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Rethinking the geographical concepts of “post”modern (eco)museology: Spatial trends and challenges for the Brazilian ecomuseums and community museums

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This paper presents the hypothesis that ecomuseums and community museums, at least within the Brazilian context, make a mistaken use of the geographical concepts (territory, region, landscape, place and space) in their endeavour of planning and management of collections, cultural heritage and of the “territory-heritage” as a whole. Accordingly, it is possible to notice a depletion of (eco) museological and spatial theories, when the geographical concepts have their meanings changed and mixed up with one another. Therefore, there is a risk, yet apparent, of reifying, stifling memories, identities, knowledge, works and local artifacts, because the speech, which should be a facilitating factor in the (eco) museological mediation, often ends up becoming a State control tool and of power struggles in other political arenas.

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Introduction

It is often believed that the world has become both globalised and localised in all life spheres and backgrounds. In this conception, the process revolves around two poles: a) major economic and financial undertakings and an urbanisation linchpin that promotes, at least in the western realm, societies with post-industrial, post-modern and cyborg profile; 2) reactions against intrusion and theft of “Others”, all on behalf of preserving the place, the people or group that feels neglected. Usually in these latter cases, the outcome is the creation of exclusion clusters (Haesbaert, 1997), localist communities or globalised tourist (Bauman, 1999), residential segregation (Ribeiro, s/d), territorial distinctions (Barbosa, 2010), power micro-spaces (Foucault, 1979), bio-political spaces of exception (Agamben, 2002), in short, territorial restraints (Haesbaert, 2007) of every kind that engenders territories with (extremely) problematic geographic feelings. Upon quoting territory, as a provocation, a topic will focus its analysis in order to point out the problems arising from the current trivialisation of the concept, exposed to every type of use and abuse. The proposal is to place it again where it has always been and has a greater semantics strength: in power relations, in institutional hierarchies, everywhere else, in negotiations and bargaining. The approach through which territory has been conceptually emptied from any political and economic meaning deserves a thorough review. And for socio-eco-museum purposes, the approach is similar.

In many cases of territorial localism/exclusivity, even those with strong global appeal – which Nigel Thrift very cleverly referred to as globalised localism (Thrift, 1996) – there is a clear and resigned denial of the relational dimension of the place, in other words, the spatiality of social life. Without those three assumptions advocated by geographer Doreen Massey (2008), space (and its production) becomes a mere abstract clipping, full of ideologies and thus its connection to other contexts and networks becomes delicate, and in several cases, it is adjoined in the name of originality, good morals and the maintenance

of "local" interests. By taking such action, we build a vision of place as a crystal, a lump of which only the established ones have the right of usufruct. But since the postmodern spatiality is so practical – the dimension it simultaneously harbours, "traditionalises", translates and transforms into flow technical objects, the know-how, institutions and relationships – such exclusivist and pseudo-authentic speech no longer fits to our contemporaneity. And to our enthusiasm, ecomuseums and community museums are already to some extent, aware of this new socio-political, cultural and space scenario shaped by urban societies (Westernised?).

There is a need – urgently raised by post-colonial studies and the very recent Latin American decolonial movement (although some of its mainstream mentors are hosted in U.S. and European universities...) – to overcome Eurocentrism and the arrogant scientific knowledge that insist on framing the social aspect within the ideas and ordinances planning. What is needed is the opposite: Science being framed by social groups from their experiences, interests and urgency for empowerment and development.

The space and its conceptual variants (territory, region, landscape, place) should be understood, recorded and conducted in order to clarify what, according to Sack (1997), defines the human being as a geographical creature: memory, imagination, culture, tradition, identification processes, rituality, intertextuality, negotiation, conflict ... Therefore, memory and imagination tend to occupy a prominent "place" in our space representation systems. Accordingly, it is through memory and imagination that the act becomes inventive, fluid and (in)tense. This more generous view allows us not to make the fatal mistake of the Western modernity, namely: the reduction of "deviant," "exotic" and non-Western cultures to billiard-balls (Massey, 2008), essentialised entities (Clifford, 2002), spatially isolated groups¹ (Gupta & Ferguson, 2002) that are not included in the Western civilisational landmarks.

This early dialogue serves to show that, if within the scope of international relations and urban phenomena, there is clear uncertainty over how to think and spatially act, the sociomuseum scene does not escape this situation either. It is a social dilemma of modern societies that annihilated the space for the sake of time. From Marx to Hegel and Henri Bergson, and then, from Lucien Febvre to Richard O'Brien, theorists have devised a Cartesian, and modernist and non-social space to be subdued by time, this rather is a crucial dimension of change, vitality of the socius. Space would only be a support, the stage of events driven by the flow of time. Space would be taken as clipping of time (Hegel's idea) to reveal the strength and elasticity of the duration. There is no need to elaborate on the disastrous consequences of this thinking concerning social theory and social movements in general, for a long "time," they held up to the famous idea: "the revolution will come one day," "sometime the change will happen", "if things will really change, only time will tell". Regarding this last phrase, it is undeniable that behind it there is metaphysical-like solution, because it is the space that shows how well a social process takes place, it materialises the production of inter-relationships and also dictates the pace of change. Massey (2008) considers in detail all perniciousness contained in the modern (non) geographic thought, and which prevented the advancement of the critical social theory. Therefore, besides the cultural turn, the spatial/geographical turn of social sciences in the late twentieth century were so much celebrated (Cook, 2000).

