The 25th of April Documentation Centre: recording a colonial past and enabling emancipatory research

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Abstract:

The article describes the history and activities of the 25th of April Documentation Centre (CD25A), at the University of Coimbra, Portugal. The Centre has an overt commitment to democracy and colonisation. It deals with a history timeline starting with the opposition to Portuguese colonialism and the fascist dictatorship, crossing the transition to a democratic state and the Revolution of April 1974, and extending until the end of the 20th century. It is argued that, in digitally opening its collections and interacting with scientific research, journalism, literature and education, CD25A has played an important social and political role. Interviews with three of its users are analysed – which will serve as the basis of a larger investigation into the Centre's value for research in Portuguese colonialism. It seems that the "research atmosphere", created by its staff, is as important to researchers as its unique collections.

Keywords: digital archives; digital libraries; colonialism; Portugal; historical memory.

Introduction

This article has two foci. Firstly it describes the history and activities of the 25th of April Documentation Centre (CD25A), a small-scale but singular information service and specialised library, which, it is argued, is providing socially relevant and unique services while critically using ICTs to its advantage. It is argued that in organising and digitally opening their collections and interacting with scientific research, journalism, literature and education, CD25A has played an important social and political role both at the national and international level. Then the article goes on to report on the early stages of a research project that has emerged from my interest in CD25A's work. I became aware through informal conversations that researchers using the CD25A spoke positively about their research experience there. Their comments piqued my curiosity as to how and why this Centre's documentation programmes might be contributing to research in Portuguese colonialism, four decades after the end of the empire and at a moment when postcolonial studies were releasing noteworthy studies. The article is exploratory and, indeed, tentative; hopefully, it may spark interest in furthering the research question and developing the research design.

Libraries have an unobtrusive history to tell. This is especially true when their narrative is woven by managerialism alone and if presentism provides a picture of diluted colours and an ahistorical institutional discourse. For the purpose of brevity, the term "libraries" is here used

to include documentation and archive services. One may wonder whether the history of libraries, and even more so of archives, is inaudible because testimonies are rare or because their voices lack resonance. Documentation centres are not safeguarded from this trend, which may be even more devastating if their central focus is placed on contested historical events, which are subject to disputed memory organisation and expression. I decided to write this paper to counteract a silence that surrounds the social studies of libraries, which, I argue, should not be mistaken for irrelevance or inefficiency on their part. A narrative void should be compensated for, especially in times when social values and ethical issues are under stress in the context of some professional and institutional practices.

Underfunded and understaffed, with standardised and mostly quantifiable or quantitative management objectives, libraries, at least in many global North countries, are being scrutinised for a societal value that is expected to be registered in terms of financial return. Deep budget cuts and/or closings are scenarios that several public libraries have faced in recent years. The literature provides evidence of how libraries have undergone successive pruning and trimming redesigns as a consequence of financial engineering measures (for example: Flood 2015; Rainie 2016; Straumsheim 2014).

Librarianship, in terms of curation of historical documents, is at times simplistically equated with a professional practice oriented to the past, or worse, with the cultivation of values of days past. The "spectacularity" or exposure to media, which the French Marxist philosopher Debord (2014) identifies as endemic to contemporary society, and which is equated with worth, is usually absent from the work and achievements of libraries and archives. Their persistent, long-term oriented, cumulative, and expert work - attributes that are especially outstanding in libraries with a historical purpose - may be downplayed as obsolete and unimportant. They are judged as economically non-viable within the recent trend in neoliberal politics that favours the dismantling of public services and the glorification of private, for-profit, entrepreneurship. ICT products and services are, in comparison, marketed as optimal substitutes on the basis of their alluring hyper-novelty, ease of use, indispensability and instant gratification - and, last, but not least, allegedly pure (non-human) neutrality and reassuring formal rationality (Bakardjieva 2015).

