

# Information Representation in Displaced Archives: A Meta-Synthesis

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to perform a qualitative synthesis of literature concerning the representation of information in displaced archives. Methodologically, this communication is configured in a metasynthesis oriented to theory building, constituting a non-reactive, documentary-based and exploratory type of study, focused on articles and books chapters published in English between 1954 and 2019. The collection of

texts is supported by the SPICE strategy, applied to the search in databases (WoS and EBSCO). We adopted content analysis according to the assumptions of Charmaz and Finfgeld-Connett. Of the 443 records, 155 texts that responded to the research purposes were included. Three themes emerged from the content analysis around the aforementioned theme with a view to theory building: “anarchivism as (non-) representation”, “archive of the archive”, and “archival canon”. Finally, displaced archives constitute an emerging theme in several domains, so it is important to explore the complex nature of this phenomenon from the point of view of representation and knowledge organization.

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## 1.0 Introduction

The phenomenon of displaced archives emerges in the scientific literature as a kind of intractable problem. In addition to the conceptual diversity associated with this phenomenon present in the scientific literature from various fields (e.g., removed archives, migrated archives, seized archives, alienated archives, captured archives, diasporic archives, expatriated/repatriated archives, estray archival, disputed archival claims, replevin, etc.), there is a tendency in the scientific community to adopt the concept of displaced archives as a possible hypernym. The most recent definition of displaced archive is found in the report issued by the International Council on Archives through the Expert Group on Shared Archival Heritage, understood as “archives removed from the place of their creation, where the ownership of the archives is disputed by two or more parties” (Lowry 2020, 5). Nevertheless, one of the problems that makes this phenomenon a particular case is whether we can identify archives that are in the condition of displaced without there necessarily having to be claimant party(ies) for that purpose.

Although the most recurrent focus in addressing this phenomenon has been around the problems of restitution, repatriation, return or relocation, the identification and, more incisively, the representation of these documentary sets have remained obscured in scientific discourse. According to Winn (2015), one of the limiting factors in the identification of displaced archives consists, among others, in the inexistence of information access tools. For Lowry, “the catalogue is the key” (2017a, 8), not only as an instrument of access to information where the processes of organization and description are materialized with a view to its retrieval and access, but also as a mechanism of information representation that derives from the powers of archival mediation.

Studies on information representation suggest that, in the postmodern archival stream, it is not possible to ensure neutrality or impartiality in the representation of the content and structure of a fonds (MacNeil 2012) in finding aids. Such archival descriptions are supported by interpretative approaches that depend on the description and access policies adopted by custodians, which are not unrelated to

the political, historical, socio-cultural, and institutional contexts of the environment where they were produced.

Considering that the finding aids can be genologically diverse (e.g., catalogues, inventories, guides, scripts, directories, indexes and databases), it is considered more productive to focus on the representation of archival information, from the perspective of how a “fluid, evolving, and socially constructed practice” (Yakel 2003, 2) is constituted as “the core of archival description produced to facilitate access to archival materials in the background of their creation and custodial history” (Zhang 2012, 49).

Considering that some of the studies on archival information representation have been problematized with greater incidence, although incipient, in knowledge organization (KO) and information science (Aguilar and Kobashi 2013; Barros and Sousa 2020; Corujo and Freitas 2021; Hjørland 2002; Tognoli 2013; Tognoli and Guimarães 2011; 2012; Troitiño Rodríguez 2018; Vital, Medeiros and Brascher 2017), these studies have largely confined themselves to material and technical processes, physical (e.g., arrangement) and intellectual (e.g., classification and description), of concepts that conform to the bureaucratic dimension of the producers and/or custodial entities. In what concerns the displaced archives, the phenomenon itself challenges the core concepts of archival science, especially how these disputed documentary sets are represented from the point of view of provenance, integrity, naturalness and how these representations are (re)constructed or destroyed in the process of archival mediation. Notwithstanding that some emerging discussions on critical approaches to the decolonization of knowledge gave insightful perspectives particularly on archival knowledge organization systems in KO (Adler 2016; Eadon 2020; Gilliland 2012), little has been written on information representation in displaced archives.

Based on these aspects, and given the scarcity of studies on this topic, this article focuses on how the representation of information about archives removed from their original social and territorial contexts has been addressed in the scientific literature. Thus, we intend to conduct a scientific literature review that informs about the trajectory of the information representation process from the removal process to the claim by the dispossessed communities that can be

theoretically relevant to the scope of KO. Thus, based on the above, it justifies performing a synthesis of knowledge from scientific literature called meta-synthesis (Sandelowski and Barroso 2010; Grant and Booth 2009; Finfgeld-Connett 2018). Thus, this article is structured as follows: section 2.0 formulates the starting question and research objectives; section 3.0 outlines the methodological assumptions for this type of qualitative literature synthesis; section 4.0 presents the results of the empirical investigation; section 5.0 makes concluding remarks around limitations and implications, as well as future lines of research.

## 2.0 Formulation of questions and objectives

For the present scientific literature review, it is intended to focus on two topics in an interrelated manner: (1) archival information representation and (2) displaced archives. It aims to identify in the literature how these topics have been addressed from a theoretical and methodological point of view.

To formulate the research question, we adopted the *SPICE*<sup>1</sup> strategy (Booth 2006a), as it consists of an approach designed within the framework of Information Science and applied to qualitative literature prospection. The specifications of the research question can be found in the following table.

<i>SPICE</i>	Parameters
<i>Setting</i>	Archival institutions (custodial institutions)
<i>Perspective</i>	representation of archival information
<i>Intervention</i>	displaced archives
<i>Comparison</i>	finding aids
<i>Evaluation</i>	scientific literature in the field of Information Science (1954-2019)

Table 1. *SPICE* research question format.

The research question can be formulated as follows: “How have archival entities represented displaced archives through finding aids according to the scientific literature produced between 1954 and 2019 in the field of Information Science?”

The general aim of this study is a literature review concerning the theoretical perspectives on how displaced archives have been represented not only particularly in finding aids, but also in other information representation mechanisms that are relevant for the understanding of the phenomenon of interest, i.e. displaced archives. The specific objectives consist in: (a) analysing the number and characteristics of scientific papers published between 1954 and 2019 in at least two academic databases; (b) identifying in the content of the included texts evidence on the importance of the representation of archival information in information access tools for the identification of archives in the condition of displaced; and (c) evaluating questions

about possibilities and limitations in the identification of displaced archives in finding aids. The expected outcome of this meta-synthesis is to lay the groundwork for the generation of new theory, extending existing perspectives on the representation of archival information as applied to displaced archives.

## 3.0 Materials and methods

### 3.1 Choice of method

To systematise the knowledge currently available on the representation of information in displaced archives and research trends in addressing this topic, we resorted to a type of synthesis of literature knowledge called meta-synthesis (Finfgeld 2003; Finfgeld-Connett 2018; Saini and Shlonsky 2012). The approach adopted consists of theory-generating meta-synthesis (Finfgeld-Connett 2013; 2018). According to Finfgeld-Connett (2018), theory-generating meta-synthesis is part of a qualitative research paradigm underpinned by grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Grounded theory consists in “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (Charmaz 2006, 2). Operationally, the method makes “use of constant and systematised comparison between data, and between data and scientific literature; the search for answers, stimulated by the formulation of sensitising questions; the use of theoretically induced samples; and interpretation grounded in the perspectives obtained in the field itself” (Freitas 2012, 109). To do this, we need a textual corpus that is representative from which to extract and explain dynamics between processes and concepts about a given phenomenon.

