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ARTICLE

Anthropology and Museums: Notes from a Course in Bahia, Brazil

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Abstract

This paper describes a course on Anthropology and Museums *offered at the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil. The interface between anthropology and museums is of great relevance for the elaboration of an effective pedagogical strategy in teaching anthropology. The course described here included both theoretical and practical activities aimed at covering contemporary debates about anthropology, museums, and material culture as well as at offering direct first-hand experiences for students. The development and results of the course highlight the usefulness of adopting this theoretical-practical mixture for the effective engagement of students in the educational process.*

Keywords: *Anthropology; Museums; Ethnographic learning*

Introduction

The relationship between anthropology and museums goes back to the beginnings of the discipline. Boas explicitly mentions this relationship in an early reflection on the effectiveness of an anthropology course: "Wherever possible, the work should be based on the study of museum material" (Boas 1919, 48). Even though anthropology changed character after the fieldwork paradigm became central to the anthropological brand in the twentieth century, this relationship has retained its importance (Bouquet 2006). However, this does not mean that this relationship has always and everywhere remained the same. Several changes have occurred over the decades due to changes in both anthropology and museums (Stocking 1988), reflecting dynamic and diverse contexts in both synchronic and diachronic perspectives.

Historical and social changes in both anthropology and museology (in their epistemologies, politics, and methods, for example), together with the emergence of new actors, have changed relations between the fields. These changes have

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given rise to new sensibilities and opened possibilities for new voices to be included in exhibition processes. In Brazil, for example, the active inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and those from other underrepresented social groups in museum activities is leading to a revised understanding of the semiotic power of exhibitions. The creation of the Maguta Museum by the Ticuna Indigenous people is an example of this alternative experience (Pacheco de Oliveira 2012). In this and other cases, alternate forms, fortunes, and meanings highlight the necessity of developing a new appreciation for who produces, collects, exposes, and visits museum collections.

A new way of looking at "objects" has also emerged. Changes in debates on materiality initiated by the work of scholars such as Gell (1998) or Appadurai (1988) promoted the idea that "objects" are real actors that can influence human experience. This expansion of the concept of agency has sparked debates about how "objects" affect their producers, users, and observers, enabling the emergence of new social dimensions and embodiments. Such debates have shaped anthropology at both ethnographic and theoretical levels. For the former, for example, see the volume edited by Santos-Granero (2009) dedicated to Native American theories of materiality. Theoretically, such discussion goes beyond the boundaries of anthropological research and leads to innovative research questions on how materialities embody specific cognitive, sensorial, social, and cultural experiences (e.g., Gerristen and Riello 2015; Henare et al. 2006; Miller 2013). These movements promote alternative perspectives on core topics in anthropology, such as social organization, belief systems, embodied experience of the world, gender roles, and so on. The tangible experience of such "cultural" aspects of materiality is also related to the attention given to socio-technical features of the present. This reassessment of material culture and its semiotic power has also influenced exhibition practices such that any discussion of anthropology and museums now presupposes an effective engagement with these debates. The assumption that materiality (with its socio-technical, cognitive, and sensorial-embodied dimensions) is at the core of dialogical possibilities between anthropology and museums has consequences for teaching and learning in these areas.

There has been a growing global interest in incorporating material culture studies into teaching programs (e.g., Chatterjee and Hannan 2015; Dias 2013; Nichols 2019; Peers and Vitelli 2020; Woodward 2016). Several authors emphasize how interaction with material culture provides both direct sensory experiences (Edwards et al. 2006) and mental engagements with the world (Malafouris 2013). As Adams points out, "classrooms and exhibition spaces need to engage more consistently and inventively with the fact that people interact through material things" (2015, 89). Combining sensory and intellectual stimuli within a course fosters a direct relationship with the material expression of sociality and the multiple forms in which it is perceived, thereby offering students multiple embodied experiences.

This combination also introduces concerning aspects of both anthropology and museology, such as relationships to colonialism, authenticity, racism, and so on, while also providing an opportunity to discuss how these issues are currently being revisited through engagement with previously silenced social actors.

A detailed review of these considerations is beyond the scope of this article. Recent publications in anthropology, museology, and other related disciplines (e.g., Benneth et al. 2017; Karp et al. 2006) offer a more comprehensive panorama. What follows is a short description of and reflection on a course we offered on *Anthropology and Museums* at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) in Salvador, Brazil. This course was designed to be an exercise in dialogue between anthropology and museums, employing debates around the educational opportunities within museums and exploring the broader understanding of their diverse semantics. It required varied activities to incorporate contemporary controversies and allow students to appropriate them in creative and original ways. We will describe the structure of the course in sequence, including its organization, the theoretical modules, the practical undertakings, and other activities that contributed to the learning process. The description presents strategies we adopted to promote an effective engagement of participants with the social, cognitive, and political dimensions of materialities, with special attention to how these are presented in museums' collections and exhibitions. In this way, we share empirical examples of how to incorporate such debates in specific teaching and learning situations. We conclude with some reflections on the overall experience and comment on the impact of the course on students' thinking about the relationship between anthropology and museums.

