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Shifting Paradigms in Musealization: The Participation of Indigenous People in the Rio de Janeiro Indian Museum

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ABSTRACT:

This article presents a theoretical reflection on the relationship between museum and musealization processes in a contemporary perspective, examining the Indian Museum of Rio de Janeiro, founded in 1953 and currently linked to the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), as a case study. To this purpose, our argument focuses on a critical analysis of Museology, in a decolonialized way, which involves the participation of indigenous people since 2001, notably in the museum's

research projects and exhibitions, with a *partnership system* between anthropologists and indigenous people. Such activities encompass indigenous people in the musealization, which is understood according to the theoretical model proposed by Zbynek Z. Stránský of selection, thesaurization, and presentation.

Key words: Indian Museum, Museology, musealization, indigenous people

RESÚMEN:

Cambiando los Paradigmas de la Musealización: La Participación de los Pueblos Indígenas en el Museo del Indio de Río de Janeiro

Este artículo presenta una reflexión teórica sobre la relación entre museo y musealización en una perspectiva contemporánea, teniendo el Museo del Indio de Río de Janeiro, fundado en 1953, y desde entonces forma parte del organismo indigenista oficial del Estado brasileño responsable de promover protección y los derechos de los pueblos indígenas en Brasil. Nuestro argumento debe enfocarse en un análisis crítico de la museología, que involucra la participación de los pueblos indígenas desde principios de la década del 2000, y las transformaciones que se produjeron con un “sistema de participación” entre museo, antropólogos y los pueblos indígenas. Tales actividades engloban a lo indígena en los procesos de la cadena de musealización, entendido de acuerdo con el modelo teórico propuesto por Zbynek Z. Stránský de “selección”, “tesaurización” y “presentación”.

Palabras clave: Museo del Indio, museología, musealización, pueblos indígenas



During the 19th century, the active promotion of collecting objects by ethnographic and natural-sciences-oriented museums in the west played a determinant role in shaping memories and social identities as the concept of the ethnographic “other”. The newly-born Anthropology that emerged in Brazil, just like in the United States and Europe contexts, maintained a close relationship with the evolutionist and eugenic theories in its early years. Those ideas were adopted by Brazilian academics in an exchange with foreign naturalists, many of whom had come to Brazil to research and collect, mainly to add to the collections of natural history and ethnology museums in Europe. Social and scientific revolutions marked the 19th century, and museums were affected by the changes that came about. In Brazil, the foundation of its first museums,

notably the National Museum in 1818, Emílio Goeldi Museum in 1866, and the Paulista Museum in 1895, revolutionized the country's scientific field. The museum became a place known for its excellence in knowledge building.

The museums dedicated to national history and ethnology imported the scientific knowledge produced in the Global North's major centers. They implemented the same evolutionist speeches to the musealization of material culture produced by Brazilian indigenous people. Social evolutionism, as a development of Darwinian theory, worked for a long period of time to comfortably fit the development of Anthropology, especially in regard to the understanding of racial differences and its subsequent categorization of indigenous people as "exotic" and racially inferior. Thus, indigenous people were situated in the lower ranks of a hierarchy of what was understood as social and human evolution. Simultaneously, social evolutionism contributed to validate the modern European project of establishing itself as the ideal of civilization. Any model of nation that differed from the modern European ideals were considered primitive. In the "*Museum's Era*," a period defined by Brazilian historian Lilia Schwarcz (1993/2017), which encompasses the decades from 1870 to 1930, social evolutionism started its downfall, and Franz Boas' culturalist theories began to replace it in the Global North's main ethnographic museums. Meanwhile, in Brazil, the Boasian notion of culture would only gain ground in the 1930s, at the end of the so-called *Museum's Era*, with the first anthropologists graduating with a university degree. Up to this period, physicians, engineers, jurists, military officers, and other professionals produced Brazilian Anthropology; and, at that time, few of them had received a proper education in the discipline (Mellatti, 1984). Around the turn of the century in Europe and the United States, Museology was marked by a period of "renewed interest in the professionalization of the museological work and the exchange of good museological practices" (Aquilina, 2011, p.11). This was directly influenced by the foundation of the *Office International de Musées* (OIM) in Paris (predecessor of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), and by the publishing of museum manuals¹ based on practice and observation, as well as the founding of training programs or courses about museums. Meanwhile, in Brazil, such a transition was non-existent, and there was no debate over the concept of Museology during the first half of the 20th century. Even the debate concerning practical and technical aspects of the museological work would only happen at the beginning of the 1930s, with the foundation of the Museum Course at the National Historic Museum in Rio de Janeiro. Gustavo Barroso conceived of this course, and Rodolfo Garcia founded it.

