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Memory policies and poetics: views and passages



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Memory policies and poetics: views and passages

Abstract

Based on reflections by authors like Andreas Huyssen, Maria Angélica Melendi, Paola Helena Acosta Sierra, and Diana Taylor, this article discusses some modes of intervention in the public space that, contemporarily, deal with memory (quite especially, traumatic memory) and resort to expressive effects or performative acts that, in turn, interconnect poetics and policies. The project “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations” is examined in detail, a Brazilian experience in the education area that, inspired by a photographic exhibition by Sebastião Salgado, has been proposing for 2 decades creative and renovating qualification paths, based on fieldwork and, quite especially, on 2 performative acts: photographing and hiking. An experience that interconnects performing and educating, as well as the intense production of memory vectors (such as photographic documentary records) in association with incorporated (collective and individual) memory dimensions.

Keywords: memory; photography; hiking; Sebastião Salgado; education.

Políticas e poéticas de memória: olhares e travessias

Resumo

Com base em reflexões de autores como Andreas Huyssen, Maria Angélica Melendi, Paola Helena Acosta Sierra e Diana Taylor, são discutidas algumas formas de intervenção no espaço público que, contemporaneamente, operam com a memória (muito especialmente, a memória traumática) e lançam mão de formas expressivas ou atos performativos que, por sua vez, articulam poéticas e políticas. Examina-se, mais detidamente, o projeto “Re(vi)vendo Êxodos”, experiência brasileira na área de educação que, inspirada em uma exposição fotográfica de Sebastião Salgado, tem proposto há 2 décadas percursos de formação criativos e renovadores, baseados em trabalhos de campo e, muito especialmente, em 2 atos performativos: fotografar e caminhar. Uma experiência que articula o performar e o formar, assim como a produção intensa de vetores de memória (como os registros documentais fotográficos) em associação com dimensões incorporadas (coletivas e individuais) da memória.

Palavras-chave: memória; fotografia; caminhada; Sebastião Salgado; educação.

Introduction

[...] an experienced event is finite, or at least enclosed in the realm of what has been lived, while a recalled event has no limits, because it is just a key to everything that came before and after (BENJAMIN, 1985, p. 37).

Poetics and politics are words of Greek origin and their etymology indicates, for the first, the meanings of creation, invention, and manufacture (having *poíesis* as a reference) and, for the second, acting in the public space, taking into account the guidelines and standards by which a given collectivity must be guided – or proposed to be guided by (the Greek word of reference, in this case, is *politeía*, referring to the *polis*)¹. Although the meanings of these two words have expanded in the historical background of their uses, these primordial keys of meaning provide guiding frameworks for the issues I wish to address here. I take as a horizon memory dimensions that have been or can be interconnected in the public space, with an emphasis on creative, inventive, imaginative, expressive – poetic, in short –, ways of doing this.

In this regard, the academic literature has focused with certain intensity on works and performances of an artistic nature that refer to memories of traumatic contemporary experiences.

Andreas Huyssen (2014b) highlighted the visual artists Nalini Malani and William Kentridge, particularly works that, dealing with elements of shadow play, thematized issues, and traumas associated with India's division, since independence (Malani), or with *apartheid*, in South Africa (Kentridge). Huyssen (2014a) also discussed aspects of memorial projects that resulted in the "Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe" (designed by architect Peter

¹ Regarding the context of classical Greece, action itself would be *praxis*, and action specifically in the public sphere, in order to result in politics, it might involve, above all, using the word (the discourse or *lexis*), to argue and persuade (see ARENDT, Hannah. *A condição humana*. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, Salamandra; São Paulo: Edusp, 1981. p. 31-37). In the presentation to Aristotle's *Politics*, translated into Portuguese by Mário da Gama Kury, the translator highlighted that the Aristotelian conception of the various fields of knowledge drew a division between theoretical sciences (such as metaphysics and theology) and practical ones. Among the practical sciences, in turn, we could distinguish those "that teach us to produce things" ("poietic sciences") and those "that show us how to act" (with emphasis given to politics, "science of well-being and happiness for all human beings") (KURY, 1997, p. 7-8).

Eisenman and built in Berlin) and the 9/11 Memorial, in New York (designed by architects Michael Arad and Peter Walker, to which a museum has been added)².

Maria Angélica Melendi (2006) dealt with some initiatives in Argentina, such as the sculpture by Yaacov Agam and the monument erected by the group Memoria Activa, alluding to the July 1994 attack that destroyed the headquarters of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina, in Buenos Aires. The group Memoria Activa, which consists of friends and relatives of the 85 victims of that attack (EL ATAQUE, 2004), went weekly to Plaza Lavalle, on Mondays, at the time when the bomb exploded, for a decade to observe a minute of silence at the monument, “as an expression of homage, remembrance, and struggle for justice” (MELENDI, 2006, p. 234). Melendi also thought of the “Monumento a las víctimas del terrorismo de Estado” and the “Parque de la Memoria,” installed on Avenida Costanera Rafael Obligado, in Buenos Aires, which refer to repressive actions – involving kidnapping, imprisonment, torture, and murder – consummated in Argentina between 1969 and 1983 (MELENDI, 2006, p. 238-244; PARQUE, 2021). The author also contrasted this last ‘monumental’ perspective with daily publications, in the Argentine newspaper *Página 12*, of photos of missing people due to political. Accompanied by brief biographical texts, according to the author these publications seem to be ‘paper tombstones.’ And she asks:

Where, finally, could we find memory? Far away, in the Park, on the edge of the city, and on the riverbank, in a remote space that is far from the life flow? Or in the daily life of a newspaper page, at breakfast time, as the mandatory moment of reflection and meditation, which makes us see and recall day after day, face after face, to avoid official oblivion, the social amnesia that is implicit in the idea of monument? (MELENDI, 2006, p. 245).