For ecomuseology and community museology, space is important not only for its strategic value in speech and museum territorialisation, but also as it settles in scalar mode the relations and injects processivity to the socio-environmental dynamics. Accordingly, a community museum is not focused only in local relations: it can reach actors, resources and experiences from other contexts, outside the sphere of its scope of immediate action. This implies a situation in which the museum territory and its performance area together form a plant of local production of the global. Memory and imagination, two prominent elements in any production and museum communication, are inherently global in their capacity to give meaning and significance to the past, present or future events. The global is not in essence a usurper of the place, but with it the global can maintain continuities and point horizons of undertaking/intermediation.

The central purpose of this paper is to establish a bridge between geography and museology. Only thus can we understand the geographical bases of action of museum institutions and government spheres that promote/finance Brazilian museums (IBRAM, museum state systems, research and consulting companies in cultural resources). Preference will be given to ecomuseums and community museums because these institutionalities are trying to arrange society/community/regional/local network into a dialogue with the territorial and cultural heritage. This is the scope of the text: think "museum post-modernity" that anchored on the community/eco-social bias of the museum process, outlines spatial strategies consistent with trends and demands of globalised societies. These, even intricate in relations of economic and cultural domination and exploitation are more attentive to peripheral voices (albeit in an action that aestheticises or even folklorises popular expressions) and to issues such as justice and social equality, human rights, environmental conservation, protection of historical-cultural heritage and democratisation of access to culture (cultural citizenship).

Arrange geographers, museologists and other museum actors in interaction. This is a challenge that shall come into being when bridges are established between the branches, and the geographical space is fully highlighted in the museum and museographic processes. Regarding the bridge meaning, I refer to the Simmelian thinking style like a continuous exchange, which generates, in specific events, the completion of uniqueness (Simmel, 1996, p. 21). *É na construção de pontes que se realiza a paisagem, vista numa perspectiva simmel-raffestiniana*² standpoint as the *stimmung*³ that works as the interface

between the human side and the exterior side, the ecological and symbolic aspects, the corporeal and the representation aspects. In other words, the landscape, and in foreseeing a discussion about the next topic, is an "instrumental image" that allows the human intervention in a "multiplicity of domains" in life (Raffestin, 2007, p. 5).

In the following topics, I will give a brief explanation concerning the major geographic concepts: landscape, region, territory and place; at some occasions, I will quote examples of ecomuseums institutions incorporating geographic concepts as a discursive (Foucault, 1979), strategic (Werlen, 1993) or existential resource (Tuan, 1983) in order to procure things, recognition and status before the local population and in other contexts, spheres and political, cultural and heritage institutions.

Landscape

It is through the landscape that society and individuals are realised, namely, nature takes shape and manifests itself in the image/representation/speech of social subjects. I use the word "realisation" not in the Heideggerian sense, but as a form of attention to the central role of representation in shaping what we call landscape. It is commonly claimed that the representation is the other end of the Real, a symbolic form that has at its heart the masking of the Real by the transmutation of perception in a diffuse and ambivalent arrangement of forms of expression and content (Gumbrecht, 1998). These forms of expression and forms of content are the materialisation of processes transposing the universe of memory, imagination, image and meaning in worlds of intermediations from the language, the positioning of subjects, use of materials and media, etc.

Consequently, an idea of landscape as "instrumental image" (Raffestin, 2007) is important in the museum and museographic domains for two reasons: 1) it provides an imagistic-discursive content that enhances the museum space, leading the public to meet and interact with memories and events of the past – and in many cases, with its present and future projections of the local community; 2) it provides the basis for fracturing images that it helps to create, because images are culturally and environmentally constructed and, as in any process involving the cultural environment and the environmental culture are likely to be contested, reworked and re-semantised; therefore, the landscape is fully and consistently activated in virtually all museum communication processes (Santana, 2011), leading the public to experience the atmosphere of the period that the museum space intends to emphasise. Ecomuseums and community museums are the museum instances most impacted by the way local inhabitants present and represent the local heritage and their experiences of living and place.

Under such a landscape point of view, the territorial image provided in a landscape way establishes the exchange system between the practical-sensitive world and the symbolic world. In ecomuseology and community museology, the landscape should act as a spatial analysis method of the ways to intervene in the empirical reality spread out between the material and the symbolic, but especially under the scrutiny of the images and representations. The idea of landscape as a material-apparent result of societies hinders more than helps to clarify the actual conditions of production of place (Massey, 2008), of regional consciousness (Bezzi, 2004) and groups territorialisation (Haesbaert, 2004). Unfortunately, through the trends seen today in the world museology and museum examples of the landscape seen in Europe and Brazil⁴, we see that the landscape sociomuseum discussion is just at its start.

Region

Anthropologist Gilberto Freyre in the middle of last century introduced the proposal of "regional museum" as an institution to preserve the folk memory. This idea, advocated in some museum sectors and in the third sector, has been gradually treated harshly in some musealisation processes in which the phenomenon has a clear regional "feature". This is the case of Museu do Homem do Nordeste⁵, (Museum of Man of Northeast, Museu Regional de Olinda (PE) (Regional Museum of Olinda (state of Pernambuco) and Museu Regional de São João del Rei (MG) (Regional Museum of São João del Rei (state of Minas Gerais)).



