

Ecomuseums in Spain: an analysis of their characteristics and typologies

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Spain has adopted the tenets of New Museology and ecomuseums. Some of its professional museologists were founding members of the International Movement for a New Museology (MINOM), and created ecomuseum experiences including Maestrazgo and Allariz. The evolution of the ecomuseum in Spain has not, however, been studied in depth. Consequently, it remains mostly unknown what is the present situation of ecomuseums in Spain, when they were originally founded and what their key characteristics are. This article presents a study of over 100 ecomuseums that have been created in Spain, since the 1980s to the present time.

Key words: Ecomuseums, Spain, New Museology, institutional ecomuseum, community ecomuseum, community development

Introduction

Conventional museums have often been seen as commercial enterprises, in which the primary objective has drifted between leisure, revenue and different aspects of social, cultural and economic benefit. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, emerging voices of defiance sought to change these approaches. Heritage and museum specialists from different countries believed that museums should be at the service of the communities in which they were located, as an instrument that would go beyond beyond the aesthetic barriers of the object and the physical frontiers of the institution, capable of resolving the needs and problems of communities.¹

The community museological experiences that began to emerge in different countries, such as Mexico, USA, Niger, France and Canada, led to changes in teaching² and different strategies for communicating heritage (Freeman Tilden, 1957). These sought new forms of understanding and interacting with the natural, cultural and human environment, coming together in a common line of thinking on a global level called New Museology. Its approaches were the consequence of over a century of museological practice³ and of a particular moment of society in those decades. There was a sensitivity towards the ecological and social problems

¹ VARINE-BOHAN, Hugues de. Politiques muséales et stratégies de développement local et national. De l'exhibitionnisme à la communicationsociale, en *Actas del IV Taller Internacional del Movimiento para la Nueva Museología (MINOM)*. Molinos, Aragón (España), documento SIGNUD, cota, 1987, doc. 1987-003-03, p. 7.

² FREIRE, Paulo. *La educación como práctica de la libertad*, Madrid : Siglo XXI., 2009.

³ SOLA, Tomislav. ¿Será el museo capaz de defenderse? Una mirada sobre la inspiración del ecomuseo, en *Mus-a*, Revista de los Museos de Andalucía, año 5 n° 8, julio. In: *Museos locales: naturaleza y perspectivas*, Sevilla : Consejería de Cultura de la Junta de Andalucía. Dirección General de Museos, 2007, p. 31.

in a world with extreme socio-economic differences between countries which were, at the same time, in a relentless process of globalisation.

One of the first typologies to emerge from the New Museology was the ‘ecomuseum’, which would become one of the flagships of this branch of museology. The ecomuseum originated in France and was adapted to the particular needs of a given period. Although similar to other community typologies (community museum, neighbourhood museum), this typology expanded rapidly to the rest of the countries in the world and continues to grow today.

In Spain in the seventies and eighties, with the arrival of democracy and its progressive immersion in globalisation, the ideas of the New Museology began to gain prominence, both locally and in the recently created Autonomous Regions. However, despite claiming to be based on the ideas of the New Museology, not all of these experiences correspond to community initiatives as understood within New Museology. The proliferation of ecomuseums in Spain reflects this situation; although there are 84 institutions with this name active in Spain, only a small number fulfil the parameters of ecomuseums, particularly in terms of community management and participation.

The work presented here studies the phenomenon of ecomuseums in Spain. It analyzes the different types of ecomuseums that exist in the country, their characteristics, and fundamentally, which of them should be considered community ecomuseums by the standard of New Museology.

1. Ecomuseum; More than a word

Within what Peter van Mensch⁴ called ‘the second museological revolution’, museologists and other social scientists from the world were quite sure that the museum as we knew it had to change. Museums were in an identity crisis.⁵ Reflections on the state of museums were filled with inconvenient and even hurtful adjectives: the institutionalised museum was argued to be a useless museum⁶, unnecessary⁷, dangerous⁸, an institution for acculturation⁹, a graveyard¹⁰,

⁴ MENSCH, Peter. Magpies on Mount Helicon? In: *ICOFOM Study Series*, 1996, n° 25, pp. 133-138.

⁵ VARINE-BOHAN, Hugues de. Le musée au service de l’homme et du développement, In: DESVALLÉES, André – BARRY, Marie-Odile – WASSERMAN, Françoise (eds). *Vagues: une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie*. Mâcon: Editions W. vol. 1, 1992, pp. 49-68. The original text was published in 1969; VARINE-BOHAN, H., ref. 1, pp. 65-73; CAMERON, Duncan F. Le musée, un temple ou un forum, In: DESVALLÉES, André – BARRY, Marie-Odile – WASSERMAN, Françoise (eds). *Vagues: une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie*. Mâcon: Editions W. vol. 1, 1992, pp. 259-269. The original text was published in 1971; KINARD, John. Intermédiaries entre musée et communauté, In: DESVALLÉES, André – BARRY, Marie-Odile – WASSERMAN, Françoise (eds). *Vagues: une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie*. Mâcon: Editions W. vol. 1, 1992, pp. 99-108. The original text was published in 1971; ADOTÉVI, Stanislas. Le musée inversion de la vie (Le musée dans les systèmes éducatifs et culturels contemporains). In: DESVALLÉES, André – BARRY, Marie-Odile – WASSERMAN, Françoise (eds). *Vagues: une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie*. Mâcon: Editions W. vol. 1, 1992, pp. 119-138. The original text was published in 1971.

⁶ VARINE-BOHAN, ref. 1, pp. 65-73.

⁷ HUDSON, Kenneth. Un museo innecesario. In: *Museum*, n° 162 (vol. xli, n° 2), 1989, pp. 114-116.