### 3.2 Research strategy

We started from the *SPICE* approach (Booth et al. 2019) as a tool to support the data collection process. Searches took place iteratively between 2019-11-19 and 2020-04-21 in *WoS* and *EBSCO* databases (by institutional subscription), as it facilitates the use of truncation in title and topic fields.

Using the descriptors applied by Macedo (2019), we expanded the search criteria by adding the topics *colonial archives*, *diasporic archives*, *seized archives*, *looted archives*, and *expatriated archives*. For the generation of truncatures, we resorted to Porter’s *stemming* algorithm for the English language (Porter and Boulton 2002; Porter 1980), accessible at <<https://osf.io/2b3nf/>>.

### 3.3 Data collection and eligibility criteria

We selected two databases: *WoS* and *EBSCO*. We limited ourselves to texts genologically materialized in peer-re-

viewed articles published in scientific journals and monograph chapters, in English. All document types other than articles and chapters of monographs were excluded. Furthermore, we circumscribed the searches to the domain of Information Science: in *WoS*, with records classified under *Library and Information Science*; and in EBSCO, the databases *Library & Information Science Source* (LISS) and *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts* (LISTA). The records obtained from each of the databases were exported electronically to the bibliographic manager *EndNote<sup>TM</sup>*, where they were carefully checked for data completeness, availability of texts for full reading and removal of duplicates (Kwon et al. 2015).

As inclusion criteria, we carefully analysed, in a first stage, the titles, topics and abstracts in English and then we carried out a screening of texts likely to be excluded. In addition, in a second step, we adopted an expansive search strategy recommended by Finfgeld-Connett (2018). Thus, in addition to the records obtained from *WoS* and *ESBCO*, the selection criteria were as follows:

1. Papers: in addition to the candidate papers for inclusion, we reviewed the respective bibliographic references, based on the same selection criteria adopted for this phase, manually and iteratively checking the *WoS*, *ESBCO* and recursively *Google Scholar* databases, preferably those texts that were available, once the options were exhausted, in full.
2. Book chapters: we included the integral chapters of *Displaced Archives* (Lowry 2017b) and *Archival returns* (Barwick, Green and Vaarzon-Morel 2019).

Once this check was done, records were exported from *EndNote<sup>TM</sup>* in standardised formats (.ris and .txt). Candidate data for analysis were imported into the *EPPI Reviewer 4 tool* (Thomas, Brunton and Graziosi 2010), which provides an automated workflow. The sample resulting from this process will form the basis of analysis for this topic. Each of these phases will be represented in a standardised reporting flow adapted from PRISMA (Moher et al. 2009).

### 3.4 Criteria for data analysis

We adopted the recommendations for data analysis based on Finfgeld-Connett (2013) and Sandelowski and Barroso (2010) within the scope of this meta-synthesis. Thus, coding in the context of grounded theory adopts a constructivist and pragmatic epistemological strand (Charmaz 2008). As such, we applied three stages, incrementally.

#### 3.4.1 Stage 1: Initial coding

After determining the number of texts included in *EPPI Reviewer 4*, data were imported into the *ATLAS.ti cloud*

platform (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH 2020). We proceeded to (1) import included texts; (2) perform a careful reading of the texts; (3) identify textual data segments where occurrences of the descriptors are explicitly or implicitly manifested, using in vivo coding of occurrences of words associated with *finding aid(s)*, *archival representation*, *literary warrant*. The coding process takes place by deductive-inductive, comparative, interactive and iterative approaches in reading the texts, and coding is an incremental and provisional process, since as the analysis proceeds adjustments may need to be made (Charmaz 2006).

#### 3.4.2 Stage 2: Focused coding

In order to limit interpretation biases, data analysis matrices are obtained from the *ATLAS.ti cloud*, providing a computationally controlled environment for the coding and categorisation process. This step allows the constitution of matrices that integrate the most relevant results for theory building, including the raw data and the *memoranda*, arranged side by side (Finfgeld-Connett 2013; 2018).

#### 3.4.3 Stage 3: Interpretation and synthesis of the results

In this stage, it is intended to integrate, interpret, and synthesise the most relevant findings from the textual content with a view to generating new theory around the representation of archival information in displaced archives. Thus, a thematic framework was constituted *a priori* to guide the formation of categories and subcategories, shown in Table 2.

Each of the themes enables the constitution of clusters, which will allow their differentiation according to the contexts (armed conflict, decolonization, secession of States, subnational context and diaspora or *extra situs*) and uses of the documentary sets in the representation process, grouped into the following initial subthemes: (a) information access tools; (b) representations on substitute media; (c) accessibility and custody; (d) archival classification and description; (e) representation of integrity and naturalness; (f) literary warrants; (g) representation of producing/custodian entities.

### 3.5 Validation, triangulation, and reporting

For the triangulation process, in order to reduce interpretation distortions, the study was conducted by three researchers. One of the team members performed the data collection process and initial coding processing. Two of the members performed the validation of the codes assigned to the texts. Ambiguities and conflicts were resolved by consensus among the authors. Research data are stored on the *Open Science Framework* platform, accessible at <<https://osf.io/vy82e/>>.



#	Theme	Coding Strategy
1	Removal	Codes that represent mechanisms of (non)representation of archival information regardless of the inchoate factors of archival removal and the destination that was given by the intervening parties.
2	Recovery	Codes representing strategies for the (non-) recovery of archival information. Focuses on mechanisms of (non) representation of archival information and the custodial vicissitudes of the documentary collections.
3	Reconstitution	Codes representing strategies for the reconstitution of archival information on documentary sets removed, dispersed, or returned to their original communities.

Table 2. Thematic framework of reference.

## 4.0 Results

### 4.1 Characteristics of the studies

A total of 443 bibliographic records were obtained: 306 records were obtained according to the search criteria and 137 bibliographic records were integrated manually, based on the cited references of the former. 114 records were removed, among duplicates, incomplete data, non-required document typologies and dates outside the search scope. 164 records were excluded, by reading the title, keywords, and abstracts, for not responding to the topic of study ( $n=160$ ); for having returned unrequired documentary typologies ( $n=3$ ) and for not having access to full text ( $n=1$ ); and for the full reading of the articles and book chapters not having returned the topics under study, when the coding process ( $n=10$ ). The sample was reduced to 155 articles, produced between 1962 and 2019 and texts in English.

The geographical coverage of studies included points to an increasing trend around displaced archival cases in both international and subnational contexts. There is a volume of studies originating from the American continent, namely the United States of America ( $n=78$ ) and Canada ( $n=2$ ); followed by the countries of Oceania, led by Australia ( $n=18$ ), New Zealand ( $n=2$ ) and Papua New Guinea ( $n=1$ ). The most productive European countries were the United Kingdom ( $n=24$ ), the Netherlands ( $n=5$ ), France ( $n=4$ ), Denmark ( $n=2$ ), Finland ( $n=2$ ), Germany ( $n=1$ ), Italy ( $n=1$ ) and Austria ( $n=1$ ). From the African continent, we obtained papers from South Africa ( $n=5$ ), Uganda ( $n=2$ ), Ghana ( $n=1$ ), Zimbabwe ( $n=1$ ) and Namibia ( $n=1$ ). From the Asian continent, Israel ( $n=3$ ), Qatar ( $n=1$ ) and Japan ( $n=1$ ) are of particular note. The most productive authors included Grimsted ( $n=15$ ), Montgomery ( $n=9$ ), Banton ( $n=4$ ), Cox ( $n=4$ ), Karabinos ( $n=4$ ), Caswell ( $n=3$ ), Kecs-keméti ( $n=3$ ), Lowry ( $n=3$ ), Namhila ( $n=3$ ), Punzalan ( $n=3$ ), Anderson ( $n=2$ ), Bastian ( $n=2$ ), Frings-Hessami ( $n=2$ ), Gilliland ( $n=2$ ), Lovering ( $n=2$ ), Phillips ( $n=2$ ), Sela ( $n=$

2), Shepard ( $n=2$ ). Regarding the remaining authors, we only obtained a single item.

