

## Archival and Biographical Research Sensitivity: A European Perspective from Spain<sup>1</sup>

Miguel S. Valles Martínez

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**Abstract:** This *FQS* issue on archives and biographical methods is a special occasion to inform about a European initiative for the promotion and exchange of experiences of qualitative research in the social sciences. The whole project was designed as a four-year (2006-2010) European Science Foundation program known by the acronym *EUROQUAL*.

This article intends to provide some ideas and methodological reflections arising from the Madrid *EUROQUAL*-Workshop on Archives and Life-History Research (21-23 September 2009). The key point concerns what I suggest to name *archival and biographical research "sensitivity."* It has to do with the issues of research *quality*, research *economy* and the conception of social research as *patrimony*. Approaches in the European landscape also serve to highlight the contrasting situation in Spain.

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## 1. Introduction: Concept and Types of Archival Research Sensitivity

*Archival and biographical sensitivity* in social research may be conceptualized from various methodological perspectives. Here, I begin by revealing some of the meanings of this chain of terms that served as the starting point of my inquiry (which are part of the proposal presented in this article of methodological reflection and practice). Readers may think of their own research, or someone else's, past or present, and apply them to these basic questions:

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1 I present a revised English version of a paper that was first presented at the 10th Spanish Congress of Sociology held in Pamplona 1st-3rd July 2010. The focus is on various methodological reasonings gathered while preparing the Madrid event, starting from the kick-off meeting of the *EUROQUAL* program in 2006.

1. Are the raw materials—produced by other researchers, institutions or individuals—being used?
2. Are the processes of research put into practice by the authors of such investigations in prefaces, introductions or large critical and reflexive methodological appendices being put on record? Or, on the contrary, is it preferable to follow a minimum of technical specifications, formal or even realistic annotations but where authors and contexts of interpretation remain invisible?
3. Is there a foresight or intention of transferring (partially or totally) research materials to databases or files, so that they can be re-used by other researchers? Are there any research projects—commissioned or proposed by more stand-alone researchers—where designs are *ad hoc* or, conversely, proposals are continuous, longitudinal or similar? [1]

These three sets of questions have been summarized in the table below to highlight methodological strategies and researcher profiles involved. At the same time the types of *sensitivity* in mind are highlighted. This is a tentative proposal, but I believe it may be of utility (Table 1).

<b>Research experience</b>	<b>Archival and historical-biographical strategies practiced</b>	<b>Researcher profile more characteristic</b>
1)	Secondary processing of primary or secondary materials or data. Use of available archives	Researcher as beneficiary-user
2)	<i>Auto-archive</i> of historical-biographical backstage of research	Visible and partially sensitive researcher
3)	Willingness and planning for the donation of backstage materials for archiving and reuse  <i>Proactive archival sensitivity</i> incorporated in <i>continuous research</i> designs	Sensitive researcher with patrimonial mentality and horizon

Table 1: Types of archival research sensitivity [2]

It is a rather necessary step—when writing academic papers—to make reference to the pertinent literature. A sort of triple pseudo-dialogue glancing backwards and forwards in terms of time, because one establishes a fictionalized conversation with authors who left their writings published in the past, while one narrates for oneself at present and for potential readers in the near future. The well-known blue collection of Sage on qualitative research methods includes a monograph which deals with "archival strategies and techniques" (HILL, 1993). A brief overview of this work will help to demarcate my point of view, the contribution intended here in terms of methodological reflection. The author, who has done archival work at the American Association of Sociology (ASA) and has

been the editor biographer of MARTINEAU's classic text on methods in sociology, warns that his focus is on "the sociohistorical use of manuscript repositories." He expressly states that he does not deal in his monograph with quantitative research based on archives, such as archives of statistical data. He claims to adhere, above all, to the "tangible, intersubjectively verifiable trace of evidence found in formal archives" (HILL, 1993, p.2)<sup>2</sup>. HILL has a particular sociohistorical conception of research which places emphasis on the specification of the "materials" that constitute the main interest of his inquiries. These include "letters, diaries, confidential memos, lecture notes, transcripts, rough drafts, unpublished manuscripts, and other personal and organizational records." HILL's conception of archives is one which is methodologically biased towards the traditionally documented (written or tangible) materialization of historical, archaeological research. Consonant to his view, the author refers to the well-known works of WEBB, CAMPBELL, SCHWARTZ and SCHREST (1966) on "unobtrusive measures." [3]

In contrast to HILL's position, the focus of this article and approach is not reduced to the more conventional "formal files" whose nature—materiality and accessibility—are being transformed thanks to the new technologies. Alongside this fundamental archival tradition, which has made possible sociohistorical and sociobiographical research, the so-called "vivo archives" must be highlighted because of their special importance to the approaches of oral history and biographical sociological methodology. It is arguably a transdisciplinary task that requires a certain change of mentality, emulation and promotion of good practices led by classic or current pioneering initiatives. The following sections will provide some examples of this. Suffice it to remember the research strategy of William THOMAS and Florian ZNANIECKI (1918-1920) which consisted of collecting letters and promoting autobiographical stories about Polish-American migration experience. [4]

The changing concepts (and contexts) of *archive* and *biography* not only warn us about the dichotomy: written sources and documents as opposed to oral or *vivo* ones. The digitalization of the traditionally archived and the concept of the *virtual archive* or the ways of collaborating in their creation and dissemination compose a panorama without precedent. The phenomena of *massive archiving* around audio-visual contents, easily accessible and open to public participation, as YouTube<sup>3</sup> or the *social networks* are illustrative. In other words, the *vision* and *mission* that I want to highlight here is that not all that is relevant for social researchers is archived in an ex-officio or institutional capacity. It is important to also promote the archiving of materials that are either under-archived or not archived at all. [5]

Turning to the literature on methodology, one may wonder about the role played by the more general introductory texts of the social research techniques and

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2 In DENZIN and LINCOLN's words: "a positivist and evidence-based epistemology" (2005, p.8).

