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Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Huvila, I. (2015)

Another Wood Between the Worlds?: Regimes of Worth and the Making of Meanings in the Work of Archivists.

The Information Society, 31(2): 121-138

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2015.998103>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-247809>

Another Wood between the Worlds? Regimes of worth and the making of meanings in the work of archivists

Short title: Another Wood between the Worlds?

Isto Huvila
Department of ALM, Uppsala University*
and
School of Business and Economics, Åbo Akademi University
*Box 625, 75126 Uppsala, Sweden
isto.huvila@abm.uu.se

Abstract

The expectation that archives would function as the custodians of the *longue durée* of the society is paradoxical in its apparent simplicity. On the basis of an interview study of Nordic archives professionals, this article explores archives professionals experience and explicate the transformation and complexities of the worth and meaning of archival work and its major constituencies, the archival records. The analysis shows how the continuums of the worth and meaning of archival records and the work of archivists are constituted in a complex interplay of quasi-institutionalised orders of archival work, their associated but often conflicting regimes of worth and information, and similarly oscillating local intermediary practices.

Keywords: regimes of worth, archives, archivists, regimes of information, archival records, work

1 Introduction

Theodor R. Schellenberg (2003) begins his classic volume *Modern Archives. Principles and Techniques* from 1956 by quoting Byzantine Emperor Justinian's (as quoted by Baldassare Bonifacio in 1632) order that "throughout each and every province that a public building be allocated, in which building the magistrate is to store the records, choosing someone to have custody over them so that they may remain uncorrupted and may be found quickly by those requiring them". One and a half millennia later the simple order is still a very illustrative and timely example of the controversial simplicity and complexity of archives and their role in the society. An archive is a *longue durée* that resides in an apparent disconnect between the creators and users of records whoever they are and whenever someone makes an attempt to bring them together. In terms of Ekbja and Evans (2009), the most of the (archival) records are objects that are *a priori* revalued and resignified, i.e. moved from one regime of worth and information to another at the moment they are placed in the context of archives and records management and every time thereafter when they are used by someone. The paradox of archives and records management is that at the same time archiving trivialises records, it elevates them to become evidential constants of certain anticipated and an abundance of unarticulated practices.

This article explores how archives professionals experience and explicate the transformation and complexities of the worth and meaning of archival work and its major constituencies, the archival records. Archival work functions as an example of a broader category of work that is struggling with a change from being dominated by a highly institutionalised and structured regime of information (in some senses similar to sciences, Bowker, 2005) to a complex field of multiple competing structural arrangements and partly related and unrelated embedded everyday practices of work that influence how the

relevance and value of archival information is constituted. The study is based on a analysis of interview transcripts of eight Nordic archives professionals conducted using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The analysis explicates the frictions of the partly overlapping and partly contradictory structural arrangements – orders of archival work, the intermediary role of situated cross-order practices and their relation to how archival work has been conceptualised in archives and records management domain in terms of the Giddensian inspired records continuum theory (Flynn, 2001; Cumming, 2010). Conceptually, the present study is loyal to the interviewees and refers to archives and record-keeping as processes that cover the entire of continuum of the records and their existence without making a sharp distinction between (historical) archives and (contemporary) records management (as is customary in the Nordic countries, e.g. Norberg, 2003). The analytical framework of the study is based on the notions of the regimes of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006) and regimes of information (Ekbj and Evans, 2009). The analysis shows how many of the contemporary challenges of archives and archival work can be traced back to the emergence of overlapping, competing and dichotomous structures that simultaneously support and interfere with the situated practices of creating, archiving, organising and using records and archival materials, and the simultaneous diversification and reproduction of the identity of archives and records management in the context of the discourses of information and knowledge management and cultural heritage.

2 Literature review

There are relatively few comprehensive empirical studies of the work of archivists. Most interview and survey studies have tended to focus on specific aspects archival practices

(e.g., digitisation and policies, Kim and Lee, 2009; cooperation of libraries, archives and museums, Tanackoviae and Badurina, 2008; archival description Battley, 2013) and, for instance, conceptual issues (e.g. Clement et al., 2013), archival knowledge (e.g. Duff et al., 2013) and skills (e.g. Johare and Masrek, 2011) instead of the practical work at an archival institution. Gracy proposes *archival ethnography* (i.e. ethnographic studies of archival work, not to be mistaken with Ketelaar's notion of archival ethnology, see Ketelaar, 2001) as an approach to study archival processes in situ "rather than [...] idealized conceptions of archival theory" (Gracy, 2004, 336), but besides her own study of a community of film preservationists (Gracy, 2001) and a French ethnography of archival practices (Both, 2010), the most of the ethnographies and in-depth studies of archives and records management work have tended to focus on records creation and administration practices at the offices of origin before they are handed over to the custody of archivists (e.g. Yakel, 2001; Shankar, 2004; Valtonen, 2005; Foscarini, 2009).

Belovari's (2013) work on how the professional practices of museum professionals can shape the public understanding of museum artefacts is illustrative of how also an archivist can actively shape the meaning and worth of archival records. Instead of conforming to the earlier ideal of being a neutral custodian of archival holdings, an archivist is endowed with inescapable agency. Anthony's (2006) findings on how the archivists' knowing is highly situated in their work and its context highlights reciprocity of the influence. Her study shows that experienced professionals could rely on their knowledge of the history of their home institution, people and departmental functions whereas novice archivists were compelled to compensate their lack of contextual knowledge by resorting to meta-searching. Kearns and Rinehart's (2011) comparative study of the self-perceived 'information responsibilities' of archivists and librarians represent another line of research. According to

their analysis, the both groups considered access (to information) to be their first priority. Archivists took more responsibility for preserving, processing, collecting and management whereas librarians were more inclined to emphasise evaluation, research and teaching as significant aspects of librarianship. Manning and Silva (2012) conclude their partly related comparative survey of the responsibilities on academic archivists with and without library responsibilities by expressing their concern of the increasing workload and competency problems associated with the increasing diversity of responsibilities. Even if their classification of “archival duties” (e.g. grant writing, writing policies and procedures) versus “non-archival responsibilities” (e.g. digital initiatives) may be discussed, the study shows clearly how the dual role as archivist-librarian brings both the benefits (interaction) and problems (time, workload) of the double duties. There is also some evidence of how the public conceptualises the archival profession. According to a large study conducted by Usherwood et al. (2005) in the UK, the public tends to perceive archives (together with libraries and museums) as relevant and trusted repositories of public knowledge even if they are not used by everyone all the time.

In contrast to the relative scarcity of empirical research, the paradigmatic evolution of archives and records management has been discussed in the archival literature to a considerable extent. Archives have developed from the being the primarily administrative instruments of pre-modern regimes to serve the historical fascination of the period of romanticism in the beginning of the 19th century and the primarily European nationalist and imperial endeavours during the following hundred years (Cox, 2000; Duchein, 1992). The second half of the 20th century was a period of pluralisation in archives and archival thought (Cook, 1997; Ribeiro, 2001), a process, which accelerated towards the end of the millennium. Körmendy (2007) sees this primarily as a result of an external, societal

pressure. Archives and archiving have expanded both in volume and in its extents to cover public movements, local history and marginal communities in addition to great men and governmental history. Archival theory and practice have moved from the earlier practice and descriptivism oriented positivism to functionalism (Delmas, 1992) and critical discussion of the subjectivity and role of archives, archivists and other stakeholder groups (Cook, 2011; Lane and Hill, 2010; Yakel, 2011). According to Cook (2013), archives themselves have transformed in the process from passive curators to active appraisers to societal mediators to community facilitators. From the 1990s onwards the paradigmatic changes have been influenced by new theoretical openings, for instance, from the perspectives of Giddensian sociology (McKemmish, 2001), postmodernism (Cook, 2001) and critical theory (Dunbar, 2006). The contemporary theory has challenged the constancy and immutability of archives and appropriated the ideas of processualism, life-cycles (Borglund and Öberg, 2006) and, increasingly, the one of continuum (Upward, 1997) and participatory negotiation (Shilton and Srinivasan, 2008; Robinson, 2007) of archives and their holdings.

