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We're Here! We're Queer?
Activist Archives and Archival Activism

I WOULD LIKE to take you back to the summer of 2008, more specifically, to the sunny Saturday of July 26, towards the end of the third Queer Festival in Copenhagen. In the charming buildings of the alternative circus school AFUK – Academy for Untamed Creativity, hundreds of activist from all over Europe were gathered to enjoy a week of political discussions, partying, skill-sharing, community building, and queer sex. The festival site was quite busy this afternoon, as a demonstration against hate crimes was scheduled to start around 3 p.m. The planning of the manifestation was initiated in a workshop a couple of days earlier as a response to a violent attack that had taken place the previous Tuesday in Ørstedsparken, a popular cruising park in Copenhagen. A 38-year-old man had been brutally assaulted by three young men who shouted homophobic slurs and threatened to kill him while beating him severely (Tved 2008; Borking 2008). It was not the first assault on people cruising in the park. A few months earlier, an activist friend of mine had been beaten in a similar way. Stories circulated of other physical and verbal attacks, and many of us felt that a reaction was imperative.

Starting at the festival site on Amager, in the southern part of

the city, the demonstration was to cross through the city center and end in the park where the assault had taken place. The spirit was high in the group of about a hundred that had gathered outside the school building. Some had taken their tops and t-shirts off in the baking sun, others were dressed in colorful outfits from the festival's dress-up room. The mixture of anarchist symbols and trash aesthetics gave the demonstration quite a sexy appearance. As the crowd started to move the people upfront unrolled a large banner stating, "ACT! AGAINST HOMO & TRANSPHOBIC VIOLENCE." Others carried smaller banners, all made in the festival's Do-It-Together (D.I.T.) spirit.¹ The organizers had made a flyer, printed in thousands of copies, that we handed out along our way. It was formulated as a wake-up-call to the straight population of Copenhagen, urging them to take action against discrimination and the recent violent attacks against LGBT-people.

In company of friends and strangers, I walked along talking, cheering, and handing out flyers to passersby. A small group of activists functioned as cheerleaders, alternating between the chants: "Say Hey! / Hey! / Say Ho! / Ho! / Say Homophobia's Got To Go!" and "We're Here! We're Queer! We're Not Gonna Disappear!" When we entered Langebro, a highly trafficked bridge connecting Amager to the city center, the atmosphere got quite tense. The organizers tried to make us block all three lanes going in the direction of the city, but it was difficult as we were a rather small crowd. After a couple of furious drivers had managed to maneuver their cars through the demonstration, we made a better effort to hold the line. Somewhat frightened by the aggressive drivers, the collective determination to take up space was energizing. With hundreds of cars behind us we traversed the city

center and headed for the park where we laid down on the grass and relaxed in the sun.

No permission had been given to us for setting up a demonstration in the city center this Saturday, and I was surprised that the police did not stop us for “disturbing public order”. But this non-confrontative character of our reclaiming of the streets might have been one of the reasons why the manifestation was not picked up by the press. Of the numerous demonstrations taking place every year in Copenhagen, it is usually only the dramatic and violent activist spectacles that achieve attention in the media – as well as in the histories of social movements. Actions of a more *unspectacular* kind, such as this manifestation against hate crimes, seems to be forgotten rather quickly. But even the more conventional and peaceful forms of actions deserve our attention. These happenings are central not only to get a broader understanding of the workings of social movements, but also to open up important questions of the production of value and relevance in the writing of history. In this article I argue for the need to rethink the concept of the archive when working on activist history. Taking the current archival impulse in recent queer theoretical work as a starting point,² the article focuses on the transference of activist history through a discussion of activist archives and what I term *archival activism*.

In the following, I will first outline some of the difficulties and challenges facing historians working on queer history and social movements. Then, by returning to the demonstration in Copenhagen, I will consider how this action can be seen as a form of *archival activism*, in the sense that it produces connections to a queer activist past.

