

Voluntary associations, promotion of heritage and tourism in Portugal at the beginning of the 20th century. Actions at the local, national and international level¹.

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Abstract

As in other European countries, in Portugal, from the second half of the 19th century, voluntary associations were created for the purpose of preserving and promoting heritage. Some of them were scientific and/or professional associations whose aims were to study monuments and objects of art with historical or artistic value and carry out specialist intervention, for example, the Real Associação dos Architectos Civis Portugueses - Royal Association of Portuguese Civil Architects - founded in 1863. Other associations had a more diversified membership profile attracting those from a range of professions with an array of cultural competences. Heritage promotional activities included the dissemination of information regarding the heritage through excursions and tourism. Some associations were based in Lisbon, the capital of the country, where dynamic action and urban expansion provided the basis for a discourse whose aim was to safeguard the historical heritage threatened by progress. The Sociedade Propaganda de Portugal - Promotional Society of Portugal - founded in 1906, was the most important example of this type of association in Portugal. With scope of action at the national level, it played a pioneering role in the protection of the cultural heritage while encouraging the growth of tourism, seeking guidance in the actions of tourism associations and societies already existing across the rest of Europe, and it regarded tourism associated with an interest in the country's attractions (monuments, landscapes and traditions) as benefiting the national economy. The Grupo Pro-Évora - Pro-Évora Group - was founded in 1919 in the city of Évora, in the Alentejo province. Its scope of action was at local level and it sought to disseminate information about the heritage and attract visitors to the city. This voluntary association, which is still operational, is one of the oldest and most enduring associations for the protection of the heritage at the local level. It was created with the purpose of guarding the historical and material heritage of the city against the effects of poor decision-making by the public authorities and the aspirations of private operators, while it also sought to disseminate information about the heritage and attract visitors to the city. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how these two associations, one operating at the national level and the other at the local level, played a pioneering role in safeguarding the cultural heritage, extending the concept of heritage through their association with tourism.

Keywords: Portugal, contemporary history, cultural heritage, tourism, voluntary associations, Sociedade Propaganda de Portugal, Grupo Pro-Évora

Introduction

The growth of voluntary associations, interest in the cultural heritage and tourism are part of a broader process of social change which within the context of European historical experience is regarded as a process of modernisation of society.

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The economic, social, political, cultural and technological transformation of society from the second half of the 18th century enabled the emergence of new lifestyles and a notion of citizenship that encouraged the interest and involvement of citizens in different spheres of society. The new social elites engaged in the practises of the old aristocracies while displaying the sociocultural and political values of the wealthy middle classes.

Within this context, voluntary associations were created for a variety of purposes including the philanthropic and the cultural,. Some of these associations brought together individuals who were interested in the arts, antiques and monuments, elements that are currently encompassed by the broad field of historical and cultural heritage. The realisation that the changes that were being wrought in different areas of society might lead to the disappearance or irreversible transformation of buildings and objects with historical or artistic value led academics and professional people to express their opposition to this and in some cases they joined such associations.

At the same time, opportunities to go on "tourist" trips, in order to expand one's knowledge, for leisure, or perhaps for therapeutic purposes, were, at the beginning of the 18th century, only available to the aristocracy. Initially these were extended to the newly enriched middle classes and later, during the course of the 19th century, to an increasingly larger proportion of the population who were able to take advantage of such opportunities. This development was facilitated by a general increase in disposable incomes, especially in urban areas, and also by the development of transport and communications. It was not until the 20th century that the tourist activity grew to such an extent that many regions and even countries came to depend on it for one of their main sources of revenue, as it now represented an important sector of the economy².

The growing interest of tourists in the history, the arts and material heritage of different regions and countries contributed towards the emergence of associations that served to promote both heritage and tourism.

Besides publicising regions and places they regarded as being of tourist interest and, where appropriate, lobbying for improvements to transport, communications and hotel facilities, the associations disseminated information regarding historical and heritage assets in order to attract potential visitors. The focus on buildings and monuments considered to be of interest resulting in the publication of magazines, reviews and posters by the associations itself provided a contribution to safeguarding such assets. Associations were also often at the forefront of moves to challenge the public authorities responsible for the poor state of repair of monuments, and sought to raise the level of interest and awareness of local people as to the preservation of the heritage, often disregarded by the authorities.