The main journals where articles were retrieved were *Archival Science* ( $n=23$ ); *American Archivist* ( $n=16$ ); *International Journal of Cultural Property* ( $n=6$ ); *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* ( $n=5$ ); *Archivaria* ( $n=5$ ); *American Historical Review* ( $n=4$ ); *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts & Cultural Heritage* ( $n=3$ ); *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* ( $n=3$ ); *Ethnomusicology Forum* ( $n=3$ ); *Archives and Manuscripts* ( $n=3$ ); *Archives* ( $n=3$ ); *Journal of Information Ethics* ( $n=2$ ); *Ethnomusicology* ( $n=2$ ); *Cahiers du Monde Russe* ( $n=2$ ); *Archives and Records* ( $n=2$ ). Among book chapters, 13 chapters of *Displaced Archives* (Lowry 2017b) and 11 chapters of *Archival Returns* (Barwick, Green and Vaarzon-Morel 2019) were integrated.

A significant part of the retrieved records on representation of archival information was excluded for not being related to the phenomenon of interest, for example, issues related to archival description processes, technical aspects in the construction of literary warrants or electronic information systems, or even theoretical and conceptual analyses on the representation of archival information in finding aids not associated with cases of displaced archives.

Thus, Figure 1 identifies the PRISMA workflow leading to the selection process of included and excluded studies by stages.

What is significant is that, although most of the papers do not focus on the specific topic under study, the included studies present relevant evidence that responds to the elements of perspective, intervention and comparison (i.e., the representation of archival information in access tools about archives in the displaced condition) for theory building. The results of the meta-synthetic analysis will be described below.

### 4.2 Description of the included studies

A total of 155 texts produced between 1962 and 2019 were included. Between the decades 1960 to 2000, the produc-

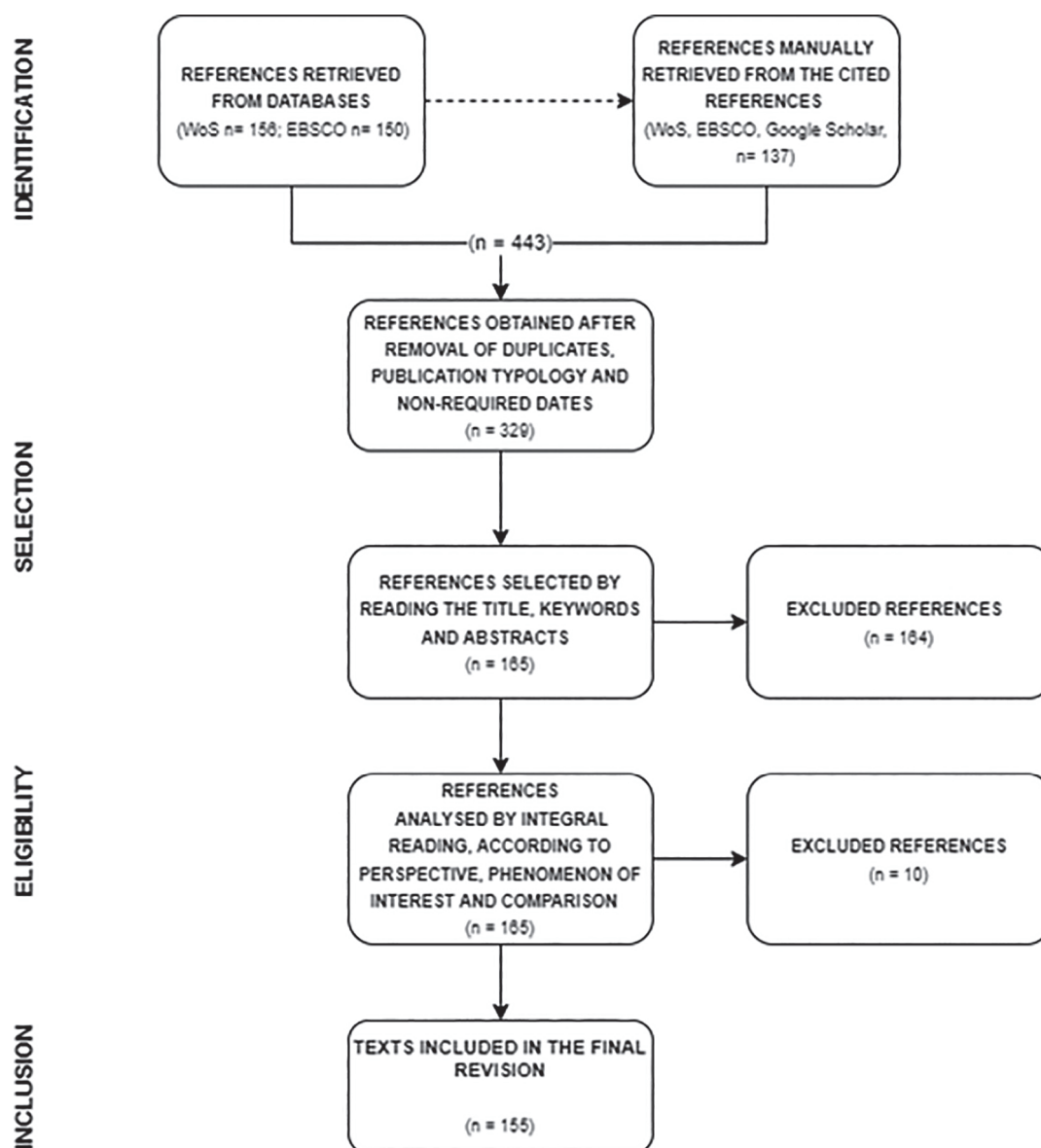


Figure 1. PRISMA research flow.

tion of texts stands at 14% ( $n= 21$ )<sup>2</sup>, while from 2001 to 2019 there is a significant increase in the order of 86% ( $n= 134$ ).

It should be noted that, as of 2008, there is a consistent and upward increase in scientific production on the topic under study, with 2017 ( $n= 17$ ) and 2019 ( $n= 21$ ) being the most productive years.

Most of the qualitative studies incorporated different methodological approaches, not always clearly explained by their authors. Case studies predominate, explicit or not, simple or overlapped with other methods (theoretical-conceptual analyses, biographical methods, collective rhetoric) ( $n= 50$ ); historical analyses ( $n= 41$ ); theoretical-conceptual

analyses ( $n= 21$ ); ethnographic, auto-ethnographic methods and naturalistic research ( $n= 17$ ); opinion, position-taking, point of view ( $n= 5$ ); literature review ( $n= 3$ ); action research ( $n= 3$ ); case law commentary ( $n= 3$ ); critical reaction papers to a particular article ( $n= 2$ ) and interview ( $n= 2$ ). The least frequent methods apply content or thematic analysis, documentary analysis, longitudinal and eclectic study, research statement and report ( $n= 8$ ). Many of the texts included address international and sub-national contexts.

