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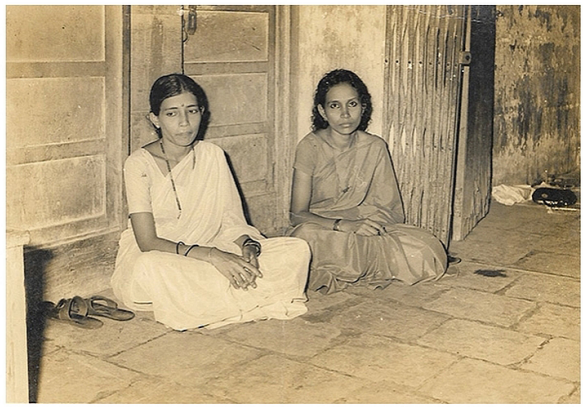
189 – The school teachers who went on a twelve-day satyagraha



My mother, K Jagadammal (right) with her peer and friend Jayshree Sawant (left), Bombay, Maharashtra. 1977

Image & narrative contributed by Nishant Radhakrishnan, Mumbai

This is a photograph taken in 1977 of my mother, *K Jagadammal* (right) with her peer and friend *Jayshree Sawant* (left) in Bombay. They were on a strike, outside a school compound, protesting the injustices served by the school they both taught in.

My mother, *K Jagadammal* was born in 1949 in *Kalanjoor, Pathanamthitta* District, Kerala. Her parents were farmers, and she was one of five sisters and a brother. Her father later ran his own grocery shop, exactly opposite *Kalanjoor Government School*, that all of his children attended. My mother and her siblings all grew up to have careers as school-teachers.

In 1972, following a matrilineal Dravidian tradition, the *Marumakkattayam* system (where women of the family are legitimate inheritors of property and therefore integral to families), my mother was betrothed to her cousin, her mother's brother's son, my eventual father, *M. G. Radhakrishnan*. My father had been living in Bombay (now Mumbai) since 1968 and worked in a clerical position at the Indian Cotton Mills Federation. After their marriage they moved to Bombay and on June 11, 1973, my mother armed with degrees in B. Sc (Science) and B. Ed (Education), joined the ranks of thousands of Malayalee migrants (mostly teachers and nurses), and became a Primary section teacher at *Abhyudaya Education Society High School* where she taught all subjects except Marathi.

From 1975, my parents lived in the teeming mill suburb of Kalachowky, among other migrants, in a one-room kitchen apartment. The 70s were also the years when the political party, Shiv Sena were mobilising their cadre against migrants, especially South Indians like my parents. But this was also the time that people away from their birth homes had begun to embrace and appreciate the other Indias. Yet like many others from Kerala, my parents had a high degree of political agency and found it hard to tolerate injustice. While it may sound like a cliché, it is second nature for us Malayalees to go on strike. The 1970s were a potent moment in India – the heady years of Emergency and after. In this photograph my mother (right) was 28 years old when the two teachers went on a strike demanding their reinstatement at the Abhyudaya Education Society High School, following three years of harassment and intimidation by a member of the school management.

In 1975, a new teacher, *Kalyanikutty* joined the school. She was related to a *Mr. Nair*, the school administrator, known to be an authoritarian figure. Allegedly, he would run the school like his personal fiefdom. On several occasions, he would command Kalyanikutty to return home over perceived slights or mistakes. The personal harassment was purely based on the close family relationship between them – found often in patriarchal Indian households. Unable to tolerate the injustice, and in solidarity with Kalyanikutty, all teachers, including my mother submitted a protest letter asking Mr. Nair to stop troubling Kalyanikutty. In retaliation, he called upon each teacher and asked them to withdraw their signatures. All the Secondary School section teachers refused to do so, but from the Primary section, with the exception of my mother, all teachers withdrew their signatures – and categorically refused to withdraw it. This began a long period of harassment for my mother – threats, show cause notices, random inspections on her classes, a trip to the police station. But my mother, with the support of my father, teachers, students and much of the management, maintained her stand. My parents' position was clear – Mr Nair did not own the school or its employees – he was her co-worker, an employee, just like her – an equal in hierarchy.

So the stage was set – My mother, a teacher – K. Jagadammal versus Mr. Nair, the patriarch. Heavily pregnant with me, she was denied her rightful maternity leave and made to accept half-pay on leave, albeit was abruptly terminated from service. In 1976, shortly after my birth, pressured by committee members, she was reinstated, but demoted to a lower teaching position. Following Mr. Nair's machinations, at the end of the academic year, she was terminated, again.

So in 1977, my mother was no longer an employee of the school, yet she simply refused to accept the unfair termination and continued to attend the school in protest. Every single day, she would go to the Headmaster's office to sign-in on the attendance muster. When she was not allowed to sign it, she began submitting letters –

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Celebrating Six years of IMP

CHAPTER 3

Community-Based Digital Archives

Programming Alternatives

Jatan, the digital archive programmed and installed to manage and disseminate the objects stored and preserved in ten major Indian museums, is currently the exception to the rule of online access to Indian cultural heritage. Despite the Ministry of Culture's Five Year Plan focusing on and financially supporting digitization, few institutions allow online access to their collections. Indian museums and cultural institutions that have a website provide information about how to reach their physical space as well as a brief overview of the collections. The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, for example, also houses a large photographic collection of more than two hundred thousand (now digitized) images, providing these on in-house computers. Online, there is a small selection of 306 images with captions in seven folders, without any metadata.[1] The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts houses a large collection of works by famous photographers such as Raja Lala Deen Dayal, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Sunil Janah, Shambu Shaha and others, but the digitized images were (in 2017) not even transferred to the intranet, let alone available through the internet.[2] The National Archives of India also stores a number of photographs in private collections, but none are available online.[3] European institutions, especially those in Britain, might have an advantage when it comes to experience in conceptualizing and financing digitization projects. Yet, regarding searchability and retrieval, two of the most extensive photographic collections lag behind. The British Library makes it a challenge to actually navigate to as well as through the India Office Collection, even though fifteen thousand images are available online.[4] The Fürer-Haimendorf collection provides the user with considerably better navigation and search options, but simply finding this digital archive online is a barrier, as search engine optimization and SOAS's website structure do not

prioritize the retrieval of the 14,000+ photographs from South Asia.[5] With private (photographic) heritage collections, the situation is similar. The Alkazi Collection of Photography, for example, provides access to the digitized versions on in-house computers only, and only to those that visitors request, not to the full database.

This overall situation of restricted access to cultural heritage – which was undoubtedly worse a few years ago, and is likely to improve further with new digitization projects on the horizon[6] – raised attention and critique. Among the critics is Anusha Yadav, a curator, designer and photographer based in northern Mumbai. In one of our first meetings, Yadav (interview, 2016) recounted one of her experiences in this area:

> I think our history should be accessible. There was a very interesting argument on that in one of the sessions where a lot of archivers met in India, and the guy from the museum said, 'These are family jewels. We can't share them with the world', and I said, 'But you don't have to share them but can you at least tell me where they are? At the minimum, you can tell me what you have. You'd have to show me the picture even if you want to save it'. If I want to know if there's a picture available of Gandhi eating food, then I should know where it stands. I mean, where is it?

Yadav (ibid.) elaborates on the current state of India's archived heritage, a topic that we would dwell upon and deepen during our subsequent encounters and later during my internship with her:

> Yadav: I'm talking about a government museum. Their catalogues are not available. We have no idea what's in there.
>
> Müller: Why do you think that is the case?
>
> Yadav: Because they're just too lazy and there's no funding for it. The government is not that interested.
>
> Müller: How come they can actually go to an official meeting of archivists, different archivists, Indian ones, so there are a number of them with an up-to-date agenda talking about probably the future of the archives? How can one still have such a position?
>
> Yadav: Because knowledge is power so they'd rather hold onto that power. If they have nothing to protect, then why are they powerful? They are in powerful positions because they guard these things.

