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## EXPERTS' OPINIONS ON THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY ARCHIVES ON ARCHIVAL SCIENCE, ARCHIVAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE ARCHIVAL PROFESSION\*

**Abstract.** The article analyzes interviews with 12 experts from Poland and abroad on their perceptions of the impact of community (independent) archives on archival science as an academic discipline, on heritage institutions (especially public archives) and on the archival profession. **The purpose of the work** is to present the partial results of the project entitled «The impact of independent community archives». **Methodology.** Data were collected through semi-structured qualitative interviews, which were then analyzed using a priori codes (based on literature and previous interviews with community archivists), supplemented with new codes — new meanings observed during the iterative analysis performed by two team members. **Scientific novelty.** The article is the first study analyzing expert opinions on the impact of community archives, comparing views of different types of experts (e.g. academics, advocates for community archives, active or former community

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archivists). **Prospects for further studies.** Future research should also analyze the contributions of people from other cultures, continents and archival traditions, and should be based on sources that directly describe the influence of community archives on archival science and archival practice. **Conclusions.** Experts pointed to the significance of community archives in reshaping the foundations of archival science (e. g. terminology, archival value). Experts from Anglophone countries and Chile emphasized the relationship of community archives to decolonization of archives and critical archival studies. Experts from continental Europe focused on the acceptance of the existence of grassroots archives and their distinct archival practices. Some experts noted the impact on archival education. Experts variously assessed the effect on the practice of public archives.

**Key words:** community archives; independent archives; archival science; archival profession; archives impact.

«So, community archives make you  
feel the power of archives, but in other positions».  
*Claudio Ogass Bilbao*

«I can't imagine, really, a critical archival studies discipline  
as exists today without community archives being at the heart of that».  
*Andrew Flinn*

### *Introduction*

In recent years, community archives (independent, grassroots archives) have become increasingly important elements of the archival landscape, or more broadly, the institution of heritage in Poland and other countries, particularly those in the Anglophone world. Despite the significant and ever-growing presence of the subject in scholarly literature, the term «community archive» remains ambiguous and lacks a universally accepted definition. The difficulties with definitions appear to be a common challenge among various authors who write about community archives<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For example: *Flinn A.* Archival Activism : Independent and Community-led Archives, Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions // *InterActions : UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*. 2011. Vol. 7. № 2. <https://doi.org/10.5070/D472000699>; *Gilliland A., Flinn A.* Community archives. What are we really talking about. CIRN Prato Community Informatics Conference 2013 : Keynote. URL: [http://www.cnr.infotech.monash.edu.au/assets/docs/prato2013\\_papers/gilliland\\_flinn\\_keynote.pdf](http://www.cnr.infotech.monash.edu.au/assets/docs/prato2013_papers/gilliland_flinn_keynote.pdf) (accessed: 18.01.2025); *Caswell M.* Toward a survivor-centered approach to records documenting human rights abuse : lessons from community archives // *Archival Science*. 2014. Vol. 14. № 3–4. P. 307–322. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-014-9220-6>; *Sheffield R.* Community Archives // *Currents of Archival Thinking*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition; ed. by H. MacNeil, T. Eastwood. Santa Barbara, 2017. P. 351–376; *Welland S., Cossham A.* Defining the undefinable : an analysis of definitions of community archives // *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*. 2019. Vol. 68. № 8–9. P. 617–634. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-351-98888-8\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-351-98888-8_10)

This article, along with the research project it describes, focuses on Polish community archives. The authors are rooted in the Polish archival tradition, where the term «archiwum społeczne» is commonly employed. It is not precisely equivalent to the English term «community archive». In this context, the term «społeczny» covers aspects that refer to or are a product of society, created and owned by the society. It encompasses individuals who work selflessly for the benefit of society, as well as initiatives that are organized at the grassroots level, independent of state involvement<sup>2</sup>.

The term «independent community archive» in this article refers to a grassroots archive that is neither a family archive nor privately owned. Instead, it is a widely accessible archive that does not belong to the state. In practice, independent community archives in Poland are typically managed by third sector organizations, such as foundations and societies, and, less frequently, by informal groups. In a broader sense, common in Poland but not applicable to this article or the research project discussed, community archives can be established by public libraries or community centers. The focus of such archives typically encompasses local history, including the history of the local community, as well as records pertaining to specific social groups, such as minorities or professional groups. Additionally, these archives may concentrate on particular events or notable individuals<sup>3</sup>.

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doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-04-2019-0049; *Poole A. H.* The information work of community archives : a systematic literature review // *Journal of Documentation*. 2020. Vol. 76 № 3. P. 657–687. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-07-2019-0140>; *Czarnota T.* Komu są potrzebne społeczne archiwa? // *Archiwista Polski*. 2011. Vol. 64. P. 15–33; *Ziętal K.* Wstęp // *Archiwistyka społeczna / Fundacja Ośrodka KARTA*, ed. by K. Ziętal. Warszawa, 2012. P. 7–13; *Wiśniewska M.* Postmodernizm a archiwa społeczne // *Archiwista Polski*. 2013. Vol. 70. P. 25–29; *Ziętal K.* Archiwa społeczne w Polsce // *Toruńskie Konfrontacje Archiwalne*. Vol. 4 : Nowa archiwistyka : Archiwa i archiwistyka w ponowoczesnym kontekście kulturowym / wyd. Naukowe UMK, ed. by W. Chorążyczewski, W. Piasek, A. Rosa. Toruń, 2014. P. 71–76; *Ziętal K.* KARTA i archiwa społeczne // *Biuletyn eBIB*. 2014. Vol. 151(6). P. 1–6. URL: <https://ebibojs.pl/index.php/ebib/article/view/349>; *Wiśniewska M.* Digital community archives — selected examples // *Archiwa – Kancelarie – Zbiory*. 2015. Vol. 6(8). P. 221–236. <https://doi.org/10.12775/AKZ.2015.008>.

<sup>2</sup> Społeczny // *Słownik języka polskiego PWN*. URL: <https://sjp.pwn.pl/szukaj/spo%C5%82eczny.html> (accessed: 18.01.2025).

<sup>3</sup> Polish definitions and characteristics of community archives are included in the following publications, among others : *Ziętal K.* Wstęp // *Archiwistyka społeczna*, ed. by K. Ziętal. Warszawa, 2012. P. 7–9; *Wiśniewska M.* Postmodernizm a archiwa społeczne // *Archiwista Polski*. 2013. Vol. 70. P. 27; *Czarnota T.* O archiwach społecznych i ich znaczeniu dla polskiego dziedzictwa narodowego i tożsamości lokalnej // *Archiwa – Kancelarie – Zbiory*. 2014. Vol. 5(7). P. 127–128. <https://doi.org/10.12775/AKZ.2014.005>; *Wiśniewska M.* Archiwum społeczne — archiwum emocji // *Toruńskie Konfrontacje Archiwalne*. Vol. 4 : Nowa archiwistyka : Archiwa i archiwistyka w ponowoczesnym kontekście kulturowym, ed. by W. Chorążyczewski, W. Piasek, A. Rosa. Toruń, 2014. P. 78; *Ziętal K.* Archiwa społeczne w Polsce // *Ibid.* P. 71–76; *Giziński P.*

This article is part of a three-year research project titled «The Impact of Independent Community Archives» (also known as the IMPACT Project), funded by the National Science Centre in Kraków, which was launched in October 2023. This project conducts empirical research on contemporary independent community archive initiatives to understand their effects on both the communities they serve and the individuals who manage them. The goal of this article is to present partial results from the project that examines expert opinions from various countries regarding the impact of community archives on archival science, the landscape of public archival institutions, and the archival profession.

The empirical research conducted to date on the impact of community archives has primarily originated from the USA and the UK, focusing predominantly on their social and affective effects. In 2006–2007, the Community Archives Development Group conducted a study called «The impact of community archives». Using 46 surveys and 10 detailed case studies, the project showed a range of positive impacts of community archives on individuals and communities, for example: providing opportunities for lifelong learning; engaging different groups of people; empowering communities and encouraging a sense of belonging to a community; improving «livability» and safety of the area<sup>4</sup>. In 2016, Caswell et al. studied the affective impact of the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) on academic members of this community, reporting a phenomenon called «representational belonging» and a significant affective response from respondents of South Asian origin<sup>5</sup>. In 2022, the issue of the affective impact of community archives was complicated by Gabiola et al. who pointed out possible retraumatisation of people engaged in community archives activities and discussing the right to forget and be forgotten<sup>6</sup>.

The impact of community archives on the field of archival science and the professional landscape, encompassing both archival institutions and

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Przegląd pomorskich archiwów społecznych — podsumowanie projektu gdańskiego Oddziału Stowarzyszenia Archiwistów Polskich // Stowarzyszenie Archiwistów Polskich. 2016. P. 1–2. URL: <http://sap.archiwapomorskie.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/raport-z-archiwistyki-spoecznej.pdf> (accessed: 18.01.2025); *Michałowska J.* Archiwum społeczne — czym jest i jak zacząć je prowadzić? // Podręcznik dla archiwistów społecznych / Centrum Archiwistyki Społecznej, ed. by M. Pankowska-Dowgiało. Warszawa, 2023. P. 12–23.

