

## **1. Title:**

INTERCULTURAL PUBLICS AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:  
THE CASE OF CULTURAL TOURISM AT THE ART MUSEUM

## **2. Author:**

Pedro Andrade

## **3. Affiliation:**

Center for Studies on Communication and Languages (Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Linguagens), Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, New University of Lisbon (Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa), Portugal

## **4. Abstract:**

This paper intends to present a study on global flows/encounters at a leisure space. The global flow is cultural tourism and the leisure space-scape is the art museum, where differences and identities may be articulated through communication strategies developed by intercultural publics. These translations may occur at the museum 'physical' space or at virtual scapes like museum web pages or multimedia devices resident in an art exhibition.

Such a problematic constitutes a part of a project that received financial support from the Foundation for Science and Technology-Lisbon, Portugal, and is conducted in partnership with several cultural institutions: Belém Cultural Center, Institute of Museums and Conservation, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisbon), Serralves Foundation (Oporto), etc..

The project is carried out in 2 main and articulated directions:

1) a sociological analysis of intercultural publics involved in public communication of art within physical and virtual museums. This process implicates the production, distribution, consumption and understanding of art in urban contexts. I. e, it assumes that art is a communicative and social phenomenon, requiring, in addition to artists and 'art gatekeepers', an 'active audience', who reproduces mass media and cultural institutions, but also transforms them.

One public segment analysed is the tourist, which is articulated and compared with other museum visitors profiles, such as families, schools, immigrants, retired and disabled persons, just to name a few.

2) the implementation of a multimedia module for interactive consultation of art works within public museums, which was presented at artist Joana Vasconcelos exhibition, at Berardo Museum, Lisbon, from 1st March to 18th May 2010.

This intermedia module may work as an intercultural device, as it is based on visual and audio languages, which are global languages, as well as on text presented both in Portuguese and in English, that allow communication between visitors' cultures, within a common device, a multitouch table.

The objectives of this module are:

- Enable the visitors to interact and play, alone or in groups. The aim is to generate discussions among visitors about the artworks displayed, allowing the public to contribute with his intercultural knowledge and opinions by making comments about artworks.

- Build a network of meanings constituted by intercultural common knowledge of visitors, by assigning tags to artworks;

- Collect, from the playful interaction of users, critical information to the sociological study.

During interaction, a surface pad including multi-touch technology, acts as a mediating dispositif allowing visitors to:

- See videos, photos and texts about each artwork;

- Write comments about the exhibition in a digital guestbook;

- Read the comments of other users;
  - Assign custom tags to artworks, to establish a collective and social network of connections between artworks on display;
  - Consult the links established among artworks tag by tag;
  - Play a 'trichotomy game'. Trichotomies are constellations of 3 articulated concepts.
- All the information originated by user interaction *in situ*, is available online inside a platform very similar to the interface used in the exhibition space.

#### **5. Keywords:**

intercultural publics  
cultural tourism  
public communication of art  
art museum  
multimedia devices at museums  
trichotomies

#### **6. Contact:**

Postal address: Calçada dos Mestres 7, 4º andar B Lisboa 1070-176 Portugal  
Telephone: 351 213850583  
Cell phone: 915913659  
E-mail: pjoandrade@gmail.com

# INTERCULTURAL PUBLICS AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES: THE CASE OF CULTURAL TOURISM AT THE ART MUSEUM

## Introduction: cultural networks, flows and tourism scapes

This paper intends to present a study on global flows / encounters at a leisure space. The **global flow** is cultural tourism and the **leisure space-scape** is the art museum, where differences and identities may be articulated through communication strategies developed by intercultural publics (eg. cultural tourists and other public segments). To analyse these inedited processes, **Sociology of Mobilities** has had a remarkable development within the scientific communities in recent years (Urry, 2007).

In Portugal, some early studies refer to the new reality of the **inter-voyage** in our globalized world, that has at least the following characteristics:

- **inter-voyages** can be defined as hybridizations of different forms of voyages, like a fusion among a touristic voyage, a consommation voyage to a supermaket/shopping center and a pilgrimage.