Even if the contemporary discussion has extended the *long durée* of the relevance and worth of archival work and records, the premise of archives and their significance is based on the fundamental tenet of archival work dating back to the late 19th century and beyond, the *provenance* of the records and the organisational context of their office of origin (Bazerman, 2012). The different conceptualisations of records as information, documents (Yeo, 2007), evidence (Brothman, 2002), transactions (Cox, 2001) or speech acts (Henttonen, 2007; Yeo, 2010) are all dependent on their origins. The link between records and their worth both in terms of corporate surplus value (an important driver of corporate archives and records management, e.g., Bailey, 2007; Ataman, 2009; Bailey, 2011), or their

less tangible role as a source of societal accountability (a central aspect of the discussions of the need to strive for more inclusive and representative archives, e.g., McKemmish et al., 2012; Shilton and Srinivasan, 2008) are dependent on their provenance. In spite of its fundamental nature, provenance is a controversial and complex concept (Douglas, 2010). Its apparent simplicity conceals the difficulty of determining what is original, and consequently, as Cook underlines, shifts archives far from being “unproblematic storehouses of records awaiting historians” (Cook, 2011).

In addition to broadly theoretical and societal re-articulations of archives and archival work, the rapid advance of digital technologies and surge of digital information have provoked debate on how digitality and social media affects archives and archival work in the future (e.g., Bailey, 2008; Zhang, 2012; Theimer, 2011). The techno-influenced societal change together with the simultaneous evolution of archives and archival work has been portrayed both as an unavoidable condition (Bailey, 2008) and an opportunity (Stevenson, 2010). In general there is a relatively broad consensus of the continuing value of the fundamental principles of archival work in the digital context (e.g. Gilliland-Swetland, 2000; Duranti, 2010), but as, for instance, Bailey has urged, there is a need to “fundamentally rethink the way in which we [records managers] strive to achieve them” (Bailey, 2008, p. xv).

The discourses of change highlight some of the major contexts of relevance of the archival work. In archival field, there are several competing perspectives anchored in different historical trajectories that conceptualise archives as information institutions (e.g. Gilliland-Swetland, 2000; Buckland, 1991) or cultural heritage institutions (Manžuch, 2009), or that emphasise their distinctiveness by highlighting the non-informational and non-cultural nature of archival records as pieces of authentic evidence (e.g. Duranti, 1999). The

mission of archives has been described in terms of preserving and providing access to culture and heritage (e.g. Barry, 2010), memory (e.g., Cook, 1997; Gilliland-Swetland, 2000) and knowledge, supporting learning, promoting identity and understanding (Gilliland-Swetland, 2000), and, for instance, serving (e.g. Sundqvist, 2007) and empowering their users (e.g. Usherwood et al., 2005). Archives are considered to have a civic role as societal and cultural institutions (e.g., Hickerson, 2001; Jimerson, 2004; Johnson and Williams, 2011) and access to their assets is perceived as a new civic right (Dempsey, 2000) independent of the cultural background of the citizens. The role of archivists has been characterised in comparable terms in the literature. The outlines of work roles of the “new archivists” tend to underline the significance of such factors as outreach (Theimer, 2011), technology skills (e.g. Stevenson, 2008), pedagogy in formal and informal education (e.g. Krause, 2010; Zipsane, 2009), engagement (e.g. Prelinger, 2010) and partnerships with records creators (e.g. Keough and Wolfe, 2012)

Archives and archival work have also captured the popular imagination and the attention of many widely cited philosophers and cultural theorists (e.g. Ebeling and Günzel, 2009; Foucault, 2002; Derrida, 1995). In parallel to the subjectivist emphases of the contemporary archival theory, the humanities scholarship has referred since the 1990s to the *archival turn*, a move from perceiving archives as a source to considering them as a subject (Hutchinson and Weller, 2011). In spite of this general turn, the old ideas of ‘archive’ and ‘archiving’ have not disappeared and they have a certain tendency to surface as emblematic references to that what archives are supposed to be (e.g. Brockmeier, 2010). In an attempt to elucidate the premises of different types or ideas of archives, Bowker (2010) makes a distinction between *formal archives* and *trace archives*. Bowker’s formal archives are peremptory and sequential whereas trace archives are “about habits and customs and place rather than

coordinate time and space” (Bowker, 2010). In contrast to a formal archive, a trace archive is inscribed in the lived environment rather than collected and curated.

Bowker’s idea of trace archives has certain premisory similarities with the Giddensian inspired records continuum model (Upward, 1997; McKemmish, 2001). In contrast to the life-cycle approaches, records continuum emphasises that records reside in a space-time continuum and have parallel uses and roles throughout their existence that begins long before they end up in an archival repository (Borglund and Öberg, 2006). Moreover, the model suggests that the process of archiving records (from records creation, to their capture in the archival domain, organisation and pluralisation) parallels with the phases described in Giddens’ theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984; Upward, 1997).

Even if the theoretical (including Bowker’s) and often metaphorical conceptions of archives and archival work tend to differ from the practical realities of the institutions (Ebe, 2009) they are indicative of the cultural and societal underpinnings and implications of archives and archiving (Ernst, 2008). They capture the confluence and dissonances between scholars, archivists and other stakeholder of archival records and institutions that, as Manoff (2004) notes, indeed revolve around a shared preoccupation with the function and fate of the ‘record’. Theorists, including Derrida (1995), Foucault (2002) and Ernst (2008), have discussed from different angles the implications of the paradigmatic continuity and change of ‘archives’ as monuments of an obsession to preserve (Derrida, 1995), as *loci* of as much constructed as recorded, and consequently political, memory (Foucault, 2002), and the complex material and technological relation of archives and what they archive (Ernst, 2008). Even if these observations are not primarily empirical, they capture many relevant premises of the archival work discussed in the literature: its situatedness in overlapping organisational contexts, the significance and perplexity of the

conceptualisations of the records and their use, and the practical constraints of acting as an archivist and a user of archival records.

3 Theoretical framework

Ekbia and Evans (2009) suggest in their study of land management in the Midwest USA that the complex processes of decision making operate on the basis of different “worlds” or “polities” (borrowed from Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006) in which the value of people and objects is measured in different terms according to a *regime of worth* specific to that world. These regimes incorporate not only economic values but also a variety personal and social ideas of worth. According to Ekbia and Evans, the regimes of worth (of Boltanski and Thévenot), in turn, embody *regimes of information* that incorporate varying meanings of information in the world in which it exists.

A central tenet of the regimes of information is the theory of situational informativeness of information. Ekbia and Evans base their argument to the earlier remark of Buckland (1991) of the situational nature of the “informative” capability of objects. The meaning is not universal, but related to a particular situation, which according to the approach of Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), is associated to the various worlds (with associated polities), inhabited by individuals, and their related regimes of worth. In contrast to such institutional directions of sociology and information science that categorise people by their membership in exclusive categories, for instance, as archivists, administrators or educators, the approach acknowledges that a person can refer to any and simultaneously multiple systems of worth and meaning. Instead of referring to a situation as a unique combination of all possible factors, it is construed as a combination of all the regimes that are active in a

given timespace. Polity is a legitimate order, a higher common principle that sustains justification. Within a particular world, the worth of people and objects can be determined by comparing them using standard 'tests', for instance, by comparing the wealth or notability of two individuals. In contrast, there are no legitimate tests available for measuring worth between the worlds (e.g., comparing wealth to notability). Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) argue that if the agents are nevertheless oriented towards *common good* they may reach a compromise, but this settlement is always weak and subject to any redefinition of that what is considered to be 'common good'.

