MUSEUMS AND SOCIAL INCLUSION, FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

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Abstract (100 to 150 words)
This paper confronts the role of museums nowadays; explore concepts of contemporary museology where the participation and the rise of the different stakeholder are crucial. It also presents theory of social inclusion and city marketing to analyze how the theory can be taken to the practice. Finally presents two examples: the Topenmuseum (Museum of the tropics), Amsterdam and the Museo de la Independencia (Independence Museum), Bogotá to analyze the benefits the museums are achieving by developing inclusive strategies.
Keywords (up to 5)
Museums, social inclusion, sociomuseology, participatory museum

INTRODUCTION

During the last forty years, the entity of museum has been debating and defining its function as an institution in the service of society and its development[1]. One decisive declaration in the process of evolution of this definition is one done during the Roundtable of Santiago de Chile (1972) where is recognized the important social role of museums and its potential to contribute in the education of the community in accordance to the challenges and particularity of the Latin-American society.
Thus in the second half of the 20th century, the political dimension of the 'human factor' started to become an increasing concern of museums in different parts of the world. As a result, movements like new museology or to which the Dutch museologist, Peter van Mensch calls "second museum revolution", appeared the 60s in different European countries intended to democratize, theorize and professionalize the work of museums; this movement analyzed new practices and new theoretical concepts in museums; the three basic concepts that represented the new paradigms were "community museology", "the inclusive museum", "lieux de mémoire"(Van Mensch, 1992).

In the last decades it is possible to talk about a *third museum revolution* related to the importance of the different stakeholders and their influence in the museums' making decision process. This is in part due to the shifts in society facing big challenges as globalization, people's mobility around the world, the network society (dos Santos, 2010) and the shaping of a network society in which the dominant forces of change are to be found more in the social movements and grass-root organizations than in the traditional structures of civil society (Castells, 2004).
As a result, new and more diverse actors have appeared demanding a more democratic way of governance in the matters of heritage. Thus, museums are called to cooperate and deal with the challenges of the contemporary world; and reflect upon the way they deal with their publics, the services they offer in which the discussions about participation, access, representation and authority are very clear examples. In this way, new approaches seemed to be allowed to broader narratives and boost the connection between the agency of museums and the reality of society. In addition, nowadays it is possible to see how the political dimension of connecting with people in society can transform the life of what many consider to be the very foundational components of museums; that is, their objects and collections (dos Santos, 2010). Thus, museums –so considered themselves as institutions mostly devoted to research- starting to switch from an emphasis that was on *object* accountability towards on *social* accountability. "Objects and collections have a social life inside museums. By looking at them as prime working tools, it is possible to explore how they relate to the lives of people outside"(dos Santos, 2010, p. 30).
This paper confronts the role of museums nowadays from the theory to the practice and analyzes the benefits the museums are achieving by developing inclusive strategies. The examples presented are the Topenmuseum (Museum of the tropics), Amsterdam

1 To read the last museum definition adopted by ICOM (International council of Museums) check out the following link: http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition/ (8.10.12)

and the Museo de la Independencia (Independence Museum), Bogotá.

The shift to an inclusive museum

In consequence, museums have been called to assume new roles and to reinvent themselves as agents of social inclusion and social development (Sandell, 1998), to demonstrate its specific purpose and contribution to society and even the pertinence of its existence in the current challenging world.

According to Richard Sandell, museums in many ways, can be seen as representatives of an institutionalized exclusion -actually from their origin as public museums, were restricted to certain segments of the society-; museums work through mechanisms which can contribute to prevent access to services of certain social groups; museums can also be seen as organizations which reinforce the practice of exclusion in the economic, political and social dimensions by promoting and affirming dominant values and subordinating and rejecting alternative values (Sandell, 1998) –normally from the ones whose have been excluded due to their ethnicity, gender or income among others-.

Social exclusion has been defined "as the consequence of economic restructuring which resulted in the process social disintegration, in the sense of a rapture of the relationship between the individual and the state. Equally, it is attributed to the failure of particular social structures in society. These structures are defined as: the democratic and legal system, which promotes civic integration; the labour market, which promotes economic integration; the welfare system, which promotes interpersonal integration; and the family and community system, which promotes interpersonal integration" (Quoted in Newman, Maclean and Urquhart, 2005, p. 16)

As museum has a tradition on social exclusion can also contributes towards social inclusion at *individual, community* and *societal* levels. At an individual or personal level, engagement with museums can deliver positive outcomes such as enhanced self- esteem, confidence and creativity. At a community level, museums can act as a catalyst for social regeneration, empowering communities to increase their self-determination and develop the confidence and skills to take greater control over their lives and the development of the neighbourhoods in which they live. Lastly, museums, through the representation of inclusive communities within collections and displays, have the potential to promote tolerance and inter-community respect, and to challenge stereotypes.

