Uma reflexão sobre pós-colonialidade, decolonização e museus virtuais. O caso do Museu Virtual da Lusofonia

A reflection on post-coloniality, decolonization and virtual museums. The case of the Virtual Museum of Lusofonia

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Resumo: *O artigo trata de questionamentos sobre políticas culturais e formas de musealização, e como tais questões se adaptam ao processo de virtualização dos museus cuja intermediação dos bens simbólicos e culturais torna mais complexa a compreensão do fenômeno. Como referencial teórico, utiliza-se da pós-colonialidade e decolonialidade, que apontam como o discurso originado nos impérios coloniais deve ser superado, e a interculturalidade, com a qual se desmonta os discursos de ódio e favorece as trocas simbólicas efetivas entre o Norte e o Sul globais. Finalmente, traz-se considerações sobre consumo cultural circunscrito aos espaços museológicos, especificamente em museus virtuais, tendo como caso de estudo o Museu Virtual da Lusofonia (MVL), ambiente organizado segundo conceito pós-colonial da lusofonia, e que recentemente compõe um dos museus do Google Arts & Culture.*

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Palavras-chave: *Museu Virtual da Lusofonia; políticas culturais; pós-colonialidade; decolonialidade; interculturalidade; Google Arts & Culture.*

Abstract: *The article deals with questions about cultural policies and forms of musealization and how these issues adapt to the virtualization process of museums, whose intermediation of symbolic and cultural goods makes understanding the phenomenon more complex. As a theoretical framework, it uses the post-coloniality and decoloniality, which point out how the discourse originated in colonial empires must be overcome, and interculturality, which dismantles hate speech and favors effective symbolic exchanges between the global North and South. Finally, it brings considerations about cultural consumption circumscribed to museological spaces, specifically in virtual museums, which the case study is the Virtual Museum of Lusophony (MVL), an environment organized according to the post-colonial concept of Lusophony, and which recently composes one of the museums from Google Arts & Culture.*

Keywords: *Virtual Museum of Lusophony; cultural policies; post-coloniality; decoloniality; interculturality; Google Arts & Culture.*

Introduction

This reflection has the theme of lusophony as a background, with the focus of the debate from the Virtual Museum of Lusophony (MVL)[5], in a proposition within the post-colonial theoretical-epistemological field.

It is about questioning the cultural policies about the forms of musealization and its consequences in the reinforcement of hate speech (based on the rise of far right parties and movements) and against intercultural valorization. In Europe and the Global North, these manifestations are intensified based on a supposed "heroic" past, resulting from colonial empires.

It is in our interest to stress the hegemonic patterns built in the political, sociocultural and economic fields, with a central focus on the geographic area of the infrastructure that "subalternized" other parts of this process, which promoted a split in the possibilities of effective intercultural exchanges.

From this starting point, we have structured the text in four parts: (i) museums and their decolonization processes; (ii) the area of post-colonial and decolonial studies; (iii) virtual museums; (iv) MVL as a case of Lusophony interculturality.

The decolonization of museums

It is a mistake to think that differences can constitute a threat, since our world is made up of an enormous plurality. This narrative takes place through an official discourse of the European Union, which is based on a multicultural logic, assuming the conviviality of two stratified and hierarchical cultures, which can be insufficient for an intercultural dynamic, seen as a process.

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5   The Virtual Museum of Lusophony (MVL) is a platform for academic cooperation, in science, education and arts, in the space of the Portuguese-speaking countries and their diasporas, and also extended to Galicia and the Autonomous Region of Macau, bringing together in a common effort universities with projects of investigation and post-graduate teaching in the area of Communication Sciences and Cultural Studies, as well as cultural and artistic associations, all interested, universities nd associations, in the construction and deepening of the meaning of a Lusophone community".

