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Who preserves contemporary art collections in Portuguese institutions? Contributions to the study of professional roles in the conservation of contemporary art

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Conservation and Restoration

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1. REBOCHO, R., MARÇAL, H. & MACEDO, R. “Professional Identity of the Contemporary Art Conservator: Accreditation as an Influencing Factor” in ICOM-CC Joint Interim Meeting Paintings and Theory, History, and Ethics of Conservation Working Groups, 6-7 February, Lisbon, 2020 (Poster: published)
2. REBOCHO, R., MARÇAL, H. & MACEDO, R. “Professional identity of the contemporary art conservator - an empirical approach to the Portuguese institutional context” in 19th ICOM-CC Triennial Conference in April-May, Beijing, China, 2021 (Poster: accepted)

Abstract

There is an apparent consensus as to when and how the discipline of conservation emerged, and yet there is still a knowledge gap on how different professional roles in collection care operate in institutional contexts. The few studies that touch upon this issue lack empirical foundations that speak to the impact of education and the professional contexts. Understanding who takes part in daily conservation and care activities, and to what extent, will give us insight into the conservator's role and presence in the context of the conservation and care of contemporary art collections in Portugal.

This investigation has three main goals: 1) Understanding who takes part in the conservation and preservation of the main contemporary art collections in Portugal, and what is the conservator's role within that context; 2) Analysing how the role of conservators in the preservation of Portuguese contemporary art collections, relates to the international panorama; 3) Examining how conservation practices performed by "collection-caretakers" in the given context, especially by conservators, can inform about the professional identity of conservators.

To meet these goals, empirical data was collected through semi structured interviews, conducted to conservation professionals working in the five main Portuguese contemporary art collections.

The collected empirical data suggested the presence of conservators in Portuguese contemporary art collections seems to be mainly restricted to direct conservation interventions. Furthermore, the data suggests the role of conservators in contemporary art institutions conservation management, resonates with the German context described by Joanna Phillips and international contexts described by Jonathan Ashley-Smith and Manon D'haenens. Finally, the studied professional identity factors in this specific context, appear to be negative influencers for the professional identity development of the conservator working with contemporary art.

Keywords: conservator, role, conservation management, professional identity, collections care, contemporary art

Resumo

Existe um consenso aparente sobre quando e como surgiu a disciplina de conservação, ainda assim, verifica-se uma lacuna de conhecimento em como diferentes papéis profissionais no cuidado de coleções, operam em contextos institucionais. Os poucos estudos que abordam esta questão, carecem de fundamentos empíricos acerca do impacto da educação e dos contextos profissionais. Compreender quem participa nas atividades diárias de cuidado e conservação, e com que extensão, proporcionará uma visão do papel e da presença do conservador no contexto da conservação e cuidado de coleções de arte contemporânea em Portugal.

Esta investigação tem três objetivos principais: 1) Compreender quem participa na conservação e preservação das principais coleções de arte contemporânea em Portugal e qual é o papel do conservador nesse contexto; 2) Analisar como o papel dos conservadores na preservação das coleções de arte contemporânea portuguesas se relaciona com o panorama internacional; 3) Examinar como as práticas de conservação, realizadas pelos “cuidadores da coleção” no dado contexto, especialmente pelos conservadores, podem informar acerca da identidade profissional dos conservadores.

Para atingir estes objetivos, os dados empíricos foram recolhidos através de entrevistas semiestruturadas, realizadas a profissionais de conservação que trabalham nas cinco principais coleções de arte contemporânea em Portugal.

Os dados empíricos recolhidos sugerem que a presença de conservadores nas coleções portuguesas de arte contemporânea, parece estar restringida principalmente a intervenções diretas de conservação. Por outro lado, os dados sugerem que o papel dos conservadores na gestão da conservação das instituições de arte contemporânea, ressoa com o contexto alemão descrito por Joanna Phillips e os contextos internacionais descritos por Jonathan Ashley-Smith e Manon D'haenens. Por fim, os fatores que influenciam a identidade profissional, estudados nesse contexto específico, parecem influenciar negativamente o desenvolvimento da identidade profissional do conservador que trabalha com a arte contemporânea.

Palavras-chave: conservador, papel profissional, gestão de conservação, identidade profissional, cuidado de coleções, arte contemporânea

Table of Contents

Abstract	VIII
Resumo.....	IX
Figure Index	XI
Table Index.....	XI
1. Introduction	1
1.1. The Portuguese context: an overview.....	4
2. Methodology	6
2.1. Sample Characterisation.....	7
3. Conservation <i>in practice</i> : results and discussion	8
3.1. Conservation Documentation	8
3.2. Acquisitions.....	10
3.3. Exhibitions	11
3.4. Loans	12
3.5. Restoration	12
3.6. Summary of findings	13
4. Portugal in the International Panorama	14
5. Insights on the conservator's professional identity	17
5.1 Factors influencing the development of professional identities	19
5.2 Functions performed.....	20
5.3 Position in the formal structure, Authority and Professional Autonomy	20
5.4 Professional socialisation	22
5.5 Perceived professional role	23
5.6 Job satisfaction	25
6. Conclusion.....	26
7. References	28
8. Appendix I – Tables and Figures	31
9. Appendix II – Social Identity Theory.....	37
10. Appendix III – Professional Identity Influencing Factors	39
Professional groups and councils, and accreditation system.....	40
Gender problems and related issues – a Women's job.....	42
Professional Recognition and Prestige the position confers.....	45

Figure Index

Figure 1 – Portuguese Conservation Educational System Timeline.	5
Figure 2 – Collections team members by institution.....	31
Figure 3 – Loans decision-making scenarios in all studied institutions.....	12
Figure 4 – Factors affecting the construction of professional identity adapted from Jebril (2008)	34
Figure 5 – “Conservation repair and mending of archaeological ceramics” adapted from O’Grady (2017)	42

Table Index

Table 1- Studied institutions and interviewed professionals.....	8
Table 2- Education and Professional Experience of the interviewed professionals.....	9
Table 3- Functions performed by each interviewed professional.....	31
Table 4- Collected data regarding respondent’s involvement in conservation management activities within the studied institutions.....	14
Table 5- Collected data regarding conservator’s involvement in conservation management activities within the studied institutions.....	14
Table 6- Respondents’ citations informing about their perception of the conservator’s role	15
Table 7- Selected Personal and Social/Professional factors as influencers of the conservator’s PI development for the present study.....	20
Table 8- Synthesized information regarding the personal and professional levels of PI developed by Jebril (2008)	33
Table 9- Synthesized information regarding the internal and external aspects of PI developed by Jebril (2008)	34
Table 10- Median annual salary for conservators in the UK and North America.....	35

1. Introduction

What makes a conservator a conservator?¹ This question is at the core of this research project and is what has sparked our interest in the professional role and identity of conservators. This dissertation aims to understand who conserves, preserves and overall takes care of contemporary art collections in Portugal. Understanding who takes part in these daily conservation and care activities, and to what extent, will give us insight into the conservator's role and presence in the context of the conservation and care of contemporary art collections in Portugal.

The identity of the conservation profession has been mentioned by many authors in relevant literature, such as Muñoz Viñas (2004), Miriam Clavir (1998) or Hanna Hölling (2017), to begin in the artisanal craft and artistic activity, with the work of craftsmen and restorers. The conservation field experienced a shift in the activities that contribute to its professional scope around the 1970s, when natural sciences started to permeate the field, leading to what has been called the advent of scientific conservation (Muñoz-Viñas, 2004; Saaze, 2013; Marvelde, 2015) and to the creation of a new discipline (Casanova, 2012). According to Ashley-Smith (2018, p.8), the detachment of the figure of the craftsman and the growing proximity to the ideal of the conservator scientist, allowed for “a growing sense of professional identity”. Hölling (2017, p.94), on the other hand, recognises conservation as a melting pot of various fields, balancing between sciences and humanities, or artisanal and artistic approaches, all generating distinct and complementary types of knowledge.

The 1984 ICOM-CC *Definition of a Profession* is paramount in understanding the ramifications of an identity mostly defined by education in conservation techniques and ethics, and responsibilities that are mostly associated to a set of activities performed to objects. The *Definition* was truly important in a time where an emerging profession was differentiating itself from the practice of restoration, bound to a practice-led status and a remedially focused practice, to a scientifically informed and theoretically rigorous profession (Sloggett, 2014). It “sought to provide the philosophical framework for the development of conservation ethics, standards and training and to define conservation as a distinctive discipline” at the end of the 20th century (Sloggett, 2014, p.1).

The set of conservation activities, as put forward by the *Definition*, reflects the zeitgeist of scientific-based conservation in the 1980s. That definition asserts preservation activities, as consisting of actions “taken to retard or prevent deterioration of or damage to cultural properties by control of their environment and/or treatment of their structure in order to maintain them as nearly as possible in an

¹ For a discussion on terminology and designations of the conservator-restorer profession see Figueira (2015). According to Figueira (2015), “the confusion that derived from the overlapping terms [conservator and restorer] with different meanings in these two countries [UK and USA] and Western Europe negatively influenced the development of the profession and the discipline in Portugal — which until then had had a similar historic development within the museum's staff.” (Figueira, 2015). According to Bojanoski, (2018), there are two main theoretical strands concerning terminology, “one more interventive, characteristic of countries with Latin tradition”, with prevalence of the term “restoration”; and “another more focused on conservation, defended by professionals from Anglo-Saxon speaking countries”, with prevalence of the term “conservation”. According to Bojanoski (2018), this ambiguity led some to defend the juxtaposition of the two words, “conservation-restoration”, as a solution to avoid the prevalence of either term, however, it still seems there is no consensus on this matter. In the context of this dissertation the term “conservator” and “conservator-restorer” will be used interchangeably.

unchanging state” (ICOM-CC, 1984). This naturally disregards cultural heritage objects that do not conform to traditional views on changeability and time, such as those with ritualist uses, historic villages and sites, or contemporary art. Particularly in the case of contemporary art, the idea of the conservator as a technician with an only concern for the material stability of the ‘original’ object, loses relevance. This definition, however, is still prevalent in discourses around the role of the conservator. According to ICOM-CC’s “Conservation: who, what & why?” online tool (ICOM-CC, 2020), developed more recently, the conservator is described as a “person educated in conservation and restoration techniques and ethics, who is responsible for maintaining objects in as stable a condition as possible (...)”.

Despite the apparent consensus as to when and how the discipline started to emerge, there is still a knowledge gap on the conditions for the development and recognition of the professional identity of conservators. The few studies that touch upon this issue lack empirical foundations that speak to the impact of education and the professional contexts, specifically on the development of a professional identity related to the conservation of contemporary art.

What makes a conservator of contemporary art different from a conservator working with so-called traditional artworks is, in the first instance, the possible interaction with the artist that has created the artwork, and secondly, the need to constantly negotiate the materiality of the artwork with the artist and the institution. Conservators working with contemporary art are, therefore, responsible for recognising not only how artworks can change over time, but also how the museum, the artist, the curator, and the conservator, together, participate in the making of those artworks. For this reason, it is extremely important for these conservators to participate in decision-making moments regarding the conservation management of contemporary art.

The *praxis* around the care for contemporary art collections in Portugal is still underdeveloped. That mostly due to the late development of the profession and related education and advocacy structures in Portugal, and to the lack of implementation of practices in public facing collections. This context, however, allows for a privileged insight into how professional roles are developed in the care for emerging artistic practices. By focusing this study into Portuguese collections, it will be possible to address current knowledge gaps in relevant literature regarding the development and implementation of fringe-like practices in models of professionalisation and ethical guidelines that are somewhat consolidated. There seems to be no written data on the conservation and care of contemporary art collections in Portuguese institutions. It seems each institution has its own conservation management structure and does not follow standard guidelines on these issues.

There are certain knowledge gaps that this study seeks to help to close, namely, (1) who is developing conservation practices in contemporary art collections, (2) how these practices are explored in institutional contexts, and (3) how do these practices contribute to the definition of professional roles.

The investigation of these issues can lead us to reflect on the definition of professional roles of the people involved in the conservation of contemporary art, affording some insights into the professional identity of conservators, and allowing for proposals to consolidate its development and implementation.

This study therefore seeks to help closing the knowledge gap, contributing to the debate on what it means to be a conservator, what is the role of the conservator and the parameters for their participation and authority inside a collecting institution.

The empirical data that grounds this research was collected by interviewing six professionals working in five contemporary art collections. This situated account, therefore, renders site-specific results that can also resonate internationally. The project was defined in three steps, which can also be considered its main goals:

1. *Understanding who takes part in the conservation and preservation of the main contemporary art collections in Portugal, and what is the conservator's role within that context.* To meet this goal, semi structured interviews were conducted to conservation professionals working in the five main Portuguese contemporary art collections. These “collection-caretakers” are inserted in the collections team which, daily oversees the collection's conservation and care. Referring to the conservator's role in an institution, D'haenens (2019) claims activities like study, mediation, exhibition or loans are also part of the work of a conservator (besides restoration), adding that all those activities also answer to the principle of “transmission to future generations while ensuring its current use”. The conservation and care activities therefore explored in each interview, were grouped into “production of conservation documentation”, “acquisitions”, “loans”, “exhibitions” and “restoration”². In this analysis, the respondent's roles as well as the conservator's roles (either outsourced freelancers, or in-house staff conservators), within each explored conservation practice, will be approached.

2. *Analysing how the role of conservators in the preservation of Portuguese contemporary art collections, relates to the international panorama.* To meet this goal, the collected data was compared with recent literature focusing on the role of contemporary art conservators in institutions around the globe – mainly the international survey conducted by D'haenens (2019).

