

Desire for memory, desire for museums: the experience of the Memory Hotspots

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PRESENTATION

Considering the principles of the National Museum Policy, created in 2003, the Brazilian Museums Institute – Ibram supports and encourages the development of museum practices and processes aimed at rewriting the history of social groups which were deprived of the right to narrate and exhibit their memories and their heritage. As effective action, in 2008, the Department of Museums and Cultural Centres (Demu/Iphan) – which gave rise to Ibram in January 2009 – started the Memory Hotspots Programme, with the main goal of fostering wide popular participation in matters related to social memory and museums.

The Memory Hotspots Programme was inspired in and directly influenced by the Ministry of Culture/MinC, which created the *National Programme for Culture, Education and Citizenship (Living Culture)*. The purpose of this Programme is to contribute to make society conquer spaces, exchange experiences and develop initiatives that foster culture and citizenship, in a proactive manner. The partnership struck between civil society and the state power gave rise to *Culture Hotspots*, inspired in the anthropological “do-in” concept, idealized by the then Minister Gilberto Gil.

In other words, Gil set out to massage vital points in the country’s cultural body which lay dormant or were momentarily neglected by public policies. From this point of view, Memory Hotspots are the projects and actions of the Culture Hotspots

Programme directed towards the permanent construction of the memory of communities and various groups of civil society. From the influence of Culture Hotspots, Ibram has been developing its own methodology for Memory Hotspots. Memory initiatives are identified while still in early stages of development and thus the Programme contributes by establishing practices, encouraging the sharing of experiences, fostering qualification and network exchanges, besides providing support for the construction of the participative inventory of community heritage.

The sustainable action approach is also part of the development methodology for the Memory Hotspots. To this end, it is crucial that initiatives foster local knowledge and know-how, by means of museum actions, as a way of integrating the local development framework. Besides, at a later stage in their development, it is estimated that Memory Hotspots may even, if they so wish, apply for public financing bids, both national and international.

The Memory Hotspots Programme is also inspired in contemporary actions, set up from a social museology perspective, which Ibram considers to be *political will for memory*. Political, because the right to memory needs to be earned, maintained and exercised as citizenship right; a right which needs to be democratized and disseminated among the different social groups in Brazil. In this sense, the growing demand for more museums expresses every citizen's right to the means of production for memory, to the processes used in manufacturing, creating and safeguarding memory supports. It is not enough to ensure access to museums already in existence. Furthermore, access to museums is not necessarily proportional to the right to memory, since, by operating with memory, museums also deal with forgetting, with memory selection.

It is necessary to abandon the naïve view which sees memory as an asset in itself. It does not express truth, it does not constitute scientific knowledge, and it can be used as much for imprisoning and enslaving as for liberating. In the same way, museums can be at the service of the historic

narratives of dominant groups and of the forgetting of popular struggles. They can be instruments used to enhance multiple discourses and social transformation.

Based on this introduction, the paper now presents the foundations of Memory Hotspots, with an overview of their development, progress, hardships and proposals for consolidating this memory policy.

EVERY HOTSPOT IS A HOTSPOT

The Memory Hotspots Programme is constituted by a group of actions set up by Ibram, based on social museology. Using a methodology that can be considered pioneering in the area of public policies for the development of memory initiatives, it fosters museum processes that represent the local interests of historically forgotten social groups. The initiative also has the partnership of the Ministry of Justice, through the National Programme for Safety with Citizenship (Pronasci) and the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI).

Memory Hotspots aim to promote an attitude of social transformation through knowledge, the affirmation of belonging and recognition of the identities present in the communities. This set of actions can only be carried out effectively by those that are part of these communities. Therefore, the work methodology for the project, as was mentioned above, involves identifying memory actions in the work of building a critical reflection on the priority issues for the communities, thus, by means of debates and exchanges, enabling these Hotspots, future museums, to be based on supportive and participating management.

At present, Ibram follows the development of 12 (twelve) Memory Hotspots. These are experiments based in different cities in the country's five regions: Museu de Favela [Shanty Town Museum], in Pavão-Pavãozinho and Cantagalo, Rio de Janeiro (RJ); Taquaril, in Belo Horizonte (MG); Brasilândia, in São Paulo (SP); in São Pedro, Vitória (ES); in Lomba do Pinheiro, Porto Alegre (RS); in Museu de Periferia [Suburbs Museum], in Sítio Cercado, Curitiba (PR); Estrutural

in Brasília (DF); in Museu do Manguê do Coque, in Recife (PE); Grande Bom Jardim, in Fortaleza (CE); Jacintinho in Maceió (AL); in Beiru, in Salvador (BA) and in Terra Firme, Belém (PA).



Launch of Museu de Favela (Pavão-Pavãozinho and Cantagalo, RJ), in 2008.