1.The Promotional Society of Portugal³

1.1 The context in which it was created and its main aims

² - A. Cardoso de Matos, M. L. Santos and M. A. Bernardo, "Transport, tourism and technology in Portugal between the late 19th and early 20th centuries", HoST – Journal of History of Science and Technology, Vol.4, Fall 2010. URL <http://www.johost.eu/?oid=8&act=&area=6&cri=1&itid>

³ - On the background to the emergence of tourism in Portugal and the creation of the Sociedade de Propaganda de Portugal see A. Cardoso de Matos and M. L. Santos, "Os Guias de Turismo e a emergência do turismo contemporâneo em Portugal (dos finais do século XIX às primeiras décadas do século XX)", *Scripta Nova. Revista electrónica de geografía y ciencias sociales. Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona*, 15 de junio de 2004, vol. VIII, núm. 167. URL: <http://www.ub.es/geocrit/sn/sn-167.htm>

The Sociedade de Propaganda de Portugal (SPP), also known as the Touring Club of Portugal, was founded on 28th February 1906 with the aim of fostering the intellectual, moral and material development of the country, through its own efforts, jointly with public authorities and local government, collaborating with all, harnessing the resources of the nation, and by fostering international links. Another principal aim was to strive to increase the number tourists from both home and abroad and ensure that their visits would nurture an affection for the country⁴.

Leonildo de Mendonça e Costa, founder and director of the *Gazeta dos Caminhos de Ferro - Railways Gazette* - played a crucial role in the creation of the society. On his numerous trips abroad he was able to observe moves to develop tourism in various countries, leading to the idea for the creation of the Promotional Society of Portugal that he expressed in a letter to Alfredo da Cunha, editor of the *Diário de Notícias* newspaper in 1899⁵.

This project was well received in Portuguese society and, establishing itself as independent of any political or religious affiliation, the new society attracted figures from a range of political and religious persuasions, as was the case of Sebastião de Magalhães Lima, a republican and Grand Master of Freemasonry, and engineer Fernando de Souza, a monarchist and catholic. In December 1906, the total number of members of the society numbered 2,175 (1,054 founder members and 1,121 associate members). Over the next few years numbers rose substantially so that in 1913 there were 2,225 members, 10,635 in 1918, and in 1925, the last year for which data exists, 16,000⁶. Although the number of members fell far short of that of other European touring clubs, it is nevertheless significant considering the size of the country. In addition to Portuguese members, there were also associates in Rio de Janeiro and Maranhão in Brazil.

From its inception the society sought to promote the inventory, protection and dissemination of information about the country's heritage and encourage visitors from both home and abroad to engage in tourism. Its aims were to: draw up and publicise an inventory of all monuments, artistic assets, attractions and picturesque locations in the country; publish itineraries and guides to Portugal; organise and provide support for excursions; promote tourism in Portugal abroad, and encourage more Portuguese to travel within the territory; provide information on request; provide hotels, casinos, hydrotherapy resorts, transport companies, and other bodies, with plans of facilities, price lists and a list of items of everyday use in large tourist centres; encourage reforms and improvements in the establishment of hotels and provision of hotel facilities, transportation and local services; and in general study all issues of general interest related to tourism for the benefit of society⁷.

1.2 Moves by the Promotional Society of Portugal to develop Tourism and safeguard the Cultural Heritage

In order to achieve its objectives the SPP carried out a number of actions including the drawing up of an inventory of monuments and artistic assets in the country, producing guides and other publications, carrying out improvements in the hotel industry, and lobbying central and local government for the improvement of road and rail infrastructures and investment in urban centres which were the most popular tourist destinations. As early as 1906, when SPP statutes were

⁴ - *Estatutos da Sociedade de Propaganda de Portugal*, Lisboa, 1906.

⁵ - P. Pina, *O Turismo no século XX*, Lisboa, Lucidus, 1988, pp.13-14.

⁶ - "Relatórios da Direcção" published in *Boletim da Sociedade Propaganda de Portugal*. For 1925, Raul Proença, *Guia de Portugal*, vol. 1, Lisboa, 1925, p. 152.

⁷ - R. Proença, *Guia de Portugal*, vol. 1, Lisboa, 1925, p. 152.

submitted for government approval, its leaders took the opportunity to call for a range of measures to facilitate travel to Portugal. These included the abolition of passport control, improvements to the port of Lisbon, and the lowering of boarding charges. At the same time, they proposed encouraging the establishment of a daily Sud-Express (Paris) rail service and the production of a practical guide to the state railway system. They contributed to the publication of an illustrated leaflet on Portugal by the Companhia Real da Administração dos Caminhos de Ferro do Estado - Royal State Railways Board - with editions in French, English and German, and the SPP also published a Spanish edition⁸.

