

Collaborative art: Rethinking the Portuguese theatre

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Abstract

In this paper, we analyse how artistic organisations and their directors are working in local communities and how their publics are experiencing theatre. Using a multiple case study methodology, we examine three different collaborative art profiles and geographies. We find that informal contexts, networks and partnerships foster the local collaboration of organisations and enhance both their recognition and the well-being of a small circle of local inhabitants. We also draw attention to relevant dynamics introduced by a scenario of collaborative and territorialised theatre such as the growth of local artists, which fosters art creation locally and cosmopolitan theatre groups which are working in neighbourhoods, cities and international fields; finally, the intensification of broader cultural experiences and the urban conviviality of artists and their participating publics.

1. Introduction: between collaboration and the territoriality of theatre

Since Becker published *Art Worlds* (1982), there have been increasing changes not only in the shapes of artistic work but also in their socio-spatial and temporal contexts. Becker could not have foreseen that artists would be 'working together' simultaneously in Portugal and EUA or Brazil! Geographically distant territories, organisations and people are brought closer together. New digital channels boost the dissemination and sharing of art. Artistic practices and networks may converge in a territory or within virtual territories and communities that connect with each other and are constructed on the internet (Gauntelet, 2011). Abbott, a sociologist of professions, recently reminds us of an old insight from the Chicago School perspective: social facts are located and they exist through a process that links and interlinks them with past contexts (Abbott, 2016: 40–41). Thus, we know a lot about how artistic organizations are internally organized, however yet little is known about how they evolve, how they are working in relation with others, in which context, territory, with which partners. In sum, how do theatre groups and their directors collaborate, with whom, when and where?

Recent research projects demonstrate that even though theatre audiences may not be large, they are more involved as makers, participants, sometimes experts who help artistic directors with its programming (see, for example, the participant observation research in a theatre group, Dias and Lopes, 2014). The artists' relationship with their audiences has been given new impetus to innovative socio-spatial artistic contexts. Artists and local participants challenge and are being challenged to increase urban conviviality and informality that steadily brings professionals and amateurs closer together in a kind of "partnering", to use Markusen and Gadwa's contribution (2010: 18–22). The local partnering is in different ways rooted in the communities and we believe it makes theatre groups sustainable, keeping the cultural diversity of its territories and local communities. For example, we found that in some cases inhabitants now experience theatre and cultural activities as a kind of local heritage, sometimes as amateur activities, where both younger and older members of the community can spend their time, as we will see in the next section.

In fact, in the American case, Markusen and Gadwa (2010: 3) argue that one of the main goals of art projects is to "(...) bring diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired". These authors consider that arts target the community by inviting people to participate and share different cultures. In turn, Menger (2010) and Urrutiaguer (2014) also consider that in the French case the nature of art and cultural activities local and regional authorities are willing to offer citizens has broadened. Menger yet suggests that the current institutional definition of art has become more anthropological, one that can foster cultural identity and the diversity of citizens and their plural interests; also, one that articulates cultural policy with education, urban and social policy, activism and social problems. The missions and objectives of artistic organisations, partners and territories are therefore more combined. Menger proposes us understand the phenomenon through the territorial-city dimension of culture. In his words: "(...) the city as the incubator of cultural generativity, to suggest how a city-centered approach to cultural development challenges the state-centered doctrine of cultural policy" (Menger, 2010: 1).

Moreover, we may consider the role of artistic organisations acting in major cities, events, biennials and capitals of culture as well as those acting in small communities with specific cultural and artistic programmes that involve young and old people, are stimulating the proximity of people with artistic processes and practices (Borges, 2015). Karpik similarly states that theatre depends on its groups' territorial proximity with audience, in his contribution to the

International colloquium *Desvendando o Teatro: Criatividade, Públicos e Território* (Lisbon, ICS-UL, 2012; see also Karpik, 2007). He calls our attention to one of its main specificities: the diffusion of theatre is more limited than that of other artistic areas and it is extremely dependent on the “networks of informal relations” that characterise for example the theatre groups of neighbourhood. This is how the publics today are reinvented in theatre and in cultural participation in general. This reinvention takes place by the proximity to the artists, in their performance spaces, be they theatres, cinetheatres or in the open air, as demonstrated by Markusen and Brown (2014): “People also seek active engagement in artistic creation and expression, even co-curating”. Theatres are struggling to maintain audiences and marketing and strategies often fail. And theatregoers increasingly value venues, not just performances, challenging directors to curate locations as part of their offerings (Brown & Leonard-Novak, 2001).

