

To think museology today*

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1- Presentation

In the present text we intend to analyse 5 basic documents that translate the Museological Thinking in our century and that, chiefly, have led professionals of the area to apply this “science” in a less hermetic way and to understand its practice.

The option to study and analyse the documents results from the fact that they influence present day museological practice and thinking. It is impossible to speak of museology nowadays without referring to one of these documents, not to mention a few nations that have even modified and/or created specific laws for the management of their preservationist cultural policy.

Anyway, we are aware that this text intends only to carry out a preliminary approach to the documents, in the sense that the wealth of its content would allow us to slowx over an infinity of issues that they raise.

I specifically refer to the documents produced at UNESCO Regional Seminar on the Role of Museums in Education, which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1958; at the Santiago Round Table in 1972, in Chile; at the 1st New Museology International Workshop, in Quebec, Canada, 1984; at the Oaxtepec Meeting, in Mexico 1984; and

* Cadernos de Sociomuseologia. Sociomuseology Study Centre [*Centro de Estudos de Sociomuseologia*].In: *Museologia: Teoria e Prática*,16 – 1999.

at the Caracas Meeting in 1992. These are documents elaborated within the ICOM –International Council of Museums.

These documents are the result of a joint reflection by professionals who seek the evolution of ideas within their areas of action, recognising that in order to do so it is necessary to leave the cocoon of the museological institutions and try to discuss their conceptual advances with professionals of related areas. It is important to be capacitated to reuse these advances in their areas of action. This is the recognition of the importance of interdisciplinarity for the museological context.

These documents feature a common characteristic: all of them have been elaborated and produced in the American continent. And if we try to understand the importance of such documents for the evolution of museology's concept and practice in the 20th Century, one cannot forget the historical paths in the American Continent, which was, in its length and breadth, marked by the colonisation of Amerindian peoples. The colonisation process has resulted in a mixture of races, with their different cultures and traditions, as well as in some moments when it was also marked by barbarism, destruction of civilisations and traditions.

All of these factors must be remembered when we propose to analyse documents that question dogmas so much, since many of those dogmas have been created and strengthened by the European civilisation, the American Continent's coloniser.

Excepting the Quebec Declaration, which took place in North America, all of the other declarations have been elaborated in Latin America with the almost exclusive participation of Latin American professionals.

Latin America has been historically marked by social, economic and ideological conflicts and the increasing gap that

separate its today underdeveloped countries from the developed countries in the rest of the planet. The Latin American continent has sought, by means of professionals in the museology area, to point at problems existing in the cultural/educational/social areas, and even the economic area, and indicate ways for their solution or at least the easing of the intensity of some issues within the scope of Museology.

For a more in-depth analysis of these documents, the Seminar: “Brazilian Museology and ICOM: Convergences or misdirections” took place in São Paulo in 1995. The seminar aimed at debating the assimilation or not of its directives by the Brazilian museological institutions.

Within this context, a preparatory document was elaborated for the Seminar, containing 5 documents produced between the years of 1958 and 1992, already listed above. Professionals from different generations, scientific areas and nationalities produced these documents in the work meetings they attended. The documents translate fundamental aspects of contemporary museological thinking.

2 - Content of the Documents

1958 Rio de Janeiro

UNESCO Regional Seminar on the Role of Museums in Education

“The museum can bring many benefits for education. This importance does not cease to grow. The issue is to give to the educational role all the importance that it deserves, without decreasing the standard of the institution, nor endangering the fulfilling of the other no less essential purposes: physical conservation, scientific investigation, enjoyment etc...”

(UNESCO Regional Seminar on the Role of Museums in Education. 1958)

The document establishes a study goal for museology: the museological object, understood as an artistic, historical and three-dimensional object. It places emphasis on the educational role of the museums, understanding that the education practised is the formal one; it recognises the museum as if it were an extension of the school.

Much attention is brought to the museographic exhibition, and it criticises the museography of the time for its use of an excessive number of labels and posters in the exhibition: “the exhibition is not a book”. It takes the opportunity to emphasise the didactic character of the exhibition. Seeking alternatives to exhibition display problems, it suggests that the museums appropriate of the new technologies in order to communicate.

It also refers to the importance of the training of professionals for the museology area and suggests the creation of specific courses. It raises many questions regarding the different types of museums and their specialities.

