


## Public history and participatory research in the present time: body and orality in an engaged laboratory

 /tempoargumento

 @tempoargumento

 @tempoargumento

 **Juniele Rabêlo de Almeida**  
Fluminense Federal University  
Niterói – BRAZL  
[lattes.cnpq.br/5588377981047859](http://lattes.cnpq.br/5588377981047859)  
[junielerabelo@gmail.com](mailto:junielerabelo@gmail.com)  
 [orcid.org/0000-0001-9468-9192](http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9468-9192)

 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5965/2175180316432024e0111>

Received: 16/09/2024

Approved: 11/11/2024

Guest Editor:

Emerson Cesar de Campos

Santa Catarina State University

[orcid.org/0000-0002-1455-4528](http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1455-4528)

## Public history and participatory research in the present time: body and orality in an engaged laboratory

### Abstract

This article presents reflections on the intersection of public history, participatory research, oral history, and corporeality, drawing on the theoretical and methodological approaches of the Oral History and Image Laboratory at Fluminense Federal University (LABHOI/UFF, founded in 1982). It aims to examine oral history collections created through participatory research practices that incorporate embodied forms of public narrative – the recognition of pasts manifested in bodies through socially engaged work. The article explores research processes that fully acknowledge the role of the body in shaping historical subjects.

**Keywords:** public history; participatory research; body; orality; Labhoi.

## História pública e pesquisa participativa no tempo presente: corpo e oralidade em um laboratório engajado

### Resumo

Este artigo propõe reflexões sobre a interface entre história pública, pesquisa participativa, história oral e corporeidade a partir das orientações teórico-metodológicas do Laboratório de História Oral e Imagem da Universidade Federal Fluminense (LABHOI/UFF, criado em 1982). Busca-se observar os acervos de história oral construídos a partir de práticas participativas de pesquisa, que incluem formas corporais de narrativa públicas – percepção dos passados presentes nos corpos em trabalhos socialmente engajados. Discutem-se os processos de pesquisa que não minimizam o papel do corpo na construção do sujeito histórico.

**Palavras-chave:** história pública; pesquisa participativa; corpo; oralidade; Labhoi.

## Historia pública e investigación participativa en el tiempo presente: cuerpo y oralidad en un laboratorio comprometido

### Resumen

Este artículo propone reflexiones sobre la intersección entre historia pública, investigación participativa, historia oral y corporeidad, basándose en las orientaciones teórico-metodológicas del Laboratorio de Historia Oral e Imagen de la Universidad Federal Fluminense (LABHOI/UFF, fundado en 1982). El objetivo es examinar los acervos de historia oral construidos a partir de prácticas participativas de investigación, que incorporan formas corporales de narrativas públicas, es decir, la percepción de los pasados presentes en los cuerpos a través de trabajos socialmente comprometidos. Se analizan los procesos de investigación que reconocen plenamente el papel del cuerpo en la construcción del sujeto histórico.

**Palabras clave:** historia pública; investigación participativa; cuerpo; oralidad; Labhoi.

## Introduction

The objective of this article is to discuss aspects of public history<sup>1</sup> in works that intertwine participatory research<sup>2</sup>, oral history and corporality, through the theoretical-methodological guidelines of the Oral History and Image Laboratory of the Fluminense Federal University – LABHOI/UFF (created in 1982)<sup>3</sup>. The aim is to observe the research processes, constructed from collaborative practices, that generated oral history collections with corporal forms of narrative: gestures recorded in photographs and audiovisual material (which go beyond orality), as well as corporal experiments carried out in extension actions that circumscribed and implied corporal movement in the process of raising awareness for the creation of collections composed of autobiographical narratives.

Participatory oral history raises questions for the intended collaborative production on a path that passes through three central points: the social positions of the research participants (interviewers and interviewees); the context of the relationships they built; the ways of dealing with the product of this relationship, that is, the oral narrative in its public dimensions in the history of the present time<sup>4</sup>. At the intersection between oral history and engaged history<sup>5</sup>, it is possible to develop debates and actions – based on the narratives produced dialogically, without eliminating the disagreements and contradictory meanings of social memory. Thus, oral history establishes itself as a place of participation, support for records of daily

---

<sup>1</sup> By building bridges between different types of knowledge, public history goes beyond the idea of accessing and publishing academic projects and seeks the shared production and dissemination of knowledge. In Brazil, debates on public history are related to discussions about the audiences of history, narrative forms and processes of shared construction/dissemination of knowledge produced between the university, academia and communities of meaning – in projects that necessarily involve the audiences for which they are intended (Almeida; Rosa, 2021; Almeida; Rovai, 2011; Mauad; Santhiago; Borges, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Participatory research in the humanities and social sciences refers to a collaborative approach that seeks the co-production of knowledge between researchers and research participants, valuing local knowledge and the active engagement of the communities involved. This methodology challenges the traditional separation between researcher and object of study, promoting the democratization of the research process. Its principles include active participation, transformative action and intervention, and ethical commitment to the social realities of the participating groups (Fals Borda, 1991; Torres, 2008; Brandão, 1984; Abarrón; Landa, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Site: [www.labhoi.uff.br](http://www.labhoi.uff.br); Canal LABHOI YouTube: [www.youtube.com/@LABHOIUffOficial](https://www.youtube.com/@LABHOIUffOficial); Instagram: [@labhoi\\_uff](https://www.instagram.com/labhoi_uff).