<sup>4</sup> The impact of community archives : Summary of independent research commissioned by the Community Archives Development Group (CADG) // Community Archives Development Group. 2007. URL: <https://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/resource/summary> (accessed: 18.01.2025); *Flinn A.* The impact of independent and community archives on professional archival thinking and practice // *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping : A reader* / Facet Publishing, ed. by J. Hill. London, 2010. P. 154.

<sup>5</sup> *Caswell M., Cifor M., Ramirez M. H.* To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing : Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives // *The American Archivist*. 2016. Vol. 79. № 1. P. 56–81. <https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.79.1.56>.

<sup>6</sup> *Gabiola J., Brilmyer G., Caswell M., Zavala J.* It's a Trap : Complicating Representation in Community-Based Archives // *The American Archivist*. 2022. Vol. 85. № 1. P. 60–87. <https://doi.org/10.17723/2327-9702-85.1.60>.

the profession itself — has not yet been empirically researched. Although this topic is mentioned in literature, it remains scattered and lacks comprehensive exploration. In 2010, Andrew Flinn addressed this issue by analyzing the impact of community archive practices on the perception of archival value. He explored who holds custody within the archive and how the relationships between community and conventional archives are shaped<sup>7</sup>. Josie Wales critically examined the relationships, along with the potential growth opportunities, between the «official and unofficial» heritage sectors in Great Britain<sup>8</sup>. For the US context, Zavala et al. used interviews with founders, staff and volunteers at 12 Southern California community archives to examine the diverse models of independent archival practice and how they diverge from and challenge standard practices in the field, particularly regarding custody and governance<sup>9</sup>. Also discussing the North American landscape and the influence of community archives on professional archival practice, Jeannette Bastian highlights university archives, which, along with input from the communities, have created focused community collections<sup>10</sup>. Even though the publications on how community archives should transform traditional archival practices are well-known and influential<sup>11</sup>, we still lack comprehensive research data regarding their actual impact on traditional archives and the field of archival science.

The article below outlines the goals of the IMPACT Project and its various components. It details the methodology employed to gather expert opinions on the impact of community archives, presents the research findings, and discusses both the results and limitations of the study. It also highlights potential directions for future studies.

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<sup>7</sup> Flinn A. The impact of independent and community archives on professional archival thinking and practice // *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping : A reader* / Facet Publishing, ed. by J. Hill. London, 2010. P. 154.

<sup>8</sup> Wales J. Community archives and the archival community : A thesis submitted to Leiden University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA History : Archival Studies // University of Leiden. 2014. URL: <https://studenttheses.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2624542/view> (accessed: 20.02.2015).

<sup>9</sup> Zavala J. et al. A process where we're all at the table : community archives challenging dominant modes of archival practice // *Archives and Manuscripts*. 2017. Vol. 45. № 3. P. 202–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2017.1377088>.

<sup>10</sup> Bastian J. A. Radical Recordkeeping : How Community Archives Are Changing How We Think About Records // *Libraries and Archives in the Digital Age* / Palgrave Macmillan, ed. by S. Mizruchi, Cham, 2020. P. 69–82. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33373-7\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33373-7_7).

<sup>11</sup> For example: Caswell M. Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Human Rights Archives : Lessons from Community-Based Archives // *Archival Science*. 2014. Vol. 14. № 3–4. P. 307–322. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-014-9220-6>; Eadem. Urgent Archives + : Enacting Liberatory Memory Work / Routledge. London–New York, 2021.

### *The IMPACT Project*

«The Impact of the Independent Community Archives» project was launched in October 2023 and is scheduled to last for 36 months. A total of four investigators participate in the project, each employed at different stages. The Primary Investigator oversees the project from beginning to end, while the Student Investigator is involved for the first 30 months. Investigators 1 and 2 contribute during three distinct periods related to the case impact analysis, which encompasses three community archives. Since the project is still ongoing, this article does not present the complete results<sup>12</sup>.

The IMPACT project builds upon the research into Polish community archives conducted by Magdalena Wiśniewska-Drewniak. Her previous research project, conducted from 2016 to 2019, entitled «Community archives in Poland — a multiple case study», was an empirical investigation of eight community archives. The study aimed to provide a comprehensive description of these archives and to address key questions regarding their nature, functioning and the collections they maintain<sup>13</sup>.

«The Impact of the Independent Community Archives» project builds upon the previous project within the information layer, aiming to provide a more comprehensive description of additional Polish community archives. The primary goal of the IMPACT project is to analyze the influence of community archives on their creators and co-creators, as well as on their immediate surroundings, which include the users and recipients of their activities. The project specifically examines the affective (emotional) impact of the archives, as well as their social implications. In contrast to the previous study, the number of cases has been reduced to three. This reduction facilitates a more in-depth analysis and allows for a richer contextual understanding of the archives being studied.

The project comprises three parts (phases), each outlining specific research tasks conceptually.

*Phase One*, which involves a Primary Investigator and a Student Investigator, focuses on constructing the theoretical and analytical framework. This phase includes the development of a list of potential impacts of community archives, which will be utilized to analyze the empirical materials collected in Phase Two. The impact list (codes) was created based on three primary sources:

– Subject literature (Polish and foreign), with a particular focus on languages other than English, including German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Croatian;

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<sup>12</sup> To keep informed of the project's progress, visit the website [www.impact.umk.pl](http://www.impact.umk.pl).

<sup>13</sup> *Wiśniewska-Drewniak M.* Inaczej to zniknie. Archiwa społeczne w Polsce : wielokrotne studium przypadku. Toruń : Wyd. Naukowe UMK, 2019.

– Previous interviews with community archivists (conducted by M. Wiśniewska-Drewniak in an earlier research project and published by the Centre of Community Archives)<sup>14</sup>;

– Interviews conducted with experts from Poland and other countries explore their perspectives on the impact of community archives, which is the central theme of this article.

The outcome of Phase One is a list of codes (the community archive impact) referenced above. This list serves as a valuable tool for facilitating the empirical data analysis in Phase Two. Once it is supplemented and the project is completed, the list will be published in both Polish and English in an open research data repository. This will enable other researchers to access it for their analyses of the impact of archives, particularly community archives.

*Phase Two* involves conducting empirical case studies through visits to three distinct community archives. During these visits, we will interview community archivists, co-creators of the archives, donors, users, and other recipients of the activities associated with the community archive. Purposive sampling of cases will consider the diversity of archives, including factors such as topics, the age of the initiative, size, and characteristics of the collections. For each individual case, a report will be generated (referred to as the «thick description» of the archive), containing detailed information about the archive. Additionally, an impact analysis of the community archive will be performed. This analysis will involve two additional researchers, ensuring that this research task is carried out by a total of four individuals. The analysis will first focus on individual coding and then proceed to common coding of the qualitative interviews, utilizing the code list developed during Phase One. The researchers will pay special attention to the new codes, those not included in the existing list, which will facilitate the gradual expansion of the list. The procedure, which begins with contacting the community archive and concludes with the creation of a detailed description and narrative regarding its social and affective impact, stemming from the meaning negotiations among the four researchers, will take approximately eight months for each archive. This process will be repeated three times.

*The Phase Three* analysis, conducted solely by the Primary Investigator, involves a cross-examination of the impact of the studied community archives. This phase also emphasizes the contextualization of the results, particularly in relation to both Polish and international literature. The goal of this stage is to achieve a deeper understanding of the impact that contemporary Polish grassroots archives have on the individuals involved and their immediate surroundings.

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<sup>14</sup> Ambasadorzy Archiwistyki Społecznej // Centrum Archiwistyki Społecznej. URL: <https://cas.org.pl/stefa-inspiracji/ambasadorzy-archiwistyki-spolecznej/> (accessed: 18.01.2025); Archiwiści społeczni o sobie // Ibid. URL: <https://cas.org.pl/stefa-inspiracji/archiwisci-spoleczni-o-sobie/> (accessed: 18.01.2025).

An important assumption of this project is, on one hand, the continuation of the encyclopedic approach to researching Polish community archives, specifically, the creation of detailed descriptions. On the other hand, it aims to deepen the studies on community archives and to foster a direct understanding (rather than merely describing) of these archives and the complex contexts that influence their function and character. What's crucial is that the project takes into account the unique local conditions in Poland regarding the operation of independent community archives. This includes factors such as archive law, the tradition and history of grassroots archives in Poland, the role of the Center of Community Archives, and the availability of public funding for cultural activities of this nature. At the same time, the project aims to enhance the global understanding of community archives and their impact on individuals, at least to a certain extent. The project leader is confident that this initiative will not only promote Polish community archives and archival studies but also contribute to the advancement of research on the impact of community archives and the methodology of empirical research in this field. This development will be significant not only in Poland but also in other countries, particularly those outside the Anglophone sphere, which is disproportionately represented in existing literature.

### ***Expert interviews — methodology and sources***

It is important to emphasize once more that this article does not present the results of the entire IMPACT project. Instead, it focuses solely on a small segment, specifically, the expert interviews, which constitute a portion of Phase One. This segment is instrumental in establishing the theoretical and analytical framework that underpins the data collected during the analysis of the empirical case studies. Furthermore, the article addresses only one specific type of impact, as requested by the experts: the influence on archival sciences and the effects on the professional sphere of archival activities, including public archives operations and the archival profession. This section focuses exclusively on the methodology employed for conducting expert interviews.

The interviews focused on how experts from various countries (12 individuals) perceive the impact of community archives. The analysis of their experiences and opinions helped to enhance the list of potential impacts of community archives, which was also developed based on existing literature and interviews conducted with community archivists to date.

