulating and reframing the relationship between the present and the past, and may generate new understandings of organizational phenomena. In studies using facilitated settings, the researchers' role is to create the situation in which they will be able to observe the effect of bringing archives to the conversation. From a relational ontology perspective, archives are here regarded as partners in interaction and relational processes of constitution through which organizations and organizational phenomena gain (more) existence (Bencherki & Elmholdt, 2020; Cooren, 2020). In facilitated settings, the researcher often plays a central role in selecting the archival objects used for elicitation, and needs to reflect and account for the selection based on research goals and questions. Selection is also important when it comes to the interconnections of archives.

3. The interconnections of archives through time

Another set of relations that researchers might consider is the one between archives themselves. We are here considering the interconnection of archives through time, in particular in the case of documents understood as concrete texts. When it comes to the use of documents in the social sciences, it is usually their content that has been the focus of research: "Data analysis strategies concentrate almost entirely on what is in the 'text' (via various forms of content analysis, thematic analysis, or even grounded theory)" (Prior, 2008, p. 825). Some analyses have, however, focused on the "use and function" of documents, seen as a resource that human actors use or have used for "purposeful ends," or as things that function in social interaction organization through driving human action (Prior, 2008, p. 825). From both standpoints, the archive–archive relationship can be seen as a "work of connection and collection" of texts (Latour, 2005, p. 8). In other words, archives as text, together but also individually, can be seen as a textual network (Kuhn, 2008).

(Re)constituting an organization from a network of archives entails "assembling, and mobilizing" (Sergi & Bonneau, 2016, p. 382) texts and other objects that have lasted through space and time such as documents, emails, chats, tweets, images, videos, and so on. Interconnecting archival content within or across archives can then serve to create descriptions of past and present organizations and organizing. In this regard, archival material that is selected and made to speak together is similar to a "collage" providing a textual visualization of organizing processes. Sergi and Bonneau (2016) used archived tweets in that way. By analyzing the interconnections in their content, they were able to illustrate working out loud (WOL) practices on social media (narrating one's own work and relating to others while doing so), and how these "tweets have the potential to actively participate in the constitution of work and professional identity of workers engaging in working out loud," (p. 378). Dobusch and Schoeneborn

(2015) have also used digital archives to study the organizationality of a collective. By putting tweets, posts, press reports and material from the academic literature in relation, they were able to describe the communicative constitution of the hackers' collective *Anonymous*.

The interconnections of archives can, furthermore, be seen when texts from one era call upon texts from an older era. When this is visible, intertextuality, which refers to the "sequential (or syntagmatic) relationships between texts" (Hodges, 2015, p. 43) is at play. Direct quotes, paraphrases and implicit allusions, from one text to another, can show for instance how a particular organizational narrative or identity comes to gain credibility, legitimacy, authority and/or durability through time and space. It is the strategic interconnection of archives that can be seen through this intertextuality. For example, drawing on an internal magazine's 80-year archive, Basque and Langley (2018) show the intertextual connections of historical documents' content. Using mainly excerpts from an internal magazine, but also history books, newspaper articles and government documents, their analysis shows how Alphonse Desjardins, the founder of Desjardins Group (a financial cooperative), had been invoked throughout the years to construct organizational identity.

Basque and Langley's (2018) case study allows researchers to also see the use and function of archival texts by organizational actors themselves. Looking closely at their writing, more specifically focusing on their published articles and what (or who) they invoked in them, Basque and Langley (2018) highlight the strategic use and interconnection of old texts. Since articles in the magazines were written by managers and other members of the financial cooperative, researchers can observe how these actors were strategically quoting, literally and metaphorically, the deceased founder. Basque and Langley (2018) point out that, as a key source of truth and authority for their actions, managers were invoking Alphonse's name, his ideas, and his extensive writing, many years after his death. This means that Alphonse's writings were "lifted form [their] originating context (decontextualized) and inserted into a new setting where [they were] recontextualized for that purpose" (Hodges, 2015, p. 43). Exposing such strategic interconnections between archives serves to show managers' agency in the evolution of their organizational identity throughout the years.