<sup>4</sup> The meanings of the history of the present time permeate, in this text, the discussions of Bédarida, 1996; Ferreira, 2012, 2000; Rousso, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Hobsbawm (2006) in the text "Engagement" (from the book "On History: Essays") states that engagement can serve to counterbalance the growing tendency to look inward, the self-isolation of the academic.

life and as a space for learning (Almeida; Andrade, 2019). On this path, LABHOI projects mobilized the uses of the past in the encounter of diverse knowledge, with initiatives focused on the social and engaged dimension, going beyond the archival character of forming collections of oral and visual sources.

The participation of communities (collectives and support networks) in the production of knowledge is a challenge for the oral history produced at LABHOI, since sharing authority in these processes may not mean full participation by everyone; since the existence of broad networks of interviewees does not always mean establishing effective dialogues. It is worth considering the audiences and communities not covered by the projects. The uses of the past result from a composition: between people, community articulations, sensitive themes, and senses of place. Research in participatory oral history promotes reflections on the forms of public co-participation, with the active presence of different narrators, in different communities of meaning (Baczko, 1985) – expressed by plural memories, produced from the social experience of a collective constructed from representations of a common past. This implies studying and mapping the presence of each narrator in the collective as well as considering their autonomy. These are processes of mediation in dialogical encounters, through ethical procedures that involve forms and possibilities of engagement. Co-production with audiences and communities challenge LABHOI projects to establish connections between social memories permeated by dissonances, disputes, and fragmented perspectives. Participatory oral history seeks the active involvement of the group and, as far as possible, constant collaborations to produce knowledge and actions aligned with social demands.

We emphasize the key dynamics of partnerships and collaborations in participatory oral history work: engaging in dialogue to shape methodological procedures at every stage; expanding opportunities for participation, particularly by involving subjects directly from the project's inception to its development; recognizing research as both an academic and community endeavor; ensuring citizen participation through research driven by collectively negotiated demands; and understanding the impact of power dynamics and hierarchies in memory work. Mediation with local communities extends beyond simply sharing their

stories—it involves narrative choices and historical reparations, grounded in the political dimensions of citizenship and human rights.

Thus, under the term public history, LABHOI brought together multiple initiatives in favor of resizing the uses of the past – which may involve: the shared production of historical knowledge; engaged participation; the social dimension of academic production; the impact of new media; the integration of the process of production and dissemination of history; collaborative memory work in communities; the intersections between life trajectories and social, political and cultural movements. To this end, dialogues were established between academic knowledge and memory work. The aim was not to suppress science in favor of public history, but rather to build bridges between the production, communication, and social reception of research – attentive to public debates.

## The Oral History and Image Laboratory: socio-historical engagements

Since its creation in 1982, through a partnership between historians Ismênia Martins and Eulália Lobo, the Oral History and Image Laboratory at the Fluminense Federal University has been consolidated through collective projects (research, teaching, extension, and dissemination) that currently result in more than 55 thousand minutes of interviews, in addition to photographic and audiovisual collections (Mauad; Almeida et al., 2024). The work is connected in three lines of research: Memory, Africas and Slavery; Photography, Art, Media; Americas, Politics, Communities<sup>6</sup>.

The *Memory, Africas and Slavery* line discusses the history of racism and the theme of sensitive pasts in post-slavery and post-colonial societies, as well as the history of Atlantic slavery and the ways in which it has been narrated in the present. The *Photography, Art, Media* line is organized around the problematic of the history of images, through the concept of visual culture, analyzing social circuits of images, ways of seeing and practices of looking, questioning forms of production of

---

<sup>6</sup> The works from the disciplines of Oral History and Public History – offered in the undergraduate course in History at UFF – stand out, in addition to the works carried out by researchers from the Postgraduate Program in History (PPGH-UFF) referring to the uses of the past and the production of memory sources, both oral and visual.

meanings in contemporary societies. And, finally, the *Americas, Politics, Communities* line understands the city as a place of meaning, a support for varied meanings produced by different groups and communities, analytically working the category of the urban as a substrate on which different places of memory are projected – in a comparative perspective with the Brazilian experience. It fundamentally addresses public debates regarding communities of meaning and political narratives<sup>7</sup>.

LABHOI is currently a national and international reference center for the production, preservation, and study of oral and visual history in the context of debates on Public History, especially in its connections with Education. In 2018, LABHOI redefined itself as a research network, and is also established as a research group at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF). According to Ana Mauad (2018), LABHOI is characterized as an effort to touch the past through individual subjects organized collectively in communities of meaning that carry out identification exercises through a common experience of the past.