In the next sections, we will analyse the collaborative artistic work within local communities and how collaborative processes go beyond a more institutionalised logic of culture. Thus, our main hypothesis is that the relationship between artistic organisations and the territories where they are located is determined by the functioning of a specific cultural environment and by the position of directors. Firstly, we argue that although artistic networks are growing steadily, they are simultaneously becoming increasingly collaborative and territorialised (Section 1). Secondly, to make this point, we will analyse how organisations call for the local population's participation and how they provide the public with contexts of urban conviviality which can enhance people's well-being. We will describe cultural organisations, their missions and working dynamics based on directors' words and how they are rethinking their approach to artistic work and to interconnecting with local-residents and communities. We will introduce the idea that collaborative contexts are feeding and boosting organisations' work and local communities (Section 2). Finally, we will discuss our main empirical results showing multi-collaborative contexts in which art is involved today. We conclude by proposing avenues for further research and highlighting the opportunities for discussion on theatre missions and sustainability. We suggest possible future directions for the analysis of Portuguese theatre (Section 3).

1.1. Methodology

Using a multiple “case study methodology” (Becker, 1970; Ragin & Becker, 1992), and the results of our previous studies, we shed light on the missions of each art organisation and community through ethnographic observation. We consider that this demarche reveals the diversity of routines and rupture in their day-to-day artistic work, practices and collaborative interactions between people and territories. We will see that informal networks and partnerships foster the local collaboration of organisations and narrow the distance between performers and their publics, promoting the intensification of cultural experiences and increasing the publics' participation and conviviality. Our analyses are supported by observation, visits to theatre venues, in-depth interviews with the directors (Borges, 2007, 2009). Moreover, we draw on Yin (2009) and the idea of ‘multiple sources’ when building the ‘case’ to set the framework of our methodological strategy. Abbott also considers a way of understanding the nature of the social process and its “intrigues” (Abbott, 2001: 197–198): the cases are therefore built not only on ambiguities, complexities, contradictions, but also on what is relatively permanent in the art world. We therefore present three case studies from an empirical perspective. The systematisation of the information collected during the research allows us to anticipate and evaluate some scenarios that are evolving in cultural organisations: more localised cultural action, greater proximity, and the emergence of collaboration profiles with national and international partners. We are also inspired by the results of Brown and Leonard-Novak (2001) in cultural organisations and the research by Johanson, Glow & Kershaw (2014). These authors find that definitions of community participation vary in accordance with the characteristics of the municipality and the profiles of “markets along networks” (White, 1997: 177–220). We will use the same demarche but now identify how artistic organisations are working (or not) in collaborative contexts within local and inter-municipal communities and institutions; and how they take advantage of their past local connections and experiences. Our research is therefore very close to the social players; it is bottom-up research that values the rationale of the entity's local work and emphasises the diversity of the organisations' experiences and relationships with their audiences (Borges & Lima, 2014). Finally, we address the distinctive challenges of theatre and local contexts: the close relations between organisations, performers and publics through “small communities that are working together” (Borges, 2017); theatre

groups calling for the local population's participation which creates contexts of strong urban conviviality (i.e. socialising regularly with each other) and can improve the territorialisation of collaborative art.

2. Case studies

2.1. Case A: 'The city as a territory where I belong'

A. Anastácio (born in 1972) is *Alma d'Arame's* stage designer and puppeteer, founder and director. He started out in professional theatre as a light technician when he was still a student. Then he learnt puppeteering and it was in the late 1990s that he realised that this was what he wanted to do — 'I got a taste for it'. This feeling grew while he was training at the Cascais Professional School under C. Avillez, the director of the Cascais Experimental Theatre, where he did a course in scenography. He then went to Charleville in France where he learned the theatre profession of actor-puppeteer.