What is observed, however, in Europe, as well as in the rest of the Global North, goes in the opposite direction, with the growth of far right parties and movements and the dissemination of discourses against interculturality, based on a "heroic" colonial historical past. It is in this context that cultural policies are discussed in a critical way, especially the ones discussed in this article, the forms of musealization, namely in Europe and the USA, for insisting on standards centered on the geographic area of the infrastructure, subordinating other parts that make up the process.

In traditional museums, we refer to the colonial period of several countries and to the way in which people's lives in society are represented at the time, with the institutions themselves being a colonial product little updated over time, and which show a western superiority in their collections, curatorship and narrative. From our point of view, this contradicts the idea on which they were based, which sees museums as civic education platforms, grounded in significant material culture, and which should be projects of reflection on heritage, history and civilization (SOUSA, 2020).

This is why we defend the existence of museums that are more inclusive and more involved in the public debate, keeping in mind a story that should be told "in a less simplistic way, in which the 'heroes' can also be 'villains'" (CANELAS, 2019, P. 16).

Thus, it is often said that the first step for a serious discussion about the decolonization of the discourse about museums must involve the recognition of responsibilities (or "blame") in the colonization process itself, an idea which is shared by Chris Whitehead (CANELAS, 2009). Without this recognition, it is not possible to assess what work can be done in museums to promote change, even bearing in mind that most of them depend on the current political power, which is the one who determines the eventual changes.

As a way of decolonizing museums, Felwine Sarr, co-authour of the report on the restitution of the African works of art handed, in 2018, to the president of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, reflects

in the newspaper *Le Monde*, on the transmission of cultural memory and about a new ethic based on mutual respect between Africa and the West. He notes that, in Europe, museums are the heirs of the cabinets of curiosities, being thought of as the place where the group is constituted and enunciates its identity through the objects, therefore being "a museum of the 'us'" (SARR, 2019, n.p.). Then came the moment of colonial conquests, in which Paris, for example, considered itself as the center of the universe and decided that all the beauties in the world should be found there. Now, during the colonial period, the etnographic museums were created, which fabricated a stereotyped discourse about others, so he questions wether their primary functions were not compromised by obsolence (SARR, 2019).

It is from this perspective that Dan Hicks, in the book *The Brutish Museums* (2020), appeals to western museums to return the objects stolen in the violent days of the empire, during what he calls "world war zero", as part of a larger project of addressing the outstanding debt of colonialism.

There are some museums that integrate decolonization dynamics into their processes, which leads us to question what this means, in addition to the need to know who has the right knowledge in this whole theme. And more: how could the collections be opened to the people from the countries where the exhibited artifacts come from? Wayne Modest, specialist in material culture, in an interview for *Público* (CANELAS, 2019), recalls that what prevents museums from having a more serious content policy related to the theme of colonization derives from a strong belief in the safeguard systems of the existing heritage, "in the way in which we are told that things must be preserved, inventoried, studied" (2019, p. 18).

Therefore, in order to contribute to the debate about the MVL as a post-colonial proposal, we consider it necessary to address the fact that, in most museums, a discourse that ratifies the fact that the objects on display belong to white European people seems to be consensual, even though this is not entirely true.

The dominant logic, according to Wayne Modest, shows that many European museums already see themselves as civic spaces, although they continue to privilege white people as the stereotype of European citizens, evidencing colonial practices that exclude many people. Today's mistakes do not have to be repeated in the future, which is the case of certain ethnology museums that are designed from the perspective of a "us" and not of a "them".

In this sense, it is urgent to decolonize museums, allowing the presentation of collections to be done in a different way from those that are currently used, contextualizing them and observing the way in which eventual artifacts were obtained, in addition to considering different curatorships regarding temporary exhibitions. In other words, as pointed out by historian António Camões Gouveia, in a conversation conducted by Marta Lança and published on the *BUALA* portal, "what exists in the museums and archives can be told in a different way" (LANÇA, 2019).

In an effort to synthesize, a trans-historical approach could constitute an encounter "between the old and the new, objects from the past and present, linking heritage and tradition, contemporary art and social issues"; and "new approaches to our historical premises are spaces that allow for rekindling the interpretations of individual objects in relation to their contexts and narratives"; allowing the correction of "the historical look and still haunted by the colonial archive" (LANÇA, 2019, n.p.).

