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Lisbon in real Time

Exhibition Memory /

Memory of an Exhibition

Informal Museology Studies

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Informal Museology

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Exhibition Memory / Memory of an Exhibition

Pedro Pereira Leite¹

What are and how are memories written? Since classical antiquity that an understanding of the phenomenon of memory has been searched for. How do memories, images of another time, constitute themselves as representations? How do we make objects of the past become present? Writing about the memories of an exhibition becomes a challenge of creating a representation.

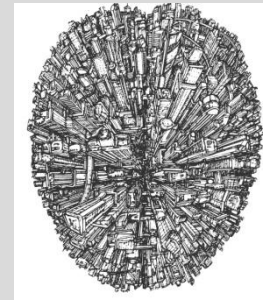


Fig 1- Context and Setting of Memory

Operating a narrative that adds being. We assume that we narrate a process of something missing by evoking what became present in it.

At the beginning of 2012, feeling cold due to the winter freezing weather, I rang the bell. I enter the lobby decorated with ashlars, climb up the wooden stairs to the first floor and enter the room. I am welcomed by the aroma of warm coffee made by Graça Teixeira. Sitting in a circle in the living room, in loose talk there were Cristina Bruno , Katia Filipini , Marcelo Cunha , Mario and Ana Moutinho . Shortly after, Gabriela Cavaco , Isabel Victor and Pedro Cardoso joined the group².

We started to talk about a project to develop an exhibition on Baixa Pombalina, on its past, but especially on its present. We all adhered to the idea very quickly, thrilled with the brief presentation projected on the wall.



Fig 2 1st. meeting on Feb 2012

From that day on, the team was composing itself. More faces were adhering, with different abilities and skills. Some from the area of technology, others in the area of design, others specialized in different contents. As it goes with all projects, some contributed more, others were helping as they could. Potential sites for the exhibition were visited. The Palace of Independence, the Millennium

¹Researcher on Museology. Published in "Baixa in Real Time", (2013), Lisbon, Universidade Lusófona, pp 65-67

² The team on Museology School at Lusofona University. Some work in Brasil at São Paulo University and Baia University.

Gallery, on Augusta Street. A visit to Brazil brought up the possibility of taking the exhibit to Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, in Bahia. The exhibition had become a pretext for different dialogues.

At different moments, proposals to look at Baixa Pombalina were advanced. In one of our meetings we had a small workshop with Cristina Bruno on the purpose of the trip as a catalyst factor for a museological process, in which the illustrious museologist presented the methodologies used for the proposed organization of the City Museum of São Paulo³. The experience of traveling as a methodology of constructing narratives constitutes an inspiring element for our research on what we've been naming "The poetics of intersubjectivity"⁴ and is characterized by looking at the space, at its relational dynamics in pursuit of its essential elements. Interrogating the space and time, with the restlessness that seeks the essence in the process.



Fig 3 Lisbon at Morning

There is an old creator myth in Indian culture that speaks of a hidden river, the Saraswati River that formerly ran open and that time was in charge of hiding it. A river flow that even hidden persists in influencing the present. Observing Baixa Pombalina at the present time is to look at a number of future possibilities. Possibilities conditioned by installed dynamics. That was the challenge we assumed to work on Baixa Pombalina. Asking ourselves what this Baixa is today. Seeking beyond narratives and meta-narratives towards finding out how that space is perceived and lived by its inhabitants. Inhabitant meaning those that make use of the territory.

Our starting point was to explore the territory. On a February morning we arrived at Baixa, as if we were travelers and we lived in it for twenty-four hours. We tried to observe the different rhythms, its inhabitants, how they made use of the space, the different meeting places, the places that attract people, and the spaces of communication among



Fig 4- Lisbon at Night

³ Bruno, Cristina (2004). "As expedições no cenário museal" (The Expedition on Musicological Scenario) in "São Paulo Expedition 450 years, São Paulo, São Paulo City Museum, pp 36-47.

