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Policies and practices for the preservation of community-based murals: the case of Riachos, Portugal

Políticas e práticas para a preservação de murais comunitários: o caso de Riachos, Portugal

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Abstract

Community-based murals return numerous positive outcomes to the communities involved. However, these works embody a significant sense of impermanence. They are intricately tied to the ever-changing social context from which they emerge, and their placement in public spaces exposes them to a multiplicity of risks. This article examines policies and practices related to the preservation of community-based murals, deploying the Riachos murals as its case study. This involved comprehensively examining the murals' evolution and gathering data from stakeholders to gain insights into the perceptions of the murals as cultural heritage and the different stances on their perishable nature. This furthermore presents a critical discussion on the key issues involved, with the emphasis placed on the unique character of community-based murals, particularly their dependence on the dynamic social context of their originating community, before calling for a departure from traditional approaches to conservation decision-making.

KEYWORDS
Murals
Ephemerality
Community
Conservation
Decision-making

Resumo

Os murais de base comunitária trazem inúmeros benefícios para as comunidades envolvidas. No entanto, estas obras incorporam um significativo sentido de impermanência. Estão intrinsecamente ligadas ao contexto social em constante mudança do qual emergem e a sua localização em espaços públicos expõe-nas a uma multiplicidade de riscos. Este artigo analisa as políticas e práticas relacionadas com a preservação de murais comunitários, utilizando os murais de Riachos como caso de estudo. Para tal, examinou-se a evolução dos murais e recolheram-se dados junto dos envolvidos, a fim de obter informações sobre as perceções relativamente aos murais enquanto património cultural e as diferentes posições sobre a sua natureza perecível. Apresenta, igualmente, uma discussão crítica sobre as principais questões, destacando-se o carácter único destes murais, em particular, a sua dependência do contexto dinâmico da comunidade de origem, sublinhando-se assim a necessidade de um afastamento das abordagens tradicionais à tomada de decisão de conservação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE
Murais
Efemeridade
Comunidade
Conservação
Tomada de decisão

Introduction

Community-based murals are commonly defined as public artworks collaboratively created by a group of people to express their shared ideas, values, concerns, experiences, and traditions. These murals often reflect the identity of the local community and can be created in the context of a local festival, to commemorate historical events or to raise public awareness about social issues [1-2]. Displayed in public spaces, such as parks, schools, community centers, and other areas, community-based murals form the streetscape for the daily life ongoing in its locality [3]. Furthermore, because they are painted on the public façades, these murals are available to any bystanders and can be appreciated free of charge, unrestricted by physical barriers and indifferent to distinctions between social classes [3]. Hence, these murals may be considered a democratic art form: the art of, by, and for the people [4].

The literature establishes how communities that implement community mural projects undergo processes of transformation involving a new redefinition of the urban space, not only in terms of urban planning but also in terms of its symbolic and social aspects [5]. There are many studies on the multiple benefits that community-based murals provide to both individuals and the communities and cities where they are located. For example, according to previous research, these murals play an important role in social cohesion and community resilience [6-7]. Some authors recognize how murals encourage connections between people, strengthen social relationships within the community, promote inclusion, and establish processes of dialogue and local consensus [2, 8-9]. In addition to fostering community, these collaborative art initiatives excel in enhancing a physical sense of belonging, promoting personal well-being, and nurturing shared memories and collective identities [1, 10-13]. Community-based murals may also become transformative for their locations in support of local development [14]. It has been acknowledged that murals help to promote neighborhood innovation and growth, facilitate connections between neighbours, provide opportunities for the rehabilitation of degraded areas, and stimulate community pride in common spaces [3, 10].

As a product of community engagement, these murals undergo constant processes of re-definition, resulting from the way they are perceived within the broader spatial and social environments they inhabit. The meanings, values and significance attached to a mural define its longevity [15]. Another factor of impermanence stems from their public locations. Displayed on external walls, and thus subject to extreme environmental conditions, these artworks interlink with an ephemeral character. Previous studies point to the numerous challenges arising in the conservation of murals often executed with non-durable materials and without maintenance protocols [16-21].