3 Although in certain places and at times the videos have been or are still closed, reminding us of the access restrictions that have affected some traditional archives. And the continuity of the archives has no guarantee.

methods. A minimum revision of some of these handbooks, paying particular attention to those that address qualitative methodology and particularly the biographical perspective, would suffice. The driving questions may be formulated like this: Is there *archival sensitivity* in these presentations of methods (survey, interviews, groups, observations, documents)? And in the presentation of the biographical methodological approach? Strategies such as field research, in its sociological or anthropological version, have emphasized the need to preserve and archive the research act. Hence the field notes or methodological appendices, although not always with the sensitivity or willingness to facilitate the reuse of raw or back-office materials. [6]

In his "Introduction to Qualitative Research," FLICK (2004, pp.187ff.) encourages the convenience of recording the research experience through journals and the use of documentary sheets for team coordination, among other resources. But, although he specifically addresses the issue of quality and narratives "between biography and episode," he does not transmit the concerns that have been defined here under the label *archival and biographical sensitivity*. On the same date was published the book co-edited by SEALE, GOBO, GUBRIUM and SILVERMAN (2004), where there are two chapters: one focused on the secondary analysis of archival data (CORTI & THOMPSON, 2004); the other on the reanalysis of materials previously obtained (AKERSTRÖM, JACOBSSON & WÄSTERFORS, 2004). Furthermore, there are other methodological chapters on: oral history, biographical and narrative research, although with very few references to archives. However, in the third edition of the well-known handbook by Norman K. DENZIN and Yvonna S. LINCOLN (2005)<sup>4</sup>, as well as in its previous editions (1994, 2000), there are several references to biographical and reflexive approaches but there is a great lack of contributions related to *archival sensitivity* and reanalysis. [7]

This lack of attention or (sort of) gaps in certain texts of methods has been fulfilled in great part by different reviews<sup>5</sup>. We can only echo here some recent contributions, where references to other more or less traditional contributions may be consulted. *FQS* devoted the third issue of the first volume, edited by CORTI, KLUGE, MRUCK and OPITZ (2000), to: "Text, Archive, Re-analysis." And in 2005, *FQS* dealt again with re-using data, this time publishing two issues, one on "Secondary Analysis of Qualitative Data" (edited by CORTI, WITZEL & BISHOP) and the other on "Qualitative Inquiry: Research, Archiving, and Reuse" (BERGMAN & EBERLE as editors). Other journals, such as *International Journal of Social Research Methods*, *Sociological Research Online* or *Methodological Innovations Online* (among others) have also shown special attention on these matters in the last six years, with special emphasis on the longitudinal

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4 In spite of the recurring reference to various "sensibilities" in the introductory text by DENZIN and LINCOLN (2005, pp.1-32), there is no specific mention to the archival approach proposed here. Take this quotation as illustration: "Its practitioners [of qualitative research] are variously committed to the modern, post-modern and post-experimental sensibilities and the approaches to social research that these sensibilities imply" (p.8).

5 There have also appeared monographs, such as the one by HEATON (2004), or other compilation books such as those by LEWIS-BECK, BRYMAN and LIAO (2003), MILLER and BREWER (2003) or BECKER and BRYMAN (2004).

perspective. In addition to outlining the advantages of reusing data, most of these authors insist on the critical or problematic aspects of archiving and reusing qualitative materials (especially the one related to the experience and context<sup>6</sup> of the act of researching). They also discuss these arguments in relation to thinking about teaching methods as well as in terms of knowledge in a substantive field. [8]

Among the Spanish methodologists, CALLEJO and VIEDMA (2005, pp.8, 11-12) draw a "typology of secondary sources" where both qualitative materials produced institutionally and those where the intervention of an investigator has mediated are considered. And make a brief overview of the possibilities for reanalysis of the latter, contrasting the shortage in the *CIS*<sup>7</sup> in Spain with the example of [ESDS Qualidata](#) at Essex. On our part, in VALLES (1997, pp.82, 102, 118-128, 138, 256-257) can be traced back the various notions of archive that are referred to in those dates, the emphasis on documentary materials<sup>8</sup> or the inclination towards biographical methodology. But it was later on (VALLES, 2005) when—while dealing with the issue of quality in qualitative research—it became more apparent that quality depended also on archiving. This is in addition to other challenges such as the one described by FIELDING (2000). [9]

## 2. Approaching the European Landscape on Archives and Biographical Research

There are societies that have developed a greater *archival culture*, and a socio-biographic one, in their history. There are also sociological research works with greater or lesser sensitivity in this area. It is also true that projects finally accomplished do not depend only on the fact that the designers are more or less sensitive or susceptible to the recycling and longitudinal approach of their inquiries. Financial and institutional backing is required to support such initiatives. I present some examples in the context of the European Union, which were highlighted at the *EUROQUAL Program* event held in Madrid in September 2009, referred to earlier. [10]

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6 It is worth emphasizing the methodological reflection by VAN DEN BERG (2005) about the risk of decontextualization and other problems associated with the archive of experience and qualitative material thinking in its reuse by other researchers. He does not give, however, a technical precision of the type that has been tested in the MEXEES project for transcribing qualitative interviews and discussion groups (VALLES, 2009). A more comprehensive and elaborate proposal can be seen in BISHOP (2006); together with methodological reflections and research experiences of archive and reuse in the rest of articles that integrate the monograph about context (CORTI, 2006).

