We are IntechOpen, the world’s leading publisher of Open Access books
Built by scientists, for scientists

6,600
Open access books available

177,000
International authors and editors

195M
Downloads

154
Countries delivered to

TOP 1%
Our authors are among the most cited scientists

12.2%
Contributors from top 500 universities

WEB OF SCIENCE™
Selection of our books indexed in the Book Citation Index in Web of Science™ Core Collection (BKCI)

Interested in publishing with us?
Contact book.department@intechopen.com

Numbers displayed above are based on latest data collected.
For more information visit www.intechopen.com
Chapter

Perspective Chapter:

Times of Virtuality and Social Isolation – The Mantiqueira Museum and Digital Polyphonic Experiences as Museological Practices

André Fabricio Silva and Diana Costa Poepcke

Abstract

The coronavirus pandemic has brought new challenges for museums in communication and interaction with their audience. This text seeks to reflect on the theoretical aspects of virtuality and digital collections, as well as their uses in museological practices in the pandemic context. As a reflection of the impact of the pandemic on museums, we present the project developed by the Museum of Mantiqueira (MuMan), the “Mantiqueira polifônica”, which proposes collaborative sound cartography and reveals the relationship between sound, place, and everyday life, besides highlighting the important role of virtual museums in the preservation and dissemination of local memory.

Keywords: museums uncurrent, mantiqueira museum, mantiqueira mountain range, history theral, covid-19, polyphony

1. Introduction

The historical periods marked by pandemics are characterized by technological advances and changes in values in society and pre-established criteria, which cause social, cultural, political and economic transformations [1, 2]. The pandemic of covid-19 reinforced the phenomenon of virtualization that undoubtedly has already transformed several aspects of everyday life, especially our way of relating, communicating, and being present in a certain time and space, which is now a space constantly permeated by virtuality.

Museums were instantly impacted by the effects of the pandemic, as their doors were closed to maintain the necessary social isolation, while their teams began work remotely. Faced with this new pandemic reality, the institutions suddenly faced various dilemmas of museological communication, especially the virtual one. Virtuality
Application of Modern Trends in Museums

has taken on a new meaning, as it has become the only way for museums to continue to perform one of their main functions: communication with the public. However, the need to reinvent one another in the face of the new context was not limited only to the universe of physical museums, but also to virtual museums. Thinking about these two types of museums, Bowen [3] brings an important reflection by noting that “virtual museums interact with virtual visitors, just as real museums interact with real visitors.” This statement offers some axes of reflection that are central in this text and in the museological practices of the Mantiqueira Museum (MuMan), which involves thinking about the actions of museums in the virtual environment, digital collections and the very idea of the phenomenon of virtuality as a reflection of the real.

2. Virtuality and communication of the museological object in the digital environment

Difficult task to demarcate the boundaries between “real” and “virtual”, because there is a risk of proposing an opposition between the terms, as if they were two distinct and opposing objects until we realize that they are complementary. It is interesting to think that, after a year of social isolation, our professional, family, and emotional relationships still manifest themselves in the virtual sphere. This discussion intensifies and brings to light the dimensions that involve thinking about the virtuality that is expressed as a reflection of reality. Pierre Levy, one of the great theorists to philosophically think about the issue of virtuality, is categorical in saying that the virtual does not oppose the real [4]. The author proposes an analysis that understands the virtual as a movement in power, not in act. Thus, virtualization in Levy is understood as one of the main vectors of the creation of reality. It allows people, collectivities, and information to multiply their interactions, enabling a process of deterritorialization. Removed from physical space, the virtual is not only imaginary but produces effects on the subjects, bringing the idea of virtualization as the materialization of the real.

When dealing with virtualization in museums, it is necessary to highlight the debate about the processes of virtualization of museum objects. For Walter Benjamin, the technical reproduction of the art object would result in the loss of its authenticity, which he called the “aura of the object”, Benjamin [5] removing this aura characteristic of its existence. Contrary to this thought, André Malraux [6] brings the reflection of what could be represented as a virtual space, transiting between the real and the imaginary, from the “imaginary museum”, problematizing the function of museums, by centering its analysis on the metamorphosis of the object. For Malraux, the reproduction of the object enables other relationships with it, helping to modify the dialog between the work and the subject from reproducibility, allowing the relationship with the objects of museums through their virtuality. In addition, individuals know artistic productions of different cultures that are displaced in space and time, from reproduction, become atopic and timeless and can be appreciated in different temporalities.

