ARCHIVING THE QUEER IN PORTUGAL: THE CASE OF THE GONÇALO DINIZ DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

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Abstract

This thesis examines the Gonçalo Diniz Documentation Centre (CDOC) at ILGA Portugal as a precarious yet generative and significant site of queer memory work in the country. Basing my research on oral history interviews with key individuals involved in the CDOC's development, I explore how the documentation centre has been imagined, experienced and sustained since its creation in 1997. Drawing from Archival Studies and Queer Studies, this thesis conceptualises the CDOC as a queer living archive, where memory, identity, desire and expectations, and temporality are continuously negotiated. I argue that the CDOC and its queer memory work are marked by discontinuity, volunteer labour, improvisation, structural precarity, and affective investment and care. Its history also reflects some of the broader tensions within LGBTQ+ activism and movements, like institutionalisation and grassroots impulses.

This research does not attempt to produce an extensive institutional history or catalogue of the CDOC. Its intent is to document the fragmentary experiences and to contribute to the developing field of Queer Studies in Portugal, while also broadening the dominant geographies of queer archiving. It is also a situated and affective practice of knowledge production and an archival effort. Across the chapters, I examine the CDOC's contested origins, its evolving structure and operationalisation, and its potential futures, framing the documentation centre as a space of queer world-making.

Keywords: queer archives; oral history; queer memory; temporality; Archival Studies; LGBTQ+ community; Queer Studies; ILGA Portugal; Portugal

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Introduction

In the past decades, archives have become points of focus in discussions on history, identity and power. Scholars from various fields, as shown in the following chapters, have been questioning the archive's neutrality and conceptualising them as constructed and contested sites. At the same time, community-driven archives have appeared to preserve the histories of marginalised groups in the traditional archival institutions. Among these are queer archives, which are grassroots and/or institutional projects that record and (re)interpret LGBTQ+ lives and experiences outside the dominant framework of history and the archives.

Scope

This thesis seeks to address the scholarly gap that exists on queer archives in Portugal, as well as the gap on queer readings of established collections and/or the archiving of queer materials. I base my work on the selected narratives of oral history interviews and the analysis of the themes that emerge from those. These interviews were made with key individuals involved in the history and operationalisation of the Gonçalo Diniz Documentation Centre (CDOC), ILGA Portugal Association's documentation centre and the country's first queer one. This text does not aim to provide a complete history of ILGA Portugal (ILGA hereafter), or an extensive cataloguing of CDOC's collection. Its main aim is to read and reflect on the CDOC as a site of queer memory work.

The CDOC represents a special case study as both a part of ILGA and a semi-autonomous space for historical and leisure materials. In this thesis, I explore how, since 1997, the CDOC has evolved, what it has preserved and how it has been experienced and imagined by those who built, coordinated and interacted with it. Through oral history as a primary methodological tool and drawing from the fields of Archival Studies and Queer Studies, I conceptualise the CDOC as a queer living archive that is unfinished and precarious, and at the intersection of memory,

identity and politics. Furthermore, I argue that the CDOC is a precarious but essential queer documentation centre shaped by the discontinuity in volunteer labour, institutional memory and conditions, and community needs and desires. I also argue that the CDOC reveals how queer memory work is marked by gaps, improvisation and affective labour.

Historical context

To better understand the CDOC's history and my interviewees' accounts, it is important to set the historical and social context. The trajectory of LGBTQ+ rights and movement in Portugal is shaped by the country's political transition from dictatorship to democracy. During the authoritarian Estado Novo regime (1933-1974), homosexuality was criminalised under the 1852 Penal Code and the 1912 law (Cascais, 2020; Santos, 2016), and State officers enacted legal repression and police violence on "sexual dissidents" (Santos, 2016, p. 158). Although there were some instances of LGBTQ+ expression (like the opening of the first bars in 1969 in Lisbon [Cascais, 2020]), any possibility of collective LGBTQ+ action or cultural representation was crushed through censorship and criminalisation (Cascais, 2020).

The 1974 April Revolution ended one of the longest dictatorships in Europe (48 years) and started Portugal's democratic transition. This did not mean that LGBTQ+ issues were a part of the dominant revolutionary and post-revolutionary discourse, since political actors were focused on decolonisation, class struggle and socioeconomic development. Even among leftist parties, LGBTQ+ issues were often seen as secondary or incompatible with the priorities of class struggle and political economy (Vale de Almeida, 2021). As Ana Cristina Santos (2016) emphasises, the invisibility of LGBTQ+ lives and issues during the dictatorship and the years that followed perpetuated the contemporary idea that "in the old days, there were no gays", something that is a product of social and media invisibility and erasure. Moreover, this discourse – promoted from the 1990s onwards alongside the LGBTQ+ groups' crescent visibility – deems heterosexuality as a "crucial part of the Portuguese identity" and having a

nonnormative sexuality or gender identity as "a sign of the times, a lifestyle, a result of modernity, which must be tolerated, but not encouraged or embraced" (Santos, 2016, p. 159).

Throughout the 1980s, there were some relevant changes in the sociopolitical and cultural contexts. In 1982, the new Penal Code decriminalised homosexuality, a legal change that was included in the broader reforms intended to align Portugal with Western European democratic norms (Santos, 2016). In 1986, Portugal joined the European Economic Community (a predecessor of the European Union), which marked a shift in the political discourse around human rights and contributed to the emergence of a legal and cultural environment more receptive to LGBTQ+ claims. Public life in Lisbon also began to change with the emergence of gay bars, cultural spaces and figures such as António Variações, enacting what Miguel Vale de Almeida (2021) calls "politics of life", which is/are "forms of subjectivity promoted by horizontal social relations around friendship, love, sex, entertainment, nightlife, fashion, dance, music, drugs, questioning of the narratives of the national history and growing exposure to international and cosmopolitan influences" (p. 119), and influencing LGBTQI+ individuals and their informal groups. This new cosmopolitanism and the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which hit Portugal in the early 1990s, unintentionally catalysed increased community formation and mobilisation (Vale de Almeida, 2021). ABRAÇO Association is an example of this, being the first non-profit IPSS (Particular Institution of Social Solidarity) that gave support to people impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Porto Editora, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). These dynamics saw its continuing development in the course of 1990s with the political and cultural mobilisation and campaigns of LGBTQI+ groups, the surge of events such as Arraial Pride and the Lisbon Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, the surge of spaces like the first LGBTQ+ bookstore in Portugal, and, of course, the creation of the first independent LGBTQ+ organisation, ILGA Portugal (Cascais, 2006; Santos, 2018; Vale de Almeida, 2021).

From the turn of the 21st century, rapid legislative progress and legal reform were brought about, especially with Portugal's further integration into the European Union and the latter's development (of note here is the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, which established anti-discrimination principles in EU law) (Santos, 2016). In the national context, it is relevant to highlight: the 2001 law on *de facto* unions, which granted limited recognition to same-sex couples; the constitutional revision in 2004, which added sexual orientation to the article on the principle of equality; the legalisation of same-sex marriage in 2010; the gender identity laws in 2011, which were revised and expanded in 2018; and the establishment of same-sex parents' adoption rights in 2016 (Santos, 2016, 2018; Vale de Almeida, 2021). Different authors underline how this legalisation and institutionalisation of LGBTQ+ rights was enabled. For Vale de Almeida (2021), it was possible through political action by some left-wing parties and their alliances, and Portugal's integration into EU norms and structures. For Santos (2018), she conceptualises the concept of *ativismo sincrético* (syncretic activism) to describe the Portuguese LGBTQ+ movement's capacity to blend lobbying, direct action, alliance-building and public celebration. Finally, for Cascais (2020), he advances the concept of *triângulo de veludo* (velvet triangle) to describe the model in which legal, institutional and civil society actors converged to facilitate these changes.

Despite this, the legal success of the LGBTQ+ movement has not always been translated into consistent and deeper sociocultural transformations. For example, as Santos (2016) writes: "this legal impact has not generated a corresponding social impact when it comes to sexual citizenship" (p. 159). Vale de Almeida (2021) also identifies contradictions within this progress. Societal implementation has not been at the same pace of progressive legislation due to cultural resistance, underfunded enforcement of the laws and heteronormative expectations in areas like education, healthcare, and labour, for example. This contradiction is framed by the author as a

tension between “form and substance” (p. 123): progressive laws do not necessarily translate into lived equality.

ILGA

ILGA has, through the years, become the main LGBTQ+ rights organisation in Portugal. Its name is derived from ILGA World (the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association), the federation, created in 1978, of organisations that campaign for LGBTQ+ rights in specific countries and territories (ILGA World, 2024). Nowadays, ILGA is part of ILGA-Europe, the umbrella organisation for Europe and Central Asia (ILGA Europe, 2025). The CDOC is one of ILGA’s many services and it is situated at ILGA’s offices, in a third floor of a building in Lisbon’s downtown at Rua dos Fanqueiros. On the same street, on the ground floor, there is ILGA’s LGBTI+ Centre, a community and cultural space, open a few times a week. Both spaces are owned by Lisbon’s Municipality and rented at a lower price to ILGA due to their association status. Through my interview with ILGA’s chief of staff, I managed to better understand how the association works. It has a General Assembly composed of association members and three management governing bodies: the Board, the Fiscal Council and the Board of the General Assembly. These three bodies are composed of volunteers and chosen through elections. Its funding comes from a variety of places: specific public, private or communitarian (European Union) projects; a public subvention from the Portuguese State from gambling revenues; trainings in the private sector (they do it for free in the public sector); quota from the association’s members; and sales in events and in the Centre’s café and bar.

Reasoning for the study and positionality

My interest and decision to research this topic is deeply personal and political. Growing up in Portugal as a queer person, I felt the absence of narratives and materials about queer life (historical or otherwise) within my own national context. The CDOC became a site of fascination and frustration: it clearly archives valuable materials and materialises a queer space

and values in a country that still lacks many; but, at the same time, how is it not more well known, and still precarious and forgotten? Conducting this research allowed me to recover, honour and critically engage with the CDOC and the people who contributed to its survival. It is also a gesture towards the recognition of queer memory and history in Portugal, and towards imagining what a queer (archival) future might look like. Additionally, it is addressing the gap in the scholarly literature, as I demonstrate in the next chapter.

General considerations

To be more responsible, accountable and clear in my writing, I want to state two important things. First, I mainly employ the LGBTQ+ acronym throughout this text, since it is the one I consider to be more inclusive of all the nonnormative sexualities and gender identities. However, I also use the term queer to describe and categorise things like the archive. This is because 'queer' has been used across academic research and activist discourse to define theorisations, methodologies, conceptualisations, actors and dynamics (for example, Annamarie Jagose's *Queer Theory: An Introduction* [1996], or Jack Halberstam's [2011] and José Estaban Muñoz's [2009/2019] works). I also use other acronyms when a specific source uses it, to respect their work and conceptualisation, and the context in which it was written/decided. In the end, all these words or acronyms should be read as an attempt to define the individual, collective and/or broader actors/acts/dynamics that are disrupting the cis-hetero normativity and matrix. Second, I tend to use 'documentation centre' and 'archive' interchangeably to define the CDOC. I am aware of the differences between the two and that the CDOC is, for precision, a documentation centre. Nonetheless, as this work and the CDOC need to be situated in scholarly and activist contributions, I also use 'archive' or 'queer archive' to characterise the CDOC, since it is the name that has been used by many academic authors and activists to define spaces such as the CDOC. Moreover, it also contributes to the idea that the queer disrupts what an archive should be.

Overview of the chapters

This thesis follows a temporal arc as a play on temporality, one of its main topics. The next chapter outlines the literature review, situating this thesis and the CDOC within relevant scholarly fields and the Portuguese context. The third chapter establishes the theoretical and methodological frameworks for my research and arguments, explaining how I conducted fieldwork and the key conceptual tools I employed. The "Past" chapter assembles CDOC's past through the oral accounts of my interviewees, focusing on its contested origins and evolution from 1997 to current day. The "Present" chapter details the CDOC's operationalisation in the present and examines its past and present as a queer living archive. Finally, the "Future" and concluding chapters explore the possibilities for sustaining and reimagining the CDOC through a set of theorisations of queer temporality, failure and hope, and a set of recommendations.

Literature Review

This chapter serves as a map of the relevant bodies of literature that inform this thesis. It brings together contributions from Archival Studies and Feminist and Queer Archival Studies, and highlights the works that frame the archive as a social, political and affective space. Throughout it, I consider how the present study builds upon, extends and addresses gaps that exist in these fields.

Archival Studies

In the recent decades, scholars, informed by postmodern and poststructuralist theories, have been rethinking the traditional nature and function of the archive as neutral repositories. For them, these spaces must be rethought as dynamic sites of power, memory and identity. Terry Cook (2011) titles his article "we are what we keep; we keep what we are" to illustrate this critical turn, and to show how archival appraisal is defined and constrained by sociocultural values and institutional dynamics. Randall C. Jimmerson (2009) similarly focuses on the archive's role in influencing collective memory and social justice. He also argues that archivists have an ethical and political responsibility to shape the historical record through inclusive and just archival practices. Both these authors move towards an acknowledgement of the archivist's agency and the consequences of their decisions, something I underscore in this thesis. Verne Harris (2021) further complicates these discussions by highlighting the fragmentary and 'haunted' nature of archives. For him, the archive is an incomplete site where silences and/or absences are *part of* the collection, and it is impossible to have a total recovery or transparency of its processes. Harris' perspective resonates with the gaps and improvisations I explore in the CDOC's history. This body of work underscores how archives are socially constructed and politically charged spaces, and pushes the field toward ethical reflexivity.

In Portugal, this field is mainly explored through Portugal's history of colonialism (Cahen, 2020), the professional role of the archivist (Marques, 2016), case studies of public (Marques,

2015), municipal (da Silva, Borges, & Freitas, 2019) and organisation/company archives (Oliveira, 2023), and the digital eras challenge to the archive (da Silva, 2013). This shows that the critical turn presented above is still underdeveloped in the Portuguese context.

My thesis builds on both these scholarly efforts, applying a critical archival theory to a case study of the Portuguese context. As I am reading the CDOC as a queer living and precarious archive, I am contributing to the expansion of the geographical and thematic scope of Archival Studies, and how the field's debates take on different shapes in specific contexts.

Community and queer archives

The study of community archives emerged in response to the critiques of traditional archival institutions and practices, which have historically excluded and marginalised certain materials and narratives. Andrew Flinn (2007) conceptualises community archives as grassroots participatory projects that challenge the dominant narratives and institutional authority of the traditional archive and history by, for example, reflecting the values and priorities of those who created and sustain them. Building on this, Rebecka Taves Sheffield (2020b, 2020c) extends Flinn's model (2007) to queer archives. In her book *Documenting Rebellions* (2020b), which offers four case studies of queer archives in North America, she narrates their history and how they have interacted with the world around them. She argues that queer archives are both the products and agents of LGBTQ+ movements. They also operate within overarching dynamics and structures, like neoliberalism and homonormativity; within everyday matters, like financial sustainability and interpersonal relationships; and within broader tensions, like radicalisation and pragmatism. Other scholars have continued and extended this analysis through case studies in different geographical and institutional settings, like Danielle Cooper's (2016a; 2016b) ethnography of British Columbia Gay and Lesbian Archives, Donald W. McLeod's (2019) analysis of the 'digitalising' of The ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives, and Brooks Hosfeld's (2018) study of IHLIA LGBT Heritage (a queer archive in Amsterdam). These studies

underscore how queer archives are dynamic spaces where the personal, the political and the professional converge and are negotiated.

This body of work demonstrates the tensions present in many community and queer archives, like autonomy and institutionalisation. I highlight these tensions throughout CDOC's history, and I also argue that the CDOC, although an institutional archive, can also be considered a community archive. Nevertheless, much of this literature is focused on Anglophone and Western European contexts, which are usually shaped by a degree of institutional support and stability that is not available the same way in other places. My research contributes to expanding the scope of this body of work by centring the CDOC in my analysis, which is situated in a Southern European, post-authoritarian and, in comparison, under-resourced context.

Feminist and Queer Archival Studies

Feminist and queer interventions in archival theory pushed it to new directions by focusing on affect, embodiment and the politics of representation. Kate Eichhorn (2013) considers the archive as a central figure in feminist political strategy and movements, and shows how feminist archival practices can prevent institutional forgetting. Bek J. Orr (2021) similarly highlights the potential of feminist and queer archival practices to be reparative and transformative when dealing with exclusion and when invested in relationality and care. In the field of Queer Archival Studies, scholars like Marika Cifor (2017) and Michelle Caswell (Caswell & Cifor, 2016), or special issues like "Radical Empathy in Archival Practice" in the *Journal for Critical Library and Information Studies*, address the emotional and ethical dimensions of archival work, the challenges of representing diverse LGBTQ+ experiences and the role of the archivist in that process. They also shift the focus from neutral archival practices and management to ones rooted in empathy and accountability between users, archivists and materials. Pauline Junginger and Marian Dörk (2021) continue to explore these topics by examining the tensions

between the fluidity of queer identities and the need for stabilising them in archives and in activism, proposing flexible and community-based strategies.

These scholars propose that the archive and its practices are affectively and politically and ethically situated, which disrupts linear and coherent histories and embraces the fragments and contradictions. I read and approach the CDOC through the lens of affective labour and the ethics of archival care, since the volunteers' and staff's work are restricted to the available resources (like time or money), and memory work is challenged by gaps in continuity. Moreover, these works also inform my reading of the CDOC's grassroots origins and the challenges it has faced between institutionalisation and recognition and a more community-driven approach.