As such, murals seem to have a well-established life cycle: they are produced for a reason, maintained for a time, and then repainted, removed, or simply left to decay until they eventually disappear. However, poor conservation can generate negative effects on the aesthetics of their respective locations. Furthermore, when murals start decaying, they can quickly become covered in graffiti or subject to vandalism, which may further detract from the visual appeal of the area. This often becomes interpreted as a sign of neglect and correspondingly confused with a low socioeconomic quality evaluation of these places [1]. As a result, community-based mural projects should incorporate preservation strategies right from the get-go. Unfortunately, what has been observed is that relatively little attention is paid to the maintenance and conservation of these murals at the time of their creation [19, 22].

On the other hand, the creation of a long-term plan for the preservation of community-based murals is fraught with great challenges and involves complex and not always easily resolvable issues. Firstly, the local community has assigned to those mural paintings a set of values and meanings. These murals, as collaborative group work, are both a social product and a process, even though it remains challenging to ensure the engagement of community voices in conservation plans [23]. Furthermore, there are legal issues to consider: who is accountable

for the preservation of this public art? Many of these murals are located on both public and private properties, which deepens the challenges for decision-making.

This article aims to contribute to the discussion on potential strategies and practices for the preservation of community-based murals, using Riachos (Portugal) as a case study. These 72 ethnographic murals, produced since 2012 in the context of a traditional festival with a very marked identity dimension, have become a vital component of the inhabited space. However, several are already in poor shape due to the lack of a preservation strategy, and the community has faced no consensual options for their future.

This case study serves to raise a series of issues: what challenges are posed to the preservation of community-based murals? How can a small community ensure the preservation of its murals and the visual quality of its urban space without significant financial resources? How to define preservation priorities? Is it possible to hear and take into account the voice of every stakeholder? Given the lack of comprehensive literature that explores all these questions in a real-world context, this article aims to provide a critical discussion and a reference framework for policymakers who wish to implement preservation policies in similar small community contexts.

The Riachos' murals: from 2012 to 2022

Riachos is a village in the municipality of Torres Novas, located in central Portugal. The abundant fertility of the lands, which was productive for livestock breeding, and agricultural production, transformed agriculture into the local economy's mainstay [24-25]. As such, the community has sustained a very close identity within this rural environment, maintaining various uses, customs, traditions and rituals belonging to the agricultural matrix in which the locals take great pride. The Cattle Blessing Festival, a religious and ethnographic event, held once every four years in gratitude for the harvests and the health of the cattle, is the best illustration of this feeling.

It was within this context, in 2012, that the first community-based murals were painted in Riachos [26-28]. This was the result of a spontaneous initiative by a group of Santo António neighborhood residents who wanted an original decoration for their streets after having such tremendous success with their sunflowers in vase decorations in the 2008 edition. Thus, the residents of this neighborhood came up with the idea of painting evocative scenes of Riachos traditions on the local walls, in collaboration with an association of local amateur artists and craftsmen, from NAR —Núcleo de Artes de Riachos (Riachos Arts Center) which was especially appealing given that many of the NAR painters also lived in the area. This initiative mobilized around 20 painters who produced about 40 murals focused on the Santo António neighborhood.

The artists were free to choose their topics under the auspices of the "ethnography of the place, uses and customs, memories of the past" [29]. They used old photographs of Riachos' settings, personal experiences, images from the Internet, as well as books engravings, as models, they thought were evocative of these "ancient times" [29]. As such, although most murals represent ethnographic scenes, there are also local figures, religious symbols, legends, and customs (Figure 1).

Most participants were only available to work on painting the murals during the evenings after their regular jobs and on weekends. Furthermore, none of them had previous experience in painting murals and very few had any previous technical or artistic training. The time it required to complete the murals, over several weeks, their public exposure, and the blending of personal skills with the criteria for each scene justified collaboration between painters even though each claimed authorship, signing and occasionally dating their murals [29]. It was also noted that several painters produced more than one mural.



Figure 1. Series of murals in Santo António neighborhood, Riachos.