As a post-doctoral researcher within the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, I must acknowledge the stimuli for this paper, namely my social commitment to and professional interest in: firstly, the workings of CD25A; secondly, postcolonial studies of the new countries that emerged from the demise of the Portuguese colonial empire; and, thirdly, the long-lasting consequences of colonialism in those territories as well as in Portugal. The independence of the present work and this commitment are not incompatible with my present position in the post-doctoral programme. A clearly stated commitment allows readers to scrutinise the perspective from which authors write and so enables them to assess results and conclusions in an informed, open way.

It is hoped that this article will highlight CD25A's ground-breaking work from the early 1980s.

CD25A

CD25A declares itself to be a hybrid institution: a scholarly library; a multimedia and rare document collection; and a unique national thematic archive. It also serves as a school library and a public library. It has publishing and outreach activities, and participates in community and scientific events.

History of CD25A

The Revolution of 25 April 1974 is the event that historically marks the end of the fascist dictatorship in Portugal, and that also signals the beginning of the dismantling of the Portuguese colonial empire. While chiefly documenting the events of 1974/1976 and the opposition and resistance to the regime both at home and in exile, dating back to the 1950s, CD25A simultaneously has collected sources on the international support of the liberation movements in the former colonies. CD25A, created in 1984 at the University of Coimbra (UC), Portugal, has become a key resource for social and historical studies. Its original purpose was to deal with a historical timeline, starting from the opposition to Portuguese colonialism and the fascist dictatorship and crossing the transition to a democratic state and the revolution of 25 April 1974. The Centre aimed at overcoming the denegation and erasure of a colonial past, while guiding the selection, recording and preservation of (previously) oppressed voices. It has since come to extend its focus until the end of the 20th century and, building on the feedback received from users and its own self-assessment, it intends to evolve to serve researchers of contemporary Portuguese history in general.

Some thirty years ago, a group of scholars from the Centre for Social Studies, following the initial idea of the Director, gained the support of the Rector of the University of Coimbra to create a documentation centre with the aim to collect rare and unique documents on one crucial historic moment for Portugal and for the new countries that had emerged from the anti-colonial struggles and the de-colonisation processes - the 25th of April (or 25A). This group was also tasked with the urgent collection of documents that were both politically and historically sensitive to prevent them from inadvertently leaving the country and to retrieve those outside the country.

The approval from the Rectorate of the University of Coimbra and the fact that CD25A was constituted as an institution under the umbrella of a public university, closely tied to scholarly research, are seen as important warrants. CD25A would become a public institution and an official body, under the direct oversight of the top-level administration of the University. According to its head librarian/archivist, these features have been crucial in presenting the Centre as a trustworthy, non-partisan and ideologically independent initiative, particularly to potential donors, who are predominantly Portuguese politicians, military members, party militants, members of the resistance, and intellectuals. In 2008, following changes to the statutes of the University, CD25A expanded its aims to include cultural outreach and learning support to society at large, with a special focus on local schools.

Collections of the CD25A

Collection policies were designed to deal with privacy and state secrecy issues, advocating for the right to information and favouring the common good in case of disputes over access to documents. A commitment to building the Centre as a public body, the conscious decision to make the most of interdisciplinary expertise and the social and ethical policies fostered an open informational environment that supported the publishing of several works on Portuguese colonialism and the decolonisation processes.

The collections were built mostly from donations, and, occasionally, from purchase. A vast number of loose papers and documents and privately and individually organised collections were assembled from donors from various parts of the country. The donations, if organised, were kept in their original collection order, reflecting the donors' life stories and interests. The collections were thus expected to be rich sources of social history of the 1960s and 1970s. The physical nature of donated documents varies considerably: books, newspapers, journals and magazines, posters, stickers, political pins, photos, press-clippings, personal correspondence, and audio and video recordings, among others.

