



SEÇÃO DOSSIÊ

The Iguazu Regional Museum and its Audiences: Institutional and Autobiographical Narratives

O Museu Regional do Iguazu e suas audiências: narrativas institucionais e autobiográficas

El Museo Regional del Iguazú y sus públicos: narrativas institucionales y autobiográficas

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Abstract: This article examines discursive languages that the Regional Museum of Iguazu built for itself and for its public, associated with the preservation of the environment and cultural heritage. In the second approach, the public of the museum exhibitions on social networks and forms of interaction with the Regional Museum of Iguazu are analyzed. Based on the concepts and practices of public history, the objective is to contribute to the planning of exhibitions and to study the relationship between museum collections and audiences.

Keywords: Public History. Public. Museums. Narratives. Autobiography.

Resumo: Este artigo examina as linguagens discursivas que o Museu Regional do Iguazu construiu para si e para o seu público, associadas à preservação do meio ambiente e do patrimônio cultural. Na segunda abordagem, são analisados os públicos das exposições museológicas nas redes sociais e formas de interação com o Museu Regional do Iguazu. Partindo dos conceitos e práticas em história pública, o objetivo é contribuir para o planejamento de exposições e estudar a relação entre o acervo museológico e seus públicos.

Palavras-chave: História Pública. Audiências. Museus. Narrativas. Autobiografia.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza los lenguajes discursivos que el Museo Regional del Iguazú construyó para sí y para su público, asociada a la preservación del medio ambiente y patrimonio cultural. En el segundo enfoque, analizamos la audiencia de las exposiciones del museo en las redes sociales, las formas de interacción entre ellas y las prácticas autobiográficas que estimulan el consumo de este espacio. Basándose en los conceptos y prácticas de la historia pública, el objetivo es contribuir a la planificación de exposiciones y estudiar la relación entre las colecciones de los museos y el público.

Palabras Clave: Historia Publica. Públicos. Museos. Narrativas. Autobiografía.

Introduction

"The democratization of museums aimed to transform museums from repositories to public forums. Museums work not only for, but more and more with, their public". Thomas Cauvin, 2016.

Museums feature carefully selected narratives that favor many interactions with visitors. It's not just about popularizing history and giving new meanings to collections. The idea of immersion in collections seeks to attract audiences by creating stimuli and provoking emotions. That said, curators and public historians interact with visitors in different ways. The strategy used in European museums, such as the World War II Museum in



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Gdańsk, is to assign a high value to remembrance and to provide for emotional bonds with museum, memorial, and monument visitors, in spite of clashes between politicians and historians.²

The visitor's perspective culminated in a renewal and dimensioning of the processes, programs, and narratives of many museums, especially those that are focused on the community. These innovations are also partially present in Brazilian museums, although some of them have no curators or learning activities connected to local communities. Therefore, this paper proposes to analyze such discourses and the ways in which the public consumes and is seduced by institutional narratives. After all, we all agree with Marsha Semmel's statement: "If museums continue to tout their value as community anchor institutions, they will need to form new authentic, ongoing, and adequately resourced coalitions dedicated to collective public good goals".³

On the other hand, collaborative management is a powerful tool for arts and public development in many public institutions, including museums. Despite resistance to the idea of collaborative decision-making processes - which to some extent approximates the concept of shared authority - the results are promising and exciting in social, economic, and cultural terms. In the UK, Jancovich's research has shown that the public is more likely to participate in cultural activities and decision-making than the artists or cultural agents themselves.⁴ Despite skepticism and some institutional encapsulations, the practices of participation in arts activities and participatory budgeting, as for example in Brazil and England between 1989 and 2001, have grown considerably, facilitating the engagement of audiences from different backgrounds and the listening of "less powerful voices".⁵

Undoubtedly, there are several motivations for artists to develop a socially engaged or par-

ticipatory art, focusing on the community and society, both inside and outside the museums. In this sense, we consider it important to encourage communities to participate in collaborative processes.⁶ In Nancy Dallet's perspective, which brings public history and public art together, proactive historians must add values to art through collaboration, understanding it as creative capital that allows for the creation of a favorable environment of interactions between artists and publics.⁷

And, in fact, New Museology is interested in political, ideological, social and formative aspects, as well as the impact of the museum on culture. Self-analysis revealed its repressive and controlling role that needed to be readjusted in the face of social and economic demands. Although the museum was an arena of disputes, it became a place of learning, engagement, and various forms of consumption: "The active model of the museum spaces demonstrates that there is a lot more going on in the visiting experience than might first be assumed, and certainly suggest that various discourses at work in a public heritage institution should be analyzed" (Groot, 2011, p. 292).