Figure 1. Museum for Northeast Men. Source: <http://museuhomemdonordeste.blogspot.com.br/>.

Many authors mean the region as the domain space, control and administration, like the connotation given in the Roman Empire (*regio*). However, the region can also be read with a sense of direction, spatial orientation (Haesbaert, 2010, p. 3)⁶. At this point, region is a continuous process of regionalisation, and the marks of the process leads to a regional issue that is never empty, always needs the identity (Bezzi, 2004, 2002) to both mobilise the “regional subjects” and accomplish the ever required cohesion and territorial integration.

There are several examples of regional processes with global impact, as in Spain (Basque, Catalan), Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. In such cases, it is regionalisms, a narrower dimension of the region where politics takes the reins, leaving culture of “between equals” or in the background.

But after all, what is region? Meri Bezzi sums it up brilliantly:

(...) region is defined as a specific set of cultural relationships between a group and a specific place. The region is a symbolic appropriation of a portion of space by a certain group, which is also a constitutive element of regional identity. The region, with a focus on cultural identity, is again seen as a real product. It is concrete. It exists. It is proper and experienced by its inhabitants, differing from the others mainly by the identity the social group gives to it (Bezzi, 2002, p. 17).

As to museum policy and management, the ontological and practical dimension of the region and regional identity should be taken into consideration when determining the scope and territorial strategies. Since ecomuseums and community museums are likely to be created in both urban and rural environments, the diversity of tactics, plans and actions will largely depend on the context to be territorialised by the museum institution. It is not the same thing to foster ecomuseums in global cities-regions (Scott et al., 2001) or in rural areas, as in the case of ecomuseums of Maranguape (state of Pernambuco) and Ribeirão da Ilha (state of Santa Catarina).

In any case, region is the prominent geographical concept of identification and articulation of groups, places and political-economic processes that are gathered in one place. The region is always under a process: this is its generic condition. And because it is eminently cultural (Hissa, 2004), the regional spatiality unavoidably involves issues such as negotiation, conflict, reproduction and social dispute. Besides intermediations, region refers to an imaginary, or rather, an imagined community (Anderson, 1987). Its dynamicity is embedded within vibrations of power ontologically engendering the regional issue (herein in accordance with Francisco Oliveira’s phrasing [1977]).

In general, (eco) museum institutions play an important role in valuing a region and/or a regional identity: their mission is to authenticate and disseminate memories, events and know-how of the regional society. All the region dimensions may be subject to musealisation (politics, economy, culture, art, religion), as they should merely be claimed by local groups and supported by museum management. The museum, as well as any cultural institution undertaking the task, is apt to recognise, enhance, invest and convey a regionality atmosphere that nourishes and rules the regional society. In any case, in musealisation situations of the "regional", culture will always be the geographical bulwark.

Territory

Today territory is the key concept of the Brazilian Human Geography, the great driver of speeches and actions on the dynamics of places and human intermediations, always determined by the trio des-territorialisation (Haesbaert, 2004), following in the footsteps of the Deleuze-Guattarian thinking.

A hypothesis for the preference of the concept of territory by Brazilian geographers, social movements and the cultural initiatives is given by Haesbaert:

Perhaps the hegemony of place revealed in Doreen Massey's works [and in the English geography] is due in part to the strength of the cultural-identity dimension within the English geographical context, as well as "territory" in our midst may be due to the strength of territorial disputes in an environment where "land-territory" is still a resource (and a shelter, would claim Milton Santos) to be appropriated and enjoyed by an increasingly larger society (Haesbaert, 2008, p. 13).

Territory is a geographical phenomenon of power manifestation, a concrete and symbolic expression of ownership or possession of the space by a person or any kind of social grouping. It is through territory that politics takes place by means of material conditions and instrumental means (and mediations) of heritage acquisition or solidarity occupation, of mutual usufruct or strict control of space. It can be noted that I am working on both the territories that are born out of solidary action and those that are a direct product, for example, of the Western modernist order, which rationalises all and marks the "correct" places of actions of social subjects (children in schools, adults in the companies, the elderly in asylums, mad people in mental hospitals, women in purified places, etc.). The French geography comprehensively discusses framing techniques (Taillard, 2004) and concept (and technique) that best describes how the capitalist west conceives space and think about its applicability in hegemonic processes.

Under a materialistic view point, Robert Sack (1986) believes that territoriality, a dynamic condition of formation and territory qualification, establishes a border, an area classification and a form of communication. But as the author explains, each group/person has their own territorial dynamics, and it takes its form and content from the social history, geographic conditions and policy of meaning of the group/person. Territoriality leads groups and people to adopt a position (Marcus, 1994) and location policy (Hall, 1992).

Nowadays, the mistake concerning the approaches of territory focuses on the trivialisation of the concept to such an extent that its operation is ambiguous, that is, totally inaccurate in its political-ideological content and established power relations. What was then the operational role of the territory, namely, the investigation of political relations, negotiations, hierarchies etc., has been used to treat all facets and situations of life, in a movement that tends to produce a reverse effect: to empty the political meaning of or uncritical approach to the culture of the social group being studied.