Queer Studies in Portugal

The academic field of Queer Studies in Portugal has developed gradually since the turn of the century, especially with works from the disciplines of Psychology and Sociology on sexual citizenship and political participation of LGBTQ+ people in Portugal (Cameiro & Menezes, 2007), homonormativity (de Oliveira, Costa, & Nogueira, 2013), the Portuguese LBGTQ+ associations and movement (Cascais, 2006), the intersection between activism and academia (Cascais, 2012), and, more recently, trans recognition (Saleiro, 2021). Ana Cristina Santos (2004, 2006, 2013, 2016, 2018) has been central to this development, producing knowledge on sexual citizenship and legal recognition. Her work explores the negotiation between personal identities and legal and institutional structures, as well as how normativity operates in legal inclusion. Complementing this, Joana Matias (2022) and António F. Cascais (2024) have begun addressing queer history in Portugal, exploring the political questions raised by the history and memory of LGBTQ+ communities in Portugal and advocating for its protection and dissemination. This body of work helps to conceptualise the LGBTQ+ experiences in Portugal as shaped by legal progress and persistent structural challenges.

However, archival research related to LGBTQ+ memory, documentation and histories remain underdeveloped. The gap is beginning to be addressed by graduate-level research such as Mariana F. E. L. Guerra' documentary and archiving project on Lisbon's LGBTI+ Pride March (2021) and Inês S. C. Nogueira's case study of a municipal library regarding the LGBTI+ community and their needs (2023). At the State level, Lisbon's I Municipal LGBTI+ Plan 2020-2021 (Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 2020) listed documenting the city's history through initiatives that promote the recognition of people and spaces linked to the city's LGBTI history as one of its measures. Although the second plan dropped that measure (Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 2025) from its "Participation and Citizenship" axis, these scholar and institutional developments show the growing awareness of queer memory work in Portugal.

Thus, my research is a necessary contribution to these developments, doing a case study on a Portuguese queer archive. It also addresses the lack of focus on the CDOC in works on ILGA's institutional relationships (Moz, 2001; da Silva, 2021), and considers and greatly expands on an oral presentation on the CDOC and the projects that contributed to its professionalisation (Santos and Cerdeira, 2015). Building on the dynamics studied in the Portuguese queer scholarship and expanding them, I focus on the role of affective and volunteer labour and discontinuity in queer memory work. By doing this, I give my contribution to the consolidation of Queer Studies in Portugal.

Conclusion

These bodies of work underscore the archive as a site of memory, power and affect. Drawing from and contributing to the mentioned literature, my thesis is situated within the established conversations and introduces questions about visibility, discontinuity and volunteer labour, especially in the Portuguese context.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This chapter outlines the theoretical and methodological frameworks that guide my analysis of the CDOC as a queer living archive. I situate the CDOC within the broader discussions of memory, temporality and power in Archival Studies and Queer Studies. These frameworks enable a reading of the CDOC as a site of knowledge production and preservation, and a space shaped by discontinuity, desire and volunteer labour. Methodologically, I employ oral history as a tool to collect and interpret data, considering the embodied and relational dimensions of memory. Through it, I explore how the CDOC has been experienced, narrated and imagined by those who have interacted with it, framing my research as historical analysis and archival effort.

Theoretical framework

First, it is important to turn to Michel Foucault (1969/1972), who sees the archive as a "system of statements" (objects, actions, language, etc.). It is the space that encompasses discursive practices that determine what constitutes knowledge and truth at a specific time – producing, circulating and classifying it –, governing and organizing the 'statements' as such, and including and excluding accordingly. Therefore, the archive is seen as a site of power, a crucial part of the structures that determine what is considered valid knowledge, and, consequently, what is intelligible. This frames my reading of the CDOC as marked by the boundaries of what is and has been considered worthy to preserve. My analysis is further deepened by Foucault's conceptualisation of power (1976/1978), which helps me frame the CDOC as a part of networks of power that are both repressive and productive. This means that the CDOC can be repressive and exclude but also be productive in enabling alternative narratives or new subjectivities.

Building on this and moving towards a more pragmatic engagement, I draw on Stuart Hall (2001), who introduces the idea of the archive being a "living" thing: a project that is never finished and that is constructed through an array of people (and here participation, ownership and empowerment are highlighted), political and cultural contexts, and discursive formations.

The archive is then something that is unfinished, situated and political. It also enacts a contested space where meanings are produced and negotiated (Hall, 2001), which allows the possibility to challenge dominant narratives and create space for difference and resignification, similarly to my application of Foucault's theory of power (1976/1978). Hall's understanding (2001) has inspired scholars such as Ann Cvetkovich (2003) and Marianne Hirsch (2012), who offer a conceptual framework that continues to support the understanding of the archive as something like a living entity, especially with their focus on the affective, embodied and mutable nature of the archive. Furthermore, the intersubjective nature of the archive that Hall (2001) hints at with his emphasis on negotiation and participation is further developed by Antoinette Burton (2005). She shows concern with archive stories, which refer to the narratives and embodied experiences about how archives are created, accessed, operationalised, experienced and interpreted. These stories serve as a challenge to the archive's presumed objectivity and neutrality. Burton highlights the intersubjectivity of the archive – centring the relationships between the archivists, donors and users – and the embodied experiences of the people who interact with it, making it a space full of desire (both from the archivists and users) and a contextual one (like Hall's [2001] conception). By placing these works in conversation, I am framing the CDOC as a political, relational and affective space where knowledge is organised and made (in)visible. This is especially evident in how my interviewees construct the CDOC as a site of hope and aspiration, and of frustration and loss, or in how different actors offer divergent accounts of the CDOC's origins. I am also using these works to position my interviewees' accounts as key narratives to understand how the CDOC is used, remembered and imagined.

My theoretical framework is further deepened through the lens of Queer Studies, as I engage with foundational works that deal with temporality, failure and history. Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) is one of these works, rejecting the heteronormative path to success rooted in reproductive temporality, capitalist productivity and linear narratives. Instead, in his

framework, failure becomes a queer tool of disrupting knowledge, capitalist logics, and the imperatives of improvement and positive thinking our society is constantly pushing. Thus, failure is not just a lack or loss, but a refusal of dominant norms and a generative way to inhabit other ways of being and functioning. I frame the CDOC's precarity and marginal status as failures that are invitations to rethink what counts as queer archival success in the Portuguese context.

This resonates with José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* (2009/2019), which argues against the focus on the present in much of Queer Studies, advocating for a forward-looking perspective to a better future for queer people. Queerness for him is something that has not been realised yet, and it is something that we see, idealise and even conceive through the fragments of our present and past. Therefore, these three temporal spaces are bridged with critique and potentiality, both rooted in the failures of the LGBTQ+ movements, organisations and people, and in hope. Muñoz's framework supports my reading of the CDOC as a space where queer past(s), present(s) and future(s) are negotiated through the desires and labour of those who engage with it. It also frames the CDOC as an unfinished site, like Hall's (2001), Cvetkovich's (2003) and Hirsch's (2012) theorisations.

Finally, Elizabeth Freeman's *Time Binds* (2010) offers a relevant frame to interpret the CDOC and its entanglement with memory, precarity and potential. In it, Freeman proposes the concept of chrononormativity to describe how the dominant time structures discipline bodies and institutions into a linear progression marked by productivity. Against this, she develops erotohistoriography as a way of engaging with the past through affective, embodied and non-linear encounters that enables queer attachments and interruptions of linear and traditional history. Freeman's theorisations of queer time and her emphasis on affect and the attachment of the past to the present are important to show how the CDOC – through its work and use, and the oral histories collected by me – allows for queer lives and histories to be (re)activated in the

present as ongoing negotiations of memory and desire. This thesis itself is also a place for the encounter of past and present, and for the embracing of the past's debris to critical think of the present and future.

Methodological and theoretical considerations

To conduct this research, I draw upon oral history as the central methodological approach. This thesis was originally designed to employ a mixed-methods approach, bringing oral history reflections together with archival research. However, some of the issues that I faced early on related to the lack of staffing at the CDOC made me rethink the project and focus solely on oral history. Over the months, the CDOC took a long time to respond to email enquiries, especially during the summer months, which I had allocated to do the largest part of my fieldwork. Space wise, there were also four reasons that contributed to this rethinking: having classes in Vienna did not allow me to spend more time at the CDOC during the academic year; a lot of institutional documentation is only available to see with the supervision of the CDOC's coordinator., who needs to check what documents are in a dossier first, for example; the CDOC can only receive one user a time, which makes an appointment harder to get; and not all its materials are catalogued. As I was browsing through the CDOC in the beginning of this year, I decided it would be best to leave the pandora box of the documentation centre's materials unopen. Additionally, when I started doing the transcription of the interviews and beginning its analysis, I also realised that archival research would go beyond the scope of the project as a master's thesis, especially when it is about oral history, temporality and living people's experiences.

Oral history is not used in this thesis just to gather data, but as a critical and situated method of knowledge production. As Valerie Yow (2005) highlights, oral history interviews are in-depth and dialogue-based encounters that need to pay attention to the interviewee's narrative structure, emotional tone and the broader socio-political context in which memories are formed and expressed. Thus, this method allows for the exploration of contradictions and emotions that

become apparent in individual and collective memory. Furthermore, drawing on Alessandro Portelli's work (1991), I understand oral history as a tool to recover people's experiences and the CDOC's history, and to interpret the meaning people attach to those. Therefore, the narratives shared by my interviewees are not understood and analysed by me as objective accounts, but as interpretative constructions shaped by personal investment, memory and emotion. This is particularly important in the context of queer history and research, where erasure and non-normativity complicate a linear or purely factual historical reconstruction and theorisation.

Building on these considerations and considering that this thesis relies primarily on six oral history interviews, I frame my research as a pragmatic, methodological and epistemological commitment that is grounded in the reality of queer archival absence in Portugal. Having had no possibility to do archival research and having almost no academic or institutional sources on the CDOC, this thesis reflects the precarity of queer memory work and its structures in Portugal. This is a limitation of my research but also an inherent trait of queer memory and archival work. As Cvetkovich (2003) argues, queer lives, practices and institutions are undocumented and erased, necessitating alternative practices to fight neglect and invisibility. Therefore, oral history in my thesis becomes a method for filling the gaps in the literature *and* a strategy for producing knowledge that resists erasure, honours affective memory and centres lived experiences.

The oral history I am trying to assemble in this thesis is not a pursuit of a consolidation of the history of the CDOC, or an attempt to completely corroborate my interviewees' narratives, but it is a form of "queering memory", like Ana Dragojlovic and CL Quinan (2023) describe. This approach suggests that queer memory inherently has gaps and improvisations, and that it is not just about what is remembered, but about what cannot be known or fully archived, or what cannot be verified and coherent. Ann Cvetkovich (2003) also writes about this when

considering trauma, emotion and memory as essential elements of queer history, making its narrative(s) a mosaic of affective and fragmented memories. Additionally, Horacio N. Roque Ramírez and Nan Alamilla Boyd (2012) argue that queer oral history challenges the normative archival standards, epistemologies and temporalities, as it values affect, failure and messiness. I hope to document these traces of history in a way that honours them and does not reduce them to a set of truths, producing a living textual archive (or a patchwork) that has space for past, present and future emotions, fragments, gaps and contradictions.

Furthermore, I conceptualise this thesis and its use of oral history as an archival effort. As La Vaugh Belle, Zayaan Khan, Holly A. Smith and Julietta Singh suggest in a roundtable (2020), archives can be intimate, affective and embodied, taking the form of a garden or a pantry, for example, and resisting the fixed authority of traditional archival processes and spaces. Accordingly – and considering the archive as a space of care, resistance and futurity (Belle et al., 2020) –, my thesis can be understood as a form of archival practice. First, it gathers and preserves the fluid experiences of people important to the CDOC's history. Second, it reflects the specific personal and academic standpoint from which I write. Third, it remains open to future reinterpretation, both in academic and activist spaces. Hall's theorisation (2001) can also support this conceptualisation of my thesis. For him, the archive actively engages with the past, present and future rather than remaining a static collection of the past. It is also "an object of reflection and debate" and one that involves "self-consciousness" and "self-reflexivity" (p. 89). My research is part of both these processes, contributing to the CDOC and the documenting of its history, and shifting the accounts of my interviewees from everyday embodied practices into self-conscious memories.

Lastly, the distinction between 'queering the archive' and 'archiving the queer' can support the reading of this thesis as an archive. This distinction has been explicitly stated by authors like Bek J. Orr (2021) or Marcel Barriault (2009), but the contents of it have emerged from

overlapping conversations and theorisations in the fields of Queer Studies and Archival Studies. I will go into further detail on this topic in the "Present" chapter, when I am relating the CDOC to broader theories and contexts. Nonetheless, I want to explicitly state that this thesis is included in these two queer ways of approaching the archive. First, it is archiving queer history by collecting, through oral history interviews, information on how the CDOC has functioned, why it was created, who has contributed to it, as well as by contributing to the understanding of other broader dynamics like queer archiving and queer temporality. Second, it is queering the archive because it will contribute to the challenging of the traditional archive – with its strict policies, its specific materials, and its specific reasonings for establishment and operationalisation – by theorising the CDOC (a queer documentation centre) and archiving its archive stories (Burton, 2005).

Sampling

My main aim when conducting the fieldwork was to interview as many people as possible who had/have a relationship with the CDOC. Having visited the CDOC in the beginning of 2024, I had a contact point there, Fátima Cartaxo (Fátima C. hereafter), who is the current coordinator of the CDOC and who had made herself available to provide any help needed. Fátima C. became my starting point for this project, and from her I started to find, contact, and recruit the participants through a snowball technique. Only one of the participants was recruited outside of this method: Gonçalo Diniz, ILGA's first President. To reach him, I contacted the online LGBTQ+ Portuguese blog/magazine *dezanove*, which I knew had interviewed Diniz in the past, and they were kind enough to put me in contact with Diniz.

Data collection

I interviewed 8 people between August 2024 and January 2025, but this thesis only considers 6 of those interviews, since I decided not to use the data from the interviews I had with two of the CDOC's users. This is because it would introduce another level of analysis that would be

complementary and not crucial to my arguments. All interviewees were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview by email or through WhatsApp, depending on what type of information I had to reach them. The interviews lasted between 1-1.5 hours on Zoom, where I recorded the interviews, except for Fátima C.'s interview. This interview was done at the CDOC, and I used my phone to record it.

I am sure there are people outside of this batch of participants that would be important for this project and for the writing of an oral history of the CDOC, but these were the ones I managed to reach having in consideration the time period where the CDOC has existed, the time period I had to complete this thesis and the relevance of the participants' accounts. A deep dive into the CDOC's materials, as well through more interviews, would be a good starting point for uncovering more important names in the history and operationalisation of the CDOC.

Interviewees profiles

My first interview was with Fátima C., the present coordinator of the CDOC since 2020. She has been doing volunteer work at the CDOC since 2018, and her educational background is in Law. She is very interested in LGBTQ+ topics, with a focus on sapphic content, having a blog on it. My second interviewee was Fátima Santos (Fátima S. hereafter), who was the main responsible for the CDOC's professionalisation in 2009, having a background and professional experience in Documentation Sciences. Next, I interviewed B., who was a volunteer present in much of the 2010s at the CDOC. My fourth interview was with Gonçalo Aguiar (Gonçalo A. hereafter), who has been ILGA's chief of staff for some years and had previously managed a project that ILGA was developing on hate crimes. Manuela Lavinha was my next interviewee, one of the CDOC's earliest coordinators between the early 2000s and the CDOC's professionalisation. Like Fátima S., she also has a background in Documentation Sciences and was a part of the CDOC for several years, even after leaving as coordinator. My last interviewee was Gonçalo Diniz, who was one of ILGA's founders and one of the most public figures of the

beginning of the LGBTQ+ movement in Portugal. He was ILGA's first President until 1999. The CDOC is named after him.

Ethical considerations

Although it is highly likely that the people I interviewed are conversant in English, I decided to do the interviews in Portuguese without asking them their preference. This is because I wanted my interviewees to feel more comfortable in an interview setting and express their experiences and ideas more accurately, as Portuguese is their mother tongue and what they had spoken when interacting with the CDOC. Moreover, although Portuguese is my first language and I have lived in Portugal until coming to Vienna, I went to the interview as a researcher from a university outside of the country, where I am being thought and will write a thesis in English. These facts could create an additional uneasiness or hesitation in the interviewee, which made me sure that the best option would be to do the interview in Portuguese. Additionally, every quote in this thesis that is not from a cited work is directly taken from the interviews and translated to English by me. This was done to value, consider and archive their experiences and feelings *in their own words*.

During the fieldwork, it was also important to assure the clear consent and safety of the participants, and to show and make them an important part of the final thesis. Therefore, all the participants received a consent form, which included the purpose of the interview and consent information for the present and future uses of the data collected. This document also included the possibility for withdrawing the consent until the point of data processing. The participants were given the choice of how they wanted to be mentioned in the final text: being identified by their relationship to the Centre, use a pseudonym, use their real names, etc. All interviewees decided to be identified with their real names, apart from B., who decided to use a random letter to identify themselves. As the CDOC had expressed interest in archiving the data (the audios and transcripts), participants also stated their acceptance or refusal of that preservation. At the

end of each interview, I asked the interviewees if they wished to receive the audio of the interview and/or a transcript of it. Additionally, every participant is thanked in the acknowledgements section of this thesis and will receive a copy of the final thesis. I deeply appreciate their participation and work.

These practices are informed by how oral history is inherently collaborative. As argued in the introduction of *New Directions in Queer Oral History* (Murphy at al., 2022), queer oral history interviews are coproduced between narrator and interviewer, especially when we consider the shared authority of the actors, and their interpersonal dynamics and positionality. This thesis embraces this element by, for example, sharing the final product and its accomplishment with my interviewees and by archiving our interviews at the CDOC. Moreover, my interviews were fully shaped by my identity as a Portuguese queer researcher, my motivations for doing the project, the bond created with each participant, and the shared stakes in documenting and interpreting the CDOC. Instead of treating this bias as something faulty or something to be hidden or corrected, I treat it as a productive part of the research process (Murphy at al., 2022; Yow, 2005).

