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WHAT IS OUR JOB, ANYWAY?

ABSTRACT

The concept of collective memory has been in use for a relatively short time. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to define collective memory, to determine what is the relationship between archives and collective memory in the Republic of Croatia (RC) and how they affect each other, in order to deduce whether archives shape collective memory, and if so, to what extent. The paper draws on RC laws and regulations, publicly available Culture and Media Ministry strategic documents, statistical data compiled by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, as well as the relevant literature and articles. These served as the basis for applied descriptive and empirical methods that led us to the conclusion. There are no archives in the RC other than state archives. These are financed from the state budget, while their directors and governing boards are appointed by governmental bodies. Archives in the RC are entirely dependent upon the state. Their main task, for which they are in many ways under-resourced and fail to fully execute, is to receive national archival records and take care of them. It is the task of archives to preserve and process archival material and make it available for use. The work of archives needs to be based on scientific and professional principles and methods. A history shaped by collective values is not a scientific, objective history, but a generator of future conflicts, wars, and friction. The work of archives cannot and may not be determined by collective memories; on the contrary, it is archives that should shape collective memory.

KEYWORDS: Croatia, collective memory, archive, state, Homeland War

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1. PURPOSE

Members of the International Institute for Archival Science of Trieste and Maribor (IIAS) chose two topics for the 2022 conference, one of which was The role of archives in shaping collective memory. The concept of collective memory has been in use for a relatively short time, and this paper aims to determine what is collective memory, what is the relationship between archives and collective memory in the Republic of Croatia (RC) and how they affect each other and, if so, to what extent. On the whole, the Institute did not deal with this topic, and one struggles to find relevant papers in *Atlanti*, the Institute's publication. The situation is similar when it comes to papers and articles in Croatian archival publications. To take the major Croatian journal in the field of archival studies, *Arhivski vjesnik* (Archival Gazette), there are no relevant articles in more recent issues. The major Croatian archival association, the Croatian Archival Society, had not yet held a conference on the relationship between archives and collective memory (now referring to the time when this article was written). The 49th symposium of Croatian archivists – Archives and the Homeland War, and the 4th Congress – Archives and Politics – can to a certain extent be linked to the topic of archives and collective memory, although papers presented at these two conferences rather reflect on concrete topics, such as the operations of a specific archive during the Homeland War, or the use of archival holdings for political purposes.

2. METHOD

This work has drawn on RC laws and regulations, publicly available strategic documents of the Ministry of Culture and Media, statistical data compiled by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, as well as the relevant literature and articles. These served as the basis for the descriptive and empirical methods in order to reach a conclusion.

The relationship between collective memory and archives cannot be addressed without defining these two concepts. In this paper, we have used the definitions available online on frequently used web portals such as Wikipedia, or the Croatian Encyclopaedia.

What is collective memory? The English language Wikipedia defines it as follows: Collective memory refers to the shared pool of memories, knowledge and information of a social group that is significantly associated with the group's identity. The online edition of the Croatian Encyclopaedia does not have a single entry on the term "collective", there is an entry under "collective memory", but provided definition is a psychological definition of memory, i.e. memory is defined as the capacity to retain and use information. The Croatian Language Portal likewise does not feature the concept of collective memory. The Portal defines a collective as a group of people gathered around a common project, job, task, promotion of an idea, that is, as people who make up an organisation, working community or unit. Memory is the process of acquiring and retaining new information or new modes of behaviour; i.e. memory. We do find a definition of collective memory on *Struna*, the database of Croatian special-field terminology, which defines collective memory (as synonymous with social memory) as the political process of selecting, shaping, structuring, and reorganising particular details from the past in line with the requirements of maintaining social order. Collective memory is based on mechanisms by which the past is distorted, such as selective omission of, or systematic silence on events that do not accord with the existing social order, or, conversely, exaggerating, and embellishing facts. The dynamics of social memory is shaped by institutions, the education system, historiography, museums, the practice of memorialisation, etc. Benčić's dissertation (2015) defines collective memory (p. 39) as follows: "Collective memories are therefore memories shared by a certain group of people. Collective

memories are socially constructed and pertain to the ways in which a group of people construct their past (most often, a nation)." It also specifies that, from the point of view of the politics of memory, memory is the experience of a social group with power (p. 28). Memory is always immersed in complex political and class relations that determine what is to be remembered (or forgotten), who should remember, and to what purpose.