Only at the beginning of the 1960s would the theoretical debates related to Museology and its object of study be carried on and gain strength, mainly based

1. Aquilina (2011) highlights the following publications: George Brown Goode's *The Principles of Museum Administration* (1895); Benjamin Ives Gilman's *Museum Ideals of Purpose and Method* (1918); and Laurence Vail Coleman's *Manual for Small Museums* (1927).

on Zbynek Z. Stránský's ideas. In 1965, the Czech author dissociated the study of museums from the field of Museology, displacing the museums not as an object of study but as a founding concept of the discipline. This allowed the placement of museums under the museological researcher's scrutiny (Dolák, 2017) as a *laboratory*. There, musealization could be more frequently observed than in other environments. Thus, work and research methodologies could be tested or even have confirmations and refusals of theoretical postulates, capable to attest the musealization's dynamic processes and the values which would guide museality.

Some historical landmarks of a discipline which has dedicated itself throughout the last half-century to the theorizing of museal procedures were: the founding of the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) in 1977; the Roundtable of Santiago of Chile in 1972 and the critical discussions of Latin-Americans on Eurocentric conceptions of museums; a movement from the early 1980s called New Museology in France, with the advent of the first ecomuseums and community museums and, mainly, with the first public cultural policies. The aforementioned events contributed to the break with hegemonic narrative building and a Eurocentric perception of museums and Museology. Museums ceased to be places where objects were kept with the aim of establishing collections and reassuring national discourses to become important objects of political claim of historically silenced groups. For the last 30 years, such movements have constantly forced Museology to seek "to understand the bonds between the Museology we practice and the experiences from the inside out of subjects and groups involved in the musealization process" (Brulon, 2019, p. 199). Musealization, understood as a "social act of production of value and creation of realities" (Brulon, 2019, p. 199), together with the *Stránskýan* way of seeing the museum as a means to an end, associated with a social function (Dolák, 2017; Brulon, 2019), has led indigenous people, at least since the 1980s in Canada and the United States, to create their own museums or claim the right to participate in the musealization process on national museums, places where hegemonic narratives still stands. Marília Cury, a Brazilian museologist, points out that these challenges and claims intensified world-wide in the 1980s. This forced museums to incorporate these claims in a reinterpretation of their collections, in the definition of public policies, and in musealization recognizing a need to assert the right to build self-narratives (Cury, 2013).

When it comes to public museums, the first experience of indigenous people in Brazil participating in these spaces, may have been the *Time and Space in Amazonas: the Wajãpi* exhibition, which opened in March 2002 at the Indian Museum in Rio de Janeiro, under the curatorship of the anthropologist Dominique Gallois. The exhibition had the participation of the Wajãpi, indigenous people from Amapá in the northern part of Brazil. On this occasion, two issues were addressed: the Wajãpi claim over the acknowledgment of their body painting, known as *kusiwa*, as Intangible Cultural Heritage both nationally and internationally, and their control over their own ritual paintings, since

some sectors in society had started to improperly appropriate these paintings for commercial use.

The practical-theoretical framework called Experimental Museology, founded before the New Museology movement, promotes, in its analysis, a “Museology committed to and open to different regimes of value” (Brulon, 2019, p. 201). It constitutes a methodology and framework of museological thinking that leads to an understanding of musealization “as a social action of value production and creation of realities as collective processes, and Museology and museums as platforms for social changes.” Seen as an empirical and interdisciplinary method resulting from Metamuseology, Experimental Museology applied in contexts of ethnographic museums can help with the process of decolonizing depictions of indigenous people in museums, transforming practices of predatory collecting, and establishing public policies aimed at the participation of indigenous people in museums.