Besides this, feminist and queer oral theorists (Murphy at al., 2022; Borland, 1998/2003) also call to attention the need to reflexivity. I situate myself within the research process as both a knowledge-seeker and a participant, and my positionality affects every layer of the research and writing processes. This allows me to examine how power circulates in the interview space and in the writing of this thesis, like, for example, the situation I described above regarding language.

Use of AI tools

While researching and writing this thesis, I made use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, particularly OpenAI's ChatGPT, as a brainstorming tool, strengthening my text's coherence and precision. First, AI tools supported the various drafts of this text by offering suggestions for

sentence restructuring, different vocabulary and clarity. Second, AI assisted in synthesizing themes emerging from my data by helping me explore possible themes and language for framing these. These suggestions were always critically reviewed considering my own interpretations, oral history theory and attention and care to narrative complexity. Third, AI tools served as a search engine in complementary literature mapping, particularly by identifying scholarly works that I had previously not considered. Nonetheless, all sources cited in this thesis were independently located, read and evaluated by me. AI was not involved in fieldwork, interview transcription, narrative interpretation or ethical considerations, since those aspects were based on my own engagement with the project, guided by reflexivity and the ethics of oral history and queer research. Additionally, AI was not used to generate content and did not replace my critical engagement with any sources or my independent analysis of fieldwork data. This acknowledgement is an attempt to be transparent and ethically responsible towards the broader user of these types of technologies in academic research and writing.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have established a theoretical framework that understands the archive as affective and political, and a methodology that considers oral history as an interpretive and situated practice. Bringing perspectives from different authors, I read the CDOC as a living archive shaped by institutional conditions and individual and collective investments. My methodological choices and limitations reflect the challenges of researching queer history in Portugal and give insight into how memory is formed, forgotten and reimagined. These frameworks ground the description and analysis that follows.

Past: Contested Origins and the History of the first Portuguese Queer Archive

This chapter explores the history of the CDOC through my interviewee's experiences and memories. It has two main objectives: to discuss the contested origins of the CDOC; and to write an oral history of the documentation centre (an effort to contribute to the writing of Portuguese queer history). I have decided to structure the chapter this way to provide a detailed account of the CDOC's history with a periodisation that emerged from my interviewee's accounts and my attempt to understand their narratives in a somewhat (chrono)logical way.

I argue that through its contested origins and shifting meanings, the CDOC is a site of negotiation between activism, institutional memory and the politics of visibility and recognition. The different accounts of its founding, for example, reveal competing memories and silences, showing how oral histories are valuable to decipher and analyse what happened but also how it is remembered, by whom and with what intent. With oral testimony at the centre of this chapter, I want to show how memory, positionality and time complicate our understanding of the CDOC's history, as the narrators' recollections depend on their relationship to the CDOC, the length of their involvement and their political and personal investment. This turns their accounts into processes of understanding and moulding their past, present and future, completely influenced by their contemporary emotion and concerns.

The CDOC is presented in this chapter not as a static institution but as a living, precarious and dynamic documentation centre shaped by discontinuity, desire and the political urgency of preserving and disseminating marginalised histories and information. With this, I want to highlight how the CDOC is a space of queer ephemera, individual and collective aspiration, and institutional negotiation.

The CDOC's contested origins

The first time I saw the name Gonçalo Diniz was exactly when I the discovered the CDOC, which made me feel ashamed after realising his importance in the fight against HIV/AIDS and for LGBTQ+ rights in the 1990s. I do not remember if at that time the CDOC's webpage had a section on Gonçalo Diniz – now there is one (ILGA Portugal, 2024) – or if it had any information on the documentation centre's origins, but I commenced my fieldwork to try to find out more about it and the history that followed. My encounter with Diniz's name and the interviews that followed highlight oral history's capacity to reveal lives and contributions "hidden from history" (Perks & Thomson, 1998/2003, p. ix). In my attempt to recover these stories that are not in any formal or informal accessible documents, this chapter situates the CDOC's origins within what Paul Thompson (1998/2003) describes as oral history's power in "shifting the focus and opening new areas of enquiry" (p. 26).

During my interviewing process, I started to have preconceived notions about how the CDOC was formed, and what Diniz's contributions had been. These notions were built through my interviewees' accounts, although they had not had any contact with Diniz or had been present at the time the association was formed. In our interview, Fátima C. told me that, in the recent years, there was an idea at ILGA that the CDOC had only been created after the inauguration of the association's community centre (then named LGBT Centre, now named LGBTI+ Centre). The main reason for this was CDOC's name, since people believed it would have had been given once Gonçalo Diniz had left the position of President of ILGA as an homage to him. However, when, for the occasion of the LGBTI+ Centre's 25th anniversary in 2022, the people at ILGA obtained video news reports from major TV channels, they realised the CDOC's plaque was already there at the Centre's inauguration. This meant the previous narrative was incorrect, and that the CDOC had been there since the beginning of ILGA's work and its establishment at Rua de São Lázaro, in downtown Lisbon, in 1997. The CDOC's name is now mostly attributed

to Gonçalo Diniz himself, who is believed to have given the documentation centre his name because he had donated his materials to it. The new narrative was also upheld by Fátima S. According to her, the creation of the CDOC was mainly Diniz's initiative and he donated his personal library to it. However, people like Gonçalo A. believe that the CDOC had been built with the personal collections of many people involved with ILGA in its early stage, as well as with materials from an HIV/AIDS association. This means that the early CDOC contained *not only but also* Gonçalo Diniz's collection.

Nonetheless, my interviewees state that the 'original' library was mainly constituted of informational and other written material (literature and academic studies) that was hard to get at the time in Portugal, since materials written in Portuguese (whether translated or not) were scarce and that in other languages was only available to those who had travelled outside the country or had the resources to get them from outside. This reality gives meaning to the original goal Fátima S. and B. described: a growing place that could provide information and knowledge resources to the association's affiliates. Manuela Lavinha went further and mentioned that the CDOC was a way of consolidating the association at the time and in the future, and a seed for future knowledge on LGBTQ+ topics, something Gonçalo A. also highlighted.

In terms of the challenges at the time of the CDOC's origins, Fátima C. did not have any knowledge, but supposed that they have remained the same through the years, like, for example, being difficult to find information, data and materials on Portuguese queer history. Gonçalo A. speculated that there may had been some discussion within ILGA on what the CDOC should be focused on: more of a library with "materials to consume" (with books, DVDs, CDs, etc., that, as I stated before, were hard to get in Portugal at the time) or a way to preserve the history of the LGBTQ+ movement. Nonetheless, in the end, both 'factions' had their victory, since the CDOC today is still a mixture of the two.

All these narratives are important to consider because of their contradictions and partiality. Alessandro Portelli (1998/2003) argues that although oral history can contribute to verify facts, it is especially valuable to capture the meaning people assign to events or other historical situations. The different accounts of the CDOC's origins do not diminish its history and its importance. Instead, they deepen them, revealing how memory is intrinsically shaped by personal, social and institutional relationships. As Valerie R. Yow (2005) notes, memory is a reconstructive act completely influenced by emotion, social and political context and the passage of time. Thus, these testimonies I have and will describe are interpretative engagements of my interviewees with the past, shaped in and by the present. This is clearly seen in this section since none of the testimonies are based on lived experience at the time of the creation of the CDOC, nor on direct contact with Gonçalo Diniz. They are simply ideas that have been built over time and experience. Nonetheless, it is worth noting a difference in my interviewees' accounts: earlier and/or long duration involvement with the CDOC generally correlated with a more confident or elaborate narrative on its origin and Diniz's role. This difference further underscores that the knowledge produced in oral history interviews is shaped by each narrator's positionality and time of involvement to the CDOC (Yow, 2005).

A question arises from this discussion: why is there no concise narrative on the CDOC's origin and Gonçalo Diniz? I would argue first, because there is no written history of the CDOC and ILGA apart from what the association has on its website. Further, as demonstrated in the literature review, there is little scholarly research on Portuguese queer history and other LGBTQ+ topics, and the little there is mostly concentrated in scientific fields like Sociology and Psychology. Another reason is the fact that there has been a lack of continuity in the CDOC, whether regarding the personnel (volunteer and ILGA's Boards turnover) and the physical space (the move in 2014 and the floods in São Lázaro), as seen further below.

Stuart Hall's (2001) concept of the archive can further help better understand why there are divergences regarding the origins of the CDOC. Hall reminds us that the archive is something that is shaped by power structures, memory, and historical interpretations of itself and its materials. The CDOC clearly shows this in the fragmented narratives I described. The different actors considered offer diverging accounts on the documentation centre's origins. This absence of a clear and unified history shows how an archive, like the act of archiving for Hall, is "always a critical one, always a historically located one, always a contestatory [sic] one (…)" (Hall, 2001, p. 92). Moreover, the generational and time distance between my interviewees and Gonçalo Diniz and the early years of ILGA also underscore this point, since they are giving their accounts of the CDOC's origins in the *present*, making them historically contingent to their experiences, concerns, etc. The documentation centre is, thus, a site where historical memory is continuously reinterpreted through the present, which, in turn, makes the shifting narratives about the CDOC's origins a manifestation of the way archives function as sites of memory-making and historical negotiation (Hall, 2001).

The narratives above show both a failure of record-keeping and of the writing of Portuguese queer history, and the broader dynamics of historical silence and institutional memory. Luisa Passerini (1998/2003) contends that memory is never neutral since it is shaped by ideology, social norms and public narratives that influence what is remembered and what is omitted. The discontinuities and losses that are present in the CDOC's oral history are not accidental but symptomatic of the precarity of queer memory itself, which will be discussed during this thesis. They also reflect the constant interplay between individual and collective memory, where gaps and silences are absences that structure historical understandings and meanings (Yow, 2005).

Furthermore, the archive itself is also akin to a living entity (Hall, 2001; Cvetkovich, 2003; Hirsch, 2012), since it is shaped continuously by additions, dismissals, losses, reinterpretations, and omissions. The CDOC's evolution through time presented in this chapter will clearly show

this, with its goals, meaning and space being in flux for almost three decades of existence. As an ongoing unfinished project, there is a constant array of inputs and outputs that contribute to its blurry and disparate history. José E. Muñoz's conceptualisation of queerness as a horizon rather than a fully realized 'state' (2009/2019) complicates this analysis, as the CDOC is not just any archive, but a queer one. The implications of the CDOC as queer archive will be discussed in the next two chapters. Just as queerness is a process of becoming (Muñoz, 2009/2019), the CDOC's history is a narrative in constant movement. It is also shaped by the present needs of the actors who interact with it and their aspirations for its future.

Considering this constant restlessness, the presence of discontinuities, ruptures and reconfigurations are also forces that define the archive, making it "a series full of gaps, intertwined with one another, interplays of differences, distances, substitutions, transformations" (Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 37). This means that archives are shaped by what is kept and remembered *and* by what is lost or forgotten, which is confirmed by the absence of a definitive cohesive history of the CDOC. Queer ephemera, both material and immaterial – something that Muñoz (2009/2019) describes as the "trace, the remains, the things that are left, hanging in the air like a rumor" (p. 65) –, are often lost or ignored, but are crucial for queer history, spaces, interactions and future(s). Therefore, these oral testimonies, the institutional memory gaps, and the lost materials due to floods and relocations are all fragmented traces of the inherent discontinuity and incompleteness of the CDOC. The idea of queer ephemera also traces back to how there is a constant negotiation of the history of the CDOC instead of a fixed truth, since, for queerness "(…) the ephemeral trace, matter[s] more than many traditional modes of evidencing lives and politics" (Muñoz, 2009/2019, p. 81).

With this fragmented and contested narratives, and theorisation in mind, I will move to the past and the people who lived it, making a temporal path to the present day starting with Gonçalo Diniz's testimony.

Gonçalo Diniz and the start of the CDOC (1997-1999)

My interview with Gonçalo Diniz began with him telling me about his life as an activist in the 1990s in the ABRAÇO Association. In the "associative environment" of the time, Diniz found individuals who were excited to build a civil society organisation that could specifically advocate for LGBTQ+ rights on all fronts of civic life (ILGA Portugal, 2024). ABRAÇO served as a catalyser to the formation of that association, in the middle of many other dynamics, as Diniz explained. First, with informal meetings in 1995; becoming formally recognized in 1996 as an IPSS, with Gonçalo Diniz as its first President; and a year later, opening the then called LGBT Centre at São Lázaro (ILGA Portugal, 2024). Diniz highlighted three actors (from a plethora) who had supported ILGA in its first years: Lisbon's Municipality material support and help in organizing events, as well as providing the space at São Lázaro; ABRAÇO's moral and logistic support, since they allowed the early ILGA team to have meetings at their space; and Bar 106, a gay bar in Bairro Alto which also gave its space to ILGA's team for their meetings.

Diniz told me that the main motivation for the creation of ILGA had been the fact that Portugal was behind, when compared to other European countries and to the USA, in terms of a dynamic LGBT movement that fought for the rights of those who had non-normative sexualities and gender expressions. This consciousness had only been possible because most ILGA founders were from middle to upper class and mostly urban families, and had travelled to other European cities, encountering more LGBTQ+-friendly/visible realities. Gonçalo Diniz was aware of this privilege and said, "it was inevitable that we compared the reality we lived here [in Lisbon and in Portugal] to the one in London, Amsterdam and Paris", which had been unsettling for him at the time. The discrepancy of realities in the same continent and as members of the EU had also been due to a lack of public LGBTQ+ references and to what he called the "prevalent hypocrisy" in people's silence regarding family members or celebrities who had gender or sexuality non-conforming identities. Thus, more than just an association that fought for legal

recognition, Diniz and the other founders had wanted ILGA to "provoke a national debate, a social change, a change in mentalities" in a Portugal that had been a democracy for 20 years after the end of a long dictatorship and had made little to no progress in terms of LGBTQ+ rights, visibility and wellbeing, as described in the historical context.

This reality becomes more relevant when considering the difficulties of living a non-normative life outside of the two main urban areas, Lisbon and Oporto, in which people suffered a lot of prejudice, as Diniz recalled. Diniz mentioned that people would sometimes approach him and thank him for his public appearances and disclosure of his sexuality, especially those who lived in more "isolated places" that had "no references whatsoever". ILGA had been initiated to change this reality through public visibility and a more institutionalised struggle, as Diniz described to me. This narrative illustrates how oral history interviews can become spaces for moral and political reaffirmation, and in this case, also activist purpose and public legacy. Portelli (1991) argues that narrators often use the interview to construct an image of themselves that reflects what they *did* and what they *meant to do*. In recounting the gratitude from strangers in "isolated places", Diniz (re)affirms the impact of his activism work while implicitly justifying the public stances he took at the time. This is deepened by Horacio N. Roque Ramírez's and Nan Alamilla Boyd's consideration (2012) that narrators often construct a narrative with legacy in mind, especially when their contributions have been overlooked in institutional or popular memory, as has Diniz's persona.

The Portuguese context and Diniz's account of the creation of ILGA hint briefly at why the documentation centre was created within the association. Gonçalo Diniz and the other founders had as a main reference ABRAÇO, and that association had access to privileged information on HIV/AIDS from, for example, a European community group Diniz was a part of. To try to give information that could improve or even save the lives of the community it was trying to help, ABRAÇO created a documentation centre, which provided a big part of CDOC's materials

in the beginning. Apart from the fact that many people were involved, direct or indirectly, with both ILGA and ABRAÇO, ABRAÇO's documentation centre also had materials that were not HIV related, but still LGBTQ+ related, and, therefore, perfect to be kept by the CDOC. There was also a mutual interest from the two associations that the CDOC had materials specifically related to HIV and its treatments, mainly the excess materials from ABRAÇO. This specific context, as well as the overall Portuguese context, provides a stronger reasoning for the creation of the CDOC: ILGA must have a free access documentation centre which gathered as much information as possible in various formats. The fight against HIV/AIDS and ABRAÇO were catalysers for the creation of the CDOC, and helped conceive its goals, similarly to – or, more accurately, by extension to – what happened with ILGA itself.

As a space of and for information, the CDOC was conceived as an integral part of the community centre that opened in 1997. The founders of ILGA had wanted the LGBT Centre to be more than just a "meeting point" and as "holistic" as possible, as Diniz recounted, making the CDOC the "didactic" service which offered information to the community that went to the Centre. Thus, narratives on the origins of the CDOC as a resource centre align with Diniz's memories. It was also a way of collecting and archiving the materials ILGA was producing and, therefore, of consolidating and validating ILGA's work. Despite this, this latter goal was not a specific priority in Diniz's narrative, which suggests that Manuela's and Gonçalo A.'s assumptions were a product of their time, having only been in contact with the CDOC some years after its origin. They did not consider how this goal was almost unconscious in the mind of Diniz and others who conceived the Centre and took it for granted. Additionally, when I brought up the question of the CDOC's name, Gonçalo Diniz told me he had felt "almost awkward" at the time and that it was a group of associates who had proposed at ILGA's Assembly that the CDOC would have his name while he was still President, which may indicate

that it was not his choice or desire, nor was it related to the fact that the CDOC had his collection (which it did not, according to him).

The CDOC was one of the many ideas that the nonstationary founding group of ILGA had for the association: ones were successful like CDOC, others were not. Gonçalo Diniz was the more permanent person in that group, which may have also helped the construction of a narrative in which he was the sole or main person responsible for the CDOC. According to Diniz, although unstable, there was no discussion within the group on what the CDOC should include or if it should be more didactic or more recreational, which does not align with Gonçalo A.'s supposition of past debate on the CDOC's goals. The LGBT Centre was at the ground floor of an old building, which ILGA decided to make a mezzanine to take full advantage of the space. Gonçalo Diniz described the Centre in detail, with a big meeting spot for the bar and conviviality, some offices for public attendance and for the association, and the CDOC. The CDOC had glass walls, which materialized the division with the rest of the Centre, but, at the same time, how the CDOC was integral to the Centre's purposes. The main users of the CDOC were, according to Diniz, the people who went to the community centre and wanted information or recreational materials on LGBTQ+ topics, but people would also use it as a more silent refuge or to have a private conversation. In addition, Diniz did not remember people using it for academic purposes, which can be easily explained by the lack of studies during the 1990s on those topics, as recounted by my interviewees and shown in my literature review.

