

PART 2

Heritage, memory
and the city

Consuming Heritage

Counter-uses of the city and gentrification

Rogério Proença Leite

Abstract

Based on research in the old Recife Quarter in the city of Recife, capital of Pernambuco state, Brazil, this study examines processes of gentrification in areas of heritage value. The article focuses on the way in which these urban policies have transformed cultural heritage into a commodity, and urban space into social relationships mediated by consumerism. I argue that heritage sites that undergo processes of gentrification create strong spatial segregation and generate an appropriation of space by the excluded population that takes the form of counter-uses, undermining the uses imagined by urban and heritage policy makers.

Keywords: consumption, gentrification, heritage, counter-uses

Resumo

Este artigo analisa os processos de gentrification em áreas de valor patrimonial, tendo como referente empírico o bairro do Recife, em Pernambuco, Brasil. O tema central recai sobre as características predominantemente mercadológicas dessas políticas urbanas que têm transformado o patrimônio cultural em mercadoria, e o espaço urbano em relações sociais mediadas por práticas de consumo. Pretende-se argumentar que os sítios patrimoniais que passam pelos processos de gentrification criam forte segregação socioespacial e geram formas de apropriação do espaço por parte da população excluída na forma de contra-usos, subvertendo os usos esperados e o espaço disciplinar criados por essas políticas urbanas e patrimoniais.

Palavras-chaves: Consumo, enobrecimento, patrimônio, contra-usos

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The architectural and urban interventions known as *gentrification* still arouse numerous conceptual controversies. After several decades of use, the term remains somewhat controversial, lending itself to the analysis of quite different empirical situations (Rubino 2003).

Since its first enunciation by the British sociologist Ruth Glass in her work *London: aspects of Change* (Glass 1964), the term has been used to describe different forms of urban intervention, ranging from processes of ‘regeneration’, ‘rehabilitation’ or ‘revitalization’ of patrimonial areas and sites of high historical value – whether residential or not – to contemporary practices of urban restructuring in non-heritage areas, the megaprojects housing the offices of transnational corporations in so-called intelligent buildings, or the construction of luxury condominiums for the middle and upper classes (Smith 1996, Less et al. 1998).

As I have suggested in a recent text (Leite 2010), there are many reasons for the growing interest in studies of urban gentrification, as Loretta Less, Tom Slater and Elvin Wily have also argued. Academic interests in the phenomenon are diverse. Some authors argue that gentrification practices are an expression of neoliberalism in urban planning and of globalization processes. Others observe a dispute between the academic fields of geography, sociology and architecture (Less et al. 1998).

From another perspective, gentrification practices have been understood as postmodern expressions of contemporary urban planning. Authors like Harvey (1992), Zukin (1995), Featherstone (1995) and Jameson (1997) elaborate this hypothesis from the observation of certain aesthetic and functional characteristics prevalent in these processes, such as the perceived visual attractiveness of the sites, the juxtaposition of architectural styles, an emphasis on monumentality and a recognition of the importance of market forces.

The process of gentrification in urban conservation areas involves a

specific model of intervention that alters cityscapes by accentuating architectural features or transforming them to generate a heightened visual impact, adjusting the new landscape to the demands of the real estate market, safety, planning and urban cleanliness intended to promote the use or reappropriation of the area by the middle and upper classes. This process results in the emergence of socio-spatial boundaries that exacerbate social segregation by fragmenting space into distinct *places* (Leite 2007).

When these urban areas are historical sites or centres, gentrification processes add real estate value and contribute to the symbolic strengthening of a sense of belonging through the enhancement of local culture. At the same time they attract visitors by promoting a sort of detraditionalization of cultural heritage (Fortuna 1997), turning it into a spectacle through its absorption by consumer culture (Featherstone 1995). I return to this point later.

In Brazil the predominant form of non-residential gentrification follows what Bidou-Zachariassen (2006) has termed 'gentrification for visitation.' This type of intervention, which largely centres on attracting tourism, does not involve the restoration of low-income housing. The only residential interventions involve the construction of luxury hotels in the place of decrepit town houses. This form of gentrification, common in Brazil, takes place in the context of the physical/architectural deterioration of historical sites and the tendency for the poor to migrate to outlying areas of the cities.

One of the main differences between residential and touristic forms of gentrification tends to be the intended destination the area's traditional residents. In some projects rehabilitation of housing is designed to allow local residents to remain in the area. Others prevent the original inhabitants from staying by changing the uses of spaces to tailor them to market demands.

In this paper, I discuss one of the first interventions of this kind in the city of Recife in northeastern Brazil: the gentrification of the *Bairro de Recife*, which I shall refer to hereafter as the Recife Quarter.

Old Recife: the foundation of the *MauritsStadt*

The original urban core of Recife was a small settlement of about 10 hectares, built on the isthmus of Olinda. The natural reefs (in Portuguese *arrecifes*) formed a safe harbour for ships transporting brazilwood and sugar to the Iberian Peninsula. The Village of Reefs grew as a trading port.

According to the historian Evaldo Cabral de Mello (Mello 1997), Rua do Bom Jesus (Bom Jesus Street) – the main focus of the ‘revitalization’ work undertaken in the late 1990s – was one of the most important areas of the early urban centre. Another street, Rua dos Judeus (Jew Street), was home to a Jewish community that had fled persecution in Europe. They built the first synagogue in the Americas, Kahal Kadosh Zur Israel, probably between 1640 and 1641 (Dantas 1999).

With the arrival of the Dutch, who invaded Brazil in 1630, Recife gained its first urban plan. The Dutch built walls, gates and trenches to surround and protect the small village and port. According to historian Vanildo Bezerra Cavalcanti (1977), one of the gates, the Land Gate (*lantpoort*), was situated in the Bom Jesus Street. It was later replaced by the Bom Jesus Arch.

The Dutch subsequently constructed the Maurício de Nassau Bridge, the first to connect the old isthmus to the mainland. This allowed the increasingly populous city to expand. An area called New Maritius – today the district of Santo Antônio – was built on the island of Antonio Vaz. The subsequent transfer of the seat of the Dutch government and the residence of Count Nassau to New Mauritius boosted the importance of this new area (Cavalcanti 1977: 149).



Figure 1. Lithograph of Bom Jesus Street, author unknown. Collection of the Museum of the City of Recife.



Figure 2. Drawing of the old Land Gate on Bom Jesus Street. Author unknown. Collection of the Museum of the City of Recife.

By the end of the 19th century what remained of the *Mauricéia* of Pernambuco State was an image of an unhealthy, profane and beautiful place. This spurred a major project of urban reform of the historic centre and port zone, the Recife Quarter, in 1910. Following a trend seen throughout Brazil, the authorities began their work by destroying what were identified as insalubrious buildings. The reconstruction of the Quarter began in 1909 under the responsibility of the *Société de Construction du Port de Pernambouc*, and later the *Société de Construction de Batgnolles* (Lubambo 1991: 77). Reflecting the modernizing ideas of cleanliness and beauty, the new constructions followed the French-inspired eclectic style. The plan included landfills to augment the size of the port area, construction of warehouses and, more drastically, the alteration of the road network, widening roads to facilitate transport to and from the port. With all these changes, the old colonial civil architecture was destroyed.

The emphasis on social hygiene led to the disappropriation of at least 480 buildings (Lubambo 1991: 123) which were pulled down to open up the new roads. Based on the ideas of Hausmann, the introduction of wide avenues sanitised cities, literally and metaphorically. The reforms undertaken in Rio de Janeiro and Recife were intended to eradicate outbreaks of diseases like smallpox and yellow fever, particularly rife in port areas. Disease and the associated fears were major obstacles to any development reliant on

international investors: Fabris (2000) has documented the apprehension people had merely of disembarking at the port of Brazil's Federal Capital.

The wide-ranging urban reform of Recife devastated the old Dutch district. The narrow streets with their overcrowded slum tenements and brothels, so vividly depicted by Gilberto Freyre in *Sobrados e Mucambos*, can no longer be seen. Two long and broad avenues sliced through the Recife Quarter: the tiny houses were substituted by monumental buildings modelled on the liberal eclecticism of contemporary French architecture. The neighbourhood that sprang up over the rubble of the burned Olinda was also the setting for a major renovation that transformed it into another cultural document, this time of the French Belle Époque.

The reform of the Recife Quarter was particularly significant in terms of the economic history of Pernambuco. At the time, Recife was the most important capital city in the Brazilian northeast, the centre of the region's 'new urban elites.' As Perruci (1978) has shown, from the end of the late nineteenth through to the early twentieth, Pernambuco's sugar industry was transformed by the replacement of the old sugar mills with industrial plants. This economic shift contributed to the consolidation of predominantly urban-based industrial capital at the expense of the rural areas.

The reforms not only improved the port's operating conditions, they also created a new image for the city, reflecting the ambitions of the State's new elites (Cátia Lubambo 1991).

The opening of large avenues was about more than an architectural landscape: it obeyed the political imperative of building a landscape of modernity. As well as being a work of sanitary engineering, it was an operation of social segregation, limiting the free flow of people. Eclecticism – a hybridism scorned by the modernists, characterized by the free use of overlapping styles from the past – amounted to an architectural representation of the new lifestyle of the emerging bourgeoisie, marked by the monumentality of the buildings. Nevertheless, this modern Brazilian landscape also harboured what this new class saw as a more shameful element. As Carvalho (1999) remarked concerning the reforms in Rio de Janeiro: "*In renovated Rio the world of the Belle Époque was fascinated with Europe but ashamed of Brazil, particularly poor and black Brazil*" (Carvalho 1999: 41). The discourse on urban planning reproduced the same 'eugenic stigmas' that permeated the debate on national character in Brazilian thought during this era (Lira 1999).



Figure 3. Photo of Bom Jesus Street in the colonial style. Author unknown. Collection of the IHGB, Rio de Janeiro.



Figure 4. Photo of Bom Jesus Street in the eclectic style. Author unknown. Collection of the IHGB, Rio de Janeiro.



Figure 5. Photo of the major reform of the Recife Quarter, 1910. Author unknown. Collection of the IHGB, Rio de Janeiro.



Figure 6. Central Square of the Recife Quarter, rebuilt in the eclectic style following Haussmann's urban design for Paris. Author unknown. Collection of the IHGB, Rio de Janeiro.

After the reform, the area was mostly taken over by insurance companies, banks and organizations involved in the import and export trade. This 'elitism' had a political consequence for the district's image and use. Following the concentration of commercial activities, housing functions came to be considered as residual and the district was projected instead as a business zone, an image that remained linked to the quarter until the 1950s when other central regions acquired more commercial importance. Between the 1950s and 1980s, the Recife Quarter fell into a slow decline, typical of central areas of big cities, until this situation was reversed with the implementation of the Revitalization Plan, the third phase in the political and visual reimagining of the Recife Quarter.

The process of gentrification of the Recife Quarter

From the 1990s the so-called Revitalization Plan for the old Recife Quarter began to be implemented: this was a detailed proposal for short and medium term action, including the physical dimensions and estimated costs of the planned works, presented as part of the Northeast Tourism Development Program.

The proposal set out three different sectors of intervention, and also defined areas of interest and a spatialization of activities based on the concrete



Figure 7. Bom Jesus Street during the Belle Époque, mid-1930s. Author unknown. Collection of the Museum of the City of Recife.

possibilities for intervention. The main objective of the revitalization proposal was to develop activities related to the services of the Revitalization Sector, turning it into a kind of anchor of the entire Revitalization Plan. The type of use of properties, circumscribed by sector, also facilitated the area's delimitation as a privileged zone for the deployment of more dynamic services associated with leisure and entertainment. This Revitalization Sector contains the highest concentration per square meter of built area, service, housing, and retail trade, while other sectors have a higher concentration of large buildings linked to wholesale trade, utilities and industry.

The technical details of the plan had a clear justification. As already outlined in a previous study (Leite 2007), it was not just a proposal for the restoration of heritage buildings, but an integrated idea of urban intervention in the form of a long-term *enterprise*. Reflecting the assumptions of market-led city planning (Vainer 2000), the Plan had three main goals, the operational framework for which was the set of Intervention Sectors: 1. transform the Recife Quarter into a “regional metropolitan centre,” making it a centre of modern services, culture and recreation; 2. turn the area into a ‘space of leisure and entertainment,’ aiming to generate a “space that promotes the concentration of people in public areas, creating the feeling of a vibrant urban

space”; 3. turn the area into a “centre of national and international tourist attraction.” These objectives indicated just how much the proposal was directed towards expanding the local economy, transforming the Recife Quarter into a complex mix of consumerism and entertainment.

This view of an *economy of culture*, which apprehends culture in terms of its economic results and the city as a commercial enterprise, anticipated the concentration of offices of big companies and corporations, boosting the Recife Quarter’s “image as a central and noble space of the city.” The ‘animation blocks’ of Bom Jesus Street have been made possible not only by reforms to the area’s physical structure, but especially by the program of events that the City Hall organizes throughout the year, which delineates a range of distinct forms of using urban spaces. The *cultural turn* of the entrepreneurial urbanism described by Otilia Arantes (2000) functioned in the Recife Quarter as a mechanism for legitimizing an image attractive to consumers and to potential new investors. Remodelled houses transformed the area into a bustling meeting place where people mingle under the glimmer of the street lights and the noise of many voices, *frevo* songs and jazz music. Strategically positioned to enhance the restored facades, these beams of light reinforced the feeling of a film set, the impact of which contrasted hugely with the rest of the neighbourhood. After six in the evening, traffic was barred from these streets and wooden trestles were set in place, accompanied by public and private security guards, which helped transform this quarter of the city into an artificial boulevard. Gradually the streets were taken over by people and the sidewalks by bar and restaurant tables. It was estimated that during large events at least 15,000 people would take to the streets in search of fun and relaxation. With the support of local business people, the Recife City Council began to promote an intense cultural program: concerts with local musicians, dance performances, art exhibitions in street, *seresta* festivals. Various activities staged throughout the year ensured the area remained a vibrant centre of cultural entertainment, integrating the Recife Quarter with the city’s cultural calendar. During carnival, a varied and intense program maintained the area’s profile as one of the newest options for tourists visiting Pernambuco. The parade of groups in the quarter was a show in itself: *blocos*, *troças*, *reisados*, *maracatus* and *caboclinhos*. Aside from the numerous roving events, the City Council maintained the traditional São João festivities in its official program, two typically large-scale street events.



Figures 8 and 9. Bom Jesus Street during the gentrification process, 1998. Photo by R.P. Leite



Figure 10. Retraditionalization process involving presentations of the local culture. 1999. Photo by R.P. Leite

These investments provoked a substantial change in the urban landscape of the Recife Quarter, the new mixture of consumption and leisure redesigning its profile, making it the area with the highest concentration of bars and restaurants in the city of Recife. The new image developed for the area focused in part precisely on the fact that it was one of the few places where consumers had various options within a relatively small area, like a food court in a shopping mall.

In 1998, when the Revitalization Plan for the old Recife Quarter was already in progress, the area was listed by IPHAN, recognizing it as a national heritage, largely on the basis of the urban transformations and changes of styles, especially during the major reform of 1910 that turned the Recife Quarter into what “(...) is today a unique, intact, and hybrid Brazilian example of Haussmann’s Paris.” This reform, which marked the transition from Old Recife to New Recife, had turned the quarter into a “(...) unique living archive of the overlapping temporalities that have dominated history and artistic production in Recife and in Brazil.”

