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A Pilot Project at the Paper Money Museum, Porto (Portugal)

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Abstract: This paper will outline models and strategies in education and partnerships with neighbouring schools developed by the Paper Money Museum during the past year. The museum is well-known for its inclusive approach to different audiences and is currently trying to develop educational school programmes which involve the building of different relationships with schools and community advocates as well as the development of ongoing research about not only representations and outlooks but also about the outcomes of such projects. The analysis and discussion of data produced by this research and its relation to the building of new education models for this museum constitutes the core theme of this paper.

Keywords: Education, School and Community Advocates, Partnerships, Indicators, Outcomes

Contexts for a Pilot Teaching/Evaluation Project

ONE OF THE classes I teach at the postgraduate course in museum studies, at the University of Porto (Portugal), deals with communication, audiences and museums. The course has always strived to implement collaborative partnerships with museums and other cultural institutions, in a more or less conscious attempt to both include *practicing professionals* in the business of training *newcomers* and create opportunities to explore concepts about museums' and museum professionals' roles. For students this is a unique and valuable experience to work in the *reality zone* and look at theory-in-practice, experimenting and sometimes even participating in the development of different approaches to audiences, collections management, preventive conservation and so on.

One of the evaluation assignments proposed for this class has been, for the past few years, the development of a short evaluation project on needs and expectations of a chosen group within the neighbourhood of a chosen museum¹ and how these can be addressed by the museum. The assignment includes a discussion on the relevance of programming and evaluating museum projects' based on outcomes and indicators and an outline of general recommendations for the museum². It necessarily implies a *close encounter* not only with the museum but also with the neighbouring community itself, briefly profiling the community before selecting a group to work more closely with.

¹ Students tend to opt for and be placed in museums they already *know*: either their working place or where they have carried out some other academic assignment (i.e. the study of a collection). This certainly makes it much easier: students are already "part of the team" and clearly bring into play, previous knowledge about the museum and its collections.

² Some of these fieldwork projects have, in fact and in some instances, been put into practice by different museums.

As a teaching approach, high priority is given here to connect understanding and theoretical and critical knowledge with practical skills and the *zone reality*. Furthermore, this approach aims at supporting a discussion within the *practicing-museum community* itself, about how they think about audiences and programming, on the one hand and, on the other hand, about roles of museums in contemporary society. Roles and competencies of museum professionals are clearly part of the expected discussion.

The teaching approach and the evaluation assignment proposed have clearly been influenced by academic and professional contexts at large, for example, those related with *evaluation and programming strategies based on outcomes* (HOOPER-GREENHILL, 2007), an understanding of museum missions as *telos*, as well as by concepts such as *natural neighbouring ecosystems* (STERN and SEIFERT, 2007) and the *activist professional* (SACHS, 2000).

Building Education Partnerships in the Natural Ecosystem

The Paper Money Museum is part of the António Cupertino Miranda Foundation and is located at Avenida da Boavista³. As many other European cities of the time, this wide avenue, became the preferred residential area of the local bourgeoisie, who built their summer (or even permanent) houses at each side of it. The twentieth century saw the development of denser populated areas around the Avenue: service buildings, high-store buildings and social housing projects occupied spaces of a part of Porto that was essentially rural, until then. During the past few years, this dissimilar neighbourhood acquired a new centrality, particularly owing to the development of the main city park (just opposite the Museum) which is at present a central leisure city-spot. It is, then, this heterogeneous space and diverse community that the museum strives to inhabit.

The museum has committed itself to the values of education and inclusiveness and has a strong sense of social purpose. Its mission markets its vision as a resource for social well-being and the development of a society of knowledge. Policies and activities are structured mainly around these axes which, naturally, include the values of excellence, long-life education, partnership, accessibility and sustainability. The museum is admittedly one of the beacons of best practice for its work on inclusiveness within the Portuguese network of museums.

During the past few years students from the postgraduate course in museology (FLUP⁴) benefited from a partnership established with this museum, which welcomed different short study projects and longer working placements. During a meeting with museum staff to plan for the development of new projects for our students⁵, it was clear that the museum wanted to explore new approaches to work with visitors, and was open to the possibility of creating spaces for experimentation and evaluation. Although this is a small museum, it is visited by quite a large number of schools and offers a diverse array of activities for different age groups. But most part of work with schools does not go beyond a visit or site activity and feedback, in terms of subsequent activities, is rather poor.