When I asked Diniz about the challenges at the time of the creation of the CDOC, he mentioned two. The first challenge was that no one involved in the early days of the project had proper training in how to organise a documentation centre, which translated into a lack of "coherence in how the materials were gathered", and a lack of guiding principles and of a strategic plan. The second challenge was financial resources, as the small amount of money ILGA had was being spent on other materials that the association lacked for their normal functioning. This

financial situation made clear some things. Most of the CDOC's materials had to come from individual or institutional donations, and, as the materials were scarce and "beggars can't be choosers", there was no specific intent of being more inclusive or representative of specific groups within the LGBTQ+ community, as Diniz described. Furthermore, there was no loan service at the CDOC and there was no way of trying to develop more initiatives or even professionalisation of the CDOC at the time. An example of this was that there was no cooperation with other associations or institutions, apart from receiving documents from those like APF (Planned Parenthood Association) or ABRAÇO. Moreover, the Centre and, by extension, the CDOC were dependent on voluntary work to be open to the public. The clarity of Diniz's answers in this topic contrasts to the other narrators' uncertainty or speculation, which may be shaped by temporal distance and personal investment. As Yow (2005) points out, narrators usually use interviews to present themselves as knowledgeable authorities, especially when they have been involved in historically significant things. However, that authority is partial and, in a way, performative, as it is shaped by personal investment. Interviews become spaces of identity negotiation where narrators are selectively framing the past based on how they wish to be seen in the present and future (Yow, 2005).

During the interview, there were many instances in which Diniz alluded to the non-existent relationship he has with ILGA nowadays, despite still being a member of the association. For example, he had no idea of the CDOC's present state and even commented that "for you to be doing this research, I imagine that the CDOC must have a different status than the one at the time [in the 1990s]". Portelli (1991) argues that the perceived distance from events allows narrators to position themselves in relation to, for example, institutions they once shaped. That position is influenced by the narrators' current day context, priorities and points of view, or, in other words, their situated interpretations. Diniz's response is an example of the asymmetry of perspective created by time, geography (since Diniz is not living in Portugal anymore) and/or

detachment. Furthermore, Portelli (1991) argues that oral history interviews are dialogic acts in which the presence of the interviewer actively shapes what and how things are remembered: narrators construct meaning in relation to their past and their imagined audience instead of just recounting the facts. Building from this, Diniz's comment on my research suggests he was conscious of the narrative he was putting forward: he was telling his story while anticipating how it will be interpreted and preserved by me in my thesis and by the CDOC in the future. This further gives meaning to the influence of his situated interpretation and of his certainty in certain narratives, as Diniz was actively moulding his account with the present and future consequences in mind. There were also some instances where Diniz did not answer or relegated the answer to today's team at ILGA, even though the questions were regarding the future of the CDOC or its influence on broader dynamics in contemporary Portugal. His selective engagement with my questions points to what Yow (2005) describes as a subtext where silence and deferral are paradoxically meaningful assertions: what is not said becomes part of what the narrator *wants* to say. In this case, I would argue that these moments may reflect discomfort, or a desire to avoid making claims about an uncertain or undesirable past/present/future, or an effort to withhold authority in a changed institutional landscape. Moreover, George J. Severs (2022) demonstrates how reticence in queer oral history can function as narrative strategy. In his case study, the narrator's unwillingness to discuss a sensitive topic preserved and validated their image as a progressive activist. Thus, narrators may employ reticence as a strategic tool to shape their legacy, as Diniz did in this part of our interview. Despite this, Diniz told me how extremely honoured and grateful he is for the work, effort and value people have been putting into ILGA, and how the CDOC can be a useful tool to accomplish the educational or informative role of ILGA.

Considering Diniz's present relationship with ILGA, it is understandable why it was hard to find someone who knew him personally at ILGA or had his contact, or why the narratives about

the association and CDOC's origins were not as clear as his. Diniz "passed the baton" once he left ILGA and stopped being an active figure in the Portuguese LGBTQ+ movement at the turn of the century, when he moved to London to be with his partner (Marques, 2015). Besides ILGA, he was also involved in advocating for a law that recognized cohabitation regardless of sexual orientation for *de facto* couples (Diniz, 1997), a legal breakthrough that, according to Santos (2013), "set precedence for other remarkable legal changes to follow" (p. 55). Diniz told me that since his move to the United Kingdom, he has had no desire to interfere with the association's functioning and has been acting as a very distant observer of the association he helped to create, further confirming my argument on his avoidance of making claims as a narrative strategy.

This foundational early period in the establishment of the CDOC was mainly characterised by ambition, improvisation and a sense of political urgency. Inspired by other European countries and North America, and networks or organisations like ABRAÇO, ILGA worked to institutionalise LGBTQ+ advocacy in the conservative Portuguese society of the 1990s. The creation of the CDOC reflected this spirit, as it emerged from the associative culture at the time and was shaped by a pragmatic drive to gather and share information instead of having a clear archival strategy. Therefore, the CDOC was a product of activist necessity and a symbol of ILGA's broader project to change, inform, and create visibility.

The CDOC in the beginning of the 21st century (1999-2009)

After Gonçalo Diniz left the association in 1999, there were various Presidents, Boards and people volunteering at ILGA that contributed to the history of the CDOC. Through my fieldwork, I have not managed to identify any specific names besides Manuela Lavinha, whose account serves as the basis for this section. Apart from being a project close to her heart due to knowing some of ILGA's founders personally, Manuela said that volunteer work had always been a part of her life and is something that, for her, opens people's horizons while contributing

to a healthy civil society. Yow (2005) notes that interviewees often craft their narratives in ways that affirm their past and present moral or social choices/positioning. This is particularly relevant when considering the scope of the CDOC and of my thesis, both related to activist and community spaces/topics. Manuela's emphasis on the pros of volunteering for people and her framing of the CDOC as a communal project (something that will come up further in this section) positions her within a tradition of civic contribution. Thus, her account can be understood as past recollection and present identity work, where the interview serves to narrate the past and to reaffirm personal values in the present.

Despite this closeness to ILGA, Manuela only became a regular volunteer in the early 2000s. She could not give a precise year, but according to her account and the incomplete document on the Boards Fátima C. showed me, I have managed to situate it earlier than when Manuel João Morais was elected President of the association in 2006 and somewhere during the time Susana Marinho was in the Board. This act of situating Manuela's work in the CDOC was something that came up during the entire interview and during my assessment of it, as I was trying to piece together Manuela's remembrance of names and Boards positions. An important dimension of oral history is that the interview is a process in which memory is shaped and activated through the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee (Yow, 2005). For this, it is important to consider the relationship between the two sides of the interview, as well as the questions posed, for example. My own investment in the CDOC, our generational difference, and the conversational style of the interview helped to make the memory of the time to be constructed through trust and interaction, and inspired "the narrator to think hard, to try to remember." (Yow, 2005, p. 51).

During that time, Manuela spent three to four hours, one day per week, at the CDOC, and stayed somehow active until the move to Rua dos Fanqueiros in 2014. Volunteer work is always dependant on a confluence of many factors (Musick & Wilson, 2007), and Manuela was no

exception. Her availability to volunteer in the CDOC became more irregular and, interestingly, the change of space also contributed to that natural disengagement. In the present situation of ILGA, the community centre is separated from the CDOC and other offices, which, for her, made the work "more complicated" logistically and interpersonally. While in the previous space there had been easier interaction between people and communal work, in the new space, Manuela mentioned two "entropies": the separation of spaces, which makes the CDOC completely shut out of the community centre and its dynamic environment, a thing that Manuela was very fond of; and the share of space between CDOC and ILGA's offices, which makes the free access only given to people of trust or accompanied by someone known to the association. There is also the fact that there is a high turnover in the Boards and the volunteers, which also makes the return or even the continuity of people like Manuela slightly harder and inconvenient.

Although one of the CDOC's earliest coordinators, Manuela considered herself to be a volunteer among others, who had had as her main job to "create a network". This network was mostly realized in assessing the work that needed to be done and its continuity, and matching that work with the other volunteers' availability, expectations and desires. It had also been affective, as Manuela mentioned that many people had volunteered at ILGA to meet new people and build a community, no matter the work or the continuity of it. Thus, her role was one of "being available" to create and then manage these networks with ILGA's needs, as she described. At the time, one of the main needs was that there was a volunteer that could ensure the community centre and the CDOC were open as many times as possible. That is why another of Manuela's main tasks was to train the other volunteers so there was a bigger number of people who could provide a good service to the CDOC's users. That training meant knowing extremely well how the CDOC was organised and, for those who wanted to help the ongoing cataloguing and other activities, how to catalogue and organise the materials, for example. This was something that

surprised me because some volunteers could just be there to guarantee the CDOC was open and people could use it, and not actively contributing to its internal tasks and organisation.

Therefore, for Manuela, the main priority and goal was that the CDOC was a breathing, "living space" with one or more volunteers there to work daily and make it accessible and usable to those who had searched for it. Being open also meant being connected to the community that visited the LGBT Centre for leisure purposes. Manuela, like Gonçalo Diniz, also mentioned how the CDOC had not been isolated, but *inside* the LGBT Centre: "a door that was open, a light that was on, and the people, while there [at the LGBT Centre] could come in and consult [the materials]". The CDOC users came to know of it because it was part of ILGA, or from word of mouth or attending the Centre. People could only use the materials on site and could also photocopy them for X amount of money, that Manuela said was a way of gaining some funds for the CDOC. Users could also just simply sit and read, or watch something on the TV, like a library or another convivial space in the Centre. The community aspect of the entire Centre (the CDOC included) is also relevant for this oral history for two things: the sociocultural environment in the early 2000s in Portugal, which Manuela described as "not accepting"; and the fact that the Centre had served as a space for people to figure out themselves by socialising and then "gain their [gender and sexual nonnormative] identities".

The work at the CDOC was autonomous from the Board and Manuela considered them to be "volunteers like me", as there was no strong hierarchy and the people that constituted the Board were also volunteers. The work consisted mostly of organizing the new materials and the ones that were already there, like a great amount of news clippings that a volunteer had been collecting for some time, and other materials, like periodicals, postcards and DVDs that needed to be sorted by title and date. At the time, there had been no catalogue, and volunteers would simply organise the materials in files and shelves, but, when computers had started to become available, the volunteers had started to do this cataloguing in Excel databases that they had had

created for each type of material, which was precarious but still searchable, as Manuela remembered. According to her, the materials at the CDOC came from donations from anyone or any institution who felt that the materials in question would be important for the documentation centre to have, preserve and make available, like, for example, a donation from the now extinct Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR). The volunteers would ask the users of the documentation centre who were conducting research to leave a copy of the final product at the CDOC, a practice that remained through time. There were also materials which were produced by the association, like an exhibition at Teatro da Comuna (a theatre in Lisbon) on the Portuguese LGBTQ+ movement that was later adapted into a file for the CDOC to have, copy and give to people. The CDOC was also a place for exhibitions from the volunteers of ILGA. Manuela recalled one of photographs and one of Egyptology, which clearly shows how the volunteers were directly implicated in the space they were giving their work to, and how their efforts and proactivity were directly connected to the LGBT Centre and the CDOC's activity.

However, as we can deduce by the exhibition on Egyptology, the CDOC was not restricted to LGBTQ+ topics. Another example of this was the fact that the CDOC had, of course, mainly materials related to the LGBTQ+ community, but not exclusively. If a person would find useful to give the CDOC a collection of crime books and there were people who would like to have those there, Manuela saw no problem in that and even encouraged it. This vision of the CDOC is supported by how Manuela felt that we are a "multiplicity" and cannot be reduced to one axis of identity, and by how she considered that the CDOC did not have any special influence on what people conceived as a LGBTQ+ topic or individual. For Manuela, it was one of the various actors in people's lives that influenced that perception. Nonetheless, at the time, the Centre and the CDOC were one of the only public spaces where people could be themselves fully and interact with each other and the (queer or not) materials candidly, and that was what was important for her both personally and professionally.

At the time there were no recurring partnerships, as resources were scarce and the reality of the association was precarious. Financially, there had been no funding and there had been people who had to put their own money into the association, as Manuela remembered. The main challenge during the time Manuela was there, as I have indicated previously, was to keep the LGBT Centre and, by extension, the CDOC open with volunteers' scarcity: "to have the Centre open was the great project of our lives", as she recalled. There was even a particularly hard time when Manuel João Morais was President of ILGA (his presidency started in 2006), when the Centre was closed for long periods of time due to a lack of volunteers. It was important for Manuela and the Board to have the space open at least one day per week so that people could enjoy it, and it could fulfil its intended purpose. In addition to this challenge, two others came up in my interview with Manuela. Firstly, the place at São Lázaro was very precarious since it was susceptible to floods and infiltrations, which happened a few times during this period. Manuela remembered putting documents to dry on a chord, like "clothing outside" of a Portuguese house. She could not pinpoint exactly what had been affected, but she said that several documents had been lost or damaged, including internal ILGA documents. Some catalogues of the CDOC and other informational documents were also lost (both digital and physical, as the electronic devices were also affected). Secondly, the technological instruments of the CDOC (computers, the TV, the printer, etc.) were leftovers from what the association had received and bought, since there were other priority areas for the normal functioning of ILGA. This meant that some instruments were unreliable, and some volunteer work on cataloguing was also lost due to this precarity.

Nonetheless, Manuela and the other volunteers at the LGBT Centre persevered and tried their best to have the association's different services open and accessible to the public, many times using improvisation to manage the reality at the time. The interpersonal interactions and knowing that she had been contributing to making that type of space available to the public

were the things Manuela felt most grateful for during her time at the CDOC: "the space was of the people, to the people (…) and it helped them to become who they wanted to be". It is no surprise that she was glad about the revival of the Centre and the professionalisation of the CDOC, which clearly contributed to her idea of an active and thoughtful civil society and, by extension, ILGA.

The period between 1999 and 2009 was characterised by commitment, precariousness and grassroots care. The CDOC was maintained as a living space that served both as a documentation centre and as a site of community-making within ILGA's LGBT Centre. The work was shaped by improvisation and interpersonal networks, with no formal resources or professional infrastructure. Volunteers like Manuela Lavinha ensured the CDOC remained open and accessible, often under difficult conditions, but they also ensured that the CDOC was an affective and open-ended project, underscoring the idea that documentation and community-building could not be easily separated.

The professionalisation of the CDOC (2009-2013)

While Manuela was still a recurring volunteer at the CDOC, a new phase of the documentation centre and the LGBT Centre began. She recalled this as a "big change" that allowed for a person to be there during part of the week, making the CDOC and other ILGA spaces available during restricted hours and, consequently, making them more dynamic and in-touch with volunteers and users. This change was due to two externally funded projects that ILGA won (Santos & Cerdeira, 2015): "LGBT Centre: a space of citizenship, social integration and valorisation of Human Rights", from January 2009 to January 2011, funded by EEA Grants; "LGBT Centre: Cultivate Citizenship, Educate Equality", from January 2011 and December 2013, funded by QREN (the Portuguese framework for applying EU Community policy of economic and social cohesion in the period of 2007-2013). As Fátima S. told me, both had been a way to "revitalise the community centre, the LGBT Centre, and, at the same time of the CDOC", since the latter

was always a part of the former. Thus, the financial funding was channelled to hiring human resources, which would (re)organise ILGA's spaces and services, and to renovating the physical space (furniture and other equipment).

After the instability of the previous decade, one of the main tasks of the new human resources of ILGA had therefore been to foster regular volunteering teams, or as Fátima S. put it "to create community again", especially at an "important time" when same-sex marriage had been becoming a critical topic in Portuguese society and ILGA had been one of actors working to have it approved in the Parliament. She said this had been a time where activism was "very collective" and that "it brought a lot of people to the association", and the Boards and all ILGA's services (including the CDOC) had been acting as a "whole" in the activist efforts. This account reflects Santos' theorization on the LGBTQ+ movement in Portugal and the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights (2018), especially the concepts of *pedagogia de proximidade* (pedagogy of proximity) and *ativismo sincrético* (syncretic activism). The first concept refers to the efforts of activists and organizations to engage directly with news, media workers and policymakers to shape public narratives and drive change. The second concept refers to the simultaneous use of direct action and/or disruption, and institutional lobbying, which questions the traditional dichotomy between radical and assimilationist strategies in social movements (very striking in LGBTQ+ movements). This strategic fluidity allowed activists to maximize their impact despite the limited resources and strong cultural resistance. ILGA was one of the actors which used and benefited from these two dynamics, making it a part of the strategic mobilisation Santos describes.

Although this law contributed to making LGBTQI+ identities intelligible and legitimate through legislative progresses (Vale de Almeida, 2021), Santos (2013) also brings attention to and critiques the "politics of containment": a negotiation process between conservative and progressive sectors of society in which radical demands are toned down to achieve broader

societal consensus. For Santos, the 2010 same-sex marriage law is a perfect example of this compromise, as it shows LGBT conformity to heteronormative standards rather than a challenge to them. She draws from the concept of homonormativity – the normalization of certain queer identities that mimic heterosexual norms of marriage, monogamy, and family life, for example, at the expense of more disruptive or diverse expressions of sexuality – to better understand the internal debates within the Portuguese LGBT movement. For instance, while some activists wanted to have same-sex marriage as a priority of the movement and its actions (pre-2010) and celebrated same-sex marriage as a major victory (post-2010), others criticised these for reinforcing respectability politics and prioritising assimilation over liberation. Although neither Fátima S. nor any of my interviewees explicitly mentioned this divide in the movement or within the association, I would argue that Fátima S. and ILGA's Board at the time were clearly a part of the first group based on her account, having used politics of containment for the legal recognition of same-sex marriage. This is further confirmed by B.'s comments on how after the marriage law, "the next fight [at ILGA and in the majority of the Portuguese LGBTQ+ movement] was adoption", making it "a phase in which the talk was all about the family (…) the reproduction of the bourgeois [family] model".