As agents of individual, community and societal change, museums have demonstrated their potential to contribute towards the combating of issues such as poor health, high crime, low educational attainment and unemployment (Sandell, 2003).

This is all closely connected to the practices of social work, as Lois Silverman also concludes: the mechanics of social work, such as fostering social relationships, satisfy human needs, give meaning to things and encouraging social and cultural change are all applicable in the work that museums do (Silverman, 2010) and therefore give them reason to act as agents of social change.

The question remains if and how museums deal with this possible new role and what motivates them to consider the social inclusion aspect in their practice. Are they driven by an altruistic idea or do they speculate on social inclusion to compete for bigger budgets or to pursue political purposes or are they carrying out inclusive experiences without knowing what they are achieving by doing that?

It is obvious that some museums have considered the importance of social inclusion as a part of their effort to get a better government financing. Other museums are claiming themselves as 'museums for everybody' and are producing a number of short- term multicultural programming practices by 'tagging' specific groups of population and enhancing the cultural stereotypes even more by putting the excluded groups in 'boxes'. Such activities might have short- term public resonance, but no sustainable effect in the community at all. And furthermore, it may even lead to sociocultural conflicts in the future. On the other hand, there are also museums and staff that truly believe in the important role they play in society and make inroads on short- term projects or a longer-term strategy.

Cultural heritage and social development

Urban refashioning or city marketing is becoming more and more important and apart from economic and infrastructural aspects, the cultural aspect plays a large role in it. Think, for instance, of the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao (1997) attracting millions of new visitors with its distinctive Frank Gehry building.

In Barcelona, the 1996 creation of a museum for contemporary art, MACBA (Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona), contributed to a regeneration and renewal of the multicultural and conflicted neighbourhood of el Raval. In Liverpool, a complete city marketing strategy was developed since 2008

- when the city was the European Capital of Culture
- that covered a wide range of cultural aspects such

as the organization of the Liverpool Art Biennial. In New York, former deprived neighborhoods such as the Meatpacking district in the West Village and the Lower East Side were transformed into bohemian and attractive areas for locals and tourists with high tech architecture (e.g. the New Museum for Contemporary Art), a variety of nice restaurants, designer shops and

cafes. In Latin America it is important the development of Community museums; one of the best examples is the case of Oaxaca. There, the community owns and runs the museum, whose work strengthens community organization and action beyond its walls. 'To appreciate the potential of the community museum, consider the challenges local communities, especially disadvantaged ones, face today. The effects of globalization include persistent poverty, loss of cultural identity, accelerated migration, and disintegration of the bonds of unity and solidarity within local communities. In this context, the community museum is not a luxury, and its value is not simply decorative: it is a necessity that allows communities to repossess their heritage, both physically and symbolically. It is a tool for rethinking the future, for facing rapid transformations with the strength born of a core identity rooted in the past.' (Cuautémo and Morales, 2006, p. 78)
Thus, it generates programs to strengthen the cultural identity of children, trains adults in a variety of skills and promotes and supports local artists and artisans. At the same time is has been an effective strategy to develop community tourism bringing tangible benefits for the community and boosting social development. Community museums are mean to empower communities and develop networks, which allows local initiatives to be broader scopes and affect cultural policies. The success of these experiences has been known and replied in many Latin American countries –including Colombia- and taken as a examples in developed countries.
All these initiatives have in common the influence of culture and the development of the creative class –concept coined by Richard Florida and developed in the coming paragraphs- in the area. In the city as a forest of symbols, culture has a role to translate and make visible those symbols and by that has the potential to transform the city into a comprehensible space for its inhabitants. Following from this, cultural and creative initiatives can become elements of cultural distinctiveness, identity and economic development. It can also create a right of access to cultural heritage and a guarantee for basic needs of the population in the construction of citizenship, assuming a strategic role in the defense of cultural diversity and local cultural identities in response to globalization (Nascimento, 2008).
Thus, the cultural sector plays an important role in the way it deals directly with human creativity. In this process, social resources are now considered crucial in economic development, especially when it comes to the 'creative class'. This term coined by Richard Florida refers to the people who are employed in fields ranging from science and engineering to architecture and design, from arts, music and entertainment to law, business, finance and health. According to Florida, this group constitutes an important percent of the workforce in developed countries (e.g. The Netherlands (47%); Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark and Norway (42%); Belgium and Finland (41%), Germany (40%); United States (30%)) and is responsible for a huge part of the income of the companies they work for. As a result, more and more countries are coming to understand that lasting economic advantage relies on attracting and retaining talented people, rather than simply competing for goods, services, and capital (Florida, 2005).
The openness of a society contributes strongly to increasing diversity and boosting creativity. Consequently, a well- organized diversity is not only important for a healthy ecological system but for a productive economic system as well. The creative society or city should not just focus on industrial diversity, but perhaps even more important on human diversity. Each person has creative potential that they should strive to exercise and that can be turned to valuable ends. Creative capital is consequently a virtually limitless resource (Florida, 2005).
According to the Global Creativity Index (GCI) that assesses the creative competitiveness of countries, there are three essential indicators to measure the empowerment of economic growth, which Florida calls the 3Ts: Technology, Talent and Tolerance (Florida, 2005). Economists have typically considered the first two: technology has been known as the key of development and economic growth, and talent has begun to be considered important in the way that growth is a consequence of the human capital. The third, tolerance, has a special attribute to truly prosper in the creative age.
Despite being recognized by economists as key drivers of the economic growth, they have viewed them as raw materials or a stock. But resources like technology, knowledge, and human capital differ in a fundamental way from more traditional factors of production like land or raw materials. They are not stock, but flows and as such are mobile factors and accordingly flow into or out of places. Therefore places, which work upon openness, diversity and tolerance, tend to be more successful in generating, attracting and holding on these critical factors of production.
Truly successful societies, therefore, go out of their way to be open and inclusive. Places that are able to mobilize the creative talents of their inhabitants are those that not only tolerate differences but are proactively inclusive. In this way Florida found out that there is a 'correlation between, on the one hand, places open to immigrants – ethnical minorities, artists, gays, bohemians, and socioeconomic and racial integration, and on the other hand, places that experience high- quality economic growth. Such places gain an economic advantage in both harnessing the creative