On the other hand, the museum had never attempted to develop a long-term project with any local school or even any kind of front-end analysis. As it has later arisen, knowledge about (and in) the community was superficial and lacked a more thorough and committed

³ <http://www.facm.pt/>

⁴ http://sigarra.up.pt/flup/web_page.inicial

⁵ February 2008.

effort. Nevertheless and although the museum was aware of the effort / input required and the little it would represent in terms of visitor numbers to the museum, it was willing to invest a lot of its time on a local project. The challenge, hence, was to work with a few local schools on a long term basis, identifying schools as central nodes of the *neighbourhood natural ecosystem* and actively participating in the construction of what the museum came to call the “territory of a new educational paradigm”⁶. Moreover, it was clear to the museum that what they could offer to this community was mainly their experience as a non-formal education setting, working with collections and, above all, with topics related with financial education. Low-achieving school indicators and a persistent school absenteeism and dropout, also characterized sectors of this particular neighbourhood and were unavoidable contexts.

This interest in listening to the community and actively participating in the development of a common educational agenda is in accord with present expectations in relation to long-life education and its value for the exercise of citizenship. The idea is that education, learning, in the museum can support new meanings of citizenship – configured, in this case, around local social identities, communities – constituting itself as an indispensable approach to re-think strategies both of the educational function of the museum and the meaning of active citizenship. The idea of a creative involvement whereby the museum is responsible not only for itself but also for the contexts where it is placed, for the future of its community, of its city, is at the heart of this project. In this sense, the museum attempts to transform itself into a true dialogic space of civic participation. Besides, this is a heterogeneous neighbourhood: low-income families live almost side by side with middle-class and very well-off families with all tensions and misrepresentations it implies. This pilot project should, then, also be understood within Paper Money Museum strategies’ to look for relevance outside its walls. The Museum is obviously looking for relevance at the different levels of public sphere but it is increasingly assuming the micro-public space as of particular importance, recognizing it as an essential level for the coordination of communication and of spaces for civic participation. Moreover, it is a clear attempt to demonstrate a commitment to idealism, depth and interconnectedness as tests of genuineness and quality as discussed by Janes and Conaty (2005:8-10).

The Network

Museum staff, as well as three of our students, set off by profiling the community, surveying schools, briefly characterizing them (socio-demographics, *curriculum*, staff, activities, resources, buildings, etc.)⁷. During a second stage, they visited schools, introducing the project to coordinators or others teachers appointed by the school. In some instances, a powerpoint about the museum was used to initiate a conversation about the project and its goals. However, loose talk (guided by a previously prepared set of questions related with the project objectives’) proved much more gratifying and was the perfect context to express needs, expectations and anxieties by all different schools visited. On the whole, these meetings were a positive step towards changing perceptions in relation to the museum itself. Afterwards, schools were invited to visit and have tea at the museum. The visit also included a presentation and a

⁶ The activities developed by this project are described in much more detail by the short film presented at the 2nd International Conference on the Inclusive museum, by the President of Administration Board of the Foundation António Cupertino de Miranda, Amélia Cupertino de Miranda <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cd97Y0zRopQ>.

⁷ Ana Afonso, Filipa Leite and Marta Gaspar.

brainstorming discussion about the project and a final invitation to join in. Some working areas were defined in cooperation with these partners and a first very flexible draft of a working plan was produced (July 2008). This approach intended to create closeness. These were rich-information moments for all involved. This was a new approach both for the museum and educational partners. But all was not success and some schools withdrew during this initial stage or during the first working meetings or already jointly planned activities. Reasons pointed out for abandonment were, generally, associated by the Museum with personal contexts and teachers' lack of motivation. Additionally, initial museum perceptions about working with schools disclosed a deep problem related essentially with trust: establishing meaningful and lasting relationships with schools and their teachers was seen, somehow, sceptically and as a goal extremely difficult to attain. Perceptions about the teaching profession were associated mainly to a lack of enthusiasm and dedication (*exceptions apart!*): teachers were seen as basically uninterested by anything that demanded personal commitment and extrapolated what they thought of as their teaching functions as related to curriculum.

