Queering the Amateur Analog Video Archive:
The Case of Bologna's Countercultural Life in the 80s and the 90s[1]

Diego Cavallotti, University of Udine
Elisa Virgili, University of Insubria (Varese-Como)

Abstract

Drawing on an interdisciplinary approach, this article aims to outline some theoretical issues concerning the archival structure of videos developed during the Eighties and the Nineties in Bologna's alternative scene. More specifically, we will focus on two archives, Cassero CDOC Centre's video archive and Home Movies — the Italian National Amateur Film Archive, which host two different video repositories that stemmed from a common background: Bologna's countercultural environment, in which we can find the "1990 Student Movement" (the so-called *Pantera*) and the gay and lesbian scene that belonged to Arcigay and Il Cassero. These materials shared not only some production/fruition modalities, but, very often, the same people took part in them: we can see members of the gay community who were, in the meantime, students who participated in the university occupations. Therefore, the main questions we have to answer are: which kind of archival framework is the most appropriate for such materials? Are the current archival practices correct in order to abide by the original context and motivations that fostered their production? Our reply refers to the notion of *transarchive*.

Introduction

When we talk about the interrelationships between LGBT[2] themes, archival

---

[2] This term causes certain difficulties — first of all, issues of definition. For instance, in this article we use the term LGBT because we refer to the current name of the archive we accessed (*Il Cassero LGBT Center's CDOC*); however, from 1982 to 1994 nobody employed this acronym. The movement started to use the formula *National Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transsexual Coordination Pride Rainbow* for the National Pride in Venice, 1997, and the acronym LGBT since the *Rome World Pride* in 2000. This is not a mere linguistic clarification: the different terms indicate not only different historical transformations, but also different types of mobilization structures the

frameworks, and amateur analog video collections, we are confronted with an epistemological conundrum. LGBT amateur videos, both in home[3] and community[4] modes of communication, were concrete emanations of a countercultural environment that tended to blend their modal boundaries: first, this was not only because they were produced within the LGBT community, but in fact specifically addressed to its members, therefore creating a semi-public fruition context in which the presence of a non-LGBT audience was limited; second, because we can compare the community itself (as a social place where both political and affective bonds are established) to the 'family-we-choose', originally described by Weston.[5]

Suppose these materials become part of an archive: how can we account for the inner fluidity of the social and cultural bonds that stood behind the production of these audiovisual products? To what extent should this fluidity be an inner feature of this archive?

Starting from these questions, throughout this paper we will focus on two different collections. The first one is preserved in Bologna at *Il Cassero LGBT Center's CDOC 'Flavia Madaschi'*[6] and refers to VHS format videos related to a ten-years time span (1982-1991). It is composed by amateur videos produced within the LGBT community of Bologna (mainly by K.G.B.&B. [Kassero Gay Band & Ballet]). The second one is stored in Bologna at *Home Movies – Italian Amateur Film Archive*: it is composed by U-Matic, VHS, S-VHS, VHS-C, S-VHS-C, Video8, Hi8 videos and regards the activities of Bologna's countercultural network — more specifically the activities of the so-called *Pantera* movement, created by protesting students who participated in the house-squatting scene as well. The group included gay and lesbian students who were members of *Il Cassero*: during the 1990 student movement they developed their own group, called *Pantera Rosa*, which was one of the first efforts to create a university gay-lesbian group since the 1977 movement.

These students appeared in and helped to shoot videos belonging to both collections. So, what should we do with them? Should we keep them apart or should we try to develop an archival framework in which their interrelationships are made visible?

---

movement dealt with. *Politiche dell'orgoglio. Sessualità, soggettività e movimenti sociali*, ed. by Massimo Prearo (Pisa: ETS, 2015).

[3] Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), pp. 4–16, 49-69.

[4] Ryan Shand, 'Theorizing Amateur Cinema: Limitations and Possibilities', *The Moving Image*, 8.2 (2008), 36–60 (p. 53).

[5] Kath Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[6] This documentation centre (CDOC) was founded in 1983 and its development paralleled the growth of Bologna's movement (*Circolo di Cultura Omosessuale 28 Giugno* and, since 1985, *Circolo Arcigay Il Cassero*). 'Il Cassero. Chi siamo', <http://www.cassero.it/chi-siamo/il-cassero/> [accessed 18 May 2016].