Dissatisfied with the way in which historical photographs and archival material are hidden and exploited as a means to consolidate established

power regimes, Yadav decided to create a counterweight. In 2010 she founded her own online archive. She deliberately ensured that this archive would be publicly accessible to anyone, anywhere in the world (provided s/he has internet access), both regarding creation and consumption of the content. She called it Indian Memory Project.

This chapter is concerned with exactly this creation of archives – in digital, online format as alternatives or counterweights to current canonical dealings with India's past. The chapter brings into view what I call community-based digital archives, and disentangles the reasons for their creation. The aforementioned power imbalance is only one aspect, and an ambiguous one at that. The most prominent and publicly represented arguments are those of a lack of access and of sharing. They are closely related to an optimistic understanding of digital media and the internet. I will show that the public statements of newly created archives regarding their emergence and existence utilize what have become *scripts* of necessity and sharing. The script of undermining power and control takes an equivocal position; while it is relevant, both in relation to the lack of access and to sharing, the conventions on which archives as *lieux de mémoire* rest are in practice not easily avoided, even when community-based archives emerge in digital format.

Scripts are used in this chapter as a heuristic device to enable an understanding of why and how digital media are envisioned as a remedy for heritage material. The way in which scripts are conceptualized here alludes to Erving Goffman's (1959) theory of the presentation of the self in everyday life with its resemblance to staged theatre plays. As a form of symbolic interactionism, the notion of scripts has been applied with slight variations of the term in most of the social sciences (Vanclay and Enticott 2011; van den Berg 2008). When I talk of scripts in the following, they are to be understood as 'a culturally shared expression, story or common line of argument, or an expected unfolding of events, that is deemed to be appropriate or to be expected in a particular socially defined context and that provide a rationale or justification for a particular issue or course of action' (Vanclay and Enticott 2011: 260). Script refers to ways of speaking or acting in everyday life that express internalized values and knowledge, such as behaving according to socialized gender roles or using artefacts according to their use ascribed in manufacturing. Frank Vanclay and Gareth Enticott (ibid.) categorize scripts into four (sometimes overlapping) types, namely (1) routines or expected sequences of events, (2) a catchphrase or metaphor frequently recited, (3) a mini-story, narrative or parable that has particular significance, and (4) a commonly used or widely evoked line of argument. When turning to digital archives, the main form of scripts are commonly used arguments.

Scripts can be established anew, but are more often employed as a commonplace argument or expression. They are learned or socially conditioned mental maps (Silvasti 2003: 156); people are rarely consciously aware of scripts or that they are using them. They comprise an internalized set of vocabulary or repertoire, which also assists in legitimizing or advising courses of action. They can provide a rationale for an issue or an action, and often have a moral dimension to them (Vanclay and Enticott 2011: 261).

Users of scripts base their arguments on acknowledged contextual conditions. They express what is 'deemed to be appropriate'. In other words, scripts are predicated on underlying, background arguments, which again can take the form of (preceding) scripts. What Bibi van den Berg (2008) terms 'contextual cues' are underlying, accepted and sometimes only subconsciously resonating ideas about how things, people or encounters work – or should work. Contextual cues are the main resource for a script's legitimation.

Applying scripts to the analysis of newly established, digital-only archives ties in with what has almost become a tradition of relating Goffman's theory to various forms of digital or other media (see Hogan 2010 for a useful list). Digital technology enhances or rearranges scripts, and online performances are easier to understand when conceptualized as onstage or offstage performances that establish new scripts while at the same time being based on existing ones. Yet, instead of turning to users' online behaviour, this chapter is concerned with the creators' scripts as reoccurring lines or arguments when setting up online archives in India.

The chapter deals with two creators as examples of digital archives that have been created more recently, namely Indian Memory Project (IMP) and The 1947 Partition Archive (1947PA). As we will see, both archives share the mentioned scripts – albeit in slightly varied forms – in public statements, interviews and in their corporate videos. They also have a number of individual and contextual aspects in common. Both archives are driven by powerful middle-class women in their late thirties/early forties. These women's individual life stories contributed to the setting up of the archives and are used as explanations or even justification for their endeavours. These individual stories constitute the beginning of this chapter, as they provide an introduction to the archives and demarcate different ways of telling this story, either as retrospective connecting points or by stressing key moments. They are a prelude to the scripts of necessity, sharing and archival power that follow.

Indian Memory Project

> Indian Memory Project is an online, curated, visual and narrative based archive that traces a history and identities of the Indian Subcontinent, via photographs and letters found in personal archives. Contextualised with narratives, the photographs & letters (contributed by people all over the world) reveal a powerful and historical palimpsest of a largely undocumented society and sub-continent.
>
> With personal images serving as evidence, each post on the archive reveals valuable information about people, families & ancestors, cultures, lifestyles, traditions, choices, circumstances and thereby consequences. Indian Memory Project is a personal memory of the world – a sociological and photographic history, remembered, realised and experienced by its own people. It was founded in February 2010, by Anusha Yadav.[7]

This is the official description of IMP, as found on the website's 'About' page. The website offers its visitors a collection of about 180 photographic images related to the history of the Indian subcontinent. Each of the photographs is connected to a narrative. In each of these stories, a person – usually the one providing the photograph – recollects and shares a personal memory. This personal memory is often emotional, subjective and linked with content from other websites. It is rarely autobiographical; usually, a relative or a friend of the depicted person tells his or her story, relating a particularly memorable event or biographical milestone.

The stories – rephrased by Yadav to fit the format of IMP – are usually between five hundred and two thousand words in length, and set in slim, dark grey letters on a plain white background underneath the prominent photograph. The photographs that people send to Yadav for the website are often (but not always) originally black and white. Displayed in digitized form on a white background, they often expose a strong sepia tone. The website itself has a sleek and elegant design. The main part of the homepage is taken up by the latest entry, where a yellow-gold entry headline is followed by the photograph and the story. The yellow-golden title 'Indian Memory Project' is displayed in graceful letters at the top of the main page; a thin yellow banner underneath features the various subpages. The right side of the main page sees black and white social media icons ('follow us'), important copyright notices, donation options, awards and other information.

Yadav's expertise in art and design clearly comes through in the web design. She is an independent graphic designer and photographer in

her early forties. Born in Britain, she returned to India during her childhood, growing up in Jaipur. At that time, she recalls, the roots of her interest in photography and personal histories were probably formed. One aspect she mentioned in one of our conversations was that she always treasured the photographs of her father, who was an amateur photographer. He passed away when Yadav was only twelve, so his photographs are a way for her to relate to and form a vision of her father. Another point she mentioned was the significance of growing up in Jaipur after her father's death, as photographs were quite important in North Indian middle-class families. Almost every family had photographs in their living room:

> The richer they are, the more photographs there are in the living room, also because they could show portraits of marriage, and each one had a story. Anybody that we went to, there were always stories: 'This was my uncle, this was my aunt, that was my grandfather'. So, my understanding of photography became contextual. It was not photographs just by themselves, but information. … I mean the photographs came with information 100 per cent. That happened then even in school. I went to an all-girls school that used to be run, was established by the Queen of Jaipur so it would have her photographs and all the delegates and the royal family and all of that. A lot of girls in my school were from royal families, so it was all around the idea. I mean Jaipur *per se* is an exoticized city, so everything about it was exotic and historical, beautiful and amazing. (Yadav, interview, 2016)

This childhood exposure to photography was not an obsession, Yadav says. These are points which she only connected in retrospect.