Recent studies by the European Commission show that strategic planning reconsiders the actions of the public in museums (audience development) aiming to articulate them to their objectives and purposes.⁸ In this way, museum audiences are considered participants in a broad formative process that promotes considerable changes in institutions, artistic productions, visitor behavior, and in the community itself.

From these considerations, the object of this study is the Iguaçu Regional Museum (IRM), which is one of the most modern museums in the interior of the State of Paraná, Brazil (fig.1). The objective is to contribute to the planning of exhibitions and to study the relationship between museum collections and audiences. In the context of pu-

² Andreas, Irmgard & Machcewic, 2018, unpagued.

³ Falk & Dierging, 2016, unpagued.

⁴ Jancovich, 2014. See also Frisch, 1990.

⁵ Jancovich, 2016.

⁶ Kobelinski, 2021.

⁷ Dallet, 2017.

⁸ These studies have been developed in 17 European countries by the institutions Fondazione Fitzcarraldo, Culture Action Europe, EC-COM, and Intercult. The objectives are to plan and promote innovative strategies for the development of the public. Ver Bollo et. al, 2017.

blic history, we raised the following questions: a) How does the Iguaçu Regional Museum operate in relation to autobiographical practices? b) How has its image been constructed and how has it influenced this type of narrative? We studied some evidence of self-referential practices, which

extended from the museum to the community through the texts and photographs posted on the museum's website.⁹ Furthermore, we reflect on the challenges and opportunities that the Regional Museum of Iguaçu has for the formation of an engaged and participative public.



Figure 1 – Frontal view of the Iguaçu Regional Museum, Facebook, source Guisla Schmickler.



Figure 2 – View of the Segredo Hydroelectric dam, Facebook, source Guisla Schmickler.

⁹ We understand public history as a complex process of practices, engagements and interpolations with audiences at different levels, including self-reflection, contact and interaction with popular narratives, sharing and collaboration in the interpretation and production of knowledge about the past. See Kobelinski 2020; Cauvin, 2020.

Strategies and Exhibitions

The IRM is designed to impress.¹⁰ The architectural design incorporates distinct elements, such as wood, iron, and glass as well as modern means of communication, organization, and the showcase of its collections. In addition, its physical structure has been incorporated into the natural landscape. These combined elements have an impact on visitors. However, this sublime feeling contrasts with the intervention in the environment and generates a false idea of refuge in nature. Controlling people and spaces is analogous to Bentham's Panopticon because its language seeks to control distinct moments in space and time by grouping natural, material, and symbolic elements in the same place.¹¹

The coexistence of material, abstract, symbolic, and functional elements characterize the Iguaçu Regional Museum as a place of memory. According to Pierre Nora, this concept includes characters, statues, paintings, museums, archives, institutions, events, etc. However, they must incorporate both an intention to register memories and a sense of identity. Therefore, its existence is linked to articulations between memorial registers and their reconstruction of history through, which, by their nature, are shown both as complementary and opposite: "[...] what constitutes them is a game of memory and history, an interaction of the two factors which leads to their reciprocal overdetermination. [...] Places indeed, but mixed, hybrid and mutant places, intimately linked to life and death, time and eternity".¹²

In conceptual terms the IRM is based on the New Museology and ecomuseum concepts by establishing relationships between the preservation of culture and educational actions aimed at environmental preservation.¹³ The programs *Scientific Use of Local Flora and Fauna*, *Rescue of Cultural Memory*, and *Archaeological Rescue*, developed and managed by COPEL (Energy Company of the State of Paraná), attracted visitors and expanded tourism. The company's advertising materials highlight its role in societal transformation, its commitment to education, and the development of interactive activities with its audience.¹⁴

The museum and hotel feature belvederes facing the lake and the Segredo Hydroelectric dam. The idea is to show the interaction between man and nature, and simultaneously minimize the effects of the hydroelectric enterprise (fig.2). In this way, the museum environment becomes alive and close to its visitors. This effect is also produced by open-air archaeological exhibits, strategically arranged near the museum entrance in a setting full of exotic plant species.¹⁵ It is as if both had been there for a long time, while inside the museum one can find panels, photographs as well as ceramic and lithic artifacts, among other collections.