Shultz and Hernes' (2019) study on identity construction at the Carlsberg brewing company showed similar uses and re-uses of organizational and cultural archives, such the "Golden words" of the founder. Their study extends beyond textual archives, and includes "matter" from the past, for instance showing how the original yeast recovered from old bottles of beer was reproduced and re-interpreted in organizational texts and products to link future-oriented strategy formulations with the longer time horizon of organizational identity.

In studies that focus on the interconnections of archival texts and objects through time, researchers play a role that only requires them to be lightly involved. Whereas studies

of this type use data that exists and has been preserved without their involvement, researchers' involvement consists of selecting which archives to study, choosing texts and objects for detailed analysis, making sense of them, and looking at how they speak together, to account for the constitution of organizations, or organizational processes.

4. Archives in relations with space

Research driven by a CCO theoretical frame can serve to highlight how traces of the past, taking the form of archival objects, are inserted in, perverted, or erased from dedicated spaces, and describe the practices through which these assemblages contribute to (or harm) the organization's existence and persistence through time. Archival objects are the locus of such practices in all kinds of organizations and public spaces, as shown by de Vaujany and Vaast (2014) who documented how university staff re-used NATO's office furniture left behind by previous occupants of the building. They show how the furniture functioned as a constant reminder of the particular history and the prestige of their building, impacting how people interacted with it and, later on, how some walls were tagged with graffiti, masking the prestigious history of the building from the new generation.

In CCO, space has been conceptualized as "an ongoing construct of multiple and heterogeneous sociomaterial interrelations, which coexist and affect each other" (Vásquez & Cooren, 2013, p. 27), or as an "organizational assemblage" (Cnossen & Bencherki, 2019, p. 1059) that exists through practices. In both these definitions, space is enacted: it exists through interrelations and practices and is not fixed nor separated from the agents that inhabit it, whether humans or non-humans. In a similar way, we argue that a CCO perspective on archives focuses on their various materializations, that is their relations with other agents that allow them to make a difference in the situation. These ways of conceiving of space and archives are consequent with a relational ontology, and invites CCO researchers to observe archives in relations with their surroundings through the practices that mobilize them and infuse them with meanings.

For example, the role of archival objects could be to maintain a sense of coherence with the past, as seen in Basque and Langley (2018). The article includes a photograph of delegates from the *caisses populaires* (the bank branches) posing under a giant picture of the founder, after electing their new president. This photograph illustrates how the past is made present in the situation through this picture, creating a form of blessing from their precious founder (deceased 80 years prior to this picture being taken) upon their actual decisions (see Figure 1).
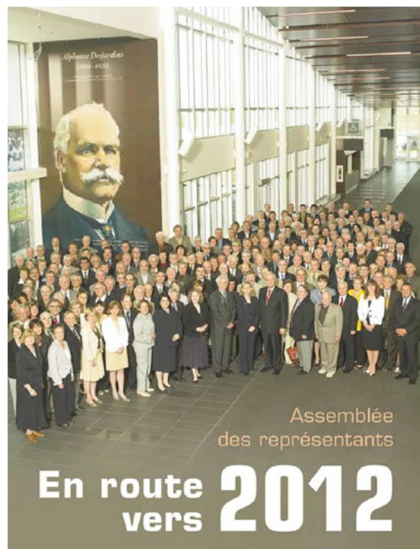
Figure 1: Cover image, Revue Desjardins, 74(3), 2008 (taken from Basque & Langley, 2018, p. 19)

However, coherence with the past through spatiality might sometimes become an obstacle in building an organization's legitimacy over time, as shown in the (previously cited) study by de Vaujany and Vaast (2014) on Dauphine University in Paris, located in a building originally designed to be NATO's headquarters. The study of subsequent appropriation and dis-appropriation practices, documented through ethnography, interviews and extensive study of various archival data (such as photographs, architectural plans, and videos) revealed how the building, its configuration, as well as the artefacts that remained from its past, all played different roles (and thus, displayed agency) in orienting and constraining their uses by students and faculty members through the years. Together, these various agents (the building, objects and organizational members) contributed to construct the organization's legitimacy (or lack thereof), as the inhabited space and "spatial legacies" ended up displaying obsolescence, which contradicted the organization's preferred identity: an elite and innovative institution.

