Museologial Process: exclusion criteria*18

Maria Célia Teixeira Moura Santos

1- Introduction

In the last few years, reflections around knowledge building in the museology area have increased considerably, allowing us to cast many gazes over our actions, and, consequently, enabling us to a wider debate around our professional action field, decreasing our *exclusion* from the academic environment – museologists reproducing the knowledge produced in other areas.

In the present work, we shall approach some issues related to the museological process, taking as a reference several studies about the subject, which, due to the time given to us in this round table, could not be re-presented here for discussion. Besides, we have dedicated a chapter to such approach in our publication titled "Museological Process and Education: building a didactic-community museum". So we have opted instead to carry out a reflection about *exclusion*, looking into the museum institution and into the application of museological processes; in other words, we shall carry out a self-criticism, in which I include myself, affecting an analysis that will be debated here, considering, additionally, that the museums and museological practices are in relation to the other social global

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practices, therefore, they are the result of human relations at each historical moment.

Finally, based on our lived experience, we shall give continuity to our reflection process, highlighting the importance of knowledge production for the area of museology and the relevance of the theory-practice relation, punctuating some aspects we think that may contribute to the construction of a museological action that may serve as a historical elaboration in securing a space for self-determination.

2- Museological Process: an action of exclusion?

The analysis of the museological process presupposes turning explicit the fact that its application takes place within the most diverse contexts in humanity's relation with the world; therefore, this process is impregnated, marked by the results of the action itself, immersed in the concrete, cultural reality, in which the social subjects are placed; thus, the application of research, preservation and communication museological processes, starting from the qualification of cultural activity, is conditioned historically and socially.

The relationship between the museological process and exclusion, which cannot be understood apart from the attempt of an approximation with a real vision of society as a historical construction trespassed by conflicts, antagonisms and struggles, in which the issue of power is always present, demanding to be socialised and set into a framework. The museum-society relationship has been made evident by the technicians' action who carry out, for better or for worse, the cultural policy established by current systems, fulfilling goals and aims proposed by certain segments. These goals and aims are devoid, most of times, of actions committed to social development, or, at the

most, there are specified goals and directives that translate a concern with the greater approximation between the museum institutions and society's longings, but generally remain on paper, due to the many obstacles hindering its undertaking.

To speak of exclusion is to speak of social inequalities, a theme much discussed and studied in depth by many authors, which excuse us from the responsibility of discussing at length, for we would not even have the competence to do so. We seek, in the existing bibliographic production, some support needed for the relation with our field of activity – museology.

In this sense, I have appropriated the category of poverty, analysed by Pedro Demo (1996), as a synonym for social inequality, when he studies social well being, seeking to cast a critical evaluation glance over our actions. The author brings our attention to the fact that poverty is not restricted to the problem of material lack, perceived above all by means of hunger. He stresses that if we observe well, our vision of poverty is very "poor". On the one hand, we keep only the physical, material manifestation, leaving aside a "poverty of the spirit". On the other, he stresses, additionally, that we ignore what is markedly the core of poverty: the political ground of oppressive marginalisation. Poverty, defines Demo, "is the process of repression to social advantages". Carrying on, he distinguishes two more typical poverty horizons: socio-economic poverty and political poverty, bringing our attention to the fact that one is related to the other. The author characterises socio-economic poverty as imposed material lack, translated in the commonly recognised precariousness of social well-being: hunger, shanty town, unemployment, child mortality, disease etc., stressing that this horizon has been more researched. Social-economic poverty features methodological advantages mobilised in

academic procedures, such as "social indicators", because these are quantifiable. He also characterises political poverty as the historical difficulty of the poor to overcome the condition of manipulated object, in order to reach that of a conscious subject organised around his or her interests. The author highlights that political poverty is manifested in the quality dimension but is not reducible to that, also being conditioned by material lack, which indicates the citizenship deficit. As political quality is not measured, one notices that this horizon is less studied due to methodological difficulties for its measuring. On the other hand, there is always a State intervention with difficulties in understanding that social policy should not always be of State nature. The author emphasises that a people who constitute just a manipulated mass is politically poor, that is, it is not a people proper, but the oligarchies' manipulation object. He also brings attention to the fact that, more than ever, the overcoming of political poverty can only be the first initiative of the real interested party (our stress).

