

Museums

Coordination and role of the Museums of the University of São Paulo (1990-2010)

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THE YEAR 2011 marks a new stage in the development process of the Statutory Museums of the University of São Paulo, namely Museum of Contemporary Art (*Museu de Arte Contemporânea* - MAC), Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (*Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia* - MAE), Paulista Museum (*Museu Paulista* - MP) and Museum of Zoology (*Museu de Zoologia* - MZ). It is, in a way, an event that celebrates the 30th year of approval, by the University Council, of the Statute of the Museums in 1981, promulgated by Resolution No. 2342 of 1982.

It is important to remember this Resolution, as it precedes the current Statute of 1988 which, upon creating the *Coordination of the Museums* explained the doctrine that guided the structuring of the University of São Paulo.

This structure organized, into different levels, the *Teaching and Research Units* and the *Integration Bodies*. The first formed a large, relatively homogeneous set in terms of its specificities, corresponding to the Faculties, Institutes and Schools. The latter were more heterogeneous and housed the Museums.

Understanding the role of the University Museums in 1988 requires interpreting the texts of Articles 2, 4, 5 and 6 of the Statute then approved in a combined way.

Article 2 expressed the purposes or objectives of the University in a comprehensively fashion, as regards academic education and the way to promote its relationship with society. Under this Article, the objectives of USP included: “I – to promote and develop all forms of knowledge through teaching and research; II –to provide higher education with a view to developing professionals capable of conducting research and teaching activities in all areas knowledge; III - to extend to society services associated with teaching and research activities.” Under these purposes, the issue of specialized knowledge is not as emphatic as in the founding statute of USP of 1934. The concept of extension, in turn, was already presented at a more mature level.

It is in the comparison of Articles 5 and 6 that the difference and expectation of the university in relation to the museums are more clearly perceived since, in its structural organization to achieve its objectives, the University

groups its activities into three broad categories: Units, Integration Bodies and Complementary Bodies, the first two more directly focused on core activities.

This categorization brings with it the underlying idea of hierarchy and importance that is specified in Articles 5 and 6, which define the characteristics of the Museums (as well as of the other Integration Bodies) and of the Teaching and Research Units.

In essence, these two Articles characterize the way the University Council perceived knowledge and how it should be structurally institutionalized. It favored the specialized knowledge provided for in the curriculum structures, particularly at the undergraduate level, which would be controlled by the Schools, Faculties and Institutes, collectively referred to as Teaching and Research Units. They would be formed by clusters of smaller structural units, known as departments (Article 51), which would be defined based on a scientific-didactic organization. This position resulted from the persistence of a philosophy that saw in the Department the ideal space of specialized knowledge, which would interact with other Departments in the organization of the teaching and scientific structures that distinguish the Teaching and Research Units according to the areas of academic and professional education (professors, engineers, lawyers, physicians, etc.).

It is possible to recognize in this doctrine the continuity of the philosophy that guided the founding of the University in 1934, with the creation of the School of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters that would become the institution's "alma mater", based on the development of the specialized knowledge produced in its various departments and that subsequently would give rise to the area of the Institutes devoted to teaching and research (Chemistry, Physics, Geosciences, and Mathematics, for example).

It is interesting to note that in 1934 the so-called professional schools of higher education created in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the state of São Paulo (Law, Engineering, Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry, for example), were fully integrated into the university, whereas the Museums, which already existed, were mentioned only as institutions of a complementary nature, not effectively integrated into the academic structure that was being established.

Article 6 clarifies, in both doctrinal and legal terms, the role of the USP Museums. It will be the same role assigned to the Specialized Institutes and to a new form of academic scientific organization introduced in the university: the Support Centers. All of them are seen as "focused on studies of intersectoral interest"; hence the emergency of a space structurally reserved for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge. The support centers, which were the big novelty provided for in this Article, consolidated the criticism of the role of the Departments from both the academic and political standpoint raised in the discussions of the University Council in 1988. Since then, the Support Centers have gained prestige within the University and undermined the power of the Departments.