Thus, mobilities don't refer just to mouvements of people, objects, images, information, ideas or capital, but as well to the voyage itself.

- **inter-voyages** are played by new **social actors**, like the **counter-tourist**, who can be a local inhabitant of a visited country that defies the order and values of legitimated tourism; and the **critical tourist**, which is a representant of a central country who develops a critical perspective on his own relationship towards local populations and about his society of origin or departure (Andrade, 1993);

- **inter-voyages** often imply virtual voyages and **cybertourism** occurred in cyberspace and specially at **cybertime** (Andrade, 1997).

These flows and translations may as well occur at the art museum 'physical' space or at virtual scapes like museum web pages or multimedia devices resident in an art exhibition. It is this process that we want to develop here.

First of all, within public exhibition social spaces, and in the context of curator propositions and other mediating entities, **art audiences** are never passive.

In fact, art publics engage their own identity or construct their **difference** through several art **reception strategies** and adaptation of art works to their own perspectives, during their visit to an artistic space.

The essay presented here aims also to introduce some of the traits of such a transformation encouraged by **new media**, particularly in the case of art experimentation by the museum publics.

Such a problematics constitutes a part of a research **project** entitled '**Public Communication of Art: the case of local and global art museums**'. It received financial support from the Foundation for Science and Technology-Lisbon, Portugal, and is conducted in partnership with several cultural institutions: Belém Cultural Center, Institute of Museums and Conservation, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisbon), Serralves Foundation (Oporto), etc..

The project has 3 main articulated directions:

1) A **sociological analysis of intercultural publics** involved in public

communication of art within physical and virtual museums. This process implicates the production, distribution, consumption and understanding of art in urban contexts. I. e, it assumes that art is a communicative and social phenomenon, requiring, in addition to artists and 'art gatekeepers', an 'active audience', who reproduces mass media and cultural institutions, but also transforms them.

One public segment analysed is the **cultural tourist**, which is articulated and compared with other museum visitors profiles, such as families, schools, immigrants, retired and disabled persons, just to name a few. In fact, cultural tourism stands nowadays as one of the more relevant areas of globalized tourism, and is object of deep competition between touristic cities, like Lisbon (Richards, 2001).

2) The implementation of a multimedia module for **interactive consultation of art works** within public museums, which was presented at artist Joana Vasconcelos exhibition, at Berardo Museum, Lisbon, from 1st March to 18th May 2010.

This intermedia module may work as an **intercultural device**, as it is based on visual and audio languages, which are global languages, as well as on text presented both in Portuguese and in English, that allow communication between visitors' cultures, within a common device, a multitouch table.

3. The definition of practical **methods for public communication of art** using new media.

In fact, one of this project main objectives is the connection of **social sciences** (mainly considered at Section 1.) **new technologies** (underlined at Section 2.) and **arts** (the central goal of Section 3.).

However, this is an on-going work in progress, so the information discussed here is still in construction, de-construction and reconstruction. We will just present here the project's sociological part, and only its **planification design**. The correspondent data, even if already gathered in the last 2 years, is being submitted to analysis, and thus the results are to be presented publically in a few months.

This project continues a research about **museology** that was developed for several years, including **science and art and science museums** as well as **digital museums** within Web 2.0 (see Bibliography, Andrade, 2003-2010).

## 1. A sociological analysis of cultural and tourism publics

### *Public communication of art (PCA)*

**Public communication of art** (PCA) involves art production, diffusion, consumption and understanding within public contexts. That is, PCA presupposes that art is a social and communicative process, requiring not only artists and 'art gatekeepers' (curators, critics, etc.), but also an 'active audience' who reproduces mass media or other cultural institutions, and as well transform them.