By understanding “Museology as a science which studies not the values as they are, but their social construction” and viewing musealization in light of Experimental Museology as “the guiding principle of the museal experience” (Brulon, 2019, p. 201), this present article will analyze some important transformations in musealization processes, such as the ones formulated by Stránský (1974) regarding selection, thesaurization², and communication, including indigenous participation in Rio de Janeiro’s Indian Museum.

The Indian Museum – Tutelage, Discourse, and Musealization

The anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro officially founded the Indian Museum on April 19th, 1953. Its first site was a building in Maracanã, a neighborhood in the northern area of Rio de Janeiro, next to the famous soccer field. Its creation came from a process initiated in the Indian Protection Service (SPI),³ and it was already provided for in a decree when the Study Division (SE) was created in 1942. One of the main functions of the SE was to address the need to produce local studies about indigenous people in their own villages. SPI would be the official bureau responsible for implementing public policies, organizing

2. Thesaurization was understood by Stránský as the process of inserting an object into the documentary system of the new reality of a collection or museum (Stránský, 1974; Brulon, 2018).

3. The Indian Protection Service (SPI) was founded in 1910 by Marshal Mariano Cândido Rondon. Its original name was Indian Protection and National Worker Localization Service (SPILTN), but this was changed in 1918. The SPI project encompassed lay assistance, aiming at widening the gap between the Catholic Church and the indigenous catechism, following the republican and positivist guideline of separation between Church and State. The indigenist policy adopted would be to *civilize them*, shaping the indigenous people into national workers. In 1967, after a series of crises, the SPI gave way to the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) as the welfare organization for the Brazilian indigenous people. Information available at: <http://www.funai.gov.br/index.php/servico-de-protecao-aos-indios-spi>.

the State's "tutelage knowledge,"⁴ and producing knowledge related to the Brazilian indigenous people dispersed across the entire national territory. The Indian Museum came to be, and it is still linked to the national organization of indigenous protection up to this date.

From the indigenist policies perspective, the first years of the young Brazilian Republic faced the challenge of undertaking studies concerning the indigenous people locally. Cândido Rondon, a Positivist, was the first director of the SPI (which was called SPILTN until 1918). He was responsible for carrying out this governmental social welfare initiative, whose main objective was to care for and protect the indigenous people and to prevent them from being exterminated. The model SPI adopted in the management of indigenous people and their territories, since its foundation and under Rondon's leadership, replicated models which were first introduced during Colonial times, advanced through the Empire years, and used up to Republican times. The Jesuits had already used the same luring and pacifying techniques. These methods were updated as time went by, according to the new contact realities, and among other things, those procedures increased the value of rural properties located near the indigenous lands. These applications reflect what Pacheco de Oliveira (2014) classifies as the *paradox of tutelage*: is the tutor there to protect the indigenous people from the surrounding society or to defend broader society's interests alongside the indigenous people?

Most Brazilian ethnographic collections were assembled during the 19th century and into the first half of the 20th century. The collections comprised donations from foreign naturalists, especially to the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro, with no direct connection to any Brazilian museum. The collections were also a result of direct musealization: since the objects were donated, their selection was conducted in the field without any criteria that could serve the museum's scientific needs. The documentation was also basically non-existent. However, it is safe to assume that the entrance in which these objects arrived in museums was not small (Castro Faria, 1949; Ribeiro, 1989). It was commonplace for indigenous people to be understood as "generic entities," having their pluralities and cultural differences, if not completely ignored, then arbitrarily identified. The SPI's rationale for collecting objects at the beginning of the SE did not differ from that of other museums until they hired specialists. The specialized work, which took place after the hiring of Darcy Ribeiro as ethnologist, who would become head of SE and later would create and direct the Indian Museum, Max Boudin, linguist, in 1947, and Dulce

4. When the first government agency (SPI) for the protection of indigenous people in Brazil was created in 1910, indigenous people were understood within a legal statute that considered them as legally incapable, inspired by the positivist and evolutionist models of that period. According to Souza Lima (1995), law number 5484 sanctioned in 1928, the tutelage of the Indians by the State was guaranteed through the SPI, as a way of controlling the Indians through administrative and legal formulations. By stratifying the civil and political rights of indigenous people, the SPI and the Brazilian Government were able to maintain control over indigenous territories.