⁸ LINDQVIST, Svante. Le musée dangereux. In: DESVALLÉES, André – BARRY, Marie-Odile – WASSERMAN, Françoise (eds). *Vagues: une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie*. Mâcon: Editions W., vol. 2, 1994, pp. 220-223. The original text was published in 1987.

⁹ CAMERON, Duncan F. Un point de vue: le musée considéré comme système de communication et les implications de ce système dans les programmes éducatifs muséaux. DESVALLÉES – BARRY – WASSERMAN, ref. 5, pp. 77-98. The original text was published in 1968.

¹⁰ ADOTÉVI, ref. 5, pp. 119-138.

spaces for the transmission of the cultural imperialism of States.¹¹ This criticism went beyond the characteristics of the museum to its very essence or *raison d'être*.¹²

These criticisms called for a route where museums would be a key piece in the processes of social, cultural and economic development, and the transformation of the community. At the same time, the museum should be constituted as a space for reflection and dialogue to provide an answer to the needs and problems of its environment, such as protection of the natural environment and cultural heritage, social problems (drug addiction, crime, racism and so forth), and problems deriving from property speculation, and economic or demographic decline.¹³ To achieve this, the museum had to be understood and structured as something organic and living, where the culture of a community could be determined by the geographic limits that the community occupies, and within which both culture and community coexist.¹⁴

Ecomuseums were one of the typologies that proposed the idea of the *museum with a difference*. For François Hubert,¹⁵ the emergence of ecomuseums in the France of the 1960s was connected to specific political and social conditions, marked by an exodus and a fall in the standard of living, which Hubert called 'the disinherited regions'. This decade would end with a progressive decentralisation of state administration, with the introduction in 1963 of the DATAR¹⁶ and in 1964 the National Register of Cultural Sites and Monuments.

Numerous rural areas benefited from some of these initiatives, reinforced between 1963 and 1968 when the French state established two different models of protecting natural and cultural heritage: national parks and regional parks.¹⁷ While the former were installed in areas where human action was minimal and their objectives were the preservation, research and fostering of ecotourism, the latter were implemented in areas where there were already stable settlements of population and their primary objective was to play a role of lasting development. The creation of these regional parks was the ideal panorama for Georges Henri Rivière to adapt the Scandinavian model of open air museums to the French context. The idea was not to move buildings to an artificially created location, but to reconstruct the spaces as they really were.¹⁸ Through ecomuseums, communities began to play a major role in the recovery of their own culture.

The formal concept would not come into being until 1971, by the hand of Hugues de Varine-Bohan on the occasion of the 9th General Conference of the ICOM in Paris and Grenoble. In this same year, Marcel Évrard proposed that de Varine-Bohan should work on a museum in the

¹¹ NICOLAS, Alain. L'avenir du musée, In: NICOLAS, Alain. (ed.). *Nouvelles Muséologies. Muséologie Nouvelle et expérimentation sociale*, Marseille : M.N.E.S., 1985, pp. 167-185.

¹² DIAZ BALERDI, Ignacio. ¿Qué fue de la nueva museología? El caso de Quebec, en *Artígrama*, n° 17, 2002, pp. 493-516.

¹³ HAUENSCHILD, Andrea. *Claims and Reality of New Museology: Case Studies in Canada, the United States and Mexico*, Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies, 1988. <http://museumstudies.si.edu/claims2000.htm>, (consultado el 26 de septiembre de 2009).

¹⁴ LÉVI-STRAUSS, Claude. *La Antropología ante los problemas del mundo moderno*, Barcelona : Ediciones RBA, 2012, p. 109.

¹⁵ HUBERT, François. Historique des écomusées, en: *La muséologie selon Georges Henri Rivière*. Paris: Dunot, 1989, pp. 195-206.

¹⁶ Délégation Interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale (DATAR).

¹⁷ HUBERT, ref. 15, p. 195.

¹⁸ HUBERT, François. Los ecomuseos de Francia: contradicciones y extravíos. In: *Museum*, n° 148 (vol. xxxvii, n° 4), 1985, pp. 186; INIESTA GONZÁLEZ, Montserrat. Museos locales, patrimonios globales, en VV. AA.: *Patrimonio Etnológico. Nuevas perspectivas de estudio*, Granada, Cuadernos del Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico, Consejería de Cultura de la Junta de Andalucía, 1999, p. 114.

community of Creusot. The main premise was to create a new type of museum, far from the ‘conventional’ museum, which could be adapted to the local reality. Thus the ecomuseological experience of Creusot – Montceau-Les-Mines was born¹⁹. The main characteristic of the project was that the new institution should emanate from the community and its population, the management of which would be in its hands by virtue of work committees (Users, Scientific and Technical and Management), comprising members of the community and specialists, who would undertake to plan, research and preserve the heritage, as well as manage the museum itself. A new phase was being initiated for ecomuseums, namely the community phase.²⁰

Hugues de Varine-Bohan²¹ was aware that ultimately the experience had been a turning point in the concept of museum²² for museology and epistemology. At this stage of creation and consolidation, two tendencies can be seen. First, ecomuseums associated with the environment (natural and cultural) and registered under natural parks. This was a model that adapted well to natural spaces in which it was possible to develop a tourist activity while, at the same time, educating visitors and local people about the importance of the preservation of the environment and the recovery of the cultural heritage of the localities. Second, there were the ecomuseums that took on the Creusot model. Their essence derived from being an instrument of community development, ongoing evolution and a certain rejection of normalisation (institutionalisation). Both models were based on similar technical principles, but whereas the former was an evolution of conventional museums, the latter was a new type of museum closer to social action.²³

From 1980, the third generation of ecomuseums was initiated, with numerous ‘small ecomuseums’ emerging throughout the French territory. These adopted, in theory, the precepts of ecomuseums (community), but in practice, they were not sustainable.²⁴ Many of them based their programmes on an ethnographic mythification of the past and the valorisation of the territory as landscape within an ecological and environmental awareness-building. The concept became fashionable, and the division between natural park ecomuseums and community ecomuseums defined by their relationship with the local community and their independence and/or self-management.²⁵

Between these second and third generations, ecomuseums began to expand in numerous countries, which saw in them an ideal formula to apply to their particular cultural and socio-

¹⁹ Recently, Hugues de Varine published the history of the Creusot ecomuseum from its beginning to the present in *Mesaventures à l'écomusée de la Communautéurbaine Le Creusot-Montceau 1971-2014* (second edition, 2016).