Each of our students had also dedicated more time to profiling an individual case-study intensely as well as the Museum and these were, indeed, the main *actors* of the subsequent pilot project which also included a third school located almost next to the museum: Clara de Resende, Garcia da Orta and Manoel de Oliveira, with the Paper Money Museum, became, then, the first nodes of this *imagined* local educational network (September 2008)⁸. At Clara de Resende and Garcia da Orta the work was mainly developed with two teachers⁹, while at Manoel de Oliveira, the main advocate was a special and quasi-independent project, developed mostly to support students and their families. This project named Acreditar (*Believing*), further introduced the museum to other actors working in the field, mainly with disadvantaged and low-income families. A pilot social project – the Contrato Local de Desenvolvimento Social de Aldoar – was taking its first steps in the field by then but was already becoming a reference for the whole community and, hence, central for the construction of this imagined local educational network. A different school, run by a parents' association for children with different handicaps, was also willing to work and share their views with the Museum (Association Somos Nós¹⁰). In terms of work methodology, it involved not only visiting schools at different times by museum staff but also a number of meetings with teachers and their students (both at the museum and at schools), or with project coordinators to jointly design and think about individual action projects that seemed to fit the interests and capabilities of all partners implicated. It was a full collaborative process.

Although this is a modest baseline study it seemed interesting to attempt to document these encounters and the processes involved as well as the underlying assumptions and views partners have about each other (April 2009)¹¹. We also hoped that, it would also support Museum's aspirations for reflexivity. Open-ended interviews were used to describe the ex-

⁸ The first of these schools is just a 15 minute bus ride away while the other two are within walking distance of the museum (some 10 minutes walking) and together, they reflect, the social background of the neighbourhood.

⁹ *Site-project advocates* interviewed: Ana Patrício (Clara de Resende), Ana Maria Barros (Garcia da Orta), Sónia Costa (Acreditar), Dulce Guimarães (Contrato Local de Desenvolvimento Social de Aldoar), Filomena Osswald (Somos Nós).

¹⁰ Although they have already been interviewed, unfortunately and merely for lack of time, their views will not be introduced here.

¹¹ Apart from site-advocates, Amélia Cupertino de Miranda (President of Administration Board) and Sónia Santos (Educational Officer) from the Paper Money Museum were also interviewed.

perience and think about what each of the partners brought to the project in terms of prior interests, agendas, perceptions. Interviewees were also asked to share thoughts about values and the understanding of learning both within school and museum contexts'. The nature of expected outcomes was also taken into consideration during these conversations¹². A further stage of this documentation study will also work with end-users, highlighting their own views, experiences, uses and attitudes. This qualitative recording approach seemed important in order to get an understanding of how these partners have changed / maintained their views about the museum / the community and identify what they found particularly valuable about the museum (and also what did not work for them). Above and beyond, a discussion with museum staff about the project, its goals and how it affects their practices has been an integral part of this documentation process that involved all of us.

The Secondary School Partners: Clara de Resende and Garcia da Orta

The advocate at the Secondary School Clara de Resende has been a teacher for almost 40 years and is a History graduate with a masters' degree in Modern History. She teaches History and coordinates a newly introduced area in the curriculum aimed at bringing into being different projects with students. This new area of work builds, for instance, on principles of transdisciplinarity and the development of research and teamwork. At this school, students are organised in small teams and encouraged to choose a working theme related to their professional / academic future interests and it was within this new area that the museum also worked. Initial expectations were both related to the need to offer *outside* experiences to students and to become part of the surrounding neighbourhood which was an intended agenda shared with the museum. The Paper Money Museum was seen as a *proper* and *safe* institution to *initiate* these 12th grade students and confront them with *real-life-like* experiences.

The advocate at the Secondary School Garcia da Orta has *only* a bit more than 20 years of teaching experience and is a Law graduate who, at this school, teaches subjects related with Economics and Sociology and, for the first time during her teaching professional experience, worked with museums. This teacher started by visiting the museum (a guided visit) with her students who, in her own words, loved it and felt very much motivated to work with the museum. Questions during and after visiting the museum were raised, leading to the development of a proposal which included the organization of different talks intended to help students exploring these very questions. Also, the museum was acknowledged as an important learning setting for students who are otherwise difficult to motivate and keep interested in any subject.

¹² *Protocol* for the interview: presentation

Presentation of interviewee and the school / association: biography

Prior perceptions/experiences of museums in general

Prior perceptions/experiences of the Paper Money Museum

Defining needs, expectations (initial and present)

Defining outputs and outcomes

Key-words:

Defining values: the school and the museum

Defining learning: the school and the museum

Interviews were carried out at interviewees working places.

