



## ***O fim da clausura:***

# **A study on the last years of operation of the old jail of Ponte De Lima**

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**Abstract** The object of study of this project focuses on the need to document imagetically the last years of operation of the old jail of Ponte de Lima. During the research process, we verified the existence of a gap in the information about the experience of being imprisoned in the 1950s and 1960s. By remembering the past, the collection of various pieces of information has been made with the main goal of obtaining testimonies and capturing images to build an estate on the experiences lived by Ponte de Lima's community in this context. After the collection and treatment of all obtained data, it has become fundamental to showcase the conducted research through a photographic and videographic exhibition, where it was possible, in a semiotic perspective, to inform the community about the space and experiences of seclusion in the portrayed time. In this investigation it was possible to analyze and apply the fundamentals of image design, enhancing and contextualizing the role of visual communication in contemporary society. The use of image was imperative in this process in order to consolidate what was dispersed in the collective memory, and thus historically perpetuate the value of the message conveyed imagetically.

**Keywords** Visual Narratives; Memory; Ethnography; Curatorship.

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## **Introduction**

The focus of this project is on the Porta Nova tower, better known as the '*torre da cadeia velha de Ponte de Lima*', a town in the Viana do Castelo district of Portugal. This chain

integrates what remains of the defensive walls created in the year of 1511, in the reign of D. Manuel I, to protect the '*Portugal's oldest town*'<sup>1</sup>. Taking into account that the research focus was about this chain, there was a need to use exploratory methods to find out more about the building. From the first exploratory interviews, as well as other methods of collection of information, we were able to retrieve and find photographs, videos, and documents that helped to circumscribe the profile of the jail. Essentially, this documentation were used to clarify the activity of the jail in its last years of operation, which ended in 1967.

Considering that it was intended to study the visual archive of the old jail of Ponte de Lima, as well as creating new documents that would allow a better understanding of the functioning of the building, we formulated the starting question in two moments. To begin the investigation, we were guided by a first split question and, in a second phase, felt the need to support research in a new formulation. Both served as the guiding thread of the whole project.

How can the testimonies of the last inhabitants of the "old jail" of Ponte de Lima contribute to the inscription of the patrimonial dimensions of this monument among the citizens and visitors?

Can this patrimonial dimension be a vehicle of public and contemporary awareness about concepts of deprivation and freedom?

Considering that the study will be conducted through these two starting points, it will easily be understood that it was of great importance to find people who would allow the

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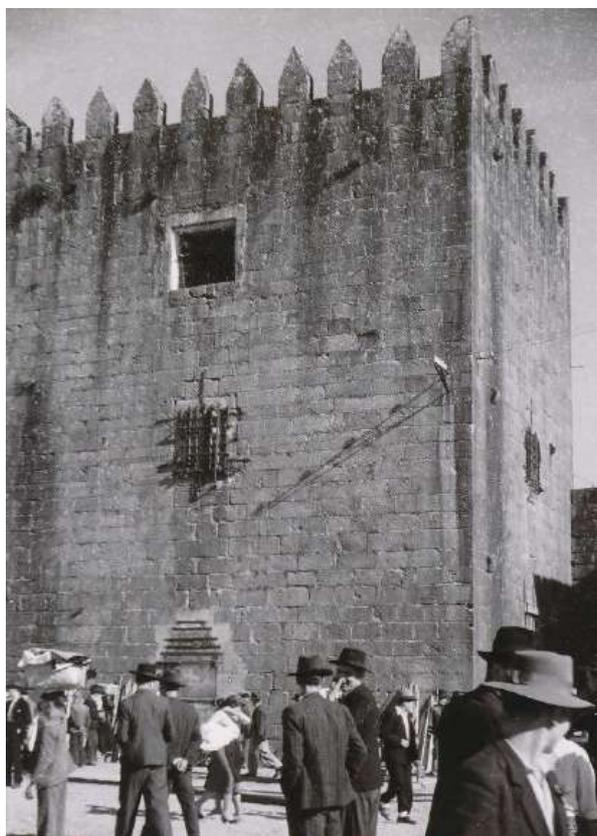
<sup>1</sup> The greatest expression of the development of Ponte de Lima was given by the fair granted by D. Teresa, the oldest known in Portugal and mentioned in the charter. (...) The importance of this fair grew to the point of D. Dinis, when he granted, in 1305, fair letter to Monção to impose the condition that it not be held on the same date as Ponte de Lima. (Almeida & Vieira, 2007, p.99)

encounter with stories and testimonies about the operation of this jail, especially those who lived in this place, as ex-prisoners and ex-carriers. Through the deepening of this topic, we believed it was possible to identify unknown facts, which allowed to give a new identity to the object of study that we wanted to analyze.

