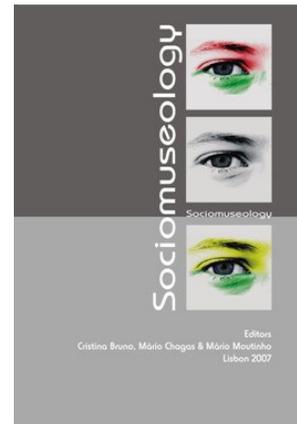MOUTINHO, M. C. M.; BRUNO, Mº.C.O. CHAGAS, M (Org.) .
Sociomuseology. Lisboa: Edições Universitárias Lusófonas, 2007. Vol. 1. 220 p

The Importance of Local Museum in Portugal***** (pp. 91-112)

Judite Primo

The widening of the notion of heritage and the consequent redefinition of the "museological object", the idea of community participation in the definition and management of the museological practice, museology as a development factor, the issues of interdisciplinarity, the use of "new technologies" of information and museography as an autonomous communications means, are examples of issues resulting from contemporary museological practices.

If indeed museology in Portugal intends to continue to participate in international museology's renovation process, it is evident that it must adequately (re)think theoretical and practical museology so as to meet the new demands:

- museology's place in contemporary society;
- the social role played by the museum in contemporary society;
- museology as reflection of contemporary thinking;
- museology as a development vector;
- museology of ideas/museology of objects;
- relationship museum/ community/ heritage;
- autocratic or shared decision power ;

- exhibition of a product/ exhibition of the process;

- exhibition of inherited objects/ exhibition of constructed objects;

- collections / wide-ranging information management;

- new technologies as resources or as false attractions;

- statistics / educational services; and

- cultural action/ cultural fabrication.

In this sense, the renovation of museology implies the renovation of mentalities, renovation of a better interplay between museological theory and practice, renovation and training of technical and administrative bodies. Only with the renovation is that museological action can cast a reflection on the development process, mobilising interdisciplinarity, know-how, learning in communion, experience exchange, collective memory and the dialogic and liberating education.

4.3. Local Museums in Portugal

The phenomenon of Local Museums can be understood as a process taking place all over the country, a feature that characterises the museological institutions created since the mid-1970's in Portugal. A result of the local initiatives within the scope of cultural associations, of the defence of heritage or of the autonomous power themselves, Local Museums defend a new research perspective grounded on community participation, on heritage and memory dynamics and on the insertion of the museum in the midst of different communities as a development factor.

The changes in the Portuguese museological panorama after April 25 can be, according to Mário Moutinho[1], divided into four phases:

First Phase: the affirmation of other museological practices possibilities:

- emergence of the ecomuseums;
- Seixal Ecomuseum as the first ecomuseum in Portugal;
- debate between the new museology *versus* traditional museology;
- diffusion in Portugal of the lines expounded in the Santiago Declaration;

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[1] Cf.: MOUTINHO, Mário. Local Museums in Portugal after April 25 [*Museus locais em Portugal após o 25 de Abril*]. Lecture delivered in 1998.

- ICOM's and ICOM national commission's alienation from the debate and from all of these processes.

Second Phase: absence of consistent opposition by the State museums:

- strengthening of the associations and autonomous power in the creation of cultural institutions;
- recuperation of the "new ideas" by the traditionally constituted museums;
- democratisation of the idea of museum;
- the museum professionals meetings' debate about the museum's social role begins to move towards the discussion about the following concepts: the widening of the notion of heritage; museum and cultural heritage participative management formats;
- the search for the professional's place within the museum: museologist/curator , museologist/militant, militant/professional, professional/technicians.

Third Phase: Solidification of the Second phase and Museology's recognition as a discipline by the University:

- creation of the first university course in 1989;
- creation of programmes by the CEE geared towards local development and the inclusion of museological and heritage action in these programmes.

Fourth Phase: Museology understood as resource:

- understanding of heritage as a wide-ranging notion of cultural, natural, landscape, geological etc. aspects;
- museology understood as a communication means and featuring an educational role;
- museums as object of planning, integrating various vectors;
- museology as a means and not anymore as an end it itself.