Post-colonial and decolonial studies

The MVL was created far from the Portuguese colonial empire, in the midst of post-coloniality (2013); therefore, it was not subject to the constraints experienced in relation to the so-called "traditional museums", namely those with an ehtnological profile. Thus, that structure came from a reflection based more on decolonial and post-colonial studies than on the perspective of museological studies, which may suggest some contradiction, but which, in practice, gives it a better structure.

The criticisms of the field of post-colonial studies by Latin American decolonialism start from the epistemological origins of the former, "insofar as their genealogy is located in French post-structuralism, and not in the dense history of the decolonial global thinking" (MINGOLO, 2017). In fact, it is easier for the European intellectuals to accept post-colonial thinking than decolonial thinking, since it is closer to them, through Third World migrants, than that of "native Europeans" in the First World. Furthermore, in the scientific production of the Global North, Latin America and the Caribbean are absent or occupy a marginal place in central debates and texts which, at least, should "face the seductions and promises of neoliberal globalization" (CORONIL, 2000, p. 107).

Despite the fact that post-coloniality contains coloniality within its origin, it can differ from what was traditionally done in the field, with a critique of the paradigm of European rationality and modernity.

> The post-colonial theory not only describes the disadvantages, but also aims to deconstruct the reasons for marginalization, inequality and evolution of a feeling of alterity, ultimately seeking to propose ways to improve. (GANTER; ORTEGA, 2019, P. 262)

From this perspective, post-colonial thinking aimed to contribute for the deconstruction of the "myth of a single and objective science" (GANTER; ORTEGA, 2019, P. 262), only with regard to its aspects of social and economic domination. This would not include the entire West (only its ruling classes), spreading the idea of a hegemonic ethnocentrism or a homegeneous, exclusionary and class-ridden aristocracy.

Furthermore, there would be a blind spot in the analysis of both fields (QUIJANO, 2000; QUIJANO apud CASTRO-GÓMEZ; GROSFOGUEL, 2016) regarding the naming and exploitation of the North over the South, based on long-lasting ethnoracial structure, which since the 16th century has offered a European hierarchical system against a non-European one. Therefore, it would be interesting to incorporate a new approach that included both reflections, such as the understanding

that the processes analysed by the decolonial and post-colonial fields work in a network (GROSFOGUEL, 2016, P. 16), integrating complex, heterogeneous, multiple elements in a world-system of long duration[6]. In this way, decolonial and post-colonial studies could offer, together, a greater complexity of analysis and of comprehension of reality.

As ways of executing this joint proposal between the fields, we believe it is possible to install the colonial differences at the center of the knowledge production process (MIGNOLO, 2005). This could be done by highlighting a symbolic resistance (CASTRO-GÓMEZ; GROSFOGUEL, 2016), opposing the hegemony of knowledge of the North, fostering a "decolonial spin" (MIGNOLO, 2008), which encompasses modern institutions, such as the university, towards a turning point where Latin American communicology can renew the theoretical paradigms, and by breaking with the epistemology of coloniality and with the models of the Global North (RIVERA, 2016).

The relationship between post-colonial studies and media and communication studies takes place in the role of "local production as a resource in the face of cultural colonization and as a way of influencing global currents" (SUZINA, 2018, P. 25). This goes through community communication, commercial media and even the regulation of the media sector in Latin America, in order to "intervene in the composition of the narrative, with the possibility of transforming the hegemonic narrative" (TORRES, 2008, p. 28).

Escobar (2005), on the other hand, raises a relevant question in the face of trends in post-structuralist geography, which helps us think about the place of nature and the nature of the place from the discourses of globalization arising from "capitalcentrism", in the sense that the theoretical construction of post-development places capitalism at the center of the development narrative, which pressuposes refusals, devaluations and marginalizations of other and new forms of development outside this centric logic.