Several offers were received from citizens under the temporary status of a usufruct deposit. Donors may require this for different reasons. There might be claims from heirs waiting for resolution; or a non-definitive agreement may be more easily acceptable when sentimental reasons stall the permanent giving away of documents. To gain further time to solve doubts or disputes, the Centre would then institute a trusted intermediary between the legal owners and those requiring prompt access to the information source. Most often, these special deposits eventually become regular donations.

Archival or bibliographic materials are treated according to international standards and are searchable on the website Infogestnet.com, an international portal for simultaneous inter-archival searching. Some 300 entities are now listed as contributors, including social, political, cultural and religious organisations.

Services of CD25A

The collections held by CD25A are now the object of research by students and teachers at various levels and grades. Portuguese post-graduate students predominate but international researchers are frequent users. Recent postcolonial programmes in Portuguese universities, notably masters and doctoral programmes, are bringing new, more specialised and more demanding users to CD25A.

In 1990, the Centre initiated the Oral History Project on the April Revolution, producing a list of interviews and about 200 hours of testimonial recordings. Some of these interviews were proactively initiated, coming from acknowledged information source gaps. This project encouraged a more active role for the Centre in facilitating research. F eeding from its own records, it also became a publisher of critical editions of monographs: sometimes under its own imprint; sometimes in partnership with the Centre for Social Studies; and sometimes in joint publishing ventures with other publishers. The CD25A catalogue has been automated from inception; all documents are registered in a single database and indexed using a subject-

headings list. A website was created in 1994 (University of Coimbra 2015) and the catalogue was placed online. The Centre broke new ground nationally when, following the launch of the Oral History Project on the April Revolution in 1990 and of its website in 1994, it initiated the digitisation of materials, envisaging that it would expand access to documentation by creating a virtual collection. From 2005 onwards, benefiting from a special European Union funding framework, the digitisation of collections became systematic, amounting at present to approximately 200, 000 pages, 500 audio CDs and 700 DVDs.

Access, privacy, preservation

The question of access, with its mix of ethical and legal concerns, deserved special attention from the Centre's management and experts and, of course, from those people contributing documents and memories. The thematic areas covered by CD25A are still problematic in present-day Portuguese society, and so the ensuing tensions and conflicts, associated with access, demand practical as well as legally and ethically informed responses. This is why the Centre resorted to a team of experts to reach a consensus on access and privacy policies.

As a general rule, access to CD25A's library and reading room is public and free, although experts and researchers are the central user group. Accessing the archive's official documents depends on their exemption from the legal restrictions concerning data privacy or state secrets. Beyond this, to search the archive for any documentation not yet publicly available on the website, users are requested to submit their credentials from their research supervisor or to declare the purpose of the proposed search. It should be noted that personal data, if not already made public, may only be communicated by public archives if there is a consensual agreement between the parties/legal stakeholders or if 50 years have passed from the date of death of the individual or from the dissolution of the legal person. If these requirements are not met, the right to privacy is assured to donor citizens over a standard period of 75 years, starting from the date of the document and may extend to other individuals represented in text or image. This procedure was instituted in conformity with the European Union's practices for unclassified material in their official archives and is aligned with the Portuguese laws on privacy and the right to image. Occasionally, the donor may require certain access conditions once the offer of personal documents has been agreed to, and these must be observed. Some especially sensitive private data, contained in formerly personal documentation, are the object of special attention. A separation between private and public data is made, even for the lives of public personalities: thus, sensitive data relating to an individual's private life, such as health, home address, his or her good name and reputation, and an individual image are to be treated with special care. Privacy protection must be safeguarded for these sensitive data and the mentioned period of 50 years after a person's death must be respected. From that moment on, these data are considered historical and may be made public.