We can in such way identify local museums as the museums that consider their heritage intervention as the indicated means to fulfil the goals leading to development of the territorial contexts in which they are inserted. They take up very diverse formats and means, thus representing various degrees of conceptualisation. Their intervention is not restricted to work with collections, generally taking up an interference, among other aspects, in the valorisation of

local resources, valorisation of heritage, valorisation of cultural aspects, support to teaching, fomenting of employment and professional training.

Thus, it is important to understand that to manage a local museum means to equip it in such a way as to be able to deal with a collection of difficult nature and in constant change. The wealth of such museums rests, precisely, on the transformation and change that encompass a locality's life. Fernando João Moreira has elaborated a table with which is possible to establish the thematic interlinks of the cause/effect type in the creation process of a local museum that is structured in view of local development, based on a logic that is structured in two trends of internal coherence: the chronological and the thematic.

Schematically, we have:

Table nº 7
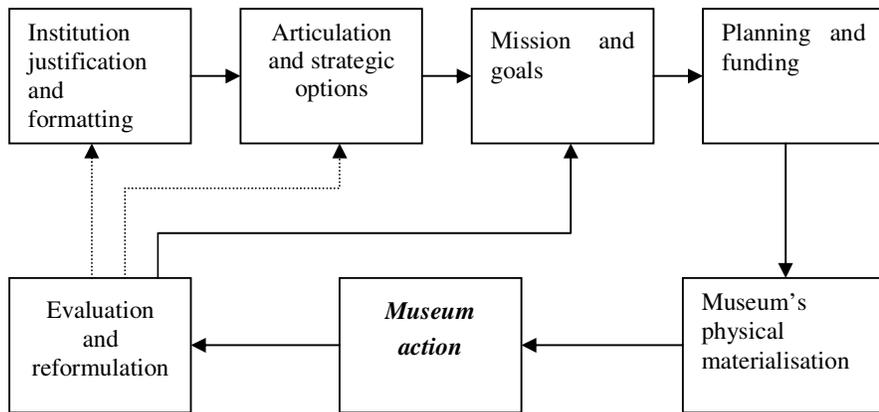
Source: Fernando João Moreira 1999.

Mário Moutinho brings our attention to the dangers that many Local Museums run into as they fall into the temptation of taking up the responsibilities and tasks allotted to the National Museums.

"They are cases in which the material collection takes up a dominant role in relation to the immaterial collection, though, as we know, what makes up the specificity of each community is not so much the diversity of its artefacts but the nature of its development problems."

(MOUTINHO, 1989:47)

The danger emerges at the moment when these local museums intend to take up features and roles that are not their own, succumbing to the idea in which the existence of a permanent exhibition and a collection is necessary, without having secured the necessary conditions for the maintenance of these roles. We refer to local museums that are not geared towards the needs of the communities into which they are inserted, that is, those museums conceived for an outside

public. Thus they excuse themselves from taking up their true role, which is that of acting as a cultural and heritage diffusion instrument of local importance and impact.

The great challenge placed in the local museum panorama is its capacity to work, on the one hand, as a personal development instrument, and, on the other, as an instrument of local development. However, in order to do so, it is fundamental that those museums own up to the fact that their intervention are also inserted[2]:

- in the discussion and search for a solution for the problems of the individuals, understood as people and as beings who are part of a collectivity;
- in community interpretation and intervention; and
- in the importance that intervention processes take up.

An institution thus defined (questioning, interventional and independent) can play a fundamental role in any local development process, thus justifying its use and importance for the local community, with the certainty that, if there are problems and the will to tackle them, it will not become a superfluous institution.