Some geographers argue that territory should retrieve its "original" semantic load, that is to say, where the emphasis is on the concrete and/or symbolic uptake of space. Centred in this approach, territory emerges as a dimension where the conflict, negotiation, interest and physical, symbolic and visual demands make up the analytical and defining scope of social existence of the territory. The territory should be focused on the dimension of the struggle, the social conflict. The territory embodies events requiring a decision making that, in most cases, takes harsh proportions of calculated risk and physical and/or symbolic violence. As Carlos Walter Porto-Gonçalves⁷, ironically asserts, territory is the place of the back alley, the tête-à-tête with the Other. And the Other is not always so outlying: it may be your neighbour, an adjacent suburb, a street of a socially lower group, as points out Norbert Elias (2000) upon studying the little town fictitiously called Winston Parva, and the conflicts arising from the division and stigmatisation between the established ones (early dwellers) and the two other newly-installed territory groups.

At the Ecomuseum de Santa Cruz, along with other cultural actors, ways to understand the dynamics of segments territorialisation and local groups, and one of the rich examples of cultural territorial dispute existing in the region is that of "Clóvis bate-bola," groups which appear in the carnival period and set up a symbolic and "friendly" atmosphere of rivalry and joy, with the right to contest for the best clothing and performance in "cruzas" and "roda-baiana"⁸. This phenomenon has gained such popular reputation that has been recently recognised as a cultural heritage in the State of Rio de Janeiro.

The criticism of human geographers is that territory has fallen into such a vulgar concept that, regardless of the topic that is under discussion, territory has become a kind of "Joker playing card" that can replace the remaining geographical concepts: where earlier it was spoken of as landscape, it is now spoken of as territory; where a space would be of a regional type, now it is treated as territory; in place situations (the convergence of social paths and nature), the vocabulary strength of territory stands out as a dimension of the human interaction by power; and finally, in environmental approaches, territory would be a cycle that articulates and enriches acclimatised elements, taking out of the environment its major concept richness: that of the *amb + ere = to be related*, "go-along" (Yazigi, 2006).

In line with this reasoning, how can we define territoriality and the territory of an ecomuseum or community museum? Certainly, it will not be possible along the lines today prescribed by the intellectual "whim" and social movements, including several Brazilian ecomuseums that have confounded territory with place, landscape, region, environment/ambience...

Place

Place habitually is the concept that draws attention to the affective, experiential and lived side (or even playfulness) of spatialised social relations. Place is the meeting space, connecting social and natural trajectories that make up a unique and particular space. Unlike the readings made by some "territorialists" geographers (Sahr, 2009), the concept of place does not ignore the power relations, and much less tapers the political aspect, which is part of the processes of recognition, organisation and reproduction of places. Place is connected to the conformation of geographical identity shared by the subjects enjoying that meeting space of stories/social paths and nature (Massey, 2008).

However, place does not seem to be a concept very much requested by museum experts and other cultural agents. This is due to the naive, parsimonious and incomplete nature conveyed by the concept. As a result, Anthony Giddens adopts *locale*; in France, *landscape* is the main concept used both by geographers (Roger Brunet, Augustin Berque, Paul Claval) and by sociologists and philosophers (Michel Maffesoli, Gilles Lipovetsky, Alain Roger, Pierre Sansot); in Britain and in Southern U.S., *region* has been rebuilding as a concept-matrix of geographical human-cultural disciplines (Cardoso, 2011); whereas in Brazil, territory emerged with full force in recent years (Haesbaert, 2010, 2007, 2004)⁹.

Region, often seen as a concept situated in the limbo between the local and the national, is now confronted with the contemporary requirements for valuing of the place sphere, the senses of place, the practiced place¹⁰. And with that review of the place, museology finds fertile ground to expand its ideas and intermediations. Seeing regions in the interstices of the cities and in other space instances is still a new path in the Brazilian Geography.

By way of introduction, place is the network of relationships instituted in a particular space-time. It is upon (dis) articulation and (dis) integration of social phenomena on a locatable network of relationships that place is produced. People, art groups, merchants, institutions, streets, sub-districts, public agencies, hospitals, religious communities, events and entertainment, these are the hallmarks and nuances of a place that establishes landscapes relating to local processes.

Ontologically speaking, geographers deal with referrals of the place... These are built in the daily reproduction of material activities and memories, imaginations, feelings and loyalties that mobilize, educate and expand the sensibilities of local residents and supporters. Here, we are going deeper into the breeding ground of the sense of place, a concept hardly explored by British and American geographers.

When the sense of place is developed, practiced, and perhaps the greatest of all, ritualised, people incorporate a geography of emotion, a spatially marked structure of feeling, but that at any time can expand or contract through the processes involved. The geography of the place of emotions has its apex at the moment in which people, groups and institutions state, with all zeal, that "this place is mine," "we cannot live without this place," "we love this place," "we miss our place to death." Again focusing Rio de Janeiro, this city is an important area to study the causes and effects of a sense of place continuously developed (Wonderful Town, Land of Samba, place of cunning and happy people) and disclosed in a speech by the media, hegemonic institutions and popular segments, making up a dense web of meanings to be debated and processed in the daily life.

