

THE WINE MUSEUMS IN PORTUGAL: COMMUNICATING THE PAST AND UNDERSTANDING AND (RE) BUILDING THE WINE CULTURAL HERITAGE

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ABSTRACT

The wine museums are spaces of visitation, “guardians” of memory and of discourses about the past and present wine culture of the regions they represent. But they are also places of integration and interaction between history and identity, spaces of selection and exclusion, and also of subjective and selective memories. These spaces today assume two different roles and responsibilities: on one hand, the preservation, dissemination and (re)production with scientific rigor of this heritage, but on the other hand, they commit themselves to make it playful, attractive and pedagogical, adapted to targets and publics. They are therefore vital agents in the construction of a “wine culture”, an oenological culture in the regions in which they are integrated, nevertheless remaining selective. The number of wine museums in the Douro region has grown exponentially. For a better understanding of the wine culture in this region and its identity, promoted and valued through these spaces, the present study analyses a significant sample of the existing museums, how they organize and select their discourse. The main goal of this study is to better understand the role of these wine museums in the Douro region, how they help building the local wine culture. From the analysis carried out, it can be concluded that there is some discursive selectivity that values the historical “notables” of the land, the owners, and at the same time it often sheds social cleavages. It can also be noticed a strong religiosity, present in many of the exhibitions and collections. The hard land work is also very visible, centred on the technical aspects of grape and wine production and growth at its evolution for centuries. Many of these spaces are recent and others have been renovated, revealing that the region recognizes and values the existence of wine museums. They are, nevertheless and clearly, an added value for these territories of the Douro, both in their aspect of animation, creating dynamics and building cultural affirmation and identity that goes well beyond the wine heritage of the region. They are spaces that aggregate a cultural universe that represents and values more than the wine itself.

KEYWORDS

Local identities; wine culture; wine museums; wine tourist

OS MUSEUS DO VINHO EM PORTUGAL: COMUNICAR O PASSADO E COMPREENDER E (RE)CONSTRUIR A HERANÇA CULTURAL VITIVINÍCOLA

RESUMO

Os museus do vinho são espaços de visitação, “guardiões” de memória e de discursos sobre o passado e o presente vitivinícola das regiões que representam. Mas são também lugares de integração e de interação entre a história, a identidade, espaços de seleção e exclusão, de memórias subjetivas e seletivas. Estes espaços assumem hoje a dupla função e responsabilidade: por um lado, de preservação, divulgação e (re)produção com rigor científico deste património, mas, por outro lado, comprometem-se em torná-lo lúdico, atrativo e pedagógico, adaptado aos

públicos a que se destinam. São por isso agentes fundamentais na construção de uma “cultura do Vinho” nas regiões em que se inserem, que não deixa, porém, de ser seletiva. O número de museus vînicos na região do Douro tem crescido exponencialmente. Para um melhor entendimento da cultura do vinho nesta região e da Identidade que é promovida e valorizada através destes espaços, entendeu-se relevante o estudo dos espólios e respetivo discurso dos museus existentes, através da seleção de uma amostragem significativa destes núcleos. Objetivando-se assim com este estudo o entendimento e o contributo do papel destes museus vitivinícolas para a região do Douro. Da análise realizada pode concluir-se que existe alguma seletividade discursiva que valoriza “os notáveis” históricos da terra, cala muitas vezes clivagens sociais, expressa uma religiosidade vincada, evidencia o árduo trabalho da terra e que não raras vezes se centra nos aspetos técnicos de produção da uva e do vinho e na sua evolução. Muitos destes espaços são recentes e outros foram renovados, percebendo-se que a região reconhece e valoriza a sua existência. Constituem, ainda assim e claramente, uma mais valia para estes territórios do Douro, tanto na sua vertente de animação, como na dinamização e afirmação cultural e identitária que vai muito para além da herança vitivinícola da região. São espaços agregadores de um universo cultural que não se basta no vinho e que permite melhor conhecer a região em que se inserem e que valorizam.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Cultura do vinho; enoturismo; identidade local; museus do vinho