Similar to de Vaujany and Vaast, who used ethnography as one of the main data gathering methods, Vásquez and colleagues present a shadowing technique as an interesting option for studying archives in relation with space (Vásquez et al., 2012). Delineating the object of study is an important and ongoing part of the shadowing process. Preliminary observations are made in order to identify specific actors that seem to play a key role in materializing archives in relation to space and through it. Such relations must remain the focus of observation, to understand how the past is made present in the organization's physicality and how it serves to (re)produce the organization through time and space (Vásquez & Cooren, 2013). The researcher's aim is to observe and unpack the organizational assemblage that results from encounters between archival objects in and through various spaces (headquarter buildings, employee's offices, parks, public transportation facilities, and so on).

In shadowing, the researcher can be mobile or immobile, and embrace various ways of describing space and everything that inhabits it. As van Vuuren and Westerhof explain "spatial descriptions can take three forms (i.e., survey, route, and gaze)" (2015, p. 327). The observation of the way archival objects – including mundane objects such as old containers, a shopping cart, and a logo with a nebulous history – relate together can be considered along with field notes, in-depth or on the spot interviews with organizational members or passers-by, which can be part of the ethnography, as in Cnossen & Bencherki's (2019) study. Their analysis shows that, in the description of what unfolds, the researcher must account for the intricate ways in which space constrains and orients practices, but also for the ways in which these practices constitute space and infuse it with meanings. Archival objects play a key role in these practices and ways of inhabiting space, as they are moved from places, shared, exchanged, even robbed or vandalized (de Vaujany & Vaast, 2014).

We can also imagine that practices do not need to be the focus of such research, if the researcher takes the stance of a ventriloquist and makes the relations between archival objects and space speak. Wilhoit & Kisselburgh (2019) offer an interesting description of this relation using Cooren (2015) work:

Cooren (2015) has shown that through relational ontology and ventriloquism, communication can take place between things. He described a woman who told a story relating two pieces of artwork near each other in a museum. This example shows that a person can observe a relationship between things (in this case, pieces of artwork) and make them say something about their relationship. Although this connection could be entirely imaginary on the part of the human, and not intended by the artists or curators, the fact that the juxtaposition between these artworks is there, can be noticed, and made to speak means that the artifacts also contribute to the meaning found in this relationship." (2019, pp. 877–878)

This depiction of a woman making sense of the relationship or an artwork in relation with the space and objects that surrounds it echoes Cifor's description of her own encounter with Harvey Milk's blood-tainted suit in a museum (2017, pp. 11–12). She explains carefully how the relationship of the archive with space (the suit being folded and put behind a glass, accompanied by a quote from Milk, etc.) created various effects on her, for instance putting her in the position of a distant observer, that would differ from her subsequent encounter with the object several years later when she could touch it and interact with it. While, in this section, we saw that the researcher's role is to delineate the object of study, make observations and analyze the practices that construct archives' agency in relation with space, the relation of the archive with the researcher is the last of our typology, and this last method will demonstrate a particular kind of involvement and engagement with archives.

5. Archives in relations with the researcher

Ultimately, the archive always comes alive in relation to the researcher as a subject studying the interaction of archives with (other) humans, archives, or spaces. While the reflexive and interpretive role of the researcher is always present to some extent in CCO studies, the researcher's position can vary a great deal. In studies drawing, for instance, on ethnomethodological and conversation analytical traditions, the researcher subject often mainly adopts an observing, reporting, and theorizing role. By contrast, in studies drawing from participatory ethnography, autoethnography, or feminist theory, the dynamic relationship between the researcher and the objects and materials of the study becomes more focal. For example, Sergi and Hallin regard performing qualitative research as an "emotional, embodied and deeply personal experience" (2011, p. 19) in which the researcher is fully immersed. Cifor (2017), drawing from feminist theory and new materialism, focuses on the "liveliness" of archives that results from the researcher's embodied and affective encounters with the materiality of archives and archived (bodily) matter. Similarly, Winkler's (2013) autoethnographic study of identity work, while not focusing on archives as such, takes the connection between the "inside view" of the researcher (including remembered experiences and feelings, as well as traces thereof in the form of diaries) and the "social outside" of the cultural surroundings as the main object of study.