3. *Examining how conservation practices performed by “collection-caretakers” in the given context, especially by conservators, can inform about the professional identity of conservators.* To meet this goal, first, a survey of relevant literature on the definition of professional identities was performed. It focused on definitions of PI, its meaning, and its dynamic development, on how it is influenced by different factors, and how it is currently evident in conservation literature. Professions associated with the care of people, like social work, occupational therapy, childcare/teaching and especially nursing³, were identified as the professions with sustained contact zones with the conservation practice,⁴ and, for

² In this study, the term “restoration” is being used to refer specifically to direct conservation interventions, and not all conservation actions. Although this profession has the name of “conservation-restoration” in Portugal, the author recognizes that the meaning of the word “restoration” can change in Anglo-Saxon contexts and gain a somewhat pejorative connotation. This way, the term “restoration” is understood, in this study, as “the action that attempts to modify an object's perceivable features”, as defined by S. Muñoz-Viñas (2004, p.20).

³ The general association of these jobs to be a “caretaker” or a “carer” – either for people or for heritage – and curiously enough, to a “woman's job”, makes these professions share similar challenges that will be addressed further along.

⁴ This connection has been identified previously. There are many studies working at the intersection between medical and conservation professions (Muñoz-Viñas, 2004; Idelson, 2011). Interestingly, the idea of “care” has permeated the conservation discourse in the last years, which have sustained an ongoing focus on “collections care” (Lindsay, 2005; Ashley-Smith, 2018; Henderson, 2011).

that reason, were surveyed more extensively⁵. The study did not consider all factors found in the literature, but rather a limited number, based on their attributed importance in the literature and the perceived relevance they have for the conservation field, including: functions performed, perceived professional role (by self and others), position in the formal structure and authority, professional autonomy, professional socialisation, job satisfaction, professional recognition and prestige the profession confers, professional groups and accreditation system, as well as gender-related issues.⁶ An analysis is performed, relating the collected empirical data (on who takes part in the conservation of contemporary art collections in Portugal), to the different selected professional identity influencing factors.

To approach these goals, it is necessary to understand the development of the profession in Portugal, and how much it is related to early stages in the professionalisation, namely the education phase of the formation of a conservator.⁷ The reliance on education to meet any of the conservator's professional goals is particularly relevant in Portugal. Due to current legislation on interventions in cultural heritage⁸ (along with other informal mechanisms of regulation) access to the profession is very much coupled with the Portuguese education system. This is particularly important for the conservation of contemporary art, a specialism that only now beginning to be consolidated worldwide.⁹

1.1. The Portuguese context: an overview

Restoration training in Portugal was carried out through apprenticeships in workshops until the 1980s (Figueira, 2015). According to Remígio (2010), conservation specialisms in Portugal had their genesis in the Institute for Examination and Restoration of Works of Art (IEROA),¹⁰ created in 1940, next to the National Museum of Ancient Art (MNAA). Initially conceived as a place for the painting laboratory

⁵ Studies around the development of PIs, according to the review article by researcher Inês Cardoso and co-authors (2014), have mostly addressed two professional groups: nurses and teachers. In that essay, important professional identity construction similarities were found, especially between nursing and the conservation profession, which triggered further research and a deeper association between the two.

⁶ The last three factors were not addressed in the empirical approach but were selected for this study due to their perceived relevance/importance for the conservation profession (see Appendix III).

⁷ The dynamic development of any professional identity can be understood, according to Jebril (2008), as a continuous and ongoing process, developed in four different stages: 1) the level of preoccupation, that extends from childhood to puberty (preparatory phase) and from puberty until the beginning of the formal professional education, that fits the individual's personality traits (searching phase); 2) the learning stage, which occurs in the context of initial training, corresponding to the phase in which the construction of professional identity is at its highest level, where the individual is identified with the chosen profession (being able to relate the self with the profession); 3) the professional stage, which occurs during the professional exercise, closing the gap between theory and practice, corresponding to the phase of accumulation of experience and the reinforcing of professional identity; 4) the post professional stage, representing professional identity changes during the retirement (not enough research has been done on this phase) (Cardoso, Batista, & Graça, 2014; Jebril, 2008).

⁸ Decree-Law no. 55/2001 of 15 February (*Definição das carreiras de Museologia e Conservação e Restauro na Administração Pública*); Decree-Law no. 47/2004 of 19 August (*Lei Quadro dos Museus Portugueses*); Decree-Law no. 107/2001 of 8 September (*Lei de Bases do Património Cultural Português*); Decree-Law no. 140/2009 of 15 June (*Intervenções sobre bens culturais classificados, ou em vias de classificação*).

⁹ As seen, for example, for the lack of speciality courses in the field until the turn of the millennium. The most significant growth in the field of conservation of contemporary art took place in the 1990, when time-based media art conservation started to be developed in Europe and in North America. The development of the field was propelled by in-depth, focused, projects, which developed ontological frameworks for understanding these artworks alongside taxonomic matrices, workflows and procedures, guidelines, documentation models, and informatic tools for the archiving of media art.

¹⁰ According to one of its founders, João Couto, it was a "restoration Institute in its own house, in a building specially designed for this purpose, a unique case in the world" (DGPC, 2020).

and workshop, this space would later expand to offer three specialized workshops: furniture and polychrome wood, paintings, and textiles and tapestry (DGPC, 2020; Remígio, 2010).

It was only in 1989 that the first academic degrees, equivalent to a technical university level (“*Bacharel*” degree), were created at Escola Superior de Tecnologia de Tomar do Instituto Politécnico de Tomar (IPT/ESTT) and at Escola Superior de Conservação e Restauro de Lisboa (ESCR) (Figueira, 2015; Casanova, 2012) (Fig.1, Appendix I).¹¹ These degrees provided the track towards 13 specialisations: *azulejo*, ceramics and glass; archaeological objects; ethnographic objects; sculpture; photography; musical instruments; metals; furniture; paper, documents and book; stone; painting; mural painting, and textiles (Remígio, 2010).

In 1998 and 1999, these degrees evolved to become what is now called a “pre-Bologna Degree”,¹² first the IPT/ESTT and then the ESCR. With the extinction of the latter in 1999, the degree continued at the Faculty of Science and Technology, NOVA University of Lisbon, which adopted the same 13 specializations (Figueira, 2015; Remígio, 2010; Casanova, 2012).

In 1995, the Professional Association of Conservators-Restorers of Portugal (ARP) was established with the approval of its first statutes, which were based on the 1984 ICOM-CC *Definition*, and the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorer’s Organisations (ECCO) guidelines (ARP, 2020a). Together with the European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education (ENCoRE), ECCO has defined a conservator has to graduate with a master’s level (considered level 7, according to the European Qualification Framework (EQF)) to be suitable for access to the profession, with the title of conservator (Casanova, 2012; ENCoRE, 2003), a recommendation that is followed by ARP. Indeed, to join ARP as an active member, you must possess a degree in conservation and restoration,¹³ or to have been exercising the profession of conservator for at least seven years until 1989 (ARP, 2020b). Furthermore, conservators must align themselves with at least one of the 13 conservation specialisms offered back in 1989. This means, in 2020 this organisation does not recognise specialisms such as contemporary art, built heritage, or preventive conservation.

In the context of this dissertation, the lack of recognition of the specialism on the conservation of contemporary art is particularly relevant. All conservation degrees in Portugal (recognized by ECCO and ENCoRe) provide opportunities to carry out a specialism in contemporary art. There is, however, a visible lack of institutional support for this specialism which, looking at the international context, is growing both in terms of importance and regarding opportunities in the job market. For example, although FCT-UNL has created a laboratory specifically dedicated to documentation for contemporary art in 2010, there is still a lack of a dedicated graduate degree that allows for specific training in the care

¹¹ These degrees were based on the ICOM-CC's 1984 Definition of the profession.

¹² To read more about the Bologna process see The Europe Union (2005).

¹³ Currently in Portugal, there are three institutions, recognized by ECCO and ENCoRe, that provide higher education degrees in conservation and restoration: Faculty of Sciences and Technology, Nova University of Lisbon (FCT-UNL), Polytechnic Institute of Tomar (IPT), and Catholic University of Porto (Figueira, 2015).

of contemporary art and time-based media.¹⁴ In many ways, this leads to some confusion about the role of the conservator in contemporary art collections, which sometimes encompasses skills that lack in current conservation educational contexts, including collection management.

In this study, it is expected to encounter several conservation practices (which are fundamental in the management and care of collections), being performed by different professionals instead of conservators, since they are not usually present on many institutions' staff in Portugal. What does this tell us about the conservation practice and the conservator's role? How do conservation practices being performed by others who are not conservators, influence the conservator's professional identity? These are questions we hope to begin to answer in this study.

2. Methodology

To meet this study's goals, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals working directly in conservation and collection care for contemporary artworks in five Portuguese institutions.

Interviews are a tool for the registration of very specific knowledge (Beerkens et al., 2012). In this study, the interviews served to gain in-depth insight into who (and to what extent) conserves and preserves the main Portuguese contemporary art collections, with a focus on the conservator's role. In in-depth interviews, the interviewer and the interviewee are both involved in generating information, hence both determine the outcome (Beerkens et al., 2012; Marçal et al., 2013). As for the interview structure, conservation literature usually advises the use of semi-structured interviews, which reside between a close interview – which follows a pre-determined script – and an open interview – where the artist speaks freely about previously agreed topics (Beerkens, et al., 2012). In the semi-structured strategy, the interview starts with open questions, evolving further to in-depth inquiries (which may be planned or not). Caution must be taken to avoid direct/closed questions, which can induce a biased description of events (Beerkens, et al., 2012; Marçal et al., 2013).

In this study, the interviews sought to explore the role of the conservator in the context of the conservation and care of contemporary art collections in Portugal¹⁵. To this end, we sought to understand the practices performed by conservators, and how these practices were influenced by their context and their professional role. Interview scripts were developed for a theme interview, which focused on the functions performed by caretakers in Portuguese contemporary art collections. Questions were grouped as “production of documentation”,¹⁶ “acquisitions”, “loans”, “exhibitions”, and “restoration”.

¹⁴ Degrees such as these have recently emerged in European Universities. Notably, the first degree dedicated to the conservation of contemporary art (with a specific focus on Modern Materials) started at the Bern University of Arts in 2003 (Marçal, 2019).

¹⁵ The interviews were conducted together with a colleague who is addressing the management of time-based media art collections in Portugal in her master's research. This joint approach may have possibly influenced the responses obtained in this study.

¹⁶ In this study, the term “conservation documentation” is understood as “*documentation of the conservation process* of a given object”, as defined by Marçal and Macedo (2017). This term comprises: “1) condition and treatment reports; 2) technical multimedia documents (photos and videos, 3D and other digitally created images, analytical results, etc.); 3) historical research data; and 4) all documents related to inventory, insurance and inter-departmental exchange” (Marçal&Macedo, 2017, p.1).

All the interviews started with broad questions which first sought to gain insight into the interviewee as an individual professional, understanding the formal educational and professional backgrounds. Then the interview script focused on the current professional sphere, hoping to understand how the institution's staff and teams are divided, the interviewee's professional role and the functions performed daily. The interview further evolved towards more narrow questions, like the existence of a conservation team/department; who integrates conservation activities and to what extent (since conservation documentation, acquisitions, loans, exhibitions and restoration); the perception of the conservator's role; all while understanding the dynamics, communication and latent hierarchies inside the institution.

2.1. Sample Characterisation

The five main contemporary art collections in Portugal were selected as representative of the national context. During sample characterisation, carers of collections – the people who care for collections in these selected institutions – were sought through secondary data sources (mainly official websites of these institutions). In order to select who to interview, and as there is a lack of permanent conservator positions in Portuguese institutions, we sought to select people working as "museum conservators",¹⁷ collection managers, or registrars performing conservation actions on a daily basis.

After initial contacts that explained the aims, scope, and timeline of the study, six professionals working directly in collection's care accepted to participate in this study (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Studied institutions and interviewed professionals

Institution	Interviewed Professional	Interviewed person per Institution
Berardo Collection Museum (BCM)	- Registrar	1
Serralves Museum	- Collection Manager	1
Culturgest	- "Museum Conservator"	1
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (CGF)	- Curator and Collection Manager - Head of preventive conservation and restoration	2
National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC)	- Curator and "Museum Conservator"	1

A choice was made to interview both the curator/collection manager and the conservator of the same institution (CGF), in order to have a perspective of the same issues, on both sides. In the case of MNAC, since the contact with this institution was made at such a late stage of the investigation, there was only an opportunity to exchange information through a conversation via email and not through a face-to-face interview. This somewhat limited the results when compared to the personal interview method used with other studied institutions.

¹⁷ The "museum conservator" is a Latin term which originated from the professional with the "Museum Conservator" Degree. According to Ema Rocha (2013) the "museum conservator" course was created in 1932 and was in operation until 1973, under the responsibility of the first Director of the National Museum of Ancient Art (MNAA), José de Figueiredo. The course taught the practice and daily functioning of a museum. Based on the French model of the *École du Louvre*, the course was based on theoretical sessions of Art History and practical sessions related to museum's collections. Oriented towards a theoretical-practical teaching, the MNAA museum conservators course represents the antecedent of the current academic training in Museology in Portugal (Rocha, 2013). This terminology gained roots in the Portuguese museological tradition, and to this day, the "conservator" position in museums, is usually occupied by art historians and curators. For this reason, the Culturgest and MNAC "museum conservators" (Latin term) are considered, from now on in this study, "curators" (Anglo-Saxon term) since this study follows an Anglo-Saxon terminology. Current ECCO's president, Susan Corr, stated: "it remains an issue, in some countries, where the word 'conservator' remains jealously and legally guarded by the curatorial profession" (ARP, 2019). As pointed by this terminology, Portugal is one of those countries.