A queer archival impulse

What is an archive? Monumental buildings, museums, libraries, messy lofts, albums, computers, and memory-sticks – archives come in many forms.³ When we talk about archives, we usually mean storage units for individual or collective – official or unofficial – documents and materials: Places that function as a basis for our attempts, however partial or ineffective, to reconstruct or represent stories of the past (Bradley 1999). Archives are constituted by exclusion. It is the processes of selecting and classifying that “makes an object archival” (Taylor 2005:19). The archive can therefore be said to be positioned between memory and forgetting, between order and chaos. In this way questions on archiving always implies question of power. As the philosopher Jacques Derrida points out in his influential book *Archive fever: a freudian impression*: “There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation” (Derrida 1996:4 n.1).

Questions of power have also been central to queer theoretical discussions of archives and archiving, with a special focus on the heteronormative framework that structures the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in official histories. Developing alternative archives has been central to establish a ground for researching on queer world-making. For instance, in the essay “What’s that smell? queer temporalities and subcultural lives”, Judith Jack Halberstam argues for the need of “a nuanced theory of archives and archiving” in order to grasp and remember the queer subcultural production that often disappear from public

record (Halberstam 2005:169). Halberstam describes the ideal queer archive as an eclectic merging of ethnography, oral history, online databases and homepages, collections of zines and temporary artifacts, and statements and descriptions from activists and cultural producers. But she does not stop with these different forms of material repositories:

[T]he notion of an archive has to extend beyond the image of a place to collect material or hold documents, and it has to become a floating signifier for the kind of lives implied by the paper remnants of shows, clubs, events, and meetings. The archive is not simply a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity (ibid:169–170).

Pointing out that an archive needs users and interpreters in order to function, she urges cultural historians to “wade through the material and piece together the jigsaw puzzle of queer history in the making” (ibid:170).

The figure of the archive has been ubiquitous in the humanities as of late, being frequently used as a universal metaphor for different forms of memory structures, knowledge productions, and storage facilities.⁴ In a comment to the recent propagation of the term, the German media archeologist Wolfgang Ernst has warned against reducing the “archive” to a mere epistemological metaphor, as this diminution risks neglecting the material conditions of archival structures (Ernst 2008). While for instance Michel Foucault’s influential concept of the archive as the discursive field that structure our way of thinking certainly is present in Halberstam’s call for engaging with subjugated histories and knowledges, her methodology is highly indebted to the materi-

alist tradition in cultural studies, with its engagement with the popular and other “low” cultural productions.⁵ The archival impulse in recent queer theoretical work seems to stand in this juncture between the discursive and the materialist, where theoretical questions as to how the archive structures the way we understand and write history have been fueled by revalorizations of the material and conceptual boundaries of traditional archives. Two of the theorists Halberstam invokes have been central for my interest in the archives of activist history, namely the performance theorist José Esteban Muñoz and the activist professor in English and Women’s studies, Ann Cvetkovich.

Focusing on the temporality of queer acts and performance, Muñoz argues in the article “Ephemera as Evidence” that the ephemeral is central to a queer understanding of the archive:

Queerness is often transmitted covertly. This has everything to do with the fact that leaving too much of a trace has often meant that the queer subject has left herself open for attack. Instead of being clearly available as visible evidence, queerness has instead existed as innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments, and performances that are meant to be interacted with by those within its epistemological sphere – while evaporating at the touch of those who would eliminate queer possibility (Muñoz 1996:6).

Muñoz reminds us that the lack of queer presence in official archives and histories are related to the performative and ephemeral quality of queer acts. Destructing traces that could confirm queerness have been important to survive in a heteronormative world. Focusing on the “invisible evidence” of queerness, Muñoz shows the necessity of rethinking the evidential when writing queer history. Interested in paying heed to the “world making

qualities” of performance and queer acts – events that disappear “in the very act of materializing” (Muñoz 2001:441) – Muñoz argues for the importance of an expanded understanding of materiality, one that centers on the “traces, glimmers, residues, and specks of things” (Muñoz 1996:10).