Figure 2. Mural depicting the folk group "Os Camponeses", painted by José Triguinho in 2016, Largo M. S. Serôdio, Riachos.

In 2012, there were no concerns about the murals' long-term viability beyond the Blessing Festival. Before starting to paint, the only endeavor was to clean the walls and conceal minor surface defects.

Four years later, in 2016, Riachos was again hosting the festival, and new murals were then painted although with certain differences from the original context that had inspired the 2012 murals. Given the continued existence and positive reception of the previous murals among both the community and its visitors, there was a strong eagerness to create new murals and broaden the range of Riachos' painted areas. Although only 12 painters were participating this year, the area of intervention in the village was enlarged alongside a better approach to planning and choosing the themes and places to be painted. As a result, 35 new murals were made in central locations, in the most visible public spaces, along the routes leading to the main festival venue, with a special emphasis on the main Riachos' square. More elaborate murals emerged,

both in terms of themes and styles. Several murals were also painted in honor of real people and specific groups, including individual portraits and a large mural depicting the local folk dancing group (Figure 2).

In some instances, the walls were initially painted white with acrylic paint to prepare them for the final work. Preparatory sketches were then drawn onto this base layer or directly onto the concrete surface. Similar to the process used in 2012, the murals were created using acrylic paints applied with brushes, rollers, or sponges. In addition to the new murals, retouches and some repaints were made to 26 already existing murals. These interventions were frequently made by participants other than the original authors. In 2016, more emphasis was placed on mural preservation. Within this scope, the painters took more care in preparing the walls and protecting the final work with varnish [27-29].

In 2020, due to the Covid19 pandemic, the Cattle Blessing Festival did not take place, hence no murals were painted that year. The festival only took place again in 2022. However, organizing the festival this year was a last-minute decision that did not gain community support, since many wanted it to take place in 2023 to coincide with the centennial of the Riachos' parish. This was the reason why NAR did not engage in any new mural painting campaign. As a result, only three new murals were painted in 2022, all of which were the result of private initiatives, one by the author on the façade of her own house and the other two by the same author at the request of the respective residents.

Perceptions of heritage and the temporal dynamics of murals

The incorporation of these murals into the local cultural heritage is a requirement for their inclusion within the scope of public interest and the implementation of preservation plans. The Riachos' murals are widely treasured by the community not just as a visual storehouse of traditions, but also as a catalyst for local identity and an aggregator of the feeling of belonging in public space [26-29]. Several elements have led to this point: their visual impact on the streets, the captivating imagery of their contents, their strategic placement around the village, and the wealth and variety of the figures depicted [29]. Furthermore, through the subjects depicted, the murals reflect the community's self-perception and the image it has built of itself. This characteristic renders these murals highly recognizable, allowing them to be readily used for self-representational purposes.

The process of producing the murals itself played a vital role in fostering a collective sense of belonging. As the murals were created over several weeks, residents took the opportunity for close observation. This scrutiny was not merely passive as they actively engaged with the painters, making suggestions, comments, and requests. These collaborative interactions cultivated the sense of collective authorship [27, 29].

The community's pride in the murals and their recognition as cultural treasures stems from the fact that Riachos has no other significant built heritage [26]. As such, the murals have played an important part in filling the gap in the local community's heritage, bringing memories of the rural past to the streets and serving as indisputable symbols of this identity that still resonates strongly inside this location.

Regardless, a 2020 survey of local people reported that many residents would agree to the removal of a mural under certain circumstances [26]. According to 46 % of respondents, a mural's poor state of conservation is a valid justification to remove it. This position is of particular relevance given that a significant proportion of these murals present conservation problems due to the prevailing environmental conditions [27] (Figure 3). However, of the 12 murals lost since 2012, only one was destroyed due to its poor state of conservation and, even in this particular case, a new one was painted in its place, by another author, although maintaining the same theme (Figure 4).



Figure 3. Mural painted in 2012, in extremely deteriorated condition and at risk of total loss, due to the detachment of the paint layer.



