



Memories of pain: The Sensitive Heritage of the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to reflect on the creation of new digital memorials and obituaries to preserve and tell the story of people who were victims of the coronavirus, and the political and cultural aspects of these projects of patrimonialization of mourning.

Keywords: pandemic, memory, technology.

Resumo: Este artigo objetiva refletir sobre a criação dos novos memoriais e obituários digitais para preservar e contar a história das pessoas que foram vítimas do coronavírus e os aspectos políticos e culturais desses projetos de patrimonialização do luto.

Palavras-chave: pandemia, memória, tecnologia.

Resumen: Este artículo pretende reflexionar sobre la creación de nuevos memoriales y obituarios digitales para preservar y contar las historias de las víctimas del coronavirus y los aspectos políticos y culturales de estos proyectos patrimoniales.

Palabras-clave: pandemia, memoria, tecnología.

Introduction

In an editorial published in the prestigious journal *New Left Review*, Susan Watkins (2020) asked us about the political consequences of the coronavirus crisis and how we can

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outline a future, offer an alternative, warning that the pandemic has exposed the demagoguery and incompetence of populists. For Watkins, reflecting historically on the impacts of the pandemic means also thinking about the ways in which we position ourselves within it.

This is, therefore, a device-article, a strategy, an attempt to position myself in the midst of the chaos and the countless transformations and accelerations that the pandemic has caused, stimulated or induced. More specifically, I want to think about how intellectuals, museologists, anthropologists and curators who work with memory are reacting (or may react) in the face of the exponential increase in deaths caused by the virus and the political ineffectiveness in managing the pandemic, from the point of view of dealing with the memories of this generation and how to narrate the sensitive heritage of pain and mourning.

Strictly speaking, this is not a work on the concept of memory or on which memories deserve to be 'preserved' as in the old and still present colonial museums and libraries built by great fortunes heirs of the legacy of coloniality. My intention is to reflect on the processes and actors that intervene in the work of constitution and fabrication of memories crossed by the constitutive singularities of a pandemic on a global scale.

Far from exhausting the reflection on the interfaces between memory, anthropology and biopolitics, my idea is to propose a set of analytical tools to understand the dispute over memories and the ways in which institutions and places of memory or even the nascent "museums of the pandemic" are proposing to tell, expose, narrate, recreate the history and legacy of populations victimized by the pandemic and how this sensitive heritage of pain and mourning can serve as an arena of political and cultural struggle.

Talking about the memories and stories of people tragically victimized by the coronavirus seems to fit into what Rancière (2009)² called the sharing of the sensitive and which, in the field of museology reflections, we also call "sensitive heritage", that is, an ethical way of dealing with the memories of those who have been subjected to irreparable pain and loss, traumatic and painful events.

This is also a manifesto-text to make intelligible the sensitive experience of memorializing the mourning of a time. Patrimonialize the *ethos* of death. Remember and

² RANCIERE, Jacques. A partilha do sensível: estética e política, Editora 34, 2009.

understand our individual and collective pains and losses, especially when these pains result in the sensitive heritage of an era. For us, intellectuals and managers of memory and heritage, it will be necessary to respect the originality of suffering without appeasing it, as Didi-Huberman (2015) recalls.

We know that all memory is an object of permanent negotiation. Every historical memory is an arena, a *locus* of political disputes and multiple agendas, given all the discussion around memories that deserve to be told or not. Thinking about these 'places of memory' when we deal with memorials to honor, remember victims of a pandemic, requires from us an exercise and a commitment to understand the mechanisms through which socio-technical and museum devices have been produced to avoid erasing and silencing these stories.