This article laid the ground for the evolution experienced by the Museums later on, besides giving rise to conflicts - in some cases - in the relations between the Departments and Units and the Museums. Paragraph 1 of Article 6 stated that “the Integration Bodies will develop programs of general interest as well as those proposed by faculty members from units and departments related to their objectives”. While this provision applied to all Integration Bodies, its meaning seemed to be different for each of the clusters. In the case of the Museums, it conveyed, in some situations, the idea of a risk of interference in the activities planned by the Museum itself. This idea was reinforced by the fact that the teaching staff of Museums did not have a consolidated career and was numerically very small.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 6, in turn, laid the ground for the process that started next and ended with elimination of said provisions.

Paragraph 2 stated that: “There will be a Museums Coordination formed by the Provost for Culture and University Extension as President; the Museum directors and an equal number of representatives of related Teaching and Research Units.” According to paragraph 3: “It will be the duty of the Coordination referred to in the preceding paragraph to design the policy on the integration between the Museums and the represented Units, as well as to establish operational and customer service rules.”

These two articles combined allowed the Museums Coordination to operate as a political-academic structure conducive to an enhancement process that would give greater visibility to the Museums by working on their consolidation - particularly through the effective integration of their academic staff into the University with the implementation of public entrance examination for the teaching career. It also served to voice the specificities of the Museums in the context of USP, by highlighting the interdisciplinary nature contained in the expression “*studies of intersectoral interest*” represented by the *collections of the material culture* that characterized the Museums, in contrast with the Departments.

Paragraph 4 of Article 6 established a parallel with the Departments, by stating that the Museums - like the Departments - would have “an Advisory Council whose composition shall be provided for in its Statute,” i.e., the Museums were placed hierarchically below the Teaching and Research Units and at the same level as the Units’ Departments. Confirming that situation, only one Museum director elected by his peers sits in the University Council, i.e., the set of Museums is viewed from the perspective of a Teaching and Research Unit represented by its director.

The reality, however, has more nuances than that reflected by this doctrinal perspective. Each Museum alone is more complex than a Department. It does not control a curricular structure, but rather a material collection that has specificities. In turn, each Museum has diversified collections and needs for

specific curatorships. The role of the professor in the Museum is very different from that of the professor in a Teaching and Research Unit.

This situation arose from the interpretation of the General Statute of the University, which in its article 50 puts the Museums and the Departments at the same level for purposes of admission into and promotion in the teaching career. It should be remembered that the oldest Museums were structured outside of USP and even before its creation. As in other research institutes in the state of São Paulo, they were the working place of researchers. After the incorporation of the Museums by USP, this structure was partially maintained, and this statutory provision aimed exactly at fully integrating the staff of researchers, with the effective implementation of a teaching career in the Museums.

This leveling of the teaching career and the statutory provisions converged towards leveling the Museums with the Departments as well.

When the Statute and the General Bylaws of the University were enacted in 1988, the Legislation and Appeals Committee (*Comissão de Legislação e Recurso* – CLR) of the University Council drafted a set of resolutions that should guide the activities of the University until the respective bylaws were approved by the University Council. Thus, the organization and operation of the Museums Coordination was first regulated by Resolution No. 3728 of August 20, 1990.

This resolution defined the fundamental criteria that would guide the activity of the Museums in the next twenty years, since few changes were introduced in Resolution No. 4192 of September 1st, 1995, which revoked it.

A comparison of the two legal instruments shows that Resolution No. 4192 adjusted the doctoral degree requirement to that of “livre docente”^{TN} and promoted the small expansion of the Coordination by bringing to the collegiate body a representative of non-faculty employees elected by their peers. The mechanism for choosing these representatives and their term of office remained unchanged.

The cluster of related Units in each of the Museums remained practically unchanged, with the expansion of the units in the case of the MAC, through the establishment of the School of Engineering of São Carlos and of the Museum of Zoology and the School of Animal Science and Food Engineering.