In order to extend its scope of action to cover the whole country, the SPP, initially based in Lisbon, opened offices in a number of regions in Portugal and abroad. By 1925, there were branch offices in Albufeira, Amarante, Braga, Cartaxo, Faro, Guimarães, Lagoa, Leiria, Luso, Manteigas, Monchique, Portalegre, Portimão, Póvoa do Varzim, Régua, Silves, Sintra and Viana do Castelo, as well as tourist information centres in Pombal and Trancoso. There were also offices abroad, in Paris, Berne, Geneva, Lausanne, Lorient, Madrid, Saint-Malo and Vichy, and tourist information centres in Hendaye and Irun.

The society published a monthly *Boletim*, or review, to publicise its activities, which was distributed free to members. It was published until 1921, and from 1932. It featured suggestions for itineraries and tours in Portugal and information about the main sights in a number of cities, some texts accompanied by photographs.

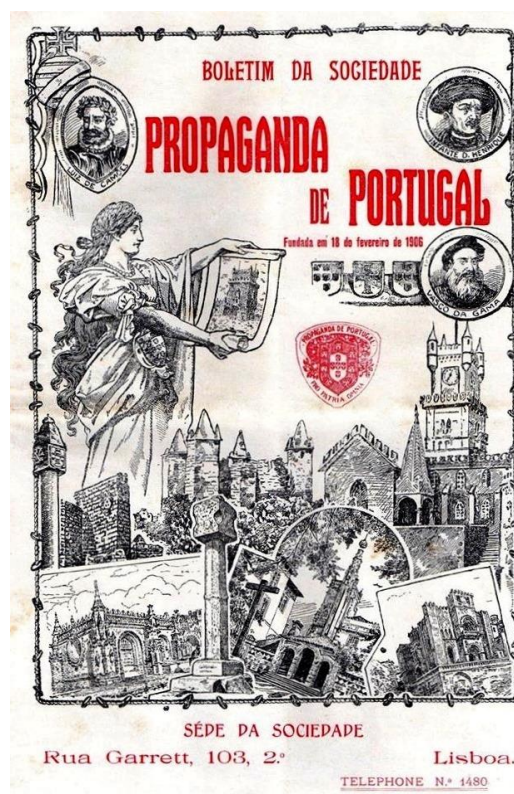


Fig. 1 – Cover of the *Boletim da Sociedade Propaganda de Portugal*, 1906

For the purpose of operational efficiency, in pursuit of its objectives, the society was organised on the basis of committees covering different areas, for example: hotels, and tours. The Tours Committee published a guide entitled 'Portugal' in 1908 portraying the country as an attractive

⁸ - Sociedade Propaganda de Portugal, *Relatório da Direção Provisória apresentado à Assembleia Geral de 19 de Dezembro de 1906*.

destination for tourists. As an incentive for the development of tourism in Portugal, the Tours and Hotels Committees carried out a range of activities. For example, the former organised an excursion to Évora in 1916 for 50 people, who were provided with the opportunity to visit the main sights of the city, estates in the surrounding area and the Convento do Espinheiro.

In the early 20th century the Portuguese hotel industry was pitifully underdeveloped, with the exception of hotels in large cities like Lisbon and Porto, and one of the concerns addressed from the outset by the SPP was the development of the industry. That foreign tourists should be able to find accommodation of the standard they were accustomed to in most European countries was essential for the development of tourism. Over the years the hotels committee sought to ensure the development of the hotel industry of the country⁹ and in 1917 engaged architect Raúl Lino, a member of the society, to accomplish this. The report he produced included plans for a hotel to be built in the south of the country, saying that "the establishment of hotels in our country is not just a question of investment - it is an architectural problem that must be resolved. Unfortunately, we are forced to look abroad for adequate design models which, besides the great practical inconvenience involved, is above all a sad indictment of the weakness of spirit which characterises so many undertakings at home."¹⁰ The project was aimed principally at southern regions of the country, which is why the call for tenders for a hotel mentioned seeking a design which would be suitable for a hotel in Northern Portugal.