One of the museum's strategies is to make visitors walk along ecological trails so that they may be enchanted by nature. When arriving at the museum, visitors are faced with a mirror-glass façade and, after walking through the main entryway, they find an artificial lake and a souvenir

¹⁰ This museum is located in the Ney Braga Hydroelectric Power Plant, in the municipality of Reserva do Iguaçu, State of Paraná, Brazil. The building was designed by architect Domingos Henrique Bogestabs and was inaugurated in 2000 during the administration of former governor Jaime Lerner.

¹¹ Foucault (1995, p. 203) observes that the Panopticon features procedures for control, observation, classification, and organization: "By Bentham's time, this menagerie had disappeared. But one finds in the program of the Panopticon a similar concern with individualizing observation, with characterizations and classification, with the analytical arrangement of space". According to Foucault (1994, p. 759), "heterotopia" means a space that is outside of everyday social and institutional space.

¹² Nora, 1993, p. 22.

¹³ For Sánchez Laws (2011, p. 27), "the term New Museology officially originated from the 1971 ICOM Ninth International Conference in Grenoble, France, where the concept of ecomuseum was proposed". Ecomuseums are defined not only by their physical structure, but also by their natural and human environment: "[...] At the same time that it preserves the material fruit of past civilizations, and that it protects those that bear witness to present day aspirations and technologies, the new museology – ecomuseology, community museology as well as all other forms of active museology – is first and foremost concerned with the development of populations, reflecting the modern principles that have driven its evolution while simultaneously associating them to projects for the future." Acc. Declaration of Quebec – Basic Principles of a New Museology 1984.

¹⁴ "[...] Museums and their services have improved, ceasing to be an environment of mere contemplation and preservation of objects or collections linked to historical periods. They have become spaces of education and social transformation based on accumulated knowledge and social practices, which are evidenced in different types of collections, especially in this time of intense use of technologies and virtuality, which allow for real-time interrelationships with registers, spaces, objects and cultural facts, valuing the company as a communication and knowledge interface with society", COPEL, 2011, unpagged.

¹⁵ The inscribed rock blocks were displaced from the region of Boa Esperança do Iguaçu, State of Paraná.

shop. The visitor is then led into a dark room. Arranged in a circle in the center, they are surprised by a spectacle of lights and sounds. Slowly, floodlights illuminate the middle course of the Iguaçu River, from its source to its mouth, as the historical and hydraulic engineering aspects of the Iguaçu River basin are narrated. Then, at the edges of the room, dioramas are lit sequentially. The recorded narrative describes the regional ecosystem. The representations include species typical of pine forests¹⁶ as well as stuffed animals, such as crows, hawks, owls, baitacas, quails, Brazilian guinea pigs, ferrets, tayras, deer, coatis, skunks, armadillos, ocelots, sparrow hawks, reptiles, etc. There is also a painting that represents the collective farming system known as *faxinal*, whose goal is to demonstrate harmony between humans and nature.¹⁷ The educational show continues in a small classroom, with themes including the environment, ecology and the campaigns developed by Copel. One may also access laboratories with samples of species of fauna and flora.