1972 Chile

THE SANTIAGO ROUND TABLE

“ ... the museum is an institution at the service of society, of which it is an integral part and that features within itself elements that allow for the participation in the awareness raising of the communities it serves; that it can contribute to the engagement of these communities in action, situating their activities within a historical framework that allows them to clarify present day problems, that is, linking the past with the present, engaging in the structural changes in course and

provoking other changes in the midst of their respective national realities.”

(Santiago Round Table. 1972)

The Document defines a new concept of museum action: the **Integral Museum**, aimed at providing the population a vision of the whole of its material and cultural environment. With this new concept of museum, the institution is understood as an instrument for social change, as a development instrument and as action. It then worked with the perspective of global heritage.

The museum's role comes to be understood beyond object collection and conservation, for the institution is now seen as a community development agent, playing a decisive role in the community's education. It takes up a social role for the museum.

It deals with the importance of interdisciplinarity in the museological context, speaking of opening the museums to related disciplines, so that the institution becomes aware of the anthropological, socio-economic and technological development of the Latin American nations.

It understands that the museum has sometimes become study centre, as it makes its collections accessible to researchers.

It deals specifically with the problem of the museum in relation to the rural and urban environments, to scientific and technical development, to lifelong education as it believes in the institution's potential in playing the role of an awareness vector regarding the community's problems. Within this context, the museologist is seen as a political and social being.

As it speaks of the importance of modernising museographic techniques, it states that it is necessary to decentralise the museological action by means of a travelling exhibition.

It recommends the creation of technician training courses (college and university levels).

1984 Canada

QUEBEC DECLARATION

“ museology must seek, within a contemporary world that tries to integrate all of the development means, to extend its traditional attributions and roles of identification, conservation and education, into wider practices, so as to better insert its action into those linked to the human and physical environment.”

(Quebec Declaration. 1984)

The meeting evolved from the ideas of new formats for museology into the recognition of a new museological movement in which these new formats of museological action find legitimacy: this is the **New Museology Movement** that would be formalised in Lisbon during the **2nd International Meeting – New Museology/Local Museums, under the denomination of International Movement for a New Museology (MINOM)**, an organisation that was recognised two years later as a International Council of Museums Affiliated Organization (ICOM).

It was essential for the New Museology to deepen the issues of interdisciplinarity within the domain of museology, a fact that challenged the isolated, absolute and reducing knowledge of instituted traditional museology, thus making room for a wider critical reflection.

A museology of social character is mentioned, in opposition to a museology of collections. A new dichotomy is created, one between **New x Traditional Museology**.

Investigation and interpretation took up an important place within the museological context. The aim of museology should be, from this moment on, community development and not only the preservation of past civilisations' material artefacts.

The documents elaborates on a museology that should manifest itself globally in society, therefore it becomes necessary that this science be concerned with social, cultural and economic issues.

1984 Mexico

OAXTEPEC DECLARATION

“Community participation avoids the communication difficulties, characteristic of the museographic monologue undertaken by the specialist, and collects the traditions and the collective memories, placing them alongside scientific knowledge.”

(Oaxtepec Declaration.1984)

In this document the relationship **territory-heritage-community** is considered as indissoluble; it also proposes that museology, be it New or Traditional, should lead Man to confront reality by means of three-dimensional, representative and symbolic elements. In order to do so, dialogue and community participation are needed, avoiding the specialist technical monologue.

It shows that there is a dichotomy between the Old and New Museology.

It defends the *in situ* preservation, and justifies that idea with the argument that on taking heritage off its context, the original idea is modified. The defence of *in situ* preservation derives from the consideration of territorial space as a museographic area.

The idea of cultural heritage is widened, now understanding it as an integrated view of reality. With this it indicates that museology cannot keep isolated anymore, it cannot any longer dissociate itself from the discoveries and scientific advances, of social, economic and political problems.

Museology is reaffirmed as a community development vector and proposes that this enable the community to manage its cultural institutions.

1992 Venezuela

THE CARACAS DECLARATION

“The museological role is, fundamentally, a communicating process that explains and guides the museum’s specific activities, such as collection, conservation and exhibition of cultural and natural heritage. This means that the museums are not only a source of information or education instruments, but are spaces and communication means geared towards the establishment of the communities’ interaction with the cultural process and products.”

