

# Metamuseology, Museology and decolonization – indigenous people and museums in Brazil

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The decades after the 1970's have been marked by identity-recognition demands and civil rights gains, as well as breakthroughs in the social sciences and humanities that have a deep effect on Museology and museums (Zavala, 2013). On one hand, post-colonialism has an impact on the basic and applied research affecting museums. On the other hand, decolonization shifts attention from colonialist and hegemonic outlooks to the rights of several groups to their own memory and therefore to musealization.

This period has led to the production of documents by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) that remain reference documents today: Declaration of Santiago (Chile, 1972), Declaration of Quebec (Canada, 1984) and Declaration of Caracas (Venezuela, 1992).

Ecomuseums, museum houses, neighborhood museums, local museums, school museums, community museums and other manners of organizing museums have sprung up in the decolonial environment through the introduction of new practices founded on participation and self-representation. Cooperation initiatives create the International Movement for a New Museology (MINOM) in 1985. Within the framework of New Museology, grassroot movements give rise to other museologies that value the protagonism, sovereignty and autonomy of social groups – Social Museology, Indigenous Peoples Museology, Affirmative Museology (Santos, 2017), as well as Sociomuseology, a branch of sociology that opposes orthodox museology (Carvalho, 2015) and Critical Museology (Lorente, 2020). Both of these challenge colonialism and hegemony at museums, a critical outlook also shared with museum studies.

The civil rights demands of the indigenous peoples of America have become public policies which, as such, directly affect the representation of the original peoples in museums. Two paradigmatic initiatives were the following: in the United States the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAPGRA) was introduced in 1990 setting museum policies with respect to the original peoples of the continent and fostered the creation of the National Museum of the American Indian, with the participation of indigenous peoples. In Canada, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) was created. In 1988, George Erasmus, then the leader of the AFN, opened “Preserving our Heritage: A Working Conference for Museums

and First Peoples” in Ottawa, after protests against The Spirit Sings exhibition. In 1992, *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples* - Task Force on Museums and First Peoples was published being the outcome of a partnership between the AFN and the Canadian Museum Association. Two names in Canada and the USA out: (1) Michael Ames (1992), whose work *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes, The Anthropology of Museums* is representative of the new theoretical breakthroughs in Museology, and (2) James Clifford (1997) who wrote *Museums as contact zone*.

In Brazil, with the Constitution in 1988, public policies began to focus on the specific characteristics of indigenous peoples and as a result, public authorities started to design and implement different health and education policies to target them. The National Museum Policy (*Política Nacional de Museus, Brasil, 2003*) offers an opportunity for the participation of different social groups and the manifestation of different identities. The joint efforts of the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Justice through the Brazilian Institute of Museums (*Instituto Brasileiro de Museus - IBRAM*) created the Memory Location Programa *Pontos de Memória*, (*Programa Pontos de Memória, Brasil, 2017*) to promote museological procedures in a broad range of communities, among which include indigenous groups.

In order to collaborate with experiments and technologies that support the formulation of public museum policies, Brazilian museological centers (university and non-university) have been developing actions with indigenous groups according to the interdisciplinarity and theoretical and methodological milestones, such as collaboration, research-action, ethnomuseology, interculturality, etc. (Cury, 2017b; Cury, 2019b; França & Broekhoven, 2017). The indigenization of museums particularly affects traditional museums (for example, see Oliveira, Lima & Oliveira, 2020; Roca, 2015a), with contributions both from collaboration (Roca, 2015b) and research-action (Ávila Meléndez, 2015; Cury, 2019b), covering actions, and relying on a collection management policy (Cury, 2016; Roca, 2015b) and institutional policy discussions (Cury, 2019a, Cury, 2018, Roca, 2015a, Roca, 2015b). However, indigenization consists of actions also understood by Indigenous Museology considering self-management, and indigenous reflections and authorship (Afonso, Oliveira & Damasceno, 2020; Campos, 2020, Carvalho, 2020; Oliveira *et al.*, 2020; Pereira, Melo & Marcolino, 2020) and by indigenous museums, which are of great interest to Museology (Cury, 2020).

I present here an outlook on the issues that started to be addressed in the 1970's, continued to be discussed at the turn of the twenty-first century and remain relevant now, contributing for the Brazilian participation. My selection proposes topics for discussion under a range of circumstances (traditional and indigenous peoples museums) to contribute to museological theory and Metamuseology. The discussions developed in this article will address the threefold concept of Musealia, Museality and Musealization and heritage, both inside and outside of the institutionalized museum, as proposed by Stránský, by gathering indigenous people around a reflexive museology (Cury, 2020, Ávila Meléndez, 2015).

Between Canada, USA and Brazil, we propose a discussion on representation and self-representation (Cury, 2019b), the sacred and human remains, aiming to contribute to ethical issues that define the policy of collection management, as a crossroads of indigenous *musealia* laden with past and current museality and a musealization based on human rights that we recognize that indigenous have.

In addition to the experiences of traditional museums, especially archeology and ethnology, indigenous points of view will be treated, especially present in their museums and in the museology they develop, in the perspective of metamuseology - a museology looking at a museology - as a way of decolonization.

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