Muñoz challenges the material and temporal structure of archives by confronting the institutional ideology of “hard facts” that dominates the humanities – an ideology that often excludes the fleeting and performative knowledges of queerness. Similarly, in *An archive of feelings* (2003), Ann Cvetkovich insists on the significance of affects for the writing of history: “Lesbian and gay history demands a radical archive of emotion in order to document intimacy, sexuality, love, and activism – all areas of experience that are difficult to chronicle through the materials of a traditional archive” (Cvetkovich 2003:241). Emotions and intimacies are hard to document, let alone archive in traditional ways. As feelings can only be accessible indirectly in archival material, Cvetkovich posits artistic representations and oral histories as valuable affective transmitters (ibid; Cvetkovich 2009).⁶ In this way, the concept of the “archive of feelings” inspires new approaches to material in existing archives, highlighting the ways in which texts and images can convey feelings when engaged queerly.⁷ But it also puts pressure on what we understand as an archive, opening up for thinking the role of the body in the transmissions of knowledge and experiences.

Affects and their expressions, such as shame, fear, pride, grief, and indignation, are central to the history of queer activism. From the traditional Gay Pride Parades to queer radical groups such as ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power), Queer Nation, Gay Shame, and Chicago Feel Tank, feelings have been put

at center stage. But as the AIDS activist and social movements researcher Deborah B. Gould (2001, 2009) has pointed out, the affective dimensions of activism have usually been neglected as a relevant site of engagement in social movements research. Emotions have been seen as a murky territory across the field. For instance, the “collective behavior” models that dominated studies of social movements until the 1970s tended to view protestors as irrational and overemotional: describing activists as immature, psychological unstable, or even “latently homosexual” (Goodwin, Jasper, Polletta 2001:3). In contrast, the following generations of scholars within the “resource-mobilization” paradigm analyzed protestors as rational actors within a political field of opportunities. But in their focus on the rationale for protesting, feelings and affects were often overlooked and ignored (ibid:3–9; Gould 2009). Accordingly, activists either were seen to have too much feeling or none at all, with the result that for instance queer forms of activism – driven by love and rage, mourning and militancy – fell outside the interpretive framework of the field.⁸ The researchers that has initiated an “emotional turn” in social movements research in the last decade has worked through this emotional “conflict”, by focusing on the mutual dependence of thought *and* emotion, rationality *and* irrationality in protest movements (Gould 2009:16–17). This recent interest in emotion and affect have opened up new possibilities of valuing and understanding queer activist practices, while revealing the need for new modes of archiving that can capture the passionate intensities crucial to the “moving politics” of social activism.⁹





Activist archives

The challenges facing scholars wanting to work on activist history also have other dimensions. As the queer activist writer Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore has suggested, “[a]ctivism disappears from the public record almost as quickly as activists burn out and disappear from struggle” (Sycamore 2008:268). It does not take many years or even months before actions that are not recorded somewhere are forgotten, and it can be difficult to reconstruct trajectories and strategies at a later point. In his article “Remembering AIDS” (2006), the performance historian David Román emphasizes an important aspect of why activist practices often go undocumented, thereby lacking the staying power to transmit knowledge. Román describes how he started to document AIDS-related performance and activism in the mid-1980s when he realized that “many artists and activists [...] had not set out themselves to document their work for history, since they, as most people living in that moment, did not think that AIDS would even have an extended history to record, let alone, remember” (Román 2006:284). Román points to one of the central temporal problems related to archiving activism and activist aesthetics, namely that activists aim at *doing something* there and then, not with posterity in mind. Doing archival work on social movements can even give people a painful feeling of being historicized. Deborah B. Gould describes the experience of such a shift “from the streets to history” in relation to seeing an exhibition on ACT UP in the late 1990s: “Given the continuing AIDS epidemic, history was not exactly what or where we wanted to be” (Gould 2009:43).

In later years, the question of documentation of actions has

changed and developed, as we have seen a proliferation of activist strategies centered on recording events. Inexpensive recording equipment has created new possibilities for documenting actions, and the Internet has proven to be an important tool in circulating information. But increased circulation does not necessarily seem to result in long-term remembrance, as the flow of information and documentation online is often transient, published on short-lived homepages and blogs.