Each interviewee is inserted in a group of staff professionals that work daily in the conservation care and management of collections, named, in this study, “collections team” (Fig.2, Appendix I). As seen in Fig.2, only the CGF holds conservators on the collections team. Considering the sample of respondents, curators and collection managers, tend to have degrees and master’s degrees in art history. This is in line with the findings in the international study conducted by D’haenens’s (2019). As for the conservator, registrar and one collection manager (who also has a degree in art history) their education/training tends to be in conservation. For more information on the sample characterisation see Table 2. From the enlisted sample, two interviewees with relevant conservation education and training (apart from the CGF Conservator) are now performing different roles – the registrar from BCM and the collection manager from Serralves.

3. Conservation *in practice*: results and discussion

A brief look into the daily performance of conservation practices demonstrates that the work of a conservator, when executed in a museum context, is far from being defined by “treating material damage”, as so well put forward by D’haenens (2019, p.34). As previously mentioned, the conservation and care activities therefore explored in each interview, can be grouped into “production of conservation documentation”, “acquisitions”, “loans”, “exhibitions” and “restoration”.¹⁸

One of the interviewees reported the daily performed activities were not aligned with the held job position. The interviewee mentioned the inexistence of an official collections team, adding, “there is a certain schizophrenia concerning professional titles because what I do effectively is collection’s management”. The interviewee’s performance of collection managing tasks (which are not aligned with the held job position) is a consequence of the official collection manager working only part-time and focusing mainly on the administrative paperwork part of loans and copyrights management.

A professional working in another collection, while explaining their daily tasks, reported the difference between a “conservation and restoration technician” and a “conservator-restorer”. This respondent claimed the activity of the former is very intended only for the relation with the object, while the latter implies a much broader activity. The path of a conservator, as stated by this interviewee, is much more open and connected to different programmes in the museum, including loan processes, collections management, database management, artworks inspections, verification and anticipation of artwork’s damage in storage, accompanying the workshop activities the storage facilities, among other.

3.1. Conservation Documentation

According to the interviewees, conservation documentation and inventory are performed by all respondents. Five out of six interviewees reported they perform condition reports, along with the artwork’s conservation diagnosis. This data suggest there seems to be no distinction between job positions in the performance of activities related to these conservation practices.

¹⁸ Table 3 (see Appendix I) indicates the tasks performed by all interviewed professionals.

Table 2- Education and Professional Experience of the interviewed professionals

Official Position Title	Institution	Name attributed to the interviewees	Occupying position since	Degree	Masters	Post-graduation	Conservation Specialization	Current Field of Expertise (as per own's description)	Professional Experience	Any conservation education and/or training?
Registrar	BCM	BCM Registrar	2011	CR	CR	-	Contemporary Art	-	-Conservation Intern in contemporary art institution -Conservator in contemporary art institution	Yes
Collection Manager	Serralves Museum	Serralves Collection Manager	2016	AH	CR	-	Time-based Media Art	-	-Paintings Conservation Intern in conservation laboratory -Paintings Conservator in conservation laboratory -One-year Conservation fellowship in Time-based Media Conservation in an international institution -Freelance Conservator	Yes
"Museum Conservator"	Culturgest	Culturgest Curator	2008	AH	AH	Curatorship and Exhibition's Organization	-	Contemporary Art	- Projects manager in the field of Culture	No
Curator and Collection Manager	CGF	CGF Curator	2005	AH	AH	Book edition and Digital supports	-	Paper Artworks	- Curatorial Intern in cultural centre - Curator in CGF	No
Head of preventive conservation and restoration	CGF	CGF Conservator	2011	Architecture of interiors and Furniture ¹⁹	Museology	Museology	Furniture and Lacquers	-	- Freelance Conservator - "Conservation and Restoration Technician" (CGF from 1992 to 2011)	Yes
Curator and "Museum Conservator"	MNAC	MNAC Curator	2001	AH	AH	-	-	Photography and New Media	- Curatorship and research of photography national and international collections	Yes

AH – Art History; CR – Conservation and Restoration

¹⁹ Bear in mind that, at the time (1985), there were no tertiary conservation-restoration courses in Portugal as there are today. While undertaking this course, this interviewee worked in private conservation ateliers and, afterwards, undertook two out of three years of a furniture conservation course in José de Figueiredo Institute, while working mainly in conservation of furniture, Indo-Portuguese objects and lacquers (later specializing in the latter).

Regarding the performance of conservation documentation, the position of one interviewee should be highlighted. According to this interviewee, curators are solely responsible for the conservation diagnostic evaluation and conservation inspections of all collections. This issue raised a question for this study of how can a professional, namely a curator, with no conservation education/training, develop a correct conservation diagnostic. The interviewee clarified that a correct conservation diagnostic “can only be guaranteed when people with conservation and restoration training are involved”.

In this case, curators²⁰ have the obligation to analyse and update the collection’s conservation state on the computer database under the heading “conservation inspections”. The interviewee claimed there exists, however, a “possibility” of calling “someone from conservation and restoration” to help to perform these tasks. The institution, therefore, foresees this possibility in their policy documents. The same interviewee, however, further stated that conservators are usually not involved in conservation inspections. This may happen because the mentioned *possibility* is not an *obligation*. The interviewee considered that if there were just one or two additional people on the conservation department (becoming a small team of four), focusing only on these tasks, they could monitor all inspections. According to this interviewee, this is an opinion voiced a long time ago by the museum’s director. The same interviewee, however, further shared another concern, claiming that the institution’s organization chart and career definitions, allow curators to carry out conservation diagnoses alone. The interviewee concluded that even though curators are ultimately responsible for their respective collections, as stipulated in the institution’s statutes, they do not have sufficient material knowledge to perform those diagnosis by themselves, suggesting that should always be a person from conservation-restoration doing it.

The collected data seems to suggest that conservators, although recognized as professionals who can be asked to correctly perform conservation operations, are not currently seen as people that ought to perform those tasks.

3.2. Acquisitions

According to all respondents, conservators are never present in deliberation meetings related to acquisitions²¹. According to one interviewee, conservators are only contacted “when considered necessary” and asked for a professional opinion regarding new acquisitions.

One interviewee explained conservators only see acquired artworks, after the acquisition is formalized.²² Consequently, the conservation diagnosis only takes place after the acquisition is formalized. When asked whether a conservator’s opinion on maintenance, intervention, and presentation costs (which could influence the object’s acquisition) is considered, the interviewee responded

²⁰ According this interviewee, these curators have no conservation education/training. Note that training in art history in Portugal, traditionally does not imply advanced training in collection care, leaving these professionals not able to deal with these conservation functions alone.

²¹ Both Culturgest and BCM are not presently acquiring artworks (although BCM still accepts donations), but both interviewees confirmed that when they did, conservators were never present.

²² This happens in all five studied institutions, including CGF where a conservation department exists, however, in one institution, a freelance conservator is usually hired to perform a condition report (before the acquisition) that is attached to the collections team assessment regarding the acquisition, that is later forwarded to the administration office.

negatively, adding that “the curators do a little bit of that”. The same interviewee reported curators receive the acquired artworks on the institution’s installations, then producing the necessary documentation and conservation diagnostic, integrating a conservator in the process only “if necessary”.

According to one interviewee, the professional opinion formed by curators during acquisition decision-making meetings, is later forwarded to the administration’s office for a final approval. This interviewee reported, however, that those opinions are often incipient and never contemplate conservation diagnosis, because curators have other sensibilities. Similarly, another interviewee explained registrars and freelance conservators are not consulted before the acquisitions take place, attributing that to a “lack of museum culture” and the lack of a well-structured team. Both these two interviewees claim “without a doubt” it would be most beneficial to have a conservator in those meetings.

3.3. Exhibitions

Staff from one of the surveyed collections reported that conservators are present in the assembly of exhibitions. In other two studied institutions, conservators are never present and in the remaining two studied institutions, conservators are only present “when considered necessary”.

One interviewee explained artwork’s location decisions are made by curators, and safety decisions are made by the registrar. When asked if those location decisions compromise the artwork’s safety, the interviewee explained the registrar clarifies the conservation point of view, with the curators usually following suit with the registrar’s perspective. The interviewee then compared two possible scenarios related to the assembly of exhibitions, 1) with foreign curators and 2) with Portuguese curators. The interviewee considered invited curators from other countries, were usually more open to conservation issues. This made it easier for the interviewee to apply conservation directions in exhibitions. On the other hand, the interviewee reported some resistance regarding the Portuguese curators’ acceptance of conservation directions. Despite the strong warnings, particularly in colour photograph prints (due to the preferred aesthetics achieved with brighter lighting), the interviewee claimed it is common for those invited Portuguese curators to choose not to follow conservation recommendations.

Another interviewee explained the exhibition’s assembly is made by the curatorial team, the museography team and outsourced technicians. This interviewee also compared two other possible scenarios related to the assembly of exhibitions, 1) when exhibitions involve institution’s artworks, and 2) when exhibitions involve loaned artworks from other institutions (for temporary exhibitions). In the first scenario, a conservator is only called sometimes. This can happen, for example, when curators believe the conservator can handle the object better, due to previous conservation interventions which required proper handling. In the second scenario, however, the interviewee explained a conservator is usually present. In this second situation, the conservator is asked for different conservation opinions, and to write condition reports. When questioned on whether the asked conservation opinions are in fact applied, the interviewee answered “well, that varies a lot from artwork to artwork”, suggesting that, at least in some cases, they are not considered.

This interviewee also identified occasions where the curatorial team considered certain ‘ideal conservation measures’ to be impossible to fulfil.

3.4. Loans

Three different scenarios regarding the participation of conservators in loans decision-making can be seen in the five surveyed institutions, according to the respondents’ testimony.

In two surveyed institutions, conservators are present in loans decision-making (scenario a). In one surveyed institution, conservators are only present “when needed” (scenario b). In the remaining two surveyed institutions, conservators are never present (scenario c).

The collected data implies the decision to loan artworks can either be made by, 1) the collection team, in a total of two institutions (in which the conservator is always present – scenario a) or 2) curators, in a total of three institutions (in which the conservator is sometimes or never present – scenario b and c), (Fig.3).

As for the first situation (1), in which the loan request is evaluated by the collections team, the conservator (who is always present), is responsible for the assessment of the artwork’s conservation state. Together, the

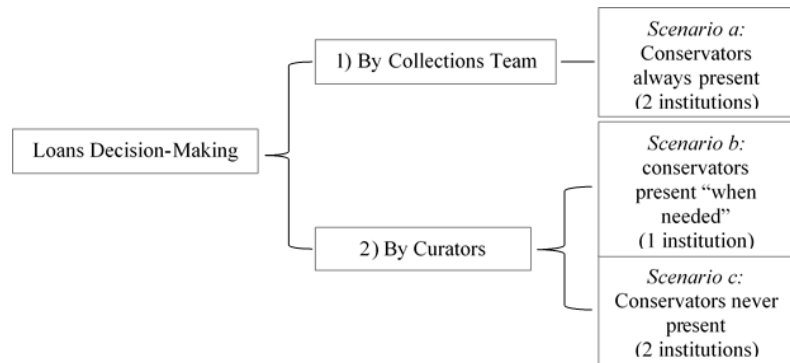


Figure 3 - Loans decision-making scenarios in all studied institutions.

team draws a conservation opinion which indicates whether the artwork is fit to be loaned. This opinion is later discussed with the administration office, which gives the final approval (like in all institutions).

As for the second situation (2), an interviewee declared curators are responsible for determining whether artworks are in good conservation condition. This interviewee further explained conservators are only contacted in these moments if the curator deems it necessary. Typically, this happens when curators consider the object requested for loan needs direct conservation interventions, but only if there is still time before the loan takes place.

3.5. Restoration

The conservator’s presence, in all but one institution, is only verified in the form of freelance conservators²³. These professionals have a main function/purpose – to restore artworks (and to perform other work related to the physicality of objects, like cleaning procedures). The CGF conservation department has two conservators on staff, plus other two on a contract (not counting freelancers). Three out of four of these CGF conservators are also essentially responsible for direct interventions. The interviewed conservator, who has not performed direct interventions in two years, is the exception in this case.

²³ The exception is CGF, the only institution which has conservators on staff, however, the presence of freelance conservators is also verified here.

As empirical data seems to suggest, the conservator’s presence appears to be verified only “when needed” or “when considered necessary”, usually by the curator. The collected data further suggests this necessity and/or need to hire conservators is strongly linked to when artworks are accepted for loans, recently acquired or going for exhibitions, and their appearance/physicality must be attended to, through a direct conservation intervention. Besides restoration, just one example was identified by the author for the reason conservators are considered needed. This reason was their handling of objects during exhibition assemblies. This better handling of objects conservators provide, is consequent of a previous contact with those objects, which took place during a past intervention.

3.6. Summary of findings

To summarize the reported conservation practices performed daily by our respondents, the collected data shows respondents are primarily involved in loans decision-making and production of documentation for conservation (83%), followed by acquisitions and exhibitions decision-making (67%) (Table 4). Conservators, on the other hand, were reported to be primarily involved in restoration activities (80%). Conservation activities, such as the production of conservation documentation (like condition reports and inventory), inspections and monitoring of artworks/collections, are functions that are not exclusive to professionals with conservation education or training. Moreover, in decision-making processes related to exhibitions, loans and mainly acquisitions, the presence of conservators is very limited (Table 5).

Table 4 - Collected data regarding respondent’s involvement in conservation management activities within the studied institutions

	Activity	Always Involved	‘Sometimes’ Involved	Never Involved
Respondents	Acquisitions decision-making	67%	0%	33%
	Exhibitions assembly	67%	33%	0%
	Loans decision-making	83%	0%	17%
	Conservation Documentation	100% ²⁴	0%	0%
	Restoration	0%	33% ²⁵	67%

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that five out of six interviewees expressed the desire of creating a conservation department, or enlarging their already existing conservation staff, claiming they are working towards that goal and things would improve that way. One interviewee, however, was the only one who did not express a will to create a conservation department in their institution. This interviewee considered an in-house conservation team “no longer justifiable”, because “the collection is not growing” and all the already existing staff members are “completely multipurpose”.

