

**Collective Memories in Dispute and Insurgent Identities:  
Kaingang Protagonism in Heritage Institutions**

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## Memórias coletivas em disputa e identidades insurgentes: O protagonismo Kaingang em instituições patrimoniais

### RESUMO

**Objetivo** – O artigo teve como objetivo analisar a atuação do povo Kaingang no campo da memória institucionalizada e da produção patrimonial, a partir de uma perspectiva decolonial.

**Metodologia** – A pesquisa foi conduzida por meio de uma abordagem qualitativa-crítica, fundamentada em práticas de etnografia colaborativa, pesquisa participativa e escuta situada. O estudo de caso orientou a investigação empírica, articulando observação, análise documental e participação em atividades culturais e educativas, com ênfase na coautoria do conhecimento e na produção situada da memória.

**Originalidade/Relevância** – A originalidade do trabalho reside na análise das práticas de memória indígena a partir da agência dos próprios sujeitos, deslocando o enfoque da representação institucional para a autorrepresentação e a coprodução da memória.

**Resultados** – Os resultados indicaram que a atuação Kaingang no Museu Índia Vanuïre produziu deslocamentos relevantes nas práticas museológicas e educativas, rompendo com a lógica expositiva tradicional e com a vitrinização da cultura indígena. Foram identificadas práticas de curadoria compartilhada, museologia insurgente e produção de memória viva, baseadas na oralidade, na performatividade, na territorialidade e nos referenciais cosmológicos Kaingang.

**Contribuições teóricas/metodológicas** – O estudo contribuiu teoricamente ao articular a memória como disputa política, a pluralidade epistemológica e as práticas patrimoniais contra-hegemônicas.

**Contribuições sociais e ambientais** – No plano social, a pesquisa evidenciou o fortalecimento da autodeterminação narrativa e do protagonismo indígena na construção da memória pública. No plano ambiental, destacou a centralidade do território e da floresta como fundamentos da memória e do conhecimento Kaingang, reafirmando a indissociabilidade entre patrimônio cultural, território e justiça socioambiental.

**Palavras-chave:** Memória indígena. Patrimônio cultural. Museologia decolonial.

## Collective Memories in Dispute and Insurgent Identities: Kaingang Protagonism in Heritage Institutions

### ABSTRACT

**Objective** – The article aimed to analyze the role of the Kaingang people in the field of institutionalized memory and heritage production from a decolonial perspective.

**Methodology** – The research was conducted through a qualitative-critical approach, grounded in collaborative ethnography, participatory research, and situated listening practices. The case study guided the empirical investigation, articulating observation, documentary analysis, and participation in cultural and educational activities, with an emphasis on co-authorship of knowledge and the situated production of memory.

**Originality/Relevance** – The originality of the study lies in the analysis of Indigenous memory practices based on the agency of the subjects themselves, shifting the focus from institutional representation to self-representation and the co-production of memory.

**Results** – The results indicated that Kaingang participation in the Índia Vanuïre Museum produced significant shifts in museological and educational practices, breaking with traditional exhibition logics and the objectification of Indigenous culture. Practices of shared curation, insurgent museology, and the production of living memory were identified, grounded in orality, performativity, territoriality, and Kaingang cosmological frameworks.

**Theoretical/Methodological Contributions** – The study contributed theoretically by articulating memory as a political dispute, epistemological plurality, and counter-hegemonic heritage practices.

**Social and Environmental Contributions** – At the social level, the research highlighted the strengthening of narrative self-determination and Indigenous protagonism in the construction of public memory. At the environmental level, it emphasized the centrality of territory and forest as foundations of Kaingang memory

and knowledge, reaffirming the inseparability between cultural heritage, territory, and socio-environmental justice.

**Keywords:** Indigenous memory. Cultural heritage. Decolonial museology.

### **Memorias colectivas en disputa e identidades insurgentes: El protagonismo Kaingang en las instituciones patrimoniales**

#### **RESUMEN**

**Objetivo** – El artículo tuvo como objetivo analizar la actuación del pueblo Kaingang en el campo de la memoria institucionalizada y de la producción patrimonial, desde una perspectiva decolonial.

**Metodología** – La investigación se desarrolló a partir de un enfoque cualitativo-crítico, fundamentado en prácticas de etnografía colaborativa, investigación participativa y escucha situada. El estudio de caso orientó la investigación empírica, articulando observación, análisis documental y participación en actividades culturales y educativas, con énfasis en la coautoría del conocimiento y en la producción situada de la memoria.

**Originalidad/Relevancia** – La originalidad del trabajo reside en el análisis de las prácticas de memoria indígena a partir de la agencia de los propios sujetos, desplazando el enfoque de la representación institucional hacia la autorrepresentación y la coproducción de la memoria.

**Resultados** – Los resultados indicaron que la actuación Kaingang en el Museo Índia Vanuïre produjo desplazamientos relevantes en las prácticas museológicas y educativas, rompiendo con la lógica expositiva tradicional y con la cosificación de la cultura indígena. Se identificaron prácticas de curaduría compartida, museología insurgente y producción de memoria viva, basadas en la oralidad, la performatividad, la territorialidad y los marcos cosmológicos Kaingang.

**Contribuciones teóricas/metodológicas** – El estudio contribuyó teóricamente al articular la memoria como disputa política, la pluralidad epistemológica y las prácticas patrimoniales contrahegemónicas.