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

First of all, we don't aim to develop here a fully-fledged paradigm accounting for the multi-layered interconnections that complex archival items[7] refer to, compelling the archivists to deconstruct institutional boundaries such as the archival ones. Moreover, we don't aim to reconstruct the whole social networks in which these materials were produced, although we think that these videos hint at them and they should be part of our research targets. Finally, we don't aim to 'queer' the collections mentioned above as a display of theoretical mastery that is an end unto itself: our goal is to elicit specific issues concerning the archival life of these videos, which relate to them as emanations of counter-cultural communities that often cross their paths, such as *Il Cassero*'s and *Pantera*'s ones.

When it comes to describe their archival features, first of all we should ask ourselves how they relate to the complexity of their original production/fruition contexts. One of the hypotheses we are focusing on is that *Il Cassero*'s and *Pantera*'s archival repositories should engage in dialogue with each other, overtaking their institutional boundaries. This means, on the one hand, that the creation of a counter-cultural video archive should take into account the heterogeneous composition of the community in which these videos were originally produced and screened; on the other hand, to pinpoint how audiovisual communication was one of the tools that helped the lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders to interact with other communities, becoming part of a broader social and cultural scene as well. Through this perspective, *queering* LGBT archival items (or collections) means to disclose its inter-linkages with items (or collections) preserved in other archives whose major goal is to save the collective memory of other social groups, adding new possible identity layers to the LGBT galaxy.[8]

In other words — and here comes the answer to the second point, which regards our theoretical frame — to queer an archive means for us to develop Morris's and Rawson's assumptions: in 'Queer Archives/Archival Queers' they affirm that this act critiques and challenges 'the normativizing collecting and circulating practices of other institutions'[9] — in our case those audiovisual archives (LGBT, amateur film archives, etc.), whose primary goal is to preserve the memory of a community without taking into account the ramifications of itineraries in which more than just one countercultural community is involved. These trajectories enrich and, at the same time, question established identities, showing how com-

---

[7] In other words, we are talking about items that lack a solid documentary apparatus because they were produced in an informal context. In order to reconstruct their history, we have to rely on oral documents, *memoirs*, or even anecdotes. Sean Cubitt, 'Anecdotal Evidence', *Necsus*, 2.1 (Spring 2013), 5–18 (pp. 5–8).

[8] Scott Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture, and Difference* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. X.

[9] Charles Morris and K.J. Rawson, 'Queer Archives/Archival Queers', in *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*, ed. by Michelle Ballif, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 74–89 (p. 76).

munity membership is not a matter of exclusivity: some of *Il Cassero*'s members were also *Pantera*'s students, for instance.

Starting from these stances, we feel the need to account for a multi-layered framework[10] in which the archives develop ambiguous relations with the items they store because they thematize the fact that they refer to different communities, in our case the LGBT and the student movement ones. Thus, what is at stake here is a sort of amphibolous and paradoxical teleology, in which we cannot recognize the emergence of a univocal identity, but an iterative act of creating multiple identities. More specifically, in our cases, conceiving these audiovisual archives as open and fluid infrastructures means to open new breaches both in the LGBT and in the '1990 Student Movement' identities, renewing their inner features in a more inclusive fashion. Thus, the act of queering archival LGBT collections hints at complex and polymorphous historical constructions, in which we can find 'queer traces' (oppositionality, fluidity, polymorphy, etc.).

In order to investigate the hybridity and the inherently openness of these constructions, we will refer to an interdisciplinary approach, which will cross the research pathways of queer theory (Morris and Rawson's framework), amateur film and video theory (Zimmermann's approach[11]) and archive theory (Ketelaar's and Cook and Schwartz's epistemic sets[12]). Drawing on these references, we will not linger on in-depth descriptions of *Il Cassero*'s and *Pantera*'s collections: instead, we will reflect on how the institutional boundaries between these collections can be re-programmed in order to account for the inherent oppositionality, fluidity and polymorphy of their items and the complexity of the social networks they stem from. For this purpose, we will develop the notion of *transarchive*.

Il Cassero*'s Amateur Video Collection*

The birth of Italian gay movement is conventionally connected to the foundation of *Fuori!* in 1972. *Fuori!* was the first organisation that catalysed the stances of the Italian gay world and sought to develop a common political agenda. Very soon, however, a diaspora started to undermine *Fuori!*'s project:[13] in 1974, after *Fuori!* moved closer to the Italian Radical Party (a left-liberalist party), many of its members splintered and joined new groups — often local, underground

---

[10] Jake Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), p. 170.