For the purpose of training hotel staff, the committee established a hotelery school at the Casa Pia de Lisboa, which operated during 1917, but with the change of government and cuts to subsidies it closed.¹¹ However, the aim of establishing a training school in the field persisted and in 1919, on his travels abroad, Luiz Fernandes, a member of the Hotels Committee, collected from several French hotelery schools, such as the École Pratique d'Industrie Hotelière des Alpes Françaises in Grenoble and the École Supérieur d'Hôtellerie Bernascon in Aix-les-Bains, information on operations and brought back prospectuses, study plans and programmes. With the aim of establishing a school in 1918, the Hotels Committee held talks with the head of the Instituto Superior de Comércio - Higher Institute of Commerce - to discuss the possibility of creating a hotelery department at the institute.¹²

With the aim of raising standards in the hotel sector and providing a stimulus for individual units, the Hotels Committee produced a Hotel Guide, published annually, which recommended selected hotels to tourists. In 1918 the SPP sent out a questionnaire to all municipal councils as part of an exhaustive survey of facilities in the sector.

It was the constant concern of the society to develop the hotel sector, as well as other sectors of industry linked to tourism, accompanied by the awareness that tourism was not merely a pass-time of the rich or a sporting activity; its development served the economic interests of the country, encouraged regional development, preserved traditions, and raised the level of hospitality, thereby exploiting the potential of Portugal's material, moral, intellectual and artistic resources.¹³

⁹ - In 1907 the SPP published the following works by Luís Fernandes: *Guia Prático dos proprietários de Hotéis*, and *Guia Prático dos serviços de Hotéis*.

¹⁰ - Raul Lino, "Memória justificativa e descritiva de um projecto de Hotel Portuguez, para ser construído no Sul do Paiz" in *Boletim da Sociedade de Propaganda Nacional*, Year 11, nº 6., p 107.

¹¹ - *Boletim da Sociedade de Propaganda de Portugal*, Year 11, nº 3, 1917, p.62.

¹² - "Relatório da Comissão de Hotéis" in *Boletim da Sociedade de Propaganda de Portugal*, 13 Year, nºs 1 e 2, 1919, p. 31.

¹³ - Idem, Year 7, nºs 9 a 11, 1913, p.79.

1.3. The publication of travel guides to stimulate tourism and the promotion of the cultural heritage

Tourist guides as we know them today appear to have emerged as a phenomenon during the early 19th century with the development of the railways.¹⁴ The utilitarian nature of guides meant that they gradually became more impersonal in style, and systematic and complete in content, with a description of destinations and practical information regarding accommodation and the standard of hotel facilities, currency exchange, distances from the nearest post offices, main routes to other locations, means of transport, and so on.

Some of the first guides published in Portugal were also associated with the railways. However, publishing costs, especially those connected with the reproduction of images, lithographs and engravings, were virtually prohibitive. As the *Gazeta dos Caminhos de Ferro de Portugal e Hespanha - Guide to the Railways of Portugal and Spain* - put it in 1896, (...) "the production of an illustrated book with a good number of engravings, accompanied by quality colour images, in this country requires such a large outlay that no one in their right mind could countenance this kind of expense, and if one ventured forth on such an undertaking for the sole purpose of advertising, many would describe it as an extraordinary waste of money; however, some consider that the railways, for example, suffer from a complete lack of publicity which could be provided by attractive guides with views of sights, cities, and points of interest, colour maps and everything that might serve to attract the traveller, as well as those in the freight business, and inform them of prices, routes and facilities for all kinds of transport, etc."¹⁵

However, guides for travellers visiting Portugal date from earlier times, even though production costs and sale prices made them expensive and therefore less widely accessible.

Seeking to attract new readers, gradually guides were produced in new formats which were more convenient and user-friendly, as is the case, for example, of the *Guides du Cycliste en France* of the late 19th century which were small in size and not overly extravagant in terms of quality. A new type of pocket guide was first produced in 1874 when Thomas Cook launched the series of 'Tourist's Handbooks in the United Kingdom, consisting of 25 titles with red or blue covers.¹⁶

When the Promotional Society of Portugal was established in 1906, the number of guides or monographical works on the various tourist resorts was still insufficient to meet the growing tourist demand. One of the aims of the society was therefore to publish guides and leaflets to promote tourism in the country.

¹⁴ - According to Catherine Bertho Lavenir, travel guides are not dissimilar from the books produced by travel writers which they derive from, and three stages can be identified in their history. In the first stage, a prototype guide entitled *Guide du voyageur en Suisse* published by Englishman Johan Ebel in 1793 is still very close to the travelogue. A second stage, linked to the development of the railways and coinciding with the industrialisation of tourism, is marked by the appearance of practical guides which focus on sights and the detailed aspects of travel, often providing a general introduction to the country or region in question. In the late 19th century and the early 20th century, a different type of guide - the monograph - dedicated to a specific region, began to be produced. Catherine Bertho Lavenir, *La route et le stylo. Comme nous sommes devenues touristes*, Paris, Ed Odile Jacob, 1999, pp. 58-62.