The Course

We offered the *Anthropology and Museums* course in the second half of 2019 during the second semester of the academic year in Brazil. The course combined two student classes at UFBA. One was a postgraduate course sponsored by the Postgraduate Program in Anthropology (PPGA) that was also open to the students in the Postgraduate Program in Museology (PPG Museum). The other was an undergraduate course sponsored by the Undergraduate Program in Social Sciences that was also open to students in the Undergraduate Program in Museology. The course included a total of sixty-eight hours, divided into seventeen lectures, in which a theoretical module and practical activities were intermingled. We also planned for the participation of representatives of the Kamayurá people from Brazil's Xingu Indigenous Park, who live in the Amazon region. This pedagogical strategy followed the suggestion that the learning process should favor ethnographic practice over theoretical focus (Da Col and Graeber 2011).

This composite nature of including both postgraduate and undergraduate levels of interdisciplinary learning required appropriate pedagogical strategies to allow for the different backgrounds of the students enrolled. We chose to maintain two levels of required and recommended reading. Postgraduate students were expected to complete three required readings per week, while undergraduate students could select only one of these; we also suggested four optional books weekly for all students. We selected the bibliographic materials according to the topic at hand and offered a wide, interdisciplinary perspective as much as possible. During the class discussions, we presented the whole bibliography in the form of a unified discourse to make it accessible to students according to their interests and competences. The practical activities were the same for both undergraduates and postgraduates; however, we took the variation in student backgrounds into account during the final assessment. Aspects of the course were selectable for both undergraduate and postgraduate students so that they could participate according to their intellectual, personal, and research interests, and in order to positively impact effective engagement and active participation.

Students came from a variety of backgrounds. More than half self-identified as Afro-descendants, and students enriched the course development with specific discussions of their experiences, as we will describe below. Students came also from different academic trajectories. Postgraduates from PPGA (2) or PPG Museum (3) were the most expected. Two other students were from the Postgraduate Program in Education, History, and Philosophy of Science and had backgrounds in Biology and Archaeology. Another student was from the Postgraduate Program in Dance. The undergraduate students were all from the programs in Social Sciences and Museology (9). Fortunately, some students were or are museum employees, or they had experience as museum institution interns. There were also some "volunteer" students (4) who participated without having official course enrollment status. Among them was a foreign anthropology master's student who was in Salvador for her field research and asked to attend the course. Four others were employees of the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (MAE) at UFBA, three of whom were also enrolled as postgraduates. These MAE employees were already preparing to receive a visitation from the Kamayurá people, as described below.

The course took place in a meaningful location: the original building of Bahia's School of Medicine. The school was founded in 1808 after the Portuguese court and the entire government administration fled to their American colony as a result of the Napoleonic wars. Its foundation marked the beginnings of a new Portuguese policy aimed at creating the United Kingdom of Brazil and Portugal, which was completed in 1816. This school was incorporated into the UFBA in 1946, when the latter was created. Since then, most of its activities have been moved to new facilities. Today, this large palace houses the administration of the Faculty of Medicine, some prestigious old rooms, and two other auditoriums, all with luxurious carved wooden

furniture from the 19th century. It also houses, as a separate institution, the Faculty of Medicine's ancient library with its historical documents, books, and related restoration and conservation laboratories. The building includes two offices for postgraduate medical courses and the associated lecture theaters and laboratories. Finally, the building also contains two independent museums, although both belong to the UFBA: the Afro-Brazilian Museum (MAFRO) and Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (MAE).

MAE was founded in 1983 in the basement of the palace, in a place only recently uncovered by an archaeological excavation. It is located in the remains of the "Real Colégio dos Jesuítas da Bahia," which is even older than the School of Medicine itself. Although it was not officially recognized as a "college," it was the first institution of higher learning established in Brazilian territory in 1564 and existed until the expulsion of the clergymen in 1759. The "Jesuit College" (for short) offered courses in classical Latin and Greek studies, grammar, art, mathematics, and, of course, theology. Although its titles had to be further recognized in Portugal by the Jesuit University of Évora, on which its curriculum was based, the institution was responsible for the education of most colonial elites. It led the intellectual life of the colony's capital until the expulsion of the Order, just a few years before Salvador also lost its status as the colony's capital to Rio de Janeiro in 1763. Although the college had repeatedly required university status throughout its nearly two hundred years of existence, it only received this status from the fleeing Portuguese king when he arrived in Bahia. The new Faculty of Medicine of Bahia was housed in the former nursery and pharmacy of the old Jesuit College, which by then had already been converted into an army hospital.

