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A discussão sobre o museu atual: O debate social. Parâmetros do século XX no século XXI e debates ibero-americanos

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Resumo

Este artigo pretende abordar a situação atual dos museus, centrando-se especificamente na forma como estes se percebem, o que está intimamente relacionado com a própria definição do que é um museu. Neste sentido, tem-se verificado que a museologia tem tido dificuldades em efetuar esta redefinição. Isto tem levado a esforços prolongados para concetualizar e adotar o termo no contexto global do ICOM. Esta análise levou-nos desde a proposta falhada de 2019 até à mais recente, aprovada em agosto de 2022. Este facto evidencia a estreita relação entre a terminologia utilizada e conceitos modernos muito relevantes, como a sustentabilidade, a inclusão social, a comunidade, entre outros. Estas preocupações estão claramente reflectidas nos Objectivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS).

Palavras-chave Museologia, definição, sustentabilidade, museologia social.

The discussion on today's museum: The social debate. 20th century parameters in the 21st century and Ibero-American debates

Abstract *This article aims to address the current situation of museums, focusing specifically on how they perceive themselves, which is closely related to the very definition of museum. In this sense, it has been observed that museology has experienced difficulties in carrying out this redefinition. This has led to protracted efforts to conceptualise and adopt the term in the global context of ICOM. This analysis has taken us from the failed proposal of 2019 to the latest one, approved in August 2022. This highlights the close relationship between the terminology used and very relevant modern concepts, such as sustainability, social inclusion, community, among others. These concerns are clearly reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

Keywords *Museology, definition, sustainability, social museology.*

La discusión sobre el museo actual: El debate social. Parámetros del siglo XX en el siglo XXI y debates iberoamericanos.

Resumen *Este artículo pretende abordar la situación actual de los museos, centrándose específicamente en cómo son percibidos, lo que está estrechamente relacionado con la propia definición de lo que es un museo. En este sentido, a la museología le ha resultado difícil redefinirse. Ello ha dado lugar a prolongados esfuerzos por conceptualizar y adoptar el término en el contexto mundial del ICOM. Este análisis nos ha llevado desde la propuesta fallida de 2019 hasta la más reciente, aprobada en agosto de 2022. Esto pone de manifiesto la estrecha relación entre la terminología utilizada y conceptos modernos muy relevantes como sostenibilidad, inclusión social, comunidad, entre otros. Estas preocupaciones se reflejan claramente en los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS).*

Palabras clave *Museología, definición, sostenibilidad, museología social.*

Introduction

In the following lines we will address the context of the changing trends in museology, which over time have struggled to adapt their vision to the social realities that surround them and a specific area, Ibero America. In this sense, we must not lose sight of the fact that the museum is an institution that has served to build a vision and an interpretation of the historical development of peoples. However, like any social instrument for the construction of knowledge, it is subject to the permanent revision of its functions and principles, as it has been shown in recent times through the tensions and reflections surrounding its own definition.

Within the line of institutional support, with theories that go towards the sustainability of the community, its urban environment and its heritage, it is notable that, in 2018, the International Council of Museums (ICOM), together with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), began to talk about local museums as the key type of museum for the development of their region. As well as a basic tool for achieving social wellbeing and being a catalyst for creative societies and spaces for inclusion and health. In 2019 these theses culminated in the publication of the Guide for Local Governments, communities and museums, which was presented in Kyoto (OECD and ICOM 2019).

These ideas continue to be promoted by existing organizations, are becoming increasingly important in the wake of the 2020-2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the global outlook that is emerging after the global pandemic of COVID-19.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known by the title “Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” adopted by the United Nations General Assembly for approval on September 25th, 2015, constitute the most ambitious global agenda, addressed jointly (193 countries), around common global goals to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for humanity as a whole. It is shaped in 17 sustainable development goals, articulated based on the achievement of 169 concrete targets, among which we find some directly related to culture and museum action (Clemente 2019), especially framed in 28 targets integrated in 12 out of the 17 goals (Azoulay 2018). In this sense, and as the institutions themselves state, cultural aspects play an essential role in the success of the 2030 Agenda. Cultural rights, heritage, diversity and creativity are central components of human development.