INTRODUCTION

Memory and the recovery of past impressions have become almost a major cultural obsession in contemporary societies. There is a kind of “mnemonic fever” (Nora, 2001, p. 84) in which the value of cultural diversity is recognized, and its rehabilitation becomes relevant in order to understand the past of each place or people. On the one hand, history has the power to make the present and the future comprehensible, considering we are the result of our past experiences, life and history. On the other hand, there is a growing tourist interest in the exhortation of this cultural diversity, because while collecting travel experiences it is a way to enrich each place and site. In an increasingly globalized world, cultural diversity is valued and allows us to nurture interest in experiencing different spaces, knowing different times and trying to understand the various combinations of both space / time dimensions.

Museums are born as institutions that value and recognize the importance of the past. In the beginning they were private collections, but soon after they became public spaces, allowing to disseminate culture and collections among the population. So they become institutionalized, many of them became nationalized and where declared state property, recognizing their public interest and service as keepers of memory and past.

More recently, in contemporary times, they acquire new pedagogical and playful functions, adapting to societies and market trends. These institutions were also sensitive to the growing presence of technological tools, being able to work and adapt to various audiences and languages, discovering new needs, assets to different accessibilities, sensitivities and discursive realities. Again, private museums start to grow, and also museums of different scales: thematic museums and local museums with a very specific

interest collection. These are all new challenges for these institutions that increasingly become aware and discover new roles as social and reflective agents.

The museums of wine fit into this context and allow the experience and the understanding of an oenological culture, but also the knowledge of the specificities of each region they represent. They offer a look at their past and present, with touristic interest but also important for the local population allowing the recognition and the (re)construction of local identities.

This paper questions the role of wine museums in Portugal as cultural agents representing a local oenological culture. But also which role do these museums play in the wine tourism phenomenon. What kind of narratives and relations of selectivity lies behind their exhibitions? The aim is thus to better understand this cultural phenomenon, but also the role of these institutions within this context. Thus, on the one hand, it was intended to know the oenological identity wine museums promote. Which identity and oenological heritage they are able to communicate. On the other hand, the aim was to understand the process of contents production that underlies this identity.

It was decided to carry out the study in the oldest demarcated wine region of the country, founded in 1756 and located in the Douro region, because it is also the first one to develop wine tourism in Portugal. It also has the major variety of wine tourism products at present (Inácio, 2008). Visits to cellars and wineries date back to the 1940s and take place in Gaia. As a consequence, it has also the largest number of units of analysis: wine museums or local museums where the theme of wine is integrated (Douro Museums, 2011).

The idea was to be able to reproduce this study in other regions, allowing a work of comparison among regions, identities and specificities of each region. So this first study is meant to be an exploratory study, a reflexion exercise with academic relevance for tourism and museum studies, but also a way to give some contributions to the understanding of local identities, oenological culture and its regional diversity in Portugal. Aiming a better understanding of the cultural narrative options that were made in each of the units and regions.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF WINE MUSEUMS: METHODOLOGY, GOALS AND WORKING HYPOTHESES

Assuming as a premise that the wine museums in Portugal contribute to the knowledge and (re)construction of heritage and oenological identity, the hypotheses studied were: (H1.) The historical narratives of the production processes take place along with the understanding of the social processes. (H2.) Local singularities are highlighted in these narratives. (H3.) These identities and spaces are relevant for both the tourist and the local communities, legitimating this cultural heritage. Because this reality is complex, we chose to use primary and secondary sources. There was direct intervention and visitation to the identified units.

The methodological approach focused mainly on a qualitative analysis of content, to assess discourses, narratives and dynamics through the observation of the existing

exhibitions. It was decided to perform a content analysis of the existing exposures in these various spaces, using observation grids and a qualitative analysis of the data collected.

From the universe of museum units existing in the region (Museu do Douro, 2011), it attempted to integrate as many cases as possible, with the option to analyse only the units under the name of Museums (seven out of thirteen), at least in the first phase of the work, reflecting the diversity of its distribution within the region: Baixo Corgo, Cima Corgo and Douro Superior, a region with approximately 250 thousand hectares (IVDP, 2015). The goal was to obtain significance with a representative sample.