In a first phase we centered the study on the reminiscence of the past, through the identification of people who were able to recreate experiences related to their empirical relationship with the old jail of Ponte de Lima. These reports, in turn, summoned a relationship of forces in the validation of the documentary area, allowing to gather a set of very different material, from texts, objects, photographs and diverse documentation. In this period, we decided to put in order all the information, creating a narrative that supported the investigation. Or, in other words, it would be more perceptible to convey a realistic view of twentieth-century society from the meeting and exposure of the existing visual archive. In fact, the assembled visual archive allowed a greater understanding of the experience of being reclusive during the 1950s and 1960s in this jail. Photography, in particular, has assumed the role of guardian of a past that has made it possible to identify the daily life of people who have crossed the building. “Documentary pictures can show social processes, the actors within them (events), and the conditions in which they take place (state). The ‘neutral’ type of photograph shows the state of something, its ‘condition’, while reportage uses both event and process to them as life story ‘experiences’” (Bate, 2016, p. 66).

In a second phase we outlined the construction of two visual narratives. The first one used photography as a historical document in rural environments, a narrative capable of transmitting the social context of the time under study, allowing the understanding of the change of consciousness regarding the spaces of incarceration. The second one was based on a visual ethnographic experience, through the capture of video interviews that enabled a better understanding of the surrounding environment of the jail building, opening the way for reflection on the intrinsic nature of 'jail' through the contrast between this nature and the contemporary hermetic spaces of prison. The visual ethnography experience it can be understood “as an approach to experiencing, interpreting and representing culture and

society that informs and is informed by sets of different disciplinary agendas and theoretical principles. Rather than being a method for the collection of ‘data’, ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers own experiences” (Pink, 2001, p. 18).



**Image 1.** “A Lata e o Cordel”, Conde d’Aurora, 1950s – Casa d’Aurora Archive

The importance of this work seemed to us to be that there were scattered data, such as documents, photographs and videos referring to the last years of operation of the old jail of Ponte de Lima, but not yet an exploratory work capable of gather these data, confronting them with the current testimonies of people who have interacted with this reality. It is also necessary to understand that the set of people who could contribute to this investigation -

former prisoners, former prison guards and individuals living near the jail's tower - were already at an advanced age, considering that this tower has ceased activity as a prison in 1967. In this way we can affirm that there was an increased interest to explore this topic as soon as possible, trying to record the interviews in order to preserve the data collected for future memory.

### **Theoretical discussion**

"Photography is the starting point of the mass media that today play an all-powerful role as a mean of communication. Today [photography]... has become the most common language of our civilization" (Freund 1989, p.202). The possibility of looking at the mirror of a distant reality allows anyone to submerge in a profound experience of historical appreciation, and the conservation of all the photographic and videographic records, that have emerged throughout the investigation process, has become central. We are currently confronted with a vast number of images through the different media we use daily. Whether through the television that transmits reality to us, almost instantaneously, or through the internet, when, for example, we look for images in *Google*, or even through social networks, where each person can group thousands of photographs and videos. The photos and the first films retain, in their essence, a bit of the magic of capturing a fraction of a second through the analog process. "Photography has a way (...) to stop time, sometimes suggesting the before and after of the "decisive moment", a way of (...) discovering in reality a balance, a harmony only perceptible, something that, according to the popular expression, is bound by a thread" (Bauret, 1992, p. 114).