---

1 1999 Bowen [3].

2 For Walter Benjamin, technical reproduction devalues the present of the work, your brands Historical Of cultural heritage. The aura of art dislikes, this aura that for Benjamin would be the singular figure of the object.
The virtualization of the object is established as a tool that expands the field of operation of museums. As Teresa Scheiner points out, digital technologies contribute to the conservation of heritage, in which "the electronic environment seizes and homogenizes the immense plurality of patrimonialized objects and transforms them, in turn, into new heritage icons – virtual documents." The diversity of the virtual environment represents a reconfiguration of the material and immaterial good, by assuming new forms and functions through the scanning process and its share in the virtual environment ([7], p. 230).

Thus, we bring an important reflection with regard to whether this object or well when being digitized and made available in the virtual environment loses its museal value. As initially highlighted, the virtualization process does not represent that the scanned object is the opposite of the actual object. In the same direction, Marina Gowert of Reis states that the virtual, even if it does not exist physically, is able to produce effects and influence physical reality. The author identifies the virtual community as a space where the virtual is related to the real, to the extent that the process of virtualization of the museological object means the virtualization of information, transmitted in the virtual environment [8]. Concomitantly with this thought, Renata Cardozo Padilha [9] points out that when the museological object is transported to the digital environment, through digitalization and digital reproducibility, it starts to have a virtual dimension, as a “digital museological object”. According to Padilha [9], the three-dimensional object of the museum, when digitized, becomes a new virtual existence. This process highlights its transformation into a digital museological object, going through the same processes of musealization, transforming material and immaterial goods into museological goods, and acquiring a new communicational feeling.

The validation of the “aura” of this object and its recognition by the public, or users of the web environment, permeates the recognition that it has a new history and new uses that require it to fit into this “contemporary intentional way of storing, preserving, organize and disseminate heritage assets”. This digital museological object becomes another, which differs from its original reference. From its own identity, it must go through a musealization process, considering its informational function in the digital field. It evokes ideas and thoughts that go beyond the mere musealization process. The relationship between the values added to the object can be amplified in its digitalization process, or virtualization, reinforcing, to a certain extent, the thought elaborated by Malraux about the metamorphosis of objects from their digitalization to virtual use.

It was possible to perceive that, with the popularization of the internet from the 1990s onwards, the museum-web environment relationship and the virtuality of museum objects in their communication with the virtual public has been a matter of concern for some museological institutions and researchers in the area. Although it is a central theme in the discussions to think about the paths that museums should follow in this century, we see, with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, that many museological institutions were not adequate to the processes of changes brought about by technological advances. The transformations caused by the pandemic raised some debates about the place of the museum in the digital world, highlighting the need to think about new professionals in the area, whose function permeates the virtual space. Thus, the process of virtualization and consequent metamorphosis of the museological object, which was already on the rise with the growth of technologies,
was accentuated during the period of the pandemic. If at first we observed skims about the possible dialog between virtuality and museums, the pandemic made it a primary necessity, causing direct effects on the museological field.

The Brazilian Institute of Museums (Ibram) highlighted the growing number of virtual actions promoted by Brazilian museums since the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic [10]. Thinking about Brazilian reality, the instant use of the virtual environment revealed that Brazilian museums were not able to experience the virtual immersion that can provide to the public. This experience, according to Nathalia Lavigne, refers to the fact that the visit to a museum brings with it a series of body choreographic rites that involves the way we relate to the musealized objects and the processes of subjective transformations provided by this encounter [11]. Therefore, this experience should be thought of equality in the virtual environment.

3. Virtual museums, collections, and oral history

Faced with the problem, two points deserve to be highlighted and presented as a reference of museological actions, since their genesis is already established as important communication tools in the virtual environment, through digital collections, being: the museum virtual and the oral historian.