Besides these Hotspots, Ibram has been undertaking the commitment to provide technical assistance to the development of other initiatives throughout the country, especially regarding action methodology and the qualification offered to those who become a part of the project. This commitment ensures that the total amount of 12 (twelve) Hotspots can be reached, aiming for work which is inaugural, but which is understood as continuous, comprehensive and is intended as State policy.

The concepts present in the theoretical framework are directly connected to a world vision which integrates participation as a crucial element in forging strong links between the parties involved in the work. According to Juan Bordenave (2002), the word participation, in the format

considered for the Programme, is associated with the phrase *take part*, in the sense of sharing ideas as well as actions and results, this joint work being an association of parts united by a common feeling.

The principle of participative work methodology derives from some fundamental premises based on the respect for the local cultural precepts, particularly aspirations regarding quality of life, according to the understanding of its inhabitants with a view to reinforcing their identity. The dialogic relation and the promotion of autonomy are also among the precepts of participative methodology, since work is not carried out by groups that are foreign to their conception, but rather by individuals privy to the foundational concepts of the project, which is methodologically inspired in critical pedagogy, with a view to social transformation.

METHODOLOGY

Work methodology with the Memory Hotspots takes the following stages:

- ✓ 1) Community Identification and Awareness-raising Strategies
- ✓ 2) Exchange between Memory Hotspots (network coordination)
- ✓ 3) Constitution of Deliberating Instances
- ✓ 4) Qualification workshops
- ✓ 5) Preparation of the Action Plan (for the development of Participative Inventory and Dissemination Products)
- ✓ 6) Preparation of the Participative Inventory
- ✓ 7) Development of Dissemination Product
- ✓ 8) Inaugural session of the Memory Hotspot
- ✓ 9) Sustainability Strategies

Next, we will detail these methodological stages, emphasising the most significant aspects of the process.

COMMUNITY IDENTIFICATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING STRATEGIES:

This stage began with a survey of the communities, following the orientation of Pronasci¹. Faced with the need to pinpoint 12 different instances of will for memory, the technical team sought, in most cases, to converse with institutions and people who already had some form of exchange with the community in question. By way of example we may mention the Terra Firme district, which for 25 years has been carrying out joint initiatives with Museu Parense Emilio Goledi.

Strategically, this first contact should be mediated so that the technical team is not treated with suspicion and discredit. Because it influences the methodological options, at the beginning of the project a feature which marks it has so far become quite evident, namely: the need to establish a bond of trust in the traditional manner, in other words, based on the pledged word. This is tied to three essential aspects:

a) This being a pioneering project in the field of memory and museums in Brazil, there are few instances to be used for reference²;

¹ Pronasci, within the scope of the Ministry of Justice, indicated some communities, using as standard the high level of local violence. This strategy was adopted by the team concerning the indications of the Project's partner. However, we do not share this position and believe that the factor to be prioritized by the project in the choice of place should be strictly the will for memory and the will for a museum.

² In this case, we resort to Museu da Maré [Maré Museum] (Maré-RJ) as the reference for a museum that arose from the will for memory of a suburban community. But the case of the Maré Museum is not used as a standard, because memory hotspots are encouraged to develop museums suited to their conditions. Besides, although reference to the Maré Museum recurs, its construction was not the result of a Programme such as those that are ongoing with the 12 memory Hotspots. For this reason, too, it is different, and the possibility of referencing it in the process of raising awareness is also limited.

b) Ill-fated public policies have negatively marked the groups in the past, leaving them with reservations regarding public power;

c) The broad path of combativeness on part of these groups led, in some cases, to the development of action and resistance strategies. Therefore, the external suggestion of new methodologies is seen with restraints.

Once this initial survey stage was over, a series of meetings, visits and conversations was carried out with the community. The approach followed the pace of internal negotiations among inhabitants and also the specificities of each local experience. During these meetings, the technical team introduced Ibram's proposal and the Memory Hotspots Programme. Last but not least, information was gathered regarding each community's training history. Leaders shared their expectations and apprehensions regarding the project aimed at enhancing their memories.

EXCHANGE BETWEEN MEMORY HOTSPOTS (NETWORK COORDINATION)

For the development of this stage, it was proposed that a broad exchange meeting be held. Referring to the Web of Culture, which gathers all Culture Hotspots, the broad meeting of Memory Hotspots was called *Web of Memory*. This was the beginning of the harmonization of Memory Hotspots in the network, fostering recognition among initiatives, as attested by the words of Leila Regina da Silva, of Taquaril:

We went to Teia [*the Web meeting*] so that we could heed the methodology of the Programme more (...) The community doings we already do in everyday life, with great difficulty, but we do them,

but about the memory, the museum, there was still a bit missing...