In cases of conflict with users' demands, the common ethical procedure adopted to deal with these restrictions is to decide on a case by case basis, as both state secret and privacy protections are known to be legally bounded and subject to change. While trying to harmonise different interests, the Centre commits to the notion of the common good and to the right to information, and declares: "In the case of a conflict of rights, the notion of the common good should prevail on the right to privacy [as should prevail] the notion that, in our days, the state secret ages very quickly" (Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril 2014). It is

significant that in the webpages referring to the Oral History Project, which was referred to earlier, a researcher and a former member of the expert staff emphasise that the people who contributed with their life histories and thematic histories were envisaged as collaborators on the project, not depositors, informants nor actors (Cruzeiro 2004). Accordingly, CD25A have to make explicit the future conditions of access demanded by the donors in the agreements signed with them, which users are to be informed of.

As an early pioneer in digitisation projects, the Centre has already faced some issues resulting from the obsolescence of devices, software and file formats. Judiciousness and prudence have been guiding ICT principles, considering that long-term preservation is the aim and that the existing digital solutions are only partly satisfactory.

Organisation and activities

CD25A has the following central tasks:

1. Organising and maintaining an online searchable bibliography;

2. Developing an Oral History Project, which involves the production and publication of life stories of prominent historical agents (Martins 2014)

3. Publishing activities in diverse physical formats: for example pedagogical materials for secondary schools (Santos et al 2000);

4. Engaging in community outreach: with travelling cultural programmes, such as photography exhibitions and document displays and some 30 circulating collections for loan to schools;

5. Participating in debates and conferences organised by the community;

6. Cooperating closely with the University of Coimbra's Rectorate to comply with the annual strategic plans.

As mentioned earlier, the website (http://www.cd25a.uc.pt/) is a pivotal tool in providing access to the collection and its full-text resources. The original design structure was recently altered with the aid of software developed in-house. To explore the collections, a user is faced with a set of Internet pages unfolding from each of the collection's subdivision. Although the conceptual design is simple and basic, the hierarchic arrangement of collection divisions and subdivisions may confuse novice visitors, although guidance on navigation is provided by an online guide. Those users trained in archive searching might be more at ease because the system uses the principles of analogue organisation. Apparently, the website is oriented to facilitate research within the premises and upon local initial training. A virtual visitor, if an experienced one, may be able to search autonomously.

The staff, presently limited to five persons, is committed to welcome and guide user groups, such as secondary school students and teachers. Support and guidance may be obtained, additionally, by individual or group appointment.

Users' responses to and assessment of CD25A

In this section I describe a fledgling study of perceptions of the value of CD25A among its users. My interest is in how it is creating opportunities for the production of reflexive historical research and, indeed, postcolonial emancipatory discourses.

As mentioned in the introduction, my interest in the impact of the Centre was aroused after interacting with some researchers in Portugal's colonial history. As also suggested in the introduction, the evaluation of libraries and information services has come to rely mostly on quantitative measures – such as usage statistics. Nevertheless, and for several years, several authors have reminded their readers of the importance of qualitative research to address some of the anxieties and doubts about *what library users value the most* (Given and Leckie 2003; Goodman 2011; Radford 2006; Sequeiros 2013; Sequeiros 2014; Wilson 2000). Arguably this line of research, which delves into users' heterogeneous and complex forms of engagement with libraries, is beyond the capacity of statistical measurements alone. Indeed, a purely quantitative approach might well overlook the possibility of such a question being raised in the first place or decline to address it. Qualitative enquiry aims at *understanding* users' views and experiences, and relies on the *interpretation of* their answers. It *conceptualises* its results in order to present rich and deep conclusions which reflect the diversity and complexity of the real world (Ritzer and Ryan 2011). Although my own project is at this stage only tentative and modest, my analysis of interviews with three CD25A users in this article will hopefully illustrate the value of qualitative approaches to assessment of library value.

In the first place, the Centre was asked to identify research projects on Portuguese colonialism, published in recent years, for which it had provided documentation. The selection of users required that they had active contact addresses and that they could be reached with convenience, as several researchers who use the CD25A do not reside in Portugal. Prior to this, the Centre negotiated my access to them, to ensure researchers' data privacy. About half of those contacted accepted to take part in the interviews, to have their statements made public and their names disclosed.