(Caracas Declaration. 1992)

The document analyses the present day situation of the Latin American Museums, establishing a profile of the socio-political, economic and technological changes in the previous 20 years in Latin America, in addition to the conceptual and operational transformations taken place in museological institutions.

It understands that museums in Latin America face the challenge of the relationship between the museum and Communication, Heritage, Leadership, Management and Personnel. It redefines the concept developed at the *Santiago Round Table*, from

the Integral Museum into the concept of the Museum Integrated into the Community.

It recommends the reformulation of collecting, conservation, investigation, education and communication policies, all of that in order to establish a significant relation with the community.

It proposes that the museum takes up its responsibility as social manager, by means of museological proposals reflecting the community's interests and to make use of a language committed to reality, this being the only way to transform it.

3 - A Reflection about the Documents

*“Times change, wills change,
Being changes, trust changes,
The whole world is composed of change,
Ever taking up new qualities”*

(Luis de Camões)

The conclusions arrived at the UNESCO Regional Seminar on the Role of Museums in Education, which took place in 1958 Rio de Janeiro, is the first document analysed in this text.

Let's remember that the Seminar took place in Brazil, a country that resulted from the cultural assimilation of distinct peoples – Amerindians, Europeans and Africans. Brazil reached the 20th Century with relative sedimentation of these cultures, the fundamentals of a national identity continually enriched by new elements.

The decades of 1950 and 1960 were marked, in the Brazilian scene, by the labour legislation reforms of the Vargas government, the modernisation of the industrial national grid (the creation of the Electricity National Company is a symbolic example), the political

changes that followed the suicide of president Getúlio Vargas, the construction of the city of Brasilia (which aimed at a kind of rebirth of a Brazil full of “potentialities”) and the later transference of the country’s Capital city, and the 1964 Coup that plunged the country in a dictatorial military regime.

Within the global context, this is the moment when the world witnesses the generalised decolonisation processes, the Bandung Non-Aligned Countries Conference in 1955, the strengthening of the Communist movement in China, East-European countries and in Cuba, the modernisation process of Europe’s industry and development of Trade-union organisations and the strengthening of the Latin American dictatorships.

The understanding of Cultural Heritage in general reflects consequences of the post-War period. As an inheritance of this period, one highlight the patent fact that a large portion of the architectural and monumental heritage had been destroyed, as well as the pillaging of art works between countries had taken place, as well as the development of the art trade. Within this context the International Council of Museums, the ICOM, is created under UNESCO’s protection.

Reflecting this situation, several professionals met in 1958 to discuss the museums’ educational role and to consider that the museums’ space was adequate to exercise **formal education**, a new fact for the museological thinking of the time.

In the Rio de Janeiro document, education in the museum is still seen as an extension of the school and not as a social transformation agent. Paulo Freire’s thinking would only later in time interest the museum world. The same Document is fundamentally concerned with the museological exhibition and the resources that the museum resorts to in order to communicate with the public.

Forty years after the Seminar and the production of this Document, many of the aspects approached in this document have suffered deep transformations that have led to its “ageing”, but we must recognise that it was fundamental for the era in which it was produced and because it converged with the longings of many museology professionals, dissatisfied with the limitations that traditional museology imposed on them. The Seminar was important as it has raised issues that would later lead to the transformation of the museum in development agent.

During the 1970’s Latin America was ridden by military dictatorships. A tense atmosphere was established everywhere due to the fact that large portions of the population opposed the military regime and sought the institutionalisation of more democratic regimes. On struggling for the adoption of the democratic system, the improvement of the economic and social conditions was intended, as well as the possibility of voicing political issues and issues related to the exercise of citizenship.

The Santiago Round Table, carried out in Chile in 1972, can be considered as the first interdisciplinary meeting, concerned with the interdisciplinarity in the museological context and geared towards the museum’s role in society.

This document proposes that museology should study the relationship that humanity establishes with cultural heritage, and that the museum should be understood as social transformation instrument and agent.

The museologist is now asked to take up a political/ideological position, for as a professional working in an institution that aims social development, he or she is now understood as a political actor.

The concern with the museums' educational action is a reality that intensifies in American countries from the 1970's on. This is a period when Education also undergoes transformations provoked by new pedagogic trends. It is also a moment in which educators begin to seek museological institutions as extensions of the school, stimulating the emergence of an educational sector that had previously mostly been concerned with the training of guides, elaboration of didactic material and fixing of guided tours.