Peter Davis (1999) notes that the sense of place is one of the basic pillars of the ecomuseum action, and it should be enhanced in all senses and situations. And indeed, in recent years the main focus of the ecomuseums has been the pursuit and protection of meaning, or rather the "spirit of place" (Corsane, s/d). From East to West, the ecomuseum action has been summarised to pace in the best possible way the equation "territory + heritage + memory + population" (Corsane, 2008, p. 3), whose result is to Peter Davis, the ecomuseum, an institution to serve the conservation and interpretation of "all elements of the environment in a way that it ensures a continuity with the past and a sense of belonging" (1999, cited in Pérez, 2009, p. 194), regardless of the socio-political context.

An overview of ecomuseums and Brazilian community museums makes us understand that place is the dimension that is implied in the theoretical and labour developments of each one of these institutions. Place is not elevated to the category of crucial theoretical action both due to the conditions described above (naive vision of the concept) and the fact that territory has taken over the reins in museum speech,

being used in an indiscriminate and uncritical manner. The question is whether the place will follow its course or if new perspectives will open "space" for debate on how ecomuseums and the community museums can participate in the production of place, using memory (basic concept of museology) as an organizing element of affections and imaginations that gives local community powers to understand, appropriate, labour and reframe its Space-World (Sahr, 2007) as a cultural heritage to be enjoyed in a conscientious, fair and caring way by all identifying with it.

A quick look at the context and debates of the Brazilian community (Eco) Museology

In concrete terms, IBRAM (Instituto Brasileiro de Museus) [Brazilian Institute of Museums] is one of the records of the new State cultural policy implemented early this century – initiated by Lula's administration (2003-2010) –, headed by scholars, politicians and other left-wing activists who erected the cultural heritage as an action priority for the sectors related to the culture. Safeguarding, registration, restoration, promotion and funding actions have augmented in the last ten years. IBRAM as well as other public and non-governmental institutions affiliated to it or to the Ministry of Culture (MinC), marks a historic moment of re-conceptualisation for the cultural heritage (now encompassing intangible culture), enhancement of vernacular know-how (Master Griô, point of culture, recognition of specific segments such as gypsies, quilombolas, ribeirinhos, lace workers, babacu coconut breakers, popular luthiers and hip hop, funk, "forró pé de serra," dirty music groups, etc.).

The museum and the museum knowledge also stand out in the current Brazilian cultural scene: they have become protagonists in a moment of re-appreciation and re-narration of the Brazilian history, where stories of cultural diversity are to be told and safeguarded. This diversity needs to be documented, preserved, promoted and, if possible and necessary, museumified for new generations. They are creating new ways to generate employment, income and cultural creation through the formalization, professionalization and mercantilisation of history and cultures. Urry (1996) remarks on the outbreak of the "tradition industry", this being a recent vector for the expansion of profits regarding the consumer's sovereignty and the new demands for a popular taste. Although it is not based on the action of ecomuseums and community museums, which have a less auratic and mercantilist scope than conventional museums, Urry manages to generalise with a relative accuracy the current role of the different types of museum:

It is not so much a matter of incorporating a high culture, devoid of ambiguity, which the vast majority of the population is excluded of. Museums have become more accessible, especially for service providers classes and the middle class (...). In terms of leisure of these classes, suggests Merriman (1989), visits to museums, with their associations, with their associations to a previously very high culture, enables the acquisition of a certain cultural capital, acquisition made possible thanks to the degree whereby people today have the ability to "read" museums (Urry, 1996, p. 178).

And he makes a critical quotation, and that goes for the community (eco) museology, rushed readings that see the tradition industry as a sea of inauthenticity and lack of commitment to the "history as such":

Indeed, it is not clear, in any way, which history most people have. In the absence of a tradition industry, how is the past usually appropriated? (...) For many people the past, at best, will be recovered by reading biographies and historical novels. It is not obvious that the account of the heritage industry is more misleading than such readings.

What needs to be emphasised is that the history of the tradition is distorted due to the prevailing emphasis on visualisation, the fact that they present to visitors a series of artifacts, including buildings ("real" or "manufactured" artifacts) and then try to visualise the pattern of life that would have been built around them. This is essentially "artifactual" history, in which a variety of social experiences are necessarily ignored or trivialised, such as war, exploitation, hunger, disease, law, etc. (Ibid., p. 153).

The museum, museology and the agents who are indirectly involved in Brazil constitute a field where memory, identity and cultural economy become part of safeguarding, promotion, sponsorship and broadcast actions. Museums and similar institutions began to fight for shares of public funds (and private as well) via notices, incentive laws, etc. Everything should be devoted on behalf of an excellent museum management, prioritising the qualification of the actors and beautification of the museum space. Within this scenario of attempts to democratise public resources, from the Museu Imperial de Petrópolis (Imperial Museum of Petrópolis) to the Ecomuseu de Ouro Preto (Ecomuseum of Ouro Preto) – and all those pertaining to federal and state museums systems, all are in the struggle for institutional consolidation.

