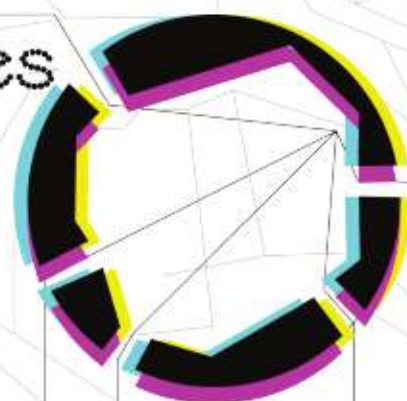


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**Sharing my photographs, finding
answers, building a better present:
the collaborative memory archive of the
Museum of São Brás**

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***Sharing my photographs, finding answers, building a better present:
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Abstract

In the countries of southern Europe, the economic adjustment policies being applied are causing a progressive weakening of the museological action in its various forms. Questioned within the transformation process involving a profound change of the management models and of the prevailing values, museums seek a Sustainable Museology.

In this context, new museological formulas emerge associating sustainability to social creativity and to valorization of diversity. This is the case of the *Costume Museum* in São Brás de Alportel (MuT), in the Algarve, and its "Museology on layers". A model based on shared management, taking as its starting point a deep knowledge of the territory, the collective construction of senses and local cultural meanings, and the reframing and reuse of ancestral knowledge, with the objective of contributing to an equitable development.

In this paper we present the structure, the method and the results of one of the reference projects: *Photography, memory and identity* (FMId). In this case, a contrastive analysis between the collaborative research and the cartography of meanings associated with pictures of each family is performed. This exercise of memorial archaeology leads to decoding diverse segments of local culture: traditional knowledge, history and local memory, balanced uses of the resources of the territory, forms of alternative economy, community organization ways, etc.

Its resonances reach every one of the museological functions and processes of MuT, but also each of the families involved in the project, have now a current account of memory in their hometown Museum.

¹ The present article is a scientific product resulting from the post-doctoral project of the first author "Society in the Museum: study on cultural participation in European local museums" (SOMUS), supported by the Post-doctoral Programme of the Portuguese *Foundation for Science and Technology* (FCT, LA-50012) of the *Portuguese Ministry of Education* (2014-2016).

Introduction

Mapping sociocultural realities connected to the land, to a theme or to an event, is today natural and necessary for any museum that seeks to develop its actions among the community and associations with whom it shares a specific area.

Originally associated with specific museological typologies – such as the museums of ethnology – for its research potential of the forms of organization and occupation of land, this too is one of the keys that leads to the construction of a Museology of local nature, committed to the valuing of cultural diversity and to sustainable development.

The project we hereby present belongs precisely to this type of Museology, today better known as Sociomuseology. We are talking about a local museum in a small village in the Algarve, whose essence of being are the locals: this is the *Costume Museum of São Brás de Alportel*. The main difference is the fact that we are not only dealing with people as visitors, but rather as workers in the construction of the museological process.

In this context we focus our attention on one of the projects that is currently running. It is entitled, *Fotografia, Memória e Identidade (Photography, Memory and Identity)*, and consists of an experience that places collective memory as a central process, recognizing its power as a mediator between past and present (Reginaldo, forthcoming). The starting point is a set of images, lost in time and spread over the village. These are images, which throughout the process, are collected and speak out, images that allow us to map both the smaller history of the village and the processes of identity construction at a larger scale.

In the end, the “Daily menu” is also made of places, people, ingredients or ideas that have travelled through time to our table.

A world museum of a local scale

The project at *Costume Museum of São Brás de Alportel* goes along the lines of action defined by Sociomuseology, developing from a model which is essentially dictated by the people that interfere in its daily processes of construction. Heir to the museological trend that we have become familiar with from New Museology (since 1972), and resulting from its evolution and recognition of the relation with other social sciences since the 1990's, Sociomuseology places at its core and at that of the museological process, the local community. It is from here that it focuses its line of action: in the use of participative methodologies that privilege the integrated development of man and of the land by way of culture².