Other Partners: Acreditar and Contrato Local de Desenvolvimento Social de Aldoar

Project Acreditar (*Believing*) aims at reducing absenteeism and unsuccessful schooling trajectories. They develop direct and indirect actions in order to involve not only students but also their families and the educational community at large, sharing responsibility for the social and personal development of children and teenagers. These actions tend to favour non-formal educational experiences that enhance the acquisition of personal and social skills that will hopefully support educational success and a more participative citizenship. The psychologist, who coordinates and has developed this project is specialized on deviant behaviour and began working (still as a trainee) in this very neighbourhood some eight years ago. Although she is the youngest mediator in this network she has a thorough knowledge of the community and an impressive assurance of what she is trying to accomplish. What started as a small local educational project would, during 2006, come to work with other partners and create the educational consortium Acreditar which acted already as a basic local social educational network. The Paper Money Museum benefited from this networked experience of the community and was introduced to other key-actors of the community namely the Contrato Local de Desenvolvimento Social de Aldoar.

The coordinator of the Social Development Contract of Aldoar, a social worker with more than thirty years of experience, was a key sponsor and advocate of the museum in the community. The Contrato created by the Local Municipality and the Institute of Social Security during 2007 is still a young project, but very much interwoven with community advocates such as parish services, schools and local associations. It aims at developing intercession work in the neighbourhood of Aldoar, creating partnerships and synergies within this community. They are both obvious partners for a local educational network.

[Previous] Perceptions and Practices

It is interesting to note that all mediators interviewed duly recognised themselves as regular museum visitors and in some cases worked regularly - within their professional activities - with museums but just one partner had developed a long term working project with any of them¹³. For the most part, and as prior perceptions, they recognized museums as fertile grounds for acquiring knowledge and understanding mainly about historical or art related issues. The availability of children and family related activities or the regular group guided visit or workshop/atelier was also common knowledge.

They often referred that successful museum visits depended a lot on the quality of the relationship established with whoever guided the visit; and, usually, that depended a lot either on some previous acquaintance they had at the museum (who ended up acting as a facilitator) or on a very motivated teacher who took a special interest in museums and who invested a lot of personal effort.

In any case, only one of the secondary schools displayed a consistent and wide use of that sort of resources, including recurrently a wide range of museum visits within its educational programmes (ESCR). Most had not even visited the Paper Money Museum before or, which

¹³ Indeed, the Project Somos Nós / It is Us has been working with the Contemporary Art Museum of Serralves for quite some time, developing long-term projects, namely, those related with the keeping of a vegetable garden.

is more preoccupying since we are talking about neighbouring institutions, did not previously acknowledge it as a potential educational partner. More to the point, museum collections and perceptions about the museum were not the most engaging ones.

Creating Relevance

A clear prior agenda of the museum was the quest for sustainability and relevance within the local community. But how relevant did partners find the themes offered at the museum and this particular project?

Secondary school participants found themes put forward by the guided visit relevant as they related to their day-to-day experiences, stirring up their attention, taking their interest and relating knowledge to real-life experiences bringing school taught lessons alive.

Indeed, this relation between themes put forward by the museum and personal relevance can be illustrated by the enthusiasm of how other partners welcomed museum proposals and thought about further active educational roles the museum could easily take on:

(...) I went to that meeting and one of the things that enticed me at once (besides other possibilities we realised could eventually happen...) was the project called Financial Diet because we are supporting families with severe money management problems and I immediately opened my ears to that proposal and I thought “that could be very interesting!” because (...) I saw there a possibility of working something out that was part of our intended support strategies for these families: the question of management, financial diet... (...). It is possible to start working on these questions and even about entrepreneurship right? (...) (DG, CLDSA).

The Financial Diet project would indeed be customized to fit these families’ needs and profile and is well underway. The principles of entrepreneurship and creativity also seem to be an integral part of this particular approach.

[Changing] Perceptions and Practices

It is still early days, but one year after the project has started and some activities have already taken place, the museum has changed its own perceptions about not only the community but also about its own working processes. It went to the field certain that it would be easy to motivate schools and bring people to the museum, soon to discover that it was not only a question of attracting people but also to work with them, within their own contexts and, perhaps, it was even the museum onus to lay out the first foundations for the meaningful relationship they were looking for.

Surprise at the connexions participants could eventually find out between their interests and Museum collections, made work, at first, difficult: it was an altogether different knowledge and work practice / ethics framework they were asked to address. These changes were also related to the importance of programming through prior design, based on evaluation, outcomes and indicators *negotiated* with partners within this educational network. Geographical proximity has also been recognised by both the museum and other partners as an important factor for audience and programme sustainability. A more insightful discussion has also occupied staff meetings during the last few months about museum roles and collections: to

what extent can the museum take on board (looking for relevance?) themes that are apparently *totally* outside their collections' scope? How can they look for a balance between collections' scope and community demands?