⁴ See Leite, Pedro Pereira (2012). Olhares Biográficos: a poética da Intersubjetividade em Museologia, (Biographical Glances: The Poetic of intersubjectivity on Museology), Lisboa/Ilha de Moçambique, Maca D'Água

them. We tried to look at the stills. We particularly attempted to listen to the meanings of these powerful hidden voices in the stones and blackened faces of the people who speak of past experiences as present actions. Curiously, in late September, already at the final stage of collecting and systematizing work, we went down to the subterranean river that runs in Baixa. The Roman Galleries of Prata Street are a good example of our Baixa. A geology in movement, which provides us with the foundation of a city, periodically devastated by natural cataclysms, which mankind insists on confronting, rebuilding beauty successively out of ruins. A city that is renewed every day, observed in plural forms and lived differently.



Fig 5- Old River underground the city

The methodology of the trip allowed us to gather elements to be integrated in the planned work. Proposals in which the construction of narratives should be shared as well as express different ways of looking at the space. It is true that "our journey" is still an incipient proposal of the potential that the methodology suggests as a challenge to urban spaces museology. A challenge that seeks to overcome the view of the city as a static object. The city as living space incorporates forces that face one another. Natural and social forces. But cities are also representative scenarios of themselves. Depending on the point of view, the representation proposals are different. Then the challenge is to watch the city from its inside. Hear its echoes and incorporate them as museum narrative as a plurality of views that could give us a city "tomography".



Fig 6 The Tugus river

Out of this innovating potential that the applied methodology revealed, we stress at this point the analysis of the poetic dimension of urban space and the sound cartographies. They are two elements produced within research and allow extending the proposed museum narrative in urban spaces.

From Cartography thru the Space Poetics

In the case of the poetic dimension of space as a tool for investigation, it is useful to understand the "spirit of the place". Its utopian dimension (beyond the site) is a starting point for the construction of structural concepts of proposed narratives made from the users of the spaces. Confronting the

user of the spaces with his/her experience in that space, be it by the way he/she moves in it, by his/her life stories, or by the memory of his/her experience, allows us to intuitively grasp the transformation processes of the space. The poetic presents an exegetical dimension (from exegesis or transcendence) which releases meanings contained in the forms, through verbalization and ritualization (commuting and celebrations). At the same time it introduces a theoretical or inclusive dimension, (immanence, as a quest for the essence of all things) because it produces a contextualized speech in a space and time, where traditionally one seeks to capture the phenomena: *the setting*. Well, this contextual speech successively recreates the social experience, making the narratives as the development of themselves.



Fig 7- My Guide

Poetics as a communicative act allows producing plural meanings and can be translated into a sensitive experience. A journey of the senses through space in search of processual moments. Poetics as an urban experience is an experience of intersubjectivity where the various subjects move in time and space around socially significant objects, of common heritage, to jointly reconstruct the elements that are common to them, creating new meanings and new processes.



Fig 8 - The Tram- hear the urban sound

Exploring urban sonorities

In the case of sound cartographies of spaces⁵, it is a proposal of process knowledge about the identities of spaces. As the search for poetic images, it results from the investigation and recognition of spaces through experience. The proposal is to capture the urban action in process through its sounds. Here, we took the time of the city sound as a field for recognition of urban experiences. A commuting trip between urban and rural spaces is enough for one to realize the differences in sound, visual and smell densities. Cities

⁵ Inspired on the works of Carlos Fortuna in "Music, Urban Live and Deafness" published in Rua Larga, Coimbra, june 2012. Carlos Fortuna work in Coimbra University in Portugal and proposals some analytical approaches on urban sociology.

domesticated time. Time has come to be linear, marked by mechanical sounds that shape its pace. The silence interrupted by the bell from Catholic churches steeples, or by the call for prayer from the mosques are elements of domestication. But the cities and contemporary metropolis have intensified mechanical sounds, involving the city rhythm in a noisy concert which we strive to control all the time. Whether through the use of "headphones", either through forgetfulness, urban sound is an experience of space recognition. Through the relationship between silence and the importance attributed by the brain we can guide ourselves and recognize the differences between the spaces. For example, the mechanical noise of cars is also a marker of territory, as the silences of contemporary museums symbolize changing territories.



Fig 9 to build a play list of urban sounds as experience of knowledge



4_Sonsmecânicos_1.MP3 (Linha de comandos)

Observing the sound of real life as a recognition exercise, as an experience of an intersubjectivity proposal is thinking about how individuals get connected between themselves and with the earth. Restoring the connectors as building tools of ecology knowledge. It is useful to draw the intention of urban planners to the fact that the sound is not integrated into the territory planning while sonorities are territorial trademarks of resilience from which one can recreate the urban landscapes of the future.

