

Introduction

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This RLE dossier is dedicated to muSEAum – Branding the Sea Museums of Portugal, a research, co-innovation, training, and development project funded by FCT, the Portuguese State foundation for science and technology, developed by CICANT, a research unit of Universidade Lusófona, Lisbon, from September 2018 to July 2022, a period that will be remembered by the Covid-19 pandemic that led to a two-year closure of most museums[1]

This introduction first explains the institutional protocolar framework that was established for the project, resulting in an exemplary museum-academy partnership that did not dwindle during the Covid-19 lockdowns. In fact, the two years of absence of physical contact stimulated imaginations and were used to further the project's objectives, and to develop and perfect the museums' digital communications skills. Secondly, the introduction provides an overview of the articles included in this special muSEAum dossier of RLE.

The muSEAum project had two focus areas. The first was museum branding and digital communication activities to create or stimulate museum awareness and reach. Communication is an area reasonably developed in large and better resourced Portuguese museums, although it could be much improved. But it is lacking in quality and quantity in medium and small museums which are by far the largest contingent of museums. The legal frameworks of museums, whether national, regional or municipal, is punctuated by the absence of much desired administrative and financial autonomy from the respective parent State bodies – national government ministries, regional governments, municipalities.

The second focus was on museum visitor experience as an element of the museum communication effort and the contribution that digital technologies may have in enhancing the visitor experience and positive WoM.

The co-innovation lifelong training partnership was established by CICANT with municipal and regional museums (these hailing from the Azores and Madeira) representing the whole country, and one large national museum, the Marine Museum (Museu de Marinha), in Lisbon. The cooperation protocols established with the museums' parent institutions defined the rights and obligations of each party. The dispositions and objectives were in general accomplished or surpassed by both parties thus ensuring the project's success.

The protocols established with each individual institution authorized the CICANT muSEAum team to identify, quantify and qualify resources and management practices, through physical or online surveys, and interviews with the museums' directors and staff, and to evaluate the communication potential of the collections. The museums' contribution extended to the investigation necessary for the accomplishment of doctoral degrees executed in fulfilment of and as an integral part of the project's objectives. Museums participated in the definition of the sea museum concept, value proposition, brand idea, digital personality of the collective muSEAum brand (Museus de Mar de Portugal / Sea Museums of Portugal), and in the development of the project's network. The museums authorized the disclosure of the partnership in the context of the project's activities.

On its part, when requested by the museums, CICANT's team provided consultancy and recommendations originating from information and research analysis produced during the project's process, including on best international practices. The project's team performed the tasks necessary to the identification, quantification and qualification of resources and management practices, through surveys, interviews with directors and museums' staff and with officials of the parent entities. CICANT made available the human resources necessary for the acquisition of skills by the museums' human resources in organisational and communicational processes. Finally, CICANT contributed to the development of the muSEAum brand and network.

The five articles in this dossier impart a panorama of the enlarged scope that muSEAum acquired over its four-year development, one year more than the projected three years due to the Covid-19 lockdowns. The first article by Nuno Cintra Torres provides an overview of the project's genesis, on the museum ecosystem, the project's activities and possible future developments. Rute Muchacho aims to investigate how the new media have changed communication with the public and contribute to a new visitor experience and to the redefinition of the museum space. Kirsten Drotner argues that citizen engagement underpins sustainable museum innovation. Célia Quico departs from early 20th century stereoscopic photographs of Nazaré at the local Museu

Dr. Joaquim Manso to speculate about the future of the place. Nicole Costa and Ivone Magalhães write about their experiences in the management of museums in Central and Northern Portugal.

The first article, by Nuno Cintra Torres, provides a glimpse of literature on the economic impacts of museums for local and regional development, namely in employment emerging from tourism. It then approaches museum visitors' motivations with a reference to Falk who postulates that visitors foremost objective when visiting a museum is to find personal wellbeing. On the other side, Drotner argues that visitor studies are limited because they miss how people interact socially and find meaning when relating to museums. Meaning through signifying connections is the touchstone of Dewey's writings on museum experience, an event that should be a pleasurable experience. Meaning is also dealt by McCracken who argues that cultural meaning is drawn from a culturally constituted world and transferred to a consumer good and from good to the individual. An integrated visitor attraction experience should be encapsulated in the museum brand and reinforced in all the museum touch points, before, during and after the visit, writes Wallace. Digital technologies used in museums possess qualities that Dewey would consider as significant objects. The article provides an overview of the Portuguese museum ecosystem. A panorama of management practices in museum branding and digital communications is provided by an online survey of hundreds of visitors in six museums and by a management survey in 38 institutions. Local museums are overtly focused on the local or regional constituencies. The local focus comes in detriment of national or international reach. Many museums, large, medium and small have poor national visibility, not to mention a non-existent international presence, as a consequence of the absence of a structured brand and marketing activities targeting multinational audiences. A lot remains to be done by Portuguese museums big and small to acquire relevance and reach in the digital domain, it is defended by the writer. The article concludes with information on the three conferences, two webinar series, books and other materials produced by the muSEAum team. The article is complemented by the article by Rute Proença Muchacho who presents and explains the graphic work developed in the course of the project, from the suggestive logo to the visuals of the conferences, webinars and publications.