Given the length of the results, we refer to the individual data in <<https://osf.io/x34j9/>>.

For an appreciation of the themes, several articles address international cases that concern the confiscation of archives

in the context of armed conflict, the removal of archives in the context of decolonisation, irredentism, or the secession of states. In sub-national cases, they address jurisdictional issues of archival custody, centralisation of archives removed from original communities (ethnic or indigenous, continental, or insular), extra-legal confiscations in the context of armed conflict or peace, repressive political environments, and problems of community-based archival management. Importantly, cases of displaced archives in subnational contexts constitute an emerging topic in the literature, with the focus on components involving context, community, territoriality, and ownership. Although subnational cases are presented in a latent or implied form in most of the articles analysed, it is possible to deduce from the texts elements involving disputes between ethnic communities and public or private institutions, the transfer of territorial sovereignty between states and archives or public documents in private ownership. This aspect has not been acknowledged in Auer's report (1998), emerging for the first time in Lowry's report (2020). The texts included, equally, exploring possibilities and barriers in the restitution, repatriation, return or relocation of archives to original communities, both physically and digitally. However, it is not straightforward how the authors identify inchoate factors of archival dispossession in subnational contexts and subsequently converted into international cases. For example, decolonisation and armed conflict provided, in some cases, phenomena of dispersal or diaspora of private archives, while others were constituted outside their original territory, especially in the context of exile (coined here *extra situs*). Nevertheless, the literature included in this study focuses mainly on the custody and ownership of analogue media, with very few studies focusing on the born-digital universe.

Next, the main themes related to the phenomenon of interest, perspective, and comparison (representation of archival information in tools for access to information on displaced archives) are described.

### 4.3 Description of themes and presentation of theory

For the content analysis, we established *a priori* three thematic axes (cf. above Table 2) in order to explore, in the set of texts included, how the representation of archival information in finding aids has been addressed around the phenomenon of displaced archives: removal, recovery and reconstitution. These thematic axes provide, from the data collected (see <https://osf.io/x34j9/>), the creation of metaphorical categories, which point to motivations, strategies, and mechanisms of physical and intellectual dispossession through the (non-)representation of archival information. The sub-categories do not constitute units closed in on themselves, as they share links and interconnections with the main categories.

The analysis of the corpus of included texts resulted in the creation of three categories (anarchive, archive of the archive and archival canon), containing in turn several sub-categories, distributed by thirteen clusters according to the contexts of dispossession.

#### 4.3.1 Theoretical construct 1: "Anarchivism" as (non)representation

This category has reference to Derrida's (1995) concept of *anarchive*, understood as "la pulsion de mort, la violence de l'oubli, la sur-répression" (1995, 126). The *anarchive* is a phenomenon inseparable from the constitutive nature of "la violence de l'archive même" (the violence of the archive itself) (Derrida 1995, 19). Simply, anarchivism consists of "destructive forces of the archive", which can be represented as "indexes of loss and absence" (Huang 2020, 264).

Removed archives (physically and intellectually) from their originating contexts may have been subjected to an anarchist hermeneutics, especially as the traces or links of the archives generated in their originating contexts were (intentionally) removed (or destroyed) through mechanisms of information (non)representation. To explore the anarchist hermeneutics underlying the process of (non)representation of removed archives, we constituted two interrelated subcategories — reappropriation/recapture and reconfiguration — which are explained below with the support of the data available in <<https://osf.io/hyx49/>>.

##### 4.3.1.1 Reappropriation/recapture

This subcategory points to mechanisms of (non-)representation of archival information as a form of possession by removing custody of archives from the original custodian (institution, community, or individuals), taking them as if they were their own or acquired by extra-legal or illegal means (recapture). The misrepresentation of the appropriated cultural good or manifestation may constitute a suppressive form of its value (intrinsic and/or extrinsic), its authenticity, its integrity, as indicative elements of dispossession (Battley 2019; Lehane 2012). For the present case, while the appropriation of archives removed from their original contexts constitutes a first, locally and temporally determinable form of dispossession (a "technology of disinheritance" (Butler 2009, 58)) we understand here that, for operational purposes, reappropriation, and recapture amount to forms of appropriation of removed archives via intellectual representation. For example, Frings-Hessami (2019a; 2019b) expanded the *records continuum* model into an "appropriated archive *continuum* model", applied to the case of the archive of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum of the Khmer Rouge (Cambodia), which was "politically appropriated by the successor government" (Frings-Hessami 2019a, 260) (i.e.,

appropriation by physical possession) and intellectually re-appropriated in the sense of “misrepresenting the content of the archive” (Frings-Hessami 2019a, 273f.). Another example concerns archives removed in the context of armed conflict by occupying forces to adversaries who tend to represent them as “enemy records” (Sela 2018b; Grimsted 2010b; Montgomery 2011; 2014; 2015a; 2017; Brower 1963). Beyond this, re-appropriation in the context of armed conflict is most notable with the use of surrogates (micrography/digital imaging) or datification technologies (Auer 2017; Pennell 2019; Montgomery 2001), not only to support military intelligence analysis on the enemy (or to limit access) but also as a fungible mechanism for the (physical) repatriation of archives. Montgomery stressed that although inalienability and imprescriptibility are principles recently introduced in international archival terminology, “the laws of armed conflict (...) impose no obligation of return at the end of hostilities” (2015a, 306).

Another example stems from cases that occurred from the decolonisation or the secession/succession of States, where there are distinct approaches to reappropriation via the removal (usually to the metropolis) and concealment of archives (public or private) (Sato 2017; Karabinos 2018b; Agostinho 2019; Anderson 2015; Banton 2013). The most paradigmatic case consists of the “migrated archives”, i.e., archives removed during British decolonisation, “rediscovered” at the *Foreign and Commonwealth Office* premises in Hanslope Park concerning cases of human rights violations (Hampshire 2013; Lowry 2019b; Bailkin 2015; Elkins 2015; Banton 2012a; 2012b; 2013; Mnjama 2011; Hiribarren 2017; Badger 2012; Phillips 2013; 2016; Anderson 2015; Sato 2017; Karabinos 2018b). Cases of archives removed from former colonies constitute the most difficult cases to resolve between the parties involved in the dispute (Lowry 2017a; 2019b). Most cases involving archives removed in a colonial context to the metropolises find subterfuge in the strategy of reappropriation using new technologies, such as micrographs or digitizations, constituting technologies of colonial domination in a postcolonial context (Mnjama and Lowry 2017; Mnjama 2011; Banton 2009; Danielson 2013; Agostinho 2019).

Another mechanism of reappropriation of removed archives in a subnational context consists in the design of finding aids not always oriented to represent in an organic and reunified way documentary sets dispersed among several custodial entities (Belton 2010; Bastian 2001). There are cases of re-appropriation with the purpose of deliberate destruction, dispersal, and fragmentation of documentary collections, both through repressive action by the state and by the communities, groups or individuals themselves (Rhoads 1966; Mattern 2016; Kratz 2014; Balcells 2014; Caswell 2009). The destruction of archives in the context of armed conflict may take the form of *damnatio memoriae*

(Montgomery 2015b; 2017). Montgomery notes how “the archives may have been intentionally destroyed as part of Saddam Hussein’s aim to obliterate Kuwait’s national identity and annex the Emirate as Iraq’s nineteenth province” (2015b, 61).