The list of related Units is important in that it indicates a conceptual relationship between the curricular structures of scientific knowledge and the material collections of the Museums, thereby expressing the concept of knowledge integration on the one side and of a structural hierarchy on the other. It is as

^{TN} Many Brazilian universities still accept the institution of “livre docente” – an adaptation of the German “privatdozent”. In the past, “livre docência” was a mechanism to ensure academic quality; today it is most often a mechanism to avoid the doctoral degree requirement for admission and promotion.

if the Museums could be perceived as Departments, gathering material collections typical of museums in coordination with the other Departments of related Units. This explains the content of the competencies of the Museums Coordination.

It was in the field of competencies that Resolution No. 4192 introduced more specific criteria that allowed the Museums to overcome the issue of teaching career that hitherto had been lacking legal treatment. Here, the creation of teaching career positions from a proposal of the Museums' Advisory Council merits to be noted. The solution to this problem led to the consolidation of the career in the following years, fostering a remarkable academic development of which the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology is an iconic example.

Coupled with the consolidation of the teaching career, special mentions should be made of the establishment of graduate disciplines that began to be offered to USP students and that effectively promoted the integration of the Museums into the more visible day to day of undergraduate courses.

Also noteworthy is the competence of the Coordination by "approving the Statute of the Museums and submitting them to the approval of the University Council", which led to the progressive disappearance of the Statute of the Museums (Resolution No. 2342 of 1982), thus overcoming problems that until then had remained unsolved. These were, incidentally, controversial issues which would be reflected in the delay in approving Resolution No. 4192 at the University Council. This is a point that deserves further consideration.

In the interval between Resolutions Nos. 3728 and 4192, the University Council approved, on December 17, 1991, the Statute of the Museums Coordination, whose Resolution should have been numbered 3906 and dated January 10, 1992. This Resolution was not published by decision of Dean Roberto Leal Lobo e Silva Filho, who, in his deliberation on the matter expressed doubts as to the legality and merit of the transitional provisions of that resolution, which addressed precisely the issues related to the teaching career. According to said provisions: unless the Museums meet the conditions laid down in section II, Article 57 of the Statute, the decisions referring to examinations for admission into the teaching career and "livre docência"^{TN} (Article 3, paragraphs X, XI, XII, XIII and XIV of the Resolution) shall be made by a committee comprised of a faculty member from each related Unit and two members of the Advisory Council of the interested Body. Sole Paragraph - the faculty member mentioned in the "caput" shall be chosen by the Congregation of the Unit.

To settle the question and submit the matter to the University Council, the case was referred to the Legislation and Appeal Committee (CLR).

After many discussions at the CLR, it was unanimously decided on November 9, 1992 that, since the Museums and Departments were at the same

^{TN} See previous TN.

hierarchical level, the Advisory Councils of the Museums would have the competence to propose to the Museums Coordination all matters related to the teaching career.

The idea was to assign the Coordination the role that in the Units was played by the Congregations. This included increasing the representation of the related Units in the Coordination and introducing faculty representation. This decision, which was included on the agenda of the University Council in its meeting of November 24, 1992, prompted a heated debate.

The thesis of leveling the Museums Coordination with the Congregations met strong resistance. After lengthy discussions, the matter was removed from the agenda. Discussions were held at the CLR, at the University Council and at the Culture and University Extension Council, after which it was again included on the agenda of the University Council in its meeting of August 24, 1993, with two alternative proposals to the text of the CLR: one from Prof. Antonio Guimarães Ferri and another from Prof. Ulpiano Toledo Bezerra de Menezes. These new proposals were reviewed by the CLR, which approved the decision ratifying that previously issued, and provided inputs for the University Council's decision based on a comparative analysis of the three proposals (CLR, Prof. Ferri and Prof. Ulpiano). This decision of the CLR was motivated by the realization that this was a doctrinal matter rather than just a matter of legal merit.

The discussion of this matter was lengthy and was only concluded at the meeting of September 1st, 1995, which approved Resolution No. 4.192 published in the Official Gazette of September 5, 1995. The thesis of raising the status of the Museums Coordination was defeated, and the prerogatives of the Congregations on issues related to the teaching career in the Museums were maintained. This has always been a matter of discomfort in the everyday life of the Museums. It is an unresolved issue that to some extent has contributed to weakening the Coordination from the standpoint of the Museums.