The Sustainable Development Goals seek to build on the work of the Millennium Declaration, a global partnership established under the Millennium Declaration, in September 2000. The Millennium Declaration

set eight goals to end extreme poverty by 2015. In this regard, it is important to note that Latin America has played an important role in the growth of social, ecological and cultural sustainability, so present in both UN programs. With clear influence within Unesco, this region has achieved milestones such as the formulation of the McBride report *One World, Many Voices* (MacBride and Suárez 1993), or the permanent effort to readapt its own development paradigm, which began with the theory of dependency (Bambirra 1977; Cueva Dávila 2008; Katz 2018; T. dos Santos 2002; Solorza and Cetré 2011; Sotelo Valencia 2017) in the middle of the last century, to be subsequently readapted as communication for development (Larsen 2019; Montilla 2013; Nascimento Junior 2008), for social change (Gumucio Dagrón 2011; Mari Sáez 2017), the theory of good living (Hidalgo-Capitán et al. 2019) adopted even by the reformed constitutions of some countries such as Ecuador or Bolivia (Rodríguez Salazar 2016), and lead to the present decolonial positions (Grosfoguel and Mignolo 2008; Mignolo 2008; Nogueira Pereira 2018). All this, with a high degree of coincidence between the master lines of the SDGs and the ideas developed in Latin America during these last seventy years, as well as with the declarations of the La Mesa Redonda de Santiago de Chile Santiago or Caracas (Junior Nascimento, Trampe y dos Santos 2012).

Urban issues and museums: The case of Málaga's growth

In relation to the previous point, it is relevant to highlight the great growth of contemporary museums, which has not been exclusive to Spain but which can be exemplified by the case of Málaga. The typology of the contemporary art centre has been taken as the epitome of modernity. The public actors understood it as an entity which possesses a great symbolic capital that has a positive impact on the city.

The newly renamed Ciudad de los Museos (City of Museums) was already well known in the museum circuit in the previous two decades, especially for the Fundación Picasso Museo Casa Natal, from the eighties of the last century, and the Museo Picasso Málaga, from 2003, located in the renovated 16th century Palacio de Buenavista. Both can be related to the typology of “brand museums” or “market museums” (Hernández Hernández 1994; Krauss 1993), as they are associated with the figure of the cubist painter. However, nowadays this trend is not limited to the figure of the painter from Málaga. In the case of Málaga, the aim was to achieve high levels of visits through the creation of a circuit of large museums, with recognisable names. In the last nine years, the capital of the Costa del Sol has incorporated a series of museums affiliated to powerful national and international art centers and galleries.

The city council has been checking the typologies that have had the greatest social acceptance and validation in recent years and that generate the greatest symbolic capital: artist's museum, collector's museum, international museum and contemporary art museum. Many of these can present several categories themselves, such as the Centre Pompidou in Málaga, which is a contemporary art museum and brings together the international brand of the Centre Pompidou.

Within this enlargement, in which contemporary art museums are the bastion, the crisis of museums in terms of visitors has become evident due to the pandemic. With tourists unable to come, the presence of Málaga's native community has been proven scarce or non-existent.

To this should be added that, the increase in the floating population in the city of Málaga, where the city center has undergone a process of gentrification and touristification promoted by the interest aroused by cultural tourism in the city centre, which has led to the city's houses to become short-stay and/or renting housing by foreigners at prices higher than Málaga's locals can afford.

The social strategy of intergovernmental bodies

As this is not an isolated case, museums and museologists, since the museum boom at the turn of the century, began to realise some needs in terms of the sustainability of institutions. Organisations such as ICOM therefore proposed rethinking museums and their definition based on the following ideas (ICOM España 2019):

- Economic and environmental sustainability.
- Digitalisation and new technologies.
- Civil society and community building.
- Leadership and management.

Over the last decade, regional museum organisations, as well as various international committees such as ICOM, have expressed interest in the needs and commitments that museums should have. The latest international meeting was held in Prague in August 2022. The main themes of this meeting are related to the ideas that have been put forward for defining a museum.

As for the intergovernmental organisation, Ibermuseos, the strategic plan that was approved for the 2020-2023 period was articulated around the socialisation of the museum. It therefore deals with local development; memory, identity and social change; and the educational work of museums.

