


La Función Social de los Museos en la Era de la Tecnología. Un estudio de caso sobre la influencia de los medios digitales en la dimensión social de los Museos Nacionales en Portugal

The Social Function of Museums in the Digital Age. A case study on the influence of digital media on the social dimension of National Museums in Portugal

Leonor Amaral^a

^aApoyo financiero FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (Portugal) y Unión Europea, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, CITCEM-FLUP – Centro de Investigação Transdisciplinar «Cultura, Espaço e Memória»,  leonordamaral@gmail.com

How to cite: Amaral, L. 2022. La Función Social de los Museos en la Era de la Tecnología. Un estudio de caso sobre la influencia de los medios digitales en la dimensión social de los Museos Nacionales en Portugal. En libro de actas: II Congreso Internacional de Museos y Estrategias Digitales. UPV, Valencia, 19-28 de octubre de 2022. <https://doi.org/10.4995/CIMED22.2022.15659>

Resumen

Momento único en la Historia Contemporánea, la pandemia del COVID-19 reforzó la relevancia de la reflexión sobre la responsabilidad social de los museos y el (des)encuadre actual de sus paradigmas comunicativos tradicionales. Las sucesivas restricciones y limitaciones aplicadas a los museos en el contexto de una crisis pandémica han transformado la forma en que estos han operado en los últimos años.

Por otro lado, la creciente toma de conciencia de la importancia que asumen los museos como instituciones promotoras de la cohesión y la inclusión social, pero también del conocimiento, el aprendizaje y el ocio, ha reavivado un debate con fundamentos teórico-conceptuales que ha buscado, desde la Declaración de Santiago de Chile (1972), comprender la posición de los museos en relación a su dimensión social, hoy en un panorama de incertidumbre e intensidad que caracteriza nuestros días.

Por lo tanto, urge repensar, en sentido prospectivo, el papel de los modelos de gestión de la información y comunicación digital en la percepción de estas instituciones dentro de la sociedad contemporánea.

La presente propuesta busca presentar los resultados preliminares de una investigación de doctorado en Museología, financiada con una beca de la Fundación para la Ciencia y para la Tecnología de Portugal, que se centra en el tema de la relación que se establece entre el pensamiento de la función social de los museos y sus estrategias de acción digital.

Como herramienta de interacción inherente a nuestras acciones y actividades más identitarias, las tecnologías digitales de la información y la comunicación configuran nuestra forma de pensar y actuar, como seres sociales, en el día a día. En este contexto, “museo” y “digital” no pueden ser conceptos dispersos. En un estudio realizado con los visitantes de siete Museos Nacionales de Portugal, aquí para ser presentado, encontramos algunos indicios sobre la relación entre la

acción digital de los visitantes y su posible influencia en la visita a los museos. Estos datos nos permiten reflexionar sobre cómo los museos pueden posicionarse en relación a los intereses y costumbres de sus visitantes.

Palabras clave: *Museos; Museología; Comunicación; Digital; Tecnología.*

Abstract

A unique moment in Contemporary History, the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the relevance of the reflection on the social responsibility of museums and the current (dis)framing of their traditional communication paradigms. The consecutive restrictions and limitations applied to museums in the context of a pandemic crisis have transformed the way they have operated in recent years.

On the other hand, the growing awareness of the importance assumed by museums as institutions that promote cohesion and social inclusion, but also of knowledge, learning and leisure, has revived a debate with theoretical-conceptual foundations that has sought, since the Declaration of Santiago do Chile (1972) to understand their position in relation to their social dimension, today in a panorama of uncertainty that characterizes our days.

Thus, there is an urgent need to rethink, in a prospective sense, the role of information management and digital communication models in the perception of these institutions within contemporary society.

The present proposal seeks to present the preliminary results of a doctoral research in Museology, financed with a scholarship by the Fundação para a Ciência e para a Tecnologia in Portugal, which is focused on the theme of the relationship established between the approach by museums to their social functions in relation to their digital action strategies.

As an interaction tool inherent to actions and activities with which we most closely identify, digital information and communication technologies shape daily the way we, as social beings, think and act. In this context, “museum” and “digital” cannot be dispersed concepts. In a study carried out with the visitors of seven National Museums in Portugal, presented here, we find some indications regarding the relationship between the visitors' digital action and consumption habits and their possible influence on museum visitors. These data allow us to reflect on how museums can position themselves in relation to the interests and habits of their visitors.