While it is important to maintain a critical perspective on the mediating processes of documentation, it is also necessary to reflect upon the use and misuse of archival material. For instance, the police have used activists' personal documentation of events as evidence in court when people have been arrested during actions. Therefore, it can often be difficult to track down information on activist groups working with radical civil disobedience, as documentation is deliberately not published or saved, for good reasons (Bucharadt 2008, Graeber 2009). The historical amnesia of activism, then, can partly be related to the momentary quality of activist aesthetics and the different archival problems this entails, but it is also related to structural conservatism in historiography.

This is evident in my own field of study, art history, where the legacy from the modernist denouncement of political and operative aesthetics still lingers in contemporary discussions (Kester 2004). There has been a long tradition for denouncing aesthetic expressions created with the purpose of doing something rather than merely *being* works of art. Activist esthetics have in this perspective been regarded as kitsch, propaganda, and agit-prop—without interest or relevance for art historians.¹⁰ Although several movements in art history have criticized the long-lasting

focus on canons as well as the fixation on objects and absolute field demarcations, activist aesthetics have only recently come to be considered relevant for art-historical analyses.¹¹ A concept such as “tradition” has been – and still is – an important criterion for valuation, and practices that do not find legitimacy in historical traditions have been marginalized. Feminist theorists have criticized this “generational legacy” paradigm, where the present is held up to the standards of the past, assuming a problematic reproductive logic.¹² Wanting to avoid this logic of “reproductive futurism,”¹³ I find David Román’s attention to the value of the here and now to be of great importance. A queer activist archive must rework the dominating heteronormative investment in history, and, following Román, I consent that actions “should not need to prove relevant to future generations in order to be valued today, nor should they be obliged to build on conventional models of tradition to be deemed significant. Rather, the contemporary should be evaluated primarily in terms of how it serves its immediate audience” (Román 2005:15).

Activist empowerment

With Román’s argument of the importance of the here and now in mind, I will return to the demonstration that opened the present article. A discussion of the significance of the action against hate crimes during the Queer Festival in Copenhagen in 2008 must take into consideration the interaction between *external* contexts and factors *internal* to the activists in question. In retrospect, the demonstration itself does not seem to have left any

major mark in the archives. The action did not receive any press attention, and there exists nearly no online information or published recordings of the event. Seen from an aesthetic or politically radical perspective, the demonstration could also easily be regarded as unworthy of attention, with its well-known form of marching in the streets with the political aim of creating awareness.

This said, the significance of the manifestation, as an action of activist empowerment, should not be underestimated. Talking to fellow activists at the time, I think it felt significant for many of us to mark our presence in the city and in the park. We got a chance to show that we were ready to stand together against hate crimes – while criticizing the way the branding of Copenhagen as a “gay-friendly city” glossed over problems of heterosexism, racism, transphobia, and the increasing number of violent attacks. A substantial audience was confronted with this critique through the distribution of flyers on our way across town that day. Further, the action was central to the foundation of the activist initiative Copenhagen Bash Back! a couple of weeks later – underlining the demonstration as a relevant act of inspiration.¹⁴

Archival activism

It is usually the spectacular and militant strategies that gain attention in activist discussions. More “ordinary” strategies are seldom analyzed, although they can function as important sources in creating a more nuanced picture of activist archives and history. I would now like to devote attention to one of the perhaps

least original and prominent aspects of the anti-hate crime demonstration in Copenhagen – an aspect that nonetheless has continued to carry resonance for me long after the event was over – namely the chanting of the slogan “We’re Here! We’re Queer! We’re Not Gonna Disappear!” While walking in the demonstration taking part in the crying of this slogan, I had a strange feeling of asynchronicity: The sound of the chant brought me back to a time and place I have never encountered but in books, namely the actions of Queer Nation in the U.S., and their infamous variations of the confrontational slogan, “We’re Here! We’re Queer! We’re Beautiful! Get Used to it!” For me, the utterance of this slogan represented a form of “touch across time” – to borrow Carolyn Dinshaw’s phrase (Dinshaw 1999) – where the sounds of Copenhagen overlapped with my phantasmatical image of the heyday of the early queer activism in the streets of New York and Chicago. The old chant made queer history present to me – and the feeling of anachronism that this conjured was as moving as it was disturbing.

