

## **SUSTAINABILITY AS A SUBJECT TO PROMOTE CONNECTIONS, CREATIVITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION.**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this paper we present some activities that were performed in Museu Ciência e Vida focused on sustainability which promoted some creative experiences of social inclusion. Two theatrical performance were organized and also two panels and an interactive exhibition.

**KEYWORDS:** Sustainability, theater, community, social inclusion, creativity.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the recently created Museu Ciência e Vida (Science and Life Museum) in Duque de Caxias, a surrounding region of Rio de Janeiro, we have developed some activities focused on sustainability which have promoted a nice and grateful experience between the museum and its visitors. We invited some teachers that use to visit the museum to take part in activities such as temporary exhibitions, planetary sessions and workshops in order to participate in the creation of activities focused on sustainability, which was a very discussed subject at that time due to Rio+20 Conference. Our first experience with them was a collective construction of a theatrical performance. Afterwards as part of the activities planned to be an attraction for the Museums' Spring week, organized by Ibram (Instituto Brasileiro de Museus / Brazilian Institute of Museums) we developed a panel to discuss the social function of museums. In a second moment, we organized a second panel about sustainability. We also developed an interactive exhibition on sustainability.

From a more recent point of view on museums and their educative function, after many discussions since the UNESCO Seminary in 1958 (Genoveva 2013), the community “has been developing a critical evaluation along this way, reasserting the museum as a way to communicate the elements of the triangle – territory, patrimony and society – serving as an instrument of dialogue, interaction between the different social, economic and political forces; an instrument that can be useful in its specificity and function to the “ individual man” and “social individual” so that he can face challenges that goes from the present to the future (Horta 1995); it shows the importance of the museums as an instrument for social inclusion. This instrument can also be explored to promote the social inclusion of those that have any sort of physical restriction, as lacking visual

perception, for example (Fabbri 2010). Museums are also potential instruments to cultural tourism and urban leisure (Patricia Andrade, 2008). Alexandre Beites (2011) establishes connections with the “rhizomal theory” of Deleuze and Guattari (2004), proposing new reading about rigid rules and pre-established objectives. According to Beites, the new museum suggests new and different relations with society, acquiring the function of forming people to the exercise of their citizenship across the public and the exhibited patrimony. In this sense, Museu Ciência e Vida proposes activities and exhibitions to contribute to the promotion of a better life quality and a larger exercise of citizenship.

## **THE THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE**

The construction of the theatrical performance, *Sustainability on Scene*, was a collective process that started at the museum, then was developed in the schools and was concluded at the museum. We started the process offering some workshops on theater practice, a speech on sustainability, and also a bibliographical references. Ten Middle School and High School teachers attended these workshops. Afterwards we discussed with them the possibilities to develop a drama with the students to discuss sustainability and that would be presented at the museum’s auditorium. Finally, two performances were developed, one with students of the Middle School and the other one with High School students.

The performance developed by Middle School Students, *Now or now*, was about a polluter mining factory. A houseless person took a magical trip to the year 2056 and saw the environmental crises established in the city. Thus, this person decided to make a hunger strike, attached to a tree, trying to touch the factory managers. After lots of discussions between the managers and the community they decided to develop a program of awareness and change of attitude with more social and environmental responsibility to reduce pollution and make improvements in the city. With this activity with the schools we could notice that the Museu Ciência e Vida is becoming an instrument for social inclusion in the region contributing to the improvement of the formal culture of the youth and also a space for leisure and fun. The second drama, *Sustainable Dream*, was also about the excess of garbage in the cities. A young homeless boy was very irritated with the amount of garbage in the city where he lived, since people used to throw their wastes away. One day he met a scientist who in the past had invented a robot with many recycled modules and also a broom which was designed based on the same idea. He was very excited with the scientist’s inventions so that he showed the objects to his colleagues and then they started to use them and helped him to spread the idea to keep the city clean and separate the recyclable garbage. Day by day more and more colleagues started to help him in the purpose to keep the city cleaner and, like all happily ever after adventure stories, they got a clean and healthy city, besides a better planet.



**Figura 1 - Theatrical performance, Now or now.**

## **THE PANELS**

Two panels having sustainability as general theme were organized. The first one was focused on the museum's social function, in which those teachers that had taken part in the theatrical performance were invited to participate, besides other visitors that use to come with large groups, such as a cultural promoters etc. This panel were developed during the Museums' Spring week, proposed by Ibram (Instituto Brasileiro de Museus / Brazilian Institute of Museums). We noticed that they enjoyed to create the theatrical performance alongside the museum, having the possibility to contribute with their knowledge and having a final product that was collectively constructed. Creating the theatrical performance was an opportunity to emphasize sustainability at school and develop activities concerning this subject with the school community. They also appreciated the fact that the museum is continuously having new activities, exhibitions and etc. At last, the more the museum offers new attractions, the more they come to visit. They introduced the visits to the museum in their school routine; they come to the exhibitions and afterwards they develop activities at school concerning the exhibitions.