Figure 4. Example of a disappeared mural, replaced by another in the same location: *a)* The original mural, painted in 2012 by Quinita and C. Lopes (was in very poor condition because it had been painted over a lime-washed wall with a loss of cohesion in the underlying layers); *b)* mural painted in 2016 by Z. M. and C. Lopes over the previous one, with the same theme.

In cases of murals deteriorating, the most common option has been to repaint or retouch the affected murals. As mentioned above, this approach was applied to 26 murals in 2016 and only one in 2022. Retouching and repainting, which are not necessarily done by the original author, have altered the colors and added new features to the composition (Figure 5). These interventions were, in most cases, carried out with the authorization of the authors, which means that these murals now have multiple authorships (signatures) and dates (Figure 6). Consent from the authors seems to be the key to this process. According to the authors consulted, if future conservation and restoration interventions are carried out without the artists' involvement or approval, they retain the right to express their concerns about prospective changes to their murals and the removal of their signatures [29]. While repainting has become a widely practiced and generally accepted procedure, some painters expressed reservations regarding its aesthetic results. José Triguinho stated: "I'm not sure if completely repainted murals look good. They never look the same as the original. I was told that other people could retouch my murals but I think it's worse. I think it's better if it just disappears!" [30].

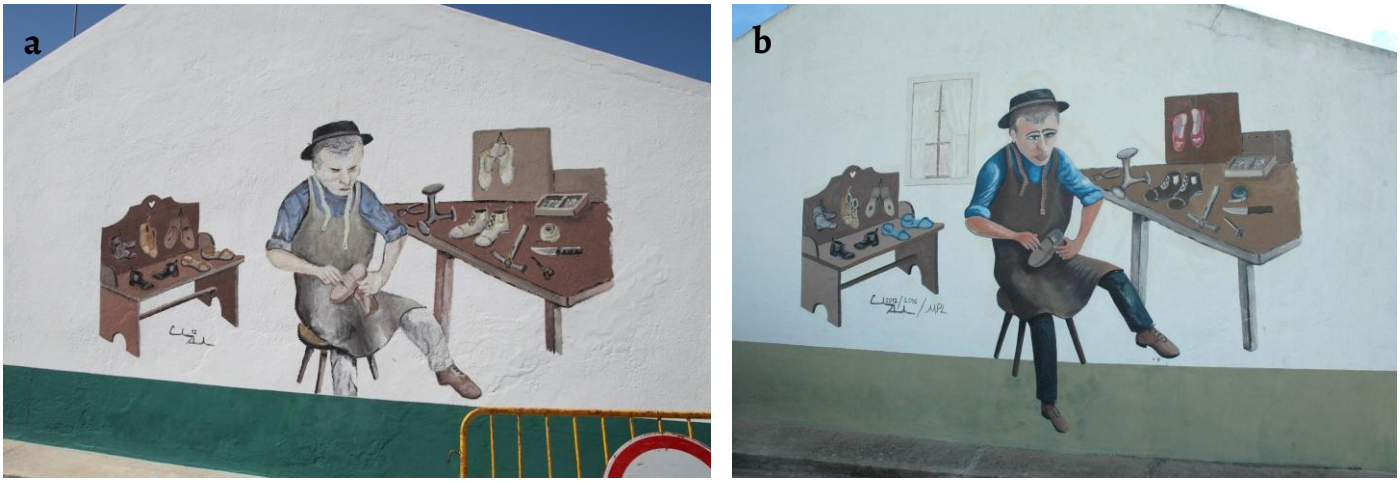


Figure 5. An example of the changes introduced in the murals composition over time: *a)* Original mural painted in 2012; *b)* Mural in 2016: new elements were added, and the colors were "revived".

