

Ecomuseum model for a bottom-up heritage management. The Ecomuseo Casilino Ad Duas Lauros Case

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Modelo do Ecomuseu para uma gestão bottom-up do património . O Caso do Ecomuseo Casilino Ad Duas Lauros

Introduction

The museification of heritage is a very debated topic in literature (Salerno 2020; D' Eramo 2022; Ruy & Almeida, 2020). Museification is often considered in a negative sense, a way to safeguard something for showcasing it. There are multiple manners for converting this process in a participatory experience, for example in ecomuseums practices.

Indeed, ecomuseums can be defined as: "a pact of care between a community and its territory " (Maggi , 2004), and they are a way to strengthen the social role of cultural institutions, as they work for the community, and with the community . Capacity building and participatory heritage management are promoted by ecomuseums and allow local communities to be the protagonists in the narration of the territory , giving them their real voice (Corsane et al., 2009). Avoiding the process of musealization , and the crystallization of the territory (Ruy & Almeida, 2020) ecomuseums are a way to promote and discover the living heritage.

This paper aims to present the work of Ecomuseo Casilino ad Duas Lauros in Rome , in the heritage preservation and enhancement of the district. This urban ecomuseum located in the 5th Municipality of Rome , consists of different peripheric districts – Pigneto , Largo Preneste, Stazione Prenestina, Tor Pignattara/Marranella/Vigne Alessandrine/Villa Certosa, Casilino, Centocelle , Quadraro vecchio, Gordiani -. The ecomuseum has many headquarters , and in each one there is the Community of Care , which takes care of the heritage . The methodology for finding and safeguarding the heritage , developed by the ecomuseums , is shared and balanced between the local community and the ecomuseum scientific committee.

Born after a conflict between local community and the municipality , due to a city proposal for a residential building construction on an archaeological area, the ecomuseum , throughout years , has been safeguarding the local heritage , collaborating with local associations and community . The ecomuseum has been offering different types of training , and aims to enrich school education , offering many courses for kids and adults . One of the many educational offers is the School of Heritage , where participants are involved in the development of a conservatory- management heritage project. This paper will illustrate some of the ecomuseum's initiatives in bottom-up heritage management.

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The text is organized as follows: the first paragraph presents a theoretical framework about the concept of musealization, and how this process can occur in cities. Then, it discusses how participatory heritage management models can avoid urban musealization, in particular, presenting the role of ecomuseums. The last paragraph is a result of a field research at Ecomuseo Casilino, conducted in December 2021 and November 2022, and presents this ecomuseum model in collaborative heritage management.

Museology and musealization: a short framework

What is museology? What is musealization?

Many authors have tried to define this concept, and, throughout history, there have been many debates around the definition of the object of study for museology. For instance, in May 1986, the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM²) organized a workshop to discuss the general opinion on the existence of a multitude of museologies and museological objects, themed: "Museology – science or just technique?" The main strands of thought that emerged from this workshop were the consideration of museology as being the study:

- of the purposes and organization of museums.
- of the implementation and integration of a set of activities, which aims at the preservation and use of cultural and natural heritages, both in the context of museum institutions and other cultural institutions.
- of museological objects.
- of a specific relationship between Man and reality.

The different approaches have detached themselves from the idea that museums dealt merely with material objects, by contemplating a more enveloping museology, which considers not only objects, but also the relationships that people have with them in the museum environment. According to Bruno (1997 pag 14):

Museology was structuring itself as an area of knowledge that seeks to understand, theorize, and systematize the specificity of the relationships between Man (element of society), and Object (part of a collection and fragment of heritage), in a Scenario (historically recognized institution); considering integral heritage as the focus of museology (or Sociomuseology) means broadening these three concepts and updating the working methodology. It is also necessary to ask oneself: what should replace collecting from a conceptual point of view? What are the documentation systems that need to be implemented in this new conception of museum heritage? If the public category will be substituted for society, what means of evaluation can be implemented for a better understanding of its expectations?³

The concern of museology, according to Bruno (idem) should, then, be centred on two great phenomena: on the one hand, the need to understand the individual behaviour of Man in relation to his/her heritage, on the other hand, the potential to develop mechanisms that transform heritage, and that, in doing so, contributes to the construction of identities. Museology has always been seen as an applied scientific discipline and not as a practice, instead, the *Mouvement International pour la Nouvelle Muséologie* (MINOM⁴), in the second half of the 1980's wanted to address the social issues associated with museums.