[11] Patricia R. Zimmermann, 'The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings', in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, ed. by Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2008), 1–28 (p. 18).

[12] Eric Ketelaar, 'Tacit Narratives: The Meanings of Archives', *Archival Science*, 1.2 (2001), 131–141 (pp. 137–41).

[13] Which was the establishment of a stable political platform for the Italian gay rights movement.

groups. One of them was the *Collettivo Frocialista*, founded in Bologna in 1977, which, one year later, became *Circolo di Cultura Omosessuale 28 Giugno*.[14]

This was the first gay culture club to engage in dialogue with a state institution: Bologna's municipality (led by the Italian Communist Party[15]), whose mayor, Renzo Imbeni, signed an agreement in 1982 with the founding members of *Circolo 28 Giugno*, offering them a venue for cultural activities. In 1985, the *Circolo 28 Giugno* became the national headquarter of *Arcigay*, the most important Italian gay association, under the name of *Circolo Arcigay Il Cassero*. Throughout the late Eighties and the beginnings of the Nineties, *Il Cassero* developed several campaigns that targeted the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic and discrimination against gay people.

First and foremost, however, *Il Cassero* became one of the cores of Bologna's countercultural scene, presenting itself as a hub for its theatrical and cine-video-graphic collectives. K.G.B.&B. was one of the most influential groups: it was directed by Stefano Casagrande, who, in the late Nineties, became *Il Cassero*'s chief coordinator.[16] Their productions were often staged at *Il Cassero* during club parties (for example, at the beginnings of the Nineties, every New Year's Eve party would host a K.G.B.&B performance) or specific events, such as the first party/gay ball held for celebrating the 1982 agreement with Bologna's municipality.

The ball was recorded on a videotape called *MEGALOMENIA – Festa del circolo 28 giugno – ITALIAN SLIP 1982 'NIKOTINA & GAY CASSERO BAND' – Sala Sirenella (Quartiere San Donato)* (VHS, 1982), which is one the earliest documents preserved at *Il Cassero*'s CDOC.

First of all, it is worth noting the stereotypical mode of amateur communication: a text with low coherence and cohesion (a fragmentary sum of performative highlights of the party rather than a cohesive textual structure that tells us about the ball), audiovisual grammatical mistakes (no transitions from one shot to another, the use of an annoying spotlight that blinds whoever is portrayed, a large number of camera-looks, etc.), and a manifest technical poorness. As a consequence of these practical and semiotic features, we are confronted with several problems in decoding the video's meaning-making processes: if we cannot count on anyone that assists in interpreting them (someone that recognizes the party's participants and helps to contextualize the video), we cannot read them properly. So, as often happens, the images 'are taken up as intermediary, mnemonic, and channelling device *through* which the viewer evokes and identifies

---

[14] Massimo Prearo, *La fabbrica dell'orgoglio. Una genealogia dei movimenti LGBT* (Pisa: ETS, 2015), pp. 76–84.

[15] Since 1979, the Italian Communist Party has shown some interest in the gay and lesbian community: the members of *Arci* (a leftist Italian Cultural Association close to the Communist and the Socialist Parties) created a civil rights commission coordinated by Marco Bisceglia, an openly gay priest. One year later, Bisceglia founded *Arcigay*, which became, from 1983, when *Fuori!* ceased to exist, the biggest Italian gay association.

[16] Stefano Casi, *Teatro in delirio. La vera storia del K.G.B.&B. – Kassero Gay Ballet and Band* (Bologna: CDOC, 1989), pp. 53–54.

not with the mimetic image, but with an absent person or past event',[17] their relevance exceeds their content, inviting the viewer to re-join the past events it represents. These materials are closely tied to their original production/fruition contexts: to investigate them is to understand how their social fabric is reflected in their textual features.

The contents of the video get clearer as the camera-operator focuses on K.G.B.&B.'s show. It consists in a parody concert and in a comic performance. In fact culminates in a serious epilogue in which a ball participant in drag reads *Circolo 28 Giugno*'s declaration of intent, in which it is stated that every member should fight against homophobia, sexual discriminations and every kind of identity constraint. Thus, *MEGALOMENIA* can be interpreted in two different ways: on the one hand, as a document witnessing Bologna's gay lifestyle before the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic in Italy, as an audiovisual emanation of Bologna's gay movement, in which we can observe the joy of the community united to spend leisure time together and, of course, to celebrate an institutional achievement; and on the other, as a polyvocal milestone of a broader and inclusive movement, which cannot be defined only as 'gay'.