Keywords: *Museums; Museology; Communication; Digital; Technology.*

1. Introduction

We live in an imagined future, imagining other futures.

- Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

The current debate around the role of museums within contemporary society has, from the outset, a strong prospective dimension. Imagining its future has become, within museum theory, a current practice. In this context, the projection of the public service of museums, a central role in the design of these institutions, presupposes, at first, a reflection on the environment in which they operate. Today, as we are well aware, the environment has been influenced by a tendentially optimistic predisposition towards technology which is recognized as having a strong impact on changes and transformations of a social, cultural and institutional order, and invariably on the relationship established between the museological institution and society.

In this way, museums will increasingly grapple with issues inherent to the sociocultural impacts of the age of technology. Within this framework, characterized by a “new” globalized world, by networking relationships, by new questions of identity and new symbolic values, by mass consumption and by an economy based on knowledge, a new system of demand and supply is established in the cultural sector. In it, diverse challenges of elementary scope coexist for museums and for the performance of their missions.

Despite this reality, the cases in which the abstention and/or absence of museological institutions in this debate are not non-existent. Such a position seems to lead, invariably, to their perception as entities tending to be conservative, static, not very flexible, or even anachronistic. This often voluntary isolation from the world around us has become, as we can easily recognize, increasingly discouraged. This is partly due to the fact that, by assuming the role of social institutions, museums relate directly and constantly with their audiences. Thus, their response to the interests and needs of the communities to which they address themselves is naturally a priority demand.

In addition, in this context, through the proactivity of the younger generations who, intuitively, have become increasingly responsible for redefining the map of the cultural offer, the necessity for the greater dynamism of these institutions has become a matter of subsistence within an admittedly competitive market.

Therefore, the following starter question is suggested – can the poor representation that the museum sector sometimes finds in the common imagination of younger generations not mean a disheartening prospect in the face of the future that may be conceived for them?

In this articulation between global-local, physical-digital, singular-plural, present-future, we find the starting point for the proposal of the investigation presented here on the social function of museums in the age of technology and, in particular, on a study project on the influence of digital media on the social dimension of National Museums in Portugal.

2. Purpose

Assuming that digital information and communication technologies as tools of social interaction inherent to our most elementary and identity-linked actions and activities, daily shape the way we, as social beings, think, relate and interact, it becomes unavoidable to consider their place in contemporary museum theory.

This investigation is part of a Doctoral Research in the field of Museology, financed through a scholarship from the Fundação para a Ciência e para a Tecnologia in Portugal. The project seeks, in general terms, to understand the impact of digital culture on the relationship between museums and society, studying the role of digital action strategies in the performance of the social function of museums.

This debate has gained greater importance over the last few years, and the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the relevance of reflection on the social responsibility of museums and the current (dis)framing of their traditional communication paradigms. In a scenario where museums had their doors closed, in many cases for an indefinite period, the digital became one, if not the only, solution capable of enabling these institutions to fulfill their missions. It is true that a large part of these institutions had already developed, long before the 2020 pandemic crisis, their work in a hybrid, physical-digital format. In particular, the areas of information systems, access to collections and communication itself were commonly explored. We have seen, for example, the recognition of the centrality of new professional categories in museums in the digital dimension, which is actually the theme of the study of the Mu.SA Project – *The Future of Museums Professionals in the Digital Era*.

Nevertheless, and despite having observed a prompt mass transition of museums, their teams and programs to the digital universe, we have not always found an active, effective and consolidated response from museums to the “digital needs” of their audiences. Thus, it becomes urgent to rethink, in a prospective sense, the role of museums’ models of information management and digital communication in their contemporary social perception.