The first cultural activity organised by *Alma d'Arame* was a festival. "The festival was the group's flagship", Anastácio told us in our first conversation (field notes, 22.10.2014). The aim of this group's festival was to 'see how the people in the locality would react'. Anastácio believes that the most important part of artistic creation is "the people [they] are the ignition, the flame, the spark that makes us do art. I am not complaining. We have audiences of 100, 80 people". Anastácio is acknowledged in the city for his puppet work, but he attributes his recognition above all to the fact that he "comes from that city", he was born there and keeps up his links with the people, his neighbours, his public. The festival was produced in collaboration with the *Oficinas do Convento* (Convent Workshops), a cultural association for art and communication located in St Francis Convent in Montemor-o-Novo. In the past, Anastácio produced shows and events at the *Oficinas*.

In his own words, today *Alma* is "a small structure focusing on puppet theatre, performance, installation, scenography, sculpture" (field notes, 18.05.2015). It is not just a puppet theatre group; its artistic work is interdisciplinary and with a broader scope. After all, the organisation is based 101 km from Lisbon and gets involved in the challenges facing the territory where he lives: the puppets are welcome there, but the cultural action and social intervention requested by the group's social partners goes beyond this kind of

work. *Alma* is a non-stop work drive, which offers the city various cultural activities. The artist's relationship with the other local organisations and agents has become stronger since *Alma* became professionalised and Anastácio started to work full-time. The artistic work the team do is almost circular, because everything is concentrated in a space that is confined by the geographic boundaries of the city itself. *Alma* collaborates with *Oficinas do Convento* and *Espaço d'O Tempo*, in the Castle. To use the director's words, it was "difficult to reach", but the theatre group gradually set out its path and became an important satellite for the increase in the community's territorial collaboration. The local experiences and social dynamics of the artists and residents was fed by the co-existence of countless social, cultural structures and artistic groups.

On a daily basis, Anastácio's work is divided between artistic activities to develop the *Alma* project, conversations with the team, the construction and setting up of shows and the preparation of workshops, as well as meetings with colleagues from local partner structures to create joint programming. But there is still time to socialise with friends. Friends who belong to community organisations with whom Anastácio spends his free time and who also cooperate, for example, with the support project for the disabled, *Explorar'ARTE*, at the *Casa João Cidade*, near the Roma community outside the city centre. In these moments of socialising, a friend tells him: "I know a text that might interest you" (field notes, 18.03.2015). These moments provide the opportunity to hear a local story and they trigger spontaneous collaboration among people who have known each other for a long time and who just hang out together. As a rule, the residents in this community were at the *Espaço da Criança* (Children's Area) at some point in their childhood. This allowed Anastácio to meet other young people and build friendships that are still going strong even today. On the other hand, the youngsters go to the Youth centre. Essentially, the leaders of the local theatre groups and cultural structures of this community have a past context in common.

Anastácio is from this community and his relationship with it facilitates his artistic work and his acceptance by local people. How does Anastácio see his project? He described *Alma* as a structure that works "with a network to consolidate a project for a city" (field notes, 22.10.2014). As an artistic organisation that is on the margins, out of the city of Lisbon, it is ultimately this geography that brings it more visibility. Lisbon has so many organisations, activities and artists in the city centre. Anastácio described the feeling of this "excess" when he told us about leaving the Lisbon Puppet Theatre and his time

at the D. Maria II National Theatre in Rossio (Lisbon); it was just a question of time. Anastácio already knew that Lisbon was not his town. Through *Projet M*, *Alma* participated in a partnership in 2013–2016 that was led by a renowned organisation, *O Espaço do Tempo*, which was working in conjunction with other partners like *Oficinas do Convento* and *Projecto Ruínas*. Together, the organisations are associated to the municipality. The *Projet M* made its name locally by promoting artistic residencies, workshops and new creations. *Alma* developed and coordinated this cultural project and this allowed the team to establish and assert itself as a structure that programmes regular cultural activities for the local population. This was the case of the two workshops we attended, one with local students and teachers, and other with local professional and amateur artists (field notes, 18.03.2015).

2.2. Case B: A collaborative project with Facebook followers

Our conversation with L. Fernandes (born in 1972) began to the sound of an orchestra with a hundred or more local children and youngsters (field notes, 4.07.2014). The *Casa d'Orfeu* is an old building; it had been given to the Fire Brigade and later donated to this organisation. It has a small library with a valuable collection of documents about musical traditions, entire books on the history of *d'Orfeu*, told through articles, minutes of meetings and budgets. There are also a few rehearsal rooms, a showcase with publicity material, films, DVDs for sale. The *Casa* is occupied not only by the production team but also by youths, local-residents, who rehearse there. Fernandes confesses that he considers himself a "self-taught musician". He is the director of *d'Orfeu* because he was the only that resisted "tough times" in the 1990s. Those experiences must have strengthened his ties with the local agents responsible for culture, who could establish cooperative links with the institutions in the broader (regional) territory. From 1995, he accompanied the foundation of the school of traditional music. He concluded his degree in music at the University of Aveiro when *d'Orfeu* was in its fifth year.