Since the mid-eighties, K.G.B.&B. started to explore the possibilities of videomaking. One of the most important efforts was *Cassero News* (VHS, 1990). It was an 'amateur video-newsreel' shot in *Il Cassero*'s cellar and narrowcasted on the bar TVs of the club, providing information (the activities of *L.I.L.A.* [*Italian League Against AIDS*], the most important news about *Il Cassero*'s community, gay-themed movies, etc.) and entertainment (*Maga Tamara*'s column — a man in drag, 'Sorceress Tamara', giving some advice to lonely hearts calling on the phone) for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities of Bologna. In the second (and last) edition of *Cassero News* we can find an interview of the members of *Pantera Rosa* – among them is Vincenzo Tallarico,[18] who was, at the same time, one of *Il Cassero*'s most active members. One of the main topics conveyed during the interview was the emergence of a new generation of gay men whose lives were very different from their 'older siblings': they had their first sexual experiences only after the ravages of AIDS had changed the way in which sexuality was conceived, and, more generally, they did not conform to the identities of thirty-fourty year-old gay men or lesbian women; they were first of all students, who lived their lives at the borders of the community and were involved in the exciting underground scene of Bologna, which, in those days, witnessed the appearance of a new protesting student movement, the *Pantera* movement.

[17] Vivian Sobchack, 'Toward a Phenomenology of Nonfictional Film Experience', in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, ed. by Jane M. Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 241–54 (p. 247).
[18] Vincenzo Tallarico was, in those days, a University of Bologna's student and one of the most important *Il Cassero*'s activists: despite his young age, he became part of *Il Cassero*'s board in 1990. Later on he moved away from Bologna and put aside activism.

PVEH Collection

In 1990, a law proposal by the socialist Minister of University and Scientific Research Antonio Ruberti gave rise to a protesting student movement, which took issue in particular with the corporatization of the university and the admission of private citizens or institutions onto university boards. Within a month, the movement (called *Pantera*), captured the public conscience of the students and became a national issue. The protesting students proved their communicative skills very quickly:[19] they used fax technology to send messages to each other all over Italy, they developed behaviour protocols for TV or press journalists, and they shot counter-information videos.[20]

In Bologna, a group of film students gave rise to an experimental audiovisual project called *Videogiornale*, a video-newsreel that documented the everyday life of *Pantera*'s protests. They provided a full-coverage of the university occupations, creating a small distribution network among the university departments. Every evening an edition of *Videogiornale* was screened: this is how, in a sort of pre-digital way, the students connected to each other, informing the squatters what was happening in their community and how they were perceived by the outside world — 'video-journalists' often interviewed pedestrians about the university protests.

Videogiornale's master cameras and edited newsreels are now part of the *PVEH Collection*. They belong to a wider collection that documents Bologna's countercultural life in the late Eighties/early Nineties, from *Pantera* to the house-squatting scene, from the rise of cyberpunk culture to a peculiar experiment of a local TV station (called *Pratello TV*). *Videogiornale* and the *Pantera* protest movement should be recognized as the formative experience of a group of young students that, throughout the years, grew up, changed its members and took part in Bologna's lively countercultural scene.

Since *Videogiornale* created a sort of audiovisual network within *Pantera*'s community, it became the best way to make announcements. This was the case for *Pantera Rosa*. In a VHS named *GAY PANTERA ROSA di Luciano Seminario Autogestito GAY/Lesbo* (VHS, 1990) in the *PVEH Collection*, the representatives of *Pantera Rosa* informed other students about the gay and lesbian meetings during the university occupation. Their brief video-announcement was then included in the fifteenth edition of *Videogiornale*, which was narrowcasted on the TVs of the university's (occupied) classrooms. Among *Pantera Rosa*'s members, we can once again identify Vincenzo Tallarico, who, with other male gay students, discusses the relevance of gays and lesbians in past student movements, and the importance of a new political subject that includes new sexual identities.

[19] Loredana Colace and Susanna Ripamonti, *Il circo e la Pantera. I mass-media sulle orme del movimento degli studenti* (Roma: Led, 1990).
[20] Nando Simeone, *Gli studenti della Pantera. Storia di un movimento rimosso*, (Roma: Alegre, 2010), pp. 65–80.