Gentrification and Consuming Heritage

The process of tourism gentrification promoted by the reformation of historical sites is typically based around installing services and offering an extensive range of culture, leisure and entertainment for the middle and upper classes.

In general, such interventions are preceded by a comprehensive decline of the site, both its physical aspect (including the deterioration of buildings, urban housing and sanitary infrastructure) and its symbolic aspect (the decline in the site's importance relative to other areas of the city, loss of centrality, and an increasingly negative social image, frequently associated with insecurity, inhospitable conditions and marginality). Despite this problematic diagnosis, these areas maintain a strong significance in the city's history, precisely because they were once places of pronounced visibility and economic, political and cultural importance (Leite 2013).

Even during its most 'decadent' phase, the Recife Quarter retained its historical importance in the local imagination as the site where the city originated. Once 'revitalized,' the area underwent an adaptation of tradition to the demands of a market of cultural consumption, in what Carlos Fortuna (1997) has called *detraditionalization* to refer to a strategic mechanism of contemporary urban planning, designed to revalue local culture and heritage as part of adapting cities to the context of 'inter-city competition':

[...] detraditionalization is a social process through which cities and societies are modernized by subjecting earlier values, meanings and actions to a new interpretative logic of intervention. This detraditionalization is driven by the need for each city to revalue its resources, actual or potential, in order to reposition itself in the increasingly disputed market of inter-city competition. (Fortuna 1997: 234)

This process does not mean abandoning tradition, therefore, but reworking it in response to the market forces that permeate any kind of contemporary urban interventions. In those cases involving 'gentrifying' interventions, this detraditionalization assumes its most radical form with the possibility of a complete change in the meanings attributed to heritage sites, including the addition of entirely new values. Such interventions therefore enable deep changes in uses and users, affecting especially traditional residents who are usually targeted for relocation away from the area, making room for others

more suited to the new intended uses. In some cases this alteration takes a dramatic form with the eviction of former residents, configuring what Michel de Certeau has called ‘social curettage’ (Certeau 1996). In other cases there may be a search for residents and users with new profiles without, though, discarding those already found there. This is the case – to a lesser extent – of the city of Porto, in Portugal, which retained some of its traditional residents, and – to a greater extent – of the city of Évora, also in Portugal, which even today invests in attracting younger residents owing to the aging demographic profile of its resident population. Like Recife, Porto was a strategic centre for the local economy – indeed for the entire Douro region due to its intense social and commercial life. As the Portuguese saying goes, “Lisbon parties, Porto works, Coimbra studies, Braga prays.” The city’s association with commercial activities is ancient, tracing back to the earliest origins of the city, regarded by natives as the birthplace of the Portuguese nation. This idea derives from a kind of foundation myth in which the city is attributed with the origin of the country’s name, due to the independence of the County of Portugal, the *Condado Portucalense*, from which the word Portugal originated as a composite of the toponymic expressions ‘port’ and ‘cale’ (Fortuna & Silva 2002). Labelled the ‘Portuguese Manchester,’ Porto shared the latter’s image of an active, liberal and progressive city. Even with the decline in the use of its historic districts, especially from the 1960s when its resident population decreased substantially,¹ Porto retained a central role due to the rich history associated with the city’s image.

Évora is possibly one of the oldest historical cities in Portugal. Its origin is supposedly related to the Romanization of Lusitania, which elevated the province to the status of *municipium Eborae Liberalitas Julia* by Emperor Julius Caesar during the exploration of the Iberian Peninsula (Évora Municipal Chamber 1997). With its Roman archaeological remains and a rich architectural complex, including palaces and churches, Évora during the medieval period was an important walled citadel, the residence of Portugal’s kings and aristocracy. Its rich heritage contains examples of Renaissance, Islamic, Gothic, Manueline, Baroque and Neoclassical art and architecture. Situated in the region of Alentejo, the idea hovers over Évora that it could have been the country’s

¹ According to data from the Rede Atlante (2005), the population living in the historical region of Porto fell from 16% to 5% of the city’s total population between 1940 and 2001.



Figures 11 and 12. Historical centre of Porto, Portugal. 2006. Photo by R.P. Leite



Figure 13. Ribeira do Porto during the gentrification process. 2006. Photo by R.P. Leite



Figure 14. Historical centre of Évora after the revitalization process. 2006. Photo by R.P. Leite

capital. Prior to the recent interventions, its image was mostly that of a stagnant, small and traditional city, dominated by a few small families and groups of influence (Fortuna 1997). During the 1980s, precisely when emphasis on conservation and gentrification processes was increasing in urban areas around the world, interventions began in Évora that would turn it into an attractive centre for leisure and tourism. Following Paulo Peixoto's analysis (1997), these transformations, which culminated in 1986 with Évora's declaration as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, represented a pioneering example in Portugal of the use of heritage resources as a means to project a city at global level.

A significant difference exists, though, between the Brazilian and Portuguese cases, which can be considered a mitigating point in terms of how the Portuguese experience fits into the gentrification pattern. Given the residential characteristics of Porto and Évora, the kind of gentrification that occurred there was less concerned with replacing their traditional residents than, for example, the Brazilian case of Recife (Leite 2010).

At the same time, it is also worth observing that although the Brazilian and Portuguese examples of intervention sought the same results – namely, the detraditionalization of their cultural heritage in order to ensure that



Figures 15 and 16. Historical centre of Évora after the revitalization process. 2006. Photo by R.P. Leite

their respective historic centres were included in inter-city competition – the Brazilian discourse was more clearly focused on creating urban tourist and entertainment hotspots, perhaps because Recife’s residential size was smaller. Moreover, the Portuguese concern to avoid creating mere scenarios had not stopped detraditionalization from taking place in Porto and Évora, including the same kind of spectacularization of culture seen in the Brazilian cases.

I take the spectacularization of culture to be the accentuation or creation of cultural traits that look to highlight the singularity of an urban space, through a strong visual appeal and fleeting social practices, intended to turn history and culture into consumable commodities. The idea of a spectacularization of culture has always been present in diverse forms in urban intervention processes. Architectural monumentality is perhaps the best known and certainly the most remarkable element of this desire to spectacularize found in some reforms as part of a search for greater visibility, distinction and aesthetic appeal. Gentrification policies, like the *protogentrification* practices that preceded them, such as Haussmann’s famous reforms in Paris and Otto Wagner’s interventions in Vienna’s Ringstrasse, are clearly monumental experiments in architecture and large-scale urban design (Schorske 1990).

However architectural and urban monumentality is not the only form taken by the spectacularization of culture. In Brazil, the heady appeal of the supposed (but questionable) authenticity of popular culture has been one of the most powerful resources for the revival or even reinvention of these gentrified spaces, part of a spectacularizing and market-oriented view of the culture economy. The intervention process is well known: manifestations of the local culture are promoted in order to exploit certain aspects of the cultural legitimacy of these sites, creating thematic spaces through this emphasis on local culture. The ultimate aim is to attract new users by expanding the possibilities for consumption, either in the form of new bars and restaurants or symbolically through the heavily promoted artistic and cultural manifestations.

Consequently the notion of the spectacularization of culture can be considered a derivative of the concept of detraditionalization, since it presupposes an accentuation of cultural values and local heritage as part of the visual and scenic accentuation of the urban space and the social practices directed towards symbolic consumption. The primary outcome of the spectacularization of culture in gentrification processes is a strong socio-spatial demarcation of public life revolving around the desired/intended uses for these

'revitalized' spaces. Often this demarcation focuses on the ways of inhabiting these spaces, where public socializing is heavily determined by the possibilities available for social interaction.

Sociospatialities and counter-uses of the city

One of the main negative impacts of gentrification, affecting its own long-term sustainability, is inherent to the urban strategy of this type of urban intervention: the creation of a strong socio-spatial demarcation in the use of space. This appears to be an insoluble dilemma. To activate new uses of the local area and establish differentiated niches of consumption to attract consumers, these interventions invest heavily in the 'requalification' of spaces, creating relatively well-defined boundaries between different users. This often involves excluding a significant part of the local population, who are left unable to interact within these spaces due to the strong tendency towards market commodification that makes these spaces the preserve of a social elite. In response, non-users create zones of instability around or even within these spaces, generating points of permeability and tension related to the practical and symbolic dispute for the urban space. This also stems from other factors, I think, including the debatable idea that cultural heritage can produce a unique sense of belonging for the entire population, serving as a force for social cohesion.

In-depth studies on the polysemic meanings of heritage (Canclini 1997, Fortuna 1998, Arantes 2000) have shown the degree of symbolic complexity that heritage can have for different social groups. Distinct forms of appropriating and attributing meaning are generated when these sites are 'revitalized,' depending on how users see themselves represented in these transformed spaces. Moreover a kind of latent conflict between local residents and outside visitors becomes established, explaining why this type of intervention can seldom be sustained for long. Either the old residents, even if residual, perceive no benefits for themselves from the interventions (the cases of Recife and Porto), or the influx of new users alters day-to-day routines, generating a dynamism not always desired by the local population (the case of Évora).

One conclusion seems clear when we analyze these processes comparatively: regardless of the different contexts and variations between the processes, the type of intervention geared towards consuming heritage and

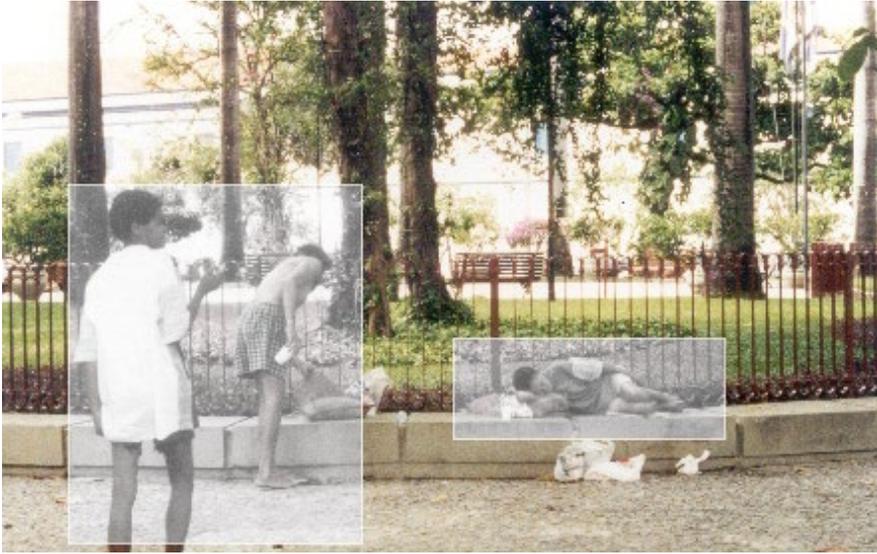


Figure 17. Counter-uses in the main square of the Recife Quarter. 1999. Photo by R.P. Leite

towards the spectacularization of culture curbs the possibilities for interaction due to the distinct sociospatialities created in the process. The problem is that the model, as conceived, fails to escape the trap that it sets for itself: in order to generate niches of consumption, users must be selected, but by inhibiting some uses deemed contrary to those intended for these spaces, it weakens the desired urban harmony by provoking a range of reactions that very often take the form of a symbolic contestation and confrontation, what I have called *counter-uses* (Leite 2007). By *counter-uses* I mean the daily practices that challenge the disciplinary space in order to subvert expected uses, creating practical and symbolic ruptures within the space.

Hence urban interventions like gentrification would appear to collide with an implicit nonviability: the different interests and social motivations for interactive processes do not fit into a model designed to promote a single predominant urban (economic) use. In some cases, the solution found to reduce the effects of such *counter-uses* has been to demarcate the ‘revitalized’ spaces even more radically, creating distinct areas of cultural entertainment. The Recife case provides a clear illustration of this mistaken solution. At the height of the revitalization program, Recife City Council created different ‘animation centres’ in distinct zones of the heritage site, seeking to meet the demands of different consumer groups. Initially it seemed that the idea would work, since it reinforced the boundaries separating the different areas



Figure 18. Counter-uses at Ribeira do Porto. 2007. Photo by R.P. Leite

of the Recife Quarter. But the contact zones remained fluid and permeable, and the boundaries had to be symbolically ‘negotiated’ by the different users and counter-users as the uses in one area became *counter-uses* in another. Such urban permeability is inevitable in this kind of process. In Salvador, a recent study showed how the small ‘Rocinha favela,’ deeply embedded in the city’s historic centre, penetrated the gentrified space of the Pelourinho, just as the latter merged with the sociabilities of the favela (Araujo 2007). A similar situation was observable in Recife with the conflicts and permeabilities between the ‘Favela do Rato’ and the gentrified area (Souza 2007) or again in the ‘revitalization’ of Iracema Beach and the relations with the ‘Poço da Draga’ favela (Souza 2007, Bezerra 2008).

In referring to the restrictions or curtailments on interaction in spectacularized spaces, I am thinking above all of the social constraints involved in gentrification. The sophistication of some houses, transformed into restaurants and luxury hotels, the widespread adaptation of spaces for tourists and the scant attention paid to local residents and users, all seem to contribute to generating points of tension that, when recurrent, culminate in a conflicting spatial configuration, which can be seen as an important factor in any subsequent decline of these spaces – an *exhaustion* which, as I have suggested elsewhere, seems to be a post-gentrification and counter-revanchist phase in many cities (Leite 2010).

What we can glean from all this is that something appears to be askew: either urban practices are too deleterious when they presume that a city can be created without taking into account the differences between people in their daily routines, or urban life by definition eludes any excessive control, given that it is the locus par excellence of the dissent that animates public life (Leite 2009). I suspect both reasons are valid. Both offer a considerable explanatory power when it comes to understanding the contradictory dynamics of contemporary urban culture.

This is not the first time that social scientists have warned that urban intervention projects in historic centres must pay more attention to the aspirations of their main users and residents: their worldviews and their representations of heritage sites and the symbolic places through which they construct their multiple identities. I conclude by recalling a pertinent analytical suggestion that would ideally precede the development of any gentrification policy:

[...] it is necessary to imagine people using and transforming the spaces in which they live [...] Empty landscapes can be deceptive. (Arantes 1997).

Translated by David Rodgers

Accepted for publication on March 22, 2013.

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The Dark Side of the Moon

Heritage, memory and place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

José Reginaldo Santos Gonçalves

Abstract

In this paper the author focuses on the various ways people from an outlying area of the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, understand the concepts of heritage, memory and place. Facing a radical transformation of their neighborhood conducted by the city government, they discuss the destiny of an old movie theater that is threatened with demolition. Some of them understand it as a heritage site to be protected and preserved because it supposedly expresses the memory of the neighborhood. Others affirm that the best way to deal with the problem is to demolish the old building and construct a new public square. The point made by the author is that we are facing two quite distinct ways of understanding the concept of heritage: one of them is based on an abstract and legal perspective; the other based on the everyday life experience of local residents.

Keywords: heritage, memory, urban space.

Resumo

Neste artigo o autor focaliza os diferentes pontos de vista da população de um determinado subúrbio do Rio de Janeiro sobre os conceitos de patrimônio, memória e espaço. Diante de um processo de transformação urbana radical conduzido pela prefeitura da cidade sobre o espaço do seu bairro, eles discutem o destino de um velho cinema ameaçado de demolição. Alguns o entendem como um patrimônio a ser protegido e preservado porque supostamente expressa a memória do bairro. Outros defendem a tese de que o velho prédio deveria ser demolido e em seu lugar construída uma nova praça pública. Para o autor, estamos diante de dois modos distintos de entender o conceito de patrimônio: um deles baseado numa perspectiva abstrata e jurídica; um outro baseado na experiência de vida cotidiana dos moradores.

