



## Title

## Memory & Life

### The cemeteries of São Paulo as open air museums and memory parks

## Basic data

**City:** São Paulo

**Country:** Brazil

**Number of inhabitants:** 11.253.503

**Topics:** Culture, Museums, Heritage, History, Parks and Gardens, Environmental education, City and school, Lifelong learning, Educative resources

**Principles of the Charter of Educating Cities:** 1, 5, 7, 8, 11 y 14

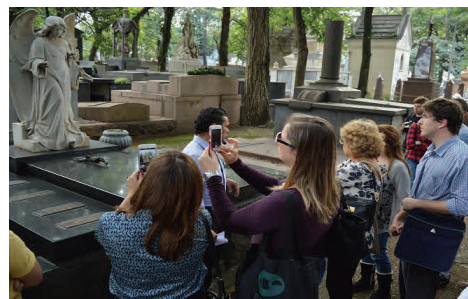
## Summary

The cemeteries of São Paulo, as in most cities, are generally seen as places to avoid, in spite of the fact that they conserve a large part of the cultural and historical memory of the city and country. In order to demystify this common feeling and refurbish our public cemeteries by transforming them into places for citizens to visit and enjoy, the Municipal Funeral Services of São Paulo created in January 2014 the Project **Memory & Life**.

Through this initiative we are fostering the knowledge, for citizens, of the history of the public cemeteries, its works of art and tombs of important people in the city's history. Through educative and cultural actions, the idea is to promote these spaces as open air museums and "memory parks".

The Project includes a varied agenda of activities carried out generally at the cemeteries themselves: guided daily and night-time visits, concerts, plays, exhibitions, story-telling for children and adults, films and documentaries, seminars, lectures, training workshops for teachers, professionals and the public in general, environmental activities, etc.

In July 2014 the Strategic Master Plan of São Paulo integrated the cemeteries into the Municipal Plan for Protected Sites, Green Zones and Open Spaces, thus strengthening the most important idea of the Project, since public cemeteries make up the second largest green space in the city, measuring more than three million square meters.



Varied agenda of activities at the cemeteries

## Objectives

- To encourage the citizenry to visit the municipal cemeteries and participate in activities that foster the knowledge of the city's history.
- To renovate and reorganize the cemeteries.
- To make the public cemeteries of São Paulo places for the transmission of knowledge.
- To value the historical, natural and cultural heritage of São Paulo and Brazil.
- To offer resources to education, health, social services... professionals, in order to help people get over the loss of a beloved.

## Methodology

In January 2015, 150 QR codes were fitted onto major historical-artistic tombs at the Consolação Cemetery. Through this tool, visitors are provided with photos, videos and writings about the life of the famous people buried at this cemetery, in order to strengthen its museum-like character. A self-guiding tour was also created for visitors to acquire knowledge of these prominent personalities, as well as the artistic works that adorn their tombs. Other cemeteries have also installed QR codes in their routes.



QR codes fitted onto tombs

In March 2015, the "Extended Classrooms" were created at the Consolação Cemetery for teacher training, as a result of the joint effort of the Funeral Services and the Education Department of the Ipiranga District, to promote cemeteries as inter-disciplinary spaces to foster knowledge in which art, history, culture, environment, etc., intervene. Due to the success of this activity, many schools requested tours to the cemetery, and that is why it was decided to make Wednesdays the visiting day for the schools.



School tours to the cemetery

In July 2015, the Funeral Services signed a collaboration agreement with *the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo*, which materialized in specific activities: storytelling for children at the Consolação Cemetery; publication of pedagogical brochures dealing with death, grief and memory for schoolchildren and their families; and workshops for teachers focusing on providing them with resources for dealing with the issue of death and mourning in the classroom.

In August 2015 the Vila Formosa "Self-Guided Environmental Tour" was started in order to foster knowledge amongst the population of the diverse fauna and flora at the cemetery, through educational, cultural and recreational activities.



Environmental tours at cemeteries

In November 2015 the "Seminars to support Families in Mourning" was begun for professionals in the areas of education, health, social services and funeral services. There we discuss mourning and health and forms of dealing with the grief of losing a loved one, monitored by specialist psychologists. The goal of these professionals was to acquire skills for knowing how to act in these cases and provide humanitarian guidance to those in mourning.

In 2016 the *Virada Cultural*, an annual event during which for 24 hours we organize cultural activities in the city, the Consolação Cemetery participated by providing: open discussions on funerary art and memory parks; a show called "Enough to make the soul freeze", inspired by tales by Edgar Allan Poe; and guided night-time visits of funerary art.

## Social and urban context

The city of São Paulo, capital of the province of the same name, is the most important financial, corporate and business hub in Latin America. It is the largest city in Brazil, with a population of 12,038,175 inhabitants according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (2016).

In São Paulo there are 73,000 burials and 11,000 cremations each year. This represents 220 funerals and 30 cremations per day. The Project **Memory & Life** takes place at 22 public cemeteries in São Paulo spread out across the city.



View of São Paulo  
© Jurema Oliveira

## Assessment

This initiative makes it possible to learn about the history of the city from a new perspective, by including cemeteries as part of the city's heritage.

It brings people closer to the city's cemeteries, changing the image of fear associated with cemeteries to a more positive view of them as memory parks.

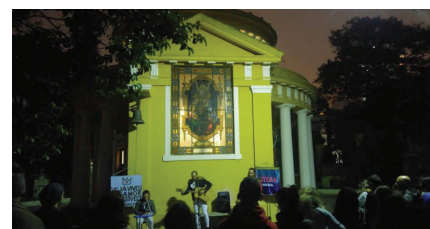
Teachers have a very high opinion of this experience both because of the activities involved: workshops, tours, seminars, etc., and because of the resources provided.

### Strengths:

- Cemeteries have become places for the transmission of knowledge and the use and enjoyment for the citizenry.
- We have broken with the image and traditional use assigned to cemeteries.
- More and more people have become interested in participating in the activities at the cemeteries.

### Future proposals:

- To open more channels of publicity for the initiative in order to reach a larger part of the population.
- To develop more activities and establish more collaboration so that this project can become a permanent program in the city in the medium term.



Night-time activities

## Contact

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