Ecomuseum as a design tool for sustainable social innovation

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify points of convergence between the concepts of Ecomuseum and Social Innovation, from the point of view of Design. The concept of Ecomuseum, highlighting information such as the emergence of the concept, its objectives and characteristics will be developed. This article will also present the concept of design for social innovation and sustainability. The aim is to identify a framework that will allow classification of the concept of Ecomuseum as a sustainable social innovation initiative. It will start with an exploratory bibliographical research and in addition, it will be used documentary research. Design role will be highlighted, with its interdisciplinary and transversal vision capable of identifying solutions to the obstacles to a new model of life: sustainable, creative and that privileges the collective benefit over the individual.

Key Words: Ecomuseum, Social Innovation, Sustainability, Design.

1. RESEARCH PROBLEM/GOALS

The maintenance of human life on planet Earth is the greatest challenge of today's society. Even though this question directly involves the natural resources with which we satisfy our physiological needs, it is equally important that this survival be permeated with well-being. Beyond surviving, human beings strive to adopt a new model of life: sustainable, creative and that privileges the collective benefit over the individual. It is in this effort that design role is highlighted, with its interdisciplinary and transversal vision capable of identifying solutions to the obstacles that interfere in this new model of life – and opening the way for the implementation of socially innovative actions.

Innovation, therefore, is one of the designer's attributes whose challenge is to narrow the relationship between social welfare and respect for available natural resources. Cipolla (2012) considers that social innovation is related to the capacity of society in solving its own problems. Manzini (2008) states that a particular role in transition towards sustainability will be fulfilled by series of local actions that will increasingly be able to break through the established patterns, guiding us toward new behaviors and ways of thinking.

One of the local initiatives highlighted for breaking down the paradigms of the subject's relationship with the territory where he lives is the Ecomuseum – a proposal for the appreciation of the cultural identity of communities that, according to Brulon (2015), evolves through collective local memory rather than through material collections.

This paper aims to analyze the concept of Ecomuseum as a tool for sustainable social innovation, identifying points of convergence between the concepts of Ecomuseum and Social Innovation, from the point of view of Design.

2. THORETICAL BACKGROUND

2 .1. Ecomuseum

Ecomuseum is a contemporary model of museum[1] where the basic principle is always the solidarity between forces of the territory that are concerned with the heritage and its social utility (Filipe & Varine, 2015).

The concept of Ecomuseum emerges, according to Brulon (2015), from the discussions concerning the entitled "new museology" in 1960's in France, and becomes official in 1984, at the First International Ecomuseums Workshop / New Museology, held in Quebec (Canada). This movement reflects the growing debate on the role of museums in society, proposing improvements on methodologies and techniques previously developed in museological spaces (Leite, 2015; Santos, 2017). It also intends to transfer power to safeguard held by the museological institution - traditionally represented by its buildings and stored collections - to the community whom in a particular territory, produces culture and interacts with natural resources. Varine (n.d.) considers that the heritage is a cultural, social and economic capital of the territory and therefore, a collective responsibility.

While traditional museology focuses on museum building, collections and visitors; the new museology privileges the scenarios whose interaction between community and territory results in objects and memories (Milk, 2015).

According to Rivière (1983), the Ecomuseum is an instrument where government and population conceive, manufacture and explore together. Government with the experts, the facilities and the resources that it provides. Population, according to their aspirations, their knowledge, their capacity for analysis. This context of production of knowledge and citizenship, hence, privileges the experimentation of social innovation (Leite, 2015).

Santos (2017) produced a dissertation for Museology Master's at University of São Paulo (USP), composed by an exploratory study that examined and contrasted terms and concepts related to Ecomuseums, referencing French museologists Georges Henri Riviére, Hugues de Varine, René Rivard, André Desvallées

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[1] According to the Statutes of The International Council of Museums (ICOM), "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment." Retrieved from https://icom.museum/en/activities/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/

and Mathilde Bellaigue; Brazilian museologists Heloisa Barbuy and Bruno Brulon; and Spanish museologist Ignacio Díaz Balerdi .The result was presented in the form of conceptual maps, and will support the analysis proposed in this paper.