The Local Museum, as a development promoter, cannot act out of context regarding local problems in its area of influence and the people who form a local community. In other words, the museum cannot sever from problems of contemporaneity as a consequence of being able to act in isolation. Thus, it is necessary that the institution carry out a set of preliminary studies that will tool the museum up around the surrounding panorama, as well as capacitate it to develop strategic lines for its intervention. According to Fernando João Moreira, the Local Museums need to, regarding a diagnosis of the concrete insertion situation:

i.   *"carry out an exhaustive survey of all the texts, studies and planning instruments within the scope of the museum's area of influence;*

ii.   *analyse these instruments in the sense of synthesising the diagnoses carried out and find out, on the diverse scales, the existing development strategies;*

iii.   *to develop a critical reflection about the many issues discovered;*

iv.   *to start the studies considered necessary in the sense of updating the diagnoses and/or detail/complement the pre-existing development strategies."* (MOREIRA, 1999: 5)

According to the same author, only after such studies, the Local Museum will be able to obtain, in a clear manner, the local component regarding: potentialities, bottlenecks; threats and opportunities (diagnoses), as well as define the strategic development goals and the action's

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[2] Cf.: MOREIRA, Fernando João. The Creation Process of a Local Museum [*O processo de Criação de um museu local*]. 1999.

strategic vectors. When this phase is concluded, the issue for the Museum is to define, in an articulated way, the components mentioned own action plan.

The Museum's action as a local development instrument, in the perception of Fernando João Moreira, rests on two dominions:

- Internal dominion, which is understood as the museological action that directly aims the promotion of the well-being, material and immaterial, of the population within its area of influence;
- External dominion, which is understood as a museological action that indirectly aims (for instance, by means of the attraction of exogenous financial resources) the promotion of material and immaterial well-being of the population (See Table 8).

In the case of the Internal dominion there are seven intervention vectors, as follows:

- to promote local identity by means of studies, exhibition and/or other actions that collaborate to render evident relevant aspects of local history;
- to promote the inhabitants' territorial identity;
- promotion of inter-personal ties in the sense of strengthening the construction of an idea of community;
- to promote the integration of new inhabitants and/or marginalized groups by means of the diffusion of the identity bases of the sheltering places, the exploitation and diffusion of their own cultural outlines and of the specific elements of the groups in lack of integration and, finally, the fomenting of concrete actions of collective character capable of promoting the cooperation between groups around the resolution of problems;
- to promote an environment of individual and collective dynamism;
- to promote and render viable training actions within the areas of influence of the museum and that are adequate to the local and the museum's development strategies;
- to promote other actions that are related to the museum's intervention, the population and problems existing in its area of influence.[3]

The scope of the External Dominion, is characterised by a handful of initiatives to be developed for the exterior of its area of influence and/or geared towards the elements of external origin, seeking to capture surplus values susceptible of stimulating local development. Regarding this aspects, it is pertinent, according to the author quoted above, the four vectors listed below:

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[3] Cf.: MOREIRA, Fernando João. The Creation Process of a Local Museum [*O processo de criação de um museu local*]. 1999.

- to promote the local touristic potential, by means of, on the one hand, the conception of a museum that plays the role of a touristic pole, and, on the other, realising specific actions that seek to fulfil this goal;

- to promote the external visibility of the place, by means of the diffusion of the heritage characteristics;

- to promote and value the local traditional basis products; and

- to promote local values aiming the heritage education of tourists and visitors, promoting, thus, a tourism that is characterised by responsibility and commitment to the local basis sustainability and dynamics. [4]

The option of the museum between the internal and external plans, will condition its own strategic policy, in the same way as its intervention nature and its relation with users/builders.

"In the first case, the stress rests on internal action, and the museum, in order to be completely effective, will have to take up the role, above all, of a museum sparking direct action processes, in which, most cases, the majority of the benefits will be obtained by means of their own processes that lead to products/goals (for instance, the temporary exhibition will be important above all in its conception/construction phase, as catalyser for the meeting of knowledges, promoter of creative dialogue and generator of the confrontation capable of promoting contradiction resolution, the process-exhibition). In the opposite camp, the action geared towards the exterior, the museum will have to take up, chiefly, the role of a contemplation space, in which the induced effects derive above all from the quality of the obtained final products (for instance, the temporary exhibition will be important to the degree of the effects produced in the viewer who contemplates, the exhibition-product). (MOREIRA, 1999:09)

Beyond the differences that each one of these plans or museological options can assume in museological practice, it is necessary that they can be taken up by the local museums in their fullness and free of complexes, so as to better define the institution's format, as well as its museological practice according to their own characteristics of an institution that defines itself as a local development vector.