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6   Tal como uma hetetarquía (KONTOPOULOS, 1993, in CASTRO-GÓMEZ y GROSFOGUEL, 2016).

Overcoming this logic evokes the decolonization of places, of the "center" and the "periphery", and the incorporation of effective practices, platforms and languages of intercultural exchanges that are based on pillars imagined in "non-centric" fields of disputes. For this exercise, Mignolo (2008) advocates the need to combine civil desobedience with epistemic desobedience, as an effort for the decolonizing option, which starts with an overwhelming revision of history, museums and memory to imagine things, shapes, values and the world view of the past, present and future.
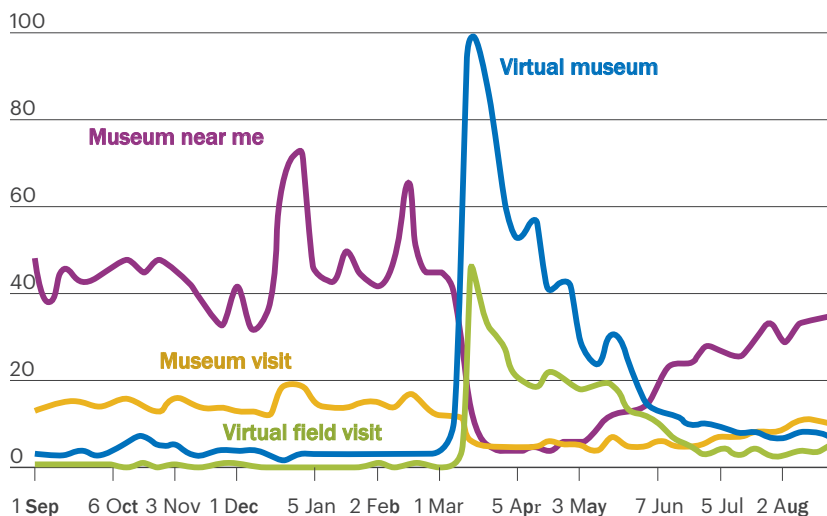
The virtual museums

Regarding the "virtualization" of museums as a way of adapting to the current socio-technical contingency, this dynamic emerges as a basis for a possible change of paradigm in the consumption of art and culture, thanks to the potentialities based on new communication and information technologies. This is because if the consumption of art and culture already expands the boundaries of what is understood as the experience of consumption, it derives from the interaction between a subjective entity, the consumer, and an objective entity, the product, in a given context (ADDIS, 2005).

In other words, the consumption of culture through virtual museums allows the subjective entity to interact and share its experiences thanks to multimedia tools, thus being able to reach the level of what Aksal (2014) calls "edutainment". With the interactivity generated by new communication technologies in the process of museological consumption, as in the case of virtual museums, the cultural work exposed virtually responds to the demands of the consumer, already called "interactor" because of this (TANG; WU; ZANG, 2020).

Added to the ability of the media to share that make up the virtual museums, it is possible to share the museological experience in many ways, from the virtualized work itself, through our registration in the form of an opinion, and it can be consumed by any other individual who has access to the web environment and is connected to the same digital

social network. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020, for example, there was an exponential growth in visits to virtual museums, which can be stabilized at high levels after the so-called "new normal" (whatever that means) is established (RAPOSO, 2020):

Figure 1 – Global search trends for museums in search engines, between September 1, 2019, and August 28, 2020. Percentage relative to 100 defined by most access (virtual museum).

Source: Google Trends. At: JORNAL PÚBLICO, Sep 6. 2020.

