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FAMILY ARCHIVES AND
HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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**PERSONAL ARCHIVES AND THE SHAPING
OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN PORTUGAL:
RESULTS OF A NATIONAL CENSUS**

ABSTRACT: In recent decades, several institutions have played a significant role in the preservation of personal archives, founded on their relevance to history, culture, and collective memory. Based on the results of a census carried out to identify memory institutions in Portugal and the personal archives they preserve, this article reflects on some aspects related to the role of these archival institutions in the construction of collective memory. Considerations are made on some archival practices that concern the appraisal and selection of records produced by individuals, and on the underlying policies for their safeguard for posterity that consider hierarchies of applied value, emphasizing the importance of certain documents, personalities, and social areas. Taking a closer look at the specific universe of personal archives that were preserved, the limits and implications of the processes of archival treatment are also questioned, namely their arrangement and description, exploring some levels of under-representation and how conscious decisions and historical influences have affected the final representation of individuals and of their archives. The global impact of the acts and decisions of memory institutions, individuals, families and other communities on archives is examined, along with its consequences for the correct understanding of what are personal archives and the definition of the underlying information systems, as well as the interpretation of the accumulation of information production contexts and its subsequent communication.

Keywords: personal archives; memory institutions; collective memory; appraisal; archival census

RESUMO: Nas últimas décadas, várias instituições têm desempenhado um papel significativo na preservação de arquivos pessoais, fundamentando-se na sua relevância para a história, cultura e memória coletiva. Com base nos resultados de um recenseamento que visou identificar, em Portugal, que instituições preservam arquivos pessoais, este artigo reflete sobre alguns aspetos relacionados com o seu papel na construção da memória coletiva. São tecidas considerações sobre algumas práticas arquivísticas relacionadas com a aval-

iação e seleção de documentos produzidos por indivíduos, e sobre as políticas subjacentes à sua salvaguarda para a posteridade, que levam em conta hierarquias de valor, enfatizando a importância de determinados documentos, personalidades e áreas sociais. Examinando mais de perto o universo específico dos arquivos pessoais que foram preservados, também se questionam os limites e implicações dos processos de tratamento arquivístico, nomeadamente a sua organização e descrição, explorando-se alguns níveis de subrepresentação e a forma como decisões conscientes e influências históricas afetaram a representação final dos indivíduos e dos seus arquivos. Aborda-se o impacto global dos atos e decisões de instituições de memória, indivíduos, famílias e outras comunidades na formação dos arquivos, e as consequências daí decorrentes para a correta compreensão do que é um arquivo pessoal e dos sistemas de informação inerentes, bem como para a interpretação dos contextos de produção e acumulação de informação e sua posterior comunicação.

Palavras-chave: arquivos pessoais; instituições de memória; memória coletiva; avaliação.

Introduction

The definition of what constitutes “personal archives”, particularly in relation to other forms of aggregation of documents such as “family archives”, remains shrouded in a tangle of conceptual and terminological issues under the influence of diverse archival theories¹. We can, however, consider it a “set of documents that were produced, or received, and maintained by an individual throughout his life and as a result of his activities and social function”².

Some authors have defended the need to view personal archives as the result of a social construction, considering different decisions in the selection

¹ In Portugal, classical archival theories have considered personal and family archives from a generic understanding of the concept of archives as the “organic set of documents, regardless of date, form and material support, produced or received by a legal entity, singular or collective, or by a public or private body, in the exercise of its activity and preserved as evidence or information” (ALVES *et al.*, 1993; NP 4041, 2005). However, over the last two decades, in the epistemological framework of Information Science developed by researchers of the University of Porto (SILVA, *et al.*, 1999; SILVA; RIBEIRO, 2002), archives were the subject of a new theoretical approach based on their characterization as “information systems”, a perspective founded on the general theory of systems. Malheiro da Silva, in particular, proposed that personal and family archives be considered as information systems (SILVA, 2000; SILVA, 2004). According to this author, personal information systems are a residual form of archives, resulting from family information systems that have become fragmented over time, owing to different vicissitudes, some fortuitous and others deliberate, in that the disaggregation they cause follows interventions by families, third parties and memory institutions themselves.

² OLIVEIRA, 2012: 33.

and retention of documents, multiple processes and agents that influence the shape of archives over time. Memorial and sentimental reasons, historical concerns, and even fortuitous events can be present in the process of this construction or can lead to fragmentation or dispersion of archival aggregations. In the course of time, personal archives are subject to the decisions of their producers, but also to the intervention of other interested parties like family, friends, curators, archivists and others, both at the production stage and after the death of their producers³.

In the absence of guidelines for the appraisal of personal and family archives by archival institutions, libraries and museums, among other memory institutions, the tendency is for the decisions of which manuscripts and personal should be selected and preserved and which should be discarded to be influenced by the sensitivity of archivists and curators, by the interests of governments and ideologies, or by deciding what is more appropriate to certain users and to the goals of the institutions themselves. The inevitable risk is to only guarantee the preservation of the archives of great personalities and to solely select groups of documents that are, at a given moment, considered as culturally, socially, and historically relevant.