The theoretical-methodological guidelines that support LABHOI have undergone transformations throughout its long history: from the physical archive, through the digital and online – with the Laboratory's website, created in 2003, with the availability of the collection of oral history interviews and audiovisual material<sup>8</sup>. In recent years, LABHOI has consolidated its public history practices in an engaged manner: producing and disseminating historical knowledge in a collaborative and socially committed manner. The epistemic guidelines that guide its participatory research practices seek interaction between researchers and communities, the valorization of local knowledge and the construction of counter-

---

<sup>7</sup> By consulting the research lines on the LABHOI website, it is possible to identify the oral history and image collections connected to each project.

<sup>8</sup> One example is the project *Memories of Captivity* [Memórias do Cativoiro]: started in 1994 by the team of Ana Lugão Rios, Robson Martins and Hebe Mattos and consisted of oral interviews with black peasants from the former coffee-growing regions of Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo and Minas Gerais. This research resulted in the book *Memórias do Cativoiro: família, trabalho e cidadania no pós-abolição* [Memories of Captivity: family, work and citizenship in the post-abolition period] by Hebe Mattos and Ana Lugão Rios, and, in 2005, in the videographic film of the history, with the same name as the project, directed by Guilherme Fernandez and Isabel de Castro, with academic direction by Hebe Mattos and Martha Abreu. Together, the sound archives of the *Memories of Captivity* project have 273 gigabytes of oral interviews in a total of 46 hours and 58 minutes of recording.

colonial narratives – using, here, the concept proposed by Nêgo Bispo<sup>9</sup> (Antônio Bispo dos Santos) at the intersection of values and feelings expressed in forms of community life and knowledge marked by resistance practices. This is the encounter between narrative and corporality, which Bispo (2015) calls confluence: the coexistence between different elements whose visions can come together in lived experiences – a counter-narrative that opposes a narrative that privileged colonizing versions.

Thus, LABHOI's engagement recognizes a (corp)oral history of communities. This engaged perspective is not limited to the idea of “inclusion” (a supposed quest to be “included” in an already established exclusionary system), as it emerges for the “creation” of new spaces and approaches. LABHOI's research often examines sensitive issues that relate to life stories present in various social movements in an intersectional manner: black, indigenous, LGBTQIA+, environmental, union, feminist, among others. The discussion around engagements in public history brings a dynamic understanding of theories and methods of participatory research in oral history, committed to expanded perspectives on bodily expressiveness. The field of public history, which has consolidated itself in Brazil over the last decade, has benefited greatly from debates on oral history that are attentive to participatory challenges: collections built by the community itself with first-person voices, social demands for memory policies, and political resistance in self-managed research. This is a concern with the collective processes that have changed the way we deal with historical sources (particularly oral records – in popular culture memory centers and social movements – that seek historical reparation and the right to memory). The field of public history has been transformed by new forms of archival records and public access and participation in the production of historical knowledge.

LABHOI's social engagement has broadened the horizons of training in the university environment, renewing teaching and learning conditions, promoting the integration of teachers and students around the process of constructing

---

<sup>9</sup> Born in 1959, Nêgo Bispo lived in the Saco-Curtume quilombo in São João do Piauí, Brazil, and died on December 3, 2023. His political activity in the fight for land claims led to a worldview in defense of traditional territories, incorporating “Afro-Pindoramic” symbols, meanings and ways of life, referring to African and indigenous descendants.

contextualized knowledge and interdisciplinary cooperation that goes beyond the concern with the technical treatment of documents. By promoting research in the field of oral history and the history of images, LABHOI has followed the movement of renewal in contemporary historiography: it has questioned the status of historical sources; it has interrogated the history of the present time to broaden the horizon of historical research, with the valorization of new objects of study and proposing innovative approaches. Today, LABHOI engages research participants in an engaged manner – valuing the active involvement of communities in the processes of knowledge production and in the construction of historical narratives. Participatory research places the subjects involved at the center of the research process, not only as objects of study, but as co-authors of the knowledge produced. In an engaged history, the aim is to work with historically marginalized groups, questioning the ideals of “neutrality” and “distance” by working collaboratively. Knowledge production is a two-way street, in which there is exchange between researchers and communities.

LABHOI’s research is attentive to the problem of the history of memory, understood from the studies of the support, agents and representations that shape the dynamics of the uses of the past (Mauad; Dumas, 2011). By valuing oral and visual history, LABHOI’s engaged history seeks to construct plural and inclusive narratives – whether in contexts of the struggle for social justice, or in education, cultural policies, or memory policies. The basis for the interaction between words and images in LABHOI’s work sought to go beyond the typical contours of film documentary to foster the development of a variation of the genre committed to recording academic work in an alternative format to paper and with an updated language that is closer to scientific dissemination, with the production of materials committed to public history. In addition, it sought to promote a product that could be returned to the interviewees as the result of a collaborative process. The use of visual sources, technical and artistic images, is now part of what in the work of the LABHOI group has been called videographic writing (Mauad; Knauss, 2006). A work in which each person contributes their knowledge and experience in a collective production that brings together individual skills. This perspective currently gives rise to a platform for the production, circulation, and distribution of video stories at LABHOI.