This new subject should link the needs of the gay/lesbian community to a broader political landscape, in which a new generation of activists could find its place.

Thus, to sum up, it is necessary to focus on two different amateur videos that were shot almost during the same period, had the same communicative aims, referred to the same people and now belong to two different archives. More specifically, the presence of Tallarico in both videos reveals the tight bonds that link Bologna's young activists to a broader countercultural movement: as activists they took part in a student movement simply because they were both gay (or lesbians) and students. This compels us to reflect upon a simple but often neglected notion: when we talk about LGBT audiovisual products we should not merely identify who shot or appeared in them only in terms of sexual orientation, but we should account for the complex framework in which they establish social, cultural, and affective bonds.

In order to solve these research problems, we will develop the notion of *transarchive* as a queered archival model.

Transarchive: A Queered Model

If we want to engage in dialogue with these collections and disclose their *queer* and *transarchival* potential, we have to start from two specific issues.

Firstly, we have the definition of *queer archive*, as both an enunciational principle and an actual counter-institution that challenges the normativization of archival practices. As we stated in our introduction, Morris and Rawson's notion of 'queer' as the act of queering LGBT contents in order to disclose their counterhegemonic profile is highly relevant in our case, as it helps us to develop a theoretical model through which the polyvocal nature of our materials — and of the multiple identities they collect — is fully taken into account. Secondly, we have to stress the relationship between the very nature of the amateur analog videos we are investigating and their archival life. The facts that their videos were developed outside the professional realm, produced using consumer technology, and referred to alternative production/fruition institutional contexts should entail a different set of archival practices.

First and foremost, for instance, if the main goal of a non-professional video archive is to reconstruct not only the 'correct version' of an audiovisual text, but also the social network that fostered its development (as we argued in reference to the *PVEH* case study), then, in our cases, a strict separation between archival institutions is nothing but a limitation: on the one hand, confronting the paratextual sources would provide the users with a better understanding of the video contents; on the other, 'mixing up' the collections would allow a more exhaustive reconstruction of the social fabric in which countercultural video-making took shape in Bologna — more specifically, we could account for its inherent complexity, underscoring also how the nuances of sexual (and gender) identities stemmed from this fast-changing social turmoil. That is why the act of crossing

over these audiovisual archives is also an act of challenging fixed identities and social common places: in other words, this archival crossover, called *transarchive*, can refer to an act of queering the archive.

Queering Archival Records

LGBT amateur analog videos can claim for themselves a double layer of alternativeness: on the one hand, we have, of course, the counterhegemonic stance of audiovisual productions developed within a countercultural movement, whose institutional boundaries reflect the basic assumptions of the struggle against homophobia and heterosexism; on the other, we have audio-visual products that represent the unstandardized and heterogeneous side of the 'official' cinema/video realm. Indeed, as we can argue following Zimmermann, amateur videos allow us to investigate 'the more variegated and multiple practices of popular memory' from polyvocal points of view, since they refer to a 'visual practice emerging out of dispersed, localized, and often minoritized cultures, not a practice imposed on them'.[21] In the intersecting perspectives of film history and social history, researching amateur videos means to move away from 'a single, metanarrative, and omniscient viewpoint, based on referentiality, reality and facts that repress heterogeneity, toward a more particularized, multicultural construct of plural pasts.' In other words, the inherent polyvocality of these materials can open up 'historical analysis to different explanatory models'.[22]

Through this perspective, we could affirm that amateur videos account for the primary source of heterogeneity and singularity, which is everyday life. In our particular case, we can observe a merging point in the daily life of a community, where ordinariness meets social and political activism. In this way, the amateur analog videos preserved at *Il Cassero* (as well as the *PVEH* Collection) make us understand, for instance, not only how its members dealt with the AIDS crisis, but also how, in those days, the community itself tried to improve the quality of its members' daily lives — see *Cassero News*, Bologna's community 'amateur video-newsreel', or *GAY PANTERA ROSA* and the topsy-turvy context of an university occupation.