Finally, we used secondary sources, by analysing the data and material that some of the units provided, as well as those available on the Internet, reporting the activities developed by these institutions. Some studies carried out over a decade on these same places (Inácio, 2008) have also been taken into consideration, allowing to analyse and compare how some unit have evolved to respond to today's demands, providing a double analytical perspective: one of temporal evolution and another of current analysis of the existing permanent expositions and the spaces in which they are found, which in some cases were altered.

MUSEUMS: SPACES OF REPRESENTATION OF POWER AND SYMBOLIC (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

The appreciation of “memory and the past” goes back to the period of the Italian Renaissance, a period in which social elites valued objects of antiquity and also some other singularities, mere curiosities, which they collected in their travels, and to which they conferred artistic and historical value, but also because they would give them back a certain social status (Anico, 2000). It was a way of valuing their holders and their travel experiences. Collections of rarities and precious things brought from other geographies thus appeared in the Renaissance European Courts, contributing to the creation of a great diversity of private collections among wealthy families, nurturing a taste for collectivism and eventually the “seed” of the first museums (Faria, 1995).

This interest was continued and nurtured by nineteenth-century Historicism. And despite the strong Nietzsche criticism for being annihilating of creative forces and for overcoming and focusing on the cult of the past, leaving no room for innovation (Ribeiro, 2014), this movement was however very relevant, allowing the knowledge and understanding of the past. Renewing the interest of the civilizations and cultural history, materialized in the collections and in the discourse organized and build in this period for this purpose.

The collections presented in museums are therefore selective from the outset and represent the choices of those who organized them, giving them a certain “discourse alignment” and meaning, often framed by cultural, political, ideological circumstances and even personal interests, taking into account what their patrons wish and allow. Giving them voice.

Museums thus reveal systems of meaning characteristic of a specific historical age, are socially restricted and involve, simultaneously, forms of social interaction and modes

of perception (Faria, 1995). Furthermore, it is often forgotten that history is full of narratives and biases that allow the (re)construction of the past (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1985; Foucault, 1992). In the selection of these messages, we can always add the subjective look of those that narrate, observe and interpret the messages, and also the subjectivity of the listener and his perception of the messages available (Berger & Luckman, 1972). Likewise, the interests and particular visions of patrons are recurrent in the universe of chronicles and written testimonies recorded for annals.

Moreover, museums are institutions with a social and cultural role, yet despite the recognition of the need for scientific rigor, they now also have the simultaneous obligation to adapt this discourse to various audiences and languages. A discourse that is both pedagogical and playful, requiring choices of form and content and a conscientious and judicious selection of facts and highlights in a process of symbolic (re)constructions of the real.

According to ICOM (2001), the museum is defined as a permanent non-profit institution, which helps the development of societies. It is open to the public and play the role of acquiring, preserving, researching, communicating and exhibiting materials that are a testimony of human beings and their environments, with the purpose of providing their study, education or enjoyment. Therefore, it is perceived that, today, museums clearly aim to provide aggregating cultural symbols, whose purpose contributes to the sense of belonging to a certain place and past, helping to build collective identities, no matter how big these are. This phenomenon is of particular value and interest in the context of globalization and tourism, promoting particularities in an instrumental way, allowing to focus on cultural diversity and its appreciation, providing consumption formats, aiming several audiences, languages and sensitivities.

MUSEUMS, FROM NATIONAL TO LOCAL: SPACES OF POWER, KNOWLEDGE OR ENTERTAINMENT?

As we already have seen, museums became places that can be seen as “guardians” of memory and past discourse, places of integration, interpretation and a dialectic relation between history and identities, as well as subjective and selective memories (Kavanagh, 1996, 2000). They organize discourses about reality, legitimizing identities and sociability. They reflect power logics that consciously or unconsciously help to decide the future and to understand who we were, who we are and what we will be. Following this same logic, local museums assume the same functions, but within a smaller scale and with smaller projections, favouring localisms, regionalisms, and pluralisms, give them a space and valuing them (Desvallés, 1993) or, as Faria (1995, p. 173) states, “local museums reflect the history of local communities”. Yet this has not always been the case, they have seen changes in their role, pursues and goals as well as in their ownership.