The article by Kirsten Drotner is based on a keynote address delivered at the 3rd muSEAum conference, Lisbon, 'Levantar ferro! Manter o rumo! Set sail! Stay the course' (2022). The Denmark based author argues, in line with the muSEAum experience, that the Covid pandemic offered museums important new opportunities to foster more, and more diverse, citizen engagements; and such engagements may be key to sustainable museum innovation in the future. The author claims that there are two leading paradigms in existing museum interaction with the world: a technology paradigm and a personalisation paradigm. Examples on how museums may apply participatory designs

to foster more inclusive and diverse citizen engagements are provided. Drotner claims that unlike the situation in the USA and parts of Asia, many European museums are based on public funding. This implies that broad public support is key to institutional legitimacy and survival. Also, in democratic societies, cultural heritage, including museums, is defined as a public good, not primarily a consumer good. It is, potentially at least, a resource for all citizens, and not just a choice for individuals with economic and cultural capital. To mobilise these cultural resources social groups must be engaged with, and by, museums as citizens, not as consumers. It is this logic about public funding and public good that underpins museums' need to develop and sustain citizens' engagement as social encounters. The article concludes by discussing how and why citizen engagements can catalyse sustainable museum innovation, namely through the personalisation of the engagement facilitated by personalised devices and the Internet. Citizen engagement can be achieved, the author proposes, by putting people first, not collections or technology, by designing for social interaction and balancing individual authority with audience engagement.

The article by Nazaré born Célia Quico is a product of the research done during the muSEaum project resulting in an invitation to delve into the past through the collection of 49 pairs of stereoscopic photos of Nazaré by Álvaro Laborinho shot in early 20th century. The pictures, of which numerous examples are included in the article, are part of the collection of Museum Dr. Joaquim Manso in Nazaré. The group include glass plates and stereoscopic cards from 1913 to 1932 and repeat many of the themes of Laborinho's standard photos, such as seascapes, countryside landscapes, bathers on the beach, fishermen and women on the beach, various local events in Nazaré, family and friends. The thematic analysis of the images is the focus of the article and includes the presentation of the transdisciplinary exploratory project "Nazaré Imersiva" (Immersive Nazaré) that was based on the stereoscopic collection. "Nazaré Imersiva" consists of a 360° video lasting about five minutes that depicts a time travel experience taking place in Nazaré and spanning 200 years. The 360° video includes video captured on site - panoramic views of Nazaré and Praia do Norte - with animation in motion graphics and three different soundtracks.

Nicole Costa provides an analysis of management experiences of the organic unit that comprises three museums in a central region of Portugal: Museu José Malhoa (painter, 1855-1933), Museu da Cerâmica (Ceramics Museum), both in Caldas da Rainha, and Museu Dr. Joaquim Manso (ethnography, art, photography) in Nazaré. The article reflects on the practice of concepts related to social museology permeated by the encounter of otherness that marks the management of the Brazilian born museum professional who, having won an international call, is currently the director of the three Portuguese museums. Her article explores how an empathic and activist museological

posture was found to manage the three previously independently managed institutions. The article focuses on the difficulties and proposals for solutions for the construction of museums that value diversity, inclusion, and experience. The author's observations and the bibliographic references mark the starting point of the provocative tone of an article that seeks to answer questions about the results of the joint management, new ways forward, and the lessons learned that may inspire and motivate other institutions.

To conclude the dossier is the testimony of museum management by Ivone Magalhães who expounds her long experience at the Esposende Municipal Museum, an agro-maritime town in Northern Portugal. She argues that the museum reflects the land and sea where it was created, a place that is home to several maritime, fishing and agro-fishing communities, but also since the 19th century a Summer beach resort for the inland populations, stretching to Braga, the region's major urban and historical centre. The collections of the museum include several pieces representing the diverse communities' ways of life and work, namely the harvesting of sargasso at the long beaches, once used as fertilizer. The municipal museum is at the centre of the Esposende Polynucleate Museum project that emerged as a response to the loss of audiences caused by the Covid pandemic (2020-2022). Despite its meager collection, the strong architectural limitations of the adapted building -- the former Teatro-Club -- and the extremely scarce human resources, the project proceeded to identify the natural and cultural heritage (material and immaterial) of the municipality and its evaluation from a tourism perspective (heritagisation), and their presentation to visitors with museological tools. The Polynucleate Museum project was designed to enhance all the traditional technologies of the municipality and has currently four nuclei: the Bread Museum with the musealization of three windmills in a set of seven, and three nuclei installed in pre-existing buildings but adapted for the new purpose, including the Teatro-Club building. The new cultural facilities guarantee full museological coverage of the territory. The independently managed Esposende Maritime Museum, overlooking the mouth of river Cávado and the Atlantic, housed in the old maritime rescue house, is another attraction.