What is an archive? The online edition of the Croatian Encyclopaedia defines an archive as a private or public collection of documents that need to be preserved, that is, an institution tasked with collecting and safekeeping archival materials (*archivalia*) for the purposes of scholarly research. In the RC, in an ideal case, the regulations on records management and archival management, whose principles have remained practically unchanged since 1945 to this day, mandate that in performing their work, as well as in official correspondence with natural and legal entities, governmental bodies receive or collect documents, that is, documentary (registry) materials. The entire documents must be registered in the official records of each body. Each body's record office receives complete files, organises the use, processing and disposition of records and other documents, keeps records of documents, attends to the integrity and arrangement of archival material, supervises it, safeguards it, and performs tasks related to transferring custody of its materials to the relevant archival institution. The tasks of processing, securing, and managing documents and archives are entrusted to professionally qualified individuals trained to perform certain tasks. Documents are kept in the record office until they are disposed or transferred to the relevant state archive. The relevant state archive is in charge of expert supervision of the records kept by the bodies. Archival materials are transferred to the relevant state archive within a deadline that typically does not extend beyond 30 years from their origination.

This paper is based on the relationship between archives and collective memory in the RC, and briefly presents information about the key event in the recent history of Croatia – its independence and the Homeland War.³

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), made up of six republics, one of them Croatia, fell apart in the bloody wars at the end of the 20th century. New states emerged in its former territory, among them the RC, where the war is known as the Homeland War. The Homeland War was a defensive war of liberation for the independence and integrity of the RC, against the aggression of the allied Greater-Serbian forces – extremists from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (especially the Republika Srpska), and Serbia and Montenegro. During the initial stages of the war, an important role in the attacks on the RC was also played by the Yugoslavian National Army (YNA), then still at least nominally the common armed forces of all the SFRY member-states, which was to be reorganised over several months into three substantially interconnected – through common command and supply – militaries: the Serbian Army of Krajina in Croatia, the Republika Srpska Army in BH, and the Yugoslavian Army in Serbia and Montenegro. After the Bljesak and Oluja (Flash and Storm) operations, the biggest part of the occupied territory of the RC was liberated, while the remainder was peacefully reintegrated without the use of military force, with the help of the transitional international administration (1996-1998).

The Homeland War came at a high price. According to data available at the online edition of the Croatian Encyclopaedia, at least 12,500 people were killed on the Croatian side,

3 The paper cites the most basic information. There are many articles, papers, information available online, both in the languages of the former SFRY and in international languages, about the dissolution of the SFRY, the emergence of new states within its erstwhile territory, the war of the 1990s, the work of the Hague Tribunal and related topics.

while the 1,030 whose fates are still unknown were considered missing persons. The wounded (33,043 people, of whom 9,816 civilians), prisoners of Serbian camps, children who lost their parents and veterans with lasting health issues also fall into the category of victims of war. On the Serbian side, there were 6,153 soldiers and civilians who were killed or missing. A total of 183,526 residential buildings were damaged or destroyed. However, neither the Croatian Homeland War Memorial Documentation Centre, as an archive founded by the RC, nor the various civil society organisations that took it upon themselves to produce a verifiable list containing names of all those who perished or disappeared on Croatian territory, have managed to do so even though more than thirty years have elapsed since the wartime hostilities first broke out.

According to statistical data (Statistical Yearbook 2011, p. 107), in 1991, Croatia had a population of 4,784,265, while in 2011 this number had shrunk by 346,805, to 4,437,460 inhabitants. In 1991, 581,663 Serbs lived in Croatia, which decreased by 380,032 to 201,631 by 2011. In 1991, there were 9,724 Montenegrins, while in 2011 there were 4,926, a decrease of 4,798.