In short, the removal of archives by intellectual reappropriation suggests the existence of a dimension of anarchivic representation that is characterised by the obscuring or erasing of the traces that represent the provenance, original order, naturalness and integrity of the documentary sets, as a way of disengaging their relationship with the original custodial entities.

#### 4.3.1.2 Reconfiguration

This subcategory emerges from the set of studies included as a process interrelated with the re-appropriation of archives removed from their original contexts and with the theme of recovery. Reconfiguration also stands out as an anarchivic dimension of the (non)representation of displaced archives, especially when the aim is to obscure the content of the archives through various mechanisms of (non)representation of archival information. Several examples support this idea, which are listed below:

*Euphemistic representations.* Archives seized during or after armed conflict relied on euphemistic classification systems, designed to obscure not only the provenance of the archives but also their content (Montgomery 2001; Sela 2018b). For example, Iraqi *Ba’ath* party archives resorted to euphemistic descriptors to attenuate acts related to the genocide of the Kurdish community in the context of *Operation Anfal* (1986-1989). Iraqi information retrieval tools represented such acts as “collective measures”, a ‘return to the national ranks’ and the ‘resettlement in the south’ to refer to a type of “numbing bureaucratic language about ‘liquidations’, ‘expulsions’, and ‘transfers’ of the Kurdish victims” (Montgomery 2001, 88–9). Another strategy of euphemisation consists in the treatment of the archives captured from the Palestinians by the Israeli military forces, which sought to avoid reusing the systems of representation “according to the criteria originally employed by the Palestinians” and, as such, the captured archives were “catalogued according to Zionist terminology (...) with no relation to their Palestinian characteristics/cataloguing” and “treating them as materials of minor cultural importance” (Sela 2018b, 211). This approach reveals the recourse to a reconfiguration according to the “terminology of the colonizer and not the original terminology” (Sela 2018b, 216), supported by “laws, rules, norms, methods and archive procedures such as censorship, restricted study, access prohibition/limitation, control over what is declassified (to whom and to what extent), cataloguing and labelling according to Zionist codes and terminology that differ from the original



Palestinian terminology, signifying Israeli ownership over the material” (Sela 2018b, 202).

Added to this is another strategy of reconfiguration by euphemisation, which consists of resorting to changing the official name of the contested custodial institutions as a way of obscuring the nature of the content of custodied fonds. Grimsted exemplified, in the context of the 1990 mediatic revelation of cultural assets confiscated from the Nazis by Soviet forces, how the Russian authorities “euphemistically renamed” (1998, 6) or “euphemistically rebaptized” (2001, 192) the then *Special Archive of the Central State of the USSR to Centre for Preservation of Historical- Documentary Collections* in 1992. Similarly, the Spanish case *Papeles de Salamanca*, opposing the public authorities of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia against the national archive located in Salamanca, was triggered by the opening in 1999 of the *Archivo General de la Guerra Civil Española* (General Archive of the Spanish Civil War), whose fonds and collections were the subject of a claim by the Catalan authorities and communities. As a result of this claim for the restitution of archives, the Spanish government decided to change the organizational structure in 2007 to a more euphemistic name, as *Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica* (Historical Memory Documentary Centre) (Balcells 2014), a designation that is currently used.

“*Contra gentes*” representations. This anarchist strategy of information representation occurs when removal agents rely on or develop archival representation systems based on discrimination according to ethnicity and/or religious creed (Baiklin 2015; Mnjama and Lowry 2017; Sela 2018b; Montgomery 2001; Stoler 2002) or, furthermore, of non-representation of certain communities as a form of exclusion (Caswell 2012; Namhila 2004; 2015). These are mechanisms for limiting information retrieval to the targeted communities. Sela exemplifies how “a longstanding Zionist tradition, a Palestinian is classified as an enemy and a terrorist”, to the point where “Palestinian settlements are referred to by Hebrew names to erase their Palestinian identity” (Sela 2018b; 2011). Other approaches to reconfiguration for reappropriation in a subnational context consist of colonial practices in the relationship towards Australian Aboriginal communities, especially how “the intellectual inaccessibility of the descriptions” manifested in the way “settler rather than indigenous place names were used to denote the communities from which children were removed thus making it harder to locate one’s birth family” (Wood et al. 2014, 408–9). Another mechanism of representation *contra gentes* was demonstrated by Namhila, who identified how archives of “native” communities have been pre-empted because of “a preconceived attitude that the ‘Natives’ were not important” and how “Native estates were simply not on the ‘radar’ of the archivists who prepared finding aids and databases” (2015, 4).

*Representations by the “archiurum falsarii”.* The deliberate alteration of naturalness/integrity to obscure, conceal or mischaracterise archives also constitutes another strategy of anarchist reconfiguration by the *archiurum falsarii* (Bonifacio 1632, 12). Examples of this practice can be seen with the tampering with the Tuol Sleng archives of the Khmer Rouge (Frings-Hessami 2019a; Caswell 2012), where government forces acted to expunge potentially incriminating pieces about acts of human rights violations and, in this way, “the archive was taken out of its context, and its structure was changed” (Frings-Hessami 2019a, 260). This approach is also related to the instrumentalization of archival appraisal as a mechanism for “sanitize” the colonial past and war crimes (Karabinos 2018b; Hampshire 2013; Anderson 2015; Elkins 2015; Grimsted 1992), especially through destruction insufficiently documented by custodial entities or based on axiological criteria leading to selection and disposal (Sato 2017; Namhila 2015; Hampshire 2013; Elkins 2015). Thus, tools for accessing information about removed archives tend to be reconfigured by custodial entities with the intent of restricting access and identifiability (Montgomery 2011; 2014; 2015a; Sela 2018a; Brower 1963; Grimsted 2010a). Sela has highlighted how Palestinian archives captured by Israeli forces have been reconfigured by “knowledge production centres”, “with tactics of silencing, fabrication and false image” (2018a, 10).

#### 4.3.2 Theoretical construct 2: “Archive of the archive” as “meta-archive” and “archi-archive”

Although the concepts of *meta-archive* and *archi-archive* are attested in Derrida (1995, 44, 45), they have been sparsely developed in the archival literature, with distinct applications and without a clear and consistent definition. The epistemological intention that motivates us to adopt these concepts consists in the idea of “archive of the archive”, as a basis for the retrieval of information with constitutive potential from archives removed from their original contexts of creation and accumulation. For this reason, we consider that “archives of archives” should be viewed in terms of “how archives can be held accountable for their own actions” (Henry 2009, 6). Although Schwartz and Cook consider archives to be “social constructs” (2002, 3), they nevertheless have “the power to privilege and to marginalize” (2002, 13). As such, archives “are not neutral: some facts count, others are excluded” (Ketelaar 1999, 55). Although there are various perspectives on the relationship between archives and representational power (e. g., Blouin 1999; Schwartz and Cook 2002; Kaplan 2002; Ketelaar 2002), the analysis of the elements that underpinned the previous theme brought out, a new theme, namely how the recovery of archives removed from their original contexts depends on access to the “archives of archives”. Thus, the

“meta-archive”/“archives of the archives” enable retrieval with a view to restoring or repossessioning representations of archives in the displaced condition, which will be analysed below. Data is available in <<https://osf.io/xqtsv/>>.