In addition to the detachment foreseen by Maria Angélica Melendi in monuments that, although erected in public spaces, are far from the ‘life flow,’

² Museums dedicated to traumatic memories have been the study object of several researchers, including sociologist Amy Sodaro (2018), who proposed the category ‘memorials’ for museum institutions focused primarily on addressing past times marked by violence and distress arising from it. In his book on this theme, Sodaro addressed more closely the following institutions: Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C., USA; House of Terror, Budapest, Hungary; Kigali Genocide Memorial Center, Rwanda; Memory and Human Rights Museum, Santiago, Chile; 9/11 Memorial Museum, New York, USA. There is a Portuguese translation of the book’s introduction (SODARO, 2019).

live stage performances, even if not renewed ‘day after day,’ have been outlined as poetic channels with greater reach potential – including theater events to occasional and varied interventions in the urban environment.

Paola Helena Acosta Sierra (2019) analyzed playwriting works that deal with indelible tensions and violence in Colombia’s recent political history, like the plays “Río arriba, río abajo: Antígona en el puente cantando,” “Donde se descomponen las colas de los burros,” and “Arimbato, el camino del árbol,” by Jesús Domínguez, Carolina Vivas, and Felipe Vergara, respectively. The author believes that this ‘struggle playwriting’ take a major role in reviewing and expanding public memory policy, as they refer to non-hegemonic memories, allowing us to rethink elements of the traumatic past embedded in the present. It is also about addressing the memories of citizens who were directly subject to violent actions triggered as a result of clashes between the State and the guerrillas, in order to help safeguarding the victims’ rights (ACOSTA SIERRA, 2019, p. 314).

A dramaturgy that deals with the traumas of contemporary Peruvian history was, in turn, the target of reflections proposed by Diana Taylor (2013, p. 263-293), when addressing the history of the Yuyachkani theater cooperative, mainly in the staging and acting of the plays “Contraelviento” and “Adiós Ayacucho.” Taylor also thought of the “escraches” and other interventions in the public space of Buenos Aires, promoted by the organization H.I.J.O.S. (consisting of missing people’s children), along with the Callejero Art Group; such interventions focused on the repressive actions of the Argentine dictatorship, between the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the victims’ memories (TAYLOR, 2013, p. 229-262).

According to Diana Taylor, there are performative acts that allow us to reach and affect people, in order to turn them into ‘witnesses.’ Referring to the Yuyachkani, the author stated:

The Yuyachkani, as its name implies³, depends on the notion of interconnectedness: the ‘I’ who thinks/recalls is inextricable from the ‘you’ whose thinking ‘I’ am. The Yuyachkani’s I/you promises to

³ Based on Hugo Salazar de Alcázar, Taylor points out that Yuyachkani means, in Quechua, “I am thinking” / “I am recalling” / “I am your thought” (TAYLOR, 2013, p. 264).

be a witness, a guarantor of the link between the 'I' and the 'you,' the 'inside' and the 'outside.' The Yuyachkani becomes a belated witness to the ongoing and unrecognized drama of the atrocity and invites its audiences to do the same. [...] staging, for the Yuyachkani, does not contribute to increasing the victims' desecration, turning their pain into a source of pleasure for the spectators. Rather, without staging, spectators would not recognize their role in the continuing history of oppression that, directly or indirectly, involves everyone (TAYLOR, 2013, p. 292).

Based on the case of the Peruvian theater collective, Diana Taylor proposes a reflection on a kind of second-degree testimony, since what is witnessed might refer to the *staging* of something that has been experienced and/or witnessed by others; a staging based, in turn, on the memories of the experiences at stake. Without deepening the discussion here regarding the relevance of regarding the action of witnessing as transferable, according to Taylor⁴, I believe that the author's remarks are thought-provoking as they point out some conditions favorable to transmitting memories: a theater performance (like those by the group Yuyachkani) can become the key moment in which someone connects to what is transmitted and, once affected by this, it also starts to commit to transmitting this memory, becoming a link in a long chain. What has been experienced belongs to the person who has lived that (or, as Benjamin stated, in the comment taken as epigraph, it is "enclosed in the realm of what has been lived"); however, the memory of what has been lived can be shared (making the finite infinite, in Benjamin's approach)⁵.

The examples mentioned above point out the fertile grounds for studies devoted to thinking through the interactions between memory policies (hegemonic or not) and artistic expressions or performative acts, either mobilizing institutional players in the arts and heritage field or focusing on and adopting

⁴ "The act of witnessing is transferable; thus, theater, like testimony, photography, film, or storytelling can turn others into witnesses" (TAYLOR, 2013, p. 292). Therefore, from the author's perspective, not only performances, but also their actual results (like photographic records and movies) may be vectors of transference. Taylor stated something similar (but referring to transmitting the traumatic experience) in a text about H.I.J.O.S.: "transmitting the traumatic experience is more like 'contagion' – a person 'takes' and bears the weight, the pain, and the responsibility of/for past behaviors/events. The traumatic experience can be transmissible, but it is inseparable from the person who has gone through it" (TAYLOR, 2013, p. 236).