Rebello and Geraldo Pitaguary, museologists, in 1949, opened the possibility of producing specialized knowledge about indigenous people. It would aim to create public policies and adequate museological treatment of collections. The analysis of documents produced back then undoubtedly shows that the main form of object selection carried out by SPI was stimulated by some of its workers collecting indigenous objects via purchase, exchange, donation, and gifting. This led to the understanding that indigenous objects were goods. These actions took place without following any scientific criteria.

The collection of objects, conducted through the plundering of indigenous people, would also prioritize the authenticity, originality, and aesthetic categories (Couto, 2005; Ribeiro 1996/2020). Darcy Ribeiro published field notebooks regarding the collection conducted with the Ka'apor from 1949 and 1951. These notebooks are considered instructive:

Today, I started looting the indigenous artifacts. I had left this unfortunate work to the end, but I have just finished trading some pocket knives, beads, scissors, army knives, iron parts that can be used to make arrows, and other trifles they [the Ka'apor] love for dozens of arrows, many bows, and, above everything else, a lot of feathers. ... It just consoles me to know that they are going to a museum and that other adventurers had taken much more and turned them into gifts or exotic goods to be sold, giving almost nothing in return. (Ribeiro, 1996/2020, p. 264)

”

The ethnologic practice of collecting, however criticized, would give solace to the anthropologist. After all, it would turn itself into a museum collection as an inalienable good constituting itself as a research object and “existence-proofs” of cultures that needed “saving” because they were on the brink of extinction (Stocking, 1985).

The Indian Museum was the first ethnographic museum in Brazil; its founding had some similarities with models of ethnographic museums – or with those that had ethnographic collections – and it took a proactive role in collections and indigenous matters, which had been previously centralized at the National Museum. From these similarities, we highlight the explicit adoption of social and political discourses aligned to the indigenous cause and create an *unaligned* speech from other federal museums assuming the welfare and its social-political role, although this is permeated by the salvationist views prevalent in Anthropology at that time (Chagas, 2003; Couto, 2005).

To Darcy Ribeiro, the old ethnological museums were mainly responsible for the distorted way in which the general Brazilian population saw the indigenous people: as dated, *living fossils* (Ribeiro, 1955). Nonetheless, Ribeiro's viewpoint

did not raise the slightest interest on the part of the population to see them humanized. The Indian Museum sought to promote an approximation between Indians and the rest of society. The displayed objects were the mediators of realities with the indigenous material culture perceived as art created by individuals with their own cultures and evidenced by their aesthetical value, not as *savage-made* exotic artifacts. Declared by Ribeiro as “the first museum in the world created specifically to fight against prejudice” (Ribeiro, 1997, p. 195), his anthropological approach would assert that the museum was “founded to demoralize and eradicate the idea that indigenous are violent and bloodthirsty, brutal and savage, evil and cunning” (Ribeiro, 1997).

While head of the Indian Museum, Ribeiro evidenced the aesthetical value on the exhibitions he organized:

The Indian Museum allows aesthetic considerations to take precedence over purely scientific ones in its work of presentation to the general public, since its authorities are convinced that it is impracticable to teach ethnology to casual visitors. They therefore concentrate their efforts on dispelling the most common prejudices about Indians, such as the idea that they are incapable of producing any delicate work, that they are a lower form of life, that they are unsuited to civilization, or hopelessly lazy. The Museum attempts to demolish these false ideas which, by ceaseless blind repetition, finally take on a semblance of truth – to fight them, that is to say, without referring to them explicitly, but by emphasizing facts which reveal their falsity. (Ribeiro, 1955, p. 6)

”

