

Overview of Museum Education and Cultural Mediation in a Quebec Regional Museum: Between Democracy and Cultural Democratization

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Summary: The Beaulne Museum is a regional institution located in Coaticook, Quebec. Its threefold mission includes the showcasing of textiles and costumes, local heritage, and visual arts. While favouring an historical approach, the museum's programming is also open to modernity. Many exhibitions and a range of cultural activities are offered to the public with the aim of promoting cultural democracy and cultural democratization. This paper examines audiences' response to the museum's offerings and the impact of the socio-economic and environmental context on the relevance of its activities.

Keywords: Museum education; Regional museum; Cultural democracy; Cultural democratization; Cultural mediation.

Introduction

Museum education and cultural mediation are the ultimate goals of the museological chain. In recent decades, museum researchers and professionals have shown increased interest in this museological function, owing to the general awareness of museums' social role (Black, 2010, Brown & Mairesse, 2018). It has rightly been pointed out that it is not enough to collect; rather, this activity must be done with a purpose, namely that of communicating with the public and establishing a connection to individuals' experiences (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994). Target audiences are thus at the centre of concerns. In addition, some of the literature published in recent years on museum education and cultural mediation brings this to light by offering an overview of the question as it stands in Canada, the United States, and Europe, and by studying visitor needs (Dufresne-Tassé, Banna, Sauvé & O'Neill, 2006; Dufresne-Tassé & Marin, 2012). This includes a case study analysis of a core institution of Quebec museology, the Musée de la civilisation (Bergeron, 2002), and a thorough examination of museum assessment (Daignault & Schiele, 2014). More recently, mediation issues in the digital age have also been brought up (Juanals & Minel, 2016). Through this overview we wish to contribute to the body of work published in recent years that touches on various aspects of museum education and cultural mediation but in the context of a museum situated in a small locality, far from large urban centres.

Notwithstanding the location of the institution, we can generally define the main purpose of museum education as the enrichment of the person through visitors' meaning-

making (Silverman, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; Falk & Dierking, 2000). The museum is a place that offers, by its specificities, multiple ways where a person can grow. As Dufresne-Tassé (2018) mentions, education being the goal, “mediation is the technique, or the means used to achieve the interventions of democratization and democracy” (p. 126). Further on, for Bélanger (2007), “in the Quebec context, mediation is thought of, financed and practised in a situation of cultural decentralization, urban and regional revitalization that increasingly involves culture; it develops in the context of a marked interest in social inclusion problems [...] [and,] places cultural mediation at the heart of several types of development and problem solving” [free translation] (p. 27). To adequately fulfil its educational function, the museum must constantly innovate to respond to the community’s needs. In doing so, we are understanding museum education and cultural mediation through the lens of cultural democracy and cultural democratization. Cultural democracy values the different forms of cultural expression and encourages the effective participation of communities (Baeker, 1999). It calls for expressions and practices outside of the mainstream canon (Matarasso & Landry, 1999; Baeker, 2002). In other words, it is “the enhancement of works and lifestyles related to the expression of popular cultures not only traditional, but mixed, emerging, stemming from urban cosmopolitanism, sometimes in opposition to dominant cultural models [free translation] (Lafortune, 2012a, p. 13). In regards to cultural democratization, it is understood as the sharing with the greatest number of “excluded” people of “learned”, “cultivated” or, if you prefer, “high” culture (Midy, 2002). More precisely, “it is the access of as many people as possible to legitimate artistic works and the transmission of aesthetic values, as defined by a certain art history” [free translation] (Lafortune, 2012a, p. XI). Moreover, Émond and Mendonça (2018) identified accessibility, equality, inclusion, equity and sustainability as being five key principles from which cultural democracy and democratization are driven.

In this paper, we will focus on the notions mentioned above in order to study cultural democracy and cultural democratization as modalities to cultural mediation. Our reference for the present study is a regional institution, the Beaulne Museum of Coaticook, located in the Eastern Townships of Quebec.