Bernard Deloche points out that virtual museums are characterized as spaces of records produced directly in the virtual environment, establishing itself as a field of mediation and relationship of heritage with virtual audiences [12]. It is a museum that highlights virtual communication as a way to present a certain heritage. In parallel, we have the field of oral history and its records that seeks to register and digitize orality. The preservation of oral history collections contributes to bringing the presence of memory. Such collections can be digitizations of old collections that were recorded in some analog audiovisual media or are collections created with digital equipment, that is, a nato-digital collection. The preservation of oral reports has highlighted the importance, as they seek to record oral expressions and narratives that are not expressed in the typologies of traditional collections safeguarded through digitization. They contribute to the diffusion of other memories that have been forgotten or silenced.

In view of the debate presented on the experiences that digital collections represent from the sensations amplified in the process of digitization of the collections, establishing a communication that expands from its uses in virtual spaces, we will present a case of MuMan's experience during the pandemic. A virtual museum that has been developing a work of oral records, from the perspective of a virtual open-air museum, which seeks to musealize the territorialities of the Serra da Mantiqueira through digital devices and platforms. It fits the double point highlighted above: it proposes a virtual experience through the digitization of oral reports and offers an expanded experience between the virtual museum and digitized oral collections.

4. The Mantiqueira Museum (MuMan)

MuMan had its first concepts formatted and published in 2013, being a virtual open-air museum, which seeks to musealize the territories and territorialities of the Serra da Mantiqueira through digital devices and platforms, creating paths, narratives
and expographies that allow experiencing the cultural heritage of the region in its sociospatial context. Although virtual, MuMan preserves in its essence the interaction with its audience through a choreographic performance and transposes it to a hybrid model of expanded reality, in which the visitor enjoys part of the virtual experience and also experiences the territory itself on site.

MuMan seeks to musealize the ways of life of mantiqueirenses, the ways of being and being in the territory, with its diversity and uniqueness. Fulfilling the main museological functions, the museum's mission is to study, safeguard and disseminate the cultural heritage of Serra da Mantiqueira. To this end, it has a digital collection available on the museum's website and is divided into three collections: 1. “Oral History”, oral history interviews conducted by MuMan with the local community; 2. Two of them. “Iconographic”, selection of digitized photographs from public and private physical collections; and 3. “Documentary”, the selection of official documents and digitized newspapers from the physical collection of different organs and vehicles in the region.

Currently, the collection research projects are aimed at the constitution of a digital collection composed of narratives of life in audio and video, part of the collection of história oral. These collections are performed by the research team and require physical contact. We can hardly perform extensive oral history research without the immersive process in the territory. This collection method developed by MuMan – also applied in other museums, such as São Luiz do Paraitinga Museum, Zé Pereira Museum and Monteiro Lobato Folk and Pedagogical Historical Museum – proved unfeasible in the face of the pandemic context and social isolation. Within this reality, MuMan was awarded by the ProAc LAB notice “Award for Historical Museum of the State of São Paulo” with the project that created or the Mantiqueira Polyphonic platform, a new way of collecting collection and interaction.

The Serra da Mantiqueira is one of the largest geographical formations in Brazil, characterized by a mountain range that extends for more than 500 kilometers, sewing three states of southeastern Brazil: São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro. This chain, formed from large vertical tectonic movements, consists of infinite ridges and seas of hills between the cities of Bragança Paulista (SP) and Barbacena (MG).

Project of amplementation of the adeer of the Oswaldo Cruz Historical and Pedagogical Museum, approved by the edital of the ProAC Preservation of Museological Collections 2018. During the development of the project, the pLano museological for the museum, which municipalized the institution and switched its name for Museu São Luiz do Paraítinga – Oswaldo Cruz House. The project was carried out by enterprise ConectaMUS and delivered to the community in November 2019. Site: https://www.saoluizdoperaitinga.sp.gov.br/post/museu-sao-luiz-do-paraítinga---casa-oswaldo-cruz$48837.

