ECOMUSEUS EM FAVELAS: UM MODELO BRASILEIRO DE INICIATIVA BOTTOM-UP
ECOMUSEUMS IN SLUMS: A BRAZILIAN BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVE MODEL

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Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo apresentar, descrever e discutir o primeiro museu comunitário ao ar livre concebido em uma favela no Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. *Favela*, como os brasileiros conhecem, é um termo cunhado no final dos anos 1800 usados para representar assentamentos irregulares. A noção que os estrangeiros que nunca visitaram uma comunidade de favela em sua maioria têm é ficcional e resultante do que é mostrado nos filmes: os filmes apresentam as favelas brasileiras como áreas pobres onde a criminalidade, a violência e a pobreza reinam. Esta representação, porém, é apenas uma face da realidade dessas comunidades e esta face tem mudado. Neste cenário, apresentamos um modelo de iniciativa *bottom up*, que transforma O Museu de Favela em uma experiência única. Favelas não são assentamentos exclusivos do Brasil e, portanto, esta experiência pode motivar outras comunidades internacionais com contexto semelhante a reproduzir um museu territorial vivo: a sua coleção e seus tesouros são os seus 20 mil habitantes e os seus estilos de vida, os narradores da desconhecida, mas importante, história do Rio de Janeiro. O novo paradigma emergente no qual o ecomuseu está constituído como um museu implica em uma profunda mudança de perspectiva, muda o objeto de estudo e de trabalho de acervos documentais contidos em museus tradicionais para a informação. Ele traz novas metodologias de pesquisa adequadas para o estudo da informação como um fenômeno social e humano.

Palavras-chave: Ecomuseu, Favela, Iniciativa Bottom-up

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Abstract

This paper aims to present, describe and discuss the first community open-air museum conceived in a slum area in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Slums, or favela as Brazilians call it, is a term coined in the late 1800s used to represent irregular settlements. The notion foreigners who have never visited a slum community have is similar to what is shown in movies. In turn, movies present Brazilian slums as impoverished areas where crime, violence and poverty reigns. This representation though is only one face of the reality of these communities and this face that has been changing. In this scenario, we introduce a bottom-up initiative model that transforms this ecomuseum into a unique experience. Slums are not exclusive Brazilian and therefore this experience may motivate international communities with similar context to reproduce a territorial living museum: its collection and treasures are its 20 thousand inhabitants and their lifestyles, narrators of the unknown, yet important, history of Rio de Janeiro. The new emergent paradigm in which the ecomuseum is constituted as a museum implies in a deep change of perspective, it changes the object of study and work from documentary collections contained in traditional museums to information. It brings new research methodologies adequate to the study of information as a social and human phenomena.

Keywords: Ecomuseum, Slums, Favela, Bottom-up initiative

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INTRODUCTION

The interest of our research group in Museu de Favela Ecomuseum arose in 2011, when we first acknowledged the initiative. At that time, we found scientific reports describing the implementation of the museum, and thus our first study on the initiative was published in 2013 and narrated the implementation of the museum in its initial stage. The article *Um Modelo de inovação bottom up: Museu de Favela (MUF)* was published in December 2013 in Brazilian Portuguese language, available at: http://seer.ufrgs.br/index.php/EmQuestao/article/view/37113.

Sequentially, the present study aims to outline an overview of the Museu de Favela Ecomuseum and go further to report the current situation of it. The methodology of the study consists of a bibliographic review and an exploratory search on MUF's website in order to verify the state of the art of the initiative. *Favela* is an organic complex self-organized system that comprehends human, social, economic, political and cultural factors. Due to these characteristics, this study is justified as we believe MUF itself has been coherent and successful in its complex systemic self-organization, project, developing and fund raising, while other similar initiatives failed.