The site, with all its past and present facilities, is an excellent didactic tool for teaching and learning. The choice of this site allowed us to introduce students to the polysemy of spaces in the production of memory. By reflecting on the history of the place, it was possible to observe the multiple interactions between politics, economics, ideology, and other social factors in the production of the experience of the place by their users and how this changes over time. Salvador's history is materialized in this building, as is the social exclusion of most of the population from its activities. Only recently have previously excluded scholars, more than half of whom identify as Afro-Brazilians, been able access to the institution not only as servants or visitors.

The idea for the course emerged during the first semester of 2019 from informal meetings between the two instructors and in response to our particular concerns with the multiple relationships between anthropology and museums in Salvador. Despite us both having previous experience working with exhibitions and museums, this was our first time organizing a course specifically on this topic, which required careful consideration. The first author of this paper had organized several

ethnographic exhibitions in various countries and in collaboration with Amazonian Indigenous people, while the second author was at the time the Director of MAE, and these previous activities enabled us to discuss direct experiences throughout the semester. We initially intended it to be a postgraduate-only course at the PPGA, but owing to the interest expressed by the management of the PPG Museum, we decided to adapt our original plans to enable a wider range of participants. Salvador has many museums, cultural centers, exhibition centers, and other similar institutions. There also exist lively ongoing debates in civil society on topics such as the representation of the cultural heritage of Afro-Brazilians, the decolonization of the city's social history, the transformations currently taking place in the city, historical memories of Brazil's "first capital," and much more. The social and cultural life of Salvador inspired us to make the course more comprehensive, offering it to both graduate and undergraduate students, in order to incite a more collective reflection on the relationship between anthropology and museums.

This dialogue required us to think about how to effectively produce a concrete integration of the two poles of anthropology and museums, not just as an intersection of two disciplines or, alternatively, as the promotion of anthropological views of museums or as a course dealing with "ethnographic" museums. Initial title suggestions such as *Museum Anthropology*, *Anthropology of Museums*, and others were discarded as they seemed to reduce the focus of the course to one particular perspective, whereas the aim was, on the contrary, to broaden the dialogue. The choice of the course's name, which was finally approved by the PPGA Council and included in the official grading, fell on *Anthropology and Museums*. Due to the limited time available in the course, we decided to mostly focus on the exhibitory dimensions of museums. While acknowledging the importance of other activities carried out in these institutions (including conservation, collection, and storage), we opted to reserve those activities in a complementary position and to privilege the exhibited objects and collections. We viewed these exhibitions as most crucial in the overall proposal of the course discussing multiple dialogues carried out in museums and in anthropology, which are embodied in such objects.

The choice of the course name was related to the idea that the conjunction "and" can expand possibilities without focusing on a particular approach or perspective. This conjunction is adopted here as "a kind of zero-relator … whose function is to oppose the absence of relation, but without specifying any relation in particular" (Viveiros de Castro 2003, 2). This choice underscored our claim to bring together heterogeneous discussions and ethnographic experiences and to reconsider compartmentalized distinctions between theory and practice, explanation and description, etc. The necessary division of the course into an introductory module with a stronger theoretical emphasis and the more practical activities that followed should not be seen as an unbending dichotomy. Rather, the aim was to gradually introduce students to an independent and active search for

connections between disciplines, classroom discussions, theory and practice, and academic and personal engagement. In this way, we sought to open the course to the multiple possibilities that the plurality of participants offered for debate.

Introductory Meetings

We organized five introductory sessions to familiarize students with debates about the relationships between anthropology and museums and about material culture. The choice of topics corresponded to an attempt to introduce students to some of the most important debates on the emergence of museums and anthropology, historical and contemporary epistemological and methodological proposals, and interdisciplinary dialogues. Each lecture was organized in a participatory environment, with a concise presentation of the topic under discussion followed by collaborative dialogues in which we invited students to present examples and reflections from their own experience. Incorporating student suggestions required a flexible teaching strategy to effectively manage interactions with and among students. Rather than following a fixed, predetermined script, we chose to tailor each meeting to the students' interests. This strategy allowed us to incorporate students' theoretical backgrounds, practical experiences, and personal readiness into the course. The following sections briefly outline these themes and the subsequent debates in class.

Introductory Lecture

The first lecture introduced the course and provided students with knowledge of its broad objectives. We gave an overview of the topics we planned to discuss in the theoretical lectures, the practical activities we had planned, and how we intended to receive the Kamayurá representatives. We asked the students to briefly introduce themselves and explain their motivations for taking the course. In this way, we were able to capture their main interests and use those interests as a starting point for the discussions that followed. Some of the reasons students gave for enrolling were: developing interdisciplinary thinking about museums and anthropology; acquiring intellectual tools for cultural valorization; bridging the gap between theory and practice in anthropological work in museums; acquiring new skills for people already working in museum institutions; and others. We then decided to include these topics in the didactic plan through specific bibliographic material that would be discussed in the following classes.