**Figura 2 - The panel organized during the Museums' Spring week, when we discussed the social function of museums.**

The second panel, *Sustainability: Multiple Looks*, was developed with the cooperation of many researchers. We promoted a discussion centered on sustainability but not focused on the biological aspect; we extended the discussions to other aspects of sustainability which are very close to the routine of common people and that could improve some changes in their attitudes to promote a more sustainable world. We had two panels, one during the morning and the other one during the afternoon. The first was about *Water and Sanitation* and in the other one was about *Solid Residue*. Both themes were chosen because they are important subjects to the region where the Museu Ciência e Vida is located. To compose the panel about *Water and Sanitation* we invited a engineer with large experience on sanitation, an anthropologist that discussed environmental and equal justice, a specialist on Sociology that discussed water partition and social aspects, and a governmental representative to talk about management of the water resources in Rio de Janeiro State. We noticed that the local population attended the panel making questions and proposals. These panels were not developed focusing on the school communities. We noticed the population participating mainly in organized groups, associations and etc. The theme solid waste was especially important to Duque de Caxias, since it recently closed a big open air landfill. Some people were invited to compose the second panel to discuss this problem: an engineer, a social scientist, an engineer that talked about the productive chain of the sector and an economist that works on the impact of the solid waste in the management of water resources. All discussions established during both panels were very ~~benefie~~ positive and we could observe a great participation of the organized community which had an opportunity to discuss their problems, express their point of view and their opinions. The discussions allowed us to reflect about critical problems and helped us to find some creative solutions in a cultural temple where reflections must be encouraged to promote the engagement of the community in their local problems as well as social inclusion.

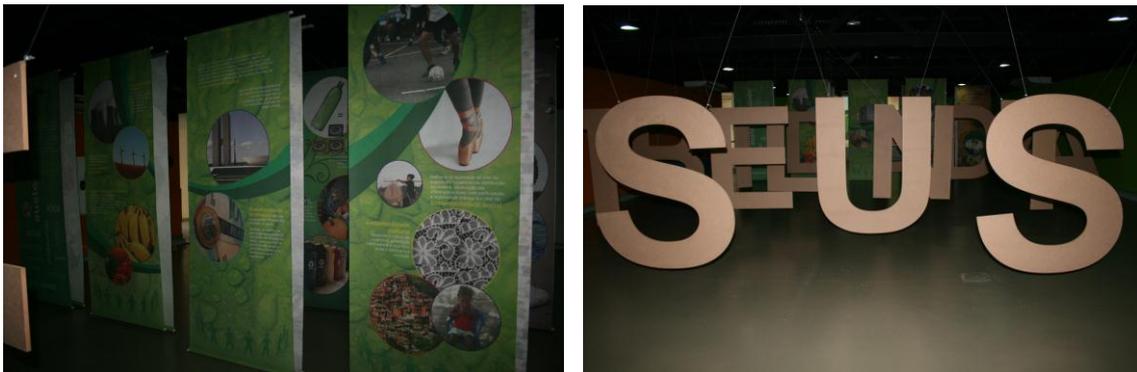


**Figura 3 and 4 - The the two sections of the panel Sustainability: Multiple Looks, developed with the cooperation of many researchers.**

## **THE EXHIBITION**

As the last activity of this series concerning sustainability we developed an interactive exhibition on this theme to discuss the concept of sustainability, called Sustainability:

what is this? The exhibition was created according to a sustainable behavior, that is, we reused some interactive apparatus that had been used in another project to compose the exhibition. We used reforested wood and also tissue made from PET bottles. The exhibition is composed by the letters of the word SUSTAINABILITY, in Portuguese, in a big format using reforested wood, and seventeen banners in which we presented and discussed many forms of sustainability. The idea of this exhibition is to discuss the word sustainability, what this word means, and its reflections on many areas – such as governmental sustainability, gastronomic sustainability etc. –, to show to visitors that this concept has many applications that must be translated in a behavior according to the concept. This is a long process that will perhaps take many years to be assimilated by the common citizen. We have started with teenagers and children. As part of the exhibition, two interactive games available in the museum and also on the web site were developed to emphasize the concepts developed during the exhibition. To complement the exhibition we develop a list of ecoattitudes, sustainable attitudes, which are suggestions of some simple attitudes such as turning off the light when leaving a room, spending less water when washing the clothes and housekeeping, and etc. A special notebook for teachers was designed to help them to develop activities in the classroom concerning this theme. They receive the notebook as they visit the exhibition, and it will be also available for download on the website.



**Figura 5 and 6 - The exhibition Sustainability: what is this?**

## **CONCLUSION**

During the year devoted to sustainability some activities were developed at Museu Ciência e Vida (Science and Life Museum) to discuss this theme by promoting debates and enquiries about aspects concerning our lives. We could observe that these activities were very fruitful to teachers and students as well as to the local community which had an opportunity to discuss with specialists problems concerning their city in a collective construction process.

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