**Contribuciones sociales y ambientales** – En el plano social, la investigación evidenció el fortalecimiento de la autodeterminación narrativa y del protagonismo indígena en la construcción de la memoria pública. En el plano ambiental, destacó la centralidad del territorio y del bosque como fundamentos de la memoria y del conocimiento Kaingang, reafirmando la inseparabilidad entre patrimonio cultural, territorio y justicia socioambiental.

**Palabras clave:** Memoria indígena. Patrimonio cultural. Museología decolonial.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The debate on memory, heritage, and local identities has gained increasing centrality in contemporary studies devoted to the critique of institutional forms of production and consecration of historical narratives. This centrality is further intensified in the Latin American context, where the persistence of the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2005) continues to structure the modes of organization of knowledge, culture, and memory. Heritage institutions—such as archives, libraries, and museums—have historically played the role of legitimizing certain versions of the past while silencing others, particularly those originating from Indigenous peoples, traditional communities, and subalternized groups. In this context, it becomes urgent to critically rethink heritage practices in light of decolonial perspectives that challenge the epistemological monopoly of Western modernity and reorient the ways in which collective memory is narrated and safeguarded.

This article proposes a decolonial analysis of Brazilian heritage institutions based on the experience of the Kaingang people in the Vanuíre Indigenous Land and their engagement with the Índia Vanuíre Museum, located in the municipality of Tupã, in the interior of the state of São Paulo. Through a critical ethnographic case study, the article seeks to understand how the Kaingang have challenged and re-signified museological, archival, and educational dispositifs, destabilizing hegemonic frameworks of patrimonialization and affirming practices of insurgent memory. The central objective is to analyze, drawing on analytical categories developed from decolonial theoretical frameworks, the strategies of resistance, re-existence, and self-representation enacted by the Kaingang within heritage institutions.

The methodology adopted is qualitative and interpretative, grounded in references from collaborative action research (Fals Borda, 1978), critical ethnography (Lassiter, 2005), and decolonial pedagogies (Walsh, 2009; Smith, 2018). The analysis is based on the assumption that knowledge production is neither neutral nor disinterested, and that listening and co-authorship are fundamental elements in the construction of a form of science committed to epistemic justice. The choice of the Kaingang case is grounded not only in its ethnographic relevance, but also in its theoretical and political significance as an example of symbolic displacement and heritage insurgency.

The relevance of this study lies in its potential contribution to the field of the epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2010), offering elements to rethink the role of heritage institutions in contexts of epistemic plurality and ontological conflict. By analyzing how Indigenous practices are articulated through their own logics of memory, time, and territory, the article aligns itself with a research agenda committed to the decolonization of thought, methodologies, and cultural policies.

The article is organized into seven sections. The first presents the introduction, outlining the theme, objectives, and justification of the study. The second discusses the critical foundations of social memory and local identities from a decolonial perspective. The third problematizes the role of heritage institutions and their memory practices. The fourth details the methodological approach

adopted. The fifth presents the case study of the Kaingang people in the interior of São Paulo state. The sixth systematizes the analytical categories that guide the critical reading of the case. Finally, the seventh section brings together the concluding remarks, proposing reflections on the institutional and epistemic displacements that emerge from the relationship between Indigenous peoples and heritage.

## **2 SOCIAL MEMORY AND LOCAL IDENTITIES: CRITICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR A DECOLONIAL APPROACH**

The concept of social memory has been widely mobilized to understand the ways in which groups and societies construct shared meanings about the past (Candau, 2016; Pollak, 1989). However, thinking about memory from a critical perspective requires going beyond the normative notion of “collective remembrance” and considering the historical, epistemic, and institutional dispositifs that regulate who is allowed to remember, what can be remembered, and how such remembrance is socially legitimized and disseminated.

Memory, in this sense, constitutes a political and symbolic terrain of dispute. As Elizabeth Jelin (2002) argues, memories are always selective, competitive, and marked by power relations. The institutionalization of public memory generally takes place in contexts of structural asymmetry, in which certain social groups exert greater control over the frameworks of remembrance and historical visibility. Within this context, the decolonial approach emerges as a critical tool to destabilize these narrative hierarchies and to question the hegemony of official history, forged under the sign of Eurocentrism (Mignolo, 2007).

In the Latin American context, this critique becomes even more urgent. The coloniality of power (Quijano, 2005) structures not only the economic and political dimensions of societies, but also regimes of knowledge production and symbolic orders through which social experiences are organized. It manifests, for example, in the imposition of a monocultural historical metanarrative that silences Indigenous cosmologies, erases local memories, and delegitimizes oral and embodied knowledges. As Mignolo and Walsh (2018) point out, resisting this coloniality implies engaging in epistemic disobedience—that is, affirming other ways of knowing, narrating, and belonging in the world.

It is within this horizon that decoloniality proposes a reconfiguration of the meanings of memory and identity. Memory ceases to be understood as a repository of past facts and comes to be conceived as a situated political action, as a living struggle for the right to exist and to narrate oneself from one’s own standpoint. This shift entails recognizing memory as insurgency: a force of re-existence in the face of erasure, a tool of symbolic struggle and community rearticulation (Walsh, 2009; Smith, 2018).