On the other hand, the 2020 survey showed that 44 % of the respondents agreed with destroying murals whenever the owners of the wall requested it [26]. This means that according to almost half the Riachos' population, the owner of the architectural structure hosting the mural holds the authority to determine its fate. However, destroying the mural without any formal communication or explanation to the authors does not seem to gain acceptance. For example, in Ana Isabel Moreira's mural "Fonte da Barreta" [Barreta Fountain], which was painted in 2012 (Figure 7) and was soon destroyed by the wall's owner for reportedly "not liking the painting", the author expresses her outrage as follows:

> *The owner of the house authorized the painting on his wall, the director of NAR invited me and I accepted. I am the painter! I have the right to my work!* [...] *I never saw the owner, I don't know him and he didn't deign to speak to me or watch while I was painting! It was disrespectful. He destroyed the mural, without my knowledge and any explanation. NAR didn't inform me either*. [31]



Figure 6. An example of a mural with multiple signatures and dates.



Figure 7. Mural "Fonte da Barreta", replaced by another in the same location: a) mural painted in 2012 by Ana Isabel Moreira; b) mural painted by a different artist, over the previous one.

Another distinct situation was that of the mural entitled "A pastora" [The shepherdess], painted on the side wall of a house in 2012 and destroyed shortly afterwards (Figure 8). According to Pereira Jorge, the NAR president at that time, a few months after the painting was made, problems with water infiltrations were detected. For that reason, the outer wall plaster had to be completely removed for the application of a new coating and, consequently, the mural was destroyed. In this case, the authors were previously informed and understood the circumstances.



Figure 8. Mural "A Pastora" (on the left) destroyed during the building's repair works to address water infiltrations.



Figure 9. Murals painted in 2012, dedicated to the bread-making cycle. This collection originally consisted of eight murals. Five of them were destroyed to make way for a new residence.

Most murals are located on the walls of private buildings and are therefore subject to the discretion of the owners. Five murals were destroyed because the walls on which they were located were demolished for the construction of new houses (Figure 9). Such a situation seems to gain acceptance in the community, which generally considers the property owner's desire should always prevail [26, 28]. This rationale implies that the discontent of the authors of damaged murals derives from the failure of not being personally informed about the destruction [27].

There seems to be a collective local community awareness about the perishable nature of murals. Despite the application of a layer of varnish to the 2016 murals, to enhance their life span, as previously mentioned, there is an implicit acknowledgment that murals will not endure indefinitely. However, as regards the finitude of the murals, there are ambiguous feelings among their authors. Dadinha, an author of several murals in Riachos, highlights that even during their execution, she and other painters experienced apprehension about the potential disappearance of their work, given the immense effort invested in their creation [30]. Valter Reis holds a contrasting viewpoint and appears to be resigned to the eventual disappearance of his murals: "I know that murals have been varnished, which helps to preserve the work I've done. However, I don't know how much longer it will last. Everything that stands will eventually fall. It's not that it makes me uncomfortable. It's part of the cycle of beginnings and endings, and that's what life teaches us to accept." [30].

Preserving the Riachos murals: exploring critical considerations

This case study provided valuable insights that enabled the engagement in reflections aimed at establishing optimal practices and policies for the preservation of the Riachos murals. We gained a better grasp of the problems and opportunities involved in their long-term preservation after thoroughly investigating the social environment in which they were

produced and to which they belong. The summarized outcomes of these critical reflections are presented below.

Murals are responsive to the dynamic nature of their social context

Timothy Drescher referenced how all community murals are primarily social [17]. Therefore, all preservation decisions must be considered within the dynamic social context in which they are situated. A community is a living, constantly changing entity. Small communities, such as Riachos, can undergo rapid modifications as a result of local events, changing dynamics among members, political movements, economic developments, cultural influences, or even individual choices. As a result, the community's fabric may be rewoven, relationships and power structures may shift, and the group's identity may be redefined.

Furthermore, the murals' cultural significance is not inherent in the murals themselves; rather, it is conferred upon them by all those who hold an interest in them, particularly the local community from which they came [32]. Embedded within the community, the murals are intricately intertwined with the ongoing social processes. Consequently, the community's perception of the murals and the values attributed to them are subject to influence by these evolving circumstances, rendering them susceptible to change over time [15, 33]. Murals that are popular today may no longer be so tomorrow.