Edgar Pêra

The filmmaker Edgar Pêra was one of the first names selected. Pêra co-authored a video about the 25A Revolution, commissioned by the Centre to be used as a lecture medium and part of a pedagogical kit released in 2000 (Santos et al. 2000).

Pêra explains that, more than the sources he could use in the Centre, he valued "the atmosphere of liberty within which I made the film. [It] has everything to do with the 25A. While being pedagogical, it can be an artistic object. It would be of a great advantage not to be soporific, conventional". Edgar Pêra recalls the attitude of the Centre's Director, saying that important support was transmitted through "his own relation to fascism":

"[He] gave me an immense liberty to make a film only about emotions, instead of explanations, so that [young people] could feel what the emotions under fascism are and

what it was like to live the 25th of April. I was given a free hand to make a bolder thing".

In talking further of his relations with the DC25A staff and directors, Pêra claims them as fellow authors as they gave him access to the Centre's "culture" and thought – more valuable than their Centre's resources:

"I understand them to be the authors of this creation. I got a culture medium, not only the resources, but also the persons who reflect daily on this subject. Every conversation with them is productive".

His emotional engagement with his project is striking in this extract when he describes the revolution as a moment of "utopia", which his film tries to emulate:

"Another departure point was to avoid centring on individuality. The hero is the people, it is the people who make the revolution… I believe in cinema as something that is collective, which we associate to the 20th century and to revolutions, and it is all connected. … Utopias are to be envisaged not as a future but as a moment in the present, as something one lives. There is that thing of the eternal return, the problem that such a beginning repeats itself in many moments, I was privileged, not all generations live utopias. [The film] was done my way, something to resemble that".

Considering the audience and the objectives of the project, he wanted to use a language clearly different from that used by television, the army or the private sector:

"It is integrated in the aesthetics of the spoken word, the discourse integrates the instrumental music created with computers which fits the fascist slogans and words of command."….

It was important to speak to the young and to an audience outside Portugal who had not witnessed those historical events:

"A contemporary language was achieved, and the starting point was the sound, as in many of my films, by the way. It is obvious that the film was designed while having those people in mind. .But the main objective was to make it attractive, to wager on that kind of music, not only the traditional protest music but also the contemporary music they might listen to in pubs or discos…. Being unconventional, allowed the film to be exhibited and appreciated in other countries".

Pera describes how his film's imagery alludes to the "farce" of the empire: "I also looked for certain colonial images, somewhat ironic: the empire was a farce. I was 13 years old, [we had to] put an end to a war, I felt that". While the author and I watched the video during the interview, Pêra made a point of drawing my attention to the brief initial sequence when a young black man in a boat crosses the Tagus River to disembark in Lisbon, amidst other passengers, in what could be a daily life routine of a city of multi-ethnic commuters. This sequence, he commented, is meant to be a reversal of the famed colonial metaphor, embodied in the *Monument to the Discoveries*[i], a sculpture commissioned during the fascist government of Salazar, which portrays Henry the Navigator as a leader of different social groups, leaving the Portuguese territory to engage in the conquest of "unknown worlds"[ii].

Marco Gomes

Marco Gomes, a researcher with the Centre for Social Studies, was interviewed as a recent user of CD25A who researched materials for his doctoral thesis (Gomes 2015). His quest at the Centre was for three-dimensional objects, such as statues, artefacts, key chains, puzzles, stickers, and political pins, related to the communication of politics of the revolutionary period. He begins the interview by declaring "The CD25A? It is my passion!" In this extract, echoing the views of Edgar Pêra, he argues that "watching" and keeping in touch with the CD25A is essential to any researcher of the revolution; and he praises the expertise of the CD25A staff and the collegial atmosphere they create:

> "For those interested in the 25A, and beyond that, it's impossible not to visit it, to research but also to watch it. There is a very close, informal relationship among every person, librarian and researcher".