#### 4.3.2.1 Restoration

Among the most important aspects pointed out by the authors regarding the recovery of displaced archives is the existence of finding aids. The existence of this kind of tools is a crucial requirement to ensure access, from identification to the reconstitution of dispersed sets of records (Grimsted 2001; Winn 2015). Access tools make it possible not only to identify archives that may be in the displaced condition but also make it possible to evaluate the degree of dispersal of *fonds* removed from their original contexts. Furthermore, the availability of access tools makes it possible to ensure the business continuity and heritage rights of successor communities (Lemmon 1992; Gilliland 2018). The fundamental requirement of these access tools consists in the degree of updating and level of descriptive granularity that attest about the state, status and provenance of the archives removed from their original contexts (Grimsted 1982; 1991b; 1993b; 2017). These conditions aim to ensure the reliability of descriptions as instruments of accountability (Frings-Hessami 2019a). For example, archives seized by occupying forces in the context of armed conflict tend to produce more detailed finding aids, either for military intelligence purposes (Grimsted 2001; 2005; Montgomery 2015a) or to support judicial investigation in cases of human rights violations and to support transitional justice (Barrera 2009). Furthermore, one aspect that is not fully agreed upon is the fungibility of producing surrogates as an alternative to the physical restitution of archives (Karabinos 2013; 2015; Kahunde 2012; Frick 2015; Montgomery 2013; Peterson 2000; Winn 2015). Cases related to colonial archives removed from the originating territories to the metropolises subsume a question of surrogate production as an alternative solution to repatriation (Shepard 2015; 2017; Kahunde 2012; Nannyonga-Tamusuza and Weintraub 2012; Peterson 2000; Winn 2015). Several authors converge on the idea that the production of surrogates solves the problem of access to content rather than the physical custody of removed archives (Boserup 2005; Lyons and Sands 2009; Banton 2009; Danielson 2013; Karabinos 2017; Cox 2017; Chebotarev 2005; Peterson 2000; Niles 2012; Frick 2015; Montgomery 2013; Ashie-Nikoi 2019). This perspective assumes greater relevance not only in the context of State succession (Grimsted 1993b; Montgomery 2013) but also in sub-national cases, especially when archives cannot be kept with the originating communities because of the difficulty of preserving the originals (Treloyn and Emberly 2013; Treloyn, Martin and Charles 2016; Kahunde 2012; Lyons and Sands 2009).

#### 4.3.2.2 Retaliation

This subcategory emerged from the set of texts included as a consequence of recovery. The (re)discovery of sets of records that have been misplaced among custodians can generate a set of criticisms and lines of argument related to the issue of the legitimacy of custody. For example, Grimsted (1992) and Winn (2015) have identified, as major barriers to accessing displaced archives, the absence of access tools, physical distance, and the language burden. Indeed, the absence of finding aids (O'Neill 1979) or their descriptive (Grimsted 1971; 1991a; Cox 2010; Namhila 2004) or provisional (Yeo 2009) inaccuracy can have negative consequences for dispossessed communities, such as settling cases in court on grounds of human rights violations (Anderson 2011; Badger 2012; Lowry 2019b; Banton 2012a).

If in contexts of archival seizure in the context of armed conflict the practice was to describe in detail the informational resources that were captured to the enemy (Montgomery 2010; 2014; Cox 2010), there is also the practice of concealing archives under the suggestive synecdoche of “trophy of war” (Grimsted 1998; 2001; 2010b; 2010a) or represented by anthropomorphisms such as “imprisoned photographs” (Sela 2018a) or “prisoners of war” (Grimsted 2017).

However, there are other aspects to consider, especially when access tools describing displaced archives are available and custodians are identified. For example, O'Neill (1979) recognises that the function of finding aids is to empower custodians, especially in the control, management, and definition of user access policies. Still, the existence of finding aids may not be a relevant resource for dispossessed communities, who want direct access (which implies physical custody) to documentary sets (Lancefield 1998). Sela notes that archival representations in finding aids tend to be designed “to serve a Western audience and never a native audience” (Sela 2018b, 210). Added to this is the use of new information technologies to make access to displaced archives virtually available, disregarding literacy levels, the digital divide that exists between dispossessed communities, often disseminated without their consent, whether in a sub-national context (Vaarzon-Morel and Kelly 2019; Namhila 2004), or in the diaspora (Moustafa 2018), or, again, in a post-war (Montgomery 2014) and post-colonial contexts (Agostinho 2019). To issues of access other imponderables are raised, related to displaced archives: the problem of data ownership and custody in the cloud environment (Goh 2014); technological obsolescence (Treloyn, Martin, and Charles 2016); the costs of custody when producing surrogates (Grimsted 1992); security classifications (Banton 2017); intellectual property issues (Heuman 2013; Kahunde 2012); the difficulties of identifying successor entities, so that archives with displaced status do not end up as “orphans” (Grimsted 2017), and the difficulties in

recovering archives in private ownership (Dominy 2013; O'Neill 1979).

In relation to the archives of the same producer dispersed among custodial entities, Yeo (2009) criticized how the use of literary warrants for archival description has been applied by the archivists in a not very consistent way in terms of the representation of naturalness/integrity. Another example consists in the fragmentation of Algerian *fonds* under French custody, delimited by criteria of *archives de souveraineté* and *archives de gestion*, calling into question their integrity and naturalness (Shepard 2015; 2017). Some authors have highlighted cases of biased interpretations of archival principles (Karabinos 2013; Grimsted 1993a; Cox 2010). For example, Frings-Hessami highlighted how the use of microfilming and digital imaging overlooked the fact that the original order, naturalness and provenance of the Tuol Sleng archives were deliberately reconstructed to eliminate “irrefutable evidence of the crimes against humanity committed by the Khmer Rouge” (2019a, 256). It is therefore inescapable that the motivations behind these forms of intellectual dispossession are politically and ideologically motivated (Namhila 2016; Stein 2015; Dominy 2013; Caswell 2012), which are not only confined to the “power to name” (Caswell 2012) but also to the instrumentalization of archival functions (such as archival appraisal) as a means of exercising the “power to decide” about the fate assigned to displaced archives (Lowry 2019a).

#### 4.3.3 Theoretical construct 3: Archival canon

The concept of archival canon emerged from the analysis of the set of texts included as teleological function of archival custody.

The occurrences of the concept of archival canon in archival literature arise through the transposition of concepts originating from literary studies, applied to the set of authors representative of a tradition or school of thought of archival science (Cline 2014; Ashton 2017; Harris 2004). The concept has been extended to the idea of a *corpus* of texts selected by authority according to an axiological framework of importance and quality. However, the meaning adopted here is restricted to the institutional archival canon, as a *corpus* of records derived from a process of choice by archival institutions, through mechanisms of accession and representation of information, whose consecration may generate recognition or contestation by the communities.