In their work, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) have identified six different worlds with related regimes of worth (Table 1). Ekbja and Evans (2009) built on their work suggesting further that corresponding informational constellations exist in parallel to the regimes of worth (Table 1). Whereas a regime of worth embodies the measure of worth in a particular world, the regime of information stipulates how a particular object or an individual is informative (cf. Buckland, 1991) within a particular polity.

World	Description	Regime of worth	Regime of information
Inspired	World of vision, passion and imagination.	Symbolic role and originality.	Information as intuition
Domestic	World of traditions, customs, conventions	How much objects contribute to the establishing hierarchical relations among people.	Information as anecdote
Fame	World of attention, persuasion, presentation.	The attention, reputation and respect of objects.	Information as message
Civic	World of solidarity, group membership, collective interest.	The capability to serve collective good.	Information as documentation
Market	World of desire and competition over the possession of valuable things.	The capability to satisfy desires.	Information as commodity
Industrial	World of science, technology, efficiency, performance.	As instrument and means of production.	Information as measurement

Table 1: Worlds and their related regimes of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006) and information (Ekbja and Evans, 2009).

The present study takes the notions of worlds and regimes of worth and information as prototypical contexts of activities and their associated systems of worth and meaning. The empirical work described later in this text shows how the polities represent a lens for explicating how worth and meaning of activity (here archival work) and its constituents (here specifically archival records) are created, distorted and denied in the practices of how archivists work. In the context of archival work, we posit that the polities of Boltanski and Thévenot are articulated, practiced and can be identified within different *orders of work*,

defined as constellations of circumstances, articulated purposes and practiced principles linked to, but seldom directly concordant with the prototypical regimes. The orders of work are constellations of practices and, literally, in Garfinkelian sense (Garfinkel, 2005), orders of how things are done. Theoretically, an order of work can incorporate a single regime of worth and information and thus be a stable order of activities rather than a fragile settlement. In practice, however, we believe that even a relatively stable orders tend to be associated with constellations of regimes that subsist a fragile compromise and a shared, even if sometimes only implicitly formulated idea of common good (i.e. worth) and a shared understanding of meaning (i.e. what is informative).

Our empirical work shows also that an order of work is consciously taken as one's own and shaped in the process of how people act and simultaneously theorise and explicate their perception of the circumstances and value formation in the situation in hand. Conflicts between orders of work can be explained by clashes between their associated regimes of worth, (i.e. understanding of what is valuable) and information (i.e. what is meaningful) and the consequent faltering of their internal compromises. In comparison to the discords between regimes, these conflicts are inherently even more complex because the contradiction relates not only to individual regimes but to multiple antagonising constellations of regimes.

The making of an order of work incorporates also invariably an attempt to explain and understand the complexity and indeterminacy of situations within the situation and is, as later shown, a part of the process of socio-material sense-making that has similarities with Giddens' (1984) notion of structuration. In contrast to institutional underpinnings of the theory of structuration, our understanding of the Giddensian 'structures' is to see them as Garfinkelian social orders that represent actual orders of action. They are orders of social

practices, not true aggregates in the Giddensian sense, even if they can be treated as such by the individuals who are engaged in sense-making in a social setting.

The Giddensian parallels of the theory are interesting for this study from the perspective of the records continuum model, a widely cited approach for explicating the evolution of records and their contexts from the decision that eventually led to its creation to its use for various administrative, organisational, personal, cultural and, for instance, historical purposes (McKemmish, 2001). The theoretical premiss of the records continuum is in the Giddensian process of structuration of the records in the context of archives and record-keeping (Upward, 1997). Our proposal is that in parallel to explicating the bond of records and record-keeping using the process of structuration, the emergence of diverse uses and context of interest and the pluralisation the significance of records can be further elaborated using the notion regimes. Regimes of worth can elucidate the ways how records are valued and the regimes of information how they are signified documents, evidence, transactions, speech acts or information.

4 Methods and material

The empirical material consists of eight qualitative interviews of archives and records management professionals from two Nordic countries. In accordance with the aim of the study to focus on archivists' experiences and meaning-making and in contrast to ethnomethodological approach of observing the actual orders of work, the interview approach was chosen, to let interviewees articulate their understanding of the practical and conceptual organisation of their work and to explicate the premises of worth and meaning given to their actions by themselves. Another reason for choosing the approach of interviewing professionals from was to get a view of the general rather than specific (e.g.

technical, organisational or legislative) aspects of the field of archival work. It was assumed that such things that are common to the interviewees coming from different organisations may be assumed to have wider significance. In contrast to a survey, interviews gave interviewees opportunities to articulate their views in depth and in detail, and the interviewer a comparable opportunity to ask for clarifications and additional information.

The design and conducting of the interviews was based on the semi-structured thematic interview approach of Hirsjärvi and Hurme (1995) and carried out as a part of a larger study of the information work of archive, library and museum professionals. The interviews focussed on the interviewees' professional work. After initial questions about education and work experience, the interviewees were asked to describe their work (daily tasks, organisation, positive and negative challenges), work related information sources and information seeking and their perceptions of the value and significance of archives and archival work. The interviewees were also asked to reflect upon how they would like to see that the work of archivists would change in the future and, inspired by the critical incident approach, to describe an recent actual case of working with archival records they (upon their own understanding) could describe as an "achievement". All interviews were conducted by the author, taped and transcribed by a professional transcriber. The interviews lasted in average 120 minutes. The author analysed the interview transcripts together with original recordings using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The results were revisited and revised after one month of the original categorisation for assessing its validity, and again one month later, reanalysed using negative case analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) with a specific purpose of finding contradictory evidence that would decrease the reliability of the drawn conclusions.

The choice of interviewees was based on a modified theoretical sampling with sensitivity

to basic demographics (age and gender distribution, particular types of archival institutions) and convenience (voluntary participation). For the sake of an assumed relative overlap of data and possibility to reach saturation in reasonable time, the sample was limited during the interview and theory-building process to public archive institutions. Private enterprises also keep archives, but the variety archives keeping and records management practices in the private sector was considered to increase the heterogeneity of the material to an extent that would have limited the possibility to make meaningful analytical inferences of a reasonably sized body of data. The sample was formed during the interview process and informed by a simultaneous analysis of the archival sector in the two countries with an aim at a reasonable representation of different types of institutions and duties (as to content and status of the employee in the hierarchy) that would complement the analysis and provide working level of saturation. Simultaneously, the sample was consciously limited to professional archivists and mid-level management to get qualified but not too abstract information. The choice of interviewing professionals in two countries was motivated by the considerable national differences in archival traditions, practices and theorising (e.g., Norberg, 2003; Bruebach, 2003; Tamblé, 2001; McKemmish et al., 2005) around the world. In the global perspective, the two Nordic countries are similar to an extent that allows the analysis of the whole interview record in one, but at the same time distinct enough to make it possible to distinguish and look past at least some national particularities. Considering the sampling approach (theoretical considerations, convenience and quota), the sample is not representative of a larger population, but is still useful considering the qualitative approach and the conceptual and exploratory rather confirmatory aims of the present study.

Four of the interviewees were men and four women, two and two from the both

countries. Five interviewees had worked over 10 years in archival sector. All interviewees represented local and regional institutions, or regional offices of national institutions. Their work duties ranged from customer services to marketing, collection management and administration. Interviewees provided an oral informed consent and were guaranteed anonymity. For reporting purposes, the interviewees were assigned false names (Table 2).