After school, Yadav studied graphic design and graduated from the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad. She worked for several years in print and online advertisement in both Delhi and Mumbai, and took classes in photography at Brighton University. After that, she established herself as an independent artist, curator and designer. Now living in Mumbai, she regularly curates shows, designs websites and books, is featured in exhibitions and is invited to give talks on archives and historical photography. Recalling how IMP came about, Yadav (ibid.) tells the following story:

> I actually wanted to do a book on weddings in India, but a more academic book, a photobook. When I came back from Brighton, I think that is the time that I started the Facebook photo sharing platform. Yes, I made a Facebook group called Indian Heritage Photos or something like that.

> I used to collect pictures for the book proposal and then asked specifically for wedding pictures. People are not good at instructions but the good part is that it had its own dynamics. … The book proposal didn't come through and I abandoned the idea, but nonetheless I kept thinking there was something there that I hadn't looked at. I think in 2010, I remember I was looking through the pictures again and the penny dropped because everybody who goes through the pictures on Facebook through this group, they were writing about everything else but the wedding: 'how my father went from here to there', 'so many marriages had happened', 'this was his profession', 'he had three wives', 'this is when my father bought his first car'. So it was a lot of these other things and not about the wedding …
>
> It was their own dynamics and it absolutely worked for me because certainly when they started talking about partition, polygamy, class system, profession, attire, culture, ethnicity, all of these started becoming categories in my head. The moment they became categories, I knew I could form a library and I could form an archive and that I would do it online. …
>
> Yes, that's how it started. It only excited me, it didn't take much of my time. I didn't think it was taking my time when I was writing this because it was fascinating for me. It was also something I could enjoy because I enjoy technology and I enjoyed spreading the word. I got excited about other people getting excited. … Yes, that's how it started. Three or four months later, the *Telegraph* in Britain covered it and that's when I knew that it was big.

By 2019, IMP had about 180 entries, more than 800 subjects and 3,000 keywords, more than 1.2 million views and 12,000 subscribers on Facebook. For the project, Yadav won the Innovator of the Year award at the India Today Woman Summit 2014, the Online Influencer Award from L'Oréal Paris Women Achievers 2013 and an Honorary Mention at the Austrian Prix Ars Electronica Awards 2013.

The 1947 Partition Archive

> The 1947 Partition Archive is a non-profit non-governmental organization dedicated to institutionalizing the people's history of Partition through:
>
> 1) Documenting, preserving and sharing eye witness accounts from all ethnic, religious and economic communities affected by the Partition of British India in 1947. To do this, we have created a digital platform for

> anyone anywhere in the world to collect, archive and display oral histories that document not only Partition, but pre-Partition life and culture as well as post-Partition migrations and life changes.
>
> 2) Collecting, preserving and sharing personal items and artifacts associated with the people's memory of the 1947 Partition.
>
> 3) Bringing knowledge of Partition into widespread public consciousness through [a number of creative and scholarly offline formats]. Presently, a portion of our collected works are being made available in limited capacity via our online Story Map.[8]

The Story Map is the prominent feature of the 1947PA's website. The black background sees small social media buttons at the very top, followed by a header that includes an edited version of a photograph of people migrating. The photo is cropped to integrate the 1947PA's logo on the right, and shows an unusual colour gradient including orange, a sepia tone and green. A small orange banner underneath features the various subpages. The main part of the home page is occupied by a large map of South Asia and South East Asia created from Google Maps. It features smaller and larger orange dots, indicating where oral histories have been recorded, or people migrated to or from. The map also features a window to search for stories and three orange bubbles to 'share your story', 'collect stories' or 'donate'.

When opening a single story, it appears as white letters on a black background. The stories often feature one or more small images of the interviewed person at the top, followed by his or her name in large letters and a slightly smaller listing of current residency, age in 1947, migration route and the interviewer's name. Colourful large share and like buttons ask you to share this story, followed by the actual written summary of the person's biography. Comments, feedback and discussions happen on the archive's Facebook page, which feature the same stories within the aesthetic frame as Facebook predetermines it.

The 1947PA is, like IMP, an online archive that aims at documenting the Indian past. It does so not by digitizing existing tangible material, but through recording oral histories of people who lived through partition. The result is similar to what IMP does – it disseminates the photograph of a person along with the associated biographical story of that person in online form. People can subsequently engage with this story, as well as with other users, through the archive's website and/or its Facebook page. The format is multifaceted: the 1947PA displays video recordings that it creates, stores and makes available through a number of university libraries; photographs of the interviewed person

taken during the interview; and digitized photographs that show the interviewed person at an earlier point in their life. The words written on the website are a summary of the recorded interview.

When I interned with the 1947PA in Delhi for three months in summer 2017, I met Guneeta Singh Bhalla – the founder and leader of the 1947PA – only towards the end of my term. Working mostly in the USA, Bhalla travels to India at irregular intervals. We talked about her work and future plans, but less about how the project started. However, Bhalla has given numerous newspaper interviews on how she came up with the idea and started the 1947PA. In these she always stresses key moments that led her to record and document the history of partition, and mentions several beneficial attributes of her biography.

Guneeta Singh Bhalla was born in Delhi, and moved with her family to the USA at the age of ten. She says: 'I grew up listening to stories about Partition from both sets of my grandparents, but mainly from my paternal grandparents who actually did the migration. They never really got over having to leave their ancestral home and land behind, even 50 or 60 years later'.[9] Her father's family comes from Lahore and migrated to Amritsar in 1947. As a child, Bhalla heard fragments of partition stories, but it was not until she was nineteen that her grandmother told her a more thorough story of her partition experience: 'Singh Bhalla was rapt. [O]n that day in 2000, the details of her grandmother's journey shifted something within her. She began to understand the story's significance in the history of a fractured, postcolonial India'.[10]

Nonetheless, Bhalla took up studies in physics in Florida, which she completed with a PhD. Towards the end of this period, in 2008, she acknowledges another key moment, visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial:

> [W]hen I came across the witness archives in Hiroshima, that's when it clicked. It was so powerful to hear the stories of experiencing the atomic bomb from survivors. Suddenly it was all very real and human and I felt their pain much more than watching videos of the mushroom cloud or reading written accounts of those hours that followed the dropping of the bomb. It was an immediate click for me. I knew the same had to be done for Partition. I began recording witness accounts on a hobby camcorder I always carried with me, while on a trip to India in 2009 in a small ancient town (former kingdom) in the North called Faridkot.[11]

Bhalla was also eager to record her great uncle Haravatar Singh Sodhi's story in 2009, as he was the last member of her family who was an adult at the time of partition. She visited him in Punjab:

> There was just one problem: [Bhalla had] forgotten to bring her video camera. 'He told me not to worry', she said. 'The next year, on my next visit, we would record it then. … I knew I needed to do this work. Partition is an event the world needs to know.' Sodhi passed away six months later, while Singh Bhalla was back in California. Guilt and regret seeped through her for missing her chance. 'When he died, I got really obsessed about the idea to record stories', she said.[12]

> 'I couldn't sleep that whole week … It was just like a bout of madness – an intense and completely irrational desire to put everything aside and just do this without even looking at the future, making no plans.'[13]

Back home in the USA, Bhalla followed through with her aim to record more and more stories of partition. She turned to Sikh temples and mosques in the state of California, where she had taken up a postdoc position as a physicist. She gathered a small team of students around her and got some equipment, with which they started recording stories. 'Our house turned into almost this weird little cafe, where all these people kept coming in to borrow all this equipment, and I was living with my partner at the time and he was just like what's going on?!'[14] In 2011, she registered the project as an NGO, on the advice of one of her donors. In 2013, when the project had become big, she quit her job as a physicist to manage the 1947PA full time.