A staircase leads to the top floor, which includes a bar and access to a panoramic elevator, which is virtually never used. Then, you'll see a contrast between the modernity of the museum and the exhibitions. One example is the exhibition that portrays fragments of rural life, typical of the interior of the State of Paraná. The representation of the riverside population has an effect similar to that of taxidermy; it seems to be real, but it is a montage. The exhibition *The Man and the Woman of the Iguaçu* builds a cultural identity for the people of Paraná. An emulation brings together lifestyle habits from the Humaitá and Umbu traditions (6000 BCE) as well as from Guarani and Caingangue indigenous groups, European

immigrants and the *Caboclo* population. On the other hand, the idea that both indigenous and mestizo populations lived in harmony with nature and did not cause environmental changes are naturalized: "The *Caboclo* population, characterized by a simple and relaxed way of life, greatly valued interaction with the elements of nature. Their way of being and living did not harm the environment, because the *Caboclo* took from it only what was necessary for his survival".¹⁸

Indeed, the museum has become a research laboratory – a school of learning, entertainment, and the safeguarding of history and memory. The combination is virtually perfect: museum, hydroelectric power plant, hotel, event center, club, forest garden, ichthyological station, forest reserve (*Rio dos Touros*), and ecological trails. These references stimulate curiosity and sensory perception, transforming cultural and natural objects – such as arrowheads, scrapers, mortars, and millstones; wagons, water mills, *Caboclo* houses, wooden trays, necks, and hoes; stuffed or preserved animals; and herbariums – into unforgettable documents that are introjected into the archives of the self and, later, disseminated on personal blogs and websites.

Copel's speech valued the company, environment, and nature preservation as themes to publicize its projects in Brazil and abroad. Consequently, it has also influenced the IRM's museological discourse.¹⁹ In 2002, CEO Ingo Ubert stated that "it is undeniable that the environment is considered a strategic issue for managing and expanding the Brazilian electricity system. If this were not the case, it would be very difficult to meet the growing demand for energy satisfactorily".²⁰

On the other hand, Copel has also developed

¹⁶ Acc. Rizzini, Coimbra Filho & Houaiss (1988, p. 72), "pine forests are diverse types of communities in which pine trees are the most characteristic element".

¹⁷ Acc. Chang, 1988, p. 13, and Nerone, 2000, p. 87, *faxinal* refers to a type of vegetation (mixed ombrophylous forest or araucaria forest; *faxinal system* refers to a community-based organization that shares farming land and animals among its members. Something similar in nineteenth-century German History can be seen in Max Weber, 1961, pp. 21-22.

¹⁸ Copel, 2014, unpagued.

¹⁹ Copel was the first Brazilian company in the electricity sector to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange (1997). It signed a cooperation agreement with China's Hubei Qingjiang Hydroelectric Development Liability Corporation to build the largest hydroelectric power plant in the world, Shui Bu Ya, at 230 meters high (Copel, 1999, p. 233)

²⁰ Copel, 1997, unpagued. "Copel also works for those who don't need electricity; Copel has always been concerned about giving more than electricity to the people of Paraná. Because in all its actions, it also conveys respect for the environment. This is what it takes into account when building power plants, repopulating the region with native fauna, and preserving the forest. And this is how it came up with developing SOS Tree, a program that uses a compact power grid to reduce tree pruning. Reducing environmental impact. Copel has found one more way to develop Paraná: to work in harmony with nature". Copel, 2002, p. 4.

an advertising campaign. One of them features sketch maps of the museum, museological and archaeological pieces, and images of animals, plants, and the region's landscape. The content of "Embark on this trip" simulates entering the museum and highlights the museum's purpose by referencing nature and the hydroelectric enterprises along the Iguaçu River, considered relevant for the development of Paraná and Brazil.

Copel developed environmental impact studies in the area covered by the Segredo Hydroelectric Power Plant, which resulted, in 1987, in the Environmental Impact Report (COPEL, 1987), a novelty in Brazil's environmental legislation. Resettlements were organized to benefit 200 riverside families that were affected by the lake formed by the dam. In addition, forest gardens were created for plant repopulation. In addition, ichthyological studies and experimental aquaculture were conducted in order to produce fry and create the *Rio dos Touros* Ecological Station. The initiative to build the IRM was based on a strategy of enhancing the company's value as well as engaging with the public and financial agents: "[...] it was a structure originally conceived by the Environmental Impact Report of the Segredo Hydroelectric Power Plant, in which the Scientific Flora and Fauna Use Program stated that it should 'provide subsidies for the creation of a museum of the reservoir'.²¹