Pandemic Singularities

Anthropologist Jean Segata (2020) has warned us that outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics are not just a portrait of epidemiological trends, but need to be read as critical events that expose structures of suffering, injustice and inequality. According to the author, these events

reorder relationships and moralities and also produce subjects, subjectivities and new policies of coexistence. We have been experiencing this with the new coronavirus. He has highlighted the many faces and the many costs of what Bruno Latour (2020) called “a profound mutation in our relationship with the world”. It is not just about the overwhelming sharpness of the disease that the virus can cause, the COVID-19. This is how the pandemic highlights many layers of vulnerability. They accumulate in situations of inequality of access to health and social protection services. In the weakening of self-care and collective care in the face of countless socioeconomic problems, such as the precariousness of work and unemployment. (SEGATA, 2020, p. 277)

When, in January 2020, the news that a virus in China was causing deaths from respiratory syndrome, on this side of the ocean, we were breathing a politically dense air and a haze obscured our horizon in a country that had just emerged from a coup that deposed a democratically elected president in 2016 and that had entered the second year of government of a group that continued to announce the dismantling of the State and public policies of social promotion and economic ascension for C and D classes.

The scenario, therefore, was not favorable for facing a pandemic – we were still looking for ways to contain the Zika, Dengue and Chikungunya epidemics that caused widespread damage in the poorest parts of the population, problems with fetal malformation in countless children and resulting deaths of a combo that added up the lack of investments in the public health network, the dismantling of programs such as Mais Médicos, popular pharmacy and the progressive dehydration of income transfer programs initiated in previous governments.

Anthropologist Debora Diniz (2020) has said that the coronavirus pandemic seems like *an update of the classes of Michel Foucault on biopolitics, security and territories*. Governments produce regimes of control and surveillance of bodies in the name of 'politics of life', that is, they articulate and elaborate sophisticated ways of defining who lives and who dies amidst the explosion of a health crisis of epic proportions.

In the case of epidemics and pandemics, there are epidemiological, cultural and political singularities that go beyond microbiological issues. It is increasingly about discussing the biopolitical heritage of the country and its legacies for future generations, rather than finding out which conspiracy theory is right about the origin of the virus.

So it was with the Zika virus epidemic. With Zika, however, the global panic was mild, as it was soon understood that the risk to the disease was confined to tropical countries. And why the rapid silencing on Zika? Because all biopolitics becomes necropolitics when inequality regimes determine which bodies live the risk. (DINIZ, 2020, s/p)³

And these regimes of inequality assert themselves daily in a country that is used to registering deaths of black and brown populations with the same casualness with which it treats the advertising appeals on the agendas of the newspapers. In addition to the statistical findings that prison institutions and the punitive system put a target on our backs, the pandemic has accelerated, deepened and revealed the unequal treatment given to the different strata of Brazilian society.

It is not just about being able or not being able to afford a private health plan. It is about a complex system, set up as an arena, in which official, unofficial, journalistic and academic narratives vie for a place in the sun for the right to say how to face and fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

³ DINIZ, D. A necropolítica das epidemias. **El País**. Available at: <https://brasil.elpais.com/opinion/2020-03-09/a-necropolitica-das-epidemias.html>. **Accessed on:** Mar. 09, 2020.

There are many ways in which we have tried to apprehend the contemporary scene. Epidemics are no longer a problem for epidemiologists and public health professionals and have become an analytical key to understanding the society in which we live. Anthropologists, historians, philosophers have been trying exhaustively to respond to the political and epistemological challenges that a health crisis of this proportion poses to us.

The pandemic has also given rise to a set of categories and ways of interpreting reality that challenge the premises of anthropology, forcing us to create new epistemological cartographies and ethnographic devices to apprehend its schemes of dissemination, contagion, and its impacts in different fields of social life.

In this very lexicon, words like horizon and utopia have definitely fallen into disuse due to absolute collapse of civilization. If restrictive measures have not worked as expected to prevent the spread, the advancement of contagion, unfortunately, the belief of part of the population in science and in the role of institutions of the highest seriousness - Fiocruz, Butantã, public universities and their research centers - is declining, whose credibility has been challenged by a denialist government and thrown into one of the many graves of this country, opened to bury bodies, projects, stories and dreams waiting for a national immunization plan that never comes.