Nowadays, this artistic organisation no longer limits itself just to musical activities. The shows in the group's 'portfolio' (i.e. shows that are put together to be sold) are described as performances of music-theatre and new circus. The activities organised by the team are more wide-ranging than ever and have an inter-associative slant. The seminars about folklore and amateur theatre groups deal with subjects like amateur associative organisations, marketing,

management, tax and accounting for associations; there are diction and communication workshops for the public in general, and the percussive orchestra for the young, the *opÁ*.

How do *D'Orfeu* work today? And who do they collaborate with? Fernandes talks of this organisation's similarities with *ACERT, Associação Cultural e Recreativa de Tondela*, located in Viseu. Why? He suggests that they do the same kind of cultural work with and for the local community, with a concern for local everyday life. In both cases, the team develops their work with the local-residents and it presents themselves as a municipal co-producer of cultural activities. The work is linked to the community through primary collaborative networks that are mobilised and that Fernandes presented to us as a "curiosity of this group": *D'Orfeu* has members who do not pay fees but whose membership is based on their direct collaboration in the group's tasks. The social and relational capital that Fernandes and his team have been accumulating over the years has allowed them to consolidate local support, which was boosted by the allocation of central state funding; this was an important recognition factor. In Fernandes' words, the state funding "is the affirmation of the group's strength, of its credit". The director sees the institutional central support as an opportunity that organisations must take advantage of to be valorised in their "home territory". He adds that in fact the real recognition for their work comes from the local authority and above all from their local public who feel 'called' to see their performances.

Fernandes's day is always very intense: from organising publicity photos for the events, performances and festivals to updating the internet site, looking at clips of articles, audios and videos. He has little time to create new performances, but there are publics (real and virtual) to appreciate them. For example, *d'Orfeu* and the *Festim* event constructed a digital community on-line, and Fernandes showed us this on their website: "We did this here, you can see, it's registered, we've reached lots of different people, we've shared". It is a communication model that announces the group's activities where they can chat with their small community and 'followers'. His day progressed. Team preparations were made for the arrival and performance of the last *Festim* group. We travelled from Águeda to the Estarreja Cine theatre. It took less than an hour. But on the way Fernandes showed us a recording of a show in which he had played a leading part. He had acted in the Osório Repertoire. He told me it had been very rewarding because "the public participated all the time". And he explained he

enjoyed socialising with the international artistic groups that he promotes because they give him artistic inspiration.

Fernandes believes that his intervention model in local culture should be achieved in conjunction with the resident population and that it should respond to the region's needs. The institutional support that the organisation has managed to consolidate through its association with six municipalities results from the conception of a programming model and a specific institutional model that the group develops and reinvents at each step with their partner municipalities. The regional newspaper, *Soberania*, reported the festival as follows: "*Festim* 2014: a region united by the musics of the world". *Festim* is presented as an event that strives to unite territories through its cultural, social and educational offer. The artist-director told us it is more than a very artistic event; it is a "cultural happening". The event makes the structure and its artistic team sustainable, allowing the team to dedicate their time to their artistic work, developing the *Gesto Orelhudo*. According to Fernandes, this is the structure's brand and artistic identity. The international links that it started to explore with the *OuTonalidades* project are another aspect that d'Orfeu is developing, pursuing Fernandes' initial vocation for music as well as the interests of its partners. Fernandes uses his ingenuity and expertise to combine creation, programming and publicity activities; priority goes to promoting a model of "art for all" that articulates the structure's vocation, the trajectories of its professionals and the characteristics of the territory and local network of partners, boosted significantly by its digital capacity.