The first photographs taken from the old jail contain in themselves this mysticism and concern of the photographic process of the first half of the twentieth century. Without a more faithful representation of the real, we identified the need to recover the entire photographic repertoire related to its period of activity. The acclamation of one of the most striking buildings in the town of Ponte de Lima allowed not only to highlight the reality of rural spaces during the 'Estado Novo' era, but also to construct a markedly visual project

where it was possible to explore documentary photography combined with an interactive installation. In order to finalize this theoretical discussion, it is necessary to address important issues that are closely related to the development of all data collection and interpretation. To that end, it should be stressed that one of the basic pillars of this investigation was to understand how we could reinstate the role of the chain as a historical heritage, taking into account its most recent history and cataloging all the collected elements that would perpetuate this building in the memory of the citizens of Ponte de Lima and all those who related to this project.

On the subject of memory John Berger states that photographs are relics of the past, traces of what has already happened. "If the living take that past upon themselves, if the past becomes an integral part of the process of people making their own history, then all photographs would reacquire a living context, they would continue to exist in time, instead of being arrested moments. It is just possible that photography is the prophecy of human memory yet to be socially and politically achieved" (Berger, 2013, p. 57).

In this context the role of image is preponderant here because it not only reveals a distant reality by a medium of communication closer to interpreting, but also evidence the social representations of an era that crosses the present day, by its historical and political load. It is therefore urgent to highlight these three aspects: the re-registration of the 'Cadeia Velha' as historical heritage, photography as an alley of memory and its scope for more in-depth interpretations such as social representations, since they are the guiding thread of all this investigation that, besides describe, it also tries to reflect critically the visual expression of a building like this.

More important than recovering this material, we consider essential to make it visible to the public. Although some images were already in local publications, most of the photographic repertoire collected would never have been shown to the public, so the need arises to distinguish it. Because of this, we opted for a photographic exhibition, giving visibility to the collected material. This experience provided a visual encounter with those who lived during the activity period of the jail, and also allowed the closure space to be divulged to

society, intensifying the enclosure experience inherent in the space of the jail. The longevity of these images gave them a degree of uniqueness, which contributed to the project's relevance. Through them it was possible to glimpse a realistic frame of the period under study and make comparisons with the seclusion spaces of the present. We decided to materialize the project through an exhibition, which allowed us to gather a set of unique photographs that work as validation of the testimonies recorded in video. Photographs and video documentaries have played a role of transmitting reality, but they have also opened new horizons for the perception of deprivation of liberty and surveillance mechanisms. At the same time, they fulfilled the purpose of transmitting information, they became active, extolling one of the central objects in the daily life of prisons. The use of the suspended cans, attached by a cotton string, gave a new meaning to the exhibition. On the one hand, we have highlighted the primordial object used by prisoners as a means of communication, and in another hand gave it another meaning by recycling their intention. By placing the respective captions of each photograph inside each can (duly numbered to match the correct photograph), we provided an interactive device so the audience could not only appreciate the content of the photographs but also find out more about its history looking for the respective caption inside the cans.

In summary, it is possible to affirm that the whole project was developed through an incisive and somewhat archaeological investigation of the data referring to the old jail of Ponte de Lima. This exploration allowed to gather a strongly visual heritage, articulated to a historical notion of Portugal that mirrors the peculiarities of our culture. The recovery of static visual narratives allowed a better approach to the interviews that served as a motto for the realization of the documentary video projected in this exhibition. It has thus become possible to construct two visual narratives, different in their presentation, but which complement each other, allowing us to re-evaluate the value of the jail.

## Research work and methodologies adopted

In a first phase the main newspapers and radio stations of Ponte de Lima were contacted in order to propose news articles informing that an investigation was being carried out on the last years of operation of the jail and that it would be necessary to the contribution of Ponte de Lima's population through testimonies, photographic and videographic records relevant to make the study feasible. From this request resulted two positive answers: in the first one, which was materialized in an interview in the 'Manhãs de Sábado' program of Ondas do Lima radio, the research project was explained, what we wanted to know and what information was needed. An application was also made to the Ponte de Lima's community, in the event they have knowledge of stories, photographs or videos that involve the jail, to submit this data through the online platform [cadeiavelha.blogspot.com](http://cadeiavelha.blogspot.com).