Expressions such as sanitary leviathan, funerary collapse, epidemiological legacy, sanitary apartheid, necro-leachate, epidemic intelligences, containment measures, lockdown, herd immunization, gain airs of “normality” at a time when people got used to the *ethos* of death and counting human losses as another 'journalism block' in the daily agendas of the television market, while trying to understand the graphics of the greatest health and political tragedy that this country has ever witnessed.

Since colonial times, prospecting and suppressing epidemics has constituted a well-elaborated technology of government, what anthropologist J. Segata called 'mosquito-centric', a narrative used to sustain discourses and practices of state control, surveillance and rigging.

A narrative was produced, along with a lexicon of this phenomenon, assuming the universality of the virus - due to its contagion mechanism - with the standardization of its effects and symptoms, producing a kind of guide to local knowledge on responses to the coronavirus, despite what I previously called 'epidemic singularities'. According to Segata (2020), when a disease like COVID-19 spreads, it takes its science and techniques with it.

It transposes local metrics, statistics and actions, and this can lead to numerous misunderstandings. Numbers may be universal, but the phenomena and experiences they describe are not. Today, COVID-19 is a disease on a global scale, but that does not make it a universal phenomenon, and anthropology and the Social Sciences are essential at this time to think about its effects in a situated way. (SEGATA, 2020 s/p).⁴

Because I understand the central role that intellectuals have as translators and interpreters of this scenario, I propose to think about the effects of the pandemic on the processes of recording and memorializing the pain and mourning of those who have lost their most loved ones.

Memory and Consciousness

Since the 1990s, a particularly useful idea has taken shape for this reflection that I propose: the idea of space, places, sites for the preservation of memories, histories and collections that involve and articulate the themes of heritage and human rights, the so-called “sites of conscience”. “Sites of conscience” can be defined as places of memory that seek to engage the civil society, the public and the State in projects that establish criticism, debate and reflection on central issues for the promotion of social, ethnic-racial and epistemic justice, taking into account the culture of human rights as a basis for this endeavor.

According to the institutional document that guides the work of one of these groups, the mission of the project is defined as follows: “we are people, sites and initiatives that activate the power of places of memory to engage the public in the connection of the past and the present in order to predict and shape a more just and humane future.”⁵

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is a worldwide network of “Sites of Conscience” – historic sites, museums and initiatives dedicated to remembering the struggles of the past and addressing their contemporary legacies. Sites of conscience, such as the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in the United States, the Gulag History Museum in Russia and the District Six Museum in South Africa, activate the power of places of memory to infect the public with a deeper understanding of the past and inspire action to shape a fairer future. (NAIDU, 2008, p. 07)⁶

⁴ SEGATA, J. **Covid-19: escalas da pandemia e escalas da antropologia.** <https://www.ufrgs.br/ifch/index.php/br/covid-19-escalas-da-pandemia-e-escalas-da-antropologia>

⁵ <https://www.sitesofconscience.org/>

⁶ Naidu, Ereshnee. **Da memória à ação: Um Kit de Ferramentas para Memorialização em Sociedades**

The world that was designed in the so-called modernity, especially after the two great wars and the long and tumultuous process that culminated in the independence of African countries until the end of the 1970s, was marked by violations of human rights and also by attempts on the part of civil society in trying to reconcile with the past.

The purpose of these sites is to assert themselves as safe spaces to remember and preserve these memories, especially of those people who survived atrocities and conflicts, natural or provoked disasters, so that their stories remain once the conflicts are overcome, as a way of producing historical reparation and racial, social and epistemic justice.

The memorials of the pandemic have been configured for us, as researchers interested in the difficult work of organizing social and collective memory, an instigating task. It is worth, as Ulpiano de Menezes (1998) has already done, when he indicated that once the dilemma between relic (historical object) versus artifact (object crossed by the web of internal and external symbolic relations to the museum) has been overcome, to question which alternative fits to these places of memory, to the museums, in these specific cases to digital museums and virtual obituaries of the pandemic as places for the reinvention of narratives about the memories and stories of the people we lost.