2 .2. Design for social innovation and sustainability

When society realizes that the patterns of production and consumption in consolidation since the Industrial Revolution will no longer be feasible, arise concern about the availability of natural resources needed for the maintenance of human life on planet Earth. Emerged from this fear, the concept of "sustainable development", which was described in the 1980's in the Brundtland Report[2], as development that meets current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Lana, 2016). Manzini (2008) states that to be sustainable, a system of production, use and consumption must meet the demands of society for products and services without disrupting natural cycles and without depleting natural capital.

For Vezzoli and Manzini (2016), design for sustainable system innovation begins with the local but at the same time develops the transcultural creativity-attitude, only to be endowed with an effective social creativity, able to become part of wider sustainability. Achieving full sustainability requires working in partnership and intellectual investment, and highlights the strategic role of design as an activator of interactions and innovations in society.

For a long time, it was considered innovation as a concept strictly connected to the field of materials and technology (Tamborrini, 2012). Currently this process also takes into account the attendance to contemporary and future social needs. Cipolla (2012) warns that it is also necessary to observe that the "innovative" character of each case is strongly based on its local context, since what is innovation in a given territory may not be to other localities. Another pivotal point related to innovation is the involvement of the population, which best identifies and interprets the problem and, in a collaborative way, recognizes and implements possible solutions. Collaborative networking is also a way of sharing innovations.

Social innovations also play a key role in developing new models and services to meet social needs, connecting people, ideas and resources. (Murray, Caulier-Grice, Mulgan, 2010).

The Young Foundation[3] (2012) states a working definition of social innovation as new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes etc.) that simultaneously meet a social need (more effectively than existing solutions) and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships and better use of assets and resources. In other words, social innovations are both good for society and enhance society's capacity to act. This work also provided a set of core elements, therefore providing the intended framework for analysis in this paper.

The set of core elements for social innovation is displayed in the Table 1:

[Table 1] *Core Elements for Social Innovation (The Young Foundation, 2012)*

Core Elements	Description
1) Novelty	Social innovations are new to the field, sector, region, market or user, or to be applied in a new way
2) From ideas to implementation	There is a distinction between invention (developing ideas) and innovation (implementing and applying ideas)
3) Meets a social need	Social innovations are explicitly designed to meet a recognized social need
4) Effectiveness	Social innovations are more effective than existing solutions – create a measurable improvement in terms of outcomes
5) Enhance society's capacity to act	Empowers beneficiaries by creating new roles and relationships, developing assets and capabilities and/or better use of assets and resources.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The present study was carried out by Exploratory Research to obtain the necessary data about the concepts of Ecomuseum and Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability. According to Gil (1991 p.45),

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[2] Comissão Mundial sobre Meio Ambiente e Desenvolvimento. *Relatório de Brundtland – Nosso Futuro Comum.*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
[3] See https://youngfoundation.org/

"this type of research provides greater familiarity with the problem intending to make it more explicit," with the main objective being the improvement of ideas or the discovery of intuitions. The exploratory then turned into Bibliographical Research - that is developed from already prepared material, and is constituted mainly of books and journal articles (Gil, 1991). Publications were analyzed concerning Ecomuseum, Design, Sustainability and Innovation. This theoretical basis, made possible by bibliographical research, guided the identification of points of convergence between the concepts mentioned above.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The analysis of ecomuseum concepts combined with the core elements for social innovation made possible to identify all the key innovation proposed, as described in Table 2:

[Table 2] *Core Elements for Social Innovation in the Concepts of Ecomuseum (translated by the authors)*