⁵ Specifically regarding the odds that a traumatic memory affects someone far apart from the experience that generated it, Diana Taylor's contributions to this debate, along with Stephen Greenblatt's, were explored in another text (GONÇALVES, 2018).

practices linked to (individual or collective) action of citizens with no ties to such fields.

In this article, however, I do not dwell on contemporary traumatic experiences under the scrutiny of artistic works, performances, and inventive urban interventions, or even memorial projects translated into monuments and museums. In an era of shadows and harshness like the one we live in, I chose to highlight a pedagogical proposal that, supported by reflections and records on traumatic population displacement experiences (in Sebastião Salgado's sensitive photographic poetics), provided them with new meaning, turning pain into hope. This is a Brazilian pedagogical action with 20 years of existence, recognized in the educational and in the cultural heritage areas (it has been even awarded): the project "Reviving/Reviewing Migrations"⁶. Born in a public school in Brasília, Federal District, Brazil, this project has engaged, above all, teachers and students, but it knows how to build partnerships with professionals and various public institutions and entities, at different levels. It has strongly interconnected 2 performative acts: photographing and hiking. An experience that remains open, in process, where invention and intervention, action and reflection, memory and history, have been combined.

Photographing

As highlighted more than once by one of its creators and, later, its general coordinator, the project "Reviving/Reviewing Migrations" was inspired by the visit of most schools in the Brazilian Federal District (many of them public schools), in 2001, to the photographic exhibition on the project "Migrations," by Sebastião Salgado, to which a book is also associated. The East Sector High School Center

⁶ The project received an honorable mention at the IV José Aparecido de Oliveira Award, in 2011 (RE(VI)VENDO, 2011) and 1st place in the next edition of the same award (A SECRETARIA, 2012). It was awarded in the category "Excellence Initiatives in Promotion and Shared Management of Cultural Heritage," at the 28th edition of the Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade/IPHAN Award, in 2015 (IPHAN, 2015). Also, the East Sector High School Center was among the schools awarded, in 2012, at the School Management Award, of the National Council of Education Secretaries (nominated as one of the "national feature" schools), highlighting the project "Reviving/Reviewing Migrations" among its actions (QUAL, 2012).

took 20 groups to visit the exhibition – about 700 students (BAPTISTA, 2009, p. 174; BAPTISTA, 2017, p. 50).

In turn, the exhibition on the project “Migrations,” as well as the book (SALGADO, 2000), derived from trips made by the Brazilian photographer to more than 40 countries, over 6 years, following long human group displacements (and some of their consequences). Displacements usually caused by painful situations: wars, persecution, conflicts over land, disease, poverty, hunger... Salgado’s photographic work has been inspired by these journeys, many of them made on foot, by small groups or by crowds, which tried to overcome hatred, distress, injustice, and death, resorting to poor accommodations on the way or at the destination (even when it was a possible destination, far from the desired one, as in the case of refugee camps).

But why witnessing and documenting it all through photography?

In a book about his personal history, written along with journalist Isabelle Francq almost 20 years after the onset of the project “Migrations,” Salgado declared his intentions:

In the four corners of the globe, people are displaced for essentially the same economic reasons, which favor a minority while the majority becomes miserable. And everywhere the resulting overpopulation magnifies the same evils: precariousness, violence, epidemics... On the eve of the third millennium, I wished to show these people in transit, their courage in the face of uprooting, their incredible ability to adapt to situations generally quite difficult. I wished to show that, each in their own way, everyone manifests in the world their spirit of initiative and the richness of their differences. On the eve of the 21st century, I tried to show the need to refound the human family on the basis of solidarity and sharing (SALGADO; FRANCQ, 2014, p. 61-62).

Thus, the positivities that may be noticed in moving subjects, strictly migrants or refugees, are affirmed, along with the need to seek alternatives to interrupt the reproduction of distress and injustice (to refound the ‘human family,’ based on solidarity and sharing). These two major perspectives had already been introduced by Sebastião Salgado in a dialogue with John Berger, in 2001: at the time, he claimed to wish to show what is intolerable in the situations

registered by him, in order to provoke changes; and, at the same time, to emphasize the dignity and value of each of those lives in transit.

[...] all they have with them is just a little slice of hope. And it is with that hope that they are trying to get another stable position in life.

If anyone looking at these photos feels compassion, I'll think I've completely failed. I want people to understand that we can have a solution (SALGADO, 2017 *apud* BERGER, 2017b, p. 210).