Due to the crimes committed within the territory of the former Yugoslavia, the United Nations Security Council established a judicial body, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (an abbreviated form of the name) by Resolution 827 of 25 May 1993. The tribunal was the first such institution to be established on the basis of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, and its Statute is legally binding for all UN member-states. It began to operate on 18 November 1993 at its headquarters are in the Hague (the Netherlands).⁴

3. RESULTS

3.1. ARCHIVES IN CROATIA

The RC adopted its first archival legislation in 1997. Archival materials are records or documents that are the products of legal or natural entities performing their tasks, which hold permanent significance for culture, history and other disciplines, regardless of the place and time they originated, the form and physical medium on which they are preserved. Archival holdings are the product of selecting material from registry holdings.

The legislation stipulates that archival services are provided by public institutions – the Croatian State Archives (CSA), local state archives, and local self-government and administration units' archives; while specialised and private archives can, as institutions, also perform certain tasks pertaining to archival services.

4 On 19 April 1996, the Croatian Parliament, the Republic's highest legislative authority, adopted the Constitutional Act on the Cooperation of the Republic of Croatia with the International Criminal Tribunal, which regulated the cooperation of the Republic of Croatia with the International Tribunal on serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1991, and the fulfilment of the commitments of the Republic of Croatia pursuant to the Security Council resolution 827 (1993), the Statute and the Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the Tribunal. On 5 March 1999, the Croatian State Parliament adopted the Resolution on Cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal, which states in Clause 7 that "The Croatian State Parliament denounces the politicisation of the operation of the International Criminal Tribunal, dismissing the imprudent public statements by the representative of the Court's Prosecution regarding the military and police operations Bljesak and Oluja. Considering the incontrovertible legitimacy of these counter-terrorist actions on Croatia's own territory, the Croatian State Parliament holds that any individual criminal acts committed in connection to the aforementioned are a matter solely for the Croatian judiciary." On 14 April 2000, the Croatian State Parliament adopted a Declaration on Cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague, which expresses the general view that "The RC holds that all the perpetrators of war crimes committed within the territory of the former Yugoslavia need to be punished regardless of their nationality, military formation or role they performed."

State archives: implement measures to preserve their archival holdings and look after their security; arrange, catalogue and publish archival materials and enable their use; supervise the safekeeping and selection of archival materials outside the archives, and determine measures to preserve them; continuously supervise the work of archives and other holders of archival materials outside the system of state archives; receive public archival materials; collect private archival materials through purchases, gifts or storage; capture archival material for safekeeping and preservation, and perform restoration and conservation work on archival materials; issue data, extracts from documents and certified transcripts at users' requests; produce and publish finding aids for specific archival fonds and collections; organise lectures, courses and other forms of professional training and development for personnel; organise exhibitions, lectures and other forms of cultural activities that promote interest in archival holdings and archival practice; cooperate with each other and with other cultural institutions, academic and related institutions providing documentation and information services in order to improve archival practice and scientific production, as well as auxiliary historical and information sciences; they also perform other tasks defined by this Law and other regulations.

State archives are established by the RC. Their operations are financed from the national budget. As the central and principal archive, the CSA performs archival services on the archival and registry holdings of governmental bodies, national and public institutions, and companies, as well as legal entities, families and individuals whose activities extended or extend throughout (the majority of) the RC, that is, are of significance to the RC. Local state archives perform archival services on the archival and registry holdings of governmental bodies, legal entities with public competences and public services who perform their activities within one or more local self-government and administration units, and on material that originates within the area where the archive in question operates.

The archive is managed by its director. To be appointed as director of an archive, a person has to have a university degree, pass the archival certification examination, have published valuable scholarly or scientific papers and possess skills as professionals, workers and organisers. In exceptional cases, a person who did not take the archival certification exam can be appointed director, if their work so far gives ground to expect that they will successfully manage the archive, undertaking to pass the certification exam within two years from their appointment. The CSA director is appointed and discharged by the Government of the RC. Directors of local state archives are appointed and discharged by the Minister of Culture.

The Ministry of Culture is in charge of administrative supervision of state archives. The CSA is tasked with technical supervision of the work of the local state archives, and the Ministry of Culture with technical supervision of the CSA. Archives also have expert councils, whose composition is defined by each archive's statute. The 2018 archival legislation also introduced supervisory boards for state archives with more than twenty employees. A supervisory board has five members, four of whom are appointed by the founder of the state archive, and one is elected by the employees pursuant to the labour laws.