The IRM started its programs entitled *Historic Environmental and Anthropological Rescue of the Iguaçu River Valley* and *Cultural Memory Saving Program* in the 1990s. However, the scenario is bleak, especially when we consider the anthropological collection and the narrative employed by the museum. Through the *Cultural Memory Saving Program*, twenty rural communities were surveyed in the middle course of the Iguaçu River.²² However, the collection was not created until the formation of the Segredo hydroelectric dam and the resettlement of the riverside population in the municipalities of *Pinhão* and *Mangueirinha*. Because of this, part of the anthropological col-

lection was obtained from societal groups not affected by the hydroelectric project. Therefore, a set of precious information on these isolated populations was not included in the collections and was left on the sidelines of scientific research. The anthropological exhibits show only some remnants of the former residents, whose limited references do not reveal their relationship with nature and the Iguaçu River. The populations relocated by Copel began to lead a better life, with schools, water supply, sewage, energy, specialized rural guidance, and incentives for cooperatives.

Undoubtedly, there were social impacts resulting from the venture – such as, for example, the arrival of workers from various regions of Brazil to work on the project and their subsequent settlement in the region. As pointed out by France (2007, p. 157), who studied the problem with the omnipresence of hydroelectric power plants in the interior of Paraná, the Iguaçu Regional Museum captured society's imagination by creating different meanings for archaeological and ethnological heritage among societal groups and even between generations: "just like educational institutions, the museum legitimizes some aspects of culture in an arbitrary way, delimiting the current doctrine and punctuating the past".

In practical terms, MRI presents itself as a modern and innovative institution, but with an inclusive and humanistic rhetoric. Moreover, there is no strategic planning for audience development or interactive processes for learning, inclusion, and developing better communities for the future. Thus, recent theoretical and methodological advances of New Museology, such as the collection of essential information to develop actions, projects, and engagement, for example, have not been considered.

Visitors' autobiographical fragments

Museums around the world have sought new forms of communication with the purpose of exploring their collections and raising visitors'

²¹ See COPEL, 2002, unpagged.

²² Acc. Diniz & Kobelinski, 1991-1992.

awareness.²³ At IRM, activities exclusively focus on environmental issues and on students from public and private schools. In this case, the general public is not served, and universities have no interest in participating in or developing educational projects in this space. On the other hand, there is a lack of planning around visits made by elementary and high school teachers. For example, students take no part in how the visit is planned, there is a lack of reference materials about the museum's collections, and the site visit fails when it comes to evaluating teaching possibilities. Therefore, there is limited publicity of the visit in the school space, and activities do not involve the observation, research, and resignification of the objects on display.

In the field of Public History, some studies on museums and heritage point out that people express themselves better when historians engage with people, especially when the topics of interest come from the community itself.²⁴ In addition, they recognize that education in museums has the potential to stimulate formal and informal fields and may change people. Among these stimuli are guidelines related to knowledge (cognitive aspect), to the objective of exhibitions (metacognitive aspect) and to emotions (motivational

aspect). The emotional dimension of learning stands out in the context of the IRM, especially through autobiographical posts on Facebook (social networking sites).²⁵

The role of imagination, the impossibility of retaining reality, the inconsistency of classifications due to the way in which events are recorded, and the intention to eternalize that which is constantly reorganized during life stand out in self-referential writing.²⁶ If in self-referential writing, "each one adjusts their observations to a kind of tacit rule – what can be said, what must be shown, what may be written",²⁷ the autobiographical fragments arranged in the table (1) *Perception of yourself and the Iguaçu Regional Museum through Facebook* are subordinated to the arrangements of the institutional narrative. Cognitive and emotional dimensions predominate through short messages, which serve as subtitles for virtual photo albums.²⁸ They were significant until the year 2015. Then, they were scaled down because of the saturation caused by repeated scenes and texts. This mode of interaction with the public omits the metacognitive dimension because the objectives of the exhibitions are not pointed or reflected in the texts, nor are they valued in the images available to Internet users.²⁹

²³ See, for example, the Museo Laboratorio della Mente (Rome) and the Melbourne Museum (WWI: Love and Sorrow Exhibition), Haviland-Jones & Barrett, 2008. Available in <https://www.museodellamente.it/>