However, the book and the exhibition did not receive a unanimously favorable reception. In France, right from the start, they came under severe criticism; the philosopher and art historian Jean Galard highlighted Michel Guerrin's critique, who accused the photographer of adhering to an anesthetizing aestheticism regarding the difficult situations shown, despite Salgado's claims to denounce (GALARD, 2012, p. 29). In the book *Diante da dor dos outros*, some of these critiques were commented by Susan Sontag, partly relativized, partly enlarged: Salgado was characterized by the author as a "photographer specializing in world misfortune," with books and exhibitions ornamented by a "sanctimonious rhetoric," which in "Migrations" might have focused on "the powerless people" in order to reduce them "to powerlessness." They might be mere unnamed faces (Sontag criticizes Salgado for not having identified them), whose unique misfortunes could eventually dissolve into global distresses, "too vast, too irrevocable, too epic" to provoke "any local political measure." In these terms, the author saw that "compassion can only struggle in emptiness – and become abstract" (SONTAG, 2003, p. 67-68)⁷.

Would the beauty of the images nullify the horror displayed and, consequently, the mobilization potential? According to Jean Galard,

[...] it comes to whether the aesthetic disposition (beauty perception in regions where we did not expect to find it) is compelling or irrelevant, whether it provides an active access to grasping reality or whether it deprives all things of reality until it reaches anesthesia (GALARD, 2012, p. 30).

⁷ However, as seen earlier, in an excerpt from an interview given by Salgado to John Berger, the photographer declared that he did not seek to generate compassion among those who came into contact with his work – on the contrary, he believed that this could denote unaccomplishment, failure.

And, alluding to the photographic images produced by Salgado, the French author added: “he produces them to force us to look at them; if, in addition, they are beautiful, they will have some possibility of being remembered more intensely” (GALARD, 2012, p. 126).

This debate, full of traps, has found unexpected and creative responses and unfoldings in the project “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations.”

After the visit of student groups from the East Sector High School Center to the “Migrations” photographic exhibition, a group of teachers from the Human Sciences area at this public school in the Federal District, led by History teacher Luís Guilherme Baptista, proposed the students something inspired by Sebastião Salgado’s project: looking at realities and experiences in Brasília, or in nearby cities, and think through the possible parallels with what has been registered by the photographer, in various countries. Thus, there came the project “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations.” At first, as teacher Luís Guilherme recalled, in 2017,

[...] students were instructed to study and research historical, geographical, philosophical, and sociological aspects that permeated the themes and subjects covered in the incredible images that Salgado gave us. And the result was good. They held seminars and wrote studies. They were very good. We, the teachers, were still not satisfied, so someone suggested that we should make students took photographs on the same themes explored by Sebastião Salgado. It was amazing. [...] we decided that they should ‘look for’ and find all the themes within the borders of the Federal District (BAPTISTA, 2017, p. 50).

The photographic records, informed by these different perspectives, were displayed in an exhibition, inaugurated on August 6, 2001, curated by photographer Mila Petrillo, who became a collaborator on the project. The exhibition took place outside the school, at the Renato Russo Cultural Space: it was up to the student photographers sharing their views with other residents of the capital city and its surrounding towns, not restricting the scope of this educational action to the school environment. The same place hosted other exhibitions, like the 2017 edition, whose inauguration is shown in figures 1-3.

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Figure 1. Inauguration of the “Photographic Exhibition of High School Students from the East Sector,” December 2017, at the Renato Russo Cultural Space. The general coordinator of the project “Reviving/Reviewing Exoduses,” Luís Guilherme Baptista, talks to the audience. Photograph by Wanessa Landim.



Source: Collection of the project “Reviving/Reviewing Exoduses”

Figure 2. Inauguration of the “Photographic Exhibition of High School Students from the East Sector,” December 2017, at the Renato Russo Cultural Space. To interact with the exhibition (also by photographing it), the audience had to look at the floor to be trodden, on which the photographic images were posted, all of them black and white. Photograph by Wanessa Landim.



Source: Collection of the project “Reviving/Reviewing Exoduses”

Figure 3. Inauguration of the “Photographic Exhibition of High School Students from the East Sector,” December 2017, at the Renato Russo Cultural Space. For several visitors, it was not enough to walk along the yellow and red strips that circumscribed the exhibition images: looking closer required bending one’s body, getting closer to the ground and, when possible, using cell phones to enlarge the image or reproduce it.
Photograph by Wanessa Landim.



Source: Collection of the project “Reviving/Reviewing Exoduses”

Renovated annually, the photographic exhibition has been set as one of the project’s core activities. By opening up to new themes and perspectives, it remained as a kind of synthesis and, simultaneously, a seedbed of research and discovery paths (BAPTISTA, 2017; BAPTISTA, 2018)⁸.

In Sebastião Salgado’s project, photography served as a means to document events taken as indices of broader economic and social processes, especially the issues and traumas they generate, which become strongly visible

⁸ The most recent exhibition took place in February 2020, at the Museum of the Divine, in Pirenópolis, Goiás, Brazil (VILLARREAL, 2020). The photographs produced by students are part of the collection of the project “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations” and some of them are available by accessing the issues of the *Revista Caminhos – o melhor do Brasil* (<https://www.revistacaminhos.org/> and <https://issuu.com/revistacaminhos/>). For this article, the publication of its 9 images was authorized, they were produced by 3 former students who are currently participating in the project as monitors: Fontenelle Moraes, Rodrigo Soares, and Wanessa Landim. I thank Prof. Luís Guilherme Baptista, general coordinator of project “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations,” for allowing me to access the photographic material that belong to the project, providing the images selected with contextualized information, and authorizing their use in this text.