In the bosom of this new trend there is now a more careful gaze cast over the new pedagogic processes and the search for the adaptation of these processes to cultural and educational actions of museological character.

With the Santiago Round Table Declaration, the museological community cannot ignore anymore that the museum begins to play a decisive role in the community's education and becomes a development agent. Because it now understands that the museums' biggest potential is its educational action and true education is one that serves liberation, questioning and reflection, the new museology trends have appropriated, after this Declaration, the pedagogical method put forward by Paulo Freire. Freire understands education as the practice of liberty and builds the theory of the Dialogical and Problem-posing Education in which the educator-educatee relationship is horizontal, that is: he believes that from dialogue and reflection men and women educate themselves in communion.

“Now no one educates no one, as equally nobody educates oneself: men and women educate themselves in communion, mediated by the world.”

(FREIRE, 1987:69)¹

The dialogical educational action theory, with which contemporary museology has much evolved, is based on collaboration, union by liberation and the negation of the banking education. So it is an educational trend that encompasses Man as a participative being who seeks in collaboration and union with other individuals the emersion of consciences and knowledge leading to the critical insertion in reality, seeking to ground on dialogue (as exercise for liberation), on creativity and critical reflection. This more democratic thinking about education fully coincides with the museological thinking that was legitimated after the Santiago Round Table.

Twenty-six years after its elaboration, the Santiago Round Table Declaration continues to serve as a base for the elaboration of other documents. One can state that in this Document the Museum still held a dominant role.

Ratifying this idea, Horta, when she analyses the document produced in the Santiago Round Table, writes that:

“The function of the Museum in the Santiago document still postulates the ‘intervention’ in the social environment and its territory, still holding the position of a ‘teacher’, making the ‘public’ aware of the need to ‘preserve’ cultural and natural heritage. We still have a

¹ FREIRE, Paulo. *Extensão ou comunicação*. [Extension or Communication], Paz e Terra, 18ª ed. 1987.

museum full of certainties, a museum defining a discourse that, no matter how revolutionary, is still monologist. The idea of a 'museum' in its new 'integral' format, is still nebulous, as a 'role' (representation, image?) to be played, which is configured more ideologically, politically, socially than functionally, specifically, technically, pragmatically."

(Horta. 1995: 34)²

The Museum in the Santiago Declaration is still understood as Protagonist for the undertaking of activities with the community. But that does not reduce the merit of having been the most innovative - and why not say revolutionary - of all the documents, the one that brought about the widest conceptual transformations to the museological context.

The Santiago Document featured as a novelty the concept of the **Integral Museum** – the institution now played the role of working with the community by means of the Global Heritage vision – **the idea of the museum as action**.

Oaxtepec Document was written in 1984, the same year of the Quebec Declaration and reaffirms many of the issues raised and recommended by the Santiago Round Table and also in Quebec.

The Documents produced in Quebec and Oaxtepec brought into the museological context a few conceptual discussions, for in the desire to legitimate the New Museology Movement, it had created an antagonism between the **Traditional Museology** and the **New Museology**, elaborating on the existence of two antagonistic types of museology.

² Maria de Lourdes Parreira Horta. Twenty years after Santiago: the Caracas Declaration - 1992. [20 anos depois de Santiago: a declaração de Caracas - 1992]. In A memória do Pensamento contemporâneo: documentos e depoimentos, 1995.

In order to mark the supposed differences between the “two museologies”, comparative tables were drawn up, with which it was intended to show that the Traditional Museology was the one that is carried out inside the building, with a collection, serving a specific public exercising an educational role (formal education); while New Museology was exercised within a territory, working with cultural heritage together with a participating community. The Table below reflects this thinking:

• TRADITIONAL MUSEOLOGY	• NEW MUSEOLOGY
• Buildings	• Territory
• Collections	• Heritage / Patrimony
• Specific Public	• Participating Community
• Educational Role	Museum understood as a pedagogical act towards development.

At that moment, at first sight, one could think that a new museology opposed an old and archaic museology. But in truth what happened with the museological “science”, as well as with other social sciences, was an awakening to all that was going on in the contemporary world, by means of a more acute vision of the transformations taking place in society and a search for updating and for more contemporary action, and not the emergence of a new museology.