Fernando João Moreira, states, further, that a museum that takes up the service to populations must intensify the internal trend of their action so as to:

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[4] Cf.: MOREIRA, Fernando João. The Creation Process of a Local Museum [*O processo de criação de um museu local*]. 1999.

i) "*promote collective experience;*

ii) *incentive to participating and reflection processes;*

iii) *take in the importance of all knowledges, independent of its professional or scientific character;*

iv) *privilege the process more than the final products;*

v) *be conceived and built by the population, eventually with the technical support of museologists;*

vi) *be managed by and for the population;*

vii) *be evaluated not only regarding economic parameters, but also in terms of its services rendered to the social domain."* (MOREIRA; 1999:14)[5]

A local museum thus defined, will be able to more easily work in the local development processes, as long as it is able to take up the population's creative force, acting as the sum total of collective initiative.

In this sense, the IPM/OAC (Instituto Português de Museus/Observatório das Actividades Culturais) Inquest is not able to handle such dynamics or the meaning of the Local Museums in Portugal. With the exception of already treated data regarding the decentralisation and the museums' creation date of, little more is referenced about Local Museums. But these are fully contemplated in the European community policy in the scope of the following interventions:

a) Community Initiative Programmes (CIP), among which the LEADER and the INTEREG Programmes stand out;

b) Community Support Framework (CSF), through Sectorial Programmes and Regional Programmes.

Within the Community Initiative Programmes (CIP), the LEADER Programme is the one that had most impact on the national museological fabric, as can be verified by means of the projects approved in the museum domain, between the years 1995-99, and that range from the restoration of traditional pieces, to the incorporation of sites into the museum and the reconstruction or creation of museums and ecomuseums.

Within the Support Community Framework III (CSF) approved for the period between 2000-2006, three fundamental strategic priorities were defined:

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[5] MOREIRA, Fernando João. The Creation Process of a Local Museum [*O processo de criação de um museu local*]. 1999.

- promotion of the economic and social cohesion, in the sense of privileging the sustainable growth and regional competitiveness, so as to secure job generation;
- coherence between economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection, aiming to stimulate sustainable development, not only in the sense of integrating the environment into the policies taken up but also in the sense of guaranteeing equal opportunities between men and women;
- balance in territorial development, as requisite for the articulation of the policies carried out and as a demand for the establishment of efficacious and active partnerships.[6]

Regarding culture, the CST III contemplates essential aspects of political culture, integrating two interventions of national character:

- to strengthen culture as a factor of development and employment;
- to promote a greater spatial balance in the access to culture.

For the Culture Operational Programme the CST III has defined two priority intervention domains, as follows:

1-   Value historical and cultural heritage

- The recuperation of buildings classified as historical heritage, including intervention work and edifications, as well as the construction or adaptation of complementary support equipment for visitors;

- Innovative cultural activities, which may contribute to the revitalisation of the rehabilitated heritage and to job generation. Priority will be given to actions in places that are susceptible of attracting significant touristic fluxes, due to featuring valuable cultural and historical heritage, so contributing to the development of activities within the cultural, social and educational scope of the populations;
- Restructuring of the main national museums, including the recuperation of the buildings and of the material culture integrated to its inventory, the adaptation of spaces for public use and complementary visitors support equipment, of surrounding infrastructure and of exterior arrangements, as well as complementary actions that may contribute to the transformation of the museums into poles of touristic attraction.