It will be necessary to abandon the notion of common sense that defines museum and places of memory as a set of delimited and hierarchical collections, for a new idea of an imprecise and complex space crossed by multiple agencies and devices.

Brulon (2020)⁷ recalls that museums were created in the modern era and linked to the sovereignty of the State as instruments of a power over life (a biopolitics, in the term used by Foucault), acting on the political and economic management of human existence and at the same time shaping life by giving it meaning in its collective invention. *In their biopolitical function, museums also serve mourning, as they help us to value life and accommodate the remains left by the dead – in their material and symbolic sense.*

I want to reflect on the disputes over memory that are embodied in the new policies of writing and memorialistic recording that have been unfolding around the world, above

Pós-Conflicto. Ministério da Justiça / Comissão de Anistia (Brasil) Coordenação: Paulo Abrão & Marcelo D. Torelly. 2008, 44p.

⁷ BRULON, B. **Museus pandêmicos: apontamentos a partir de uma museologia do luto.** Accessed on: May 18, 2020. Dia Internacional dos Museus. Available at: <https://revistamuseu.com.br/site/br/artigos/18-de-maio/18-maio-2020/8487-museus-pandemicos-apontamentos-a-partir-de-uma-museologia-do-luto.html>

all, from the notions of digital donation, copyright, copyleft, stimulus to the creation of countless digital museum platforms that presuppose another poetics to deal with a new archival and discursive policy in the name of memory and the heritage of humanity.

For this, it will be necessary to leave the old canonical practices of colonial exhibitions, collection through spoils, thefts, expropriation of the cultural production of different groups to arrive at what is postulated today in the perspective of a new social museology of “collection of the present” as a challenge for everyone involved in the area of heritage and culture, especially in post-colonial and post-independence societies.

The new social museology has argued in favor of affirming memory sites as places to propose other strategies for the preservation, representation, conservation and exhibition of artifacts and their digital representatives. More than that, let them be places for criticism of these same artifacts and the discourse produced about them.

Unsurprisingly, museums are heirs to the practice of kidnapping ancient treasures, cathedrals and palaces, as well as cabinets of curiosities. It is also known that all colonial empires during their expansion and domination project produced barbarism, caused, in many cases, genocide (Congo, Haiti, Algeria, Abyssinia, Ethiopia, etc.) and promoted looting, theft and destruction of art, cultural goods, books, as well as promoted the epistemicide of different ethnic groups. Countless objects were looted by the various expeditions of Marcel Griaule and Henri Labouret in Africa, for example, which resulted in the great collection of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, causing the erasure of traces and vestiges of the history of these peoples. In fact, Walter Benjamin (1986) even states that *"there is no document of culture that is not, at the same time, a document of barbarism"*.

The shameless theft of objects – in the case of African countries, the emphasis on exotic elements that demarcated the place of the Other, different, bestialized, soulless – worked very well feeding the ethnological tension between nature and culture, civilized and savages, colonizers and colonized, which helped to build some of the founding myths of anthropology. (SILVA, 2019a)

After years of ethnographic missions, voyages sponsored by colonial empires, reconstructed museums and rehabilitated memories – for example, the return of the remains of Saartje Baartman⁸ made by Nelson Mandela. After the end of "apartheid" in

⁸ After the end of "apartheid" in 1991, one of the first claims of the Khoi-khoi ethnic group to Nelson Mandela was the return to South Africa of the remains of Saartje Baartman. The South African president discussed the matter in 1994 with the then French president François Mitterrand who opposed South African