²⁴ Although only 83% of respondents perform condition reports (since the Culturgest Curator reported not performing them).

²⁵ The CGF Conservator has not been doing direct conservation work for two years, however, if there is the need to restore furniture and lacquer objects, he is the qualified professional that would perform that work. Moreover, the Serralves Collection Manager also performs, on occasion, interventive work on time-based media artworks.

Table 5 - Collected data regarding conservator's involvement in conservation management activities within the studied institutions

	Activity	Always Involved	'Sometimes' Involved	Never Involved
Conservators	Acquisitions decision-making	0%	0%	100%
	Exhibitions assembly	20%	40%	40%
	Loans decision-making	40%	20%	40%
	Conservation Documentation	0% ²⁶	100%	0% ²⁷
	Restoration	80%	20% ²⁸	0%

Through the collected data, it is possible to conclude that the conservator's functions are scattered over several roles. This may be due to several factors, 1) internal to the institution (like the institution's financial resources, and policies), 2) external, such as the social context of contemporary art conservation in Portugal and legal national policies (which ultimately influence each other), and 3) the fact that conservators are usually perceived as restorers, making them circumscribed to direct interventions (as shown by this study's results) causing the other conservation practices to be usually performed by other professionals.

This perception of the conservator as a technician and a restorer can also be sustained by some respondents' testimonies, in addition to other perceptions (Table 6). This topic of the perceived professional role of conservators will be further addressed in chapter 5.5 of this study.

Table 6 – Respondents' citations informing about their perception of the conservator's role

Respondent	Different perceptions of the Conservator's Role ²⁹
Registrar	<i>"a conservator is a person who uses the possibility of the means at their disposal to ensure that the heritage they are in charge with is being preserved to be enjoyed, studied and lived as faithfully as possible to its essential identity, for as long as possible"</i>
Collection Manager	<i>"is a person who loves to preserve, and who is happy to take care of something. (...) It is a person who takes care of [something]"</i> <i>"has a more technical job"</i>
Curator	<i>"is a collaborator and a partner (...) that sometimes may not be needed"</i> <i>"there is no need for that degree of knowledge in the institution"</i>
Curator	<i>"it is a person that helps a lot. It is a fundamental person on the follow-up of an artwork, in the sense that they support the curator at many levels and is a person with knowledge we curators do not have, that can help us on many levels"</i>
Conservator	<i>"the conservator-restorer should be someone who has the capacity and the knowledge to treat an object/collection, in order to extend its life and, with that inherent, allow it to be exhibited"</i>

4. Portugal in the International Panorama

The comparative analysis between this study's collected data, with the international panorama, will be mostly supported by D'haenens (2019) recent study, based on an international survey which

²⁶ Bear in mind that in all the studied institutions, professionals other than conservators perform conservation documentation (usually without any help/contribution from conservators).

²⁷ In all studied institutions, there are always occasions where conservators (freelancers or not) single-handedly produce documentation for conservation (especially condition reports).

²⁸ As mentioned, the CGF Conservator is the only conservator, in all studied institutions, who is not always involved in direct conservation interventions (since his daily functions go much beyond restoration and has not been restoring for 2 years). The CGF was, therefore, the only institution where conservators were not "always involved" in restoration (even though the other conservators from the CGF conservation team are always involved in restoration).

²⁹ The selected quotes were freely translated from Portuguese to English by the author.

addresses the role of conservators within the conservation of contemporary art collections.³⁰

Who are the heads of collections?

First, D'haenens's (2019) study shows "the heads of collection who responded to the survey are mainly art historians" (p.38). As it will become clear in chapter 5.3 of this study, art historians often are the heads of collections in many Portuguese museums and institutions. This can also be verified in the present study's selected institutions, namely BCM, Culturgest, CGF and MNAC. In Serralves' case, the Collection Manager (the head of collection) has conservation education and training, however, this professional also has an art history degree that should not be ignored here.

What is the Conservator's involvement in conservation management activities?

One of the main findings of D'haenens's study (2019, p.37) is that conservators "have very limited involvement in material and institutional management: loans, exhibitions, and acquisitions (28%)".

As previously mentioned, the conservator's limited involvement can also be verified in the present study (Table 5). In all studied institutions, these three activities (loans, exhibitions, and acquisitions) are mainly managed by the institution's curators and collection managers.

Regarding the limited involvement in acquisitions, senior conservator of time-based media art Joanna Phillips (IIC, 2019) refers the German museological context, criticizing the fact that in many German museums, the conservator is not even consulted by fellow curators when the museum acquires a new artwork. Conservators are only informed "after the curator or museum director has already accepted the artist's hard-drives with a series of files with an unchecked condition or quality". This scenario is confirmed in four out of five of the surveyed institutions for the present study.³¹

On the other hand, D'haenens (2019) claims conservators "have slightly more involvement in storage, inspection, re-enactment, and documentation. They are primarily involved in direct conservation interventions (65%) but it is interesting to note that other stakeholders may also be involved in such tasks" (p.37). This information also corroborates the data collected in the present study, where conservators are also "slightly" more involved in storage, inspections and documentation. These functions, however, are not restricted to the conservator, and are usually performed by curators or collection managers (especially in inspection and documentation). Moreover, according to the collected empirical data, conservators are also "primarily involved" in direct conservation interventions.

Referring to the conservator's involvement in institutions (especially in interventive treatments), Jonathan Ashley-Smith (2018), claims "the proportion of time and effort dedicated to interventive conservation in heritage institutions appears to be decreasing" (p.6), being replaced by preventive conservation and collections care activities, with the arguable justifications of cost efficiency and risk

³⁰ The D'haenens (2019) study responses were collected from "28 collections and 46 individuals in all categories (private, public, and corporate), of variable sizes, and across almost all continents (except Africa)" (p.36).

³¹ In Serralves, the conservation education and training of the collection manager, allow him to perform conservation assessment/verification task before the acquisition takes place.

reduction (Ashley-Smith, 2018). This information is also verified in the present study, confirming that conservation departments inside museological institutions are scarce, since they are often linked to interventive conservation, which seems to be increasingly understood as unnecessary as a constant presence inside the institution.

Considering the information provided by D'haenens (2019) and this study's results, it seems the conservator is mainly hired only to perform direct conservation interventions. These interventions, however, appear to be fading in heritage institutions, according to Ashley-Smith (2018). If this is the case, the conservator's presence inside heritage institutions can tend to diminish with time.

How does the Conservator's presence manifest itself inside the institution?

Types of contract are also addressed by D'haenens (2019), where, "1/3 of collections have an in-house conservator, 1/3 consult an external workforce when necessary, and 1/3 support conservators through both types of contracts (in-house and external)" (p. 38). The collected data for this study shows the presence of conservators in Portugal seems to be less varied: 1/5 of the studied institutions has both in-house and external conservators, and 4/5 hire external conservators where necessary.

The choice to undertake a conservation treatment, according to D'haenens (2019), "nearly always depends on urgency, a loan, or an exhibition (89 % and 68 %). The conservator is generally consulted when a need for aesthetic or structural intervention arises" (p. 38). Similarly, in the present study, the interviewees invoke a "necessity" to hire conservators arising from the emergency of a close exhibition, loan, or acquisition, which correlated with the international panorama.

The expertise provided by the conservator, and how they are perceived by other stakeholders inside the institution, is also approached by D'haenens, who claims (2019):

"their [conservators] expertise is generally limited to treatment proposal and implementation as well as advice but not to implement such advice or decide which artwork to treat at what moment. On the one hand, their expertise is regarded as practical and has a direct implication on the physical preservation of the work. However, this takes place generally for the pre-selected works by curators or managers during handling (in which process conservators are hardly involved). On the other hand, their expertise is considered as theoretical advice, but the impact of this advice is more difficult to evaluate because its implementation will be decided and applied by others" (p. 38).

This information is unmistakably confirmed by the present study's collected data. As previously mentioned, according to the collected data, the conservator is usually hired or consulted for advice regarding the physicality of objects. The implementation of those conservation interventions/advice, and the manner and timing of those implementations, however, are left to others. The collected data also shows the conservator's hiring/consulting, only happens when curators or collection managers consider it should happen, when in contact with the object (this was expected, since almost all studied institutions do not have in-house conservators). This hierarchy is also confirmed by senior conservator of time-based media art Joanna Phillips (IIC, 2019), when referring to German museums, claiming conservators regularly report to curatorial departments. Moreover, Phillips also claimed her German contemporary

art conservator colleagues feel very frustrated with these institutional hierarchies where they have no autonomy in decisions (IIC, 2019).

On a concluding note, D’haenens (2019) claims “the presence of an in-house conservator does not seem to improve the conservation situation, either due to lack of time or because they are rarely responsible for diagnostics” (p. 39). In the case of the CGF (which has in-house conservators) this is also confirmed, because these conservators are mainly responsible for direct conservation interventions, except for the interviewed conservator. This interviewed conservator, however, also has very limited involvement in decision-making regarding acquisitions, loans, and exhibitions, and is not responsible for conservation practices like the production of documentation for conservation and inspections. D’haenens (2019) attributes the reason why the presence of in-house conservators does not seem to improve the “conservation situation”³² to a lack of time or the scarce responsibly conservators have for diagnostics. These two possible reasons are also mentioned by the CGF Conservator, who claimed conservators are not being entirely responsible for conservation diagnosis, which makes things “*go wrong*”. The CGF Conservator also mentioned the conservation team has a constant time constraint, which can also contribute to that conservation situation, and hamper the team from performing other conservation activities, like artworks inspections. This requires a change in the institution’s policies.

Considering the selected recent literature, it seems this study’s collected data relates to the German panorama described by Joanna Phillips and the international panorama described by Manon D’haenens and Jonathan Ashley-Smith.

The involvement of conservators in loans, exhibitions, and acquisitions, however, seems to be highly contextual. The international study of D’haenens (2019), does not consider results of projects like *Matters in Media Art*, led by MoMA, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and Tate, which show clearly how conservators working in those settings not only are involved in those collection management activities, but have indeed developed knowledge that impacts decision-making in those specific fora.³³

5. Insights on the conservator’s professional identity

Now that we know who takes care of contemporary art collections in Portugal, and what role conservators have in that context, in this section, an analysis will be made on how this collected data can inform about the professional identity of the conservator.

The professional identity of any profession is relevant because it affects the professional’s psychological well-being and the individual’s behaviour in the workplace (Caza & Creary, 2016). A study led by the philosopher Mohammad Jebril (2008) has shown that a consistent professional identity reflects on the professional’s performance and on the advancement of the profession as whole, while

³² Understood by the author as the roles of the different professionals and their participation and dynamic in the conservation of collections.

³³ A project launched in 2005 that aimed to build common ground between three museums – MoMA, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and Tate – and to develop guidelines for the care and preservation of time-based media art.

issues leading towards an undefined professional identity tend to “result in poor professional unity, increase professional attrition, weakening the profession and increase money loss” (p.2). Professional identity problems, Jebiril (2008) adds, “stem from the difficulty many professionals have in defining their professions underlying premises, role ambiguity, lack of universal conceptualization, as well as diversity in the scope of practice that affects professional unity and professional image” (p.1).

These conditions of uncertainty are often verified in the recently formed, broad-range professions, such as the conservator, whose professional identity is clearly understudied.³⁴ Not only the profession is clearly young (at least when compared to related disciplines such as Art History, or Material Science), but the terms that sustain its professional practice are also quite fluid: as an example, the title of “conservator-restorer”, according to Casanova (2012) was only attributed to conservation professionals in the 1980s, following the document “*Le conservateur-restaurateur: une définition de la profession*” presented by Agnes Ballestrem, to the ICCROM’s Standards and Training Committee. These obstacles the profession faces, reflect on real life complications such as the difficulty in establishing functional accreditation systems, as well as difficulty in establishing professional groups that represent, support and advocate for all workers, as well as the lack of consensus regarding legal, educational and even deontological aspects. These conditions/obstacles the profession faces, further reinforce the need for a more in-depth study of the professional identity of the conservator.

Studies around the development and consolidation of professional identities have been approached by multiple areas of knowledge (like sociology, social psychology, psychology and philosophy) (Cardoso et al. 2014). Different understandings and perspectives on what that identity entails have been proposed,³⁵ with researchers such as Cardoso and co-authors (2014) and Cathy Maginnis (2018), suggesting that the professional identity is only one component of an individual’s overall complex identity being, for that reason, difficult to study in isolation. Professional identity, or PI, has been defined by Slay & Smith (2010) as “one’s professional self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences” (p.85). Maginnis defended in 2018 that to this notion of identity one needs to add professional knowledge and skills (Maginnis, 2018). Drawing on a perspective on PI defined as Social Identity Theory (SIT) (after Henri Tajfel and John Turner),³⁶ we can understand the development of an individual’s professional identity through their interactions with social groups (Maginnis, 2018; Molinero, 2015, p.13). In this framework, a person’s social identity implies an awareness that she/he belongs to a social category or group (Stets & Burke, 2000), where social actors have multiple identities

³⁴ Only two results were found for the study of the professional identity of conservators, a Portuguese master’s thesis in sociology (Sá, 2011) and a resulting paper from the same author (Sá, 2012).