The experts interviewed for this study are individuals engaged in community archive research, advocates for community archives, current or former community archivists, or those who have participated in the co-creation of community archives. Many experts have combined the roles mentioned above. The selection of respondents was carried out to ensure a diverse representation of their knowledge regarding community archives,

encompassing research, advocacy, and practice. Additionally, we aimed to achieve geographic diversity that reflects the varying characteristics of grassroots archives across different regions of the world. Six participants were from Poland, aligning with the project's focus on Polish community archives. The remaining six individuals hailed from various countries: one from England, one from the USA, one from Northern Ireland (currently employed in the USA and possessing extensive international experience), one from Germany, one from Croatia, and one from Chile (currently affiliated with a university in England). An important factor in selecting respondents was their willingness to participate in the project, as well as their linguistic availability, specifically, whether they spoke a language understood by the researchers (English or Polish). Unfortunately, this limitation affected the study's scope (more on that later).

The interviews were partially structured. The researchers agreed upon an interview scenario; however, it was not intended to be followed rigidly, particularly regarding the order of questions (aside from beginning with the general question) or the precise wording of the questions. Instead, it served as a guideline for the topics to be discussed with the respondents. The first question was a general inquiry concerning how the respondent perceives the impact of community archives. Its primary aim was to encourage the expert to identify the various types of impacts they observe, thereby contributing to the development of a typology of community archive impacts. The scenario included questions regarding the specific types of community archive impact, which were defined in advance by the authors of the study based on their prior desk research. The types of impact identified in this study include: the effect on the local community (specifically, the community related to the archive, including minorities and professions); the influence on community archivists; the repercussions for broader society (beyond the group directly associated with the archive); and the impact on archival science and professional practice, encompassing heritage professionals and heritage institutions. The final question, although not a direct component of the IMPACT project analysis, was included as a supplementary inquiry due to the intriguing nature of the topic. This article addresses the answer to this very question.

The interviews were conducted by the authors (Primary Investigator and Student Investigator) either face-to-face or online during a video meeting. The majority of interviews were conducted between March and July 2024, with one additional interview taking place in November 2024. Most interviews lasted between 20 to 40 minutes, with two notable exceptions: the shortest interview took just 12 minutes, while the longest exceeded 70 minutes. All interviews were recorded, with the consent of the participants, in either audio or video format. These recordings were subsequently converted to audio format, transcribed, and analyzed qualitatively using a qualitative data analysis support program.

It is important to note that, although 12 expert interviews were conducted during this stage of the study, only 11 of them were analyzed for the purposes of this article. The initial interview was a pilot interview (performed with Małgorzata Pankowska-Dowgiało). During this session, the impact of community archives on archival science, as well as on public archives and professional archivists, was not addressed. This question was added subsequently, following the completion of the pilot interview.

The analysis of the interviews involved multiple readings and an exploration of the impacts highlighted by the experts, following an iterative process. This was conducted using the code list generated earlier, which outlined the impacts of community archives identified through prior desk research. The authors focused on exploring new meanings (impacts) that are not found in the existing literature or in preexisting interviews with community archivists. This approach enabled enhancement of the code list.

This type of research, which involves direct contact with respondents, raises important ethical concerns as well. There is no ethical committee to support and regulate research involving human participants at the faculty where the IMPACT project is conducted (Faculty of History, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń)<sup>15</sup>. Thus, the guidelines from the Sociologist Ethics Code were applied throughout the research process. Although the research itself is not inherently sociological, the Code is sufficiently general to apply to studies involving people conducted in other disciplines<sup>16</sup>. However, the subject matter is not particularly sensitive and the group of respondents is not especially susceptible to manipulation. Therefore, the study presents a low level of potential ethical concerns. The authors place special emphasis on obtaining informed consent from the respondents, ensuring clarity regarding the nature of the interview and its potential uses, including the possibility of depositing the data in an open research data repository. The respondents provided written consent, and they were also given the opportunity to anonymize their responses; however, none chose to do so.

### *Findings*

At the outset of the findings section, the authors provide brief descriptions of the interviewees, emphasizing the sources of their expertise

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<sup>15</sup> This issue was also described here: *Wiśniewska-Drewniak M., Lowry J., Kravchenko N.* Maybe in a few years I'll be able to look at it : a preliminary study of documentary issues in the Ukrainian refugee experience // *Archival Science*. 2023. Vol. 23. P. 265–266. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-022-09407-1>.

<sup>16</sup> Kodeks Etyki Socjologa Uchwalony przez Walne Zgromadzenie Delegatów Polskiego Towarzystwa Socjologicznego dnia 25 marca 2012 r. // *Polskie Towarzystwo Socjologiczne*. 2012. URL: <https://pts.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/kodeks.pdf> (accessed: 30.12.2024).

related to the topic of community archives. This context enhances the reader's understanding of the quotes from these specific experts in the subsequent sections of the article. The authors then discuss the impact of community archives in a narrative format, allowing the experts' voices to resonate through intentionally broad quotations.

As much as possible, and despite the differences in terminology, the authors aimed to quote the respondents in their original form. It is particularly important to highlight the terminological differences among the phrases «archiwa społeczne» in Polish, «community archives» in English, and «Freie Archive» in German. The distinction of the German term is particularly noteworthy, as it primarily pertains to the archives of social movements from the 1960s. This includes movements such as anti-fascist, peace, women's and LGBT+ rights, environmental advocacy, and those focused on the third world<sup>17</sup>. Other terminological challenges include the distinctions between the English terms «archival science», «archival studies» and «archivistics». However, the authors are unable to address these differences here. Although the authors recognize the distinctions between these terms, they are treated as synonyms here for the sake of narrative simplicity.

### *Interviewees*

As part of our research, interviews were conducted with the following individuals (listed in alphabetical order):

Jürgen Bacia — German political scientist and archivist; in 1985, he co-founded the Archive for Alternative Literature in Duisburg (Afas — Archiv für alternatives Schrifttum)<sup>18</sup> and has been its director since 1986; he also has a publication record on German free archives<sup>19</sup>;

Michelle Caswell — American academic, professor in the Department of Information Studies at University of California, Los Angeles; she is a co-director of the UCLA Community Archives Lab<sup>20</sup>; in 2018, she co-founded the South Asian American Digital Archive<sup>21</sup>; she has an extensive and highly

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<sup>17</sup> Bacia J. Freie Archive Als Gedächtnisorte Der Neuen Sozialen Bewegungen // Hamburger Journal Für Kulturanthropologie. 2020. Vol. 12. P. 27–28. URL: <https://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/hjk/article/view/1607>.

<sup>18</sup> Afas — Archiv für alternatives Schrifttum. Afas Website Home Page. URL: <https://afas-archiv.de/> (accessed: 20.01.2025).

<sup>19</sup> For example: Bacia J., Wenzel C. Bewegung bewahren : Freie Archive und die Geschichte von unten / Archiv der Jugendkulturen. Berlin, 2013; Bacia J. Freie Archive Als Gedächtnisorte Der Neuen Sozialen Bewegungen // Hamburger Journal für Kulturanthropologie. 2020. Vol. 12. P. 27–48.

<sup>20</sup> UCLA Community Archives Lab // University of California Los Angeles. URL: <https://communityarchiveslab.ucla.edu/about/> (accessed: 20.01.2025).

<sup>21</sup> South Asian American Digital Archive. SAADA Web Site Home Page. URL: <https://www.saada.org/> (accessed: 20.01.2025).

impactful record of publications on, among others, community-based archives, especially from the US perspective<sup>22</sup>;

Waldemar Chorążyczewski — Polish academic, professor in the Department of Archival Studies and Records Management at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń; he also has a publication record on community archives, especially focusing on their impact on archival science as a research discipline and on the cultural landscape<sup>23</sup>;

Tomasz Czarnota — Polish academic, professor in the Department of Archival Studies and Auxiliary Sciences of History at Marie Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin; he has an extensive publication record on community archives in Poland, including their presence in research and archival education<sup>24</sup>;

Andrew Flinn — English academic, professor in the Department of Information Studies at University College London; he is a vice-chair of Community Archives and Heritage Group which aims to support and promote community archives in the UK and Ireland<sup>25</sup>; he has an extensive and highly impactful record of publications on community archives, especially from the British perspective<sup>26</sup>;

<sup>22</sup> For example: *Caswell M.* Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Human Rights Archives : Lessons from Community-Based Archives // *Archival Science*. 2014. Vol. 14. № 3–4. P. 307–322. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-014-9220-6>; *Eadem.* Seeing Yourself in History : Community Archives and the Fight Against Symbolic Annihilation // *The Public Historian*. 2014. Vol. 36. № 4. P. 26–37. <https://doi.org/10.1525/tpb.2014.36.4.26>; *Caswell M., Cifor M., Ramirez M. H.* To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing : Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives // *The American Archivist*. 2016. Vol. 79. № 1. P. 56–81. <https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.79.1.56>; *Brilmyer G., Gabiola J., Zavala J., Caswell M.* Reciprocal Archival Imaginaries : The Shifting Boundaries of «Community» in Community Archives // *Archivaria*. 2019. Vol. 88. P. 6–48. URL: <https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/13695>; *Caswell M.* Urgent Archives : Enacting Liberatory Memory Work / Routledge. London–New York, 2021.