However, there are many criticisms to the virtualization of museums, as in one of the first works on the theme, "The museum of the third kind" (ASCOTT, 1996), in which what a virtual museum is is discussed and what the consequences are of the indirect/remote mediation with the work, the dissociation of the museological object from its aura (MUCHACHO, 2005, P. 579), or the trivialization of the concept of museum for any initiative of an artistic compilation on the web (MAGALDI; SCHNEIDER, 2010). Nonetheless, given that "multimedia applications, connectivity and interactivity turn technology into a variable (not a medium) whose effects enrich the experience and

its value" (ADDIS, 2005), it is undeniable that virtual museums create a new reality in the communicability between the museum and its public (MUCHACHO, 2005, p. 581):

> The virtual museum is essentially a museum with no borders, capable of creating a virtual dialogue with the visitor, giving him/her a dynamic, multidisciplinary vision and an interactive contact with the collection and as an exhibition space. By trying to represent the real, a new reality is created, parallel and coexisting with the first one, which should be seen as a new vision, or a set of new visions, about the traditional museum (2005, p. 582).

After Lewis' (1996) definition of what a virtual museum is for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*[7], in which the distinction between what is a real collection and what is a virtual one is clear, Schweibenz (1998) advances with the concept, treating the virtual museum as

> (...) a logically related collection of digital objects composed in different media and, through its capacity to provide connectivity and multiple access points, lends itself to transcending traditional methods of communication and interaction with visitors. Flexible in relation to its needs and interests, it does not have a real place or space, its objects and information related to them can be disseminated all over the world (1998, p. 131).

Since the beginning of the experience of art and culture consumption in museums, the experience has always extrapolated outside the walls of the buildings, both in online environments, as previously presented, and offline, in the lives of the visitors (JAFARI et al., 2013, p. 1742), thus, it is necessary to understand in what cultural context the museum is inserted, whether virtual or not. Therefore, virtual or not, museums are considered places of memory, responsible for disseminating a representation of a certain "reality". The narratives built to express this chosen reality depend on the objectives, methodology and experience

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7   "A collection of digitally recorded images, sound files, text documents and other data of historical, scientific or cultural interest which are accessed through electronic media. A virtual museum does not house real objects and, therefore, lacks the permanence and unique qualities of a museum in the institutional definition of the term". (LEWIS, 1996)

of the teams in each cultural sector, as well as on the objectives and capacities of the institutions.

However, it is a fact that the experiences allowed by new communication and information technologies enhance the revision of museological issues, both the conceptual ones (such as the issue of colonizations discussed in this article) and paradigms such as public participation, with in-person visits to museums, in addition to other resources allowed by digital media, such as customization, interactivity and navigability (SUNDAR et al., 2015). Through them, one can get closer to the details of the work of art with high definition cameras; it is possible to see the collection in virtual environments thanks to videos with 360^0 techonology, or obtain information in text, audio or video while contemplating the real work, through 3D glasses and the augmented reality narrative.

With regard to Google Arts & Culture (A&C), an aggregator of museum pieces from the whole world, like a "museum of the museums", or a metamuseum (TANG; WU; ZHANG, 2020), the digital platform allows linked or physical virtual museums with virtualized collections to take advantage of the platform's potential. Released in 2011 as Google Art Project, it offers virtual visits to hundreds of museums, their collections and exhibitions, without a curatorial interference, according to Google, on the availability of external content on its platform.

In our case study, MVL has been part of the GA&C since September 4, 2020, offering high-resolution images and videos from its collection, which increases its audience reach on a global scale[8]. In addition to this, Google's metamuseum has tools for new immersive experiences, such as Live View in Street View, which emulates the real room where the work of art is exhibited, or the "Art Camera" feature, which leads the spectator

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8   Since the Virtual Museum of Lusophony already existed before the integration with Google, it had its own characteristics before being included in the GA&C platform. According to Lima and Mendes (2009), there would be three categories of virtual museums: the ones that exist through virtual communication media, with no counterparts or correspondents in physical media; the ones that have counterparts or correspondents in physical media; and those with no correspondent in the physical world, but whose collections are digitally converted counterparts or correspondents in the physical world. This last one is the case of the Virtual Museum of Lusophony.

to see details of the work – which might not be possible in person. There are also other entries based on new forms of participation, since, installed on a powerful platform such as Google, the collection inserted on GA&C is allowed sharing criteria, from self-portraits with the works, thanks to a selfie tool, to the transposition of the art piece in physical environments, thanks to the same 3D feature, made popular by the Nintendo application, Pokémon GO.