Those are two contributions to the development of future investigations that mark the my memory of this exhibition.

Museologia Informal: Práticas e Saberes

Rede de empreendedorismo e inovação social criado em Moçambique com um olhar global. É um espaço virtual para apoiar a criação dum mundo radicalmente mais justo e mais feliz através duma prática museológica informal

O que é a museologia informal?

A museologia informal é uma reflexão e uma prática com o objetivo de ligar capacidades inovadoras na sociedade. Apoia-se na poética da intersubjetividade e procura práticas sociais emancipatórias para a construção dum mundo mais feliz. Muss-amb-ike espaço de saberes e memórias é uma comunidade global de gentes de diferentes origens e profissões, com diversos olhares e diversas culturas que trabalham sem fronteiras e com as novas fronteiras para enfrentar os novos desafios sociais, culturais e ambientais a partir da teoria critica

Consideramos que os problemas do mundo atual não são a falta de ideias mas sim a construção do acesso aos saberes e aos conhecimentos, aos recursos necessários para agir e à consciência dos impactos da ação.

Por isso acreditamos que é necessário criar espaço locais coma acesso ao conhecimento, a recursos e a ligação às experiencias emancipatórias e a sua divulgação

Estamos a trabalhar para criar lugares para gente que cria mudanças. Esta é a nossa ambição e estamos comprometidos a criar sítios que reúnam vontades associativas, capacidade de ação e inovação, uma oficina dotada de serviços. Estamos a criar um espaço de experimentação e inovação social participada

Temos objetivo de trabalhar com as ferramentas necessárias para crias e desenvolver novas iniciativas. Lugares para ter acesso à experiencia, conhecimento, ajuda financeira. Gerar encontros e trocas de experiências

Cinco princípios da museologia informal

1. **Co-criação:** Em Muss-amb-ike todos somos criadores de novas realidades em colaboração com a comunidade. As nossas ações são criativas e utilizamos os processos de comunicação participada e a poética como ferramenta de trabalho. Estamos presentes e em diálogo como os outros. Para isso construímos e incentivamos a organização de comunidades de aprendizagem onde somos todos mestres e alunos.

Palavras-chave: Criatividade, Colaboração, Comunicação Assertiva, Co-criação, Comunidade de aprendizagem.

2. **Integridade:** Na nossa vida somos coerentes entre o que pensamos, dizemos e fazemos. A nossa comunidade interage com os outros e fomenta os processos participativos

Palavras-chave: Transparência, Coerência, Integridade

3. **Aceitação incondicional do outro:** Muss-amb-ike é uma comunidade aberta, inclusiva que se enriquece com as diferenças dos seus membros. Quem se identifica com estes princípios é Benvinda. O nosso potencial reside no reconhecimento da diversidade dos saberes e dos olhares. Reconhecer a diversidade implica trabalhar o conflito como um processo criativo e reconhecer a dignidades e a liberdade de todos.

Palavras-chave: Dignidade, Inclusão, Diversidade

4. **Sustentabilidade:** Estamos na busca dum novo paradigma onde as comunidades se possam organizar na busca de um modo de se relacionar com a natureza sem dependência do carbono, com base numa organização social que resolva os seus conflitos pelo diálogo e que desenvolva processos produtivos que garanta a distribuição dos recursos alimentares com base na disponibilidade da natureza e no uso adequado nas capacidades e saberes disponíveis. Entendemos o mundo como uma realidade complexa. Cada uma das nossas ações integra dimensões sociais, espirituais económicas, políticas e ambientais. As suas diferentes dimensões afetam o ser e a comunidade.

Palavras-chave: Pensamento holístico, integralidade, complexidade, sustentabilidade

5. **Flexibilidade:** Não temos uma visão do futuro estático ou definida. Acreditamos que é através da prática e do confronto do saber com o seu resultado que se constrói a realidade do dia-a-dia. Por isso a nossa capacidade de mudança e transformação é fluida. O nosso crescimento é orgânico e não imposto.

Palavras-chave: crescimento orgânico, flexibilidade.