Program Cultural Action (ProAc) is legislation from encouraging culture of the estado of São Paulo created in 2006 through Law N° 12.268/2006. Or ProAc finances activities cultural and artistic offering, from annual notices, values for the financial viability of projects of various sizes and types presented by residents of the estado. The nominated edition “LAB” are the edicts with resources from the Aldir Law Blanc (Law No. 14,017 of June 29, 2020).
with its public during the pandemic, without losing the experience of the territory as an open air museum.

5. **Mantiqueira Polyphonic: a sound and collaborative cartography**

Polyphony, in music, is the compositional technique in which sound textures are produced and performed in which various melodies or independent voices are present in a harmonic way, generating a melodic and rhythmic character [13] in literature, Bakhtin uses this concept to analyze, above all, Fiódor Dostoiévski, dealing with polyphonic romance, the one in which each character functions as an autonomous being, with vision, voice and position in the world [14, 15]. Here, dialogism can arise between the voices of the characters, the narrator, the readers and the writer.

When we turn our gaze to the relationships between memories and identities that emerge from a territory, it is understood, beforehand, that they are a true discursive polyphony, where several interdependent voices can come to harmonize or disarm, thus creating a dialogism around the same reality. It is interesting to think that sounds occupy spaces and are potential agents of actions and reactions, so they produce invisible borders, but material, participating in disputes and negotiations around the use and meaning of public spaces.

*MuMan’s Mantiqueira* Polyphonic project was created from the understanding of the importance of all these elements that involve the relationship of the subjects with the territory. It is constituted as a digital platform of dual function: collecting collection in a collaborative way, engaging the public of the museum, transforming it from visitor to an active collaborator of the collection, and creating a sound and collaborative cartography of the Serra da Mantiqueira, with the objective of showing what are the sounds, voices, music, noises and vibrations that the inhabitants live in their daily lives, configuring the territory as a representative element of mantiqueirens identity.

The collaborative character of the platform has several functions, such as strengthening the community’s relationship with the museum’s collection and making the community itself recognize itself in it. The platform design is designed for a multitude of approaches while enabling employees to create their own sound projects, which are presented with separate and individual keywords of recordings within the map. Sound records can be recorded directly from the mobile phone and sent by the museum’s own virtual visitors to the platform.

The records within the platform are divided into eight sound categories and into two groups. The first are soundscapes, composed of the categories: sounds of the city, sounds of nature, sounds of the house, and sounds of the swidden. The second is the voices, composed of the categories: causes, life reports, ways of doing, and ways of speaking [16]. The same record can fall into more than one category. However, it is up to the user, who assumes here the role of researcher-curator, to choose which tonic he wishes to give to the registration made. The material is received by the museum staff and is approved individually to then become available online. Thus, the public of the museum interacts with the virtual exhibition – cartography – and with the collection, to the extent that the registration is made with minimal social contact.

---

5 These categories were based on the experiences highlighted by *Michel from Certeau In Relations that the subjects establish with the territory.*
The platform was launched in August 2021 and is already in use. Some of the records inserted are of people who live with their families and take advantage to collect the stories or sounds of everyday life. Some were collected via WhatsApp or in transit between one location and another. To stimulate the contribution of users and qualify professionals who can use the platform as a teaching tool, concomitantly with the launch of the platform, distance training in Oral History and Virtual Collections was launched in May of this year, in order to disseminate knowledge about capturing life history reports.

From this training, several projects were developed, among them a pedagogical project in Baependi (MG), conceived and developed by professor Maria Fernanda Silva Alves, participant in the training. In this project, history students of the eighth grade class of the Anísio Esau dos Santos State School, in the neighborhood of São Pedro, a rural area of the municipality, will collect the reports with their cell phones and register on the platform. They’re students who are taking remote teaching classes. It will be a way to increase their interactivity with school content and technology, making them understand concepts such as primary source, orality, and memory and, together with this, make them perceive themselves as historical subjects, stimulating the feeling of belonging to their community and local history.