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[6] Cf.: Community Support Table III 2000-2006.
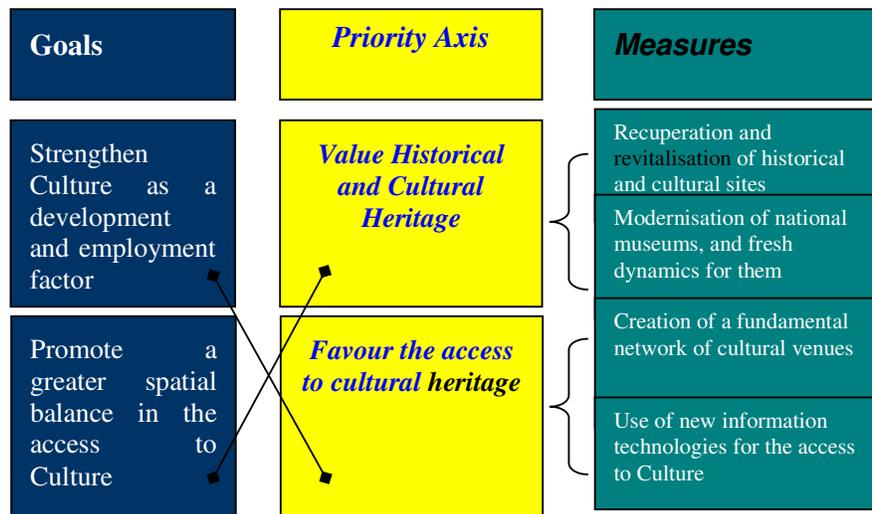
2-   Favouring of access to cultural property

•   Improvement in the supply of the spaces adequate to the undertaking of cultural activities, aiming the constitution of a balanced national network, by means of the construction, adaptation and equipping of cultural venues;

•   Promotion of cultural activity within the scope of the performing arts, which concur to the establishment and support, in the lift-off phase of this kind of spaces, for the emerging of cultural agents and connected professions, as well as for the creation of new publics and habits of cultural consumption in the populations – with the global aim of reducing the asymmetries existing between the different regions in the country;

•   Public initiatives that contribute to the diffusion of cultural information, by means of the new information technologies, or to facilitate the approximation of culture both to the individual and society;

•   The opportunities offered by the Internet and other digital vehicles are considered very important. For this reason, this domain will give special attention to the digitalisation of public collections of cultural character for ends of public diffusion, including, namely, the following actions:

▪   Museums IT network;
▪   Inventory and digitalisation of cultural heritage;
▪   Inventory and digitalisation of archival collections, of bibliographic and photographic funds etc.;
▪   creation of digital libraries;
▪   support to the Public Reading IT Network (PRITN).[7]

In all the Regional Operational Programmes (ROP) culture is contemplated in the "Priority Axle III: Intervention of the Regionally Decentralised Central Administration". The sectoral decentralised measures refer to the dominions of Education, Employment, Training and Social Development, of Information Society, Science, Technology and Innovation, Health, Sports, Agriculture and Rural Development, Fishery, Economy, Accessibility and Transports, Environment and Culture.

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[7] Cf.: Community Support Table III 2000-2006.

Table 9: Culture Operational Programme Structure

Goals	Priority Axis	Measures
Strengthen Culture as a development and employment factor	Value Historical and Cultural Heritage	Recuperation and revitalisation of historical and cultural sites
		Modernisation of national museums, and fresh dynamics for them
Promote a greater spatial balance in the access to Culture	Favour the access to cultural heritage	Creation of a fundamental network of cultural venues
		Use of new information technologies for the access to Culture

Source: POC. 2000.

The fundamental distinction between the actions of incentive to culture defined by the Regional Operational Programmes and by the Culture Operational Programme (COP) rests on the fact that the Sectoral Programme (COP) must support projects of national and international scope and importance, concentrated on buildings and places that are under the tutelage of the Ministries' central services. In their turn, the regionally decentralised components of the interventions in the culture sector and contemplated by the ROP, aim the support of buildings of patrimonial value recuperation projects and are formed by smaller projects relative to those supported by the corresponding sectoral intervention.

These decentralised cultural measures aim the establishment of partnerships with regional bodies, such as local public authorites, or with private associations and other public and private organisations, in particular those organisations that own property in the form of buildings and encompassed places (such as for instance ecclesiastic authorities). It is intended to stimulate the organisations' active participation on the regional level regarding the definition of the investment priorities in the Culture sector, aiming the a greater efficacy and efficiency in the allocation the available resources.[8]

Regarding the conservation and valorisation of natural heritage, the Regional Operational Programmes (ROP) support actions sited within the areas listed in the National Site Listing, the Special Protection Zones, in areas under statutory protection considered in International

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[8] Cf. Operational Programmes of the Centre, North, Alentejo and Algarve Regions. 2000-2006.