1991, one of the first claims of the Khoi-Khoi ethnic group to Nelson Mandela was the return to South Africa of the remains of Saartje Baartman; numerous questions were put into perspective: to whom do the objects, artifacts and collections exhibited in museums scattered around the world belong? What can be characterized as the heritage “of humanity”? What to do with the constant requests for repatriation of remains that are in museum collections? What does it mean today to talk about authenticity and the right to property over the pieces, fragments, narratives and representations of alterity translated by the objects in these institutions? (SILVA, 2019b)

When establishing memory sites for the preservation and dissemination of collections and memorials like these, resulting from conflicts, disasters and lethal health crises such as the one we are experiencing now, there is always a tension between what to remember and what to forget or delete. Our challenge is to question how to use the memorials of the pandemic, this sensitive heritage of pain and mourning, not only to celebrate the lived lives of these people who left, but also to raise questions about social justice.

Memories of Mourning: A Sensitive Heritage

Naming, remembering, forgetting is a cycle that is repeated in all societies, even non-graph societies had a way of naming things, recording and also of silencing.

2020 is already configured in our personal and collective imagination as a year to forget. Or would it be to remember and not allow it to be repeated as G. Santayana said?

Philosopher Paul Ricoeur (2007) warns us that memory is almost always in the singular, as capacity and as effectuation, while memories are in the plural: we have memories. In this sense, he says that *memories can be treated as discrete forms with more or less precise margins, which stand out against what we could call a memorial background.* (p. 41)

Our memories of the present time are being articulated in an arena of struggle in which players face each other unequally and asymmetrically: on the one hand, the agents

claims using the argument of the "inalienability" of national collections. In 2004, however, parliament eventually approved the return of the Hottentot Venus as it became known.

of the State and their necropolitics and, on the other hand, people left to their own devices, buried as indigent, in open graves without the presence of their loves, affections and friends, leaving them our duty to memory.

The purpose of this article is to interrogate and understand the geometry and geopolitics of these memories produced, narrated and reinvented in digital obituaries and memorials of mourning.

The Argentine sociologist, Elizabeth Jelin (2002), responsible for coordinating the project on the memories of repression in that country⁹ says that it is necessary to speak of 'memories' (plural), understand them as a discursive construction, full of gaps, erasures and omissions understanding the narrative, the way in which each person builds a sense of the past - a memory that is expressed in a story,

First, it is necessary to understand memories as subjective processes, anchored in symbolic and material experiences and marks. Second, recognize memories as an object of disputes, conflicts and struggles, always marked by power relations. Historicize memories, recognize that there are historical changes in the sense of the past as well as in the place assigned to memories in different societies, climate, cultural spaces, political and ideological struggles. (JELIN, 2002 p. 27)

Castriota (2019) says that for a long time the preservation of heritage was related to the commemoration of a grandiloquent national memory engendered by governments and public bodies, reinforcing and privileging official narratives about the past. There was, therefore, no place for those elements that related tragedy, oppression, pain and shame to their founders, on the contrary, the human misery of slavery was celebrated in exhibitions that told the story of human trafficking as a great colonial enterprise of adventurous and brave men.

However, this scenario has been changing in view of the intellectual developments and theoretical investments that the field of museology has been promoting. Thus, we have witnessed the multiplication and creation of memory sites at an international and national level to portray, describe, narrate, expose and celebrate what became known as “heritage of pain” or “difficult heritage”. Take, for example, the island of Gorée, in Senegal, listed in 1978 by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, a status that was also granted to the Atomic Bomb Cathedral in Hiroshima and the Auschwitz-Birkenau camps in 1997. In 1999, it will

⁹ Jelin, Elizabeth. Researcher and Academic Director of the *Memoria Colectiva y Represion* Program, BA/Argentina, supported by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) for the Southern Cone.

be the turn of Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned. In Brazil, in 2017, Cais do Valongo in Rio de Janeiro, becomes the 21st Brazilian site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, today considered a sensitive heritage site for telling an important part of the history of the Atlantic slave trade and the enslavement of African peoples.

These places are the description of "sensitive historical sites". Places that evoke the memory of traumatic and painful events as much as the memory and memories that have been produced from the coronavirus pandemic.