Archival institutions, especially historical archives (considered as crucial institutions and symbolic configurations of social memory (Jacobsen, Punzalan and Hedstrom 2013)) concentrate documentary sets that derive from “dominant cultural and political aims as defined by evolving attitudes within constructs of the nation-state” (Blouin 1999, 102) and as “tools for the symbolic legitimization of power” (Assmann 2008, 102). Archives as memory institutions acquired greater

projection after the French Revolution (1789), which meant a change, in the Kuhnian sense, of paradigm, “conceived as public services, (...) at the service of the memory of the new Nation-State” and with “the purpose of liberalizing access to archival information by the generality of the population” (Ribeiro 2018, 18). If from the French Revolution onwards archival science obtained a decisive impetus for its theoretical and methodological development, *le tour de force* took place with the massive relocation of archives removed from their original contexts of creation, both at the subnational and international level. The institutional archival canon thus becomes “a historical grand narrative, consisting of selected figures, events, story lines, ideas and values, linked by definite plots, perspectives and explanations” (Grever and Stuurman 2007, 3). Ketelaar integrates the relationship between archive and canon in the framework of the “representational turn”, especially in “how to define the unique qualities of archives as “touchstones” for memory” (Ketelaar 2017, 256). As such, the archival canon can be interpreted, along the lines of Lyotard (1979), as a metanarrative (*métarécit*), as Harris assertively puts it: “every canon *is* a metanarrative” (2004, 218). Archives as memory institutions thus constitute symbolic spaces for the construction of a state-sponsored narrative of national memory (Berger 2013). They are represented by Antoniasia as “‘national memory’, ‘collective memory’, ‘national identity’, ‘heritage’ and ‘public access’” (Karabinos 2018a, 177), embodied “as a master narrative of a community’s history, embodied in the social routines and professional mentalities of its recognised (...) specialists” (Grever and Stuurman 2007, 4–5). However, archival custodianship is being challenged by the emersion of new technologies, which can generate new geographies of power and rhetorical strategies of representation (Johnson 2020), making the institutional archival canon contextually dependent on the dominant technology and challenging classical conceptions of territoriality, inalienability, and sovereignty in a post-national context (Lemieux 2019; Rogers and Duranti 2017; Gilliland 2017).

Based on these assumptions, we constitute the theme of archival canon(s) as integral to the theory of representation of archival information in displaced archives, in the way that discourses of representation evolve in terms of postmodern contestation of narratives established by custodial entities in relation to archives removed from their originating contexts. To this end, we constituted two subcategories that emerged from the literature under the theme of reconstitution (reunification and revitalisation) which are explained below, with data available in <<https://osf.io/rsdyf/>>.

##### 4.3.3.1 Reunification

The dispersion of archives of the same producer among several custodial entities, whatever the inchoative factors may

have been, instigates the question of how to reunify them. Reunification is not, however, limited to the bringing together of artefacts dispersed among custodial entities (which may even be in the custody of a single entity in their entirety) but in reunification *with* dispossessed communities. Punzalan (2014c) has identified four contextualising dimensions around archival dispersal phenomena. Such consist of the geographical, temporal, provenance and material dimensions. While this approach is useful for understanding the etiological factors of dispersal, the literature only considers two routes for the achievement of reunification: one consists of the route of physical reunification of artefacts and the other of virtual reunification, through surrogate representations. Physical reunification is one of the most complex processes to resolve, as it involves patrimonial issues that interfere in the legal sphere. Although physical reunification (via restitution, repatriation, return or relocation) is a matter that motivates the pooling of efforts among international and national bodies (both governmental and non-governmental) to resolve archival custody conflicts, Lowry (2017a; 2019b), Cox (2017), Kecskeméti (2017) and Montgomery (2012) have highlighted that the legal route has been less than effective. Physical returns of archives to their originating countries or communities have been very scarce, compared to the numerous cases that have remained unresolved (Sinkoff 2016; Lowry 2017a). The other route consists of virtual (or digital) reunification, which Punzalan defines as “the strategy of putting together physically dispersed heritage collections in order to produce a consolidated, digitized representation of scattered artifacts, literary and artistic works, and/or archival records attributable to a single origin or common provenance” (2014a, 300).

The dispersion of archives has provided a relevant theoretical and methodological leap for the development of literary warrants with a view to archival description in an electronic environment, as suggested by Blouin (1992), in the case of the Vatican archives, and by Heverly (2005), referring to the *émigrés* literary archives in custody between American and German universities. As we have noted above, the existence of finding aids that represent archives considered to be displaced is an indispensable requirement for both physical and digital reunification processes (Lemmon 1992; Patkus 2005; Grimsted 1987; 1991a; 1993b; Kamba and Mazikana 1988; Heverly 2005). The existence of this kind of tools is, however, not a sufficient element in itself. Such *instrumenta* should be assessed in order to be able to judge about their descriptive (in)consistencies regarding the representation of ownership, provenance and original order on archives in displaced status (Cox 2014; Lovering 2017; Cox 2011; Lehan 2012; Blouin 1992; Punzalan 2014c; Grimsted 1991a) and about quality of metadata schemes (Bracknell and Scott 2019). Also, several authors have pointed to the importance of considering the use of literary warrants as a critical requirement for reunified

representation (Barwick et al. 2019; Grimsted 1993a; Lovering 2017; Blouin 1992; Punzalan 2014a).

If the production of automated finding aids facilitates the reunified representation of documentary sets and the production of surrogates (micrographs and digital images) in a consistent manner, the provision of digital content as a process of “digital repatriation” should be provided with the support of information mediation, especially to minimise the digital divide between claimant communities and custodial institutions (Curran 2019; Gibson, Angeles and Liddle 2019). The “digital repatriation” route has been pointed out, as alluded to above, as a possible solution in the resolution of custody conflicts, constituting a kind of “diplomatic route” (Boserup 2005; Niessen 2018; Christen 2011; Patkus 2005; Kamba and Mazikana 1988), especially in joint heritage projects (Cooke 2015; Kecskeméti 1985) and in facilitating access to content (Wood et al. 2014; Kahunde 2012; Nordlinger, Green and Hurst 2019; Heverly 2005; Montgomery 2012). However, several studies have pointed to the importance of the sustainability of surrogacy production projects, attending to the risks of technological obsolescence and long-term co-operation (Ellis, Gree and Kral 2019; Kecskeméti 1985; Punzalan 2014b).

The main characteristic that corroborates this reunification strategy consists in the interest of the claimants in wanting to represent dispersed documentary sets under Latinised ethnonymic names, such as *Rossica/Sovietica* (Grimsted 1993a), *Ucrainica* (Grimsted 1993a; 1987; 1991a), *Baltica* (Grimsted 1993a), *Polonica* (Grimsted 1993a), *Rhodesiana* (Dritsas and Haig 2014), *Judaica* (Schenkolewski-Kroll 2016) and *Hungarica* (Niessen 2018), among other forms. This strategy has also been adopted for the archives of liberation fronts constituted in exile during Apartheid (Ngoepe and Netshakhuma 2018; Garaba 2011). However, these reconstitutive approaches are conditioned by a number of factors that can be limiting for dispossessed communities, such as the problems of declassification of archives captured in a post-war context (Grimsted 1993b) or during decolonisation (Shepard 2015; 2017) and in foreign custody; or with appropriation in a sub-national or State succession contexts for the purposes of reinterpreting prevailing cultural nationalism (Frings-Hessami 2019b; 2019a). In addition to this, the dissemination of seized archives via the Internet raises ethical issues in relation to the affected communities (Montgomery 2012), especially when custodial entities rely on narratives that aim to convey an idea of legitimising custody in order to consequently minimise or obscure the provenance of the removed archives.

