



**Aspects of social and cultural inclusion at museums:
The experience of Pinacoteca**

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When developing educational projects within museological institutions, it's important to have some conceptual presuppositions as starting points and also as conductive axis. The technical and specific issues of each museum and each working team relate to the chosen methodological aspects, as well as to the pedagogical lines of thought that speaks more to the institution, its typology, its collection and its expository mode. Nevertheless, I believe that there are some other issues that are equally important and deserve to be considered, like the role of culture and heritage to our society and its ideological aspects. Developing museological projects, being them educational or not, always implies in taking ideological stands when concerning the social role of institution – being the institution aware of this or not. Even when we strive to be “strictly technical”, we are positioning ourselves, which means that the alleged neutrality is not possible.

Having these observations in mind, I'll present here some of the choices we have made and some of the concepts we've adopted for the developing of the Sociocultural Inclusion Program (PISC) of the Pinacoteca's Education Department since 2002. First, we consider the culture as a fundamental right. The so-called cultural rights are among the essential human rights, as well as the political, social and economical rights, as stated in several important documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is asserted at this important text's article XXVII, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, that: “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”.

However, cultural rights, unlike social rights, are still shortly recognized and assured. According to the Brazilian Ministry of Culture, the cultural rights comprehend:

- The right to an identity and to cultural diversity (or the right to a cultural heritage);
- The right to take part in cultural life, which comprehends: the right to freely creating; the right to free access; the right to free diffusion; and the right to freely participating on the decisions of the cultural policies;
- The copyright;
- The right to cultural interchange (national and international).¹
- The issue of having access to culture is central to the exercise of the cultural rights. According to Annamari Laaksonen, of Interarts Foundation (Barcelona),

Taking part in cultural activities, along with the access to them, are the backbone of the cultural human rights. Access is an indispensable element to cultural rights and, mostly, to the right of participating in cultural life. Access is related to opportunities, options, alternatives and choices. It's an safe and enabling environment for equality, interaction, recognition and respect. Creating access can be related to enabling, facilitating and letting happen. Having access is a precondition to participating, and participating is indispensable for assuring the exercise of human rights.²

¹ Ministério da Cultura. Conselho Nacional de Política Cultural. Secretaria de Articulação Institucional. Coordenação Geral de Relações Federativas e Sociedade [Brazilian Ministry of Culture. National Board of Cultural Policies, Institutional Articulation Secretary. General Coordination of Federal Relations and Society]. Guia de Orientações para os Municípios. Sistema Nacional de Cultura - Perguntas e Respostas [Orientation guide for counties – National System of Culture]. Brasília: May 2011, p. 19.

² LAAKSONEN, Annamari, “O direito de ter acesso à cultura e dela participar como características fundamentais dos direitos culturais” [The right of having access to culture and taking part of it as fundamental aspects of cultural rights]. Revista Observatório Itaú Cultural/OIC – n.11 (January/April 2011). Sao Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2011, p. 50.



When we talk about accessibility at museums, different conceptions of the word come to mind. In our actions at the Pinacoteca's Education Department, we consider a broad notion of accessibility, which involves not only the promotion of *physical access*, by assuring the circulation and affluence of the public to the institutions (making use of elevators, wheelchair ramps and providing free tickets for socially impaired groups) but also – and especially – concerning the intangible aspects of access to museums, such as *cognitive access*, which we stimulate by the development of understanding of the expository speeches, and what we call “attitude” access, through the stimuli of the identification with the production systems, the enjoyment and the confidence and delight by the insertion in the museum's environment. With the expansion of the concept's meaning and comprehension, museums can create initiatives to develop accessibility focusing not only the audience with physical or social difficulties but all other groups that are excluded from the official cultural processes and systems.³

The Pinacoteca is located at Parque da Luz, at the old city centre of Sao Paulo, an area that offers plenty services and private and public equipments but that, even so, is inhabited by a population living in precarious conditions of subsistence, a reality similar to the impoverished peripheral areas of the city. The city centre is a region that suffered successive moments of socioeconomic degradation before and now is undergoing a controversial urban renewal project, with prospects of exclusion of the impoverished population.