in thousands of drifting lives. The terms to document and a document, as we know, come from the Latin *docere*, a verb that translates as teaching (LE GOFF, 1996, p. 536). At the base of photographing – if we give credit to the intentions declared by Salgado – there was a wish that the photographic records produced in the project “Migrations” not only show, but also teach about what was registered, inviting reflection and change. Simultaneously, in this act, a memory intent was drawn, interconnected to the realization of the marked vulnerability of those lives. In the book *Migrations*, the photographer pointed out:

[...] few people leave their homeland willingly. [...] They leave with the belongings they can carry, advance as they can aboard fragile boats, squeezed into trains and trucks, on foot... They travel alone, with their families or in groups. Some know where they are going, confident that a better life awaits them. Others are mainly on the run, glad to be alive. Many won't be able to get anywhere (SALGADO, 2000, p. 9).

Sebastião Salgado aimed, on the one hand, to expand the temporal span of these particularly fragile lives by means of photographic records that, as fragments of his misfortunes, could serve as memory vectors. On the other hand, he took a second step towards memorial inscription, referring to his own experience in the course of the project, which involved close and relatively long contact with the groups photographed⁹. These two memorial gestures are inseparable from the photographic act, which affirms, through the resulting register, an “it happened,” as well as, on the part of the photographer, an “I saw what happened that way” (therefore, “I was there”). As John Berger commented, in a 1968 text in which he thought through the meanings of a photograph:

Photography is already a message about the event it registers. [...] in its simplest sense, the message, decoded, means: *I have decided that witnessing this is worth registering*. [...] photography is the process of making what is observed aware of itself (BERGER, 2017a, p. 38, author's italics).

Therefore, these elements that affirm the action of documenting and, simultaneously, the photographer's testimony (and interpretation), are present in

⁹ It was also possible to activate memories about his migration experience, as highlighted by Paulo Maia (2017, p. 196): “there is a path taken, a time lived and, above all, memories permeated in the building process of his photographic narratives. Memories of a traveling narrator and, in a way, also a migrant, as he had exiled from Brazil after the 1964 military coup.”

the images produced, year after year, the photographic exhibitions of the project “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations.” An interesting sample is available, in fact, in an online publication dated 2014, produced by three students in the area of Design at the Instituto de Educação Superior de Brasília (IESB) – Fernanda Alves, Gabriel Pereira, and Luérison Alves –, advised by Prof. Bruno Porto. In this publication, black and white images highlight the interest of students participating in the project “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations” in the architecture of the urban space, particularly in its temporary arrangements, its interactions in peculiar geometric compositions, its reinterpretations through superimposition of objects, inscriptions and graffiti; images that indicate the attention given to the rhythms and movements of nature, noticed in the configuration of trees and clouds, as well as in flowers and animals; they inform about the discomfort with environmental degradation and the distress of homeless people or those who live under poor housing conditions, at the same time that they strive and struggle for better living conditions. A selection that demonstrates the building of critical perspectives on the social realities photographed and, simultaneously, the approach to the potential of photography, sensitive with regard to framing, composition, use of light, and contrast effects (see ALVES, PEREIRA and ALVES, 2014¹⁰).

Throughout the project’s existence, the photographic material has been combined with an intense effort of analysis and reflection. But the qualification/educational perspective of “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations” necessarily meant that the project has still taken into account those who were photographed – and, with this, that the clues offered by the photographic images have been put into question as to the meanings of this experience for those who participated in it. The emphatic openness to creative knowledge production processes gave great visibility to their transforming power: through the images produced (as well as other materials, such as texts and study seminars), it has been possible to track something not just grasped (captured momentarily), but learned, appropriated in a significant manner.

¹⁰ ALVES, Fernanda; PEREIRA, Gabriel; ALVES, Luérison. *Re[vi]vendo Êxodos [fotografias do projeto]*. Brasília: [Curso de Design, IESB], 2014. Disponível em: https://issuu.com/luerisonmiguelao/docs/revivendo__xodos_portfolio. Acesso em: 14 mar. 2021.

Teacher Luís Guilherme Baptista, a key reference for “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations,” at an event held by the Brazilian National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN), in 2009, highlighted how the project aimed to be an instrument for qualifying critical citizens. And the author added:

[...] 75% of my audience comes from the outskirts and they are wonderful, brilliant, intelligent, creative, and beautiful students. But they need channels to express themselves. Thus, it is crucial to deploy these processes, these channels for them to be able to create. That is why we have created the project (BAPTISTA, 2012, p. 175).

By opening up creative channels, the project “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations” has promoted a re-encounter with elements also existing in Sebastião Salgado’s undertaking, resetting them: from 2004 onwards, the act of hiking – for a long time – was incorporated as one of its core activities.