Research problem

Officially registered in 1975, the Beaulne Museum is a regional museum located relatively far from urban centres. The city of Coaticook has a population of 8,698 people and the regional county municipality has 18,497 inhabitants (Statistics Canada, 2016). It is characterized by a mixed French- and English-speaking population, although the gap in numbers between the two groups has continuously widened over the course of the last century, benefiting French speakers. In addition, this is a tourist area. The Beaulne Museum therefore sits in a unique microcosm grouping multiple parameters, whose impact on the institution and vice versa is interesting to study, especially given the scarcity of research literature on the functioning and impact of regional museums.

Regional museums have particularities that at once are recognizable because of their institutional structure yet having to disseminate a unique cultural narrative. Of interest is how a regional institution juggles with global and local culture. In what way can the cultural product offered by the Beaulne Museum since its founding be characterized? Have cultural education and/or mediation always been aligned with the

characteristics of the social environment they are set in? Have they occupied their rightful place? How have they evolved and how are they received by their target audiences today? Are notions of cultural democracy and democratization present in the Beaulne Museum's cultural mediation offer?

Methodology

Our reflection is based on the literature of the last three decades dedicated to the topic of museum education and cultural mediation. We also scoured the Beaulne Museum archives: minutes, annual reports, committee meeting reports, the listing of all exhibitions since its inception, exhibition records, special event records, and reports on the characteristics of museum attendance. We were thus able to make an overview of the programs implemented since the opening of the institution, the context thereof, the means used, and their reception by the public.

We designed three questionnaires specifically for this study: one for occasional visitors, one for teachers who take part in the workshops organized by the education service, and one for individuals from the cultural milieu and cultural actors having had a long-standing involvement with the museum. This is a qualitative analysis. However, we were rapidly faced with the limits of this exercise due mainly to sample size occurring in a small community. The answers provided in the questionnaires were therefore not very diversified, hence our decision to limit the number of questionnaires studied. In total fifteen questionnaires were analysed, five of which for occasional visitors, six for teachers and four pertaining to cultural actors.

Aside from the questionnaires, starting in 2008, short surveys were made available to visitors at the exit of the museum. We examined the comments provided in fifty of these short surveys. Subsequently, evaluation sheets were forwarded to primary school teachers who bring their students to the introduction and creative workshops offered by the education service. Seventy-seven sheets were consulted.

Although based on a thematic analysis, this study also presents a historical perspective. The first section exposes the museum's socio-economic environment, the second presents the museum offering since its inception, and the third focuses on the audiences' response to the museum's activities.

1. The Beaulne Museum's socio-economic environment

Museums are both witnesses and a reflection of the territory and the community that they are set in. This is more relevant in rural areas where institutions located in relatively homogenous environments act as a beacon to the community.

The Beaulne Museum is located in the Coaticook Valley which has been a tourist region for a number of decades. The pillar of this tourism is unquestionably *Parc de la gorge*. Coaticook Gorge Park is a natural park with a gorge running through it. A suspended footbridge, the longest in North America (169 metres) overlooks this gorge. The park has more than 20 km of trails and many activities are offered year round: snowshoeing, skating, snow biking, mountain biking. Also, for the past five years, the *Foresta Lumina* light show has helped to reinforce the Coaticook Valley's reputation as a tourist destination with its 2.6 km illuminated night trail located in Coaticook Gorge Park. The agribusiness also attracts gourmet tourism with businesses such as Laiterie de

Coaticook, farms, dairies, and so on. Even when the museum is not the primary attraction, it benefits from some of the trips undertaken to the area.

It is therefore interesting to see to what degree and in what way the Beaulne Museum's environment influences the development and the scope of its museum education and cultural mediation activities.

Demographic characteristics and its impact on cultural mediation

The figures published by the Regional County Municipality (RCM), bring to awareness certain realities experienced by the local and regional population. According to the Coaticook RCM 2014 final report on socio-economic planning, the size of the 0 to 4 age category (higher proportion than in Estrie and Quebec) justifies the effort and attention dedicated to creating workshops for school groups (RCM of Coaticook, 2014). Similarly, the attachment to creating certain exhibitions that reflect traditions, results from the large number of people aged 65 and over (a higher percentage than in Estrie and Quebec). Furthermore, the fact that the total population is relatively small invites to conceptualizing cultural mediation within a broader perspective that includes tourist visitors.