The empirical approach has some obvious limitations. Even if the author has done his best to avoid taking “researcher degrees of freedom” (Simmons et al., 2011), additional studies are needed to confirm the exploratory results of this study. Findings are based on a relatively small number of interviews from only two countries that limits to the possibilities to generalise the expressed views. In order to control for the overexpression of individual opinions, the analysis places a special emphasis on views expressed by multiple interviewees. Secondly, considering the exploratory aim of the present study to provide evidence for the existence of a phenomenon in mind, the possible inability to generalise is not considered to be a major issue. Thirdly, even if an ethnographical approach could have provided more in-depth information on individuals and their work, the interview approach was considered to be a reasonable compromise to get depth and breadth on work practices and their associated regimes of worth and meaning within and between individual organisations.

Informant	
William	Departmental director at regional archives; works on oversight and preservation.
Adso	Archivist at a city archive; works with both oversight and outreach.
Abo	Archivist at a regional archive; works with oversight and archival pedagogy.
Severinus	Archivist at a regional archive; works with education, consulting and oversight.
Malachi	Archivist at a large higher education institution archive; works with digitisation and researcher service, and consultation.
Berengar	Archivist at a regional heritage management institution; works also as a librarian.
Adelmo	Archivist at a regional archive; has worked with reference service, conservation, description and genealogy, by the time of the interview mostly with inspection of records management at public authorities and education.
Benno	Archivist at a large municipal archive; works with the planning of archival accumulation and records management.

Table 2: Informants.

5 Analysis

5.1 Orders of archival work

The analysis provided evidence of the presence of six constellations of archival work that are linked to the six worlds of Boltanski and Thévenot (Table 3) and their related regimes of information. We conceptualise these analytical constellations as *orders of work* referring to the analytical entity discussed earlier in this article. However, similarly to the prototypical social orders in general, the orders of work are not monolithic. They accommodate a large

variety of different interpretations and ideas of the work, its constituents and character that are in tension with each other. Even if, as it is shown later in the text, it is possible to reach compromises between the different orders of work, a central aspect of the orders of work is in their incompatibilities.

Orders	Description	Example	Informants
Archival	The order of work builds on the self-understanding of archival profession (traditions, conventions, professional expertise, collegiality, idea of the particularity of archives and the knowledge of the management of archival records) and its purpose of supporting the existence of a public sphere in the society.	<p>“We have long experience [...] We can substitute each other” (Severinus)</p> <p><i>Particularity of archives:</i></p> <p>“We tried to keep [archival documents and museum objects] separated” (William)</p> <p><i>Knowledge of the records:</i></p> <p>“[Archivists need to] have a connection with the materials” (Adso)</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p> <p>“[H]opefully I am participating in keeping up a good public sphere in the society” (William)</p>	William, Adso, Severinus, Adelmo
Organisational	Order of work is determined by the institution specific policies, needs, preferences and work practices at each office of origin (i.e. the organisation that produce archival records).	“The closeness of the region offices has been useful for us [archives]; there you can get information on what happens” (Abo)	William, Abo Severinus, Benno
Antiquarian	Order of work is based on an idea of the intrinsic historical and cultural usefulness and interestingness of records and information inscribed in them combined with an implicit, indeterminate contemporary understanding of the exceptionality and uniqueness	<p>“It can be also the form of the record [...] sometimes it is related to that it is an exceptionally beautiful drawing” (Berengar)</p> <p>“I would like to change things so that materials would become better</p>	William, Abo, Berengar, Adelmo

Orders	Description	Example	Informants
	of particular records.	available [online] so that people would realise what wonderful materials we have” (William) “It is very difficult to say what can be interesting” (William)	
Pluralistic	The existence of archives and the order of archival work is determined by the anticipated needs and preferences of the contemporary and future society and the users of the archival holdings.	“Archives are used in historical and social science research [...] The big question is whether we are preserving the right parts of the materials when other parts are disposed. [...] This is being contemplated a lot.” (Adelmo)	Adelmo, Benno, William
Digital	The order of work is determined by the participation in the ‘digital society’ i.e. the society characterised by the Internet as an institutionalised source and channel for publishing information, and forms of participation mediated by digital technologies.	“[...] I want to work with and really make the digital archiving work [...] the most interesting thing is to take archives to the 21st century” (Malachi) “[t]he challenge at the archive is to digitally manage digital documents” (Malachi) “[it is good that] old source collections are available online” (Malachi)	Adso, Malachi, Berengar, William, Severinus, Benno
Personal	The order of work is based on the personal interests of archivists. The most rewarding and motivating, and at the same time necessary part of archival work is to work directly with personally interesting archival materials.	“I am that much a historian that nothing can replace the smell of an original manuscript” (Severinus) “Archival pedagogy is the most fun part of my work [...] To develop it is my ambition” (Abo)	Adso, Adelmo, Severinus

Table 3: Orders of archival work.

The first, *archival order* of work, is closely associated with an ideal of an archetypal archival work that was seized by the interviewees as a certain kind of envisaged 'universal' nexus of archival praxis. It is characterised by the partly real and partly imagined historical continuity of archival and records management practices, professional collegiality and mutually acknowledged expertise of archivists, focus on records (in contrast to other materials, e.g., Abo: "You can go to the prints [...] but even better go to the original archival record") and a shared general conviction of the public societal significance of archives and records management. According to the archival order, the archives are public authorities and mainstays of democracy and accountability in the society: "[archives] is mainly a question of democracy [...] that citizens can take a look afterwards or on current public matters" (Adso) or "[f]or citizens we exist [...], we [are] public authorities" (Severinus). The archival order also demarcates archives from other institutions. An archivist perhaps acknowledges the overlap of certain interests of archives and some other organisations, but as Severinus notes, for instance, "[museum and library professionals] have a bit different view of how cataloguing is there and description and others". The technical aspects of archival information systems were also a matter he "[would] not like to interfere with". The social significance of this order of work for the professionals themselves is illustrated by how informants articulate many aspects of information seeking and sharing in their work as an exchange between professionals: "A general starting point is that in the other end of telephone line is a professional who knows the thing" (Severinus).

The archival order is closely linked to the civic polity of Boltanski and Thévenot in its predominant conceptualisation of the worth of the archival records and archives in terms of a common collective good. In this context, archival records are informative as documentation that embodies past activities, legislation, agreements, arrangements and

settlements. Archivists at public archives, for instance, Malachi underlined the importance of keeping public records for the collective good and regretted that the different divisions of his organisation were not always following the legislative requirements.

Secondly, similarly how the shared the idea of the premisory nature of the notion of 'archive' demonstrates of fundamental significance of the archival order of work, the similar emphasis of the organisational context and work practices at the office of origin (i.e. the organisation that stands for the creation of the records) shows the similar bearing of the *organisational order*. The organisational order is not, however, similarly sensitive to the long-term priorities of the archival order of work and tends to focus on the immediate relevance and usefulness of records. In order to understand, describe and organise the records originating from a specific record-keeper, "[i]t is important to gather as much information about the organisation as possible" (Adso). Also others, including William, Benno and Severinus described in detail the necessity and complexities of obtaining a proper understanding of an organisation and the work practices of its employees as an essential part of the work of an archivist. In addition to the management of archival records, the organisational context influences also the recordness of things. Abo described how the organisational patterns of work had contributed to that the personnel had failed to recognise the evidential significance of a particular stock of photographs. He recalled also another case when he had discovered that the organisation had a considerable collection of old films that were never considered to be of interest to the institutional archives.