A more detailed analysis of how acquisition policies determine and shape the way in which society is represented through personal and family archives has been neglected. Based on the suggestions of Richard J. Cox that there are “no innocent deposits”⁴, it seems imperative that archival theories and archivists take a closer look at the issues related to appraisal and selection practices, rethinking what information should be preserved and how to manage archives for the future, understanding more profoundly the original contexts of production, accumulation and use of documents, and also taking into account the role of curators and of archival institutions in the shaping of collective memory.

The selection of what to preserve requires the establishment of some kind of judgment of what is worth remembering of the memory of individuals, for the benefit of society. Consequently, to understand archives it is essential

³ MACNEIL, 2008; YEO, 2009; YEO, 2012; DOUGLAS, 2013.

⁴ COX, 2004.

to recognize what memory was intended to be preserved, who determined it, and for what purpose. To evaluate and select what to keep, and to decide what to exclude, is one of the most complex issues in any theoretical or methodological approach taken by archivists, and should be the first responsibility of archival activity⁵.

Preserving personal archives in memory institutions

During my PhD research⁶ I sought to understand the processes and value frames underlying the selection and decision processes for preserving personal archives by Portuguese memory institutions, and to learn the extent to which these archives represent society and collective memory. I also wanted to determine whether the description practices and decisions taken by archivists, when representing the archives and its contents, affect the understanding of the archive's formation contexts, and how they influence a theoretical concept of what are personal archives.

The research took as a universe of analysis the institutions that, in Portugal, hold, organize, and make available archival fonds and collections concerning individuals, as well as the archives they preserve. This universe was identified by means of a census that was conducted between 2015 and 2017⁷.

Regarding institutions, the decision was made to identify as broadly as possible archives, libraries, museums, associations, foundations, universities and others that, to a greater or lesser degree, hold, treat and disseminate personal archives, limiting the survey only to those with formal legal existence. It was also necessary to restrict the universe of fonds and collections to be identified and analyzed, and to exclude from the census those that are placed

⁵ COOK, 2011b.

⁶ PEREIRA, 2018.

⁷ PEREIRA, 2018: 33. The main methods used were documentary analysis, a survey based on the design of a data collection model, and a number of unstructured interviews, using this survey as the basic guide. For more detail on the methodology used see PEREIRA, 2018: 25-33.

by memory institutions in the category of family archives⁸, despite the natural difficulties in drawing clear boundaries between “personal” and “family”.

As a result of the census, 376 entities and a total of 3,850 archives were identified and considered adequate for inclusion in the universe of personal archives⁹. About 80% of the identified institutions belong to the public sector. This is also evident in the number of archives under public responsibility, which exceed 87% of the registered total¹⁰. This fact derives both from acquisition policies of the different institutions and from a general understanding that the public sector offers better guarantees and conditions for the conservation and technical treatment of archives. Regardless, this does not mean that there are no success stories and potential in the private sphere.

More than 60% of the public archival repositories belong to the local administration, usually corresponding to services aimed at preserving the documentary and cultural heritage of the respective municipalities. However, in relation to the number of personal archives, these institutions hold only about 30% of total collections.

The main institutions responsible for the custody of personal archives are dependent on the central government, either under the direct administration of the state, namely those included in services and departments that are organically integrated in the government, or indirectly connected to state administration, such as institutions with financial and administrative autonomy, acting independently in the pursuit of certain functions and purposes, like many found within universities¹¹. For example, of all the institutions

⁸ For family archives, a research project is being developed at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, under the coordination of Maria de Lurdes Rosa, which includes an inventory mostly directed at the period from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, leaving out modern family archives. See <URL: <http://fcsh.unl.pt/arfam/>> and <URL: <http://www.inventarq.fcsh.unl.pt/>> (last accessed on the 10th May 2017).

⁹ The terms used by archival repositories to designate groups of personal papers are varied. Although the most common is the designation of fonds or collections, some institutions in Portugal also refer to them as private holdings or call upon other terms which are difficult to translate to other languages, such as “espólio”. About the conceptual and terminological discussion in the specific case of personal archives see PEREIRA, 2018: 37-76.

¹⁰ PEREIRA, 2018: 240-241.

¹¹ Universities that hold personal and family archives are mostly public and integrated in the indirect administration of the State. Some include important archives (such as the Archives of the University of Coimbra), specialized departments and libraries of different

belonging to the public sector, those that work under the dependency of the Ministry of Culture are responsible for about 25% of the total number of personal archives identified at the national level, despite constituting an overall small portion (only 34 institutions out of 376)¹². In the private sector, most of the institutions are foundations, associations and cooperatives. Although less numerous¹³ some have taken on an important role in the preservation of several personal archives¹⁴.