One cannot speak of two museologies, for what actually existed were two different forms of acting within museological “science”. It is possible to say that one of these formats is basically concerned with administrative, documental and object preservation

issues; the other action format is more devoted to the needs and social desires, and thus works with the idea of heritage understood in its global character; the preservation, conservation and documentation actions are carried out from the point of view of this more global notion of heritage. At the end of the 20th Century and beginning of the following millennium, it became increasingly clear that it was possible (at least seemingly) to work in the social sciences with one's back turned to humanity and the world around us, a world full of differences, dichotomies and culture pluralities.

The Quebec Declaration text does not bring any conceptual novelties, but its importance is due to having recognised the existence of the New Museology Movement, thus legitimating a more active, socialising, dialogic and internationally autonomous museological practice.

The 1990's find Latin America with a formal "democratic" system established as a fact, though in some cases this very system was out-of-step with the socio-cultural realities of Latin American countries. The adoption of the democratic system was in part a frustration to the Latin American peoples, for its implementation did not promote an expected noticeable change in the social-economic or cultural systems.

Capitalistic economy has provoked a deepening of the crisis, accelerating the change in values and the communities' socio-cultural disintegration; besides digging a bigger gap between developed and underdeveloped countries.

The great change or novelty in the Caracas Declaration, elaborated in 1992, is the evolution of the integral museum concept into the integrated museum concept. This Declaration rereads the document produced in Santiago, pointing at the permanence of many

of its postulates and influences in the present day concept of the museum.

The Caracas Declaration does not sustain the museum's role as that of a teacher, it is a museum no longer full of the certainties that defined its monologue. What is being sought after now is the institution to find room for dialogue. Equally, the pedagogical role, referred to in the Rio de Janeiro Declaration of 1958, should now be transformed into a committed mission, which is translated into a practice strengthened by museological theory and by the elaboration of basic documents.

In Santiago, the concept of global heritage is much discussed, but it is in Caracas that one speaks of the community as co-manager of this heritage, featuring its own vision and interests.

If one observes carefully the Santiago Round Table and the Caracas Declaration, one shall notice many points in common:

- both Declarations denounce inequality and injustice;
- reflect on the role of the museological organisations in Latin America;
- recognise the museum as an institution at the community's service;
- they claim for the museum a role of social transformation;
- and understand the museum as a dynamic space that enables and stimulates critical awareness, besides serving as an instrument for identity development and affirmation.

“Confronting the two declarations, one can say that if the Santiago Declaration is the awaking of the awareness that the museums may contribute in some way to the development of society and for the

improvement of life quality, the Caracas Declaration is a consolidation position of museology within society.”

(PEDROSO DE LIMA, 1993: 91-92)³

Besides the Integrated and Integral Museum Concepts, these five declarations have brought about many changes that came to be legitimated and that have given new expression to museology in the 20th Century.

The museum now acts, independently of its typology and collections, as a communication channel and is strengthened as a social intervener; new museographic practices are redefined, aiming the greater efficacy of the museological action. The implementation of University level courses is begun, for the training of professionals who will work with Museology, as well as the construction process of Museology as a Social Science. New museum typologies emerge and gain legitimacy, as is the case of open-air museums, Ecomuseums, neighbourhood museums, local museums...

4 - Conclusion

“ A culture is evaluated in time and is inserted in the historical process, not only by the diversity of the elements that constitute it, or by the quality of the representation that emerges from them, but, above all, by its continuity. This continuity encompasses modifications and changes in an open and flexible process of constant redefinition, which guarantees to a culture its survival. For harmonious

³ A evolução de Conceitos entre as Declarações de Santiago e de Caracas [*The Concepts evolution between the Santiago and the Caracas Declaration*]. In: Cadernos de Museologia n.º 01. Francisco PEDROSO DE LIMA.

development, it presupposes the awareness of a large segment of the historical past.”

ALOÍSIO DE MAGALHÃES.

The basic grounding for the elaboration of the work was the analysis of the five documents produced between the years of 1958 and 1992. In order to do so, it was necessary to take the concepts of museum and museology understood in their relations with the historical process, as well as the influences that these documents have exerted on this evolution.

ICOM presents in its Statutes of 1995 the following definition of museum:

A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.

(a) The above definition of a museum shall be applied without any limitation arising from the nature of the governing body, the territorial character, the functional structure or the orientation of the collections of the institution concerned.