The work of the Portuguese researchers Faria (1995) and Anico (2000) are useful references to understand the evolution of these institutions. According to Faria, it is possible to clearly distinguish phases in the evolution of these spaces from their genesis, from private collections that the bourgeois class has acquired, to museums on the

nineteenth century whose mission was to educate the population, passing to spectacular spaces and playful cultural spaces of performances. Anico (2000), a decade away, advocates the relevance of regional and local museums for building identities, attributing them a significant cultural value and role by studying local museums in Loures.

Museums today can be considered places where the “representation of power” takes place as well as the (re)construction of a past in which diverse perspectives and narratives about reality are presented. They are places of negotiation and dialogue, of production of shared meanings with different publics (Desvallés, 1993) and desirably adapted in the discourse to these various publics. This last aspect, however, is not consensual. For some authors we are in the era of the spectacle society (Debord, 1967) or in the era of emptiness (Lipovetsky, 1989) or in a hyper-consumption society (Lipovetsky, 2006), where personalization of experiences is a must. Where real life becomes a “show”, where, according to the most critical currents, the emptying and pauperization of contents often happens. Following this idea, museums must remain spaces “guardians” of culture and quality of the contents represented, being able to resist to this decadence of contents. There are several authors and reference studies in this area, launching the debate on the role of museums in contemporary societies.

In the perspective presented here, the Museums adapted to these times being themselves spaces of leisure and education (Faria, 2001; Maccannell, 1976; Urry, 1999), where the “edutainment” takes place. Authors such as Pearce (1992) and Urry (1999) even speak of *post-museums* conferring a new meaning and functionalities to the museums that assume an educational, playful and functional role in the societies they belong to but also for those how visit them.

THE WINE MUSEUMS: CULTURAL SINGULARITIES

The wine museums are thematic centres, places that preserve a selective memory where the culture and the patrimony they legitimize and represent are related to an “oenological identity” of the region. The culture linked to wine and vineyards and wineries is present in some parts of the globe. In the Portuguese case, it has a long history, dating back to the Palaeolithic period. In these spaces of multiple functionalities wine is celebrated as a product and a civilizational invention. The comprehension of this culture is associated with a particular region. Spatial-temporal issues are relevant in this culture, but questions like the context and relations within societies are also part of this identity.

Wine museums have two main functions: they are places promoting local cultures, being relevant to the communities and populations of proximity. Taking part of cultural products of a certain region. But they also play a touristic role, with great potential to be included or offered as tourism products. They have a clear role on the valorisation, explanation, interpretation, creation, exhibition of identities and local and regional diversities for those who visit these regions, providing their understanding.

On a double perspective they are thus places of representation of memories and knowledge of the “oenological culture”: a) they allow the public to understand the

production process, because they also have evolved over times, and space, with local singularities; b) they make possible the understanding of the wine culture, the oenological local culture, and the historical process, distinguishing the notables of the land, but also the anonymous actors included and represented in each region.

The (re)construction of cultural identities reveals itself a central object and goal for these places, a feature studied in depth by Handler and Gable (1997) that stimulates and contributes to the creation of a double vision about this reality; the one of the visitor and the one of the visited; the local community and the tourists and visitors. In conclusion, the reflexion about local culture and local identities valorisation produces self-knowledge and self-esteem and helps to create local development by retaining in the region some human capital, proud of their routes, a critical mass that is fundamental for the region sustainability (Inácio, 2008). Therefore, there is no doubt that wine museums have an important role by being spaces of culture, pedagogy, entertainment, relationship and communication of local identities, especially in regions where the wine culture is part of the DNA of the population, allowing the understanding the fundamental and structural questions within this local culture.