With the selection of an object of study composed by seven¹ National Museums in Portugal, this project aims to present an analysis that adopts a critical and reflective approach to the dynamics developed by these institutions within the scope of their digital transformation process, based on a study of proximity that sought to understand the role of information systems and digital platforms in their relationship with society and vice versa. In this context, the Doctoral Research was designed to assume a tripartite operational structure that aspires to map:

- 1) The National Museums before the pandemic – by knowing the state of the art, management, mission and strategic goals before the pandemic, by studying the presence of digital approaches in strategic planning and by identifying dynamics of sustainable action already developed.
- 2) The National Museums during the pandemic – by contextualizing the response of these museums to the pandemic crisis, identifying the social impacts, problems and weaknesses evidenced in terms of digital heritage management and digital communication, identifying investments in infrastructure and training of professionals in the digital domain, contextualizing the process of accelerating digitization in the response to the pandemic, identifying strategies and digital communication models adopted, studying their role in promoting well-being and fighting isolation, contributing to the study of the current state of the use of information systems and digital platforms in museums in Portugal.
- 3) The National Museums in the future – by identifying transformations and opportunities that have arisen in terms of digital technology and the relationship with communities likely to be continued in the future,

¹ Museu Monográfico de Conímbriga, Museu Nacional de Etnologia, Museu Nacional do Azulejo, Museu Nacional do Teatro e da Dança, Museu Nacional do Traje, Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea e Museu Nacional de Arqueologia.

questioning and debating investments in the pandemic period and their medium to long-term gains, reflecting on the role of National Museums in non-formal education using digital platforms in posterity, studying the correlation between digital transformation and sustainability commitments in line with the National Strategy for the Promotion of Accessibility and Inclusion of Museums, Palaces and Monuments of the Direção-Geral do Património Cultural (DGPC).

In the context of this paper, a special focus will be given to the methodologies developed within the scope of the second stage of this investigation. The second stage, which was preceded by a first stage which dealt with the acquisition of knowledge of the field and the initial bibliographic consolidation, took advantage of the collection and analysis of data referring to the audience research already developed, which sought to evaluate the impact and importance attributed to the dissemination of heritage in the digital space of these seven National Museums.

This field study is supported by a logic of scientific research that dialogues with institutions and society and was developed from an ethnographic approach of data collection, specifically through a questionnaire survey to visitors to these National Museums.

The composition of this survey took as a starting point the following hypotheses:

- The possibility that, after the lifting of restrictions on access to museums resulting from measures to combat the pandemic, the perceived need to visit museums could increase;
- The possibility that access to digital content about a particular museum could influence the decision to visit that museum;
- The possibility of a greater propensity on the part of the younger generations to value the digital dimension of museums;
- The possibility of considering the digital as an accessibility tool in museums.

As a verification procedure for each of these hypotheses, a simple, easy and instinctive questionnaire survey structure was conceived. It was important that this survey did not to any degree frame the respondent's response, did not occupy much of their time and did not interfere with their own experience of the visit.

It was therefore necessary to structure a set of brief questions, cast in accessible language, which did not guide the response of the visitor, in order to ascertain, as much as possible, the opinions created about the museum, on the one hand, but also the understanding developed on the wider museological institution in general.

The structure of the survey can be understood from three parts (see figures 1 and 2) - (I) Quantitative questions of socio-demographic characterization; (II) Quantitative questions specific to the domains of museum attendance and participation in digital platform environments (III) A final qualitative question of opinion (positive and negative) that sought to map the motivations of visitors to visit and not to visit museums.

It is intended that, with this paper, the main purpose highlighted in this research project is substantiated, which is to strengthen the path in Portuguese scientific study to a research hypothesis that has gained momentum in international studies in Museology namely the employment of digital platforms as tools for a socially sustainable future for museums.

Your Help with this Survey is Much Appreciated

This investigation is developed within the scope of a PhD dissertation in Museology at Faculdade de Letras of Universidade do Porto, on the topic of the impact of the pandemic and digital transformation on the museums social dimension and management of museums.