It is easy to see the inspiration of Paul Rivet’s humanist speech adapted by Darcy Ribeiro, especially the idea to create a museum engaged in combating prejudice by indigenous people’s cultural representation through material culture, which is aesthetically analyzed. The relationships established with Georges Henri Riviére, Paul Rivet, and Alfred Métraux, with whom Ribeiro had been corresponding regularly since 1951 (Couto, 2009), would have greatly influenced the development of the humanitarian speech, promoting the aesthetic factor over the scientific one. The letters exchanged with Geraldo Pitaguary, a museologist at the Indian Museum during his internship under the tutelage of Riviére, and Rivet also played a key role: Couto (2009) states that Pitaguary provided Darcy Ribeiro with information regarding museography and museological communications used by the Museum of Man in Paris. The museum’s educational proposition, in a language that could be easily understood by everyone and thus ceasing to be an “elite privilege” (Rivet, 1937, as cited in Conklin, 2013), was at the core of Paul Rivet’s Museology. It aimed at an “ethnology for the masses” (Conklin, 2013). The declared objective Rivet had in mind was, in his own

words, the creation of a “great popular education establishment as well as to scientific research” (Rivet, 1937, as cited in Conklin, 2013, p. 105). His objective did not stray far from the ones already adopted by the SE for the embryonic ethnographic museum. Brulon points out that the museographic language Rivet and Rivière adopted was “predominantly belonging to art museums” (Brulon, 2012, p. 104), rebutting the ethnographic approach because there would be some “hardships in highlighting the aesthetical aspects in the works” (Brulon, 2012, p. 104). These aspects greatly influenced Ribeiro’s museologic discourse. The alleged “museal imagination” (Chagas, 2003) of the anthropologist in the Indian Museum exhibitions discourses did not open or create anything new on the international scene. Ribeiro museological adapts, in his own fashion, the museums’ way of thinking and Museology concerning the indigenous people. He does so starting with established ideas already practiced in Europe. These ideas were aligned with the post-war mood and inside a broader project with a universalist character led by UNESCO.

Transforming the Museological Process: The *Time and Space in Amazonas: The Wajãpi Exhibit* and the Indigenous Participation

The Indian Museum’s historical developments illuminate many difficulties and complex processes. In 1978, the Indian Museum relocated its headquarters to a settlement in an old 19th-century manor in Botafogo, a neighborhood in the southern area of Rio de Janeiro. The building was donated by the Brazilian government, and it lacked the adequate infrastructure to house a museum. This manor, which still houses the museum, located at 55, Rua das Palmeiras, has been through a series of renovations and adaptations throughout the years to hold and exhibit over 20 thousand items. They are currently part of its collection of the material culture of Brazilian indigenous people. Apart from holding an extensive archive and image collection that reflect the story of Brazil’s indigenous people, the museum also preserves important documents related to the land demarcation of indigenous areas throughout the country.

Some of the key changes inaugurated by the Indian Museum in the early 2000s lie in the relationship change amongst the institution and indigenous people in a more direct way. That shift started to substantially affect the musealization of indigenous cultures and how they are represented. From this moment on, the indigenous people became closer and more involved in the interpretation of the exhibits and the process of the acquisition of collections. The institutional process of indigenous participation in the Indian Museum, which had been developed since the mid-1980s, happened in partnership with Claudia Menezes, the director of the museum. She invited the Indians to specific events inside the museum that focused on educational activities and, on her initiative, on photographic and audiovisual exhibits, which were used as a cultural revitalization resource and as an instrument of support for indigenous causes (Menezes, 1989). In 1990, contrary to the optimistic situation in the second

half of the 1980s, the Indian Museum would undergo its most intense crisis. The Indian Museum's resources were scarce, services were paralyzed, and buildings were in a terrible condition (Levinho, 2000). Gradually, the museum would recover through a series of reforms and, at the beginning of the 2000s, changes were made that would usher in a new curatorial practice in the Indian Museum. There were modifications in the way exhibits and collection policies were conceived, forming a partnership system. The museum would support projects with specialists that dealt directly with indigenous people, involving indigenous people in the museal processes (Abreu, 2007; Couto, 2012).