The National Sector Museum Plan (PNMS, term 2010-2020)¹¹ is a leading document in the Brazilian cultural field. It features the consolidation of a far-reaching policy for the multifaceted museological segment, comprising from the training of managers to the use of the most sophisticated media and marketing strategies in order to compose audiences, unlike previous management approaches, which gave precedence only to conventional museums¹² and the "petty politics" concentrating all resources and privileges on the hands of only a few museum actors, the tactics of IBRAM and its allies perpetrating the museological activity within novel parameters of democratisation of resources and access to culture.

If PMSM is able to accomplish all goals set within the deadline prescribed, socio-museology as a whole will achieve another projection and relevance in the national socio-cultural scenario. As "guardian" entities of know-how, ways of life and local-community territoriality, the community ecomuseological action is linked to a geographical view in which "territory" is the actual address of the museumised phenomenon. There are no museums that are more related to the place, the geographical region, and the symbolic territoriality than ecomuseums and community museums, except for museums of landscapes and territories, which gradually gain "space" in the sector policy of IBRAM and similar.

The goal of the Plan is to provide ecomuseums and community museums with an objective cultural and political purpose, that is, ability to train and empower community actors for the full exercise of cultural production and citizenship. Inserted as a sector pole, ecomuseums and community museums have as its political most attraction its easy insertion with communities with a low museum potential. Regarding ecomuseums, these can anywhere and under any circumstances, museumises a space: it is enough to have a community willing to receive new ideas and agencies, and a "technical" body who face the problems and challenges of the community consensus, heritage and environmental demands, and the risk of reification of space in the eco-musealisation process. Barreto (2000) says that until the 1980s, ecomuseums had their pinnacle in Europe, notably those endorsed by mentor Hugues de Varine. However, by 1980, ecomuseology starts to lose theoretical (and political) strength for a number of reasons that are not answered solely by the internal structure of ecomuseums. It involves a closer look at the cultural flows and socio-spatial mobility of post-modern capitalist societies.

Among the reasons for the crisis and transformation of the ecomuseological sector, are the social changes after 1973, which have provided companies with a global, post-industrial and spectacularised (cultural industry) content. In this scenario, societies and nations begin to leverage some isms peculiar to a system that became flexibilised, relaxed, liberalised and spectacularised in all social spheres. Therefore, individualism, pragmatism, managerialism and entrepreneurialism make up the political landscape of the Western industrial democracies. As to individualism, in Brazil, the trend of new ecomuseum and museum-community institutions in Brazil has been to have their names linked to an important person of the past, placing the community on a secondary level.

In light of the foregoing, we see that initiatives such as Ecomuseu Dr. Agobar Fagundes, located in Nova Russiá, Blumenau (SC), and Ecomuseu Nega Vilma, resided in Dona Marta slum, Botafogo (RJ), comprise the new ideas of museum and cultural producers and managers. The proposal is simple: immersed by an entrepreneurial view, such producers and managers of the culture turn one or more distinguished persons into symbolic baits, and based on a "rescue" of their personal narratives, habits, skills and political and cultural significance, the community musealisation is triggered, summoning a pool of people who are interested in sharing the symbolic and concrete appropriation of their place by means of virtuosities and peculiarities of the renowned subject(s). Closing this brief comment, we can realize that based on one or more people (that were) locally influential, the cementation of the social and patrimonialising of the place become fully feasible. The unique requirement is that the museological plan is convincing and beneficial for dwellers and collaborators. And the community empowerment becomes a matter of time and resources.

In pragmatic terms, ecomuseums, as well as museology in its entirety, cannot escape the structural imperative of radical contemporaneity embracing us; a world where the struggle to maintain the aura and physical integrity of the cultural heritage has become as important as the fighting against hunger, poverty, war and social and environmental injustices. Culture is the anchorage for novel social demands and struggles in pursuit of recognition and protagonism. Culture, far from the romantic appeal of anthropologists, is the new centre of social battle; of the symbolic war for (re) taking of spaces and activities subject to the cultural industries or groups featuring other sustainability parameters (solidarity economic, cooperativism, financing for crowdfunding).

Turning back to ecomuseums... These demand a good amount of financial and human resources to support their projects, and establishing alliances and agreements with private actors (company, research institute, patronage) become inevitable. In most cases, these are disjointed actors and not in the least used to ecomuseological design, and by so doing, one runs the risk of breaking the original design of the museological project.

The community museum phenomenon has obtained interesting results in Brazil. In almost all places where a community museum is installed, reports are that the initiative derived from the "inside" of the horizontal networks that make up the community and its externality (university, technicians, and patrons). These were either the result of the militancy of residents associations or other institutions hankering for restoration of the stories and identity (ies) of the place, or local intellectuals committed to the situation. Accordingly, the community museum has been moving in this direction: providing tools so that dwellers

themselves mobilize their feelings, membership and activities, forming a localized economy of goods and symbolic exchanges.