<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="2">1. Gender</td></tr> <tr><td>Male</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Female</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Other</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Prefer Not to Answer</td><td></td></tr> </table>	1. Gender		Male		Female		Other		Prefer Not to Answer		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="2">6. Employment Status</td></tr> <tr><td>Permanent employment</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Fixed-term employment</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Temporary job</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Student or researcher</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Retired</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Other:</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Unemployed</td><td></td></tr> </table>	6. Employment Status		Permanent employment		Fixed-term employment		Temporary job		Student or researcher		Retired		Other:		Unemployed					
1. Gender																															
Male																															
Female																															
Other																															
Prefer Not to Answer																															
6. Employment Status																															
Permanent employment																															
Fixed-term employment																															
Temporary job																															
Student or researcher																															
Retired																															
Other:																															
Unemployed																															
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="2">1. Nationality</td></tr> <tr><td>Portuguese</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Other</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Which:</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Prefer Not to Answer</td><td></td></tr> </table>	1. Nationality		Portuguese		Other		Which:		Prefer Not to Answer		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="2">7. Do you usually visit Museums and/or Exhibitions?</td></tr> <tr><td>Yes (go to question 7.1)</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>No (go to question 7.2)</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Prefer Not to Answer</td><td></td></tr> </table>	7. Do you usually visit Museums and/or Exhibitions?		Yes (go to question 7.1)		No (go to question 7.2)		Prefer Not to Answer													
1. Nationality																															
Portuguese																															
Other																															
Which:																															
Prefer Not to Answer																															
7. Do you usually visit Museums and/or Exhibitions?																															
Yes (go to question 7.1)																															
No (go to question 7.2)																															
Prefer Not to Answer																															
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="2">2. Do you live in Portugal?</td></tr> <tr><td>Yes</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>No</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Prefer Not to Answer</td><td></td></tr> </table>	2. Do you live in Portugal?		Yes		No		Prefer Not to Answer		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="2">7.1. If you answered yes to question 7, would you say your interest in visiting Museums and/or Exhibitions after the lockdowns has?</td></tr> <tr><td>Remained the same</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Increased</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Decreased</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Prefer Not to Answer</td><td></td></tr> </table>	7.1. If you answered yes to question 7, would you say your interest in visiting Museums and/or Exhibitions after the lockdowns has?		Remained the same		Increased		Decreased		Prefer Not to Answer													
2. Do you live in Portugal?																															
Yes																															
No																															
Prefer Not to Answer																															
7.1. If you answered yes to question 7, would you say your interest in visiting Museums and/or Exhibitions after the lockdowns has?																															
Remained the same																															
Increased																															
Decreased																															
Prefer Not to Answer																															
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="2">3. Age</td></tr> <tr><td>15-24</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>25-34</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>35-44</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>45-54</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>55-64</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>65 +</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Prefer Not to Answer</td><td></td></tr> </table>	3. Age		15-24		25-34		35-44		45-54		55-64		65 +		Prefer Not to Answer		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="2">7.2. If you answered no to question 7, would you say your interest in visiting Museums and/or Exhibitions after the lockdowns has?</td></tr> <tr><td>Been developed</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Did not develop</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Prefer Not to Answer</td><td></td></tr> </table>	7.2. If you answered no to question 7, would you say your interest in visiting Museums and/or Exhibitions after the lockdowns has?		Been developed		Did not develop		Prefer Not to Answer							
3. Age																															
15-24																															
25-34																															
35-44																															
45-54																															
55-64																															
65 +																															
Prefer Not to Answer																															
7.2. If you answered no to question 7, would you say your interest in visiting Museums and/or Exhibitions after the lockdowns has?																															
Been developed																															
Did not develop																															
Prefer Not to Answer																															
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="2">4. Education</td></tr> <tr><td>Elementary School</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>High School</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Professional Qualification</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Bachelor's Degree</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Masters's Degree</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Post Graduate Qualification</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>PHD</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Post PhD</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Prefer Not to Answer</td><td></td></tr> </table>	4. Education		Elementary School		High School		Professional Qualification		Bachelor's Degree		Masters's Degree		Post Graduate Qualification		PHD		Post PhD		Prefer Not to Answer		<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="2">8. Regarding the frequency of your visits to museums, do you believe that after the pandemic you will:</td></tr> <tr><td>Maintain the level of visits to museums</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Increase the level of visits to museums</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Decrease the level of visits to museums</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Prefer Not to Answer</td><td></td></tr> </table>	8. Regarding the frequency of your visits to museums, do you believe that after the pandemic you will:		Maintain the level of visits to museums		Increase the level of visits to museums		Decrease the level of visits to museums		Prefer Not to Answer	
4. Education																															
Elementary School																															
High School																															
Professional Qualification																															
Bachelor's Degree																															
Masters's Degree																															
Post Graduate Qualification																															
PHD																															
Post PhD																															
Prefer Not to Answer																															
8. Regarding the frequency of your visits to museums, do you believe that after the pandemic you will:																															
Maintain the level of visits to museums																															
Increase the level of visits to museums																															
Decrease the level of visits to museums																															
Prefer Not to Answer																															