7 *CIS* stands for *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (Sociological Research Center). It is an outstanding institution in Spain in terms of promotion and publication of sociological and public opinion investigation (survey research mainly), see [http://www.cis.es/cis/opencvms/EN/8\\_cis/](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencvms/EN/8_cis/) [Accessed: September 10, 2011].

8 A less expensive methodological strategy based on the analysis or reanalysis of archived materials.

## 2.1 UK: *ESDS Qualidata* as a hegemonic model of national archive of qualitative data in Europe

Attention has already been drawn under the previous heading to the contribution by CORTI and THOMPSON in the handbook by SEALE, GOBO, GUBRIUM and SILVERMAN (2004), where the relevance of the British case is discussed in relation to the *Qualidata* Archive hosted at the University of Essex, and backed by the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council). This body is sponsoring an integrated platform, of national character, offering services of data archive and dissemination of various kinds: quantitative, qualitative and mixed. Known as the Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS), the enterprise has been operating since January 2003 (although the archiving services started much earlier), and covers four main branches of archive and reuse data promotion (governmental, international, longitudinal and qualitative data)<sup>9</sup>. [11]

My attention here focuses especially on the *ESDS Qualidata* hosted by the *UK Data Archive* located at the University of Essex. It is presented on its [website](#) as a "service" that provides "access and support for a range of social sciences qualitative datasets," with the purpose of "promoting and facilitating increased and more effective use of data in research, learning and teaching." It focuses on "acquiring digital data collections from purely qualitative and mixed methods in contemporary research and from UK-based 'classic studies'." The most common route of acquisition occurs through the grants policy from the ESRC, requiring the grant holders to deposit materials and data resulting from research when this ends to preserve them and share them through the financial institution. This entity ensures (offering advice and protocols) that grant-awarded researchers produce qualitative material "well-documented" and of "high quality" anticipating its archive and dissemination from the beginning. Its range of services (thinking about potential users) includes an operating catalog in their web page, from which you can locate the available studies. Information can be consulted about the background and design characteristics of the research studies and links to results and final reports submitted to the funding organizations. No doubt this information by itself is an extraordinary source in terms of learning, teaching and knowledge or promotion of the *back-office of research* (CASTILLO, VALLES & WAINERMAN, 2009); a key aspect to assess if it is convenient the reanalysis or replication of the archived study. [12]

*ESDS Qualidata* assumes a complementary role in relation to the "preservation" of "important collections," which are often paper versions of data, and for which partial scanning is carried out. Also worthy of mention is the well-deserved tribute to some of the most respected pioneers of qualitative research<sup>10</sup> alive. It also emphasizes on the goal of creating "value-added data sources" through the

9 It is worth emphasizing the offer of specialized support "for teaching and research". See more information at: <http://www.esds.ac.uk/> [Accessed: September 10, 2011].

10 From the beginnings of *Qualidata* in 1995, this center located in the Department of Sociology, at Essex University, has sought to preserve the pioneering social research materials. In this attempt outstands the Pioneers Project that apart from locating and archiving data from British classic studies has undertaken interviews with pioneers themselves. Some of which are already available on the website of this project, integrated in the cyberspace of *Qualidata*.

contextualization of research materials, and their access via the Internet; along with considering the service that their staff is doing in terms of methodological and technical development of a culture of sharing the qualitative too. [13]

Finally, *ESDS Qualidata* has a double service of user-support and training<sup>11</sup> addressed to either professional or earlier career researchers, with the aim of optimizing the use of archived qualitative data sources. [14]

Undoubtedly, this serves as a reference for European countries such as Spain, where there is a great dispersion and variability of barely known archival initiatives (as will be seen later in this article). For now, suffice it to note, in order to conclude this brief presentation of the British initiative, that in the *EUROQUAL* event held in Madrid on *Archives and Life History Research* the Head of *Qualidata* at present, Louise CORTI, was invited as key-note speaker. She was invited to present an inaugural lecture on the European panorama of qualitative social research archives with an emphasis on the methodological and practical aspects. Her presentation (entitled "The European Landscape of Qualitative Social Research Archives: Methodological and Practical Issues") contributed a state of the art context, focusing on the British case that she knows best. Her account of the emergence and consolidation of *Qualidata* (as a digital archive of greater antiquity) in the UK context of social research led her to highlight a number of critical points common to all archives in the social sciences. Namely: financing, infrastructure, standards, processes, skills, education and training, users support, promotion and archiving of research in cooperation with researchers. For more detail see the writings published by CORTI in collaboration (CORTI & THOMPSON, 2004; CORTI, WITZEL & BISHOP, 2005) or as a single author (CORTI, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007), among others. [15]