The fact that some archival repositories hold many of personal archives does not mean that they are especially invested in their preservation and may have other main or equivalent activities. Conversely, the fact that an institution holds only a single or few archives does not imply that those fonds are not

scopes, documentation or research centers, museums and other information services in their institutional organization. In the course of the census, a total of 46 repositories were registered as belonging to universities, containing 15,6% of the total number of archives identified (PEREIRA, 2018: 244, Table 2).

¹² In the case of the ministry of culture, we find different institutions that are under its dependency in various ways: directly, through the secretary of state for culture, as with the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal; through public institutes, such as the Cinemateca Portuguesa; and with some degree of independence, as with public companies such as the national theater D. Maria II. Also included in the current composition of the ministry of culture are institutions under the guidance of directorates such as the Direção-Geral do Livro, dos Livros e das Bibliotecas, which supervises almost all regional public archives (called “arquivos distritais”), the Centro Português de Fotografia, located in Porto, and the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. The same applies to numerous institutions under the responsibility of the Direção-Geral do Património Cultural, including several museums, some libraries, and specialized archival institutions such as SIPA (Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitetónico).

¹³ In the private sector, 74 institutions that hold personal archives were identified. Together, they were responsible for 479 fonds and collections at the end of the census, in May 2017.

¹⁴ These include, among others: the Fundação Mário Soares, responsible for more than a hundred archives, which began its activities in 1996 with its patron's archives, and then went on collecting other archives, until the present day; the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, which holds several collections in the field of photography and also fonds in the area of arts and architecture; and a number of Universidade Católica Portuguesa departments, such as the João Paulo II University Library and the Centro de Estudos de História Religiosa, both of which hold several personal archives. Associative institutions include, for example, the Associação de Jardins-Escola João de Deus (Lisbon), with its museum and library, the Sociedade Martins Sarmento (Guimarães), the Associação Património Histórico (Caldas da Rainha), or the Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa (PEREIRA, 2018).

essential for the pursuit of the purposes of the institution or considered to be an asset of undeniable value¹⁵.

The degree of involvement of all the institutions identified in acquiring and preserving personal archives is thus quite different: 46% of them hold only one archive; 27% between two and five; and, at the opposite end, 4% of the total number of repositories hold more than four dozen archives. This small group — 16 institutions in a universe of 376 — accounts for about half of the total number of personal archives identified¹⁶. Between the extremes lies a great diversity of situations.

The acquisition of personal archives by these various types of institutions implies that they carry out some kind of appraisal of information as an act of memory. In fact, by analyzing the incorporation processes I have found that acquisitions depend on different decisions and acts of information selection: they can stem from the initiative of specific individuals or communities; arise from a deliberate effort and incentive to receive donations or other legal forms of custody, taken on by the institutions themselves; occur as goals for the achievement of missions and institutional objectives; or, in some situations, these incorporations might happen by chance. Also, even if many institutions acquire archives as a whole, they are also receptive to incorporate only parts of a personal archives, depending on choices of specific subjects or types of documents which are considered somehow valuable.

At the same time, operations linked to appraisal and subsequent options concerning the organization and description of the archives also have reper-

¹⁵ Among the many repositories that hold only one personal archive we find several museums, namely historical house museums sometimes named after a person they intend to pay homage to, or whose memory was perpetuated by that means. In a similar situation are some documentation or research centers, libraries and associations and foundations. In most situations, the ownership of archives may be a necessity to support the institutions' activities and an asset that ensures and justifies their continuity. Some examples can be found in PEREIRA, 2018.

¹⁶ PEREIRA, 2018: 260-261. In this group, I have included some institutions where, from the outset of the census, one would expect to find personal archives, based on the role they have long played in the area of archival preservation, as is the case of the Torre do Tombo and the Biblioteca Nacional (namely in its Arquivo de Cultura Portuguesa Contemporânea — Archives of Contemporary Portuguese Culture — section, but also in the music and the *reservados* departments). These are joined by others that in the past decades have given special importance to this type of archives, such as the Fundação Mário Soares and the Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril (Coimbra University).

cussions on the “construction” of collective memory, through the different conceptions of institutions, individuals, and communities of what personal archives are, or what they should be, and what their value is for the public, which impacts directly on archival theories and concepts.

Throughout the census I have found that the processes of incorporation of personal archives are not always sufficiently documented and justified, and in many situations it was not possible to ascertain any information about the circumstances and contexts in which they occurred.

The lack of detailed records on the acquiring processes, the absence of archival descriptions that provide that information, the type of cataloguing applied¹⁷, the subjection to different degrees of confidentiality, and even the lack of response to requests for information addressed during the census determined the impossibility of establishing the mode of acquisition for 24% of the total universe of the 3,850 archives.

Considering that in the great majority of situations these archives are held by public repositories, it becomes necessary to implement best practices in this field that take into account the limits, implications and obligations of communicating to the public the processes of acquisition of archival assets coming from the private sector, that can be used and enjoyed by the community in general, although they may be subject to legal reserves of communicability¹⁸.