<sup>23</sup> *Chorążyczewski W.* Archiwa społeczne jako fenomen kulturowy // *Archiwa organizacji pozarządowych w Polsce / UMCS-NDAP*, ed. by T. Czarnota, M. Konstankiewicz. Warszawa–Lublin, 2015. P. 9–22.

<sup>24</sup> For example: *Czarnota T.* Komu są potrzebne społeczne archiwa? // *Archiwista Polski*. 2011. Vol. 64. P. 15–33; *Idem.* Problemy polskich archiwów społecznych za granicą // *Arkhivy Rossii i Pol'shi : istoriya, problemy i perspektivy razvitiya*, ed. by L. Mazur, J. Łosowski. Yekaterinburg, 2013. P. 145–160. URL: <http://elar.urfu.ru/bitstream/10995/19625/1/arp-2013-11.pdf>; *Idem.* Archiwa społeczne w badaniach i dydaktyce uniwersyteckiej w Polsce // *Archiwistyka społeczna / Fundacja Ośrodka KARTA*, ed. by K. Ziętał. Warszawa, 2012. P. 40–46; *Idem.* Archiwistyka społeczna w nauce i dydaktyce uniwersyteckiej oraz zmiany w nauce zachodzące pod jej wpływem w latach 2005–16 // *Archiwa społeczne. Diagnoza i wyzwania / Fundacja Ośrodka KARTA*, ed. by A. Józwick, K. Ziętał. Warszawa, 2017. P. 94–119.

<sup>25</sup> Community Archives and Heritage Group. CAHG Web Site Home Page. URL: <https://www.communityarchives.org.uk/> (accessed: 20.01.2025).

<sup>26</sup> For example: *Flinn A.* Community Histories, Community Archives : Some Opportunities and Challenges // *Journal of the Society of Archivists*. 2007. Vol. 28. № 2. P. 151–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00379810701611936>; *Flinn A., Stevens M.,*

Anne Gilliland — American academic (born in Northern Ireland), professor in the Department of Information Studies at University of California, Los Angeles; her research is highly inter- and transnational and concentrates on issues such as human rights, migration, and community archives<sup>27</sup>;

Claudio Ogass Bilbao — Chilean archivist and academic based in the UK, preparing his PhD at University of Liverpool; from 2013 to 2022 he was a head of University of Chile Student Federation Archive (AFECH — Archivo de la Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Chile), documenting the Chilean student movement<sup>28</sup>;

Małgorzata Pankowska-Dowgiało<sup>29</sup> — Polish archivist and an employee of the Center of Community Archives in Warsaw, a cultural institution dedicated to supporting community archives in Poland<sup>30</sup>. In her daily work, she interacts

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*Shepherd E.* Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy and the Mainstream // *Archival Science*. 2009. Vol. 9. № 1–2. P. 71–86. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-009-9105-2>; *Flinn A.* The impact of independent and community archives on professional archival thinking and practice // *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping : A reader / Facet Publishing*, ed. by J. Hill. London, 2010. P. 145–174; *Idem.* Archival Activism : Independent and Community-led Archives, Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions // *InterActions : UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*. 2011. Vol. 7. № 2. <https://doi.org/10.5070/D472000699>.

<sup>27</sup> For example: *Gilliland A., Flinn A.* Community archives. What are we really talking about. CIRN Prato Community Informatics Conference 2013 : Keynote. URL: [http://www.ccnr.infotech.monash.edu.au/assets/docs/prato2013\\_papers/gilliland\\_flinn\\_keynote.pdf](http://www.ccnr.infotech.monash.edu.au/assets/docs/prato2013_papers/gilliland_flinn_keynote.pdf) (accessed: 18.01.2025); *Gilliland A., Štefanac T.* Independent Community Archives : Challenging the Status Quo of Private and Public Archives // *Atlanti*. 2018. Vol. 28. № 1. P. 207–215; *Ibidem.* Post-x : Community Based Archiving in Croatia // *Community Archives, Community Spaces. Heritage, Memory and Identity / Facet Publishing*, ed. by J. Bastian, A. Flinn. London, 2020. P. 165–84.

<sup>28</sup> For example: *Ogass Bilbao C.* ¿Aquí archivamos la memoria del movimiento estudiantil? : Valor e importancia del Archivo de la Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Chile (2008–2015) // *Aletheia*. 2015. Vol. 6. № 11. URL: [https://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/art\\_revistas/pr.6978/pr.6978.pdf](https://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/art_revistas/pr.6978/pr.6978.pdf); *Ibid.* Los Archivos de la represión en Chile : ausencias, hallazgos y paraderos posibles // *Hilos Documentales*. 2021. Year 4. Vol. 3. № 6. URL: [https://sedici.unlp.edu.ar/bitstream/handle/10915/132272/Documento\\_completo.pdf-PDFA.pdf?sequence=1](https://sedici.unlp.edu.ar/bitstream/handle/10915/132272/Documento_completo.pdf-PDFA.pdf?sequence=1); *Ogass Bilbao C., Smith R., Riethof M., Redden A.* Preserving Memories of Cultural Resistance in Chile : The Archival Process of Tallersol's Poster Collection // *Displaced Voices*. 2023. Vol 3. № 2. P. 108–118. URL: <https://www.livingrefugeearchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Preserving-Memories-of-Cultural-Resistance-in-Chile-Bilbao-et-al.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> As mentioned above, this expert participated in the pilot interview and was not asked about the impact of community archives on archival science and public archives and archivists, and is therefore not quoted in this section of the article.

<sup>30</sup> Centrum Archiwistyki Społecznej. CAS Web Site Home Page. URL: <https://cas.org.pl/> (accessed: 20.01.2025).

with community archivists and has previously spent many years involved with the largest Polish independent archive, the KARTA Center<sup>31</sup>. Additionally, she is the editor of the community archivist handbook published in 2023<sup>32</sup>.

Monika Płuciennik — Polish archivist and researcher currently employed at the Gdańsk University Archive. She actively participates in initiatives that support community archivists, organized by the local Pomorze (Northern Poland) division of the Society of Polish Archivists and the Stanisław Flis Foundation «Archiwa Pomorskie»<sup>33</sup>;

Tamara Štefanac — Croatian archivist and curator at the National and University Library in Zagreb. Her research interests and publication records include topics related to Croatian community archives and documentation of the Croatian diaspora<sup>34</sup>;

Arkadiusz Więch — Polish academic and local historian affiliated with the Archivistics and Quantitative Methods Laboratory at Jagiellonian University in Kraków. As an academic teacher he teaches courses on community archives, among other subjects;

Katarzyna Ziętał — Polish archivist and director of the Center of Community Archives. She has previously spent many years at the largest Polish independent archive, the KARTA Center, where she led the Community Archive Observatory. Additionally, she is an author and editor of numerous publications related to Polish community archives<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Ośrodek KARTA. KARTA Web Site Home Page. URL: <https://karta.org.pl/> (accessed: 20.01.2025).

<sup>32</sup> Podręcznik dla archiwistów społecznych / Centrum Archiwistyki Społecznej, ed. by M. Pankowska-Dowgiało. Warszawa, 2023. URL: <https://cas.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Podrecznik-dla-archiwistow-spolecznych-CAS.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> For example: Baza «Archiwa Pomorskie» // Fundacja im. Stanisława Flisa «Archiwa Pomorskie». URL: <https://archiwapomorskie.pl/baza-archiwa-pomorskie/> (accessed: 20.01.2025); Konferencje dla archiwistów społecznych // *Ibid.* URL: <https://archiwapomorskie.pl/konferencje-dla-archiwistow-spolecznych/> (accessed: 20.01.2025); V konferencja «Przyszłość pamięci. Archiwa społeczne na Pomorzu : Inspiracja — Rozwój» // *Ibid.* URL: <https://archiwapomorskie.pl/events/v-konferencja-przyszlosc-pamieci/> (accessed: 20.01.2025).

<sup>34</sup> For example: Gilliland A., Štefanac T. Independent Community Archives : Challenging the Status Quo of Private and Public Archives // *Atlanti*. 2018. Vol. 28. № 1. P. 207–215; *Ibidem*. Post-x : Community Based Archiving in Croatia // *Community Archives, Community Spaces. Heritage, Memory and Identity* / Facet Publishing, ed. by J. Bastian, A. Flinn. London, 2020. P. 165–84.

<sup>35</sup> For example: Archiwistyka społeczna / Fundacja Ośrodka KARTA, ed. by K. Ziętał. Warszawa, 2012. URL: [https://cas.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Archiwistyka\\_spoleczna\\_podrecznik.pdf](https://cas.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Archiwistyka_spoleczna_podrecznik.pdf); Archiwa społeczne w Polsce : Stan obecny i perspektywy / Fundacja Ośrodka KARTA, ed. by K. Ziętał. Warszawa, 2016. URL: [https://cas.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Archiwa\\_spoleczne\\_w\\_Polsce\\_Stan\\_obecny\\_i\\_perspektywy.pdf](https://cas.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Archiwa_spoleczne_w_Polsce_Stan_obecny_i_perspektywy.pdf); Archiwistyka społeczna : Diagnoza i wyzwania / Fundacja Ośrodka KARTA, ed. by K. Ziętał. Warszawa, 2017. URL: <https://cas.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/archiwistyka-spoleczna-diagnoza-i-wyzwania.pdf>; Ziętał K.,

Almost all the experts interviewed by the authors had published papers on community archives, which were analyzed for their potential impacts as part of the IMPCT project. At first glance, the task of inquiring about these experts' perceptions of the impact of community archives may appear redundant. However, the interviews were conducted to update and supplement information from previously published papers, the oldest of which are nearly 20 years old. Secondly, not all expert opinions can be published, as some are merely opinions and speculations rather than established scientific facts. Consequently, these cannot be included in scientific papers. And thirdly, the authors aimed to gather the opinions of experts who, without a doubt, possess extensive knowledge about community archives, yet may not have published papers on their impact, this is particularly true within the Anglophone community.