Socio-economic reality

Examination of the structure of the community in relation to the museum has led to the following observation: the population has a lower level of post-secondary attendance than the average for the Estrie and Quebec City regions. For example, in 2011, 30.6% of people aged 15 and over had no diploma, certificate or degree compared to 24.2% for Estrie and 22.2% for Quebec. In the same line of thought, only 7.7% of the population held a university certificate, diploma, or bachelor's degree or higher. The percentage in Estrie is 15.7% and in Quebec 18.6% (RCM of Coaticook, 2014, p. 14). As regards the sectors of activity: agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, are predominant with 14.7% of the active population against 3.6% for Estrie and 2% for Quebec, as is the manufacturing sector which mobilizes 20.1% of the active population versus 16.1% for Estrie and 11.4% for Quebec (RCM of Coaticook, 2014, p. 20). Concerning the average personal income, it is lower than elsewhere: \$21,418 versus \$23,180 for Estrie and \$25,646 for Quebec (RCM of Coaticook, 2014, p. 25). To recap, we can say that the population is relatively under-represented in post-secondary education and living mainly from the farming and manufacturing sectors with a low average personal income.

In addition, the 2016 census indicates a decrease in population compared to 2011. In 2016, the city of Coaticook counted 8,698 residents and 18,497 inhabitants for the Coaticook RCM (Statistics Canada, 2016) compared to 2011 where the city of Coaticook had 9,255 residents and the Coaticook RCM, 18, 847 (Statistics Canada, 2011). This situation is common to many remote rural municipalities and can create concerns for the sustainability of the institution. If this trend continues, the weak local visitation rate might drop further together with the diminishing population around the museum (already small in number), thereby compromising its viability despite its attractiveness for tourists. However, if mediation activities targeting youth are effective, the dwindling population should not affect attendance dramatically since upcoming generations of adults will have been exposed to art and heritage within the context of the Beaulne Museum.

Outlook on visitation figures

Since 1978, yearly visitation, not including virtual visits, has varied between 7,500 and 8,500 entries (Visitor registry). School groups represent on average half of this visitation rate. The proportion of tourists in these statistics has remained consistent for two decades, but it has been on the rise in the last four years. During the tourist season, which stretches from June to October with a peak in July and August, approximately 80% of visitors are tourists (provincial, national, and international) and 20% are local and regional visitors (Visitor registry). As Michel Allard (2012) highlighted, it is recognized that tourists visit not only for the purpose of entertainment, rest, and a change of scenery, but also education and learning. Conversely, during the low season, 10% to 15% of visitors are tourists and 85% to 90% are local and regional residents. Among the latter, 80% are students (Visitor registry).

In terms of the split between French-speaking and English-speaking visitors, the latter represent only 2% to 3% (the overall ratio in the region is 95% French speaking and 5% English speaking) despite the proximity of the American border and the favourable exchange rate for American visitors in recent years. An effort could be made to attract this clientele (Promotional plan). However, the rate of 2% to 3% English-speaking visitors should be nuanced as it only represents persons who identified themselves as such. A number of English-speaking residents speak and understand French and consequently, do not request that the guided visit be conducted in English.

Concerning age groups, the ratio is the following: 50% very young (school visitors), 30% seniors (60 years of age and over), and 20% of adults (varied) (Visitor registry). The youngest and the oldest are therefore the most important portions of the museum's clientele and this reflects the situation for many museums. This brings about the challenge facing the Beaulne Museum to achieve accessibility and equality for all citizens in the development of its activities.