## 2.2 France: LEJEUNE's initiative as exemplary counterpoint

The situation of France regarding archival materials from qualitative studies offers a panorama of lack of leadership, judging by CRIBIER's somewhat critical review of the French situation (2005). The comparison made by the authors of the "Introduction" to the special volume, EBERLE and BERGMAN (2005, p.1), highlights that "while France is just starting to collect qualitative data for archiving, the *Qualidata* archive in Great Britain has already existed for more than a decade." In the *UK Data Archive Bulletin* at the University of Essex<sup>12</sup> they did not pass the opportunity to announce the visit to *Qualidata* in March 2002 of two researchers from the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris, Francoise CRIBIER and Elise FELLER, commissioned by the French Ministry of Research to promote a qualitative data archive in France. However, my visit at the beginning of March 2010 of the [website](#) of Le Centre Quetelet suggests that, at present, the national digital archive keeps mainly survey data (see <http://www.reseau-quetelet.cnrs.fr/spip/>). My observation was confirmed when consulting the *Qualidata*'s link which relates, in a page updated February

11 See <http://www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/support/introduction.asp> [Accessed: September 10, 2011].

12 See <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/news/publications/UKDataBytes5.pdf> [Accessed: September 10, 2011].

25, 2010, the European initiatives of "national archives for the acquisition, preservation and dissemination of qualitative data." Only Finland had routinely begun to acquire qualitative data. The rest of countries mentioned (Northern Ireland, Germany, France<sup>13</sup>, Austria and Switzerland) were in the initial exploratory stages of the process. [16]

Although these overviews are interesting, they leave out other important initiatives, such as the promoted by Philippe LEJEUNE<sup>14</sup>. I refer to the *Association pour l'Autobiographie et le Patrimoine Autobiographique* (APA). The APA is a national association founded in 1992, that has in its mission the *preservation of the autobiographical heritage*. The APA has its Headquarters in Ambérieu-en-Bugey (Department of Ain, the region of Rhône-Alpes), a town with a population of more than 12,000 inhabitants in 2007 according to the INSEE. In his Madrid oral and written presentation of the APA, LEJEUNE himself heartedly stated that the municipality of Ambérieu-en-Bugey not only supports this initiative letting premises for office and storage infrastructure, but it is also expressed in a complementary and striking manner placing a sign at the entrance of the municipality which reads: "Ambérieu, the city of autobiography." A self-presentation of this Association, its composition and activities, may be viewed on the [website](#). Suffice it here to highlight some of its most characteristic features:

- It gathers people who either keep diaries—or their life story—and those who are autobiographies enthusiasts.
- Unlike national archives focused on materials from qualitative studies, whose acceptance has to pass a filter, the APA "accepts to read all texts or unpublished autobiographical documents that you want to send"; and, in addition to organize their readings in selected groups, they make them available to other readers in the public media library of Ambérieu-en-Bugey city.
- The APA does not commit itself to the full publication of the originals deposited, but publishes reviews; and yearly organizes the dissemination, training and promotion activities of international cooperation in this field. [17]

At the *EUROQUAL* event in Madrid (September 21-23, 2009) LEJEUNE orally presented something already written and repeatedly voiced in other international forums and bibliographic sources<sup>15</sup>. He referred, for example, to the fifty-odd readers who meet regularly in five reading groups (Aix-en-Provence, Paris, Perche-Normandy, Sceaux, Strasburg). Or to the writing and reflection groups on

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13 Concerning France, in November 2005 an international symposium was organized on the analysis in qualitative research, whose objective was to weigh "the status of secondary analysis of interviews from a methodological and epistemological point of view and to consider a national data archive for France," see <http://www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/access/internationaldata.asp> [Accessed: September 10, 2011].

14 Professor of literature at the University of Paris-Nord, presenter at the *EUROQUAL* event in Madrid, who collaborated with Chantal Chaveyriat-Dumoulin, parsonage in Lyons.

15 In the IberoAmerican context it is especially known the text translated and published in the *Revista de Antropología Social* [Journal of Social Anthropology] of the University Complutense of Madrid, accessible from <http://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2012562> [Accessed: July 30, 2011].

autobiography located in Lyon, Geneva, Lausanne, Paris, Strasbourg, Nantes, Toulouse, Aix-en-Provence. In the presentation of the APA that he made in 2002, invited by the Academy of Autobiography in Kärstämäki (Finland), and later on published in LEJEUNE (2004), these were his first words:

"My aim is to present the French experience of the APA. We call ourselves 'association' in the same way that you call yourselves 'academia,' and our Italian friends from Pieve or German colleagues from Emmendingen consider themselves 'archives.' All of us have in common the first letter A and the passionate interest in Autobiography" (p.185). [18]

In his Madrid talk, LEJEUNE made again some reflections on the experience of the APA, highlighting a sample of the schedule of activities for 2010; among which he mentioned a round table in Paris on March 20, "L'oubli [forgetfulness]" and a weekend encounter, "Europe and autobiography" (June 11 to 13 in Strasbourg). He also recalled his collaboration with sister associations in other European countries: Archivio Diaristico Nazionale (Pieve S. Stefano, RA, Italy), Tagebucharchiv in Emmendingen (Germany) and APA-Belgium (Brussels). LEJEUNE (Bordeaux, 1938), recommends visiting his own [website](#), where there is a very comprehensive list of his works along with a variety of practical resources for teaching and researching in this area. This is an exemplary initiative dedicated to promoting the conservation of unpublished autobiographical texts and their reading and worth imitating. [19]