Favela is a term coined in the late 1800s used to represent irregular settlements in Brazil, or slums. Many theories are evolved to explain the origin of these settlements. The terminology *favela* arouse due to the first slum that was set up on the Morro de Castelo in Rio de Janeiro by the families of soldiers returning from the *Canudos* Campaign. At the time, 20,000 veteran soldiers were brought from the conflict against the settlers of *Canudos*, in the Eastern province of Bahia, to Rio de Janeiro and left with no place to live (Favela, English version, 2012): "When they served the army in Bahia, those soldiers had been familiar with Canudos's Favela Hill — a name referring to *favela*, a skin-irritating tree in the spurge family *(Cnidoscolus quercifolius)* indigenous to Bahia. When they settled in the Providência hill in Rio de Janeiro, they nicknamed the place *Favela hill* from their common reference, thereby calling a slum a *favela* for the first time"

Also, in Brazil, slavery abolition was a long process that started in 1611, at the same period that slavery started in the country and although Abolition movement gained popularity in 1870s, it was only *Lei Aurea*, the law, that finally abolished slavery on May 13th, 1888 – Brazil was the last independent American country to abolish slavery. When slaves were freed, however, there were no

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structure to accommodate their new condition and their needs of home and care among others.

Another factor that has contributed to the proliferation of *favelas* was the rural exodus due to climate conditions of the Brazilian northeastern region. Thus, most modern *favelas* appeared in the 1970s as a consequence of drought, industrialization and rural mechanization in the northeast area of Brazil. Many people left rural areas of Brazil and migrated to cities. Without a place to live, many migrants had no other option to live in *favelas*.

Finally, it has to be considered that the urban population jumped from 12.8 million in 1940 to 80.5 million in 1980 (Ribeiro 2001, 193-207) and now it surpasses 203 million, without appropriate infrastructure. Brazil has two of the major cities in the world that today hold the biggest *favelas* in the country – Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.

In addition, drug trafficking is a major problem that derives from the unfortunate alternative found by youngsters to make money and in favelas this situation is aggravated - according to Brazilian Censu Data released in 2011 (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Ibge, 2011), approximately 6% of the population live in slums, that means 11.4 million people in irregular occupations - lack of family structure, and public services in this impoverished areas foster drug use and consequently drug dealing.

Subject to several social researches and academic studies, Brazilian *favelas* have also been main theme or background to countless movies that have tried to depict their scenery, their people, their lifestyles, and conflicts, such as *Cidade de Deus (City of God):* released in Brazil in 2002 depicts the story of two drug dealers fighting for drug trafficking control in a conglomerate called *Cidade de Deus* in Rio de Janeiro; *Tropa de Elite* (The Elite Squad) released in 2007 and *Tropa de Elite 2* (The Elite Squad 2) released in 2010 show the effort this special squad makes to control drug trafficking in the slums of Rio de Janeiro; the stories follow depicted from the point of view of the squad's sergeant. The story is never told from the point of view of the *favela's* residents.

On another strand, Hollywood has also unfavorably used the Brazilian slums as background to movies as in Incredible Hulk, shot in *Rocinha* slums and released in 2008 (Favela, 2012). Consequently, the notion foreigners who have never visited a slum community have is fictional and resulting from what is shown in movies.

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In turn, movies present *favelas* or slums as only impoverished areas where crime, violence and poverty reigns. This representation though is one face of the reality of these communities, however, and this face that has been changing. Today, 88% of the houses have adequate water supply, and 99,7% have electricity and 67,3% are connected to adequate sewage service. Also, according to a survey sponsored by Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico *(CNPq)* (National Council for Scientific and Technological Development) and the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Although *Favela* museums are not a novelty in the scenario of Rio de Janeiro, in fact touristic visitations to slum communities date back only in the 1990s, launched in *Rocinha* Slums. According to Moraes (2010, 106), "The location, grandiosity and economic development fostered the interest of tourists and society".

According to Menezes (2008), however, at the time of her research, Morro da Providência (the same hill quoted above related to the origins of the terminology favela), had been taken over by the Brazilian Army (for the government of Rio de Janeiro, was unable to control the violence and drug trafficking), and the *Morro da Providência Community Museum* had already been forgotten both by the media and the community.

ECOMUSEUMS

In the words of Davis, Huan & Liu (2010, 81), the essential ecomuseum features are:

· The adoption of a territory that may be defined, for example, by landscape, dialect, a specific industry, or musical tradition.
· The identification of specific heritage resources within that territory, and the celebration of these 'cultural touchstones' using in-situ conservation and interpretation.
· The conservation and interpretation of individual sites within the territory is carried out via liaison and co-operation with other organizations.
· The empowerment of local communities – the ecomuseum is established and managed by local people. Local people decide what aspects of their 'place' are important to them.
· The local community benefits from the establishment of the ecomuseum. Benefits may be intangible, such as greater self-awareness or pride in place, tangible (the rescue of a fragment of local heritage, for example) or economic.