CASE STUDY: THE WINE MUSEUMS IN DOURO REGION

In Douro the traces of wine production go back to prehistory (Barreto, 1993). The demarcated region has existed since 1756, being one of the oldest in the world. The history of these people and of this territory was therefore and always marked by the presence of wine production and vineyards, thus becoming a distinctive feature of local culture. There are groups, classes, immigration, migration, and habitats, society nets and relations that are based on these characteristics of inheritance that evolve around oenological patrimony. Even today, the descendants of national and foreign families who have been working the land for centuries and producing wine of worldwide reputation remain dominant, with the presence of small and medium-sized producers.

There are large houses of ancestral tradition, which include English families for several generations, but also large economic groups, who show interest in the opportunity that the territory provides in the production of unique wines.

Douro has witnessed a significant improvement in the quality of local wine production in recent decades. They are among the best in the world. They won medals and prizes of merit and national and international prestige. In the region there are international wine fairs with considerable prestige and projection, showing the growing and already huge dynamic of the wine industry in the region. They produce a great variety of wines, among them well known Port Wine.

The tourism developed in the region is considerably influenced by the wine presence. The “Douro Valley” was the first destination to receive an SMED (System for Measuring Excellence in Destinations) of the CED (Centre of Excellence of Destinations, NGO recognized by the OMT) in 2008.

Tourists want to get to know this wine and destination and they are not exclusively wine tourists. Cultural tourism, urban tourism or many other forms of tourism,

recognize the interest of the region and came to see the *terroir*, a territory that has very different geo-morphological characteristics, but they also come to taste or experience the wines of the region.

The wine-growing landscape of the slopes of the Douro River was a “human invention”, “pulled out” from nature, flattened, “transformed” into “mortórios”, moulding itself and making it favourable land to this production. This is, however, a very difficult land to work on. History says so. Unesco awarded this unique wine-growing landscape in 2001, giving major visibility to this cultural heritage. It became an important tourism resource for the region and for the country. Both the National Tourism Strategy 2027 and the previous strategy PENT (2006) consider that Douro region and wine tourism are priorities in the development of tourism in the country.

“The Douro is Wine” (Barreto, 1993, p.9) and the society in the region is marked by this omnipresence. In the region there are three large territorial units with distinct characteristics: Baixo Corgo, Cima Corgo and Douro Superior. In the production of wines, each region has relatively distinct histories and functionalities, mainly in Port Wine production. Traditionally, it is in the most inland and agricultural territory that the production process takes place. The territories situated near the coast are the places where aging and storing wine is done. But also where the expenditure (shipping/ transportation) and commerce of the wine takes place. It includes Cellars and Wineries in Foz, benefiting from the centrality of Oporto, the second largest city in the country. But not only Porto wines are produced in the region, many others of great prestige and renown wines are produced here and generate cultural and tourist interest, with different varietal provenances.

There are a large variety of wine tourism products offered in the region, including thematic itineraries, suggesting visits to farms, cellars or wineries. It is also possible to stay in several “Quintas” or in tourism lodging units in the rural area or in “Turismo de Habitação” (ancient houses with noble routs), but also in several luxury hotels, projects of great prestige in the region. There are also organized cruises in several sections of the Douro River, targeting different publics. While some of short duration, others that are more expensive, allow a longer stay on board, stopping along the river for a several days trip. It is also possible to travel by train along the Douro, on a historical line, or even do helicopter tours, starting in Oporto. Throughout the year, there are wine fairs and festivals, and also gastronomic exhibitions. Some have local, or national or international scale. In these fairs the wine is tasted, tested and promoted. In 2001, there was also a project called the “Wine Villages”, which consisted in the recovery of ancient villages with strong wine traditions and heritage. They have been recovered and today they are available for visitation. Finally, there are several wine museums, about 13 in total, and other local museums where wine is also present.

In the last decade, wine museums have more than doubled in the region. There are currently thirteen structures dedicated to wine (Museums of the Douro, 2011). The present analysis focused on seven of these 13 structures (50% of the total). Among them there are some of the oldest ones, but also the most modern and recent ones in the

country, both public and private structures. In the present analysis their size and geographical distribution where criteria included in the sample choices: two in Vila Nova de Gaia, one in Porto, one in Peso da Régua, one in Pinhão, one in São João da Pesqueira and the last one in Foz Côa.