capabilities of a broader range of their own people and capturing a disproportionate share of the flow' (Florida, 2005, p. 39).
In the Netherlands, the recent advice on budget cuts in the arts by the Raad voor Cultuur (Council for culture), also taps into the importance of creative capital. The advice says that participation and diversity are key factors for museums: 'it is essential to be inclusive: museums have, as carriers of art and culture, the potential to connect people and communities. With this, new and wider possibilities for education, recreation, economics and tourism are created' (Raad voor Cultuur, 2011, p. 77).
This shows that what to many institutions means something vague and foreign: social inclusion requiring ethical behavior related to social development and increasing quality of life, could and should be understood as one of the most important tools for sustainability and economic growth in financially turbulent times.

Tropenmuseum, an effort to change

The Tropenmuseum (Museum of the Tropics) is an anthropological museum is located in Amsterdam, the Netherlands; was established in 1864 and is one of the largest museums in the city. The museum is the Cultural section of the Royal Tropical institute (formerly called Institute for the colonial union) and is aimed to 'improve knowledge and understanding of different cultures, through the exchange and preservation of cultural heritage, exhibitions, stage performances and publications.' (http://www.kit.nl/kit/Culture. 12.3.2013).
The museum houses a collection of 340,000 pieces, of which 175,000 are Material Culture (objects), 155,000 are photographic material (photographs, albums, slides, negatives etc.), and 10,000 other imagery (drawings, paintings, documents etc.). Its semi permanent exhibitions are divided in 6 sections by geographic areas: Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.
The museum was originally aimed to show Dutch overseas possessions, and the inhabitants of these foreign countries. During the mid nineties the museum came under the influence of ethnologists adding information on the economy, manners, and customs of the inhabitants of the shown areas.
For so long the museum represented the domination of the Dutch overseas and the Royalty's will of getting gradually more income out of the exploitation of the resources and raw materials of their Colonies ruled by the Dutch East India Company (VOC). As such, the museum was interested in showing that cultures from the western point of view, from which were uncivilized people living in exotic circumstances. This perspective is still kept in the displays of the so mentioned sections.
In recent time the Tropenmuseum has been working on the collection's Policy of the museum –still in progress- as well as in the Operating Plan in which is stated the museum's will of becoming a more participative organization which can function as a place to stay, enjoy and exchange experiences further that solely a place to be educated.
To achieve this aim the museum is assessing its semi permanent exhibitions; in this paper it is going to be preseted the case the Latin-America and the Caribbean exhibition. This assessment was carried out by a museum professional who is also part of the source community, but not based solely on his point of view but complemented with the voice and willing of the community, in this case mostly Latin-Americans and Caribbean living in the Netherlands but also a few living in their hometowns in the so called *new world*.
The survey work was carried out in partnership with the *Centro Cultural de Hispanohablantes* and *Casa Migrante,* two organizations which deal with migrants from Spanish speaking countries, they acted as gatekeepers and were crucial to get the consulted audience in the museum.
The first diagnosis made after a tour throughout the display of the Latin American and the Caribbean, showed a traditional perspective in which a western curator tried to interpret a diverse and huge area without involving different local communities, or at least Latin American or Caribbean academics or researchers.
The display presents an inaccurate or out of date information, a stereotyped scenography, and gaps of territories of topics; it seems to be a result of several trips of the curator to a few South American in search of exotic souvenirs similar to the classical cabinet of curiosities with rare specimens, objects or images of estrange practices, very similar to the ones from the XVII century but with more technology –certainly out date-.
According to this first approach the questionnaire was organized in three parts, the first one about the museum in general, the second regarding the current exhibition and the last one concerning the future exhibition.
To carry out the public consultancy were set up two programmed free visits to the museum. Invited people were previously explained about the goal and letting them know the importance of the consultancy. For most of them (47%) was the first time visiting the museum as they expressed they didn't feel attracted and interested by the museum as such.
Attendees' first reaction when arrived to the museum was to express their grateful and enthusiasm for having been invited by the museum to participate on this consultation as it chaged the negative image they had of the museum. They express also their willing to cooperate and express their ideas since was the first time they were asked to do it in an important and well-known institution such as the Tropenmuseum.