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There are often significant benefits for those individuals in the local community most closely associated with ecomuseum development (Corsane *et al.* 2007a and 2007b).

According to "Associação Brasileira de Ecomuseus e Museus Comunitários" - ABREMEC - Brazilian Association of Ecomuseums and Community Museums, a non-profitable civil organization that aims to foster the creation, collaboration and visibility of ecomuseums and community museums in Brazil, the Brazilian ecomuseums and community museums are mapped as shown in Figure 1.
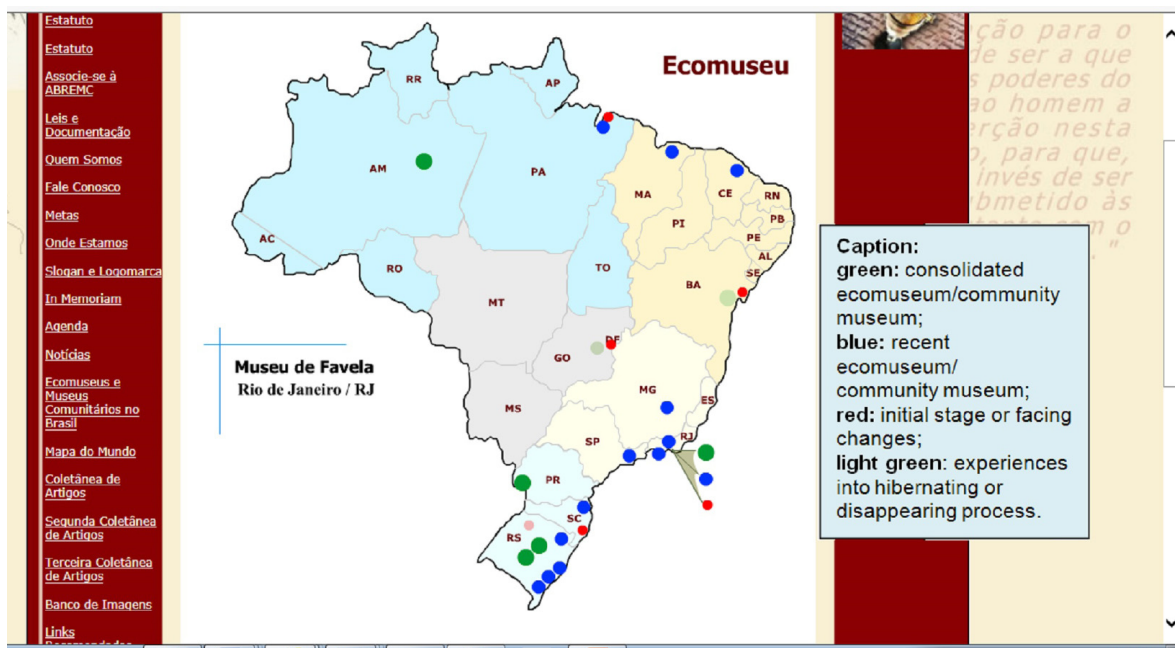

Figure 1. Map of Ecomuseums and Community Museums in Brazil. Source: http://www.abremc.com.br/ecomuseus.asp. [Accessed Sept. 02, 2014]

Although the founders of MUF conceptualized it as an ecomuseum, it contemplates the principles of the New Museology understood in a broader sense. According to Alice Duarte, "[...] we need to understand the designation "New Museology" as embracing either the developments of the French strand or the Anglo-Saxon strand, which are not contrary but complementary." (Duarte 2012, 89).

Duarte (2012) contributes to the understanding of the New Museology as a theoretical and methodological movement, that includes not only ecomuseums, but

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local museums, neighborhood museums, and community museums. For the author, the New Museology is the result of two initial renovation strands (French and Anglo-Saxon) that were disseminated in the 1970s. This reformulation meant a cultural democratization, which included bringing the museum closer to the population, democratizing access to the museum, recreating the social context of objects instead of treating the objects isolatedly.