So, when it comes to reflect upon the role of LGBT amateur analog videos in an archive and the actual protocols that can be applied to them, we have to acknowledge the main difference between their configurations in a LGBT archive and in a queer archive. Both of them relate to audiovisual materials that dwell at the crossroads of everyday life and political activism. Anyway, in the LGBT archive it is crucial for these videos to reinforce specific identities, highlighting how they took part in the creation of an overarching and all-encompassing community in an historical moment when it is necessary to legitimize the existence

---

[21] Zimmermann, p. 1.
[22] Ivi, p. 5.

of non-heteronormative sexual orientations. In other words, the LGBT amateur analog video archive displays a *centripetal structure*, in which its items should be hypothetically ordered relating to the different parts of the community, creating at the same time audiovisual repositories for the LGBT macro-identity.

Instead, the queer archive tends to interpret these materials retrospectively as documents of polymorphous, open, inclusive and multi-layered identities against any form of normalization of LGBT memories.[23] In this way, the queer archive displays a *centrifugal structure* in which not only the internal boundaries (between the gay and bisexual identities, for instance), but also the external boundaries are questioned. More specifically, through the notion of queer archive, we can reflect on how an amateur video can become a hub for the inter-linkages among different countercultural communities.

The problem at stake here is thus how these hypothetical characteristics of the amateur analog video queer archive can be transformed in actual features. How can they be the distinctive marks of a framework that critiques and challenges 'the normativizing collecting and circulating practices of other institutions'? How can they bend the exertion of the power of consignation[24] — which affects not only the acquisition policies, but also how the archivists interpret these amateur videos and how they order them — toward the open and dialogic practices of the queer archive?

Drawing on our case studies, we will focus on these questions, outlining a 'double step' process.

Step 1: Private/Public Dialectic

When we think about amateur videos, we typically consider them as reservoirs of private and intimate memories. Outside the enclosed context of family fruition, these materials seem to be out of place. This is the reason why, when they enter the archive, we think that a sort of archival violence is perpetrated against them: they change their nature, becoming part of a publicly accessible institution. That's only partially true, at least for two reasons. Firstly, the archive itself does not always grant public access to the materials it stocks. Sometimes this is in the name of preservation (when access is a threat to the item's integrity) or for power issues (the stakeholders decide that the item must not be accessed). From this perspective, the archive is not a fully public institution: the 'publicness' of its items is always negotiated with the community. Secondly, as our case studies prove, many amateur analog videos were shown in semi-public fruition contexts.

For instance, as we already noted, *Cassero News* (1990) was narrowcasted on the bar TVs of the club, providing information and entertainment. Very often the

---

[23] Morris and Rawson, p. 84.
[24] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 11–12.

information delivered was strictly focused on the life of the cultural center. For example, in its first edition the announcer reads the news regarding the nomination of *Il Cassero*'s board and introduces a video-report of the last national *Arcigay* conference. Although it was not mandatory to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender to get the club membership, it was highly improbable that someone outside the selected audience of the community would be interested in *Cassero News*: their fruition context was neither completely public nor completely private.

The same observations can be applied to *GAY PANTERA ROSA*. This video was not supposed to be narrowcasted, since it was only a rough 'video-draft'. Ultimately it was edited, and a polished version of it was then included into the fifteenth edition of *Videogiornale* — which, in turn, was narrowcasted on the TVs of the occupied classrooms, where the students gathered together before a TV-VCR system and watched their counter-informative newscast. This causes some very complex issues. First, it is implausible that people outside *Pantera*'s community watched it: non-leftist students were often considered as agitators and asked to leave. Secondly, unfinished materials were not supposed to be narrowcasted. They belonged to *Videogiornale*'s small archive, and could only have been watched by the 'video-journalists'. A further layer of 'privateness' emerges: the privateness of a transitional material, the master-tape, which was expected to remain sealed in *Videogiornale*'s metaphorical vault. So, if the screening modalities of these videos were semi-public (*Cassero News*) or semi-private (*GAY PANTERA ROSA*), how can they be related to the access policies of the amateur analog video queer archive, whose 'radical openness' challenges archival power?