The archive had recorded more than eight thousand stories by 2019. The interviews were conducted by volunteers (so-called citizen historians) and paid 'story scholars' in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the USA and other countries. The 1947PA's Facebook page has more than nine hundred thousand subscribers and likes.

Script 1: Lack and Necessity

The individual accounts of how and why these two projects were started allow for a more detailed, personal approach to the archives, and also serve, to some extent, as a legitimation as to why *these particular* archives are important and valuable. To argue for the need for digital archives *per se*, and digital archives dealing with partition or Indian memories in particular, the two women primarily employ a script of lack and necessity. Both the 1947PA and IMP state this categorically. The 1947PA states a lack of documentation of individual accounts of partition, a lack of narratives of partition beyond textbook numbers, and finds fault in the minimal attention given to this dramatic historical event. As Bhalla explains:

> I knew [Partition] was a really traumatic and large-scale event, but I never learned about it in high school here in the US. In fact, it was not even mentioned in my textbooks while in contrast we learned about the Holocaust in Europe and Hiroshima/Nagasaki for a whole semester in my World History class.[15]

The archive's corporate video, embedded in its website, transports the script of gaps, enhanced with the urgency of advancing time:

> Shockingly there exists no memorial / or public archive devoted to Partition / devoted to the memories of those whose lives were affected / There exists NO source of witness voices for us to learn from. / so we decided to create one. … Let's preserve 10,000 stories by 2017 / Together, we can preserve history, one story at a time. / And create a source of learning for generations to come. / Before it is too late. / Before the memories are forever lost.[16] [Emphasis in the original]

Repeating this script in a TED Talk in 2018, Bhalla explains:

> So that was the public memory of Partition: it was this story of ice-cold numbers and contested accounts by political leaders. Those numbers did not account for the human toll, and they did not capture hearts. Yet, we were so wed to those narratives that they had led to a lot of cross-border tensions. I wanted to know more. … There was a fear: if we did not record our history, we would build our future on a faulty and less understood history and a faulty sense of identity. And so I wanted to do something about it.[17]

Bhalla clearly communicates her motivation, the multiple voids that led her to start the archive: the lack of a place for remembrance of partition, whether in written form or in the form of a memorial or museum; the government's inability so far to install such a place; the missing voices of people who lived through partition, this first-hand oral history account that she perceives as a very powerful way of learning about the past.

Yadav does not so much stress a perceived lack in her extensive public statements, but points at a deficit when it comes to established heritage institutions' access policy (see her first account at the beginning of this chapter). She also points to the issue on her website, where she writes:

> Contextualised with narratives, the photographs & letters (contributed by people all over the world) reveal a powerful and historical palimpsest

> of a *largely undocumented society and sub-continent*. With personal images serving as evidence, each post on the archive *reveals valuable information* about people, families & ancestors, cultures, lifestyles, traditions, choices, circumstances and thereby consequences. Indian Memory Project is a personal memory of the world – a sociological and photographic history, remembered, realised and experienced by its own people.[18] [Emphasis added]

The highlighted parts of this statement refer to the gaps and deficits: society is largely undocumented (through photographs and letters) and is missing a bottom-up (photographic) history. IMP is a response to that gap and aims at satisfying the need to document memories.

Both these notions of shortcomings seem slightly exaggerated. There exist a number of initiatives that record the oral history of partition, albeit none as large in scale or as wide in recognition.[19] Written accounts of partition in fictional and nonfictional form are abundantly available.[20] Yet a distinct memorial site does indeed not exist, and the states of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh celebrate the birth of independent nations rather than publicly point to the turmoil of partition. Bhalla and the 1947PA avail themselves of this fact, and enhance their argument for the archive with a notion of time-related urgency.

Likewise, it is not true that the Indian subcontinent and its society is largely undocumented; public and private photographic collections indicate otherwise. Even regarding photographic accounts, the statement seems disproportionate. The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, for example, houses about two hundred thousand photographs, and the Alkazi Collection of Photography owns about one hundred thousand images. The India Photo Archive, the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, the national museums and the Press Information Bureau all store between several dozen and several thousand photographic images. Together, they constitute a substantial volume of photographic documents from many decades. The number of photographic documents from India increases further when adding foreign photographic archives to the list, such as British and missionary archives.[21] However, what is indeed an issue is that many of these archives are documentations of or by socially/politically important people. These photo archives are not created by or designed to represent the common people, let alone a cross-section of society. Yadav highlights this aspect, stressing that if indeed these archives exist, they are not accessible and their content is not available for view, which consequently creates the need for something like IMP.

Nonetheless, the script of a lack, as employed by both community-based archives, can be a powerful one when asking for support for the respective cases. Both Yadav's and Bhalla's idea is to create and curate online archives, for which they need material in the first place. There is a need to convince people to contribute, to fill the persistent gap. Pointing at such a lack, and indicating a moral judgement of the same, with which potential contributors can identify ('shockingly, there exists no memorial of Partition'; 'we need to reveal parts of history so far largely undocumented'), is a legitimate strategy. It draws on users' sentiments as well as on the insufficient performance of existing state institutions.

This script rests predominantly on two ideas: one is the ideal of a more democratic production of history through oral accounts and bottom-up engagement, the other the notion of the internet as a place for digital memory making.

Regarding the first idea, it is commonly known that history, conventionally, relies on written accounts stored in archives or preserved in libraries. Alternative versions of the official, constructed canon of the past rest on oral accounts. Oral history 'is as old as the first recorded history' (Ritchie 2011: 3), but the term in its current meaning was coined in the 1940s and subsequently grew in importance. Oral history projects – the collection (and analysis) of narrative interviews with contemporary witnesses or life story interviews – were, especially in Europe, conducted as bottom-up endeavours, attempting to include unheard voices: 'European oral historians … allied with political movements on the Left. They reexamined history from the "bottom up", intending to include the voices of those previously excluded from national narratives' (ibid.: 4). There was a sense of social responsibility, which can also be traced very strongly in the 1947PA and IMP. It might not be so much 'to radicalize the practice of history' (Grele 2006: 48), but a belief that current history production is insufficient, because it is a 'story of ice-cold numbers and contested accounts by political leaders'[22] (Bhalla), which needs a project that 'traces a very different history of the subcontinent from the one we read in textbooks'.[23] Oral history projects are not necessarily led by professional historians, but often include local enthusiasts, curators and archivists (Ritchie 2011). They can collect information that would not have existed otherwise, as the interviews are rich sources of first-hand historical accounts. Testimonies of eye witnesses, especially when the interviews are conducted a significant time after the narrated events, have been contested as not 'objective', and the fallibility of memory is certainly something to be acknowledged. However,

oral historians stress that a source is not more reliable just because it is written down (ibid.: 12). IMP to some extent avoids the question of the truth value of oral accounts, as it is a visual and narrative-based archive, which takes photographs[24] as the starting and material reference point for its oral history accounts.

The 1947PA, by contrast, is a straightforward oral history project. It works with volunteers ('citizen historians') and enthusiasts on small stipends ('story scholars') who are responsible for conducting interviews. They all receive some initial online training, including information on how to conduct interviews, what questions need to be asked, basic recording techniques, image composition and behavioural rules. After this online training, they are provided with a few documents that include checklists and field manuals. Thus equipped, they set out to conduct oral history interviews, which they subsequently upload to the 1947PA's server. The 1947PA is hence an archive that conducts oral history with a digital camera in an offline space, and collects these stories in a digital archive that is (at least in part) later accessible online. It makes use of technology, whose progress has always influenced oral history, not least since audio recording techniques emerged. The 1947PA did not face the challenge of converting formats (as many other oral history archives did; see Schrum et al. 2011), but made online sharing of oral history accounts an intrinsic element of its offering. It also relies on the growing willingness and eagerness of people not only to share their personal accounts of partition, but to do so online. The interaction with media and the wish to be heard makes online oral history archives an acknowledged form of sharing individual ideas and memories (Schrum et al. 2011: 509).