²⁰ HUBERT, ref. 18, pp. 186-187.

²¹ VARINE-BOHAN, Hugues de. L'avenir des musées des communautés locales. Conferencia impartida el 15 de octubre en el Universidad d'Utrecht, en Consejo de Europa, informe: *Moderniser la réflexion sur les musées. Les Quatre premières conférences annuelles du Prix européen du musée de l'année*. Strasbourg, 1997, pp. 11-12.

²² Hugues de Varine-Bohan (1993: 11) would acknowledge that the experience of Creusot became a key place for numerous specialists, generating disciples in many countries, as the model of museum proposed meant a research laboratory for the development of both theories and practical actions for the future of museology from the point of view of community action. We must remember that in 1978 he published the first key text to understand the ecomuseums and their methodology: “L'écomusée”, which appeared in *La Gazette*.

²³ VARINE-BOHAN, Hugues de. L'écomusée. In: DESVALLÉES – BARRY – WASSERMAN, ref. 5, pp. 456. The original text was published in 1978; OLCINA, Paulet (1984): *Écomusées: 1971-1984*, Bilan, en SECRETARÍA DE DESARROLLO URBANO Y ECOLOGÍA : Declaración de Oaxtepec, In: *Memoria del Seminario Territorio – Patrimonio – Comunidad (Ecomuseos). El hombre y su entorno*. Oaxtepec, Morelos, documento SIGNUD, cota, doc. 1984-033-04, 1984, pp. 54-55.

²⁴ HUBERT, ref. 18, p. 187.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 188.

economic conditions.²⁶ The French-speaking part of Canada was one of the places where ecomuseums first took root. At the end of the 1970s, the ecomuseum experience of Haute-Beauce began, with Pierre Mayrand as the main promoter.²⁷ After this experience, Fier-Monde, Valle de La Rouge and Deux Rives followed suit.²⁸ In Portugal, after the revolution of 25th April 1974, the social and cultural initiatives of a local character created a favourable atmosphere for local museums and ecomuseums to be tools for the self-sufficiency of the municipalities.²⁹ Scandinavian countries like Sweden and Norway began calling numerous open air museums 'ecomuseums', thanks to the territorial affinity, identity, tourism potential and the participative work methodology.³⁰ In 1985 Oumar Konaré presented the idea of creating ecomuseums for the cultural and social development of the Sahel.³¹ From very early on in Brazil, work was begun with methodologies of social action and community participation, as other countries of North and South America had done with neighbourhood museums or community museums. This encouraged the development of a museology of a social nature, useful for the growing population living in shantytowns (*favelas*), with few socio-economic resources and many pressing needs.³²

At the end of the 1970s in Europe, there were no more than 20 initiatives that were called ecomuseums but in the 1980s, France alone had over 50 ecomuseums, many of which, admittedly, were local or open air museums that had adopted the name. From the 1990s to the end of the 20th Century, the number exceed 300 throughout the world, located primarily in France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Canada.³³ This number continues to grow and expand, and there are records of ecomuseum initiatives in Australia, Mongolia, Japan, China, South Korea, and Turkey. In Japan, some 100 institutions³⁴ have been set up, there are over 60 in France, in Italy almost 200³⁵ and in Spain over 70 active ecomuseums are on record.

²⁶ DUCLOS, Jean Claude. L'écomusée. Histoire et actualité, en Curso sobre Museos de Ciencia y Técnica, Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo, documento SIGNUD, cota, doc. 1990-006-04, 1990, pp. 8-9.

²⁷ MAYRAND, Pierre. *Haute-Beauce. Psychosociologie d'un écomusée*, Cadernos de Sociomuseologia, n° 22, Lisboa : Centro de Estudos de Sociologia, Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias, 2004.

²⁸ RIVARD, René. Los ecomuseos de Quebec, en *Museum*, n° 148 (vol. xxxvii, n° 4), 1985, pp. 203-205.

²⁹ NABAIS, Antonio. El Desarrollo de los ecomuseos en Portugal, en *Museum*, n° 148 (vol. xxxvii, n° 4), 1985, pp. 211.

³⁰ MAURE, Marc. Ecomuseums: a mirror, a window, or a show-case?, in *Communication and Exploration*. Guiyang (China), Actas del foro *Communication and Exploration*. Foro Internacional de Ecomuseos celebrado en Guiyang (China) del 1 al 4 de junio de 2005, 2006, pp. 69-72. This text was published also in *ICOFOM Study Series*, n° 35, 2006, pp. 362-364.

³¹ KONARÉ, Oumar. Un programa de ecomuseos para el Sahel, en *Museum*, n° 148 (vol. xxxvii, n° 4), 1985, pp. 234-235.

³² CAMARGO E ALMEIDA, Fernanda de. San Cristóbal: el ecomuseo de un barrio, en *Museum*, n° 148 (vol. xxxvii, n° 4), 1985, pp. 236.

³³ DAVIS, Peter. *Ecomuseums, a sense of place*, London & New York : Leicester University Press, 1999; MAGGI, Maurizio – FALLETI, Vittorio. *Gli ecomusei. Cosa sono, cosa potrebbero diventare*, in Instituto Ricerche Economico-Sociali del Piemonte (Ires) Torino, 2000. www.ecomusei.net/index.php/maggi, (consultado el 9 de abril de 2008).