Lusophony as a proposal of interculturality: the case of MVL

The metaphor of circumnavigation constitutes a creative way of characterizing the contemporary experience, which is, after all, a technological experience (HUGON, 2010). It allows us to think about the crossing as a human experience in a network and in which the dominant "contingent intelects" (COSTA, 2020) circulate more easily. The current circumstances are those of a world mobilized in its different practices by all kinds of technologies, especially mobile platforms of communication, information and leisure, by new forms of social interaction and by emerging models of interaction and association.

Figure 2 – Homepage of the Virtual Museum of Lusophony.

Source: Self-authored.

The case of the MVL (Figure 2, previous illustration), contributes to the elaboration of an intercultural cartography in the Portuguese-speaking world, of hypermediated places (BOLTER; GRUSIN, 1996), spots where technological mediation favors immersive states, geographical displacements, social exchanges, sensory crossings and imaginary evasions.

The technological circumnavigation that we put into perspective is intended to be hosted on the MVL platform, which is part of a strategy aimed at the symbolic ordering of the world, through transcultural and transnational networks of knowledge, openness to the diversity of langauges and cultures, and in which are discussed the problems of hegemonic language and political, scientific, cultural and artistic subordination (MARTINS, 2018a, 2018b).

The point of view adopted for this technological crossing is that a great language of cultures and thinking, such as the Portuguese language, can not fail to be in the "contingent intelects" (COSTA, 2000) and therefore must be, equally, a great language of human and scientific knowledge (MARTINS, 2014), regardless of the colonial violence associated with it.

To accomplish this process, and already registered in the GA&C since September 2020, the MVL proposes the mapping of the intercultural dynamics resulting from Portuguese colonization through the eventual preservation of these tangible vestiges and the correspondent reuse today (COSTA, 2019).

In short, the investigation that we propose to carry out intends to act in five axes: in the landmarks of memory, through the survey, identification and analysis of statues, streets, sculptures and memorials that represent the presence of the Portuguese; in linguistic landmarks, through the survey, identification and analysis of documents (books, magazines, articles, among other written records) that relate the Portuguese presence in the local culture; in sociocultural landmarks, through the survey and description of rituals and other common socio-cultural practices, perceiving the intercultural dynamics; in the application of inquiries in strategic posts of the Portuguese-speaking space; and in the maintenance of the MVL's current interactive platform.

The MVL excludes the idea that with the globalization process there was merely an economic phenomenom, aimed at the electronic integration of financial markets, with its development connected to information and communication technology (GIDENS, 2004). It is not just like that: through the internet (browsers, websites and hosts), references of trips and wandering are used, inviting us to give in to the appeal of the open sea (through the web), to an impulse that inhabits the nomadic being, shaped by the technological revolution (COSTA, 2013; HUGON, 2010).

We do not "deny" that a process of unification or the world has occured through the expansion of capitalism, but it has also been diversified, referenced by resistances and different adaptations (SAHLINS, 1993). Regarding the phenomena of uniformity and fragmentation provoked by the cosmopolitan globalization, this technological circumnavigation goes in the opposite direction, privileging the results based on an intercultural, transcultural, critical and inclusive possibility (MARTINS, 2018).

It is assumed in the MVL that the "multiculturalist globalization" may oppose the "cosmopolitan globalization", thus framing an inclusive Lusophony, based on a globalization of what is diverse, different, made by mixing, by the diversity of ethnicities, languages, memories and traditions (MARTINS, 2017), in which the idea that uniformity is not the same as homogeneity stands out (BAYLY, 2004), and in which only the affability towards the "other" will allow the sense of humanity to awake (KAPUSCINSKI, 2006).