2.3. Case C: From 'breaking shale' to the Food Tent

Teatro Viriato has a long history. After 25 years with no activity, *Teatro Viriato* opened its doors in 1985 with an artistic project by *Área Urbana - Núcleo de Ação Cultural*, sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, and with support from Viseu City Hall and the Civil Government of the Viseu District. The Architecture Faculty of Porto was commissioned to do the plans for the restoration and refurbishment of this theatre under the supervision of the architect Sérgio Fernandez. Between 1986 and 1996, the City Council restored the theatre in partnership with other funding institutions. In 1996, the theatre came to life through a programming and administration project by the Paulo Ribeiro Company, with the support of the Viseu City Council and the then Ministry of Culture; this gave rise to the *Centro de Artes do Espetáculo de Viseu*,

a Cultural and pedagogical association. In 1999, the first season in this new phase of Viriato's life was inaugurated with a performance that was put together specifically for the occasion, *Raízes Rurais, Paixões Urbanas* (Rural Roots, Urban Passions), by R. Pais; the title gives a clear picture of the context in which Viriato was working. Between 2003 and 2006, Viriato was directed by M. Honrado, when P. Ribeiro was working as the artistic director of the Gulbenkian Ballet.

Ribeiro (born in 1955) is a choreographer and director of the dance company with his name. In 2015, the *Companhia Paulo Ribeiro* celebrated its 20th anniversary. Ribeiro was born in Lisbon and began his career as a dancer in Belgium and France. He made his debut in choreographic creation in 1984 at the Stridanse Company in Paris. P. Ribeiro has received various international awards (the Humor award in 1984, 2nd prize in Contemporary dance in the Volinine Competition in 1985) and national awards (Acarte Prize for *Dançar Cabo Verde*). Between 1998 and 2003, he was General Director and Director of Programming at the *Teatro Viriato/Centro Regional das Artes do Espetáculo das Beiras*. In 2003, he became Artistic Director of the Gulbenkian Ballet, which was founded in 1965 and closed in 2005.

Our conversation with Ribeiro began in the atrium of the *Teatro Viriato*. The director-choreographer had been at the dance school, *Lugar Presente*, next door to see if everything was running smoothly. We went backstage in the theatre, which still smelled new, and to the rehearsal room where P. Ribeiro works and builds his shows with his ballet dancers. It is a large room full of light and with an inspiring view over the city (field notes, 19.05. 2015). It is occupied by a team that is doing an artistic residency at the *Teatro Viriato*. Ribeiro spoke about the local institutions' growing confidence in him and his team. He described his arriving in the city of Viseu, when he tried to collaborate with local entities. Ribeiro used the region's predominant stone as a metaphor to describe his first encounters with local partners and institutions. It was like 'breaking shale' (very, very hard), asking for collaboration, support, and managing to create an atmosphere of trust, a support network. They did not know him personally in the locality; he was an artist from Lisbon. He accepted the challenge but had absolutely no professional link with Viseu. Today, he admits that although he still enjoys the experience of living in Viseu, he needs to get away to see what is going on in the big cities; that is why he makes almost weekly trips to Lisbon where he can go to shows and participate in the city's cultural life.

The Paulo Ribeiro Company is in permanent residence at the *Teatro Viriato*, from which it creates, goes on tour and develops pedagogical activities. Since

2004, the dance school, *Lugar Presente*, has occupied the neighbouring building, which was restored and donated by the Viseu City hall and *Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Viseu*. The school offers classes in specialised artistic education: introductory dance courses, basic and secondary school courses in dance, free courses. The school's ties with the *Teatro Viriato* will grow as students participate in training workshops in the work space under the direction of the theatre's teachers and technicians.

"It wasn't like this some years back", confessed Ribeiro: the relationship with the city was initially marked by "caution", to use his words. He told us: "At first we rarely risked co-productions; it was always a risk, normally the programming was done with our partners, using our networks". Today, the collaborations with the other local structures and institutions make the *Teatro Viriato* a success. He recalled that it is largely thanks to its good relationship with the schools that *Viriato* is now "inside" the city. This relationship has a past which he describes as follows: "we went into the school (...) and now, we have become accomplices".