(...) When we joined Teia, what impressed us most was the contact with the other Hotspots, (be)cause we related to the struggles... which had a guiding line, the fight for a home... When the photos were shown like this in the exhibitions of the Memory Hotspots... "is this our staircase, is this our street?" We recognized ourselves... Those who went to Teia were delighted and when we came back to the community...

because we realized that we were going in the name of the community, then we had the commitment of giving the community that feedback...³

All Memory Hotspots gathered in Salvador (BA) to hold the 1st Meeting of the Web of Memory. The event enabled Ibram and its partner institutions to formally introduce themselves to the memory hotspots, giving an institutional body to the set of initiatives that had been started. Thus this was followed by the presentation of the Memory Hotspots Programme, and the sharing of experience between the Hotspots, by methodological debates and, among other things, the establishment of timelines and strategies for strengthening and consolidating the Memory Hotspots.

The results of the Web of Memory varied. As a landmark of the awareness stage of the Programme, it became clear that from then on the groups were more open to Ibram's methodological proposal. Besides, sharing experiences among the 12 initiatives gave rise to the harmonization of the network, as was expected. Definitely, the Memory Hotspots Programme started to represent a commitment undertaken by those who participated in the Web.

³ Leila Regina da Silva in an interview given to Inês Gouveia and Sara Schuabb for the Memory Hotspots Programme. Brasília, 13 July 2010.



Introduction of the chairman of the Memory Hotspot
 Museu de Favela – MUF [Shanty Town Museum] (Pavão-
 Pavãozinho and Cantagalo- RJ), Carlos Esquivel, a.k.a.
 ACME.

*Perspectiva prá favela se tornar uma cidadela, Muf
 Prá agregar e acabar com todas as panelas, Muf
É galeria a céu aberto, no beco e na viela, Muf
 Prá envolver, prá vender, receber a clientela, Muf...*⁴

We must stress here that the Web of Memory is inspired by the Web of Culture, of the Culture Hotspots. There is the tacit understanding that, in the network movement, the initiatives become stronger as the whole is also strengthened, in a retro-feed movement. Thus, from the beginning there has been the perspective that memory hotspots should come to integrate *the great Web*, in other words, the Web of Culture. The decisive step in this direction took place between 26 and 28 March, in Fortaleza – CE, when the 2nd Web of Memory Meeting took place. The gathering integrated the programme of the Web of Culture 2010 – Digital Drums. The Fortaleza

⁴ Chorus of the MUF anthem; Rap composed by: Acme and Aline; sung by: Acme. Translation: “*Perspective for the shanty town to become a citadel, Muf / To bring together and put an end to all pies, Muf / It’s an open-sky gallery, in the cul-de-sac and in the alley, Muf / To involve, to sell, to welcome the clients, Muf...*”

meeting gave memory hotspots a unique opportunity to understand one another within the Web. Again there was huge sharing of experiences, this time enhanced by the participation of over 2,000 culture hotspots.

From the point of view of Ibram's institutional project, Teia Brasil 2010 [Brazil Web 2010] was a crucial moment to celebrate the partnership between the Memory Hotspots Programme and the Living Culture Programme, of the MinC, because, from the Institute's perspective, it is crucial to strengthen the basis of this national memory project. Besides, the development of the Memory Hotspots Programme cannot do without the consolidation of a State policy which acknowledges memory as a political right.



Coordinator of Ibram's Centre for Social Museology, Cláudia Rose, at the meeting held during Brazil Web 2010.

CONSTITUTION OF DELIBERATING INSTANCES

In the context of methodology, once again the meeting enabled the collective preparation of initiatives to be developed. To this end, the focus was placed on the

constitution of the deliberating instances for each of the 12 hotspots. This group of people would thus become responsible for representing the Programme in their town, as well as for the implementation and/or coordination of the next initiatives to be proposed by Ibram.

The strategy used by Ibram had two quite clear objectives at that moment: to foster the formalization of the group who had been leading each of the Memory Hotspots, preventing the excessive taking-of-turn of the players; to seek to once again ensure the legitimacy of the group. The issue of legitimacy, vital in the methodology of Memory Hotspot, would be reinforced by the constitution of the deliberating instance, created during a seminar where the group would be elected, or chosen, preferably with the presence of Ibram to oversee the activities.



Plenary Session: Representatives of Memory Hotspots.

Respecting each hotspot's organization and flow, Ibram left each town in charge of arranging the date of the seminars, the format of the deliberating instances, the number of members and also the methodology used to form the group – in other words, whether by election, indication or any other format of their liking.

Until August 2010, all the memory hotspots had already mobilized to constitute their deliberating instances. At the same time, the groups also started putting together their own internal regulations, which also assisted the institutionalization strategy.



