

Community Museums and (G)Local Development – CALL FOR PAPERS



MUSEUMS IN SMALL TOWNS AND RURAL AREAS contribute to creating or reinforcing local identities, promote social cohesion, give visibility to the territory and its populations, and attract travellers and tourists to varying degrees. Community museums also actively contribute to recovering local memories and narratives that enrich historical knowledge and culture, boosting the self-esteem of populations that sometimes feel isolated or even ignored. Their agents often act as cultural mediators who, through multiple initiatives, consolidate community values, promote integration, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, they play an important role in attracting investment for the restoration of abandoned buildings and degraded landscapes, giving them new functions, enhancing the territory, and generating jobs in aging and depressed regions. Various educational and cultural initiatives often accompany the activities of these community museums (agricultural, mining, or industrial) located in small towns, on the outskirts of large cities, or in rural areas. In this sense, the concept of «community museum» (used here in a comprehensive sense) is not limited to museums of agricultural rurality and their representations, as it also considers different musea-lizations and patrimonializations of historical extractivism, the multiple memories of industry situated in a community or peripheral context, and the historical trajectory of their territories.

In recent decades, as a result of the conjuncture marked by deindustrialization and the new industrialization of the rural landscape, the growing importance of tourism and services accompanied by improved incomes and levels of well-being associated with social changes and democracy, there has been a surge in the creation of museums and museum projects in Portugal with a significant presence in small urban centers and rural regions. From the 64 museums existing at the beginning of the millennium, we reached 2022 with 165 integrated into the Portuguese Museum Network (OPAC data) and 475 open to the public in 2024 (INE). This growth follows the more general trend observed in this period in European countries and even outside Europe. China, for example, went from fewer than 4,000 museums to more than 7,000 in the same period because of public policies accompanied by growth in well-being levels and the emerging tourism culture.

Recognizing the cultural, economic, social, and political importance of this (g)local movement, the **Fábrica Catalã**-cultural association will hold the Symposium “**Community Museums and (G)Local Development**” on July 3 and 4, 2026, in Azaruja (Evora, Portugal), aiming to promote the exchange of experiences and knowledge resulting from the activity of its agents and among specialists. What has been the impact of community museums on local and regional life in these multiple dimensions? What public policies have been followed to promote or ensure the sustainability of these local infrastructures? What strategies and activities have been developed for the community or to attract tourists? What communication and marketing do they develop? What material and human resources have been mobilized? How do they use digital technologies and social networks? What museum networks have they promoted or integrated? What methodologies, SMART goals, and metrics have been effective in measuring the impact of these museums and the use of resources? What obstacles have they faced? Finally, it is important to know not only successful cases but also those that did not go beyond the project phase or that had an ephemeral existence.

THEMATIC AREAS:

1. Community Museums, public policies and powers (local, national, transnational)
2. Museums, economy and communities
3. Heritage strategies and collections
4. Actions, communication and marketing strategies
5. Community museums: democracy, citizenship and (in)sustainability

The CO welcomes proposals for communication and posters until April 15, 2026, situated within the stated problematic and thematic areas. Files submitted in DOC, DOCX or ODT formats must contain a title and abstract of up to 400 words, be accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae of the author, and be sent to the email address: simposiomcdgl@uevora.pt. The accepted working languages are Portuguese, Spanish, French, and English.

READING LIST:

Brown, Karen; Alissandra Cummins, Ana S. González Rueda (2024), Communities and Museums in the 21st Century Shared Histories and Climate Action. 1ª ed. – Londres: London: Routledge.

OECD/ICOM. CONSELHO INTERNACIONAL DE MUSEUS. (2019) [Cultura e Desenvolvimento Local: Maximizar o Impacto. Um Guia para Administração Local, Comunidades e Museus](#). - OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Papers, No. 2019/07 ©.

Moutinho, Mario Caneva de Magalhães. «The contribution of Ecomuseology and Sociomuseology for Social Harmony». ICOM News 1 (2010): 1-1.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:

Maria Antónia Pires de Almeida, Assistant Researcher, Research Centre for Political Science, University of Minho.

Maria do Carmo Duque, Archaeologist (Fábrica Catalã Cultural Association)

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João Brigola, Professor and Researcher, University of Évora and CIDEHUS.

José Manuel Lopes Cordeiro, Professor of Public Higher Education (Retired); President of APPI - Portuguese Association for Industrial Heritage, National Representative of TICCIH - The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage.

José Manuel Brandão, History, Territories and Communities, NOVA FCSH branch of the Centre for Functional Ecology, University of Coimbra (Integrated Researcher).

Mário Magalhães Moutinho, Coordinator of the Museology Department at ULHT. Lecturer and Researcher in the area of Sociomuseology at Universidade Lusófona, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Education and Development (CeIED) - ReLeCo: Memory, Citizenship and Sociomuseology. Board member of the UNESCO Chair - Education, Citizenship and Cultural Diversity.

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Registration (until June 15th): info@fabricacatala.com



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