### ***The impact on basic archival notions and archival research***

The most frequently cited impact of community archives on archival science, as noted by experts, is the effect on the fundamental principles of this discipline — essentially shaking its very foundations. Michelle Caswell, renowned for her significant contributions to the field of critical archival studies<sup>36</sup>, emphasizes that community archives dismantle traditional Western archival theory. She argues that these archives should be viewed as products of historical processes rather than fixed entities. This perspective invites a critical examination of the fundamental axioms and terminology of archival theory, provided that community archival practices are acknowledged as legitimate and valid:

*I think that if we take the theories and practices that are developed in minoritized identity-based communities seriously, it completely dismantles all of dominant Western archival theory and causes us to rethink it, first of all, to locate it historically and contextually rather than seeing it as this ahistorical neutral practice. If we think about community archives, again, take their theories and practices seriously, we see that dominant Western archival science is rooted in white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, systems of oppression, colonialism. And so it uncovers and historicizes that tradition, but also it pushes back against it. So we can no longer have a singular definition of what is a record or what is an archive or what is preservation or what is description or how to do those archival functions if we are to take community-based practices as legitimate and serious and reflections of the communities*

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Melon M. Strategia wzmacniania trwałości zbiorów społecznych // Centrum Archiwistyki Społecznej. 2023. URL: [https://cas.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Strategia-trwalosci-zbiorow-spoecznych\\_CAS.pdf](https://cas.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Strategia-trwalosci-zbiorow-spoecznych_CAS.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> More about Critical Archival Studies — see for example: Caswell M., Punzalan R., Sangwand T. K. Critical Archival Studies : An Introduction // Journal of Critical Library and Information : Special Issue on Critical Archival Studies. 2017. Vol. 1. № 2. <https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i2.50>.

*and cultures from which they emerge and not just some haphazard practice that was cobbled together by a group of amateurs. I think that was perhaps the dominant attitude 15, 20 years ago, and that has shifted, thankfully, but it really does cause us, I think, to rethink all of the core concepts that we have learned. And by we, I mean people who are trained in the dominant Western tradition, which I was*<sup>37</sup>.

Similar observations on the acceptance of community archives as relevant archival practices are made by Claudio Ogass Bilbao. He emphasizes that the archival profession must acknowledge community archives, which are evolving and will continue to transform the field of archivistics. Furthermore, he highlights that professional archivists are not always the most qualified experts in archival science. In this context, he refers to the concept of the *archival multiverse*<sup>38</sup>, a diverse array of archival worlds, cultures, and contexts, each of which is real and shaped by historical and social factors:

*I like, for example, this new concept or this new idea that we are living in the archival multiverse, which is a concept I really engage with. (...) I think that it's a good demonstration of the impact of community archives in archival science, in the archival profession. It is the recognition that these community archival practices are not amateur. We, as professionals, we do not know everything about archival stuffs. For that reason, we need to embrace community archives rather than avoid them. It is the reality. It's something that is happening and it's something that is going to happen throughout the future. It is not going to stop because we want it or not. That is why it is important to engage with community archives, to learn about distinct kinds of archival practices and ideas*<sup>39</sup>.

C. Ogass Bilbao highlights the aspect of decolonization within archivistics, particularly in relation to community archives. This perspective examines the discipline and its current state through a historical lens, emphasizing that traditional archives have primarily served as tools for exercising power and control. In contrast, grassroots archives facilitate a reconfiguration of power dynamics between archives and individuals, prompting us to reconsider the very foundations of the field:

*[Community archives] invite us, as archivists, to understand a new perspective, to understand this archival movement from below. (...) I think*

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<sup>37</sup> Caswell M. Interview. 06.05.2024.

<sup>38</sup> For example: Gilliland A. Archival and Recordkeeping Traditions in the Multiverse and Their Importance for Researching Situations and Situating Research // Research in the Archival Multiverse / Monash University Press, ed. by A. Gilliland, S. McKemmish, A. Lau. Clayton, Victoria, 2016. P. 31–73.

<sup>39</sup> Ogass Bilbao C. Interview. 17.07.2024.

*that we have not reflected deeply on this, but this is a huge contribution to changing the approach. Now we are not talking about, well, the rights of archives of the State, of the Church, of the richest people, of the upper classes. We are talking about the power of archives of communities, of people, from below. (...) And this should be also a starting point to make a huge revision of our past principles and ideas. Archival science, like it or not, it is a narrative from the State. It is a narrative that contributed to colonization, to imperial powers in the past. (...) The States regularly used these records to create knowledge to control people, to control territories and things like that. Having this in mind, maybe, we, as archivists, need to reflect that this new focus on the archival movement from below is an immense gesture of decolonization. Just the fact of talking about or studying community archives mean a huge change in our position, in our focus and approach. We, as archivists, have put our eyes and minds in the archival discipline from below, the ideas and practices made by the marginalized and underrepresented groups in society. I think this perspective should promote more reflection about decolonization leading to a stronger reflection about our past as discipline (...)*<sup>40</sup>.

A. Gilliland observes the influence of community archives, among other factors, in the way they compel the profession to reconsider the traditional «archival constants». This includes terms such as «record» and «archive», as well as the nature of expertise in archives and the manner in which it should be recognized. Moreover, she stresses the differing approaches to cooperation between records creators and archives, stemming from the existence of community archives. This creates a more participative relationship:

*instead of classic ideas about provenance, how do we work participatively? (...) [T]he shift in language from custody to stewardship is a really important one. How do we not act like a vacuum cleaner and suck everything into our space, but think about how documentation thrives in its native location? But we can help to maybe broker some of that in some way. We can give some of the technical expertise and mellow our theory also*<sup>41</sup>.

At the same time, A. Gilliland highlights that the impact of community archives and archivalistics is most significant in the USA. The primary reason for this is the decentralization of the field of archives, characterized by the absence of a central authority to regulate archival practices. Additionally, the archival profession is notably open, accompanied by a diverse range of archival education programs. She also highlights the significant role that certain communities' traumas play in public discourse in the United States and emphasizes how community archives can be instrumental in the healing process:

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Gilliland A. Interview. 09.05.2024.

*(...) there's a lot of, I think, collective trauma, there's a lot of collective political guilt in the United States. So community archives address both of those things, both the sense, the growing awareness of how problematic US history has been for certain populations, but also those populations that often have experienced enormous hurt from those behaviors, wanting to be able to express that hurt, to express their identity, to have it recognized, and to have their past not only recorded and recognized, but used as a basis for repair going forward. And repair in the sense of trying to fix some of the continuing hurtful, damaging narratives, but also literally financial repair, emotional repair, educational repair as well<sup>42</sup>.*

A. Gilliland also expresses the opinion that, in common law countries, the impact of community archives on the field and the profession can be greater than in civil law countries. In the latter, archives, archivists, and archival education are largely subject to legal regulation, which diminishes the potential for such counter-influence to occur<sup>43</sup>. T. Ștefanac also highlights the differences in this regard that arise from the legal system of each country:

*[The impact of community archives] Depends on the country, depends on the legal system where that archive is situated. In common law countries, it's quite different than in civil law countries. That's, again, really different than Sharia or other kinds of laws. That really shapes not just the landscape of the country where the archive is, but the possibilities of that archive<sup>44</sup>.*

Simultaneously, the perspectives of Polish experts, along with tangible changes in Poland's heritage landscape, indicate that there is potential for community archive-inspired reforms in civil law countries as well. It may be less about the distinction between civil law and common law countries and more about the strictness of legal regulations concerning archives, archivists, and archival education. In Poland, although public archive practices are strictly regulated, there are no guidelines governing which institutions or organizations can designate themselves as archives. The term «archive» carries no legal implications, and the profession of archivist remains largely unregulated, much like archival education at the university level.

Several experts referenced the diverse methods and practices of community archives in their discussions, highlighting their flexibility in addressing the unique requirements and specifics of materials collected by grassroots archives, while diverging from traditional «official» archival practices. In the opinions of M. Caswell and C. Ogass Bilbao, as quoted above, there is a recognition of these practices as alternative methods for maintaining archives,

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<sup>42</sup> Gilliland A. Interview. 09.05.2024.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ștefanac T. Interview. 05.07.2024.

rather than viewing them as inferior or amateurish approaches. M. Płuciennik observes:

*community archivistics show how flexible and necessary for adaptation a multitude of archival practices or rules of operation, execution of archival practice are*<sup>45</sup>.

