Weaving memories: the creation and trajectory of the project “The city for all: perception, belonging, and preservation of the cultural heritage as a way of constituting the senses of collectivity in Bocaina city”

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ABSTRACT

The project "The city for all: perception, belonging, and preservation of the cultural heritage as a way of constituting the senses of collectivity in Bocaina city", created in 2020, is an initiative of the Research Center for Language Studies in Architecture and City of the Institute of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo, in São Carlos. Supported by the citizen science methodology, it aims at sharing scientific actions between university and city and creating a space for dialogue with the population towards a collective construction of scientific and empirical knowledge about Bocaina and subsidies for the development of public policies for the city focused on Cultural Heritage. This article describes the project and its trajectory to date for encouraging the design of projects in other contexts as a way to establish links, stimulate a sense of belonging, and above all, keep the local collective memory alive, thinking, in other words, in the broader sense of the [univer]city concept.


1 INTRODUCTION

The project "The city for all: perception, belonging, and preservation of the cultural heritage as a way of constituting the sense of collectivity in Bocaina city" is an initiative of the Research Center for Language Studies in Architecture and City of the Institute of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo, São Carlos, which involved five postgraduate students, a scientific initiation student, and a doctoral professor of the same institution. Created in early 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic, it was conceived to enable the sharing of scientific actions between university and city.

Due to its significant amount of original architectural features and some traditional customs and celebrations, Bocaina is a living example of cities in the countryside of São Paulo State that were formed from the coffee plantations. Therefore, and in an attempt to understand the preservation of the local heritage, actions were developed towards an exchange of knowledge, memories, and affections related to the city.

Together with residents, former residents, and friends of both the city and the cultural heritage of Bocaina, the project investigates the memories and affections that awaken the feeling of belonging and the participation of those groups in the preservation of the assets that represent their identity. It aims at a collective generation of subsidies for the development of public policies for the city and dissemination of those memories and affections.

"The city for all", which is based on the citizen science methodology, can be understood as an educating collective project, in the sense of a libertarian education, as proposed by Paulo Freire (1987; 1996). It enables a horizontal exchange of experiences, living, and knowing, from which knowledge can be constructed, and proposes actions for the valorization and protection of the cultural heritage of Bocaina dialoguing with its holders, i.e., the population. According to Paulo Freire (1996, p. 12, our translation), "[...] teaching is not transferring knowledge, but creating the possibilities for its production or construction".

1 Research involved: “Affective Inventory: appropriation processes of the cultural heritage by the population of Bocaina-SP, PhD, Ana Laura Assumpção; “City and perception: Cultural heritage in Bocaina-SP and the relations of belonging in the formation of collective identity”, MA, Ana Paula de Castro Vieira; “Photography in the study of the city: from artifact in the archive to the uses and functions of the image for the construction and maintenance of memory spaces in Bocaina-SP”, MA, Bruna Cristina Bevilacqua; “Cultural Heritage and Symbolic Investment: A study about the patrimonial condition of the São João de Bocaina School Group”, MA, João Gonçalves Neto; “Historical urban dwellings in Bocaina, SP: spatial conformation, changes and permanences of uses”, MA, Maria Helena Gabriel; “Cultural Heritage in Bocaina: study of recurrences in elements of eclectic facades as a constituent of the formal repertoire of the urban landscape”, scientific initiation, Beatriz Haberman.
The article describes some actions already undertaken, others in development, and some proposals and challenges to be faced. The aim is not only to describe the project, but also to propose actions for different cities, communities, and groups towards establishing links, stimulating the sense of belonging, and, above all, keeping the local collective memory alive.

2 THE CITIZEN SCIENCE METHODOLOGY

The project "The city for all" is based on a citizen science approach, which focuses essentially on the democratization of the knowledge production process, linking technicians and community members towards the development of scientific studies. Individuals are no longer receivers or suppliers of information, but members of a group of researchers who shape practice (ALBAGLI, CLINIO & RAYCHTOCK, 2014).