¹⁷ Although it is increasingly common in Portuguese archives to use the international descriptive standards of the International Council on Archives, there are numerous institutions that do not yet use ISAD(G) for the description of their fonds. On the other hand, in many cases the archival collections do not have an instrument of access to the information, or are catalogued in bibliographic databases, too often focusing on isolated documents, making it difficult to retrieve information about the whole archives, or, at the opposite end, with the whole of the archives being described in a single, very summary bibliographical record. In the case of museums, the situation is very similar to that of most Portuguese libraries, since the description of archival assets tends to privilege isolated documents or objects and not the archives.

¹⁸ The most recent recommendations of the International Council on Archives in this area point to the importance that archival institutions, and all others responsible for the management of archives, aim towards transparency in the field of information, namely by making known the existence of archival assets, even when subjected to partial or total access restrictions, which should be clearly indicated (ICA, 2014: 4, 8). For the Portuguese case, in addition to laws concerning copyright, there is also a legal framework on the right of individuals to defend their good name and reputation, image, and privacy, as found in the *Constitution of the Portuguese Republic* (Article 26), and the constraints imposed on confidentiality of private correspondence and the use of image established by the *Portuguese Civil Code* (in particular articles 75 to 80). On the other hand, the law concerning archives

It is also important to establish guidelines and procedures that prevent the loss of this type of information, which is relevant for understanding and interpreting the changes in record-keeping contexts that have occurred over time.

For those archives in which it was possible to obtain information on the incorporation process, several modalities were found, with donation being the most frequent, but also including cases of purchase (directly from the producers or heirs, or, for example, at auction), inheritance by wills, and others. A recent phenomenon I have found is the increasing frequency of the use of the legal form of deposit, in which the producers or their heirs entrust a personal archives (sometimes only part of the papers) to a certain institution, under conditions defined between both parties, without the effective transfer of property rights. A similar increase can be found in cases of collaboration among institutions and between institutions and private owners of archives aiming technical intervention concerning conservation, description, and dissemination to the public.

Many archives analyzed were subjected to incorporations at different times, and had different provenances. In fact, the acquisition processes did not always involve only the original producers of the documentation or their direct heirs, who may have been only one of the intervening parties or altogether absent, demonstrating the presence of various forms of constitution and aggregation of documents. An analysis of the archival history of the fonds and collections revealed complex processes that undoubtedly shape the very constitution of the personal archives that memory institutions present to their users. It is common to find documentation presented as personal archives, but that aggregates documents from various sources, with different provenances, not necessarily corresponding solely to documents produced and accumulated by the individual that lends his or her name to the archives.

With all this complexity, many of the archives considered to be personal by memory institutions are not only the result of the activities of a given individual, but rather “archival constructions” with different actors involved,

and archival heritage in Portugal (Decree-Law nr 16/93, of 23rd January 1993) specifically determines that it is the competence of private archives owners to propose the rules and modalities of their public communication (article 17 (4)). More detailed information can be found in ROSA [2009].

resulting from intricate and deliberate memory construction processes. On the one hand, it is the individuals themselves and their families that weave this web, entrusting the institutions only with what they consider to have value to be preserved and passed on to the future. On the other hand, it is these same institutions that also play an active role in capturing and selecting information, fueling the “creation” of forms of memory fixation, shaped by the way they acquire documentation and aggregate information from multiple sources¹⁹.

Changes in guardianship, developments in the archival treatment by the holding institutions, changes in the adoption of the most appropriate term or concept to designate a particular documentary reality, separations or aggregations of documents in accordance with many different arguments, various record-keeping practices over time, omission or lack of sufficient information about how archival holdings came into the possession of repositories, or even the deliberate concealment of information, all of these result in limitations and difficulties when striving for a correct and complete identification of personal archives, as well as to clearly distinguish them from other types of archives.

There were several situations in which archives were named after a single individual, supposedly indicating the presence of a personal archives, but often a more detailed analysis revealed the presence of a family archives, and sometimes the name did not necessarily correspond to the person who was its most significant producer. In other situations, the chosen name may even be simply that of the donor, or final custodian, while its content remains related to documents produced by others.

The disaggregation and dispersal of archives by various entities, the way information is processed by their professionals, and often the incipient or non-existent technical treatment and archival description, and the absence or insufficiency of finding aids make it difficult to establish clear boundaries between personal and family archives.

¹⁹ Some authors have pinpointed the ways through which custodians and archival institutions have impacted on the shape of archives, an aspect which has to be considered when one is focusing on the context of “creation” (YEO, 2009; NESMITH, 2006; DOUGLAS, 2013).

The mere analysis of the archive's legal formulas of acquisition revealed the presence of greatly diverse and heterogeneous aggregations with regard to origin, authorship, possession, and even the contexts of production and accumulation, in some cases resulting from materials collected on several occasions over time. Such situations result in consequences for understanding the original contexts of the production of information, questioning the correct use of the concept of archives, even on the part of the archivists and other professionals involved, and limiting the perception of the underlying information system.