Importantly, the Museum starts to be seen as a true partner within the community, with much potential and unique knowledge (collections and accessibility practices / tangible and intangible) and symbolic resources to offer. For certain sectors of the community it is an ally to reinforce skills and relevant learning for day-to-day living and self-worth; a rich resource for information, knowledge and research; a learning setting that through play and wonder is able to create new positive social interactions; a space for collaborative learning and respect:

(...) I think there was an immense openness of the museum to us, right? That I never thought possible! An enormous availability (...) a specific and particularized care to each theme and they also had to meet... because students had chosen themes... and they had to think about how they could tackle these themes... that's why I say... the museum was so much available... much openness and the resources... they have resources that we do not have and that they made available to us and that we have already used (...) they were immensely generous. I was very grateful to them and students loved it students felt important, protagonists and that is great to them (...) (AP, ESCR).

(...) it is almost just crossing the avenue... the very local institutions... one cannot understand why... one of the things because (...). I think that in reality few people, few or only some people in this community had realised that the ACMF is part of Aldoar, is part of Aldoar as is the Parish Centre, the school, the church, the health centre, it is a local institution... (...) It is a neighbour... obviously it is not relevant only for Aldoar but it is a resource that this community has at hand, to take advantage of... (DG, CLDSA).

[Great] Expectations

There is no doubt that, for the Paper Money Museum, being recognized as a significant partner within the local community was probably one of the most important outcomes envisaged. This recognition involves not only changing perceptions about the museum in the community but also recognizing that barriers still existed within. The Museum expressed great expectations for this project and some indicators were even pointed out.

The Financial Diet Programme aimed openly at equipping participants with practical skills that could be crucial to changes within families. One of the *tailored* Financial Diet programmes, for instance, worked with gipsy families and also intended to lead family members to recognise and enhance the important management roles taken upon by female family members. This is definitely a new, challenging and difficult territory for the museum.

For partners such as Acreditar and the Contrato expectations are obviously more related with opportunities to working with local low income, vulnerable families. Very different learning skills are at stake here: understanding of the value of money, understanding of the functioning of the very financial institutions (banks, etc.) and, of course, practical skills related with the management of domestic economics could act as learning indicators.

Self-worth, autonomy, maturity, respect and equity are common key-words expressed by all partners as a result of working with the Paper Money Museum. Whether referred to the

use of the Museum to make formal presentations by school students or to be welcomed by the President of Administration Board at the front door, the use and appropriation of space and the quality of social interaction, looks as if it was a most exciting and important moment for changing, for instance, participants' perceptions about the museum and themselves.

To supplement teaching, to provide curriculum related support, to motivate, to offer more than *simple displays of objects*; and, importantly, to change visions and perceptions about museums: these are key expectations often expressed by school partners. But if learning is referred to, again and again, as a *natural* Museum territory, collections, its tangibility and multiple possibilities to stimulate curiosity and wonder and to open up different ways to learning, are understood as an essential and differentiated feature that can enhance the unique contribution of the Museum to this *imagined educational network*:

Museums have a great surplus: you have a collection, you have the whole history there; here we talk more about the material, you have the material! And with the material you can do much more, right? Therefore, you can take advantage of these resources and adapt them to different needs, right? While, here, we work more, perhaps... with abstract ideas, while you have the material, tangible and can have a much more practical approach, much closer to people (SC, PA, ESMO).

These should, nevertheless not be understood as purely structural constraints. This process has demonstrated that given enough space, participants can construct their own connections within museum spaces. In any case, it is the informal, active, collaborative and relevant to day-to-day situations approach, the personal quality of interaction that is voiced as a fundamental characteristic for museum learning and for this particular project. In some situations, museum contexts can even offer alternative symbolic spaces for learning:

(...) for them learning is associated with schools and as lot of them had experiences of learning... they think they cannot learn... going to school already means they are not going to learn anything there... they won't be able to learn... and thus in different spaces... (DG, CLDSA).

At this stage of the project, partnerships with schools should nevertheless be recognized as fragile as they seem to rest more on personal teachers' motivations and personal teaching approaches than having, in reality, integrated any school's educational project as the Museum expected to.

Some [last] thoughts

The project is still in its early days and in the process of ongoing documentation that will look into *end-users* perceptions and uses of experiences offered / constructed. However and overall, the Museum forged strong links with all partners involved and attempted to open up new communication channels, ensuring quality of contact and a deep and enduring commitment to the maintenance of institutional-personal relationships. This process led the Museum to re-think programmes offered in a more flexible way and taking an active educational responsibility in the community.