A reflexive approach to the dynamic relationship and encounters between the researcher and the archive opens up yet another perspective to the performativity of archives. From the perspective of CCO, the relation may be understood as co-constitutive and regarded, for instance, through the conceptual lens of ventriloquism (Cooren, 2012; Cooren et al., 2013). On the one hand, the researcher as ventriloquist brings the archive "to life" and makes it "speak" – not so much as an informant but more as a partner in generative dialogue – which can be done as part of immersive and affective methods of inquiry and reporting (Sergi & Hallin, 2011), whereby the researcher mobilizes emotions, memories, and a personal connection with the archive. At the same time, the researcher also acts as the dummy through which the archive acts by making them feel, remember, and reconstruct events in ways that are partly out of their conscious control. CCO researchers have been documenting how such phenomena unfold in the field, as they are animated, transformed, and moved by the multiple agents that constitute the organization (Matte & Bencherki, 2018). As explained by Matte and Bencherki (2018), the body of the researcher becomes a medium through which materializations occurs; it becomes haunted, so to speak, by the elements of the organization it encounters.

For example, in her research work, the second author of this chapter has written on the way in which she was moved by a particular set of archives, namely children's magazines published by banks. In her research notes (see Hirsto et al., 2020), she writes:

> I bought the first set of The Golden Piggybank Club magazines from the 1980s–
> 1990s online from a private collector who delivered them to me on the parking

lot of a gas station. When I received the box of magazines, I was not thinking about my topic, the formation of economic citizens. I felt excited – ridiculously excited on the mere prospect of holding one of those magazines again in my hands: of sensing how the paper feels, how it smells; to be able to turn the pages, see the colors and the layouts. When I picked up the first magazine, I felt deeply moved. It seemed to bring me back to childhood, and let me meet my 10-year-old self again. These magazines, which were at their time so mundane and insignificant, felt precious, and I handled them with great care.

The author's emotions are visible when she describes how she felt while holding the old magazines in her hands. Upon the encounter, these magazines clearly did something to her, she was deeply moved by them, they reminded her of her childhood, and in a way summoned the spirit of her 10-year-old self. Further, the encounter led to her expressing these feelings in different academic contexts, and redirecting the focus of her research. From an analytical viewpoint, then, it is important to account for the sensibilities that animate us in selecting (and eliminating) some traces from the past and that affect us enough so that we make them speak through our research work. In Cifor's (2017) study, for example, the researcher accounts how their strong affective reactions to handling the blood-stained clothes of Harvey Milk connected her to the material history and performative power of the GLBT movement and the role of San Francisco's community-based GLBT Historical Society in preserving its legacy.

In supporting this sort of reflexive process, the method of historical empathy may provide additional guidance. Historical empathy, which in history studies and pedagogy refers to an effort of gaining "intuitive understanding 'from within' of the object of investigation" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, p. 179) through a process that involves both cognitive and affective engagement (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 41). It can be simplified as putting yourself in the shoes of a figure in the past, for example as the (imagined) producer or recipient of a text, in order to relate to her lived experience. From this position, it is possible to consider questions such as the following ones, which are raised in the second author's research notes on magazines from a more distant past: *What might a young woman, living in a rural village in the 1920s, have thought or felt when reading this story or seeing this advertisement in a bank magazine? What kinds of hopes, aspirations, or reflections might have arisen?* (Hirsto et al., 2020). From the perspective of relational ontology and CCO, empathy may thus be considered a method for animating and intensifying the relation between archival material and the researcher by means of eliciting emotional connection with past events and people, as well as identifying with their circumstances and aspirations. This is a way of using historical empathy, or we could also say historical *compassion*, for the purpose of embracing the same passion, and being animated or set in motion by the same figure (Cooren, 2010) that inhabited our predecessors, who created and possessed the objects that have now become archives.