³⁴ NAVAJAS CORRAL, Óscar. Global models for concrete realities, In: *Cadernos de Sociomuseologia*, n° 38, edición especial para la XXII Conferencia General de ICOM, Shanghai, noviembre de 2010, Lisboa: Universidad Lusófona, 2010, pp. 103-132.

³⁵ RIVA, Rafaella. *Il metaprogetto dell'ecomuseo*, Segrate : Collana Studi Progetti, 2008.

2. Ecomuseums and ecomuseology in Spain

In Spain, there is no regulatory or legal figure that brings together all the typologies of museums under New Museology. Even though the typology of ecomuseums has spread markedly throughout the territory, both on a state and regional level, the ecomuseum is not an acknowledged museum typology in Spain (with the exception of the *Manual de Uso Público* ('Manual of Public Use') published by the regional Ministry of the Environment of the Autonomous Community Government of Andalusia). There are, though, other figures of protection that could, to a greater or lesser extent, be seen as substitutes for it, including Cultural Parks, Cultural Landscapes, and Cultural Places of Interest. This has meant that the decision to call an experience 'an ecomuseum' is a mix between those who have opted for applying the name because of theoretical and methodological knowledge of ecomuseology, and those who have adopted it for reasons other than its philosophy.

If we look at the specialist literature, we find numerous authors – María Ángeles Layuno Rosas;³⁶ Luis Alonso Fernández;³⁷ María Bolaños,³⁸ and Josep Ballart,³⁹ etc. – who have used the concept and the word ecomuseum. In most cases, this reflects a given moment in the evolution of museums and museological thinking in Spain, but also possible methodologies of intervention in the territory and heritage management beyond the conventional museum. There are only a few examples of monographs that dedicate a comprehensive and thought-provoking space to this concept.

According to the museum register of the Sub-Directorate General of Spanish State Museums, there are 12 institutions entered under the name of ecomuseum (Table 1)⁴⁰. Going down the administrative and territorial hierarchy, there are 13 institutions in 9 of the 17 Autonomous Communities. Lastly, taking a look at the registers of the different provincial councils, only Catalonia, Valladolid in Castilla León, Albacete in Castilla la Mancha and La Coruña in Galicia record this typology.

³⁶ LAYUNO ROSAS, María Ángeles. *Los nuevos museos en España*, Madrid : Edilupa Ediciones S. L., 2002.

³⁷ ALONSO FERNÁNDEZ, Luis. *Introducción a la nueva museología*, Madrid : Alianza Editorial, 1999; ALONSO FERNÁNDEZ, Luis. *Museología y museografía*, Barcelona : Ediciones del Serbal, 2006.

³⁸ BOLAÑOS, María. *Historia de los Museos en España*, Gijón : Trea, 2008.

³⁹ BALLART, Josep. *Manual de Museos*, Madrid : Editorial Síntesis, 2008.

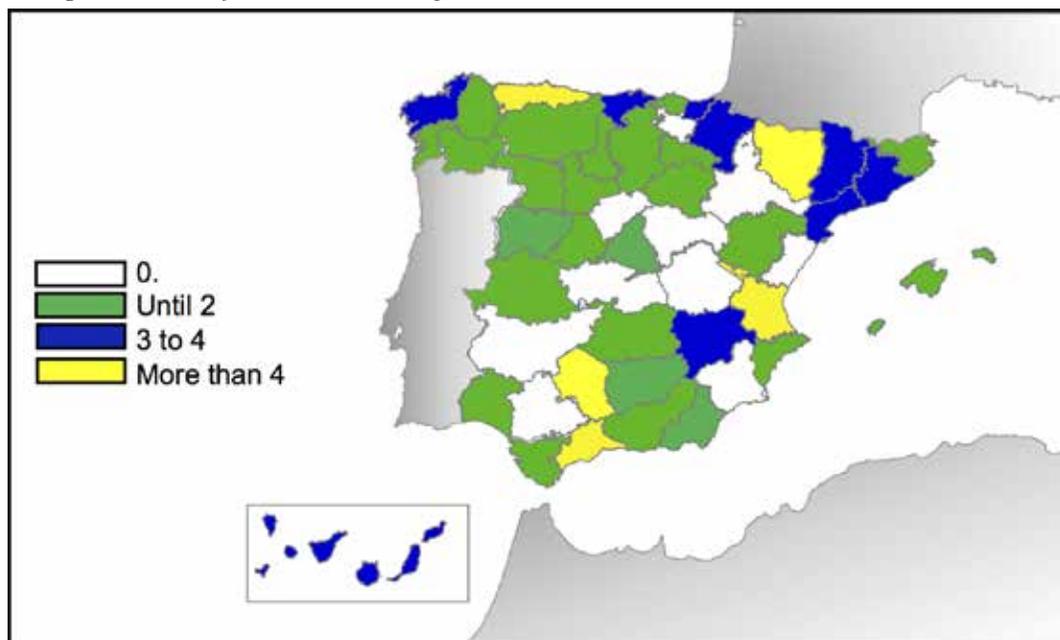
⁴⁰ It is important to point out that we are only referring to the official registers, where different institutions have been listed under this word, and not the methodology or philosophy behind them.