A Prática da Museologia Informal

A prática de museologia informal apoia-se na poética da Intersubjetividade, desenvolve ações colaborativas,

Os sete princípios da prática da museologia informal.

1. Partir do Conhecimento da Vida:

a. No mundo de hoje há muita informação. É fácil procurar informação e conhecimento. Mas na verdade temos pouco conhecimento do mundo e da vida.

2. Procurar o Conhecimento Pertinente:

a. Procurar um conhecimento que não mutila o objeto. É necessário contextualizar. Procurar o todo dentro do uno. Olhar para as relações.

3. Compreender o Indivíduo

a. Identidade Humana: É preciso compreender o indivíduo, o social e o natural. A unidade tridimensional da condição humana.

4. Compreender o Social

a. A compreensão humana: Desenvolver a capacidade de comunicar através do diálogo

5. O conhecimento é incerto

a. A Incerteza: a ação gera incerteza. É necessária uma ecologia da ação. Dar pequenos passos e pensar em alternativas

6. Os fenómenos são complexos

a. Condição planetária: Os fenómenos são complexos e interligados em múltiplas escalas e tempos (transcalaridade e transtemporalidade)

7. Acção como limite da ética

a. Antropo-ética: O ser humano é tridimensional. É simultaneamente ser biológico, ser individual e ser social. Cada um desses desenvolver as suas responsabilidades individuais e sociais.

What Is Informal Museology ?

No matter how elementary the level of attention that is paid to contemporary Museology in Portugal, its multifaceted character should nevertheless be acknowledged. It is a site where concepts, attitudes and aims cross, translating not only museology's general guidelines, but the role and the place that the different actors in the most diverse processes seek to occupy in society, in the affirmation of the shared right to a full citizenship.

The different forms of museology that has developed throughout the country, in particular post April 25, vouchsafes the statement that, in parallel with State museums, there came to light hundreds of museological processes by initiative of the cultural and ecological associative movements, in addition to those of the reinvigorated autonomous power.

There are tens of thousands of people who, in various ways - more or less elaborated or theorised - find in museology the privileged expression means on issues concerning so many heritages - historical, architectural, linguistic, archaeological or anthropological - within the context of the valorisation and identification of local specificities and competences.

These are no doubt museological processes, permanent or intermittent, creative or model

reproducing, conservative or participative in the development of the communities that have given them life.

Meager in its essential, it is a museology devoid of financial resources or sophisticated knowledge, often also featuring out-of-date ideologies and paradigms.

But it is also a museology that expresses the cultures of our time, the culture of the mix, the expression of a society in transformation.

Such museums and museological processes are, in our understanding, the deep expression of Portugal's contemporary museology.

And, in this sense, this museology of daily life turns out to be an essential component of change itself.

It is, thus, neither rupture nor a marginal phenomenon, but instead it is the fruit and seed of a more democratic society, of a more free associativism, of a municipalism that are more aware of a new development model that favours decentralisation and the consequent valorisation of local resources - both human and natural.

Not being a marginal or a rupture museology does not mean it is structured around and founded on the image of a traditional and urban museology. Instead, this NEW MUSEOLOGY that results

from the new conditions of the museological discourse - and therefore is part of the museological knowledge accumulated for generations - has demonstrated in its diverse forms a more clear conscience of the idea of participation and sparks a more evident social implication.

We speak then of an informal museology that fits into the wider concept of SOCIAL MUSEOLOGY, which translates a considerable part of the museological structures' effort to adequate itself to the conditionalisms of contemporary society.

This adaptation effort, which by the way extends over many other countries, was synthesised by UNESCO's General Director, Frederic Mayor, at the opening of ICOM's 15th General Conference in the following way: the more general phenomenon of the cultural conscience development - be it the emancipation of the interest of the public at large for culture as the result of the widening of leisure time, be it the growing cultural awareness as a reaction to the inherent threats of the acceleration of social transformations - finds, on the level of the institution, a welcoming largely favoured by museums.

This evolution is evidently both qualitative and quantitative. The distant institution, aristocratic, Olympian, obsessed with object appropriation for taxonomical purposes has increasingly given

way - and some are distressed by this - to an organisation open to the environment, conscious of its organic relationship with its own social context. The museological revolution of our times - manifested in the emergence of community museums, 'sans murs' museums, ecomuseums, itinerant museums or museums exploring the apparently infinite possibilities of modern communication - finds its roots in this new organic and philosophical awareness.