The *Time and Space in Amazônia: the Wajãpi* exhibition, under the curatorship of Dominique Gallois, opened on March 22nd, 2002. It was the first exhibition in this new format. The Wajãpi inhabit the northern part of Amapá and French Guiana. The objects produced for the exhibition were made at a distance, following what was requested by the museum and the curator. But the Wajãpi people came to the museum, built a traditional Wajãpi house at the museum's garden and validate the exhibition assembly. This exhibition had the effective participation of 13 tribes that composed the Wajãpi Council (APINA). They produced over 300 objects (Abreu, 2007) which were purchased by the museum. This action placed the indigenous people in an object market, establishing, thus, a new relationship between the museum and the indigenous producers.

The indigenous object would then invite less predatory cultural transactions. The acknowledgment of indigenous people as agents active in the market financially benefits the tribes. It also establishes more equal mercantile relationships, which allows direct deals and negotiations in a live chain – previously invisible – of musealization (Brulon & Guedes, 2019). Before being properly stored, all items went through a cataloging stage. The objects that were produced arrived at the museum with supporting documentation provided by the Wajãpi producers. In this process, the indigenous knowledge about objects is indispensable to their musealization because all collections directly acquired from the ethnic groups involved are already authenticated. This means that every object comes with its complete information, such as raw material, techniques involved, social function, and the craftsman who produced it. The musealization ritual begins to connect shared knowledge and different experiences to the museum's object. Shared museality is linked to the value of the information preserved by those who had produced and exchanged it (Brulon & Guedes, 2019), inverting the *ethos* of power in the value and meanings attributed by anthropologists, museologists, and curators. With an active role, the indigenous people worked together with museologists and the other staff at the Indian Museum, giving their opinions, coordinating the installation of the exhibition, and establishing what was and was not allowed, according to their beliefs. The intercultural dialogue established allowed the Wajãpi to create self-narratives of their own cultures, obeying their ritual and aesthetical values. Some facts regarding the participation and decision-making of the Wajãpi during the assembly of the exhibition can be highlighted. First, they forbade the display

of images of already deceased people. They did this because it would be harmful to their spirits. On another occasion, the organization placed some long sticks to “support the sky.” The Wajãpi women then instructed the painting of a big red circle around the sticks. Without this, the sticks would do little to “hold the world above” (Abreu, 2007). Museologists and the other staff accepted the Wajãpi’s requirements.

According to João Pacheco de Oliveira,

It is not possible to understand the presence of Indians in national and contemporary history without exercising radical criticism and contesting these narratives, highlighting their inefficiency as descriptive and analytical instruments, and deconstructing the political and ideological theories in which they find support. (2009, p. 11, as cited in Freire, 2016, p. 37)

”

Colonialism situates indigenous societies in an estranged rhetoric from the remainder of national society, and museums reflect this process in a-historical and evolutionists representations (Roca, 2008) reproducing images that favor the building of a “generic indigenous,” during the 20th century, characterized as indigenous representations from the 16th-century invasions, frozen in time. It is necessary that museums, especially the ethnographic ones, critique indigenous assessment and representations and their roles in the building of alterities (Roca, 2008). They should also make an effort to revisit and update the musealization processes, starting with object selection and collection, going through the documenting stage until reaching museological communication, and avoiding predatory and colonial practices. This would guarantee indigenous people their right to self-narrative and representation control.

It is mainly this concern that has allowed the Indian Museum to establish a dialogue with the most diverse ethnic groups and to place itself as a service provider to the indigenous people when it comes to their partnerships with professionals and institutions. The Wajãpi exhibition introduced a new form to include the indigenous people in ethnographic museums and intercultural negotiations. Before 2016, the museum developed two other long-term⁵ exhibitions and several that were short-term. The museum has also supported initiatives that came straight from the indigenous people. The aforementioned projects followed the policy of the museum “responsible for the protection of indigenous heritage, and act by providing support to projects that are developed in this way” (Couto, 2012). During the exhibition period with the Wajãpi, the

5. *The Presence of the Invisible: Daily Life and Ritual Among the Indigenous people from Oiapoque*, curated by Lux Vidal, opened in 2008, and *On The Way To The Beads*, curated by Els Lagrou, inaugurated in 2015.

