

Community intergenerational performance for challenging age prejudices

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Abstract: The region of Alentejo, in Portugal, is considered a European rural region, with more than 23% of its population over 65 years old (Eurostat 2020 – Aging Europe 2020). The majority of them are in danger of isolation, which has an impact on the older population's mental health. Therefore, engaging in a creative process of community intergenerational performance strengthens solidarity, especially between young people and seniors, avoiding loneliness. The Centre of Art History and Artistic Research (U Évora), located in Alentejo province, will engage with a community intergenerational performative-based research involving active social participation, active ageing and well-being, intergenerational learning and experience sharing with senior residents of Evora municipality. This research will involve the participation of 40 senior residents and University students from visual arts and performance studies. We will run a 6-month artistic research process with the community, during which participants will have talks, presentations, team building and creative sessions/workshops. We will work with memories, embodied experiences, embodied knowledge, and image-building about the urbanrural landscape. Sharing and participatory creative dialogue will involve creative processes aiming at two interactive performances in public spaces in the city of Évora.

With this presentation we will discuss the ongoing results of this intergenerational community performative research, which belongs to a broader international project, "Age Against the Machine", European Network of CERV Cities project, funded by the European CERV programme, with a network of six partners: (Red Cross of Serbia (Serbia), Trupa Drž ne daj (Serbia), Teatr Brama (Poland), Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium Odin Teatret (Denmark), University of Évora (Portugal) and Compagnia Il Melarancio (Italy).

Five Festivals are planned to exchange experiences, process implementation, and different and diverse approaches for reflecting on intergenerational performance. Through intergenerational community collaboration in a performative way, the project aims to challenge existing European policies concerning older populations, promoting equality and human rights as fundamental EU values.

Keywords: Aging; Mental Health; Intergenerational Performance; Community Artistic Practices; Interactive Public Dialogue; Site-specific practices.

Bio: Isabel Bezelga holds a PhD in Theatre and conducts participatory artistic research at the Research Centre in Art History and Artistic Creation (CHAIA) at the University of Évora. She is an Associate Professor at the School of Arts - University of Évora, where she teaches Theatre postgraduate courses. Currently, she serves as the Director of the Department of Performing Arts. Bezelga has supervised numerous post-doctoral, doctoral, and master's studies in Theatre and performance, organized international academic meetings, and contributed to journals, academic juries, and awards. Her work has been published in international books and specialized journals. She coordinates both national and international artistic and socio-cultural projects, with a particular focus on collaborative performances in public spaces.

Ana Moya Pellitero is an integrated researcher at CHAIA, University of Évora, since 2015, and a principal researcher in Humanities and Arts under the FCT and University of Évora programme contract (2023-29). She holds a PhD in landscape theory, urban culture, and visual arts from TU Eindhoven (2007) and completed a post-doctorate on intangible urban landscape heritage and artistic community practices at the University of Évora (2016-2021), funded by FCT Portugal and the European Social Fund. She has also been a visiting researcher at the Research Group on Anthropology and Artistic Practices at the University of Barcelona (2018-2020). Pellitero holds a postgraduate degree in Landscape Intervention and Heritage Management from the Autonomous University of Barcelona.