Palavras-chave: herança, memória, espaço urbano

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Heritage as a native category

Public and academic debates about “heritage” – generally understood as a form of “collective memory” – have increased in recent decades. The literature is quite extensive, and no comprehensive review will be undertaken.¹ Both categories have been submitted to investigations and inquiries in many disciplines, and have been distinctly present in the political agenda of social movements and government policies. It is difficult to ignore their presence in the social and political life of great cities, where dialogs and confrontations take place, expressing antagonistic concepts of space, time and identity. The current transformation processes of urban spaces – as well as efforts towards their legitimization and questioning – necessarily involve memory and heritage institutions and agents. They also involve the individual and collective responses of city residents to the projects conducted by those institutions and agents.

This process has evolved for decades in Brazil. The theme has been strongly present in the communication media and in the academic world, and is a legitimate field of studies in various disciplinary areas, mainly but not exclusively in Anthropology.² In my work I have insisted on the need to qualify the category “heritage,” exploring its native conceptions, and thus distance ourselves from its ideological and legal uses.³ Therefore, I’ve also been focusing on the idea that, from the native point of view, heritages always exist in specific, material forms and are built and noticed by means of sensitive codes

1 For some recent work see Nelson; Olin 2003; Assman 2011; Olick; Vinitzky;-Seroussi; Levy 2011.

2 See Arantes 1984; 2000; Gouveia; Miceli 1985; Gonçalves 2004; 2005; 2007; 2012; Chuva 2009; Abreu; Chagas 2010 [2003]; Rubino 1991; Santos 1992; Fonseca 1997; Lima Filho, M.F.; Eckert, C.; Beltrão, J. 2007; Santos 1992; Tamaso; Lima Filho 2012.

3 See Gonçalves 2008; 2008a; 2012.

– sight, touch, smell, hearing, taste – and not only as abstract formulations that belong to programmatic discourses. Moreover, I insist that they exist as material objects situated in certain specific modalities of space, inseparable from the human experience and consequently from the “body techniques.”⁴ In this sense, it is impossible to study “immaterial heritage” without focusing on its eminently material dimensions, its social and individual uses, as well as its production and effects.⁵

The importance of heritage consists in the fact that it performs a decisive role in the articulation of individual and collective narratives about memory and identity. It also offers a material and visible dimension to these narratives in the public space. Beyond that, when seen from the native point of view, heritage exists as part of its users’ experience. It is in this context that it is perceived, used, transformed and destroyed. Heritage is significantly integrated into the everyday existence of individuals and social groups.

Once the categories of social memory and heritage began to circulate broadly in the social and political world, they inevitably took on a highly objectified form. That is, they came to be seen as objects to be identified, preserved or reconstructed by individuals or social groups. Heritage is understood to be a legal entity subjected to public or private property laws. It is the object of preservation policies: as are buildings that are officially classified as heritage sites⁶ by the National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN) or as elements of “intangible heritage” like popular rituals, forms of popular cuisine and popular medicine, festivals like carnival, etc. A building to be officially recognized and protected by IPHAN is collectively perceived as a physical and symbolic unity (besides being a legal entity) that supposedly exists independently from the context of everyday social and cultural relations.

The social, political and legal uses of the categories “heritage” (and “collective memory”) frequently tend to have anthropological and sociological studies understand heritage as an object in itself, and not as something that exists in a vast network of social and cultural relations. One of this article’s objectives is to explore some native points of view on heritage and memory

4 Mauss 2003: 401-424.

5 See Gonçalves 2005; 2007; 2012.

6 In Portuguese: “bens tombados”.

and situate them as part of that web of social and cultural relations.

A huge construction site

Due to the projects designed for the events of the football World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016, the city of Rio de Janeiro has been described in the last few years as a large “construction site,” especially by engineers, architects and urban planners. This metaphor is usually brought up in official discourses in a triumphant manner. In the specific case of the large network of roads that cut through various neighborhoods in the outer neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro, a series of complicated consequences has reached the people who live in and drive through these areas. As we have extensively seen in the communication media, thousands of people have been displaced from their homes due to the need to demolish buildings and widen streets and avenues to create space for large roads. Besides demolitions and other changes that may be seen as positive or negative, these construction projects trigger a series of collective responses by the population. These responses tend to vary. Some people defend their housing against damage and seek financial compensation from the state; others defend the preservation of areas and buildings that are symbolically associated to the population’s life and socially recognized as “heritage,” a concept which, as we know, takes on varied semantic forms.

One of the construction projects undertaken by the Rio de Janeiro city government is the Transcarioca Corridor, a major expressway running from the Barra da Tijuca neighborhood to the Tom Jobim International Airport. The route cuts through a series of neighborhoods and has led to the demolition of many buildings. The purpose of the highway is to significantly reduce commuting time between Barra da Tijuca and the Tom Jobim International Airport. These demolitions are seen to be necessary by the city government because, along most of its route, the Transcarioca Corridor will be built at the level of the existing streets and avenues, will have to be widened in many places, which implies the demolition of buildings. The Transcarioca route crosses the neighborhoods of Barra da Tijuca, Jacarepaguá, Madureira, Bonsucesso, Ramos, Irajá, Vaz Lobo, Vicente de Carvalho and Brás de Pina up to Largo da Penha, where there will be a connection to the Ilha do Fundão and Tom Jobim International Airport. The estimated cost is more than a billion

Reals (US\$500 million) and the construction, started in 2011, is expected to be partially finished in 2013. The prediction was that approximately 3,630 buildings would be demolished along the Transcarioca route.⁷ In addition to the Transcarioca, there are two other road projects: the Transoeste and the Transolímpica.⁸

The reflections developed in this article⁹ have been raised by the stories I have heard about the actual conditions and destiny of a movie theater in Vaz Lobo (“Cine Vaz Lobo”), a neighborhood situated along the Transcarioca route. As has happened to thousands of other structures along the routes of the recent road construction in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the Vaz Lobo movie theater was identified for demolition to widen an avenue. The Vaz Lobo movie theater is located at 4 Vicente de Carvalho Avenue, in front of the Vaz Lobo Square. The neighborhood of Vaz Lobo borders the neighborhoods of Irajá, Vicente de Carvalho, Rocha Miranda, Turiaçu, Cavalcante and Madureira. Vaz Lobo has 110 hectares and a population of approximately 14,041 inhabitants,¹⁰ with a total of 5,333 residences. Vaz Lobo is part of the XV Administrative Region of Rio de Janeiro, which includes the neighborhoods of [Bento Ribeiro](#), [Campinho](#), [Cascadura](#), [Cavalcante](#), [Engenheiro Leal](#), [Honório Gurgel](#), [Madureira](#), [Marechal Hermes](#), [Oswaldo Cruz](#), [Quintino Bocaiúva](#), [Rocha Miranda](#) and [Turiaçu](#). Three important avenues in Rio de Janeiro’s suburbs come to meet precisely at Vaz lobo Square, where the Vaz Lobo Theater is located: Avenida Ministro Edgar Romero., Avenida Monsenhor Felix, and Avenida Vicente de Carvalho.

7 See <http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/TransCarioca> Access 08/03/2012.

8 See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJ44BVhOAKY> Access 08/03/2012.

9 The data presented here is the result of a research project I have been working on in the last two years with members of LAARES (The Laboratory for the Anthropology of Architecture and Places) in the Graduate Program in Sociology and Anthropology / IFCS / UFRJ (www.laares-ufrrj.com), with the support of CNPq, CAPES and FAPERJ. Our studies have focused on the concepts of “place,” “architecture” and “urbanism” in various social segments in the context of large cities, exploring these notions in the discourses of professionals of engineering, architecture, urbanism and historical preservation as well as in the discourses of residents and agents of local social movements. Currently, the empirical focus of our observation and analysis has been the effects of the big projects for urban intervention in the city of Rio de Janeiro given the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games. Fieldwork, participant observation and interviews have been concentrated in the neighborhoods of Vaz Lobo, Madureira and Irajá.

10 Information found on the website *Bairros Cariocas* of the Rio de Janeiro city government: http://portalgeo.rio.rj.gov.br/bairros Cariocas/index_bairro.htm Accessed on March 8, 2012.

The Vaz Lobo movie theater as heritage

According to stories told by the interviewees,¹¹ the Vaz Lobo Theater was built in 1939 during the Estado Novo, as the dictatorial regime led by Getulio Vargas from 1937 through 1954 was known. It was inaugurated in 1941 and closed in 1982,¹² never to reopen again. Along these thirty years it was never used as an Evangelical church, a supermarket or a bank, as were many movie theaters in Rio de Janeiro in recent decades. This supposedly did not happen because the former owner, Manuel Mendes Monteiro, refused many proposals to sell the building. The theater has remained closed. In addition to the movie theater, the building had commercial stores on the ground floor, a few of which are still occupied, and a few apartments on the two upper floors. One of Manuel Mendes Monteiro's daughters lives there. She is the only resident of the building. According to some interviewees, she used to live with her mother in the building until a short while ago, but now lives alone. The other apartments are said to be empty. According to the stories I heard from my interviewees, she doesn't allow anyone into the theater. Many stories are said to be told about the current state of the auditorium. Although it is said that nobody has visited it in three decades, they describe it as sumptuous, supposedly having a sophisticated lighting system as well as what was considered at the time of its construction the largest architectural span ever built in the city. According to these testimonies, the room is equipped for up to 1,800 people. Some say all of the chairs have already been sold. But none of the people I interviewed were able to confirm this. They also could not say when, for how much or to whom they were sold. But they repeatedly assured me that there are no more chairs. They also say the lighting system still works. According to some interviewees, an electrician hired by the heiress was the one who passed on this information. They also say there is still projection equipment there, but they are unable to say what kind and its condition.

11 These narratives were put together on the basis of interviews conducted with members of the "Cine Vaz Lobo Movement" which is fighting for the preservation of the movie theater and its transformation into a cultural center. I would especially like to thank Mr. Ronaldo Luis Martins, a retired public employee and founder of the Historical and Geographical Institute of Irajá; Dr. Dr. Gusmão, a retired lawyer; Karen da Silva Barros, a historian; Maria Celeste, historian and elementary school teacher; and Fernanda Costa, an architect who was responsible for the route conversion project of Transcarioca in the portion where the road reaches the Vaz Lobo movie theater. I thank them all for their kind and generous reception of the research team.

12 For pictures of the Vaz Lobo movie theater see <https://www.google.com/search?q=cine+vaz+lobo&tbn=isch>. Accessed on March 14, 2013.

Manuel Mendes Monteiro died in 2009. In that same year the Rio de Janeiro city government announced the Transcarioca Corridor project. But it was only initiated in 2011. Then, a local social movement for the preservation of the Vaz Lobo movie theater pushed the city government to officially announce a change in the highway route, assuring that the movie theater would remain where it was. There was also a project for rebuilding the Vaz Lobo Square.¹³ The original movement for the preservation of this movie theater became larger and turned into what today is known as “Movimento Cine Vaz Lobo: preservação, cultura e memória” (Cine Vaz Lobo Movement: preservation, culture and memory). The movement has extended its efforts to the preservation and recognition of other buildings and historic places as “heritage sites” in Vaz Lobo, Irajá and surrounding areas. According to some of the people I interviewed, the Movement has also had repercussions on surrounding neighborhoods whose residents decided to gather in defense of the preservation of some of their public spaces and buildings, including old movie theaters.

One could surely say that this is a very common story: an old neighborhood movie theater threatened by probable demolition and the subsequent social mobilization of the local population regarding its preservation as “heritage.” But what distinguishes the “Cine Vaz Lobo Movement” is precisely the way its members understand the notion of “heritage.”

According to the engineers and urban planners of the city’s department of public works,¹⁴ who are involved in the Transcarioca Corridor project, the Vaz Lobo movie theater building was considered an obstacle in the process of widening the pathway for the road construction and as such the project called for it to be demolished. However, according to people who worked at the time in the Secretariat of Cultural Heritage¹⁵ of Rio de Janeiro, the movie theater (according to a 2006 project) should be preserved as “heritage” because it was a “street movie theater” and was associated to an important moment in the history of the neighborhood, the city and the movie theaters of Rio de Janeiro. The members of the Cine Vaz Lobo Movement, perceive it in a

13 See <http://vejario.abril.com.br/blog/as-ruas-do-rio/bairro-a-bairro/o-largo-de-vaz-lobo-estava-na-mira-da-transcarioca> Access 08.03.2012.

14 In Portuguese: “Secretaria de Obras”.

15 In Portuguese: “Secretaria de Patrimônio Cultural”.

different way, but also claim the building should be considered “heritage,”

Why did a movie theater without great architectural value, classified by specialists as “late art deco”, without any other attributes to distinguish it, and which has been closed for approximately 30 years, come to awaken the interest and memory of specific segments of the population of that neighborhood? It is important to point out that this is not an isolated event. In Rio de Janeiro and many other Brazilian cities in recent years there has been a broad movement for the preservation of the so called “street movie theaters,” an expression that is used to distinguish them from movie theaters located in shopping centers. The Vaz Lobo movie theater is classified as one of these “street movie theaters.” From the point of view of the agents of the pro “street movie theaters” movement, it is public space that is mainly appreciated as a source of social and individual life – not private space. In this way, the decline of the so called “street movie theaters” – because of the city’s population growth, real estate speculation, the construction of shopping centers and the emergence of new media – is seen as one of the reasons for the decline of social life. From their point of view, this has dangerously led to what is called the “desertification of public space.”¹⁶

The ideas of the members of the Cine Vaz Lobo Movement differ from those of the members of the movement for the “street movie theaters.” Firstly, because the latter is situated in a generic plan and when they refer to the Vaz Lobo movie theater, it is presented as just an example of the general category “street movie theaters.” In addition, in the case of the broader movements in defense of “street movie theaters” there is a clear and explicit project to reopen these theaters, and have them operate with financial support from the city government. In contrast, the members of the Cine Vaz Lobo Movement affirm that the Vaz Lobo movie theater has been unique since its inauguration until today. The Vaz Lobo movie theater became a powerful icon and the name of the Movement clearly isn’t an accident. Unlike the movements in defense of “street movie theaters,” the Cine Vaz Lobo Movement members do not present such a clearly defined project for the future uses of the building. They foresee a wide range of uses: it could become a cultural center, a performing arts center, the headquarters for the Historical and

16 See <http://escrevendo1.blogspot.com.br/2012/03/movimento-pela-reativacao-dos-cinemas.html>
Access 08.03.2012.

Geographical Institute of Irajá and so on.