Table 1: *Number of ecomuseums acknowledged by the Spanish State, the Autonomous Communities and the provincial councils*

	NUMBER OF ECOMUSEUMS BY AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES		NUMBER OF ECOMUSEUMS BY PROVINCIAL COUNCILS	
Andalucía	1	Ecomuseo del Río Caicena	0	
Aragón	0		0	
Asturias	1	Ecomuseo de Somiedo	0	
Cantabria	0		0	
Castilla la Mancha	0		1	Ecomuseo de Pinilla
Castilla León	3	Ecomuseo de Muñogalindo, Ecomuseo de Tordehumos, Ecomuseo Molinos de los Ojos	1	Ecomuseo de Tordehumos
Cataluña	2	Ecomuseu de le Valls d'Àneu y Ecomuseo Farinera Castelló d'Empúries	2	Ecomuseu de le Valls d'Àneu y Ecomuseo Farinera Castelló d'Empúries
Extremadura	0		0	
Galicia	0		1	Ecomuseo Forno do Forte
Islas Baleares	1	Ecomuseo Cap Cavalleria	0	
Islas Canarias	2	Ecomuseo de la Alcocgida y Ecomuseo de Guinea	0	
La Rioja	0		0	
Madrid	0		0	
Murcia	0		0	
Navarra	1	Ecomuseo de Zubieta	0	
País Vasco	1	Ecomuseo de la Sal	0	
Valencia	1	Ecomuseo Aras de los Olmos	0	
Total	13		5	
State	12	Ecomuseo de Tordehumos, Ecomuseo Aras de los Olmos, Ecomuseo de Arxeriz, Ecomuseo de la Alcocgida, Ecomuseo de Somiedo, Ecomuseo del Pan, Ecomuseo de Guinea, Ecomuseo de Zubieta, Ecomuseu de les Valls d'Àneu, Ecomuseo Castelló d'Empúries y Ecomuseo del Río Caicena		

Source: prepared by author. Data as of June of 2018

Cartogram 1: *Number of Active Ecomuseums in Spain*



Source: prepared by author. Data as at June of 2018

Table 2: *Ecomuseums in Spain by province*

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES	PROVINCE	ACTIVES	IN PROJECT	CLOSED	TOTAL
Andalucía	Almería	1			22
	Cádiz	2			
	Córdoba	5			
	Granada	2			
	Huelva	1	1		
	Jaén	2	2		
	Málaga	4	2		
	Sevilla				
			17	5	0
Aragón	Huesca	5			7
	Teruel	1			
	Zaragoza		1		
		6	1	0	
Asturias	Asturias	5	2	0	7
Cantabria	Cantabria	3	0	0	3

Castilla La Mancha	Albacete	3			5
	Ciudad Real	1			
	Cuenca		1		
		4	1	0	
Castilla León	Ávila	1			13
	Burgos	1		1	
	León		1		
	Palencia	1			
	Salamanca	1	3		
	Soria	1			
	Valladolid	1			
	Zamora	2			
		8	4	1	
Cataluña	Barcelona	3			12
	Gerona	1			
	Lérida	4			
	Tarragona	3	1		
		11	1	0	
Extremadura	Cáceres	1	0	0	1
Galicia	La Coruña	4		1	8
	Lugo	1			
	Orense	1			
	Pontevedra	1	1		
		7	1	0	
Islas Baleares	Islas Baleares	2	1	0	3
Islas Canarias	Las Palmas	2	2		8
	Santa Cruz de Tenerife	4			
		6	2	0	
La Rioja	La Rioja	1	0	1	2
Madrid	Madrid	1	1	1	3
Navarra	Navarra	2	1	0	3

País Vasco	Guipúzcoa	3			4
	Vizcaya	1			
		4	0	0	
Valencia	Alicante	2			8
	Castellón		1		
	Valencia	4	1		
		6	2	0	
TOTAL		84	22	3	109

Source: prepared by author. Data as at June of 2018

The Spanish ecomuseological panorama is, however, much wider and more complex than it appears in the literature. Since the country's political transition, 109 initiatives have emerged that have decided to use the term ecomuseum. Of these, 84 continue to be active today, 22 have remained at the project stage and 3 are closed down or have changed their name (Table 2). Of the ecomuseums that continue to be active, they are most prevalent in Andalusia, with 22, followed by Castilla y León with 13, Catalonia with 12, and Valencia, Canary Islands and Galicia with 8 each. Conversely, Extremadura has only 1 and Murcia, at the present, has no record of an ecomuseum in operation or at a project stage.

From the above, we can verify that the ecomuseum has had an impact on the Spanish museological panorama, which continues to evolve today. That said, this does not necessarily mean that the ecomuseums that have emerged in Spanish territory correspond to the precise philosophy of those put forward by the New Museology.

2.1. Origin of ecomuseums in Spain

The seeds of the ecomuseums that were introduced into numerous countries came from open air museums, as in France and the Nordic countries or, indirectly, in Japan.⁴¹ But in Spain, as in Italy and Portugal, this was not the case.⁴² One reason lies in the development of tourist activities focused on the sun and beach that, to a certain extent, displaced policies more concerned with the recovery of a folkloric and ethnographic heritage that could contribute to the construction of a cultural identity.

One of the spaces that gave rise to ecomuseums were natural parks, as in the French case. In Spain, Regional Natural Parks provided the flexibility necessary to generate policies that would link the protection of nature and the recovery and valorisation of cultural heritage with the economic development of the territory and the local communities. What did not

⁴¹ NAVAJAS, ref. 34, pp. 103-132.

⁴² Authors such as Luis Alonso Fernández (1988: 215-217) have mentioned open air museums but their descriptions, more than centring on a prior manifestation of ecomuseums, focussed on open air sculpture museums, which did develop in Spain (Lorente, 2012). We would, however, mention that there were – occasional – open air initiatives that did undergo a process of heritage recovery, the creation and the valorisation of open air disperse heritage which subsequently became an ecomuseum, such as the municipality of Suera (Castellón), ecomuseums such as the Pizarra (Madrid), that of Somiedo (Asturias) and the losAperosAgrícolas de Esplús (Huesca) that emerged with similar approaches to those of an open air museum.

spread, however, was how this territorial revitalisation was to be understood. Catalonia has examples of a global policy focused on the interconnection between territory, heritage and community, as for instance, the Ecomuseo of els Ports or the Ecomuseo FarineraCastelló d'Empúries, which is delimited by three natural parks. The Ministry of the Environment of the Regional Government of Andalusia has proposed that ecomuseums like the Molino el Pintao (Huelva) or the Benamahoma (Malaga) should depend on the management of a natural park. The dependence of the Andalusian ecomuseum on the natural park is in contrast to the Catalan case, where the ecomuseum can be a resource of both a population and the park. The Catalan approach can be seen in other territories where ecomuseums have been developed in natural and national parks as another source of attraction and an added value for an ecomuseum project, such as the case of the Ecomuseo de Cabañeros (Burgos).