All these ideas have been on the table since 2016, when the redefinition of the museum concept was already being considered at ICOM's Milan meeting, because the committees realized that the 2007 definition didn't meet the needs of the new 21st century. Museologists and museum workers had noticed changes that were not included in the definition. Remember that throughout ICOM's history there have been nine definitions and an attempt of definition in 2019, that was rejected at the Kyoto assembly and, after a review, another was approved in August 2022.

These future perspectives were a requirement that the regional committees and the different sections of ICOM were demanding. Moreover, it seems logical to make this demand when the definition in force, the 2007 definition, predates the 2008 crisis and everything that has happened in the last three years since the failed 2019 attempt. ICOM's Management Board made public its opinion on the 2007 definition, after sectoral and committee meetings, in which it was stated that "it has seen only minor adjustments in recent decades, and therefore does not adequately reflect or express the complexities of the 21st century and the current responsibilities and commitments of museums, nor their challenges and visions for the future" (ICOM 2019 marzo, 25).

Museum milestones and social debate in twentieth-century museology

The first of these was Social Museology in the 60s, which was linked to the New Museology in the 70s, the development of ecomuseums, which then led to the creation of the International Movement for Social Museology (MINOM) organization in the 80s. In 1972, Integral Museology, created in Latin America, proposed the participation of communities in museums, such as ecomuseums, which was reflected in the Santiago Round Table in 1972.

Subsequently, Critical Museology was developed during the 1990s and the 2000s, right up to the present day. The museologist Jesús Pedro Lorente himself says that we are experiencing the decline of this museology, because a heritage museology is opening up (Lorente, 2022).

Although these elements seem novel, within the history of museology we can situate them as heirs to the approaches of the last third of the 20th century. To introduce some concepts, we must go back to 1968, when the ideas of Social Museology burst onto the scene, incorporating concepts about the democratization of museums and their collections. With the configuration of the New Museology trend in 1971 at the Grenoble and Paris meeting, the idea of the ecomuseum and community involvement in

projects was implemented, as well as its applications to agricultural and industrial heritage typologies; in 1972, the Integral Museology developed in Latin America and implemented in Europe by French museologists promoted community participation in the different museum typologies. In the 1980s, with the Quebec and Oaxepece workshops in 1984, the New Museology (Pierre Mayard 1985) was consolidated as an organisation within ICOM. With Critical Museology, a tendency to review the functions and dimensions of the museum, as well as its relationship with the public, was incorporated (Padró i Puig 2003).

From this debate, which took place in the last third of the 20th century, the following terms, among others, were brought to the museum's attention: territory, community participation, material and immaterial heritage. These ideas were accompanied by certain key elements for the whole museum dynamic, such as the territory where the museum was located, the material and immaterial heritage that this territory and the museum have and, of course, a community, a citizenry to which all this belonged and which could be involved in the discourses and narratives.

One of the reasons of the rejection of 2019 Kyoto definition by a majority was because of its lack of specificity, as well as its absence of focus on concepts linked to the functions that a museum institution should have. In fact, one of the main reasons for rejection, especially from the Latin American region, was the absence of the term education (Guiragossian and Berti 2020, 300) (ICOM France 2020a, 2020b; Raoul-Duval 2019; Raposo 2019). Therefore, after dismissing this proposal, a second committee was formed for the definition, which came into force in 2020. It should be remembered that the first committee was chaired by the Danish Jette Sandhal, known for having founded pioneering museums such as the Women's Museum in Denmark and the Museum of World Cultures in Sweden. With the creation of the new committee, there was a change of presidency and Jette Sandhal was succeeded by two museologists in charge of developing a methodology to be able to carry out the relevant surveys and studies necessary to present a new redefinition in August 2022.

The Lusophone and Spanish-speaking presence has been fundamental in shaping museum ideas. It should also be noted that between Spain, Portugal, Brazil and Mexico (Ibermuseos reference countries), 90% of the museums in Ibero-America are reached.

One of the highlights of the process was the intercontinental debate organised by ICOM Brazil, ICOM Portugal and ICOM Mozambique to discuss the New Definition in the light of the specific challenges of Portuguese-speaking countries.