According to the 2018 Statistical Yearbook, in 2017, Croatia had 19 state archives,⁵ which stored 15,763 fonds and collections, 117,268 metres of material (p. 518). There were 9,928 users, and 495 employees worked at the archives, 318 of whom were archivists by profession. In 2017, the RC had a population of 4,284,889 (p. 60). The 318 professional archivists employed in the state archives make up 0.0074% of Croatia's population, while 9,928 users present 0.23% of the population.

5 The basic information on national archives is available at <http://www.arhiv.hr/hr-hr/Arhivska-slu%C5%BEba/Arhivi-u-Hrvatskoj> [website partly available in English].

According to Statistical Report no. 1690, Culture and the Arts in 2020 (pp. 79-82), 19 Croatian archives stored a total of 16,558 fonds and collections, 115,706 metres, of which 68.86% had been processed, and 2.5% available in digital form.

	Fondovi/zbirke - ukupno Fonds/ collections - total	Fondovi/zbirke - sredeni Fonds/ collections - arranged	Fondovi/zbirke - sredeni, % Fonds/ collections - arranged, %	Dostupno u dizitalnom obliku Available in digital form	Dostupno u dizitalnom obliku, % Available in digital form, %	
Ukupno	16 558	11 402	68,86	285	2,50	Total
Uprava i javne službe	4 704	3 478	72,55	40	1,15	Administration and public services
Pravosuđe	983	585	59,68	5	0,73	Administration of Justice
Vojne jedinice, ustanove i organizacije	355	289	81,41	20	6,92	Military units, institutions and organisations
Obitelj i obrazovanje	1 896	1 898	100,00	2	0,12	Education
Kultura, znanost i informiranje	166	98	59,04	2	2,04	Culture, science and information science
Zdravstvo i socijalne ustanove	151	89	58,94	-	-	Health care and social care institutions
Gospodarstvo i bankarstvo	3 343	2 042	61,08	3	0,15	Economy and banking
Političke stranke, DPO i sindikati	1 642	1 120	68,21	43	3,84	Political parties, socio-political organisations and unions
Društva, udruge, udruženja	947	598	63,15	5	0,84	Societies and associations
Vjerske ustanove	269	155	57,62	15	9,68	Religious institutions
Vlastelinski, obiteljski i osobni fondovi	1 274	700	54,95	40	5,71	Estate, family and personal funds
Zbirke izvornoga arhivskoga gradiva	603	425	70,45	106	24,88	Collections of original archival materials
Zbirke dopunskih preslika arhivskoga gradiva	45	24	53,33	4	16,67	Collection of supplementary copies of archival material

Figure 1. Archival fonds and collections in 2022, Statistical Report 1690, Culture and the Arts in 2020, p. 79

In 2020, there were 780,103 metres of materials outside archives. In 2020, archives had 10,141 users, and 503 employees worked there, of whom 330 were professional archivists.

	Arhivsko gradivo u posjedui Archival material in possession			Broj izvršenih postupaka izlučivanja Number of extractions procedures	Količina izlučenoga arhivskoga gradiva ¹⁾ Quantity of extracted archival material ¹⁾	Fondovi/zbirke predane u nadležni arhiv Fonds/collections submitted to the competent archive			Total
	konvencionalno ²⁾ Conventional ²⁾	analogno ³⁾ Analogue ³⁾	dizitalno ³⁾ Digital ³⁾			konvencionalno ²⁾ Conventional ²⁾	analogno ³⁾ Analogue ³⁾	dizitalno ³⁾ Digital ³⁾	
Ukupno	780 103	175 607	151 134	1 210	65 594	1 969	6 563	5 052	Total
Javni stvaraitelji/posjednici Public creators/possessors	667 647	164 214	41 643	1 127	56 437	1 912	135	78	Public creators/possessors
Privatni stvaraitelji/posjednici Private creators/possessors	112 456	11 393	109 491	83	9 157	57	6 428	4 974	Private creators/possessors

1) Konvencionalno gradivo izraženo je u dužini metrima.
2) Analogno gradivo izraženo je u broju komada.
3) Dizitalno gradivo izraženo je u GB-u.
1) Conventional material is presented in linear metres.
2) Analogue material is presented in the number of items.
3) Digital material is presented in GB.