¹⁵ - "O guia do Caminho de Ferro do Cabo". *Gazeta dos Caminhos de Ferro*. 4^o Year, n.º 195, 16th February de 1896; p. 59.

¹⁶ - Goulven Guilcher, "Naissance et développement du guide de voyage imprimé: du guide unique à la série une stratégie de conquête des lecteurs" in Gilles Chabaud et alii, *Les Guides Imprimés du XVI au XX Siècle : villes, paysages, voyages*, Paris, Belin, 2000, p. 81-91

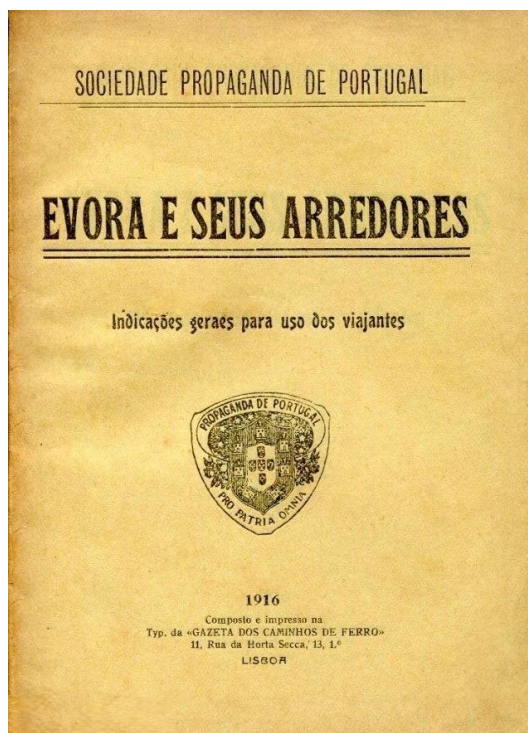


Fig. 2 – Brochure: *Évora e os seus arredores*, Sociedade Propaganda de Portugal, 1916.

In 1919, for example, although it struggled with difficulties regarding the publication of the *Boletim*, which was often published late, monographs, leaflets and brochures continued to be published. At the time, monographs were regarded as providing excellent guides for visitors to the different regions, due to the lack of paper, but only guides to Elvas, Portalegre and Castelo de Vide were produced. However, the society continued to see advantages in publishing monographs in foreign languages, which had begun with the guide to Porto, translated into French and illustrated with engravings, which was expected to be a splendid advertisement for the capital of the North. Regarding the “Portugal” leaflet, which was widely disseminated at home and abroad, it was held to be the most interesting publication of its type produced in Portugal thanks to the articles praising the climate, the landscape, and the art treasures, enhanced by some excellent prints, thus arousing the interest of readers.¹⁷

The depth of analysis of the different guides was very variable: the most notable places, sights and buildings were described in all of them, as well as museums, sometimes accompanied by notes that were more or less exhaustive, some containing information on history and economic aspects, as well as references to local geology, flora and fauna.

The development of tourism has often been associated with romanticism, the first tourist guides stressing the uplifting quality of treasures from the past including all buildings and monuments from the medieval era. The close link between the romantic movement and the emerging concept of heritage is reflected in guides. Their study reveals the extent to which they reflect the evolution of the concept of heritage and how they influence their main consumers: tourists.

As Claude Petitfrère points out, “Any presentation of an object to an audience by an author presupposes selection and interpretation, whether communication is by means of the written word or images. Thus a city space presented to the reader/viewer is in a way reinvented.”¹⁸ Places

¹⁷ - *Boletim da Sociedade de Propaganda Nacional*, Ano 13, n.ºs 1 e 2, January/April, 1919, pp. 10-11.

¹⁸ - C. Petitfrère, "Le guide et le plan. Les villes françaises sous le regard d'Alfred Jouvin de Rochefort, au temps de Louis XIV" in Gilles CHABAUD et alii, (ed.) - *Les Guides imprimés du XVIe au XX siècle : villes, paysages, voyages*, ob. cit..

usually indicated as being must-visits included, those that might be regarded as traditional and were linked largely to the sacred and also buildings linked to the cultural, social and political values of every historical era.¹⁹ Churches, cathedrals and bishops' palaces usually made an appearance. Among civic buildings were town halls, the symbols of cities, and palaces. As time went by, other spaces, such as theatres, came to be valued for their architectural value or importance as social facilities.