³⁵ Identity can be understood as unique and unmistakable, and it is relevant for this study because, according to professional identity researcher Cathy Maginnis (2018), “it is who an individual is and relates to their choice of profession, aligning with perceptions of themselves, matching their values and beliefs, influenced by societal and personal factors”. In other words, it is a construct developed along life, constantly transforming and evolving with time, under personal and contextual/social influences, that result on the individual’s sense of who they are and how they see themselves according to the chosen profession (Cardoso et al., 2014; Maginnis, 2018).

³⁶ Several identity understandings and perspectives exist and, according to Owens and co-authors (2010) there are three main traditions in research on identity, naming them “three faces of identity”, which are the Identity Theory, the Social Identity Theory and Collective Identity. For more information on SIT, see Appendix II

that are activated by different social contexts (Owens et al., 2010). A social group can be a social class, family or a profession – such as conservation. Intergroup relations are especially important in the field of conservation, as seen in the results discussion above. From this study, it is evident that the dynamic inside the collection’s team is particularly relevant in the definition of the functions performed by conservators and in relation the conservator has with other professionals involved in the conservation and care of collections. This interactive model resonates with different aspects that have been studied as influencing factors for the development of professional identities. With a study focused on the functions performed by caretakers, which, in itself, is considered a PI influencing factor, the empirical data collected via interviews allows us to further discuss on the construction of PI of conservators working the conservation of contemporary art in the Portuguese institutional context.

5.1 Factors influencing the development of professional identities

Different factors can act as drivers or inhibitors to an individual’s PI development. There is not an overall systematic approach on the study of PI influencing factors, with selected factors depending on the purpose of the study, their approach to theory, their surveyed profession, and the chosen PI development stage.

Drawing on the data gathered in the interview process and in discussions in the context of the fifth IIC Student & Emerging Conservator Conference - The Conservator's Reflection (IIC, 2019), there are some PI influencing factors that seem to be directly addressed by the focus on the daily functions performed by conservators in Portuguese collections: functions performed, job satisfaction, perceived professional role (by self and others), position in the formal structure and authority, professional autonomy, and professional socialisation. These factors were also selected due to their relevance in the understanding of the general context and framework of the profession (in Portugal, in Europe and in the USA) and their considered strong impact on the conservator’s PI construction. Table 7 further proposes other factors that might be relevant, but that were not addressed in this study’s empirical discussion.³⁷

Table 7- Selected Personal and Social/Professional factors as influencers of the conservator’s PI development for the present study

Personal Factor	Job satisfaction (Pimentel et al., 2011; Jebril, 2008)
	Perceived professional role (by self) (Jebril, 2008)
Social / Professional Factor	Professional groups and councils, and accreditation system (in part informs about institutional policies, professional status and work conditions from Jebril (2008))
	Functions performed (Pimentel et al., 2011)
	Position in the formal structure and Authority (Pimentel et al., 2011)
	Professional Autonomy (Maginnis, 2018; Pimentel et al., 2011; Jebril, 2008)
	Gender problems and related issues (Molinero, 2015; Pimentel et al., 2011; Jebril, 2008; Adams, 2010)
	Perceived professional role (by others) (Jebril, 2008)
	Professional Recognition and Prestige the profession confers (Pimentel et al., 2011; Jebril, 2008; Cardoso et al., 2014)
Professional socialisation (Pimentel et al., 2011; Maginnis, 2018; Cardoso et al., 2014; Molinero, 2015; Brown, 2014) (in part informs about “interprofessional relations” and “communication” from Jebril (2008))	

³⁷ See Appendix III for the discussion of the other selected factors.

5.2 Functions performed

The collected empirical data on the collection-caretaker's performed conservation practices – especially the conservator's – raises some concerns related to the conservator's PI development in the given context. Two important results were drawn from the collected data analysis that are worth mentioning here, 1) the conservator's almost sole involvement in restoration, which strongly limits their presence and participation in other conservation activities, and 2) functions like inspections, condition reports and conservation diagnosis, being systematically carried out by professionals without education/training in conservation. The absence of trained conservators in these tasks, which are strongly dependant on specific conservation knowledge, also constitutes a risk for collections. These two issues can be considered as negative contributors to the conservator's PI development, because they not only hamper conservators from performing conservation related functions but also allow other professionals without conservation knowledge/training to perform it for them.

Moreover, conservators should be included in tasks related to acquisitions, loans, and exhibitions, since these are already part of the functions of conservators-restorers in an international context. This involvement could contribute to an improvement of the professional socialisation of conservators, and to the equity of roles within the institution.

5.3 Position in the formal structure, Authority and Professional Autonomy

According to the collected empirical data, the conservator's position in the formal structure, tends to be hierarchically below curators and collection managers. As suggested by the collected data, the conservator is only present when and if curators, or collection managers, decide to temporarily hire them. Even when curators/collections managers decide to hire conservators, results from their assessments can be refused or simply not followed. In the surveyed institution where a conservation department exists, curators/collection managers also hire conservators when they (curators/collection managers) decide an artwork needs a conservation intervention (at least in processes of loans, acquisitions and exhibitions). It was perceived, however, that in this institution, most of the preservation work, especially in storage, is run by conservators.

This dependence on the curator and/or collection manager to execute most conservation practices, points, therefore, to an inferior position in the hierarchy (and a consequent inferior authority and autonomy), negatively affecting the conservator's PI. The empirical data seems to suggest conservators can be perceived as specialists who are competent enough to formulate instructed professional advices, but not enough to make the decision of how and when to implement those instructed formulations. It is possible, for example, to refer back to one of the collected testimonies, in which the interviewee claimed the conservator does not have the authority to prevent a loan process, even if it puts an artwork at risk.

This observation contrasts with the formulations of the conservation profession as being an evidence-based critical judgement profession, as seen in related codes of ethics and even definitions of the profession (ECCO, 2002, 2003). Researcher and graphic document's conservator, Conceição Casanova (2012) who, in her doctoral thesis, addresses the evolution of the conservator's legal and

formal statue and consequent authority, mentions Cesari Brandi as representing the ‘era of experienced judgment’. According to Casanova (2012), this coincides with the establishment of the first restoration institutes/organizations (which played a fundamental role in the professionalization process), and with the emergence of a specialist as someone with much experience and “capable of making decisions, based on critical judgment” (p.245). This judgment, however, was primarily placed on historians, who were “the fundamental element for the decision to intervene in the artwork” (Casanova, 2012, p.245). This can be understood in the continuity of a tradition especially evident in Latin countries, where the art historian and the ‘museum conservator’ had the final decision about the artwork’s conservation (Casanova, 2012, p.245). Casanova (2012) partly attributes the lack of authority of the conservator in the museum context, to 1) this tradition evident in Latin countries, 2) the late first attempt to define the profession (only in 1984 with the ICOM-CC *Definition*), and 3) the implementation, in Portugal, of a higher scientific education and training plan, only in the 1990’s (Casanova, 2012, p.245). Conservation researcher Jonathan Ashley-Smith (2009) also recalls the late first attempt to define the profession, as well as other contributors like many conservation international institutes not representing the conservation workforce, when referring to the (pre)maturity of the profession.³⁸

Casanova (2012, p.245) further explains the conservator’s weak status in the museum’s hierarchy: 1) conditioned their already late emancipation; 2) is also consequent of the broad-range, multifaceted and hard to define activity, together with the combination of antagonisms like science and art, and therefore objectivity and subjectivity, all in one profession (Casanova, 2012, p.245). The mentioned “status in the hierarchy” can be translated, in this study, to the “position in the formal structure”.

These targeted issues by Casanova (2012), that mention the conservator’s weak status in the hierarchy, may explain why conservators are usually not a part of loans, exhibitions and especially acquisitions decision-making, as shown by the empirical study.

While the lack of authority of conservators in decision-making processes have been addressed by institutions like Tate (London) or the Guggenheim (New York),³⁹ this is a problem that is still common in many institutions. As previously mentioned, referring to this problem, senior time-based media art conservator Joanna Phillips (IIC,2019) claims that her contemporary art conservator colleagues, in Germany, said they are very frustrated with “institutional hierarchies” and have no autonomy in decisions. Moreover, Phillips (IIC,2019) explains in institutions with these strong hierarchies, conservators regularly report to curatorial departments, which according to her is very common in German museums.

Professional autonomy and, consequently, authority, also comes with the recognition by peers.⁴⁰

³⁸ For more information on this matter, see section 1 of Appendix III.

³⁹ Both of which have placed conservators on par with curators in the formal structure of the institution - something that is also reflected in salary levels.

⁴⁰ When referring to ‘professional autonomy’, different authors like Cardoso and co-authors (2014), Adams (2010), and Pimentel and co-authors (2011) discuss the concept used by the sociologist Elliot Friedson. For Friedson, professional autonomy is achieved through professional recognition, which in turn requires a specialized knowledge.

In a profession consistently being developed through tacit and explicit knowledge,⁴¹ conservation is, however, still very much acknowledged as a practical skill which, for the conservator J. Ashley-Smith (2016), is considered as being of a lower status than academic achievements. Ashley-Smith (2016) also claims skilled interventions rarely achieve a high priority within heritage organisations (as also supported by D’haenens (2019) international survey, and this study’s empirical data). This derogatory perception on the importance of tacit knowledge, can explain the surveyed conservator’s dependence on curators or collection managers to perform functions effectively associated to conservation practice, and their consequent lack of autonomy and authority.

5.4 Professional socialisation

Professional socialisation⁴² is part of every form of conservation practice, from discussions about the boundaries of artworks, to negotiating risks within the gallery space, presenting on research in professional fora, or engaging with student associations. As mentioned by the IIC’s President Emeritus Sarah Staniforth (IIC, 2019),⁴³ soft skills and “the need of convincing others to do what is right in conservation”, are especially important in conservation, because usually the conservator does not have a strong authority/autonomy established.

Conservator’s socialisation extends from a) *socialising with other conservators*, where conservation departments and professional groups and councils are of paramount importance. Here, conservators have the opportunity to share knowledge, experiences and strategies, to improve the profession and its identity construction, to b) *socialising with other professionals* present in the workplace (apart from conservators), where processes of joint education/training between different professional fields, but also the building of “soft skills”, are both very important for mutual understanding. In order to improve communication in the workplace and knowledge transfer, soft skills are considered essential to transmit the meaning and value of the conservation work to others (Brooks, 2008).

The socialisation between conservators and other colleagues, inside the institution, can be understood through their knowledge transfer, communication⁴⁴ and hierarchical position. The socialisation between conservators inside the institution is limited to institutions having a conservation department. In this case, conservators socialise between each other (when there is more than one) or socialise with freelance conservators when they are temporarily hired. Most of our studied institutions only hire freelance conservators, meaning these can only socialise between each other when there is a project that requires

⁴¹ According to Ashley-Smith (2016, p.121), tacit knowledge is difficult to communicate to others via words and symbols and can be acquired without language (achieved through observation, imitation, and practice). Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, “can be readily articulated, codified, accessed and verbalised” (as in the case of the “textbook knowledge”) (Ashley-Smith, 2016, p.121).

⁴² According to business manager Alba Molinero (2015), there are two crucial moments in the process of socialisation for the professional identity construction: 1) socialisation *for* work (period of socialisation at university) and 2) socialisation *by* work (incorporation into the workplace).

⁴³ Sarah Staniforth claims (IIC, 2019) the development of soft skills is crucial and that it is necessary to understand where the power lies within the institution to know who to persuade in order to do what is right in conservation.

⁴⁴ All interviewees reported a good communication between the collection team members.

more than one freelance conservator. This limited socialisation between professionals from the same professional field, could negatively influence the PI development.

Socialisation between conservators can also occur outside the workplace, in which professional councils/groups and research dissemination, plays a major role. The participation on those settings often starts at the university level, which is one of the first stages that effectively impact the PI development.

From all studied institutions, only one has conservators on staff, and consequently only one has a conservation department. This directly impacts the socialisation of students within the professional setting, as conservation students who want to be acquainted with professional settings, with active conservators in the workplace, in the field of contemporary art, have very limited options to do so.⁴⁵ This scenario negatively affects PI construction right from the university and can ultimately suppress students from following this specialism due to the felt lack of representation in the workplace.

This socialisation process is not only important among conservation students and conservation professionals, but also between them and other professional fields.

Discussing the collaboration between curators and conservators in the workplace, where sometimes friction occurs, senior conservator of time-based media and Director of the Conservation Centre in Düsseldorf, Joanna Phillips, and senior paintings and painted wooden sculpture conservator and Head of the Department of Technology and Conservation at the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Foundation Corboud in Cologne, Iris Schaefer, claim both professions do not know enough about one another (IIC, 2019). They firmly defend a better education right from the start, where curatorial, art history and conservation students can share projects, classes, knowledge, and experiences.⁴⁶ In this sense, a much better acceptance and cooperation between them, can only happen from joint education, training, and socialisation. According to Phillips, one cannot simply look at both professions when they arrive at the institution, but look at them as a system. Adding that, in the New York University, the abovementioned students share art history classes – which she considers essential to create mutual appreciation since the academical context. Phillips considers this to be very important, because those students will meet again later in the workplace (IIC, 2019).

5.5 Perceived professional role

Addressing the way conservators see themselves and how others see them – or conservator's identity and alterity – Salvador Muñoz-Viñas (2017) explains how the conservation action *alters* the thing that needs conserving and calls the reluctance of acknowledging this fact, “the Frankenstein syndrome”. The addition of contemporary conservation materials and techniques, contrasting with older materials (many times belonging to different eras) and the decision of removing certain parts of the object and leaving others, creates this blend of materials and techniques, producing the Frankenstein metaphor. Viñas (2017) emphasises that many conservators, as well as their colleagues and the general public, “still want

⁴⁵ This also points to a lack of role models in this field, which is another professional identity influencing factor addressed in the literature (Slay&Smith, 2010, Maginnis, 2018)

⁴⁶ At the Rijksmuseum, the conservator's pay scale was recently elevated to the same as the curator, which has been negotiated for years and has now become the desired scenario.

to see conservation as a purely neutral activity” (p.16). This means conservators want to see themselves, and others see them, as merely passive players (Viñas, 2017, p.16). This unrealistic desire of being an invisible “almost ghostly agent”, leads “conservators and all other parties involved in heritage management” to learn to “not just believe that conservation can be performed without interfering with the object, but also to disregard that interference” (Viñas, 2017, pp.16-17). Viñas (2017) considers this selective blindness to conservation creating new composites, as what the Frankenstein syndrome is all about.