Prochnow (2020) and Trigo (2007) propose to investigate the memory behind traumatic, painful, sensitive events through the categories of instrumental memory and cultural memory. Instrumental memory would be at the service of power and the state, while cultural memory works in a non-accumulative way, that is, they are memories articulated to experiences and events, whose function in the life of the community is not to talk about the past, but to give continuity to the process of permanent construction of identities and ideas shared by the collective.

For example, by privileging the stories of the excluded, the marginalized and minorities, these memorials of mourning and pain emphasize the importance of subterranean memories as opposed to official memories narrated by the State. These subterranean memories produce a work of subversion of silence and attempts to erase our bodies.

Real Pain, Virtual Obituary

Still in 2020, at the beginning of what we would understand by a pandemic on a planetary scale, an American journal published an article with the following headline: Coronavirus Is Spurring a New Era of Digital Funerals¹⁰. The article had made reference to the fact that in China that year, in an attempt to prevent people from going to cemeteries to wake their dead and therefore prevent the spread of the virus, several cemeteries had started offering virtual obituary services at the price of *some fresh flowers and hundreds of yuan*, local currency.

¹⁰ CUMMINS, Eleanor. MEDIUM, March 23, 2020. <https://onezero.medium.com/coronavirus-is-spurring-a-new-era-of-digital-funerals-45e728899eaf>

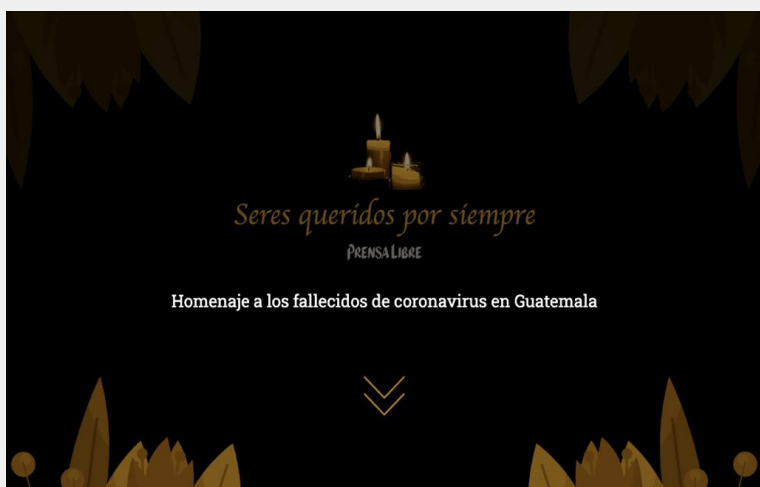
Also in the US, the disease control and prevention service (CDC) asked the population to avoid participating in burials - a directive that had spread around the world - appealing to citizens to make use of ceremonies through video or virtual funeral systems, which had stimulated the emergence of startups¹¹ to offer virtual obituary services. Bryant Hightower, president of the National Funeral Directors Association in the US, says that one in five funeral homes in the country today already use this system.

Here are some of these experiences in five different contexts: Guatemala, Ecuador, Spain, United States and Brazil.

Guatemala

Description: *Publicamos este obituario en el Día de Todos los Santos 2020 como un homenaje a los más de 3,500 (até a data da criação do portal) guatemaltecos fallecidos hasta el momento por el COVID-19.*