Not all murals can be preserved

As mentioned above, the ephemeral nature of murals is generally accepted by the community as does the idea of destroying the mural "whenever necessary". As David Lowenthal stated, we have to accept that destruction, in the context of cultural heritage, is not a practice necessarily to be condemned but rather deeply rooted in human nature and society, constituting part of economic and creative life [34]. In the case of Riachos, as stated, it is not the act of destruction itself that is criticized but rather the absence of transparency and dialogue with the mural's authors. The artists express their frustration not because their murals were destroyed *per se*, but because they were unaware of the damage and were excluded from the decision-making process. The murals' placement and ownership of the architectural structure they adorn are critical aspects. Murals regularly clash with private interests, and it may not always be feasible to reconcile all parties interests.

On the other hand, it became evident that for the local population, and particularly for the authors themselves, destruction is viewed as a dynamic process. Existing murals are sometimes eliminated to give place for the creation of new ones on the same site. The constant process of creation and destruction inherent in the development of these community murals is seen as an essential part of their unique nature. Consequently, rather than dismissing, discouraging, or condemning it, it should be recognized and cherished.

Clear and unanimous leadership must be provided

Contrary to expectations, there was a marked shift from the tradition of regularly creating new murals and conservation through the retouching and repainting of those decaying in the meantime during the last Cattle Blessing Festival, in 2022. As was noted, only three new murals were created last year with just one retouched. When asked, at a meeting in May 2023 at the Agricultural Museum of Riachos, why they had not created new murals and attempted to solve any conservation issues in the existing murals on the occasion of the Festival, the painters unanimously replied: "because nobody called us".

This demonstrates the potential consequences of a lack of leadership in the process, which can swiftly jeopardize the entire dynamic of creation and preservation that was previously established. Therefore, clear and unanimous leadership must be provided and acknowledged by all those involved. Until 2022, this function belonged to NAR, which may keep it or pass it on to the Agricultural Museum, a regional institution that plays an important role in bringing the local community together [24, 35]. This institution, as a community museum, could assume the

role of managing this heritage. It would be responsible for cataloguing the murals, conducting ongoing monitoring of their conservation status, and leading the efforts to preserve the existing murals.

However, as previously stated, as there is a strong feeling of collective authorship over decision-making regarding the future of the murals, this should be a responsibility shared between the artists, owners, residents, and policy-makers. As such, the museum would need to ensure that all the different voices involved are heard when making decisions.

It is not possible to establish universal criteria for decision-making

Given the multiplicity of factors involved and the dynamic nature of the contexts surrounding murals, it is simply not possible to establish global criteria for conservation. Conserving community murals involves complex processes and it is therefore impossible to establish principles that can be universally applied to all cases [17]. Deciding which murals should be preserved, which changes are or are not acceptable, and who can restore each mural are all decisions that have to be taken continuously and for which even guidelines are difficult to establish precisely because community murals represent one facet of ongoing social processes [17].

Today's decisions are necessarily influenced by the dominant perspective of the present and, as a result, are always open to debate in the future, with decision criteria evolving at any time. This dynamic nature of the conservation decision-making process can be viewed as an intrinsic dimension of this cultural heritage.

Furthermore, no preservation decision will ever be impartial or neutral [32, 34]. Recognizing this fact is a key point for fostering transparency and critical engagement with community murals. This encourages the community to acknowledge diverse perspectives, address ethical issues, and engage in a broader discourse to ensure that the preservation policies reflect a broader spectrum of voices.

In this context, thorough documentation is crucial. As part of a master's degree project in Museology at Nova University Lisbon (UNL), conducted in 2022, a proposal was developed for the documentation of these murals [36]. This includes, among other aspects, recording each author's and owner's perspectives on ownership and preservation. Understanding how each one envisions the conservation criteria and the boundaries they establish for their alteration or destruction is essential for informed decision-making.

Ensuring the long-term viability of mural preservation is imperative

Without regular monitoring of the conservation state and treatment, the murals will continuously deteriorate. As such, the murals can become a burden rather than a source of pride, degrading the aesthetic appearance of the streets and becoming *heritas damnosa*, as the classical Romans described it [34]. However, preserving existing murals (in addition to creating new ones) requires material resources that are scarce or even nonexistent in a small community like Riachos.