² ICOM was created in 1977, and it is made up by members from all the continents that deal with museums-related specific functions and the social role of museums. It is in charge of researching, studying and disseminating the theoretical basis of museology as an independent scientific discipline, critically analysing the main trends of contemporary museology.

(<https://icofom.mini.icom.museum/welcome/welcome-to-icofom/>)

³ Author's translation.

⁴ MINOM is an international organization affiliated to ICOM (International Council of Museums), founded in Lisbon in 1985. Based broadly on a concern for social and cultural change, MINOM brings together individuals who are dedicated to active and interactive museology. It is open to all approaches which make the museum an instrument for identity building and development within the community. (<http://www.minom-icom.net/about-us>)

Therefore, the social role of museology emerged as a fundamental question, going beyond the simple collection and exhibition of objects, to analysing the relationship between Man, his/her reality, and his/her heritage, by implementing processes of participation in the local community. In this sense, the museum should be understood as a "living" and not inanimate place, an agent for (social) change, which transforms itself over time and in historical periods according to the needs of society.

Moreover, museology is an applied discipline which analyses the relationships that societies establish with their cultural heritage and, at the same time, develops new ones, expanding the notions and definitions around heritage. Museology is a field of knowledge oriented towards the framing of cultural references; therefore, it is a discipline applied for the preservation of culture. Sociomuseology has the same goals but applies them through a different approach (gaze).

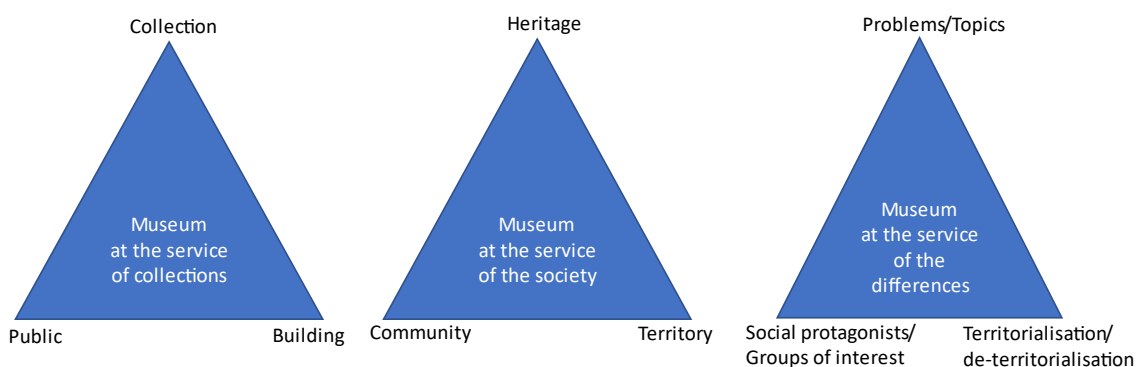
The definitions around this specific branch of museology are, however, multiple: the museum fact; the museological phenomenon and museological gaze; and the musealization process (Duarte, 2022).⁵

The museological gaze starts from the present and turns to the past, both to understand the museological phenomenon, and to create a future. The musealization process is, therefore, very long, because museums are dynamic organisms, and it is necessary to observe them over time (idem). Finally, it is necessary to keep in mind the differences between theoretical and practical museology: the first is interpretative or phenomenological, while the second has the objective of observing the past to create future projects, through the intervention on reality, by, for example, conducting field work. The museological planning is done in time (past-present-future), and in space.⁶

There are three museological paradigms, as illustrated in figure 1, which describe the museum as an institution (Brito 2019):

- at the service of the collections, with the paradigm defined by the triangle: collection, building and public.
- At the service of society.
- At the service of differences.

