The Museums of the Sea: Functions, Discourses and Future Perspectives. The Case of Galicia (Spain). Marìa Ángeles Piñeiro Antelo, Lucrezia Lopez²⁵

Throughout time, museums have renewed their functions. Generally speaking, these institutions have been responsible for collecting, preserving and sharing objects and traditions, thus they have played a relevant role in safeguarding and supporting the development of communities, enhancing their local identity (Hein, 2005). Once museums and heritage are valued by their communities, they have become catalyst resources in favour of territorial regeneration and endogenous cohesion. Besides this, museums contribute to meaning-making narratives because they produce discourses that communities generate, learn and use to promote their territorial belongingness (Bodo, Gibbs and Sani, 2009). Thus, another pivotal function is the educational one. Indeed, the proper public dimension of museums turns them into educational institutions (Black, 2009).

In recent years, the availability of public funds for the sustainable development of fishing communities in Europe has paved the way to many initiatives to enhance the value of the fisherman profession and to restore the traditions and traditional knowledge linked to fishing (Piñeiro and Lois, 2019). Among these initiatives, the creation of museums centred on the study of the sea and its environment as a livelihood that

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determines the life of those societies that focus their economic activities on tasks and trades of a maritime nature.

Given these premises, the main aim of the present proposal is to explore the social, cultural and economic dynamics related to the use and valorisation of the Galician maritime heritage by means of the so called Museums of the Sea. We will analyse if and how these initiatives recognize and reappropriate the maritime and cultural legacy to support local sustainable development strategies.

Concerning the methodology, we will introduce a comparative study among the Galician Maritime museums. Our analysis will begin with the first experiences dating from the beginning of the 20th century, supported by private companies or public administrations, until the latest initiatives at local scale, and with the support of funds from the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), directly related to the valorisation of the maritime cultural heritage as a tourist resource. We will point out the proper functions of each of them, in order to clarify and make explicit their discourses and their management models. As a result, the role of these museums is evaluated both in the visibility and conservation of the maritime heritage, as well as in the improvement of the perception that fishermen have about their profession and their contribution to the culture of the coastal communities. Finally, we will ponder the future directions of these initiatives in the terms of success and territorial branding.

References

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