T. Czarnota echoes this sentiment, highlighting that the varying methods of record collection and the distinct nature of state and community archives result in different approaches to arrangement and description. To a certain extent, this has now been recognized as an equally valid archival practice:

*It is through the unique origin, form, and content that the collections [of community archives] differ from those characteristic of state archives. Therefore, the arrangement and description methods (...) must be distinct. Textual records hardly dominate this context, do they? Photographs, audio recordings, and even ephemeral materials are more prevalent in this context. (...) However, specific differences must be preserved, as it is essential to maintain the unique characteristics of the collections in each case; this nature varies slightly from one instance to another. So, you couldn't... Fortunately, no one would attempt to strictly follow a classical methodology for processing collections, as established in state archives. While this approach is effective in that context, it is not suitable for transplanting into the reality of community archive collections (...). Here, we may not be observing a direct impact on archivistics, but rather a significant emergence of diverse voices advocating for equal rights. This includes various solutions, distinct information models, descriptive frameworks, and access methodologies that differ from those we have become accustomed to in recent years*<sup>46</sup>.

J. Bacia also observes the distinct nature of materials collected in free archives. This uniqueness necessitates unconventional archival practices, which archivists in free archives can share with their counterparts in traditional archives:

*The majority of the material in free archives consists of unconventional stuff. Cataloguing unconventional documents requires an unconventional approach. Archivists in free archives often have this unconventional approach. Their colleagues in traditional archives often do not have this knowledge. Cooperation and exchange of experience is a win-win-situation for both sides*<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Płuciennik M. Interview. 19.03.2024.

<sup>46</sup> Czarnota T. Interview. 27.03.2024.

<sup>47</sup> Bacia J. Interview. 18.07.2024

W. Chorążyczewski emphasizes that community archives compel us to reconsider and reassess the conventional tools employed in archivalistics. This includes terminology and the criteria for archive selection, which were originally developed for state archives and are simply ineffective for community archives:

*So many of these terminology stereotypes and established language simply do not align with a grassroots approach to the archives. Several times, I have encountered the issue of value assessment (...). While these [academic] criteria [for archive selection] are noteworthy, but exclusively when applied to a state archive that is tasked with collecting comprehensive materials. (...) We select items based on their uniqueness and their informational value, among other factors, which, let's face it, may not hold significant importance when we discuss community archives<sup>48</sup>.*

T. Czarnota highlights the phenomenon of the anthropologization of archivalistics, which is also linked to community archive activities. This shift represents a transformation in our perspective on archives, moving from a predominantly materialistic view to one that emphasizes people and society:

*Currently, our perspective on archivalistics has evolved to embrace a more anthropological approach. This shift emphasizes viewing archivalistics not merely as a collection of statements on operational methods, but as an active process. We focus on how to enhance these methods and apply them effectively to facilitate access to archival information<sup>49</sup>.*

This, in turn, according to T. Czarnota, would influence the reformulation of the subject matter, the objectives, and the division of archivalistics as a field of study.

In a similar tone, A. Więch discusses «reinvigoration» of archivalistics, made possible by the emergence of community archives:

*This change I've observed over the years reveals that archivalistics is not merely about... documents (...) rather, archivalistics is not a static field; it is, in fact, very much alive. I believe that, largely due to community archives, archivalistics is not a dead field of study; rather, it is a vibrant and evolving discipline that is continuously shaping, existing and functioning in our society. It is a highly individual and unpredictable phenomenon (...)<sup>50</sup>.*

A. Flinn observes that the changes occurring in archivalistics stem from various interconnected aspects related to community archives:

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<sup>48</sup> Chorążyczewski W. Interview. 08.05.2024.

<sup>49</sup> Czarnota T. Interview. 27.03.2024.

<sup>50</sup> Więch A. Interview. 20.11.2024.

*It's kind of hard to differentiate between the impact the community archives, community archives thinking from the sort of questioning or post-modern turn, from questions around taking post-custodialism into new areas, the social justice and critical archive thinking, particularly participatory practices. So there's a whole range and strand of different approaches that many of which have synergies between them<sup>51</sup>.*

A. Flinn expressed the view that recognizing community archives and their role within the archival landscape significantly influences our understanding of archivistics as a discipline. This recognition affects various aspects, including archival selection, value, professionalism, and the overall role of the archive. He clearly articulated that he views the impact of community archives as highly significant and formative for critical archival studies:

*[It] has had a huge, potentially huge, impact on the way we think about archival thinking in the profession. So, all sorts of ideas about appraisal, around ephemera, around valuing, around the boundaries being between professionalism and non-professionalism and what the hell that means, the importance of archives to people's lives in terms of the stories that they tell and how those stories, if they're not reflected back to them in other collections, you know. How that kind of representation happens and doesn't happen and how it matters. I think, all those questions, community archives has been hugely, hugely significant in broadening out. I can't imagine really a critical archival studies discipline as exists today without community archives being at the heart of that<sup>52</sup>.*

A. Flinn also observes that community archives not only contain the records maintained within them but also serve as a driving force at the heart of the communities' interests:

*the idea of archives not only on communities, but for communities, by communities — that spirit, I think, is at the centre of a new archival thinking. One that de-centres the professional and, to some extent, de-centres the academic focus<sup>53</sup>.*

A. Flinn also observes, as part of this narrative, that community archives have influenced the decentralization of professionalism and academia in discussions about the nature of archives and their relationship with communities:

*Although obviously there has been a huge connection between people working in academic fields of archival studies and community archives*

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<sup>51</sup> Flinn A. Interview. 14.05.2024.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

*particularly in the UK and America. But I think one of the things that it's done is de-centre that professionalism and the academic framing of what archiving is and has put it into community-led, community-owned spaces*<sup>54</sup>.

W. Chorążyczewski, in turn, demonstrates that community archives and their practices of collecting diverse materials blur the previously sharp distinctions in Poland between archival materials, library collections and museum exhibits. This convergence has implications for the fields of archival studies, library studies, and museum studies<sup>55</sup>. It is through community archives, as noted by W. Chorążyczewski, that we recognize the important fact that the creators of archival materials are not solely institutions or prominent individuals; rather, they also include communities. This insight significantly broadens the scope of archive studies<sup>56</sup>. T. Czarnota emphasizes the significance of community archives, which are increasingly prevalent in the practice of public archives and archival science. He highlights the importance of acknowledging non-state archive resources<sup>57</sup>.

K. Ziętał has also observed this process occurring in Poland. There is a notable shift from the negation to the recognition of community archives as a legitimate phenomenon within the heritage landscape. Furthermore, these archives are increasingly acknowledged as a significant subject within archival studies, which is gaining popularity:

*in the beginning, community archival studies was, in a sense, denied. There were various uncertainties regarding whether this is any kind of archival studies in general, are these even archival materials? After all, community archives cannot manage these collections; they lack the necessary resources... Consequently, there was significant doubt: Is it even real? Perhaps it was merely a fabrication... (...) [Since 2015] these questions have become more tangible: How does it integrate into the national archive holdings? For instance, how is it positioned? (...) I believe we are now at the next [stage], where interest in this division of archival studies is evident. It is increasingly present at the most significant archive conferences. Not to mention the fact that when we discuss the archival studies of everyday life, particularly in the private sphere, we often find that community archives have simply become an integral part of this archival studies*<sup>58</sup>.

From the perspective of community archives as a subject of study within the field of archival studies, W. Chorążyczewski intriguingly highlights their potential to serve as laboratories, or «proving grounds», that allow us to

<sup>54</sup> Flinn A. Interview. 14.05.2024.

<sup>55</sup> Chorążyczewski W. Interview. 08.05.2024.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Czarnota T. Interview. 27.03.2024.

<sup>58</sup> Ziętał K. Interview. 21.03.2024.

observe the natural, vernacular approaches people take toward creating, as well as selecting, organizing, and describing archives:

*[C]ommunity archives serve as excellent proving grounds (...) for observing archive-related behaviors among individuals. (...) They resemble origins, akin to revisiting a time when someone first created an archive without any prior knowledge of the process. (...) This perspective allows us to comprehend why the emphasis on a subject-related order emerged in archives long before the provenance order that we recognize today. The focus on the matter arises naturally. Humans perceive the order of matter as logical. It is the sole primal source of order. You can understand this through the study of [community archives]. We can observe the origins of this teamwork; we engage with it<sup>59</sup>.*

### ***The impact on archive education***

Another impact of community archives on the field of archive studies, as highlighted in the interviews, is the shift in how archivists are trained at the university level. T. Czarnota observed that Poland has experienced significant advancements in this area, with the topic of community archives increasingly gaining attention at universities. This surge in interest is attributed to the growing body of research focused on this phenomenon:

*[I]n the meantime, it has grown and matured. These are not isolated topics or directions; rather, they represent entire courses dedicated to this phenomenon. Perhaps, if the current educational structure permits, there may even be entire specializations focused on community archives. Actually, fifteen years ago, it was not entirely possible. Simply because we lacked sufficient knowledge about this movement<sup>60</sup>.*

A. Więch also highlights his experience as an academic instructor and the shift in students' attitudes toward the subject of community archives and grassroots archival activities:

*I will admit, there was some resistance from the students (...). Today, there is an official course known as Community Archivistics, and over the years, I have observed a notable change in the students themselves. This means that, for them, archives are no longer merely institutions — such as state archives or church archives. Instead, it has become evident that they can encompass various associations, (...) including local memory halls (...). So, [students] suddenly began to recognize that as archivists, they are not limited to working in traditional institutions like state archives. They can also engage locally or even on a larger scale. They have the opportunity to function as community*

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<sup>59</sup> Chorążyczewski W. Interview. 08.05.2024.