Figure 2. Archival holdings outside archives in 2020, Statistical Report 1690, Culture and the Arts in 2020, p. 80

The National Plan for the Development of Archival Practice for the period 2020-2025 (p. 5) shows that the development of archival services outside the network of state archives envisaged in the 1997 Law has entirely failed to materialise.

The Ministry of Culture's Strategic Plan for 2020-2022 (p. 60) shows that the existing spatial and technical resources of the majority of archives preclude the storage of the materials that need to be received. Especially limiting is the as yet insufficiently developed system for receiving, processing, and using materials in digital form, while the finding aids data for around 50% of the materials held in archives need to be harmonised or filled in, which, with the resources available, can only be done over a relatively longer period. The majority of archives lack the storage space and/or equipment for storing new materials coming in to be received within the legally determined deadlines. As a result, the materials remain longer in inappropriate spaces outside archives where they are exposed to the risk of rapid decay and are unavailable to users.

3.2. ARCHIVES AND THE HOMELAND WAR

For the RC, the Homeland War was, as the 13 October 2000 Declaration by the Croatian State Parliament specifies, just and legitimate, a war of defence and liberation, and not aggression or conquest against anyone. The RC defended its territory from Greater-Serbian aggression, within its internationally recognised borders. The Declaration was also adopted to stop the radical politicisation of the Homeland War and the worrying polarisation of the Croatian society, which could have had far-reaching consequences. The fundamental value of the Homeland War was the establishment and defence of Croatia's state sovereignty and territorial integrity, which created the conditions for the legal state and the rule of law, as well as the legal functioning of governmental bodies as the best way to continue to affirm the dignity of the Homeland War. The House of Representatives of the Croatian State Parliament called on all citizens, state and social institutions, unions, associations, and media, and mandates all RC officials and governmental bodies, to adhere to these principles as a bulwark to protect the basic values and dignity⁶ of the Homeland War as a token of our common future.

On 10 December 2004, the Law on the Croatian Memorial-Documentation Centre of the Homeland War was adopted, establishing the CMDCHW to collect, arrange, preserve, keep custody of all documentation and data related to the Homeland War, as well as to foster scholarly and scientific research into such documentation and data, to investigate the truth about the Homeland War and introduce the general public, both locally and globally, with the established facts. The centre was established as a public scientific institution – a specialised archive and a Croatian national interest. The founder of the Centre is the RC.

In performing its functions, the CMDCHW is responsible for collecting, consolidating, arranging and preserving all the documentation and all the data that originated during the Homeland War or is related to it. It collects, arranges, classifies and processes registry and archival materials that originated during the Homeland War or are related to it,

6 Regarding whether war as such can even have dignity, Puhovski, Ž. (2020.) states: "It is precisely why it is irresponsible to link dignity to extreme situations where options are necessarily limited (and there is mostly no luxury) – local talk about "the dignity of the Homeland War" is a persuasive instance of the dismal (and unoriginal) abuse of a great (both traditional and contemporary) value. Because dignity can primarily be attributed to persons (in this case, warriors), rather than a historical phenomenon, which a war certainly is. Especially in light of the slaughterous nature of war, which truly has nothing to do with dignity; a war can be waged for higher goals, it is (occasionally) possible even to act with dignity in a war, but its taking place is dignified only to those who simply despise human survival, believing it not to be merely necessary, but right to sacrifice thousands of lives for the Goal."

in line with the Law on Archival Holdings and Archives; performs scholarly and scientific processing, analysis and appraisal of data, documentation and materials related to the Homeland War; publishes publications and other works that are the products of its activities; publishes registry and archival materials that originated in the Homeland War; issues data, excerpts from documents and certified transcripts at users' requests, in line with the Law on Archival Holdings and Archives; organises scholarly and scientific lectures and exhibitions, as well as scientific conferences and other modes of exploring the truth about the Homeland War and introducing the general public at home and abroad with the established facts related to the Homeland War; cooperates with archives, museums and other legal entities in order to improve its work.