Featuring suggestions for tours of the main cities and excursions to places of interest for tourists, guides now included city plans and maps, indicating main routes and geographical or cartographic information considered relevant.

Guides also gradually assumed the role of vehicle for publicity, including several pages of advertisements for hotels and thermal spas as well as the main shops and stores, businesses and transport companies.

2. The Pro-Évora Group - an association created to protect the city's historical and cultural heritage.

Based in the city of Évora and founded in 1919, the Grupo Pro-Évora - Pro-Évora Group - is a remarkable example of an enduring association which has defended the cultural heritage over the last 100 years or so.

The association was founded during a period of intense cultural debate in Portugal following the establishment of the First Republic in 1910. An impulse for the emergence of the body was the encouragement of intellectuals linked to the Associação dos Arqueólogos Portugueses (APAI) - Portuguese Archaeology Association - based in Lisbon. Several founding members of the group belonged to the Évora social and cultural elite.

The founders of the group declared themselves to be admirers of the "treasures" of the city and fearing that contemporary political turmoil posed a risk, they sought to protect them. The aim of the association was to safeguard the city's monuments, indeed a meritorious mission, innovative in nature for the time; its statutes contained the following: "The main purpose [of the Group] is the protection of these monuments and the aesthetics of the city, by all political and institutional means, promoting their conservation and restoration"²⁰. The novelty of such aims lay precisely in the shift from the viewing individual monuments in isolation to a holistic approach, prefiguring to some extent the modern phenomenon of urban heritage.

The group's action proved to be decisive for the preservation of the heritage of the city of Évora, and many important initiatives were carried out due to their efforts. When in 1920 the group was appointed as the representative of the city on the Comissão dos Monumentos do Conselho de Arte e Arqueologia - Art and Archaeology Monuments Council, some 30 buildings of historical and artistic interest in the city were granted National Listed Monument status due to its insistence.

Over the next few years, the group carried out a number of actions to promote historical and cultural heritage of Évora. Its leading figures produced and published tourist itineraries, books and postcards to promote Évora's cultural heritage; campaigns to increase awareness of the importance

¹⁹ - Idem, p. 56.

²⁰ - J. Custódio, *Renascença" Artística e práticas de conservação e restauro arquitectónico em Portugal durante a 1ª República*, Évora: Universidade de Évora, 2008 (PhD thesis).

of the heritage of the city were carried out through the publication of articles by members in the local and national press; courses were held for cicerones in order to provide the information and training required for guiding visitors round the city.



Fig. 3 - Évora Cicerone's Diploma, 1937. Issued by the Pro-Évora Group²¹

With the establishment of democracy, the Pro-Évora Group held great debates on the changes that were planned for the historic city centre, especially the remodelling of the main Praça do Giraldo (1988) and the Rossio de São Brás (2001), the Strategic Framework Plan for the Historic City Centre (2008), the Programa Acrópole XXI (2008), and the construction of the Portas de Avis Shopping Centre (2015), among others.

The group's interest in the cultural life of the city and its capacity for promoting citizenship and civic participation through public discussion have led to collaboration with public and private institutions in the city such as Évora City Council, the Frei Manuel do Cenáculo National Museum, Évora Public Library, the Alentejo Region Department of Culture and the Eugénio de Almeida Foundation.

The regular and continuous nature of its action to protect and promote the city's cultural heritage undoubtedly contributed to the conferring of World Heritage status on the Historic City Centre of Évora in 1986.²²

Conclusion

At both the local level, in the case of the Pro-Évora Group, and at the national level, in the case of the Promotional Society of Portugal, the two cases presented demonstrate the role played by voluntary associations for the preservation of the cultural heritage. They also show that in Portugal appeals for the need to safeguard the historical and cultural heritage were able to be expressed through a discourse that focused on the potential of the heritage for tourism.

²¹ - R. Arimateia, *Túlio Espanca: contributos para uma biografia*, Évora, Câmara Municipal de Évora, 1997.

²² - M. A. Bernardo and A. Cardoso de Matos, *O processo de candidatura da cidade de Évora a Património Mundial: informação e envolvimento da comunidade*, Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Best Practices in World Heritage: Integral Actions, Menorca, 2018.

The analysis of these associations also shows that such organisations can play an important role in raising awareness and mobilising people to action in the defence of causes while providing a coherent means for collective expression and the participation of citizens in the public sphere.

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