Fátima S. was the person hired on a part-time basis specifically for the CDOC. At the end of 2008, she felt that this was an incredible opportunity to "connect [her] professional life with activism" and to give her active contribution to a cause she felt close to. This narrative on volunteer work could be similarly read as Manuela's: a way to make sense of and justify the past while simultaneously reaffirming her values in the present. Fátima S. and the person who was hired to coordinate the LGBT Centre were the first paid workers at ILGA and these hirings illustrate how oral narratives may influence/be influenced by structural shifts in institutional memory. Portelli (1991) reminds us how people assign meaning to the past from the perspective of the present, and in this case the memory of "professionalisation" is intrinsically tied to

feelings of institutional legitimacy and recognition of activism as meaningful labour. Fátima S., but also most of my interviewees, used this word to affirm their past and/or present work, as well as the CDOC's potential and ILGA's recognition of the CDOC as a valuable service.

Considering specifically the CDOC, the projects were "an effort from the association to professionalise the CDOC in order to value and make accessible" (Santos & Cerdeira, 2015) its materials, especially at a time when LGBTQ+ topics were becoming more popular within academic and public discourse with the fight for same-sex marriage right. This is confirmed by Fátima S.'s account of the evolution of the CDOC's goals, since at first it was more focused on resources for the those who sought leisure and informational materials that were not available in Portuguese or were hard to find but then became also an important resource for studies on LGBTQ+ topics. The ILGA Board at the time also had this consciousness that the collection of the CDOC was relevant and could play a role in social change and academic endeavours, as Santos and Cerdeira note (2015). Therefore, the first project's aims were focused on a more conventional establishment of the CDOC, with official goals and mission, increased accessibility to users and proper storage of the materials. The second project had as its aims the continuation of the previous goals but also introduced a focus on cultural promotion, with events like a book fair, and collaborations with other institutions, like municipal and school libraries (Santos & Cerdeira, 2015).

This latter set of goals was especially important when we consider that the two projects established a parallel restructuring of the community centre and the CDOC. This had allowed the CDOC to become an active participant in the events and activities of the LGBT Centre, expanding its goals and function within ILGA and making it an intrinsic part of the association, as Fátima S. described. The CDOC and its team would always provide logistical support for the association's big events like Prémios Arco-Íris (ILGA's awards) and would provide any materials that were needed for a specific event or exhibition, for example. Besides this, the

CDOC had begun to host their own events and partnerships more frequently, as Fátima S. recalled: the starting of reading groups; the book fair in São Lázaro and, later, in Oporto, two events that "were incredibly cherished by the community" and that brought many new people to the association; book launches and presentations; and partnerships with other LGBTQ+ associations like AMPLOS and rede ex aequo. These events were also a good opportunity to get new materials from publishers and authors at a low price or as donations for the CDOC. Most of the materials during this time continued to come from donations, since the funding from the projects was used to strengthen the CDOC's structure and operationalisation. However, there was a slightly stricter screening process in comparison to the previous period. This is stated by B., who remembered having, at the book fair, a "box with books on low price" for "a kind of stray books" that would not be included in the CDOC.

Despite this, Fátima S. described how inclusion and diversity had always been an important goal of the documentation centre, and the materials, in a way, confirm that, with an incredible variety of formats and topics within what was of interest for the CDOC (LGBTQ+ and adjacent), like, for example, various issues of the first lesbian magazines in Portugal, *Organa* and *Lilás*. B. also mentioned how the training they had underwent and then the work at the CDOC had been influential on their reflection on "things you would not think at first", like the connections between feminism and LGBTQ+ topics. This does not mean that there had not been a bias, as B. mentioned that "the contents reflected the bias of what the public wanted", which translated into an "overrepresentation of gay men, and then, suddenly, a lesser representation of lesbian women and even lesser of trans issues".

It is additionally important to consider how the CDOC is also an "institutional and social archive", as B. stated. It has contained documents of ILGA and its history, which are intrinsically connected to the Portuguese LGBTQ+ movement. B. referred to "untouched boxes" with those and other historical and uncatalogued materials like, for example, a report

sent to ILGA in the late 1990s/early 2000s made by a Portuguese citizen on homophobic acts done by their neighbours. Thus, the CDOC is a significant repository for the association and the movement's histories and demands further scholarly and activist engagements.

At a certain point in this period, the CDOC started to have less space for new materials. At the same time, the internet and computers became more widespread and more used by individuals and institutions. As Kate Theimer (2011) argues through her concept of Archives 2.0, these technological innovations marked both a shift in the tools used and a broader cultural transformation in archival thinking toward more participatory, user-centred and flexible practices. Terry Cook (2013) similarly highlights how the expansion of the digital contributed to a new archival paradigm that centred community engagement and memory-making, turning archives into agents within broader social and technological systems. In the CDOC, the tech developments had offered a solution to the problem of space and created a new way of archiving, as Fátima S. described: to search online for available materials on LGBTQ+ topics and have a database of those electronic resources. The internet also brought new services that were useful to the CDOC. Fátima S. told me how she had started using LibraryThing, a free online catalogue, to organise both the online and physical materials of the CDOC. She also had created a library cataloguing system for the different types of physical materials. However, this material treatment was as simple and functional as possible, leaving behind a more traditional archival precision, as most of the people who were working at the CDOC were volunteers with no training in archives. Additionally, B. talked about how they had been trying to organise the extensive amount of physical news clipping in a chronological way to overcome the "trickiness" of thematic organising on topics that could be easily meshed.

More than just an assessment of the materials, Fátima S.'s work had been "all over the place", according to her. She had to reorganise the existing materials, come up with a catalogue and making sure it stayed coherent, try to digitalise some materials (one of the goals of the project

that was “very hard to accomplish” since it was extremely time-consuming), coordinate the volunteers, deal with buying and assembling furniture, help with events in the LGBT Centre, among other tasks. On top of all these, there was the interpersonal component of a community service. Fátima S. told me how important it had been to talk with people and do this “community and relational work”. This dynamic resonates with what Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor (2016) conceptualised as radical empathy in archival practice, where affective interpersonal relationships are essential to ethical community engagement. Despite the list of tasks, the two priorities for Fátima S. at the time were to “respond to the people who sought [whatever material] and to integrate [the CDOC] in the community centre”, and, consequently, have an active role in the Portuguese LGBTQ+ community. The main way people would reach the CDOC was through going to the LGBT Centre or through the association’s website. The first group had been mostly people who were looking for materials for leisure, and although there had been no official loan service, Fátima S. told me they would let people who had been volunteers or “usuals” at the Centre take books home. The second group of users was wider geographically and consisted mostly of people or institutions who needed informational materials. Thus, Fátima S. answered the calls of researchers looking for specific materials, other civil society associations which needed materials for exhibitions or training, and even public institutions like schools and municipalities which got in contact with the CDOC to ask for informational materials to be sent.

This considerable set of activities as coordinator of the CDOC can help explain how cataloguing was and still is an ongoing task. As B. put it: “it seems a bit like something we have been doing for 1000 years, these catalogues that are never finished”. It had been the “thing that suffered the most (…), the one I would set aside more easily”, as Fátima S. mentioned, a “time management” solution. The fact that CDOC’s collection was not incredibly big also helped this prioritising of tasks. Fátima S. had organised herself the materials and, therefore, had an extensive knowledge

on where each was stored, which was extremely valuable when something was requested. Despite all of this, Fátima S. also considered the work of cataloguing as one that is always "unfinished and in movement", which is also a valuable explanation and framework. Moreover, there was also another reality that hindered the work of and at the CDOC: the instability of the volunteer teams, as there was always someone new to teach or to get used to the CDOC, and the work put on them. The volunteers would go to the CDOC on their assigned day but sometimes a "super urgent task" of ILGA would need to be done and they would need to drop what they were doing at the CDOC to help on that "other need", as B. remembered. For them, ILGA did and does not have "much coherence" when managing the volunteers, who are mostly valued for their work on the big events and initiatives and not valued during the rest of the time. I argue that this is also a factor that contributes to people's attention and work to be scattered and not focused on the continued tasks at the CDOC.

Despite this precarity, Fátima S. also told me how the CDOC had been more than just a safe "work and knowledge base" on LGBTQ+ topics, but also an important asset that the volunteers had had "to create a network", either with each other, with other volunteer teams at ILGA, or the people who went to the Centre. This means that the interpersonal part of the work that Fátima S. highlighted as one main goal of the CDOC had been also present within the CDOC and other services at ILGA, making it more than just about the users of the Centre. The community that would form and its interactions had been something that would "give a sense of identity" for both the volunteers and the people that frequented ILGA's space, as Fátima S. described. B., who worked at the CDOC alone on Saturdays for three to four hours (even without Fátima S.), is a clear example of this. After coming out, they were "feeling lost" and wanted something that could "anchor" them. ILGA appeared as a solution to this and to "fulfil the will and need to participate in activism and to find people who would get me". This emphasis on community and belonging resonates with Michael D. Franklin's (2012)

conceptualisation of queer oral history initiatives as relational projects grounded in informal affinities and recognition. While the CDOC is a documentation centre rather than an oral history project, it similarly becomes a space where queer subjects and/or volunteers produce meaning, negotiate belonging and sustain memory work within and beyond institutional logic. Therefore, the CDOC can be understood not only as a repository, but as part of a broader affective infrastructure of queer memory and remembering.

Apart from these challenges, there were also others at this time. Fátima S. referred the lack of financial resources as the main challenge and the one which had always been implicated, since they had been "always on the edge", even while being supported by the two short term projects. Regarding space, for Fátima S., both the space at São Lázaro and the one now at Fanqueiros are not adequate for CDOC's and users' needs. As Fátima S. and B. recalled, although Fanqueiros is safe from floods, mice infestations, is not "decayed" and even "harmful to people's health" like São Lázaro, the latter had allowed for a more "organic" and "dynamic" approach to the CDOC, making it a part of the "communal space" of the Centre and ILGA. As both spaces are property of Lisbon's Municipality, this challenge is also inherently connected to political will and the priorities of that public institution. Furthermore, all these challenges inhibited the potential of the work that could be done on the CDOC, since if there was an increase on usability and accessibility for users at the time, it would have been impossible to "sustain [the service] in a serious manner", as Fátima S. put it, without the proper human and spatial resources. Additionally, B. mentioned how the CDOC "was clearly not a priority service of ILGA [within the services the association provided or within the association's external activism]", which also makes me think no matter how much effort put from the CDOC's team, it would have hardly led to accomplishment.

Despite the problems faced, Fátima S. described her experience as "fulfilling" and something that had allowed her to "create a community" but also "reflection, debate, critical thinking and

action", especially during the time that had led to the approval of same-sex marriage. B. also described the experience as "extremely fulfilling" in a personal level, whether it had been because of the interpersonal relationships constructed during that time or because of the contact with materials that, otherwise, they would not have known about or encountered.

This phase from 2009 to 2013 was characterised by professionalisation and strategic integration within ILGA's broader activist efforts. This was enabled by project-based external funding, which allowed the hiring of the CDOC's first paid coordinator and, consequently, the implementation of a more structured cataloguing system and an increased presence of the CDOC in the Centre. Nonetheless, it was also marked by persistent precarity of funding, volunteer continuity and institutional priority. Despite these constraints, the CDOC became a dynamic site of knowledge production and community-building, embodying (as ILGA was doing) both the aspirations and contradictions of institutionalised activism.

The move to Rua dos Fanqueiros and the road to today (2014-now)

At the beginning of 2014, ILGA moved to the space they are still in today. Fátima S. had left her place as the paid coordinator of the CDOC in the end of 2013, due to health reasons and the fact that the project was finishing soon, which meant that she was not a part of the move and the establishment of the 'new' CDOC. Despite having been absent for a while due to her recovery, she eventually continued to be a part of CDOC when she had availability, serving as a volunteer, mentor, and sometimes coordinator until Fátima C.'s coordination in 2020.

B. recalled this period as a "literal emptiness", as Fátima S. had not passed the baton to anyone and there had been no specific funding or a voluntary worker available to spend the time Fátima S. did at the documentation centre. They told me that when Fátima S. had returned, there had still been an attempt to think and discuss the CDOC's future management, but this had "never stuck" and had ended up being fruitless. There had been a few people interested in volunteering

at the CDOC, and B. even mentioned one person that had been "super motivated and interested in the archive" but eventually "got tired" of doing work and not having any type of feedback or accountability from other more experienced volunteers like B. or other people from the staff or Board of ILGA. The instability during this period clearly shows how the CDOC is "dependent [on volunteer work and all that entails] and something very precarious", as B. put it, and how ILGA is usually focused on more "critical (…) and resource-consuming" services, like the psychological care the association provides. There is also the fact that the Boards never delegated clear instructions on how and what the CDOC should act or do, which makes the team there more autonomous and, therefore, the service even more prone to instability. Additionally, it is also a problem of continuity, since there are tasks and projects within the CDOC and at ILGA that "have difficulty in continuing (…) they would surge, die and surge again" or "would not be carried through until the end", as B. remembered.

These reflections are deeply informed by B.'s emotional proximity to the CDOC and ILGA. Oral narratives, as Yow (2005) observes, are often shaped by the emotional needs and personal investments that (re)surge during the interview process, especially when narrators are attached to the people, institutions or causes being discussed. B. was a volunteer at the CDOC and an attendance member to ILGA events at a formative time in their life, which directly translates into their narrative. They also expressed a mix of nostalgia and critique, which reflects Portelli's consideration (1991) that oral history is valuable in how it reveals what narrators believe, feel and wish had happened. In this case, B. relived and revealed their past and present expectations and desires on ILGA's and CDOC's operationalisation. My open-ended questions and our shared investment in the CDOC also contributed to creating a space for this affective storytelling to happen.

In addition to these challenges, the space at Fanqueiros also has its problems. As I have stated, there is the fact that the CDOC is "hidden", "outside of what the community space [the LGBT

Centre] is", as Fátima S. put it, but there had also been challenges related to the classification and catalogue system, which had had to be adapted to the new situation of the documentation centre, and challenges related to the move itself, where some materials may had been lost. Despite this, there were some positive changes to the CDOC and ILGA in this period. ILGA managed to hire people for their staff, like Gonçalo A. for the association's community management and general coordination. One of his tasks has been to supervise the volunteer teams for services and events, and to serve as a bridge between the "the basis of the association" and the Board, so that, as Gonçalo A. described, they "can make decisions and understand how the association is living". This period also saw Fátima C. starting her volunteering work at the CDOC in 2018. As Fátima S. had been the only other volunteer at the time, she had managed to give Fátima C. some information on the operationalisation of the CDOC, despite her little availability and before her definite departure. Fátima C. had known ILGA and its services for some time, but it was after an interview with Gonçalo A. that she had a clearer idea that she would want to work on the CDOC, especially because she was very interested in "researching and giving visibility to queer history" in her blog.

Furthermore, during this time, the CDOC started to establish a close connection to the BLX (Lisbon's Municipality Network of Public Libraries). There had been some instances of partnership over the years, especially in the month of June for initiatives related to Pride month, but in 2019, on the 50-year anniversary of the Stonewall riots, the BLX contacted ILGA and the CDOC to contribute with their expertise on LGBTQ+ topics for some initiatives they wanted to do. Another example of this proximity was how ILGA and the CDOC helped thinking of works and authors for the BLX to acquire and have in the libraries. All this had started a "strengthening of bonds and works with the BLX", like Fátima S. mentioned, a tendency that continued with Fátima C. as coordinator.

Additionally, three primary changes are perceptible during this period of the CDOC. First, with the change of space, the only way to get to know or contact the documentation centre was restricted to ILGA's website or email, dropping the interpersonal or community aspect of this service. Second, the clipping of interesting materials for the CDOC started to become more and more digital, leaving behind print press and printing online resources. Third, ILGA started to pay more attention to intersectionality and to the representation of less mainstream identities within the queer community. An example of this is the change of the name of the community centre from LGBT Centre to LGBTI+ Centre. Another example is B.'s account of the growing diversity and intersectionality in the volunteer body at ILGA and the discourses and positions the association started to explicitly uphold. For example, they told me that Gonçalo A. and the rest of the team had begun to try to "articulate this [their work and LGBTQ+ rights] with racism and the right to housing", something they had not seen present in the previous period, where ILGA had been "very LGBTs, and families and weddings". This new stance and vision started to make ILGA Portugal more than a civil society actor "for LGBT topics and just LGBT topics", as B. put it, but an association that had a more holistic view of human rights and the discrimination and oppressions people face, as well as tried to move from what Santos (2013) calls "the politics of containment" and the mainstream gay politics endeavours and visions.

This phase from 2014 to the present has been characterised by discontinuity, gradual reactivation and a commitment to a stronger intersectional vision. After the end of the project funding and the move to Rua dos Fanqueiros, the CDOC entered a phase of organisational fragility, where there was no consistent coordinator, a decline in visibility and irregular volunteer efforts. Following that period, new figures such as Gonçalo A. and Fátima C. began to invest their time and work on the CDOC, making it slowly reemerge as both an archival and activist space. The CDOC also started to turn outwards to other organisations and to be more

immersed in broader institutional dynamics at ILGA, beginning to adopt a more inclusive and intersectional framework.

Conclusion

The history of the CDOC is a shifting story shaped by activist urgency and investment, material precarity, and institutional change. From Gonçalo Diniz's foundational role to the testimonies of volunteers, coordinators and staff across decades, the CDOC appears as a living institution continually remade through personal investment, memory and the politics of the present. This chapter also signals some topics that will be further developed in this thesis, namely the loss and potential inherent to queer archives, and the unfinishedness of queer memory work.

