

COMMUNITY MUSEUMS IN PORTUGAL: historical review and current examples

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The renovation of social museology in Portugal

- Born with the coming of **democracy** in 1974
- It was mostly carried out by the civic movements emerged after the 1974 Revolution (the ADPs, Associações de Defesa do Património), with the support of a few museologists and teachers



- In 1981, the first postgraduate course in Museology was held in Portugal, inaugurated by Georges Henri Rivi re and enclosed by Hugues de Varine
- This course formed many young intellectuals and Portuguese technicians, **promoters and actors** of museology of the following years



Since mid-1980's onwards, the initial common vision split into:

- The official museology gave **priority to collections**, intellectualized concepts of communication and magnified buildings
- The social museology focused on local development and the preservation of **knowledge and memories**



The social function of museums in Portugal

- It has had a **marginal development and has been marginalized** by general museological contexts
- Its activity **has been ignored** for years by a large part of the museums' professionals
- It has been considered for long time as a kind of **museology of the poors**



In spite these circumstances, several positive steps were taken:

- The **formal birth of MINOM** - International Movement for a New Museology, in 1985 in Lisbon
- The creation of **MINOM Portugal** in 1995, which maintains its activity mainly in local museology
- The study of concepts and practices of social museology in the **Center of Studies in Sociomuseology**, at the Lusophone University for over 20 years, including a master's and a doctorate.
- The organization by both institutions of tens of **Meetings and Conferences** on the social role of museums



However and still today:

- In Portugal there are almost not museums with managerial autonomy regarding their guardianships (either public as private). The exception are a few cases of local community movements organized in ONGs
- There are, however, museological initiatives promoting **the values of social museology**.
- These initiatives achieve to survive when there is an active collaboration between **four key-actors**:
 - Community
 - Guardianships
 - Academic experts
 - Museums professionals



- The greatest difficulty for these museums lies in the **absolute power** of guardianships on their activity and/or in the erratic financial supporting resources (most of them derived from EU programs; some from internal state/local programs and only a few, merely residual, from formal/legal patronage and other private sponsorships)
- There is **no adequate legislation** to ensure the affirmation and sustainability of these projects
- The projects have a **precarious existence** and can be abandoned simply because of **change in leadership or political parties** dominance in each locality.



It is nevertheless possible to find projects of social museology all across the country.

They are mainly devoted to:

- Preserving **knowledge and memories** of traditions, crafts and industrial activities
- Promoting **identity and interculturalism** affirmation.
- Contribute to the **balanced development and sustainability** of communities and regions



SOME CURRENT EXAMPLES



Popular Typography – Ecomuseu do Seixal - Seixal



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- It is a **partnership** project between the municipality and typographers owners and a museological extension of Municipal Ecomuseum
- Allows to **keep functioning** their machines, according to traditional methods
- Discloses ancestral knowledge and techniques
- Preserves the technical and industrial heritage of typocomposition and printing in a **Memory Space – Popular Typography**



Museu do Trajo de S. Brás de Alportel – Algarve



Museu do Trajo de S. Brás de Alportel – Algarve

- Created in 1987 in partnership with the local Santa Casa Misericórdia
- With minimum capital, it pays resources through a series of plans, such as volunteering, supported by public and private entities, patronage and sponsorship.
- It preserves objects, investigates and organizes exhibitions and publications
- It promotes the values and principles of Sociomuseology among different communities
- It contributes to local development and the preservation of memory.



MCCB – Museu da Comunidade Concelhia da Batalha



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- Created according to an action plan carried out by a multidisciplinary team composed by local authorities, local community, academic specialists and technicians museums
- His mission was defined and prepared with antecedence to the process of design, construction and operation
- Possesses a Manual for Quality and Procedures, aiming the management of its activity
- Prioritizes since the origin the questions of inclusion and multiculturalism
- Concentrate his main effort in the collaboration with youngsters, through schools.



Casa-Museo Centro Cultural João Soares – Cortes, Leiria



Casa-Museo Centro Cultural João Soares – Cortes, Leiria

- Since its inauguration on December 8, 1996, its aim is to promote the history and culture of the twentieth century in Portugal
- All initiatives highlight the values of democracy and citizenship
- The museum is a space open to the community who builds most of its annual work plan
- The “*Viva a vida*” (“Live Life”) program promotes the relationship of elders with new technologies, seeking the understanding with youngsters.