Image 2. Clipping of page 3 of Cardeal Saraiva Newspaper, September 16, 1966

To better understand the daily life of the old jail of Ponte de Lima we looked for ex-prisoners and ex-jailers to be interviewed, as well as citizens who could tell stories of their acquaintance with inmates and still not known publicly, of curious people who were storing images of the building. Knowing that some Ponte de Lima citizens have often crossed paths with photographs of the history of Ponte de Lima, we have sought out these people to see if they had photographic records inside or outside the prison. From this approach only two citizens had a significant booty, yielding this data to the further study within the areas that structure the image study.

### **Documents and images searched in archives**

This reflection of the past stems from the exploration of pre-existing documents found in the archives and Municipal Library of Ponte de Lima, namely articles from the periodical *Cardeal Saraiva*, the only newspaper that existed at that time (twelve newspapers of each year were analyzed between the period of 1940 to 1975), books that did not focus specifically on the jail, contained some passages about the building and the first video captured in Ponte de Lima (1963), a program of the 'Terras de Portugal' series by Reinaldo Varela, for RTP - Rádio e Televisão Portuguesa. After this research, we contacted the DGRSP – Direção Geral de Reinserção e Serviços Prisionais to make the investigation known and to know if there were documents and images about the jail during the period of operation analyzed.



**Image 3.** "Partial view of men's cell - the darkest", 1959 - Direção-Geral de Reinserção e Serviços Prisionais Archive

After formulating the request with the knowledge of the General Director of the DGRSP, we learn that there was a file with inspection reports and photographs of a visit made by DGRSP. In order to have access to these data, a formal request was made to visit the premises where these documents and images were located – the prison area of Santa Cruz do Bispo. After obtaining the endorsement of the General Director of DGRSP, we visited Santa Cruz do Bispo facility where the interviews were held in December 2014 and resulted in the aggregation of the main inspection reports and photographs of the interior of the jail. The photographs and reports collected were never published and had never been shown in public, so it emphasized the value of discovery of this investigation.

To better understand the dynamics that constituted the aura of the chain, when it was active, we proceeded to collect testimonies, through interviews captured in videos of the inhabitants of this building and the people who lived with it. In this way the most pertinent

testimonies will be presented for this study, taking into account the interviewees connection to the daily life of this prison space.

### **Amândio Vieira**

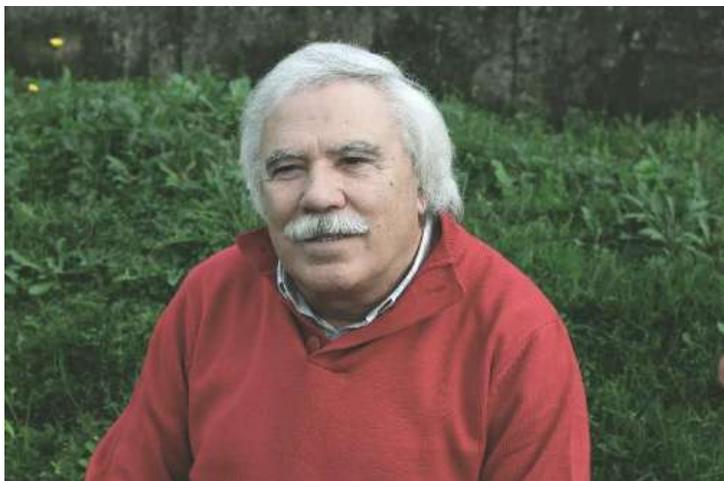
After pursuing a career in nursing, Amândio Vieira began his taste for photography, especially for historical photography, acquiring over the years photographs of various places in Ponte de Lima, including the old jail. He worked as a photographer part of his life, keeping his retirement to dedicate himself exclusively to the treatment of local and unpublished photographic data. Providing important photographs of the building under study, Amândio was one of the most important contributions in the collection of images for the investigation, allowing the use of more than 30 photographs, including ex-prisoners who passed through the prison.



**Image 4.** Rio Lima Flood, Amândio Vieira personal collection, no date provided

### **Ernesto Costa**

Ernesto collaborated with the project through the granting of photographs and postcards, as well as through an interview, recorded on video, portraying his perception about the experience of the reclusive ones, mostly during his childhood and adolescence. As was evident from his testimony, the memories he kept of the prison establishment were rather bleak. According to Ernesto Costa, the imprisonment of women was socially more striking, since after their release they were hardly able to enter the labor market and even consecrate marriage, since they carried the symbolic mark of criminality. It is important to note that in this time, 1950s and 1960s, the photographs were very scarce, and the authors were almost the same. That is, those who had a favorable financial situation could buy a camera and take time to capture important moments. In this way, many photographs, known as vernacular<sup>2</sup> were central in the development of this study.