This critique is particularly relevant when it comes to Indigenous peoples such as the Kaingang, whose historical experiences have been systematically delegitimized by official discourses and heritage institutions (Cury, 2021). Kaingang memory, structured through orality, the circularity



of time, the relationship with territory, and the dualistic cosmology of *kamã/kanhru*, escapes Western dispositifs of fixation and registration. Bringing this memory to the center of analysis is not only an act of cognitive justice, but also a reconfiguration of the very criteria of what counts as heritage and as history (Aquino, 2021).

Likewise, the concept of local identity must be displaced from an essentialist understanding toward a critical and situated reading. Rather than conceiving it as the genuine expression of an original culture, identity is understood, from Stuart Hall's (2006) perspective, as a discursive, performative, and relational construction, marked by hybridity, the interweaving of temporalities, and constant negotiation with power. This means recognizing that local identities are not given, but rather effects of practices, disputes, and positionings that emerge within specific contexts of enunciation.

In the Kaingang case, for instance, identity is continuously (re)constituted through everyday practices in the village, ritual celebrations, territorial struggles, and forms of engagement with the non-Indigenous world. The strategies of self-representation developed at the Índia Vanuïre Museum—such as shared curatorship, storytelling circles, and ceramic workshops (Figure 1)—are expressions of this dynamic process of identity affirmation (Cury, 2021).

Figure 1 – Ceramic workshop



Source: Índia Vanuïre Museum, 2025<sup>1</sup>.

This understanding requires thinking of memory and identity not as contents to be preserved, but as processes in dispute, open to conflict, reinterpretation, and insurgency. In this sense, heritage institutions are called upon not to represent the Other, but to open themselves to

<sup>1</sup> Available at: <https://museuindiavanuire.org.br/boletim-do-acervo/memoria-e-transmissao-dos-saberes-tradicionais-kaingang/>. Accessed on: Mar. 23, 2025.

the Other as a producer of narratives, as an epistemic subject, and as an agent of symbolic reconfiguration. Indigenous memory, therefore, does not merely claim a place; it transforms the very field of patrimonialization, instituting a politics of listening and presence.

From this problematization, the article shifts the focus from memory as representation to memory as a situated practice of re-existence, and from identity as essence to identity as a living and performative dispute. This shift is fundamental to rethinking the role of heritage institutions in contexts marked by the colonality of knowledge, historical denial, and narrative inequality. What is ultimately at stake is not only the past, but the right to other possible futures, in which epistemic plurality becomes a political horizon of justice and recognition.

### **3 HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS AND MEMORY PRACTICES: A CRITICAL DECOLONIAL APPROACH**

Heritage institutions—archives, libraries, and museums—have historically operated under the modern-colonial paradigm, which hierarchizes knowledges and memories according to categories forged by Eurocentrism and the colonality of power (Quijano, 2005; Mignolo, 2007). This logic has, for centuries, crystallized certain historical narratives as universal, relegating to oblivion or marginalization the experiences and epistemologies of racialized, subalternized, and dissident peoples. In this context, decoloniality emerges not merely as a theoretical project, but as a critical and insurgent practice confronting the epistemic control that shapes cultural institutions.

Walter Mignolo (2011) argues that the colonality of knowledge is expressed in the ways knowledge is organized, authorized, and legitimized. Archives, museums, and libraries were—and often still are—spaces for the consecration of the memory of the nation-state, dominant groups, and an exclusionary official historiography. As Catherine Walsh (2009) reminds us, it is necessary to destabilize the presumed neutrality of these spaces and reveal their complicities with colonality.

The decolonization of heritage practices requires more than symbolic inclusion; it demands a profound transformation of modes of listening, curatorship, classification, mediation, and meaning-making. The questions of “who remembers” and “what is remembered” are brought into focus, and attention shifts from passive safeguarding to the co-production of memory as political action. In this sense, Mario Chagas (2021) proposes a “decolonial poetics and politics” in museological practice, recognizing territories and bodies as sites of living, insurgent memory that challenge the verticalized institutionalization of heritage.

In the case of the Kaingang, their relationship with the Índia Vanuîre Museum opens up a concrete possibility of subverting traditional exhibition logics. Practices of shared curatorship, the constant presence of knowledge holders in educational mediation, and rituals held within the museum space constitute forms of “insurgent museology” (Chagas, 2021), guided not by the representation of the Other, but by Kaingang self-representation grounded in their own cosmological and epistemological references. The museum thus becomes a field of dispute, negotiation, and collective invention of memory, in which orality, interaction, and the production of artifacts function as curatorial dispositifs.

In the field of archives, this critique translates into claims for community archives, counter-archives, or insurgent archives, as discussed by Ketlyn Barbosa and Marcos Ludmer (2020), who argue that archival practice can serve the collective memory of peoples rather than the bureaucratization of their histories. Archives created by quilombola and Indigenous populations have been asserting the right to narrative self-determination, breaking with the state monopoly over documentation and memory.

In the Kaingang case, this movement acquires particular contours given a history of erasure and distortion in institutional records. For decades, documents produced by indigenist agencies such as the Indian Protection Service (SPI) and later the National Indigenous Foundation (FUNAI)—including files, reports, and images—helped construct an image of the Kaingang filtered through colonial lenses, detached from their cosmologies and forms of social organization. The current struggle of the Kaingang to reinterpret these collections, as well as to establish autonomous forms of recording and preserving their memory, expresses a concrete attempt to reclaim control over their historical narrative. This occurs not only through the revision of archival documents, but also through the valorization of their own modes of knowledge transmission—such as orality, art, and ritual—thus expanding the scope of what may be considered an archive from an Indigenous perspective.