In several situations, the supposed personal archives are in fact collections artificially assembled around a common characteristic — documents relating to a particular person, for example — that do not take into account the provenance and contexts of production and accumulation of the documents themselves. Even so, these aggregations can contain sets of records where we can find relationships between the information registered and the individuals who produced or gathered the documents in the course of their activities.

Memory institutions play a fundamental role in the preservation of personal and family archives for the benefit of collective memory, but problems like those mentioned before reveal the difficulty facing professionals involved in incorporating and applying some of the basic concepts of archival theories to their daily practices.

With regard to the specific problem of appraisal of personal archives, most institutions do not clearly state the criteria applied or their guidelines for attributing value, although empirically it is possible to discern choices that reveal the predominance of certain subjects in the field of politics, social movements, arts, politics, science and culture, among others.

The appraisal is almost always based on subjective criteria, based on a non-scientific consideration of the importance of archives by itself, of the documents and information contained therein, and the comparison and relation to other archives already belonging to the institution's archival holdings. The analysis of the authenticity of the information and the integrity of the archives is less frequent, and it's more common to find criteria related to the rarity of the documents, the danger of disappearance, the type of media, the importance of the titular personality, or to the testimony "of a person, of an

activity of creation, or of an event, where meaning enters into identity and collective memory”²⁰.

Individual and social representativity: trends and dynamics

Although it was not possible to establish exactly the dates of incorporation for a large number of the archives that were identified²¹, which confirms once again the need to develop best practices with regard to information transparency, the official date provided by the institutions for the first documents acquired for each fonds or collection was taken as an indicator of analysis²², in order to identify a set of trends over time.

I found that during the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century it was the need to constitute or enrich the collections of some institutions that justified the incorporation of a number of personal archives²³. A strong appreciation of statesmanship and its functions led to the need to accommodate documents that testify to the activity of the men who served the country, from a political, diplomatic, or cultural point of view, reinforcing the affirmation of national identity. During the Estado Novo period

²⁰ RAMALHO, 2011: 16.

²¹ Of the total 3,850 archives identified when the census was completed, it was not possible to establish the date of first acquisition for 34% of them (PEREIRA, 2018: 307).

²² It should be noted that the date provided by the institutions may not correspond to the actual physical entry of the documents, which may have taken place earlier and subsequently formalized through some type of contract. On other hand, if a fonds has been the object of several acquisitions the initial date does not necessarily mean that the first one corresponds to the largest volume of documentation, something that frequently occurs in situations of deposits and donations (in these cases the first entry may correspond only to a small set of documents, which served to establish links of trust between institutions and donors or depositors, and that only after this relationship has solidified the remainder of the archives were delivered). Likewise, in purchase situations that gave rise to archives formed by the acquisition of different sets of documents, it was not possible to evaluate the size of each one.

²³ This is the case of the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, whose origin dates back to 1796, when the royal public library of the court (Real Biblioteca Pública da Corte) was created, later transformed in 1836 into the Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa (BARATA, 2003), and some fonds that are held by the Biblioteca Pública de Évora, the Torre do Tombo, and the Biblioteca Geral of the University of Coimbra. The same can be said, concerning the first decades of the twentieth century, of some regional archives, such as the Arquivo Distrital de Braga, and municipal libraries, such as Porto's (PEREIRA, 2018: 309-316).

in Portugal (1933-1974), libraries, museums and archives continued to be the natural repositories for documents of some men of government, duly sanctioned by the dominant political ideology, and of others known for their intervention in areas mostly linked to culture.

Political persecution during a considerable part of the twentieth century, especially between 1926 and 1974²⁴, condemned many archives to a state of destruction, dispersion or confiscation, and imposed deliberate non-registration of clandestine actions. The overthrow of the Estado Novo, on the 25th April 1974, and the progressive stabilization of the democratic regime in the following years led many people to seek a recovery of the memory of those who were persecuted and silenced.

An increase in the number of incorporations took place during the 70s of the twentieth century, and even more so during the following decade, also due to the greater support and even investment that the new democratic regime directed toward the enrichment of the collections of some institutions, namely by acquiring the archives of figures that had been politically active during the final days of monarchy, up until 1910, and during the subsequent republican regime, or that were a part of largely forgotten socio-cultural currents. The awareness that private archives were important for understanding historical, cultural, social, and political phenomena generated a renewed interest in their preservation.

This process developed both on the side of the people who were in possession of documentation and within groups and communities of interests who specifically focused on the collection and preservation of private archives, and also through the action of some existing archival repositories, while simultaneously new spaces and institutions emerged, created specifically for the preservation of civil society archives, including personal archives.