Indian Museum was also fundamental to the acknowledgment of Wajãpi graphic patterns, the *kusiwa*, which were designated as the first Intangible Cultural Heritage in Brazil: first, in Brazil, in December 2002; then, internationally, in 2003, as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. The Indian Museum worked with the indigenous people through the APINA, the Ministry of Culture, and other partnering institutions, in the production of the documents necessary to UNESCO's application process.

Ames (1999) points out that the words “partnership” and “collaboration” have become popular in museums to describe the work produced with indigenous people. However, it is common for such terms to function as “museal marketing” in museums where museological models are not actually revised to achieve complete collaboration with partners whose agendas are not the same. To James Clifford (1997), the real engagement in the political agendas of exhibits planning are the means through which museums will be able to abandon paternalism and a history of exclusion and condescension. There is no instruction manual to be followed to decolonize museums and partnering establishments that guarantees the effective participation of indigenous groups in the musealization processes and their rights to control the representation of their cultures. However, institutions need to make an effort to achieve this goal. Clifford (1997) states that collaborative efforts in museums are never easily done and they start from disputes, claims, and negotiations between the social groups and the State and museums. According to Ames,

They want out of the boxes, they want their materials back, and they want control over their own history and its interpretation, whether the vehicles of expression be museum exhibits, classroom discourses, or scholarly papers, textbooks, and monographs. (Ames, 1992, p. 140)

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Although previously a place of colonial encounters where geographical and/or historical perspectives established unequal relationships, the museum, in this perspective, should work to reduce disparities in power relations and develop reciprocal arrangements (Ames, 1992, p. 140). Decolonizing the museum and transforming it into “contact zones,” especially ethnographic museums, involves including the indigenous people (and other historically undervalued groups) in every musealization process, and in the work mentality of professionals, followed by profound structural changes in the institutions responsible for the safekeeping and exhibition of the collections. This also involves strengthening public policies to make sure that indigenous people participate, not only the creation and maintenance of indigenous and community museums, but also in organizing exhibitions and collection acquisition. In this way, predatory practices are avoided from the beginning of the musealization process during

fieldwork. Contact zones help to avoid situations that may lead to contextualization and information gaps in the documenting stages, the creation of distorted narratives in museological communication, and in the derogatory way the market acts in the so-called “primitive arts” (Brulon & Maranda, 2017).

Museology should not come from museums, but it should produce knowledge from the processes that are part of the musealization, which then act as a theoretical base for practical work. However, without analyzing museological practices, there is no justifying or validating of theories. It does not assert the dynamic character of musealization. Without a practical-theoretical articulation, as a “reflexive museology,” proposed by Stránský (1974), that creates some sort of *feedback cycle* capable to affect both theory and practice, the musealization would be a sterile theory, abandoning its creative force identified from a social need. It is paramount, from where we stand, to think of the theory connected to practices, even if distant from museal spaces: firstly, by thinking in a Metamuseology way that does not offer a mismatch between practice and theory: secondly, to evaluate if the work methods are functional and, if not, contribute possible methodologies to Museology. In this sense, I believe that ethnographic museums position themselves as exceptional spaces in these analyses: real methodological “laboratories” of even more complex relationships between different value attributions of what comes to be the museality of the immense cultural diversity on the planet. One can assume it is through musealization, and its constitutive procedures, that museality as a document value of museum objects becomes possible (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2010/2013). In the context of ethnographic museums, where there is a constant debate over the invested meanings to cultural references, these procedures produce regimes of unpredictable value inherent to the groups that started to act in their own self-musealization (Brulon, 2019). In this sense, experimental Museology would define itself as the proper methodology to these analyses, since its premise is to take into account museal arrangements that stray from the traditionally instituted forms, and to stimulate museological theories and practices that should act to bring indigenous people, and other narratives and ways of life that have been politically and historically suppressed, out of symbolic exile.

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