The theme of popular involvement in scientific initiatives, increasingly discussed in the academic field, is not recent. From a historical perspective, the initiatives may have been more clearly designed in the 1960s, a period of significant social and political transformations worldwide. According to Engel (2000), in the field of sociology, the idea that the social scientist should have more contact with the research object, get out of isolation, and put knowledge into practice, directly interfering with the results, started to gain strength in the 1960s. As an example, the action-research emerged "from the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice" (ENGEL, 2000, p. 182, our translation).

Although not as widespread as action-research, citizen science arose around the 1900s, in a study that aimed to count birds and involved an extensive participation of amateur volunteer groups, who provided data on the counting of species in predefined regions (SOARES & SANTOS, 2011).

In academia, citizen science has emerged in the field of preservation and environmental monitoring, an area in which such a methodology has been recurrently adopted. Furthermore, a significant number of studies related to the mapping of urban areas, astronomy, and applied science has been developed. The adoption of the methodology in the broad field of social sciences is still timid, placing "The city for all" as a vanguard exploratory action as a citizen science project in the field of cultural heritage preservation in Brazil.

The research participants can be called citizen scientists, thus reiterating the political character of their activities and rescuing “the first person” and the conformation of a democratic practice with an emancipatory objective. The attribution of social and scientific responsibility to community members is a determining factor for the return of knowledge to the social domain, building it back together with society (ENGEL, 2000). Therefore, methods that make use of social participation aim at the understanding of a complex human process, rather than at the prescription of a universal law (BASKERVILLE, 1999).

Below are the guidelines from the Ten Principles of Citizen Science report prepared by the working group Sharing best practice and building capacity of the European Citizen Science Association (ECSA) for the understanding of the way citizen science is guided:
1. Citizen science projects actively involve citizens in a scientific endeavour that generates new knowledge or understanding. Citizens can act as contributors, collaborators, or project leaders and play a meaningful role.

2. Citizen science projects have a genuine science outcome (e.g., answer to a research question or information on conservation action, management decisions, or environmental policy).

3. Both professional and citizen scientists benefit from taking part in the projects, and benefits can include social ones, publication of research outputs, learning opportunities, personal enjoyment, satisfaction through contributions to scientific evidence e.g. to address local, national and international issues, hence influencing policy.

4. Citizen scientists can participate in multiple stages of a scientific process, including development of a research question, design of a method, data collection and analyses, and report of results.

5. Citizen scientists receive feedback from a project such as the way their data are used and research, policy, or societal outcomes.

6. Citizen science is a research approach, with limitations and biases that should be considered and controlled. However, unlike traditional research approaches, it provides opportunities for greater public engagement and democratization of science.

7. Citizen science project data and meta-data are made publicly available and, wherever possible, results are published in an open access format. Data sharing can occur during or after a project, unless it is prevented by security or privacy concerns.

8. Citizen scientists are acknowledged in project results and publications.

9. Citizen science programs are evaluated regarding their scientific output, data quality, participants’ experience, and wider societal or political impact.

10. Leaders of citizen science projects take into consideration legal and ethical issues on copyright, intellectual property, data sharing agreements, confidentiality, attribution, and environmental impact of activities. (ECSA, 2015).

In what follows is an example of citizen science employed in the field of memory and preservation that acted as a project reference and helped the creation of this project.

3 MEMORY FOR ALL PROGRAM

The program “Memory for All” is focused on the study, systematization, and dissemination of Portugal’s recent history and some of its main goals are the collection, documentation, and dissemination of individual and family memories evoked by souvenirs, artifacts, photographs, and other affective objects. As described on the “Memory for all” website\(^2\), it is a training and research collaborative program and a citizen science program that

\(^2\) Retrieved from https://www.memoriaparatodos.pt/.
promote the study, organization, and dissemination of Portugal's historical, cultural, and technological heritage, developed in close connection with archives, institutions, municipalities, schools, and local associations. Based at the Institute of Contemporary History and at the Center of Documentation and Studies on the History of the First Republic and Republicanism, both at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the New University of Lisbon, it counts on full professor Maria Fernanda Rollo, its main founder and current scientific coordinator, and a network of academic researchers and distinct actions that include the participation of several segments of society inscribed in the Citizen Science scope.

