Four As in archive: access, artefact, activism, affect

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Archives, Art and Activism:
Exploring Critical Heritage Approaches to Global Societal Challenges
Symposium 3-5 September 2015
University College London

What has it got to do with me?
Four As in archive: access, artefact, activism, affect

Waste pickers in São Paulo, Brazil use artefacts as symbolic resources in the formation and articulation of their individual and collective identity. At the COOPAMARE (Cooperative of Autonomous Paper, Cardboard, Scraps and Reusable Materials Collectors) urban graphic objects contribute to their space and place of practice within an informal urban design enclave. This paper – call it a foray into a world where archives and art are alien, but activism not – will introduce and explain how access, artefact, activism and affect are linked in the struggle for esteem and identity in the city's urban poor. It will show how waste pickers are defined by the symbolic resources they adopt and adapt to provide dignity in the face of hostility from their local more affluent neighbours. As citizens with little access to institutional resources, and in a context of social diversity, the question we might ask is who archives their ‘artefacts’ in plight as ‘members’ of society doing our dirty work.
Urban visual culture
What waste pickers do in São Paulo

Collect, select, separate, compress, commercialize ... material
Where waste pickers do what they do

Pinheiros, São Paulo
Where waste pickers do what they do

Pinheiros, São Paulo
Where waste pickers do what they do
Where waste pickers do what they do
The significance of the fish

1980 Church establish Community Centre for Street Sufferers in Glicério neighbourhood

1985 Association of Paper Pickers

1989 The first cooperative of recyclable waste pickers form Cooperative for Autonomous Waste Pickers of Paper, Cardboard, Scrap, and Reusable Material (COOPAMARE) — 20 waste pickers

1990 Association for Waste Pickers of Paper, Cardboard and Recyclable Materials in Belo Horizonte by Street Pastoral of the Archdiocese of Belo Horizonte

1999 National Movement of Recyclable Waste Pickers

Political conflict with São Paulo Municipality for right to circulate with hand carts

Now over 500 cooperatives with 60,000 members
Access, artefact, activism
... affect
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Symbolic elements...
...shared concrete things, or some socially stabilized patterns of interaction or customs that encapsulate meanings or experiences for people...
cultural artefacts... books or films... painting

These become *symbolic resource* when ...
(a) Used by someone for something
(b) In the context of a transition that results in a new socio-cultural formation, it entails a significant re-contextualisation of the symbolic element to address the problem opened up by a rupture and to resolve it.

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Symbolic resources assist in ‘the way [waste pickers] think about themselves, their communities, their environment, their pasts, their aspirations and their futures.’
Thank you