Both the idea of perceiving information as measurement data (related to Boltanski's and Thévenot's industrial world) and as a commodity (market world) are visible in how archivists describe the organisational order of archival work. For the organisations, whether public or private actors, the value of archival function is commonly related to its

capability to serve the business by functioning as a reserve of compulsory or otherwise useful 'industrial' assets or tradable commodities. Even if the interviewees that represented public archives did not emphasise the value formation aspect to equally prominent degree than, for instance, corporate records management literature (e.g., Bailey, 2007; Ataman, 2009), especially Benno and Adelmo underlined the significance of organisational accountability as central aspect of archival work. As Abo and Benno noted, however, the (potential) relevance of archives is not always well understood by the management as a direct asset and archivists can be left to fulfil certain legislative obligations and left out of the daily operations of the organisation. Benno's description of how his superior at his former employer had thanked him for making her to understand the relevance of archival function at an organisation exemplifies this gap.

The *antiquarian order* is somewhat paradoxal notion in the context of the archival profession and even if related to, in tension with the organisational and archival orders of work. The antiquarian order emphasises the *longue durée*, but in contrast to the continuum of archival institutions and processes, the historical perspective of antiquarian order focuses on antiquarian or museal value of archival documents, often underlined with the contemporary ideas of heritage and the past at the present. Many archivists acknowledge "it is very important to preserve cultural heritage in general and in the region. That is, public authorities are a part of our common cultural heritage" (Abo), but at the same time, the authorities and even the archivists themselves may consider that the cultural and historical aspects are a relevant in only a part of their daily work. The support for heritage related work within an organisation can be that "my boss said that it's ok" (Abo) suggesting that there is no real support and it could equally well be 'not ok'. The most eager proponents of antiquarian premises and outreach seemed to be the ones who were actively engaged in

archival pedagogy and exhibitions planning. Others cited the importance of the activities on a more abstract level as something obvious, but not necessarily as something that is a part of their daily work: “the general cultural heritage aspect goes without saying” (Malachi). William considered that outreach and exhibitions are important for archives, but he sees them mostly from the point of view of the materials and would have been glad to leave the practical activities for museums. The boundary work between museums and archives was apparent also in the comments of Adso and Abo who reflected on the type of outreach, pedagogy and public engagement archives should aspire. In practice, their descriptions of their work reminded of how museums tend to reach out to their audiences, but at the same time the interviewees told how they were actively trying to find empathetically *archival* approaches for their work.

Whereas the premises of the archival and organisational orders are relatively easy to locate in the civic, and industrial and market worlds, the affiliations and the idea of ‘common good’ of the antiquarian order is more convoluted. Even if the worth of archives and archival work is measured in civic terms (archival materials as cultural heritage, a form common collective good, e.g. William’s remark that “generally speaking this cultural heritage aspect is self-evident, we think so too”.) that can be framed within the same regime of worth together with the collective ambitions of the archival order, the interviewees appreciated the worth of individual archival records and collections commonly by their intuitive and curiosity value rather than by specifically referring to a greater collective good. The archival records are “fantastic materials” (Berengar) not only because of their documentary value, but also by that they are intriguing for a number of different innate reasons that “are difficult to specify” (William).

The references to the *pluralistic order* were similar to the antiquarian order in a sense

that the order was simultaneously axiomatic and controversial for the interviewees, and in apparent conflict with organisational and archival contexts of work. The archivists acknowledged readily, citing Adelmo, that “the big question [is that] whether we are preserving the right parts of the materials when other parts are disposed [.. that..] is being contemplated a lot”. Whereas the archival order construed the measure of worth in highly intrinsic terms, the regime of worth within the pluralistic order is fluctuating and can be seen as an aspect of the ‘fame’ of the individual priorities of the interviewees. A part of the pedagogical interest of Adso and Abo can also be explained in terms of the pluralistic order and their interest to make archives relevant in the contemporary society. Even if a part of described outreach activities could be described as marketing, both Adso and Abo underlined that their ambition was to make a difference instead of merely trying to increase the attendance.

In contrast to the self-explanatory worth of archives and archival work within the archival order, the pluralistic order incorporates a significantly more convoluted idea of the value of the archival work and the anticipated external demand of records. Both organisational and archival orders assume a mono-contextual approach with respectively the organisation (usually the office of origin) and the archetypal archival work as a premise of the management and use of archives. In addition to the ‘fame’ of materials and the idea of perceiving information as a message, a common aspect of the interview transcripts was that according to the interviewees, the records were supposed to satisfy a ‘need’, of e.g. a future researcher (Adelmo) or genealogist (Malachi), which *per se* is linked to the economy of worth in the market world even if was only seldom described in explicitly monetary terms. The regimes of information tended to be similarly perplexing than the conceptualisations of worth, but even there the measure of informative potential of the archival records was

money, or more frequently (mentioned by all interviewees) the lack of financing to realise the informative potential of the holdings.

The articulated references related to the *digital order* were largely subordinated to more explicit concerns of archival management, research use and for Adso and Abo, the work with the public audience. Malachi was the only interviewee that put significant emphasis on digitalisation as a guiding principle of his work. William and Benno saw digitisation of archival work flows as a major change, but for them, technology was an external regime archives were 'forced' to confront rather than an instrument of change emanating from within the world of archives. Berengar noted that he "expects a lot of [the digitisation of archival collections]" and sees it as a "major upheaval", but similarly to William and Benno, he saw it as something that is imposed by the contemporary society rather than coming from the archives. "The challenge at the archives is to be able to take care of digital records. [...] I think it is the most interesting thing, to take archives to the 21st century" (Malachi). The need to digitise holdings tend to be expressed in a matter of factual tone: "[In an ideal situation, I would like that] everything would be digitised and many more databases would be created" (Abo).

A significant characteristic of the digital order is the intrinsicality of the value of the 'digital'. At the same time, however, the outspoken practical implications of the digital are based on the (imagined or real) capability of the digital to create, emphasise and decrease other types of value. The 'digital' can be, for instance, argued to support the monetary value of archives and to reduce the relative worth of archives as a public good. If the pluralistic order subscribed to an idea of the fame as a measure of the worth of different viewpoints, in the digital order, the 'digital' has been elevated to a position of fame. The premisory justifications of its value tended to be based on the conviction and anticipation of

the its worth (e.g., Berengar, Malachi) rather than direct references to any specific advantages. These latter types of references to the civic and industrial measures of worth, for instance, to the effectiveness of digital records-keeping (Adelmo) and the enhanced possibilities of citizens to access public records (Malachi) were subordinated and presented as exemplary rather than unchallengeable benefits.

Finally, several interviewees described the significance and a sense of satisfaction based on working hands-on with personally interesting archival materials. The most of the interviewees subordinated the *personal order* of work to the archival, organisational and antiquarian priorities when they were directly asked about their precedence. Even if the interviewees were hesitant to emphasise it, all of them acknowledged some degree of personal interest in some aspects of records and archival work either by making a general reference to that 'all' archivists are interested in history (e.g., Adso), by talking about their (earlier) personal research interests (e.g., Severinus, Benno), by explaining their fascination to the records they had been working with (e.g., Malachi) and by adding how the interests and personal preferences influenced the ways of their work. Even if the informants tended to put more emphasis on the collective priorities, it is apparent that the personal interests are in potential tension with all other orders of work and that they can have a major impact on their precedence.

In contrast to the civic (pluralistic and archival) dispositions of work, within the personal order, the worth of archival records and archival work is linked to their capability to provide inspiration. All interviewees did at some point describe their personal fascination to some particular archival records (e.g., Abo to archived textile samples and films) and the archival work itself (e.g., Malachi on the possibility to make a difference at a venerable institution). Even Benno, who in general placed a lot of emphasis on the organisational and

societal value formation, referred to the symbolic and personal rather than civic role of the documents when he described his fascination of discovering a long-lost original of an old map.