The origin of ecomuseums in Spain cannot, therefore, be sought in open air museums or in Natural Parks even though both have had their influence. Rather, their origin lies in the evolution of local museums and territorial museums marked, on occasion, by micro-nationalisms, decentralisation and opposition to an ever more intense globalisation. These initiatives derive from the 'need' for a community recognition that would embrace identity, heritage and territory.

In considering this need, it is interesting to dwell on the years during which the different ecomuseums were being created (Table 3).⁴³ The data show that up to the 1990s, there were barely 5 ecomuseums in Spain, while from the second half of that decade the numbers increased rapidly. Andalusia and Catalonia were the regions that advanced most in the process, with initiative such as the Bronze Ecomuseum – *Ecomuseo del Bronce* (Jaén), the ecomuseums of les Valls d'Àneu and the Rural Life – *Vida Rural* of Belianes (Lérida), and the Natural Park Ecomuseum of the Delta del Ebro, (Tarragona). Together, these regions have one third of the active museums today. The Basque Country, Aragón and the Canary Islands also began to gain prominence, enjoying major booms between 1995 and 2005. The other regions began to take interest in developing this typology as of 2006, when the pioneer regions reduced their activity. At the present time, Castilla La Mancha, Castilla León, Asturias and Cantabria are the most active regions.

Table 3: *Ecomuseums by date of creation*⁴⁴

AUTONOMUOS COMMUNITIES	1980-1985	1986-1990	1991-1995	1996-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010	2011-2015	TOTAL
Andalucía		1	2	3	4	5	2	17
Aragón				2	2	2		6
Asturias				2		1	2	5
Cantabria			1			2		3
Castilla La Mancha				1		2	1	4
Castilla León				1	2	4	1	8

⁴³ Throughout this analysis, we are going to focus on the ecomuseums that are active at the present time, making specific references as well to those that are not but that contain relevant information for the Spanish panorama of ecomuseums.

⁴⁴ Data of the 72 active ecomuseums are shown, although the actual figure is 73, but the Galician ecomuseum *Terras de Azul Cobalto* has not provided sufficient data.

Cataluña	1	1	3	1	4		1	11
Extremadura						1		1
Galicia				1	2	2		5
Islas Baleares			1					1
Islas Canarias			2	1		1	1	5
La Rioja						1		1
Madrid						1		1
Navarra				1			1	2
País Vasco				3	1			4
Valencia			1	2		3		6
TOTAL	1	2	10	18	15	25	9	80

Source: prepared by author. Data as at June de 2018

One of the reasons for this phenomenon is to be found in the the political transition itself, by which the transformation of the autonomous and territorial policies of the different regions was slow and which, on the legislative front, would be strengthened with the *Ley Reguladora de las Bases del Régimen Local de 1985* (law setting forth the main guidelines for Spanish local government regulations). Another reason is the entry of Spain in the European Union. The time during which spaces that have used the word ecomuseum have emerged, namely from 1996 to 2000, 2001 to 2005 and 2006 to 2010, coincide with the moment of the greatest influx of ERDF funds, particularly with the first LEADER programmes of 1996.

2.2. Typologies of Spanish ecomuseums

Taking into account their evolution at international level as well as specific developments in Spain, there are four basic parameters that define an ecomuseum in Spain: (1) a model generally centred in one headquarters with different antennae distributed throughout the territory; (2) the designation, or self-designation, of ecomuseum; (3) the objective giving rise to the initiative and the level of community participation, and (4) the preponderance of a building as the central axis of the ecomuseum's activity.

Most ecomuseums have a model centralised in a headquarters, which is the key – and in some cases, only -- reception place for visitors and tourist information, even though, in theory and international practice, the tendency has been towards an ecomuseum with a decentralised network.⁴⁵

With respect to the name of ecomuseum, some initiatives have used it to comply with the parameters of a community ecomuseology, but at the same time, for reasons other than the theory and philosophy of ecomuseums. Some opted for adhering to the prefix *eco* in an ecological sense, others use it for reasons of differentiation from an offer of museology and heritage of similar characteristics,⁴⁶ and finally, some use the term to reflect the contents housed

⁴⁵ OHARA, Kazuoki. La imagen de Ecomuseo en Japón. In: *Amigos del Pacífico*, vol. 25nº 12, 1998, pp. 26-27; DAVIS, ref. 33; CORSANE, Gerard. From outreach to inreach: how ecomuseum principles encourage community participation in museum processes, in Foro Internacional de Ecomuseos celebrated in Guiyang (China), del 1 al 4 de junio de 2005, *Communication and Exploration*, Guiyang (China), 2006, pp. 109-124.

⁴⁶ Both in the first case and the second, many ecomuseums have said that the use of the word ecomuseum or the prefix *eco* is a tourist attraction and image for future visitors.

in the ecomuseum and to avoid categorizing the museum within a conventional concept.

These foregoing aspects are, in turn, closely connected to the third characteristic: the initiative and processes of community participation. Very few ecomuseums have had processes of community action from their genesis in a bottom-up sense; in most cases, decision making has come from the top down.