2. Basis and characteristics of the museum's offering

From the first years of the Beaulne Museum's operation, its board of trustees—"committee" at the time—oriented its mission along three major lines: textiles and costumes, local heritage, and visual arts. The eclectic nature of this mission imparts a number of fields on the regional museum. A highly specialized museum focusing on textile and costumes or on local history or on visual arts, would have greater difficulty developing and reaching out to its specific population base, even considering tourist clients. The typological diversity of the exhibitions offered attracts a greater number of visitors who find them of interest regardless of their personal tastes. This vision, which remains unchanged, translates above all into a corresponding base and offering. In this, we see an institution that develops activities around its collections with the preoccupation of serving a diversity of visitors from its community and beyond, which is in line with notions of cultural democracy and cultural democratization.

A solid base: collections and documentation

In keeping with its mission, the Beaulne Museum collections cover textiles and costumes (approximately 8,000 items), local heritage (approximately 6,500 items), and visual arts (approximately 500 works) (Inventory of artifacts). These collections were

built gradually, and they continue to grow, although, in contrast to the early years of the museum's existence, accepting artifact donations is subject to rigorous examination.

In addition to objects and works of art, the documentation centre has items such as: books covering a broad spectrum of fields, from local and regional history to various arts disciplines, and different trades related to the museum's collections, archives (photos and other types of documents), maps, brochures, periodicals, and so on. The museum's offering is above all embodied by the exhibitions presented and its own collection of objects.

Exhibitions

A clear historical mark

What immediately strikes the Beaulne Museum visitor, both virtual and real, is the neo-Queen Anne architecture of the Château Arthur-Osmore-Norton which the museum moved into in 1976, one year after its official incorporation. The permanent exhibition retraces the life history of the man who built the stately home, Arthur Osmore Norton, and his family. This history, which also touches upon that of the city of Coaticook, provides a valuable overview at least of the first half of the 20th century. The external and interior architecture lends core level legitimacy to the institution by virtue of the aesthetic appeal that it confers and the rich history that accompanies it. The museum's conservation, enhancement, and mediation activities have made it possible to maintain the building, classified as a historic monument in 2012, in good condition.

The museum's board of trustees and management have always been cognizant of its mission to reconstitute and restore the local history alongside the local history society created in 1966, which, unfortunately, has never had the means to achieve its goals.

An exhibition of historical photographs by the famous photographer Nakash was presented as early as 1978. Other historical exhibitions followed in subsequent years, such as an exhibition on the impact of the railway on Coaticook in 1991 and an exhibition entitled "Life in days gone by" ("Vie d'autrefois") in 1999. The list goes on. To these were added, starting in 2008, virtual exhibits on topics related to local history.

In addition, 2012 marked the launching of an archeological excavation project on the Hotel Queen site, whose guests were mainly customers of the railway located behind Château Norton. The hotel was in operation between 1863 and 1897, when it was destroyed in a fire. Artifacts have been discovered in a succession of digs and more discoveries are expected. The objective of the project is to put together an exhibition on the history of the hotel, which is closely tied to that of the railroad, and, therefore, to local economic history.

The goal of enhancing local history and heritage is also at the core of another mission defining the museum: textile and costumes. In fact, Coaticook has long been a major producer of a variety of textiles. Both the textile industry and trades have been developed over time and have become one of the most important economic sectors. An article was dedicated to this subject (Toé, 2016). As a privileged witness to local history and a guardian of its tangible and intangible heritage, the Beaulne Museum could not overlook this sector. Close to half of the artifacts that compose its collections and its heritage artifact exhibitions (except visual arts exhibits) are textiles and costumes. A

range of themes are thus explored ranging from special types of textiles to lavish costume styles and a diversity of costume accessories.

History and heritage are therefore an important part of the museum's offering and their relevance has never been questioned. Exhibitions are considered tools for cultural mediation, the aim of which is to facilitate the discovery and understanding of the community's history and its social impact on the lives of its citizens. However, this historical and heritage rooting has not prevented the museum from focusing on the present and looking to the future.