In libraries, the decolonial challenge assumes equally complex contours. Public or school libraries, marked by universalizing cataloguing traditions and normative curricula, must confront the absences and silences in their collections and cultural programs. The insurgent library is one that recognizes the legitimacy of oral narratives, local knowledges, and peripheral, quilombola, Indigenous, and Afro-diasporic literature, promoting a rupture with the canon and enabling cultural reappropriation by communities (Mortari, 2020).

In this sense, it is necessary to discuss the risk of institutional co-optation of diversity. Often, the incorporation of “other” memories occurs in an exoticizing or instrumentalized manner, without meaningful community participation. Decoloniality proposes, at this point, not merely visibility, but the reconfiguration of institutional power. That is, it is not about representing the Other, but about making space for the Other to represent themselves, using their own references, methods, and priorities. The Kaingang experience in the interior of São Paulo demonstrates that such a displacement is possible—albeit partial and fraught with tensions—when Indigenous subjects become active agents in redefining the cultural functions of institutions.

Thus, from a decolonial perspective, archives, libraries, and museums should not be merely spaces of custody, but places of struggle, dialogue, and transformation. The strengthening of local identities depends on recognizing that such identities are forged within contexts of symbolic dispute, and that collective memory is not given, but constructed—and, at times, denied or forgotten. Reversing this process requires listening, horizontal practices of cultural mediation, and an ethical commitment to decentering the gaze. In the Kaingang case, insurgent, performative, and territorialized memory points to pathways for rethinking the role of heritage institutions in the construction of futures grounded in epistemic justice.



#### 4 METHODOLOGY: EPISTEMOLOGICAL RUPTURES AND METHODOLOGICAL INSURGENCIES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DECOLONIAL RESEARCH

The production of knowledge in the human and social sciences has historically been structured around Westernized paradigms that reproduced the colonality of knowledge by affirming epistemological regimes grounded in detached objectivity, the hierarchization of subjects, and the homogenization of ways of knowing (Quijano, 2005; Mignolo, 2007). These paradigms tended to delegitimize the experiences, narratives, and modes of knowledge production of racialized peoples, peripheral communities, and Indigenous and traditional epistemological systems by subordinating them to external and universalizing analytical categories. In this sense, decolonial critique was not limited to revising methods, but involved questioning the very ontologies and epistemes that sustained scientific practice itself.

Decoloniality, understood as a field of action and thought (Walsh, 2009), was mobilized in this study as a proposal of disobedience to Western epistemic normativities and as a means of constructing methodological practices committed to epistemic justice, situated listening, and the co-authorship of knowledge. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2018) has argued, scientific research, when guided by logics of extraction, hierarchical observation, and critical distance, constituted one of the most persistent practices of colonality. In contrast, the decolonial perspective shifted the focus from “studying about” to “researching with,” recognizing communities as epistemic subjects and co-producers of knowledge.

From this displacement, the methodology of this article was organized as qualitative and critical, articulating collaborative ethnographies (Lassiter, 2005) with principles of participatory action research, particularly as formulated by Orlando Fals Borda (1978). The notion of *sentipensar*, proposed by the author, guided the understanding of the investigative process as a practice integrating reason and emotion, body and territory, subject and knowledge. This approach recognized memory not only as an empirical source, but as a symbolic, subjective, and embodied dimension constitutive of meaning-making.

Within this methodological framework, the analytical categories that structured the Kaingang case study—such as memory as political dispute, Kaingang epistemologies and self-representation, insurgent museology, and the ecology of knowledges—operated not only as interpretive tools, but also as guiding principles for listening, recording, and analysis. The centrality of orality, ritual, and performativity in Kaingang epistemology, for example, required methodological approaches that recognized the body, ancestry, and territory as legitimate dispositifs of knowledge production (Aquino, 2021).

In this way, the methodology articulated directly with the proposal of an “ecology of knowledges” (Santos, 2010), by rejecting epistemological monoculture and affirming the coexistence of plural rationalities. Memory, within this scope, was not treated as data to be collected or archived, but as a living and situated practice, traversed by symbolic disputes that

materialized in the body, in speech, and in territory. The research thus assumed a situated and relational character, understood not as a neutral act, but as an ethical and political intervention committed to the re-existence of peoples and to the construction of epistemic and heritage justice.

## **5 CASE STUDY: KAINGANG MEMORY IN THE INTERIOR OF SÃO PAULO — CULTURAL PRACTICES, HERITAGE DISPUTES, AND INSURGENT EPISTEMOLOGIES**

This case study was developed from a decolonial methodological approach, grounded in insurgent epistemologies, collaborative ethnography, and practices of listening. It is articulated with the investigation of Indigenous peoples' engagement in the field of institutionalized memory and heritage production, focusing on the experience of the Kaingang people in the Vanuíre Indigenous Land, in the municipality of Arco-Íris (SP), and their dialogue with the Índia Vanuíre Historical and Pedagogical Museum, located in Tupã.