Concerning the social and political dimension of the museum, in the French strand "relevance is placed on sustainable development, socio-cultural animation and the participation of the population" (Duarte 2012, 91), as for the Anglo-Saxon strand, the relevance is on the "expanding the representational space of the museum and the deconstruction of its exhibition discourses, defending the increase of the voices represented there" (Duarte 2012, 91).

Therefore, both strands address political and social issues; both strands highlight the role of the museum as an instrument of social change and democratization access to the museum. On the other hand, the differences between the strands, according to Duarte (2012) are theoretical: "Globally considering the French and Anglo-Saxon strands of the New Museology, their differences are mostly found at the level of their theoretical sources of support, since in the former the weight of museum professionals and their connection to the respective international bodies is more relevant, while in the latter the weight of academics and their connection to the university institution prevails. (Duarte 2012, 91)"

In Brazil, the movement New Museology was strengthened in the 1980s and 1990s, period when the number of public and private museums increased exponentially: Naif International Museum of Art in Rio de Janeiro (1985), municipal Bispo do Rosário Museum (1982), private Casa do Pontal Musem (1986); Núcleo de Orientação e Pesquisa Histórica in Santa Cruz, RJ was recognized as an Ecomuseum, Maguta Museum, which exhibits Tacuna Indigenous collection in 1990 (Santos 2011).

In 2000s, during President Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva (Lula) governance, the Ministry of Culture had its budged increased. The Minister of Culture, musician Gilberto Gil, from 2003 to 2008, together with sociologist Juca Ferreira, who took the ministry over until the end of 2010, created governmental programs to promote and support ethnic diversity appreciation and democratization of access to cultural patrimony: Sistema Nacional de Cultura (SNC) (National System of Culture) and Plano Nacional de Cultura (PNC) (National Plan for Culture) (Santos 2011).

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The Ministry of Culture has also financially sponsored suburban neighborhoods and favela museums established as community bottom-up initiatives with the support of non-profitable organizations. Although museums are generally top down initiatives - in Brazil most of them are traditionally financed or sponsored by governmental resources - community initiatives are responsible for an important social and cultural change and can be noticed in contemporary Brazilian society.

Community museums play an important role in social and economic transformation and expand the diversity museums now face. Also, museums that emerge from the community's efforts bring to their collections the values of the people who live in these territories and therefore warrant the history of these communities. Museums around the world have experimented exponential growth of community bottom-up initiatives, which is part of a democratization process of technologies and narratives of museums (Santos 2011).

MUSEU DE FAVELA

In this context, Museu de Favela (MUF) is the first museum on culture and slum memory in the world (MUF 2009). MUF is located in a popular area of Rio de Janeiro, in the hills between the famous beaches of Ipanema and Copacabana. The museum is organized within 5,300 houses connected by a labyrinth of alleyways and staircases in the hills of the slum communities Pavão, Pavãozinho and Cantagalo. The location of the communities are shown in Figure 2 below.
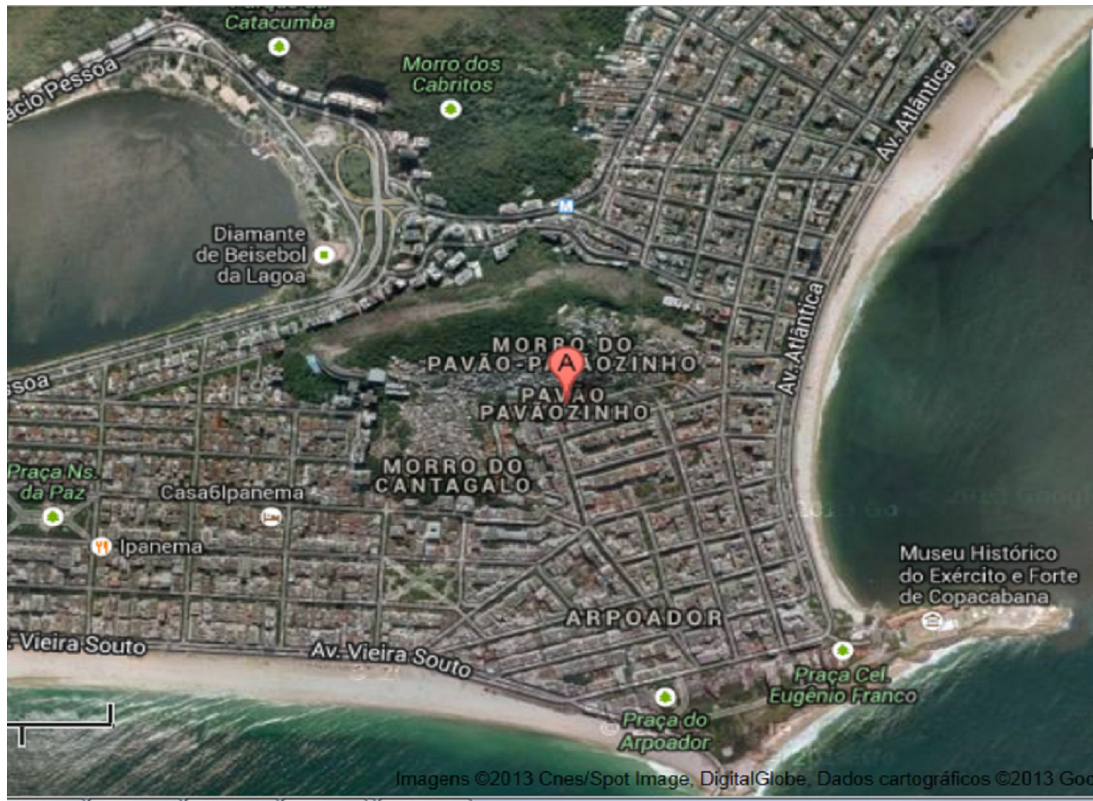
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Figure 2. Map of the communities Pavão, Pavãozinho and Cantagalo.
Source:https://www.google.com.br/maps/search/pav%C3%A3o+cantagalo+pav%C3%A3ozinho+rio+de+janeiro/@-
22.9664367,-43.2027042,3093m/data=!3m1!1e3?hl=pt-BR. [Accessed Sept. 02, 2014]