<sup>60</sup> Czarnota T. Interview. 27.03.2024.

*archivists, collaborating with their communities and realizing their own potential. (...) Moreover, it turns out that even if they do not work directly in their profession, the existence of community archives allows them to pursue their passions. I have observed a significant change among the students; they have truly opened up (...), they now express a desire to conduct interviews, which is no longer a surprising notion for them. Previously, they would ask, «Really? Interviews? Oral history? What does that have to do with archives?». However, I recall that in the very beginning, it was quite challengin<sup>61</sup>.*

J. Bacia also highlights that free archives are present in the education of future archivists in Germany, primarily through The Archives School in Marburg:

*This archive school has included a seminar in its study program about the importance of free archives and their collections. At least an excursion to an independent archive is also part of the study programme. By this the next generation of traditional archivists is well informed about the importance of free archives<sup>62</sup>.*

M. Caswell also emphasizes that the inclusion of the topic of community archives in archival education across various areas of the curriculum is crucial:

*I think in order to be most effective, education about community archives can't be siloed in one class. It has to be infused in the entire curriculum. And I think that's something that UCLA does really well. So (...), the Intro to Archives class, (...) it's not just about the dominant Western record-keeping tradition. There are community perspectives that are built within that class, in the description class, in the oral history class, in the community engagement class. In all of the classes, there is some element of community-based practices that are addressed so that by the time the students get to the community archives class, it's not seen as different or separate or siloed from just archival practice. It's seen as just another form of archival practice. And I encourage that. I think that transformation has to happen. Otherwise, you get students who learn very rigid definitions and practices and boundaries, and then they go to community archive sites and actually can do harm because they go and say you're doing it all wrong, rather than saying you're doing it differently because the dominant way does not meet your needs<sup>63</sup>.*

### ***The impact on traditional archives and archivists***

A particularly intriguing effect of community archives is their influence on official archival practices and the role of professional archivists. Some

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<sup>61</sup> Więch A. Interview. 20.11.2024.

<sup>62</sup> Bacia J. Interview. 18.07.2024.

<sup>63</sup> Caswell M. Interview. 06.05.2024.

respondents indicated that they have recently become more open and sensitive. M. Pluciennik observed an increasing support for public archives in relation to community and private ones. Although she does not explicitly label it as such, these activities can be interpreted as a shift towards more participatory archives<sup>64</sup>:

*(...) the community archives movement also caused the archive doors to open. Generally, archives have become increasingly socially sensitive. When it comes to assistance in archival methodology, and providing access to documents, as well as supporting archival initiatives and community archivists, along with private individuals who possess materials but may not even identify as «community archivists». It is moving towards greater social openness in all these archival institutions<sup>65</sup>.*

O. Bilbao highlights the delicate nature of the relationship between public and community archives, emphasizing the importance of respecting the decisions and autonomy of community archives:

*I think one of the most important things about community archives is that the person, people, or communities who create them do it because they have a political and ethical position in life. And I think that is quite valuable because this political and ethical principles or standard marks all the archival procedures from arranging to outreach. And we must learn about how to describe [archival materials] including the community, including their perspective, and respecting autonomy, self-determination. For example, there are some archives who do not want to look for state-based funding because they really believe in their autonomy, and they do not care about the State. And we need to understand this phenomenon well<sup>66</sup>.*

A. Flinn defined as *profound* the impact of community archives on the archival landscape in the UK, particularly regarding the collaboration between public archives and communities. He highlighted the transition from public archivists' desire to possess materials related to these communities to a partnership model that empowers communities to manage their own heritage. This shift is closely linked to the concept of the participatory archive. A. Flinn asserts that, in this regard, professional practice is completely transformed:

*if I compare the conversations that were being had about the role of community archives within the archival ecology and environment in the UK, from now to 25 years ago, and particularly reflecting on those people within*

<sup>64</sup> Huvila I. Participatory archive : towards decentralised curation, radical user orientation, and broader contextualisation of records management // Archival Science. 2008. Vol. 8(1). P. 15–36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-008-9071-0>.

<sup>65</sup> Pluciennik M. Interview. 19.03.2024.

<sup>66</sup> Ogass Bilbao C. Interview. 17.07.2024.

*professional practice, the space is utterly transformed. It would be very difficult to find people, particularly in local authority or higher education frameworks, who weren't trying to think about how they could support or work with community archives in their area, whether it's a subject area or a local area, without trying to take it up, take those materials over. So that shift from wanting to represent community by taking in collections to working hand-in-hand with communities to support them in creating their own collections and holding their own collections up until which point they feel they can't or whatever other changes. But that general shift in attitude to being at best ambivalent, perhaps suspicious of archival activities that weren't happening within the framework of a mainstream funded professionalised archive to an acceptance and working with those communities, I think, has been profound, really<sup>67</sup>.*

M. Pluciennik asserts that community archives and their public activities enhance the accessibility and openness of state archives in Poland:

*[C]ommunity archives serve as an incredible source of inspiration for engaging in public work (...) and community initiatives, as they are inherently socially sensitive. As a result, they demonstrate that mutual support and action can be achieved in this manner. I believe it is important to note that, in the past, such support was not as widely promoted. Additionally, I believe that it is a feature (...) of the archival community that, by nature, archivists tend to be loners. This indicates that integration is not an inherent process for them. Here, community archives demonstrate not only that you can achieve this, but also that you can do so in a satisfying manner<sup>68</sup>.*

J. Bacia, however, argues that independent archives in Germany have had limited impact on traditional archives. But he observes that, due to the presence of free archives, traditional institutions are increasingly attentive to materials produced by social movements and have become more responsive to these issues:

*I would say that independent archives have not really had any huge impact on professional archival practice in public archives. Okay, traditional archivists are sensitized for the problems they have by collecting materials from the new social movements. Some traditional archives observe the groups of the new social movements a little more closely, because they are interested in building up their own collections here and there. But mostly they are not very successful. And they often simply don't have the time for such a job<sup>69</sup>.*

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<sup>67</sup> Flinn A. Interview. 14.05.2024.

<sup>68</sup> Pluciennik M. Interview. 19.03.2024.

<sup>69</sup> Bacia J. Interview. 18.07.2024.

In a similar vein, W. Chorążyczewski observes that the increasing popularity of community and family archives in Poland is prompting a shift in the attitudes of public archives regarding their collection policies (their «sensitivity»). They are moving away from a sole focus on synthetic and general materials, occasionally turning their attention towards specific materials related to individuals and personal matters, something that had not occurred previously:

*We must see this together with the contemporary movement of family archives. It's all about what they [state archives] used to leave behind. Today, although this perspective is evolving.... [State] archivists are increasingly embracing materials that previously did not conform to established standards, those lacking the quality of being synthetic, a characteristic that older archivists may still yearn for. I recall this myself: if we possess statistics on drunkenness or disease, then why should we maintain files on individual cases, right? And this is no longer the case; we increasingly collect these items from the bottom up. I believe that it is the result of the impact of the community archive movement. The separation of these family and personal initiatives (...) is not straightforward, particularly regarding grassroots initiatives. I believe these initiatives have also altered the sensitivity of state archivists<sup>70</sup>.*

In her interview, M. Płuciennik clearly emphasizes increasingly frequent collaborations between public and community archives and the significant role of public and local libraries<sup>71</sup>. Cooperation between community archives and archives was also emphasized by K. Ziętał, who observed a mutual inspiration arising from this collaboration<sup>72</sup>. In turn, J. Bacía provided examples of the collaboration between an independent Afas archive in Duisburg and the city archives concerning the transfer of archival materials:

*[T]here are examples of a division of labour. For example, the city-archive of Duisburg recently has donated the estate of a citizens' initiative to the Archiv für alternatives Schrifttum (afas). Another example is the very extensive collection of Internationales Frauen-Friedens-Archiv (International Women- und Peace-Archive). For ten years it was in storage in the city-archiv of Oberhausen. Then it was given to afas because it is in the right context there<sup>73</sup>.*

Štefanac notes that she observed a positive relationship between community and state archives, characterized by a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and experience:

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<sup>70</sup> Chorążyczewski W. Interview. 08.05.2024.

<sup>71</sup> Płuciennik M. Interview. 19.03.2024.

<sup>72</sup> Ziętał K. Interview. 21.03.2024.

<sup>73</sup> Bacía J. Interview. 18.07.2024.

*I've seen actual examples of impact, and I was really glad to see it, because the professional community understood very well that they are in contact with the connoisseurs, you know, with persons who are really knowledgeable about the documentation of that community, about the records and resources. And they were open enough to learn from them, and that was, these examples were really a great one. And in turn, some of the community archivists were open enough to learn from the professionals about the basics of collecting, of arranging, of the description. These were the good examples, because impact went positively in both ways<sup>74</sup>.*

Both J. Bacia and A. Flinn highlight the relevance of grassroots archives within the interests of professional archivist associations. J. Bacia also highlighted the establishment of the task force dedicated to the new social movement archives in Germany:

*[I]n the year 2008 the free archives founded their own working group in the Professional Association of German Archivists — Verband deutscher Archivarinnen und Archivare (VdA). The working group of the free archives is called Arbeitskreis Überlieferungen der Neuen Sozialen Bewegungen (AK NSB) [Working Group on the Heritage of the New Social Movements]. Thanks to that working group traditional archives and traditional archivists can perceive the free archives, their collections and their staff. In the meantime, it has become a matter of course, that the traditional archivists recognize the importance of the free archives and their collections. All in all, I can say that there is now a very good cooperation between the free and the traditional archives, and, of course, between the free archivists and their traditional colleagues<sup>75</sup>.*

In Great Britain, community archives are represented within the Archives and Records Association, where the Community Archives and Heritage Group serves as a special interest group. This «marriage», although it may seem «odd» to A. Flinn, is still a curious indication of the interest from the archivist profession:

*...it still strikes me as being odd in one way, because it doesn't quite work. But the idea that the professional association is bringing in and supporting a network of community archivists is a really interesting one<sup>76</sup>.*

Three experts have directly observed that community archives significantly influence the overall perception of archives within society. A. Gilliland states that

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<sup>74</sup> Štefanac T. Interview. 05.07.2024.