[...] the program was formalized and developed and its main missions are the collection, sharing and preservation of memories and testimonies, democratization of access to the tools of historical research, promotion of collaborative dynamics of research, production and dissemination of knowledge, and creation of new sources for research, focusing on the social dynamics of the construction of memory as an essential factor for the definition of identity (ROLLO, 2020, p. 37, our translation).

Initially, the project was conceived in the Centenary of the Republic, in Portugal, for bringing to light the history of the first republican years that had been veiled by the censorship actions of the subsequent period, i.e., New State (Rollo, 2020, p. 36).

It was then possible to apprehend the wealth and extent of objects, especially documents and photographs owned by private individuals and, especially, the memory(ies) that endured among heirs, i.e., relatives of those who still lived through the events of October 1910 and in the following years. The relevance of such contributions for the deepening and enrichment of the history of the First Republic period was very clear (ROLLO, 2020, p. 36, our translation).

The project’s digital platform has currently made material from 14 projects available. The themes, which range from historical facts, such as the Carnation Revolution, and geographic spaces (e.g., “Aldeias” project) to the memory of the environmental heritage in the face of climate change and the Agenda 2030, with the project “Lagoa dos Óbitos”\(^3\), trigger the mobilization of academic researchers and citizens for the collection of stories and favor insurgent research themes. The material/product of the actions is available in an open access database towards contributions to current and future research and complies with regulations regarding ethics and copyrights. Digital media, characteristic of Citizen Science initiatives, in the program “Memory for All” also take the lead in relation to research tools:

Similarly to its matrix, the commitment of the program “Memory for All” is, in short, based on scientific practice for people and communities and their contexts, involving them in various levels and seeking a collaborative dynamic that promotes the preservation and

\(^3\) See more about this and other projects at https://memoriaparatodos.pt/.
appreciation of memory, creativity, and creation of new knowledge. It also ensures its sharing and promotes accessibility, thus constituting an interface and intermediation between academia and society. The use of digital tools is natural and inevitable, sought and developed, reflecting and appropriating the digital context for the possibilities it provides and the way it shapes and conditions the production of knowledge and society in general, as it may be perceived through the Memories of the Digital (ROLLO, 2020, p. 41, our translation).

The main key of the project “Memory for All” is citizen participation throughout the process. The citizen is not considered a passive subject that receives ready-made data and information, but rather an active collaborator in decision-making and actions, hence in the production of knowledge. Such empowerment of communities, groups, and individuals⁴, when considered in the heritage processes through the instruments and methodologies that comprise citizen science, produces knowledge and, concomitantly, legitimates identities. Besides being a process of document collection, the project induces an appreciation of individual memories in the constitution of a collective memory, providing the participants with a feeling of belonging.

Although not so recent, citizen science has not gained space in the scientific field as another type of traditional research method and has been slowly explored in different areas. The democratization of knowledge, an element that reveals the potentiality of the method, has been emphasized, reinforcing the idea knowledge is everyone’s right. The crises currently faced by Brazilian research have offered opportunities for analyses of the insufficiency of work that uses conventional scientific methods to understand social problems in certain contexts. Therefore, the supply of places for other stories and the thinking of other propositions for understanding our world are an attempt to break with the power structure in which science is traditionally developed, theoretical knowledge is considered more important than field work, and field work is more important than transdisciplinary initiatives.

A progressive incorporation of citizen science in several areas of knowledge suggests the method is and will be present in research, not simply as the only one to be used, but associated with others, thus clarifying research problems and revealing the universal character of science.

4 PRACTICAL ACTIONS

Some practical actions have already been undertaken and others have been under development since the beginning of the project in 2020, i.e., for approximately one and a half year. They have been divided into three groups, namely educational actions in schools, digital actions, and in-person actions in the city.