Along these lines...

The **museum** is perceived as an instrument of the democratization of culture that recognizes the relevance of local diversity for integrated development (Varine, 2007, p.23), and which for this reason, acts along with the people so as to construct new forms of equilibrium. Taking as a starting point, ingredients such as social experience, knowledge related to how to inhabit and use nature, this

² For more information on the principles and practices of Sociomuseology see: Sancho Querol, 2013, p. 167-178.

museum proposes to reach its objectives related with social inclusion, sustainability in its many forms or non-formal in the various segments of the local population. In sum, we are talking about museums that deal with real people and real problems in real time. (Šola, 2007, p.38).

According to this perspective, **heritage** is the result of a process of identification and selection of realities which, for its symbolic character, and for its power of representation and of communication, reflect the evolution of our society, of its way of life, and of the cultural values to which they are associated. So, besides helping us to better understand the origin and evolution of vital processes of which we are a part of, or to define the traces of our social and cultural identity in time, the category, heritage is an essential tool for the development of cultural conscience and, consequently, for the designing of the present. In other words, heritage is a “good for action” category. (Gonçalves, forthcoming).

Museum and heritage are precisely the two main aspects of the paper, with a few small differences in form and structure regarding the social nature to which they are normally applied and which are defined by our case study: an archaeological memorial, which takes place within a museum of ethnographic nature, situated in a rural area.

So we find ourselves dealing with a local museum whose origins remount to the year 1983, when a social and cultural institution, the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*, in a village with 10.000 inhabitants, São Brás de Alportel, proposed to create an ethnographic museum to document local culture, with the objective of safeguarding inherent movements of the people and the land, undergoing rapid transformation. In this sense, and as a result of a long path documented in previous work (see Sancho Querol and Sancho, forthcoming), I suggest the name *Costume Museum of São Brás de Alportel*, be abbreviated to **MuT** from here forth.

What makes MuT different is the fact that it has created, along the years, its own methods of working based on the definition of a structure of layers of social, cultural, environmental and economic action (Sancho Querol and Sancho, o.c.), from which it develops its museological action with the community.

As a result, MuT has today, heritage education projects running with local schools, dealing with dynamics of local knowledge, with artisans of different fields and studying the many traditions connected to the use of natural resources of the land, or of participatory inventory regarding the ways of living in a rural environment in small communities spread out over the mountains.

Finally within the context of heritage, we find a project which goes by the name of *Photography, Memory and Identity*, or **FMIId**, which sets out to give back to the population a cultural collective property which is memory (Varine, 2007, p.22), preserving its creative nature and guaranteeing its presence and its contemporary usage within the broadest possible scope of its users and owners (Sola, 2007, p.32) through the means of the museum.

It is with this objective that FMIId takes as its starting point family photographs, that is, images, which as a general rule were not captured with the intention of documenting sociological, ethnographic or any other scientific variant related to the study of the reality of mankind as contexts. There are other cases where, because of their characteristics, they reflect the many and diverse aspects of daily life in the village through time, sharing the common fact that they have been validated by owners to reflect the image they want to transmit of themselves. From this visual universe through which we are connected to the real world, a process of visual interpretation gains form thanks to a team of local

agents who made the mapping of the evolution of history and of local identity possible with such a high level of detail never before imagined

Archaeologies of memory: photography as the seed of dialogue in time

“Las imágenes se hicieron al principio para evocar la apariencia de algo ausente. Gradualmente se fue comprendiendo que una imagen podía sobrevivir al objeto representado; por tanto podría mostrar el aspecto que había tenido algo o alguien, y por implicación como lo habían visto otras personas. Posteriormente se reconoció que la visión específica del hacedor de imágenes formaba parte también de lo registrado [...] Esto fue el resultado de una creciente consciencia de la individualidad, acompañada de una creciente consciencia de la historia.” (Berger, 2000, p.16)

Created in 2009 as an exercise in memorial archaeology surrounding the São Brás municipality the FMId project takes as its starting point a memorial object – the family photo – to decode a broad spectrum of segments of culture and local society, till now unfamiliar to the museum and the community at large.