Representation of contemporary art

The part of the museum's mission that consists in showcasing visual arts is quite substantial. Through contemporary artists, the museum plays an important role as an exhibition centre to the extent of maybe overshadowing other aspects of its mission. On average, 12 to 13 visual art exhibitions have been presented every year for at least the last ten years. Furthermore, there have been two biennials since 2008: a local and regional artists' fair, and an exhibition of high school students (on hold for the last four years while developing a better system for the teachers). A small majority of the artists are from the Eastern Townships, but many of them come from other Quebec regions, including the Montreal and Quebec City areas, and the Montérégie and Mauricie regions. In this regard, the museum exceeds its regional vocation and reaches out to the province as a whole.

Visual arts exhibitions thus help to expand the museum's offering and ensure constant animation while enabling a large number of artists to present their work to a variety of audiences. Quality requirements have been upheld. The museum therefore plays the role of a catalyst for talent development.

As it stands, exhibitions, be they physical or virtual, focused on history and heritage or on contemporary art, are a vehicle for promoting cultural democracy and cultural democratization. We examine next the means used by the museum to enable the public to benefit from the heritage and the works of art that it presents.

Confronting education and cultural mediation activities and methods with means and context

Exhibition visits

Exhibit visits are guided for individual visitors and for groups. As an introduction to the visit, the guide summarizes the Norton family history. The tour starts with the permanent exhibition rooms and ends with the temporary exhibitions. Although the method is conventional, the visit can be captivating depending on the guide's storytelling and communication skills. Like other institutions of this size, the individual skills of the educator are essential to creating a good experience for the visitors. No audio guide or other electronic devices that have become common in larger museums are used. The apparent lack of technological means is actually an advantage if the guide is able to keep the visitors' interest through human contact and interaction. The possibility for visitors to ask questions and to revisit stories is enriching. A parallel can be made here with storytelling, used to create personal connections between visitors and the museum offer,

which consists in the guide or the facilitator's ability to tell a story, to make the visitor "travel", react, and perhaps even offer a narrative of his or her own (Bedford, 2001).

Workshops

The museum's educational activities also include creation workshops, mostly for school groups. In fact, the school sector occupies a prominent place in museum education. The head of education service sits on the visual arts selection committee because some workshops are tailored around exhibitions included in the program. Sometimes special exhibitions are designed specifically for educational purposes. This can be tied to Nicole Gesché-Koning's observations about the role of the museum educator as an exhibit designer (Gesché-Koning, 2006). Because exhibitions are the backbone of the museum, education has always been paramount in the process of defining its vision of how it should function. A range of topics are addressed, and students are introduced to a number of artistic creation techniques that are appropriate to their age. In addition, there are games and exercises aimed at introducing the notion of heritage. The above is also related to the Quebec Education Program.

Aside from school groups, workshops have occasionally been organized when requested. For example, in 2001, the education sector organized knowledge-sharing workshops in collaboration with the local *Cercles de fermières* (Women farmers' circles). The program included knitting, crocheting, embroidery, and hand-sewing. In the last three years, the concept has been updated to create the flagship inter-generational knitting, lace, and embroidery workshop, which draws strong interest: directed by two facilitators, participants are introduced to or improve their expertise in a variety of textile craft techniques that face the threat of disappearing due to the advanced age of the people who master them.

In the last five years, needs-appropriate educational workshops have also been offered on a yearly basis to persons with physical or mental disabilities. Despite the limited resources used, the emotional benefit for participants has been manifest. This is in line with the concept of using art as a form of therapy for certain illnesses (Hawkins, 2015), an increasingly popular activity that is also used at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Other culture-oriented or cultural mediation activities

Though not expressly designated as such, a large number of cultural mediation activities have taken place at the museum since its founding. Depending on the activities, the public may be more or less involved in their implementation. For a long time, in particular prior to the creation of the Arts and Culture Pavilion (an entertainment and activity hall for the general public) in 1995, the museum was one of the rare places in Coaticook where cultural activities took place. Storytelling evenings, masked balls, and theatre activities, among others, were held at the museum.