The results of survey showed the museum is still perceived as a traditional organization with educational purposes, but definitely people claimed more participation and guided tour more reflective and interpretative.
Regarding the exhibition of Latin America and the Caribbean they expressed a lack of representation as their culture is not shown in an objective way but is very stereotypical; The contents are presented from an European; out of date information and several countries are not even named on the display. There is also a lack of contemporary culture and the social political situation.
With respect to the future exhibition people expressed it should be focus on the perspective of multiculturalism and centered on people and communities. The new displays should represent the Latin American and Caribbean people of today as well as the indigenous communities (past and present) and different cultural backgrounds. They also support the idea of the museum to organize the displays upon on themes but expect them to be dynamic, interactive and more reflective on immaterial culture; thus, the themes voted the most were music, ancestral cultures, multicultural kitchen, contemporary daily life and migration and globalization.
About their engagement as a source community, they convey their will to cooperate actively on conception and evaluation of the new exhibition by sharing their experiences, knowledge and stories as well as joining focus groups, testing contents or acting as gatekeepers with other Latin Americans and Caribbean.
Making a balance of this experience, it is worth to mention that was the first time for them the museum wanted to open up to their source communities by consulting and working with them. The general feeling of the attendees was a very positive attitude towards a museum worried to fulfill the needs of their audiences and especially the ones represented on it.
It is important to mention that people felt represented within the museum because the assessment was run by a Latin American, as made the process easier to contact the organizations and to conduct the survey and interact with them in Spanish. This created a confortable environment as the barrier of language was turned down.
It was also interesting the way they felt amazed just because the museum was invited them to 'advise' about the contents of an exhibition not being experts in culture or museums –most of them where professionals or postgraduate- but just for the fact of being an ethnical minority living there and 'experts' in the way the know their culture better than an outsider. Most of them attended the museum along with their families as for them was important to show their children (some of them born in the Netherlands) their culture, identity, traditions and ancestors.
Paradoxically, this museum created with other different goals could now become a link between immigrants and its homelands; Nowadays this museum that in the past represented the Dutch colonialism, has a strong potential to contribute to reinforce the identity, refute stereotypes and contribute to tolerance and integration of minorities by presenting them accurately to allows the understanding of their differences. Now the challenge for the museum is keep on working on partnerships and continue engaging this community that is already aware of the plans the museum has.