This idea started to gain a voice when local visual memory artefacts were gathered from personal photographic collections of the Village and surroundings making them available to the general public through the means of the Museum and new technologies.

Both on the part of the population, which readily agreed to share these personal images, as on the part of the museum, the need to overcome the mere formal identification of the image for archival purposes was noted. The years and the thinking resulting from this work, opened new dimensions bringing forth an understanding of the multiplicity of aspects concerned with identity, professions, human relations among those portrayed, denomination and function associated with places, or happenings and the traditional knowledge which had in the meantime disappeared.

This is how the Museum gathered that, besides collecting, documenting and making images available, the greatest aim of this visual archive would be the democratization of the memories to which the photographs are connected through an institution such as the museum, that is, the development of its social responsibility in a field so structuring as collective memory is.

Along these lines, MuT became, at once: both a starting point and the basis of a network of local inhabitants which, realizing the importance of the initiative, would contribute to the spreading and the involvement of new families interested in participating in; the depository of memories of each family; deciding who would be responsible for the collection, organizing and the contemporary reusing of knowledge that emerges with each decoded image. In this sense, Museum and community became the main beneficiaries of the collective memorization.

The Photography Group

“A história de cada fotografia está ligada a um destino favorável ou não, e às interpretações a que for sujeita nos museus, arquivos, acervos particulares e caixas de recordações familiares.” (Martins, 2009, p.297)

FMId is an open group, dynamic and of diverse interests that relies on the efforts of a team of loyal collaborators to whom new members are regularly associated while others who were there just temporarily, resign. Among them we find people who wish to share images whose aim is to contribute

to the identification and documentation of other images and whose only wish is to find company and share the nostalgia of childhood and youth within a constructive atmosphere. At play is not only the decoding of the roots and the evolution of the society of São Brás, but also the development of another form of social-cultural conscience which is essential for the construction of the present.

In this sense, the passing of the years has helped to put together a solid team, which is currently formed by a “core group” of 9-10 people, committed to the long term construction of a memorial fund for the region (see Figure 1). To this fixed group, whose ages vary between 50 and 85, someone new is sometimes added; who shares the interests to this cause but who, for personal reasons cannot be a regular member. These people compose the Photography Group, a real team of *Agents of local memories* (Sancho Querol, forthcoming) characterized by their diversity of profiles, experiences and life stories and completed by the presence of: João Pires da Cruz (former mayor of the São Brás de Alportel Town Hall and self-taught scholar of local history), Maria João Gaspar (former nurse, and an active volunteer benefactor dedicated to social problematic cases), José Oliveira e Sousa (former military officer interested in history and local heritage), Luísa Pimenta e Maria João Caiado (two seamstresses with an interest in local history), Francisco Silva (cork worker and former Town Hall employee), Amaro do Serro (former cork worker, and later owner of a cork factory, interested in memories of the land), Inélida Gonçalves (cook, interested in memories of local events and in the construction of genealogies), Manuel Vargas (former truck driver and later entrepreneur in the trucking business for the cork industry).

Figure 1. Photography Group (April 2014)
Source: MuT Archive³



Simultaneously, the Photography Group turns out to be the link between the Museum and the community, as it not only is formed by a part of it, but also benefits from the credits and the respect of each one of the parts involved in the process of the construction of this archive. Within this context, and in response to the lines of action of MuT, it is important to refer that the Group has assumed since the beginning, the role of not only a collector of documents for the local population, but also the role of the driving force of a project which represents, for all the São Brás community, the passing down of its own legacy, essential for understanding other dimensions of history and of the village identity.