The *Teatro Viriato* is also able to support and receive other artists and structures that do not have their own work space but just float in the Portuguese theatre panorama; here they encounter an important collaborative relationship: "There are performances that tour ACERT [another regional art organisation], but [our] company doesn't go to Tondela. There is a crossover of publics, but not so much of performances", concludes Ribeiro. The Circus Lab project promotes a collaborative network with various municipalities (Viseu, Mangualde, Nelas, São Pedro do Sul and Tondela) and envisions artistic productions with partners like ACERT (Tondela), but also with Binaural / Nodar (São Pedro do Sul), the Paulo Ribeiro Company (Viseu), Erva Daninha (Porto) and Radar 360° (Porto), with the *Viriato* Secondary School (Viseu), School Groupings of Tondela Tomaz Ribeiro and São Pedro do Sul. The artistic processes culminate with the presentation of results in schools, with the students, and at the *Teatro Viriato*. This is followed by an international conference on the importance of artistic education in mandatory schooling. But the artistic and cultural programme is very diverse, with shows, workshops and *Tenda de Sabores* (the Food Tent). It is the gastronomic experiences that attracts the public in general. So, who is *Viriato*'s public? It is children from the age of three, youths and adults. Ribeiro spoke about the gratification that motivates all the artists to continue their work in this city: "It is a fantastic night. We challenge people, and it is wonderful to see their confidence in us.... The cultural activities and the Food Tent were full!"

3. Discussion

The three case studies presented herein have diverse geographies, locations, arts profiles and specific collaborative contexts, which are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of case studies, arts profile and collaborative contexts

Case	Arts profile	Collaborative context
Case 1 Alma D’Arame Montemor-o-Novo (city) 17 437 inhabitants 1232.97 km ²	<i>Alma d’Arame</i> is in the centre of Montemor-o-Novo, a territory with a growing number of local professional and amateur artists. The director has a long-standing, informal relationship with the municipality and he has maintained professional relations with the main artistic organisations in the city (e.g., Espaço d’O Tempo) and socio-cultural and therapeutic institutions.	Multi-local collaboration of actors and very strong local conviviality with other cultural organisations and their publics. Key-alliances: Adam Bartley (Norway); Espaço d’O Tempo (cultural institution); Oficinas do Convento; Montemor-o-Novo school grouping.
Case 2 D’Orfeu Águeda (city) 11 346 inhabitants 335,27 km ²	<i>D’Orfeu</i> is in Águeda (Aveiro). The director has a past in the city. There is a close relationship with the young people of the local community and amateurs. For example, the organisation creates ‘volunteer opportunities’, and invites amateurs’ participation: ‘Experience festivals inside, sign up.’	Multi-regional collaboration with six different local municipalities, and a very strong local conviviality with local schools, and their young students. Key-alliances: Local municipalities; Estarreja Cine theatre and ACERT-Tondela.
Case 3 Teatro Viriato Viseu (city) 99 274 inhabitants 507.10 km ²	<i>Teatro Viriato</i> (Viseu) has been directed by a famous director for the last 16 years. The theatre is in a territory with a growing number of local professional artists and cultural organisations. The theatre has a close relationship with the artistic school of dance and their students. The team maintains strong and very good personal and institutional relations and alliances with the local municipality, cultural institutions and schools.	Multi-regional collaboration and strong local conviviality with participating publics (all ages). Strengthening of collaborative networks between creation entities and professional artistic agents, in search of wider territorial scope at national level. Key-alliances: Cirkus Xanti (New Circus Company, Norway), ACERT — Tondela and local artistic organisations.

Source: Own elaboration (the number of inhabitants and the km²: Census 2011).

We are now ready to review the principal issues of these three case studies and indicate some patterns in the way the cases can figure in our sociological

arguments (Section 1). We believe theatre has been expanding and reinventing itself as a process through which the relations of collaboration between interveners shape the territorial and social character of a city and region (Mulligan & Smith, 2010; Kester, 2011). At a global level, art and theatre are now understood as drivers of lasting cultural development; but this does not mean that art is seen simply as an instrument used to reach other more general development objectives, that are subjugated to models of “economic organisation in which social life needs to be justified by the market or in utilitarian terms” (Alexander & Bowler, 2014: 8). Instead, art, and theatre, should be an end and one of the ultimate aims of the sustainable development (see the case of French theatre, presented by Urrutiaguer, 2015: 16–18). Numerous artistic experiences open art organisations to local communities and publics, striving to consolidate their position in a specific territory and respond to local cultural and social needs. These experiences have been helping the public become more involved in culture and in the decisions made about it. Using our research experience and the Portuguese cases, three key challenges to theatre can be discussed considering the literature produced about it.