The question of how the inhabitants of the previously colonized countries and the ex-colonizers represent the colonial past (LICATA et al., 2018) and recycle it is a crucial question to understand the Lusophone cartography resulting from the proposed technological circumnavigation.

In the MVL, the concept of interculturality is privileged (COSTA, 2019), which is different from the notion of multiculturalism, which only presupposes the coexistence of two stratified and hierarchical cultures. Therefore, interculturality distances itself from the Luso-tropical

dynamics, associated with Portuguese colonization, where a one-dimensional cut was emphasized by those who held power (ABADIA et al., 2016; CABECINHAS, 2007; CABECINHAS; FEIJÓ, 2010; MARTINS, 2015; SOUSA, 2017). For this reason, the MVL considers interculturality as a process, which means that several people with various inequalities participate in it, transcending any multicultural rethoric (CABECINHAS; CUNHA, 2018).

The European maritime expansion of the 15th and 16th centuries was a process that opened itself to alterity, diversity and to knowledge of the other, but which failed because it assimilated and destroyed every difference, producing colonialism. It is in this sense that failing to consider the differences between colonial histories and colonization processes may lead to imposing on one people the post-colonial narrative of another, as pointed out by Ana Paula Ferreira (2007).

In this paradigm crisis, the identity plan integrates a broader process of change which, according to Stuart Hall (2000), shakes the frames of reference that previously seemed to give a certain stability to individuals. Homi Bhabha (1998) even talks about hybrid intercultural spaces.

With regard to Lusophony, the MVL proposes the deconstruction, together with its protagonists, of the mistakes resulting from a history of the relationship between a colonial "self" and a colonizing "other" (MARTINS, 2014). This is so it does not turn into any "luso-aphonia" (COUTO, 2009).

In this sense, the MVL outlines a reimagining of Lusophony, decolonizing the minds of its protagonists (NGUGI WA THIONG'O el al., 1986; MBEMBE, 2017), in order to overcome these mistakes and resolve resentments (FERRO, 2009). As pointed out by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro (2016), it is not just a matter of decolonizing the languages of the great European narratives, to which Edward Said appealed, but of decolonizing people, decolonizing the colonizer and their image and decolonizing the decolonized and their image, resolving resentments, senses of superiority and/or inferiority, as well as ideological imaginaries.

Lusophony is understood in the MVL as a post-colonial vision that results from Portuguese colonization in relation to the currently self-determined countries (Angole, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe and East Timor). Despite the mistakes in which it navigates, we do not look at it in a Lusocentric dynamics, since it does not have the yoke of "Portugality" weighing on its shoulders, as occured in the colonial period. It is a term inscribed in the cultural area, even if an exercise in needed to dismantle its misunderstandings (MARTINS, 2014).

Thus, The MVL emerged from this intense debate in 2016, having been developed and promoted by the CECS – Center for Communication and Society Studies (University of Minho, Braga, Portugal), as part of its strategic project financed by the FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology (Government of Portugal), taking advantage of the fact that the Portuguese language is the fourth most spoken language in the world, being used by over 260 million people. According to the United Nations projections, in 2050 there will be close to 400 million Portuguese speakers, a number that will grow to 500 million by the end of the century (RETO et al., 2016).

On the other hand, Portuguese is the third most used language on the internet, a fact that values the language in the context of new technologies of the present and future. These are data that have weighed in the design of the Virtual Museum of Lusophony as a virtual platform, taking advantage of the ballast that digitization allows for the encounter of cultures in the context of Lusophony, developed with a focus on the promotion of interculturality, having emerged, consequently, in an already decolonized form and in accordance with the proposal of definition of a museum by ICOM – International Council of Museums.

The MVL emerges as a platform for academic cooperation in science, education and arts, in the space of the Portuguese-speaking countries and their diasporas, which extend to Galicia and Macao, and in its mission we can read about the intention of promoting knowledge by the Portuguese-speaking countries, of their countless forms of artistic and cultural

expression, which must be gathered, preserved and disseminated, both within the Lusophone context and internationally.