As we have already dedicated some time thinking about the characteristics of the Brazilian educational and cultural policy in the social, political and economic contexts, analysing their influence on the activity of the museological institutions in previously published texts (Santos, 1993, 1996), we shall seek to approach now the relation: *Museological process-exclusion*, initially situating the museological activity by means of a glance inwards, that is, with an evaluation of our own actions, as technicians and in interaction with the other; the exclusion, caused by ourselves in our political - as well as social and economic - poverty; to face up to these actions in the museum's daily practice, which is going to reflect, consequently, on the goals and aims of our institutions. The choice of such focus is related to the lack, perceived by us, of an analysis that would allow the characterisation of the museum's social action from within. We always displace the

discussion's axle on the subject of museum and society towards the relationship with the public, with the community, forgetting that the public and the community are also us, and that only by starting from a criticism and self-criticism process, internal and external, is that we will be able to take up our social commitment.

I shall take the management of museum institutions and the application of research, preservation and communication actions as parameters for the discussion of our problem – *museological process: an action of exclusion*? We must clarify that, for us, the application of the museological process is not restricted to the museum institution, as it can pre-date the museum's objective existence or indeed can be applied to any social context. We take up the definition of the museum fact as *the qualification of culture in an interactive process involving the actions of research, preservation an communication, aiming the construction of a new social practice.*

From now on, we shall try to place the museological actions within the context of the organisation and the management of museum institutions, for we consider that these should be integrated to the institution's aims and goals. In the organisation and management of museums or of projects developed in our area, or in relation to other areas of knowledge, one notices that the subjects involved are considered as separate categories, where to each one is allotted the task to execute actions planned and thought out by "illuminated heads". In general, the subjects are excluded from the moment of conception, of defining goals and aims for the institution's directive plan, if these exist at all, or else the people are not even heard and properly clarified on the plan to be executed. There is no room for group contribution, for exchange, for mutual enriching, for healthy criticism, because of our political poverty that does not allow us to see

beyond our interests and our own navels. Besides, our social and economic poverty is used to justify the accommodation, the stagnation and the absence of creative actions that point to the solutions of our problems.

The museological actions are completely excluded from the organisation and management activities, as in a odd jigsaw puzzle of ill-fitting pieces, because the technical activities of research, preservation and communication are also applied in separate compartments, in a complete dissociation between means and ends (Santos, 1996, Chagas, 1996), or else discriminated by "researchers, thinking heads and narrow minds" from other areas, who consider us mere knowledge reproducers. Thus, the application of museological actions has been the result of the application of technique for technique's sake, rather than the result of a process.

Within this context, from the management point of view, the conditions for unbridled completion are set, which facilitates inclusion or exclusion, by means of improper practices that the absence of political quality leads us to passively accept, as for instance, our so well known practice of "carpet bagging". The absence of a leadership able to identify, to manage and to try to solve conflicts, without camouflage, perhaps remains as one of our greatest lacks. Inequality rules, as do a thirst for stardom, individualism, lack of cooperation and the lack of a vision of the institution as a whole.

Another aspect worth highlighting is the lack of exchange between museological institutions. The absence of integrated projects, even between institutions within the same administrative sphere, be it at the municipal, state or federal levels, demonstrate the lack of correlation between our collections, which should be explored, worked on and, by means of a trans-disciplinary action going beyond the internal organisation of each discipline, seek the indispensable

links to the comprehension of the world in its integrity. Our insulation, so often marked by prejudice, is perhaps one of the causes that hinder the growth of the museological process. It is not rare to find, among the professionals of the area, the use of labels and separatist attitudes by those who embrace the new museology, the community museums, the "traditional" museums, which all demonstrates our poverty, our small mindedness, stopping the healthy exchange, the enriching of our experience of the other, the incentive to creativity and the opening of new paths, without having to despise the historically built knowledge. This internal process of inequality and exclusion has often sparked disenchantment, low self-esteem, the disincentive to the search for new solutions and even, the flight of professionals from our institutions.

Still on the isolation of our museological institutions, I quote an example I am now living: I have been working on a project for six years in a state school in the city of Salvador. The actions taken there resulted on the setting up of a museum within the school. The results obtained have allowed us to advance in terms of the theoretical – methodological issues in the areas of museology and education. With the aim of widening horizons and allowing for the interaction with other processes, by initiative of our team, we have carried out various projects with other categories of museums in our city, in which students and teachers, from different levels of teaching, had access, for the first time, to these institutions. From the choice of themes and the actions' undertaking up to the evaluation, we have acted as *provocateurs*, in other words, we have "leaned heavily" so that the necessary interactions with the other technicians from other museums took place, who, with rare exceptions, did not even show interest in knowing our programmes' goals.