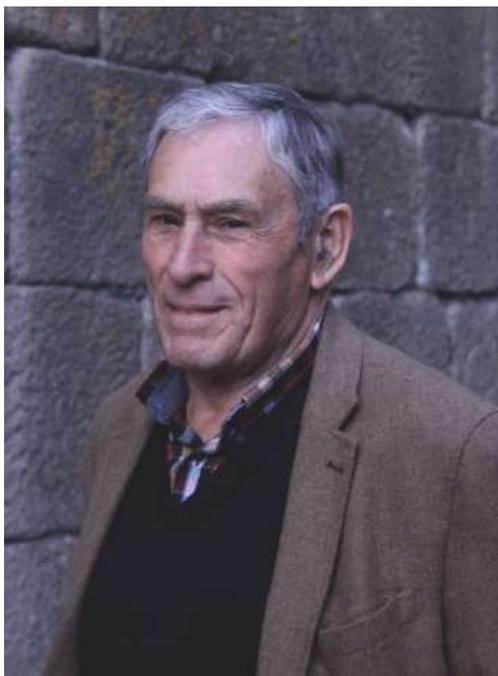
**Image 5.** Interviewee Ernesto Costa, 2014

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<sup>2</sup> Vernacular photographs are created primarily by anonymous, amateur and working class members. (...) The objects of vernacular photographs can be read not only as creative and sensual artifacts, but also as thoughtful, even provocative meditations on the nature of photography in (Batchen, 2002, p. 60).

In order to integrate the investigative work in the area of visual ethnography<sup>3</sup>, we analyzed the interviews, captured on video, contrasting empirical information about community relation with the prison space, providing points of reflection for the idea of deprivation of freedom. We wanted to know what memories remained of the old jail's functioning, details, stories, and community testimonies that had not yet been revealed to the public. This investigation arose from the need to capture these testimonies as soon as possible, since few people could describe the daily life of the 'Estado Novo' period. We heard that the last jailer and one of the ex-prisoners were able to concede an interview.

### "The last jailer"



**Image 6.** Albertino Martins – the last former jailer of the old jail of Ponte de Lima, 2014

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<sup>3</sup> Visual ethnography is not simply combining words to produce a desired result. Pairing narrative with photographs and video assists the researcher in documenting and symbolizing the self-representations of the participants. Photography and video also afford the researcher the ability to present a visual sequence of a particular chronology (Riviera, 2010, p. 5).

The hinge interview was from Albertino Martins, 77, the last jailer who worked in the old jail. Albertino was one of the most important contributions in this investigation, and he told us the inner workings of the chain, through the remembrance of his passage as a jailer. Information such as housing conditions and hygiene, eating habits, cohabitation between prisoners and communication with the outside, were valuable because they allowed us to trace the daily profile of this space. Albertino Martins said that there was a lot of misery in that building. There was no water in the taps, there was only one toilet in each cell (shared by several inmates), there was no sanitation - the waste was deposited in the lower part of the jail, which once served as a cell for the most dangerous prisoners. During the winter this cell was almost always submerged, due to the constant floods of the Lima's river.

### **"The priest who catechized the prisoners"**

To know a little more about the prisoners' daily life, we explored their relationship with religion. In this sense, we decided to interview the last priest who had contact with the prisoners, Manuel Dias, 81 years old, explained that during the visits he made to prisoners, especially when he was going to catechize them or confess them at Easter, he always had the flu. Although the time spent inside the chain was small, hygiene conditions and shelter were so small that it facilitated the spread of infectious diseases. Many incarcerated sought spiritual liberation through religion. When hope was scarce, and the bodies were confined within a few square meters, the prisoners often called for divine justice and acceptance by the Christian community. As Manuel Dias said, good and evil will always be relative.



**Image 7.** Interviewee Priest Manuel Dias, 2015

There will always be cases in which evil is committed in the name of justice, as is the case of political prisoners, and there will often be comparisons between the justice of men and divine justice, which are completely different within them. Manuel Dias passed away during the year 2015, leaving behind his interest in the history of Ponte de Lima and all the knowledge he acquired as parish priest.

