

Multicultural libraries: diversity is our strength

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Abstract: It reports some findings from the research project in progress about multicultural public libraries in Brazil. Under the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities, this research studies cultural diversity of traditional human groups in the context of Brazilian public libraries. Through literature review and mapping of multicultural public libraries in the country, it aims to analyze how social values of Quilombola, Indigenous and Gypsy communities are being included in Brazilian public libraries. As main result, it explains that public libraries are changing their services to embrace multiculturalism. About 80% of Brazilian public libraries found in this study had become multicultural. It concludes that public libraries in Brazil are becoming cultural artefact guided to the culture diversity to serve society.

Keywords: Public Libraries. multiculturalism. Indigenous. Quilombola. Gypsy

1. Introduction

This text reports some findings from the research project in progress about multicultural public libraries in Brazil led by Professor Alentejo at Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO). In this text, we analyze how social values of Gypsy, Quilombola (descendants of enslaved Africans who maintain cultural, subsistence and religious traditions), and Indigenous peoples are being included in Brazilian public libraries. Under the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities, this research studies cultural diversity of traditional human groups in the context of Brazilian public libraries. According to Decree 6.040, traditional peoples and communities are defined as "culturally differentiated groups that recognize themselves as such, which have their own forms of social organization, which occupy and use territories and natural resources as a condition for their cultural, social reproduction, religious, ancestral and economic using knowledge, innovations and practices generated and transmitted by tradition" (Brasil 2007). In Brazil, there are many traditional communities that express their cultural

diversity richness through their social values. Social values are related to cultural heritage, environment, territory and citizenship (Santos 1987).

2. Methodology

This quantitative and qualitative study is divided in two parts: literature review and mapping of multicultural public libraries in the country. By first, we have analyzed IFLA Manifestos, national legislation and institutional programmes based on citizenship, education, culture, heritage, diversity and public libraries as well specialized literature on library and culture. For the second part, we consulted demographic censuses and other official sources such as: National System of Public Libraries (*Sistema Nacional de Bibliotecas Públicas - SNBP*) and the database 'Map of Conflicts Involving Environmental Injustice and Health in Brazil' (*Mapa de Conflitos Envolvendo Injustiça Ambiental e Saúde no Brasil*). 'Map of Conflicts Involving Environmental Injustice and Health in Brazil' is maintained by Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (FIOCRUZ). This encompasses the right to culture of traditional populations often affected by discrimination. Its database also synthesizes data from leader institutions on environmental and health issues such as: Map of Socio-Environmental Conflicts of the Legal Amazon; Brazilian 'New Social Cartography', official reports of the DESCH Platform on human rights, contributions of NGOs and the Brazilian Network of Environmental Justice (RBJA). FIOCRUZ database provides data on environmental, health and social conflicts against traditional peoples in cities. Through the location of the cities where traditional populations are located, we mapped the public libraries in the SNBP database.

3. Background

After long period of Military Dictatorship, Brazilian Democratic State emerged under the Constitution of 1988. This was the landmark for the proliferation of State policies for the industry, health assistance, sanitary programs, education and culture. From 1990 and on, the illiteracy rate decreased from 20% to 14% and the life expectancy rate increased from 62 years to 75,5 years (Portal Brasil 2016). In 1991, the Human Development Index was rated in 0.493, but in 2010, it increased to 0.727 (Lourenço 2013). In the new democratic age, social movements acted as "translators" of the complex developing mechanisms of the Brazilian society in defense of cultural and social diversities (Bem 2006). For example, in 1989, the Law 7.716 defined terms of crimes resulting from discrimination or prejudice of race, color, ethnicity, religion or national origin. At the same time, public libraries have increased in quantitative. Until 1970 public libraries were counted around 3.255 (IBGE 1974, pg. 799-800). But in 2014 they increased to 6.102 nationwide (SNPB 2015). By 1997, due to the lack of institutional guidelines for the school library in the country, many public libraries have also played the role of school library. In 2010, Brazil has established its first national school library policy which aims to guarantee universalization of school libraries in the country within ten years. Despite of all national improvements, Brazil still faces problems in public health, extreme poverty, illiteracy, land conflicts and racism (Porto & Rocha 2014). Similarly,