In the 1980s, a number of initiatives were organized by specific groups with the aim of recovering and safeguarding the memories of the political

²⁴ On the 28th May 1926, a military coup was carried out, installing a dictatorship (1926-1930) that lasted until the government was handed over to civilians, followed by a national dictatorship (1930-1932), gradually transformed into another type of regime, the *Estado Novo* (1933-1974), with characteristics similar to Italian fascism.

militancy of those who had been removed from public activity, and marginalized, imprisoned, forced into exile, or simply forced to act in secrecy.

Political activism, and the specific drive to recover and (re)build the memory of groups that shared ideals of militancy, were at the basis of the gathering of important personal archives. This was the case of the Arquivo Histórico-Social²⁵ that collected documentation on anarchist militancy of the first half of the twentieth century. Likewise, 1984 saw the creation of the Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril, at the University of Coimbra, that very quickly came to host a large number of collections donated by several individuals, with acquisitions specifically aimed at recording the political memories of resistance to the dictatorship and the process of democratic transition. The awareness of the individual's role in history and the importance of transmitting one's own testimony originated the creation of the Fundação Mário Soares, which, in addition to the personal archive of its founder (1924-2017), also mobilized friends, party colleagues, and other individuals to entrust the treatment of numerous archives to the institution.

This dynamism in the incorporation of personal archives, ever growing in Portugal since the 1980s, involved individuals and institutions in memory-building processes, and resulted in the recognition of the role of certain personalities in numerous aspects of society. Sometimes the incorporation of documents was limited to aggregations/collections of individual memories and not to "true" archives, resulting from the information produce by single individuals within the course of their life. But those collections were, nevertheless, collected, accumulated and preserved, and empirically considered valuable as a testimony of historical events or common ideals.

From the analysis of the universe of 3,850 archives identified during the census, it was possible to connect the information provided with a total of 3,520 individuals²⁶. However, it was found that in many situations few bio-

²⁵ The materials collected were integrated in the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal during the 1980s.

²⁶ I have considered both archives that were effectively produced and accumulated by the individuals who lend their name to the fonds and also other documentary aggregations that may correspond only to documents gathered by third parties around a specific individual. However, in the current state of identification of personal archives, and in view of the many fonds that are not sufficiently studied, treated, and described according to

graphical studies and content descriptions exist that allow the contextualization and precise identification of how information was produced, collected, accumulated and used over time, which were the individual roles, who were the family and social relations, among others essential contexts for understanding the archives themselves²⁷. Thus, the indicated number does not necessarily correspond to the complete identification of all the individuals represented in the personal archives preserved in Portuguese memory institutions, due to the absence of archival treatment, in many cases, or due to the options taken in the description and classification operations that may have led to the absence of reference to other persons which can be also considered producers, but are not clearly identified as such.

The identified individuals allows us to recognize some tendencies in appraisal: some related to the history of political power and social movements; others to cultural and artistic aspects; others aimed at the preservation of the memory of certain activities of human society in scientific or professional areas; and others still built on the efforts to set up awareness of certain communities' identity and memories.

Most of the individuals identified were born in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries²⁸. In some cases, some of these individuals might have shared similar interests and, in others, different ones. One cannot suppose *a priori* that the preserved personal archives faithfully represent most social contexts of contemporary history, its cultural and political transformations, or the developments of philosophical and scientific thought. However, the substantial increase in the number of incorporations since the 1980s leads us to question

uniform standards, this is an aspect that needs to be further looked into, since each of the identified archives has to be considered alongside the analysis of the effective information contained within.

²⁷ In many circumstances I found a lack of even the dates of birth and/or death in biographical data. Also the names of the individuals provided by the institutions differ, both in detail and in the way they are presented, causing difficulties in their correct identification and in the construction of standard archival authority records.

²⁸ Until the eighteenth century, most private life archives were held by aristocratic families, or those which, while not being part of the titled nobility, possessed property and certain privileges, or were outstanding businessmen. The majority of personal archives identified in the Early Modern period are related to Church figures, prominent personalities in politics and diplomacy, or individuals who were recognized for their contribution in cultural areas like literature.

the limits of the scope of the selective memory processes that prevailed, considering what was decided to preserve as reliable evidence of certain periods, moments and events.

The fall of the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 also paved the way for greater democratization in memory institutions, through progressive access to information for citizens in general, giving rise, in the consolidation years of the new regime, to a sort of “race” of incorporations of personal papers in archival institutions, libraries, museums and others. Still, the process was not neutral or objective, and possibly not even aimed at representing society in its fullness, although this hypothesis requires development in future studies.

A purely empirical glance at the personalities linked to the area of politics, from the universe of archives identified in Portugal, especially considering the incorporations after the 1980s, indicates that this was done preferably following a tendency on the preservation of the memory of those who were silenced of the collective memory during the *Estado Novo*, and that previously found no place in memory institutions.

In this sense, some of the archives that were the object of interest for preservation were those of former personalities linked to the development of republicanism at the end of the nineteenth century and during the first years of the Republic, in the early twentieth century, both in the field of ideological and cultural thought and with regard to political intervention.