### **"The ex-prisoner of the old jail"**

Among the prisoners who passed through the old prison were Antonio Roteia, 79, who explained in a brief interview the reasons that led to his imprisonment, what were the daily routines of that prison and the profile of criminals with whom he lived during the execution of his sentence. The moment that led to the confinement of some months of Antonio Roteia took place in the village of Ponte de Lima.



**Image 8.** Former prisoner of the old jail of Ponte de Lima – António Roteia, 2015

António Roteia says that his sentence consisted of a year of imprisonment, called the 'correctional' period and six months paid in cash. From his experience as a recluse, he lets us know that he does not agree with the prison sentence for those who commit crimes. In his perspective, the criminal when confined he was not rehabilitated, on the contrary, he gained new habits and, often, returned to commit crimes when released. In fact, many prisoners of Ponte de Lima jail were starving, had no job and preferred to be arrested because they had access to food and a place to sleep. And, in this way, they were able to guarantee their survival. The beds were called 'tarimbas' and were made up of potatoes bags filled with straw and, to guard against the cold, one or two blankets.

In addition to his experience as a prisoner, Antonio says that he also served as a prison 'judge'. The prison 'judge' was in charge, in the absence of the jailer, to maintain the proper functioning of the prison space. Often the prisoners argued and ended up using violence, and it was the judge's responsibility to maintain order in these cases and then communicate them to the jailer. As for the method of communicating with the outside, Roteia

confessed that he sometimes threw a can attached to a string in an attempt to raise alms and cigarettes. At one of these times, an authority agent saw the trade scenario and tried to suppress it. At that moment, the jailer, Albertino Martins, came in, trying to explain to the officer of authority that the practice was not common, asking that there were no consequences for that situation. Antonio Roteia did not suffer any repression because he was trying to communicate with the outside, through the known method that involved the can attached to a string.

### **Prison spaces of the past in contrast to the present**

Considering that Portugal was in rapid economic expansion in the 1950s<sup>4</sup>, it is contradictory that the Portugal places of imprisonment did not follow the same development that was taking place in Europe in the post-war period. It is contradictory because, in theory, Portugal should have followed European economic developments, however, it persisted in the 'Estado Novo'<sup>5</sup> regime, which in essence reflected the deleterious state of this jail.

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<sup>4</sup> The economic growth that occurred in Portugal from the beginning of the 50s will have contributed to gradually improving the level of income and satisfaction of basic needs. This is indicated by the evolution of most of the development indicators, when expressed in average values of improvements achieved in the fundamental components of the standard of living (Silva, 1982, p. 1077).

<sup>5</sup> The 'Estado Novo', inaugurated in Portugal in 1932, did not arise from moment to moment, as if spontaneously. He was skillfully and patiently built by Salazar and his supporters in the years prior to his institutionalization, as a response to the conflicts, instability and political fragility arising from the Military Dictatorship that resulted from the military coup of May 28, 1926 (Grilo, 2011, p.193).



**Image 9.** “Man’s cell chamber”, 1959 - Direção-Geral de Reinserção e Serviços Prisionais Archive

The role of jails in the twentieth century was very different from today. While in the first half of the twentieth century the jail served mainly to 'keep' those who committed crimes and those who were insane/alienated from society, prisoners are now expected to rehabilitate, so as to reintegrate them into society. “The disciplines mark the moment when the reversal of the political axis of individualization - as one might call it - takes place. In certain societies, of which the feudal regime is only one example, it may be said that individualization is greatest where sovereignty is exercised and in the higher echelons of power” (Foucault, 1988, p. 192). Whereas in the last century any space that allowed several people to be packed and held captive until a trial served as a prison zone. Vigilance is now imperative in prisons, and thus buildings are designed to keep criminals away, are "guarded" under a greater supervision, depriving them of their freedom, but keeping their individuality confined to the cell. “It would not be true to say that the prison was born with the new codes. (...) procedures were being elaborated for distributing individuals, fixing them in space, classifying them, extracting from them the maximum in time and forces, training their bodies,

coding their continuous behaviour [and] maintaining them in perfect visibility (...)" (Foucault, 1988, p. 231)