This typology permits us to further divide the Spanish experience into two categories: those that tend towards the philosophy of the New Museology and those that have opted for this model as a form of diversification of an offer (cultural and tourist) that is more and more competitive, or to avoid classifying their contents under any other typology. The former category derives from community initiative or community ecomuseum. The latter corresponds to the institutional ecomuseum. In turn, the experience of institutional ecomuseum can be divided into five sub-categories:

1. *Ecomuseum as a territorial museum.* This is conceived as a building that serves as a nucleus from which the different actions emanate, which actions endeavour to unite a territory that has natural, geographical, cultural and historical characteristics in common.
2. *Ecomuseum as an interpretation centre.* Here the most important feature is educational functionality, and is aimed at being a space for reception of visitors and a natural and/or cultural interpretation of a given area.
3. *Ecomuseum as an open air museum.* Unlike conventional open air museums, in the Spanish experiences, the vernacular architecture and the heritage assets are not moved to a new, delimited enclosure, but rather the roads and streets themselves are used to install the different resources or the very architecture is conceived as part of the itinerary.
4. *Ecomuseums as enterprises.* These are initiatives of individuals who have a clear business inclination, always associated with the tourist (accommodation and restaurants) and cultural industry.
5. Lastly, the *ecomuseum as a local ethnographic museum.* This type of initiative assumes the name and the parameters of ecomuseums to extend its field of action to the territory, endeavouring to break the stereotype of a passive museum linked to an enclosed building while at the same time serving to differentiate it from other installations with similar contents.

The general characteristic of institutional ecomuseums is that the political (institutional) decision that creates the project has a marked top-down structure (verticality). The role of specialists predominates (heritage verticality). Creation occurs at a specific, fixed moment (time). Their goals are specific and they depend on the project at hand (mission, vision and objectives). They are usually managed by an administration or an enterprise (dependent) and use volunteers as a form of making up for lack of personnel (institutional volunteering). The different models that are associated with it are some local conventional museums, interpretation centres, territorial museums, and so forth. Lastly, participation works from within outward, which implies a partial vision centred on the building and its collections.

Table 4: *Comparative characteristics of Community Ecomuseums and Institutional Ecomuseums*

COMMUNITY ECOMUSEUMS	INSTITUTIONAL ECOMUSEUMS	
	(Community Initiative)	(Administrative Initiative – Professional)
1	Inverse verticality	Institucional
2	Horizontalidad Patrimonial	Verticality
3	Active	Sstatic
4	Atemporal	Temporal
5	Busca la utopía	mission, vision and objectives
6	Independiente	Dependent
7	altruistic volunteering	institutional volunteering
8	without any particular model	different models
9	Participation	Participation
10	Integral	Partial

Source: prepared by author based on Hugues de Varine-Bohan (1992b) and Pierre Mayrand (2009)

In contrast to the institutional model, the community ecomuseum (community initiative) is the closest to the classical combative model. It is created from the bottom up (inverse verticality). Society and heritage are at the same level of dialogue (heritage horizontality). The end goal is to be able to raise awareness about the spirit of the ecomuseum (it seeks utopia).⁴⁷ It is a dialogue between all social actors in a horizontal, democratically participative structure, which gives it an ‘independence’ of action and management (independent). Volunteering is understood to be a reflection of the critical culture of the community individuals (altruistic volunteering), as René Rivard⁴⁸ and Pierre Mayrand⁴⁹ used in their theories and ecomuseological projects. It is flexible to the needs of each environment and each community (without any particular model), thereby generating synergies that permit a horizontality in the processes it carries out, by participation from the population, and a holistic, pluridisciplinary vision (integral).

While the former model is an extension of territorial museology and is the most prolific, the latter is more limited to the experiences recorded in Spain. Moreover, as we shall verify in the last section of this study, some of the initiatives of Spanish Social Museology meet these characteristics without using the name ecomuseum.

3. Characteristics of and differences between the institutional ecomuseum and the community ecomuseum

Some institutional ecomuseums had a bottom-up genesis, starting from citizen and community initiatives (Ecomuseo dels Ports, Ecomuseo Molino el Pintao, Museo de Tiriez, and so forth), but these were absorbed or reduced by the intervention of administrations,

⁴⁷ For the New Museology, utopia is the essence of the project; it is the criterion that ensures the continuous reinterpretation and evaluation of the project (Mayrand, 2004). Utopia should not be understood as a project that can not be carried out, but rather as a process that is constantly being reformulated in response to the needs of the community, the heritage and the territory.

⁴⁸ RIVARD, ref. 28.

⁴⁹ MAYRAND, ref. 27.

institutions and enterprises. In many cases, this arose from imperatives of economic survival. By contrast, in the community experiences, the bottom-up initiatives have remained constant even though the initial panorama or form of management might have changed, as in the case of the Ecomuseo del Río Caicena, where the representation of the civil population has not changed.

In this respect, we must point out that where experiences do not arise directly from a community initiative, decisions on their creation derive essentially from three institutional levels. A local and/or regional level that plans the recovery and development of a rural territory – on numerous occasions identified as ‘*comarcas*’ (country areas) – or an urban territory, which finds in these types of installations a tool for possible tourist development. These types of initiatives have been accompanied by the other two levels, namely State and European. The participation of the State in these actions was one form of fostering cooperation and dialogue between administrations in a decentralised system. With respect to the second form, the European Union rural development programmes provided the finance required for the creation of the infrastructures necessary for the development of the projects. This type of pyramid system involved two premises that exclude an integral community participation. First, the bureaucratic process to apply for grants require specialists that have a better knowledge of the strategies to comply with the pre-requisites than the reality of the territory. Second, projects are related to political programmes and decisions, in most cases, short term. Many of the institutional ecomuseological experiences analysed have, over time, become passive, obsolete or partially inactive installations, or they have had to close due to a lack of resources for their maintenance.

In contrast, community experiences that have emerged from citizen initiatives have achieved their goals through ‘negotiation’ with the public powers. This does not mean that they did not have support from local, state or international administrations, but when these were requested, the projects were at a mature stage. On one hand, this means that there is autonomy in regard to orders from the top, enabling a horizontal dialogue to be fostered, but on the other hand, this ‘independence’ can give rise to suspicion on the part of public powers and confrontation with said initiatives. Bottom-up initiatives are largely sustained by dialogue between the different actors. This makes it develop by slower processes and over a longer term, such as occurred in the case of the Ecomuseu de les Valls d’Àneu, which took its first steps in the 1960s and its ‘results’ became visible decades later.