#### 4.3.3.2 Revitalisation

Cultural heritage studies place particular emphasis on the importance of repatriation, restitution, or return (whether phys-



ical or digital) as a means of revitalising communities in vulnerable situations. Revitalisation allows dispossessed communities to recover and reinterpret their archival canon(s). As presented above, the removal of archives from their original contexts can generate disruptive contexts in the social ecosystem, such as the devitalisation of cultural diversity or the difficulty of ensuring the normal functioning of institutions (public or private) and dispossessed communities. For example, the absence of finding aids for archives removed from their original contexts, due to armed conflict or in the context of decolonisation, has deprived several communities of the possibility of resorting to justice in order to obtain compensation for violations they have suffered or because their rights (to identity, property, access to information, etc.) have been suspended (Cox 2014). This dispossession strategy is also manifested in the way custodial institutions represent removed archives in new information systems through the prolongation of colonialist practices based on the “logic of extraction”, “savage ethnography”, pejorative representation of communities, hierarchisation and exclusion, supported by new technologies and disseminated without the consent of dispossessed communities (Ellis, Green and Kral 2019; Curran 2019; McKemmish, Chandler and Faulkhead 2019; Wood et al. 2014; Stoler 2002; Crouch 2010; Hilder 2012; Hill 2017). To address this, several authors have pointed to participatory models in the representation of archival information (sometimes referred to as decolonisation methodologies (Gibson 2019; Christen 2019)) as a way of deconstructing dominant narratives that have represented dispossessed communities (Cooke 2015; Crouch 2010) and as a strategy for revitalising cultures in situations of vulnerability (music, oral tradition, language, etc.) (Treloyn and Emberly 2013; Ellis, Green and Kral 2019; Barwick et al. 2019). Such participatory methodologies in the representation of archival information offer the possibility for communities to define accessibility criteria and privacy regimes (Thorner et al. 2019), to define adapted metadata schemes (e.g., compliance with indigenous ontology) (Christen 2011; Iacovino 2010; McKemmish, Chandler and Faulkhead 2019; Thorner et al. 2019), of constructing literary warrants (Christen 2011; Iacovino 2010) and of the requirements for the production of surrogates (Amoros 2019; Lyons and Sands 2009; Wood et al. 2014; Grimsted 1993a; Hilder 2012). In addition, several authors have highlighted that while physical restitution is sometimes cost prohibitive for communities in terms of preservation and custody, access through new technologies can be a fungible means if the restitution process is a participatory process (Nordlinger, Green and Hurst 2019; Hilder 2012; Crouch 2010; Gibson 2019; Amoros 2019) and generate multiplier effects in the revitalisation process (Treloyn and Emberly 2013). However, not all electronic information systems may be suitable for claimant communities (Barwick et al. 2019) and the production of surrogates may entail high

costs given that social, political, technological and financial environments are not static processes (Punzalan 2014b; Ngoepe and Netshakhuma 2018).

These approaches endorse the role of community participation in the process of representing information from removed archives as a critical element in revitalising cultural practices, especially those that are at risk.

## 5.0 Conclusions and implications

This meta-synthetic review has made it possible to evaluate how the phenomenon of displaced archives challenges archival studies and information science in epistemological and methodological terms.

This meta-synthesis identified 155 texts that point to the need for further study on the representation of archival information concerning archives removed from their original contexts. We can verify that a large part of the texts did not address this issue in depth, remaining as a topic little explored in the specialized literature, but open to research. The connection between finding aids and archival knowledge representation related to the phenomena of displaced archives did not emerge directly from the sample of texts. This meta-synthesis suggests that we need to read between the lines using constructivist grounded theory method to ascertain what are the underlying processes on archival representation.

Lowry (2019b) suggested a “critical theory on displaced archives”, proposing to explore the phenomenon within the framework of the “ethics of custody”. However, we consider that the ethics of the representation of information about displaced archives constitutes a critical factor that calls on custodial entities for greater transparency and accountability about the documentary sets under custody. This meta-synthesis could add new perspectives, especially on ethical issues on archival arrangement and description of displaced archives not clearly addressed in existing KO literature (Silva, Guimarães and Tognoli 2015; Zhang 2012), especially on the fungibility of surrogates to avoid physical restitutions and the role of literary warrants for archival description in the sense to provide a reunified representation of displaced archives in finding aids.

We can summarise some of the most relevant aspects of this qualitative literature synthesis:

1. Removal associated with “anarchivistic” phenomena. The representation of information on displaced archives tends to be re-appropriated or reconceived with a view to their concealment or to be reconfigured, through the de-characterisation of their naturalness or the obscuring of their provenance by means of euphemistic or discriminatory denominations.



2. Recovery related to the “archive of the archive”. The literature included indicated a clue that points to the place of “archives of archives” (as “archi-archives” and “meta-archives”) in the way these influence the archival representation of archives removed from their original territorial and social contexts. Restoration tends to represent removed archives with recourse to information access tools and new reproduction technologies, produced by the “archi-archives”. Such a strategy may give rise to scenarios of retaliation not only in relation to arguments about access to information but also to forms of power relations over dispossessed communities. However, there is a prevalence of focus on technical aspects of information representation in finding aids, where more importance is given to literary warrants for archival description and tools for dissemination and support transfer and less on issues of semantic representation of information.
3. Reconstitution as the formation of “archival canons”. The trend, which can be seen in the set of included texts, is the constitution of institutional archival canons from the removal of archives from their original social and territorial contexts. The reunification and revitalisation of displaced archives can be reconstituted depending on the participation of dispossessed communities in the process of information representation. However, it is possible to deduce that the restitution of archives may correspond to a decanonisation not only of the fonds, but also of the role of archival institutions.

This meta-synthesis provides evidence for the need to explore other dimensions related to the representation of information about displaced archives. Among the practical implications of this systematic review, we could verify that the existence of finding aids, supported or not by literary warrants for archival description, does not ensure the unequivocal identification of archives considered as displaced. Critical realism, as proposed by Hjørland (2004) for library and information science and possible extended to KO and Archival Science, may constitute a possible way to analyse underlying causal mechanism and structures of archival representation of displaced archives.

The results obtained from this meta-synthesis faced some limitations. The main limitation consisted in the size of studies that, if restrictions had been applied, might not have been theoretically relevant to the chosen phenomenon of interest and perspective. Given that most of the texts were based on qualitative methods materialised in historical analyses and case studies, most of the studies included did not focus specifically on the representation of archival information in access tools. Another limitation concerns the criteria adopted for the literature prospection, following the recommendation of Finfgeld-Connett (2010; 2013; 2014; 2018) in adopting an expansive approach and thus remain-

ing open to future syntheses of literature knowledge that allow knowing the nature of this phenomenon.

## Endnotes

1. A mnemonic acronym for setting (scenario or context, to answer “where?”), perspective (to answer “of/to whom?”), intervention or phenomenon of interest (to answer “what?”), comparison (to answer “compared to what?”) and evaluation (evaluation, to answer “with what result?”) (Booth 2006a; 2006b).
2. It is important to mention that, due to the criteria for selecting texts by exclusion, the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s of the 20th century were very important in terms of studies on displaced archives, especially in scientific and professional meetings held under the aegis of the Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ECAR-BICA and ESARBICA), especially because of the archives removed by the former colonial powers in the context of decolonisation (Musembi 1983; Mwiyeriwa 1983; Lekaukau 1983; Mazikana 1983; Mukula 1983; Leisinger 1982).

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