A methodology

“Dezenho obtido pela luz, ou processo segundo o qual os objetos por si mesmos se dezinham sem socorro de lapiz” (taken from one of the first news articles to come out in Portugal, to make known the findings of Daguerre and Talbot. *Revista Litteraria*, Porto, March 1839, in Sena, 1998, p.16)

³ All the images of this article are part of the Archive of MuT.

The FMId bases its action on participative methodologies which involve the community in each of the steps that bring the process to life. Inspired on the ideas of Bourdieu (1965) and Barthes (1980) on what seems to be an “informal sociology of photography”, FMId crosses collaborative research with cartography of the senses associated with family photographs. From here, its *modus operandi* is based on the exercise and the regular unchaining of memories submerged in time and rescued within the context of a collective activity that takes place once a week at the museum.

So since 6 years ago, every Thursday at 3pm, the Photography Group meets with the participation of a representative of MuT. This session lasts for approximately 3 hours during which a plan that has been previously defined by the typology and contents of the photographic collections awaiting their time to speak out, or by the themes the group wants to develop in depth so as to complete the research being pursued. In this context, the Museum takes on the role of the mediator helping to orchestrate the research process, and taking responsibility for the guard and use of information which emerges at each work session.

With this objective, the team at MuT created and maintains a data base in digital format which already has 37,000 images representing 400 families of the area and its limits as well as graphic and audio-visual documentation associated to the images. This database incorporates all the time periods, places and social segments of the land, organized into 5 categories, which are constantly being adapted to the expansion and diversification of the selection, and which were created from a small set of ideas and concepts originating from the fields of Ethnography (Martins, 2009, pp.312-314) and of Heritage Studies (UNESCO 2003 and 2005).

So taking into consideration the themes of interest in an area such as community local memory, five categories or thematic fields have emerged, to be inserted into the archive, organized into subcategories in alphabetical order, developed from the mapped images.

According to this perspective, it is important to mention that the criteria originally used for the classification of the inventory, of a sequential nature according to the order of entrance of each object, has been replaced for what makes the most sense for the group that is, according family units which inhabit the land.

Regarding the material dimension of the object of study, be it a photograph, document or other register of any other nature, the method used in the project involve a form of loan of the object, for scanning, soon returned to the respective family a couple of days later. This option, which recognizes the sociocultural scope of the object, rests its foundations on theories such as those of Crimp (1995, *in* Martins, 2009, p.299), for whom photography loses its informative capacity when it is removed from the world to which it belongs as also the principles of Sociomuseology. As such, the Museum considers the “affective possession” a priority of the objects on the part of each family, in spite of the “effective possession” of the originals in the institution’s archive.

For this reason, the visual archive at FMId is mostly composed of digital files, being only a small percentage originals (approximately 3% of the total) archived at the Museum, because these belonged to a former and older archive, or because of special cases (legal processes, emigration, death...) people have opted to donate their collections to the Museum.

As a result, the archive is organized into five categories which we will now outline:

Category 1 - PEOPLE

Popular Culture: clothes (work and formal), traditional costumes, fashion and local contexts, extravagance, power relations.

Social phenomena: emigration, parties, rituals, ceremonies (weddings, religious events, funerals, balls).

Instruction and Education: schools, school life, values and principles.

Local public figures: poets, politicians, businessmen.

Religion: life and death, prayers, expressions of daily life, terminology, symbolism.

Local Society: sociological studies, genealogical studies, demographics, neighbourhood relations, family, social change, tracking of diminutives and their origins.

Category 2 - PLACES

The Urban Evolution of the land: geographic studies, extinct local topology (official and non-official), places, sites and streets.

Local monuments and remarkable buildings: changes, restoration work, transformation, religious architecture.

Category 3 - INSTITUTIONS

Associations, clubs and organizations: hierarchies, organization, rules and values, evolution.