(b) In addition to institutions designated as "museums" the following qualify as museums for the purposes of this definition:

(i) natural, archaeological and ethnographic monuments and sites and historical monuments and sites of a museum nature that acquire, conserve and communicate material evidence of people and their environment;

(ii) institutions holding collections of and displaying live specimens of plants and animals, such as botanical and zoological gardens,

aquaria and vivaria;

(iii) science centres and planetaria;

(iv) non profit art exhibition galleries; conservation institutes and exhibition galleries permanently maintained by libraries and archives centres.

(v) nature reserves;

(vi) international or national or regional or local museum organizations, ministries or departments or public agencies responsible for museums as per the definition given under this article;

(vii) non-profit institutions or organizations undertaking conservation, research, education, training, documentation and other activities relating to museums and museology;

(viii) cultural centres and other entities that facilitate the preservation, continuation and management of tangible or intangible heritage resources (living heritage and digital creative activity).

(ICOM Statutes 1995:2-3)⁴

We have stressed item (vii) because we consider that contemporary museology, as it manifests greater vitality, creativity and commitment beyond what has been inadequately conventionalised as “what a museum should be”, regardless of what ICOM itself recognises.

However, in this text the museum is understood as an institutionalised or not space, where humanity’s relations – the subject who knows – with the museological fact – evidence of reality – are established. This reality features Man’s participation, who holds the power to act and therefore establish its action of modification.

⁴ ICOM Statutes. 1995.

In the course of the 20th Century, several factors have contributed to the change/transformation of the museum concept, especially after the 2nd World War and, according to Peter Van Mensch (MENSCH. 1989: 49-50), these factors have been grounded on the many suggestions indicated in the Documents studied for the elaboration of this text. These are:

- The change in the focus of study, from object-based to community. The museum is now made with the community in order to respond to its needs. To conserve objects is not the institutions' only goal anymore; cultural heritage must be understood as an element at the disposal of humanity and its descendants, helping them to build a new social, political, economic and cultural structure;
- the concept of cultural object was widened and in the present day approaches to issues such as tangibility, rarity and mobility have become questionable. The cultural inheritance transcends the materialism that characterised the previous acquisition policy;
- there is a tendency for the *in situ* preservation. The museum object must be preserved in its original context, so that its meaning is globally understood;
- the concept of the “traditional”, centralised and strongly institutionalised museum is exhausted and so there emerges concepts such as a decentralised, integral, integrated museum as a social development factor and the museum as action.

Thus, an institution that grounds its activities on these presuppositions is fit not only to the selective preservation of some cultural aspects of a society, but from the action and reflection instruments with which will invest the members that compose it.

Despite some contemporary museology professionals' attempts to apply the integration binomial: community/museum through militancy and action, a traditional vision still survives, standing in opposition to changes in the world's perception and, in this vision where the social aspect is not privileged, issues such as cultural property and citizenship are still understood in an elitist and excluding manner.

*“It is indispensable to hold an integrated view of reality, one that minimizes the dividing of the technical, social and international division of labour (...). To concentrate heritage in a building modifies the original corresponding context. The consideration of the territorial space with museographic scope of a complete reality context.”*⁵

(Oaxtepec Declaration. 1984)

Based on this approach, one can say that when the preservation act takes place in an out of context manner, with no use aim, it is not justified. It is necessary that preservation is understood as an instrument for the exercise of citizenship. The preservation action must be a transforming public act that provides full appropriation of the cultural property by the subject.

The exercise of citizenship only takes place when the individual knows the reality in which he or she is inserted, the preserved memory, the present day events, understanding the transformations and seeking a new way of doing.

⁵ *Oaxtepec Declaration*. Mexico- 1984

The need for a more participating museological activity, integrated to the community, is something present since the Santiago Declaration, but if one refers to the Recommendations that are contained in the Caracas Declaration, one can state that:

*“That the museum seeks the full participation of its museological and communication function, as a relationship space of individuals and communities with their heritage and, as social integration links, taking into account the different cultural codes in its discourses and exhibition languages, allowing for their recognition and valorisation.”*⁶

(Caracas Declaration. 1992)

With the transformations in society, there merges a need for a museum activity of greater social intervention. Officially, this participating and community museology is legitimated through the elaboration of basic documents for museology such as the Santiago Round Table, Quebec Declaration, Oaxtepec Declaration and the Caracas Declaration, important documents as they bring about a change in the way museum understands humanity and its relations; the cultural heritage that is now considered is so not only for its intrinsic characteristics but for a whole range of information that lies beyond them, and a new concept of museum and museology.