The Pinacoteca is the oldest art museum of the Sao Paulo State,

³ CHIOVATTO; AIDAR; SOARES and AMARO. “Repensando a acessibilidade em museus: a experiência do Núcleo de Ação Educativa da Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo” [*Rethinking the accessibility in museums: the experience at Pinacoteca*], Diálogos entre Arte e Público - Acessibilidade Cultural: o que é acessível e para quem? [*Dialogues between Art and Audience – Cultural Accessibility: what is accessible and for who?*], Recife: Fundação de Cultura Cidade do Recife, v. 3, 2010, p. 18.



having been founded in 1905, and nowadays it possesses approximately 9,000 pieces of artwork, among paintings, drawings, engravings, sculptures, photographs and objects of art, both national and international, from the XVIIIth century on. The museum usually offers long-term exhibitions of its Collection and an extensive and varied program of temporary exhibits. From 2004 on, the museum incorporated the Estação Pinacoteca, a building that was once a train station and now hosts temporary exhibits and is home to the Memorial da Resistência (Resistance Memorial), a place dedicated to safeguard the history of resistance and repression during the dictatorship period faced by the country on two decades of XXth century.

The Education Department, which was created in 2002, has the main goal of developing educational projects using the Collection's potential; promoting the quality of the audience's experience when in contact with the Collection's artworks; assuring broad access to the museum, besides promoting the inclusion of audiences that would not otherwise become regular visitors.

Nowadays the main programs developed by the Education Department are:

- Educational visits: available upon previous request for every organized group, especially schools;
- For teachers: Preparatory meetings for teachers with the purpose of providing them with pedagogical subsidies related to the themes and content of the Pinacoteca's Collection and specific temporary exhibitions;
- Educational Program for Disabled People: Welcoming physically, mentally and sensory impaired visitors by using multisensory approaches;
- Staff Training Program: promotes the continuing training of the museum's employees, especially from the reception,

maintenance and safety departments, concerning heritage education and other aspects particular to museums;

- Materials and resources for mediation: publications and other resources developed with the purpose of providing knowledge subsidies for both educators and teachers, which can be used in their practice outside the museum, and also for spontaneous visitors. The materials include games, guides and informative labels for specific works;
- Sociocultural Inclusion Program, about which we will focus further in this text:

The Sociocultural Inclusion Program's goal is to promote a high quality access to the Pinacoteca's cultural assets by groups in socially vulnerable situations, with little or no contact with official cultural institutions like museums.⁴ The Program also aims to contribute to the improvement of their quality of life and the formation of new audiences to the museum.

Here, it becomes important to clarify what is our notion of social inclusion. At our initiatives, the concept of social exclusion refers to the processes by which an individual or a group has limited access to initiatives, systems and institutions that are considered references to a certain standard of social living, and therefore are deprived of the possibility to fully participate in the society in which they live. These individuals or groups, when socially vulnerable, may face several and simultaneous situations of exclusion: the lost of rights by being excluded of the political system; the loss of resources by exclusion of the labor market; and the deterioration of personal relations by the weakening of familiar and communitarian bonds, becoming, thereby,

⁴ Coleção Cadernos de Políticas Culturais [*series of notebooks about cultural policies*]. Vol. 3.

subject to a context of multiple deprivation.⁵ To this situation we can also add the impairment of the senses of belonging and cultural recognition that the exclusion by the officially established circuits and institutions of culture can cause.

If we base our work on a definition of social exclusion as a process and as a state by which the social dynamics and institutions prevent some groups from a broad participation in the society, than we can reason that the cultural institutions have a role in this excluding process or, by opposition, that they can be a tool for promoting social inclusion. Also, given the exclusion's multisensory nature, the set of policies created to promote the inclusion must have an interdisciplinary approach, possibly including cultural and social services, becoming necessary that cultural institutions position themselves at the social issues' arena and indicating that professionals working at cultural segments must never put themselves distant from the social demands⁶.

Following the same line of thought, some authors point to three levels of action at which the cultural institutions may contribute to the promotion of social changes:

- 1) Individual – through the development of self-esteem, sense of identity and the acquisition of new skills.
- 2) Communitarian – through the promotion of self-determination in

⁵ DE HAAN, A. e MAXWELL, S. (eds.), "Poverty and social exclusion in North and South". International Development Studies Bulletin, vol. 29, n.1, 1998, pg. 03. Several thoughts about applying the concept of social inclusion in museums can be found at publications of Richard SANDELL (ed.), *Museums, society, inequality*. Londres and NY: Routledge, 2002 e DODD, Jocelyn e SANDELL, Richard (eds.), *Including museums: perspectives on museums, galleries and social inclusion*. Leicester: Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, 2001.