Museological paradigms



⁵ Duarte, museology class at Lusofona University, first semester of the Academic Year 2021-2022, PhD in Sociomuseology.

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Figure 1: Author's own elaboration from museology classes.

The musealization of the heritage. The nostalgia of the past and the crystallization of the urban space.

Museification is a process that can occur in different contexts: with objects, communities, or even places.

According to Jaques (2008 in Ruy & Almeida, 2020), museification is the transformation of the city into a museum which freezes the urban space, of historic centres, and is a facet of the "show-city", which often leads to the process of spectacularising. In this sense, the city is seen as a "commodity", a brand that stands out among the rest.

Del Cairo (2013 page 76 in Ruy & Almeida, 2020) defines the museification process as the action of institutions of selecting and confining an object based on a rhetoric that petrifies its history, and its cultural significance. The object decontextualized and transformed into a reminiscence of the past (idem) is supported by a specific logic of collective memory. Often, the mummification of heritage is done with the expectation of selling it for tourism purposes (idem). Decontextualized places are, then, ultimately, made available to external consumers, tourists in search of cultural attractions.

Museification or "mummification" of the cities can be made with the "city branding". Therefore, the excessive preservation rules on historic buildings, turns the entire city into a museum (Vaz, 2007 pag 39, in (Ruy & Almeida, 2020). According to Salerno (2020 p. 211) the processes of capitalisation, "shift the accent from the life of the urban organism to the conditions of its aesthetic conservation"⁷. Furthermore, as a consequence, by placing the focus on the visitor's needs, it's the present (future) uses by local people are disregarded.

Extracting value from cities for market purposes means converting them into museum cities. D'Eramo (2022, page 97) defines this process as an "urban taxidermy" aimed at the satisfaction of the needs of tourists. In fact, "freezing time" can only be useful to someone who does not live in that period, but is passing through, such as a visitor or a tourist. According to the capitalist economic logic, everything can become a commodity. The commodification of culture becomes a raw material from which to extract value, which falls within the industrial logic of the market (idem page 133).

Breaking the glass: a museology for the living heritage. The Ecomuseo Casilino case.

The Ecomuseo Casilino Ad Duad Lauros is an urban ecomuseum in Rome, resulted from a conflict at the center of the Casilino district ex SDO, which is a trace of the agricultural-medieval memory, as well as an archaeological area located the heart of the ecomuseum. Here, in 2012, the municipality wanted to carry out a building redevelopment, and a network of eight consortium associations was formed to address this threat, later founding an ecomuseum.

The proposal to create an urban Ecomuseum aimed at identifying, taking a census, interpreting, and reconnecting local (in)tangible cultural heritage, including cultural resources of the multicultural resident communities.

The association-based system of the ecomuseum was recognised as the management authority, grounded on volunteer's organization which pursue the objective of safeguard and manage local resources in a participatory way.

At the institutional level, Casilino is a territorial museum institution recognized by the Lazio Region for being of regional interest with the decision G13389 / 2019 of the Culture and Youth Policies Directorate of the Lazio Region and, consequently, included in the Regional Museum Organization.⁸

Furthermore, the ecomuseum intends to re-enhance the agricultural, natural, and archaeological areas against the progressive increase in construction, providing proactive

⁷ Author's translation.

⁸ <http://www.ecomuseocasilino.it/>

alternatives to land consumption. To reach such aim, it recovers the traces of the historical-architectural and archaeological heritage and the link of the existing connections between city and countryside. This will contribute to rediscover the Roman countryside in the district, which was hidden, surrounded by a city that, over time, has grown dramatically.