### **5.1 The Vanuíre Indigenous Land: Memory, Territory, and Colonial Subordination**

The Vanuíre Indigenous Land is home to a population of approximately 245 people, predominantly Kaingang, as well as members of the Terena, Krenak, Atikum, and Fulni-ô peoples (Possari, 1995). Located in the municipality of Arco-Íris, in the interior of the state of São Paulo, its territorial formation is rooted in a trajectory marked by systematic processes of forced displacement, territorial confinement, and the institutionalization of indigenist violence promoted by the Indian Protection Service (SPI) and later by the National Indigenous Foundation (FUNAI). These mechanisms configured what Quijano (2005) defines as the coloniality of power: the articulation between territorial domination, epistemological subalternization, and economic exploitation.

As analyzed by Quintero and Maréchal (2020), the processes of territorialization promoted by the Brazilian state throughout the twentieth century—especially through the aldeamento regime and the policy of *toldos*—entailed forms of disciplining Indigenous bodies, forced restructuring of social organization, and reconfiguration of ways of life. In the Kaingang case, compulsory settlement in reduced territories, imposed sedentarization, and subordinated insertion into agricultural labor fronts exemplify the logic of subjugation typical of colonial/modern capitalism. In this sense, the Vanuíre Indigenous Land, like others in Southeast Brazil, constitutes a space of persistent coloniality, where state control over territory and Indigenous bodies is repeatedly exercised through logics of confinement and forced integration (Quintero; Maréchal, 2020).

Current conditions in the village express tensions between cultural continuity and structural precariousness. Although housing is predominantly built of masonry, access to essential services—such as healthcare, intercultural education, public transportation, and cultural policies—remains limited, revealing the institutional racism that structures the state's relations with Indigenous populations. Indigenous youth, often exposed to discourses of assimilation and cultural

erasure, tend to distance themselves from traditional knowledges, intensifying the challenges of maintaining Kaingang identity.

The transmission of traditional knowledge—especially that related to ancestral medicine, spirituality, and social organization—is the responsibility of the *Kujà*, central figures in the Kaingang epistemological system. As discussed by Aquino (2021), the *Kujà* are guardians of knowledges originating in the forest—understood not as a natural resource, but as a pedagogical subject, a sacred space, and an epistemic matrix. Its destruction, driven by monocultures, the advance of agribusiness, and illegal deforestation, amounts to the destruction of the very foundations of Indigenous knowledge (Aquino, 2021).

This ontological relationship between territory and knowledge produces a distinct understanding of space: in contrast to the Western logic of use and exploitation, the Kaingang conception of territory presupposes reciprocity, listening, and ancestry. Environmental devastation, therefore, is not only ecological but also epistemic, directly affecting the continuity of rituals, cosmology, and symbolic production. As Aquino (2021) states, cutting down a forest for a Kaingang is equivalent to destroying a university or a church for a white man—an analogy that makes explicit the abyss between regimes of meaning and underscores the urgency of approaches that place Indigenous references at the center of discussions on heritage and memory.

## 5.2 The Índia Vanuïre Museum: Heritage in Dispute

Founded in 1966 and linked to the São Paulo State Department of Culture, the Índia Vanuïre Historical and Pedagogical Museum holds one of the most significant collections on Indigenous cultures in Southeast Brazil, with particular emphasis on the histories of the Kaingang, Terena, and Guarani Nhandewa peoples (Gazoni, 2014). Its collection comprises more than 38,000 items, including ethnographic objects, historical photographs, administrative documents, oral records, and archaeological materials, many of which were collected in contexts of symbolic violence, asymmetric mediation, or institutional appropriation (Acam Portinari, 2024). These objects were systematically catalogued within a modern museological logic that, as Quijano (2005) and Mignolo (2007) argue, reinforces the coloniality of knowledge by framing Indigenous peoples as static witnesses of a remote past rather than as contemporary historical subjects.

For decades, the museum operated under a representational regime centered on exotification, the vitrification of the Other, and the construction of narratives that reinforced stereotypes of Indigeneity as domesticated cultural difference. Traditional museography reproduced Indigenous peoples as immobile figures devoid of agency, expressed both in the absence of Indigenous participation in curatorial processes and in the language of exhibition labels, often offensive or imprecise.

From the 2010s onward, however, driven by articulations with leaders from the Vanuïre Indigenous Land, pressures from Indigenous movements, and cultural democratization programs, the museum initiated a process of institutional reconfiguration. The creation of the Kaingang

Reference Center, with the continuous presence of Indigenous leaders, artisans, and educators within the museum space, marked a turning point. This presence transformed the museum into a space of active dispute over memory, in which the Kaingang began to exercise not only the right to representation, but the right to self-inscription and the co-production of public memory.

The “Indigenous Peoples’ Weeks,” in turn, promote activities such as body-painting workshops, dialogue circles, audiovisual production, and traditional ceremonies, in which Indigenous subjects assume protagonism in cultural mediation. As shown by Cury (2021), these actions challenge the hegemonic museological model by instituting forms of insurgent curatorship centered on orality, performativity, and decolonial pedagogy. In this process, the museum ceases to be a space that speaks about Indigenous peoples and becomes a place of speech with and from Indigenous peoples.