Core Elements for Social Innovation (The Young Foundation, 2012)	Concept of Ecomuseum (apud Santos, 2017)	Author
1) Novelty	"A new genre of museum"	Rivière (1973)
	"A new structure, tried and realized (...)"	Rivière (1976)
	"An instrument for a new pedagogy of the environment"	Varine (1973)
	"A modernization / improvement of the open-air museum"	Varine (1973)
	"An experimental creation of a new museology of origin and community essence"	Varine (1973)
	"A revolutionary innovation in the field of museology"	Barbuy (1989)
	"Museums that oppose (in their origin) to the patrimonialist tendencies by the sense that they confer to heritage"	Barbuy (1995)
	"A neologism that sanctions a process that precedes the invention of its name"	Balerdi (2002)
	"Was an 'experimental model', 'imprecise new type of museum' and 'avant-garde museum'"	Brulon (2014)
	"Was aligned to the new discourse on the anthropological idea of culture"	Brulon (2014)
	Involved the "belief in a paradigm shift in world museology and which remains" the basis of the idea of a community museum	Brulon (2014)
2) From ideas to implementation	"Has a practical practice "	Desvallès (1985)
	"Are managed by the population"	Desvallès (1985)
	"Museums that have reached a certain degree of development, become institutionalized and integrated into official systems"	Barbuy (1989)
3) Meets a social need	"A school that associates the population with its actions of study and protection; and stimulates a better perception of the problems of its own future through critical information and analysis "	Rivière (1980)
	"Should contribute to the resolution of ethnic conflicts and cultural intolerance"	Devallées (1985)
	"Is a museum that spreads over the territory, in multiple fragments that can be people's houses, buildings bearing history and memory, landscapes that allow understanding of an ecosystem and the development of the region, becoming spaces of non-formal education and instrument of instruction and understanding "	Bellaigue (1993)

	"Revalues the abandoned urban spaces and whose axis of action will be the territory in which a community lives (local dimension), with simultaneous activities for the recovery of community identity, and the daily patrimony that must be preserved *in situ"*	Balerdi (2002)
	"Was created at a time of dissemination of a counterculture and emancipation of popular culture"	Brulon (2014)
4) Effectiveness	"An instrument that is shared, created and exploited jointly and by the population, with its aspirations, its culture and its power of approach"	Rivière (1980)
	"Museums that represent the reactivation of various regions of the world, of cultural awareness and reflection and elaboration of projects"	Barbuy (1989)
	"Museums that proposed ways of social interaction with communities"	Barbuy (1995)
5) Enhance society's capacity to act	"Is developed by the community with the support of organized collectivities and associations that operate within it"	Varine (1973)
	"Place themselves (in many cases) as centers of cultural resistance"	Barbuy (1995)
	"Is a museum constituted 'for' and 'with' the population and makes it actively, working collaboratively with the trustee and the museologist"	Bellaigue (1993)
	"Associate local authorities and state agencies"	Brulon (2014)
	"" Place their own social relations at the center of the institution, "which are largely located in peripheral areas, that is, "on the margin of the hegemonic cultural system "	Brulon (2014)

The recognition of central elements of social innovation in the concept of Ecomuseu reinforces the pioneering spirit of this initiative, and especially its vocation for meeting social needs. The perception of all the authors mentioned above emphasized the mission of strengthening environmental and social links through which the Ecomuseum justifies its existence, placing itself in the position of stablish connections between different stakeholders.

In this sense, the great challenge of Ecomuseums lies in the dynamics of relationship with the community. In addition, Filipe & Varine-Bohan (2015) emphasize the need to evaluate the social utility of the ecomuseum; choose its goals and priorities; choose strategies and become a mixed or hybrid company. Furthermore, it is necessary to adapt the concept - and, more importantly, to adapt the methodology and implementation of the Ecomuseums.

And at this overhauling time, design is the ideal setting for strategically develop a way of thinking able to fulfill needs and solve real problems, reinforcing the benefits of socioenvironmental interaction proposed by Ecomuseums.

This paper is a synthesis of the research that will result in a proposal of design performance in Ecomuseums, fostering its implementation and reinforcing its character social innovation and sustainability initiative, theme of the dissertation for the Masters in Design of the State University of Minas Gerais (UEMG).

5. IMPACTS ON SUSTAINABILITY

Balerdi (2002) states that the Ecomuseus became strategies for sustainable development. The practice of Ecomuseu, in order to bring social solutions of high quality and low environmental impact, there must be active, bottom-up and social participative (Vezzoli & Manzini, 2016). The quest for sustainability involves all sectors of society and, more sensitively, designer's performance. It is necessary to re-formulate all stages of products and services, adapting obsolete practices to the current situation when natural resources are scarce and society is in crisis. Encouraging effective action by Ecomuseums is therefore a

way of ensuring that the cultural and environmental heritage of these regions is maintained in this territory, continuing part of the life of the community and imbuing it each day more with meaning.

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