Relevancy and learning were two of the concepts that mostly informed partners' views. Relevancy of learning experiences was associated with building knowledge from previous experience but allowing for new meanings and connexions. Undoubtedly, relevant learning experiences relate to one's identity and personal contexts and it is mainly about changing. Changing, in this sense, encompasses not only, acquiring new skills or more information, or more knowledge about something; instead, changing can be deeper than that and may also be about changing as a person. The Museum was also perceived as a pleasurable, non-threatening place for learning.

Partners referred often to learning outcomes such as skills related to knowledge and comprehension: learning more about something, opportunity to further explore a topic or to use previous acquired knowledge, information management and individual research, evaluation of problems; to communication skills: speaking for public audiences, explaining concepts; to social skills: knowing people, sharing and discussing ideas, teamwork, sharing skills¹⁴; to affective skills: self-worth and respect for others. Concepts such as motivation, enjoyment, wonder, creativity; or actions like doing, organizing and producing things within small teams or involving larger groups (i.e. short conferences / Museums' Day show) were also part of the benefits associated to this project. Partners also demonstrated awareness of the Museum as a place for research and scholarship that can provide visual and hands on experience to support topic / curriculum related learning and to bring the subject alive; as a place capable of presenting different perspectives and capture participants' interest in a much broader way; as a place that offers opportunities for learning through action, direct and *real-life* experience.

Collections and its tangibility – but also interpretation and personal mediation / ways of doing / experience – are essential characteristics for the construction of meaning as put forward by all partners. The Museum should not, therefore, lose sight that although it is certainly a mission driven museum a mission is only significant if supported by their very nature. As often pointed out by partners, all have a different role to play in the community and that should not be seen as a constraint but as an asset. Collections have an important role to play here.

Recurring again to the terms used by Janes and Conaty (2005) - idealism, intimacy, deepness and interconnectedness – it seems the Museum attempted to create new communication channels, enhancing quality of contact and ensuring deep and enduring commitments to the maintenance of relationships with the community and specially within this educational network. More opportunities to network meetings should, nevertheless, be offered. The Museum is also willing to be *used* not only as a meeting ground for these different partners¹⁵ but also as a staging ground for visibility of actions and assets to *outsiders*. One of the problems with this educational network is that it still does not reflect the rich diversity of this particular neighbourhood. A development of this project should involve other actors in the community, revealing, enhancing and focusing on the diversity of assets existent within. The Museum could act as a central support nodal point for meaning-making practices to construct both a collective and personal identity. This means engaging with the community

¹⁴ For example, one group of youngsters from Acreditar took over a teaching role, introducing children from Somos Nós to the *secrets* of hip-hop.

¹⁵ The organization of the show jointly put together and presented by different partners on the 18th May was in itself a valuable learning experience for all involved.

in their own contexts and allowing them a voice and some ownership of Museum's services. This approach involves not only a redefinition of what the *educational natural ecosystem* is but also a redefinition of a symbolic territory.

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I have been teaching museum studies at postgraduate level for the past 13 years at the University of Porto, Portugal. After finishing a first degree in archaeology at the University of Coimbra (Portugal) I pursued my studies at the University of Leicester (M.A. 1991 and PhD 2003) where I presented a thesis on museum professional discourses (The Professional Museumscape: Portuguese Poetics and Politics), supervised by Professor Susan Pearce. I am also currently a researcher at the Instituto de Sociologia da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto. My research interests tend to be focused mainly around the following themes: museological discourses, social impact of museums, urban regeneration and the creative city. Within my research activities and projects I organized different conferences and co-edited several books: *A Cultura em Acção: Impactos Sociais e Território / Culture in Action: social impacts and territory* (Porto, Edições Afrontamento, 2003), *Reconversão e Musealização de Espaços Industriais / Rehabilitation and musealisation of industrial spaces* (Porto: Museu da Indústria do Porto, 2003) e *Museus, Discursos e Representações / Museums, discourses and representations* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2005), *Museus Universitários com Coleções de Ciências Físicas e Tecnológicas em Museus Universitários: Homenagem a Fernando Bragança Gil/ University museums with science collections* (Porto: FLUP, 2005). At the moment I am preparing the edition of the volume (novos) museus: (novos) profissionalismos / (new) museums: (new) professionalisms.

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