Hiking

In the photobook “Migrations” (and in the exhibition related to the homonymous project), long hikes were generally marked, in various ways, by deprivation, which reinforced the distresses of ‘humanity in transit,’ in Sebastião Salgado’s words. Extensive, strenuous, and sometimes fatal, these hikes often became, according to those who participated in them, as the only alternative in the face of living conditions that they could no longer put up with. In turn, the incorporation of long hikes into the project “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations” (lasting several days and stretching hundreds of kilometers) clearly had a different nature. First of all, because they were involved in an educational project in which teenage students, advised by teachers, took part. Planned, each hike was regulated by rules: departure and arrival days and times, pre-definition of stopping and landing points, extensive schedule of tasks to be carried out along the way. Preceded by numerous preparations, in them no one ever went into the shadowy unknown, and no one made a pressing crossing to escape death. For the promoting school, partnerships proved to be crucial, primarily due to the risks and difficulties involved in such an initiative, where most participants, in addition to being used to urban habits, had not reached adulthood. Hence the support of

the Army, the Fire Department, the Military Police, and the Environmental Police¹¹. By consolidating this activity in the project, as well as the guiding thematic axes (identity, heritage, and environment), the partnerships began to include other public bodies and entities, such as the IPHAN, the Chico Mendes Institute and the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA)¹².

However, it might be misleading to think of the hiking activity, within the scope of the project “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations,” just as a variation of a ‘study on the environment’ (a widespread practice in the Brazilian school system for some decades). Because people also sought to experience the harshness of hikes, during hours of arduous journey, under the sun and without any stops nearby. Unlike what happened in the hikes registered in the project “Migrations”, this harshness was seen as a desirable and relevant component in the targeted formative process. The challenges imposed on the body and the attitudinal needs they implied were regarded as instruments for various learning situations. After all, what can the body and will do outside urban areas, lacking familiarity with landscapes, habits and customs, amidst the wilderness of the Cerrado?

Twelve years after the first hike, the *Revista Caminhos – O Melhor do Brasil* summarized the objectives of the activity:

The HIKE is a pedagogical action, carried out since 2004, which aims at providing a deep cultural, intellectual, emotional, and physical dive for the students and participants in the region they studied throughout the year, within the Project. [...] it aims to bring you closer to the cultural diversity of these populations, their social organization, their daily lives and their artistic and cultural manifestations (DOSSIÊ, 2016, p. 22)¹³.

The idea of “diving” had already been highlighted by teacher Luís Guilherme Baptista, in 2009:

¹¹ In the first walk, which gathered 48 students, partnerships were established with the João de Barro Scout Group, the Military Fire Department of the Federal District, the Environmental Military Police in Candangolândia and the Army, in addition to a partnership with the team of the Mission Cruls Ecotourism Route (then linked to the mandate of a representative of the Federal District House), not counting other contacts necessary for landings on the route (BAPTISTA, 2019, p. 69).

¹² Later, other public schools also joined the project.

¹³ “The main communication means,” the magazine is another front of creative expression opened by “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations.” Released in 2016, its issue No. “0” claimed its intent to “provide the project and its activities with a memory” (QUEM, 2016, p. 7).

We don't walk, we dive. So, a deep commitment of these children, these young people, to the proposal is needed. You have to get up at 6 in the morning, be ready at 7 o'clock; start walking at 7:30 and walk 4 to 5 hours a day; be ready to attend classes in the afternoon and be with the community in the evening. [...] it is a lesson, everything is a lesson. Students come into contact with the community at night to learn handicraft, to learn their way of life, to learn how to produce 'garapa,' to learn how to live, how to think, how to dance, how people grow in these regions. So they get involved in everything and it is not just about observing. There are 'congada' and 'jongo' presentations and they participate, they have to dance and get interested, study and write (BAPTISTA, 2012, p. 179).

Instead of observing from a distance, it is convenient to immerse in practices, knowledge, and sociability networks, even if temporarily. Even here, an inspiration can emerge from Sebastião Salgado's work, considering the close contact that the photographer establishes, in his projects, with the human groups he photographs.

In the hikes, there is always much to be recognized (given the previous studies) and discovered: other practices, other ways of living, not so geographically distant. For the most part, the routes were drawn taking into account areas close to Brasília: from Brazlândia to Planaltina, 7 days, 110 km on foot, in 2004; the following year, from Morro da Serra dos Pireneus to Catetinho, in Brasília, 16 days, 280 km on foot; in 2006, from the Marco Zero da Missão Cruls, in Formosa, to the Brasília National Park, 14 days and 310 km on foot... And other hikes followed (IPHAN, 2015, p. 75). The history and geography of these areas, studied throughout the school year, were compared with experiences on the path: direct contact with the terrain, vegetation, and watercourses; the interaction with residents, which resulted in listening to their 'anecdotes' and life stories, memories of other times and reflections on the present; the experience, however brief, of various labor worlds, as well as moments of festive fraternization (BAPTISTA, 2012, p. 179).

The long walking paths of the project "Reviving/Reviewing Migrations," punctuated by challenges, with high personal requirements, are committed to transforming hikers. Scheduled for the end of a school year full of activities

associated with the project, each hike does not fail to be an integral part of the many rites of institution to turn these youngsters into adults¹⁴.

This transformation also comes to rethinking Brasília's place in relation to the locations around it. Establishing ties with something that the modern project has left in the shadows – the cities and towns that existed long before the building of a new federal capital, together with their inhabitants and their ways of life, many of them with strong traditions generally identified as 'backward.' Memories and stories that didn't seem to matter; popular practices and lives apparently devoid of unique memories. By trying an inversion in the usual movement from small towns to metropolises, the hikes of the project "Reviving/Reviewing Migrations" left Brasília to privilege and foster, in its itinerary, locations like Brazlândia, Planaltina, Formosa, Goianésia, Cristalina...