This transition is not without contradictions. Challenges related to physical infrastructure, state bureaucracy, institutionalized curatorship, and resistance from conservative sectors persist. Even so, the experience of the Índia Vanuïre Museum constitutes an important example of how heritage institutions can become fields of symbolic resignification, opening themselves to an ecology of knowledges (Santos, 2010) and to the epistemic rights of historically subalternized peoples.

## **6 MAPPING INSURGENCIES: CATEGORIES FOR UNDERSTANDING KAINGANG MEMORY**

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The analytical categories that structure the reading of this case study were formulated on the basis of the decolonial methodological approach presented in Section 4, articulating collaborative ethnography, listening, and situated knowledge production. Far from being neutral instruments of description, these categories emerge as critical tools for understanding memory and heritage from the concrete experience of the Kaingang and their everyday confrontations with institutional forms of silencing and representation.

These are, therefore, categories forged at the intersection of field practice and theoretical frameworks, operating as interpretive lenses to reveal the symbolic and epistemic conflicts surrounding Indigenous memory. They include: (1) memory as political dispute, which challenges hegemonic regimes of remembrance; (2) Kaingang epistemologies and self-representation, which propose ruptures with Western classificatory dispositifs; (3) insurgent museology and re-existence, which challenges the vitrification of the Other and activates practices of co-authorship; and (4) ecology of knowledges and counter-hegemonic heritage, which expands curatorial horizons through epistemic plurality. The choice of these categories reflects the research’s commitment to a situated, engaged analysis aligned with the principles of cognitive justice.

### **6.1 Memory as Political Dispute**

Collective memory, far from being a neutral repository of consensual recollections, constitutes a terrain traversed by disputes, silences, and power asymmetries. As Elizabeth Jelin (2002) emphasizes, conflicts around memory concern who has the right to narrate, which experiences are legitimized as worthy of remembrance, and through which dispositifs such remembrance is institutionalized. In this context, memory is an arena in which different projects of the world confront one another, rather than a mere evocation of the past.

In the Kaingang case, this dispute manifests itself incisively in their relationship with the Índia Vanuîre Museum. Kaingang presence within the institution does not aim solely at recognition of their history, but at transforming the very regime of memory. Instead of an institutionalized, written, and monumentalized memory shaped by the logic of the State and fixed collections, the Kaingang claim a living memory—one transmitted through orality, songs, rituals, performative narratives, and the pedagogy of bodies.

This practice of memory is configured as re-existence, in the sense proposed by Walsh (2009): not merely resistance to oppression, but the continuous affirmation of ways of being, knowing, and living that escape colonial normativity. It is an insurgent memory, updated through everyday practice and challenging the temporal frameworks of Western modernity. It is through the dispute over this living memory that the Kaingang transform the museum from a space of enunciation about the Other into a platform of insurgent self-representation.

## 6.2 Kaingang Epistemologies and Self-Representation

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Kaingang cosmology is structured around an ancestral dualistic system, *kamã/kanhru*, which guides not only marriage rules and social organization, but also relationships with territory, cycles of nature, and modes of knowing. As described by Aquino (2021), this is a relational and non-dichotomous ontology, in which complementary pairs do not operate through exclusion, but through dynamic reciprocity—a logic that stands in direct contrast to Western classificatory rationality.

This Kaingang epistemology manifests itself in body painting, rites of passage, foundational myths, and, above all, in the oral transmission of knowledge—a fundamental mechanism of cultural continuity. Each element of the body, the landscape, and time is imbued with symbolic and pedagogical meaning, composing a system of knowledge that is inseparable from everyday life and from the body–territory.

When Kaingang leaders claim the right to reconfigure the exhibition of collections at the Índia Vanuîre Museum based on their cosmologies, they challenge Eurocentric criteria of museological taxonomy and institute a new curatorial paradigm: insurgent, situated, and counter-hegemonic. This self-representation is not limited to the aesthetic inclusion of objects, but proposes an epistemic turn—a museum that speaks with the Kaingang and from their own symbolic codes, rather than merely about them (CPI-SP, n.d.).



In this sense, active Indigenous presence in the exhibition space operates as symbolic decolonization and the restitution of narrative agency. The museum ceases to be a place of fixation of identities and becomes a territory of intercultural translation and epistemological performance.

### **6.3 Insurgent Museology and Re-Existence**

Insurgent museology is not limited to critiquing the traditional museum model—one grounded in the logic of the display case, scientific neutrality, and curatorial authority—but rather proposes a radical reconfiguration of the museum as a territory of listening, creation, and symbolic dispute. Mario Chagas (2015) argues that museums can and should operate as spaces of decolonial poetics and politics, committed to the living, plural, and insurgent experiences of subjects who have been historically silenced.

In the context of the Índia Vanuïre Museum, the presence and agency of Kaingang artisans, spiritual leaders, and storytellers, as well as the organization of basketry workshops, body-painting activities, public rituals, and dialogue circles, constitute museological practices that break with the colonality of representation. These practices go beyond cultural mediation and reconfigure the museum as a site of re-existence—a concept proposed by Walsh (2009) to designate forms of life that persist and reinvent themselves in the face of systemic oppression, without being confined to the logic of reactive resistance.

The insurgent museology that emerges from these experiences is grounded in performance, orality, the body, and territory. Knowledge is not presented as content to be learned, but as a relationship to be lived. The events led by the Kaingang during the “Indigenous Peoples’ Weeks” exemplify this dynamic: rather than merely an “exhibition of culture,” they involve the production of shared worlds, in which audiences are invited to experience other forms of time, sensibility, and belonging.