This relates to the second idea behind the employed script of a lack: the internet as a place for digital memory making. When IMP and the 1947PA employ online dissemination of individual accounts of the past, they recognize the internet as a place for memory making. Memories have for a long time been understood as a counterpart to history. Instead of relying on the written word, memory has multiple media and formats and implies a less authoritarian, peer-to-peer approach (Garde-Hansen et al. 2009: 8). Similar to digital media, memory seems to be a counterpart to stoic and fixed versions of history, as it is more fluid and flexible, and can be adapted and transformed. Both digital techniques and memorizing can be understood as bottom-up approaches with the potential to undermine established versions of history. Thus, it seems only natural that Joanne Garde-Hansen et al. (ibid.: 10) ask if digital memory making – combining two bottom-up approaches to the past and its formation – indicates the end of history. While they deny

this – referring to the myth of cyberculture being free from history and the presence of new powerful actors within the digital realm – it is exactly this idea of a more democratic account of the past through online memory making that digital archives rest upon.

The 1947PA and IMP do not restrict themselves to random, individual accounts of the past, but claim importance and request acceptance for their displayed ways of seeing the past. They touch upon history making when they record and disseminate alternative versions of 'standard textbook' history and employ digital memory making, with its wide appeal and large coverage. Digital media can be influential when it comes to transmission of ideas, allowing for the mediation of alternate versions of the past (and the present), for better or worse. Especially when looking at the past, oral history accounts amassed and communicated online do not necessary imply an end to historical production, but they can comprise a 'recycling of history in the form of digital memories' (Garde-Hansen et al. 2009: 11).[25] Employing the internet and social network sites as mediums bears the potential to enhance and democratize means of history production. In consequence, digital archives based on individual narratives combine oral history as an alternative means of relating to the past, and digital media as another way to circumvent top-down accounts of past events. Acknowledging a lack of diversity of voices in how the subcontinent's history is told, the 1947PA and IMP set out to fill this gap with bottom-up digital memory-making approaches. They mark the lack of verbal public statements and implicitly call for a solution – for spoken accounts and/or archives in the first place – which they provide at the same time. Resting their script on internalized beliefs in the importance of oral history and online memory making anticipates the methods these online archives employ. Oral history and digital technology complement each other effectively in this attempt to collectively and inclusively create accounts of the past.

Script 2: Access and Sharing

Related to the script of lack is the script of accessibility. Both IMP and the 1947PA make use of this script, albeit in slightly different ways and with differing intensity. The 1947PA states that it wants to 'create a source of learning for generations to come'. This ambition is explained on its website:

> [The 1947PA is dedicated to] documenting, preserving and sharing eye witness accounts from all ethnic, religious and economic communities

> affected by the Partition of British India in 1947. To do this, we have created a digital platform for anyone anywhere in the world to collect, archive and display oral histories that document not only Partition, but pre-Partition life and culture as well as post-Partition migrations and life changes. … Bringing knowledge of Partition into widespread public consciousness through [various online and offline formats]. Presently, a portion of our collected works are being made available in limited capacity via our online Story Map.[26] [Emphasis added]

The idea of sharing the gathered archived material is – at least as a script – very important. It is an essential aspect of the online archive, which draws its value from being accessible online 'for anyone anywhere in the world'. The online format is here pictured as a guarantee of 24-7 access to the gathered material, breaking existing barriers of controlled access to archival material and heritage documents.

Yadav made the notion of access and sharing even more prominent for IMP. She stated that, as a minimum, 'our history should be accessible'. As noted earlier, the website stresses the importance of revealing information and memories, and does this deliberately in an online form. In an interview (2016), Yadav adds:

> [At one point] I knew I could form a library and I could form an archive and that I would do it online, and many things prompted me to do it online and keep it free. One was that there was nothing like that in India especially and history is valuable, everybody knows that, which is why they want to hold onto it and not share. So, I decided I wanted to share and I wanted the whole world to know about it. …
>
> If there's any history that concerns India, it is going to be a part of [IMP's] Facebook page, and it really works to my benefit to be inclusive rather than saying, 'This is my project and that is your project and I will not show you'. Because that is the problem in the first place, that nobody shares information, and it's that much more valuable for some people, some people are collectors and private collectors in museums, so I was very clear that I would be very inclusive on social media. I mean entirely on the subject, not on your own brand *per se*. I think there's more merit in being more inclusive on the idea of history.

What clearly resonates in these statements – beyond a sense of conventional institutions concealing historical documents – is the idea of online publication as a solution to concealment. These online archives will, as stated, *reveal* information of and through historical documents.

If there is no way to deal internally with the problem of institutional concealment, there needs to be an external way. To put it differently, if it is impossible to get access to existing archives, there is still the opportunity of creating a similar one that will grant access. This script of granting access and allowing information to circulate freely rests on the combination of conventional notions of sharing and distribution on the one hand, and an optimistic view of the internet on the other.

Theories of distribution as reciprocal exchange and gift giving predate ideas of sharing in economic anthropology. Marcel Mauss and Bronislaw Malinowski developed these theories as early as the 1920s. They set important benchmarks for the ever-growing canon of economic anthropology. Malinowski (1922) examined the economy of exchange in the Trobriand Islands, and described the Kula exchange as a system of ritual giving and receiving, in which shell necklaces and shell bracelets are exchanged clockwise and counter-clockwise among inhabitants of the archipelago. While the objects have no economic value in themselves, they are of symbolic and ritual importance. In examining Kula exchange culture, Malinowski analysed how the bequeathing and reciprocal exchange of non-economic objects enables exchange of other commodities, and social interaction between members of the receiver's and the giver's community. Departing from this, and including examples from multiple societies in present and former times, Mauss (2002) argued in his seminal book *The Gift* that giving is practised in all societies. He states that giving a gift is usually combined with the obligation of the other to accept that gift, and the implicit anticipation of a gift in return. The idea of reciprocity is a vital element of both commodity economies and gift economies. And since giving or exchanging goods does imbue the moral, economic and legal spheres of societies, Mauss acknowledged it as a 'total prestation'. Giving has since been recognized as a total social fact, being most important economically, but also influencing and relating to all aspects of human societies.

Nurit Bird-David (1990) argued that gift giving and commodity exchange need to be enhanced by a third form of distribution – sharing. Sharing is – unlike gift giving and exchange – not characterized by reciprocity, but (as exemplified through game division among the South Indian Nayaka) an act of giving without any personal obligation of recipients towards the giver (ibid.: 192). In a similar way, James Woodburn (1998) opts for a recognition of sharing as a nonreciprocal form of giving. It is not a form of exchange, as he demonstrates again with reference to game division (here among the Hadza in Tanzania). A share is usually demanded, and sharing has neither an obligation for return nor a higher social status attached to it. It is to be seen as another economic

aspect of giving that goes beyond Marshall David Sahlins' (1981) binary distinction between reciprocity and redistribution.