In addition, certain activities, designed primarily for fundraising purposes, appeared to be genuine cultural mediation activities because they were based primarily on intangible heritage components. "Christmas Tea" for example organized each December since 1978 allows the museum to collect donations. For some residents, less drawn to the museum and its exhibitions, this strategy enables an ongoing presence of the institution in the community. The same goes for the "Tea on the Veranda" offered in

July and August each year. This activity generates revenue for the museum but, above all, it perpetuates the English tea tradition which is part of the intangible heritage of the founding community of the city of Coaticook that Château Norton bears material witness to. These activities can be used to raise awareness among the public and enhance art and heritage. Although they come to the museum mainly for tea or to socialize, visitors inevitably encounter the surrounding artwork and heritage items. While providing space for socialization, the museum thus becomes a place where highbrow and popular cultures mingle (Bergeron, Arsenault & Provencher St-Pierre, 2015).

In recent years, social media, mainly Facebook and Twitter, have been abundantly used to promote activities and collect comments. These new means of reaching out to the public help immensely the institution in its mediation efforts, especially because they allow for interaction with the public. Nonetheless, traditional media continue to be used for dissemination purposes because at present it remains prevalent. French- and English-language local and regional newspapers, as well as the Radio cooperative pick up on the museum's news on a regular basis. However, abundant media presence is not necessarily an indicator of receptivity among the public. The sociological characteristics of the museum's target audiences bring into question the pertinence, for the time being at least, of the comprehensive use of digital media promoted by some marketing and digital communication experts who recommend extensive use of the most popular social media in order to reach the public (Benay, 2016). Unlimited use of social media only reaches one part of the actual and potential clientele.

As we can see, genuine effort has been expended towards enhancing the work of a number of stakeholders and towards reaching out to a diversity of audiences. Through different activities the Beaulne Museum gears towards targeting new publics aiming for equity among the population it serves.

Following this overview of the museum's activities, we shall focus on analyzing the public's response and the impact and limitations of the museum's education and/or cultural mediation.

3. Reception by the public of the museum's offering

General observation regarding visitors' behaviour

Not to undermine the museum's content, visitors of the Norton House are mainly enchanted by its unique architectural characteristics and to some degree the opulence associated to the lifestyle of its first occupants (Mini-survey at the exit of the museum).

Nonetheless, it is important to highlight the attachment to heritage items, which bring back memories for many visitors. They connect certain objects on display to objects that they possessed in the past or still have, inherited from their parents and grandparents. This brings into focus the object's importance and the visitor's fascination. It all depends on the visitor's ability to marvel at the exhibited items (Dufresne-Tassé, 2015).

Analysis of client comments

Exhibition visitors

Analyzing the degree of satisfaction is done either through a conversation with visitors following their visit or by collecting comments using a questionnaire. Although

90% of the comments offered in writing on the short anonymous questionnaire express the visitors' full satisfaction, sometimes they offer criticism, the most frequent one being the difficult access to the building and the exhibition rooms for persons with reduced mobility. In the perspective of equity and accessibility, improvements have been made since to facilitate access to the building, as well as to the exhibition rooms situated on the upper floors with the installation of an elevator.

Another recurring criticism is voiced mainly by Anglophones, deploring the fact that interpretation panels are not written in English although the house was built by a member of the English-speaking community (Mini-survey at the exit of the museum).

The problem is that the space dedicated to the permanent exhibition is too limited to allow for the installation of a larger number of panels. The choice was therefore made to design panels only in French, because 97% of visitors are French speakers (Visitor registry). An interpretation booklet in English is made available to museum visitors who do not read French. It is a complex situation where the museum deals with the notion of historic legitimacy versus spatial constraints as regards to displayed information.

The education service clientele

The education service clientele is mainly composed of primary school groups in the region. For a number of years, teachers who participated in workshops with their students have been asked to provide an evaluation of the workshop's quality. In general, comments are very positive concerning exhibition quality, the subjects addressed, workshop organization, the materials used, and the ability of the facilitator. Occasionally, there is some criticism regarding the appropriateness of a particular workshop for the age of the students, either the youngest or the oldest, but this remains marginal (Teacher evaluation sheets).