Military world: history, power, uniforms, weapons

Category 4 - ARTS AND CRAFTS

Art: artists, different collections (print, caricature...)

Photography: photographers, technique, evolution of photography, amateur photography, travelling photographers, photographic collections.

Professions: traditional professions (lost and in transformation, handicraft, use of natural local resources.

Category 5 - DOCUMENTS

Relevant documents (related with images): registers and work card, correspondence, archive (public and private), economy and finance, testimonies audio/video, registers of local life.

Flyers: leaflets, advertisements, events, charity donations, posters

Objectives

“Na medida em que os patrimônios encontram “ressonância” no corpo e na alma dos homens e mulheres que pretendem representar, opera-se um trabalho subjetivo de reconstrução do patrimônio, no qual a dimensão individual ou da personalidade individual é incontornável. Nesse sentido, a ressonância pode ser entendida como mais que a simples “... [evocação] no expectador das forças culturais complexas e dinâmicas de onde eles emergiram”. Na verdade trata-se de um trabalho permanente, interminável de reconstrução subjetiva. (Gonçalves, forthcoming).

In this context, during the process of the construction of the archive some objectives have been defined which reflect the spirit of the team and project as well as the relation of exchange which has been undergoing consolidation between Museum and Community, through a territory such as memory and an easily adapted museum object such as the photograph. Among them we would like to point out the following:

- a) Working visual memory of the land from the photographic archives of families in the area,

planning the construction of an immense album of the community capable of decoding social, cultural, rural and urban cartographies, long forgotten and fundamental to the understanding and the construction of the present

- b) Creating a *corpus* of knowledge on the Village and its people, directly proportional to the level of participation of the local population.
- c) Constructing a sustainable and participative museological process, while considering sociocultural diversity which defines the community and, simultaneously, the creation of a selection on history and identity.
- d) Finding the right path to integrating the simple people into the community (country folk, people with low level of schooling, housewives...) and the museum, creating along with them an understanding and getting them to become a part of the “circle of friends”.

Exchanges: giving back to the community as the key to the museological process

“MUSEUMS WORK IN CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMUNITIES FROM WHICH THEIR COLLECTIONS ORIGINATE AS WELL AS THOSE THEY SERVE [...]

Museum collections reflect the cultural and natural heritage of the communities from which they have been derived. As such, they have a character beyond that of ordinary property, which may include strong affinities with national, regional, local, ethnic, religious or political identity...” (ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, 2013, 6^o Article)

MuT is a collective museological project whose *raison d'être* are the people, but also the process of transformation of society and of nature they operate and which are channelled into a set of senses and meanings which we call culture (Lord, 2014).

In this way, the project at MuT is based on an ideology which places greatest importance on the museum as central to development of the people and of the land, rendering the active community an essential factor in the museological process.

According to this perspective, the FMIId projects is incorporated into a structure, where, as we see (point 2), there are different levels of social, cultural, economic and ecological interaction at work, which not only enrich the museological project as also constitute a place of expression, recognition and emancipation of the community at different levels.

Within this context, FMIId stands as an example of success for its work with the local community, precisely because it managed to establish a balance of the sense which both parts understand as essential for their walks of life. In it we can identify classical elements in a process of communication which, in this case, develops around a central piece in the construction of the Museum and the community.

In this way, and taking on the role of **broadcaster**, we find the Group which, with time and a natural flow of the process, has become the motor behind the relation between Museum and Community.

As the **receiver**, we find the Museum, which listens, questions, registers and later gives back to the community in two ways: one, through exhibitions, activities, publications..., and also, regularly on Thursdays in the last 6 years through the collective construction of senses and meanings, where the community finds a voice which translates into a process of strengthened and secure identity construction.

As object that justifies the process of communication we find the photograph, emerging from the **multiplicity of messages** that put us in touch with a universe of local memories. In this way, photography fully assumes its role as a vehicle for the inheritance of cultural and territorial heritage in the Village of São Brás.