This has not been done in other regions at transatlantic level. In the case of the Spanish-speaking countries, ICOM LAM has been working together, but with Spain there has been no such coordination with its Spanish-speaking counterparts, as the Portuguese-speaking region does. We can see it at this meeting, attended by the coordinator of ICOM Define and president of the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM), Bruno Brulon, the president of ICOM Brazil, Renata Motta, the president of ICOM Mozambique, Lucília Chuquela, and the president of ICOM Portugal, Maria de Jesus Monge. The mediator was Joana Sousa Monteiro, president of the International Committee for City Museum Collections and Activities CAMOC.

Key terms by region

It is precisely the methodology adopted for the consultation on the proposals for the redefinition of the museum, especially in the second of its phases, after the initial rejection in 2019, that has favoured the possibility of discerning the nuclei of greater reflection and more intense involvement in the construction of a new conceptual framework for the museum institution.

It is relevant to note that the number of contributions to the redefinition and the regions that suggested the most contributions were Europe and Latin America, which stood out as the most participative among the Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials (MDPP) processes, and the second process of definition with MDPP2 and ICOM Define (International Council of Museums 2022).

In addition, digital communication has opened a window to a more horizontal and bidirectional communicational semantics between museum and community, where the debate about heritage is not only through physical channels, but also through digital ones. These aspects tie in with the idea that both the digital and physical community and the museum are imbued with the idea of the “glocal”. That is, we have a close relationship with our local heritage environment, but we also have access to that of other parts of the world, and clearly the digital dimension and social resources have a lot to do with this, as we have seen in recent years.

To illustrate this idea of two-way communication, we can resort to the case of the painting of El Cid by Rosa Bonheur. Three years ago, the Prado Museum’s digital community turned out in force for it to be exhibited in the gallery, a significant example of this direct, two-way conversation between the community and the museum. The result was very satisfactory for both parties.

The museum as third place and social actions

It has been worthwhile for me to approach this term from the theoretical frameworks of Soja and Oldenburg. Geographer and anthropologist respectively, who made a stratification of the spaces in which we find ourselves as social individuals, with respect to the world.

Thus, the museum from the new proposals seems to seek to be that third place to which we aspire for the inclusion and participation of its community, as a space of our free choice and inclusive, of enjoyment, experimentation and meeting.

With regard to the theory of the “Third Place”, the geographer and sociologist Edward W. Soja has coined three levels in relation to the space we inhabit. The first level or space would be the material one, the one we perceive (perceived); the second is the mental space, the one conceived and represented in our consciousness of the material space (conceived). Finally, there is the third space or place, the lived space, the experiential or empirical (Benach, Albet i Mas and Soja 2010; Soja 1996).

This third place, the lived space developed by Soja, is complemented by the work *The Great Good Place*, published in 1989 by the North American sociologist Ray Oldenburg.

Continuing with the idea of the third place as a space desired by museums in the twenty-first century, we can comment on several cases of museums that have turned to this idea of involvement with the community and the current needs of society.

The first project to note is the Museo Situado, that is an active collaborative network of residents, groups and associations at Lavapiés neighbourhood, in which the Reina Sofía Museum participates as part of its work in different local, national and international networks. Becoming an initiative for the regularization of migrants in an irregular administrative situation. From these new proposals, it seems that the museum is seeking to be that third place to which it aspires for the inclusion and participation of its community, as a freely chosen and inclusive space for enjoyment, experimentation and gathering.

With regard to the new programmes of these state museums, it is interesting to see how institutions such as the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza are concerned with rethinking their new exhibitions from a contemporary perspective.

In 2022, the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza held *Memorias mestizas*, an exhibition featuring Afro-Andalusian artist Carla Hayes. The artist works on the colonial past in Spain and Europe and subverts hegemonic history from a decolonial and feminist perspective (De la Villa 2021).

Final reflection

Thus, the museum from the new proposals seems to seek to be that third place to which we aspire for the inclusion and participation of its community, as a space of our free choice and inclusive, of pleasure, experimentation and encounter.

From all this analysis, both historical and conceptual, we can deduce a growing interest and demand for museums as public spaces dedicated to the education and enjoyment of visitors, without forgetting that they have an important role to play in social concerns and debates. Currently, the social demand looks to decolonialism, gender issues and the sustainable development of the planet. The result is significant, it shows an implementation of approaches and terms directly related to Latin American social museology and the cultural transversality of communication which raises the need for the hybridisation of the local at the everyday and sustainable level, together with the global and virtual uses and customs mediated by digital technology, i.e., the “glocal” articulation of today’s museology.

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