The social nucleus of the Cine Vaz Lobo Movement is composed of local residents, some of them are people like Ronaldo Luis Martins, a 70-year old local historian who studies the region; Doctor Gusmão, a retired lawyer and childhood friend of Ronaldo, although the two only met again because of the Movement. Ronaldo now lives in the neighborhood of Freguesia. Doctor Gusmão still lives in Vaz Lobo. Other members are very young, such as Karen da Silva Barros who recently earned a bachelor's degree in history; Maria Celeste, who is also a historian as well as a local public school teacher; and Fernanda Costa, an architect and urban planner who was responsible for the project that led to the route change for the Transcarioca Corridor, rescuing the building of the Vaz Lobo movie theater from imminent demolition. They are the main social and cultural mediators of the Movement. They are the ones who take the initiative to contact city hall, and politicians from Rio de Janeiro State and in Brasilia. They publicize information about Vaz Lobo and especially about the Vaz Lobo movie theater.¹⁷

Apparently until the year of 2009, when the the Transcarioca Corridor was announced, and the Movement for the Vaz Lobo movie theater preservation began, very few people were aware of its existence. The building, in bad condition, did not arouse great attention or interest on the part of the local residents. According to some of the people I interviewed, the city government had a project for its recognition as “heritage” in 2006. Not for its architectural attributes, but for being recognized as one of the remaining “street movie theaters” of Rio de Janeiro. According to the members of the Movement, this project, for unclear reasons, was aborted. The resumption of the Vaz Lobo movie theater preservation project is due to circumstantial factors.

According to the interviewees, in 2009, a young architecture and urban planning student at the Federal Fluminense University (UFF), Fernanda Costa, had to choose a theme for her final course project. She decided to study the restoration of art deco movie theaters in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Although she lived in the neighborhood of Vaz Lobo since she was born, it was only then that she realized the existence of the old Vaz Lobo movie theater. It was a perfect fit for her paper. When I interviewed her, she said at first

17 See http://www.joadorio.com/site/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=659&Itemid=127. Access 08.03.2012.

that she couldn't manage to gather much information about the movie theater from her relatives and neighbors. People said they knew of the existence of the movie theater, but they didn't remember going there to see a film. And even when talking to other residents, she couldn't get a positive answer when she asked about memories regarding the movie theater. According to Fernanda, given the difficulties, she had to look for other resources for her research on the Vaz Lobo movie theater. That's when they suggested she contact Ronaldo Luís Martins, who is acknowledged in the neighborhood as someone who knows a lot about Vaz Lobo and the neighboring region, and is the author of a book about the Madureira Market ("Mercadão de Madureira").¹⁸ Since she couldn't have access to the inside of the theater, it was through Ronaldo's biographical memory that Fernanda managed to reconstruct what must have been the inside of the screening room. According to her, Ronaldo drew the room as he had kept it in his memory, since he went to the theater regularly when he was young.

In one of her meetings with Ronaldo to obtain information about the Vaz Lobo theater, Fernanda heard his commentary that "there was no way out," meaning that the route planned for the Transcarioca Corridor would definitely require demolishing the movie theater. Fernanda affirmed that "it wasn't really like that" and that there were possibilities to avoid the demolition. She had already been to the Pereira Passos Institute (an urban research institute in Rio de Janeiro), when she found an old project to officially recognize the building as a heritage site. Based on this project and archival research, she gained access to the Vaz Lobo movie theater's original architectural plans. Fernanda designed a new project that would be proposed to the Rio de Janeiro city government asking for the building's classification as heritage and the change of the Transcarioca Corridor route, thus preventing the Vaz Lobo movie theater from being demolished.. This initiative took place at the same time that the leaders of the Movement tried to gather the local population to sign a document to be submitted to the city mayor. They contacted a few politicians, including federal level politicians to obtain support for this initiative. After two years, the city government finally answered positively and the Transcarioca Corridor route near the Vaz Lobo Square stretch was altered, ensuring the building's permanence. As we will see below, this decision was

18 See <http://www.mercadaodemadureira.com/e-book-mercadao-de-madureira.pdf>. Access 04.13.2013.

not consensually received by the neighborhood residents, although it was enthusiastically celebrated by the members of the Cine Vaz Lobo Movement.

We may say that through the narratives and images produced by the members of the Cine Vaz Lobo Movement, the building came to be perceived in a new light. It was no longer just an old abandoned and ignored building in Vaz Lobo Square, whose surrounding area was used by residents, those who frequented the local stores and bars, and people who attended a Pentecostal temple and a Catholic church in the area; it was no longer a building whose surrounding area was occupied by a marginal population, especially late at night. In a certain way, the Vaz Lobo movie theater came to be metaphorically “re-inaugurated,” and seemed to gain new life.

The focus of these images and stories is the very origin of the movie theater in a historical time of population growth, and social and economic development of the outer neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro, namely the 1930’s and 1940’s.¹⁹ The focus is also its inauguration as a luxurious movie theater with 1,800 seats, its use by residents during the 1940’s, 50’s and 60’s and after that, its decline through the 70’s with the drop in attendance, the declining local population, the real estate depreciation and the closing of the movie theater in the eighties, as occurred with so many other movie theaters in Rio de Janeiro and other Brazilian cities.

The interviewees emphasize that, in contrast to many others in the city, the Vaz Lobo movie theater was not turned into a Pentecostal church or a supermarket, although, according to them, Mr. Monteiro received many valuable offers. According to some people, he wanted to turn the movie theater into a “cultural center” and for that reason he rejected all the offers he had received to sell or rent it. The building has remained closed since 1982. In the narratives I had access to, nobody explained why one of the owner’s daughters, who lives in the building, prohibits anyone from entering.²⁰⁴ They insist

19 See Oliveira, Marcio Piñon de; Fernandes, Nelson da Nóbrega (2010).

20 If more carefully investigated, these narratives of the Cine Vaz Lobo Movement provide evidence of a curious point: they insistently emphasize that the movie theater was never reopened and that it remains closed. Apparently, in this narrative context the theater represents something more than a simple register of a historical fact. The building is part of a set of elements among which it seems to have an important role, suggesting that the narrative provides evidence of a mythical dimension, in which the movie theater operates transitions in the space and time of the neighborhood universe. In the interviews, the leaders of the movement obsessively repeat this information, implying that this magically singularizes the Vaz Lobo movie theater. It is possible to investigate here the relations between myth and heritage narratives. I have explored this possibility in an article not yet published. (Gonçalves 2013).

on the fact that the movie theater has “resisted” all these years and in a joking manner suggest that the theater has a “corpo fechado.”²¹⁵

As a spatial and architectural structure situated at one of the neighborhood’s reference points, the intersection of three important avenues in the Rio de Janeiro suburbs, it was a catalyst for the members of the Movement as for a series of biographical and historical narratives. One of the people I interviewed reports that in one of the demonstrations promoted by the Cine Vaz Lobo Movement in front of the building, a large number of people signed the petition to be sent to the mayor, and some were looking for the leaders of the Movement to give them family photographs and old newspaper articles about the Vaz Lobo movie theater. According to these interviewees, there was a very positive repercussion among the local population. But they also said there were those who simply argued for the demolition of the building and the construction of a new square in that space. For these people, the building and its surrounding area were considered dangerous, since at times it is used by drug dealers and drug users. Some said the best solution would be to demolish the building. Obviously there was no consensus. However, the interviewees who are members of the Movement affirmed unanimously that the neighborhood residents were very supportive.

From some residents’ point of view

We have presented the point of view of the leaders of the Cine Vaz Lobo Movement. The stories they tell about the origin and current situation of the Vaz Lobo movie theater may be understood as a result of an effort to frame a “collective memory.”²² The preservation project for the Vaz Lobo movie theater, its reconstruction through narratives, photographs, old newspaper articles, plans, drawings that imaginarily reproduce the auditorium can be interpreted as an expression of such an effort.

However, although the members of the Movement point out the positive reception they have had from many neighborhood residents, they also indicate that there have been difficulties in relations with the population.

21 “Corpo fechado” (protected body) is a concept used by Afro-Brazilian religions to designate a magical condition of absolute protection from any harm, which may be directed against a person.

22 See Pollak 1993.

Fernanda Costa tells about her difficulties in obtaining precise memories about the movie theater from her relatives and other old residents of the neighborhood. She even says that she used to walk in front of the Vaz Lobo movie theater everyday and it didn't call her attention at all. She simply didn't notice its existence in the neighborhood's everyday life. It was a kind of non-existent space. It was only when she faced the academic task of writing a paper on an old art nouveau movie theater that she came to notice that there was one very close to her house, although not among the most significant ones. She then decided to write her final paper about this movie theater. After that, she contacted the Pereira Passos Institute and Ronaldo Luís Martins to obtain more information about the movie theater. Michael Pollak's²³ concept of "memory entrepreneurs" is useful in describing her action.

But considering that any effort to frame memory is limited, however intense and rigorous it may be, and since there is no memory narrative that is total, homogeneous and without fissures and contradictions, we may ask: to what degree do these narratives express the life of the movie theater? Would it be possible to find some kind of "resonance"²⁴ of the Movement leaders' point of view among the residents of that neighborhood?

In a certain way, if we accept what the Movement's leaders say, we could answer the question positively. But, as we have seen, they are the ones who recognize that some local residents call for the demolition of the movie theater and a radical transformation of its surroundings. When asked, many residents said they were unaware of plans to preserve the movie theater, that they didn't see such an initiative positively and preferred that the whole area be turned into a square.²⁵ Others said that the area has been occupied by drug dealers and drug addicts. One of the interviewees said that those who defend the preservation of the building don't have wide support from the local population of Vaz Lobo and in order to get the signatures for the project support they had to go to a place outside the neighborhood, the Madureira Market ("Mercadão de Madureira"), which is known as a central social and

23 See Pollak 1993:30.

24 See Gonçalves 2005.

25 The researcher Luzimar Paes Barros has collected this information. She did informal interviews in Vaz Lobo Square in December 2012 and January 2013, by talking to people in bars, shops, coconut vendors and people who attend the Catholic Church as well as a Pentecostal temple in the area near the Vaz Lobo movie theater (Barros 2013).

commercial point in the on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. They say that the building is very old and decadent, in very bad condition, and infested by rats and insects. When interviewed, the Catholic priest said many people who attend the church asked him to use his social prestige to intervene and help block the preservation of the movie theater. Apparently, at no time did the residents interviewed see the construction of the Transcarioca and the possible demolition of the Vaz Lobo movie theater building as a real threat. One of them said that after the change in the project, the road would become wider and even more dangerous for the pedestrians who have to cross it, and predicts a rise in the number of fatal accidents on the road. For them, the original project should have been used, and the movie theater demolished.

Heritage, space and experience

There is a common aspect between the point of view of the members of the Movement for the preservation of “street movie theaters” at the national level²⁶ and the point of view of the leaders of the Cine Vaz Lobo Movement. They both emphasize unity in framing the memory of the local movie theater and the neighborhood; they both share a concept of heritage that emerges in the abstract world of laws and cultural ideologies; they both share a homogeneous and continuous concept of time when telling the history of the Vaz Lobo movie theater from its origin to present days. To the extent that this is a history of decline, their intention is to interrupt this process and rescue the building from destruction, thus enacting a narrative that I call the “rhetoric of loss.”²⁷

On the other hand, those who simply ignore or are in fact in explicit opposition to the project to preserve the Vaz Lobo movie theater share a concept of heritage that emerges from their everyday life experience as well as from their biographical memory as neighborhood residents. This is to say that considering this point of view we may primarily talk of multiple heritages as well as multiple memories. We should ask ourselves if we still recognize “heritage” as a legal, social and symbolic element in their discourse.

26 A point of view that is expressed by Rio de Janeiro government employees who conducted an aborted project of classifying the Vaz Lobo movie theater as heritage in 2006.

27 See Gonçalves 2004.

In the process of being classified as heritage, the movie theater is no longer the center, but part of a wider spatial and social world. It should be stressed that from the residents' point of view heritage emerges from their existential perception of the space, from their daily passage through the neighborhood streets and from what the latter may offer them in terms of familiarity or strangeness, safety or danger. Their interest is not exactly the Vaz Lobo movie theater as a cultural or legal unit to be preserved, but the neighborhood as a whole, the streets, the house where they live, the streets they roam, the avenues and the traffic, and also the Vaz Lobo Square, where close to so many other buildings the Vaz Lobo movie theater once – but no longer – operated. For them, it is not therefore an abstract and homogenous concept of space, but a qualitative one composed of heterogeneous places, which are first and foremost inhabited, more than perceived and classified as preservation sites. Moreover, they are not telling the neighborhood history from the perspective of a possible “loss,” as do those who defend the preservation of the Vaz Lobo movie theater. They don't see the neighborhood and its streets being threatened by a loss. Many see the Transcarioca construction as positive because, according to them, it will bring improvements to the neighborhood. On the other hand, the threat that haunts many throughout the whole length of these great road constructions is the possibility that the construction may require the expropriation and demolition of their homes. In this case, it's a matter of a material loss, which is not usually mentioned by those who focus on the preservation of the Vaz Lobo movie theater.

If we were to graphically represent the concepts of space expressed by one or the other group, we'd have on one hand a homogenous surface with the Vaz Lobo movie theater in the center and identified as heritage, as a unit valued in itself, associated to immaterial values and, in this sense, separated from the everyday life around it. From the other point of view, we'd have a heterogeneous space, a meshwork of streets, avenues, houses, squares, buildings, with reference points, boundaries and frontiers used by the residents in their everyday life. So, if there is a central point, it is not occupied by the Vaz Lobo movie theater but perhaps by a certain square, a church, a commercial establishment, in relation to which the proposal to preserve or to classify the theater as “heritage” is not necessarily in their horizons. Not the concept of heritage as a legally and culturally delimited unit to be preserved. This grid of perception is a lot more complex than that of the people who defend

the Vaz Lobo movie theater preservation as an expressive heritage of the neighborhood. This is the difference between those who actually live in the neighborhood and those who, although they may live there, perceive it from a distanced perspective as a target of cultural preservation, identifying themselves with the Cine Vaz Lobo Movement. For the latter, the Vaz Lobo movie theater is more than part of their everyday life, it is the place that symbolically synthesizes a certain way of telling the history of the movie theater and the neighborhood.

If we explore the suggestion to think of heritage as a “native category,” that social situation can be understood in different ways. Moreover, the understanding presupposes distinct modalities of perceiving the local sociocultural world. From the point of view of many inhabitants, the Vaz Lobo movie theater is not an independent material and cultural element. It is perceived as part of a problematic and differently occupied physical and social environment. In this context, the very idea of “heritage” loses its abstract and unified character and becomes part of the inhabitants’ complex and diverse everyday life experience. All things considered, heritage is not necessarily for them a set of material objects and architectural structures to be preserved, but strategies for living within the spatial limits of their neighborhood. Less than a heritage to be preserved, it is a heritage to be lived as part of their everyday life. Paraphrasing Walter Benjamin, these people could well say: “Why preserve the Vaz Lobo movie theater, if it is divorced from our experience?”²⁸

Translated by Isadora Contins

Accepted for publication on February 22, 2013.

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28 “For what is the value of all our culture if it is divorced from experience” (Benjamin, 1996 [1933]: 732).

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Urban Interventions, Memories and Conflicts

Black heritage and the revitalization of
Rio de Janeiro's Port Zone

Roberta Sampaio Guimarães

Abstract

This paper discusses the creation of an arena for political and moral recognition stirred by the “revitalization” of Rio de Janeiro’s Port Zone: the landmarking of Pedra do Sal as a “historic and religious Afro-Brazilian monument” by residents who claimed legal ownership of several properties in the area, affirming that it is an “ethnic territory” and the site is “a remnant quilombo community.” The Quilombo of Pedra do Sal became one of the most controversial battles for ethnic recognition in Brazil, because it explored possibilities for broadening the constitutional concept of a quilombo. These possibilities would include, the plea for recognition of an ethnic territory in an urban context; the construction of a history of territorial occupation based on mythological narrative; and a territorial demarcation based on a cultural heritage conceived as the remnant symbol of a generic “black city” and, therefore, without presumed heirs.