Understanding research as a situated performance and attending to the affective and "subjective" (but always material) dimensions of knowledge production seems

generally well suited for the relational and performative premises of CCO (Matte & Bencherki, 2018). According to Sergi and Hallin (2011, p. 192) such dimensions are not only inextricable to research, but in fact may help to produce richer analyses of social and human phenomena. Many types of archival objects, notably artifacts and photographs representing the past, tend to evoke strong affective reactions (Kjellstrand & Vince, 2020; Schultz & Hernes, 2013) and, as Cifor's (2017) study shows, researchers are not immune to such effects. Adopting a relational approach to research helps to regard affective reactions as part of the materialization effects of archives, and to include them in the process of knowledge production.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed ways of using archives in CCO research. Archives are often primarily associated with historical research, where their role is to provide evidence of past events, and where authenticity and source criticism appear as key concerns. We have demonstrated that a CCO perspective to archive is, and needs to be, very different. CCO research, especially the Montréal School, regards communication as something that occurs in dynamic relations between a variety of human and non-human agencies. Regarded from this relational perspective, it may be argued that archives do not differ by essence from other potential agencies in communication. They, too, should be considered primarily for the different roles they assume and are assigned in communication, the (inter)actions they take part in, and the constitutive or materializing effects that their relations and encounters with other beings produce.

We defined archives, for the purposes of CCO, as "traces from the past that communicate through materialization effects". This means that archives are not studied as windows to the past but as agents that, through their participation in communicative processes and encounters, contribute to the existence of organizations or organizational phenomena. In other words, in order to "count" from a CCO point of view, archives need to be(come) or be made relevant in relation to other agents.

From this starting point, we discussed five broad ways of relating to archives in different types of research designs (summarized in Table 1), where the researcher's role varies from external observer of organizational life, to active arranger of research settings, and to a reflexive participant in affective encounters with archives. Archives may be regarded in these designs in a relatively traditional way as objects of (inter)textual analysis, but also, crucially, as agents participating in processes of communicative constitution through their relations and encounters with organizational members, space, time, and the researcher subject.

Table 1 – Five ways of using archives for research from a CCO perspective

Focus of analysis	Examples of methods for data collection	Researcher's role in relation to archives	Archive's role
Archives and organizational members in naturally occuring settings	Observation and recording of organizational life Ethnography Video-shadowing	Not involved – Exterior Observing meaningful encounters with archives	Agent in naturally-occurring relations
Archives and organizational members in facilitated settings	Focus groups Interviews Photo-elicitation Object-elicitation	Involved – Creating the encounter with archives	Device to generate data, "added agent" to the discussion
The interconnections of archives through time	Collection and selection of archives to constitute a corpus	Lightly involved Selection of archives Analyzing intertextual relations	Object of analysis, "text"
Archives in relations with space	Ethnography Autoethnography Video-shadowing	Involved – Delineating the object of study Making observations Analyzing practices	Agent in naturally-occurring relations
Archives in relations with the researcher	Autoethnography Reflexive methods	Deeply involved – Affective encounter with archives Source of data	Device to generate data Participant in reflexive process

Even though archives are, in many ways, similar to other participants in communicative events, their temporal aspect holds special potential for CCO research. In our view, the value of an archive, whether convoked spontaneously by organizational members or introduced by the researcher for elicitation purposes, lies in its ability to mobilize personal and collective histories, always "imaginary" to some extent, for the purpose of shaping the meaning and existence of organizations in the present. Therefore, considering archival material through a CCO lens may help to deepen our understanding of the ways in which traces from the past are interwoven in the communicative constitution of organizations.

References

Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2017). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research* (3rd edition). SAGE Pub.

Ashcraft, K. L. (2007). Appreciating the 'work' of discourse: Occupational identity and difference as organizing mechanisms in the case of commercial airline pilots. *Discourse & Communication*, *1*(1), 9–36. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481307071982

Ashcraft, K. L. (2020). Communication as Constitutive Transmission? An Encounter with Affect. *Communication Theory*. https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtz027

Basque, J., & Langley, A. (2018). Invoking Alphonse: The founder figure as a historical resource for organizational identity work. *Organization Studies*, 0170840618789211. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840618789211

Basque, J., Meziani, N., & Rouleau, L. (2018, August). *Talking about the "new" boss: Unpacking the strategy-identity nexus through discursive presences.* Academy of Management Annual Conference, Chicago, USA.