Nevertheless, this communication process reveals some interesting specifications that allow us to better understand the idea of museological reciprocity. Among which we can highlight the following:

- each receiver is also a receptor, in the sense that it receives collective knowledge associated with a specific image;
- the receptor is also a broadcaster within a multimodal context
- the object of study that justifies the communication process is explored in its double nature: tangible and intangible, that places the photograph (object) as a source of memory (intangible) and consequently, as a means to the understanding of cultural diversity (UNESCO 2001), of social and local experience (Santos, 2009), and of our own being, through our personal histories, and of the “how it happened” knowledge which is translated into recognition (self-esteem).

This is why the museum and the community convene in the idea of having managed to create along the years, a “counter-current of memory” for each one of the local families. (Cf.: www.museu-sbras.com/grupo-fotos.html).

Four examples of collective cartography on Thursday

Many are the visual routes that were explored along these past years within the scope of FMIId. According to this perspective, and to show some examples that allow us to understand the type of work in progress, and the cartographic practices in the group setting, we have chosen four images that illustrate the thematic categories of the archive, and will display and discuss them together with some of the documents to which they are connected. The aim here is to show the interrelation between registers, themes and categories which structure lives, as well as the structuring power of memory in the construction of history and the identity of a small village.

In the field of culture, these relations are discovered in time and as a result of constant and regular work, because the community has a life of its own and the Museum is just one among many of the weekly activities.

Categories 1, 3 and 5: People, Institutions and Documents.

Subcategories: Social phenomena (1); Associations, clubs and organizations (3); Flyers (5)

Sociological study on local cultural organizations, as in the case of a theatre group that existed in São Brás de Alportel in the 1920's, based on an image of the group where one of the members held a leaflet to announce the play they were then performing.

Findings during the mapping process:

The first image (Figures 2 and 3) allowed us to identify the people, and through them, the social classes represented in the universe of theatre, the family relations, the social organization, the professional activities of the group as well as the different issues related with gender, cultural or religious habits.

The second image (4) emerges following in-depth research on the group, which had initially been identified as the cast to the play “Armando aos pássaros” (1928), later revealing themselves to be,

following detailed analysis of a piece of paper one of the members is holding above his knee, the cast of another performance with no relation whatsoever to the first.



Figure 2. Cast of the play “De Volta a Parvonilândia” (1929) (inv. sbv2056)



Figure 3. Social cartography of the group (inv.sbv2056i)



Figure 4. Original leaflet announcing the play (inv. sba1139doc)

Categories 2 and 5: Places and Documents.

Subcategories: Evolution of the land and urban areas (2); Relevant documents (5).

Study of the urban evolution of São Brás, namely of the *Largo de São Sebastião* (main village square), from where life in the village has developed since its beginning. The starting point were two postcards dated 1932 (Figure 5) and 1940 (Figure 6), and also two maps of the Village dated 1912 (Figure 7) and 1925 (Figure 8). The four initial elements, whose identity and relation were identified during the work process, allowed us to understand the evolution of the Village, the enlargement and modernization of the core of social and commercial life in the mid-20th Century. It also equally allowed us to gain knowledge of the local toponomy, in its double form: official and non-official.

The highly dynamic quality of this urban space was recognized because of the succession of typologies of occupation that were identified in a relatively short period of time (approx. 40 years) and in an equally reduced geographical space (approx. 500 m²). In this sense, it was possible to identify the identities of the inhabitants, the sequence of the occupation of spaces, the commercial dynamics

(businesses that emerge or that disappeared, giving way to others) until we discover that within this cluster there had been a prison.