Keywords: cultural heritage; Afro-Brazilian memory; urban interventions; Pedra do Sal; Little Africa; Port Zone of Rio de Janeiro.

Resumo

Este artigo aborda a formação de uma arena de reconhecimento político e moral movimentada durante a “revitalização” da Zona Portuária do Rio de Janeiro: o uso do tombamento da Pedra do Sal como “monumento histórico e religioso afro-brasileiro” por moradores que, reivindicando ser esse patrimônio o marco simbólico de uma “comunidade de remanescentes de quilombo”, pleitearam juridicamente a titulação de diversos imóveis da região como “território étnico”. No entanto, o Quilombo da Pedra do Sal se tornou um dos

processos de reconhecimento étnico mais polêmicos da sociedade brasileira por explorar as possibilidades de flexibilização do conceito constitucional de “quilombo”. Entre essas possibilidades, a de pleito de um território étnico em contexto urbano; a de construção de uma trajetória de ocupação do território baseada em narrativa mítica; e a de delimitação desse território a partir de um patrimônio cultural concebido como símbolo do passado de uma “cidade negra” genérica e, portanto, sem herdeiros presumidos.

Palavras-chave: patrimônio cultural; memória afro-brasileira; projetos urbanísticos; Pedra do Sal; Pequena África; Zona Portuária do Rio de Janeiro.

Urban Interventions, Memories and Conflicts

Black heritage and the revitalization of Rio de Janeiro's Port Zone¹

Roberta Sampaio Guimarães – UERJ

Until the turn of the 21st century, Rio de Janeiro's Port Zone was predominantly classified by the city's moral geography as a region of prostitution, drug traffic and favelas. This notion, however, was transformed when the city government announced and implemented a comprehensive redevelopment plan² for the area in an attempt to combat supposed "blight." With improvements to the streetscape, a surge of bars and venues geared towards a middle class clientele, the renovation of townhouses to attract higher income residents, upgrades to the cruise ship terminal for the landing of international and domestic tourists, as well as the establishment of new cultural facilities, news began to emerge regarding some of the region's sites, residents and "cultural heritage assets."

Despite the local nature of these transformations, researchers such as Saskia Sassen (1991) have pointed out that such rapid interventions in supposedly "blighted" urban areas are linked to an international race to attract capital, skilled labor, and large-scale events, such as the World Cup and the Olympics. In addition, these policies focus on central and port areas of cities, justified by the appreciation of what would be their unique historical and architectural character, although they also lead to commodified tourism, real estate speculation and gentrification³ (Smith 1987; McDonogh 2003).

1 This article was developed from fieldwork conducted between 2007 and 2009 and published in the doctoral thesis *A Utopia da Pequena África. Os espaços do patrimônio na Zona Portuária carioca* ("The Utopia of Little Africa: Heritage assets in Rio de Janeiro's Port Zone"). An earlier version was presented at the symposium "The Anthropology of Objects: objectification, subjectification, and preservation" at the 54th International Congress of Americanists (Vienna, 2012). I would like to thank the coordinators of the seminar, José Reginaldo Santos Gonçalves and Els Lagrou, for their input, as well as that of João Paulo Castro, Alberto Goyena, Renata Menezes and the peer reviewers at *Vibrant* for contributions to this version.

2 The redevelopment plan encompassed the port neighborhoods of Saúde, Gamboa and Santo Cristo, and in 2001 was named *Port of Rio: Recovery and Revitalization Plan for the Port Zone of Rio de Janeiro*. Since 2009, it has been reformulated and renamed *The Marvelous Port: – an Urban Operation through Consortium for the Special Planning Interest Area of Rio de Janeiro's Port Region*.

3 First used in 1963 by Ruth Glass in her study on working-class or low-income neighborhoods in

In Brazil, the combination of large-scale urban redevelopment and the appreciation of “cultural heritage assets” has been the subject of several studies (Arantes 2000; Magnani 2002; Guimarães 2004; Frúgoli, Andrade e Peixoto 2006; Leite 2007; Gonçalves 2007; Eckert 2010). These affirm that the creation of “revitalized” spaces generates local interventions and counter-discourses, sometimes sparking social movements that claim or rethink so-called “cultural,” “ethnic” or “minority” heritage sites. In addition to affirming the culturally diverse nature of Brazil, these movements tend to emphasize the conflicts that heritage assets materialize.

This paper reflects on an arena of political and moral recognition ignited by debate over a cultural heritage asset: the landmarking of Pedra do Sal as an “Afro-Brazilian historic and religious monument” by residents opposed to the “revitalization” of Rio de Janeiro’s Port Zone. These residents, claiming the site is the symbolic landmark of a “remnant quilombo community”⁴ filed a legal claim to ownership of several properties which they affirmed constituted an “ethnic territory.” The Quilombo of Pedra do Sal became one of the most controversial battles for ethnic recognition in Brazil, because it explored possibilities for broadening the constitutional concept of a quilombo. These possibilities would include, the plea for recognition of an ethnic territory in an urban context; the construction of a history of territorial occupation based on a mythological narrative; and territorial demarcation based on a cultural heritage conceived as the remnant symbol of a generic “black city” and, therefore, one without presumed heirs.

central London, the term *gentrification* has since defined the process of investment, rehabilitation and housing appropriation of these neighborhoods by the middle class (Bidou-Zachariassen 2006).

4 The political trajectory of the term “remnant quilombo community” evokes the Brazilian context of racial debates of the 1980s, when the Federal Constitution included an article that created differentiated political subjects who would be entitled to the permanent ownership of the land they occupied through deeds for State “ethnic recognition” (Article 68, ADCT). Before this constitutional definition, a quilombo was widely considered the place where runaway slaves lived during the colonial era, and whose main icons were the Quilombo of Palmares and its leader, Zumbi. After the legal definition was established, two different concepts were merged to redefine the category. The “remnant” concept was proposed to liken the black and indigenous situations, with the rhetorical belief of “the right to memory” at its core, aiming to preserve the site where “historical processes of dispossession” had taken place. The concept of “common land use” defined rural areas where basic resources were controlled by family groups and regulated by their own legal universes. And the concept of “ethnicity” defined a “quilombola community” as a group who considered themselves as such, had a referenced identity in shared experiences and values, and considered themselves different from other identities in the event of land conflicts. This definition was later expanded to include new categories: “quilombola communities” must also have “a unique historical trajectory,” “specific territorial relationships” and “black ancestry” (Arruti 2006).

The creation, certification and dispute of the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal

Pedra do Sal (Salt Stone) is located on Conceição Hill, a geographical elevation of modest dimensions with about two thousand residents that is wedged between the neighborhoods of Saúde and Centro. Architecturally, single and two-story colonial houses dominate the area, with the exception of the foot of the hill, where mixed-use or commercial activities, such as bars, restaurants, office supply, beverage storage, and body shops can be found.

The rocky outcrop that connects Pedra do Sal's upper and lower levels consists of a smooth and slippery surface, where a sculpted staircase facilitates pedestrian circulation. On the lower level is the small square known as Largo João da Baiana. In the daytime, it is frequented by residents and users of different origins, occupations, religions, and social status. Some park their cars, others lunch at an inexpensive restaurant and schoolchildren play there. On some evenings, the square also attracts samba circles and local festivities. On weekends, tourists are not an uncommon sight.



Pedra do Sal and Largo João da Baiana, December 2007. Photo by Roberta Guimarães.

Despite its diversity of uses and users, the hill, the square and dozens of surrounding properties were claimed by an entity known as the Community of Quilombo Remnants of Pedra do Sal in December 2005. The Community was created in 2001 after the Catholic Venerable Third Order of St. Francis of Penance, owner of several properties at the foot of the hill, began an eviction process against its current residents, seeking to expand its educational and welfare projects in the area. In the following four years, more than 30 families of renters and squatters (who had been living there with the organization's consent) were either evicted or relocated from these properties. However, some residents resisted, and the Venerable Third Order accused them of being "invaders" or that they had defaulted on their rent, to justify a call for the use of police force to evict them.

Among the families cited for eviction, two were active in social movements involved in political activism and the appreciation of Afro-Brazilian culture. Although they had only lived in their residences since the 1990s, they had been living in the Port Zone for a longer period. With longstanding emotional ties to the neighborhood, they then spearheaded the establishment of the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal, and mobilized three other families around the ethnic claim. The five families were practitioners of Candomblé, and had interpreted the eviction notice as a severance of traditional social ties with the Catholic organization, which in the past they considered to be supportive. Thus, in an attempt to halt the eviction process, the families requested that the federal government⁵ recognize the region as an ethnic territory.

Shortly after the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal was certified by the state government, a media campaign was initiated by the families that made the request with support from non-governmental pro-housing and ethnic affirmation organizations. The first article — based on a letter written by the families — was published on the website Observatório Quilombola. It accused the Catholic organization of evicting residents due to a supposed increase in property value after the city government announced the "redevelopment" of the Port Zone. To defend the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal, a legal heritage claim was made, which affirmed that the site rightfully belonged to the plaintiffs because it sat on an embankment built by "slaves" and "paid

5 The Palmares Cultural Foundation, a federal government entity, was responsible for issuing certificates that grant formal recognition to remnant *quilombo* communities. The land regularization process was managed by the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA).

workers” during the construction of the port in the early 19th century. That is, through a symbolic transfer of inheritance, their patrimonial rights preceded those of the Venerable Third Order.

Sitting on an embankment built by slaves and paid workers during the construction of the port, Sacadura Cabral Street is lined with 19th century buildings. Royal decrees dating from November 18 and December 20, 1816 ensure ownership of all buildings on the site to the workers who built the embankment and their descendants. Based on these documents and the support of organizations such as the Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement), the Community Board is taking the issue to court.

It is a grand fight. The Third Order also has old documents, albeit not as old (a copy of the license signed by Regent Prince Dom Pedro I, donating the site to the religious order). With nowhere to go, the residents have taken to the streets. Plans include demonstrations during Sunday mass in the neighborhood. (Koinonia, Observatório Quilombola, 02.12.2005)

Other short articles followed. However, the conflict only received national attention a year later, when the federal government announced that it was assembling a work group to write an anthropological report on the historic, economic and sociocultural characteristics of the quilombola territory. An article on the website *Boletim Quilombola* revealed a change in discourse. Instead of emphasizing the legal heritage aspects of the claim, the focus was on religion and identity, based on a narrative about “Little Africa.”

Located at the foot of Conceição Hill, in the neighborhood of Saúde, close to Mauá Square, the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal is comprised of descendants of black slaves from Bahia and Africa. Saúde was the site of all the slave trade infrastructure during the 18th and 19th centuries. After slavery was abolished, blacks continued to live around Rio de Janeiro’s Port Zone, and the area was appropriated as a social space for rituals, religious cults, drumming and capoeira. Popular culture flourished around Pedra do Sal and traditional samba artists drew inspiration from the community. Donga, Pixinguinha, João da Baiana and the writer Machado de Assis lived in the neighborhood. The land was located by the sea and received its name because it was where the salt sold in the capital market was unloaded. In the same port zone, “Brazil’s Little

Africa” was established, a refuge for blacks escaping Pereira Passos’⁶ “bota abaixo” (tear it down), an urban renewal project in the first decades of the 20th century.

The Third Venerable Order reacted to what it believed was an attack on its estate by mobilizing the Brazilian media to denounce the quilombola community. In response to a report by the Globo television network contesting the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal, the federal government published an article on its website (Fundação Cultural Palmares, Zulu Araújo, 24.05.2007), stressing that the plaintiffs were “in fact” descendants of a quilombo community. The government argued that the landmarking of Pedra do Sal as an Afro-Brazilian historical and religious monument was their first certification of ethnicity.

Four days later, the Globo network broadcast a story stating that the real estate in question was the property of the Catholic organization, and part of the “national artistic and historic heritage” of the São Francisco da Prainha Church. Its counter-argument consisted of another official heritage designation, issued to the Third Venerable Order in 1938, before the landmarking of Pedra do Sal. Furthermore, it disqualified the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal based on a historian’s archival research, which concluded that there were no “records of a quilombo in the area” (Jornal Nacional, Milton Teixeira, 28.05.2007). The historian challenged the lawsuit by resorting to the colonial definition of the term quilombo (a group of runaway slaves), disregarding the political definition established by the Constitution.

More stories followed, both in favor and against the claim of the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal. The height of media exposure, however, was reached with the publicatuib of the article “Urban Quilombos” in two national newspapers. The writer stated there had been a “proliferation of quilombo residents” following the promulgation of the Constitution of 1988, attributing this to a “purely legal gimmick” and to the political bias of those generating anthropological

6 The civil engineer Pereira Passos was mayor of Rio de Janeiro between 1903 and 1906. He led several redevelopment works in the port and central neighborhoods, known as the Reforma Pereira Passos (“The Pereira Passos Renovation”). His views had been directly influenced by Baron Haussmann, Parisian mayor from 1853 to 1870, whose plans and policies were self-declared “modernization”, “beautification” and “sanitation” measures. In order to attain this model of urbanity, Passos demolished countless tenements, built a “modern port” and compulsorily vaccinated the population. Several authors have called these efforts an attempt to both physically and morally sanitize places and their inhabitants (Abreu 2006; Lamarão 1991; Carvalho 2001; Sevcenko 2010).

reports. As a case in point, he mentioned the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal, describing the plaintiffs as “squatters” trying to obtain real estate.

At the root of the case, five people who invaded a house and claimed for themselves 70 properties, each worth an average of R\$ 250 thousand. None of them were even born in the neighborhood. They have already obtained reports (I wonder what this could mean) entitling them to the real estate. The ideologists of social justice must be very pleased with this (real) attack against the justice of children and adults of every color whose lives are being harmed. The drug traffickers in the area leave the community alone, but the vigilantes of social causes do not. (*O Globo/O Estado de São Paulo* newspapers, Denis Lerrer Rosenfield, 29/10/2007)

Subsequently, no other articles obtained national repercussion; only short updates on the ongoing case for ethnic recognition were posted on the federal government’s website. From the stories, articles and letters published in the first two years of the certification of the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal, an authenticity⁷ system was put in place that both legitimized and questioned the cultural merit of the quilombola claim and the social motivations of the Catholic organization. Legal, political, identity and religious aspects were juxtaposed to define each of the disputed assets, be it those that are Afro-Brazilian Candomblé or those connected to Catholic Franciscans.

After the media dispute and the political exhaustion of both parties involved, the families of the Pedra do Sal Quilombo, along with government agencies and some of their intellectuals, reformulated the legal claim. This time, they claimed about 15 properties around Pedra do Sal instead of dozens of properties at the foot of the hill. In the meantime, residents of Conceição Hill were granted provisional compensation — the federal government filed lawsuits that halted the eviction process of all residents, including those who had not participated in the ethnic claim, until the historical and anthropological report on the characterization of the quilombola territory was complete.

7 Much has been written about the current use of the term “authenticity,” discussing the ideas of truth, genuineness and intimacy that it evokes (Benjamim 1994, MacCannel 1976, Handler 1985, Gonçalves 1988, Clifford 1994). Whether referring to works of art, tourist destinations or the cultural goods that comprise so-called national heritage assets, many scholars question the use of “authenticity” as something inherent to the object itself.