Archives and other legal and natural entities that hold documentation that originated in the Homeland War or is related to it are obliged to hand it over to the Centre.

The Centre is managed by the Governing board, which is appointed and discharged by the Croatian Parliament. The Centre is led by a director, who is appointed and discharged by the Croatian Government. A person who meets the conditions in the Law on Archival Holdings and Archives can be appointed director of the Centre. The Centre has an expert council, whose composition, as well as the mode and procedure of electing its members, is determined by the Centre Statute. The Centre is financed from the RC national budget. The CMDCHW has a Department for archival materials related to the Homeland War, and a Department for Scientific Research into the Homeland War.

4. CONCLUSIONS

There are no archives in Croatia other than state ones, which are financed from the budget. The directors of the CSA and the CMDCHW are appointed by the highest national authorities, while the archives are founded by the RC, which also appoints their governing boards.

115,706 metres of materials are stored in state archives; the finding aids for some 50% of the holdings are inadequate, while some 30% of the holdings have not been arranged. There are 780,103 m of materials outside archives. According to the archival legislation, by 2022, practically all of the materials that originated before 1991 should be in archives, which is impracticable, as the archives lack the human and material resources.

People working in state archives are an extremely negligible segment of the population of the country – 0.0074%, while users are somewhat more numerous – 0.23%, which is still practically negligible. Quantitatively, the employees and users of archives do not represent a significant group that might impact the shaping of collective memory.

Like all governmental bodies, state archives need to protect the dignity of the Homeland War, while the CMDCHW has an even more difficult task – to research the truth about the Homeland War. The occupied territory of the RC was peacefully reintegrated between 1996 and 1998. So far there has been no data on the proportion of the holdings, out of the 780 kilometres outside the archives, that pertains to the Homeland War.

It is a widely known fact that different groups of people, different countries and nations, have different notions of events past. Establishing the truth can be a painful and protracted process, which sometimes seems endless. Collective memory represents past events in line with the values, narratives and views of a certain group or community.

Looking at the archives' tasks as determined by the archival legislation, and the definition of collective memory as a political process, sharing the values and prejudice of a certain group of people, shaping collective memory is not among the jobs, archives are

supposed to do. Indeed, scientific, and scholarly work is encouraged. However, the Scientific Activity and Higher Education Act stipulates that scientific work is based, among other things, on fostering, and respect for, national specificities.

If we look at the Courts Act, the courts do not determine the truth, but decide in disputes, about rights and obligations, hand down sentences and other measures to perpetrators of criminal and misdemeanour offences defined by the law and other regulations. The role of judicial institutions in the process of shaping collective memory is extremely important, although in its fundamental sense contrary to it: it is based on recognising individual responsibility and seeing justice done on the bases of their own legal standards, rather than universal declarations. In their work, faced with a series of difficulties, judicial institutions have made an immeasurable contribution to shedding light on facts concerning the Homeland War.

Archives in the RC are entirely dependent on the state. Their main task, for which they are in many ways under-resourced, and thus fail to fully perform, is to receive national archival materials and take care of them. It is the task of archives to preserve and process materials and enable their use. Preserving the dignity of war, researching the truth about it with an already determined, binding state-sanctioned view about the nature of the war defined by the state's highest legislative authority, is not and cannot be the job of an archive, even a state one, at least not in the 21st century. The work of archives needs to be based on scientific and scholarly principles and methods. Scientific work of archives needs to be objective, systematic, logical, precise, based on reason, logic, critical thinking, doubt, and objective, free and independent thought. By its very nature, science questions and must question "sacred cows".

The wider goal of written history, the reason why documents and records are permanently preserved, is to give an objective, accurate, and fully comprehensive picture of past events. A history shaped by collective values is not scientific, objective history, but a generator of future conflicts, wars, and tensions. The work of archives that is determined by collective values scorns the very essence of the existence of archives, and calls into question their relevance. Collective memory cannot and may not determine the work of archives; on the contrary, it is archives that should shape collective memory.

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