

2016. From New museology to Sociomuseology

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Mário Moutinho¹

How quiet were the days, when we knew exactly what a museum was, and what it wasn't. When museums use to show the history of everything or when only showed us collections and archives, collected, bought, robbed or offered, Museums were quiet, with only the problems of storing, preserving and eventually documenting. When it exist a storyline, it was sustained in the official ideology.

Others however, start to construct their narratives linked to the challenges of society, looking around, looking to be successful actors of social change in favor of more dignity, more inclusion, more citizenship and more participation. They constructed narratives of resistance, sustaining the action of regular or intermittent local museums, ecomuseums and many others museums, looking what was called the New Museology. It was this perception of the world that was the root of a critical museology linked to the contemporary world.

It was in that context that in 1984, people from different countries and continents joined in Quebec the International Meeting of Ecomuseums - New Museology.

Participants, searching for the recognition of new forms of practice of **Social Museology**. (Neighborhood Museums of USA, Casa del Museum Mexico, Local Museums in Portugal, Ecomuseums in France, MNES, Community museums of Belgium, Sweden, Mali, Panama, Niger and many other places.

Museums were moving from a museology where collections are composed mainly by objects, to a Museology were collections are composed by problems/issues.

And working with people naturally requires new skills, different from those needed to work with objects.

The public, in this perspective, no longer had a key place in these new museums, and on the contrary, it gave rise to the idea of users, creators and stakeholders. The idea of collective work integrated into this approach by introducing the idea that museum exhibitions should be first and foremost, an on-going process and not a final product.

In this sense the reference to the **Declaration of Santiago de Chile**, always present through the workshop, reveals the socio-political objectives of Quebec's Atelier.

Something began to change, as the ICOM finally received with interest this new role of museums and recognize the MINOM reality. As we can see in the recent recommendation approved in November last Year. Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society.

New Museology arrives in the 21st century as a **movement**, a **philosophy** and a **school of thought**.

¹ Mário Moutinho PhD, Department of Museology at Lusophone University at Lisbon and MINOM' Vice-president. mcmoutin@gmail.com

As a movement, it combines the efforts of MINOM and many other organizations (public and private) and individuals around the world. Much of the experience of new museums referring to methods, role of the professionals, role of the community and its relation with other stakeholders is a reality all over the world. Local development, sustainability and Inclusion are keywords for this processes.

As a philosophy the new museology, is not necessarily related to the form of ecomuseums or community museums but to the principles of conscientization, participation and social change. A kind of Altermuseology as proposed by Pierre Mayrand. Conscientization lies in the root of new museology, advocating for grass-root participation as well as for informed and capable negotiations among stakeholders.

As a school of thought under the proposal of Sociomuseology

Sociomuseology can be seen as the result of a process of maturity of New Museology as a result of the deep changes in our contemporary society. Sociomuseology seeks to integrate a considerable part of the effort to adapt museum structures to the contemporary society with the new reality of a network society and with new levels of public museums autonomy.

The process of opening up the museum, as well as its organic relation with the social context, has resulted in the need to structure and clarify the relations, notions and concepts that may define this process.

As a school of thought, Sociomuseology constitutes itself as an area of Social Sciences with a teaching theoretical scope, with research focuses on the articulation of museology with other knowledge areas. The multidisciplinary approach of Sociomuseology aims the recognition of museology as a resource, or a tool for sustainable development, based on social and economic inclusion.

Here the process is much similar to the Public Sociology as Michael Burawoy proposed. I believe that deeper articulation between these two areas of social sciences will be of great relevance in the coming years, to understand the contemporary complexity of museology.

But years have passed, and what was new become less new, as far as museums started to integrate new approaches of new museology into the general activities of museums.

The values and principles of the New Museology themselves, structured in the 70, 80 and 90, reveals now insufficient to account the reality of museums life, in a neoliberal world, dealing with the “end of the history”, or the inevitability or the new Iraq wars.

We live in a world where new social representations took shape, where cultural hybridity is not anymore a direct consequence of the return of the colonies, like in the sixties, but the result of second and third generations of migrations into the cites suburbs. The result of dramatic and increasing movements of war refugees. The result of an increasingly unequal world with more poverty, as a result of 40 years of neoliberal policies.

These are issues that require a review of the place of museology and museums in contemporary society in the search for new paths in a process of shared global practices to promote change and a better future.

In this new reality we perceive the creation or reorganization of museums where cohabit different concepts:

1-We think on the so called traditional museum' objects, which now develop new technologies of presentation and that require specific skills centered on marketing, communication and on visiting public.

2-We also think in "formal community Museums" focused on new communication processes and organization, consuming or not the new communication technologies, but mainly oriented to social development, inclusion and experimentation. Those are the museums of new museology

3 - We think on museums that are primarily based on new communication technologies without formal territory, but sharing common social issues: global networks on the web, Issues based museums, conscience sites connecting past struggles to today's movements for human rights and social justice.

4 We also think multimedia museums of creative industries, the imperial museums, where the shape and brightness of technological and architectural solutions overlap the content

For all these models of museums, new professional skills become dominants and define new areas of training from basics to academics. From this point of view the construction of dialogic processes of Paulo Freire, the handling of ubiquitous computing, strategic planning, public evaluation, building brands, leisure marketing, are questions that underpin the different ways that contemporary museology has been assuming.

It is increasingly difficult to imagine an "imperial" museum without some kind of social inclusion programs, or Favela museum without collections of inherited objects, or social web museum network, without new museographic experiments.

It is no longer the difference that makes distinction, but on the contrary is the juxtaposition that defines the contemporary essence of museums.

The challenge of Sociomuseology is certainly to contribute to the understanding of this new museological reality, based on the existence of museums that are established by the simultaneous use of different concepts.

This new category of museums could be called as **Complex Museums**. Complex not by the complexity of the operation of these museological institutions, but complex, by the complexity of the concepts that support there issues.