Cabinets of Curiosities, Galleries, and Ethnographic Museums

This meeting offered a historical exploration of the emergence of cabinets of curiosities, galleries, and ethnographic museums as specific modalities for observing, thinking about, and representing the "other." Reading materials

included Fabian (2010), Mautu (2006), and Schwartz (2005). We began with a discussion of what the act of collecting means both historically and in the present day by providing a historical overview of collecting practices and how they reflect different approaches to the diversity of human societies. This discussion addressed issues such as authenticity, colonialism, racism, and the power structures involved. We went on to outline historical collections of Indigenous objects, the establishment of ethnographic museums in Brazil, and some contemporary cases in which Indigenous people appropriated the institution of the museum as a toolkit for their specific political, social, and cultural purposes. We asked students to discuss the redefinitions of power relations expressed in the exhibitions. Some students focused on the structural racism prevalent in the lives of the Afro-Brazilian population in Salvador. They argued that historically these communities have suffered from an invisibility that allowed the leading class to portray them as "exotic" while excluding them from the political and economic life of the city. Current museum policies are gradually opening museum spaces to these segments of the city society. An example of this is museums that focus specifically on the African diaspora in Brazil or on the influence of African-descendant peoples in shaping Brazilian society, such as the Afro-Brazilian Museum, which is housed in the same building where we held our meetings. Other students, most of whom already work in museum institutions, echoed this discussion, pointing to the overall change in Salvador's museums, which are increasingly focused on community-oriented educational strategies. This change became clear as we observed the proliferation of community museums in the city, the development of new inclusive pedagogical strategies, and generally a closer dialogue between these institutions and society at large.

Anthropology of Material Culture

This lecture introduced students to some debates about material culture in sociocultural experiences based on reading from Abreu and Lima Filho (2005), Appadurai (1988), and Malafouris (2008). As it was not possible to cover all debates on this topic due to the limited time available, we focused on three main areas. The first considered "objects" as documents, as tools for the (re)construction of themes presented in museum spaces and exhibitions. This discussion allowed for comparison with other types of documentary sources, such as ethnographic accounts, images, etc. In the second part of the lecture, objects were presented as commodities. We focused on the involvement of objects in the politics of value, which is not limited to economic aspects, but extends to the creation of various power relations among the producer, the buyer, and the user (including museum visitors), to the production of the imaginary, and consequently to their use in identity politics. The third area was concerned with objects as embodied tools, as active extensions in the experience of the world. Far from being simply passive and inert artifacts, "objects" here are seen as active agents in the perception of

ourselves and our surroundings. We asked students to discuss the multi-faceted nature of the term "object." Some students presented the originality of material life in Salvador created by the presence of Afro-Brazilian people in the city: amulets, votive images, as well as typical Bahiana clothing of African origin were given as examples. Similarly, students also referenced Indigenous objects, such as the hammock. At the same time, students referred to the repurposing of these objects as they entered museum spaces as an ambiguous process. Making the producers of these objects visible can also promote the exoticization of these producers. Students related this ambiguity to the value politics associated with the objects: some objects take on the identity of "tourist icons" (the students' term), while others are neglected in selective processes of identity politics. The emergence of galleries selling Afro-Brazilian art was also discussed in the context of value politics, as artists are generally not adequately recognized for their work (despite some notable exceptions). Finally, students discussed how objects impact our experience of the world, delving into the relationships between mind and body as a basis for recognizing multiple personal and collective engagements with materiality. An archaeological artifact (one student's example) can bridge the historical and geographical gap between the producer and the viewer, allowing the latter to meet the former in the museum space. Be that as it may, this possibility was not trivial. Some students pointed to the pervasive presence of selective cognitive possibilities, again related to the previous discussion of power relations in the exhibition experience.

The Social Life of Things

This class focused on objects in their social networks. Drawing on classic discussions by Gell (1998), Keane (2005), and Kopytoff (1986), we delved into how the notion that objects have social lives allows them to represent their active contribution to people's experiences. We further asked how the mutual socialization of objects, people, and places can be mapped, with particular attention to museums, exhibitions, and spaces. Finally, objects' ephemeral and constantly (re)produced sociality allowed us to discuss the biography of objects as a specific way of mapping their social engagement. Students responded actively to the lecture's suggestion and encouraged varied debates. Some students, particularly those already working in museums, were interested in the possibility of presenting these biographies to the public, considering what narrative strategies might be used and how the objects' social agencies might be represented in exhibitions. Museum objects are removed from their original location, which is in another place and time, and then they are labeled, cataloged, and stored in museums. Recording their biographies seemed to be a promising strategy for integrating different objects into coherent exhibitions. The students presented their own experiences in this direction, promoting a productive exchange of experiences. Other students pointed

to the web of mutual influences that connects people and objects. For example, by putting on certain clothes, people define themselves in the culturally diverse panorama of Salvador, but students also felt that both people and clothes define each other, making it impossible to erase the active social role of objects. During the debate, a synthesis of the two discussions highlighted how museums produce a collection of people and objects that can give rise to alternative forms of mutual socialization. What happens to a berimbau musical instrument (another example suggested by the students) when it is displayed in an exhibition? The instrument is a producer of sociality during the capoeira meeting (an Afro-Brazilian dance/fighting sport) that defines that social group. Once it is displayed in a museum, it allows for the creation of new social groups and allows other people to reach out to each other.