The project aims to strengthen the connections between the systems of greenery, archaeology and living by outlining the vision of a "new city", structured on the network of natural spaces. In this perspective, the initiatives are inspired by the principles of environmental sustainability: any form of land consumption and practice aimed at building from scratch is denied, focusing the attention on the recovery of the existing and of historic farmhouses and nineteenth-century villas. The Ecomuseum is the first step in the recovery of the Agro Romano accompanied by a process of sustainable development of local agricultural economies, as an alternative to the advance of urbanization that affects the territory.

The Ecomuseum's goal is to improve the quality of life of local communities through sustainable actions, such as creating a green infrastructure capable of improving the environmental quality of the area; creating an agricultural production network oriented towards the conscious use of resources; namely by carrying out a cultural enhancement project, that will enable the creation of a new economic-productive sector.

Involving local communities for taking care of the heritage. The Ecomuseo Casilino methodologies.

The Ecomuseo Casilino was born from a citizens' initiative. After years of research, the ecomuseum has developed own double-track methodological approach to promote community engagement. As part of this methodology, the research team identifies local heritage sites or practices and presents them to the local population, but also local communities can propose the assets to be analysed by the scientific committee, whom them reframes and represents them back to other communities to verify that the heritage is shared by all the local inhabitants.

Local community is therefore actively involved in the ecomuseum's activities and training, from the identification of heritage assets to its safeguarding. The continuous dialogue between the ecomuseum and the population is enough for identifying training needs, and it is through on-going training programs that the Ecomuseo manages that (living) heritage actively involving local citizens. Casilino courses are aimed at reinforcing skills in the areas of research, storytelling, and enhancement of cultural heritage. The ecomuseum trains new ecomuseum facilitators, service technicians, and territorial researchers. After each period of training, the ecomuseum, with the courses participants organize the Days of the Territory, a sharing moment for presenting the results of the work.

Casilino provides a wide training offer, which, nevertheless, can be divided in three main activities: research projects proposals; seminar activities; didactic-training activity in schools and the Heritage School. Research projects are led by external researchers; seminar activities (on monuments, public art, and history) for different targets. Learning programmes, that are being developed in schools, such as the "ecomuseum of boys and girls", aim to create a bottom-up narration of the territory, for example making community maps written by children; there are also visits dedicated to them. Casilino also works with high school students, who are trained to discover local heritage, by creating "heritage cards", and leading a tour in the district, ultimately encouraging to become territorial ambassadors for one day.



Picture 1: Tour organized by the students of the Kant High School (Rome), during the Ecomuseum's days in December 2021. Source: author's photo.

Many involvement processes of the population have been promoted by the Ecomuseum, in order to target different groups or communities. One example being the *Ecomuseum for children*, a project carried out in three middle schools of the Municipality of Rome V, specifically targeting young demographics, or the *Ecomuseum of boys and girls*, census project and mapping of cultural heritage from the point of view of primary school students in the Rome V Municipality. Looking to engage different demographics, the *Daily heritage* project, is a cycle of meetings at senior/youth/refugees' centres, trade union offices, churches and other community led spaces, to illustrate the cultural heritage of those places. The *Days of the Territory* is an annual cycle of meetings and networking events, for local partner institutions. The *EcomuseoLAB* is a participatory workshop, in which over 400 local citizens took part, aimed at promoting shared design initiative regarding the planning of urban space around historical buildings (former Cinema Impero and for the planning of the Casilino area).

A final example would be The *Heritage School* for ecomuseum operators and local community training. After a call for proposals, through which participants were encouraged to present a research project about the territory, the ecomuseum staff selected the best three projects. Then, the winners were invited to develop their proposal and started to work the year after. Marco, a participant has said:

"The Heritage School, born during the Pandemic, has fielded several interdisciplinary themes that favoured the participation of people with different backgrounds, there was not even a limited number of people, because it was done online. After the course, three researches, with different themes - anthropology, historical-artistic, environmental, urban planning, and landscape – were born. Our group was Urban Planning and Landscape, they asked us to do a project to enhance the local heritage, and since this is very linked to the presence of hydraulic structures, we thought that this was an interesting line of interpretation that would allow the narration of the history of the neighbourhoods. All the selected places have a double meaning: for example, the aqueduct was both a place of worship and a place of residence (slums). (...) A multidisciplinary training was carried out; the courses were held by the CTS (scientific technical committee) of the ecomuseum. After the school, my bond with the territory was strengthened."