²⁴ According to King & Rivett, 2015, p. 218, the relationship between academics and non-academics in the United Kingdom reveals a one-way educational model and the conception of a passive and non-participatory audience. Based on the Research Excellence Framework measurement exercise rather than the Case Studies, the authors suggest that this relationship may be successful and democratic if the relationship between academics and non-academics values engagement: "This idea of engaging people in making history complements rather than displaces other models of engagement fulfilling the same agenda, for example, the expert-transmission model of knowledge exchange. However, while the transmission model elevates scholarly expertise above other forms, our approach fosters a 'democratic epistemology'. Significantly, democratic epistemology emerges from debates in the USA that do not center solely on 'impact', rather it has developed from a concern with civic politics", p. 226.

²⁵ Xanthoudaki, Tickle & Sekules, 2003.

²⁶ Arthières (2000) presents autobiographical narratives of prisoners imprisoned in Lyon between the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

²⁷ Dauphin, 2002, p. 48.

²⁸ Acc. Foster (2014, p. 15) "While these new, virtual platforms are irrevocably changing the field of public history, there is nothing arbitrary about the digital future of the past. Far from being forced to 'collaborate [online] or perish', historians and the public are choosing to enter the virtual arena, and are using the web in diverse and inventive ways." On Digital Public History see Lucchesi, 2014, and Noiret, 2013.

²⁹ Browse the social network Facebook to <https://pt-br.facebook.com/pages/category/Tour-Agency/Museu-Regional-do-Iguaçu-C3%A7u-Iguaçu-Regional-Museum-239269876097397/> This social network belonged to the math teacher Guisla Schmickler, from the Engenheiro Michel Reydams State College, Reserva do Iguaçu – PR. Schmickler assigned the rights to use the images in this work.

TABLE1 – Perception of yourself and the Iguaçu Regional Museum through Facebook (2011-2019), by Michel Kobelinski

Personal references	IRM References
"Wonderful place, learning and leisure space". (March 2, 2019)	"Good morning! Please be informed that during the Carnival period, the Museum will be open from 9 am to 12 noon, and from 1 pm to 5 pm". (March 1, 2019)
"Best day of the year". (May 18, 2019)	"Beautiful ... wonderful place. Thank you, Tasso Azevedo da Silveira School, for providing such moments for our children ... fun and knowledge together". (April 28, 2019)
"This is a wonderful place; you don't want to go home". (November 30, 2018)	"Thank you for giving our children this beautiful day! Undoubtedly unforgettable for them". (October 10, 2018)
"Best Day. Miss you... I want to go again". (June 8, 2018)	"Excellent tour. We love it. Thank you for the wonderful reception!". (August 30, 2018)
"Best day ever, best outing, loved, miss Nature teacher, sends affection to Lara". (June 8, 2018)	"What a joy to see our children having such fun. Thank you, dear Iguaçu Regional Museum, for your responsiveness". (June 14, 2018)
"Always a joy to be in the 'Land of Love! God willing, we will be there again next year!". (November 18, 2017)	"Governador Ney Aminthas de Barros Braga Plant (Segredo) turns 25 years old. It has 1,260 megawatts of installed capacity – capable of serving about 3 million people – and is Copel's second largest power plant. GNB is a model for Brazil from an environmental point of view: the first Environmental Impact Study of the country's hydroelectric power plant was made for its implementation". (October 3, 2017)
"Tour at the Iguaçu Regional Museum #WARDAY DIAMOND". (July 6, 2016)	"Thank you, Professor Nature, for the day we spent there, for the affection and for all the memories that our children are radiant with today. Hug. May God bless you!". (October 24, 2017)
"The visit must have been of great use to the students; I especially thank my son Kauan, the guys who were together on this trip; but it was a pity that I was not told that students' parents could participate in the trip, or was it just the privileged ones?". (September 23, 2015)	"Take a virtual tour of the Iguaçu Regional Museum". (March 9, 2017) https://www.copel.com/hpcopel/hotsite_museu/museu_virtual.html .
"Where are you, Gigi? I didn't see you in the pictures, kisses". (September 12, 2015)	"Copel Get was awarded last night, 30th, in São Paulo, during the 14th Benchmarking Brazil, with the case 'Museum: 15 years of memory, guard, culture and history,' which portrays the work done at the Iguaçu Regional Museum, located next to Governador Ney Braga Power Plant. With the recognition, Copel Get becomes part of the 2016 Ranking of the Best Socio-Environmental Practices Holders in Brazil". (July 4, 2016)
"We love the ride, nature, and our history together it's wonderful". (September 18, 2015)	"Where is the Museum?". (September 12, 2015)
"Where is the photo of the visit of the museum of Unicentro, by Chopinzinho". (October 3, 2014)	"Iguaçu Regional Museum: place of History, striking and exuberant nature". (January 22, 2015)