The need to document the memory of those “silenced” by the dictatorship, and the new democratic regime’s necessity to strengthen its identity, may have also had the less desirable consequence of the withdrawal of donations to public and private institutions of personal archives of individuals who, during the dictatorship, played a decisive role in conducting the country’s politics. This assumption, however, also needs to be verified by a detailed study of the archives preserved until today and of their producers²⁹.

²⁹ There are undoubtedly some personal archives of prominent *Estado Novo* men, absolutely essential for researchers and to national history, that are available to the public; some paradigmatic examples are those of Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970) or Marcelo Caetano (1906-1980), both preserved in the Torre do Tombo, as well as other archives of former ministers or figures of the regime (PEREIRA, 2018: 354).

In the universe of the 3,520 individuals identified, women were found to remain underrepresented *vis-à-vis* men. Despite the increasing fortification of the role of women in different areas of society, the gap is still substantial — of the total number of individuals, only about 14% are women.

For much of the twentieth century, the incorporation into Portuguese institutions of personal archives belonging exclusively to women was almost always exceptional, and often their documents were acquired together with those of other members of the family, namely the husbands. In some situations, one should not overlook the fact that the reason these women have their own archival fonds today may be related to options taken by the custodian entities concerning archival interventions, organization, and description of the documents, which occurred after the incorporation³⁰.

On the other hand, the incorporations of women's archives reveal "preferences" and decisions regarding the materials to be preserved. Always in scarce numbers, until the end of the 1970s the choice fell almost without exception on writers, poets or women linked to culture and music.

Only after the 1980s and '90s do we find a more decisive increase in the number of women's archives, with emphasis on those with some relevance in areas such as literature, culture, and, to a lesser extent, science. However, a gradual extension to other areas of social intervention, such as the performing arts, could also be detected, something which also made it possible to allow for the preservation of the memory of people from popular strata³¹. With the emergence of projects and institutions related to the preservation of the

³⁰ The case of Carolina Michäelis de Vasconcelos (1851-1925) may be exemplary from this point of view. It is one of the first archives of a woman with an important role in the academic and cultural circles to be incorporated in an institution in Portugal, having taken place in the 1940s at the University of Coimbra. However, both her personal library and archives were acquired simultaneously with those of her husband Joaquim António da Fonseca de Vasconcelos (1849-1936), a musicologist and art historian. The archives lacked archival treatment for decades and subjected only to partial inventories. Just recently, in 2009, the cataloguing of personal letters began (FILIPE, 2015: 93, 141-145), and it is not clear how the separation of documents took place, so that that each spouse now has an autonomous fonds, and why it was not considered as family archives.

³¹ For example, reference should be made to the collections of the Museu Nacional do Teatro e da Dança and the Museu do Fado, both located in Lisbon.

political memory of the opposition to the Estado Novo³², several women also joined the movement to recover and preserve memories of their own political activism³³.

In the course of the analysis, I found several situations in which the documents of members of the same couple were presented in separate archival fonds, and others in which they were kept together, as well as examples of dispersion throughout various institutions, with significant consequences for the understanding of the person as a single individual, and also of the spouses in their relations with each other, and with their circle of friends and other relatives³⁴.

Examples were also found of archives that having documentation from both elements of a couple should more appropriately be considered family archives, even though both were not always represented in the name chosen for the respective fonds by the custodian entities. A number of cases were detected in which women, particularly the wives, were not included in the names chosen for the archival fonds, and only the analysis of contents enabled the identification of their presence, which indicates some devaluation of the role of women as producers of information.

There are also situations in which the name of a single individual is given to an archive, overshadowing other people present in acts of production and accumulation of documents, whether they are family relatives or friends, and it is still also possible to detect cases in which documents of third persons were added, for various reasons such as inheritances or deliberate acquisitions.

³² Like the previously mentioned Arquivo Histórico-Social, held at the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, the Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril, at Coimbra University, or the Fundação Mário Soares.

³³ In this regard, the importance of the preservation of the archives of Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo (1930-2004), one of the largest archives of a woman with a significant role in Portuguese political life as well as in the defense of civic causes in the post-25th of April period, should also be mentioned. Its safeguard motivated the desire to create conditions to treat and host the archives, first in a private foundation — the Fundação Cuidar o Futuro — and, more recently, under the responsibility of the Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril, at Coimbra University.

³⁴ Some examples are the archives of Susan Lowndes and her husband Luís Marques, and Natália Correia and Dórdio Guimarães (PEREIRA, 2018: 342-343).

The correct representation of these individuals must therefore be the object of more adequate and careful reflection in the scope of the appraisal and subsequent organization and description of the archives themselves. These archival functions are of the utmost importance because access to the information and the identification of the reasons why certain documents have been preserved depends on them. Selecting specific individuals, emphasizing certain activities, or even choosing to highlight particular documentary typologies may have a pernicious effect on understanding the process of archival creatorship.