The Cognitive Life of Things

This lecture dealt with objects endowed with their own specific agency, not necessarily that of humans. Readings included Domínguez-Rubio (2008), Holbraad (2006), and Küchler (2005). Using examples from non-hegemonic perspectives, we presented alternative ways of thinking about the lives of objects. For example, the life of some Indigenous objects is experienced as the encounter of truly subjective actors; this is the case of a "maraca" (a kind of rattle), which is experienced by the Mebenokré (an Indigenous community in the Amazon) as a real "person" (Bollettin 2016). A similar approach is used when describing high-tech artifacts, especially those demonstrating artificial intelligence, so attributing subjectivity to objects cannot be considered an "exotic" experience. We explored the question of whether it is possible to ascribe distinct and specific properties to objects, leading to an epistemic and ontological struggle. The ensuing discussion addressed questions such as: How can this specific agency be brought into a museum exhibition? What would be the consequences of such recognition for the concept of the museum experience? Is object-specific agency identifiable because of its similarities or its differences to human agency? According to the students, these debates have led them to rethink the boundaries between people and objects in innovative ways. The way in which a religious amulet enters a museum collection has been described as a movement in which the "dialogs" that such amulets have with users and viewers multiply. Afro-Brazilian orixás statues are an example of this; these entities materialize into statues that are ascribed agency of their own. As agents, they exert an influence on museum visitors that gives them direct and effective access to the universe of Afro-Brazilian religion. Other examples given by students were related to digital tools, computer science algorithms, and other virtual worlds. These are capable of redefining people's experiences, not only as an extension of human subjectivity, but by actively reinventing it. The inclusion of videos, audio, interactive screens, etc. was also mentioned as a feasible and potentially successful method of

incorporating objects' agencies into the visitor's museum experience. At the same time, this diversity of material objects opened up debate about the difficulties and possibilities of acknowledging their own lives in the local ethnographic context or museum exhibition. What function is activated when an Indigenous artifact is presented to the public, when it is identified as a "person" in its context of use? How can this effect not be reduced to a merely exoticizing experience? What about Christian religious artifacts revered for their miraculous powers?

Commodification and Heritage

This class was dedicated to discussing the emergence of debates on commercialization and heritage and delving into the impact that the emergence of new social actors has on museums; the session drew on readings from Alonso González (2015), Lima Filho and Abreu (2007), and Pacheco de Oliveira (2007). Due to the vastness of this global debate, we decided to focus on the Brazilian experience to place students within the changing panorama of Salvador. The active role of anthropologists in heritage institutions in Brazil has actively contributed to the emergence of a critical discussion on the representation of national identity, which is also reflected in museum institutions. The emphasis on selected elements, both material and discursive, for the definition of this identity became a strategy for the representation of memories and ideologies aimed at generating a national "authenticity." At the same time, this critical reflection contributed to the appropriation of the concept of "heritage" by previously silenced segments of the population, such as Afro-Brazilians or Indigenous communities, but also rural communities and immigrants from different countries. These populations use the concept directly or indirectly as a tool in their struggle for social recognition. An example of this is the Kamayurá project, which aligns very well with our pedagogical goals, as we will see below. Students gave several examples of these movements: the re-evaluation of African heritage in Salvador through museums, cultural activities, and other forms strongly linked to the demand for political and social recognition; the inclusion of archaeological sites in the production of long-term histories of particular places; and the recognition of clothing, music, and other "cultural" elements as legitimating a new identity politics. Avoiding fatuous dichotomies such as pre-existence/invention or discovery/reinvention of heritage, we encouraged a discussion of the confluence of multiple voices in heritage discourses and practices. A clear example of this is the commodification of Carnival in Salvador, which is now considered one of the largest parties in the world with strong commercial features. At the same time, it began as a "people's party" where socially invisible people gained visibility that somehow inverts the local social hierarchy. This transformation and the creation of a Carnival museum produced new narratives of identity that were negotiated among different social actors. Other examples include the Museum of Navigation, which portrays colonial travelers with a

heroic aura, and the Afro-Brazilian Museum, which emphasizes the mystical and religious aspects of Afro-Brazilian culture. Students recognized the problematic and controversial dynamics of heritage politics in the design of museum exhibitions. Finally, they engaged in the necessary critical reflection on how multiple actors are interconnected in the formulation of narratives that are materialized in museum exhibitions.