This '**active audience**' is an idea subscribed by several authors. For instance, Stuart Hall (1973) circumscribed the meaning of the 'encoding/decoding' process developed by media public, through the 'preferred reading' strategy. Fiske (1991), Willis (1990) and Radway elaborated a 'resistance theory', based on 'reception ambiguity' by the audience. And J. Lewis (1991) proposed the concept 'ideological octopus', associated with a 'calculated

ambiguity' within the messages emission/reception process across cultural media.

Moreover, in last decades, **art worlds** (Becker, 1982) became central social contexts, where new lifestyles, modes of cultural citizenship and visual literacies are proposing inedited regulations, practices and opinions.

In particular, the precedent processes involving public communication of art are happening by visitors in local/national museums or in global museums within **cyberspace**. These cultural institutions are contextualized by global communication new order, where audience's alternatives are also possible. For instance, inside Internet, multiple virtual communities, in their interaction, use a 'multimodal reading' and construct plural meanings resulting in new art experiences (Unsworth, 2001:10). However, such relevant theme was somewhat neglected inside sociology or within communication and cultural studies in Portugal.

Regarding the articulation between **tourism and communication**, it is central to interpret phenomena like the tourist experience and performances within museum space, where he can express his own identity through the ways he represents art and presents its own authenticity as tourist (Jaworski, 2005).

## 2. Museability, musealization and PCA

Applying some of the precedent theoretical perspectives or forging other concepts, a reflection and situation diagnosis relatively to PCA within physical and digital art museums is being conducted. In the empirical field, we will test, among other terms, the idea of '**museability**', meaning the contextual economical, socio-cultural and political conditions of musealization, within a given society. **Musealization** refers to the set of art works presentation strategies, by museum staff, to a lay audience. Some initial questions on this matter are the following ones (see also Figure 1):

Question 1: what influence museability and musealization can have over PCA?

Question 2: how does urban planning organizes the cultural spaces where the art museum is integrated?

Question 3: which are the sound socio-demographic characteristics and communication careers of the public who visits of art museums, especially their relationships to the city, work, family and school?

Question 4: In what concerns the adequacy of each type of common space and temporalities, which are the relationships between the art museums and their users?

Question 5: how does the visitor body, support of his practices and representations, is being shaped by PCA or contributes to its emergence?

Question 6: which are the strategies work within the museum, around texts and hypertexts written and inscribed in objects, events and frames of information promoted by the museum teams (artworks captions, catalogs, posters, etc.)?

Question 7: what activities and interactive negotiations, in classical or hypermedia supports, are possible inside the communicative space of the museum?

Question 8: in which manner PCA feeds cultural citizenship exercised by the museum visitor and vice-versa?

Question 9: how does PCA in the museum influences or is conditioned by visitors qualification regarding artistic visual literacy?

Question 10: which is the relationship between formal artistic education (developed namely in school) and semi-formal/informal artistic learning (resident within art museums)?