“We work with machines”

Museologic Pole of the Museu do Trabalho M. Giacometti - Setúbal



“We work with machines”

Museologic Pole of the Museu do Trabalho M. Giacometti - Setúbal

- Factory initially created as Occupational Therapy for people with mental deficiency (+ 60%), producing files metal fittings to sell domestically
- When the factory closed the workers demanded the right to remain with machines
- It is now a self managed museum pole, with a team composed by museum experts, former workers and health technicians.
- They exhibit, investigate, report and communicate, managing one of the best cultural program in Setubal.



Museu de Mértola – Mértola



Museu de Mértola – Mértola

- Located in the interior of Alentejo, out of the main roads from Algarve to Lisbon
- Fairly traditional polinucleated museum: NÚCLEO DA BASÍLICA PALEOCRISTÃ, NÚCLEO DA ACHADA DE SÃO SEBASTIÃO, NÚCLEO ROMANO, NÚCLEO ISLÂMICO, NÚCLEO DA ARTE SACRA, FORJA DO FERREIRO, NÚCLEO DE TECELAGEM, NÚCLEO DO CASTELO, CIRCUITO DE VISITAS DA ALCÁÇOVA, CASA DO MINEIRO, CASA DE MÉRTOLA, ALCARIA DOS JAVAZES, MOSTEIRO
- Strong educational activities
- Strong international heritage and research networks



Museu da Ruralidade – Entradas (Castro Verde)



Museu da Ruralidade – Entradas (Castro Verde)

- Located in the interior of Alentejo, out of the main roads, in at the small montain (“serra”) making the geographic frontier to Algarve
- Composed by three areas: the temporary exhibitions space, where a few agricultural machines are presented; the semi-permanent exhibitions space, where a few traditional professions and workshops are presented (blacksmith, peasant, etc.); and a space devoted to orality and musical traditions, where the particular local *viola campaniça*; several community spaces complete the offer of the museums: Projection room, Documentation Centre and *Taberna* (the typical assembling place, where traditionally mostly for men meet to drink and song the *cante alentejano*)



Ecomuseu do Barroso – Montalegre and Barroso



Ecomuseu d Barroso – Montalegre and Barroso

- Located in an extreme remote, rural region, highly depopulated
- Fairly clear geographic regional delimitations
- Differentiated rich cultural practices, especially with respects to rural life and religiosity
- Strong community activities
- Walking circuits and contact with artisans
- Folk festivals and mystical happenings: a kind of “trade-mark”



Centro Interpretativo da Máscara Ibérica – Lazarim, Lamego



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- Intense depopulation of the region, with many villages completely abandoned
- Deep attachment to popular festivities, with a particular type of masks made locally and extremely indentificatory
- Tensions between youngsters and elders; “modernists” and “traditionalist”
- Center for Interpretation of Masks (more than “just” a museum): exhibition, production, rest and encounter spaces...
- Integration in a vast net of villages with mask rituals, in Portugal and Spain



Quintadona village – Famalicão



Quintadona village – Famalicão

- More than a “museum”, a project of communitary development
- Public and private spaces requalified; In fact, requalification of the entire village, promoted with EU financial resources (LIDER+ and QREN)
- Fixation of remaining population and attraction of new inhabitants
- Rural tourism and Museologic poles referring to different village practices: Centro Interpretativo da Aldeia de Quintadona, Centro Cultural da Casa do Xiné, Grupo de Teatro Comodeantes, Casa Valxisto - Country House, Parque de Lagares, Capela de São João Baptista e NS da Conceição, Winebar Casa da Viúva
- (Re) dynamism of older festivities and creation of new ones



Picote village – Miranda do Douro



Picote village – Miranda do Douro

- Located in an extremely remote region, close to Spain (fronteir made by the river Douro)
- More than a “museum”, a project of communitary development, promoted by neighbors, organized in an ONG: Frauga - Association for the Integrated Development of Picote; this ONG is integrated in another more encompassing one (either in the geographic as in the disciplinary sense): TERRA MATER
- Public and private spaces requalified with the financial support of the electricity company exploiting a near by damp and as a social mitigating policy
- Several museologic poles have been created, but the main focus is on the development of the village and the surrounding region, including scientific research, assistance to economic practices, touristic routes, etc.





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