⁶ Accordingly to Mark O'Neill, current Director of Policy & Research at Glasgow Life (Scotland), "the implications of the fact that the twin processes of inclusion and exclusion are self-reinforcing systems are very clear: any organization that is not working to break down barriers to access is actively maintaining them. Neutrality is not possible' ." O'NEILL, Mark, "The good enough visitor", in: SANDELL, R. (ed.) *Museums, society, inequality*. London and NY: Routledge, 2002, p.34.

processes of decision-making and participation at democratic structures.

- 3) Social – through encouraging increased feelings of belonging and the affirmation of cultural identities for groups at disadvantage situations.⁷

The museological communication relies on the museums' significant contribution to social development, due to their ability to create and disseminate knowledge, or what we might call its "interpretive authority", by generating and legitimating social narratives. However, despite the potential to challenge established social standards from their interpretative authority position – which refers not only to the design of exhibitions but also to the creation of its collection –, the common attitude among many museums still is delegating the essential task of responding to the social demands they face to their educational departments, as if these departments were responsible for "translating" the knowledge produced by the institutions.

At this point, it is also crucial to point out the difference between a social inclusion proposition and one for developing audiences to the museum. We should understand the developing of audiences as the promotion of access to cultural institutions, i.e., addressing the obstacles that might spoil the access to the museum. On the other hand, creating social inclusion projects means going further and seek qualitative changes to the daily life of the groups in question.

Another concept that is common to our initiatives and deserves some clarifications, since it isn't of intuitive comprehension and - furthermore, is subject to a lot of reasoning -, is the concept of social vulnerability. Although the

⁷ DODD, J. and SANDELL, R. (eds.) Including museums: perspectives on museums, galleries and social inclusion. Leicester: RCMG, 2001. SANDELL, R. (ed.) Museums, society, inequality. London and NY: Routledge, 2002.



Brazilian government has adopted it, the expression “in situation of social vulnerability” is not consensual and shouldn’t be understood as a synonym to population with low-income. In our Program we understand it as a situation where there is violation of rights, as determined by the government’s National Plan for Social Work, defined as “*citizens and groups that are in a risky situation of vulnerability...*” The document points out the violation of rights at the circumstances of vulnerability and risks. This concept implies in a wider range of situations, being the exclusion caused by poverty one of them but not the only, comprising also the lack of access to public policies and services (despite the lack of economic resources obviously accentuating the vulnerabilities).⁸

It is also interesting to see how other social and political traditions nominate the groups we say are “in situation of social vulnerability”, for example this two Spanish museums that develop educational activities with groups of similar profiles (like prisoners and people with mental disabilities): the MUSAC (Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, in Castilla y León) uses the terminology “groups of people with limited accessibility due to social and/or political issues”, and the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, in Madri, classifies as “group of visitors with difficulties of access, or collectives at risk of exclusion”. In both cases, these categorizations could be used in the Brazilian context and have common aspects with the concept of “in situation of social vulnerability”.

The Pinacoteca’s Sociocultural Inclusion Program was created, in 2002, due to the perception of a discrepancy between what was happening inside and outside the museum. On that year we conducted a profile survey with our spontaneous visitors and the results reasserted a situation that we could already intuit: the museum’s visitors are of a privileged and specific profile, with higher levels of education and median or high household income, and don’t live close to the museum or its nearby neighborhoods⁹, thereby showing themselves to

8 “Política Nacional de Assistência Social – versão oficial” [*National Policy for Social Work – official version*], Revista Serviço Social & Sociedade, n. 80, pullout, nov. 2004.

9 Profile research with the museum’s visitors - Você e o museu (2002).

be quite different from population that lives on the surroundings.

In order to establish constructive relationships with the groups surrounding the museum, in situation of social vulnerability, we started the Program by mapping of social organizations acting on the area, that had the potential of becoming partners of the museum for its social actions, and participating in some projects that bring together local agents and entities. These first initiatives enabled that we better understand the specific demands of the neighborhood and get to know potential partnerships. Thus, the Pinacoteca's Program began with activities focusing on the groups surrounding the museum, and currently works with various groups located in the city centre, though not exclusively.