Personal references

"A very special visit, both for me and for my colleagues, no doubt". (November 30, 2012)

"This was the best ride I have ever had". (November 05, 2014)

"Congratulations on the photos... they are wonderful". (May 14, 2013)

"The photos are beautiful ... miss you". (Mar 20, 2012)

IRM References

"[...] congratulations to the teachers who welcomed us and have made this day full of emotions and learning". (September 17, 2014)

"We learn in the simplicity of the gestures that we owe everything to nature". (September 17, 2014)

"Thanks for the shared knowledge; already we miss Professor Nature and teacher Flora". (Aug 18, 2013)

"Governor Ney Aminthas Hydroelectric Power Plant Barros Braga is Copel's second power plant installed". (June 30, 2011)

In any case, the autobiographical perspective works by calling attention to a friendship circle as well as the promotion of one's self-image and the image of the Iguaçu Regional Museum. The sharing of photo albums covers mostly activities outside the museum through the "Cultural and Socio-Environmental Memory and Action Program".³⁰ They evoke an interaction between visitors and nature through symbolic hearts, built from bodily gestures or from the shapes of leaves, flowers, and trunks of local vegetation. In this way, autobiographical fragments are appropriated by the institutional discourse, filling a space that could have the participation of universities and public historians.

An explanation for this problem can be found in the current stage of education in Brazil. Public opinion surveys show that the cultural, political, and social roles played by teachers in Brazil affect the education system, despite the investment in this area in recent decades.³¹ This situation also impacts the activities of history teachers in museums, memorials, and monuments. In some cases, the teaching activities focus on the observation, reports, and activities developed by the museums. On the other hand, if institutional narratives do not properly explore local history, the community learning needs are neglected in educational programs. These situations allow us to reflect upon the public value of community and regional museums in the face of the crisis

of the learning system. Therefore, understanding how the IRM managers assess their activities and what results from them is paramount to developing educational actions that integrate the community. It is not enough to analyze the location, constitution, collection, and language of the IRM. It is necessary to consider the sharing of collections with the public and the history of riverside communities, which should engage in a dialog with the museum's collections.

As a discipline, public history in Brazil is still incipient. However, students are consumers of public history because they "[...] know stories about the past and have mental pictures of aspects of the past from their everyday, outside of school, experiences" As such, it is suggested that teachers and students should conduct surveys of the places that they will interpret in order to verify what has been ignored or forgotten in local or regional history. Students can share experiences of museum visits, since they are as varied as possible. This orientation allows the teacher to understand how students develop their ideas and, from there, develop more effective teaching tools and activities for interpreting history and its meaning. On the other hand, the development of autobiographical memories in museums can be an excellent opportunity to share experiences. In addition to stimulating the students' writing, they are multidimensional because they have "[...] spatial, emotional, and sensory components", although, "[...]

³⁰ The objectives of the programs developed by Copel are available at the following address: <https://www.copel.com/hpcopel/root/nivel2.jsp?endereco=%2Fhpcopel%2Froot%2Fpagcopel2.nsf%2Fdocs%2F729182B3A1F362FF03257E3B0062E4CE> (published on August 10, 2017).

³¹ Kobelinski, 2019, unpagged.

apparently, visual experience plays an important role in forming autobiographical memories”.³²

In this case study, visitors consider the IRM as a place of memory, even though part of it is not present. The way the material culture presents itself to the visitor is expressed as an act of violence and an imposition that masks a part of reality. Therefore, it is vital to reflect on the actors and processes that are involved in the construction of the Segredo Hydroelectric Power Plant, the language used by the museum, and the application of the concepts of New Museology, sharing and Public History. New research must disrupt this silence and revive the memories forgotten along the way, thereby highlighting the reframing of these memories and of what has been left unsaid.