It is a decolonized space that intends to be a mechanism that invites the active participation of citizens, making records available, commenting on the preserved "works" in the museum and (re)constructing a collective memory. This goes through the questioning of the way in which the colonial past weighs on intercultural relations nowadays, both on the side of the colonizer and on the side of the ex-colonized, allowing its inhabitants to look to the past as a way of building dynamics for the future.

According to the objectives it presents, we highlight the intention of articulating of the competences of digital technology with the preservation, research and promotion of the Lusophone historical-cultural heritage, as well as a contribution to the expansion of reciprocal knowledge between Portuguese-speaking countries, bringing their peoples together and allowing the construction of a more informed future, in which the intercultural dialogue and respect for the cultural heritage and the sigularity of the other prevail.

The participation of citizens, still in its initial stage, begins in the period of construction of the museum's collections. The MVL hopes that the gathering of "works" to be registered in the museum (photographs, sound recordings, audiovisual recordings, texts, music, achitectural and ethnographic heritage records etc.) will be done with the populations of the Portuguese-speaking countries with their active participation; that the recording of histories and lifestyles will be done as close as possible to all social groups in Portuguese-speaking countries; that all the survey and analysis work actively involves education professionals, politicians, cultural and artistic agents, journalists and other media professionals, historians, sociologists and communication researchers[9].

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9   Information on the website of the Virtual Museum of Lusophony. Available at: http://www.museuvirtualdalusofonia.com/.

Final considerations

The museums with ethnographic collections are filled with fragments of the world. As Joaquim Pais de Brito (2016) points out, part of the knowledge that embodied antropology was built with them, the academic discipline that is at their origin and that developed with them. The collections had an evolutionary approach, highlighting the stages of evolution of cultures and peoples, with European culture being placed at a superior level, since it was assumed that it had already reached its maximum level of civilization. In the last 30 years, some of the most important museums in the world began to change their designation by no longer being known for specialities in anthropology, ethnology and ethnography, or even for arts and popular traditions, to be designated as museums of the cultures of the world or museums of the civilizations. It is the very idea of a museum as it was constructed by the Western view, and in the way in which its collection was accumulated, that is now questioned.

Today, the question asked is how museums are going to represent the "other". Also, the scenario is a complex one, because, as pointed out by Mónica Ferro, director of the United Nations Population Fund, "the great crisis of our times is this inability to put ourselves in the other's shoes" (CARVALHO, 2019, n.p.), which causes the intercultural dialogue to suffer even more constraints.

In practice, the role of curatorial artivism takes into account learning that every decolonization process does not occur by iteslf. Artivism consolidates itself as a cause and social claim and, at the same time, as an artistic rupture – namely through the proposition of alternative scenarios, landscapes and ecologies of fruition, participation and artistic creation. Artivism is a conceptual neologism still of unstable consensus, whether in the field of social sciences or in the field of the arts. It appeals to links, as classic as prolix and controversial, between art and politics, and stimulates the potential destinies of art as an act of resistance and subversion (RAPOSO, 2015).

Altogether, it is translated into a process that cannot be configured in an ahistorical dynamic, given that its development must take into account the context in which the events took place, taking steps forward, but promoting a contextualization that avoids presenteeism (TORGAL, 2015), in addition to anachronism.

From this perspective, the MVL, as a post-colonial creation, born in a decolonized way, can contribute to the promotion of diversity, reconfiguring identities, and to the improvement of intercultural relations in the 21st century.

It is a process that is neither linear nor simple, since the weight of the colonial past still wieghs today and is visible in the parts that comprise it. Hence the need for mental decolonization, which is practically felt in the museums, but which, in Portugal, although a member of Sul Global (Global South), also stands out in school history textbooks, which reflect a Lusotropicalist vision of Portuguese exceptionality, which, in the end, still reflects what happens in the society.

The struggle is established in the exercise of strengthening a vision of an inclusive and decentered Lusophony, far from Lusocentric dynamics, but based on diversity.

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ARTIGO

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