In this sense, the museum ceases to be a space that documents the Indigenous past and becomes a symbolic territory where possible futures are projected—futures in which Indigenous peoples themselves decide what should be remembered, how, and why. Insurgent museology, therefore, is inseparable from re-existence as a political and epistemic project.

### **6.4 Ecology of Knowledges and Counter-Hegemonic Heritage**

The notion of an ecology of knowledges, proposed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2010), offers a powerful critique of the monoculture of Western scientific knowledge by arguing that different epistemological systems—Indigenous, Afro-diasporic, popular, and traditional—should be recognized not only as valid, but as indispensable to the construction of a plural, situated social science committed to cognitive justice. In the heritage field, this ecology entails breaking with the logic of centralization and hierarchization of knowledge promoted by modern cultural institutions.

At the Índia Vanuíre Museum, this principle has been expressed through practices such as the translation of exhibition labels and panels into the Kaingang language, the incorporation of oral narratives as legitimate sources of memory, and the centrality of the forest—understood by the *Kujà* as a living and pedagogical entity—as a symbolic foundation of the collection. Such actions destabilize the Western curatorial model centered on writing, classification, and objectivity, replacing it with a relational, territorialized, and plural logic.

From this perspective, the museum ceases to function merely as a site of preservation and becomes a field of ontological dispute, where different ways of seeing, sensing, and signifying the world come into dialogue—and often into confrontation. Kaingang epistemologies challenge not only the content of exhibitions, but also their form: they contest the linearity of historical time, the separation between subject and object, and the authority of the external gaze over culture.

This counter-hegemonic perspective does not aim to replace one epistemology with another, but to enable their coexistence under conditions of horizontality. The ecology of knowledges envisions a museum that is less a temple of consecration of the past and more a crossroads of meanings, where memory is always a situated, relational, and political construction.

## 6.5 Synthesis of the Analytical Categories Applied to the Kaingang Case

The selected categories were derived directly from the critical observation of the modes of action developed by the Kaingang people in their engagement with the Índia Vanuíre Museum, as well as from the analysis of the entanglement between Indigenous epistemologies and institutional dispositifs of patrimonialization. Each category represents a dimension of the confrontation between colonial logics and decolonial insurgencies, structuring a critical reading of the ways in which memory is mobilized as politics, dispute, and resistance. The table below presents, in a synthetic manner, these categories and their theoretical–practical implications in the case study:

Table 1 – Analytical Categories of Kaingang Memory

Analytical Category	Theoretical Description	Expression in the Case Study (Kaingang)	Main Reference
Memory as Political Dispute	Memory as a field of symbolic and political conflict, marked by struggles over legitimacy, visibility, and institutionalization. Living memory stands in opposition to monumentalized memory.	Tensão com o Museu Índia Vanuïre e a reivindicação de uma memória oral, ritualística e corporal. Os Kaingang recusam a vitrinização de sua história.	Jelin (2002), Walsh (2009)
Kaingang Epistemologies and Self-Representation	Relational ontology based on the <i>kamã/kanhru</i> duality; rejection of Western classificatory logic. Self-representation as a rupture with hegemonic curatorial practices.	Reconfiguration of the collection according to Kaingang cosmologies. Body painting, orality, and territoriality as epistemological bases of exhibition.	Aquino, 2021
Museologia Insurgent Museology and Re-Existence	Museology activated as a space of insurgent creation and listening, transforming the heritage institution into a territory of Indigenous re-existence and co-authorship.	Rituals, workshops, and narratives conducted by Indigenous subjects during institutional events. Museology shifts from being <i>about</i> to being <i>with</i> and <i>b</i>	Walsh (2009), Chagas (2021)
Ecology of Knowledges and Counter-Hegemonic Heritage	Critique of the monoculture of Western knowledge. Integration of different epistemes as the basis for plural, horizontal, and situated heritage practices.	The forest as an archive, orality as method, and cultural translation as curatorial practice. Kaingang presence deconstructs the Western museological model.	Santos (2010), Smith (2018)

By systematizing the analytical categories in Table 1, the aim was not only to synthesize the main critical vectors of the study, but also to demonstrate the political and epistemic potency of the Kaingang case as a paradigm for the reconfiguration of heritage practices. The dimensions highlighted here show how Indigenous memory, far from being a vestige of the past, operates as an agent of rupture, symbolic creation, and institutional displacement. On this basis, the analysis proceeds to examine each category in depth, with a view to interpreting their effects and tensions within the field of decolonial patrimonialization.

## 7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: INSURGENCIES OF MEMORY AND THE DISPLACEMENTS OF HERITAGE

The theoretical–methodological and analytical trajectory developed throughout this article has demonstrated the extent to which heritage institutions—historically forged under the modern-colonial paradigm—continue to operate as dispositifs of symbolic power, marked by the colonality of knowledge, Eurocentric classificatory logics, and the objectification of difference. By tensioning these structures through the experience of the Kaingang people in the Vanuïre Indigenous Land and at the Índia Vanuïre Museum, it was possible to identify practices of rupture, resistance, and re-existence that call into question the foundations of hegemonic patrimonialization.