1

Fig. 1 Structure of the survey – English version pag.1

9. When you seek to interact and participate in museum activities, do you prefer to attend in-person or online?	
In-person	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online	<input type="checkbox"/>
Both	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer Not to Answer	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. On which digital platform(s) do you access information about museums:	
Google	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/>
Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>
YouTube	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pinterest	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newsletters	<input type="checkbox"/>
Museum Websites	<input type="checkbox"/>
Google Arts and Culture	<input type="checkbox"/>
Podcasts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others	<input type="checkbox"/>
Which?	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer Not to Answer	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Have you ever accessed information about this Museum on digital platforms?	
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer Not to Answer	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. If yes, did that information influence your decision to visit this Museum?	
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer Not to Answer	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. Please indicate which digital platform(s) you feel you'd be more likely to get influence by to visit a museum?	
Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/>
Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youtube	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pinterest	<input type="checkbox"/>
Snaphcat	<input type="checkbox"/>
Linkedin	<input type="checkbox"/>
WhatsApp	<input type="checkbox"/>
Podcasts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Which?	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Did you visit this Museum?	
Alone	<input type="checkbox"/>
With someone	<input type="checkbox"/>
With friends	<input type="checkbox"/>
With family	<input type="checkbox"/>
With an organized group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Which?	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. In what context did you visit this Museum?	
Leisure/leisure time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
School	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guided tour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workshop/Atelier	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conference	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exhibition opening	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Which?	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. What do you consider to be your main motivation for visiting a museum? And not visiting a particular museum?	
<input type="text"/>	

Fig. 2 Structure of the survey – English version pag.2

3. Theoretical-conceptual consolidation

3.1. The Social Role of Museums

As social institutions– *in the service of society and its development, open to the public*², museums include in their definition assumptions that clearly and directly underlie the notions of public service and social responsibility. These concepts, which, due to their inherent connection to the performance of the basic functions of the definition of a museum, assume an elementary character for its management and planning and, consequently, are increasingly the subject of debate and scrutiny in the field of Museology.

² Part of the definition of Museum according to the ICOM Statutes, adopted by the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August 2007.

Proposing an understanding of the social function of the museum as the result of processes of transformation of social fabrics and specific conditions of existence (Faria, 2003, p. 29) or, alternatively, what P. Bourdieu (2003) called a reflection of the social conditions of cultural practice, it is recognized that not always along the diachrony was this the understanding of this concept.

With its emergence at the end of the 18th century, the public museum as an institution symbolized the discontinuity with previous forms of exercise and control of power, simultaneously integrating a process of emergence of new ideas associated with Order and Progress (Semedo, 2004, p. 130).

Later, in the 19th century, changes took place in the traditional practices of collecting, in terms of their structural as well as utilitarian nature, which, in a context of consolidation of new democratic values, redirected the focus of museums to a new perspective of use, service and public responsibility.

In this context, the discursive space of the museum was based on a perspective of power-knowledge that reflected on the performance of a new civilizational function. Here, the concept a social role was precisely linked to the pedagogical/educational dimension that, at least in theory, would underlie an ambition to superimpose the collective good on the individual benefit (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 174). This understanding of the role performed by the museum reflected the possibility offered by these institutions of “self-learning”, underlying a higher intention to civilize (Faria, 2003, p. 32) the “common people”.

Although, during this period, favorable dispositions were envisaged for the development of these “new” institutions, it was noted that, from the outset, museums were strongly linked to a specific public sphere, namely, that of the bourgeoisie, and that this configuration not only made these institutions isolated from other social bodies, but also contributed to their representational absence in the common imagination.

In addition, the approach to learning resulting from the experience of museums as a predefined product became increasingly obsolete, moving in this configuration to a perspective of approaching this learning as a continuous and dynamic process.

These, among other issues, did not escape the debate generated within a new museological thought developed, especially, during the second half of the 20th century, which sought at that time to give a concrete answer to the social needs entrusted to the action of museums, which led to the breaking up of the structural, moral and ideological predispositions rooted in the functioning of these institutions.

Thus, under a social context of strong questioning and change that marked the 1960s, the criticism of the social lethargy of museums is underlined, representing a fierce positioning in the face of a reality that substantially occupied the narrative of the museological institution in diachrony.