In addressing the issue of public/societal perception of conservators, Brooks (2008), on the other hand, emphasises conservators’ limited and often stereotypical presence in the media: conservators appear to be “invisible”, with “disembodied hands” manipulating a paint brush or cotton swab, with “a rather aggressive application of hand tools to a precious object” that is all too familiar in press photographs (Brooks, 2008, p.1136). Additionally, Brooks claims conservators “are not effective at communicating conservation issues to other communities” beyond their own and that must improve in order to their public perception to change (Brooks, 2008, p.1136).

Senior media art conservator Joanna Phillips (IIC, 2019), claims conservators are still regarded as “manual labourers, technicians and craftspeople – people who execute the curatorial concepts, that are made by other”, or “executing the previously determined restoration work”.

Phillips (IIC, 2019) presents the case of the German Museum Association conservation job definition where it is written “the curator plans and controls the archiving and inventory programs and oversees the conservation-restoration of the collections including the documentation”. Moreover, “the conservator develops, with the curator’s agreement, all activities that serve the preservation and preventive conservation restoration of museum collections. Where applicable, the conservator executes the previously determined restoration work” (Deutscher Museumsbund e.V., 2008, pp.20-23; IIC, 2019). This perception about the conservator’s role, and how it is perceived both as identity and alterity, also resonates in how conservators place themselves inside an institution.

Concerning the results of our study in five Portuguese contemporary art collections, the respondents’ perception of the conservator’s role was considered.⁴⁷

One respondent’ testimonies pointed for a perception of the conservator as a “helper”, more specifically, a curator’s helper. This data seems to suggest that, here, the conservator’s presence and activity, revolves around and is circumscribed to the curator. This suggests a partial withdrawing of the conservator’s autonomy/authority, and even identity as a professional, to add to the previous identified absence of conservators as constant members in collection management meetings.

A different interviewee appealed to a sense of happiness and passion needed for the job and the sense of being a caretaker⁴⁸, which resonates with this study’s analysis of conservation as a care activity.

⁴⁷ Some citations informing about that perception were presented in Table 6.

⁴⁸ This answer reminded the author of a quote from Pimentel and co-authors (2011, p.7), referring to the associated image of the woman-nurse, as someone who cares for love, without reward or need of any recognition. An image that persists over time, of a consecrated woman, who cares for patients as a requirement of Christian duty. Concluding “thus, more than a profession,

Keeping the “care activity” in mind, a second interviewee compared conservation and its activity to the medical/clinical field, mentioning the “treatment” and the goal to extend the life of objects/collections.

Looking to this collected data, it seems that there is no unique way for the conservator to be perceived. This can be due to the prematurity of the profession, the broadness of conservation-related activities, the lack of strong professional bodies which represent and advocate for all workers, no defined workers unions in Portugal, with strong and clear claims, or the absence of a strong presence in the workplace with cemented authority among the teams, among other factors.

5.6 Job satisfaction

All the above-mentioned factors affect the professional’s sense of job satisfaction (as put forward by Jebril (2008)). In all those factors, negative contributors for the PI construction have been verified, pointing to possible problems regarding job satisfaction.

Few studies have been developed, regarding the sense of job satisfaction felt by conservators. Portuguese conservator André Remígio (2010, p.46) denounces the profession’s precarity in Portugal, with unemployment and low wages. Remígio also stresses the very high rate of abandonment of the profession in Portugal (2010, p.46). This suggests, in the author’s opinion, a low job satisfaction that drives conservators to look for a better professional outcome.

Analysing the results of the empirical study it is our perception that the respondents with a higher position in the formal structure (reporting directly to the administration), and consequently higher authority and autonomy, are the ones with improved professional satisfaction. Moreover, those respondents did not point any problems related to the performance of their professional role.

On the other hand, one interviewee manifested some level of dissatisfaction related to their performed functions, because they are not aligned with their job position. In managing the collection and its conservation, this interviewee bears much more responsibilities than what would be expected in their position; hierarchically occupies a position in the formal structure below the collection manager (with less professional authority and autonomy); and presumably an inferior salary, plus having a higher workload. Although this interviewee has tried to change the situation, they claimed it is a sensitive topic because it is hard to occupy a position that is already occupied by someone else (especially when that person has been there for many years). This interviewee reports these dynamics are a motive for discussion among the team because they clearly create authority and recognition problems. This negatively impacts the interviewee’s professional satisfaction, which may be confirmed by one of their statements hoping for a change: “a person has to deal with them [issues] everyday, as you can imagine, I hope this changes soon”.

nursing acquires a status of vocation” (Pimentel et al., 2011, p.7), which, the author considers, in a way, can also be transposed to conservation.

Another interviewee also expressed some level of dissatisfaction, especially with how the conservation of the collection is managed, and with the absence of conservators in collection management moments (like, loan, acquisitions and exhibitions).

This is not to assume the job of these interviewees bears no professional satisfaction. It was the author's perception, during the interviews, that these interviewees do get satisfaction out of their jobs, however, certain issues, like the ones mentioned, should not be left out of this discussion.

6. Conclusion

In developing this work, it was rapidly verified that very few Portuguese museums with contemporary art collections, have conservators on staff.

The collected empirical data suggests the presence of conservators in Portuguese contemporary art collections seems to be mainly restricted to direct conservation interventions. On the other hand, the collected empirical data suggests also suggests conservators have a limited involvement in conservation management activities. Conservators working with contemporary art collections (usually more than other types of objects) deal on a daily basis with issues, regarding transmitted values and significance, materiality and the ephemeral, contact with living artists in order to create documentation, conservation and exhibition measures, the mediation and management of several conservation factors and instances that do not go through "treatment" of objects, among others. The collected data, however, shows conservators working with contemporary art are still overall perceived by their colleagues as "technical" and "not always needed" and essentially hired to perform direct interventions and preservation procedures.

The collected empirical data also suggests the decision-making and choice of whether the conservator is involved in the addressed daily performed functions (documentation, acquisitions, exhibitions, loans and restoration) lies essentially with the curator.

The dynamics of professional development in Portuguese collections analysed in this study are a consequence of decisions and policies made by 1) the Portuguese government (e.g. the case of the "conservator" job position that can and is legally systematically occupied by art historians/curators) and 2) the institution's administration (e.g. conservators having to answer to curators on conservation issues, or curators being responsible for conservation diagnostics and inspections). Future research on this topic should include interviewing the institution's administrations, in order to gather other perspectives on why this happens. Gathering other perspectives on why conservation departments are still so scarce, even though five out of six interviewed professionals claim to want to create/enlarge a conservation department in their institutions, and on why is conservation not being more prioritised, would also be important. Naturally, money is a problem, however, why are there, for example, institutions with four curators and zero conservators? If money is the sole problem, the institution could still have two curators

and two conservators, or even four conservators and zero curators.⁴⁹ There is a budget, however, conservation is usually not considered as deserving the same budget allocation as curatorial activities, which directly contrasts with one of the museum's primary missions to preserve its collection.

The results of this study confirm the need of defining the conservation profession, creating advocacy bodies that work towards changing current laws and create accreditation systems, among other things.

Few advocacy institutes, however, are dedicated to heritage conservation, with only the professional association of conservators-restorers of Portugal (ARP) having this responsibility at a national level. Conservators do not have a consolidated organization in Portugal, unlike the UK, where ICON plays a major role on advocating for conservators. ICON established a competency-based accreditation system, which could also be a good option for the Portuguese context and would allow recognizing many who are performing these tasks without specific recognition. The empirical data also suggests conservators working directly with contemporary art collections do not have a recognised specialism in contemporary art, which may be due to this specialization being so recent. The relative late implementation of formal training in Portugal might explain why Portugal has such diverse people undertaking a set of practices commonly associated to conservators' professional roles. These situations could be significantly resolved if universities and museums would establish more comprehensive networks of cooperation, as ways to formalize advocacy actions and try to share resources in a transparent way.

This dissertation has also developed a comprehensive preliminary analysis on the development of professional identities of conservators working with contemporary art in Portuguese institutions. Conservation, as a “care activity” shares main traits with other professions, like social work, occupational therapy, childcare/teaching and, especially, nursing. All these are female dominated fields, and consequently share labour struggles like professional recognition, autonomy and especially working conditions, which negatively contribute for PI development. Among the similarities with the nursing profession, the idea of traditional roles where the nurse appears as an executor of the prescribed by the doctor can be compared to the conservator who appears as an executor of the ‘prescribed’ by the curator. This association resonates with testimonies of conservators working in German context (IIC, 2019), and the contexts described by Jonathan Ashley-Smith (2018) and Manon D’haenens (2019). This information however cannot be generalized, since there are institutions and projects, like the previously mentioned “Matters in Media Art”, which prove that the described scenario is not the only known reality, there are others viable and successful alternatives that institutions can follow.

Considering the limited data sample of this study, a judgment cannot be made about the present state of the conservators PI, in Portuguese contemporary art collections. What can be concluded in analysing the collected data, is, on the one hand, that the studied PI factors, in this specific context, appear to be

⁴⁹ Naturally, the author does not defend that the institution should have four conservators and zero curators, both professionals have specific knowledge that is invaluable in the daily life of a museum. This example just serves to confront the notion of why does one extreme scenario (four conservators and zero curators) seem absurd but the other extreme scenario (four curators and zero conservators) does not? Especially having in mind, the importance of a contemporary art conservator in the shaping of contemporary artworks, collections and the museum.

negatively influencing the PI development of the conservator working with contemporary art, and, on the other hand, that a systematic study of the PI of conservators in Portugal is necessary.

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8. Appendix I – Tables and Figures

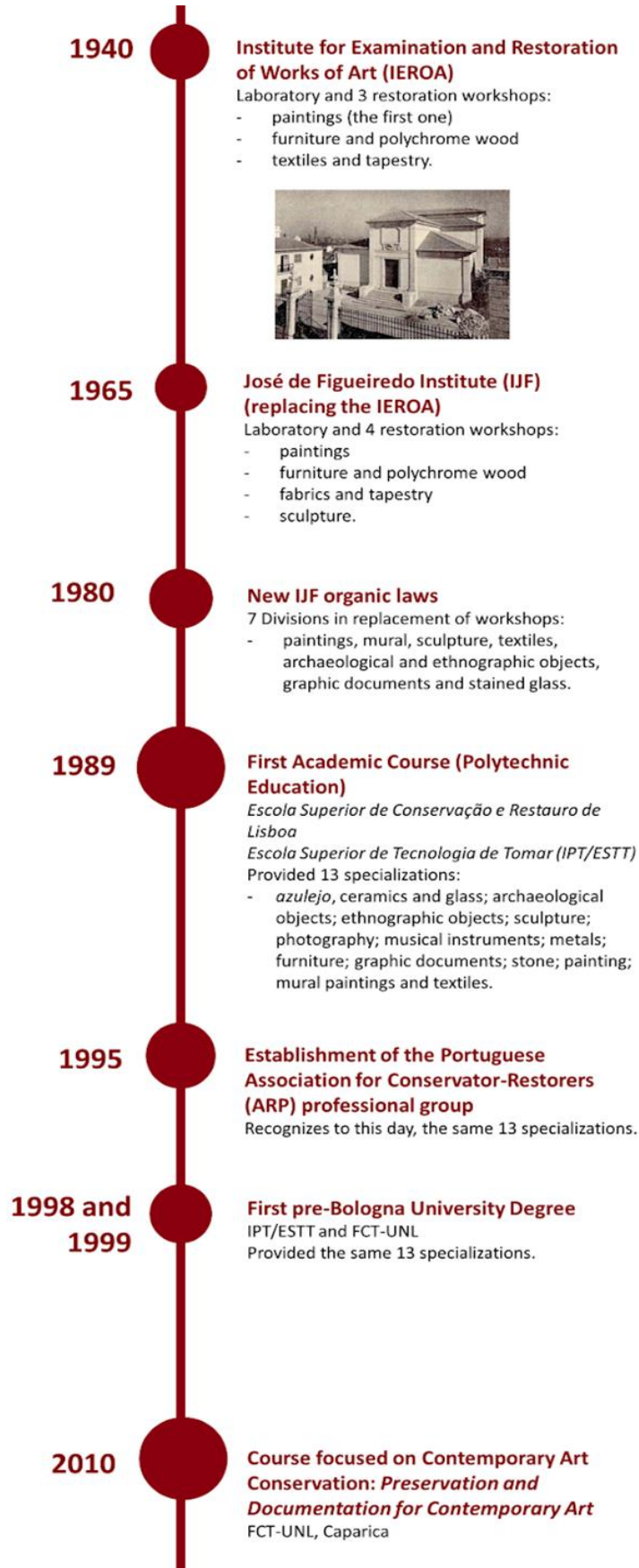


Figure 1 - Portuguese Conservation Educational System Timeline (Remígio, 2010; Figueira, 2015; Casanova, 2012).