<sup>75</sup> Bacia J. Interview. 18.07.2024.

<sup>76</sup> Flinn A. Interview. 14.05.2024.

*[I]n some ways the community archives are the most vibrant that are there and they do get the public's imagination and the media, media's imagination. And that's in the wider public<sup>77</sup>.*

M. Płuciennik asserts that community archives in Poland played some role in bridging the image gap between archives and society:

*[I] can clearly see that, first and foremost, community archivists enhance social involvement. They encourage society to pay attention to archives while also fostering closer connections between archivists and the public. Previously, in the absence of community archives, this distance felt insurmountable. The term «archivist» in public perception was linked either to the IPN [Institute of National Remembrance] or to some distant and inaccessible location. However, thanks to community archives, we can observe that this distance is diminishing, revealing a completely different phenomenon<sup>78</sup>.*

A. Więch appears to echo this point. He views the emergence of community archives as a means to enhance the overall perception of archives, as it dispels the notion of an archive being a hostile and isolated environment. He highlights the growing social awareness of the impact of archives and their role:

*the rise of community archives has led to state archives and various institutional archives becoming significantly more open and accessible. [I] remember archive science students from eight years ago who viewed archives in [a rather simplistic] manner: to them, archives meant state archives, nothing more. This perspective was a complete oversight (...). Perhaps, just perhaps, there exists a church archive that is difficult to access, presenting numerous challenges in any case (...). I believe there has been a significant shift in mentality, with an increasing awareness that archivistics encompasses much more than merely the state archive. (...) This outcome stems from the establishment and activities of community archives, which have heightened awareness of the role of archives: specifically, what archives truly are and their significance to society as a whole<sup>79</sup>.*

In addition to the issues outlined above and the aspects highlighted by multiple experts, the interviews also revealed the influence of community archives, which was noted by only one individual. These factors included: the growing significance of the archivist profession (Płuciennik); the enhanced role of providing access to archives (Czarnota); the necessity for professional development among archivists (Płuciennik); the increasing interest of cultural institutions (not exclusively archives) in community and amateur archive

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<sup>77</sup> Gilliland A. Interview. 09.05.2024.

<sup>78</sup> Płuciennik M. Interview. 19.03.2024.

<sup>79</sup> Więch A. Interview. 20.11.2024.

collections (Ziętal); and the education of amateurs in archival methods (Płuciennik).

### ***Study limitations and conclusions***

First, it is essential to clarify that the goal of this study was not to determine the answer to the question, «What do experts think about the impact of community archives?». The research task described above was part of the conceptual phase of a larger project and aimed to enhance the list of potential impacts of community archives. This list, later compiled into a set of codes, was utilized (and will continue to be used in the future) for a qualitative analysis of the empirical data gathered from individuals who create community archives or use them in various ways. As a result, the study presented here did not aim to achieve any form of generalization.

Understandably, the diversity of individuals providing interviews is linked to the varying opinions regarding the impact of community archives. A significant number of experts have expressed the opinion that community archives have a profound impact on the fundamental structure and objectives of archivistics. This influence extends to terminology, attitudes toward archival value and archival selection, as well as the understanding of the principles that govern archival arrangement and description, and even the scope and division of the discipline itself. Experts from Anglophone milieu, including A. Gilliland, A. Flinn, M. Caswell, and C. Ogass Bilbao, have highlighted the significant connection between community archives, critical archival studies, and the decolonization of archives. Experts from Poland, Germany, and Croatia (Chorażyczewski, Ziętal, Więch, Czarnota, Płuciennik, Bacía, Štefanac) concentrated on recognizing community archives and examining the differences in archival practices between community and traditional archives. From the perspective of archival science theory, experts from Poland reference the anthropologization of archivistics (Chorażyczewski, Czarnota). This approach emphasizes a more «human» and anthropocentric view of archives, focusing on both their creation and their societal role. Some experts have also observed the increasing prominence of the topic of community archives in university curricula, highlighting their impact on archival education. The impact of community archives on the practice of public archives is perceived in varying degrees. Some view this influence as «utterly transforming» (Flinn), while others argue that its effect is minimal, primarily reflected in the limited attention public archives pay to the materials of independent social movements in Germany (Bacia). Somewhere between these two perspectives, Polish experts perceive an increased interest from state institutions in personal, family, community, local, and specific materials (Czarnota, Chorażyczewski, Ziętal). Additionally, public archives are becoming more accessible and are enjoying an improved reputation (Płuciennik, Więch).

Despite the limitations in generalizability, the interviews conducted have facilitated the development of a compelling narrative concerning how various experts perceive the impact of community archives on archival science, traditional archives, and the archival profession. These experts hail from diverse countries and cultural contexts, which may pave the way for a more extensive research project. This future endeavor could focus on comparing the perceptions of community archive impacts among experts with different backgrounds and experiences, spanning research, practice, and advocacy, who are familiar with distinct landscapes of community archives. Additionally, this research could explore the various aspects and narratives of community archives as discussed in both local and global literature. In this case, it would be beneficial to broaden and diversify the pool of respondents by incorporating contexts and languages beyond Europe and the Anglo-Saxon sphere. The authors are proficient only in English and Polish, which has restricted the selection of potential respondents to those who speak at least one of these languages.

At the same time, while expert opinions are intriguing and can highlight aspects that have previously been overlooked in the literature, it is important to remember that they remain just opinions. These perspectives reflect the personal experiences of the interviewees and their individual perceptions of a particular phenomenon. Respondents invited to participate in the study, as experts in the field of community archives, are connected to various aspects of this domain, including emotional ties. It can be inferred that their stance reflects a commitment to supporting community archives and a belief in the positive impact these archives have on the world. Another approach to diversifying the narrative on the impact of community archives on the archival landscape and science is to analyze the opinions of experts across various archive-related fields.

Finally, nearly every type of impact described above requires further study to better understand its nature and prevalence. The analysis of the impact on the scholarly field should be grounded in evaluations of research projects and publications, ideally encompassing various countries and languages. The assessment of impact on archival education should focus on university curricula, syllabi, and interviews or surveys conducted with teachers and students. Furthermore, the analysis of the archive's image should examine how archives are perceived by society. Notably, changes in this perception can largely stem from variables beyond the activities of community archives; they may also be (and certainly are) influenced by the efforts of state archives aimed at promoting social openness and enhancing their public image. They can be other potentially interesting research topics connected with the landscape of grassroots archives.

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**ПОГЛЯДИ ЕКСПЕРТІВ  
НА ВПЛИВ ГРОМАДСЬКИХ АРХІВІВ НА АРХІВНУ НАУКУ,  
АРХІВНІ УСТАНОВИ ТА АРХІВНУ ПРОФЕСІЮ**

**Анотація.** В статті проаналізовано інтерв'ю з 12 експертами з Польщі та з-за кордону щодо їхнього сприйняття впливу громадських (незалежних) архівів на архівну науку як академічну дисципліну, на інституції спадщини (особливо

публічні архіви) та архівну професію. **Мета роботи** — представити часткові результати проєкту «Вплив незалежних громадських архівів». **Методологія.** Дані були зібрані за допомогою напівструктурованих якісних інтерв'ю, проаналізованих згодом за допомогою апріорних кодів (на основі літератури та попередніх інтерв'ю з громадськими архівістами) і доповнених новими кодами — новими значеннями, виявленими під час ітеративного аналізу, проведеного двома членами команди. **Наукова новизна.** Стаття є першим дослідженням, яке аналізує експертні думки щодо впливу громадських архівів, порівнюючи погляди різних типів експертів (наприклад: науковців, прихильників громадських архівів, діючих або колишніх громадських архівістів). **Перспективи подальших досліджень.** Майбутні дослідження мають також аналізувати внесок представників інших культур, континентів та архівних традицій і ґрунтуватися на джерелах, які безпосередньо описують вплив громадських архівів на архівну науку та архівну практику. **Висновки.** Експерти наголосили на ролі громадських архівів у переосмисленні основ архівістики (наприклад: термінології, архівної цінності). Експерти з англomовних країн і Чилі підкреслили зв'язок громадських архівів із деколонізацією архівів і критичними архівними дослідженнями. Експерти з континентальної Європи зосередилися на визнанні існування громадських архівів та їхніх особливих архівних практик. Окремі експерти підкреслили їх значення для архівної освіти. Загалом експерти висловили різні оцінки щодо впливу на державні архіви.

**Ключові слова:** громадські архіви; незалежні архіви; архівна наука; архівна професія; вплив архівів.