In this context, two lines of renovation of the museological institution were designed, supported, on the one hand, by the cultural democratization project and, on the other hand, by the election of museums and their practices as a field of epistemological research (Duarte, 2013, p. 100). Later, these lines of renovation, would substantiate the so-called New Museology (Duarte, 2013, p. 100) which, in short, symbolized the struggle for equal and equitable access to museums, as well as for a representational adequacy through an expansion of the narratives to diverse cultures and plural values (Duarte, 2013).

The New Museology, as a movement with a wide theoretical and methodological scope (Duarte, 2013, p. 99) represented, at the same time, the theoretical and reflective journey carried out from traditional (or modern)

museology to contemporary museology (Duarte, 2013, p. 108). With regard to its elementary nature, we find incorporated perspectives directly linked to the innovative thinking on the social role of the museum explored on the occasion of the Round Table in Santiago de Chile (1972).

In this meeting, from a prospective approach, the future of Latin American society was preconfigured in a model of the “integral museum” that would play a decisive role in community education. This notion became linked to the perception about these institutions as engines of local development, practically unexplored at the time of this Round Table, but which today, thanks to its legacy, we find widely formulated and accepted (Varine, 2012, p. 144). The relationship between New Museology and the Roundtable in Santiago de Chile (1972) was reinforced and could be said to have been formalized by the Declaration of Quebec (1984) in which, , the affirmation of the museum's social role is clearly consolidated.

In a contemporary world which attempts to integrate all means of development, Museology should strive to broaden its traditional attributions and functions of identification, preservation and education to encompass wider practices than these objectives so as to better include in its action those related to the human and physical environment. In order to achieve this goal and incorporate the populations in its action, museology is increasingly using its interdisciplinarity, contemporary methods of communication common to cultural intervention as a whole, and also the means of modern management which integrate their users.

Declaration of Quebec – Basic Principles of a New Museology (1984)

Social thinking in museums became the subject of special attention from anthropology at that time. As a discipline, the anthropology of the 1980s increased its interest in the study of museums, namely through the perception of museological practices and museographic resources as cultural practices with ideological messages with political implications (Duarte, 1998, p. 122). Inserted in this context, the post-positivist perspective can be condensed to the angle presented to us by the anthropologist Professor Alice Duarte (1998) who considered that, during this period, it was beginning to be recognized that *to the museum and its practices cannot be granted the privilege of neutrality (...)* (Duarte, 1998, p. 133)

Decolonization, as well as the emergence of a new globality, characterized by complex, mixed societies, where the global-local articulation and the increase in the participatory flow were supported, led to the recognition of the importance of assigning to museums the responsibility for their actions (or indeed “non-actions”). This perception of social phenomena as not limited to formal structures of meaning (Duarte, 1998, p. 127), removed museums from a place of “blind” authority in the face of their narratives. This fact finally seems to have reinforced their need to adapt to the environment.

The intention is to make room for a balance, albeit an unstable one, between cultural supply and demand, including in this equation the challenges presented by the environment that surrounds us, the social conditions of cultural practice, as well as the available resources (or lack thereof) underlying museum action and practices.

3.2. Global territories, local fragments

Print technology created the public. Electric technology created the mass.

McLuhan & Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage* (1971)

In the second half of the 20th century, the technological revolution, supported by information technologies, began to rapidly restructure the material base of society (Castells, 2007, p. 1). The capitalist project met new spectra of management, tending to be more flexible, decentralized and, above all, collaborative, inserting itself into a new context of networking (Castells, 2007, p. 1).

Within the framework of the communication system marked by a new digital language, which M. Castells (2007, p. 2) identifies as universal, there is the new idea of building an image that marks our culture. The possibility of personalizing taste and, therefore, identity, characterizes the new forms and channels of communication (Castells, 2007, pp. 2-3).

In this logic, in which social movements tend to be fragmented and local, generated in contexts of identity approximation - religion, ethnicity, territory, nation (...), we find the formation of what Appadurai (1996) considered a new order of instability in the *modern production of subjectivities* (Appadurai, 1996, p. 15) created by the flow of mediated information. Here, we find, on the one hand, transnational communities that organize themselves from a shared imagination, as well as the phenomenon that the Indian anthropologist called the *detrterritorialized spectator*.