Little Africa elicited in the process of land tenure regularization

The Historical and Anthropological Report on the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal,⁸ created a narrative for the conflict between the plaintiffs and the Catholic organization that presented the site as a contemporary version of Little Africa. The report drew from filmmaker Roberto Moura's book, *Tia Ciata e a Pequena África no Rio de Janeiro* [Aunt Ciata and Little Africa in Rio de Janeiro] (1983), recreating protagonists and antagonists, and describing the site as it would have been when occupied by the "ancestors" of the quilombola group.

In the book, Moura presented a specific group of genealogies, sacred ancestors and gods linked to the idea of Little Africa to prevent the loss of the city's "subaltern and black" memory, so that society could reflect on racial and social inequalities resulting from slave-. His theory was that, because of its history, racial prejudice had become an ominous Brazilian legacy, passed down from generation to generation, manifesting itself in the exclusion of "colored people" from the labor market and the access to consumer goods. According to Moura, there had been racial opposition between "blacks" and "whites" before slavery was abolished. Later, it was paired with the opposition between three social classes: "the masses," "the agrarian oligarchy," and "the urban middle class." This juxtaposition was the result of the introduction of a capitalist work ethic into the country, and led to the unification of the black, immigrant and northeastern classes, which the author identified generically as "the masses."

To highlight the singularities of blacks in this new historic context, Moura showcased the cultural practices of "Afro-descendants" who lived in Salvador, the capital of the state of Bahia, according to their Bantu, Yoruba and Islamic origins decades before slavery was abolished. To each of these origins he attributed a characteristic of what he called "carioca urban culture": Carnival groups would be a result of Bantu festivities; Orisha worship, a heritage of the Yoruba religion; and urban riots, a heritage of Islamic bellicosity. The author identified "whites of the Portuguese elite and Catholic church" as the narrative antagonists to this "African culture," thus equating both

8 I analyze the version of the report that was made available by the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform in January 2007, and completed in partnership with the Universidade Federal Fluminense, by anthropologist Eliane Cantarino and historians Martha Abreu and Hebe Mattos.

practices to define the Afro-descendants' identity boundaries, portraying them as a singular sociocultural entity.

In his version of the history of Little Africa's, the author selected a series of events to describe the times, spaces and lifestyles of Rio's Port Zone related to black cultural identity. He described the trading of slaves from boats that docked at the Valongo pier, and the burial of those who had not survived the ocean journey in an 18th century cemetery in the Gamboa neighborhood; the occupation of houses in the Saúde neighborhood (including Pedra do Sal) by migrants from Bahia and Africans in the mid-nineteenth century; and, because of the urban renewal projects of Mayor Pereira Passos at the turn of the 20th century, the relocation of these migrants to the Praça Onze area, in the city center, and to favelas and suburbs.

His narrative focused primarily on the first two decades of the 20th century, when Moura claims a unique way of life was established by those who frequented samba circles at the house of Ciata and the house of Candomblé João Alabá, which he called a "Bahian diaspora" in Little Africa. For the author, this diaspora was part of Little Africa, although they were not synonymous, as the latter was also comprised of "the masses" of several other backgrounds and religions. Members of the diaspora were characterized as slum dwellers, those who instigated riots against the city's sanitation movement, organizers of port unions, percussion groups and Carnival festivities, and practitioners of Candomblé.

In the dramatic synthesis of his mythical narrative, the author proposed that there was historical continuity between members of the Bahian diaspora and those he identified as their "heirs" in the 1980s — Ciata's blood and religious relatives. He also emphasized what, in his opinion, were a series of negative changes in their forms of sociability: the shift from traditional craftsmanship to industrial activities; the weakening of religious and recreational ties following the death of "tias" from Bahia, who were elderly women of prestigious social standing, and the demise of Carnival groups; conflicts in the burgeoning music industry; romantic frustrations; the constant housing relocations; and increased government restrictions against Candomblé practices in popular Catholic festivities. He concluded, therefore, that these negative changes were related to the exclusion of blacks from the labor market and their lack of access to consumer goods, and expressed the racial prejudice in Brazilian society.

As recounted in the Historical and Anthropological Report on the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal, Moura's narrative — in addition to presenting images of tenements, samba, municipal sanitation campaigns, work at the port and Candomblé practices — was used to identify contemporary characters. The dramatic roles of the “white Portuguese elite” was likened to the residents of Conceição Hill, bearers of Portuguese tradition;⁹ the “Catholics,” to the leaders of the Venerable Third Order; and the “urban planners,” to those behind the current Port Zone revitalization plans. The residents of Pedra do Sal became the “heirs to the memory location,” i.e. those who embody the cultural values of Little Africa's ancestors.

However, because the families who claimed ethnic recognition had different housing histories, the report argued that the group's “historical trajectory” (one of the requirements established by the Constitution for identifying quilombola communities) should be anchored in the notion of “historical atonement.” According to the authors, these families were emblematic of a cultural and political “resistance” against what they considered a string of historical oppression that would have prevented Afro-descendants from living in the Port Zone and in the city center over the years.

Although Moura's book was used as an important historical reference in the land regularization process, a variation on its narrative was employed in the elicitation of Little Africa. In addition to the Afro-descendants listed by Moura, the report included a deceased port worker¹⁰ who had been born in the state of Rio de Janeiro and, therefore, was not classifiable as “Bahian” or “African.” He did, however, establish a connection between the Port Zone's past and the sociocultural characteristics of the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal since its members defined themselves as Afro-descendants and practitioners of Candomblé, but not from Bahia or Africa, and indeed as descendants of families from Rio de Janeiro state.

9 On the uses and consequences of the symbolic association between Conceição Hill and the “Portuguese tradition” of its residents during the disclosure of the Port Zone redevelopment plans, see Guimarães (2009).

10 The port resident Mano Eloi is regarded by historic literature as an important leader of the longshoremen's union and one of the samba artists who founded the Império Serrano and Jongo da Serrinha samba schools. For more information on Mano Eloi, see Marcondes (1977), Silva; Oliveira (1981) and Castro (1998).

The landmarking of Pedra do Sal in the demarcation of ethnic territory

However, the legal and social viability of the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal depended on more than a mythical narrative about Little Africa; it required territorial demarcation. And the space that channeled the memory of Afro-Brazilian occupation in the Port Zone was Pedra do Sal, officially acknowledged as a monument of the “black city” by preservation policies.

Both Roberto Moura’s book and the process of declaring the Pedra do Sal a heritage site took place in the same social and political context: the gradual demise of the military dictatorship, political openness, and the rise of ethnic and minority movements. During this period, preservation policies also became a wedge issue, with new ideas about heritage and national culture debated and consolidated in the elaboration of the Federal Constitution of 1988. The resulting widespread opinion was that landmarked sites could challenge monophonic “white,” “elite” and “Catholic” national representations and leverage the autonomous development of the country, combating the cultural standardization associated with the consumption of foreign industrial products.

These reflections encouraged Brazilian society to represent itself as a mosaic of cultures and traditions, with the expansion of preservation policies to encompass “popular culture” and the “daily lives of communities” (Gonçalves 1996). This pluralistic concept of culture was also accompanied by decentralization policies, which encouraged local governments and even non-governmental organizations to propose the landmarking of significant sites (Fonseca 2005).

At the time, racial and preservation policies also merged. Legislators, intellectuals and social movements were particularly interested in discussing the centennial of Brazilian abolition and including articles that valued and affirmed Afro-Brazilian memory and culture in the Federal Constitution, emphasizing preservation practices. Considered socially effective in the production of collective symbols, these practices began producing images that perpetuated, diffused and exposed this culture and memory. Two iconic images were then created by Brazilian heritage authorities: in 1984, the Casa Branca do Engenho Velho (the White House of the Old Mill), an important Candomblé temple in Salvador, was declared a heritage site; and, in 1985, the historic region of Serra da Barriga, the site of the slave resistance movement

Quilombo dos Palmares¹¹, in Alagoas, also received this declaration.

In addition to the production of these national icons, the decentralization of preservation practices created other symbols linked to Afro-Brazilian culture and memory in regional contexts. Some symbols that evoked the “black city” were produced in Rio de Janeiro, including the landmarking of Pedra do Sal by the state government in 1984. According to one of the proponents, Pedra do Sal was selected to be a landmark because it symbolized not only an “elite” heritage asset, but also that of the “common folk.” Pedra do Sal was considered to have two important characteristics: it was a “religious heritage site,” capable of representing the Orisha tradition and popular Catholicism; and a “historic heritage site,” capable of representing the migration from Bahia, and the rise of Carnival groups (*Batucadas Brasileira*, Joel Rufino, 15.09.2008). The landmarking, therefore, intended to simultaneously encompass both sacred and identity aspects.

According to the landmark proposal (Instituto Estadual do Patrimônio Estadual, E-18/300048/84), Catholic and military assets on Conceição Hill had been landmarked by the national heritage institute since 1934. Therefore, a new “hierarchy of values” had to be implemented, acknowledging the “black and popular monument” of Pedra do Sal. According to the proponents, the heritage claim’s main goal was the construction not only of memory, but of a “memory site.” They argued that successive urban transformations had led to a process of “decharacterization,” threatening the “evidence of the city’s black past.” Thus, although the Catholic Church was portrayed as a symbolic antagonist, urban projects were presented as the physical antagonists that transformed real estate and streets.

The request for the declaration as a heritage site also used Roberto Moura’s book as an important historical reference to the time span that the preservation policy sought to highlight: the turn of the 20th century, when the “Bahian diaspora” took place, according to the author. The preservation specialists’ concepts of “Little Africa” and “Bahian diaspora,” however, were more nuanced than Moura’s. For them, the Saúde neighborhood was a “Little Bahia” and Bahia was a “Little Africa,” thus articulating an authenticity system around Afro-Brazilian origins that considered Bahia a purer

11 Several interpretations of the appreciation and affirmation of Afro-Brazilian culture and memory can be found in articles and books, such as in Velho (2007) and Garcia (2008).

heir to black traditions than the state of Rio de Janeiro. Similarly, the term “Bahian diaspora” was redefined. A distinction was made between people from Bahia and Africans, classifying people who frequented Pedra do Sal into two black groups with specific territorial and identity ties: those from Bahia who had lived near Praça Onze and the port and participated in João Alabá’s Candomblé festivities; and Africans who lived at the top of Pedra do Sal and participated in the Muslim cults of Assumano Mina.

Unlike Moura, the preservation experts chose not to mention the social relationships between Africans and Bahians with other groups, whether they were combative or harmonious. They also avoided the interpretation of their cultural continuity and transformation over the years or the appointment of possible heritage heirs. No information that highlighted the social exchanges of these Afro-descendants was provided, idealizing and supposedly establishing Pedra do Sal’s heritage as a symbol of the history black city.

However, despite this attempt at stabilization, the landmarking of Pedra do Sal twenty years later became, along with the eliciting of the myth of Little Africa, a symbolic mechanism in the creation of the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal. Moreover, the plaintiffs used it as a means for creating an identity differentiated from other Port Zone users and society at large. Temporal markers were also created through a ritual calendar that provisionally suspended the region’s polyphonic uses and enhanced its perception as an ethnic territory.

The families of Pedra do Sal began celebrating São Jorge Day (April 23rd), Black Awareness Day (November 20th) and Samba Day (December 2nd), symbolizing, respectively, the cult to Orishas, popular Catholicism and the political resistance and recreational practices of Afro-descendants. The celebrations involved not only friends and neighbors. They were promoted to members of social movements in support of affordable housing, black awareness, intellectuals, government workers and journalists — all considered important actors in the legitimization of the ethnic claim. However, the festivities not only affirmed the legal and political aspects of heritage preservation; their effectiveness was mainly based on identity and religious concepts, considering the plaintiffs “povo do santo” (people of the saint), the term for practitioners of Candomblé.

The celebrations entailed specific rituals, such as the “washing” of Pedra do Sal — the sacralization of space through prayer by sprinkling water; the offering of food to the eguns, dead samba artists, port workers and “filhos

de santo” (children of the saints) who had passed through Pedra do Sal; guests were served dishes associated with slaves, such as feijoada or chicken with okra; and percussion-based musical groups performed. These events operated, therefore, as calendar rites (Van Gennep 1960). Through the progressive suspension of everyday activities, they stirred a period of intense social circulation and gift exchanges with Orishas, the dead, the human and the nonhuman.

Thus, amidst the housing conflict, the Pedra do Sal heritage site spearheaded the symbolic repositioning of those making the claim in relation to mediating agents, public authorities and other users of the Port Zone. From “squatters” and “defaulters,” the five families that formed the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal positioned themselves as “heirs to Little Africa” in the public arena.

On the imponderable courses of cultural heritage

In recent decades, increased migration has led to the intensification of cultural contacts that do not always play out harmoniously. Often times they spur claims for recognition of identity-related differences, be they ethnic, religious, gender-based or of other forms of belonging that fall under the broad umbrella “minority”. And, as noted by Adam Kuper (2002), there is a contemporary tendency to strive to be different, with political struggles appropriating the anthropological notion of culture, and the assumption that identity affirmation is necessary and even desirable.

However, because urban contexts are rife with meaning, social standings and uses, certain symbolic mechanisms must be employed to produce the perception of identity differences. By analyzing the formation process of the Quilombo of Pedra do Sal I sought to reflect on how heritage policies, regardless of their original intentions, can currently be used as catalysts for political struggle, converting everyday polyphonic spaces into symbolically monophonic ones.

However, from the standpoint of its cultural biography (Kopytoff 2008), the contemporary use of its landmark status in the ethnic claim has not terminated Pedra do Sal’s social life as a marker of quilombola territory. The Quilombo of Pedra do Sal continues to be a highly controversial claim among journalists, government workers, intellectuals, social activists and residents of the Port Zone. By late 2009, its territory and the winner of the

dispute between the plaintiff families and the Venerable Third Order had still not been defined.

Regardless of the outcome, the conflict shed light on the fact that the recognition and stabilization of heritage assets in the Port Zone — both Afro-Brazilian and Catholic — depend not only on their political and legal strategies, but on the resonance of their identity narratives and religious practices with society at large. That is, the recognition depends on their capacity to evoke cultural experiences regarded as “authentic,” despite the permanent social tension due to the space’s other uses and practices. And so Pedra do Sal’s intangible biographical trajectory continues, with the permanent possibility of a social renaissance.

Translated by Louise Dreier

Accepted for publication on March 5, 2013

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Anthropology between Heritage and Museums

José Guilherme Cantor Magnani

Abstract

By analyzing some cases this article exposes the contribution of Anthropology, and specially, Urban Anthropology to the characterization of what may or may not be a cultural good and its value as Heritage in the context of the urban landscape. As a matter of fact, here it is shown the application of the ethnographic method, with its “inside and close-by” regard and with the categories of *turf*, *patch*, *route* and *circuit*, developed along researches performed at the *Núcleo de Antropologia Urbana (NAU/USP)* [Urban Anthropology Nucleus]. Thus, our aim is to argue that this work brings forth new elements for a better definition of the many heritage modalities – be it Architectonic, Archeological, Historical, and mainly the so-called Immaterial or Intangible. Thereby a fecund dialogue is opened between Anthropology and the disciplines traditionally engaged with the fields of Heritage and Museology.

Keywords: Urban Anthropology, Cultural Heritage, Patch, Route & circuit, City Museum, Urban Landscape.