Figure 1



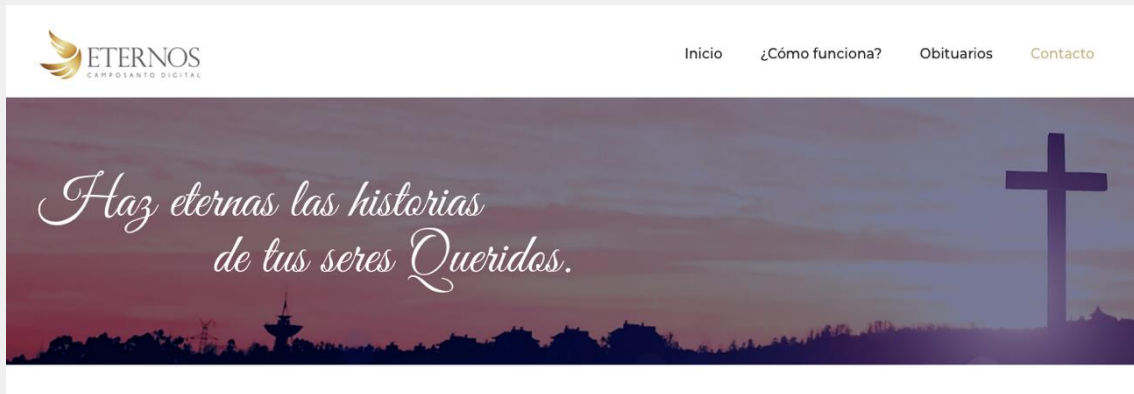
Source: <https://mural.prensalibre.com/homenaje-fallecidos-coronavirus-guatemala/>

Ecuador

Description: *ETERNOS.ec es un espacio creado para rendirles homenaje.*

Figure 2

¹¹ Start-ups are early-stage companies, usually hosted by incubators, using digital technologies and ecosystems for their operations.



Source: <https://eternos.ec>

Spain

Description: *'In memoriam' es un espacio gratuito en EL ESPAÑOL para rendir tributo a familiares y amigos fallecidos la COVID-19.*

Figure 3



Sources: <https://www.elespanol.com/sociedad/memorial-coronavirus/>

United States of America

Description: *a Digital Memorial To Oklahomans Who Died From COVID-19. More than 8,000 Oklahomans have died from the COVID-19 pandemic that has swept the state, country and world in just over a year. Behind each death, there is a face, a story and loved ones left behind.*

Figure 4



Source: <https://oklahomawatch.org/oklahoma-covid-legacy-project/>

Brazil

Inumeráveis

Figure 5



Source: <https://inumeraveis.com.br/>

It has already been said that Brazil is a country without memory and that museums do not have a guaranteed future given the scant investments in the scope of public policies, although this scenario has been gradually changing in recent years, as we can see in the data from the Brazilian Institute of Museums – IBRAM¹², indicating that there are currently

¹² For more information visit: <http://museus.cultura.gov.br/> IBRAM

more than 2600 mapped and registered museums in Brazil.

The already well-known and sophisticated historical, colonial or even some contemporary museums still portray the complicated condition of a closed space where, according to two operations in the opposite direction: oblivion, which far from being a passive phenomenon, is a device of struggle against the past, and the vestige, which is the return of the forgotten, that is, an action of this past henceforth forced into disguise. The past, like the ghost of Hamlet, haunts the present. *The history is "cannibal"*.

Perhaps, a more radical and emancipatory attitude is, instead of the constant epistemological and methodological exercises to interrogate the past from inside the museums, to reflect on our relationship with the collection of the present, its contradictions and discontinuities, promoting the inventory of places in a geopolitical strategy more consistent with a critical attitude towards our role as intellectuals in the production and representation of individual and collective memory.

I am convinced that, in the 21st century, places of memory cannot be anachronistic and nostalgic spaces afraid of becoming contaminated with the virus of contemporary society. Models such as Community Museums/neighbourhood museums such as Anacostia in Washington, even the so-called eco-museums have brought a remarkable renewal in the general field of museology, and should constitute an extraordinary way of knowing and examining this same society.

Late modernity has allowed us to think of heritage as a space of articulation between the small singularities (individuals, local cultures and neighborhoods) and the multiple instances of representation articulated in the form of official bodies.