Present: the CDOC as a Queer Living Archive

This chapter has two main goals. First, I look into the current state of the Gonçalo Diniz Documentation Centre through my interviewee's experiences to continue to write an oral history of the documentation centre. Second, I connect the CDOC's reality through time to the relevant literature and theories in mainly Archival Studies and Queer Studies to better understand its evolution, framing it through Michael Foucault's conceptualisation of power (1976/1978) and concepts like archival optimism and archival homophily (Sheffield, 2020a, 2020b).

I argue that the history of the CDOC and itself are not linear or settled but rather an ongoing and relational process – what Stuart Hall (2001) deems as a "contestatory" space (p. 92) and with the idea of queerness that José Esteban Muñoz (2009/2019) conceptualizes as a horizon in flux – shaped by memory, affect, volunteer labour, and structural and institutional precarity. The CDOC is both an institutional and community archive which has been constantly (re)defined through the interactions between people, materials, institutional frameworks and structures, and broader societal dynamics. Drawing on the oral history collected for this thesis, I argue that this documentation centre is not simply a repository of knowledge and materials but also a site of affective investment, archival desire, political commitment and identity formation. Furthermore, the CDOC lives through acts of care, improvisation and persistence, instead of functioning as a stable institution like the traditional archive. It reflects both the vulnerabilities and the transformative potential of queer memory work in Portugal, reflecting the wider struggles of queer archival practice and being a unique agent in shaping (and being shaped by) queer history and community.

The CDOC now

As described in the previous chapter, after Fátima S. had shown her the basics of CDOC's operationalisation and then officially leaving the CDOC's volunteering team, Fátima C. became

the coordinator of the CDOC in 2020. Despite that training, Fátima C. still mentioned as one of the main challenges of her work "not knowing what to do". Fátima S. had an incredible amount of embodied knowledge of the CDOC, but Fátima C. lacks the professional archival experience, the experience of coordinating a service, the lived experience at the CDOC and a cohesive team of volunteers that can also help find solutions. To overcome this challenge, Fátima C. has been using the informal aspects of the CDOC to her advantage, doing things her "own way" and being "stubborn" on getting things done, but also asking for Gonçalo A., Fátima S. or other people from her network's help when needed.

In addition to her inexperience, Fátima C. and Gonçalo A. also mentioned other challenges that remain in the present day. The first one is the issue of space, as in Fanqueiros there is difficulty in accessing the CDOC, the space is small for its intended purpose, whether for users or volunteers, and some materials are not properly preserved. This issue is also relevant to consider since it is the main reason why ILGA has not put much effort into finding funding for the CDOC – the space is already crowded with the existing materials and how are more people supposed to be working there, as both Fátima C. and Gonçalo A. asked. The second challenge is the issue of the lack of volunteers and their volatility, which also determines accessibility: Fátima C. described that "if there are a small amount of people answering emails, it gets harder for people to access and use the CDOC". Moreover, Gonçalo A. highlighted how there are different expectations, desires and motivations from different volunteers that the services must deal with, making the work dependent on the goodwill, time, effort and sociability of volunteers. Interestingly, he also mentioned how there was a "societal, generational" division: before, people would stay in a volunteer job for years and devote themselves deeply to it, but nowadays people are looking for something "much more quick, much more straightforward, more specific", which Gonçalo A. felt that can be explained by the rapid changes and precarity people are subject to in the other areas of their life. This has been analysed extensively by many

authors, but I would like to spotlight Isabell Lorey's discussion (2012/2015) on how neoliberal governance has normalized precarity as a general condition of life, leading to insecure relations to institutions, time and commitments. Our neoliberal society privileges flexibility and immediacy over long-term attachments, which is what can be clearly seen at the CDOC in recent years.

The third challenge is the fact that ILGA does not have a cultural component in its charter, which makes it impossible for them to apply to funding lines that formally require that specificity. Moreover, Gonçalo A. described the association as "falling in a no man's land", since many of the State's, EU's, or private lines of funding are for areas like youth, environment or feminism, and ILGA must be "flexible enough" to fit into one of these categories. Another challenge is how, nowadays, it is increasingly hard to collect materials, especially digital ones, since there is a constant flow of information and new projects made by groups or individuals in various parts of the country. Gonçalo A. was conscious of this during our interview and of how there is always a bias in the materials that reach the CDOC, whether these were kept and sent by someone or archived by a CDOC volunteer. There are a lot of questions regarding this issue, like who has the resources and capabilities of preserving materials, or what reaches the search of the CDOC volunteer, for example. Lastly, there is also the issue of how little information and studies there are on Portuguese queer history, which makes CDOC's work harder in providing accurate and specific information, or "technical answers", as Gonçalo A. put it. Despite these hardships, Fátima C. also described to me how she feels "more understood and more included" when she works at the CDOC, how it has contributed to the "construction of [her] identity", similarly to previous interviewees' experiences.

The current goals of the CDOC are to contribute to the preservation, research and dissemination of knowledge and information on LGBTQ+ history and other related topics, according to Fátima C. and Gonçalo A. The CDOC is open three hours per week on Wednesday evenings,

since it is the time Fátima C. is available, but she sometimes tries to have it open on another day so a specific user can use it. On those evenings, after scheduling an appointment, users can roam, search, and use freely most of the materials besides ILGA's internal documentation, which they only use with Fátima C.'s supervision. Users continue to get to the CDOC through its page on ILGA's website, through the LGBTI+ Centre or through ILGA's events where the CDOC is present, although the CDOC's team and ILGA do not spread much information on the CDOC because they know they do not have the resources for the affluence, requests and donations that would ensue. Most of the people who contact the CDOC are people from academia, especially from outside of Portugal. Other users are schoolteachers who have asked for help on LGBTQ+ topics, ILGA associates or people who frequently go the Centre and ILGA's events. To these latter two groups, Fátima C. told me that sometimes they loan books as an informal service. Apart from providing information, the CDOC has also been serving as a bridge for researchers to find interviewees and other people to participate in specific studies.

The CDOC's new materials come mostly from ILGA's and other associations' institutional materials, and from donations. Nonetheless, there are special occasions that make ILGA allocate some resources to buy new and "important" materials, as Fátima C. put it. She gave the example of the talks CDOC did at Lisbon's Book Fair on Portuguese queer authors, which propelled the CDOC to acquire books from these authors. Besides this, there is no consistent list of what is new on the market and/or would be important to acquire, making the new acquisitions completely dependent on a specific event or situation. This is also because there is no available space for those new materials. As for the already existing materials, Fátima C. admitted that there is a constant sorting, and some materials have been donated to other places because the reason they were there in the first place "is lost" and does not make sense anymore to have them at the CDOC. However, the CDOC's team tries to avoid a "closed" idea of queerness, as Gonçalo A. stated, because for them one of the CDOC's roles is to allow oneself

to question LGBTQ+ topics and to help on one's identity exploration. This perspective includes materials with outdated stances or information, as they are "history" and are "worthy of staying at the CDOC even if they are not worthy of being taken seriously", according to both Fátima C. and Gonçalo A.

When a new material arrives, it is still put into LibraryThing and a call number is attributed to it. She and CDOC's team are now focused on continuing the cataloguing the CDOC's books because it is the type of materials that people use the most and cannot find online, and it is the type of materials that users need to access more frequently. Volunteers have some freedom to choose which task they want to focus on, and there is also the possibility of doing some work offsite, like digital news clipping or researching new digital materials for the database. Besides these tasks, the CDOC's team is also building a tag system to give more visibility to certain topics (whether considered "marginalised" or "most searched", like Fátima C. described) and to signal topics that could be important to research for the future of the CDOC, something that is usually done as a direct consequence of a user request.

Nowadays, the main informal partnership of the CDOC is with the BLX: events at the BLX's stand in Lisbon's Book Fair; and a LGBTI+ monthly book club that is in its second year running at different libraries of the network. More than being important for the public, it is also important for the public workers of the BLX, since some of them did not even know of the queerness of Portuguese authors like António Botto, as Fátima C. recalled. There are two other relevant informal partnerships currently, according to Fátima C. The first one is with Clube Safo, a lesbian association that has a project called Lestória (Clube Safo, n.d.) which is trying to build the first Portuguese lesbian archive. The second one is with Livraria Aberta, the first queer bookstore in Oporto, for World Book Day (23rd April 2024). Fátima C. told me how this latter partnership was harmed by the lack of volunteers and the workload and priorities of the staff and other workers, something that Gonçalo A. also confirmed. Additionally, the CDOC

also participates in ILGA events with quizzes or talks, for example. Fátima C. mentioned how important it is to have these and other events to contribute to an exchange of information on LGBTQ+ topics, and, by consequence, to "build a community". One of the most crucial events for this was the LGBT Book Fair, that Fátima C. called "one of the places where we can outreach to the community", although it has not been done in some years due to of the lack of volunteer work. In December 2024, ILGA managed to host it again, as Gonçalo A. told me in our interview.

Despite participating in some of ILGA's events, "the CDOC is a little separated from other areas at ILGA", as Fátima C. put it. Although the staff or volunteers sometimes send things to be added to the database and catalogue, the CDOC stays behind in favour of "more urgent areas", like the victim support service. Fátima C. has been doing an important work in trying to coordinate other relevant ILGA services with the CDOC, like the communication and social media areas, which did not send the photos taken at ILGA's events and other places to the CDOC before her stepping in as coordinator. Additionally, I argue that the rotativity and the volunteer nature of the Board contributes to this prioritising of more urgent services and events, and to an unawareness of the CDOC. For example, Fátima C. told me there was never a visit from someone from the Board to the CDOC since she has been coordinator and, as seen in the previous chapter, the work of the CDOC's team has been mostly autonomous. Gonçalo A. subscribed to this autonomous view of work in our interview and told me that most things are for "the team to establish" as also a way to "hold the people and their work accountable". Nonetheless, he has a chat with Fátima C. every week and they set the future events or acquisitions of the CDOC together, as well as serving as the formal link between the CDOC and the Board.

Lastly, I would like to make two considerations. First, the turn towards a more consistent informal partnership with the BLX, for example, and increased public visibility marks a shift

to a more integrated model for the CDOC. Despite this, as Portelli (1991) reminds us, oral histories are about how people emotionally and politically interpret the events at hand considering their current realities. Fátima S.'s and now Fátima C.'s memory of decline and revival at the CDOC may reflect a desire to affirm its value at a moment when public legitimacy and stability appear more achievable. Second, in their interviews, both Fátima C. and Gonçalo A. considered relevant challenges or negative aspects of the CDOC and/or ILGA, but they also downplayed those by: immediately talking about what can be done and what it is being done to lessen the negative aspects; trying to adopt a 'it is what it is' pose; and putting forward their wishes for the present and expectations for the future. This can be explained by the fact that they continue to be personally and professionally invested in the present stakes at the CDOC and at ILGA, something that Yow (2005) observes when considering how narrators may feel the need to protect themselves and/or others and how their personal agendas shape their accounts. Both aspects make them subtly steer away from the negative or potential critique and move towards a more affirming narrative. This should not be automatically considered inauthenticity but read in the context of oral history's focus on the meaning of events instead of factual accuracy (Portelli, 1991). The meaning, in this case, is clearly influenced by loyalty and a desire to show one's work in the best possible light.

In the next section, I analyse the past and present of the CDOC, situating it in broader scholarly conversations.

Remarks on the Past and Present: an analysis of some realities, dynamics and tendencies

The CDOC cannot be understood simply as a fixed site of queer materials or a neutral repository, but, as the CDOC's oral history shows, a complex and layered space that is influenced by and influences a group of actors and feelings, like relational labour, volunteer workers and external funding, for example. Considering the CDOC's history and survival, I

argue there is a need to recognise it as a living project (as Hall [2001] would put it), completely marked by interrelated dynamics of memory, space, politics, power and care. Moreover, the CDOC's constant state of precarity is almost a defining feature of its operation and meaning, similarly to many community and/or queer archives in other parts of the world. It has relied on and has been shaped by ephemeral infrastructures or a fluctuating access to resources like space, material support, and labour. Both these facts are due to internal factors, like funding or prioritising, and external factors, like political will. This reality has disrupted progress repeatedly, but at the same time, it has also become a part of the documentation centre's internal logic. More than just failure of a documentation centre or of a queer project, it reflects the environment in which queer memory work takes place: one of constant repetition, defeat, return and recommencement.

This is a topic that I return to in the last chapter, where, for example, the concept of failure can be especially helpful here when considered an inherent and even productive trait of queer archives (Sheffield, 2020b). Rebecka Taves Sheffield's work is informed by Jack Halberstam's theorisation (2011) on failure to draw this theorisation. In this framework, CDOC's incomplete catalogue(s) and the inconsistency of its labour force are more than just failures of internal or external forces but are an inherent part of the documentation centre's queerness. As Sheffield (2020b) reminds us, queer archives often emerge outside traditional or even mainstream archival infrastructures and thus inherit many of their vulnerabilities, especially regarding sustainability and representation. Its vulnerabilities or deficits are an affirmation of queerness as partial, affective and in flux, which also refers to Muñoz idea of queerness (2009/2019).

Maybe the most striking example of this 'failure' is the volunteer work, which is the extremely fluid but constitutes the foundational form of labour that sustains the CDOC. This dynamic is not unique to the CDOC, as many queer and community archives internationally, such as the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA hereafter) in New York or the ArQuives in Toronto, have also

been largely built and maintained by volunteers (Sheffield, 2020b). Sheffield highlights how volunteer work is essential for these and other queer archives, yet how it is also precarious, revealing the grassroots strength and structural vulnerability that characterise these projects. From its establishment in 1997 until the present day, the CDOC has mostly depended on unpaid and precarious labour by individuals who are motivated by various reasons like personal investment, political commitment, or emotional attachment. This labour is inconsistent and unpredictable, as people do not have any obligations towards the CDOC or ILGA, and their contributions often depend on individual life circumstances, levels of training, and interpersonal dynamics within the association.

Nonetheless, instead of stopping activity or even closing the CDOC, all the constrains I have highlighted have given rise to a culture of improvisation and resilience. There are some examples of this throughout the years, like drying the documents on cords, using a free online catalogue service, always being open to donations, trying to make money out of activities, reliance on network of support, among others. These practices were often described informally or even lightly/humorously in my interviews, but I argue that they are also improvised and relational acts of care, creativity and perseverance that have sustained the CDOC despite its lack of institutional robustness. Therefore, the relational aspect of labour and its networks of care are crucial for the CDOC. Figures like Manuela, Fátima S. and Fátima C. show how continuity in the CDOC is only available through people who take on relational responsibility for the documentation centre's wellbeing. Their work is shaped by their familiarity with both the people (volunteers and users) and the materials, as well as by their personal attachment and desire to preserve queer traces of history and queer spaces.

The relational aspect of the CDOC is not only about work since the CDOC functions as a place where materials and knowledge are stored *and* as a space of identity formation and socialisation. People would come to the CDOC not only to do research or volunteer work, but to talk and

connect, either to themselves, to each other or with the materials. Similarly, queer archives such as the ArQuives and the LHA have historically functioned not only as repositories of materials but also as community spaces where identity formation and social and emotional connections were fostered (Sheffield, 2020b). Although it was something much more prevalent in São Lázaro, in Fanqueiros this also happens on a less vibrant and dynamic way. This means that the CDOC is affectively charged, since it is a place where past, present and future intersect, and where volunteers and users are caught between their experiences and expectations.

The form of care and persistence that has sustained the CDOC can be read through what Sheffield (2020a, 2020b) terms as "archival optimism", which describes the emotional, ideological and affective commitment that sustains queer community archives over time, despite the reigning precarity and challenges. All the physical and emotional efforts that the work entails are worth for the preservation and construction of a past, present and future shared heritage, and for the construction of a present and future audiences. It is "the fuel that lights our way through the meticulous and difficult labour of archival work" (2020b, p. 230), as Sheffield puts it. This sense of optimism, as I demonstrated in CDOC's past and present, constantly sustains the CDOC despite the constant reconfigurations and losses. It helps explain why key figures keep working there for more than a small period, even when most of everything else seems to fail them. This does not mean that it is something that is constantly there or that you stop believing the archive still matters when you leave your role there – as we see with Manuela's account, for example –, but it signals the embodied fuel that maintains the CDOC.

An affective reading can also help illuminate how the CDOC's collection has evolved. In the beginning of its existence, there was an important focus on HIV/AIDS-related materials to document and inform the queer lives under threat and marginalisation. AIDS activism as foundational in the making of queer archives' missions, in the expanding of their collections, and in underscoring their urgency is something that Sheffield (2020b) also describes in her case

studies, aligning those queer projects with the CDOC. Over time, the CDOC's focus started to blur and it started to become more and more a repository of what its users found relevant to be stored and archived there, being those materials explicitly queer or not. This new way of archiving was not linear or purposeful, since the materials were not kept just for their content, but for what they meant to someone and for how they were used. Thus, I argue that affect becomes a kind of archival logic and queerness is defined in a broader way, reflecting the donors' and users' multidimensional lived experiences. From the professionalisation of the CDOC onwards, this logic was altered again as there was a renewed emphasis on queer-specific materials, a progressively better awareness of intersectionality, new political vocabularies and archival consciousness. I am arguing that the ongoing reorientation on CDOC's scope is inherently dependent on who is involved, what resources are available, how queerness itself is imagined and the broader national and international context of the LGBTQ+ movement.