Even if the orders of work were largely parallel to each other, the interviewees described both explicit and implicit conflicts between them. Here, it is important to note that instead of suggesting of the presence of literal disputes between individual archivists, the notion of conflict refers to incompatibilities between orders and purposes of work and the differences between how archival records and the work is measured and given meaning. The antiquarian worth and significance was perhaps the most openly problematic issue for the archivists because of the difficulty of determining its proportional significance and measures of defining the antiquarian value and meaning. Apparent incongruities could be sensed also between the archival and organisational orders of work. As Benno noted that “[t]he idea is that we go through all documents relating to municipal administration and determine retention times for them” and added that combining the archival preference of standards and the organisational workflows is very difficult in practice. Personal orders of work were often articulated as proxies of societal or archival interest, but as Malachi described, his work with archival materials and seeking of information were often influenced by his personal ideas of what is interesting and relevant. According to the analysis, the most problematic order of work was the digital one. Even if the interviewees tended to argue that it would benefit the archival work in general, it was highly unclear how the anticipated benefits would be realised in practice. At the same time, the digital order was implicitly described as a given order of work that comes from the society. This assumption was partly practical and based on other orders of work. As Benno noted, the question of the digital preservation of archival records needs to be solved because of the

rapid digitisation of records management in organisations. At the same time, however, the appropriation of the 'digital' was commonly motivated by an indeterminate intrinsic value of becoming digital. For instance, Malachi argued that “[..] I want to work with and really make the digital archiving work [..] the most interesting thing is to take archives to the 21st century” without giving an explicit clarification of why he wanted to do that and what is especially promising in digital archiving.

The different orders of work and their mutual tensions can be broadly divided in two categories. The archival, organisational, antiquarian and pluralistic orders of work can be seen as inherent to the archival work and its appreciation, and a result of a longer historical continuum, the practical work of archivists and how it has been discussed in the archival literature (e.g. Cook, 1997, 2001; Blouin, 2007). In contrast, the digital and personal orders of work are external and contextual, and more closely relate to the technological, societal and micro-social contexts of the present (e.g. Bailey, 2007; Theimer, 2011; Gilliland-Swetland, 2000; Duranti, 2001). In this respect the first four more or less directly opposed to each other whereas with the two remaining orders of work, the tensions are more subtle, multi-faceted and indirectly related to the orders, which the informants recognise as a core of their work. At the same time, however, the orders are simultaneously historical and contemporaneous on their own trajectories. The indifferences between the priorities of archival and organisational, pluralising and, for instance antiquarian orders of work can be traced back to their parallel historical trajectories and their different associated regimes of worth.

5.2 Cross-order practices

In parallel to the identified orders of work in the archival field, the analysis revealed a spectrum of 'cross-order' information and work practices. In contrast to the prototypical worlds and orders of work, they are local and transient in time. Instead of referring to an individual order of work and regime of worth, the practices make references to multiple, even conflicting dispositions of activity. These contradictory allegiances can be explained by a double-bind of the practices to the orders of work and regimes of worth, and a pragmatic need to address the eventualities of daily work. In terms of Boltanski and Thévenot, they may be seen as attempts to reach a 'common good', a compromise between conflicting ideas of the purpose of work, its worth and its idea of meaning. The Table 4 summarises five such practices identified in the analysis. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to present an overview of the prominent constellations of practices identified in the interviews.

The *everyday adhocacy* of archival work describes a prevalent practice of solving unexpected problems and managing both personal and institutional issues often with resources that are perceived to be seriously limited: "We should be like 10 full-time employed to be able to specialise a bit more" (Abo). The adhocacy is typically articulated as a necessary survival strategy that attempts to balance between the conflicting purposes and conceptualisations of worth and meaning present at a situation in hand. For instance, Adelmo described in detail how the present possibilities and long-term wants lead to sometimes rather "hurried" decisions. It seems that the everyday adhocacy is essentially a practice that can be used to compromise between all possible orders of work and measures of worth and meaning, although in the analysed material, the most common references to ad hoc practices seemed to relate to the bridging of archival and pluralistic orders of work

i.e. finding a balance between conventional archival practices and anticipated contemporary and future needs.

The everyday adhocacy is related to the practice of *institutional policies*. In contrast to the idea of the universality of archival principles, the practice of institutional policies are premised by an individual archival institution, its host-organisation and their perceived autonomy and uniqueness in relation to other institutions. Benno, who had experience of writing national guidelines for municipal archives, noted that it is difficult and to a degree impossible to satisfy all conceivable needs by a single set of criteria. Berengar, Benno and Adelmo were explicit about the problems of blanket solutions and the necessity of local practices and adjustments for the success of their work. Even if the practice of institutional policies was oriented to the local, the diversification was clearly a controversial issue. Partly, the principled attitude of the informants was to avoid anomalies and partly as Malachi noted, in practice the different organisation are often “more similar than people are ready to admit”. Therefore the institutional policies can be seen as compromise of between the idealist universalist aspirations (described e.g. by Adso; often related to the archival order and regime of worth) and local organisational and practical ideas of worth and meaning.

Thirdly, the practices of *outreach* emerged in the analysis as cross-order approach for merging societal and archival perspectives of value and meaning. Outreach was articulated both as a practice of helping people to find relevant archival records that could be helpful and interesting to them. At the same time, a parallel purpose of the same practices was explained to be to help people to “realise what wonderful materials we have [at the archives]” (William). Abo was concerned of the visibility of his archive and underlined the need to highlight its usefulness both as an administrative instrument and a public good. Outreach was typically referred to as a practice of overcoming the indifferences between

pluralistic and archival orders, but in case of their administrative relevance, even between archival and organisational orders or work.

Digitisation is perhaps the most peculiar of all cross-order practices, because of its explicit reference to a certain technical procedure. The interviewees tended to refer to digitisation in highly similar terms than to outreach as a cross-order method of bringing archives and their users closer to each other and for addressing the gap between organisational and archival, and archival and pluralistic ideas of worth and meaning. Outside any specific critical incidents (specific instances of their work), the interviewees were seldom precise in how the digitisation of records would help to reach a compromise and reach a shared idea of 'common good'. In contrast, multiple informants including Adso, Berengar and even Malachi made several direct references to the unspecific capability of the digitisation to address problems that arise from the incongruences between the different orders of work and their related measures of worth.

Finally, the most of the interviewees (including Adelmo, Malachi, William, Abo) made frequent references to the lack of time and *prioritisation* as a practice that supports the daily work at an archive. All informants referred either explicitly or implicitly to the time constraints as a major issue they would like to solve if they would have the possibility to do whatever they liked to make their working conditions as good as possible. In contrast to adhocacy, the prioritisation of was articulated in more systematic terms. For instance, Adso described in detail how his practices of seeking archival materials for exhibitions were based on a combination of balancing and prioritising between personal considerations of significance, earlier knowledge of the archival collections and projections of public interest and popular relevance. Prioritisation helped especially to find a compromise between archival, and personal, digital and pluralistic orders of work in circumstances when it was

practically impossible to reach an ideal outcome from the perspective of the archival order of work.

Practices	Description	Example	Informants
Everyday adhocacy	The practice of coming up with abrupt measures to manage unplanned matters ad hoc.	“We react to what is offered. There are some light definitions [...] but in practice the acquisitions have been ad hoc things.” (Adelmo)	William, Malachi, Adelmo
Institutional policies	All archives are different and archivists make local adjustments to standards. The worth is determined by the local practices, preferences and values at each archival institution.	“We have a proposal for a disposal scheme from them [...]. And then NN, my boss has worked in [Region], and he has taken things from there and we have also made a small mix of things” (Abo) “Archival regulations it could not be called here at our [archival institution] so its called archival rules” (Abo)	Abo, Berengar, Adso
Outreach	The practice of increasing the relevance of archival materials by helping people to use them for their own purposes and for marketing the archival holdings and their perceived significance.	“I like the pedagogical part and to get people understand why archives are important” (Adso)	
Digitisation	Practice based on a conviction that digitisation of holdings has an implicit value for the archives and archival holdings.	“I would like to solve the problems with digital preservation [...] which would need acute attention” (William)	

Practices	Description	Example	Informants
Priorisation	Overcoming the major limitation of archival work, the lack of time to do everything that is perceived to be necessary to do.	“[I]t is difficult to focus when you have to work with too many things” (Adelmo) “Updating one’s competence is difficult, especially if you work parttime.” (William)	Adelmo, William

Table 4: Constellations of information practices in archival field.