Responses to the questionnaire designed specifically for this study show that teachers' comments have not changed. They are very positive regarding accessibility, circulation, and orientation in the museum. Also, 25% of teachers are satisfied that the workshops are appropriate for the students' age category. The same percentage evoke rigorous time planning of the workshop offered as a factor in their willingness to participate.

People close to the cultural community

The museum's orientation, exhibitions, and cultural mediation in general are greatly appreciated, inasmuch as diverse public groups are taken into consideration. However, some respondents suggested reinforcing the existing activities or organizing new events (Questionnaire for the cultural milieu). These suggestions are pertinent but are met with the institution's limited financial and human resources. Furthermore, an abundance of activities is commendable, but there is a need to ensure that it will be met by an adequate response on behalf of the public given the variety of activities offered by other organizations.

Although generally positive, the public's response and satisfaction must inspire the institution to adjust in order to fill any gaps that come to light and to consistently question the direction given to its museum education and cultural mediation practises in order to maintain the goals of accessibility, equality, equity, inclusion and sustainability.

Institutional governance

The governance of an institution such as a museum is impacted by its social and economic environment (Babbidge, 2018). “As the leader of its association, the Board of Directors is the element of the system that should play the role of a flagship, herald and ambassador, to keep a stimulating vision alive and to convey its message within the organization and in the community where it operates” [free translation] (Malenfant, 2006, p. 173). Governance in the museum sector means to ensure sustainability “by the collective directions of the museums’ affairs, while meeting public needs and complying with interests of key stakeholders” (Babbidge, 2018, p. 3). There are advantages and disadvantages to smaller communities: most members of the Board of trustees are personally acquainted. In fact, they oftentimes look to their circle of acquaintances for the purpose of recruitment based on shared affinities. This facilitates interactions with the various sectors of the community and allows for easy resolution of standard needs and other requirements. Collaborations unfold without too much formality (Babbidge, 2018). In addition, the sentiment of belonging seems to be stronger than it is in larger municipalities, particularly to the extent that the volunteer’s parents and grandparents often took part in the institution’s development. Word of mouth contributes to projecting a positive image of the museum and its activities in the milieu and the region (Société des musées québécois (SMQ), 2015). However, it is necessary to be vigilant for too much familiarity and informality amongst Board members may lead to issues of confidentiality, conflict of interest and possibly foster the status quo (SMQ, 2015; Babbidge, 2018).

At first glance, the governance of a regional museum may not seem directly related to cultural mediation, but it should be noted that deficient governance can have repercussions on activity orientation, important decision-making, and therefore mediation effectiveness (Babbidge, 2018). This is to say that to have an institution driven towards cultural democracy and cultural democratization, asks for the participation of not only museum educators and mediators, but everyone involved in and around the institution.

Discussion

As we have seen, the Beaulne Museum has progressively become more than just an institution that conserves and collects objects. It is an institution that is involved in education and community outreach wanting to enhance local history and heritage in a sustainable fashion, looking to the future in involving younger generations in their programming. It is mostly defined in terms of social positioning rather than a mere collection of objects. The Beaulne Museum has a large number of exhibitions and a range of cultural activities that are offered to diverse publics with a clear purpose to promote cultural democracy and cultural democratization.

Despite the actions undertaken over the years by the Beaulne Museum to attract a diversity of publics, part of the local and regional population has not yet come to own the museum or else are not concerned by its existence. This could be explained in light of the comments made by Luckerhoff (2007) when he mentions that nearly fifty years after the publication of *L'amour de l'art* (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1969) we can still identify the above-average level of education and income as factors that influence cultural

practices (Ganzeboom & Haanstra, 1989; Schuster, 1993; Donnat, 1994; Garon, 2005). Considering the socio-economic reality of the region and in light of Bourdieu's (1979) studies and recent research, we can understand the "non-attractiveness" of the institution for some members of the population.

In this regard at the Beaulne Museum, there is awareness to further address the notion of non-publics. This term designates both the population to be reached out to, lacking a beneficial relationship with art, and a clientele whose loyalty needs to be secured, an audience who ensures the profitability of the operation of existing facilities Lafortune (2012b).