Logo created by the community

QUALIFICATION WORKSHOPS

One of the more important pillars of the Memory Hotspots Programme is qualification. This is a differentiating element as regards public policy, since, once the actions that express the will for memory are identified, one of Ibram's pledges is to provide technical support so that the leaders of the initiatives in memory hotspots can be autonomous agents of their development, using the museum as a tool to promote their identities. The experience to implement these workshops comes from Ibram's practical action, from the Training and Education in Museology Programme, which offers various qualification workshops throughout Brazil.

To start the qualification programme, it was agreed during the March meeting in Fortaleza that there would be a common core, of 3 (three) indispensable workshops. Below, we present the subjects and their summarized syllabi:

- **Museum, Memory and Citizenship**

Concept: What is Memory, Social Memory, Museum. Short historic overview of Museology in Brazil. Museums, social movements and citizenship; special emphasis on social museology. Museum experiences based on New Museology. Creation of a public policy for memory and museums: National Museums Policy, Museums Systems, Museum Statutes and the Brazilian Museums Institute.

- **Participative Inventory**

Concepts: inventory, participation. The importance of the inventory. Inventory methodologies. Inventory and memory: what must be preserved. Power relations, conflicts and participation in inventory. Methodology of participative inventory.

- **Project preparation**

Concepts: Plan, Planning and Project. The importance of planning and methodology. Analysis of projects and programmes within the scope of Culture, Memory and Museums. Stages in project preparation. Legal procedures to implement a work plan. Project evaluation. Accountability.

The qualification stage started with the workshop entitled *Museum, Memory and Citizenship*. It is possible to see that, having participated in qualification, the memory hotspot started to appropriate museum themes, contents, concepts and know-how. Élcio Aparecido de Souza, member of the deliberating instance of Brasilândia Memory Hotspot (SP) made the following comment about the workshop:

...after the workshop, I began thinking that the museum, it comes undone in the way it was, then I make an analogy with the anti-madhouse fight, when you take madness from a restricted space

and spread it across society, right? (...) The memory had a closed version, finished, locked-up, and then we are given that responsibility. Then we have to invent a new way of thinking about democratic memory, which is the new way of thinking of madness, as our madness, as our memory.

(...)

The best thing I found in the first workshop was that it enabled all the participants to have a unique language, a unique vision of the process, not a homogenous one, but like “Know the process you’re getting into”, that gives you more grounds for discussions, right? To have better-founded discussions.⁵

FOLLOWING STAGES:

The next step in the methodology is to prepare an Action Plan to make a participative inventory. This is a tool to implement the following stages. Each of the Hotspots must, in this case, deepen the discussion on the profile of museum that it wants to be. Besides, in a practical manner, by means of the **Action Plan**, the Hotspots will plan how their collection – identified in the development of the **Participative Inventory** – will be worked as a **Dissemination Product**. This **Product** will be chosen by each community, and it can be an exhibition, a book, a medium, a film, a website, among others. In this way, when the **Dissemination Products** are launched, there will be an **Inaugural Session** in each Memory Hotspot, a landmark in the museums’ launch.

In the context of the Memory Hotspots Programme, the focus on sustainability exists from the initial stage of raising awareness to the experiences. Nevertheless, in the context of the development at the base, it will be from the **Inaugural**

⁵ Élcio Aparecido de Souza. Interview given to Inês Gouveia and Sara Schuabb for the Memory Hotspots Programme. Brasília, 13 July 2010.

Session onwards that the **Sustainability Strategies** will become a strong part of their actions.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The experience of developing the Memory Hotspots Programme is linked to Ibram's project, as one of the main agents of national museology. This was seminaly manifest in 2003, in the National Museums Policy. The broadening of the museum field in Brazil in this context involves acknowledging plural memories, traditionally marginalized. Besides, this is a nation-wide project, closely related to the more general initiatives of the Ministry of Culture, stemming from the perception that local cultural manifestations must not be suppressed.

Strengthening local identities, something that is directly related to memory, is a vital condition to solidify stable social relations, from all perspectives, cultural, economic, political, in short, related to citizenship. Besides, memory is indispensable to create futures. Creating futures is, somehow, to open up paths for evolution, for transformation. It is because Ibram believes in the transforming power of memory and museums that it has been supporting and investing in the development and broadening of the Memory Hotspots Programme.

To a large extent, and considering everything one wants to implement, Memory Hotspots are still in their early stages of implementation. In the meantime, even if there is lack of data for a deeper analysis, one must emphasise that the stages have already had a positive effect, namely: telling stories (or memories) has been resumed. This happened because, as they gather for periodic meetings, with or without the presence of Ibram's technical team, the elements of the memory hotspots encourage various spontaneous memory circles, where the *founding myths* of the communities are told and retold. Fights, conquests, festivals, dances, dates, photos, houses,... are remembered.

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TESTIMONIES

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