The territorial museum is located on the steep slopes of Cantagalo Hills among the neighborhoods of famous Ipanema, Copacabana and Lagoa, south zone of the city. It lies on 12 hectares of Atlantic Forest and oversees the exuberant landscapes of Rio de Janeiro. "What makes MUF particularly unique is that it is an open-air museum, sprawled throughout the entire area instead of in one specific building or gallery. It pushes the boundary on what people normally conceptualize by striving to incorporate the entire community as the museum, including people's homes, street art, and live performances, and by not limiting its creative space to a concrete building" (Godoy 2011).

Museu de Favela is build upon the three pillars of the New Museology as proposed by Davis (2011): sense and spirit of place, community involvement and malleability, i.e., responsive to unique contexts.

The first pillar, is understood as in Davis, Huan & Liu (2010): "Our perception of place affect us, places modify our behavior. In terms of heritage this is important when we try to understand its significance and the role that heritage might actually

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play in the construction of a 'sense of place'. [...]for many local people these places, as part of the tangible landscape, are important in their own right by providing a beacon for a sense of belonging, a link with the past and a symbol of permanence". (Davis, Huan & Liu 2010, 80-81).

The second pillar is felt as MUF, besides being a museum, is also a non-governmental organization that was founded by a group of 16 volunteers, most of them leaders of the community who live in the slums. The roots of the museum lie at a small group of residents of the community that got together to collect and document the history of the foundation of the slum community Cantagalo, Pavão and Pavãzinho. They started identifying and interviewing the oldest residents of the *favela.* The data collection was then derived from Oral History methodology (According to the Oral History Association, Oral history refers both to a method of recording and preserving oral testimony and to the product of that process). These interview scripts also became the first museum documental collection. The story of MUF's foundation and a video on the museum are available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gvnrQMg_K8. Graffiti artists, capoeira dancers and handcrafters formerly working isolatedly, converged with the oral history interviewers to, self-organized, create the firs*t favela* territory museum in the world.

The third pillar, which makes MUF responsive to its unique context and unique initiative is the memory and history herein preserved - the museum tells the story of the formation and transformations of the *favela,* its diversity, people, culture and backgrounds.

"MUF leaders have strong life experiences, resistant passions, knowledge as deep as diverse, and great creative capacity; they assumed a long-term commitment: to work for the enhancement of the collective cultural memory; to strength the good community character; to create a transforming vision of living conditions in the slums through the memories and the local culture, wrapped in a territorial museum format" (MUF 2009).