Due to the transformations taken place in the way of understanding museology, Waldisa Rússio has brought into this area of knowledge a new concept, that of the museological fact. Understood as a relation that is established between Man (the subject that knows) and the object (cultural heritage) within a space

⁶ *Caracas Declaration*. Venezuela. 1992.

(scenario); this relation is what becomes museology's target of study. For Waldisa, the changes taken place in the world have lead museology professionals to seek a greater approximation with the individual's life dynamics, so present-day museology is not limited to the study of objects anymore and thus has widened its action scope.

We can say that the museology grounded on Cultural Heritage leads the individual to the re-appropriation of collective memory and to the right to the exercise of its citizenship, as this heritage is fruit of humanity's activity and know-how. Such museology performs the basic roles of collecting, documenting, conserving, exhibiting and of cultural action, all of them geared towards the educational-cultural activity in the attempt to awake the individual's critical awareness.

In the course of the 20th Century, the museums' concern with the educational action is a reality that intensifies, as education also becomes understood as one of the museum's basic roles. With this, the transformations taken place in the Education Sciences, chiefly from the 1960's on, have profoundly influenced the understanding of the educational action developed by these institutions.

Historically, Education Science was understood sometimes in the perspective of an individualistic conception of education, and in others as a socialising conception. The first conception was based on the fact that if all individuals are different, education should respect these differences and adapt its methods and techniques to educate each individual differently. The second conception, in its turn, was grounded on the principle that each human being is part of social groups, and therefore the act of educating must privilege the integration of the individual into society; socialising education is based on the presupposition that there is a supremacy of society over the individual.

In the course of the 20th Century, new education concepts have emerged between these two concepts, geared more towards the knowledge building processes, leading to full learning. It is an educational process that, being grounded on the questioning of a passive and vertical education, proposes an education based on the Know How to Do, Learn by Doing and on questioning, believing that only thus the educatee would reach Full and Real Learning.

Because true education is that which leads to liberation, questioning and reflection, and because the museums greatest potential is educational action, is that a few museology professionals have brought in, from the 1970's on, the Paulo Freire method into the "world of museums".

One could sum up in very brief terms Paulo Freire's theory, which it is based on collaboration, union by liberation, cultural synthesis, dialogue, creativity, critical reflection and the denial of repressive education⁷. Thus an educational practice/theory that encompasses the individual as a participating being who seeks, in collaboration with the other individuals, the emergence of awareness and knowledge.

*"Now no one educates no one, as equally nobody educates oneself: men and women educate themselves in communion, mediatized by the world."*⁸

(FREIRE, 1981:69)

Based on Paulo Freire and others, museological educational action must create situations that lead the involved subjects towards

⁷ The author defines it as schoolbench education.

⁸ Paulo Freire. *Pedagogia do Oprimido* [Pedagogy of the Oppressed]. 1981

reflection and development. Only in this way there will be a contribution for a dialogical and liberating education, where the individuals are capacitated to transform their reality.

Among the museological actions, cultural and educational actions are understood as the more viable instruments that cultural heritage can resort to as a vector capable of providing the construction of a progressive comprehension of the many structural levels guiding its dynamics.

With the changes taken place in the concepts of museum and museology and the new emergent social needs, there have also been a redefinition of the educational roles within the scope of the museums. Museology theoreticians unite in the effort to give form to a trend that reflects about the role of museological action in the educational field. And this concern is patent in all of the five documents analysed and discussed in this text.

Museological action must create situations that lead to development and reflection of the community. Only in this way there will be a contribution to a dialogical and liberating education, where the individuals are capacitated to transform their reality. This aspect of contemporary museology is perceived on the moment that the museum comes to be considered a communication space and of knowledge exchange.

For this reason, the Museum institution is attributed value not only for its architectural heritage and its collections, but also and above all for its representativeness before the community in which it is placed.

As a result of these new trends of thought, present-day museology features one more current: social museology, whose chief characteristic is the valorisation of Man as participating subject,

critical and aware of reality, a fact that in our view transcends the valorisation of material culture isolated from social reality.