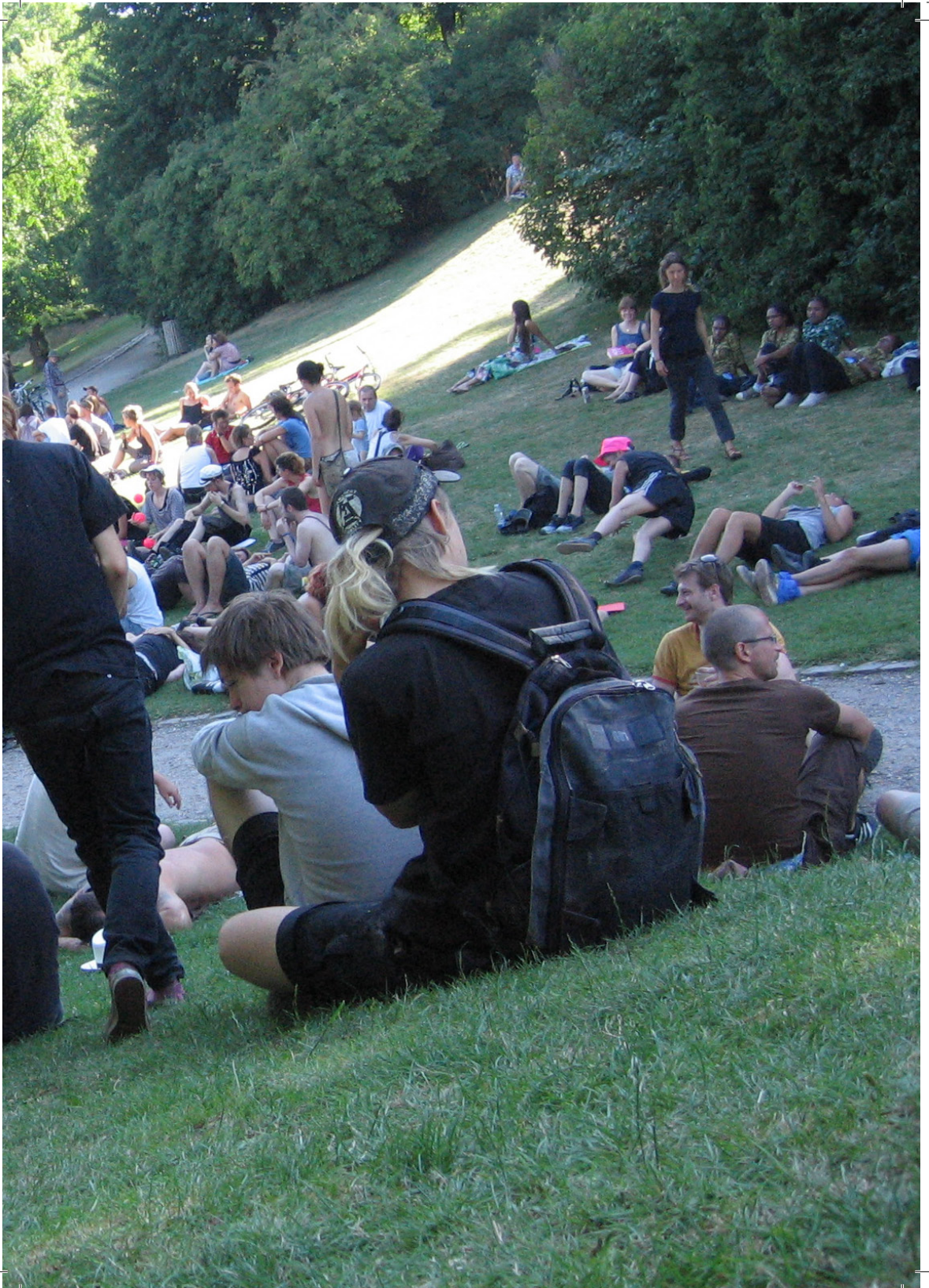
This sense of temporal touches across time designates what I call *archival activism*, describing the way repertoires of activist history are reactivated, reenacted, and re-embodied in contemporary actions.¹⁵ Through the concept of archival activism I am interested in exploring how activist practice can serve as its own archive of prior actions – functioning as an embodied and living archive that makes activist history present.