The structure of the complex system that characterizes MUF is divided into 10 sub-territories (or sub-systems) and museological sectors, identified according to their common memories and culture. MUF has an institutional format, mission and work modes that include creative experimentalism and expands the paradigms of what may be a museum.

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On these premises, Agência Espanhola de Cooperação Internacional para o Desenvolvimento - AECID (Spanish Agency of Internacional Cooperation for Developement) has awarded one of MUF's project in an international competition and with the resources, the organization board of the museum installed a cultural terrace on the roof of the museum's base. On the other hand, at national level, MUF has support from Instituto Brasileiro de Museus - IBRAM (Brazilian Institute of Museums), Sistema Brasileiro de Museus - SBM (Brazilian Systems of Museums) and the Secretary of Culture of Rio de Janeiro State.

The Secretary of Culture of Rio de Janeiro State sponsors the execution of two projects selected through a public announcement: one to foster the museums itinerant exhibitions such as *Despertar das Almas* (Awakening of the Souls) to exhibitions in museums in Macaé, Paraty and Cabo Frio; and the other to remodel MUF administrative center at Cantagalo.

In addition to the engagement in partnerships with the municipal and federal government, as well as public and private universities of Rio de Janeiro, MUF's plan of governance and the structure of power and responsibilities, is shared among the leaders of the community. In the plan, these leaders are responsible for the three-axe plan of action: Heritage, Networks and Cultural Projects. Although, according them, this structure of governance is not completely implemented due to problems of financing, the decisions respect the complex system of governance. The organization of the governance is shown in Figure 3.

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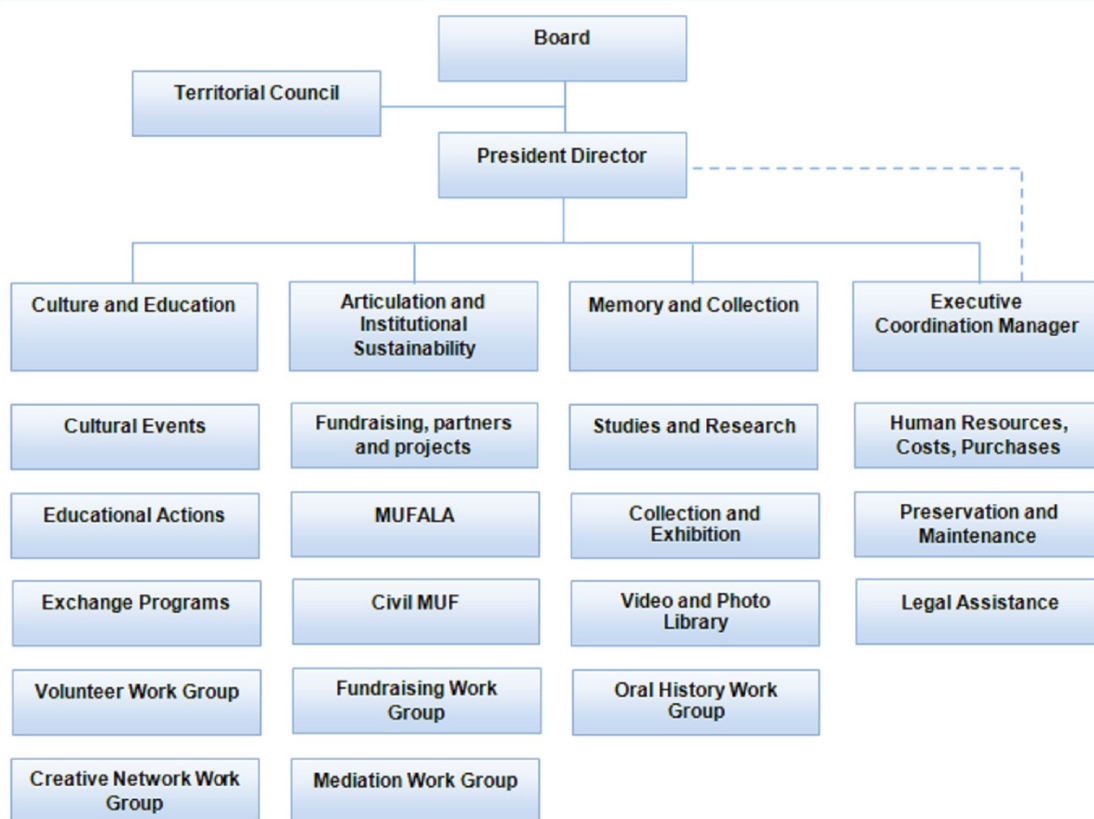ECOMUSEUMS IN SLUMS: A BRAZILIAN BOTTOM-UP NITIATIVE MODEL

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Figure 3. MUF's structure of governance. Source: www.museudefavela.org.
Translated by the author. [Accessed Sept. 02, 2014].