In the twentieth century the crimes committed had a higher degree of cruelty, the punishment was greater, especially since there were no basic conditions of survival within the prisons. "However harsh living conditions may be in the total institutions, only their difficulties can not account for this sense of time lost, we must consider the loss of social contact caused by admission in a total institution and (usually) by the impossibility of acquiring things there that can be transferred to external life" (Goffman, 1991, p. 65). It is necessary to emphasize that at this time (1950-1967) there was no minimum age to be arrested, so children were often in the same reclusive space as adults. These demands to include children in the same imprisonment space as their parents, were rules of Portugal, and were strongly linked to the 'Estado Novo' prison procedures. These particularities were altered mainly after 1974, after the fall of the regime.

The property layout in the center of the village had a very interesting purpose. The fact that the citizens pass by the side of the building exposed the identities of the prisoners to community. In the interview with the last jailer, Albertino Martins, he explained that the building in the center of the village made it easier to identify the prisoners. In this way, for many of the prisoners there was shame in this exposition. In addition to bearing the sentence for the crime committed, would have to live with shame of being visible to the Ponte de Lima's people, who stigmatized them. The fact that they were so close to the village center, allowed the communication with the outside that was done mainly through the method, now known by the elevator method. This consisted in the use of a can attached to a string that was sent through the prison to the front walk. In this can, people who passed responded to the requests of the inmates, placing in it alms and cigarettes. Although illegal, it was very frequent to use this means of communication, allowing the prisoners a symbolic escape from the prison space. As far as the elevator method was concerned, this was, according to Albertino, a habit that was easily apprehended by the prisoners and by the fact that the main

window was at the top of the building, it was not always necessary to show their face to launch the 'can attached to a string '.

When the Lima river gouged the banks, causing floods in the village historic area, the old jail building lower part was submerged, torturing the prisoners that were there. Death cases have been decreasing over the centuries, since this part of the chain is no longer used for corrective purposes.

This identification of relevant historical data, especially those that were associated with image, allowed its visualization to be studied in present and in future, providing clues of different natures. The photographs and videos captured during the interviews followed the same intention of recording the current reality for future memory, related to the history of the old jail.

## Results

Considering the operation of the tower of the old jail, as a tourist office and also art exhibition space, we decided that it would be of added value to build a photographic and videographic installation inside the jail building to put in contact the hermetic prison space with the data that reflect its existence, its materiality as a place of imprisonment. In this way, it was possible to intensify the notion of being confined, when placed representative images of the period of operation of the old jail inside the old jail building itself.



**Image 10.** Cans suspended from photographic installation, 2015

It was defined that the exhibition to be composed would have two moments, since it would have two floors in the jail building, to expose the data resulting from the investigation. On the first floor, which could be visited for exhibitions, a photographic installation was set up from a selection of thirteen photographs on the horizontal line of the view, with reading from left to right. All the photographs chosen convey a unique message about the daily life of the prisons, the surrounding environment and the conditions of jail. This series of photographs is unique and was never been revealed to the public. For this reason, it gave a degree of veracity regarding the descriptions made by the Ponte de Lima locals. These images revealed how the enclosed lived and how they communicated to the outside. The bag attached to the string was a particularity to be remarked insofar as it is crucial to understand how prisoners subsisted during the period of incarceration. "The caption explicitly clarifies the meaning of a photograph; but in the same way that there is no thought outside of words, there is no perception of a visual sense without recourse to a common articulation with that of verbal language" (Bauret, 1992, p. 35).



**Image 11.** Visitor of the exhibition 'O Fim da Clausura', 2015

Each photograph tells a short story, associated with an author, date and purpose. Each image has a number corresponding to a caption. The subtitle arrangement was not placed underneath the photographs as usual in photographic exhibitions. In the need to give a usefulness to the central object of the exhibition, we chose the can as a means of communication. Thirteen cans suspended in the ceiling were placed through cotton strings, each one properly numbered. Inside there was the respective text of each spiral caption (for easy reading). The use of this method allowed a closer contact between the visitors and the object, enabling a more interactive and rewarding experience. In a second moment, a video was produced that resulted from the recording of the interviews and the collection of the existing videos of the period in which the jail was active. The documentary video was displayed at the top of the tower, that is, on the top floor of the building. In this video were introduced the testimonies captured during the various interviews elaborated in the exploratory phase, as well as excerpts from the Terras de Portugal series of RTP, where moments were shown identifying the town of Ponte de Lima in 1960s.