The territory has also a Network of Douro Museums, and its main dynamic hub is the Douro Wine Museum in Peso da Régua (Mud). It has been helping other private institutions with the same nature and purpose to organize their collections, ensuring and creating some harmony on goals and exhibitions.

From the analysis done, there can be highlighted some particularities of relevance and which, in our opinion, contributed to the pursuit of the objectives of this study.

In general, the production process and the agricultural techniques used in the region for the production of wine are a must in these collections. The economic dynamics generated in the productive cycle is highlighted in most of them, much more than the human and relational issues between those who possess the land or work the vine or the wine.

The vast majority of the collections highlight the secular character of wine production in the region. In Foz Côa it is associated with pieces from the 1st century. Yet, most pieces from many of these spaces date back to the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Of course, the emphasis is placed on the centuries-long experience of producing both individual producers: houses of production in particular, and anonymous producers than in association contributed to this production and to nurturing this culture.

The discourse is mainly organized in a diachronic way, emphasizing the relations and difficulties that have arisen from the hard “terroir”, from the relationship with the Douro river, the down the river descent until shipping from Gaia “Caves”. The hardness of the soil, the bad weather, the diseases of the vineyard, the climate, the dust and the difficult work of the “terraces”, the constitution of the “mortórios” and the various techniques of transportation, bottling, ripening and storage that were responsible for the progressive wine production enlargement in the region.

As for the “oenological identity”, it can be seen that the discourse is more focused on the particularities of productive work techniques than on the social relations that it produces. Much more is known about agricultural work than about its people. The social relations of hierarchy, the questions of property, of classes and human hierarchies are not clear in the “organized” discourse. They are faint and discreet. The highly specialized work in production, the social hierarchies or even the gender issues are not highlighted. Some notable characters that have been protagonists, big land owners and figures in the region like Ferreirinha, George Sandman, Conde de Oeiras Sebastião José de Carvalho e Mello (Marquês do Pombal), Adriano and António Ramos Pinto, among others, have a special place in several of these museums. But the people and the relation with the workers appears “clean” of conflicts and “neutral” in their representation.

Even when the presence of the British is strong and the gender differences are very marked in the instrumental roles existing in the whole process of production, bottling, labelling, transportation and marketing it is not a subject for reflexion. Even the class issues highlighted by the different functions associated with this whole process

are not noticed. That is, relational issues are not clearly a priority in understanding these representations. The private spaces often take advantage to highlight the history of the owner's families they represent.

There is, however, a common characteristic presented in several of these places. In many of the paintings exposed, in films, in paintings and in the museums analysed the "divine" is present. Therefore, it is possible to perceive that the local identity is marked by a strong religiosity, of great Christian catholic devotion, transversal to the agents represented: the blessing of the vintage, the production and the planting; the Virgin who guides the boats "Rabelos" and protects them from bad weather and mishaps, that lurk the sailors in the difficult transport of kites to Foz is a strong presence.

The labels and the evolution of labelling of each brand are very common. The communication and the graphic representation are also very usual choices to exhibit. It is clearly a fertile place for the analysis of the value of these brands and the importance of referents associated with wine along times. It is easy to see the evolution and graphic sophistication that these product images have been having over the years. It has been following the growing quality of the wine, it is also growing international projection of wines and brands. The bottles used, and their evolution is also one of the attendances almost always contemplated in these collections' choices.

In the existing books it is easy to read the economic dynamics provided by this activity in the region although there is not always direct reference to this fact. In the records on the production and export of wine, in the existing inventories, in the commercial values that the exposed records present, it is easy to read and to realize these dynamics.

Several of the existing museums, both public and private, use electronic resources and the new media as support in the organization of their speech, giving in some cases a playful and interactive aspect to the spaces, closer and appealing to younger audiences. Concerning this subject, the Museums of São João da Pesqueira or the Douro Museum in Peso da Régua are good examples.