The Museums Coordination, however, played a key role in the process of interaction among the Museums and between these and the university, due to a set of actions that gave visibility to the area of action of the Museums and contributed decisively to the recognition of the importance of the Museums as research and teaching centers, beyond the already recognized role of extraversion towards society.

Among these initiatives, special mention should be made of the seminars sponsored by the *Museum Week*, which gradually gained national prestige. This activity was first organized in 1997, under the coordination of the then Cultural Heritage Commission (currently Cultural Preservation Center) and subsequently repeated, always in odd years.

Each *Museum Week* was organized based on a central theme. In 1997 the theme was "Museum Management Plan"; in 1999, the event focused on the themes "Brazil: 500 Years" and "Hopes for the next millennium", from cross-cutting coordination areas.

These weeks were institutionalized by the Coordination from a plan for which each of the Museums was responsible on an alternation basis. These activities led the Teaching and Research Units to recognize in their daily lives the importance of the museum collections they organized and that often got little attention. The concept of the museum as a teaching and research center was progressively established.

This process led to the idea of reserving an area at the University City to centralize the activities of the Museums: the proposal then emerged that culminated in Paulo Mendes da Rocha's project for the *Museum Square*, where the headquarters of the MAE (which is still located in an adapted area in the old facilities of FUNDUSP) and of the MZ (which would be transferred to the University City and yield space for the much needed expansion of the MP, inextricably established in the symbolic space of the Ipiranga Museum) would be built.

Alongside the progressive recognition of the University Museums, also at the national level the actions of the Ministry of Culture, in parallel to those of IPHAN, led to the enactment by the federal government, in 2009, of Law No. 11904 establishing the *Statute of the Museums*.

Essential for the positive action promoted by the Museums Coordination was its relative political-administrative centrality in the structure of the Dean's Office. It was a collegiate body chaired by the Provost for Culture and University Extension. The decisions of the Coordination resonated in the Culture an Extension Council and were brought to the University Council by the chair of the collegiate body himself. In this sense, it was a strong collegiate body. To the structural strength we should add the prestige that some provosts enjoyed in that period, particularly Professors João Alexandre Barbosa, who established the Coordination, and Jacques Marcovitch, who succeeded him and subsequently was elected dean of the University.

The progressive strengthening of the Museums, the result of the new statutes approved in the context of the Museum Coordination that led to the establishment of the teaching career and the subsequent expansion and qualification of the academic cadre, encouraged, however, the desire for equal footing with the Teaching and Research Units and greater autonomy in their political-academic organization.

The result was the enhancement of the proposed statutory and regulatory reform, which was submitted to the University dean on November 30, 2010 by the representative of the Museums directors in the University Council, Professor Cecilia Helena Lorenzini de Salles Oliveira, which, in essence, removes the Museums from the list of Integration Bodies and places them right below the Units, as expressed in the wording proposed for Article 4 of the statute - "USP meets its objectives through its Units, Museums, Integration Bodies and Complementary Bodies distributed on campuses."

This new position was refuted in the other articles in which the Museums were mentioned in the Statute and Bylaws and, as a result, the extinction of the

Museum Coordination was also voted as an essential measure, as justified in the document:

Essential, above all, is the extinction of the Museums Coordination. Established in the 1990s, the Coordination fulfilled the role of acting as a Body that coordinated and defined the policies of the Museums, when the Bylaws were approved. Today, however, when the teaching career in the Museums has been fully established, its duties provided for in Resolution 4192 of 09/01/1995 have become obstacles that prevent the Museums from relating directly to the Dean's Office, the four Provost Offices and other Central Bodies; from establishing, with full freedom, policies on research, culture and integration with the Teaching Units; and especially from exercising the initiative of managing the teaching career through its Advisory Deliberative.

That request was referred to the Legislation and Appeals Committee of the University Council, and the opinion issued by the rapporteur, Professor Sergio França Adorno de Abreu, which was favorable to the request, was approved ad referendum by the Chairman of the Committee on December 7, 2010, and subsequently approved at the Meeting of the University Council on December 14, 2010, and published in the Official Gazette of December 23rd.

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Received on 27 Sep. 2011 and accepted on 30 Sep. 2011.