In our opinion, the point at stake here is how the queer archive faces two issues. Paraphrasing Derrida, we can argue that, if there is no 'archive without consignation in an external place which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction, or of remission',[25] there is no archive without consignation power. How does the queer archive deal with procedures that risk to keep stored materials secret and unaccessible? In the community's semi-public production and fruition contexts, we have tight personal relationships between who shot the videos (or acted in them) and their audience: in other words, these videos catalyse social and affective interactions, allowing for individual needs to become visible. For instance, we might refer to a video from *Il Cassero*'s collection which was not produced under the supervision of K.G.B.&B., but rather was a collaboration between *Il Cassero*'s lesbian groups: *Lesbo qui, Lesbo là, Lesbo tutta la città* (VHS, 1994),[26] shot during the first Italian National Pride in Rome by *Il Cassero*'s lesbian activists. In its 'amateurish' flow of fragmented

[25] Ibidem.
[26] The video refers to an important political moment for the whole Italian movement and for the lesbian part of it: as we stated before, the Rome Pride was the first National Pride; two years later, in 1996, the lesbian members of the movement voted to create a separated organization, *Arcilesbica*, that was nevertheless federated with *Arcigay*.

sequences, we can observe several participants re-performing (even parodying) their own coming out, like the middle-aged woman who addresses the camera and says 'Hi, Mom! I'm a Lesbian!'. Although someone recorded these identity performances onto a magnetic strip that could be narrowcasted everywhere (or even broadcasted), they never crossed *Il Cassero*'s community boundaries and remained within the limits of its safe space. Thus, when we theorize about the relations between LGBT amateur videos and the inner features of the queer archive, about the latter's inherent dialogicity and openness, we have to reflect on what negotiating public access to these materials really means.

Within this perspective, we have to account for another nuance of Zimmermann's polyvocality: the archive works as an 'infinite activation of the record'[27] that allows us to reconstruct its contents and the social context in which they took shape. This process operates through several recontextualisations that take place 'at every stage of a record's life [in our case, during the inventory, the technical restoration, the digitization, and the cataloguing phases] and in every dimension of the records continuum, adding values (or subtracting values) to the record'.[28] The notion of 'wide access' is crucial for this infinite reactivation process: it is a phase in which an archive that challenges 'centripetal' policies transforms what is usually considered as an archival asset into a public, broadly disseminated and disposable good, which is open to new interpretations and historiographical hypotheses. Although they could crack the boundaries of a restricted community, they allow a better understanding of its inner dynamics as well.

In the case of the analog video queer archive, this issue becomes very relevant. The queered record/document cannot be simply stored. When it becomes accessible, it becomes open to a wide range of hermeneutical manipulations: researchers that link the archival record to unexpected historical and cultural phenomena, mobilizing new forms of *counter-history*; activists (or former activists) that connect the item to their lives (and their social networks), creating new forms of *counter-memory*; archivists that relate collections to each other, although they belong to different archives, giving rise to new forms of *counter-archiviality*. In other words, the negotiation of consignation power and public access signals the relevance of 'wide access' as a *countercultural approach* to the queer amateur video archive: through its inner complexity and fluidity we aim at (re)constructing social and cultural *counter-networks*. In the last part of our paper, we will focus on a specific counter-archival typology: *queer transarchiviality*.

Step 2: Queer Transarchiviality

The queer archive constructs a memorial space whose items show how audiovisual materials that are often discarded as cheap and valueless can in fact work

---

[27] Ketelaar, p. 137.
[28] Ibidem.

as aggregators of a complex and fluid memory. Its features tend to challenge the semi-public (or semi-private) nature of our case studies. Thus, the analog video queer archive should be deemed as a framework in which the dialectic of privacy/publicness represents a constitutive dynamic and not a problem to be solved: this polar tension can mobilize new interpretations on LGBT countermemories by casting light on what was deemed appropriate for these semi-public videos in those days, and what a public function can do for the LGBTQIA+ community now. The public/private dialectic works as specific feature of the 'technology of memory'[29] the archive helps to shape, creating a disseminated memory that has built, and continues to build, the identity of the movement.

This 'technology of memory' and its 'reactivation processes' involve not only the different facets of the LGBT community, but also those 'neighbour' communities in which LGBT activists took part — in our cases, especially when we think about *Cassero News* and *GAY PANTERA ROSA*, Bologna's student movement. Crossing over the collections they belong to, we can reflect upon a crucial fact: both the gay and lesbian (and, more broadly, LGBT) and the leftist countercultural identities seemed to be (in those days in Italy) synchronically mobilized. That's why *transarchiviality*, the act of crossing over collections preserved in different archives, can be a useful tool when, for example, we have to investigate the life of an activist such as Vincenzo Tallarico (who was part both of *Il Cassero*'s and *Pantera*'s communities) and we have to account for the complex nature of his social networks.

Making public material that was (originally) semi-public/semi-private, and opening up the strict boundaries between different archives and linking their collections together means, first of all, to deny the 'centripetal' nature of the LGBT archive and to point out at the intersections between sexual orientation matters and broader political identity issues.