### **2.3 Other European experiences archiving materials and qualitative studies: Germany, Austria, Finland, Northern Ireland, Poland**

Among the guest speakers in the *EUROQUAL* event on archives and biographical research, held in Madrid, was initially Andreas WITZEL, Director of the *Life Course Archive*, located at the *Graduate School of Social Sciences* (GSSS) at the University of Bremen and responsible for the project "Archive and secondary analysis of qualitative interviews in Germany." Although he could not attend, a written presentation of that project and center can be read in OPITZ and WITZEL (2005). The *Bremen Life Course Archive* was set up in 2000, following the recommendation of the German Research Council of making available for potential users about 700 biographical interviews, previously turned anonymous, documented and placed in a digital archive. The mentioned authors address the strengths and critical points of archiving and reusing qualitative materials, remarking that the German case is still in an initial phase regarding this matter. In their article, for example, the comparison with the British case is that there was hardly any qualitative data in Germany which has been archived (p.1).<sup>16</sup> Something that contrasts with the development of qualitative analysis software (several of them *made in Germany*) or the digitization of research. And they make a statement (extensible to other countries) on the gap between the taken for granted archiving of quantitative data and the absence of it when it comes to qualitative data.

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16 On the German case see also the article by LEH (2000) about the Archive "German Memory."

"Whilst it is taken for granted that quantitative data results must be handed in to the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research in Cologne (ZA) after the research study has been completed—and this has been the case since the establishment of the ZA in 1960—the archiving of qualitative data usually remains the responsibility of the individual researcher as there is no centralized organization which uses the data in research and theory in spite of the great amount of qualitative social-scientific data." (OPITZ & WITZEL, 2005, p.3) [20]

Similarly to the University of Essex in England, the Bremen center in Germany has continued to be a dynamic center of the second component of the *research sensitivity* highlighted in the title of this article. In fact, the biographical approach (in the sense of *longitudinal*) was remarked in the Bremen Workshop call for papers, April 2009: "Qualitative Longitudinal Research and Qualitative Resources in Europe: Mapping the Field and Exploring Strategies for Development" (see <http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/events-dissemination/past-events-presentations/bremen-workshop/>). Two British entities collaborate with the *Bremen Life Course Archive*: the *UK Data Archive* (Essex) and the *Timescapes Qualitative Longitudinal Study and Archive* (Leeds), with the support of the *Council for European Social Science Data Archives* (CESSDA). The call itself mentions another British initiative, the *Mass Observation Archive* (Sussex), but the international projection of the event is intended to be European and especially open to the 20 countries that are already part of the CESSDA, among which is Spain. They make explicit as the objectives of the *workshop* a double approach (both archival and longitudinal) with special mention to one of the three British experiences as European model to be imitated<sup>17</sup>. It is the longitudinal qualitative study that makes provisions for archiving, called *Timescapes*; that Prof. HOLLAND, as a member of a large team, presented in Madrid (September 2009) as invited speaker. [21]

It is worth noting here some of the "strategic questions" that composed the call for participation of the Bremen Workshop, which provide an interesting synthesis of the methodological impasse expressed by the organizers of the event. All of them concerned with responsibilities for and experiences of data archiving initiatives, re-use and qualitative longitudinal studies (Bren NEALE, Libby BISHOP, Louise CORTI, Andreas WITZEL, Nigel FIELDING and Kevin SCHURER). Of the nine strategic issues raised, these were the first three:

1. How effective are the existing models of archiving?
2. Should existing infrastructure (for quantitative resources) be augmented to include qualitative and qualitative longitudinal data or should separate infrastructure be developed?
3. What impact might the drift towards mixed methods research, e.g. in Germany and the UK, have on such decisions? [22]

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<sup>17</sup> In addition to "developing plans for a European Network of Quantitative and Qualitative Longitudinal Data Collections and Qualitative Longitudinal Researchers and Projects" they call for the exploration of possibilities to make it happen a "European-based Timescapes Study and Archive, parallel to the UK Timescapes" (see <http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/events-dissemination/past-events-presentations/bremen-workshop/> [Accessed: September 10, 2011]).

These issues were followed by others about the dilemma: centralized archives vs. thematically specialized (or a mixture of both types); their financial and management implications. Estimations were made regarding potential collaborations among archivists and researchers, in relation to the preservation of data, its reuse and sharing. Finally, questions about strategies for longitudinal qualitative research in Europe, comparative, which complement and increase the quantitative longitudinal materials were made. [23]