In partnership with a broader movement, represented by its participation in the Brazilian Public History Network<sup>10</sup>, LABHOI reaffirmed the production of knowledge based on dialogical principles linked to the civic dimensions of history, which led to investing in the deployment of its results on digital platforms, reinforcing the public nature of the knowledge produced. Over the last ten years, through LABHOI's constant activity on social media – especially YouTube – it has been possible to consolidate the LABHOI Channel – as a platform for accessing and archiving the group's audiovisual production. The laboratory's approach is marked by collaborative production, methodological innovation, and a commitment to the democratization of historical knowledge. Much of the research carried out at LABHOI has been committed to processes of historical reparation and the fight for rights, through the active participation of these communities in writing their own histories – understanding the construction of public history not only as an academic activity, but as a political and community practice.

### Body-orality: projects in motion

LABHOI is a fundamental research center for the consolidation of the Brazilian Public History Network. LABHOI projects (especially those involving participatory research) were born from listening to life stories and observing the past present in bodies – practices that reverberate effective changes based on narrative learning present in gestures. The collection of oral history interviews and the audiovisual collection of LABHOI is currently deposited in an archive/repository; with the internal server that stores the digital collection and

---

<sup>10</sup> In Brazil, researchers from different institutions came together at the University of São Paulo to hold the Introduction to Public History Course in 2011 and the 1st International Symposium on Public History in 2012, concerned with the public agenda and spaces for sharing how to do, think and feel history. These events led to the creation of the Brazilian Public History Network (RBHP) in Belo Horizonte in 2012. The RBHP's activities and International Symposia (biannual) have already traveled throughout Brazil: University of São Paulo, Fluminense Federal University, Regional University of Cariri, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Federal University of São Paulo, Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte. They also had an impact on the creation of the master's degree in Public History at the State University of Paraná and the bachelor's degree in Public History at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. The importance of the various postgraduate programs and numerous centers, laboratories, groups, and projects of public history throughout Brazil is highlighted here: especially the Oral History and Image Laboratory at UFF.

the Laboratory website, created in 2003, with the provision of a bank of oral history interviews and audiovisual collection of the research lines. In total, the LABHOI collection has 5.4 terabytes of digital files. Of these, approximately 3.5 terabytes are only related to the research line *Memory, Africas and Slavery* (Mauad; Almeida et al., 2024). One example is the project *Past Presents: Memories of Captivity*, which began in 1994 and consisted of oral interviews with black peasants from the former coffee-growing regions of Brazil: Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo, and Minas Gerais. This research resulted in the book *Memórias do Cativo: família, trabalho e cidadania no pós-abolição* [Memories of Captivity: family, work, and citizenship in the post-abolition period] and, in 2005, in the film of videographic writing of history, with the same name as the project. The practice of videographic writing of history, with the structuring of the LABHOI website and other instruments for storing and making research available, such as the YouTube platform, led to the inclusion of audiovisual media as a tool for the Laboratory to include aspects of corporality in oral history work. The film projects *Jongos, Calangos e Folias: Música Negra, Memória e Poesia* (2007); *Versos e Cacetes: o Jogo do Pau na Cultura Afro-fluminense* (2009); *Passados Presentes: Memória Negra no Sul Fluminense* (2011) were the result of a vast audiovisual collection that includes interviews with descendants of the last generation of Africans captured in Africa for forced labor on coffee farms in the Paraíba Valley in Rio de Janeiro state, as well as filming of performances of cultural manifestations of music and dance that evoke their memory. Thus, we observe the developments of these projects that proposed, in an engaged manner, to think about the history of Atlantic slavery, the African diaspora and the post-abolition period in the Americas through oral history, stimulating new forms of studying black culture in Brazil. Since 2005, LABHOI historians (Hebe Mattos and Martha Abreu) have been developing joint research through the production of historiographical films, covering a broad field of investigation on peasantry, family, culture, and black music in the post-abolition period (Abreu; Guran; Mattos, 2014). In the entirety of LABHOI's oral history archive, it is possible to find several studies committed to public history in intersectional projects – attentive to corporality in oral narratives in research-intervention processes (Chassot; Silva, 2018). Specifically, the so-called intervention research is sought within participatory methodologies – by

problematizing the division between theory and practice, and between subject and object of research. The idea that the production of knowledge must precede action is questioned, since in intervention research, the production of knowledge occurs during the meeting (with groups and communities), with the researcher being an implicated party in the field investigated (Paulon, 2005; Rocha; Aguiar, 2003). In this proposal, the concepts of subjectivity and power are observed, seeking processes of differentiation and transformation that emerge from the field itself. Thus, it dialogues with the notion of implication that challenges the traditional hierarchy between researcher and participants. The production of knowledge thus becomes a collaborative and dynamic process based on reflections, initiated in social psychology, on intervention (Chassot, Silva, 2018).