Independence museum, making a participatory Bicentennial

In Colombia, the situation is not very different from the rest of the world; most of the museums –it doesn't matter the type- are still traditional entities, elitist and exclusive; its narratives don't allow multiple identities and discourses and are also places to get taught rather than places to enjoy and exchange ideas. However, some different experiences have emerged in the past fifteen years as a result of international theoretical movements such as sociomuseology which 'works with the different dimensions of social and community development from eco-museums to networking and other ways of organizing social action in the 21st century in which heritage plays a strategic role.' (dos Santos, 2010, p. 29)
This influence became important in Colombia with the Constitution of 1991, General Law of Culture (1997) and the National Policy of Museums (under construction). These laws promote diversity and multiculturalism and encourage participatory processes and community development.
In recent years museums such as Museo Nacional de Colombia, Museo de Antioquia and Museo de la Independencia among others, have discussed their content and narratives in an effort to shift into more accurate to the reality of a multicultural and diverse country.
In 2002, the Museo de la Independencia (Independence Museum) started a process of renovation of its narrative and design. This project was born with the idea of represent the concepts of independence throughout the years and to achieve that the museum had to develop a consultancy process with its audiences.
The museum was established in 1960 to commemorate the 150-year of Independence revolt that took place on July 20th of 1810 in the capital of Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada, considered as the National Independence Day. The museum presented different displays related to the Independence process and its 'heroes' and leaders as well of the history of the old Bogotá.

The process of creation of this museum –as many others- was linked to the interests of the National Government and their idea of the National Identity; the idea of represent and validate the glorious past of the ruling classes by reinforcing the image of the 'heroes', was a mean to tell to the crowds they had the right to run the country as they ancestors had fought and died to get the freedom to the country. As expected, slaves, farmers, artisans, women, indigenous people were not a part of those exclusive group of 'heroes' despite the importance of their participation as anonymous people who really fought and died for the cause of independence.

Thus, one of the main characteristics of the museum was the lack of representation and the centralism of the story, as the independence had occurred only in Bogotá when in reality was possible to achieve as was a national movement for the freedom of the country. The museum turned out to be inaccurate and out of date as didn't represent new concepts of a more inclusive history more reflective and closer to the people.

In an effort to shift into a more representative museum for all the Colombians, there were organized different strategies to consult people about the future museum. Some of them were a series of reflective exhibitions, workshops and discussion along five years; finally it was organized a public consultancy (physical and virtual) based on the results of the mentioned exhibitions.

The results proved people really wanted the museum to be different, more interactive, dynamic and updated information. A museum which shows the concept of independence as freedom of worship, ideas and expression. Visitors also expect history to be presented upon the people who really participated on it, stories of the independence and its contexts as well as the Colombia in the past but also the contemporary Colombia with its conflicts and reality.

Overall, people expressed their interest to participate on this change and felt really amazed of being part – it doesn't matter their age, social status, genders or ethnicity- of the construction of this new museum, the one that tells the story of the Independence and creation of the Colombian nation and the center of the celebration of the Bicentennial of its independence.

This is the first example of a governmental museum renewing it narratives based on the active participation of the audiences. Since its opening in 2010 the museum kept on doing consultancy to measure the levels of satisfaction of its publics and had modify some aspects of the displays or organizing temporary exhibitions according to people's needs and opinion.

In general this kind of experiences allow people to identify and feel represented and included by the national discourse. Spaces like this are the perfect scenery to work on social fabric by making people realize they are citizens with rights and voice. In a country like Colombia with a tradition of social inequality, it is important to create spaces to reflect upon freedom, social dynamics and way of government; thus, these inclusive projects contribute to the reinforcement of identity, self-esteem and self-confidence as Colombians.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that museums have realized the importance of working with people but sometimes it is carried out solely to increase and diversify the audiences.

Museums have a big potential to contribute to social fabric as they are dealing with memory, identity and heritage. After the analysis of both examples it is interesting to see how the outcomes in two different contexts are very similar; people tend to be grateful for being asked by the museum and it changes their image on this organization, it means that one of the benefits of working on inclusion is the change of attitude and perception of museums. By Involving people they are also boosting the representation and integrating people in the official discourse –as museums are still perceived as validators of a discourse and of what is considered true-; this is important as includes those who were excluded in many ways by the society generating social fabric and cohesion.

It is true that museums are not financially strong as banks or multinational companies; however, museums are still very influential in the social, political, cultural and economic dimensions. It means they can be contributing to make visible community's ideas, needs, desires or complaints. Being facilitators to allow people's voices to be heard is also a way to empower them and make them perceive the museum as a partner that generates tangible benefits for both parts.

When museums are working to link collections from the inside to the outside and relate objects to daily life of people it is an effective tool to engage them and develop ownership. It is crucial for the preservations of the museum in general as while people take a place as their own, they can contribute to the protection of its collections and facilities, reducing the risk of damage or robber of valuable.

In terms of social sustainability, being inclusive is a way to engage people to the museum and create recurrent public for the exhibitions as well as the cultural programing and leisure areas (restaurant, café, shop), rising and diversifying the rates of visitors. This is important when it comes to do fundraising as the more and diverse are the publics the bigger in the impact of a project and the easier to get funding.

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