Findings during the mapping process:

It became clear that the urban evolution of São Brás begins with a central element: the mother church (late 15th Century), and that its relation to a small hermitage built on the outskirts in the 17th Century (1673) and devoted to Saint Sebastian, would result in the main street in the village high-street, the former Rua de São Sebastião, which is today known as Rua Gago Coutinho. Posterior to this, and as a result of the cork industry (one of the main sources of income from the 19th Century onwards), the town begins to develop immensely around the Square, being this area considered, from then on, as the modern space in the Village. Within it would be located shops (grocery store, and a barber) Municipal establishments (prison, slaughter house) and wealthy family homes.

With the passing of time, and in response to the image and the modernity aimed at by the inhabitants of the Village, the old hermitage would be destroyed and the Square enlarged, demolishing several private homes, the barber shop, the grocery store, the prison and the slaughter house (Figures 6, 9a, 9b)



Figure 5. Image showing the Square in its original form (1932) (inv. sbu1028)



Figure 6. Panoramic image of the demolished neighbourhood (about 1940) (inv. sbu1026)



Figure 7. Map of São Brás e Alportel dated 1912 (inv. sbu1011)



Figure 8. Map of São Brás de Alportel dated 1925 (Estanco Louro, 1929, Livro de Alportel, at MuT Library) (inv. sbu1010)

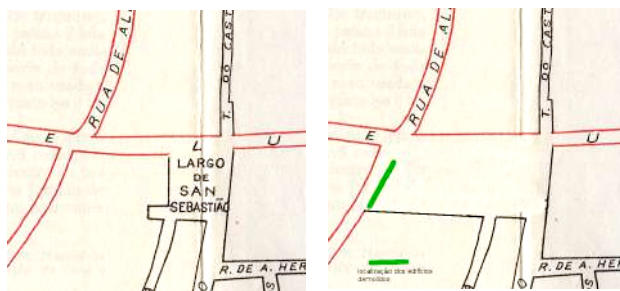


Figure 9a and 9b. Detail of the changes made to the Square between 1945-50.



Figure 10. Image showing the Square in its initial form (2014)

Categories 3 and 5: Institutions and Documents

Subcategories: Associations, clubs and organizations (3); Relevant Documents (5).

Study of the origins and evolution of the *Associação Humanitária dos Bombeiros Voluntários de São Brás de Alportel*, since its beginning – in 1927 – until today, from an image of the fire brigade (Figure 11).

In small environments such as the Village of São Brás, belonging to the local fire brigade is a matter of pride since the local population recognizes their social responsibility and so attributes them a status of prestige. Therefore, the firemen were always present at official ceremonies, had their own brass band and could also receive donations from benefactors who often included them as heirs.

Findings during the mapping process:

In this image we can see one of the founders of the Association, Manuel Pires Rico, also one of the first firemen, Custódio Raimundo Caco (Figures 12 and 13). Originally known as *Associação Humanitária dos Bombeiros Voluntários de Alportel*, this association is the result of collective will, motivated by the calamity caused by a fire in a local cork factory in 1927 and coordinated by Pires Rico (1st captain of the Fire brigades) and by the Village Doctor, Mr. Alberto de Sousa, among others.

Throughout its rich history, the Association would be legalized (in 1930), manage to have its own headquarters (in 1985) and would change its statutes, coming to be known as, *Associação Humanitária dos Bombeiros Voluntários de São Brás de Alportel* from 1993 onwards (Sousa Chaveca, 2005, p.46-201).

In the great fire that ravished the São Brás mountains in the summer of 2012 this association, despite its limited operating capacity, had a fundamental role in directing the process and above all, in the logistics related to the rescue and shelter management.