A recent example (carried out in 2023) is the project *Hip-hop and Public History in Niterói/Rio de Janeiro*<sup>11</sup> — with interviews and audiovisual recordings of rap cultural circles that culminated in a regional hip-hop gathering at the Fluminense Federal University. The project was developed in partnership between students and researchers linked to LABHOI and hip-hop culture subjects who seek to hold regular community gatherings in public spaces, in which the presence of DJs, beatmakers and MCs, among others, is encouraged. The oral history collection is the result of an intervention research: with the active participation of everyone, aiming to recognize and value the art, culture, and educational potential of Niterói's rap cultural circles. The project was born in response to the growing process of criminalization of hip-hop groups in public spaces in Rio de Janeiro. Between 2018 and 2020, during the Bolsonaro administration, several Brazilian rap and graffiti artists (among others from black culture) were the target of police or legal proceedings, with their work being censored and their sound systems turned off. They were often silenced in the middle of songs that criticized police abuse or social conservatism. Thus, the project in the social context of the city of Niterói (RJ) implemented the intersectional perspective of LABHOI's public history by working on rap battles at the intersection of categories of class, gender, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation. Thus, the intervention research on hip-hop

---

<sup>11</sup> The project generated the book: ALMEIDA, Juniele Rabêlo de et al. *Hip hop e história pública: memórias das rodas culturais de Niterói: interseccionalidades* [Hip-hop and public history: memories of cultural circles in Niterói: intersectionalities]. São Paulo: Popessuara, 2023.

pointed to a more complex view of the movement, including the trajectories of artists and cultural producers.

Also aiming to situate LABHOI projects at the interface between public history and engagement between body and orality, the “Project to safeguard the linguistic and cultural heritage of cross-border indigenous peoples in the Amazon region” produced a vast collection of oral history interviews with the Arara community of Cachoeira Seca, in the middle Xingu in Pará, and with professionals who worked together with the community during this period of contact with the non-indigenous world. The material allows us to explore the tensions between these two worlds, the constructions of memory by indigenous subjects and the transformations they experienced throughout this period. Another fundamental work for the field of public history, with the potential to perceive the engaged and participatory nature of LABHOI research, is the project *Memory of Photojournalism in Contemporary Brazil*, composed of 41 interviews, referring to the role of the photographic image in the elaboration of the historical narrative of present-day Brazil in the press. Such projects discuss the problematic of the history of the image, bringing the aesthetic and ethical dimension of the body-orality relationship into audiovisual collections – discussions on video history (Mauad; Knauss, 2006) – through visual and sound media understood as devices of cultural mediation and agents of political cultures.

LABHOI interviews also include collections built together with social movements: environmental movements, movements for the demilitarization of public security, and movements for memory policies in education. Regarding the latter, it is worth highlighting the collection of the *Teaching Trajectories Network* (Rede Trajetórias Docentes)<sup>12</sup>, which brings together 50 narratives from History

---

<sup>12</sup> The *Teaching Trajectories Network* (Rede Trajetórias Docentes) is an interinstitutional and transdisciplinary initiative that combines research, teaching, extension, and dissemination based on the collection initiated by the partnership between the Oral History and Image Laboratory (LABHOI-UFF) and the History Teaching Laboratory (LEH-UFF). The national network of researchers/Trajetórias Docentes seeks to collectively build a collection of oral history and autobiographical narratives by integrating projects from several Brazilian institutions: today, in particular, LABHOI and LEH count on the presence of UFRN with the *Teaching Trajectories Network/RN* research group (current headquarters of the *Teaching Trajectories Network*) and the Human Sciences Laboratory (LCH), linked to the Teaching-Learning Laboratory of the Education Center (LEA-CE). In addition to these groups and laboratories, others are collaborating, strengthening the dialogue, and carrying out training moments with the Network, such as the GERASOES - Geographies group (UFF).

teachers at various moments during their training – also recorded on video on LABHOI's YouTube channel. The objectives of the *Teaching Trajectories Network* include cataloging, digitizing, and providing public access to teachers' autobiographical narratives, in addition to promoting interaction between researchers through working groups in participatory oral history. The formative nature of teachers' narratives, when combined with a collaborative approach, results in a process of continuous learning: Teachers' life stories not only enrich the understanding of teaching practice, but also contribute to the appreciation and social recognition of the profession. The *Teaching Trajectories Network* is an example of how research and oral documentation of life stories can transform the understanding of education and teaching practice. This is a space for theoretical and methodological debates on life stories, training, and teaching work, in addition to exploring public interviews in oral history. The production of the collection is guided by a participatory and dialogical approach, facilitating meetings between teachers from basic and higher education.