The concept of archival homophily, as introduced by Sheffield in *Documenting Rebellions* (2020b), can give some insight on this topic, since it refers to the tendency of archival practices to reflect the preferences, identities, experiences and networks of the individuals who engage in that archival work. More specifically, Sheffield explains this phenomenon in the context of lesbian and gay archives in which many early volunteers were white, middle-class, gay men who had lived through and participated in the gay liberation movement. Thus, their collecting priorities often centred around homocentric narratives and less on intersectional or marginalised queer voices. Sheffield does not consider this a conscious bias or a deliberate exclusion but frames it as a structural tendency shaped by the social positions, limitations and connections of those doing the archiving. As seen in the CDOC, its creators', coordinators' and volunteers' experiences, expectations and desires have been moulding its collection. Whether it is Gonçalo Diniz and others in the beginning, who were focused on HIV/AIDS and in opening the Portuguese society to LGBTQ+ topics, Manuela, who wanted to maintain the CDOC alive and

therefore include everything that the community would find useful, or the more recent people, who pay more attention to diversity and intersectionality and are themselves more representative of the diversity in the LGBTQ+ community, all show how queer archives can be both a product of activist/archivist care and simultaneously a reflection of the limits of representation. This does not erase the inclusive intent of the CDOC but helps articulate why certain subjectivities or discourses around it dominate the documentation centre.

I would also like to argue that the CDOC occupies a middle space between preserving ILGA's and other LGBTQ+ association's institutional memory, and community-driven practices. This means that, on the one hand, the documentation centre benefits from ILGA's resources, space, and public visibility, but on the other, it has often lacked clear institutional planning, prioritisation or a continuity in its work. A lot of key moments for the survival or breakthroughs of the CDOC have frequently come from volunteers rather than top-down directives and the work has been done in a highly autonomous way, but there have also been moments that were only made possible with a more dynamic engagement from the Board and ILGA's staff, like the two projects Fátima S. was a part of and Gonçalo A.'s work. This highlights the volatility and creativity of community archives situated within civil society organisations.

Andrew Flinn's conceptualisation of community archives (2007) show this when considering that these archives may or may not be connected to formal institutions, but the driving force and direction to take usually comes from within the community itself. Therefore, the CDOC is, as one of ILGA's "community responses" (ILGA Portugal, 2025), almost a self-defined documentation centre whose development has been deeply shaped by the volunteer work and sometimes disjointed or fractional contributions of those involved. These characteristics, which could be considered only weaknesses if not read critically, constitute the CDOC's strength as a 'community archive', i.e. a space where a community tries to inscribe themselves into, in this case, the city's and country's collective memory despite institutional and broader structural

discontinuities. Community archives are extremely important for various reasons, but I would like to highlight two. The first one is that they ensure diverse representation in the archival field. This type of archives helps overcome the gaps of underrepresentation or marginalised groups and contribute to more inclusive historical narratives that improve our understanding of the past and present (Flinn, 2007). The second reason of their importance is that they preserve important artifacts and histories that would be lost otherwise. The CDOC embodies some of these aspects whereas its creation was related to a scarcity of LGBTQ+ materials in the public space and mainstream repositories, donations have formed the backbone of its collection, and its educational and thought-provoking role in exhibitions, talks, or book fairs.

Furthermore, there has constantly been an interplay between visibility and invisibility, where the CDOC is both valued and peripheral, materially present and publicly underrecognized. At times, the CDOC has been present in ILGA Portugal's public image, like some times during the São Lázaro period, when it was more integrated in the community centre and was easily accessible, or like in some more recent events during the Fanqueiros period. At other times, it has been pushed to the margins or given little weight in organisational strategy, like in some periods during the Fanqueiros era. I argue that this fluctuation shows how the visibility of the documentation centre is not guaranteed by its existence alone, since it depends on spatial resources, funding priorities and the perceived relevance of memory work.

Another paradox on the CDOC's life is how it is an ongoing site of power and where inclusion and exclusion are constantly at play, whether deliberately or not. For example, donations reflect what people deem worthy of being archived, and cataloguing decisions reflect available time and knowledge, as seen throughout the CDOC's history. The consequent exclusions also take place through damage, neglect, or misplacement, of which the fading memory of figures like Gonçalo Diniz or the damage of materials in São Lázaro are examples. Nonetheless, different aspects of the CDOC or even these same ones hold the potential to challenge its exclusions. For

example, its openness to donations, its evolving cataloguing practices and its growing attention to diversity and intersectional politics suggest that the documentation centre can be a site of questioning, contestation and reimagination. This can be related to Foucault's conception of power in "Method" (1976/1978). For him, power is diffuse, existing within every level of social interaction, from personal relations to institutional practices. In this conceptualisation, power is constantly shifting, because centralized control is but a part of the network of relations and the ongoing struggles and negotiations between individuals and groups are the things that construct and enact it. Power relations are, therefore, not static, but fluid and constantly transformed through compromise, resistance, confrontations and shifts. I am arguing that in the microcosm of ILGA and the CDOC, power, through actors and interactions, *produces* both inclusion and exclusion.

Archiving the queer VS. Queering the archive

To continue to analyse and situate the CDOC in theoretical and practical examples, I am bringing in the distinction between 'queering the archive' and 'archiving the queer', which can be considered queer archival methodologies and theorisations.

Queering the archive is related to the fact that traditional historical archives often marginalise or exclude the experiences of queer individuals, as historical narratives have typically been shaped by dominant societal norms and perspectives, like, for example, Ann Cvetkovich (2003) highlights. As Alana Kumbier (2014) theorises, queering means to adopt "a disruptive, transformational, or oppositional practice designed to challenge normalizing systems and structures" (p. 3). Thus, queering the archive means to engage with archives and archival practices in ways that disrupt the dominant norms, question exclusions and create space for marginalised identities and experiences. More than recovering LGBTQ+ materials and/or narratives, it is an active rethinking of what counts as archival evidence, what forms archives can take, and how affect, memory and culture can shape the archive and archival practices

beyond what is considered the traditional archival logic. This approach can involve many frameworks, methodologies and/or theoretical considerations from different fields, but I would like to highlight a few: interrogating the silence (understand what has been omitted and why by, for example, analysing the ways in which power dynamics have shaped archival collections and historical narrative, like Michel-Rolph Trouillot did in his book *Silencing the Past*); reading both against and along the grain (look for alternative interpretations and meanings that challenge dominant narratives in the archive, but also tracking the regularities, omissions and discursive structures that shaped what could be said, recorded, or classified within the archive, like Ann Laura Stoler underlines [2002, 2009]); centring marginalized voices in the broader historical narratives, especially using sources that are traditionally overlooked or dismissed, like Kumbier (2014) emphasises; using an intersectional analysis by considering the multiple dimensions of identity and power dynamics at play within LGBTQ+ experiences and historical archives (a framework popularised by Kimberlé Crenshaw [1989] and applied by scholars like Tina Campt [2004]); and reflecting on ethical considerations, especially regarding the privacy and dignity of individuals represented in archival materials, and the researcher's and archivist's own positionality and bias, like Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor (2016) underscore.

On the other hand, archiving the queer focuses on the active collection, preservation, and curation of materials related to LGBTQ+ histories and cultures. It involves intentionally seeking out and acquiring documents, artifacts and other materials that represent queer experiences, identities and struggles, but also involves some of the aspects of 'queering the archive', namely: centring marginalized voices in the broader historical narratives, using an intersectional analysis, and reflecting on ethical considerations. This is mostly used by activist and community archives and aims to ensure that LGBTQ+ histories are documented and preserved for present and future generations, providing resources for researchers, activists and community members to engage with and learn from, as Sheffield (2020b) describes in her case studies.

Despite this, these two methodologies/theories are not clear-cut, as they usually happen at the same time. On the one hand, when an archivist or researcher is queering the archive, they are approaching archival materials in a new (queer) way and finding 'new' queer materials and histories or looking for unarchived queer materials that would otherwise be overlooked or dismissed. This means that they are also archiving the queer because they are seeking out queer materials and histories and archiving those as such, challenging and changing the previous heteronormative narratives and classifications. On the other hand, when an archivist is archiving the queer, they are preserving and cataloguing materials and histories that are already deemed as queer. This means that they are also queering the archive, as they are centring queer experiences and histories in the space of the archive, using the techniques and engaging with ethical topics as mentioned above, as well as challenging what an archive should be and what it should preserve.

I would now like to turn to some examples to better understand and illustrate what I have been conceptualising. The first example is Lizeth Zepeda's (2018) work on the transformative potential of incorporating a queer of colour lens in archival practices, a practice of queering the archive. Zepeda argues that traditional archival institutions have historically marginalised and erased the histories of underrepresented communities, particularly those related to gender and sexuality. By queering the archive, archivists can disrupt these established power dynamics, challenging the dominant narratives and promoting inclusivity and social justice within archival collections. She engages with the Sarah S. Valencia Collection in Tucson, Arizona, as a case study for demonstrating how a queer of colour lens can uncover hidden or overlooked aspects of marginalised histories. Valencia's cross-dressing and other visual representations, as well as notes in the photographs, challenge heteronormative narratives and invite interpretations that acknowledge the possibility of queerness in her life. Moreover, Zepeda states that what is important is not to be certain of the queerness of someone/something, or to catalogue people

into different categories, but to challenge the heteronormativity present in history and in the archives, as well as include documents, narratives and histories that have been overlooked or dismissed in the traditional archival process.

The second example is Rebecka Taves Sheffield's (2020b) chapter on the LHA, an institution that is actively archiving the queer. The chapter traces the history of the lesbian archive and the drive and challenges for its operationalization through the years, taking into consideration the people who 'built' it and the social events/dynamics it was influenced by, like the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. Sheffield describes the essential role Joan Nestle, alongside her partner Deborah Edel, played in founding the LHA in the 1970s, as they were actively involved in collecting materials, organizing events, and advocating for the recognition of lesbian experiences within feminist and LGBTQ+ movements. Nestle's commitment to creating a safe and inclusive archive for 'lesbian herstory' laid the foundation for the enduring legacy of the LHA, consequently informing the present-day purpose of the archive (Lesbian Herstory Archives, 2023) and ensuring that the legacies of its materials are preserved for future generations. Additionally, the LHA, according to Sheffield (2020b), has served as a model for other community-based archival initiatives, especially other lesbian and queer archives, because of its commitment to centring the experiences of lesbians in all aspects of its work and the efforts in outreach, fundraising and sustainability it has taken. Two examples of these latter things are: the grassroots approach of LHA, which spotlights the power of community involvement and volunteering in building and maintaining an archive, as well as the importance of building relationships with the communities being served by the archive; and LHA's ethical stance on issues such as government funding and neocolonialism, which underscores the importance of maintaining independence and integrity in queer archival practices.

The last example is *Queering the Map*, a "community generated counter-mapping platform for digitally archiving LGBTQ2IA+ experience in relation to physical space" (QUEERING THE

MAP, 2024). It serves as a living archive of queer life, allowing users to document their personal narratives in relation to specific places, like pins on a map. The platform's guiding democratic principle, "if it counts for you, then it counts for *Queering the Map*", underscores the value of personal narratives and the diverse range of stories that contribute to this queer archive. The online platform clearly shows the interconnections between archiving the queer and queering the archive: it is keeping record and preserving the user submissions of queer experiences but also defying the expectations of what is supposedly pinpointed in a map and bringing queer subjectivities to the forefront of the archival practice. Ash Watson, Emma Kirby, Brendan Churchill, Brady Robards and Lucas LaRochelle (2024) analysed stories pinned in Australia and interviewed users from that country to better understand the reasoning and popularity behind *Queering the Map,* and the queer collective memory-making that has been carried out by it. They concluded three things. First, the stories pinned to the map offer opportunities for users to identify and empathise with the experiences shared by others, fostering a sense of community and solidarity within the platform. Second, the stories pinned to specific locations in the map highlight the intersection of people and spaces in shaping queer identities and experiences. This also reveals how spatiality influences memory-making and subjectivities. Third, the stories pinned to the map capture the day-to-day yet significant moments of queer life, emphasizing the value of documenting everyday experiences as part of the queer archive and resisting against the erasure of this types of experiences in traditional archives and maps.

I argue that the CDOC has, from its origin, continuously being involved in archiving the queer and queering the archive. In relation to archiving the queer, Gonçalo Diniz and the founders of ILGA created the CDOC with the explicit intent of gathering LGBTQ+ materials and HIV/AIDS information as these were largely unavailable to most Portuguese people at the time. Archiving the queer was also reaffirmed during the professionalisation phase of the CDOC, when new funding allowed for a more systematic approach to the materials and their

preservation. All this reflected a clear commitment to preserving queer lives, activism and knowledge for community use, something that has been, one way or another, continued through time and that reflects an important feature of community-based queer archiving (Sheffield, 2020b). The CDOC has also served as a repository for ILGA's own documents and other organisations', as well as, more recently, as a disseminator of queer Portuguese figures, further demonstrating their commitment in collecting, preserving and providing access to queer materials for leisure, informational and research purposes. However, this archiving of the queer was also shaped by the precarious reality and the biases of what could be accessed, donated or valued at a given time, calling to mind B.'s account of the overrepresentation of certain groups (as Orr (2021) writes: "it [the queer archive] can often serve to not only challenge dominant histories that exclude LGBTQ lives, but to create new dominant histories of exclusion within LGBTQ communities" [p. 2]).

In relation to queering the archive, the CDOC is an informal, precarious and living archive, shaped by volunteer work, community involvement and networks, and loss, contrasting to the formal and traditional archive and its practices, as Kumbier (2014) writes. The floods, the relocation, the lack of professional archival staff for a great part of its life, and the discontinuities of its volunteer teams, all signal how its history is marked by fragmentation. The CDOC has also served as a social and affective space, where community members (whether volunteers or not) could connect with each other and the materials, which enacts a participatory and relational model of archiving and blurs the boundaries between archive, library and communal space, especially during the São Lázaro period. Furthermore, the CDOC has consistently reconsidered what counts as archival evidence or what an archive should be/do, including everyday traces of queer life or putting up exhibitions unrelated to LGBTQ+ topics. Its constant rethinking of what counts as a queer material – is it because a queer person wanted it there? Does it need to be related to LGBTQ+ topics? – is another example of this. This

example relates to the goals of *Queering the Map* or to Zepeda's argument (2018) against rigid categorisation of people and materials, for example. Taking *Queering the Map*, the CDOC shares with it the communal labour of memory and the disruption of spatial and archival norms. It makes space, whether spatially, affectively or intellectually for the queer to be documented, remembered and accessible, as Watson et al. (2024) also argue about the digital map.

Finally, the history and reality of the CDOC demonstrate that archiving the queer and queering the archive are not separate processes, but are deeply intertwined things, as I argued before. Every effort made by volunteers and community members to collect and preserve queer materials has also reshaped CDOC's archival practices, incorporating affect, informality, ephemerality and fragmented memory into the structure and conceptualisation of the documentation centre. The CDOC's continuous construction through the lived memories, experiences, desires and expectations of volunteers is another explicit example of the challenging of traditional archival norms, as Zepeda (2018) discusses when defending a refusal of neutrality. Even though it disrupts these norms, its reality through time also ensured that queer (hi)stories and information are gathered, remembered and made accessible, making it an excellent example of how the practices of archiving the queer inevitably involve queering the archive itself.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the CDOC exemplifies how archiving the queer and queering the archive are not two distinct methodologies/theories but are intertwined. On the one hand, by collecting, preserving and giving visibility to LGBTQ+ materials and histories, the CDOC actively contributes to the construction of queer memory and presence in Portugal. On the other hand, through its informality, relational labour, precarity and affective investments, it questions the normative archival logics and contributes to the reimagining of what an archive can be,

expanding our understanding of the historical record and making space for lives and experiences otherwise erased.

I argue that the CDOC is a living thing, an agent in the political and cultural life of ILGA and in the Portuguese queer history and community. Over time, it has been shaped by those who build, maintain and use it, and, in turn, has been shaping their identities, relationships and sense of community. It is also a space in the middle of tensions between marginalisation and visibility, and autonomy and institutional dependence, serving as an engaging case study on how queer archives emerge, survive and matter, and being an ongoing affective and political project of queer world and history-making.

Future: (Queer) Possibilities for the first Portuguese Queer Archive

This chapter explores the (im)possibilities of the CDOC's future through a reflection on how the CDOC operates within queer time. I argue that the CDOC must be understood not only through its practical limitations and institutional precarity, but as a site of radical queer potential. Drawing on the oral history accounts and the queer theoretical frameworks of Jack Halberstam (2011), José Esteban Muñoz (2009/2019) and Elizabeth Freeman (2010), I analyse how the CDOC incorporates a queer temporality and a politics of failure that challenge dominant archival norms and institutional ideas of productivity. The CDOC's inconsistencies and underdevelopment should not be deemed only as shortcomings or as disfunctions, since they are manifestations of a queer refusal to conform. I argue that the CDOC's potential lies precisely in taking advantage of those disfunctions to offer a space where memory, identity and futurity are not fixed but in motion.

The CDOC in queer time

Failure

I have touched on the idea of failure, informed by Halberstam's theorisation (2011) and Sheffield's application (2020b), but I would like to expand this analysis. As I have been arguing, the CDOC can be understood *through* its inconsistencies and gaps, and to approach it from the perspective of failure is to highlight the radical and queer potential of its dysfunctions. For Halberstam (2011), failure should be read as a political and affective alternative to the prevalent narratives of success that are rooted in heteronormativity and capitalism. In this framework, the CDOC's precarity and under recognition should be read as sites of resistance and as "shady, murky modes of undoing, unbecoming, and violating" norms (Halberstam, 2011, p. 4).

As seen throughout this thesis, the CDOC resists the traditional archival expectations and logics by: existing without stable funding, consistent workforce or constant recognition from ILGA

and outside actors; and being dependant on individual initiative and affective investment, and on a weak relation to institutional memory. Taking Fátima C.'s account on doing things "her own way" due to lack of training and archival space, the CDOC's precarity reveals a queer mode of persistence: an unskilled commitment to care, identity formation and memory work that surpasses the ideals of productivity and discipline. This could be extended in some way or another to other examples of the CDOC's history, like Manuela's testimony. Moreover, Halberstam writes that "failing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well" (p. 3) and the CDOC, as a queer archive, acts out this tradition. For the CDOC, to fail has not been a defeat, but it has clearly been a refusal to conform to the standards of professional archiving and the logics of neoliberal institutions. What would success even look like for a queer archive in Portugal, especially taking into consideration its history and the sociocultural context? Would it even be possible for it to become fully professionalised with queer history remaining under researched? Would merging it with a public library or archive dilute its goals and the potential of its materials?