Conventions, in areas under the European Certificate statute, in the Biosphere Reservation or Biogenetic Reservation and in the areas relevant for the conservation of nature. The actions regarding the valorisation and protection of regionally de-concentrated natural resources, impact the coastal shoreline environmental re-qualification projects, of small dimension and incidence.

In general terms, we can sum up the aims of the Regional Operational Programmes in the de-concentrated sectoral component of culture, of the environment and the valorisation of the rural milieu and heritage in the following terms:

- recuperate/preserve the heritage (historical, architectural, cultural, environmental...);
- recuperate/preserve buildings of undeniable patrimonial value;
- recuperate/preserve castles and fortresses;
- recuperate/preserve archaeological sites;
- value culture and heritage, promoting the creation of adequate spaces;
- strengthen the traditional and specialised trade segments;
- increase the capacity for the satisfaction of essential goods and services in the social, leisure, sport and cultural areas;
- create environments that stimulate curiosity and interest in science and that diffuse scientific culture;
- stimulate experimental learning;
- promote the region's sustainable development and the improvement of environmental quality standards;
- integrate the environment into the regional development plans and programmes;
- promote a creative management of the resources and of the natural and cultural heritage;
- drive the natural heritage conservation and valorisation in partnership with a nature conservation strategy;
- preserve and valorise the identity of small rural clusters, stimulating their economic development potentialities;
- take advantage of the natural resources of a landscape for economic, social and leisure ends;
- valorise marine, agro-florestal and mineral resources;
- valorise and promote rural and low density places;
- promote environmental quality; and
- valorise and preserve natural and naturalised systems with biological and landscape interest.[9]

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[9] Cf.: Operational Programmes of the Centre, North, Alentejo and Algarve Regions 2000-2006.

As it can be noticed by the aims presented in the ROP through the Priority Axle III, the adopted development strategies point to the incentive of heritage and cultural character actions, which are characterised by their diversified, integrated and balanced nature, combining, at the same time, the support to traditional activities to more recent activities of safeguarding of environmental values.

The Culture Operational Programme (COP) is integrated to the Axle 1 of the Regional Development Plan (RDP) for Portugal in the period between 2000-2006. It aims at the elevation of the qualification level of the Portuguese, at the promotion of employment and social cohesion. Even being part of Axle 1, the COP contains within it potentialities that enable it to contribute to the fulfilment of the central aims of other Operational interventions. In this sense, the Ministry of Culture believes that the COP should contribute to: the promotion of employment and social cohesion, the development of the productive profile of the country, sustainable development of the regions, protection of the environment and equality in opportunities.

The COP emerges as the first programme featuring specific directives and goals for the museums. At first sight we can identify this fact as something innovative and stimulating, since they insert the museological set of problems into incentive, valorisation and preservation of cultural aspects programmes. However, these directives are all geared towards traditional museums, mostly under the tutelage of the Ministries, what only comes to demonstrate that even with all of the community initiatives for the incentive of local cultural aspects, the Ministry of Culture remains with a markedly elitist and excluding cultural policy.

As seen, the community intervention in the development of the country leans heavily on the on local level intervention policies, permanently establishing a structural relation between culture and development.

In this sense, local museums that in a recent past were seen as minor factors in the official cultural policy, are today recognised by the European Union as essential elements of this same policy. Here we again find the guiding principles of the "founding" documents of the theoretical structure of new museology as support for community actions.

This realisation allows us to verify the point to which the Ministry of Culture acts in a contradictory way, since it proposes, though based on the same principles an allocation of 80% of the resources available to the COP to monuments and traditionally instituted and national character museums. This gap is not observed in the Regional Operational Programmes and much less in the LEADER Community Intervention Programme, which, as we have seen, reflects the museological dynamics of local scope.

Thus, community policy has been serving as a vector for the promotion and diffusion throughout the country, of the local and regional character museums, and, in the last analysis, contributing to the affirmation of principles and practices of New Museology.

LOCAL MUSEUM

Internal plan

External plan

Endogenous development conditions

Exogenous m development conditions

Touristic attraction potential

External visibility

Promotion of local knowledges

Promotion of responsible tourism

Local development