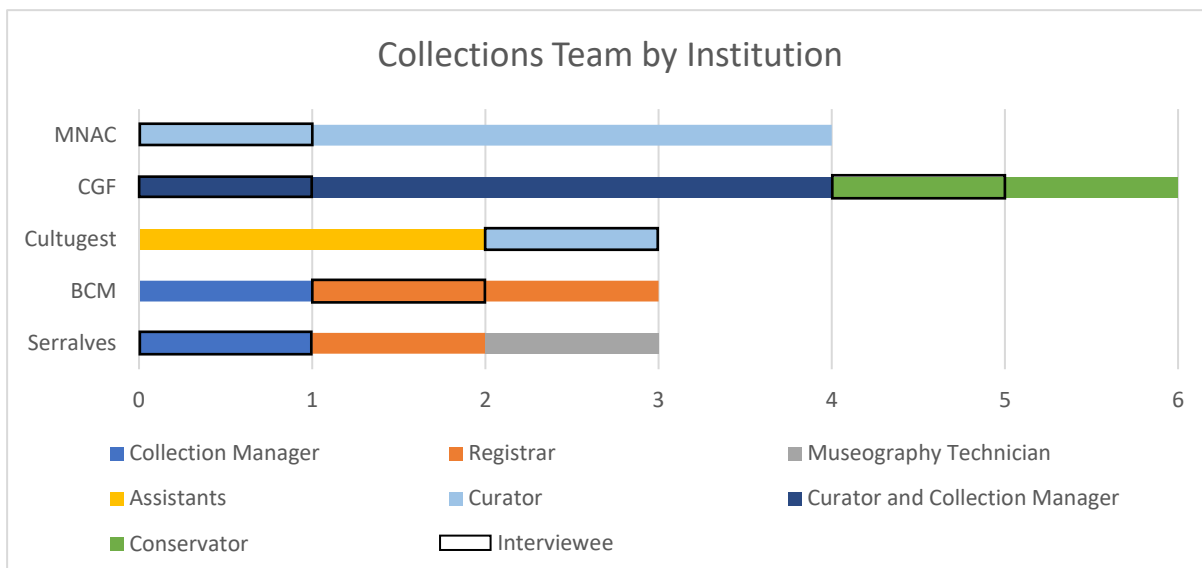


Figure 2 – Collections team members by institution.

Table 3- Functions performed by each interviewed professional

Registrar (BCM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● accompanying the transports and exhibitions of artworks ● inventory and execution of condition reports and conservation diagnostics ● managing the preventive conservation, along with the monitoring of environmental conditions ● all the supervision of the artworks ● all the storage and packaging ● documentation for all the artworks on the collection and for the ones on loan ● budget management and expenses coordination for packaging, transports, customs processes, insurances, conservation and restoration and costs associated with all exhibitions ● courier service ● coordination and evaluation of the conservation and documentation interns.
Collection Manager (Serralves)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● projects management ● inventory ● monitoring of artworks in storage / artworks inspections, conservation diagnosis, condition reports ● preservation of the artworks (including environmental monitoring) ● creation of a plan for the conservation interventions of all the artworks (establishing intervention priorities every year) ● attributing freelancer conservator to each intervention making sure that the selected artworks for exhibition are viable for exhibition and if so, making sure that they are exhibited following correct conservation parameters

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● no longer performs as much of restoration of artworks as he previously did (although he still does it when necessary, especially on time-based media artworks of the collection).
<p>Curator (Culturgest)</p>	<p>1) research, constituted by all the work involving the creation and management of a previously non-existent inventory (and all documentation associated, including condition reports), establish conservation policies for each artwork and managing university interns (mainly from conservation); 2) dissemination, regarding all the work associated with loan processes and management and the interviewee’s approval, or disapproval, for the exhibition of the artworks selected by the institutions’ curator;</p> <p>3) conservation⁵⁰, regarding all the work related to the collection’s preventive conservation in storage, along with the environmental monitoring of the collection and the creation of packages for the artworks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● coordinating the team ● managing the budgets ● having the “decision-making power”
<p>Curator (CGF)</p>	<p>Curator functions include working alongside:</p> <p>1) the education department, in organizing guided tours to exhibitions or the storage rooms, conferences, colloquiums etc</p> <p>2) an exhibition production team, mainly in organizing temporary exhibitions and loans</p> <p>3) the divulgation department, with the creation of catalogues, flyers, the website and other diffusion projects</p> <p>4) the collections department where the conservation team lies.</p> <p>Collection management functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● courier service ● inventory (including the description of the artworks and evaluation of their conservation state and condition reports) ● “making the bridge with conservation-restoration”, namely indicate the works that are considered, by the curators, in need of restoration work ● everything related to loans and acquisitions along with all the documentation produced (responsible for the condition reports) ● giving the professional opinion on whether the selected artworks for loans are in good conservation condition and if are viable for a loan
<p>Conservator (CGF)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● responsible for the conservation and restoration in the museum, dealing with conservation issues from the modern collection to the founder’s collection ● responsible for the freelance conservator’s activity ● coordination of the restoration interventions

⁵⁰ According to this interviewee, this area is essentially managed by one of the assistants.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● evaluation of the work developed jointly ● proposals evaluation ● inventory and execution of condition reports ● compiling all the conservation documentation on the museological database ● audits ● responsible for the lacquer's museum collection ● preventive conservation, such as risks assessment and reduction, the creation of a pest's plan for exhibition rooms and storage and is currently developing a safeguard and evacuation plan for all the artworks in the museum. ● has not been performing restoration interventions for the past two years, due to the rest of the work at hand
Curator (MNAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● curator of the photography and new media collections ● conservation documentation (including inventory and condition reports) ● coordinating the team ● managing the budgets ● everything related to loans, exhibitions and acquisitions along with all the documentation produced

Table 8- Synthesized information regarding the personal and professional levels of PI developed by Jebriil (2008)

Personal Level	Professional Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The individual's perceived meaning of self, self-image and the world, affect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ individual's view of life ○ perceived professional role ● Personal perception of the values, personal belief, and personal view of the profession affects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ individual's sense of professional autonomy ○ accountability ○ self-sufficiency i.e., professional independency ● Professional independency enhances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ professional's self-image ○ self-esteem <p>(Jebriil, 2008, pp.2-3)</p>	<p>Intra-professional practices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the possession of a specialized theoretical body of knowledge ● preparing individuals to possess special competence ● licensing professionals through a certification exam ● providing specific services ● creating professional councils ● issuing professional publications <p>Inter professional practices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● delineating inter-professional relations and boundaries ● creating professional status <p>(Jebriil, 2008, p.3)</p>

Table 9- Synthesized information regarding the internal and external aspects of PI developed by Jebril (2008)

Internal Aspect	External Aspect
Include cognitive and evaluative elements that influence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person’s emotional aspects, which includes the feelings of adequacy and fulfilment • person’s sense of identity. (Jebril, 2008, p.3)	Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professional image among the respective professionals • interdisciplinary professional status • social and service recognition. (Jebril, 2008, pp.3-4)

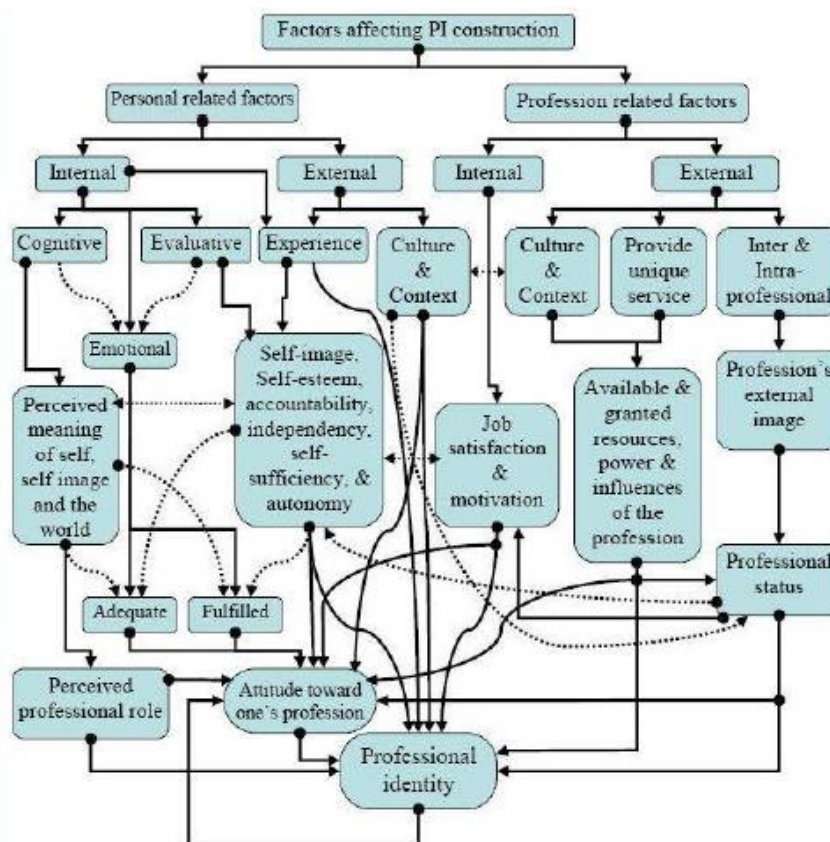


Figure 2. Factors affecting the construction of professional identity (Solid lines represent direct relationships; Dotted lines represent effect relationships).

Figure 4 - Factors affecting the construction of professional identity adapted from Jebril (2008).

Table 10 - Median annual salary for conservators in the UK and North America

Country	Median Annual Salary	
	Conservation	Nationally
UK ⁵¹ (2012– 2013)	£26.000 (30.533€) full-time professional conservator (Aitchison, 2013, p.8)	£26.500 (31.120€) for all occupations £36.369 (42.710€) for professional occupations
USA and Canada (2014)	\$62.582 (56.858€) for museum/historical society full-time conservators (AIC, 2015, p.70)	\$55.613 (51.222€) (USA) (Statista, 2020) (value missing for professional occupations)
	\$50.000 (45.427€) for private practice full-time conservators (AIC, 2015, p.43)	

⁵¹ Icon's stipulation for minimum wage for an entry-level conservator is £27.108 (31.834€) (ICON, 2020).

9. Appendix II – Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory was first developed by social psychologist Henri Tajfel in the 1970s (further developed along with John Turner) and forms an approach to understand social identity and intergroup relations (Maginnis, 2018; Molinero, 2015, p.13; McLeod, 2019).

This theory envisages social behaviour as a continuum from interpersonal behaviour to intergroup behaviour (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Maginnis, 2018, p.92). According to Tajfel & Turner (1986), in one extreme of the spectrum, completely *interpersonal behaviour* is defined by 1) the individual's characteristics, and 2) relationships between only two people. On the opposite extreme, completely *intergroup behaviour* is defined by memberships of different social categories (which apply to more than two people). According to the authors, neither purely interpersonal nor purely intergroup behaviours are to be found in realistic social situations, instead, behaviour is realistically found as a compromise in between (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

In this framework, a person's social identity implies an awareness that she/he belongs to a social category or group (Stets & Burke, 2000), where social actors have multiple identities that get activated by different social contexts (Owens et al., 2010). A social group can be a social class, family or a profession. According to McLeod (2019), groups to which people belong to, "are an important source of pride and self-esteem", giving them a sense of social identity and "a sense of belonging to the social world" (McLeod, 2019). According to this theory, a person's sense of who they are, meaning their self-concept, is based on their social group(s) membership(s) (McLeod, 2019).

According to Maginnis (2018), "the addition of the self-categorisation theory further developed social identity" (p.92), with an aim to explain psychological group formations. Moreover, Maginnis (2018, p.92) claims self-categorisation theory describes that social behaviour, could be explained by a distinction between two identities: 1) a personal, defining what makes a person distinct from other people, and 2) a social, defining individuals based on characteristics shared with others in a group (such as, for example, the conservation profession) (Maginnis 2018, p.92). A person's individual and social identities cannot be separated, and both are seen to contribute to the development of a PI (Maginnis 2018; Cardoso et al., 2014).⁵² Specific group characteristics contrast with characteristics of other groups and identify the group as "us" as opposing to a "them", through the process of social categorization (putting people into social groups, i.e. stereotyping) (Maginnis 2018, p.92; McLeod, 2019).

As a way of summarizing, Maginnis (2018) claims the PI "includes professional, educational and social values and is essentially perceived as what makes a person a professional and distinguishes one profession from another" (p.92) ("us" and "them"). For example, the different values, experiences and knowledge that characterize a conservator as such, are very different than the ones of an attorney, and ultimately distinguishes one from the other.

⁵² Note that the self can have as many social identities as groups the individual feels being part of (Molinero, 2015).

In this sense, PI is a phenomenon of subjective construction that results from the interaction between the psychological structures and the social structures of the individual throughout the course of their life, constantly transforming and evolving with time (Cardoso et al., 2014; Dubar, 1997). According to Jebril (2008) the PI formation is strongly affected by the influences from the individual's environment and, furthermore, its construction and retainment is affected by the professional status, social recognition, gender dominance, and the like.

10. Appendix III – Professional Identity Influencing Factors

This section will show the selected authors that reflected upon certain PI influencing factors, and which contributions sparked an interest for the author being consequently chosen for this study.

Pimentel and co-authors (2011) explain there are factors that can make individual adherence to a group stronger (resulting in a cohesive group, allowing recognition and prestige) or on the contrary, they can make the individual adhesion to the profession weaker (making it fragile and little cohesive, with little chance of improving its social recognition). Among the factors on which adhesion of each element to a group can depend on (PI influencing factors), Pimentel and co-authors (2011) highlight: the functions performed, job satisfaction, the position in the formal structure, as well as the prestige that this position confers.

One factor that is often mentioned in PI literature is professional socialisation (PS) (Pimentel et al., 2011; Maginnis, 2018; Cardoso et al., 2014, Molinero, 2015; Brown, 2014), although different authors consider distinct aspects that influence and characterize PS. In sum, the professional socialisation is, according to Maginnis (2018):

“process of learning skills, attitudes, values, and behaviours necessary to fulfil and understand the professional role whilst also being a process whereby an individual (...) internalises the values, knowledge, skills and beliefs of the chosen profession, developing a PI as an outcome of this process” (p.92).