Participating for the first time in one of these hikes in 2006, when he was attending High School, and still linked to the project as a college student in 2015, Rodrigo da Silva Soares highlighted some dimensions of his personal experience:

It is like opening a range of vision. A magnified look at things. Recognizing what Brasília is and what is beyond it, in the surroundings, giving value to the importance of the place where I live. Here, in the urban area, we have no contact with the popular culture that surrounds us. The action allows us to take a break from the routine, the urban area, to grasp Brazil, the many 'Brasis' that exist out there (IPHAN, 2015, p. 72)¹⁵.

"Everything is a lesson," and in each meeting there is something to teach and learn – with the utterances, memories, gestures, flavors. Yuri Soares, a former participant in the project who became a History teacher, reported in 2018 an episode of his hiking experience:

¹⁴ The term 'rites of institution' refers to Pierre Bourdieu, who proposed it as a critical counterpoint to 'rites of passage,' in order to mark a social making of difference. According to Bourdieu: "by solemnly marking the passage of a line that establishes a crucial division of the social order, the rite draws the observer's attention to the passage (hence the term rite of passage) when, in fact, what matters is the line. [...] to institute is to consecrate, that is, to sanction and sanctify a state of affairs, an established order [...] the *investiture* (of the knight, deputy, president of the Republic, etc.) consists of sanctioning and sanctifying a difference (pre-existing or not), making it *known* and *recognized*, making it exist as a social difference, becoming known and recognized both by the person distinguished due to it and by others" (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 98-99, author's italics).

¹⁵ Three out of the nine photographic images contained in this article are by Rodrigo Soares.

One of the most remarkable points of the journey was the visit to the Popular Traditions Center, better known as ‘Boi de Seu Teodoro,’ in Sobradinho, where the late master Teodoro Freire spoke of folklore, recalling his youth in Maranhão, his migration to Brasília, and his work at the UnB. After a long day traveling through dirt streets, forests, talking, and having a typical Brazilian dinner that mixed culinary traditions from Maranhão and the Midwest, we were offered a beautiful party with the community (SOARES, 2018, p. 58)¹⁶.

In an ambitious way, in 2008 a great trip was made, partly on foot, partly by bus: as a way to celebrate the centenary of Guimarães Rosa’s birth, the route covered locations in Minas Gerais and Goiás, in Rosa’s pathways between Arinos, Morrinhos, Urucuia, Riachinho, Sagarana, Buritis, Cabeceiras, and Unaí. In this regard, teacher Marilene Lara Carvalho registered, in 2020, a particularly vivid memory, in which literature, architecture, music, human warmth, and moonlight came together:

Near Buritis, in an MST settlement, teacher Mary and I taught a memorable lesson inside a church, where there was not even a bench to sit on, but it was full of attentive people. We took all the equipment and finished the lesson using the end of João Guimarães Rosa’s book, *Grande Sertão Veredas*: Riobaldo, in front of Diadorim’s body, says: this is enchanted love, which will stay with me all my life...

At the end of the lesson, listening to Luar do Sertão, as sang by Milton Nascimento... when we left the church, there was full moon, as a reward. It was filling not only the sky, but also the eyes and consequently the soul (CARVALHO, 2020).

We may say that the hikes started to define a new locus of photographic records, which, although having as their reference the many encounters and contacts on the way, show the hikers as protagonists. Above all, their experiences do provide the images of hikes with a focus: moments of tiredness, troubles, hardships, sadness, but also moments of rest, consolation, joy, solidarity, and companionship, time for listening and speaking. In the images, there is an urgent need to document, especially the group – either in a posed photo, like the one under the Chapéu do Sol (Figure 4), or in seeking relief from the heat and in collective rejoicing caused by the water flowing from the water truck (Figure 5), or at the stops where activities become similar to formal lessons (figures 6 and 7).

¹⁶ We can see that migrations as a theme continued to exist in the hikes when meeting with residents at the stops, regarded, in the example given, in a positive way.

Figure 4. 2017 hike, municipality of Cristalina, Goiás, Brazil: study in the area of Pedra Chapéu do Sol. Break for a photographic record to be shared later. Photograph by Rodrigo Soares.



Source: Collection of the project “Reviving/Reviewing Exoduses”

Figure 5. 2017 hike, municipality of Cristalina, Goiás, Brazil: students bathe with the water that flows from the water truck, after landing. Photograph by Rodrigo Soares.



Source: Collection of the project “Reviving/Reviewing Exoduses”

Figure 6. 2017 hike, Linda Serra dos Topázios Private Natural Heritage Reserve, municipality of Cristalina, Goiás: lesson at landing, with journalist and environmentalist Jaime Sautchuk, who died on July 14, 2021. Photograph by Rodrigo Soares.



Source: collection of the project “Reviving/Reviewing Exoduses”

Figure 7. 2016 hike, Natinópolis, Goiás: night lesson. Photograph by Fontenelle Moraes.