Practical Activities

The second part of the course provided students with hands-on experiences that allowed for direct and effective engagement with museums, material cultures, and exhibition collaborations, using the previously discussed topics as tools. We required students to complete three different short ethnographic exercises. We informed students of these assignments at the very beginning of the course and offered them the opportunity to complete the assignments (with the exception of the third, which fit into the Kamayurá representatives' schedule) according to their own time availability and willingness. Some students began the first two tasks in the first weeks, and others started in the following weeks. We suggested that students who were already working in museums not choose their own workplaces and instead take the opportunity to expand their experience. Some students focused on facilities and objects related to their ongoing research activities (e.g., a particular element of their ethnography for their master's or doctoral thesis), while others focused on new material that was entirely unrelated to their previous or ongoing research experience.

We did not create formal assignment guidelines, as we chose to consider students' sensibilities and the specifics of each field through a collaborative dialogic effort. After each ethnographic exploration, students were required to write a short essay about the activity. These were in the format of a short essay of about ten pages in length that included at least ten bibliographic sources from the course. Students were free to use more than ten sources and to include other sources not presented in the course. The suggested exercises aimed to encourage students to independently apply the course content in specific case studies. We reviewed the essays by identifying strong and weak points, suggesting possible improvements, and recommending revisions as necessary. Students were then asked to critically evaluate and grade their own work and their effective appropriation of the course content itself.

Mapping Museums at Salvador

The first practical activity was a short ethnography in a museum of "ethnographic interest." For this activity, we stimulated a discussion in advance about possible meanings of the notion of "ethnographic interest." This discussion

generated a variety of potential definitions: museums displaying ethnographic collections; museums as objects of ethnographic inquiry; or museums as spaces of ethnographic knowledge production, for example. These semantic possibilities offer alternative views of the relationship between anthropology and museums. Therefore, we chose to have students themselves suggest which definition better suited their personal understanding of the term. This choice was consistent with our goal of extending the analysis of the relationship between anthropology and museums as far as possible without defining its boundaries in advance. In line with this stance, students were free to decide which museum they wanted to study and whether they wanted to focus on a particular exhibition or on the institution itself.

A second topic of discussion focused on some guidelines for conducting these ethnographic surveys. Since not all students had prior ethnographic experience, as some came from undergraduate courses or from different academic disciplines, we encouraged a collective reflection in which interdisciplinary contributions converged into a simple list of suggestions. To develop a general description of the specific case, we asked the following questions: What kind of collection is it? Where is it located? What kind of institution is it? Who works in this institution? Is it public or private? How many rooms are allocated for the exhibition? What kind of spaces? Who is the audience? How does the audience react when they visit the place? As far as the description of the exhibition itself is concerned, we proposed to investigate what kinds of objects are exhibited, how they came into the collection, how they are presented, how the explanatory panels are designed, who organized the exhibition, who explains the objects to the visitors, and what kind of exhibition aids are used, in addition to other potential questions.

Students made initial contact with the leadership of each institution to obtain the necessary formal approvals. Most institutional leaders responded positively to the students' requests, but some of them required a formal letter from the college explaining the purpose of the survey. With these letters, no institution declined to allow the students to visit and conduct interviews. Interestingly, some institutional leaders also suggested future collaboration with the course to strengthen a possible network. Some students conducted only two visits to the facilities, while others made multiple visits to obtain the necessary data. Mostly they conducted interviews with the directors, staff, and visitors; collected data from the archives; and did some direct observations.

The students focused on a wide range of exhibition spaces, including the community museum Mãe Mirinha de Portão; UFBA Afro-Brazilian Museum; collection of wall panels of Carybé; MAE; Popular Arts Museum; UFBA Museum of Natural History; Numismatic Museum Eugênio Teixeira Leal; collection of African Art of the Solar Ferrão Cultural Center; House of Benin; Carnival Museum; and Memorial of the UFBA Brazilian Medicine. These institutions are housed in recent

and historical buildings; they are both public and private institutions; some are self-organized, while others are housed in prominent institutions; some are large and others small. These institutions' collections also vary widely: some focus on narrow themes while others are more comprehensive; some have few objects on display while others have large collections; some have interactive digital panels while others have no explanatory descriptions of the objects. The audiences are also very diverse: some of the institutions receive mainly primary and secondary school students and others mainly foreign tourists; some promote cultural activities for a wide audience, while others do not. This variation required students to elaborate specific research strategies for each institution.

In general, however, the results of these surveys highlighted the multiple possible ways of thinking about relationships between anthropology and museums. Some students proposed an anthropological view "of" a museum, others focused on an anthropological museum, and so on. The collective discussion that followed enabled students to compare such diverse approaches and include them in their written essays.