Both typologies work on Critical Culture, seeking the sense of responsibility that enables the community to be aware of its importance and prominence in processes of community development. The difference is that with projects that derive from the top, heritage – by virtue of its transformation into tourist-cultural resource and product – is the driving force of the change, whereas in projects that emanate from community initiative, raising the awareness of the community is more of the driving force.

A further characteristic is the heritage that they house. Most of the Spanish non-community experiences have sought the recovery of ethnographic material (customs, ways of life and traditional, pre-industrial economic activities) as the form of recovering a local identity and differentiating themselves from the other communities while, at the same time, contributing to the common identity of a region. In some cases, the museological project itself was already predestined to the preservation and exposition of a particular kind of heritage, as in cases like the Ecomuseo Fluviarium, the Museo Casa de la Ribera and the Ecomuseo de Tordehumos. This has meant that installations are converted into exhibitions locked in a historical time, which

are generally complemented by the presentation of the geographical and natural characteristics of the area.

Community experiences, by contrast, are not limited according to a particular type of heritage, but rather it is the research on the historical evolution of the territory and the community that forged the 'collections'. In the Ecomuseo del Río Caicena, for example, which started with the investigation of the El Ruedo archaeological site, its lines of action have now extended to the civil movements of the 19th and 20th Centuries, the recovery of the Civil War heritage, the creations of contemporary artists of the area and the recovery of the traditional gardens or the cheese industry that was being lost.

Community experiences in Spain have been characterised by a group or individual that has performed the function of 'leader' for the mobilisation. The danger of this characteristic is that if this 'leader' should abandon the experience, the project tends to collapse or, as in some cases (Maestrazgo o Allariz), to be reconverted or institutionalised. Therefore, all the community experiences investigated have tried to transmit a feeling of 'affiliation' to the project, a premise that has been essential to Latin American and French Social Museology.

The community initiatives that have been examined in this study have opted for different models to obtain self-financing and a 'freedom' in regard to management. The most characteristic models are: consortiums (Ecomuseu de les Valls d'Àneu), trusts (Ecomuseo del Río Caicena), civil associations (La Ponte Ecomuséu) or public administrations and civil associations acting jointly (Ecomuseo de Castilléjar). Of these, consortiums and trusts have achieved more positive results and longer-term impact for the community and the territory. These structures confer greater autonomy on the persons who work in them, since the management includes a plural participation of agents of the community itself and the territory.

Community-type experiences have not ignored the touristic objectives described earlier, but these are not necessary for economic survival or to justify the project. They have been aware that a tourist enterprise does not commence with the creation of an installation but rather, it is a complex system between agents (public and private) and tourist market operators: a supply and a demand. Tourism has simply been used as another tool for the development of the community. Some excellent examples are the Ecomuseu de les Valls d'Àneu, which is in constant contact with the agents of the sector to link the heritage offer with the industry already created in the Pyrenees area, and the Ecomuseo del Río Caicena, where the heritage of the area is an intrinsic element of its image, such as the Roman banquets, declared to be of Tourist Interest by the regional government of Andalusia.

Conclusions

The ecomuseums history has been marked by different understandings of the term. This study contributes to a differentiation between ecomuseums of a community philosophy and institutionalised ecomuseums. This differentiation has been repeated in numerous countries where ecomuseums have proliferated.

Spain has had a reticent relationship with the ideas of the New Museology, but in recent decades it has made use of their approaches to create territorial development policies. The decentralisation of Spain into autonomous regions; stagnant museological practices; cultural policies that on many occasions preferred newly created buildings – typically for contemporary art – and, ultimately, political-administrative priorities generally distant from the ideas of this

discipline, made the implementation of these proposals unequal, both in time and space. In spite of all this, as we have seen, typologies such as ecomuseums have proliferated throughout the country.

Community actions in Spain have made it possible to rethink definitions, uses and management models of the country's heritage, and to propose that the communities should deal with the challenge of valorising and taking ownership of their heritage.⁵⁰

It is true that the 'mythology' of ecomuseums and their utopia now comes face-to-face with tourism,⁵¹ the consumer society, the market economy and an a financial crisis of 2018 that has taken considerable root over these last two decades. However, the same needs exist today as when ecomuseums came into being forty years ago: namely, a sense of the community having been uprooted, development, self-confidence, self-management, self-sufficiency and utopia on a community level. Despite the challenges of the financial crisis that began in 2007, which saw the closure or decline of numerous institutions due to the lack of economic, material and human resources, many community experiences have remained active through the idea of a *utopian reality*: maintaining community action, the interrelation by all the agents involved in the process of critical culture, and become an observatory of reality of the territory. These are the tools that have ensured these initiatives could adapt to different economic and social climates and continue to work for the future of the community.

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⁵⁰ ALONSO GONZÁLEZ, Pablo – FERNÁNDEZ FERNÁNDEZ, Jesús – NAVAJAS CORRAL, Óscar. La Ponte-ecomuséu: una herramienta de desarrollo local basada en el patrimonio, en *Actas del Congreso SOPA, Congreso Internacional sobre Educación y Socialización del Patrimonio en el Medio Rural*. Pendiente de publicación, 2014.

⁵¹ DAVIS, ref. 33, 234.

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⁵² The indication “cota” refers to the database of MINOM texts that are online thanks to the work Mercedes Stoffel from the Lusófona University. This documentation was compiled, digitalised and published in a free access data base: Sistema de Interpretação e Gestão de Núcleos Documentais (SIGNUD: http://www.minom-icom.net/_old/signud/).

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