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta, a partir da análise de alguns casos, a contribuição da Antropologia, e em especial da Antropologia Urbana, para a caracterização do que seja um bem cultural e de seu valor de patrimônio no contexto da paisagem urbana. Mais concretamente, é mostrada a aplicação do método etnográfico, com seu olhar de “perto e de dentro”, e das categorias *pedaço*, *mancha*, *trajeto* e *circuito*, desenvolvidos em pesquisas do Núcleo de Antropologia Urbana (NAU/USP). Pretende-se, desta forma, argumentar que esta contribuição pode aportar novos elementos para uma melhor definição das várias modalidades de patrimônio – arquitetônico, arqueológico, histórico, e

principalmente do chamado imaterial ou intangível. Abre-se, assim, assim um fecundo diálogo com as disciplinas tradicionalmente comprometidas com os campos do patrimônio e da museologia.

Palavras-chave: Antropologia Urbana, patrimonio cultural, mancha, trajeto & circuito, museu da cidade, paisagem urbana

Anthropology between Heritage and Museums

José Guilherme Cantor Magnani

Introduction: An art cinema

In March 2010, the HSBC bank formally discontinued its sponsorship of the Cine Belas Artes movie theater complex located at the corner of Rua da Consolação and Avenida Paulista. It was regarded as an art theater that featured independent films outside of mainstream moviemaking where each of the theater had suggestive names such as Villa-Lobos, Candido Portinari, Oscar Niemeyer, Aleijadinho and Carmen Miranda.

This decision mobilized various sectors of São Paulo's cultural scene, and in July 2010 the Movimento pelo Cine Belas Artes (MBA) (Movement for the Cine Belas Artes) launched a campaign to assure that the movie theater complex would survive. As a further precaution, the MBA solicited preservation status from the Council for the Preservation of Historic and Environmental Heritage of the City of São Paulo (CONPRESP) in January 2011. The owner reacted by demanding either an increase in rent or that the movie complex abandon the building dispossession of the building. In March 17, 2011, the cinema closed its doors, which led to an intense mobilization: public demonstrations, articles in newspapers and blogs, complaints about cultural and artistic neglect, and debates about history and heritage in the city. After all since 1943 the movie theater complex had existed previously under the name of Trianon.

The commotion over the Cine Belas Artes continued as the CONPRESP refused the request. What, CONPRESP asked, would be there to preserve? According to its protocol, only a building itself can be considered, and it did not have any architectural value that would justify the measure. The public retaliated with cultural arguments and the state attorney general filed a lawsuit that led the 13th Jurisdiction of the Public Treasury court to order the theater be reopened. Then, a state entity, the Council for the Defense of

Historic, Artistic and Touristic Heritage (CONDEPHAAT), accepted a new preservation appeal, and even the city council joined the struggle, creating an Investigatory Committee and summoning the CONPRESP director to testify.

The commotion of all these actors over this issue is remarkable, but even more interesting is how this controversy involved almost all of the familiar aspects of heritage: architecture, art, history, and even the most recent: the immaterial. Just a few months earlier something similar had occurred with Parque da Água Branca (Água Branca Park), which is protected by CONDEPHAAT and which, through the initiative of a wife of a São Paulo mayor during her brief stay in government, began to conduct “improvements” and reforms without any of the customary measures, even legal ones. As a result, an association called Friends of Parque da Água Branca alerted the media, and contacted several government offices; the situation is still unresolved.¹

I use these anecdotes to begin my discussion about “New Subjects, New Technologies, and New Uses of Museology and Preservation,” the theme proposed in this edition of *Vibrant*, because they illustrate the internal incongruities of several concepts of heritage. The limits of legal measures supposedly designed to protect public heritage, and the repercussions of these debates beyond the circle of the relevant technical institutions, provides a good opportunity to place the issue in another analytical framework.

The case of the Cine Belas Artes is particularly interesting for this reflection to the degree that it is located inside a specific *patch*² that was described

1 In the article “Two Years Without the Cine Belas Artes: there is something to commemorate!” published in national magazine *Carta Capital* on March 21st 2013, Nabil Bonduki, Professor “livre-docente” of city planning at the Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo (FAU) from the Universidade de São Paulo (USP), who is also a city councilman in São Paulo and responsible for drafting the new master plan for the city, commemorates the reversal of the closing after the mobilization by the Movimento Pelo Cine Belas Arte (MBA) – which received over 100,000 signatures via the internet in defense of the movie theater complex. “CONDEPHAAT granted heritage status to the building’s façade and the memory of the cinema was registered. Any other work or physical alteration can only be performed with authorization of the institution. It is expected that with the city’s new administrative council, the CONPRESP – which two years earlier began the process of seeking heritage status – will be able to resume the issue which had come to appear positive in the technical area”.

2 “Patches” is a term we use to describe contiguous areas within the urban space endowed with infrastructure that marks their limits and facilitates a predominant activity or practice – each one specific, always competing and complementing. The category was proposed to describe a specific established spatial arrangement within the urban landscape. It is distinct from the category of *turf*, which is related to the dynamics of the group that identifies it. At any moment the users of a turf can choose another space as a point of reference and meeting place. The *patch*, on the other hand, results from the inherent relation between various components of the urban infrastructure which serves as the appeal to the flux

and analyzed in 1991 by the Núcleo de Antropologia Urbana (NAU) (Urban Anthropology Nucleus).³ At that time, the movie theater, along with the Riviera Bar, was one of the central structural elements of the social dynamics at the corner of Rua da Consolação Street and Avenida Paulista.

It is worth describing the Riviera Bar because of the complimentary role it played within this *patch*, serving as a kind of partner of the Cine Belas Artes. Given the name Riviera in 1949, it was a place frequented by families, judges and doctors that served sandwiches, tea, and ice cream. In the late 1950s it became popular among students from the São Francisco Law School and Mackenzie University. During the 60s, it was a meeting point for many activists of various political tendencies (and therefore suffered frequent police raids), and for a public connected to the art scene: theatre, movies and music. It served as the setting of the movie “Besame Mucho” (which depicted the period of the dictatorship), and inspired a song by Sá and Guarabira (“We were like that at the time of Riviera blue”), as well as the cartoonist Angeli and his characters “Rê Bordosa”, “Meia Oito,” and “Juvenal.” The latter was a waiter who worked at the bar for more than thirty years (Torres, 2008: 75).

The Baguette Grill and Pasta House, the Chamego bar, Nostromondo gay club, the Belas Artes bookstore, the Metrópolis bar, the Kairós bookstore and many street stands selling books — among other features — completed this *patch* of gatherings, culture, and leisure, traversed by the various routes⁴ used by passers-by in their various choices and preferences. This scenario, however, has changed: the Riviera Bar closed in 2006, along with most of the establishments that contributed to that particular ambiance and attracted the flux of people to that space.

of visitors. A *patch* is more anchored to the landscape than to the passing populations that frequent it. Thus the way users identify with a *patch* is different than the way users identify with their *turf*. The *patch* is more open, receives more, and more diverse, people, and offers them not a sense of welcome or belonging through any given service or good, but the possibility of encounter. The *patch* beckons to the unexpected, more than to the expected: it is not possible to know for sure what or who we are going to meet in a *patch* — even if we have an idea of the type of goods or services that are offered there and of the taste, or the general consumption pattern, of its visitors” (Magnani, 2007:20).

3 The Núcleo de Antropologia Urbana is a research group coordinated by Professor José Guilherme Cantor Magnani since 1990 at the University of São Paulo. See more information: www.n-a-u.org. TN

4 A description of one of those routes: people arrived with a certain anticipation, bought their tickets, and enjoyed the wait before the film started by drinking coffee or having a bite across the street. When the session ended, everyone headed to the Riviera bar (the more intellectual types) or to the Metrópolis (for the more flirtatious). Whether before or after, everyone strolled by the bookstores, while hours later, the enthusiasts wandered to the nightclubs.

The regulars headed off in the direction of Augusta Street, around the Espaço Unibanco (now called Espaço Itaú de Cinema), and the Frei Caneca Shopping Center and its movie theaters. That segment of the street, known as the Baixa (or lower) Augusta leads downtown – in opposition to the segment that leads towards Jardins, an elite neighborhood. – It has recently displayed a new vitality. Previously known as an erotic leisure space, home to mixed saunas, call girls and transvestites waiting at corners, the range of use and enjoyment of the space has expanded. New bars aimed at college students have opened, as well as coffee shops, music and bookstores, and indie rock houses. As a consequence, new actors began to circulate, this includes a “straight edge” scene and a more sophisticated gay public, for example, besides the already mentioned moviegoers.

The old *patch* anchored at the corner of Avenida Paulista and Rua da Consolação, once effervescent in terms of cultural consumption, is now a place of passage: bus stops and exclusive bus lanes, an intense flow of cars, and right next to the old cinema, the entrance to a new subway line. If it was once a place where people paused in search of leisure and comfort, it is now a place marked by the speed of the daily commute.

The discussion concerning the permanence (or not) of the Cine Belas Artes is directly linked to the transformations of the place, which leads me to consider the role of cultural goods and their value as heritage in both the context of the cityscape and the web of routes of passersby. In this case, the anthropological perspective — and especially the perspective of urban anthropology, and the research theories and methodologies developed at the NAU — can lend clarity to the debate.

Parque do Povo (People’s Park)

The Núcleo de Antropologia Urbana has a history linked to questions concerning heritage and museums. Among its various encounters and achievements, one should be highlighted: the restoration of the Parque do Povo (People’s Park) by the CONDEPHAAT in São Paulo in 1994. The development of this restoration process relied not only on the aid of historical and environmental foundations, but also on a research report based on fieldwork conducted by NAU that examined a specific practice that took place there: amateur soccer.

An article published by the *Revista do Patrimônio* (Magnani & Morgado, 1996) emphasized the novelty of the case. The article begins by recalling that the preservation of spaces such as *candomblé terreiros*, the sites of former quilombos, factory villages, buildings where migrant communities live, and other similar spaces – spaces linked to the lifestyles (in terms of housing, work, religion) of socially and/or ethnically marked groups – hardly surprised anyone. Although it is uncommon, the inclusion of these items on the official cultural heritage list shows the presence of values that broaden the traditional criteria that reign at preservation and restoration institutions.

The preservation of the Parque do Povo was somehow different from the places cited above: it was an area of 150.000m², located in an elite neighborhood, in fact, one of the most expensive regions of São Paulo.⁵ The area was divided into soccer fields that were used by “amateur” teams: the Marítimo Futebol Clube, Grêmio Esportivo Canto do Rio, Tintas Cirola, Sociedade Esportiva Flor do Itaim, and others that organized noisy and frequent contests in the form of daily “tournaments” and “festivals,” attracting visitors from the most diverse and distant neighborhoods of São Paulo. The Park also hosted a circus and a theater where dances were held on weekends.

If what initially justified the demand for preservation was the need to maintain a green space, considering the city’s environmental quality, it was the continuous presence of amateur soccer teams at the site, at least since the 1930s, which became the main reason for preserving the park. The region had been the site of one of the many riverside meadows in the city – in this case along the Pinheiros River – that were traditionally used for leisure activities on weekends, and which have gradually been incorporated into the city through the urbanization process.

The of the Parque do Povo, however, persisted, and not just as a mere testament or vestige of an old mode of use, but actively thrived. Yet there was an increasing dissonance between it and the sophisticated environs that came to surround it. And here began the saga of a process quite different than those that normally occur at preservation and restoration institutions.

In the first place, the question involved a space related to a leisure activity – note that at that time the discourse about “Immaterial Heritage” did not

5 It is located in the Itaim Bibi neighborhood, and is bordered by the Juscelino Kubistchek, Cidade Jardim, Brigadeiro Haroldo Veloso avenues and the Pinheiros highway.

exist. Activities of home, work, or religion were the aspects usually invoked to justify the preservation of places of worship, work settings and facilities, or examples of unique construction types. Besides the fields and grounds marked with lime and the usual park improvements, the park did not exhibit any architectonic or artistic quality.

Secondly, despite the proven historical link of the present practice with the original use of the land, it was a popular kind of leisure that had nothing to do with the image of the picnics of old along the whimsical rivers that meander through São Paulo offering delightful settings for family recreation. Currently the bodies, colors, odors, uniforms, verbal expressions, and dust from the fields all blend into a repertoire that clash with the aesthetics of the surrounding buildings, the behavior of the passersby and residents and the various models of cars, all of which belong to the upper classes.

For some, the Parque do Povo – beginning with the name – would be better off at the outskirts of the city. Of course, the regions for the elite can cohabit with “those people” at the expected hours, as long as they wear work uniforms and use the appropriate speech. But, for their recreation? The game of inversions and contrasts however, goes farther. Everyone knows that weekends are for leisure, but at the there were soccer games on weekdays. Just who was using the park? Honest, hard-working people? Where di they come from? The research challenged the suspicion that they were “good-for-nothings” playing on a Monday, a workday. We discovered that they were workers (and union members at that) from the restaurants, hotels and other establishments whose day off is Monday.

The proposal was to remove that “wound,” as some people came to call the park, and replace it with alternatives that would better suit the surroundings: a glamorous shopping center, a beautifully landscaped park or even an apartment complex, something in a postmodern style, much more in keeping with the style of the recent occupation along the Pinheiros highway in front. Everything, of course, within the parameters of a suitable landscape. Meanwhile, some users of the fields organized themselves, an association emerged, and support was sought in the media, the city council, and the university. Finally, after many unpredictable changes, the Parque do Povo was granted cultural heritage status, ensuring the right to leisure, and a form of leisure with popular characteristics, in a space that had been used as such for many years.

Unfortunately, twelve years have gone by and nothing remains from the original proposal for declaring the park a heritage site, as the city government's current website shows:

The Park is set within an area that belongs to the Caixa Econômica Federal⁶ and to the Instituto Nacional do Seguro Social⁷. For over 20 years, about 11 sport clubs have used the site. The city council put an end to this use of the space in 2006. The educational and environmental plan for the Park includes seven self-guided paths, with plants that compose the botanical collection of the park. Among them, there is the aromatic and medicinal plant collection that composes the Sensitive Garden. The species found in the garden awaken touch, smell, and taste. People can touch, smell, and even bite the leaves of the plants and trees to get to know them.”⁸

Well, these “illegal occupants” (who had been there for over 20 years!) were exactly the social actors whose practice had motivated the preservation of the Park, a bit of history that is not even mentioned in the website. But now that the unwanted visitors are kept away, it is possible to touch, smell, and bite the leaves of the aromatic plants.

As you can see, preservation is not always the best mechanism for promoting –both promptly and with positive results – the defense of any specific property (recall the case of Cine Belas Artes). Nor can it guarantee their appropriate protection (Parque da Água Branca and Parque do Povo). Goods without material and or tangible, lasting support (like the soccer fields traced into the land with lime) are more vulnerable, as are spaces related to the practices of social agents with limited powers to negotiate. This is what happened at the Parque do Povo when not even the prestigious institutions involved in the dispute were able to guarantee the preservation of the popular soccer fields.

6 According to its official website [www.caixa.gov.co], the Caixa Econômica Federal bank is owned completely by the federal government. It plays a fundamental role in the promotion of urban development and social justice in the country. The Caixa is dedicated to helping low-income people to improve their lifestyle. (Accessed on 12-04-2013, 11:50).

7 The Instituto Nacional do Seguro Social (INSS) [www.mpas.gov.br] is the entity responsible for the country's Social Security system. Its main function is to guarantee workers' and their families protection and welfare. (Accessed on 12-04-2013, 12:57)..