Objects of Daily Life

The second experience asked students to describe the "life" of any daily life object of their choosing. Students were instructed to approach an object from their own experience, either a personal experience or one common in Salvador. The goal of this activity was to introduce students to the task of mapping the lives of these objects and trying to observe them behind their familiar experiences. The starting point was that museum objects are used in particular contexts, such as a ritual, as well as in everyday contexts, especially in museums that focus on the presentation of "cultures." Consequently, the exercise should encourage critical reflection on objects so that they are not seen as "exotic." If objects that make up collections are "familiar" to "others," the task should be to carry out a symmetrical exercise with objects that are "familiar" to "us" in order to understand what happens to them when they move from the context of use to the exhibition space.

This activity promoted reflection on the theoretical debates introduced in the first part of the course. The first line of discussion concerned how to map the biography of selected objects (Joy 2009; Kopytoff 1986). In this process, care should be taken to reconstruct different dimensions of the object. One is the material dimension of the object: What material is it made of? What is its state of preservation? Does it have traces describing events in its history? A second is the social dimension: Who made it? Who treated it before it came to the actual owner? What social and cultural values does it bring? A third dimension is the personal relationship between the object and the student: How did the student obtain it? What memories are associated with it? What personal events are connected with it?

A second line of discussion focused on these objects as possessing their own active agency. This focus would allow students to recognize the agency of objects in museum collections. Along the way, students would reflect on how selected objects create "differences" in their daily experiences. Inspired by Domínguez-Rubio (2008), the exercise consisted of looking at people starting from the perspective of the object, rather than using people to look at the object. By mapping such "differences," the activity was intended to highlight how objects affect our experiences. For example, a cloth handkerchief is usually used in the kitchen. When it is used to cover the head after a haircutting due to a cancer treatment, it affects our embodiment of the disease, as well as the relations we develop with other people. This discussion entailed a double twist. On the one hand, it was about redefining the boundaries between the agency and passivity of objects in daily life. On the other hand, it was about how "ordinary" objects create "differences" when they are included in a museum collection.

Again, students were free to choose which object they wanted to focus on. Examples included the following: a cloth handkerchief, a clay pot, a wooden mortar, a Jemanjá (Afro-Brazilian religious entity) plaster amulet, a glass, a pair of Havaianas (famous Brazilian rubber sandals), a wooden spoon, a wooden funeral coffin, and a smartphone. The diversity of objects, materials, uses, and relationships they foster allowed students to collectively discuss the multiple dimensions of engagement with the material in their daily lives. As a result, this activity fostered debate about possible parallels between the objects the students observed and the objects stored at MAE. As a class, we delved into how to represent the biography of museum objects, from the context of use to exhibition, and how to make their agency accessible to museum visitors.

Kamayurá Delegation's Visit to the Course

The third exercise was an attempt to foster student engagement with museums as experienced by Indigenous people. We wanted to encourage students to think about the multiple meanings of museums, collections, and exhibitions for people from different socio-cultural backgrounds and to consider how a real dialogue can be established between the museum and the producers of the collected objects. As mentioned earlier, the museum as an institution in Brazil is increasingly engaged by Indigenous people, Afro-Brazilians, and other members of underrepresented groups. This has led to a redefinition of exhibition practices towards the progressive inclusion of these groups in the museum's production. With this in mind, we included in the course a visit that three representatives of the Kamayurá people had planned to make to the MAE.

The Kamayurá representatives visited Salvador as part of the Arquivo Kamayurá (Kamayurá Archive) project; the delegation included the coordinator of the project

and two sons of two community leaders. This project began after a fire in 2012 destroyed the *maloca* (Indigenous house) where the Kamayurá kept not only ritual objects but also many other artifacts that they no longer make. They were concerned themselves with the idea of "cultural preservation" (their term), emphasizing their protagonism in this dialogue about collection and exhibition. The goal of this *maloca* was to connect new generations with the old ways of life, because, as the Kamayurá representatives stated, "things are changing faster and faster." The goal of the Arquivo Kamayurá was not only to restore this *maloca* to its original form but also to find a new way to accomplish the same preservation and valorization task to better fit today's times. Implementing the project required a lot of internal political negotiations and careful, step-by-step execution. After naming a delegation of three, they decided to begin their mission by visiting some collections of artifacts, films, images, and voice recordings from the Kamayurá that they knew researchers had collected in recent decades. Most of these collections are now in public college museums in the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Santa Catarina, and Bahia. The goal of the project was not only to find out what exactly these collections, the exported artifacts of the past, consist of, but also how to take better care of them through new ways of preserving, conserving, and exhibiting them, including the virtual possibilities offered by the Internet. This project also had to address another issue: some artifacts have their own agency (Bollettin 2019) and therefore need to be kept under absolute control (Barcelos Neto 2012).