The analysis of the identified archives indicates that there are social, cultural, professional, and other areas that are preferentially valued. Among these, politics, literature, music, teaching and scientific research, architecture, and the arts (visual, plastic, performance) stand out. However, even within these areas there are levels of overvaluation of individuals and undervaluation of others, which means that social representation is not entirely comprehensive.

Acquisition policies and the specialization of institutions often arise from the choice of thematic areas, so it is common to use a thematic-typological approach or classification of personal archives with labels such as “political”, “literary”, “artistic”, “scientific”, “photographic”, among others, even without the necessary theoretical support. Some receive these labels at the time of acquisition, to justify their compliance with the repositories’ missions and objectives. Also, sometimes, these denominations intend to reflect and highlight certain facets of individuals, or to emphasize certain documentary typologies, to the detriment of others.

However, even if there is no theoretical and conceptual framework for labeling personal archives based on specific areas of activity, or on function of typologies of documents, it is common for them to be valued based on specific or similar characteristics. The very operations of organization, description, and classification of the fonds may prove to be a favorable ground for giving preference to certain facets of individuals. There is thus a risk of underestimating some contexts less identified with policies defined by the archival institutions.

Conclusions

Appraising archives and making decisions about the destination of documents considered important for collective memory is likely to be one of the biggest challenges in the future for individuals, families, memory institutions, and particularly for archivists and other curators. With regard to personal archives, it is necessary to study, on one hand, the ways in which people produce, accumulate, and use information over the course of their life and over time, and, on the other, to understand the archival practices of memory institutions themselves regarding appraisal, selection and communication of information. Archivists have been slow to act in line with new challenges in the field of personal archives posed by the information society, as they have neglected to analyze their own strategies for approaching individual memory, for the benefit of collective memory, with safeguard operations being subjected to uncoordinated actions and lacking in common guidelines and global assessments, a situation that ultimately undermines the comprehension of archives as information systems.

The decision of what to preserve remains anchored to the influence of different archival, historical and memorialist desiderata. The appraisal and selection operations remain based on the perceived patrimonial or cultural value of some of the personal archives, denoting little or no reflection on the extent of the information they contain.

Over time, there have always been different influences on the processes that led to the incorporation into memory institutions of personal archives, resulting in absences and presences tending to distort the representation of individuals and society. There is even a place for the fortuitous; cases in which, unexpectedly or inexplicably, a person's documentation was incorporated without knowing how or why. But above all, we find choices of individuals and groups, of institutions, influence of ideologies and frameworks of thought, symptomatic of collective attitudes concerning who should be represented in the archives.

Some behaviors and archival practices compromise the integrity of the archives and the correct interpretation of underlying information: the intervention of third parties in the configuration of personal papers; the individuals'

own options in making their documents available; the add-on of documents produced after the death of the producers; individual or collective initiatives to gather documentation on particular individuals; the fragmentation and dispersion of archives throughout various institutions, under different justifications; the absence of information caused by loss.

Problems arising from the complexity of the processes of incorporation of the archives add to the issues relating to restrictions on public availability, and are aggravated by the lack of sufficient information about producers and the contexts of production and accumulation. Some less well-conducted practices in the field of archival processing, particularly in operations of organization and representation of information, and the lack of communication of the memory institutions themselves with regard to the archives they hold (including the ones that derive from difficulties in correctly identifying what constitutes a personal archive, the scarce investment on biographical studies, and the lesser attention given to intrinsic organic contexts), are decisive for many archives, which are designated as personal, as archival constructions, devoid of consideration for the organic-functional contexts of the record-keeping acts of individuals.

As a result, many of the identified personal archives, after being subjected to a more in-depth analysis, actually revealed themselves to be “family” archives, because they have documents linked to several elements of the same family, or are the result of fragmentation and dispersion of family archives over time and for various circumstances. In other situations, archives designated as “personal” (or that have been named after a certain figure) are in fact “hybrid” aggregations, the result of information selection by different actors, dependent on specific interests.

In the current state of archival knowledge and treatment of the collections of memory institutions, it was not possible to clearly identify personal and family information systems and to distinguish them unequivocally from one another. Their preservation and treatment are still perpetuated by focusing on fragments of information systems and other pernicious practices, focusing on historicist and patrimonial concerns, without effective scientific support. The widespread ignorance of the universe of personal and family archives in Portugal has contributed to this situation, due to the absence of a coordinat-

ing entity or a central register for these archives, which could promote their adequate appraisal, preservation and study.

Thus, it was only possible to glimpse “archives” or “aggregations of documents”, often fragments of information systems that were disintegrated, dispersed and partly lost over time. Only a future in-depth analysis of the nature of each case may allow the necessary clarification.

It is urgent to fill the gap in studies that analyze the frameworks and policies underlying the acquisition decisions made by memory institutions, and the inherent consequences in the representation of society in view of the possibility of building common guidelines for the preservation of personal archives benefitting the collective memory, regardless of who is entrusted with their treatment and preservation — institutional repositories, informal communities or individuals.