What engagement with audiences do we want?

Currently Brazilian museums face many challenges. Among them, financial contributions, staff training and lack of museologists. However, we can think about ways to expand the relationship between MRI and society, study its visitors and renew the museological narrative. The approaches of critical museology and audience development have shown that the strategies adopted in Spanish museums are innovative and appropriate.³³ In the first perspective, the functional aspect is important, since it considers the links between museum and society, heritage valuation, visitor participation and ways to communicate with them. But for museums to be active, dynamic and interactive, the strategy to be adopted is audience development. It is not enough to have collections, technical resources and a narrative. It is necessary to involve audiences, encouraging them to participate in multidisciplinary projects, to value the collections and to co-produce knowledge, making the museum an open, accessible and participatory place.

Note that after visiting the IRM, visitors are amazed. Faced with a world that demands more

and more frequent commitments, this escape from daily life provides a sense of well-being and contact with nature. Everything is captured that can be stored in memory through emotions; machines freeze scenes from various angles, and then diversified information is reproduced on blogs and virtual spaces. One cannot deny the dazzle, attraction, and symbolic violence in which institutional archives and personal portraits approach and distance themselves from the observed reality. They create another space of interaction based on virtuality, where nature supersedes what is not so evident and necessary to the spectacle, the riverside communities.

This example illustrates the myriad ways in which we construct references to the past and to life itself. In Groot's perspective, *historiocopia*, or the abundance of historical meanings with which we are confronted on a daily basis, leads us to recognize the importance of the study of transnational historical-cultural practices and to a less controlling and manipulative academic history.³⁴ Thus, it is indispensable to think of representations of the past as communicative elements delimited by time and culture. According to Donnelly & Norton, “therefore, historians can usefully reflect on how various ways of referencing the past help to generate (plural) meanings as they interact within specific settings (social, cultural, historical)”.³⁵ The argument that the experience in museums is fundamental to contact with history reaffirms the role of the public in the interpretation of the collections and in the interactions during and after the visitation.

In our case study it shows that the relationship between the museum and its public needs to be improved, especially in relation to the role it plays in society. In New Museology the development of the public and the self-awareness of its rhetoric is emphasized. The MRI has a certain dynamism and an excellent physical structure. On the other hand, educational practices, curation, exhibitions and programming must be constantly reviewed in order to encourage visitors to have meaningful

³² Goldstein, 2008, p. 239.

³³ Aizpuru, Cuenca-Amigo & Cuenca Amigo, 2019; 2020.

³⁴ Groot's, 2011, p. 5.

³⁵ Donnelly & Norton, 2011, p. 156.

experiences with the past, as well as to develop awareness and social inclusion. Does the MRI encourage its visitors to think about the past and interpret its collections? In this research the evidence suggests that the most remarkable experiences of school-age visitors are related to nature. Experiences with lithic and ceramic artifacts, or even with other collections, for example, are not even commented on by visitors.

Is this the engagement we want with the public? Of course not, because it is a type of loss that needs urgent recovery and sharing. In any case, it is possible to develop inclusive activities, such as the autobiography and visitors' relations with architecture, visual arts, and body and audiovisual movements, among others.³⁶ More than answers, the questions that remain in the air are as follows: Why hasn't this museum become a place of inclusion and rights? Why don't we appreciate the people relocated in this natural space? Aren't those people a part of the history of the museum? What explains the absence of the university and public historians from IRM activities? In this case, taking into account the assumptions of Public History, a possible answer is the need to establish dialogical relations with the visitors of the Iguaçu Regional Museum, interact with the local communities and involve more diverse and broader audiences. Moreover, thinking about research in arts and humanities, the challenges and opportunities that arise, and that go beyond museums, should mobilize us to create democratic relationships with people in order to value the engagement process and not simply the impact of products or results.

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³⁶ Giuliana Bruno's (2018) work in the field of psychogeography establishes relationships between cinema, architecture, and corporeality, in which the cultural history of space and visual arts links body movement, image movement, memory, travel, wandering, and imagination.

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