4.1 Educational actions

Three educational actions in schools must be cited - one has been completed and two were scheduled to take place in the second half of 2021. The three were designed for a same group of children, i.e., 5th grade students from three municipal schools in Bocaina. The activity

⁴ See more about the role of communities, groups, and individuals in preserving cultural heritage in SOUSA, 2018.
already finished is called "Affective Narratives - Postcards", whose goal was the students producing stories through both writing and pictorial representation. They should know what a postcard is by means of a video and by receiving a postcard with an individual address and an image from the city's historical archive with information on the back, in message format. The material was then distributed so that the children could create their own postcards, drawing something of their city they would like to show to someone and writing a message to complement the image. The main goal of the activity was to promote affirmation and knowledge construction based on a relationship with the students' daily lives. By telling part of their histories, the children would feel as part of the society, belonging to that history and to Bocaina and realizing what they kept in their memory (their cultural references⁵) was as important as an old photograph. According to Paulo Freire (1996, p. 13, our translation), "[...] in the conditions of true learning, the students become real subjects of the construction and the reconstruction of the knowledge taught, together with the educator, who is also a subject of the process".

Figure 1: Postcards given to students in the Affective Narratives - Postcards activity.

Source: Authors' photograph (2021).

⁵ According to Maria Cecília Londres Fonseca (2000), the notion of cultural reference, incorporated into the discourse of preservation policies after the creation of the National Center of Cultural References in 1975, aims to encompass the cultural manifestations that are representative of other groups that make up Brazilian society, i.e., Indians, blacks, immigrants, and popular classes in general. The use of the term "reference" appears as a way to distinguish what already existed in official institutions, thus proposing a new way of acting in the area of culture (FONSECA, 2000).
Among the actions developed, the "Rereading Calixto Canvases" one showed some of artist Benedito Calixto’s works present in the main church in Bocaina, one of the few artifacts of importance recognized by the heritage preservation agency of the São Paulo State — CONDEPHAAT (Conselho de Defesa do Patrimônio Histórico, Arqueológico, Artístico e Turístico), in the city. Through photographs, the children should make their own readings on the canvases, using their bodies as a support — the activity was based on several other similar readings of canvases and enabled the children to take the leading role in the construction of their knowledge, moving away from the place where they simply received information. The action can be defined as an attempt to answer the following question raised by Paulo Freire (1996, p. 15, our translation): "[...] Why not establish a necessary 'intimacy' between the curricular knowledge fundamental to students and the social experience they have as individuals?"

The second activity, under development, called "Appropriations of the City - Paper Folding", aimed at bringing the student closer to the knowledge about architecture, especially
that of historical interest to Bocaina. Buildings should be characterized as an aesthetic fact that represents part of the stories and memories of a community from the elaboration of models. By making scale models and visualizing a building in 3D, the student approaches the object - in this case, a certain building - understanding how it was configured, if it no longer exists, or how it is configured, if it still exists. The process can awaken a sense of belonging and cultural appropriation, stimulating the notion of community through its objects — in this case, architecture — promoting manual activities, and developing skills for the understanding of three-dimensionality.

![Figure 3: Planning of the “Fascio Italiano” Building](Source: Authors’ collection (2021)).

4.2 Digital actions

The starting point of the project “The city for all” was the creation of a profile on the social network Instagram, identified as @acidadeparatatodos. More than a means of communication, the social network has established contact with the population of Bocaina and strengthened ties among researchers and residents, former residents, or even friends of the city. The actions were varied; in the first posts, a series of old photographs of the city was published in an attempt to bring the citizens of Bocaina closer to the profile. With the regular posts and
approximately five months after the creation of the project profile on Instagram platform, the first action, called "Let's draw Bocaina", was launched for the participation of the population. It invited users who followed the profile (general public, locals, visitors, friends of Bocaina) to share a drawing about the city, emphasizing its view rather than the quality of the drawing. The activity also stressed: "no matter if you think you can't draw, we would love to receive your contribution to be able to share your view of the city!".

Figure 5: Promotion of the activity "Let's draw Bocaina."

Although similar to the first action, the second, via Instagram, used photographs taken by the participants. Entitled "Let's photograph Bocaina", it aimed at expanding the contact with both people and Bocaina and, since it involved photography, the engagement was facilitated by the widespread use of cell phones. It had a wider reach and the amount of material received was much higher in comparison with the previous activity.

Figure 6: Promotion of the activity "Let's photograph Bocaina."