As previously highlighted, the ecomuseum is connected, at a local level, with the Care Communities, which are involved in project development. In each district, there are ambassadors who collaborate with the ecomuseum to develop different activities. Claudio Gnessi, ecomuseum's president, describes this collaboration as such:

“Local community is involved in the activities at two levels: as an audience, and in all the heritage-paths: when a patrimonial asset is identified, the community participates in urban explorations to verify that they also consider what is identified.

This involvement is characterized by a specific methodology and actions.

Concerning methodology, the scientific committee carries out patrimonial research and produces results, resource sheets and fruition courses that are screened by the community for verification. Specific actions are explorations and seminars. This relationship is twofold virtuous, because local community can evaluate the proposal or report the inclusion of an element of heritage (social practice, local dialect, work of art, monument...) to the scientific committee which analyses it and then organizes explorations for it to be evaluated by the rest of the community.

The territory is large, so there is an agreed community that is expanding in each territory. There is the creation of many: “Comunità di Cura” (Communities of Care), which have a registered office, carry on pilot projects, and contribute to the word of mouth with other members of the community to expand the catchment area. Ecomuseum’s participants are monitored after booking an activity.”

The Ecomuseum Casilino means “inclusion”, and concerning ecomuseum’s location, Claudio adds:

“The ecomuseum has decided to not have an headquarter, because we reject the museum model, and the offices are spread throughout the territory. Each Community of Care has a registered office, which is also the thematic interpretation centre of the ecomuseum. In Torpignattara district there is the secretariat; Casa Scalabrini hosts training activities, and it’s the research pole of migratory phenomenon, and will also be the location of the future Museum of Migration; Villa Gordiani has the theme of memory, both with the local trade union, and with the elders of the neighbourhood. The community manages the headquarters in autonomy. The largest interpretation centre is the territory that represents interpretation and conservation. It contains the exhibition space, research space, and didactic space. The aim is embedding heritage in the physicality of the territory, with the delocalization of interpretation centres. Agreement protocol with local and cultural institutions, with the creation of networks of cultural spaces; in this way local population is involved and local identity is reinforced.”

The ecomuseum works with different points of reference in each district, that might also be useful to local communities. Claudio explains:

“As the ecomuseum does not have a fixed headquarter, the location for activities is chosen from time to time in a suitable place. It is an ecomuseum that contains many museums.

For example, we organized a widespread gallery of photographs in various commercial establishments. Ecomuseum Casilino believes that the street is the best exposition centre; for example, in memory of Nazi-Fascism we choose the stumbling blocks.⁹

⁹ Stumbling stones (Stolpersteine) is a project of the artist Gunter Demnig. The project commemorates people who were persecuted by the Nazis between 1933 and 1945. Stolpersteine are concrete blocks measuring 10x10cm which are laid into the pavement in front of the last voluntarily chosen places of residence of the victims of the Nazis. Their names

Ecomuseum encourages and promotes public art, such as murals. Graffiti curated by the ecomuseums are artistic restorations, which are linked to local culture and are restitution of memory. Local community is actively involved in this process. In fact, the community chooses: the place, the theme, and the artist, who interprets the theme with his style, his aesthetics. The artist is also part of the Care Community, or the ecomuseum asks if there is any local artist interested in participating in the mural activities. The ecomuseum works with both artists who sign themselves (contemporary muralism), and with writers. Ecomuseum is pushing free walls for unknown writers, where they can make jams while graffiti is created. (...) Artists could express themselves in a collective contest.