It is necessary to admit that the term Museum, nowadays, has been used indiscriminately¹³ to represent/signify elements of a shapeless, confused and heterogeneous set formed by thousands of institutions spread around the world. In general, they do not have their own collections, they do not have a technical staff of

¹³ **Take, for example, *The Museum of Innocence* taken from the pages of a book to a real address.** The *Museum of Innocence* is certainly unusual and gives the title to the book written by the Turk Orhan Pamuk (winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2006). The story takes place in Turkey in the 1970s and tells the story of Kemal, a committed 30-year-old man who falls in love with the young Fusun and who after an affair develops an obsession with the young woman. Hence, its protagonist organizes a melancholy museum of objects that refer to the image of his beloved. There are **clocks, televisions, spoons, clothes and other small objects from the period in which the story takes place and which are also part of the collection of the real-life museum**, located near Tazkim square, the region where the story unfolds, and inaugurated by the author in April 2012.

professionals, nor have they followed or reflected on the great themes and demands of contemporary museology.

The conservative and canonical perspective of the Museum that separates the public and collections as entities separated by glass showcases is increasingly tending to dissolve. To break this gap between the public and the collections, it will be necessary to induce, produce different forms of heritage and museum actions and policies, resorting, above all, to technological innovations, without losing sight of the social, historical and political function of museums.

There have never been so many sites of conscience and places of memory as seen today around the world, and also in Brazil in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. What makes this reflection even more interesting due to the still problematic relationship among costs, public investment, absence of a clear heritage policy at the federal level and low investment in maintenance and conservation of existing and consolidated museum equipment.

It is in this scenario that digital obituaries and memorials are reconfigured. They represent the possibility of designing a new cartography of the present time in its new territoriality, virtuality and interactivity, its policies and practices as an expression of new ways of collecting past and present time. This time we inhabit has given rise to a new architecture of memory sites, new policies of exhibition and, along with them, the creation of the figure of the curator who, from being the guardian of collections of artifacts and works, progressively becomes a curator and mobilizer of personal and collective histories.

The memorials of mourning and losses thus become a space of transit, virtual encounters, celebration and affirmation of the past, memories and desire for the future. And also, a scenario for didactic action, encouraging the sharing of narratives about how we live our time and how we wish to be remembered in our belongings, identities and affections.

This is, without a shadow of a doubt, a challenge and a bet on the possibility of bequeathing to future generations a large part of the intellectual and material production of our time.

Ribeiro, A and Ribeiro, M (2016) ask us what kind of memory could emerge from a time as controversial as that of the Portuguese in Africa in colonial times? I allow myself to paraphrase the authors and ask: What memory can be told about such a controversial and

complex time as the one we live, devastated by a pandemic?

In these places to ritualize mourning in a digital way, memories are built more from silence than from the words already spoken; memories that result from fragments of narratives gathered from the testimonies of friends, co-workers, family members, people outraged by the way our generation is dealing with the multiple agendas of sustainability, responsible development, inclusive education, respect for multispecies coexistence; memorials made of gaps and questions supported by the traumatic experience of those who lost their parents, sons and daughters, grandparents, loves, without the ultimate right to wake and mourn their dead.

Benjamin Stora (apud RIBEIRO, A and RIBEIRO, M, 2016) speaks of a 'memorial whirlwind' that marks this time. A time for silence, a time for witnessing, a time for knowledge and recognition, a time for memory wars.

The challenge that arises now is: neither to sacralize nor to trivialize our time. Also not allowing the greed of capital in its eagerness to monetize and turn data, cards and people into souvenirs to end up burying our bodies even more in the quicksand of neocapitalism.

It will still be necessary to reflect more on our duty of memory to give meaning to tomorrow. To do justice to those who are gone and to promote democracy in dealing with the memories of our people, so that they are not once again deliberately erased.

To conclude, I will allow myself to think about the pedagogical dimension of memory, as Jelin (2002) did, asking: How to aim at the future in this game of multiple times in which the past turns to the present and guides the future? What past can help us to manufacture emancipatory utopias? For what future? Will we have a future?

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