Among the community museums, one that draws attention is Lomba do Pinheiro (stated of Rio Grande do Sul). The building housing the museum-community actions, which is situated on the outskirts of Porto Alegre, in the past, served as a shelter (flood of 1965) and space for popular education. This story provided the guidelines for implementation of the museum, which has in the heritage education its main philosophical and political-educational foundation. UFRGS has an interesting outreach programme with neighbourhood schools, besides the exchange made with other institutions and groups¹³. The goal is to break the gap between academic knowledge and popular knowledge, providing a multiple interaction cultural and diffuse environment, including indigenes children, youth, adults and elderly. The inclusion of all participants within the network of relationships of museumized place turns the museum into an effective mediating space between the collective memory (speech) and the actions of the local basis. As stated by the mediators of the museum¹⁴:

(...) the educational process is conducted towards local knowledge and an enhancement of memory, history, environment, in the various aspects that it may contribute to self-esteem (sic) of the neighbourhood residents. In this territory, under the guidance of Professor Zita Possamai, the work is developed through group meetings, reading, texts studying and writing, debates and discussions. Besides the theoretical and practical preparation, students work at least once a week in the territory. These projects involve the qualification of basic-level teachers and students, through visits to the museum spaces. It is intended to establish a dialogue between theory and practice, providing a reflection on the action that will be constantly reviewed and evaluated by the group.



Figure 2. Community ecomuseum of Santa Cruz – Source: personal file.

As in all museum institutions committed to the museumized neighbourhood, media and virtual environments are the best way to reach and serve stakeholders. In an era when heritage education is as necessary as environmental education and other basic subjects, the community museum of Lomba do Pinheiro is an excellent laboratory of trends of socio-spatial insertion through museological processes. The locale of Lomba do Pinheiro is the location of the communities that make up the neighbourhood, similar to the scope followed by the ecomuseums of Santa Cruz and of (still is in its planning stages) Sepetiba, both located in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro, and believe it or not: Sepetiba is a sub-district of Santa Cruz! In this situation, as in others, it is seen that the delimitation of a neighbourhood does not necessarily coincide with the boundaries and limits of an eco-museum agency.

Other community museums with a good territorial accountability and representation are: Museu Comunitário Almiro Theobaldo Muller de Itaparinga (state of Santa Catarina), Museu da Maré (state of Rio de Janeiro), Museu da Favela (state of Rio de Janeiro) and Museu Didático-Comunitário de Itapoã (state of Bahia). A quick visit to ABREMC's website, link "Ecomuseus e Museus Comunitários no Brasil",¹⁵ reveals how much failure and inequality exists concerning the distribution of ecomuseums and community museums in Brazil. Certainly it is a medium-and long-term process in view of the fact that these museum modalities do not have a strong media appeal, much less the generation of employment and income. The southern region has the largest concentration of community museums, something presumable due to the cultural, scientific and economical asset available there, and the strong identity appeal of the regional groups and other segments – Museu Comunitário dos Trabalhadores de Limpeza Urbana (state of Rio de Janeiro), Museu Treze de Maio (state of Rio Grande do Sul), the latter with an emphasis on black culture and expressions. In Southeast pole, ecomuseums are given some emphasis, even though their exhibits are devoid of personal and financial resources in artistic and cultural events and promotion of conservation initiative of the memory and heritage of the place.

Final remarks and a research agenda

The symbolic production of social museums is dynamic, relational, and intuitive. The museum is a system of (in) formation, a privileged spatial structure that works memory, imagination, collections and training of individuals to schedule commitment to cultural heritage. Under the community museum standpoint, it becomes more evident, since its aim is to be

(...) a cultural management centre with meetings and dialogues, as a promoter of the surrounding community, and the instance where different cultural actors converge and encourage exploration, discovery, intellectual exchanges and renewals (Santana, 2011, p. 2).

Endowed with a specific form of communication, the museum communication, the museum gains notoriety when its scope of geographical action encompasses all forms of contents worthy of being appropriated, catalogued and presented to the public. In these situations, creating ambience is crucial to assert the interactive aspect of the collection and heritage, inviting people to create an aesthetic relationship with the museumized product. I refer to aesthetics as "the experience of feeling for the potentialisation of the form", in which "derives the important phenomenon of the enchantment of the senses" (YAZIGI, 2006, p. 70). Aesthetic makes it possible, through in-formation, the creation of worlds via production of sensibilities, affiliations, memberships and more.

Many of the geographic dilemmas occurring in the Brazilian museum management derive from attitudes and ideological positions already taken in the first steps of musealisation of a space. The planning and implementation phase of the museum is very important in order to know what kind of geographicity/spatiality the musealisation is intended to. Among the errors are:

1. A lack of criteria concerning the spatial ontological basis of ecomuseums, community museums and other alternative museums, and this greatly affects the documentation, patrimonial and conservation process of cultural goods, the moment the museum, community and territory become instruments of cultural, political and educational action;
2. The spatial strategies of the institution that, in general, remain in the background or are not given due attention;
3. And carelessness regarding the vertical and horizontal stresses that are not suited to the hard core of meaning that the concept of territory conveys, for instance. I mention a hard core of meaning because, due to the postmodern condition that undermined all that was said to be stable, authentic and unproblematic, sciences, arts and other know-how are in front of the trap, as advised by many authors, to extend the concepts to the point that the meaning is fully compromised. Something is spoken of, when in fact the other case is being referred to, which linguistically speaking, is already recorded in another concept. In geography, territory has gone through this process.