My understanding of archival activism is inspired by performance theorist Diana Taylor’s work on how “[e]mbodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge” (Taylor 2003:21). In *The archive and the repertoire*, Taylor revalorizes embodied culture, criticizing the long tradition of occluding

other forms of historical transmission than the written word. By focusing on how the body in itself can work as a mnemonic device, Taylor highlights how the performatic field creates different transfers of knowledge: “[P]eople participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by ‘being there’, being part of the transmission” (ibid:20).¹⁶ Taylor reminds us to take the body into account when working with history, and as traditional archival material is scarce when working with activist history, her focus on embodied memory is pertinent.

The concept of archival activism is an attempt to describe the effect of embodied transmission of queer activist history. Returning to the example of the chant “We’re here! We’re Queer!” I do not know whether the cheerleaders knew this chant from the same books that I have read, or from participating in actions where it has been used. But the intention is not of interest here. Rather, the importance lies in the effects and functions of the *reactivation* of this old slogan – effects that can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The chanting of the slogan can be seen as a way of invoking a queer activist legacy – creating an activist “community” across time and space. But the weight of history that the use of an old American slogan may bring about can also have unproductive effects, such as a feeling of political exhaustion, insufficient intelligibility, indifference, or displacement.





The haunting of queerness

The archival presence in the “We’re here! We’re Queer!” slogan may also testify to the many ways in which queer history and activism are haunted by the past. The stigma-inflected term “queer” is in itself embedded in this form of historical haunting. This ghostly temporality is a central issue in Judith Butler’s seminal essay “Critically queer,” in which she reflects on the performative force of the term, discussing whether queer “could overcome its constitutive history of injury” and be redeployed “in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes” (Butler 1993:223). In a recent comment on Butler’s essay, Heather Love delineates the problem of what she calls the double imperative of the term queer: facing backwards toward a difficult past, while simultaneously looking forward towards the future (Love 2007:18). Love’s description of how we often find ourselves in the odd situation “of ‘looking forward’ while we are ‘feeling backward’” (ibid:27) is a poignant description of what I have called archival activism.

My feeling of a temporal collapse during the chanting of “We’re Here! We’re Queer!” testifies to the partial connection I have to the term queer, as I have experienced it through consumption of texts on its conceptual, theoretical, and activist history. But it is obvious that the negatively charged history of this English term is not felt in the same way for me – having Norwegian as my main language – as it may have for English speakers having experienced the derogatory use of “queer.”¹⁷

The fact that queer is the preferred term among activists in Copenhagen, and that only English slogans were chanted in the demonstration, points to the tricky influence – or, perhaps, import – from a U.S. activist discourse. But the use of English terms

and repertoires can also be seen as a result of it being the main language used at the Queer Festival in Copenhagen, as the gatherings include (mainly Western white European) people of different nationalities. In such a multilingual context, it is clear that the term queer is used and understood differently. The meaning of the chant must have varied widely between the chanters, depending on our different political and historical understanding of queerness.

For me, chanting “We’re Here! We’re Queer! We’re not Gonna Disappear!” in Copenhagen in 2008 made me feel more “elsewhere” than “here”. This sensation of being out of sync was bittersweet: while it pointed to the ways in which activist history can live on in the present, it also raised questions on appropriateness. Did the shouting of this message twenty-plus years after Queer Nation suggest progress, since we were still alive and kicking after all these years? Or did it indicate a political deadlock, that despite a long activist fight, we were still in the streets demanding a right to love without fear? As most of us were only kids during the early days of queer activism, the “we” invoked by this slogan now was different. But did the reuse of an established repertoire of queer activism point to a lack of creativity and imagination among us protesters today? Or was it a sign of historical continuity – a reanimation of the past? I find it hard to give a proper answer to these questions in the here and now. This ambivalence seems also to go to the heart of archival activism, as the weight, strength, or relevance of reactivating history can be negotiated differently.