Each activity that is done is a speech on the territory (which returns the research results), an example are Murals on memory in Centocelle district.”



Picture 2: Murals in Torpignattara district (Rome). Source: author's photo.

Discovering the Casilino districts

The ecomuseum organizes different types of tours, guided by local communities' members: itineraries linked with partnership projects with foreign and roman universities; tours with schools, presented by boys and girls trained to become touristic guides; territorial Restitution tours, for discovering local heritage; and tours for the external public. Each month 15 tours are organized, with around 30 participants in each one, and 450 visits each month.

Tours are to promote access to cultural participation. Participants can donate at the end of the tour (or online). Institutions that collaborate with the ecomuseum pay the operators that organize itineraries (through private and public financing). Participants do not pay for lowering the bend of access to culture, as the neighbourhood where the ecomuseum is located is not so rich.

Casilino uses technology as a medium to enable the exploration of the territory. In this sense, the Ecomuseum App, is an extra tool to access information one local heritage (history, monuments, oral testimonies), presenting a narrated story of the territory built together with citizens, protection bodies, researchers, schools. The app can be downloaded in an easy way from the official ecomuseum's website, AppStore or GooglePlay. In the app's interface map, the user can find heritage sites and routes proposed by citizens, through the collective collection system (anyone can add a heritage site in the map).

and fate are engraved into a brass plate on the top of each Stolperstein. Today, Stolpersteine are being realized for Jews, Sinti and Roma, people from the political or religious resistance, victims of the "euthanasia" murders, homosexuals, Jehovahs Witnesses and for people who were persecuted for being declared to be „asocial “.

Moreover, integrated research projects and activities, aimed at the study of the territory in the various heritage articulations, are another way for discovering the local heritage. The "Sentimental Itineraries project", being an example. They started in 2016, with the definition of the first group of routes in the heart of the ecomuseum (Tor Pignattara, Villa De Sanctis, and Prenestino-Labicano areas). The project's activities were further developed from 2017 to 2020, through the Co.Heritage program (for the mapping of the heritage of communities of foreign origin), using storytelling, workshops and seminars, and other activities. One of the most recent projects dedicated to migration is the M.A.U.Mi; the first Museum of Urban Art of Migrations. This project was developed by a Care Community, Casa Scalabrini 634, which is an experimental and innovative shelter for asylum seekers and refugees who, after the first period in the reception centres, can, in this way, experience a path that leads them to real autonomy. Casa Scalabrini 634 tries to cope precisely with the need to accompany asylum seekers in the second and third phase of reception towards a path of real autonomy and integration.

Conclusions

Social Museology is the seed for social change. As so, the museum must be a place of health and culture for local communities, and not just a point of interest in touristic routes. It should always be perceived as a process and a platform for dialogue.

In conclusion, to reach museological approaches that follow Sociomuseology's principles, active listening processes must be activated. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the plurality of meanings around (in)tangible heritage, and the museologist should act as a mediator, to encourage the participation of people in the enhancement and conservation of heritage.

The Ecomuseo Casilino works in a participatory way for promoting the multiple meanings of heritage, around memory (and identity) making continuous processes. Casilino, acts an active listening agent towards local community, by implementing participatory mechanisms. According to Sidoti (2021, pag 361-364) There are many actions of the ecomuseum aimed at strengthening the link between the community and the territory, for example, an activity that has contrasted the "mummifying" musealization of the urban cultural heritage have been the Design Laboratories for the creation of an offer for cultural and tourist use. Following the development of one of the routes, the one dedicated to art, it emerged that street art works can "gather the community around shared elements capable of acting positively on the development of the neighbourhood as a whole".

In this sense, it demonstrates the ways in which the Casilino can be place for practicing the right to participate. The Ecomuseum was born as an act of positive exercise for local participation in the place's cultural, social, and political life, encouraging the design of urban spaces that resist and actively oppose the looming risks of overbuilding and building speculation.



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