public and school libraries quality cannot be guaranteed by government maintainers for two main reasons: high dependence of public funds and national weak policies for libraries, almost always focused on reading room (Paiva & Andrade 2014). Currently, the major Brazilian public libraries face budget constraints to keep running (Nitahara 2016). While the current economic crisis in the country causes damages to its education and culture structure, most social and cultural institutions had begun to rethink their social role under the notion of diversity from several human groups that compose Brazil such as: Indigenous, Quilombola, Gypsies, European and Asian immigrants and as well as the LGBT community. From the point of view of librarians, since 1990s, under IFLA Manifesto for Public Libraries (1994), Librarians are conscious to provide to society their information services free of barriers to access knowledge. Under the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities (Brasil 2007), librarians are also changing the way they see knowledge representation and collections development into the libraries they manage by the recognition that social values of traditional communities must be included. Since 1997, the country has a policy to combat racism based on the education of children and adolescents, but in 2008, Law No. 11,645 establishes the guidelines and bases of national education, to include in the official curriculum of the education system the obligation for studies on 'Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous History and Culture'. This context has brought profound changes to education, culture and heritage. For example, in Brazil there are more than 250 languages spoken among indigenous people, immigrants, signs, gypsies, creoles and Afro-Brazilians, as well as Portuguese and its varieties. Decree No. 7.387 (Brazil 2010) established the National Inventory of Linguistic Diversity (INDL) as an official instrument for identifying, documenting, recognizing and valuing the languages spoken by the different formative groups of Brazilian societies (IPHAN 2014). The notion of Brazilian cultural diversity has become a social dimension that characterizes many editorial fields and public libraries in the country. From the Librarianship point of view, this developed the concept of multiculturalism to the sense of public library. Brazilian Librarianship has incorporated several themes into its coronary scope such as: accessibility, reading motivation strategies, community libraries, rural libraries and recently, multicultural libraries. These themes are focused on citizenship, inclusion and cultural diversity, ordinary to the Brazil historical construction.

4. Culture, Diversity and Multiculturalism

Santos (1987) explains the notion of 'Culture': "it reflects a group of social expressions. For the realities of human groupings are complex as well as the characteristics that unite and differentiate them and the culture that expresses them". According to Laraia (1986), culture refers to humanity and at the same time to each of the peoples, nations, societies and human groups: "diversity refers to the richness of forms of cultures". Such forms are in constant relations that concern each of us, therefore, they envy us as social beings (Santos 1987). They allow us to situate ourselves within the nature of the social allies of which

we are part, and make us wonder about the reasons of the social reality we share and about the forces that maintain and transform them. Cultural diversity is both subject to social interactions and to the analysis of cultural manifestations and dimensions with the different groups that constitute it (Laraia 1986, Santos 1987). In this context, cultural diversity means multiculturalism. The immigration process had great importance for the Brazilian cultural formation. Brazil incorporates in its territory cultures from all parts of the world. This immigration process began in 1530 after the Portuguese began the colonization of Brazil. Cultural diversity is something associated with the dynamics of the accepting process of society and therefore not artificial (Cardoso 2015). Because, culture inserts the individual into a multicultural social environment. And territory does not only mean 'land'. It embraces cultural inner logic, full of symbolic manifestation, internal cultural diversity and all ways to deal with the environment therefore, interpret reality and also act on it (Santos 1987).

5. Multicultural Public Libraries in Brazil

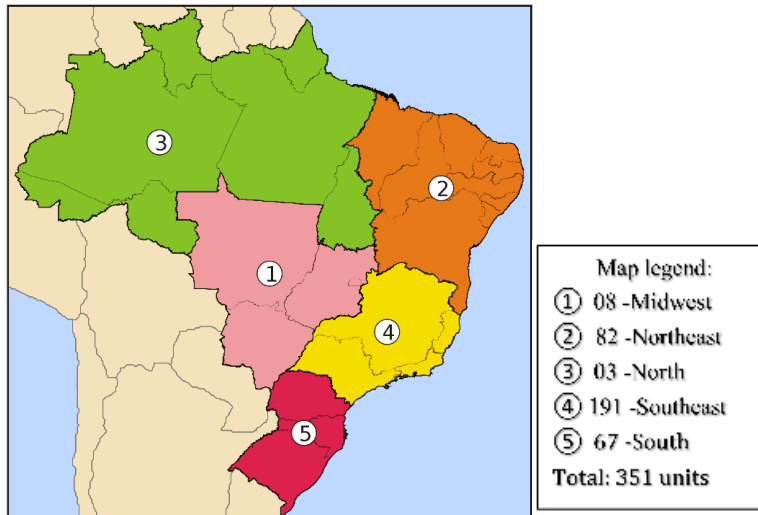
According to IFLA (2016), "Multiculturalism" is the co-existence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviours, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles. "Multicultural library services" include both the provision of multicultural information to all types of library users and the provision of library services specifically targeted to traditionally underserved groups. Public Libraries in Brazil exist in several types. The most are maintained by government funds: federal, state or municipal and others by some Non-governmental organization (NGO). In the last years, Brazilian human groupings are increasing their cultural and educational crafts by the recognition of their own social values within a national environment guided to positive policies and democracy-based. Sperry (1993) noted the role that the public library could play as a leading institution of cultural movements if it revises its own role. In 2007, Brazil established by decree the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities. It was the landmark for public libraries to become leader institutions in combat racism and promote Sustainable Development among communities they serve. Such National policy also has influenced the editorial field in the country. For example, in the last decade, the publishing market for children and young has increased books titles which portray different ethnic groups and Afro-Brazilian cultures in common everyday situations, facing prejudices and rescuing their identity (Mariosa, Reis 2011). Booklets developed under the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of traditional peoples and communities, with participation of community associations and leaderships nationwide, aim to face racism, lands conflicts and citizenship guarantees to traditional communities in the country. In 2008, Law No. 11,645 established the guidelines and bases of national education, to include in the official curriculum of the education system the obligation for studies on 'Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous History and Culture' (Brasil 2008). Legislation also comprises libraries in the country. The notion of Brazilian Sustainable Development embraces cultural diversity and it has