Source: collection of the project “Reviving/Reviewing Exoduses”

In figures 6 and 7, the weight of the students' presence in the composition stands out. In Figure 6, journalist Jaime Sautchuk, with his back turned and in the foreground, serves as a 'springboard' so that the gaze jumps to the faces of attentive hikers. In Figure 7, although the lightest area is the one that attracts our eyes and, consequently, highlights the teacher (who speaks), the play of light and shadow, as well as the framing, reinforce the central horizontal axis, referring more to a situation of assembly than to the traditional configuration of a classroom.

Figure 8. 2016 hike, municipality of Goianésia, Goiás. Hikers crowd and follow the curved road, amidst the breadth of the landscape. Photograph by Fontenelle Moraes.



Source: collection of the project "Reviving/Reviewing Exoduses"

In Figure 8, despite the vegetation occupying most of the frame, the trees in the foreground provide the frame for the main theme, that is, the hikers (which is reinforced by the branches that hang in the upper area, in the center, pointing at them). Their smallness amid the vastness of the landscape ends up accentuating the almost epic sense of the task they fulfill: their compact distribution in space (and in the photographic frame) suggests unity.

Recognized by the IPHAN, the project “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations” is in tune with the resetting of memory policies interconnected to actions for the preservation of Brazilian cultural heritage, especially after the 1988 Federal Constitution. Policies that have been guided by rather inclusive narratives and actions that, as for the so-called ‘intangible heritage,’ have prioritized, from the 2000s onwards, the appreciation and register of cultural practices of groups until then marginalized from most preservation actions, such as indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant groups, and traditional communities. There was also a remodeling of methodologies for the inventory and selection of cultural assets, in order to clarify the need for collaborative perspectives, which imply, in relation to the cultural heritage holders, closeness, listening, sharing, and co-responsibility. Such changes have also reverberated in actions of ‘patrimonial education’ that, renewed, appreciate fieldwork and direct contact with cultural manifestations and their holders, opening up to cognitive, affective, and sensory experiences, as we can sense in the registering the night view of the Chapel of São João Batista Menino, in Pirenópolis, in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Chapel of São João Batista Menino, municipality of Pirenópolis, Goiás.

The place is visited and studied by students who have participated in the “Reviving/Reviewing Exoduses” for 15 years, based on a proposal for an educational action aimed at cultural heritage created by Tadeu Gonçalves, partner and supporter of the project Photograph by Fontenelle Moraes



Source: collection of the project “Reviving/Reviewing Exoduses”

Considering that the nine images highlighted here were produced by project participants (former students who became monitors), it is noticed that they show up as indications of the outstanding meanings of this experience in their lives.

To deal with the catastrophe

The world currently shares, albeit intensely unequally, the effects of its most recent catastrophe, which showed up as the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to its size and depth, it should mark our considerations about the present time, perhaps coming to refound it. As Henry Rousso highlighted, the fugacity of the present time gives it a temporary origin, which from the 20th century onwards seems to maintain its intelligibility in the “deadliest moments of the near past” and which, for the same reason, tend to be more active in collective memory (ROUSSO, 2016, p. 26-27).

At a time when we are forced to stay confined to our homes and avoid, as much as possible, lengthy and intense face-to-face contacts, why, precisely, should we pay attention to activities that involve people on the streets, not only to photograph but to interact with others? Why should we care about people who, without obligation or necessity, choose to walk long hours in groups, going through villages and small towns?

There are many layers susceptible to analysis contained in this educational action named “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations,” persistently continued; I retain and highlight just a few aspects that can justify reflection on it at this time. It is a project that strongly points out the sense of collective belonging, of listening, sharing, solidarity, and engagement. Its participants know and recognize a wide variety of landscapes, cultural practices and people, being sensitized and affected by actions and sayings. In the participation process itself, they produce registers that shape the memory of their experiences, and which, being significant (as indicated by the reports and photographic images of the participants previously highlighted), feed their life stories.

A constant hiker, Francesco Careri thought that “the shortest route is never the best” – there is always a lot to see (and live). According to the Italian architect, “the quality of the passage’s time also depends on the activities that can fill it” (CARERI, 2017, p. 70) and “wasting time, space is gained” (CARERI, 2017, p. 87). Why should we “waste time” walking a path that could be taken by bus or car? This is one of the assumptions of “Reviving/Reviewing Migrations”: hiking shows and teaches more, as it puts us in contact, mobilizes senses and, thus,

transforms. It induces built-in memories – the landscape seen in the photograph is different from the floor to be trodden. And it generates shared memories, based on encounters and discoveries. It is a transformation project, action, and metaphor¹⁷.

Highlighting this formative action allows us to warn that, even in scenarios of extreme distress, pain, and desolation, hope can occur/survive. The teenagers from a public school in Brasília knew how to turn this into something of their own, in so many ways, sparks of hope glimpsed in Sebastião Salgado's photographs (and noticed by Salgado in those he photographed). Hope sets in motion.

Finally, if hiking, at this time, cannot be as free as we would like, it is worth thinking that this condition is temporary, despite its duration having extrapolated even pessimistic predictions. Hiking, however, is never continuous: there is a need to stop, regain energy, review the script, gather forces. Only then is it possible to retake the streets and paths, acting and creating.

¹⁷ Here, we may establish another link with Sebastião Salgado: Paulo Maia (2017) sees in what he names 'feeling of crossing' a major nexus of the photographer's work.

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Memory policies and poetics: views and passages
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