With the collapse of universal systems of meanings and the restructuring of interpersonal and intersocietal relationships, cultural practices and policies find a new multidimensional space for the production of meaning. The idea of a detrterritorialized spectator as a reflection of a world marked by electronic communication and mass migrations, where these forces project the work of shared imagination (Appadurai, 1996, p. 15), as well as the perception of electronic mass communication as a space crossing different taste experience, interests, etc. led to a confrontation with the traditional paradigms of communication in museums.

In the early 1970s, Marshall McLuhan warned of the importance of the message medium - *Societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication* (McLuhan & Fiore, 1971, p. 8).

Strictly speaking, we can say that the type of language, but also the support in which the message is conveyed, are important factors that are often responsible for determining the integration or exclusion of audiences. The emergence of new symbolic and cognitive maps and a new way of socially constructing reality (Semedo; Domingues; Lopes, 2003, p. 65) leads to a rethink of not only the nature, but also the centrality that the communicative process assumes, as well as the importance of mapping knowledge about the public, in the domain of its habitus/system of dispositions.

3.3. Some Recent Steps

The particularly demanding and dynamic environment resulting from new ways of organizing and living in society, and the need to rethink the role and place of the museum in contemporary times, led, in 2019, at the 25th General Conference of ICOM held in Kyoto, to the proposal to redefine the very concept of Museum.

This initiative was justified by the understanding that the (still) current definition of a Museum does not reflect the challenges, visions and responsibilities inherent to these institutions. As part of a prospective project, the initiative within the scope of the *Museums as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Tradition* conference, focuses incisively on the challenges arising from the synergies between museum-individual, museum-community, and museum-society.

In the particular case of the 25th ICOM General Conference in Kyoto (2019), other topics of a central nature for the present and future of society were also discussed, mentioning the example of the debate around the role of museums in a more sustainable future in close coordination with the 2030 Agenda.

Not long after, in 2021, within the scope of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Direção-Geral do Património Cultural of Portugal organized a conference around museums and their social responsibility, from which the Porto Santo Charter 2021 was born. In this Charter addressed to European policy makers, cultural institutions and organizations and European citizens, with the pandemic crisis, social inequalities and the weaknesses of the cultural sector in the background, principles for a sustainable development of culture were structured. Its mention in this context is mainly due to the statement, in this Charter, of the understanding that *digital territories must be understood as a pathway, and a pathway with its own possibilities, to broaden cultural participation and production (...) Enabling cultural citizenship implies developing digital access, inclusion and literacy policies* (Porto Santo Charter, 2021, p. 9).

In recent years, the Portuguese museological context has been impacted by an unprecedented initiative in the global strategic planning of DGPC museums that resulted in a final report published in 2020 by the Grupo de Projeto *Museus no Futuro*. In it, future perspectives for museums are designated including, among other fields of activity, ones focused on national audiences, the investment in digital transformation and the alignment with sustainable development commitments.

4. First Results

Based on the example of the case study of the Museu Nacional de Arqueologia (National Museum of Archeology), the procedures that guided the data collection in the audience research carried out in seven National Museums in Portugal is explained below.

In order to understand this process, it is necessary to highlight particular characteristics of the Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, which are considered important in this context. This is a museum located in one of the most emblematic and visited buildings in the country, the Mosteiro dos Jerónimos situated in Lisbon, where visitors can benefit from the option of a ticket combining entrance to the Museum with entrance to this monument.

Its permanent exhibition presents the sections on *Egyptian Antiquities* and the *Treasures of Portuguese Archaeology*. The museum is currently active on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube, and has its own website. Since 2019, it has been part of the Google Arts and Culture set of virtual exhibitions.

In its audience research (part of the Audience Research of National Museums Project), presented in 2018, it is possible to identify a prevalence of foreign visitors, with the age group between 25-34 years representing a higher percentage of visitors. Furthermore, three quarters of respondents had post-secondary education levels. Regarding the consultation of information prior to the visit, less than half of the visitors said they had consulted

some form of information, However, where this had happened, the most consulted source of information was the Internet (41%).

In the present study, a sample of 207 valid surveys was collected, referring to the time period between April 6th and April 19th, 2022. It was possible to verify from this that, as observed in the aforementioned study, the higher attendance of foreign visitors, 89.1% of the total number of visitors surveyed being foreigners and only 10.9% Portuguese visitors. The survey also confirmed the greater attendance in the age group between 25-34 years old, with the age group of 65 years or older being the least well represented.