The following LABHOI collections (in podcast format) of participatory intervention research based on life stories are currently being built: *Libertarian Education in Trajectories*; *Aging and Experiments in Movement: Body-orality and Life Story*. This last project, *Body-orality and Life Story* is an extension action by LABHOI in partnership with the Advanced Program for Elderly Care – UFFESPA. This extension program is configured by social work in favor of participatory processes in the construction of citizenship with elderly people (issues about aging in the city of Niterói/RJ), composed of an interdisciplinary team that configures a network of mutual support. LABHOI's work, in intervention research – with the support of several groups (from social services, psychology, theater, bio-dance) – brings together body movement and music in collective exercises that connect the cognitive, perceptive, and sensorial for the observation of pasts present in bodies. A participatory intervention process that circumscribes and involves movement in the perception of oral history, with the stimulation of body

awareness for the construction of autobiographical narratives. The weekly meetings generated a collection of Life Stories in podcast format<sup>13</sup>.

These LABHOI projects, in the public history movement, relate participatory research to oral history work that involves corporality as an object of study and collaborative practice. In this way, the research evokes the appreciation of the body language developed by the narrators, that is, gestures that refer to multiple memories. The collections presented above are committed to the documentary and archival purposes of expanding the public sense of history itself, a capacity expressed in the production, circulation, and dialogic promotion of knowledge from the past. Thus, the public history carried out at LABHOI does not refer only to the availability of content and final products, but to the relationship between academic and non-academic (or community) knowledge due to its dialogic nature – in the encounter of the research participants, in the forms of bonding promoted by gestures.

Based on discussions on ethics in oral history (Portelli, 1997; Pozzi, 2014), oral history projects carried out at LABHOI seek attentive listening, allowing the interviewee to freely construct their narratives (which are duly transcribed, textualized and edited). The projects face the challenge of integrating the notions of orality and corporality to bring together new knowledge. In this regard, the forms of production and sharing of oral history are of interest, based on the concept of narrative performance<sup>14</sup>: observation of narrated events, as well as the situations in which the narratives are developed (Bauman, 1986). Narrative performance evokes the appreciation of the body language developed by the narrator – gestures that refer to memories, intentions, and imagination in a

---

<sup>13</sup> Podcast info: *Histórias de vida e Biodança: envelhecimento na interface pesquisa-ação, ensino e extensão* [Life Stories and Bio-dance: Aging at the Interface of Research-Action, Teaching and Extension]; year 2023. Available on Spotify - Juniele Rabêlo de Almeida (coordinator). Iramaia Oliveira; Larissa Beserra; Richard Pereira; Farley Siva (Organizers of the Collection and Podcast); Juniele Rabêlo de Almeida, Virginia Flach; Lícia Mascarenhas (Team of Facilitators).

<sup>14</sup> For Richard Bauman (1986), performance brings the connection between the narrative and the event, based on the process of creating meaning. "In the performativity of orality and the spoken word, what we have come to call narrative performance is a fundamental part of the practice of activating the past from the present" (Amato; Hermeto, 2021).

historical context. Corporality can convey information about an event and express social roles and ideas present in a sequence of actions.

LABHOI's research seeks not to deny or diminish the role of the body in the constitution of the historical subject. The text *Between History, Stories and Gestures* (Amato; Hermeto, 2021) presents a historiographical review on the themes of gestures and narrative in the field of oral history – establishing interlocutions for the construction of the concept of narrative performance<sup>15</sup>. Some questions raised in this review are echoed in this article, in particular, the dialogue between body and orality in a participatory approach. How to build a participatory oral history that considers movement, vocal intonation, and body expression? Gestures do not seem to fit into writing and orality, as they present another logic of expression. For Zumthor (2018, p. 83), the performance of the body “makes the listener-spectator aware of a situation of enunciation”. Oral history work can bring the interviewee's body, making it possible to narrate and recreate their life story, “without forgetting that this body is linked to a space, circumstances, and a specific historical context” (Almeida; Amorim; Barbosa, 2007).

The video recording of oral history interviews (audiovisual production) provides an opportunity to observe bodily memories – through the narrative performance of the interviewees – and, consequently, to provide new meanings for understanding history. The integration of the body into the oral history work provokes questions about the thinking, feeling, and acting of this historical subject, in a narrator/community co-production. The interviewee's bodily performance can compose a presence that touches and leaves its mark, bringing a sensory perception that considers, “in addition to the presence of a body, its engagement” (Zumthor, 2018, p. 19). In this way, new possibilities for the production and analysis of oral history interviews are created: detached from mechanical stability and questioning of discourses that ignore the body of the historical subject. The moving body of different subjects and groups is sought, with their own spatial-

---

<sup>15</sup> According to Amato and Hermeto (2021), the so-called performative turn, in the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s, mobilized different areas of knowledge – reaching debates around the narrative dimension of orality in a broad way.

temporal marks of the social contexts of that gestural production. The ability of historical subjects to communicate (for participatory intervention research) is linked to a gestural and oral event, with the irreducible presence of a body. Oral history can encompass multiple perceptions (in voice, gesture, smell, etc.) and expand bodily perception among research participants. Expressions can be revealed, as well as the desire to deny or create new gestures. The fundamental trait of corporality is the singularity manifested in the encounter: in the experience of the event.