Bencherki, N., & Bourgoin, A. (2019). Property and Organization Studies. *Organization Studies*, *40*(4), 497–513. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840617745922

Bencherki, N., & Elmholdt, K. T. (2020). The organization's synaptic mode of existence: How a hospital merger is many things at once: *Organization*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508420962025

Bencherki, N., Sergi, V., Cooren, F., & Vásquez, C. (2019). How strategy comes to matter: Strategizing as the communicative materialization of matters of concern. *Strategic Organization*, 1476127019890380. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127019890380

Benoit-Barné, C., & Cooren, F. (2009). The Accomplishment of Authority Through Presentification: How Authority Is Distributed Among and Negotiated by Organizational Members. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *23*(1), 5–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318909335414

Bricknell, D. (2008). Historical Analysis. In *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Management Research* (Thorpe, R. & Holt, R.). SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857020109.n50

Cifor, M. (2017). Stains and Remains: Liveliness, Materiality, and the Archival Lives of Queer Bodies. *Australian Feminist Studies*, *32*(91–92), 5–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2017.1357014

Cnossen, B., & Bencherki, N. (2019). The role of space in the emergence and endurance of organizing: How independent workers and material assemblages constitute organizations. *Human Relations*, *72*(6), 1057–1080. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718794265

Cooren, F. (2010). *Action and Agency in Dialogue*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Cooren, F. (2012). Communication Theory at the Center: Ventriloquism and the Communicative Constitution of Reality. *Journal of Communication*, *62*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01622.x

Cooren, F. (2015). In medias res: Communication, existence, and materiality. *Communication Research and Practice*, *1*(4), 307–321. https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2015.1110075

Cooren, F. (2020). Beyond Entanglement: (Socio-) Materiality and Organization Studies. *Organization Theory*, *1*(3), 2631787720954444. https://doi.org/10.1177/2631787720954444

Cooren, F., Kuhn, T., Cornelissen, J. P., & Clark, T. (2011). Communication, Organizing and Organization: An Overview and Introduction to the Special Issue: *Organization Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840611410836

Cooren, F., & Matte, F. (2010). Obama, Médecins Sans Frontières and the Measuring Stick. *Pragmatics & Society*, *1*(1), 9–31.

Cooren, F., Matte, F., Benoit-Barné, C., & Brummans, B. H. J. M. (2013). Communication as Ventriloquism: A Grounded-in-Action Approach to the Study of Organizational Tensions. *Communication Monographs*, *80*(3), 255–277. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2013.788255

Cooren, F., Thompson, F., Canestraro, D., & Bodor, T. (2006). From agency to structure: Analysis of an episode in a facilitation process. *Human Relations*, *59*(4), 533–565. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726706065373

De Leon, J. P., & Cohen, J. H. (2005). Object and Walking Probes in Ethnographic Interviewing. *Field Methods*, *17*(2), 200–204. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05274733

de Vaujany, F.-X., & Vaast, E. (2014). If These Walls Could Talk: The Mutual Construction of Organizational Space and Legitimacy. *Organization Science*, *25*(3), 713–731. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43660905

Dobusch, L., & Schoeneborn, D. (2015). Fluidity, identity, and organizationality: The communicative constitution of Anonymous. *Journal of Management Studies*, n/a-n/a. https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12139

Endacott, J., & Brooks, S. (2013). An Updated Theoretical and Practical Model for Promoting Historical Empathy. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, *8*, 41–58.

Everett, M. C., & Barrett, M. S. (2012). "Guided tour": A method for deepening the relational quality in narrative research. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *12*(1), 32–46. https://doi.org/10.1108/14439881211222714

Foucault, M. (1972). *The archeology of knowledge* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Hirsto, H., Basque, J., & Wagnac, R. (2020). Making archives speak: Archival material in CCO research. Paper presented at the 36th European Group for Organizational Studies Colloquium (EGOS), University of Hamburg, Germany. https://egosnet.org/jart/prj3/egos/resources/dbcon_def/uploads/gEYmj_EGOS2020_shortpaper.pdf

Hodges, A. (2015). Intertextuality in Discourse. In *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 42–60). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118584194.ch2

Howard-Grenville, J., Metzger, M. L., & Meyer, A. D. (2013). Rekindling the Flame: Processes of Identity Resurrection. *Academy of Management Journal*, *56*(1), 113–136. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.0778