**Image 11.** Márcio Silva Photos, 2015 – Altominho Newspaper

The inauguration of the exhibition '*O Fim da Clausura*' took place on April 17, 2015 and was attended by the main actors of this investigation, the people interviewed, the representatives of the entities that collaborated with the project, representatives of the council of Ponte de Lima and all those who were interested in visiting the exhibition on one of the oldest buildings of Ponte de Lima. During the period of the exhibition, the main visits were recorded through

the statistics of the council of Ponte de Lima and the entries recorded in the guestbook. The balance of the exhibition, according to local information, was extremely positive, having had a total of 375 visits in the two weeks it was open to the public, with the highest number of visits on April 30, with 68 entries.

The return of the exhibition made it possible to perceive the scope of this project in the town of Ponte de Lima, which through the internet and social networks branched into publications and congratulations for the execution of this project. It was possible through the image and its relationship with the text to convey the idea of enclosure in the 1960s in a building dating back to the sixteenth century, highlighting its conditions of imprisonment, the stories about the prisoners that cross the meshes of time and the means found by the prisoners to communicate with the outside, in an attempt to reduce the mortification of the identity caused by the condition of prisons.

### **Final considerations**

In a reflexive appreciation of the work developed, it is possible to affirm that this study allowed the development of a subject that has been suspended over the years. In addition to the discovery of new content on the tower of the old jail, the main objective of this investigation were the execution of a practical project to display these contents. Because there is no work, dissertation, thesis, or reflection on the last years of operation of the old chain of Ponte de Lima, we chose to make this period the focus of intervention. This period of time, between 1950 and 1960 coincides with the arrival of cameras and homemade film machines in the town of Ponte de Lima, triggering greater academic interest within the area of curatorship.

At that moment we realized that he enjoyed the opportunity to add visual information to the mental image conceived through the work of historians and to make this study contribute to the reequation of the identity of the chain, giving visibility to a visual repertoire that was dispersed. The conjugation of this theme with critical reflections in the area of historical patrimony, visual memory (Batchen 2002), social representations of the self

in society and the fragmented self (Goffman, 1961) in prison spaces, makes this study an integrative visual ethnography (Pink, 2001), which are the best course for this type of studies that seek to investigate the philosophy of spaces and their appropriation by the community.

It is also necessary to emphasize that Michel Foucault's deconstructive look regarding the history of prisons and the role of punishment in reimbursement of criminals allowed a more pertinent framing of the data collected in view of the theoretical framework used in image design and visual narratives. The most rewarding process throughout the investigation was the direct contact with ex-inhabitants of the old jail and with individuals who, at some point in their lives, interacted with the reality of this space. The captured videos contain narratives and testimonies that reflect what really happened in the second half of the twentieth century, opening up avenues of reflection to understand how a secluded space characteristic of the Salazarist era was configured in a rural environment where precariousness and poverty prevailed. It should be noted that most of the participants were already in advanced age, so this factor adds ethnographic and documentary value to the contents seized, allowing them to be used in future projects and studies.

Through the visualization of the visual narratives visitors verified that the application of corrective punishments were aggravated by the deleterious and miserable state of that building. Apart from the cruelty intrinsic to deprivation of freedom, prisoners would have more hermetic punishments coupled with their sentence, such as the shame of being exposed to the community, the stigma they carried because they were cloistered, and the lack of conditions of various natures that made it difficult to stay in that jail. At all times of the exhibition it was possible to travel in time and find a reality completely different from what is nowadays. For many the visit to the exhibition resulted in the experience of remembering a recent past, the memories of childhood and adolescence. For others, the exhibition entitled "*O Fim da Clausura*" allowed the acquisition of new knowledge through the analysis of the unknown visual repertoire and the discovery of real stories about the prisoners' relationship with the jailer, the passers-by and the local inhabitants.



Image 12. 'O Fim da Clausura' exhibition overview, Joana Rodrigues da Silva, 2015

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