The concept that the body is an archive of memory as well as a field of political dispute is widely discussed in various fields of social and human sciences, including history, anthropology, and cultural studies. In *How Societies Remember*, Paul Connerton (1999) discusses the mechanisms by which societies mobilize their collective memories. The author argues that such memories are not restricted to oral accounts or written records but are also anchored in bodily practices. It affirms an "embodied memory", which refers to traditions and habits preserved through the body, often materialized in everyday habits. It investigates the role of rituals and social performances in the constitution of historical memory, suggesting that the ways in which we remember are deeply rooted in the corporality of repetitions and rituals.

Through performances, rituals, and cultural practices, corporality becomes a living source of memory, especially in colonial and post-colonial contexts (Taylor, 2003), as practices of oral-corporeal history can challenge the power of colonial written archives. The body, as a space of control and power, becomes a field of political dispute, in which social and political forces attempt to discipline and subdue it (Foucault, 1975). An arena of political tensions is established, especially in post-colonial societies, as the body is not a passive recipient of memories, but an active agent in the dispute of political and social narratives.

In LABHOI's participatory history projects, the bodies of the research participants are considered, paying attention to the marks of their life experiences, understanding the body as a source of memories, resistance, and negotiations of power. Engaged history, by actively including communities in the construction of knowledge, values these bodies in the research process. After all, corporality is



shaped and regulated by social and political norms, but it is also capable of rising up against these impositions. In public history, this political dimension is intensified, as the active participation of communities in research not only documents their memories, but also challenges the power structures that attempt to erase or control these stories. Oral-corporal narratives are essential for the construction of plural narratives, which challenge the hegemony of the textual archive and open space for the diversity of experiences.

## The public dimension of participatory research: final considerations

Through public narratives (authorized narratives available in oral history collections – open for consultation), debates about values, actions and collective trajectories in participatory research emerge; work carried out through plural practices committed to seeking partnerships and support networks in the daily lives of communities. The various communities and social movements, with their narratives, bring engaged actions amid the conflicts inherent in collective memories. Through public history practices, spaces of political and social responsibility are created in the co-production of knowledge, encouraging collaborative exercise.

LABHOI's research is mostly carried out from bridges (established partnerships) with various contemporary activism groups and collectives formed by filmmakers, anthropologists, journalists, cultural producers, community leaders, actors, facilitators of body practices, and visual artists. Such bridges catalyze the procedures of participatory oral (corporal) history and the promotion of public history practices and forms of sociopolitical engagement amidst conservatism, intolerance, and the dilemmas of coloniality in the Brazilian scenario.

LABHOI's collections become public through multiple interfaces – combining research, teaching, extension, dissemination in the production of websites, blogs, podcasts, mobile apps, visiting circuits (historical tourism) based on interactive maps, in addition to the films, series and documentaries available on these digital platforms. In this way, the audiences of history are provoked (in addition to their expansion) through new forms of access and the commitment to the public sense of knowledge.

Digitizing, cataloging, and ensuring public access to collections is an important dimension of public history. And, at the same time, by stimulating dissemination, the production of knowledge is also stimulated in more collaborative research processes, mobilizing socio-historical interventions in memory policies that are attentive to the corporality involved.

The study of corporality can contribute to the analysis of several current colonial practices and structures that reproduce, for example, racism, misogyny, and "intersectional" oppression. Reflecting on the corporality of events requires methodological rigor in the analysis of catalogued audiovisual material and in meetings (face-to-face relationships between research participants), but at the same time, it allows the discussion of socially alive issues – observing public debates on the uses of the past and disputes over memories. The work of oral history in the interface with public history can bring new historical subjects to the surface and enhance narrative learning about the corporality of political practices in the public space. Contemporary public debates intertwine collective memories and the meanings of the past that compose them. Public history enables observation and intervention towards a historiographical praxis that recognizes the co-presence of the subjects participating in the research. There are, however, no ready-made solutions. Good intentions are not enough for a public history action to occur effectively and in a shared way. When implementing the so-called collaborative processes of intervention research, the variation in the effective involvement of interlocutors becomes evident. This is a central issue that should be addressed in the reflection on public history, in order to promote a greater relationship between discourses and their practical counterparts.

This is not about suppressing historical science in favor of public history, but rather the desire to think about building bridges beyond academia, dialoguing directly with social groups – formal or informal – for the production, communication, and social reception of academic work, in public debates that expand the encounter of different knowledge. An oral (corporal) history brings counter-colonial dimensions in its search for new narratives – in an attitude of resistance that yearns for the confluence of multiple understandings resulting from the presence of the past in corporality.