Other factors are also mentioned by more than one author, like demographics (Molinero, 2015; Pimentel, Pereira, & Mata, 2011), specifically sex/gender issues, which informs about the “political and social context” referred by Pimentel and co-authors (2011), autonomy (Maginnis, 2018; Pimentel et al., 2011), recognition (Cardoso et al., 2014; Pimentel et al., 2011) and historical context (Maginnis, 2018 Pimentel et al., 2011). These are all factors mentioned by authors that approach the PI of nurses in their essays, such as Maginnis (2018), Cardoso and co-authors (2014), Molinero (2015) and Pimentel and co-authors (2011).

Jebril’s (2008) contribution to the topic (which also addresses female dominated jobs, such as nursing, social work, occupational therapy and childcare) must also be considered. Jebril (2008, p.2) regards factors which affect processes of PI formation and can be classified into internal and external factors. Within these factors, Jebril (2008) also identifies personal and social/professional factors (fitting in the SIT framework) (see Table 8, 9, and Fig. 4 -Appendix I), emphasising that “all internal and external factors are in continuous interaction and are inseparable in real life” (p.32). The same author also claims several factors affect the sense of PI at the professional stage:

“These factors include, but are not limited to, work conditions, institutional policies, interprofessional relations, communication, insurance limitations, professional autonomy, profession status, personal and public images of the profession, profession economy, gender problems and related issues, professional experience, continuous change in human occupations and technology, and many other factors. These factors affect the participants’ sense of job satisfaction.” (Jebril, 2008, p.121)

For the understanding of the PI of conservators, other factors can also be considered pertinent such as: the perspective on own ethical position and values, academic and professional specializations, accreditation system (which fits into Jebril's (2008) "institutional policies") professional groups and councils, employment protection and wages (which fits into Jebril's (2008) "work conditions"). It is possible to speculate that these factors also engage with the individual's adherence to the conservation profession.

Professional groups and councils, and accreditation system

At an international level, there are several major conservation bodies, such as the International Institute for Conservation (IIC), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), or the International Council of Museums – Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC), derived from the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), and so on.

Not all these bodies, however, work towards all conservation professionals. When writing about the (pre)maturity of the conservation profession, Ashley-Smith (2009, p.5) claims neither IIC nor ICOM can qualify as "professional". According to Ashley-Smith (2009, p.5), the IIC membership and participation is not exclusive to conservators. On the other hand, Ashley-Smith (2009) claims the ICOM-CC, by formal definition, "excludes those that do not work in museums, thus excluding a large proportion of the conservation movement as voting members" (p.5).

There are many definitions of the profession/professional, attributed by different conservation organizations worldwide and they all seem to slightly differ. Many still attribute a main focus to the physical intervention and the 'stabilization' and 'unchanging' of the physical 'original' object (like ICOM-CC, ECCO, ENCoRe) drawing away from the notion of the conservator as a decision-maker authority with managing skills and responsibilities – a manager of change (Macedo & Marçal, 2019; Saaze, 2013).

Taking Ashley-Smith (2009) as a reference, the ICOM-CC's *Definition* "is not actually the definition of a profession, but rather a definition of an individual working in a professional manner within a particular area of expertise" (p.5). Furthermore, since it was the first definition of the profession, only adopted in 1984, Ashley-Smith (2009, p.5) points that conservators are very young even if they feel they are mature, claiming it strongly contributes to the present state of the profession.

At a European level, ECCO and ENCoRe fight for the legal recognition of the conservator as a profession, based on the code of ethics, the professional qualification and the standardization of training (Casanova, 2012, p.2). The Portuguese professional association of conservator-restorers, ARP, aligned with ECCO and ENCoRe's guidelines, has been battling for the implementation of an education-based accreditation system in Portugal. However, as previously mentioned, ARP only recognizes 13 conservation specialisms offered back in 1989.

The lack of a proper accreditation mechanism can be one of the factors hampering the consolidation of the PI of conservators. But this analysis makes evident some of the ways an education-led accreditation can both hamper professional development – as emerging conservators will most likely conform to existing categories – and exclude conservation practices that do not comply with existing processes and forms of normalisation. But how can the means for the whole community of conservators to be represented, supported and advocated for, be created?

One model that has achieved some success, is the competency-based model, developed by ICON, in the UK. This accreditation mechanism provides training opportunities and establishes criteria for peer-evaluation of members. This model is independent from specialism boxes that are created within educational systems. It speaks to the PI influencing factor related to accreditation, but also builds the infrastructure for peer-recognition. Given that many of the conservators working with emerging media have, in fact, started their careers in a different specialism (as our empirical data seems to confirm), this is also a way of auto-regulating the cycle of accreditation between new and experienced conservators.

As verified in the development of the conservation education in Portugal, the education system seems to be slow in keeping track of developments in emerging artistic forms, and the accreditations seem even slower. This means, professional groups which must represent all workers, are leaving a large part of the workforce unrepresented, as is the current reality in Portugal. The author therefore proposes that an accreditation based in competency rather than strictly education can be a way to strengthen the conservator's PI while also allowing for new forms of specialisms to emerge.

Gender problems and related issues – a Women's job

Throughout this study, the connection between the conservation and the nursing professions has been mentioned. In this section this connection will be further addressed, looking at some examples where these professions meet.

Conservation, like nursing, is a woman dominated field. Conservator Suzanne Davis' research on gender equity in conservation⁵³ showed in the 2009 survey, 75,9% of respondents were women and 21,6% were men. In the 2014 survey, 77,4% were women and 19,5% were men (Davis, 2019). These statistics not only point towards a female majority in the field, but also to an increase in women's presence in conservation over the years. Furthermore, ICON's 2012–13 Conservation Labour Market Intelligence indicated that, in the UK, 65% of professional conservators were women and 35% were men (Aitchison, 2013). In Portugal it seems there are no studies regarding the number of women and men in conservation, however, in FCT-UNL, about 20 students enrol each year, of which, usually, a maximum of 3 or 4, are men. ARP has a total of 65 members, of which 20 are men (30,77%).⁵⁴ This points, as expected, to a female dominated profession in Portugal as well.

Both professions are based on a *care* activity – one of objects and collections and the other of people. Addressing the construction of the PI of a feminine profession, namely nursing, Pimentel and co-authors (2011), correctly claim:

“For thousands of years, the practice of daily care, the care that supports the weight of life, has been fundamentally associated with the activity of the various roles that had been attributed to women, as societies evolved, as a result of social division of labour” (p.13).

This shows us, once again, that the PI is highly influenced by its social context. In a society where women are socialised, from birth, to occupy certain roles like maternity and care with no, or very low, monetary remuneration, and men are socialised to occupy roles of authority and dominance, this social division of labour is a source of discrimination that affects every aspect of life, including work/professions. Pimentel and co-authors (2011) mention sociologist Elliot Friedson once again, who understands the emergence and maintenance of professions as a mechanism of control and power exercised by the dominant interests of global society, holding society responsible for promoting and maintaining this type of institution, in order to preserve it (Pimentel et al., 2011, p.12).

Although there is no extensive literature on the subject, there are some records of the early days of the profession in which women were hired to perform the conservation job, mainly in the field of archaeology. According to conservation researcher Caitlin O'Grady (2017), in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, women (as well as non-European excavation workers) emerged in the conservation of archaeological objects as an underpaid working class, responsible for 'repairing' and 'mending' of

⁵³ A research based on two AIC/FAIC monetary compensation surveys, one from 2009 and another from 2014 (Davis, 2019).

⁵⁴ Mind that women tend to be less represented in professional groups, according to Davis (2019).

objects that had just been excavated (Fig.5). These workers with ‘hand skills’ contrast with the “archaeologists, scientists, and curators”, who were mainly men, that completed university degrees in recognised disciplines (O’Grady, 2017, p.2).

Similarly to the conservation profession, Pimentel and co-authors (2011) also point to the period from the end of the 19th century until the middle of the 20th century, when scientific discoveries had a strong impact in the development of medicine, and where “the woman went on to assume the role of ‘woman-nurse’ as a doctor's assistant” (p.10). In addition, many sources point out that nursing was initially an activity for low- and middle-class women (Smith, 2011). Pimentel and co-authors (2011) also refer to a “traditional approach” on nursing, based on a



Figure 5 – “Conservation repair and mending of archaeological ceramics” adapted from O’Grady (2017)

“prescriptive role” of the nurse, with a predominantly practical orientation, which is inherent to the medical prescription, where the nurse “appears as an executor of the acts prescribed by the doctor” (Pimentel et al., 2011, p.11). As previously mentioned, a comparison with conservators can be made here, supported by this study’s collected empirical data and selected literature, where the conservator tends to be perceived by their colleagues, as an executor of the actions ‘prescribed’ by the curator.

On the other hand, the gender gap in salaries is also predominant in female dominated fields. One important figure from the mentioned gender equity in conservation study by Davis (2019), points that “in 2014 in the highest pay bracket for respondents employed full-time in museums and historical societies, men were earning 62,5% more than women (AIC/FAIC 2015, 70), while in private practice they were earning 77,5% more (AIC/FAIC 2015, 43)” (Davis, 2019, p.205). Moreover, Davis (2019) mentions the “glass-ceiling” effect present in conservation, which is a term that describes an invisible barrier to women’s advancement on many fronts in their career and lower compensation even at high leadership levels. This leads to a situation where, “as women advance through their careers, they are paid increasingly less in comparison to men and may have less functional authority, even at high leadership levels” (Davis, 2019, p.206). This can negatively affect other PI influencing factors, like authority, and overall impairing the PI development.

Still referring to the glass-ceiling in conservation, Davis (2019, p.206) concludes that this effect tends to be greater in occupations dominated by women, and that is well demonstrated in the wage data collected from the two AIC/FAIC surveys referring to conservation in the USA.⁵⁵ This means, nursing – as a women dominated occupation – shares this augmented discrimination, just like conservation.

⁵⁵ The “glass escalator”, as opposed to the glass ceiling, is also mentioned by Davis (2019) and refers to the shortcut, as opposed to the barrier, men experience in the advancement of their careers. According to Davis (2019), “in professions dominated by women, there is a strong preference for hiring men and moving them into leadership positions”. Consequently, in female dominated fields, the glass escalator is even more prominent.

Although these conservation pay-gap studies were not performed this systematically in other countries, all points to this overview as being a global constant. In fact, according to Eurostat, “in 2017, women's gross hourly earnings were on average 16.0 % below those of men in the EU” and in Portugal, that difference was of 16,3% in the same year (Eurostat, 2020) and this is not even specifically considering female dominated professions.

This gender gap in salaries is linked to Jebri's (2008) “work conditions” factor. Indeed, lower pay for the same work, verified on the majority of the conservation workforce (which are women) points to a decrease of working conditions, negatively affecting the PI development of the conservator profession.

Professional Recognition and Prestige the position confers

As previously mentioned, according to Pimentel and co-authors (2011), different factors contribute to the professional group cohesion, while allowing recognition and prestige to that same profession, which improves its social recognition. In fact, all the PI influencers considered for this study, impact on the conservator's professional recognition and prestige the profession confers. Among them, it can be distinguished, for example, the officialization by education; compliance to professional standards or participation in professional activities; accreditation; conservator's perspective on their own ethical stance or positioning; the existence and participation in workers' unions; employment protection; how others perceive the profession, namely the recognition as caretakers; other practical aspects, such as wages, both in absolute and relative terms (relative to other professionals in the sector), among others.

As mentioned, the wages are one of the constituting elements of working conditions, but also reflect the prestige a profession confers to the professional. In most European countries, the reality of the profession is perceived as precarious, where low payed internships followed by low payed job positions are the norm (IIC, 2019).⁵⁶ Portuguese conservator André Remígio (2010) emphasises Portugal's current state of "profound degradation and disorganization of the Conservation and Restoration field", referring that the overwhelming majority of conservators are unemployed, with precarious or unpaid professional internships and dependent on scholar/research grants (Remígio, 2010, p.46).⁵⁷

Once again, there are not systematic studies on this issue in Portugal, however, studies by ICON in the UK and AIC in the USA and Canada, suggest this precarity is not exclusive to Portugal (Table 10-Appendix I). Comparing the median wages for the conservation profession with the median national wage, it can be verified that, in the UK, conservators' wages are inferior to the national median wage and much inferior to the national median wage for professional occupations. In the USA and Canada, the conservator's median wage value is very close to the USA nation median wage, however no value was found for the national median wage for professional occupations (which would be higher). Also, this is not considering Canada's national median wage, that could point to a higher difference between wages.

Pimentel and co-authors (2011) claim that society recognizes and gives value to a profession based on the symbols it possesses. These authors add, "the recognition must be based on an adaptation between the needs expressed by society and the nature of the services provided" (Pimentel et al., 2011, p.7). The overall low investment of governments in culture and in the preservation of cultural heritage, along with the perception society has regarding the conservation activity (deepened on 5.5 of this study), may

⁵⁶ This problematic was also addressed on the IIC 2019 Student & Emerging Conservator Conference, where speaker Thomas Gdanitz, German MA Student and freelance stone conservator, stated that his freelance conservator friends have no knowledge on what their price rate should be. Gdanitz explains the average they take per hour is 15-20 euros, when in fact, he states that the rate should be 40-50 euros per hour (IIC, 2019).

⁵⁷ These low wages/working conditions are directly related to the previous chapter "Gender problems and related issues – a Women's job".

suggest conservation may not qualify as an urgent answer to “the needs expressed by society”. This can affect negatively the prestige conferred to the conservator.