He has special praise for the publishing work of the CD25A and for its independence:

> "The imprint of the Centre for Social Studies is strong, in a good sense. And so is that of [the head librarian] who gives a very strong professional nature to the Centre [25A]. It is a Centre that totally depends on the University, but is critically independent."

He regrets the tight budgets the Centre is living on and the absence of extended operating hours. He alludes to the problems that come from the prohibition on borrowing CD25A materials and the restrictions on photographing documents. He had had to allocate more time to research the documentation in-house and reflect on it. In closing, he declared, with a jovial tone, that he would donate some of the materials he had used during his doctoral programme to CD25A.

Catarina Laranjeiro

Catarina Laranjeiro, the third participant, refers to the fact that her master's and doctoral projects were supported by the CD25A holdings – as well, she stresses, by other archives both in Portugal and in Africa. Her research centres on the liberation movements of Guiné-Bissau. Again the warm welcome researchers find at CD25A is mentioned early on in the interview: "Things might even be covered with dust but we get a very warm welcome. It was a pleasure, never a nuisance, to go there and find [the head librarian]: you would be in high spirits immediately".

Perhaps it is the staff's love for the archive's collections that distinguishes CD25A, as suggested in these words:

> "The CD25 has the best librarians in the world, with a great love for that archive, and no money, no course, no computer can pay for that!"

Here she makes much of the Centre's openness to collaboration, which she adds might well in fact compensate for its shortages of funds and staff:

"I have always realized that, in times of crisis, receiving researchers is not a lot of work, it is having people help with their own jobs. They have a humane atmosphere that is the big added-value of the Centre."

In her opinion, both donors and researchers share her feelings on the "added-value" that comes from CD25A's "humane atmosphere". She claims that it underlies the trustworthy reputation that the Centre has built. She says: "It is a centre which they trust". As mentioned in an earlier section, donating family papers to an archive can be a delicate matter - especially so in light of the contested histories contained in the CD25A collections. Catarina Laranjeiro recognises the emotional aspects of archival work in her anecdote of a friend who was initially reluctant to offer her father's papers and who eventually decided to do so after visiting the Centre. She makes a significant comment on the affective aspects of archival knowledge-building, reminding that it always is dependent on the good-will of donors:

"People end up by offering their [personal] holdings to them instead of other institutions, and that has to do with affection... Knowledge is not academic, it is affectionate also. The Centre subsists upon the persons who are heading it, a lot. There is this phrase I like a lot: 'an archive is not something that may be received from someone, an archive is something that must be given'".

Catarina Laranjeiro's use of CD25A in her postgraduate research has centred on her research in the liberation movements of Guiné-Bissau, mostly searching for photos. Based on her experience in Guiné-Bissau, she has very strong opinions about what an archive is, as illustrated by her statement:

"It is another way of dealing with memory that has not so much to do with writing, research must be done another way. I am not the kind of person to complain about a mess in the archives in Africa, that you won't find anything… That would be "very colonialist and very moralist, nobody asked you to go there and organise anything!"

She claims to enjoy the serendipitous discoveries that archives sometimes offer. Western conventions on order and time, including those about the organisation and narration of time, are disturbed by the diverse arrangements that those archives may have resorted to:

"You find one thing dated a few years ago, and next another thing with several centuries. Time must have another form, that is why I like it, there is more room for spontaneity…. You look for one thing and you find another one. We have to be less rigid, [...] the question is to place the focus on what you find and not on what you are looking for".

And then, moving on to her experience in the CD25A collections and perhaps picking up her earlier comment that researchers often contribute to the professional work of the over-worked archivists, she suggests that their lack of perfectionist organisation aids flexibility and open-endedness in research, She says her favourite feature of the Centre is: "Feeling, well, if it is too organised, the fluidity of the research is lost."