Another piece of information that serves as a parameter for our analysis, regarding the isolation of our institutions and the reduction of the room for action, as well as regarding our museums' isolation, is that since its implementation up to the present moment, we have never been contacted by professionals from other museological institutions in our city with the aim of carrying out joint projects or of knowing about the processes developed by us, though there have been requests in that regard by institutions from abroad and schools on different levels in the city of Salvador; what leads us to the conclusion that the need is not felt, nor is part of the aims and goals of museological institutions. Unluckily, there is no movement in that direction.

Trying to think about our inequalities and our exclusion processes is a necessary task if we hope to decrease our political and socio-economic poverty. We consider that it is almost impossible to keep an open relationship with the other, that is, the relationship of the museum with the diverse segments in society, if we do not face up to our contradictions, in a constant process of self-evaluation. It would be naive to think that these contradictions do not exist or that they will be expunged, as if in a sleight-of-hand, in an isolated action by the technician. To identify them and to feel that we are also the public, the community, the citizen, in our opinion, is the first step. We consider that there are some paths to be pointed to in the sense that each one of us can come to build within a concrete historical context.

3- Challenges and Perspectives

I think that one of the first challenges to be considered is to take the relevant points, detected by the evaluation process, as indicators for our action. In this sense, I consider that our problems

can be situated within the fields of formal quality (technological challenge and scientific instrumentation) and of political quality (educational challenges, in the sense of conceiving alternative futures for society). *"The intellectual is not worth what he or she 'know' in terms of technical expertise, but equally he or she is 'worth' in terms of being an agent of change"* (Demo 1996).

If we analyse the course of History, we shall notice that the recent international transformations are the result of the work of many people and communities organised in different economic and cultural contexts. In this sense, Sander (1995) highlights the importance of the capacity for human collective creation and action in the construction and reconstruction of intellectual perspectives and in the adoption of political solutions, by means of governmental action and the citizen-like participation, exercised from the most diverse cultural scenarios. The author brings our attention to the fact that these elements are observed, daily, in our social organisations, in which human intentionality and organised and concrete action by political society and by civil society are decisive factors in the construction of a free and equitable world. In this way, he stresses that the new matrix of world power that we need to collectively build must surpass both the dichotomic perspective and the one-dimensional vision of politics and society, making room for a multidimensional or multi-paradigmatic guidance with increasing cultural content and a equitable action strategy based on democratic participation.

In the present moment, museology must tune in, in any of its tendencies, with the paths taken by contemporary science. So, the making an issue of institutional and operational themes, by means of the collections, will also question the meaning of science, contributing to make of museology itself and its practice also object of reflection,

since museums should be considered as the "locus" for the production of knowledge.

The consolidation of a museological policy must be processed taking as a referential a theoretical framework that is inherent to museums and the museums processes, giving room to the development of the institutions' directives, preserving their specificities, as it should be an essential support for the adequate exploration of as yet unrealised potentials.

Therefore, the application of museological actions, must be grounded on theory and on the necessary relationship between theory and practice, allowing for both to be strengthened and enriched. We return to the concept of museum fact, already defined above:

Qualification of culture in an interactive process of research, preservation and communication actions, aiming the building of a new social practice,

seeking a better understanding of this concept, since we have taken it to be our essential support in the development of the museum process. We stress once more that in our conception, the museological process can pre-date the existence of the museum, and should find in research the essential support for its development. The process of knowledge building will then lead to the process of integration into the museum (*musealisation*), processed in social practice – within or without the museum – within its real dynamics, considering the dimensions of time and space, approaching culture as integrated into daily life dimensions, widening its worth, awareness and meaning dimensions. Thus, the museological research, preservation and communication actions do not aim at cultural representation, understanding culture as a separate domain, in the form of events, or separating the objects

from the cultural practices that imprint them meaning, marked by the dissociation between producer and consumer. In this process, what is effectively sought is the interaction of technicians with the other subjects involved, motivating the undertaking of new social practices, that is: our theoretical-methodological proposal is grounded on dialogue, on discussion and in interactive contexts, understanding that the communication process permeates all museological actions, allowing for integration and enriching, recognising in integral patrimony an educational and development tool.

      Research, preservation and communication actions referenced on cultural patrimony cannot be dissociated from participation and development. Being so, the application of technique for technique's sake is out-of-date; at least recognisably outdated in our reflection and evaluation activities, though, in practice, still is the most recurring one.