Failure extends to the past and present of the CDOC. First, its past cannot be consolidated into a single and monolithic story, as it is an entanglement of memory, desire and interpretation of many actors. This failure of a set history calls to mind Halberstam's alignment of failure with "some of the wondrous anarchy of childhood" (2011, p. 3), modes of unmaking and forgetting and a refusal of a linear path to a goal. Second, CDOC's current problems – like lacking the visibility or status given to other ILGA's services and events, or storing some materials in spaces not fit for preservation, for example – should not be read as incidental or casual, but as conditions that define its existence and mode of operating. The CDOC, thus, functions through ephemerality, improvisation and care, or, in other words, through forms of queering that privilege affect and relationality over discipline and structure. Borrowing Halberstam's words (2011), the CDOC "loses the idealism of hope in order to gain wisdom and a new, spongy

relation to life, culture, knowledge, and pleasure" (p. 2), learning from its failure and taking advantage of it to continue its existence. This consideration could be easily connected to the discussion on the concluding chapter on how the CDOC can be improved. It can become better by *embracing* its failure and *using* it and its tools to navigate the possibilities of funding or professionalisation that may surge.

Temporality

Like failure, temporality is a topic that has been the focus of many academics working in Queer Studies and one that I have been considering throughout this thesis more implicitly. For this section, I would like to engage with it more explicitly. As I have argued, the CDOC and its history are not stable but living entities (Hall [2001]; Cvetkovich [2003]; Hirsch [2012]), an analysis that gets complicated when introducing Muñoz's idea of queerness and temporality (2009/2019). Applying his ideas, I argue that the CDOC is animated by a temporality that is fragmentary and utopian, challenging the stable institution of the traditional archive and its basis of linear time and accumulation.

Throughout the thesis, I have presented the CDOC as a documentation centre in flux, with its precarious situation (volunteer turnover, for example) taking a toll in its linear/hetero functioning. However, this precarity is also generative, as queerness – inherent to the CDOC and its practices – is "a longing that propels us onward" (Muñoz, 2009/2019, p. 1). By being fluid and holding traces of queer life and memory, the CDOC is signalling towards a future archival possibility and another (queer) world that transcends its current limitations and challenges. Thus, instead of completion, it is its potentiality that characterizes it as a queer archive. Moreover, the CDOC's informal partnerships and its events can be considered a site where queer temporality is felt. They have a performative dimension that extends the CDOC's work and purpose beyond storage and documentation, enacting queerness as potential and the

CDOC as a horizon (a word that Muñoz uses to describe queerness). They also allow the queer to circulate beyond the documentation centre's physical and temporal limits.

Considering the CDOC's founding, it was narrated through memories guided by temporal distance and emotion instead of set facts. Thus, as argued in the previous chapters, this shows the ambiguity and multiplicity of the CDOC's beginning, with its interpretations and emotional bounds. Muñoz (2009/2019) writes that "queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future" (p. 1), so it is by facing and making use of this fragmented past that the CDOC can move to the idea of concrete utopia that Muñoz defends, one that is grounded in collective memory and possibility and not "untethered from any historical consciousness" (p. 3). This concrete utopia is also there in the CDOC's present persistence. The CDOC is only able to continue through care, improvisation and queer desire for preservation and recognition, all of which translate into an embodied refusal to accept the limitations of the present. Therefore, the CDOC today is reaching towards "new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds" (p. 1). Additionally, as I argued similarly with Halberstam (2011), the CDOC's past and present reality do not signify failure in a negative sense but are aligned with what Muñoz (2009/2019) calls the "utopian performative": moments or acts that temporarily bring into being a queer world that does not yet exist. This is especially true when we consider, for example, Fátima C.'s account of her involvement with the CDOC, which is clearly affective, exploratory and informs her identity. CDOC's work – and I would argue every interaction with the CDOC – underscores this performative and future-oriented dimension.

Elizabeth Freeman's theorisation of queer time in *Time Binds* (2010) is also a relevant lens to read the CDOC. Through it, the CDOC is a site where alternative temporalities take shape through a queer reworking of how time and history are experienced and recorded. For Freeman, affective investments and bodily experiences are central to these reworked queer history and

time. The CDOC is shaped by what it archives but also by the people (with their affective investments and bodies) who come across it. Thus, it becomes a site of encounter where past and present are continually remaking one another.

One of Freeman's concepts introduced in her book (2010) is temporal drag, the persistence "pull of the past on the present" (p. 62). At the CDOC, I would argue that this drag is literal and figurative through two examples. First, it is a documentation centre that has been growing unevenly and contingent to, for example, donations or external forces such as flooding, creating a collection from decades of LGBTQ+ activism, personal donations and institutional documentation and ephemera. Second, the narratives about its creation and the role of Diniz are moulded by memory lapses, institutional forgetting and generational distance. These two characteristics are, as Freeman would argue, a generative reality, since they show how the past, through its traces and interpretations, clings to the present. The materials, the people who have interacted with the CDOC, as well as their memories, feelings and attachments are all entwined in this friction between past and present, which, in the end, offers a critical tool to resist normative linear time and opens other queer and embodied ways of (re)thinking the past and present. Furthermore, Freeman's vision of queer temporality and its practices is related to the "shrapnel of failed revolutions" (p. xxii), after failed or incomplete historical projects. I would argue that the CDOC can be considered in this temporal afterlife, since it was born at a time of AIDS activism and the start of the Portuguese LGBTQ+ movement's public and institutionalised life, and its present precarious reality reflects the heritage of that unfinished liberation. The CDOC and ILGA have been underfunded, often neglected, and subject to shifting priorities and disillusionment, but they persist as spaces for affect, community, memory and possibility. This way, like the 1960's and 70s feminist and gay-liberationist aspirations in Freeman's analysis, the CDOC may appear as belated or fractured, but it is also a source of thinking about the future and its queer possibilities. Additionally, the CDOC's temporal logic

is related to anachronism, something Freeman also mentions throughout her book. The CDOC stores materials that are outdated or problematic *because* they are history, as Fátima C. and Gonçalo A. said. This is a great example of temporal drag: refusing to discard the past's residue and letting it persist and speak in new present contexts, producing critical queer ways of being and knowing.

There are two other concepts from Freeman (2010) that are relevant for my analysis of the CDOC. First, Freeman's notion of erotohistoriography aligns with how the CDOC is a space of embodied historiography. Through the years, its materials have been accessed and engaged with through bodily presence, either by volunteers or users. For example, volunteer's engagement with the archive and its materials through care and their own desires show how they invest themselves physically and emotionally in a project with little stability but immeasurable personal meaning. It is these bodily and affective ways of encountering history and information that expand what counts as ways of producing historical knowledge and insert personal and political meaning into the historical record. Subsequently, the CDOC becomes a historiographical site where history and information are stored, but also constructed, felt and reworked. Second, Freeman's chrononormativity can be a lens to read the CDOC's 'failures', since it is the "use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity" (p. 3). The CDOC, as I have shown and argued in this thesis, does not conform to the productivity or quantifiable outcomes our neoliberal society favours, especially if we consider its opening times throughout history, how it has been maintained by volunteer work and how it has been sidelined in favour of other ILGA services. By not conforming to chrononormativity, the CDOC exposes how time has been used to enforce normativity and offers itself as a queer alternative. For Freeman, these acts of temporal resistance are crucial for queer world-making as they prioritise perseverance and interpersonal and material relations over efficiency and productivity.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that the future of the CDOC cannot be imagined only through institutional expansion and/or professionalisation, since these aspirations must be grounded in the CDOC's history of improvisation, affective commitment and resistance to normative logics of time and the archive. Accordingly, the CDOC's apparent failures like its unstable funding, limited space, volunteer dependency and inconsistent visibility, are not just hardships to be overcome to reach an end goal but are manifestations of its queer potential. These features invite us to imagine, for example, a documentation centre that privileges community and care over productivity and linear progress. By embracing its past and present realities, the CDOC will continue to enact a form of queer world-making that insists on the value of what is *queer*.

Conclusion

What should the future be?

At the end of this project, the question that is directly posed is what should the future of the CDOC be? Taking into consideration my interviewees' expectations and desires, as well as my own after conducting the fieldwork and researching for this thesis, I will recommend some steps to the betterment of the CDOC and the mitigation of the challenges it has been facing since 1997.

Nonetheless, all recommendations should be carefully considered, since a great amount of them could imply bigger institutionalisation and dependence on State or private institutions' funding and interests. As the LHA and Sheffield (2020b) and *Queering the Map* and Watson et al. (2024) showed in the "Present" chapter, it is important for the queer archive and its practices (like queering the archive) to have an ethical stance regarding the funding it receives and the institutions' practices from where that funding comes from, as well as stay community based. The tension between staying community based and/or informal or moving towards institutionalisation (being absorbed by a traditional archive, or moving into the State's network of archives, for example) and/or professionalisation has been discussed throughout the years (Arondekar et al., 2015; Caswell, 2014; Flinn, 2007) without reaching a rigid conclusion. While I agree that it is urgent to maintain independence and integrity in the queer archive and its practices, I would also argue that ILGA should take the benefits from the Portuguese State and from public and private lines of funding to continue and improve the CDOC's operationalisation (resources, longevity and access, for example), without *necessarily* becoming institutionalised or professionalised. This, however, should be done with the consciousness of: the dangers of loss of autonomy; co-optation; new limitations; and going against the CDOC's and ILGA's values and/or diluting them. It should also be done in a way that holds the values of queer and community archives and its disrupting practices in high regard. Any path forward must preserve

the CDOC's distinct character as a living and contingent documentation centre made for and by the LGBTQ+ community and ILGA.

Recommendations

Space: ILGA should lobby Lisbon's Municipality to provide another space at a reduced renting cost – a bigger space that would allow for more people working at the CDOC at the same time and for more materials to be archived. It should be a space like São Lázaro, where every service and part of the association is connected and easily accessible, also taking into consideration people with reduced mobility. This new CDOC would be *by* and *for* the community, being a space for identity formation, discussion, reflection and gathering. Knowing that this is close to impossible, I would argue that the main recommendation here is to make sure that the current materials at the CDOC are properly stored so that nothing gets damaged or lost.

More people: The ideal would be to have a permanent hired person or team at the CDOC, even if it would be on a part-time basis. If that is not possible, I would argue that the next step would be to try to find and maintain volunteers, especially to improve user's accessibility. As the CDOC gets overcrowded easily, the team could be divided into more days than just Wednesday, consequently extending the period the CDOC is open. Another solution could be to take in more online volunteers to do tasks related to the database (updating it with new book launches or studies, for example) or to reach out to local LGBTQ+ organisations, initiatives or personas so that the CDOC is constantly updated on new information and materials. This would ensure the on-site team would be freer to do physical tasks and would ensure the CDOC stays up to date with what is happening of notice in the country.

Catalogue: Completing the catalogue (even in a platform like LibraryThing) would allow for the team to have a full awareness of what is stored at the CDOC and, consequently, give better and immediate responses to users' requests. It would also allow for the loaning service to be established and maybe a public version of the catalogue to be made available to the public.

Additionally, I would argue that the CDOC needs to have an ongoing donating campaign to receive materials that would otherwise be lost, especially ephemera or materials from different media. With proper funding and a special focus on ephemera, this could be done in a way that people could request a paid postage package in which they could send the CDOC materials with a little description.

Partnerships: The first step here would be to maintain and deepen the informal partnership with the BLX, since they are open to that possibility. It would be important to continue the partnership with Livraria Aberta and start new ones with other LGBTQ+ owned businesses that have a positive impact in the country. It would also be of interest to the CDOC to strengthen and establish new partnerships with other smaller LGBTQ+ associations and initiatives, since the CDOC could archive their work and have a bigger community participation. Besides these, I would argue that the most relevant and interesting partnership to be established would be with universities/departments/research centres. This would allow for more knowledge on LGBTQ+ topics to be produced and for a network of actors that are involved in these topics to be created. The CDOC could even have a list of suggested topics for thesis and studies using its materials. Moreover, there are three new partnerships that could be established: with Portuguese archives or documentation centres, to obtain LGBTQ+ materials to be archived at the CDOC and also to have knowledge exchange; with queer archives outside of Portugal, to have knowledge exchange and maybe cross initiatives; and with Portuguese libraries outside of Lisbon so that the knowledge, initiatives and activism are decentralised from the capital. A partnership with a traditional archive could be demanding, since a community archive poses some challenges to the mainstream profession of the archivist and to traditional archival efforts and institutions (Flinn, 2007). Issues related to resources allocation and professional priorities would be raised in that kind of partnership, like, for example: what should their support be in terms of infrastructure, training, and loan of artifacts? How high priority should community archives be

in the training of archivists and funding allocation? Nonetheless, it can and should be an engagement worth the time and effort, especially as "equitable partnerships" (Flinn, 2007, p. 166).

Training: Formally train the CDOC's volunteers in archival knowledge and practices so that they have a concise idea of the topic and feel more secure and invested in their work. The CDOC could take advantage of the partnership with the BLX and have training from them.

ILGA: Get closer to ILGA's other services and teams, and its Board, so that the CDOC is always considered for archiving ILGA materials and for discussions on events and funding, for example. Following this line of thought, two things could also be done: ILGA's funding applications could have specific money allocated for the CDOC, as well as ILGA's statutes could be changed so the association can expand its available lines of funding; and each running Board in the election should need to present a specific plan for each ILGA service, including the CDOC. Additionally, the CDOC could coordinate with the LGBTI+ Centre team so that the latter team could help on accessibility on days beside Wednesday or even have a small library at the Centre.

Dissemination: Continue to invest in disseminating knowledge in events and initiatives within or outside of ILGA to fulfil the CDOC's original didactic and informational purpose.

New instruments/documents: Create two crucial documents for the CDOC's operationalisation: its statutes and its user guides. It would also be valuable to create an oral history archive within the CDOC, so that both relevant and everyday records are documented and archived.

Intersectionality and representation: Continue and deepen the intersectional approach and focus on representation in the materials, practices and frameworks of the CDOC, as well as in ILGA in general. The queer methodologies and practices in the archive face a substantial

challenge: categorizing queer identities (Junginger & Dörk, 2021; Marshall et al., 2014), which are naturally fluid. Some of the potential dangers inherent to classification systems regarding the creation and use of queer identity categories include: the reinforcement of power dynamics and perpetuation of bias, privileging certain perspectives or identities over others, for example; the normalization of norms/standards, perpetuating stereotypes or stigmas associated with particular identities; the exclusion and silencing of voices that do not fit neatly into the predefined categories; and limited flexibility to adapt to the changing social contexts and evolving understandings of identity. However, categories of sexuality and gender expression need to have some stability to be used in activism (to facilitate visibility, political debates, and progress, for example) and institutions like the archive (to enable an organization system, relevant to the better functioning of the archive). There are some pragmatic solutions that can and have been established when dealing with tensions between the fluidity of queer identities and the need for coherent identity categories, like Pauline Junginger and Marian Dörk (2021) describe: individual strategies, which are rooted in the specific history and structure of the archive in question; emphasis on documenting and preserving marginalised queer perspectives, taking away importance from explicitly critiquing traditional archival norms to be more pragmatic; community involvement, which allows for a more inclusive and participatory approach to categorizing identities; and international efforts from queer projects that institutionalize and standardize queer historiography, learning from each other's mistakes and histories to come up with a more balanced categorization. Some of these solutions are already being implemented on the CDOC, like the use of tags for materials (one material can exist within many categories) or the use of chronological organisation instead of thematic for the clippings, but they could benefit from the deepening and establishment of new solutions, especially community-based ones. Some examples of these new solutions can be found in the recommendations above, like reaching out to other queer archives in the world.

Concluding remarks

This thesis has analysed the CDOC as the first Portuguese queer documentation centre, tracing its history and practices and critically engaging with its meanings, fragilities and potentialities. From this, I understood that the CDOC is not a fixed entity but a living one shaped by precarity and affect.

By putting temporality as the common thread of the structure of the thesis, I wanted to emphasise how the CDOC exists in queer time. From its fragmented origins to the present and past dynamics of care and improvisation and, finally, to the imagined hopeful and uncertain futures, the CDOC reflects the stakes of queer memory work. Its development has not been linear or progressive but marked by partial recoveries and failures that are generative. Through my oral history, I captured the recollections and the affective elements of those who interacted with the CDOC. Their narratives showed how archives are not just repositories but relational spaces, making them more than just a static object. My interviewees' contributions also helped me to contribute to the history of the CDOC by assembling and archiving a patchwork of stories and interpretations that would otherwise be invisible. Theoretically, I argued for a reading of the CDOC as a product and enactor of archiving the queer and queering the archive. It also embodies many of the conversations and tensions in Queer Archival Studies, like inclusion/erasure, categorisation/fluidity and permanence/ephemerality. Drawing from the works of Hall (2001), Muñoz (2009/2019), Halberstam (2011) and Freeman (2010), I framed the CDOC as a horizon (taking Muñoz's words), something that is always becoming and always incomplete, and something to strive for.

My main intention with this work has been to address the almost non-existent critical engagement with queer archives in Portugal. I hope that, by situating the CDOC within the national and international contexts, I offer a study that others can build upon and/or address its limitations. This could involve a systematic study of the CDOC's collection, or a comparative

analysis between the CDOC and other European queer archives to better understand how national and transnational dynamics shape queer memory work differently. There is plenty of room for artistic, activist and/or scholarly engagements with the CDOC that treat it as a space of imagination and intervention.

Ultimately, the CDOC teaches us that queer memory work is never about the past, but also about the present and the future. We must continuously negotiate, defend, care for, question and reimagine it to fulfil its potential as the first Portuguese queer archive.

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