Jahn, J. L. S. (2016). Adapting Safety Rules in a High Reliability Context: How Wildland Firefighting Workgroups Ventriloquize Safety Rules to Understand Hazards. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *30*(3), 362–389. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318915623638

Kjellstrand, I., & Vince, R. (2020). A Trip Down Memory Lane: How photograph insertion methods trigger emotional memory and enhance recall during interviews. *Research Methods in Strategy and Management*, *12*, 39–53. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-838720200000012015

Koschmann, M. A., & McDonald, J. (2015). Organizational Rituals, Communication, and the Question of Agency. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *29*(2), 229–256. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318915572386

Koshman, M. (2013). The Communicative Constitution of Collective Identity in Interorganizational Collaboration—Matthew A. Koschmann, 2013. *Management Communication Quarterly*. https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy.bibliotheques.uqam.ca/doi/abs/10.1177/0893318912449314

Latour, B. (2011). "What's the story?" Organizing as a mode of existence. In *Agency without Actors? New Approaches to Collective Action* (Passoth, Jan-H., Birgit Peuker and Michael Schillmeier). Routledge.

Manoff, M. (2004). Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines. portal: Libraries and the Academy 4(1), 9-25. doi:10.1353/pla.2004.0015.

Mathewson, D. B. (2002). A Critical Binarism: Source Criticism and Deconstructive Criticism. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, *26*(4), 3–28. https://doi.org/10.1177/030908920202600401

Matte, F., & Bencherki, N. (2018). Being Followed by an Organization: A Hauntological Perspective on Organizational Ethnography. In *Methodological and Ontological Principles of Observation and Analysis: Following and Analyzing Things and Beings in Our Everyday World* (Malbois, F. & Cooren, F., pp. 202–232). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315201610-8

Prior, L. (2008). Repositioning Documents in Social Research. *Sociology*, *42*(5), 821–836. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038508094564

Schultz, M., & Hernes, T. (2013). A Temporal Perspective on Organizational Identity. *Organization Science*, *24*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/doi:10.1287/orsc.1110.0731

Schultz, M., & Hernes, T. (2019). Temporal interplay between strategy and identity: Punctuated, subsumed, and sustained modes. *Strategic Organization*, 1476127019843834. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127019843834

Sergi, V., & Bonneau, C. (2016). Making mundane work visible on social media: A CCO investigation of working out loud on Twitter. *Communication Research and Practice*, *2*(3), 378–406. https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2016.1217384

Sergi, V., & Hallin, A. (2011). Thick performances, not just thick descriptions: The processual nature of doing qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, *6*(2), 191–208. https://doi.org/10.1108/17465641111159152

Shortt, H. L., & Warren, S. K. (2019). Grounded Visual Pattern Analysis: Photographs in Organizational Field Studies. *Organizational Research Methods*, *22*(2), 539–563. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428117742495

van Vuuren, M., & Westerhof, G. J. (2015). Identity as "knowing your place": The narrative construction of space in a healthcare profession. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *20*(3), 326–337. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105314566614

Vásquez, C., Brummans, B. H. J. M., & Groleau, C. (2012). Notes from the field on organizational shadowing as framing. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, *7*(2), 144–165. https://doi.org/10.1108/17465641211253075

Vásquez, C., & Cooren, F. (2013). Spacing practices: The communicative configuration of organizing through space-times. *Communication Theory*, *23*(1), 25–47.

Wilhoit, E. D. (2014). Ventriloquism's methodological scope. *Language Under Discussion*, *2*(1), 45-49-45–49. https://doi.org/10.31885/lud.2.1.243

Wilhoit, E. D. (2017). Photo and Video Methods in Organizational and Managerial Communication Research. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *31*(3), 447–466. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318917704511

Wilhoit, E. D., & Kisselburgh, L. G. (2019). The relational ontology of resistance: Hybridity, ventriloquism, and materiality in the production of bike commuting as resistance. *Organization*, *26*(6), 873–893. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508417723719

Winkler, I. (2013). Moments of identity formation and reformation: A day in the working life of an academic. *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, *2*(2), 191–209. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JOE-11-2011-0001