There is a tendency for people with higher education levels to visit this museum, given that 28% of visitors claimed to have a master's degree and 22% to have completed a Bachelor's degree.

Regarding the choice of company to visit the museum, it appears that a very small percentage of respondents decided to visit this museum with friends (4.9%). Most visitors chose to visit this museum as part of a group (48.5%) or with family members (34.3%).

It should be noted that 86.5% of visitors visited the National Museum of Archeology in the context of tourism.

Regarding visiting habits, the majority of the surveyed visitors stated that, after the pandemic, they would maintain or increase the level of visits of museums, with the age group between 25-34 years being the one with the highest incidence of the intention to increase the level of visits.

When asked if they had ever accessed content on digital platforms about the Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, visitors who answered "yes" were positively disposed (88%) to be influenced by such content to visit the museum.

When asked about the access to content about these museums on digital platforms, visitors showed their preference for Google (43.2%), Museum Websites (16.9%) and Instagram (12.1%).

As for sharing content about this museum, visitors were more apt to do so through Instagram (36.4%), Youtube (23.8%) and Facebook (20.6%).

Standing at the crossroads between the present and the future, the core of this research proposal seeks, above all, to frame digital technology as an enabling tool to promote the accessibility of museums, as well as their future sustainability.

References

- AMARAL, L. (2022). “Os reflexos de uma Nova Era no Pensamento da Acessibilidade em Museus”, en 2º *Encontro Acessibilidade e Inclusão na Arte e no Patrimônio*. Lisboa: Centro de Investigação e Estudos em Belas-Artes (CIEBA), Faculdade de Belas-Artes, Universidade de Lisboa. pp. 18-20. ISBN 978-989-8944-66-5.
- APPADURAI, A. (1996). *Dimensões Culturais da Globalização*. Lisboa: Teorema.
- BOURDIEU, P. & DARBEL, A. (2003). [1969]. *O amor pela arte*. São Paulo: Zouk.
- CASTELLS, M. (2007). *A Sociedade em Rede. A Era da informação: Economia, Sociedade e Cultura*. Volume I. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
- DUARTE, A. (1998). “O Museu como Lugar de Representação do Outro”. En *ANTROPOLógicas*, nº2, p. 121-140.
- DUARTE, A. (2013). “Nova Museologia: os pontapés de saíde de uma abordagem ainda inovadora”. *Revista Eletrônica do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Museologia e Patrimônio – PPG-PMUS Unirio* | MAST - vol. 6, no 1. p. 99-117.
- FARIA, M. L. de. (2003). “A Função Social dos Museus” en Domingues, A.; Silva, I.; Lopes, J. T. & Semedo, A. (Orgs.). *A Cultura em Ação. Impactos sociais e território*. Porto: Edições Afrontamento. pp. 29-38.
- HOOVER-GREENHILL, E. (1992). *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- MCLUHAN, M. & FIORE, Q. (1971). *The Medium is the Massage*. Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- PORTO SANTO CHARTER. (2021). *Culture and the Promotion of Democracy Towards a European Cultural Citizenship*. Porto Santo: República Portuguesa.
- SEMEDO, A. (2004). “Estratégias museológicas e consensos gerais” en Brito, M. A. N. P. de. & Cuñarro, J. M. H. (coord.). *Museus do Eixo Atlântico*. Porto/Vigo: Eixo Atlântico. pp. 5-31.
- SEMEDO, A., DOMINGUES, A. & LOPES, J. T. (2003). “Esboço de um Projeto de Pesquisa: os Impactos Sociais da Oferta Cultural” en Domingues, A.; Silva, I.; Lopes, J. T. & Semedo, A. (Orgs.). *A Cultura em Ação. Impactos sociais e território*. Porto: Edições Afrontamento. pp. 63-67.
- VARINE, H. de. (2012). “Em Torno da Mesa-Redonda de Santiago” en Junior, J. N.; Trampe, A., & Santos, P. A. dos. (Org.). *Mesa Redonda sobre La Importancia y el Desarrollo de los Museos em el Mundo Contemporáneo*. Brasília: Instituto Brasileiro do Museus, IBRAM. pp. 143-144.