More recently, the economic take on sharing has experienced renewed interest with what is commonly known as the sharing economy (see Widlok 2017). However, with reference to the aforementioned anthropological definition of sharing, the current concept of companies making sequential use of commodities is not a form of sharing at all. The existence in economic systems of car sharing or apartment sharing (through Airbnb for example) is clearly part of a commodity economy based on reciprocity (and payment). Even though the business version of a sharing economy indicates quite the contrary, sharing remains positively associated with unselfishness. The idea of a nonreciprocal, generous and equalizing form of sharing is here applied to obscure commercial logic. These forms are not nonreciprocal forms of giving, but require payment. Free-of-charge sharing forms (such as Couchsurfing or agricultural production cooperatives) usually also require some form of reciprocity, mostly in other forms of capital (for example social or cultural capital).

Consequently, there is a modification of the term 'sharing' at work. Current definitions of the sharing economy do not restrict this term to a nonreciprocal act of giving, but define the term rather broadly as a sharing of assets or services for free or for a fee (according to the Oxford Dictionary), or they subsume obtaining, sharing, swapping, trading and renting under the one term (Albinsson and Perera 2018). Sharing has not only become a buzzword in relation to business models – usually associated with online practices of providing services and communicating via a platform – but has also emerged as a keyword of Web 2.0. It conventionally meant an act of distribution, or having something in common, but within Web 2.0 the term has been extended. Sharing is now also an act of communication (John 2012). As Nicholas John (ibid.: 170) explicates, this wider notion of sharing most likely derives from sharing meant as imparting to others' beliefs or experiences, and has a history in the computational sciences. Here it is file sharing (at first closely tied to material data carriers, now more and more detached from materiality) that made use of and hence characterized the understanding of sharing. With it came the notion of endless available copies, making sharing not a zero-sum game, but one that leaves you with the same as or even more than when you started (ibid.). The term sharing, when used in the context of the internet, especially by social network sites (SNS), has been fundamentally modified. Sharing is now used synonymously with communicating via SNS or participating in Web 2.0 (ibid.: 172). It refers to such various forms of online communication as uploading

an image, commenting on a post, updating your current status or distributing an entry through wider online networks. The objects of sharing thereby not only become less precise (SNS ask their customers to 'share your world' or 'share your life'), but also get dropped altogether ('Share!'), so that sharing is used as an almost universal keyword in Web 2.0 (ibid.: 173–75).

The 1947PA and IMP cater to this meaning when talking about and requesting sharing. They ask people to 'share their stories', that is, to tell or disclose their memories, to send in their photographs or to indicate their willingness to be interviewed. This request for a share comes with the pledge to pass on information, to publish it online and to thereby make it known. It is a request for communication and a promise to do the same through their own (extended) channels. In this particular case of online archives, the share – other than online communication in general – can be read as a reciprocal exchange, as the person contributing to the archive expects a storage and dissemination of her/his memories, albeit without this being necessarily a prerequisite. Moreover, other than the conventional understanding of sharing as giving something away and thus parting with it, memories are not material content. Telling a story does not mean that one has less of that story after telling it. The reproducibility of digital files on the contrary allows for duplication without reduction. If one considers digital archives in a quantitative way at all, it is an increase rather than a decrease of the story: numbers of copies increase, as do publicity and circulation.

This leads to the second aspect that the script of access and sharing rests upon: a general positive perception of the internet as a means to communicate and circulate information. Without a positive or at least neutral assessment of what the internet can do as regards bottom-up Indian history, there would be hardly any contributions to the archive. Evaluating the internet goes back to the first wave of discussing the advantages and disadvantages of internet technology in the 1990s. In general, this saw media technology and internet pessimists or sceptics, such as Neil Postman (1993) with his popular book *The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, juxtaposing optimistic positions such as Nicholas Negroponte's (1996) in *Being Digital*. Negroponte (ibid.: 230) understood digital technology to be potentially 'a natural force drawing people into greater world harmony', and envisioned the digital age as bringing about decentralization and empowerment. The internet as the digital age's flagship medium was characterized as less restrictive, equalizing and full of communication and networking opportunities. In the bright version, it enables participation, education of the masses, diversity, liberation and empowerment (Thierer 2010). 'The optimists'

response [to the pessimists' critique of the internet] is rooted in the belief that, despite their highly disruptive nature, the Internet and new digital technologies empower and enlighten individuals and, therefore, generally benefit society' (ibid.: 71). Digital technologies and the internet bring the prospect of decentralized architectures of communication, which offer users and creators – who can fall into one as prosumers – multiple choices and options for democratic participation.

The critical voices, on the other hand, stress that the internet is not democratic *per se*, as James Bohman (2004) has demonstrated, for example. Harmony does not simply come about through the internet, and neither is web architecture a warrant for empowerment or decentralization. The developments in the last decade contradict – to quite a substantial extent – the optimists' belief in love and humanitarianism as drivers for contributing to social media (e.g. Shirky 2010). There exists a concentration of market power (even monopolies) of single companies in some sectors of news, media and communication (see, e.g., Risam 2019). In sum, it does not make sense to uncritically praise the internet or to condemn it. The internet does have its advantages as well as its downfalls, which generate optimism, pessimism, and a more middle ground of 'pragmatic optimism' (Thierer 2010) and critical assessments of power concentration and cultural changes.

It is sharing as a rather positive aspect of the internet – seen with optimism itself – upon which the 1947PA and IMP rest their digital archives. Both stress the sharing aspect of their projects, whether in the form of oral history accounts from eye witnesses to partition or as stories shared in connection with photographic cultural heritage. Hidden information and personal accounts need to become public, as this might be beneficial for the individuals sharing and receiving this knowledge, as well as society at large. It is clearly a positive account of the internet as a medium for communication and connectivity. Both IMP and the 1947PA make use of it as an available medium that gathers together a large crowd of readers and followers, and is accessible from all over the world. The notion of a sharing and empowering internet feeds into the archives' scripts of free circulation of knowledge and memories, and open access to the subcontinent's history.

In practice, not only do the two archives distribute the content gathered online without sign-up restrictions or similar features, but they also offer prevalent commenting and sharing options via Facebook, Pinterest, Reddit, Google Plus, Twitter, email, Instagram or as a direct link. Sharing as distributing and through social networking sites has become an essential asset for IMP and the 1947PA. For online archives, active engagement in social media is essential, as the sharing of these

stories creates a currency in their striving for recognition, participation and potential funding, and thus becomes a profitable transaction.

Script 3: Undermining Archival Power?

As outlined earlier, Indian archives, especially governmental ones, have a reputation for neglecting documents and granting only arbitrary access. There seems to be little or too slow practical implementation of an open access policy; government archives create the impression of randomly granting or denying access to material, which in addition is sometimes stored in poor conditions. The access policy in private collections is also often restrictive. As outlined above, Guneeta Singh Bhalla and Anusha Yadav gave the limited existence of and access to archival material as reasons for creating their online archives. As such, they drew heavily on scripts of access and sharing. When asked what they thought the reason might be for restricting access to heritage material, Yadav (interview, 2016) explained it this way:

> It's just that knowledge is power and it gives them power, which is why they won't part with it. It's nice to be secretive. It's nice – but not being generous has its faults – which is why a lot of private institutions will not share and they would rather deal with a certain class of people, elites. They only want to do shows in particular places so they're not interested in all of that. That's also a lot of classism and there's a lot of other stuff at work.

She hereby draws on archival power (see chapter 1), stressing that one of the characteristics of archives and collections is that they establish themselves as storage spaces for the memory of society. What Nora (1989: 12–13, 8) named *lieu de mémoire* is a place where memories are stored and filtered through numerous means, and history is written as a produced past based on the intellectual operation rendering it intelligible. Ordering, remembering, forgetting, restricting or allowing access and interpreting archival context are in this context the main actions involved in writing history and controlling the knowledge embedded in archives. If knowledge circulates in narrow spheres, discursive and interpretational authority can be maintained.