Figure 11. Volunteer Fire Brigade of São Brás de Alportel (1939) photographed in the Jardim da Verbena (former Jardim do Paço Episcopal) (inv. sbb1004i)



Figure 12. Volunteer Fireman card belonging to Custódio Raimundo Caco, front (1944) (inv. cac1006)

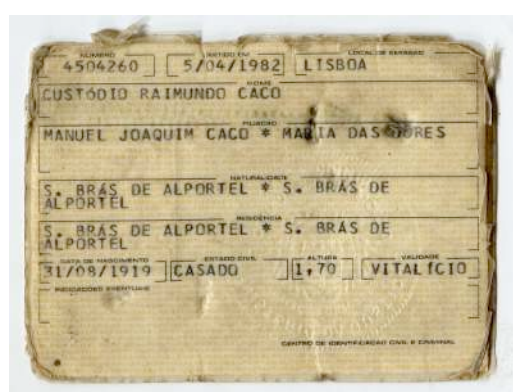


Figure 13. Last ID card of Custódio Raimundo Caco, back (1982) (inv. cac1001)

Category 4: Arts and crafts

Subcategory: Professions

Study of traditional crafts that disappeared in the 1990s in the “Barrocal” region of the Algarve, commonly known as “the broomstick lady”. The starting point was a portrait of an artisan (Figure 14).

Findings during the mapping process:

The broomstick maker, known as Almerinda Correia, currently lives in Sitio da Soalheira, in São Brás de Alportel. Almerinda began the making of handcrafted broomsticks from pygmy palms trees (a native tree species of the Mediterranean, of scientific name *Chamaerops Humilis L*) in 1951, and maintained this activity into 1993. In the 80s, as her craft began to decline because of the emergence of industrial products, Almerinda decided to keep on making handcrafted broomsticks using funds taking advantage of funding for local crafts (Figure 15). In this way, she changed the nature of the object of manufacture, from a tool to a tourist product.

The disappearance of local crafts, its evolution to purely decorative use, or its renewal in the context of contemporary life, has raised much debate in the Museum. In this context, MuT comes to be involved

in projects such as TASA - *Técnicas Ancestrais-Soluções Atuais*⁴, centred on the study and contemporary re-use of local traditional craft and knowledge.



Figure 14. Almerinda Correia with one of her brooms. (1981) (inv. etn1012)



Figure 15. The same artisan explaining the handcrafted manufacturing process of the handcrafted broom. (inv. etn1039)

Final thoughts

As in all collective walks of life, along these six years of work there have been high and low points, moments of loss of direction, low moods and uplifting moods. Memory is not an easy heritage; it has shady regions, it also has a loyal companion, forgetting, and a good ally, sharing. But above all it is a never-ending source of knowledge and understanding of our societies when applied in the plural form. The experience of cultural translation (Santos, 2004, pp.157-197) managed by the team at FMId in these last years, has allowed us to discover new dimensions to the participative process, that contribute to the expansion of the museum's social action at the heart of contemporary societies.

Among these we can highlight, for example, the defining of solid and detailed identities through time; the valuing of diversity and local, cultural specificities, the rescue and resignation and dynamics of forgotten knowledge as a result of its functional emptying, or the in depth knowledge of transformation processes in the village public spaces. Subjacent to all of these, we find a museological process which, by inverting the roles, has contributed to the development of a working model that places people of the most diverse profiles and experiences, at the core of a model that gives way to alterity, respect and inter-generational dialogue.

Along the same lines, the museum has become a platform for cultural emancipation or rather, an accessible location, visited by other members of the community who previously had no cultural habits of this kind (museums, heritage, identity...). They have helped to construct other facets of history, till

⁴ For more information on the project TASA go to: <http://www.projectotasa.com/produtos/vassourinha/>
<http://www.projectotasa.com/artesaos/da-torre/>

now unknown and to understand the evolution of processes that take place in São Brás today. They are defenders of their traditions and guardians of the most important heritage they own: memory.

Every Thursday, the Photography Group maps senses, knowledge, people... it maps itself, maps worlds silenced in time.

This is why the “Museum Menu” has no reserved seats and welcomes those with a refreshed memory and hot talk. The sharp tongue and honest laugh are a perfect pairing for the *Bela-luís*a tea and the carob cakes.

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