In a month of the platform, many records have already been received from visitors-users from different places in the territory of Serra da Mantiqueira: São Bento do Sapucaí (SP), Campos do Jordão (SP), Monteiro Lobato (SP), Itajubá (MG), Canas (SP), Taubaté (SP), Baependi (MG), among others. Users of different ages and backgrounds. It is possible to identify a diversity of daily reports, such as the project made about corn flour, typical food of Mantiqueira, present in the daily life of all residents in various dishes, such as corn turn, turned beans, turned banana. There are several records brought involving the universe of cornflour. One of them, in “sounds of the swidden”, is the “Som andxterno de moinho”, recorded in Baependi, which, according to the description of the record itself made by the user “[...] shows the strength of the water that makes the mill turn and grind of cornflour.” Other collaborators brought reports and memories about a traditional flour house in the city of São Bento do Sapucaí, also categorized as “ways of doing it”. The report is described by the user as “reporting the structure of the cornmeal plant, employees, distribution and sale. Uses of cornflour in local cuisine and region.”

Such records are good examples of characterization of the cultural landscape of the mountains. The other sound universe, which is already being mapped, are the soundscapes that have no voices or memories. They are, for example, the sounds arising from phenomena of nature, such as the “Rain”, recorded in Campos do Jordão. There is also the “Fire lit in the fireplace” registered in the neighborhood of Serranos in São Bento do Sapucaí and “Cars and birds”, registered in the center of Taubaté. There are several sounds, even noises, that also help to make up the sound polyphony of this territory.

These are some of the examples present on the platform today. Todavia, is a project designed for long-term development. Although created for the pandemic context, it is a format that will still reveal a kaleidoscope of possibilities from the moment the users themselves appropriate the platform and attribute other uses and meanings, different from those that were thought of in its original conception.

Through the Polyphonic Mantiqueira it will be possible to observe that identity is constantly changing, because memory is also in motion. It will be possible to attribute new meanings to the past and the present, living new experiences, providing new sensations from the sound. The complex process of identity construction is permeated by polyphonies in which dialogical elements will appear in so many voices and sounds; in the feeling of a group created by the collective imaginary or through other elements such as sounds, language, customs and common territory.

6. Conclusion

We seek here to highlight that the virtual experience can serve as a great tool of the actions of museums. The virtual environment emerges as another possibility of the transformation of individuals from their relationship with digital museological objects, thus expanding the social function of museums. We know that one of the major challenges of museums is to rethink the uses of virtualities, and it is necessary to increase digital efforts in communication with their audience.

The pandemic caused profound changes in the actions of museums, which were forced to rethink their virtual presence, requiring in this context new methods of interaction with the virtual public. MuMan, even if it fits the typology of virtual museum, similarly saw the need to rethink its actions and propose new experiences so that the public could interact with the museum and the territory in a safe way, respecting the sanitary protocols of social isolation. Thus, it is possible to contribute to the expansion of its digital collection without the museum needing to go to the public to carry out oral records. The Mantiqueira Polyphonic project emerges, then, as a proposal to expand the access of the virtual public to the museum and democratization access to the collection through a platform of easy interaction, in which anyone can share their sounds, being voices, memories, or soundscapes.

In addition to the theme and examples highlighted here, it is necessary to reflect and understand that, for the subjects to have a complete experience of the virtual scope, there must be the necessary democratization of this access. And for this, we understand democratization not only the development of actions designed for the virtual environment but also how the public will have access to this environment. It is necessary to think about inclusion in the virtual environment and understand that several groups have difficulties in using the virtual environment for several factors, such as the low quality of the Internet, few technological resources, physical, visual, auditory, intellectual, and psychosocial disabilities, social inequality, among others. It is essential to rethink this new concept of audience and how virtual communications of museums can access their audience democratically.
References


[8] Reis, dos Gowert M. Brazilian cultural heritage in the digital age: From the digitization of collections to participatory preservation on the Internet. [thesis (doutorado)] - Graduate Program in Social Memory and Cultural Heritage, Pelotas: Institute of Human Sciences, Federal University of Pelotas; 2019

[9] Padilha RC. The representation of the museological object at the time of its digital reproducibility. [thesis (doctorate)] - Graduate Program in Information Science, Center for Educational Sciences, Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis. 2018