become a social dimension that characterizes many editorial fields and public libraries in the country. Most editorial advances to Sustainable Development and cultural diversity is spread by Government Institutions and by NGOs. Books, Bibliographies and Catalogues diffusion in the country is essentially non-commercial and on Web available. Although IFLA/UNESCO Manifesto states "cultural and linguistic diversity is the common heritage of humankind and should be cherished and preserved for the benefit of all", in Brazil, the theme 'cultural diversity' does not means to achieve multicultural objectives. Brazil naturally has in its historic social composition diversity as a main factor of richness. Brazilian Librarianship is liberal and humanistic oriented, and its professional principles are founded on the freedom of scientific research and the dignity of the human person. In this sense, the major question is: how social values of Gypsy, Quilombola, Indigenous communities are being included in Brazilian public libraries?

6. Multicultural Public Libraries Mapping

The central problem for Gypsies, Quilombolas and Indigenous peoples lies in the lack of respect and demarcation of their territories. This creates conflicts over land between each ethnic group and people who illegally take land under the protection of environmental legislation. Although traditional communities may be throughout the national geographic space, this research sought to analyse public libraries located in regions with Gypsy, Quilombola and Indigenous communities with self-declaration about their functionalities for these traditional peoples. FIOCRUZ database currently presents data on health, conflicts and environmental risks of these and other peoples where they are located. Thus, selection of libraries through SNBP database refers to the cities closer to traditional communities found in the FIOCRUZ database. Official data on Gypsy peoples are still very incipient. In 2011, IBGE reported 291 municipalities that housed gypsy camps in 21 states. Those with the highest concentration of gypsy camps are Minas Gerais (58) and Bahia (53) (Brasil 2015). There are 2847 thousand Quilombola communities in Brazil. The Northeast region has the highest concentration of quilombos with 1724 groups (Unidades de Conservação 2017). Brazil has 505 indigenous lands, (305 ethnicities and 274 languages), representing 12.5% of the Brazilian territory (106.7 million hectares), where 517.4 thousand indigenous people live (57.7%), of which 251.9 thousand (48.7%) are in the North (Portal Brasil 2012). Among the ethnic groups in the survey, there are about 3,443 traditional communities (indigenous, gypsies and quilombos). By mapping public libraries, we identified 351 public libraries serving traditional communities. The follow map shows public library distribution by region:

Map 2 – Public libraries serving traditional peoples



Source: The authors.

From the 351 libraries found, 80% public libraries are self-declared as multicultural instances. This does not mean that other libraries in the country are not engaged with the national policies against racism or for sustainable development, they just do not declare themselves. Cartography is a factor for low or high rate of public libraries concentration, as well multicultural ones. For example, due to the North Region topography, demographic density is about 4,6 hab./km² while Southeast is 92,05 hab./km². Brazilian public libraries have incorporated several themes into its coronary such as: accessibility, reading motivation strategies, community libraries, rural libraries and recently, multicultural libraries.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

By first, we consider public libraries in Brazil as any cultural artefact guided to the culture diversity to serve society. In this sense, libraries are potentially agents that enable positive transformations: social, economic and environmental. In the case of Brazil, the samples demonstrate similar actions to what IFLA proposes in its Manifesto for Multicultural Libraries. Brazilian public library serving traditional communities are some evidences of Brazilian Librarianship development towards a multicultural 'Agenda'. Gypsies, Quilombolas and Indigenous Peoples are not the only traditional populations in the country, but essentially, they are susceptible human groups to violence because racism and land conflicts. The National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities is a milestone in combating social injustices and defending the environment. Brazilian public

libraries become Sustainable Development agents under their mission which enable access to knowledge and defend the material and immaterial heritage of the communities they serve, because, they promote citizenship under the conscience of cultural diversity and the environment. It concludes that public libraries in Brazil are becoming cultural artefact guided to the culture diversity to serve society.

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