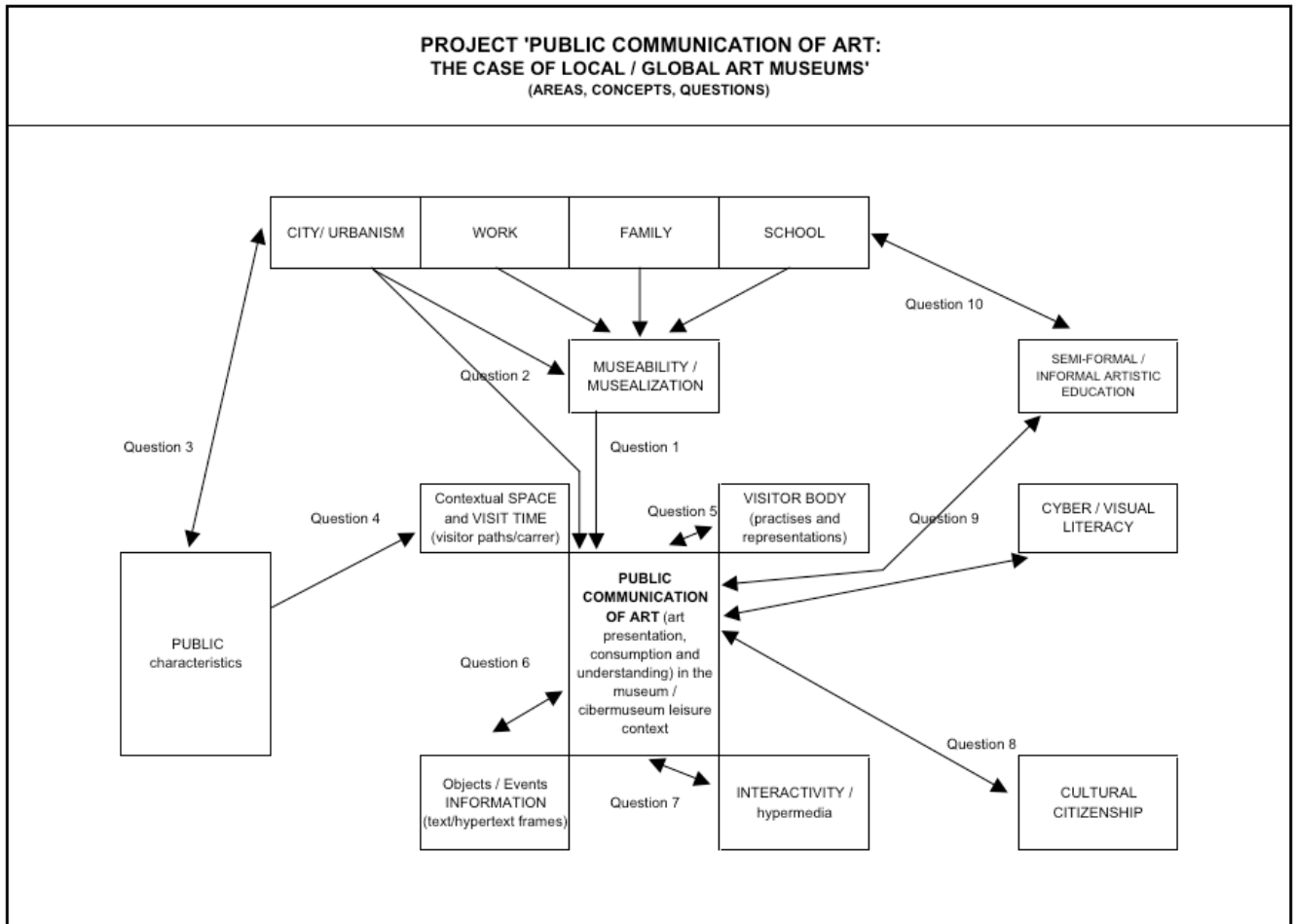


Figure 1

### 3. Publics (tourists, etc.), artists and art gatekeepers in the museum public space

The universe for this study presents a double nature: at the local level, we are inquiring specific gatekeepers or segments of the public in art museums. An important segment is tourist visitors. Our sampling considers, among other museums: Museu de Arte Moderna da Fundação Gulbenkian, Culturgest, Museu do Chiado, Fundação de Serralves, Museu Berardo. At the global level, digital museums are being considered, particularly their web sites.

Within this project, a questionnaire survey was submitted to the public at artist Joana Vasconcelos exhibition 'Netless', that took place at Berardo Museum from 1st March to 18<sup>th</sup> May 2010. Direct observations by video and interviews were also conducted at this exhibition.

Furthermore, within the Portuguese art world outside this exhibition, other interviews were made to well-known and less-known artists and art mediators

(museum directors, curators, etc.).

A site was developed for consultation mainly after the end of the exhibition. The target users are art professionals and museums publics, who can raise questions to art museums and to the modes and 'fashions' of communication they provide. Site visitors may send comments, questions and suggestions.

### **Conclusion**

Even without some empirical data available yet, it is already possible to address some tendencies concerning the reported processes.