6 Discussion

As in many other contexts, the patterns of work and the conceptualisations of worth and what is according to the interviewees informative in archives and archival work are convoluted by their character. A closer look at the orders of work, their related regimes of worth and information, and work practices that contribute to the unfolding of compromises between conflicting arrangements does not bring order to the complexity of human action, but can help to understand the underpinnings of their intricacies. The earlier literature (e.g., Anthony, 2006) has established that the work of archivists is highly situated (as any work, Suchman, 1987), but the discussion of its situatedness have tended to focus on specific aspects of the work (e.g. appraisal or outreach, Shilton and Srinivasan, 2008; Theimer, 2011), histories of archival theory and work (e.g., Duchein, 1992; Cook, 1997) and direct proposals of its premises and future priorities (e.g., Gilliland and Mckemmish, 2004; Duranti, 1999) rather than analyses of its contemporary practical complexities. The present study is limited by the small and specific empirical material, which is insufficient for providing a broad overview of the current landscape of archival work, how archivists work

or conceptualise the value and meaning of their work. It does, however, give a glimpse to the economies of worth and meaning in archival work in the two Nordic countries and a framework for explicating work practices in other contexts both within and outside archival institutions.

The six identified orders of work have many parallels with earlier observations of archival work published in the literature. The interviewees perceived the archival order as a backbone of the records-keeping enterprise in accordance with many archival scholars (e.g., Gilliland-Swetland, 2000; Duranti, 2010; Thomassen, 2001). At the same time, the articulated incongruences between the archival and organisational orders of work is exemplary of the conceptual controversies of defining archives as information, evidence or heritage institutions (e.g., Gilliland-Swetland, 2000; Duranti, 1999; Manžuch, 2009), and subscribing to the dominant tradition of, inter alia, Anglo-American and German archivistics of making a distinction between historical *archives* and contemporary *records management* (Duchein, 1983) and the adherence of the latter to the notions of information and knowledge management (Convery, 2010). Also the different conceptualisations of archival records as, for instance, evidence (Brothman, 2002), transactions (Cox, 2001) and speech acts (Henttonen, 2007; Yeo, 2010) can be brought back to the different regimes of worth and information: whether a record is a 'measurement' of an event, a document of a transaction or a 'domestic anecdote'.

In addition to the archival order, the communal (civic) worth of archives and archival work was associated also with the antiquarian order of work. The convergence of the references to the collective nature of the antiquarian appreciation of worth and often vague explanations of an intrinsic value and intuitive understanding of significance and meaning remind of the public attitudes to archives and other cultural institutions. In contrast to the

archival order that makes claims of the long tradition of the explicit civic value of archives as keepers of public documents and guarantors of democracy, the antiquarian order refers to the contemporary intrinsic and often highly intuitive and personal cultural values. These types of assertions in the interview record are reminiscent of the appreciation of cultural institutions among the general public, for instance, in the study of (Usherwood et al., 2005). The ambivalence of appraisal extends also to the making of credibility. Worth is based on trust (underlined by Ekbia and Evans, 2009) and a strong social evidence of authenticity, but at the same time, it can be very intuitive and anecdotal as Berengar's explanation of the value of archival records show. According to him, the archival records are "fantastic materials" not only because of their documentary value, but also by that they are intriguing for a number of different innate reasons that "are difficult to specify". The intricate interplay of the often historically anchored civic and contemporary inspirational regimes of worth and the idea of the value of archival records remind of the assertion of Manoff that archival discourse provides an entry-point to understanding and explicating the change of knowledge-making practices (Manoff, 2004).

If the antiquarian order and the interplay of its associated regimes of worth can help to understand the intricacy of the collective and intuitive good in the context of archives and cultural heritage (Blouin, 2007), a closer look at the pluralistic emergence of value can elucidate the complexities of individualistic and collective values. A possible reason for why the questions of participatory archives (Huvila, 2008), activism as a part of archival profession (Prelinger, 2010), outreach and the desirable degree of opening archives for the contributions of non-archivists (Yakel, 2011) have been controversial topics in the archival literature is that the discussion on the desirability of the various degrees of engagement refers alternately to the civic (records as a public good), inspired (their symbolic role to e.g.

individuals and minority groups), market (archives are relevant if they are satisfying a demand), and to a certain degree even other regimes of worth. The evolution of the pluralistic order of work and its leaning towards different regimes of worth and consequently, how archival holdings have been associated with diverse regimes of information explains also the paradigmatic changes in archival profession (e.g., Cox, 2000; Duchein, 1992) from the 'domestic' pre-modern archives, to 'inspired' historical archives, 'civic' public archives, 'industrial' records management departments and, as it seems, to the contemporary process (ref. e.g., Cook, 1997, 2001; Duranti, 1998) of redefining the regimes of worth and information of the future as a new 'common good' of the archival work.

Similarly to the archival, organisational and antiquarian orders, the pluralistic order of work is related to historical conditions and the regimes of worth of the contemporary society. They are both historically developed from organisational and antiquarian to the archival and pluralistic orders, and co-existing in time with varying hegemonic emphasises depending on different personal, collective and institutional priorities. Even if the currents of the contemporary archival discourse highlight pluralism, the archival, organisational and antiquarian orders are, as shown by the analysis, still playing a significant role in defining the priorities and worth of archival work.

In contrast to the first four orders of archival work, the underpinnings of the digital and personal orders are less specific to the archival work. The digital order can be seen as a manifestation of the largely contemporary social order of inevitable external change that Sahlén (2005) calls "modernisation" and that has been discussed by cultural theorists coming from outside of the field of archival studies, including Derrida (1995), Ernst (2008) and Foucault (2002). The references to the digital order in the interview data portray it as

an unavoidable contextual fact that has to be taken as granted. This trajectory follows closer the determinism of, for instance, Castells than the contextually more sensitive analyses of the digitisation of, for instance, Bowker (2010; 2005) or Borgman (2007). The underpinnings of the personal order of work can be found similarly in the broader corpus of literature in, for instance, classical (e.g. Wouters, 1989) and more recent studies of work (e.g. Gregg, 2011), information science literature (Nahl and Bilal, 2007) and in the archival ethnography of Both (2010) with multiple accounts on the significance of emotions and passion as a central driver of work and information use.

In addition to the explanatory power of the orders of work and their related regimes of worth and information, the analysis of the interview material shows the significance of the mediating cross-order practices as constituents of the (paraphrasing Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006) *compromises* across the different regimes of worth, or as Manoff (2004) conveys it, the shared preoccupation with the function and fate of the 'record'. The cross-order practices can be seen both as actions that lead to a compromise, but also as significant constituents of the common good *per se*. If the regimes of worth and information in which archival work and archival records are worked form the premises of the common good, it is the cross-order practices that enact the compromise and sustain the *longue durée* of that what is understood as archives, archival records and archival work. The specific cross-order do, however, have differences in how and when they enact these compromises. Institutional policies are a good example of a long-term cross-order activity based on the longevity of archival work, institutional traditions and the experience of senior archivists discussed by Anthony (2006). In contrast, the everyday adhocacy is a practice of the transient present related to the knowledge strategies of the junior archivists in the same study. When compared to these two cross-order practices, parallels of the practices of digitisation and

outreach can be found in the archival literature and the often optimistic propositions of the opportunities of provided by pedagogy (e.g. Krause, 2010; Zipsane, 2009), engagement (e.g. Prelinger, 2010) and, for instance, digital technologies (e.g. Bailey, 2008; Theimer, 2011).