MAE houses a collection of some three hundred Kamayurá objects collected by anthropologist and Indigenous rights activist Pedro Agostinho in the late 1960s during fieldwork that resulted in a monograph published in 1974 (Agostinho 1974). Some of these objects are now being presented to the public as part of an exhibition not specifically dedicated to the Kamayurá people but to the work of this now revered retired professor. Although the current exhibition focuses on the work of the anthropologist rather than the Kamayurá, the visit was an opportunity to attempt a collaborative redesign of the museum's current exhibition. It was an experiment in relating the Kamayurá artifacts not only to the anthropologist's understanding of their significance, or ostensibly to that of the men and women from whom he had collected them in the past, but henceforth to some representatives of current generations. For the Kamayurá, these objects now have a new meaning and a new kind of agency, especially in such a foreign environment. Students had the opportunity to work not only with the Kamayurá delegation but also with staff of the museum institution with whom they had to interact in the planned course activities.

The Kamayurá delegation's visit to Salvador lasted a little over a week in all. The visitors offered three half days from their schedule to engage with the students. Two of these sessions were optional for the students, depending on their work and study schedules, and consisted of accompanying the Kamayurá delegation on their visits

to MAE as the delegates stopped in front of the shelves with their artifacts and commented on them. These visits were recorded by the students and the delegates themselves with cameras and cell phones, with the agreement to share all recordings with each other. The third meeting, the most important for the course, was mandatory and coincided with our normal class time, but displaced the dependencies on the museum. The students and staff from MAE, along with the Kamayurá delegates, gathered around a large table with seven artifacts they had selected in the previous days as the ones they wanted to include in the exhibition as the best representatives of their people. This had also been discussed at the first two meetings. The students' task was to discuss with the Kamayurá why these particular objects had been chosen, their motives, the stories they evoked, and how they would incorporate them into an exhibition context.

Due to the limited time available, the assignment was intended as an introductory exercise. In addition, students were asked to find references to the objects the Kamayurá named in the available bibliography, videos, and other sources. The objects were a black wood bow, a skin scratcher, a ceramic pot, a feather crown, a pair of feathers, a straw basket, and a straw crown. The students were divided into groups and each group focused on one item. They identified the presence of these items in the books of Professor Pedro Agostinho to find out, if possible, how the items had been collected and described. They also searched extensively for these objects in the videos available on YouTube to record their use in recent times. Finally, they systematized their findings in the form of written reports. In this final work, the students were also asked to think about how these objects could be included in the exhibition using the results of the survey, the dialogues with the Kamayurá delegates, and the course materials. We planned to use the results to develop a proposal for reformulating the exhibition to send to the Kamayurá the following semester. However, this project has been revised in response to the current COVID-19 pandemic and has taken the form of a virtual collaborative exhibition (see Tromboni, Bollettin, and Teixera, forthcoming, and https://acervo.mae.ufba.br/kamayura/).

Some Notes on the *Anthropology and Museums* Course Experience

In this paper, we described a course of lectures dedicated to *Anthropology and Museums* realized at the Federal College of Bahia, Brazil. The course included both theoretical and practical components where students could gain first-hand experience, and it became clear how much the teaching and learning experience can benefit from conducting direct ethnographic exercises. This approach gave students a deep insight into the controversies associated with such interdisciplinary fields, and they were able to integrate learning on how to conduct fieldwork (Oakley 2012), how to better engage the public in exhibitions (Eriksen 2006), and how voices multiply when studying collections (Hodge 2015). After completing the

course, we had both collective and individual conversations with some of the students who were interested in continuing to collaborate on the redesign of the Kamayurá exhibition at MAE as well as other exhibition projects. Other students simply commented spontaneously to offer their appreciation for the course. The comments we received after the completion of the course confirmed the success of our experiment in putting together theoretical and practical assignments for a comprehensive experience. Most of the students' comments referred to the value of the direct practical experience and the inclusion of exercises that were unusual (at least for many of them), such as observing their own objects or dialoguing with the Kamayurá delegation.

Direct participation, observation, and dialogue are the central methodological tools of anthropology, or what Didier Fassin defined as "[the place] where true life and real lives meet" (Joshi 2014). Furthermore, first-hand experience and the ability to make autonomous decisions about the fields enabled students to reflect on course topics, generating a direct and personal dialogue with the people and objects in the field (Ortner 1995). This assumption is even more relevant in the context of studying material culture and museum experiences, as direct contact with objects can foster deeper learning and critical skills (Peers and Vitelli 2020). At the same time, dialogue with the Kamayurá delegates provided students an opportunity to explore a new ethic of exhibition practices and the appropriation of museum spaces by different agents (Kreps 2015). Studying the structure of an exhibition in a museum as well as the intellectual exercise of discussing their own objects contributed to students' effective engagement (see Krmpotich 2015). In this direction, the theoretical and practical activities proposed in the course were conceived of as a tool for students to be actively, personally, and directly engaged in the multiple aspects of materiality, museums, and anthropological dialogues. If museums are clearly a productive field of research, we have tried to show how they are also a fruitful context in which to develop multi-level teaching and learning in anthropology. The preceding description and the students' positive comments show that the strategy of mixing theoretical and practical experiences proves effective in engaging students in the teaching and learning process of anthropology and museums.

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