- i. The territories host the artistic and theatre experiences, their organisations and their artists. The territories shape and structure the creative practices, the cultural intermediation and fulfilment not only through the localisation but above all through the territorial nature of the cultural processes. The territorial dimension of theatre assumes relevance in the revival of the urban space and in the importance of the urban creative dynamics experienced by the local population in the cities. In the case of the theatre, there may not necessarily be larger audiences, but they are more committed, more active, from the youngest to the oldest, with new ways of participating and relating to the arts and with contexts of artistic fulfilment and co-creation.
- ii. Similarly, artistic innovation is the key in the artistic contexts and yet today this concept is broader than ever. Theatre groups are adopting artistic practices that are increasingly underpinned by broad concepts of art and culture, and this is boosting the social diversity of local inhabitants interested in theatre experiences. The supply of cultural activities is frequently coherent with local needs, and these differ from one ‘geography’ to other (Borges, 2017). Artistic practices are not always shows and performances, but sometimes meetings, workshops, ateliers that bring together people from different backgrounds and with different formal training (as we saw in *Alma d’Arame*). In some cases, artistic organisation care is taken to put not only shows on the theatre

programmes but also talks and seminars with the theatregoers. This kind of experiences are replicated in different Portuguese communities and cities.

- iii. The spread of creative placemaking suggests deep-seated changes in contemporary art itself. Some local cultural and artistic experiments have successfully fulfilled their mission of proximity and respond to the interests of residents and the new artistic challenges; participation comes from residents and work done by local organisations (this was the case of the new circus that started up in Viseu, in *Teatro Viriato*). The involvement of local partners could go beyond the personal sphere of a director and is made sustainable by a shared past, as we have seen from the mapping of interactions within the three case studies. Altogether they are examples of forms of multi-local management and collaborative art contexts.

4. Conclusion

The three cases of Portuguese theatre reveal the permeability of art to collaborative practices accompanied by new forms of production, participation and dissemination. In general, the artist-citizens show their political, social and environmental concerns and this results in theatre of civic activism, education through art, theatre and inter-generational communion; this may even take place around the table where the best products from the region and from partner countries (e.g. Norway in the case of the *Teatro Viriato*, the Food Tent), are tasted. The local mobilisation capacity of artistic organisations seems to play in their favour, although it involves adapting to collaboration and networking with all local partners. We can see this in *Alma d'Arame*, in Montemor-o-Novo, with the multi-local collaboration of different actors and a strong urban conviviality. The adaptation and mobilisation of people and artistic teams varies greatly in each local scenario and geography. For example, we find multi-artistic collaboration between different artistic organisations and conviviality between artists and their participating publics. Local projects consolidated pre-existing alliances and we show that it was built by each organisation and director over the years. The main trend in the evolution of this type of organisation is the stronger relations between artistic entities and the municipalities in the local and surrounding regions. This trend will increase the number of municipalities that partner cultural organisations, as we can see in *D'Orfeu*.

Like other European authors (Johanson, Glow & Kershaw, 2014: 44), we argue that there is insufficient documented public debate on the meaning, nature, missions, and strategies of local cultural support and how it could be used (Mulligan & Smith, 2010; Johanson, Kershaw & Glow, 2014). The evolution of Portuguese theatre groups, we analysed all over the time (Borges, 2007; Borges & Lima, 2014) shows us that strong local roots do not inhibit their internationalisation. Far from being contradictory, these dynamics are increasingly complementary. They tend to boost the territorialisation of culture and teams that are becoming more active in different action areas; they also tend to foster new artistic cultures and professional networks as can be seen in artistic creation *per se*; they enhance the cosmopolitanism of artistic organisations that work in a small location but are assured a place in international theatres, events and festivals; they increase participating publics and artistic and cultural experiences with specific segments of the population, notably children, youth and seniors. They bring new impetus to local conviviality and community-based art. As we can see, theatre organisations, publics, and artists are making their 'art' by using participative practices and social commitments to the local territory and communities. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly challenging to understand and evaluate creative placemaking and collaborative contexts; after all, it not always objects that are under analysis. We are now analysing processes and interactions between people and territories. And, at this point, Portuguese theatre also underlines the profound need for further studies on the interactional field of art, and on how it and its artists, publics and territories adapt and strengthen themselves as participants involved in the transformations of contemporary societies.

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