Even if they are constituents of a middle-ground, the documented cross-order practices seem to have a tendency to be partly asymmetric. They arise from a specific regime of worth and persuade conflicting orders to accept a particular idea as a starting point for negotiating a compromise. The dominance of particular orders of work in the cross-order practices might weaken their capability to resolve tensions and reach compromises. In the interview record, the asymmetry is most obvious in the *outreach* cross-order activity that, in spite of its user-oriented and compromising flavours (e.g. examples in Table 4), fundamentally leans towards a precedence of archival or institutional regimes of worth, and as such, limits its usefulness for establishing a common ground between the competing regimes.

As noted specifically in the context of the contested orders of work, trust plays a central role in the context of the information worlds as Ekbia and Evans (2009) stress. In contrast to their suggestion, the present analysis seems to indicate that the significant aspect may not be the measure of trust invested in source, but rather how it is produced within particular regimes of worth and information or between them in the context of specific cross-order practices. Similarly to how information is practiced rather than essentialist according to Garfinkel's sociological theory of information, the present study suggests that in the context of the regimes also trust and accountability are about *doing* rather than *being*. Instead of the investment, especially in the context of cross-order practices, the key seems to be the practice of investing. The observation is consistent with the recent scholarship on trust, credibility and authenticity in information science scholarship (Rieh, 2010) and

extends the current conceptualisations towards the idea of trust being relative to the inhabited worlds and the regimes of worth and meaning being at work. The analysis suggests that trust is, or can be, a relatively unproblematic notion with specific objects or persons within a specific regime of worth. The civic value of archival material as a source of documentary evidence does not compete with the civic value of the same material as a part of the cultural heritage. Even if it possible to perceive collective good from different perspectives, the judgments are based on comparable premises of worth and meaning i.e. that of a certain understanding of beneficiality shared by more than one person. In contrast, the combination of the evaluation of collective good, fame and personal intuition were delicate processes that required cross-order balancing such as the discussions of who will be using archival materials in the future (Adelmo) or how to seek useful information for an exhibition (Adso). The questions of representing minorities or work processes in Nordic municipalities are not as dramatic as some of the cases discussed in the literature (e.g. Caswell, 2010), but still illustrative of the intricacy of the consequences of crossing different measures of worth and meaning.

The notions of worlds and the regimes of worth and information in the archival context can be further set against the Giddensian inspired theorising of records continuum, which has had an unparalleled impact in the contemporary archival theory. Even if the extension of the regimes-thinking towards an explicit scrutiny of regime-specific ideas of particular types of archival documents might lean towards a similar compartmentalisation of different conceptualisations of records (i.e. entities) and their use than the life-cycle thinking, implicitly and explicitly criticised by Garfinkelian (2008) theory of information and record continuum theorists alike (e.g. Upward, 1997), the regimes (as specifically discussed by Boltanski and Thévenot) provide a potentially useful third perspective to records and

archival information. In contrast to life-cycle based approaches (with a typically rather essentialist point of view of the different conceptualisations of records in the different phases of their life), the premise of the regimes based approach would be that the conceptualisations relate to parallel processes of bringing order to social practices articulated as institutionalisation and (in Giddensian sense) structuration in different worlds. In contrast to the relatively open process of how the worth, use and usefulness of records evolve in time that leads to (opportunities of) pluralisation, the regimes of worth and information can help to explain the interplay of how and why archival records are being conceptualised and used by different individuals for different purposes in parallel to each other. For someone, the worth of a record can be in its monetary value or consequences and at the same time, the same document can be a source of inspiration or a historical anecdote. As a part of the same process, the cross-order practices such as adhocacy, institutional policies, outreach, digitisation and prioritisation provide bridges to make compromises between different regimes of worth. An ad hoc decision can help to explain a choice as acceptable within the frame of a 'common good' for conflicting regimes of worth. The description of Adelmo on the *prioritisation* of archival records in the writing of appraisal and disposal policies that balance between the industrial world of archival management and the civic priorities of the preservation of public documents provides a good example of how compromises emerge in practice.

In a more general sense, the present study shows also how the regimes of information is not necessarily dependent on specific types of information objects as in the examples discussed by Ekbia and Evans. The question is how an individual information object (e.g., an archival record) and the information it carries and manifests is conceptualised within different regimes of information. In this light, the dichotomy Bowker (2010) sees between

trace archives and *formal archives* is partly a question of perspective. Even if a formal archive is jussive as Bowker argues, it is peremptory only within a particular regime of information that has produced it as an archive within a particular regime of worth. A typical archive of a public authority is formal within that specific regime and in particular contexts within the organisational regime of information, which rely on the practical usefulness of archival material for specific purposes. Within the remaining contexts of the organisational regime and in all other regimes, the formal archive is reduced to a mere collection of traces that needs to be re-contextualised and re-institutionalised to make sense within the scope and for the purposes of these regimes. Respectively, an archive becomes formal and jussive only if it rests upon a distinct regime of worth, even if it would be considered to serve the 'common good' from the perspective of multiple regimes. In contrast, the individual archival records have a greater freedom to take multiple trajectories on the continuum, rest upon different regimes of worth and function under a variety of regimes of information. But in spite of perplexity of social orders, their related practices and constituent intangible and material objects, the making of an archive and archival record is invariably tied to the implicit or explicit measures of value and meaning associated with them, the regimes of worth and information in the world inhabited by archivists and all others who are working with archival materials.

7 Conclusion

The measures of worth of archives and archival work have changed during the history of record-keeping. For a long time, archives were dominated by an institutionalised regime of worth that perceived their relevance as providers of documentation for the sovereign to

effectively govern their subjects, to collect levies and to legitimise their authority. The paradigmatic turn of the 19th century turned archives to sources of historical knowledge and records to documentation of the past. The 20th century pluralised the archival holdings to become informative in different ways in different situations. The pluralisation was further accelerated by the rapid emergence of digital technologies that was paralleled by a theoretical shift of paradigm that has underlined relativism and subjectivity of archivists and archival holdings.

At the present, the archival community is continuing its struggle in the nexus of competing paradigmatic views of the value and relevance that are premised by different understandings of the worth and the character of the meaning of the archival work and its major constituents, archival records. The central question is how (within specific regimes of information) and on what premises (within particular regimes of worth) the significations and value of archival records and the work of archivists are being constituted. On the basis of the present study, we claim that a closer look at the orders of work can help to understand the interplay of the social circumstances that summon these regimes. A parallel scrutiny of the situated cross-order practices can bring similar order to the understanding of the actions that facilitate workable compromises between the regimes. The continuum of archival records can be seen as a 'dance' of the regimes of information and worth within the partly overlapping and secluded orders of archival work.

The present study shows that the paradox of archival work, and beyond the specific context of this study – of work, is that in practice, the worth of (archival) work, its constituent 'things' (archives, archival materials) and their meaning in the society are not solvable problems of discovering or deciding what their inherent nature should be. Instead, they are questions of how the things (archival records) and work are embedded in

situations and practiced – both theorised and acted upon – within and between the pertinent social orders of (archival) work, their underlying regimes and the use of (archival) materials. This theorising and acting is done in the context of and against the historical continuum and emerging contemporary practices of work in archives and organisations that produce archival material and their mutual and external tensions with other orders of work, with their own historical trajectories and contemporary concerns. Archival work and the constant process of making and remaking an archive are invariably dependent on their implicit and explicit commitments to specific regimes of worth and their associated regimes of information, on that what is considered to be the worth and meaning of archives.

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