Mobilities at the art museum play a major role. In the case of cultural tourists or other segments of public, however, these phenomena must not be understood just as flows of museum visitors.

In fact, cultural and art networks that may be detected at the museum, have multiple nodes or scapes, exogeneous to the museum, like the spaces of the family, work and other places of leisure. This means that the visitor carries with him numerous relations to objects, information, images, etc, complementary to those that he/she encounters at the museum, where he fuses or hybridizes all these social and cultural dimensions.

Nevertheless, the more relevant mobility seems to be the **art voyage** to the museum itself, which is a **meta-hybridization** among other multiple kinds of travels. In reality, this **inter-voyage** at the art museum is composed at least by the following **sub-voyages**: a cultural journey to see art; a commercial trip to buy souvenirs at the museum shop; a leisure run to rest from work; and even a sort of economic anti-domestic tour, when a family with their children goes to the museum just to have more time to go out and not pay a babysitter at home.

## Bibliography

- Andrade, Pedro (2008a) Web 2.0 and Digital Museums. In *XX Congress International Association of Empirical Aesthetics, IEAE, 19-22/08/2008*. Chicago.
- Idem (2008b) A Comunicação Pública da Arte: o caso dos museus de arte locais/globais. In *VI Congresso Português de Sociologia 'Mundos sociais: saberes e práticas, FCSH/UNL, 25-28/06/2008*. Lisboa.
- Idem (2006) Cybermuseums and cybermuseumology: the Hybrilog as a Bloesum. In *Culture and Communication, Proceedings of the XIX Congress of the International Association of Empirical Aesthetics, Université d'Avignon, Aug 29th – 1st Sep*. Avignon, 317-318.
- Idem (2005) O e-learning em multimédia. In *Congreso Internacional Europa-America 'Milenio y Memoria, Museos, Archivos y Bibliotecas para la historia de la ciencia, 5-7/10/2005*. Buenos Aires.
- Idem (2004) Art/Science/Technology: e-art in virtual museums measured by interdimensional networking method. In *Art and Science, Proceedings of the XVIII Congress, International Association of Empirical Aesthetics, 13-16 /9/ 2004*. Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 59-64.
- Idem (2003a) A museabilidade da Ciência: consumo, cidadania, cultura e comunicação. *Atalaia/Intermundos* (12/13), 12-32.
- Idem (2003b) Virtualidades do museu e o museu virtual. *Atalaia/Intermundos*, (12/13), 97-106.
- Idem (2003c) O museu e a literacia da viagem cultural. In *Congresso Rotas da Natureza, 23, 27-29 de Junho de 2003*. Lisboa.
- Idem (1997) Navegações no cibertempo: viagens virtuais e virtualidades da ciberviagem. *Atalaia* (3), 111-124.
- Idem (1993) Sociologia da viagem: deslocações diárias e anti-quotidiano nómada. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* (37), 51-77.
- Andrade, Pedro et al (2003) Os públicos da museabilidade da Ciência: a XIV Feira Internacional de Minerais, Gemas e Fósseis de Lisboa. *Atalaia/Intermundos* (12/13), 62-91.
- Becker, Howard (1982) *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Fiske, J. (1991) *Television Culture*. Routledge.
- Hall, Stuart (1973) *Encoding/Decoding in the Television Discourse*. Birmingham: CCCS.
- Jaworski, Adam (2005) *Discourse, Communication & Tourism, Multilingual Matters*.
- Lewis, J. (1991) *The Ideological Octopus: an exploration of television and its audience*. London: Routledge.
- Richards, G. (2001) *Cultural Attractions and European Tourism*. CABI.
- Unsworth, Len (2001) *Teaching Multiliteracies across the curriculum: changing contexts of text and image in classroom practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Urry, John (2007) *Mobilities*. Polity.
- Willis, P. (1990) *Common culture: Symbolic work at play in the symbolic cultures of the young*. Open University Press.