The specific focus of the Education Department may vary over the years, but generally consist of groups of people living on the streets and users of foster homes/shelters or community centers; inhabitants of precarious housings, like the slum tenement-houses and the illegal occupancies that are very common in the area; cooperatives and artisan groups that aim at generating independent income; drug addicts in healthcare; children and young adults who participate in NGO's social and educational projects; social educators, among others, always related to non-formal education.

Currently we develop works at four different fronts:

- 1) Partnerships and group visits;
- 2) Training courses for social educators;
- 3) External educative initiatives;
- 4) Public and assessment processes.

1) Partnerships and group visits: we establish partnerships with organizations that develop social and educational projects for our target audiences in order to stimulate continuing educational visits to Pinacoteca. Those are designed according to each groups' demands and profiles, with constant result's monitoring and evaluation. Together with our partners, we define the partnership's goals and plan a series of educational visits, which must respond to each group's demands and add to the activities already carried out by the partner institution, in a way that the relationship with the museum isn't disconnected to the work or educational process they already perform and, on the contrary, it's enriching and relates to the group's realities.

2) Training courses for social educators: consists in the training for educators working in NGOs and social assistance services, public or private, which develop social and educational programs. This initiative aims to provide them with knowledge subsidies from the Pinacoteca and other cultural equipment's, for the development, implementation and evaluation of educative projects focused on the promotion of socio-cultural inclusion, stimulating partnerships and the qualified usage of these institutions' potential by educators¹⁰. As a result of this training courses we also publish the *Arte+*, a print publication designed for social educators, which is distributed free of charge for social organizations from all over the country and has the purpose of amplifying the initiatives initiated at the courses, focusing arts and heritage education. *Arte+* is currently on its second edition.

This edition contains informative texts about the museum's participation in

10 AIDAR, "Perspectivas da formação de educadores sociais para a educação em museus" [Training for social educators's perspectives for the education at museums], Revista Museu, May 18th 2008 – Museus agentes de mudança social e desenvolvimento [*Museums as social change and development's agents*], <http://www.revistamuseu.com.br/18demaio/artigos.asp?ano=2008>

social inclusion processes, education at museums, the description of some art concepts and four reproductions of artworks belonging to the Pinacoteca's Collection, which are accompanied by educative suggestions for the interpretation of the work and ludic activities related to it.

3) External educative initiatives: In 2008 we managed to implement a initiative we were planning for quite some time – creating an external educational activity, that is, a Pinacoteca educational initiative that happens outside the museum. This action is developed with two different groups, formed by 15 homeless adults each, created in partnership with community centers located close to Pinacoteca, the Casa de Oração do Povo da Rua and the Casa Porto Seguro. The initiative consists in offering weekly art workshops at these centers and regular educative visits to the museum, combining practice and reflection about art with the developing of more familiarity with the museum. The work is organized in different modules, from drawing – including clippings, collages, records of observation, memory and invention – to graphic techniques, such as monotype, typography, silkscreen and woodcut, with emphasis on the latter. The workshops are developed and executed by the artist and educator Augusto Sampaio, along with the museum's team. Besides the educational visits, the Pinacoteca also offers specific workshops on relating image creation and the writing of poetic texts. The initiative also unfolds in a series of events, such as the educative exhibitions that take place at the Pinacoteca and the itinerant ones, publications of reflexive character, picture albums, posters, among other materials¹¹.

11 It is possible to cite the following material created as a consequence of the external educative initiative: The educative exhibition "Convivência – ação educativa extramuros da Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo" [*Coexistence – Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo's external educational activities*], open to public from March to May 2009 at