As shown in chapter 1, both archives and museums have in the last two to three decades changed direction, and now understand themselves as framed by the conditions of their establishment and maintenance. Experts inside and outside archives set frames for altered approaches

to accessing, understanding and using archival material, which often includes a scrutinizing of archives and/or implemented authorities, without necessarily granting an articulation of so far subordinated voices. Rethinking archives and museums brought the chance to reconsider the relationships between different stakeholders (Clifford 1997), opting for new perspectives, permanent questioning and collaborative approaches to collecting, preserving and displaying. Yet, despite broad agreement and seminal works (Macdonald 1998; Peers and Brown 2003; Phillips 2005; Shelton 2011), 'intellectual control has largely remained in the hands of the museum' (Boast 2011: 58). Yadav confirms this proposition with her aforementioned account of the archivers' meeting in India and the rejection of sharing the 'family jewels'.

Digitizing processes, particularly in combination with dissemination on the web, seem to grapple with the restricting principles of concentrating interpretative and history-producing power within archives and museums. They rather provide possibilities of knowledge circulation, which were not to be thought of in physical space. This third industrial revolution of digital reproduction offers a broadening of access and a rethinking of the definition of preserved museum and archival objects once again (Cameron 2007; Conway 2015), bearing a striking similarity to the potential loss of aura and visibility of art and historical documents that Walter Benjamin (1969) examined with regards to the second industrial revolution (see Müller 2017a).

Notions of accessibility and fostering encounters are prevalent in some European and North American digitization projects.[27] Likewise, the 1947PA and IMP argue for a break-up of visual economies embedded in archival practices. Both recognize the defining power adjunctive in established archives and collections and voice their complaints as well as making sharing a central aspect of their work. What is on the one hand due to the logics of legitimizing digital platforms through their impact – requiring a focus on sharing and commenting to accumulate users (van Dijck 2013) – is on the other hand due to the conviction of opportunities to challenge archival power. Removing tangible restrictions of access through online dissemination and the inclusive approach of creation can undermine the control of conventional institutions over heritage and history, and the 1947PA and IMP would like to make use of available options not least to this end.

But community-based archives in online spaces are necessarily in an in-between position, as they comprise both the aspects of openness ('community-based') and order ('archive'). The 1947PA and IMP are in ambiguous situations. They undermine the authority of top-down history productions of *lieux de mémoire*, but at the same time are engaged

in archival practice, which includes top-down decision making about collecting, ordering, preserving and disseminating. To preserve and to order is the core task of these archives, while at the same time they try to be as inclusive as possible and remain feasible.

This discrepancy or conflict also surfaces in the two archives' corporate videos. These videos, intended to summarize the digital archives' mission and work, also serve as a blueprint for their relation to the idea of the archive in its conventional form as comprising and representing the power to constitute (the basis of) written history.

IMP's corporate film starts with an old, greyish-brown, stained background. White flower graphics start to grow into it as gentle piano music begins to play. 'Indian Memory Project' is now written in black capital letters. 'The World's first Visual & Narrative based Archive' (the background now changes to a yellowed map of the Indian subcontinent) 'presents true stories of the Indian Subcontinent … presented by people from all over the world.' After these introductory statements, the film shows about three dozen historical photographical images, one after the other. The camera zooms in or out, moves slowly across the images. A violin sets in; the music is now emotional and powerful. Each photograph is accompanied by an inscription: 'He was the first Cricket captain to play England', 'She was a widow who dared to change her world' or 'They found new friends in Andaman'. After three and a half minutes, the greyish-brown, stained background appears again, with the discreet white flower graphics. 'These are your stories', the film tells the viewer, 'and your stories make our History. Contribute a story today. Visit www.indianmemoryproject.com'.[28]

The *words* used in the corporate video convey a distinct message: individual stories instead of canonical school or history books should be the core of making sense of the past, and IMP is an attempt (the first of this particular form) to jointly create and disseminate this version of the past, which also has particular truth value.

The 1947PA also created a corporate video, albeit with a slightly different screenplay. It starts with the same old, greyish-brown, stained background. White flower graphics are growing in. The numbers and letters '1947 ARCHIVE' appear, and a division mark separates 19 and 47. After this intro, the video starts with a short audiovisual account of an interviewee, with captions: 'I was very traumatized', Ali Shan tells the camera in a close-up, 'I was standing there not knowing what's happening. He – the gunman – was only about ten feet away. You know, he shot at me a few times. Every time he missed. So I started running'. The stained background appears again, featuring the lines of a notebook instead of the white flower graphics. A sitar sets in; and to the sound

of a rattling typewriter, letters in a congenial font – black, typewriter-like, slightly torn at the fringes – appear: '1947 marked the end of the British Rule in South Asia'. The background changes to a map, with the borders between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh highlighted in yellow. '1947 also marked the birth of India and Pakistan.' Switch back to the oldish background. 'Chaos unfolded during the transfer of power, / and the division of states along religious lines. / Millions fled at a moment's notice.' The background is now enhanced with a black and white video of people boarding trains and flocking onto platforms. 'In 1947 alone an estimated 15,000,000 people became homeless. / Making it the WORLD'S LARGEST mass human replacement.' A short interview is shown again. Zafar Afaq Ansari tells the camera, 'I feel like I'm a watered plant. So a bottle can be put here or there. I have no roots'. The sitar continues to provide the audio background. Typewriting appears again: 'Between 1 to 2 million lives were lost'. Another short interview statement, this time by a woman, Manjit Kirpal Singh: 'And I remember my mother made me sit down. There were all the bed sheets. And then I knew why. Because all these wounded people who were coming in – she had converted one place for clearing their wounds'. The longest section of typewritten text follows this account. 'Shockingly there exists no memorial / or public archive devoted to Partition / devoted to the memories of those whose lives were affected / There exists NO source of witness voices for us to learn from. / so we decided to create one.' A tabla sets in. The writing is pierced with image stills from interview situations, showing interviewers and interviewees. 'We began interviewing partition witnesses and became Citizen Historians / a grassroots VOLUNTEER movement / soon it went viral.' Several newspaper headlines float in and out. 'More than 500 people from over 20 countries signed up to become Citizen Historians / And uploaded nearly 1000 interviews in 9 languages / some were telling their story for the FIRST TIME. / Attracting MILLIONS of interactions on social media / The time has come to take this to the NEXT LEVEL. / This is where we need YOU. / Let's preserve 10,000 stories by 2017 / Together, we can preserve history, one story at a time. / And create a source of learning for generations to come. / Before it is too late. / Before the memories are forever lost. / Join the movement. / Support this campaign. BECOME A DONOR now.' The video ends with the credits, and the request to 'Share this!'[29]

With its corporate video, the 1947PA criticizes prevailing archival practices as not undertaking their collective, disseminative and memory-making obligations. These arguments make their bottom-up approach all the stronger.

The visuals used in the videos depict the 1947PA's and IMP's relation to what an archive entails. The fact that both their videos use a greyish-brown background – resembling old, stained paper (coincidentally, they even use an identical background in parts) – is a reference to archives as institutions with an obligation to deal with the past. In their visual self-portrayal, the two archives place themselves close to conventional concepts of archives, which they thereby also reinstate with a nostalgic aura of historical images and documents, enhanced through sound and fonts. IMP uses a map of India with a historical yellowish touch; 1947PA highlights the relation to the past through the created borders. Both films create an impression of 'historicity': IMP stresses the reference to old original photographs; the 1947PA uses historical film clips. They translate historicity into audiovisual material.

Furthermore, both stress the relation to memory, history and archives, firmly claiming to be the place to write 'History' (with a capital H in the case of IMP). The two projects clearly portray themselves as memory institutions and archives. They make a claim to be documenting and preserving the past, which at the same time is filtered and proposed as part of an intelligible history. With the corporate videos (as well as through their naming), both IMP and the 1947PA peremptorily demand recognition of their status as archival institutions.