The study revealed that the Kaingang do not merely symbolically occupy institutional spaces, but rather reinscribe them from other regimes of memory, temporality, and meaning. Their

performative, pedagogical, and cosmological actions within the museum do not operate as an appendix to traditional museology, but as a fissure—a site of rupture, displacement, and reinvention of the very idea of heritage. Processes of shared curatorship, the active presence of the *Kujà*, cycles of orality, rituals, and workshops are not “complementary” practices within heritage policy; they are insurgent forms of epistemic agency that destabilize the assumptions of neutrality, universality, and scientificity that still govern the museological field.

The analytical categories mobilized—memory as political dispute; Kaingang epistemologies and self-representation; insurgent museology and re-existence; ecology of knowledges and counter-hegemonic heritage—made it possible to map the multiple symbolic confrontations undertaken by the Kaingang. More than analytical concepts, these categories functioned as hermeneutic keys that foreground conflict, negotiation, and insubordination as defining features of the relationship between Indigenous knowledges and heritage institutionalities. What emerges is a memory that refuses to be captured by the archive, the document, or the display case, instead being continually actualized in the body, territory, forest, and orality as a practice of insurgency and world-making.

In the fields of archives and libraries, the struggle for narrative self-determination is expressed in the rejection of history as a bureaucratic dispositif and in the affirmation of other ways of producing and preserving memory. The proposal of insurgent archives, counter-archives, and insurgent libraries does not merely seek to insert new contents into existing collections, but rather to dismantle the very logics of legitimation, organization, and mediation of knowledge. In this sense, the Kaingang do not demand space within an exclusionary structure; they question the foundations of that structure and propose other forms of presence, listening, and permanence.

The contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that Kaingang practices of re-existence are not adaptive responses or strategies of cultural survival; they are political ontologies—ways of being in the world that directly challenge the monopoly of Western modernity over criteria of truth, authenticity, and legitimacy. In this scenario, the museum is not merely a stage—it is a field of dispute. And memory, far from being a repository of fragments of the past, is a territory of struggle, a performed narrative, and a politics of the present.

It is therefore urgent to recognize that patrimonialization—as it has been conceived and practiced—no longer responds to the demands of subalternized peoples. More than representing them, it is necessary to create concrete conditions for them to be full narrative subjects, producers of meaning, and epistemic agents. The Kaingang case shows that this is possible, but it requires displacement, listening, and the relinquishment of the universalist pretensions of institutionalized culture.

Ultimately, what is at stake is not only the memory of a people. It is the dispute over regimes of truth, over ways of seeing and organizing the world, over possible futures in which epistemic justice ceases to be an abstract promise and becomes an insurgent and everyday praxis. If heritage institutions truly wish to rise to the challenges of their time, they must learn to inhabit this complexity and to listen to the silences they have helped to produce.

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## DECLARATIONS

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### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

**Study Conception and Design:** Graziella Praça Orosco de Souza and Sandra Medina Benini conceived the central idea of the study, defined the research objectives, and outlined the decolonial theoretical–methodological approach.

**Data Curation:** Graziella Praça Orosco de Souza and Fernando Lopes da Silva organized, systematized, and verified the empirical and documentary data used in the study.

**Formal Analysis:** Graziella Praça Orosco de Souza, Sandra Medina Benini, and Fernando Lopes da Silva participated in the critical and interpretative analysis of the data, articulating them with the adopted theoretical frameworks.

**Funding Acquisition:** Not applicable. This study did not receive specific external funding.

**Investigation:** Graziella Praça Orosco de Souza and Fernando Lopes da Silva conducted the empirical investigation, including observation, documentary analysis, and participation in cultural and educational activities with the Kaingang people and the Índia Vanuïre Museum.

**Methodology:** Graziella Praça Orosco de Souza and Sandra Medina Benini developed and refined the methodologies applied in the study, based on collaborative ethnography, participatory research, and decolonial perspectives.

**Writing – Original Draft:** Graziella Praça Orosco de Souza was responsible for writing the first draft of the manuscript.

**Writing – Critical Review:** Sandra Medina Benini, Fernando Lopes da Silva, and Geise Brizotti Pasquotto contributed to the critical review of the text, improving clarity, argumentative coherence, and academic rigor.

**Review and Final Editing:** Graziella Praça Orosco de Souza, Sandra Medina Benini and Geise Brizotti Pasquotto carried out the final review and revisions to ensure compliance with the journal’s guidelines.

**Supervision:** Sandra Medina Benini supervised the development of the study, overseeing the research stages and ensuring the scientific and ethical quality of the work.

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### DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

We, Graziella Praça Orosco de Souza; Sandra Medina Benini; Fernando Lopes da Silva; Geise Brizotti Pasquotto, declare that the manuscript entitled “Collective Memories in Dispute and Insurgent Identities: Kaingang Protagonism in Heritage Institutions”:

1. **Financial Relationships:** Has no financial relationships that could influence the results or interpretation of the work. No funding institution or entity was involved in the development of this study.
  2. **Professional Relationships:** Has no professional relationships that could affect the analysis, interpretation, or presentation of the results. No professional relationships relevant to the content of this manuscript were established.
  3. **Personal Conflicts:** Has no personal conflicts of interest related to the content of the manuscript. No personal conflicts related to the content were identified.
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