While it remains pertinent to develop new tactics and strategies that can respond to our current situation, we do not necessarily need to leave the past behind. Instead, the experiences and knowledges from the queer activist archive can reanimate the past and reinvigorate the present.

Facing an unfolding archive

My argument for the importance of rethinking the spatial and temporal structure of the archives when writing queer activist history is not to be seen as a denouncement of traditional archives and archival methods. This text is in itself an example of such a material archival practice, as it documents a contemporary moment of queer activism through words and images. But it is important to remember that archival memory goes beyond the textual document, as embodied memory can work in tandem with the material documents to fuel the transmission of knowledge and memories.

In the preface to her recent book *Terrorist assemblages: homonationalism in queer times*, Jasbir K. Puar asks, “What does it mean to be examining, absorbing, feeling, reflecting on, and writing about the archive as it is being produced, rushing at us – literally, to entertain an unfolding archive?” (Puar 2007:xix). Puar describes the intensities felt by the contemporary historian who tries to grasp the ever becoming present. Her animated portrayal of the archive as something continually made and unmade while one tries to examine, absorb, feel, and reflect upon it, bears resonance with this article’s attempt to investigate the affective sides of activist archives, and the archival sides of activist affect. Entertaining “an unfolding archive” that rushes at you can be quite overwhelming, and the experience of “feeling historical” is not trouble-free, as my description of archival activism illustrates.¹⁸ But queer history is filled with mixed feelings that we must remember and reflect upon in order to move towards a queer future.

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Notes

1 At an organizing committee meeting during the Queer Festival that I participated in, the term D.I.T. (Do It Together) was introduced as a way to describe the collaborative activist spirit we were aiming for at the festival. While the notion of D.I.Y. (Do It Yourself) is more widespread, the concept of D.I.T. presses attention to the collective rather than the individual aspects of activist work and organization.

2 I have borrowed the expression “an archival impulse” from an essay by the art historian Hal Foster. While I find his discussion of contemporary artists’ use of alternative archives inspiring, my understanding of the queer archival impulse differs in several ways, for instance, as issues of gender, and sexuality are tellingly absent from Foster’s archival theory, as in many other contemporary discussions of archives and memory structures (Foster 2004, see also Danbolt 2009).

3 An extended version of this paragraph on the relationship between archives and

queer theory can be found in Danbolt 2009.

4 For a critical discussion of the increasing interest in the term archive in the humanities, see Steedman 2001, Merewether 2006, and Ernst 2008.

5 Michel Foucault develops his concept of the archive in *The archeology of knowledge* (1969). Halberstam's work on archives is also inspired by Lauren Berlant's explorations of the "counterpolitics of the silly objects" Berlant 1997:12. See also Halberstam 2008, Danbolt 2008, 2009.

6 I follow Cvetkovich's use of affect, feeling and emotion as *relative* synonymous terms here, even though there is a large body of theoretical work on affect that argue that these terms describe different processes and modes of experience: Affect usually designates the nonlinguistic sensory experience of something, while feelings and emotions are the expression affects take in gestures and language. For an elaborate discussion of the different uses of the terms, see Gould 2009:18–42.

7 See for instance Jennifer DeVere Brody's book *Punctuation: art, politics, play*, where she uses Cvetkovich's concept to explain how punctuation marks can be seen as an "archive of feelings", as they "historically have provided much of the affect of Western print culture since the Enlightenment" (Brody 2008:2).

8 I am referencing here the AIDS activist and academic Douglas Crimp's seminal article "Mourning and Militancy" (1989), where he argued that the direct action AIDS movement turned mourning into militancy in their fight against the epidemic and the inactive Reagan administration.

9 Deborah B. Gould uses the term "moving politics" to highlight the ways in which the word movement in "social movements" itself "gestures towards the realm of affect; bodily intensities; emotions, feelings, and passions; and towards uprising" (Gould 2009:2–3).