Of countries belonging to the European Community, Finland would occupy a prominent place according to the picture drawn from *ESDS Qualidata* (Essex), as already indicated above<sup>18</sup>. Finland has an *Academy of autobiography* in Kärsämäki, on which Professor J.P. ROOS from the University of Helsinki<sup>19</sup> presented. He described the 10 past years of existence of this pioneer Association which is firmly embedded in the life-stories movement, with similar features to the French APA driven by LEJEUNE. ROOS also provided a first-hand information on other popular Finnish archives<sup>20</sup>. The dream of a European archive, which preserved the Finnish autobiographical originals along with a translation into English to facilitate its reading by other Europeans, was expressed by ROOS. At the same time that he warned about the difficulties of their realization. He referred to the digital archive project "European memories" already started, with a European projection or vocation, non-commercial, ambitious in its goals; but so far with activities and organizations located in only six countries. ROOS did not forget the proliferation of autobiographical materials related to the new possibilities of dissemination via Internet; and he reflected on the virtual archive and research options. Entries such as *autobiography, my life*, or similar ones, throw millions of results with the Google search engine. According to ROOS the best choice to face this overflow of results, not conveniently filtered, would be a search engine able to select all autobiographical materials on the Internet. But according to this author the traditional archives should not be discarded. [24]

In addition to ROOS's participation in the Madrid EUROQUAL event, speakers gathered from other countries including Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, Northern Ireland, and Poland. [25]

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18 One may consult both the latest panorama, but from the outside, drawn by *ESDS Qualidata* in its [website](#), and the first version, but from within the Finnish country, by KUULA (2000) or in the *Finnish Social Science Data Archive* [website](#).

19 ROOS, who presented himself as introducer of BERTAUX and LEJEUNE in Finland, made a methodological assessment of great interest on both figures. One of his methodological writings on autobiography (ROOS, 1997) was selected by Robert MILLER (2005) in his edited work published in four volumes on "Biographical Research Methods."

20 For example, the *PÄÄTALO Society and Institute*, arising from the work of the Finnish Kalle PÄÄTALO, an author of an autobiography of 27 volumes published between 1971 and 1998, who is very popular in Finland. This institution organizes annually, currently, a contest to publish the "best" autobiography.

### 3. Archival and Biographical Research in the Spanish Case: An Approach from a Sociology Open to Other Social Sciences

In none of the three previous special *FQS* issues—Volume 1(3) in 2000 (CORTI, KLUGE, MRUCK & OPITZ) and issues 6(1) (CORTI, WITZEL & BISHOP) and 6(2) (BERGMAN & EBERLE) in 2005 on archive and reuse of qualitative studies—there are no contributions that address the Spanish case. This section is intended to compensate for that deficiency providing information primarily from the field of Spanish sociology. [26]

The *EUROQUAL* meeting was held in Madrid and organized by the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology. Why that University and department? The answer can be traced back to a paper on qualitative social research in Spain that VALLES and BAER presented during the ESA mid-term conference in Berlin (2004), later published in 2005, when the *EUROQUAL program* was being designed. Emphasis on the biographical methodology related to the Group of Barcelona around MARSAL, along with BAER's contribution on audiovisual testimonies, triggered the process. The Strasbourg *kick-off meeting* in 2006 gave VALLES the responsibility for organizing in Spain the referred *workshop*, which would help to recognize a "state of alert" towards the rather overlooked area of archiving, reuse, reanalysis of materials and qualitative studies. In the following pages I'll try to summarize the lived and learned in recent years: the horizon and stress of organizing the event, decisions on the call for papers and on invitations of national speakers; and, in particular, the metamorphosis that my perception of research activity has undergone. No doubt the result (already advanced) has been a greater *archival sensitivity*. [27]

The call for papers and participation for the already mentioned *EUROQUAL* workshop included a range of subjects and approaches (listed below) that gave an idea of the range of contributions that the organizers<sup>21</sup> tried to reunite, in an event where the language of communication was English. Topics asked for had been:

- national, regional, local data archives and initiatives for the acquisition, preservation and dissemination of qualitative data;
- "naturally occurring" archives of collective memory, oral or written history as resources for and topics of social research;
- archival strategies and techniques;
- life history research: disciplinary traditions and innovations. [28]

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21 The organizing committee was chaired by Miguel S. VALLES with the collaboration either effective (Tuula GORDON, University of Helsinki) or formal (Anna WYKA, Collegium Civitas, Warsaw). Special mention deserves Alejandro BAER and Mariano URRACO for their help in decision-making and management of the event. In the latter task we had also a decisive support from the Dean team (Irene VAN HALEN and Carmelo LISÓN ARCAL). It should be remembered that the number of participants was restricted by the own conception of the event, designed to unite a maximum of 30 people, senior and junior researchers, who were invited or their proposal of participation accepted, paying their travel and subsistence expenses. In addition, being "a la carte" program, promoted by the *European Science Foundation* the coverage of expenses was only offered (with exceptions) to researchers from countries associated with the program. Namely: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Spain, Finland, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, United Kingdom, Sweden and Switzerland.

In spite of knowing the existence of an integrated network of popular writings in Spain, with features similar to the LEJEUNE's APA and other regional or local initiatives from other countries, no invitation was arranged in the Spanish case for reasons related to the program, budget and language of communication. The five Spanish archives (Table 2) associated with the so-called "Red de Archivos e Investigadores de la Escritura Popular [Network of Archives and Researchers of the Popular Writing]", their research and archival approach, can be consulted at <http://www2.uah.es/siece/red/aiep.htm>. Creation and maintenance of this page, on the part of the group coordinating this initiative is commendable, as it offers an integrated presentation of the associated archives, as well as a comprehensive set of links to archives, research groups, journals or museums in other countries. It is the *Archivo de Escrituras Cotidianas* (Archive of Everyday Life Writing)—and its linked Seminario Interdisciplinar de Estudios sobre Cultura Escrita—SIECE [Interdisciplinary Seminar of Studies on Written Culture], to which "the commitment" of the referred network foundation is attributed. Located in the Department of History I and Philosophy within the University of Alcalá de Henares, this last archive (dated 2004) is considered "the youngest of all the archives currently comprising the Network."