## Referências

- ABARRÓN, Luis Rodrigues; LANDA, Libertad Hernández. **Investigación Participativa**. Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 1994. (Cadernos Metodológicos 10)
- ABREU, Martha; GURAN, Milton; MATTOS, Hebe. Por uma história pública dos africanos escravizados. **Estudos Históricos**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 27, n. 54, p. 248, jul./dez. 2014.
- ALMEIDA, Juniele Rabêlo de; AMORIM, Maria Aparecida; BARBOSA, Xênia. Performance e objeto biográfico: questões para a história oral de vida. **Oralidades**, São Paulo, n. 2, p. 101-109, 2007.
- ALMEIDA, Juniele Rabêlo de; ANDRADE, Everardo Paiva (orgs.). **História oral e educação**. São Paulo: Letra e Voz, 2019. (Coleção história oral e dimensões do público).
- ALMEIDA, Juniele Rabêlo de; ROSA, Rogério (org.). **História pública em movimento**. São Paulo: Letra e Voz, 2021.
- ALMEIDA, Juniele Rabêlo de; ROVAI, Marta Gouveia de Oliveira (org.). **Introdução à história pública**. São Paulo: Letra e Voz, 2011.
- AMATO, Gabriel; HERMETO, Miriam. Entre a História, as estórias e os gestos: performance narrativa em entrevistas de história oral. *In*: ROVAI, Marta Gouveia de Oliveira; SANTHIAGO, Ricardo (org.). **História oral como experiência: reflexões metodológicas a partir de práticas de pesquisa**. Teresina: Cancioneiro, 2021. p. 165-194.
- BACZKO, Bronislaw. Imaginação social. *In*: ENCICLOPÉDIA EINAUDI. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional: Casa da Moeda: Editora Portuguesa, 1985. p. 296-332.
- BARROS, Regina Benevides de. **Grupo: a afirmação de um simulacro**. Porto Alegre: Sulina: Editora UFRGS, 2007.
- BAUMAN, Richard. **Story, performance, and event: contextual studies of oral narrative**. Cambridge: University Press, 1986.
- BRANDÃO, Carlos Rodrigues. **Pesquisa participante**. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1984.
- CHASSOT, Caroline; SILVA, Rosane. A pesquisa-intervenção participativa como estratégia metodológica: relato de uma pesquisa em associação. **Psicologia Social**, Recife, v. 30, p. 73-87, 2018.
- CONNERTON, Paul. **Como as sociedades recordam**. Oeiras: Ed. Celta, 1999.
- FALS BORDA, Orlando. Participatory (action) research in social theory: origins and challenges. *In*: WHYTE, William Foote (ed.). **Participatory action research**. Newbury Park: SAGE, 1991. p. 119-126.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. **Vigiar e punir: nascimento da prisão**. 36. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1975.

HOBBSAWM, Eric. Engajamento. *In*: HOBBSAWM, Eric. **Sobre história: ensaios**. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2006. p. 138-154.

MAUAD, Ana Maria Mauad; ALMEIDA, Juniele Rabêlo de; SINDER, Matheus Sinder; OLIVEIRA, Marcus. O arquivo de história oral e as linhas de pesquisa do LABHOI-UFF: Laboratório de História Oral e Imagem da Universidade Federal Fluminense. *In*: HEYMANN, Luciana. **História oral e arquivo: debates e desafios**. São Paulo: Letra e Voz, 2024. p. 160-172

MAUAD, Ana Maria. Usos do passado e história pública no Brasil: a trajetória do Laboratório de História Oral e Imagem da Universidade Federal Fluminense (1982-2017). **História Crítica**, Bogotá, n. 68, p. 27-45, 2018.

MAUAD, Ana Maria; ALMEIDA, Juniele Rabêlo de; SANTHIAGO, Ricardo (orgs.). **História pública no Brasil: sentidos e itinerários**. Ed: Letra e Voz, 2016.

MAUAD, Ana Maria; DUMAS, Fernando. Fontes orais e visuais na pesquisa histórica: novos métodos e possibilidades narrativas. *In*: ALMEIDA, Juniele Rabêlo de; ROVAL, Marta Gouveia de Oliveira (org.). **Introdução à história pública**. São Paulo: Letra e Voz, 2011. p. 81-95.

MAUAD, Ana Maria; KNAUSS, Paulo. Memória em movimento: a experiência videográfica do LABHOI/UFF. **História Oral**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 9, n. 1, p. 143-58, 2006.

PAULON, Simone. A análise de implicação como ferramenta na pesquisa-intervenção. **Psicologia & Sociedade**, Recife, v. 17, n. 3, p. 16-23, 2005.

PORTELLI, Alessandro. Tentando aprender um pouquinho: algumas reflexões sobre a ética na história oral. **Projeto História**, São Paulo, n. 15, p. 13, 49, abr. 1997.

POZZI, Pablo. La ética, la historia oral y sus consecuencias. **História Oral**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 17, n. 2, p. 9-29, jul./dez. 2014.

SANTHIAGO, Ricardo. Levantando a quarta parede: história oral e entrevistas públicas. **Estudos Ibero-Americanos**, Porto Alegre, v. 47, n. 2, p. 1-17, maio/ago. 2021.

TAYLOR, Diana. **The archive and the repertoire: performing cultural memory in the Americas**. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

TORRES, Maria José Azevedo. **Pesquisa participativa: uma introdução aos seus princípios e práticas**. São Paulo: Cortez, 2008.

ZUMTHOR, Paul. **Performance, recepção, leitura**. São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2018.