10 For a discussion of the bias towards activist art in art history, see Raunig 2007:19ff and Kester 2004.

11 The critiques of the art historical canon, and its masculine bias, was raised with great strength by feminist art historians in the 1970s and 1980s (Nochlin 1971, Pollock 1999, 2003), and was followed by critiques inspired by poststruc-

turalist theory, critical race studies, post-colonial studies, and performance studies. See for instance, Crimp 1993, Mercer 1994, Jones 1998.

12 Robyn Wiegman, “Feminism’s Apocalyptic Futures,” discussed in Román 2005:14–15.

13 For an incisive critique of the heteronormative logic of “reproductive futurism,” see Edelman 2004.

14 Bash Back! was formed in response to violent attacks, and the initiative has started self-defense courses and has sporadically patrolled Ørstedsparken. A press release from Bash Back! in August 2008 that criticized police ignorance of hate crimes and urged queers to defend themselves and bash the queer bashers received a considerable amount of press attention, spurring the police and city council to discuss the problems further. See Lindblom 2008, Carlsen 2008.

15 The term *archival activism* has been used in varying contexts and with different meanings than the one I am employing here. In Lucy L. Lippard’s article “Archival activism,” the term is used as a description of the artist collective PAD/D’s inclusive and radical archiving structure set up to document socially conscious art. The term is also used by the filmmaker and writer Alex Juhasz who has discussed how nostalgic archival footage can keep “AIDS, and its histories, deaths, meanings, and activism, present,” adding “love and hope to time and technology.” While I am sympathetic to Juhasz’s work on the archive and her view on the productivity of nostalgia, my understanding of archival activism differs somewhat, as I focus on embodied archive procedures. See Lippard 1993, Juhasz 2006.

16 Diana Taylor distinguishes between the terms “performance,” “performative,” and “performatic.” She reserves the latter to denote “the adjectival form of the nondiscursive realm of performance. Why is this important? Because it is vital to signal the performatic, digital, and visual fields as separate from, though always embroiled with, the discursive one so privileged by Western logocentrism. The fact that we don’t have a word to signal that performatic space is a product of that same logocentrism” (Taylor 2003:6).

17 In the Nordic countries, the term “*queer*” has even been said to function as

a away of avoiding local stigma loaded sexual terms, making queer connote something fresh, new, and trendy. For a discussion of “local” adaptations and uses of queer in a Swedish, Danish, and Finnish context respectively, see Kulick 2005 and Rosenberg 2008; Mertz 2008; and Mizielinska 2006.

18 I borrow the term “feeling historical” from Christopher Nealon (2001).

ABSTRACT

I juli 2008 gikk en demonstrasjon mot hatvold gjennom Københavns gater, organisert av aktivister fra Copenhagen Queer Festival. Artikkelen *We’re Here! We’re Queer? Activist Archives and Archival Activism* tar utgangspunkt i denne demonstrasjonen for å sette fokus på aktivistiske arkiver og historieskrivning. Sentralt i artikkelen står spørsmålet: Hvilke arkiver lagrer sosial aktivisme og aktivistisk estetikk? Gjennom en diskusjon av queerteoretiske intervensjoner i arkivteori og historiografi argumenteres det for betydningen av å revurdere arkivets materielle, temporale og konseptuelle forståelsesrammer når man arbeider med sosiale bevegelser og aktivistiske intervensjoner. Artikkelen peker på utfordringer man møter som forsker og aktivist interessert i sosiale bevegelser og aktivistisk historieskrivning, fra problemer med dokumentasjon av flyktige aksjoner, destruksjon av arkivmateriale av frykt for overvåkning og politikontroll, til manglende teoretiske redskaper for å innfange affekter og følelser som er en sentral drivkraft i sosiale bevegelser generelt, og queeraktivisme spesielt. Gjennom en næranalyse av et av slagordene brukt i demonstrasjonen i København, “We’re Here! We’re Queer! We’re not Gonna Disappear”, lanserer forfatteren begrepet “arkivisk aktivisme” som en betegnelse på hvordan aktivistiske aksjoner i seg selv kan fungere som et levende arkiv over tidligere hendelser. Med vekt på betydningen av affekt og kroppsliggjort kunnskap i aktivistisk historieskrivning åpner forfatteren opp for en mer nyansert og affektivt informert arkivteori.