Name	Year of foundation	Headquarters	Geographic and thematic scope (prize calls or special collection of materials)
Museu del Pueblu d'Asturies (Asturias People's Museum)	1968	Town Hall of Gijón	Ethnographic, oral, photographic and written heritage of Asturias
Arquivo da Emigración Galega (Archive of Galician Emigration)	1992	Santiago de Compostela	Autonomous; thematic: archive of migrant materials
Arxiu de la Memòria Popular (Archive of Popular Memory)	1998	La Roca del Vallés (Barcelona)	Indefinite geographical scope; thematic: all kinds of memories, testimonies, letters, autobiographies and any memorialistic document (written, audio, video or any other format) Annual Prize "Romà Planas i Miró" of popular memorialism
Archivo de la Escritura Popular del Bajo Duero (Archive of Bajo Duero Popular Writing)	2001	Asociación Etnográfica del Bajo Duero (Zamora-UNED <sup>22</sup> )	Castilla-León and "the Portuguese border zone" Annual call, in collaboration with UNED, for texts on the emigration memory

22 UNED stands for Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (National Open University).

Name	Year of foundation	Headquarters	Geographic and thematic scope (prize calls or special collection of materials)
Archivo de Escrituras Cotidianas – SIECE (Archive of Quotidian Writings)	2004	Alcalá de Henares University. Dept. of History and Philosophy	Nationwide; thematic: written testimonies by common people, especially those at risk of disappearing

Table 2: Network of archives and researchers of popular writing in Spain (Source: <http://www2.uah.es/siece/red/aiep.htm>) [29]

However it was possible to have a speaker in the Madrid *EUROQUAL Archives Workshop* responsible for the *Archivo del Duelo* (Mourning Archive), as an example in Spain of the second thematic line in our call. A team of anthropologists from the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) signed an agreement in 2005 with RENFE (National Network of Trains) to archive and analyze the material deposited spontaneously by the population to express their grief, in the Madrid train stations where the March 11, 2004 attacks had occurred. The main researcher of the team, Cristina SÁNCHEZ CARRETERO, especially addressed the role of archives in the construction of memory after traumatic events. [30]

Other Spanish researchers also had an opportunity to expose their inquiries, were these connected with the current recovery of the memory about the Spanish Civil War mass graves (FERRANDIZ, 2008; FERRANDIZ & BAER, 2008); or with the memory of work (CASTILLO, 1998, 2004). Among the works published by the latter author, I highlight that he criticizes the work museums where materials are archived but without paying attention to what was lived. In his invited paper (CASTILLO, 2009) first, now an article in this *FQS* issue (CASTILLO, 2011), there are other bibliographic references and links to pages or international forums where reader can find reflections on the concepts of *heritage* or *industrial archeology*, *the working memory archives* and *industrial heritage*. [31]

#### 4. Conclusions: Other Spanish Initiatives and a Final Methodological Reflection

The double perspective of the Spanish sociological field proposed in the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Spanish Federation of Sociology (Pamplona, July 1-3, 2010), expressed in the headword "Sociology and Society in Spain. 30 Years Ago; 30 Years Ahead," refers to a double temporality to be considered in our discipline and one that has to do with the core point of this paper. The *archival and biographical-longitudinal research sensitivity* refers equally to the use of the relevant archives, but also to their creation and maintenance. In this regard, I shall briefly refer, to conclude this writing, to a handful of examples with which I have been involved. [32]

The first one occurred within a sociological research project funded by the INJUVE (Youth National Institute) in the late 1990s. The idea to replicate in part the first national youth survey in Spain (the 1958-60 one), forty years later, was promoted by Amando DE MIGUEL; who offered me the opportunity to conduct a complementary qualitative study on the oral history of the original survey. The resulting publication reported a detailed presentation of the results (DE MIGUEL, 2000; VALLES, 2000), but in the back room of the investigation were left, among other primary materials, recordings of interviews to politicians and sociologists who made this survey possible. This is something that currently remains in my personal archive. I then had knowledge of the initiative by sociologist José Mariano LÓPEZ CEPERO of preserving the original questionnaires in the INJUVE; and of the subsequent efforts of Juan J. LINZ to make copies of the first computerized data in readable formats for use in current information technologies. [33]

The second example was shaped when competing in the first Madrid Complutense University (UCM) call for Educational Innovation Projects in 1999. A large team of professors and students based at the Department of Sociology IV presented the proposal of a "Collection of Materials for Teaching and Self-education on Social Research Methodology." Due to budget cuts, only a part of the projected was undertaken: a dozen audiovisual interviews with Spanish experts in the discussion group technique were collected together with three instructional videos from them. Although the current edition of these materials was not made by the funding university, they have been generously used by teachers and students over the last ten years. While doing the project, we got some donations of audiovisual discussion groups, made for public administrations. Seen retrospectively it is a pioneering initiative useful for teaching, in which at the same time were obtained some audiovisual testimonies of professional and academic experience from a group of sociologists belonging to different generations, but of a similar school: the one lead by Jesús IBÁÑEZ. [34]