Finally, we must wonder if ecomuseums and community museums – and I also quote the recent program "memory points" – an IBRAM's initiative, which aims to stimulate local-community initiatives for the registration of collective memory and differentiated know-how – are heterotopias, evoking here the classical Foucault's grammar (2006), or comprise other topological natures. By so doing, then we can think of endotopic situations (endo = internal + topos = space = interpenetration spaces of strategic seclusion), ritotopic (rite = ceremony topos = space = ritualisation spaces) or "oligotopic" (oligos = few + topos = space = space to/for a few, the insiders) in the ecomuseology and community museology.

Such a debate based on museum topologies places socio-museology in another plan of action: as a catalyst for creation processes of cultural conservatories (Warnier, 2000). Thinking ecomuseums and community museums as authentic cultural conservatories is understanding, on the one side, that ecomuseums stands out for total cultural environmental heritage by involving everyone in the defence of

the ordinary space (Santos, 1996), but now museumized and made meaningful to all; and on the other side, that the community museum acquires responsibility and leadership in the communitisation process and territory-heritage management, returning to the collective the political voice and relevance in the local production of culture, memory, identity...

Differences between these two socio-museological facts fork, as we might expect in a two-way path: 1) the strengthening of memories, traditions, membership and manners of use of cultural heritage; 2) the possibility to access externalities, promoting socio-cultural exchange, making up differentiating rituals and use the museum institution as an ideological instrument of power to negotiate conflicts and propose solutions. In short, these are issues and questions of geographical matrix still in a germination state (at least in the Brazilian scenario), which should be urgently reviewed in the light of new contributions made by the Human Geography currents (cultural, humanistic, Marxist, media).

Endnotes

¹ It concerns the configuration of European anthropological representations over several decades. Such a view contextualised non-western societies (exotic) as isolated groups, without possibilities of civilisational advancement.

² I quote two academic scholars from distinct professions and temporalities: Simmel was a German sociologist who lived until early last century and produced outstanding diagnosis about the psycho-geographic condition of people in big European cities. A fact that spread to other Western urban contexts and stresses the generalisation of specific processes configured in the capitalist urban areas (monetarisation of the economy, impersonality of relationships, blasé attitude, privatisation of the religious aspect); Raffestin is a Swiss franc geographer who is at work, preparing excellent reviews based on the concepts of territory/territoriality and the implication in landscape, that is, the representation people envisage of perceived/conceived/lived territory.

³ These are the three possible meanings for the term in the Portuguese language: "atmosphere", "objectively perceived sensibility" or "engendered atmosphere". All of them elicit the spatiality of the phenomenon concerned and its setting over a certain period of time. The *stimmung* relations with the concept of event are very productive, particularly if the geographers advanced the geographic theory of the event discretely proposed by Santos (1996).

⁴ In the city of Rio de Janeiro, there is the revitalisation project of Largo do Boticário, in Cosme Velho, Zona Sul, which comprises the creation of a landscape museum to consolidate the neoclassic and bucolic atmosphere of the district. Available at: <<http://solucoesurbanas.com.br/projetos-em-curso/museu-da-paisagem.html>> - Accessed on: April 20th 2010.

⁵ An example is Museu do Homem do Nordeste, located in Recife (state of Pernambuco), that, despite not being related to the community ecomuseological perspective, and not taking into consideration the mistakes of interpretation that might arise upon essentialising the phenomenon of the "northeastern man", the institution plays an important role in broadcasting the know-how of the northeastern popular groups. Further details, refer to Santana et al. (2011)

⁶ Meaning also derived from the Roman Empire, but unlike the first definition (that mentions chiefs and bureaucrats of the empire), the meaning of "orientate", "direct" relates to the Roman diviners who tried to foresee events through "regions" traced in the sky.

⁷ A sentence uttered in his lesson "Geography and Social Movements", given in a Geography graduation course at UFF (2/2008).

⁸ See: <<http://textosdetherezapires.blogspot.com.br/2012/02/o-blog-entra-em-ritmo-de-carnaval.html>> Accessed on: May 5th 2012. NT: Typical folkloric costumes and dances in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

⁹ Despite the power of the territory, the region follows as a protagonist in interurban and mesoscale reviews.

¹⁰ To have a clear picture of the ambivalence of both concepts, as far as the British Geography is concerned, region is nearly always a synonym for place; in USA, as well. But in other countries, the discussion assumes different forms.

¹¹ PNSM available at: <<http://www.museus.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/PSNM-Versao-Web.pdf>> Accessed on: February 2nd 2012.

¹² In regard to this, some remarks must be raised, such as in the instance of Rio de Janeiro, where ecomuseology had its most prominent status (prematurely, so as to speak) in early 1990s, with the creation during Eco-92 (agenda 21) of Ecomuseu of Santa Cruz, which became recognized only in 1995 by means of a municipal decree. However, the current management has systematically neglected both this ecomuseum as other cultural institutions with a large profit margin.

¹³ For measurements of exchanges, see: <<http://conexlomba.blogspot.com.br/>> Accessed on: May 19th 2012.

¹⁴ Available at: <<http://conexoesufrgs.blogspot.com.br/2009/05/museu-comunitario-da-lomba-do-pinheiro.html>> - Accessed on: May 19th 2012.

¹⁵ <<http://www.abremc.com.br/ecomuseus.asp>> Accessed on: May 19th 2012.

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