      Identity preservation is necessary, for it is essential community heritage, and should be development's essential support. Demo (1996) illustrates the relation identity-development, highlighting that the aboriginal Amerindian wants his identity, but also wants a tractor, and stresses: "identity that cultivates poverty is going in the wrong direction". On the other hand, there is no point in turning against the culture of the elite, because this is also an important social and historical heritage. The recognition and the respect to plurality and to cultural diversity, and consequently to the diverse museums' categories and the diverse museum processes, is urgent and necessary. This is one of the challenges posed, in the sense of diminishing inequality and exclusion.

      We also consider that another challenge to be met with formal quality and political quality is the management of museological institutions, fed by a conception, or by several conceptions,

encompassing the construction of knowledge as processes. We highlight, in this sense, theory's carrying out power, turning concepts real, in the passage from the symbolic universe that has conceived it to the daily labour of those involved in the process. If we understand that museological institutions result from the creation of a group in constant reflection, and consequently, in permanent transformation, we recognise that its process will always be dynamic, in the sense of re-creation.

It becomes necessary to reflect about the performance of the museology courses, highlighting that its greatest commitment should be to qualitative performance, training professionals who are able to produce knowledge, also seeking the creative intersection of conceptual and analytical contributions from other disciplines, contributing with the necessary renovation of museum processes, adapting the methodological and technical procedures to the different realities, with the necessary opening for evaluation and critical reflection.

It urges to recognise the importance of training courses, in the sense of contributing effectively to the theoretical-methodological advances in our professional fields, stressing, however, the need for a greater opening in the sense of giving their curricula substantially relevant contents, without losing sight that its biggest mission is the political-cultural mission. And this greater aim cannot be reached only within the closed spaces of Academia. Sirvent (1984), analysing the relationship between formal and informal education, suggests that is possible to organise a complex educational action resulting from an interaction network between the several educational resources. It is not a matter of adding isolated components, but of integrating them around common educational goals. In this network, a formal education or a redefinition of its role before the community and the educational

non-formal resources of formal education is inserted. The author suggests, further, that the macro system institutions would be constituted in an open system in continuous communication, both between themselves and with the environment in which they are placed. Unluckily, the experiences up to now shows that the less flexible institutions regarding dynamic change are the schools.

Commenting on democratic management and the quality of education, Sander (1995) records that the construction and reconstruction of knowledge in education and in an educational management committed to quality and equity implies great effort. He brings our attention to the fact that this effort takes up enormous proportions in Latin America, where countries need to urgently multiply their scientific and technological knowledges, in order to actively participate and equitably benefit from the political and social transformations without precedent in the modern world that are currently taking place. In a study carried out in 1988, Espínola analyses what had been written about quality in education in Latin America from 1980 onwards, and, among other aspects, he analyses the impact of education on the level of social structure. One recognises the educational system as one more cog in the social structure and quality is evaluated in terms of the effects of education on the wider social system, questioning the weight or impact of education on the social structure and evaluating its capacity to produce global changes. The studies carried out have coincided three aspects:

· The quality of the educational systems in deficient in Latin America;
· Diagnoses on the existing quality levels must be carried out, in other words, the evaluation of the available quality;

.   The situation is so critical that it is not possible to keep o the quality measuring efforts, but it is necessary to produce quality.

As we reflected about the museological process, placing it within the other social global practices, starting from a self-criticism of our living experiences, we have aimed to, with the analysis here undertaken, to point to some ways that will enable us to take up our social commitment with quality, which implies our participation, immersed in our daily practice. Demo (1994) highlights that *quality is participation*; indeed, it is the main human achievement, both in the sense of being more than ever, an achievement – given the difficulty of carrying it out in a desirable way – as in the sense of being the most human imaginable – because it is, specifically, the form of human achievement. It is humanity's best work of art in its history, because worthy history is the participative history, that is, history with the lesser possible degree of inequality, exploitation, commodification, of oppression. In the core of Man's political desires is participation, which segments eternal goals of self-management, of democracy, of liberty and of living together.

Challenges are numerous. However, to speak of museum processes and their application to diverse contexts aiming social development without facing up to our contradictions, our weaknesses, constitutes a fallacy. The reduction in inequality, and consequently, in the exclusion processes within our action fields, is directly related to the mobilisation of our participation, provided we are interested in building participation. Only thus we shall be contributing to diminish our political social-economic poverty.