The third action, called "Let's share our affective objects", still in progress, has registered the highest adhesion among the actions undertaken so far. The call "Do you know that object that brings us good memories? Wouldn't it be nice to share those objects and the memories we like to have? Share a photo of your affective object, tell your story" highlights the aspect of affectivity. The notion of "biographical objects" by Ecléa Bosi (1994) can be associated with the action, since, according to the author, "[...] objects give us an assent to our position in the world, to our identity. More than order and beauty, they speak to our soul in their sweet native language," "[...] each of these objects represents a lived experience" (BOSI, 1994, p. 441,
our translation). The explanation for the high engagement of the population in the action may be in this reflection by Bosi.

The understanding of the connection between people and individual objects, in an intense affectiveness, can extrapolate the field of heritage, which starts at home. Similarly, people have ties with certain collective cultural references in the city. The subjects must be provided with voice and place so that they can talk about their memories, heritage, and cultural references.

Figure 7: Promotion of the activity “Let’s share our affective objects.”

Source: Authors’ collection (2021).

The type of activity developed with the community via social media Instagram can be seen in @acidadeparatodos. Posts and materials about the city are often created as a way to talk about Bocaina, disseminate the work done, and reach and invite more and more residents to exchange experiences, stories, and memories.

Still regarding digital actions, the development of a web platform is in progress. It will work as a digital repository and the city’s photographic collection with material from Bocaina’s public archive and documents provided to the research by private individuals will be made available. The preparation of this stage includes the digitalization of all incorporated material, since the documents are configured as material from different generations, but only in print. All educational actions undertaken in the schools will also be available for consultation, learning from their results, and collection of the material used. Moreover, other activities can be developed via the digital platform, in a further step.

4.3 In-person actions

This block was scheduled to start in the second half of 2021, since the in-person activities, i.e., cycles of exhibitions of old photographs of the city, were conditioned to the progress of vaccination against the coronavirus. The action aimed to disseminate documents of the municipal collection that were boxed and whose access was hampered by the storage conditions. Entitled “Memories of Bocaina”, the exhibition would mark the beginning of the collaboration between the project "The city for all" and the City Hall of Bocaina and took place at Cine Jequitibá, a significant building in the city’s cultural life. It was divided into three cycles, exhibiting 100 photographs. The first cycle began on August 28, 2021 and ended on October 26, 2021.
"Memories of Bocaina" is an interactive exhibition, since the absence of captions on the images suggests the participants interact using post-its and pens. All material is a reproduction of the original printed documents; therefore, the participants can write information, stories, and memories related to a particular photograph displayed, thus interacting and adding and exchanging information based on the memories of other visitors, and providing other layers and meanings to the images. All collaborations are documented and can further help in the organization of the collection.
5 CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

Two points can be raised from the one and a half year of existence of the project "The city for all". The first is the need for projects and actions that involve heritage education — a field little explored due to the consolidation of the notion of institutionalized cultural heritage — thus opening space for new ways of thinking about the subject by the population and the various social groups that hold knowledge.

The second point focuses on the challenge of making projects and actions be developed and keeping them alive. People, many times, are afraid of the interest of the project in a first moment, since it is placed in the field of cultural heritage preservation. Their involvement is a slow process that requires persistence. Contact with distinct groups during the elaboration of the network is necessary and frequently occurs through equally distinct agents such as city hall employees, the mayor, education, culture and tourism secretaries, teachers, shopkeepers, old residents, and children. Such a contact leads to the acceptance of the proposed actions marked by a significant participation. The results would reinforce such a participatory project, thus engaging other actions and volunteers towards the creation of a network. An example is the positive result of the first cycle of the "Memories of Bocaina" exhibition. After its inauguration, several city residents approached the project’s technicians to share their old photographs. Such materials are currently being digitalized to be incorporated into the project’s repository for a proper dissemination.

Keeping the project and the actions alive is also a challenge, since it requires more people to participate momentarily and to work for the development of the project, thus seeing themselves as mediators of actions to be continued, strengthened, and transformed, and have their objectives improved. The idea of mediators reinforces the concept of heritage education as liberating and humanizing. Knowledge is not transferred, but built, and when built, the educator can be a student and the student can be an educator, i.e., "the one who teaches learns through teaching and the one who learns teaches through learning" (FREIRE, 1996, p. 12, our translation).

The presentation described in this article aims to collaborate to the development of other actions for stimulating the sense of belonging and mainly keeping the collective memories alive.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