Several have a specific place to view short films about the all wine historical process. Parts of the same film can be view in different museums. This is the case of the Port Wine Museums and the Douro Museum in Peso da Régua.

Some of these spaces are very recent or have been recently remodelled and many of the architectural projects that house these collections are themselves of great interest, presenting cultural and historical relevance, because they are the reconversion of old warehouses or mills.

In all these spaces it is possible to purchase wine and taste it. Publications or merchandising related to this culture is also available in stores or in smaller spaces contiguous to the permanent exhibition. That is, the cultural and/or tourism experience includes tasting the wine of the region and having the option to acquire bottles or merchandizing. From this observation, it can be concluded that this seems to be a relevant issue for all the agents involved in this analysis, not only because it provides economic value for the museum, but because the experience of wine culture goes through showing the wines and local products in the territory where they belong to, an "on-the-spot" experience.

Many of these places, particularly public museums, host cultural and social events of the local communities: exhibitions, congresses, staging, temporary exhibitions, workshops, among others, providing some event creation and cultural dynamism in the region. They function as hubs for creating cultural value, as well as places of meaning and cultural representation, enhancing culture as a living element and meeting the interests and needs of local communities.

CONCLUSIONS

In the Douro region the existing museums are recent or have been recently restored. They can be seen as an important cultural capital for the regions they represent. They have a double function as local identity promoters: those that are closer to Porto (in Vila Nova de Gaia, Foz) receive mostly foreign publics, tourists, but those inside the territory (in the Peso da Régua or in São João da Pesqueira) also have a considerable presence of local publics, especially schoolchildren. So, they play an important role because they help young people and local children to better understand the history and characteristics of the region in which they live and the activities that stimulate them. Aside from the touristic image they help to build. It is considered that this is an important function of these spaces and an enormous contribution to the affirmation of local identities.

Therefore, it was considered pertinent to evaluate the existing narratives. In this regard it is considered that in many cases there is little dynamics or adaptation of information and content to different audiences or languages. Nevertheless, compared to 2008, when there was a first analysis of the spaces, there is a considerable improvement in several of them, namely in the adaptations in terms of accessibility of public with special needs or in the languages in which the information is presented. Some new places and facilities have been built, it is the case of Douro Museum in Peso da Régua and the relocation of the Port Wine Museum is also planned for a new space in a near future.

The wine museums in Douro region are oriented to the tourism and to the tourist experience, appealing to more than one sense, since in addition to the exhibition space there is always the possibility of tasting the region's wine.

The discourse is centred on the understanding of wine through its production process and the economic dynamics created, with the social issues present in this activity, such as gender or social hierarchy, being second to none. The identity that is "celebrated" is to some extent "peaceful". Sometimes, individual protagonists, often owners or historical characters who have left their mark in the region, stand out, but in the sense that their actions contributed to the dynamics of the wine in the region.

Many of these museums, particularly the private ones, do not charge entrance fees or fare, and several present the possibility of applying to various discounts, making the experience very accessible. Nevertheless, these spaces do not only generate social and cultural dynamics. They are valuable contributors to economic dynamics, profits that come from inlets and store sales, even though the levels of qualified employability and the number of jobs work involved in these units are not high.

As for the hypotheses formulated in this paper, it is considered that hypothesis 1 (H1.) cannot be confirmed, since “the historical narratives of the productive processes” reflect little of what “the underlying social processes are”. As for (H2.), the hypothesis is confirmed: “the narratives highlight local specificities” showing that the work in the Douro region is unique, the “mortórios”, the Rabelos and all the productive process, the “terroir” characteristics, the coexistence with the river and the geo-morphological conditions, and a unique landscape are strongly highlighted. As for (H3.), “These identities and spaces have relevance both for the tourism activity and for the local communities legitimizing their cultural heritage”, the hypothesis is also confirmed. They are important in boosting past and present culture, for both internal and external audiences, and receiving simultaneously tourists and local audiences. They clearly create added value for the territories, in terms of dynamics, animation and cultural statement. A value which represents for the region far more and goes beyond the wine heritage.

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