In impoverished areas, children and adults have to be attracted to learning. In developed countries' schools, children go to school because attendance, tests and the national curriculum are mandatory. In slums, schooling competes with other activities children have to perform in their free time. Boys and girls often need to work to increase the family income, have to help with housework and look after younger brothers and sisters. Drug trafficking also recruits youngsters, especially.

As an alternative, Education and Culture axe promotes actions to attract children and adults to learning and sharing activities. The museum organization created a *Brinquedoteca* (a common toy collection) and a *Ponto de Leitura Itinerante Museu de Favela* (MUF moving network), which encourages reading, writing and illustrating memories of the residents aiming to produce a magazine: Ponto de Leitura Magazine. MUF also organizes lectures and workshops on photography, legal alternatives to copyrights, street art preservation, conservation and restoration. To work with social and cultural inclusion, MUF has partnerships with

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official cultural institutions that donate to the children and adult residents tickets to cultural presentations in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Within these agreements, the children of the community are also favored with guided outings to sightseeing. As for sustainable financial sources, *Rede Criativa* (Creative Network) articulates all the artisans, especially confectioners, painters and embroiders to produce and sell for tourists that visit the territory museum.

The axe Institutional Articulation and Sustainability aims at establishing partnerships, attracting investments and developing projects to compete in governmental announcements for public sponsorship. The partnerships are sought within the community, between other *favelas* and other museums. As an example, MUF was in contact with the International Council of Museums Conference - ICOM 2013 in Rio de Janeiro, when all the participants visited the community and the museum. However, according to the MUF, currently, the only effective sponsors to MUF are the Secretary of Culture of Rio de Janeiro State and AECID (Spanish Agency of Internacional Cooperation for Developement).

Finally, one of the most significant activities promote by Memory and Collection axe, is an exhibition named *Mulheres Guerreiras* (Brave Women), that resulted from the collective efforts of the women of the community, MUF, and Secretary of Culture of Rio de Janeiro State. The exhibition told the women's representative stories of the community's collective memory.

CONSIDERATIONS

MUF's museological plan creates social possibilities - it creates conversation among the segments of society, which consist of two distinguished opposites that in Brazil do not interact, generally. Regarding the stereotypes, previously to the initiative created by MUF, it was impossible for the *favela* to be acknowledged in a way that was not stigmatized with stereotypes. After MUF, and especially through its website, the *favela* and its residents gained a possibility of being viewed by whom they are and what they can do; and they acomplished that by themselves, in a bottom up, self organized initiative.

The growing articulation between MUF's actions and the official culture has established partnerships that have been taking place since 2010. Those actions have brought mainstream culture up to the hills as an exchange of possibilities. As for their self-image, it can be understood by the reports and the material and immaterial assets produced in the community, that a long path has been steered.

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It is noteworthy that MUF created visibility to the conditions of the people who live in the community. Life and experience sharing were triggered and a promise of stigmas dissolution foreseen, demonstrating that the residents of the community are not fictional stereotypes created by the movies. In addition, MUF was also a way to attract the attention to the local needs.

Agent of social change, MUF is a recognizable tool of regeneration and empowerment of the *favelas* residents, as well as a space of congregation for that community consolidating its social function of bringing together schools, libraries and local associations in partnerships with the population of the three hills. MUF focus on the peoples activities and the collections that are significant for themselves, as it is described by Duarte in 'Ecomuseum': one of the many components of the New Museology (2012 92).

Yet, the authors want to register that although MUF has sought partnerships with the academy, the community still do not have a museum specialist. That specialist could bring theoretical and methodological expertise to increase the museological experience according to the New Museology and boost its cultural achievements. Hence, MUF is a fertile field for research in museology studies and practices.

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