A third example of research and publishing experience, oriented as well towards teaching methodology, but with the *archival and biographical sensitivity* increased, has been materialized in the co-edition of a special volume of the journal *Política y Sociedad [Politics and Society]* (CASTILLO, VALLES & WAINERMAN, 2009). The original idea and the greater impulse originated from Juan José CASTILLO. Although the initial editorial project was more ambitious, and although not all the colleagues who were encouraged to participate did, we managed to collect ten first-person testimonies about the practice or research career of colleagues in Argentina and Spain<sup>23</sup>. This is arguably another initiative that would deserve to be repeated or encouraged by other colleagues<sup>24</sup>. [35]

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23 I refer to the testimony by José Luis DE ZÁRRAGA, in which he narrates (among other extraordinary projects of his research career) the one funded and partially archived by the CIS (*Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, Sociological Research Center*) from 1979 to 1982. If today that center faced the institutional support for archiving and promoting qualitative studies in addition to surveys (a reality called ARCES internationally integrated), greater visibility and national and international integration would start in Spain. Indeed a new and decisive stage in sociological research in Spain would have initiated.

In the methodological journal *Empiria*, Modesto ESCOBAR published a paper presented at the 9<sup>th</sup> Spanish Congress of Sociology held in Barcelona (September 2007). His article provides technical proposals to render the contents of journalistic texts as semantic networks. The data source is the *Archivo de la Transición Democrática Española* [*Spanish Democratic Transition Archive*], made up of more than 75,000 press cuttings collected by Juan José LINZ STORCH DE GRACIA over the years 1958-1987. A complete list of individuals and institutions involved in this initiative can be seen in ESCOBAR (2009, p.15). Also worthy of consulting is the librarians' stories associated with the Juan March Institute for Studies and Research (KNECHT, PEACH & FERNANDEZ, 2006). [36]

This particular set of examples gathered here is to draw attention to emerging *research sensitivity*, of which there are initiatives both at an individual and institutional level; but which requires higher impulses, associations, groups or networks with public and private institutional support. They also ought to be translated with greater visibility and knowledge of what exists in Spain; in addition to the corresponding international projection. In this endeavor one should not only look inside the fence of sociology. In the *Más allá* [*Beyond Sociology*], to which IBÁÑEZ referred, professional practice in the media should not be discarded. Radio and television archives, the public ones especially, those from the press too (especially the more inclined to make accessible their documentary bases<sup>25</sup>) are other examples to take into account. RNE (Radio Nacional de España [Spain National Radio]) was presented by some mass media as the "first European channel to digitalize all its sound archive."<sup>26</sup> Here is a statement published on an official website (<http://roai.mcu.es/es/comunidades/registro.cmd?id=629>) regarding the outcome of the digitizing process of the RNE sound archive:

"'Radio Nacional de España (RNE)' concluded, in December 2002, the digitization of its entire sound archive and after four years of work, in collaboration with IBM, has transferred to a digital format thousands of documents of great historical and documentary value in order to ensure its future preservation and facilitate their consultation on the computer." [37]

I want to conclude referring to the need for international collaboration that was indicated by Louise CORTI already in 2000. Her vision then is still effective today, especially for countries such as Spain. Some critical points highlighted in 2000 deserve to be recalled: 1. promotion of a culture of sharing and reuse in research practice; 2. development of methods for depositing and accessing collections or sensitive materials; 3. context requirements on raw data; 4. creation of digital resources available for teaching and research; 5. tie archiving commitments to social research funding. [38]

24 While writing these pages, an invitation arrived from the *Centro de Estudios Andaluces* [*Andalusian Studies Center*] to participate in its program of methods courses in 2010. In this center, José Manuel ECHAVARREN informed me about a project underway (funded by that center) of audiovisual recording of testimonies by the pioneers of Spanish sociology.

25 RNE (the Spanish National Radio) informed on October 26, 2008, that the newspaper *La Vanguardia* was starting to offer its 127-year history for free and online.

26 See <http://www.elmundo.es/navegante/2002/12/20/esociedad/1040381236.html> [Accessed: September 10, 2011].

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## Author

[Miguel S. VALLES](#) is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University Complutense of Madrid. His research interests include: social research methodology (combination of quantitative and qualitative methods); history and sociology of social research methods (society, life and methods); qualitative interviewing; grounded theory and qualitative analysis (manual and computer assisted). His main research focus has been within sociology of population (youth, old age, migration). As member of the *EUROQUAL* Steering Committee (2006-2010) he was responsible for the organization of the Madrid "Archives and Life-History Research Workshop" (21-23 September 2009).

Contact:

Miguel S. Valles

Departamento de Sociología IV (Metodología de la Investigación)  
Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociología  
Universidad Complutense de Madrid  
Campus de Somosaguas  
28223 Pozuelo de Alarcón (Madrid)  
Spain

Tel.: +34 91 3942671

Fax: +34 91 3942673

E-mail: [mvalles@cps.ucm.es](mailto:mvalles@cps.ucm.es)

URL: <http://www.ucm.es/info/socivmyt/>

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