Another example of the *transarchival* usefulness is *PVEH*'s *Sfilata Daniele 19/7/94* (VHS, 1994). *Miss Italia Alternative*'s first edition, a man-in-drag beauty contest organized by Stefano Casagrande for fund-raising purposes (AIDS awareness), is included in this video. Daniele Del Pozzo, a former member of *Videogiornale*'s crew and *Il Cassero*'s activist, was among the participants: here we can find another superimposing layer that links our case studies to the social fabric that outline their backgrounds. Del Pozzo worked on several *Videogiornale* productions, even when its members decided to follow different research pathways. He and Lino Greco (another member of *Videogiornale*), for example, worked on a *found-footage* video called *Blue Movie* (VHS, 1993), whose main concept was a visual study on the relationship between the image-as-matter and the body.

As we can see, the individual pathways of each activist, student or videomaker draw a centrifugal map, in which none of them belong to just one social group. If these amateur videos hint at a such complex framework, their archival lives should

---

[29] Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of Californa Press, 1997), pp. 9–12.

not downgrade their entropy: preservation practices and access policies should work against every 'centripetal' consignation power[30] and facilitate the crossover of video collections — in other words, they should facilitate a *queer transarchiviality*.

Queer transarchiviality points to the establishment of an intersecting access frameworks in which the materials preserved in the LGBT archive could engage in dialogue with those stored in other archives, creating a *queer transarchive*. Here, the notion of 'wide access' becomes a relevant enhancer for the (re)construction of social-affective frames: it entails a multiplication of historiographical interpretations because every archival user (academic researchers, activists, etc.) can elaborate inter-linkages between different collections (and different archives) drawing on her/his historical knowledge or her/his memory. Every linkage is based on 'affinity recognition': videos belonging to different collections (and different archives) must have something in common, even on a very basic level — their content, for instance.

That is how the *queer transarchive* becomes more than a neutral mediator between the item's original context and contemporary researchers: the record is always manipulated and (re)constructed, and so is its functional context. In other words, the structure of the *queer transarchive* does not simply entail a batch of fixed, unquestionable and non-invasive protocols. Since it underscores the relevance of cross-boundary and fluid intersections between collections, archives, and social frameworks, it helps us to understand that every LGBT person has always been part of a wider social context and that she/he has always been compelled to negotiate her/his identity with it. In our cases, *Il Cassero*'s and Bologna's broader countercultural communities are inherently co-implicated, and so should be their audiovisual amateur archives, which witness the daily lives of their members. This is why (re)constructing and reactivating a record shapes new possible (counter)memories.

Not by chance, when Cook and Schwartz, two postmodern archival theorists, deconstruct the 'archival neutrality paradigm', they account for Butler's theory of performativity. Cook and Schwartz affirm that archival practices are based on repetition and ritual, through which a naturalization of archival 'codes of behaviour and belief'[31] is established. Those naturalized codes rule thanks to the 'tacit narratives' of the archive, transforming notions such as the sacredness of the vault and the predominance of preservation over access into scientific dogma. 'Yet routinized performance/practice, and the beliefs/theories that sustain it [...] can be shaken when social contexts become more fluid':[32] then, they can be challenged by 'transgressive performances'[33] that open new theoretical spaces and

---

[30] Derrida, pp. 11–12.
[31] Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz, 'Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance', *Archival Science*, 2.3 (2002), 171–85 (p. 173).
[32] Ivi, p. 176.
[33] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 173–180.

make old practices more inclusive. This change also involves, of course, archival power, which 'loses much of its authority'.[34]

Queer transarchiviality, in our opinion, belongs to the realm of 'transgressive performances'. As we can see, crossing over collections that belong to different archives raises our awareness about the multi-layered social and affective linkages between the LGBT movement and other movements, making them visible — and this is vital for non-researchers. *Queer transarchiviality* discloses how complex social interactions in the LGBT community have always been. They involve first of all the daily lives of people — their bodies, their stories — who cross paths with many other social and cultural groups: queering an analog video archive means, thus, to open it and to connect it to other archival frameworks, to deal with different spaces, with the 'inside' and the 'outside' of a community, and also with different temporalities. In other words, queering the archive means to queer temporalities: to retrospectively queer the past and to re-write history for the contemporary LGBT(QIA+) community.

[34] Cook and Schwartz, p. 177.