Thus, obtaining funds from local entities becomes critical, with the municipality playing a particularly important role. Given its responsibility for safeguarding and upholding significant works even if not directly involved in their development, the municipality's jurisdiction extends to providing financial support, as well as material and technical help [17].

On the other hand, the long-term viability of any project aimed at preserving the Riachos murals depends on two other crucial factors. The first is the ability to act outside of the Cattle Blessing Festival which takes place once every four years. Mural conservation requires constant monitoring of their ongoing state as well as continuing decision-making. This is only conceivable if the Riachos' community murals project is viewed as a continuous project. Secondly, it is fundamental that partnerships are established with schools, museums, and other cultural institutions to create a support network that guarantees the continuity and preservation of the Riachos' murals.

Engaging with the academic community is crucial for providing informed and enlightened contributions. Between 2021 and 2023, a research project was developed within Techn&Art, a

research center at the Polytechnic Institute of Tomar (IPT), aimed at studying these murals, documenting them, and reflecting on possible preservation approaches with the involved community [37]. This project, titled "MurArte - Documentation of the Riachos Murals for Sustainable Preservation," was carried out in collaboration with various local partners, including the Agricultural Museum and NAR, which was essential for ensuring the broad participation of all stakeholders [37].

Although this project has been completed, collaboration with IPT and other educational institutions remains ongoing and highly desired. For example, a current master's research project in museology at UNL is developing a protocol proposal for the regular monitoring of the murals' conditions. This document is expected to provide precise guidelines on who should conduct this monitoring, how frequently it should be done, and the methods to be followed. Additionally, a guide for the creation of new murals is being prepared. This manual will include a set of guidelines for selecting and preparing supports, choosing painting materials, and applying preventive measures to ensure their long-term preservation. A very close collaboration with the Laboratory of Conservation and Restoration at IPT is also anticipated to provide the necessary technical support.

Conclusions

The murals play a fundamental role in the community of Riachos, serving as both visual features and identity markers. Considered cultural heritage, their permanence is contingent upon the collective will of the community that creates, repaints, replaces, or destroys them. As such, this case study sheds light on the need to move away from traditional preservation models and embrace innovative approaches to safeguarding what can be understood as cultural heritage.

This study reports that the long-established practice of conservation, driven by a desire for absolute permanence and the preservation of all material traces, cannot be applied in situations like these. The impracticality of maintaining everything is obvious. This not only demands resources beyond the community's means but also contradicts the inherent dynamics. The preservation of community-based murals, as observed, relies on the community's capacity to perpetuate the cycle of creation, modification, and removal, where new murals emerge, those existing are maintained and/or altered while others are subject to elimination.

Community murals are a collaborative endeavor, so residents must keep the cycle going by attracting new participants and fostering partnerships that can provide resources and support for the project. Although decision-making emerges from within the community, the successful preservation of these murals as cultural heritage depends on clear and well-established leadership. Conservators can contribute to this process by offering their expertise and knowledge. However, in this case, they should reach beyond the material aspects and consider the broader context, recognizing the immaterial dimension of the murals, their uniqueness, and their significance to the community. This means recognizing that conservators are not the sole authorities but rather act as facilitators and collaborators in the preservation process.

The critical reflection enabled by this case study, however, has some limitations. The first is that this is a relatively recent case (2012-2022), meaning that sufficient time has not yet passed to allow for the consolidation of conclusions that only time and social dynamics can provide.

Secondly, it would be beneficial to place this case within a broader context by comparing it with other similar instances of community murals or urban art, which are increasingly emerging in various cities across Portugal. Such a comparative analysis could help identify commonalities and differences in practices and attitudes. This approach would expand our understanding of ethically sustainable policies and practices for preserving this type of heritage.

Given these considerations, this study provides a starting point for a critical examination of the methods and policies governing the preservation of a type of legacy with distinct

characteristics. The cultural context of origin, the expectations generated within the community that created and holds it, and its high level of ephemerality and associated intangible values all contribute to its uniqueness. These are issues that contemporary conservation and restoration practices must be prepared to address adeptly.

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