In this context, the museum needs to continue to be proactive where actions are taken in order to reach out to the museum's specific population base and beyond, thinking of occasional visitors but also of the non-publics in the hopes of attracting a greater number of visitors who would find something relevant to explore. From this standpoint, the Beaulne Museum educational programs and cultural mediation are designed at best, to meet the needs of the greatest number of citizens and help develop a sense of belonging that will favour long-term adhesion to the institution. Hence, the notions of democracy and democratization as modalities to cultural mediation are circumscribed into the promotion of engagement and inclusion and the strengthening of culture in the community.

In general, the Beaulne Museum exemplifies, by its diverse actions, what Douglas Worts (2006), a culture and sustainability specialist and former interpretive planner at the Art Gallery of Ontario, wished to see in museums, that is, having museums increasingly maximizing "their potential to be culturally relevant by being much more responsive to the needs and realities of their communities and mindful of the impact (or lack of impact) that their work has on those communities" (p. 47).

With the optic of cultural democracy and cultural democratization as modalities to cultural mediation, the museum educational role is gradually changing from a provider to a facilitator of knowledge and experiences. Besides the guided tours and activities such as workshops for schools, the museum is now prompted to create education programs tailored to specific needs encountered within its community and in collaboration with the targeted publics using all the mediation tools available and in a multidisciplinary fashion. These programs are part of the continuation of the development of museum education where cultural democracy and democratization are at the forefront of the proposed strategies. As proposed by Worts (2006), they take form when the museum is seeking the pulse of specific communities and getting citizens involved in the process. Concretely, we could foresee the Beaulne Museum sharing responsibilities between museum actors and community groups in matters of planning exhibitions, overseeing collections and putting in place education strategies, as proposed by Émond and Mendonça (2018), that encompass goals of accessibility, equality, inclusion, equity and sustainability be that economic, social and environmental. Specifically, in considering the Beaulne Museum's cultural mediation approaches to developing cultural democracy and democratization within its history and current development, we identified three key factors that could be applied to other regional institutions:

- First, a regional museum should be seen as an institution developing its activities around its collections and audiences, being always engaged towards developing community participation;

- Second, the museum educational purposes should be framed around the museum being a knowledge and experience facilitator and being socially responsible and conscious of its civic role;
- Third, the museum target audiences should continue to be built towards the inclusion of new publics including non-publics to achieve diversity and equity in the region it serves and beyond.

Conclusion

Museum education and cultural mediation at the Beaulne Museum are, in proportionate to its size and means, supported by a robust, varied, and optimal offering. They address concerns about cultural democracy and democratization inasmuch as, despite some challenges, they provide an opportunity to a large number of stakeholders to express themselves and promote greater citizen access to activities. The demographic and socio-economic character of the museum's environment has led its managers to expand their education efforts beyond the focus on exhibitions, and to seek and draw participation of the largest possible number of people in an eclectic choice of cultural activities.

Despite the museum's modest resources, the public's response has been very positive. Nevertheless, effort is mainly needed in relation to the issue of non-publics. We believe that although an improvement in this regard is tied to progress on the level of demographic and socio-economic indicators, we can start thinking about identifying other avenues for action to assure sustainability.

We can wonder if sustained viability requires local and regional museums to develop their role as places of "societing" a term used by Grimes and Minelli (2016) to propose a new kind of participation. This is to view museums not only as institutions adapting their offers to diverse publics' needs, but as social actors embedded in their communities. Exploiting "societing" in the museum context would translate into giving diverse members within communities access to their collections, while also providing a unique brand or label. In doing so, distinctive experiences would be created in a place where members of communities could meet and share their different perceptions of the world in an open dialogue with the institution. In the spirit of sustainability, can regional museums provide an environment where "societing" can occur? If so, this key notion could be added to our list, where the focus of a regional institution would be at the foremost, to create a "place to be" in the spirit of cultural democracy and cultural democratization.

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