4) Surveys and assessment processes: at our Program two public surveys were performed and these studies are considered to be both an important result and one of the causes of our work. The first was the “Survey about Pinacoteca’s visitors profile” (“Pesquisa de perfil de público visitante da Pinacoteca - Você e o museu”), carried out in 2002 and already mentioned here. This research sought to determine who was the museum’s spontaneous audience at that time, therefore delineating the profile of the people the museum was communicating with. It resulted among other things in improving the museum’s educational initiatives for social inclusion. The second survey, called “Expectations and perceptions of the surrounding audience about the Pinacoteca” (“Expectativas e percepções do público do entorno em relação à Pinacoteca”), which was accomplished between 2007 and 2008, focused on the museum’s surroundings to understand how the institution was perceived by the population who frequents the proximities. The results inspired a series of institutional initiatives meant to improve the museum’s accessibility. Some data found on both surveys showed a large contrast between the social demographic

the museum; a smaller travelling version of the same exhibition in 2010, exhibited at the Museu Casa de Portinari, at Brodowski, and at the Historic and Pedagogic Museum Índia Vanuíre, at Tupã; and the publication of “Percorrer e registrar – reflexões sobre a ação educativa extramuros da Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo” [*Go and register - reflections on the external educational initiatives of Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo*], on 2010, comprising texts that evaluate and reflect on the first two years of the project. In 2011, it was created two picture books with original engravings: one of them, entitled “Invento” [*invention or invent*] contains the woodcuts and texts created at typography and writing workshops. At the end of 2011, it were also developed a series of 42 paper posters with woodcuttings made at the workshops, and they were displayed at the museum’s lateral windows for 8 months. In 2012, a new exhibition of recent works originated from the Program’s activities, called “De um lado a outro – ação educativa extramuros da Pinacoteca de São Paulo” [*From one side to the other - Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo’s external educational activities*], travelled to cultural centers at the cities Iguape, Praia Grande and Jundiaí, located at the coast and countryside of Sao Paulo state.

profiles of Pinacoteca's visitors and the population that lives in area, as for example, the level of education (inversely proportional on both researches, with the highest level found among the visitors and the lowest, in the neighborhood inhabitants).

For evaluating the Program's educational initiatives, the department elaborated some evaluative tools that allow all parts directly involved in the actions to offer their feedback: the museum's educators, the participants and the professionals responsible for each group. A triple system was developed, and it consists in descriptive and analytic reports written by the museum's educators and two types of questionnaires, one for the participants and other for the group's manager. One of the biggest challenges for the conception of the evaluative tools was to contemplate the variety and subjectivity of experiences and the knowledge acquired by each part involved in the dynamics, since the initiatives proposed by the Program go beyond the formal, technical and contextual artistic and linguistic contents, in search for the appreciation of the interpretive and subjective experiences of the individual when in contact with culture. Therefore, for creating an evaluating systems compatible with the educative proposal, we added to the line of thought we had been developing evaluative experiences carried out in the United Kingdom, through the "Generic Learning Outcomes", which suggest a expansion of the evaluation models beyond the acquisition of formal knowledge, including the more subjective forms of learning, such as the development of skills, attitudes and values, the promotion of fruition, inspiration and creativity, and the change in behaviors¹².

At last, it's important to mention another principle that permeates the actions proposed and developed by the Sociocultural Inclusion Program in its 10 years: the concept of equity. It assumes that the opportunities in our society aren't equalitarian and that in our work we should take equality into

¹² To learn about the Generic Learning Outcomes, access www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk



consideration but not without compensating the inequalities inherent to individuals and groups.¹³

Or, as the Education and Community team at NGO CENPEC (center of research on education, culture and communitarian activities) properly points out:

The principle of equality is treating differently those who are not in possession of equal conditions, so fair relationships may be created. In societies with a long history of slavery, such as the Brazilian, the society has a decisive role in promoting equity and reducing inequalities. People in economic difficulties need more public resources than those who are privileged to assure the same rights because they were deprived from the access to public assets and services. The same way not all equality is fair when it doesn't take the differences in consideration, not all inequality is unfair when it aims to reduce iniquity. An uneven treatment is honest when it benefits the more vulnerable¹⁴.

13 Idea proposed by the professor Maria Victoria Benevides, from USP, in a class about education for democracy.

14 CENPEC/Equipe Educação e Comunidade, "A infância e adolescência no Brasil: a diversidade como meio de promover a equidade" [*The childhood and the adolescence in Brasil: diversity as a way of promoting equality*], in: CARVALHO, Maria do Carmo Brandt de (coord.) Avaliação: construindo parâmetros das ações socioeducativas. São Paulo: CENPEC, 2005, p. 21.



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