This process was already heralded in the Santiago Declaration (1972 UNESCO/ICOM), where it was also considered: that the museum is an institution at the service of the society of which it is an integral part and an institution that features within itself the elements that enable participation in the conscience building of the communities it serves; that the museum can contribute in leading those communities to act, situating its activity within the historical framework that helps to clarify present day problems...

That this new conception does not imply in the extinction of present day museums nor that we renounce to specialised museums, but, instead, this new conception will allow museums to develop and evolve in a more rational and logical manner, in order to better serve society.

Such concerns, which were renewed in the certainly most important document on contemporary museology, which is

the 1992 Caracas Declaration, makes us sure that we should consider informal museology or social museology as a fundamental element to think museology and the new paths taken by museology in Portugal.

We cannot any longer be satisfied with the eventual modernisation of traditional museums, intended mostly through the creation of a pathetic shop featuring nearly nothing to sell, or a mega exhibition of rare objects with budgets that insult the most elementary good sense and seriousness.

We think that the urge is, before anything else, in the opening of the museum to the environment in the study of its organic relationship with the social context that gives it life, facts that have sparked the need to elaborate and clarify new relationships, notions and concept that can handle this process.

A few examples of the issues derived from contemporary museological practices and that are part of a growing specialised bibliography: the widening of the notion of heritage and the consequent redefinition of the "museological object", the idea of community participation in the definition and management of museological practise, museology as a factor of development, the issues of interdisciplinarity, the use of "new technologies" of information and museography as

an autonomous communication means.

Recalling once again the Santiago Declaration, where it reads "That the transformation of the museum's activities demands a progressive change on the mentality of the conservative curators and those responsible for the museums, as well as the structures on which they depend" we should admit the need to train new museum professionals for the new museological discourse production conditions.

It is within the field of informal museology, that we certainly find innovation, change and new paths.

The biggest challenge in museology teaching in Portugal is not that of teaching what is featured in the museology manuals, but instead that of providing the future museologists with the means that will allow them to place themselves and act within a context of social change that cuts through all aspects of contemporary society.

The exhibition that simply displays without questioning, is increasingly inscribed in a kind of archaeology of an archaic museological thinking.

In museums one does not simply handle objects, but instead and chiefly with ideas. We now place the question of whether we know where the role of the curator begins and ends, and equally, where does the role of the museologist begin and end.

This change in attitude was, by the way, referred to by Hugues de Varine in the synthesis report of the 16th ICOM General Conference: "It became clear, in the international committee meetings, that there is a strong current geared towards opening and innovation... leading museum professionals to act in a non-traditional way and accept being influenced by multicultural concepts. The interdisciplinary cooperation that is emerging in the bosom of ICOM, the bridges built between the various disciplines and projects, and groups such as the MINOM are indications of this opening spirit."

To recognise this is, deep down, to accept that in the contemporary world there is a new intervention space conditioned above all by the attitude and social implication of each one of us.

A kind of interdisciplinarity of attitude, a lot more complex than the sought for and ill-loved interdisciplinarity of knowledge.

If there is a new challenge in museology, in our understanding, it does not regard in its essential to the features of its shape, but the place within it that we wish to occupy and above all the possibility of deepening and finally recognising that it is the attitude

of the actors that determines the meaning of the work we do.

So much so that we cannot control nor even condition the final effect of our intervention, which in truth ends up far removed, so often perverse and alienated from our first intentions.

In the culture of the now that determines our submissions, which we rarely acknowledge and reject, we forget that time introduces, in a certain way, new conditions which escape us, transforming the pursued path, irrevocably. What is actually within reach is no more than the possibility of choosing the beginning of the direction we wish to imprint our action.

If it is so, we can more easily relativise the successes and failures, to doubt our short term evaluations and start afresh each day conscious of a new history, a new museum.

We shall continue and, increasingly, speak of an informal museology. We shall continue to speak, and increasingly, to speak of social museology.

By Mario Moutinho (1993)

Informal Museology Studies

Papers on qualitative research

1. Memory of an Exhibition / Exhibition Memory (Spring 2013)
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Muss-amb-ike - Memory Space