Despite the stressed demand for access, communication and interaction, they here reinvent the idea of the archive as a preserving and controlling institution. They want to be an active and acknowledged part of cultural production, influencing the way national and international bodies reflect on historical issues such as partition, British–Indian relationships and the fate of individual women. Sometimes upset with the institutional inability to recognize the importance of historical events (1947 Partition Archive) or with the restrictive access policies of Indian archives and European implementations of digital possibilities (Indian Memory Project), they work to close these gaps and simultaneously challenge existing practices. Yet, at the same time, they struggle to detach themselves from archival conventions as preservers of a consensual past and constructors of acknowledged history.

Community-Based / Archives

The 1947PA and IMP are community-based online archives that emerged both from the individual circumstances of their founders' biographies, and from the wider context of historical production, archival practice and internet use. Their digital ventures concur with the general trend

of cultural production shifting towards the virtual space. They pursue their approaches at a time when existing analogue archives and museums are also entering the digital age (Parry 2010). Information on archival material and photographic collections has been made available outside the physical space of an archive or museum, demonstrating that digital archives can enable a larger plurality of voices. Digitization and web-based dissemination render new encounters possible and supposedly undermine conventional hierarchical structures, allowing 'real contact zones' (Hogsden and Poulter 2012) to emerge.

While the two mentioned archives make (in retrospect) use of their founders' individual biographies, in public statements and practices they employ three scripts. The script of absence or lack adheres to a critique of (state) practices in documenting and distributing India's past. This critique might not rest on solid ground, but the script of void and necessity rests firmly on internalized convictions that history is more democratically written when amassed in bottom-up oral history projects, and that documenting and communicating the past can be done through digital memory practices, with the internet backing participation in these newly established archives.

The belief in the internet as a democratizing entity also features in the script of access and sharing. It is internet optimism that substantiates the 1947PA's and IMP's emphasis on being inclusive and open, collecting and distributing from everybody and with everyone. The internet is taken for granted as a potentially empowering, equalizing medium, where advantages clearly outweigh potential threats. Sharing has become an important aspect of the internet, especially on social network sites. Yet they ignore the fact that the definition of sharing has changed over time; its meaning as a form of distribution without obligation of return or reciprocity has been hollowed out. Sharing, as 1947PA and IMP make use of it, retains its positive connotation, enhanced by the zero-sum characteristic that digital copies comprise. Yet, in fact, sharing has become a term used abundantly for all kinds of distribution, making it a convenient buzzword for social network sites. IMP and the 1947PA use access and sharing as a script in verbal arguments, and also successfully manage to share, in the sense of communicating and disseminating material online.

The script that is less congruent in verbal and practical argumentation is that of challenging archival conventions and archival power. While IMP and the 1947PA see issues with the current situation of what archives do and how history is constructed on the basis of this, they struggle to convert this criticism into practice. Eventually, both also aim

at becoming and started to emerge as new, additional actors in the networks of producers, consumers, objects, infrastructure and regulations constituting (digital) archives and enabling their functioning as *lieux de mémoire*. Community-based archives, like all other archives, produce, preserve and order accounts of the past, be they material or virtual. The two aforementioned online archives nevertheless strive to be archives, which they express not least visually through displaying an aura of nostalgia and creating a frame of historicity for their corporate films. Looking at their practices (the topic of the next chapter) furthermore substantiates the account that they reproduce canonical archival behaviour when executing an ample curatorship before and while publishing photographs and oral history accounts. These digital archives are quite strongly dependent devices, where archive-specific hierarchies are not abrogated through digitizing or community-created digital archives, but shifted. Decision making remains archive-intrinsic, but the actors deciding what to collect and how to make it accessible have diversified. It is now independent Indian middle-class women interfering and partaking in archival practices and historical construction, along with an even younger generation of enthusiastic volunteers and interns.

Notes

1. http://www.nehrumemorial.nic.in/ (accessed 16 May 2020).
2. http://ignca.gov.in/ (accessed 16 May 2020).
3. http://nationalarchives.nic.in (accessed 16 May 2020).
4. http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/index.html (accessed 16 May 2020).
5. https://digital.soas.ac.uk/furer (accessed 16 May 2020).
6. The National Digital Library of India (https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in/; accessed 16 May 2020) is but one current initiative, which will provide written resources and photographs. For an extensive list of online Indian heritage, see also https://directoryofarchives.wordpress.com/ (accessed 16 May 2020).
7. https://web.archive.org/web/20190624071948/https://www.indianmemoryproject.com/about/ (accessed 11 April 2021).

   Please note: The website www.indianmemoryproject.com has been relaunched in September 2019. The quotes and descriptions refer to the older version, which can be accessed through https://web.archive.org/web/20190624072036/https://www.indianmemoryproject.com/.
8. http://www.1947partitionarchive.org/mission (accessed 18 July 2018).
9. Ammara Ahmad, 'I Wanted to Change the Lack of Knowledge about Partition', *The Nation*, 17 August 2016, https://nation.com.pk/17-Aug-2016/i-wanted-to-change-the-lack-of-knowledge-about-partition (accessed 20 July 2018).
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14. Ibid.
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16. Image-film 1947 Partition Archive, published in 2013, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=ncFm4L3eMtk (accessed 16 May 2020).
17. 'Retrieving Lost Stories from the Partition of 1947', Guneeta Singh Bhalla at TEDx Ashoka University, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_QYPCDuFPk (accessed 16 May 2020).
18. https://web.archive.org/web/20190624071948/https://www.indianmemoryproject.com/about/ (accessed 16 May 2020).
19. For example, the Citizen Archive of Pakistan, Ashis Nandy and the CSDS, The Partition Museum, Bolti Khidki.
20. See http://southasia.ucla.edu/history-politics/independent-india/partition-india-bibliography/ for an extensive list (accessed 16 May 2020).
21. To mention just a few of the larger ones: the Fürer-Haimendorf Archive (https://digital.soas.ac.uk/furer-haimendorf; 14,500 photographs), the British Library (http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/index.html; 15,000 photographs), the Basel Mission/Mission 21 (http://www.bmarchives.org/; 39,000 images) and the SLUB Dresden (http://www.deutschefotothek.de/cms/weltsichten.xml; 8,000 photographs) house large archives of historical photographs from the subcontinent (all accessed 16 May 2020). Yadav also knows of a large number of (not only photographic) Indian archives and compiled these in an online 'directory of archives' (https://directoryofarchives.wordpress.com/; accessed 16 May 2020).
22. Guneeta Singh Bhalla at TEDx Ashoka University, www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_QYPCDuFPk (accessed 16 May 2020).
23. Sandip Roy in conversation with Anusha Yadav, https://indianexpress.com/audio/the-sandip-roy-show/anusha-yadav-on-the-indian-memory-project/5250575/ (accessed 16 May 2020).
24. The truth value of photographs has its own history of contestation. See, for example, Edwards 1992, 2011; Theye 1989; see also the introductory chapter.
25. We also need to acknowledge that while the digital can enhance the notion of democratization, it also enhances the notion of 'misuse', questionable truth value and ease of alternation.
26. http://www.1947partitionarchive.org/mission (accessed 16 May 2020).
27. See chapter 1; see also Müller 2017b.

28. 'Celebrating Six Years of Indian Memory Project', available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o58rGJ1vl50 (accessed 16 May 2020).
29. 'Witness Voice: Untold Stories of South Asia's Partition', available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncFm4L3eMtk (accessed 3 November 2020).

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