Her closing words bear testimony to the huge value of CD25A in counteracting the silence surrounding Portuguese fascism and colonialism:

"The memory of what the Ongoing Revolutionary Process, [PREC, Processso Revolucionário em Curso, in Portuguese] was and the start of the revolution, have to do with a sense of urgency. It has to do with a policy for the uses of memory, what the war was like, that the 25 and the PREC should not be manipulated as they had been until then. In the 1980s, when the Centre opened, we were in a country where it seemed that

there had been no anti-colonial, no anti-fascist resistance, no workers committees. [...] There was a need to counteract the silencing policies that were being activated by the agents of power."

Future research

With these three examples, this article has attempted to point to connections between the open-minded collection policies and "humane atmosphere" of CD25A and research results and publication. This initial exploration indicates future research directions, particularly those following lines of social and political inquiry rather than the current preoccupation with the impact of ICTs on researchers' use of libraries. The analysis of the three interviews points to how emotional and relational aspects of their investigative work are important dimensions in researchers' lives. Similar points on the need to take these into account in assessing the value of libraries are occasionally made in the literature, as mentioned earlier.

A parallel may be established between the *reading atmosphere,* a concept developed to understand the mix of emotional, sensory, cognitive, social and power dimensions that shapes the much appreciated lived space of a public library (Sequeiros 2011) and what I would tentatively designate the *research atmosphere* – a construct that Straumsheim (2014) might endorse. This concept is certainly evoked here by the interviewees and may be the object of further research.

A comparison with other similar memory institutions would provide interesting information to reflect on their present social and political relevance. A similarity between the aims of CD25A and those of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience was drawn to my attention during my oral presentation in Cape Town, which preceded this article[iii] and for which I am grateful. A deeper, comparative study would certainly be of interest in this thematic area of research.

Conclusions

In conclusion, some key and advantageous features of CD25A are listed and analysed. Perhaps the most significant factor in the Centre's long-term sustainability is the action programme that was developed at its creation. The decision to make it a public information and documentation service, which is publicly funded and the property of a public university, was a warrant promising independence, sustainability and free public access.

The collection was made possible by a social and political vision. This vision was both a citizen's and a scholar's theoretically-based stance. An ongoing relation with society has been fostered, from collection to service provision and expert support. The diversity of the social agents involved – schools, associations, social movements and non-governmental organisations, scholars – was central to the development of the project. Thus, the value of the Centre's dialogue with citizenship at large and historically relevant personalities and social groups is confirmed.

The acknowledgment of the possible tensions over "openness" or "publicness" is significant. Openness is defined along two, occasionally conflicting, lines of interest: the publicness of the public service provided, funded by public money, and the privacy of some data in the collections, to which a public institution commits to become a steward. This issue requires a case-by-case analysis based on ethical and practical requirements, which the Centre has been devising with the support of an interdisciplinary advisory team. A criterion-based selection is assumed as a central task from a critical librarianship and archival perspective. The documentation specialists interact with users and consider their requests and expectations attentively and in a caring way.

Finally and most importantly, the close professional and affectionate relationship that is maintained with researchers creates a mutual exchange of documents, views, and work. It results in the creation of a stimulating and trust-inducing research atmosphere. Coping with obstacles is an apparently common trait binding users and professionals, who frequently share research interests, enthusiasms and difficulties. This appears to be especially important in research areas that are highly sensitive, politically and socially. Collaborating in the production and release of studies, artistic and media pieces about the former colonial empire will have societal impacts in a society still in denial of its colonial past.

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i   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Padr%C3%A3o_dos_Descobrimentos

ii https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUNmjIw7QSk, from 0:33 minute

iii 2015 Pre-Congress Satellite Conference of IFLA's Library Theory and Research Section, "Digital Preservation as a Site of Contestation: National Heritage, Memory, Politics and Power – Beyond Technology and Management", Cape Town, 12 and 13 August 2015.