8 http://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/meio_ambiente/parques/regiao_centrooeste/index.php?p=22396 (Accessed on 06-09-2012, 08:34)

If ethnographic research manages to bring forth new elements to justify the establishment of protection measures, it is necessary to realize that the strategy cannot be valued for its technical merits alone, since the context is always political and depends on the powers of negotiation of those involved. In this regard, it is worth remembering another demonstration of that power by the residents of Itaim-Bibi, who had already managed to stop the original Parque do Povo project. In 2011, they were able, by means of their association (SOS Itaim Bibi), to veto the sale of the so-called “quarteirão da cultura” (culture block) — a 22 thousand m² site with a daycare, health center, theatre (Teatro Décio de Almeida Prado), library (Biblioteca pública Anne Frank) and the Associação dos Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais (APAE)⁹ (The Association of Parents and Friends of the Exceptional)— that the municipal government was offering to a construction company in exchange for the construction of a daycare center.

The concept of immaterial goods is currently used to consider the specificity of those cases; yet when the goods in dispute involve interests other than the “merely” cultural, it is difficult to assure proper protection. This leads to the need to appeal to other instruments to characterize a good as worthy of protection, and to implement measures beyond those currently included in the legislation. One of those measures, for example, is a municipal law from 2004 known as the Neighborhood Plan, which was intended to create solutions to neighborhood problems through the residents’ participation in forums and assemblies.

The law had its first important application in 2008 at the neighborhood of Perus in São Paulo’s Zona Norte. The inhabitants of the Vila Madalena neighborhood later invoked the Neighborhood Plan when threatened by the construction of a shopping center in 2012. Initially the “Movimento pela Vila” (The Vila Movement) saw preservation as a way of avoiding the gentrification of the traditional neighborhood: which is a cradle of counterculture, independent filmmaking, and related manifestations of art and culture.

9 APAE (Associação dos Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais) [www.apaebrazil.org.br] is a network constituted by parents and friends of people with disabilities. APAE supports their social inclusion process. (Accessed on 12-04-2013, 13:10). TN.

Santana de Parnaíba

Going back in time a bit further in this attempt to recall experiences in the field of anthropology and heritage, it is worth mentioning the project Santana de Parnaíba: memória e cotidiano (Santana de Parnaíba: memory and everyday life). This was a project that I coordinated in 1984 as part of an advisory service performed for CONDEPHAAT. Santana de Parnaíba is a city located in São Paulo's metropolitan region that has a group of buildings that have federal and state protection because of their architectural importance. But it was also the site of disagreements between residents and technicians from official institutions, which created difficulties in the implementation of some of the measures called for by preservation policies. To diagnose these problems, the president of the council at the time, Antônio Augusto Arantes, appealed to the Documentation and Research Centre for Communitarian Action, presided over at the time by professor Ruth Cardoso, who in turn appointed me to do the job. The report we drafted began as follows:

So-called historical cities are not only the sites where past events are preserved in architectural details and housing. It is necessary to recognize that life continues its course in these places. But the relations of present actors with these sites are not always accounted for by preservation institutions. This omission can be perceived in some of the premises that guide the preservationist practice. The first one is the presupposition that the criteria by which cultural goods are chosen and classified are universal and shared unanimously by all users. The other premise is considering users as mere obstacles to preservation because all too often the relationship between users and preservationist institutions is conflicting, whether it concerns selection criteria, or whether it concerns preservation by state intervention. (Magnani, (1984) 2007b: 283)

Santana de Parnaíba arose in 1580 during the first century of settlement. By 1620, this colonial village was one of the main points of departure for the bandeiras¹⁰ thanks to its strategic location on the banks of the Tietê River and along the old indigenous road that led to the backlands of Mato Grosso and Goiás. In the year of our research, it was still a small city

¹⁰ Here Bandeiras refers to the expeditions taken by pioneers during the 16th century in quest of riches, indigenous and to explore the territory.

with 15,995 habitants and many restored houses and buildings, among them the famous Anhanguera's house from the 2nd half of the 17th century. The daily activities seemed to drift calmly along the three streets of the historic downtown.

The research followed three stages: an initial exploratory stage with our contacts and informal interviews primarily conducted with elderly people, who were always willing to talk about their families and traditions. Afterwards, the data collected during this first stage was organized in a classificatory grid that divided the dwellers in two categories: "insiders" and "outsiders" and further divided the latter category into "foreigners," "artists," and "employees."

Each one of these people had a personal narrative and each had a different understanding of what was this "historical" city's important heritage. However, they all referred to one issue where the differences converged: celebrations. These celebrations were therefore chosen as the object of focus during the last stage of our fieldwork observation, with special attention given to the Corpus Christi commemoration and the procession through streets ornamented like carpets. If we were to account for the whole cycle, we would include the celebration of Saint Ana, the city's patron saint, the Saint Sebastian and Saint Benedict celebrations, the Saint Anthony pilgrimage in the rural district of Surú, and the carnival with its traditional *bloco dos fantasmas* (ghosts' parade).

Thus, by means of the ethnographic method, it was possible to: 1) describe and analyze the city's everyday life and the changes it suffered during days of celebration, 2) identify the many actors and their relationship with public and private space, 3) track the emergence of conflicts, and 4) trace the impact of this entire scheme upon the understanding of heritage, the central objective of our research.

This was not a peaceful seventeenth-century city; it was embedded in São Paulo's metropolitan region, close to highways and became encompassed within the immense urban periphery. During the research our attention was drawn to the fact that some "foreigners" (Brazilians who have recently arrived from other location and who are supposedly more sensible to the heritage issues) claimed to have "restored" their vacation homes in the historical downtown at the cost of demolishing homes in the suburbs to get "authentic" construction material.

Hence, notions about heritage vary, making it necessary to address actors and consider their diversity of interests and ideas. On the other hand, the recurrence, shown by the ethnographic research, of discussions of celebrations — the place and time of encounter not only of the many categories of visitors but also of visitors from afar — clearly showed their central importance to the city. The issue was a good place to begin thinking about heritage and its value beyond the everyday life of residents.

Urban Anthropology and Museums

Another topic of debate is the relationship between museums and anthropology, and one of the first issues that emerges is the notion of representation: what are the criteria used to justify if this or that object, image, fact, etc. could, or should, be included in a catalog? In the specific case of museums dedicated to specific cities, what elements of the multifaceted urban landscape, systems of infrastructure, demographic composition, historical formation, etc. ought to be used to “represent” the diversity and singularity of a city in a museum?

It is helpful to begin the discussion from a common-sense definition of representation. According to the conventional perspective, representation presupposes the existence of a fixed entity in the world that can be apprehended in its totality and afterwards expressed in an immediately recognizable form (in agreement with the rules of a given code, be it verbal, written, pictorial, or otherwise, and maintaining a kind of relationship among them: mimetic, metonymic or metaphorical).

This concept has been discussed by many disciplines, including anthropology. In this particular case, the so-called “crisis of representation,” as we already know, was unleashed by virtue of critiques developed inside the movement that came to be known as “Postmodern Anthropology,” during the 1960s and 1970s, which discussed the means the discipline used to obtain data and to expose it in the form of classical monographs.

The critiques’ main question was whether those monographs, written according to the rules of a “realist” style, reliably or legitimately represented the social organization, lifeways, cosmology and rituals, etc. of the people with whom the anthropologist works. These works did not mention the researcher-native relations and the power of each in these relationships,

difficulties in language comprehension, the conditions of the anthropologist's rapport with the subjects and environment during fieldwork, and many other factors. These monographs were questioned in their very goal of "representing" the complex and changing reality of a people by means of a fixed and frozen report in the final text, a document that presented research results from the privileged point of view of the researcher.

Without entering into the distinctions of the controversies and developments that this movement produced within the field of anthropology, it is helpful to recall the main issue that was raised and apply it to the central dilemma posed by City Museums¹¹. Can the city – principally in its contemporary dimensions, shapes, and dynamics – be "represented" according to the resources, tools, and notions used in traditional museology? Does this not presuppose exactly the same notion of "representation" as was defined above?

The problem becomes more complex when one is looking at the cities known in the literature as "mega-cities," "world cities," and "global cities." According to Mobgin, (2009) these cities share multiple centralities, different ways of life of their inhabitants and the infinity of marks printed on the landscape by institutions and urban equipment.

Looking at an urban situation that had not yet reached such global proportions, the philosopher Jürgen Habermas, in his article "Modern and Postmodern Architecture" ([1983] 1985), already wondered if it is still possible to talk about the city – the one whose prototype was the late Medieval hamlet described by Max Weber (1999), since for Weber urban life was increasingly mediated by "systemic relations, which cannot be given concrete form" while, "the urban agglomerations have outgrown the old concept of the city..." (op. cit.: passim, 327).

Have these cities thus "passed the point," of cities, overgrown in such an exaggerated and disorganized manner as to lead to their defacement in the view of the paradigm of reference. Or, on the contrary, would it not be the case that these cities are inaugurating new arrangements (from common structural forms) by virtue of their scales, functions and the practices of their inhabitants? And, once again, how can we "represent" this diversity?

I believe that the categories developed by urban anthropology can

11 City Museums or, in portuguese "Museu de cidade" refers to a museum that is dedicated entirely to the city and its inhabitants. A City Museum may document and divulge the city's history as well as its present state. TN.

contribute towards thinking about these new configurations, and consequently create a space to rethink the relationship between cities and museums in a broader perspective. This would allow a collaboration that gives the same importance to both aspects of this relation both in their complexity and their possibilities for interaction. Some concrete experiences presented in the following section will help in elucidating the question.

Museu do Imaginário do Povo Brasileiro (The Museum of the Brazilian People's Imaginary)

One such experience was my participation on the Board of Curators of the Museu do Imaginário do Povo Brasileiro in 2002 to define the basic concept for the various modules of the exposition. In this case, my participation was limited to the conceptual dimension, contributing to the discussion by emphasizing the need to distinguish between “the imaginary of” and “the imaginary about” the Brazilian people. It was necessary to establish this distinction to avoid confusing conflicting orientations, since choosing one or the other would have a traditional museological proposition as a consequence. If the “Brazilian people’s imaginary” was chosen, we would run the risk of taking the direction of a folklore museum. If, on the contrary, we chose the “imaginary about the Brazilian people,” there was the danger of privileging the elite’s vision of the masses. Despite having already opted, in the title, for one of the alternatives, the debate alerted us to the differences between the two, differences that were considered in the details of specific propositions.

The debate about this distinction led to another antinomy – *product versus process* – which had consequences for the establishment of the relationship between the permanent expositions and temporary expositions. Typically, museums present their products – oeuvres, objects, and images – to the public with a greater or lesser degree of information about them, but they rarely offer the opportunity to know and discuss the process of their production. Such information is normally the responsibility of more intellectual reflection conducted by specialists restricted to the academic, scholarly fields. All that is left to the public, is a more or less passive contemplation of the products.

The novelty that the Museu do Imaginário do Povo Brasileiro presented was to offer the two angles: the *product* – mainly in the form of temporary expositions – and the opportunity to access the *process of its production*,

meaning the public was provided access to facts that in given (historic, political, socioeconomic, aesthetic, etc.) conjunctures were responsible for the particular shape the product assumed in the exposition. The nucleus formed by the permanent expositions would create these opportunities while an Integrated Reference Center would give continuity to that reflection, forming a unique and original museological strategy.

Museu da Cidade de São Paulo (The Museum of the City of São Paulo)

The second experience in which I participated – this time, accompanied by other members of the NAU – was the attempt to found the Museu da Cidade de São Paulo. For several months in 2003 and 2004, a multidisciplinary team met to discuss concepts and creative processes (research and pedagogic activities, among others) for another innovative proposal for which the design and organization had been approved. It would be installed at the Palácio das Indústrias building at the Parque d. Pedro II, in the central region of the city.

Nevertheless, what I want to highlight is not so much the process as the experience that supported the Expedição São Paulo – 450 anos (“The São Paulo Expedition – 450 years). The project was financed by Petrobrás, sponsored by the newspaper Estado de São Paulo, and had logistic support from the Municipal Cultural Secretariat, the Institute Florestan Fernandes, the EXPOMUS¹² team and the NAU. The experience combined thirty professionals from various areas for a “voyage inside the metropolis,” for the anniversary of São Paulo’s state capital in January 2004.

Our goal was to come into contact with the diversity of forms of sociability, leisure, religiosity, popular exchange systems, and the functionality of complex systems (such as the subway) that are constitutive of many residents’ modes of life in the city of twelve million people. Obviously, this was not an ethnographic research in the technical sense of the word, nor did it pretend to make an exhaustive record. But, a week after professionals from the various areas of knowledge – human sciences, architecture, psychiatry,

12 “The Expomuns [coordinated by museologist Maria Ignez Mantovani] is a company that since 1981 performs museological projects within social, scientific, technological and environment fields (...). National and international museums and cultural institutions, private and corporate collectors and municipal, state and federal public entities are among our main partners and clients.” For more information visit: <http://www.expomus.com.br/> (Accessed on 09/08/2012, 08:30)

ethnomusicology, museology, archaeology, arts, and education – traveled through the city along two axes (north-south and east-west), they were able to appreciate and reflect upon the heterogeneity, diversity, and richness of the residents' households that they visited. This diversity emerged not to “survive” the renowned “urban chaos,” but to establish their creative and surprising relationships with the city.

The premise that orientated our approach was that despite a recurrent discourse about the violence, inequalities, hardship, and related maladies that are constantly attributed to the metropolis, it would be possible — by means of a “closer and insider” perspective, such as ethnographic examination proposes – to contact the regularities of everyday life and the social networks that support it.

The researchers were accompanied by a team of students – most of them NAU members – who were assigned with collecting the data found and produced during the trip: pictures, interviews, information, addresses, image-usage rights, and even some objects that would enter the future collection of the Museum of the City of São Paulo. They proposed to repeat the trip from time to time to apply the same methodology towards systematically accompanying the dynamics of the city and the necessary renovation of the museological space fated to interact with the city. But...¹³

Two more recent experiences close the series: The Museu do Futebol (The Football Museum) and the Museu da Imigração (Immigration Museum). I will not go into details about the former since there is a thorough account of it in this edition. It is enough to say that in 2010 this Museum — thanks to the initiative of a director and a coordinator, both researchers who were members of NAU – presented a project to FINEP, an organ of the Ministry of Science and Technology, which was given the job of establishing the Documentation Center on Brazilian Soccer. Initiated in 2012, the goal of the Center was to organize a research council and a team of researchers to conduct a broad survey of the practices related to soccer in São Paulo, from professional to amateur. All this information would contribute to the museum's database, which would link to the public (mainly, to the social actors involved) in innovative ways: networks, circuits, and routes.

13 Another initiative that could not be accomplished for political reasons. The expedition nonetheless had four outcomes: an exposition at Galeria Olido, a book *Expedição São Paulo, 450 anos: uma vigem por dentro da metrópole*, a video under the same title, and a CD with the photos.

The proposal supposes the elaboration of instruments for research, recording and analysis that link the museological practice to ethnography, to broaden the scopes of storage, cataloging, and exposition. Therefore, multi-disciplinary training courses are planned for the Museum researchers as well in the form of continuing education courses, in one way or another, for those who are interested and those who may be carriers of the items, memories, and cultural riches linked to the soccer practice in their neighborhoods and everyday contexts of sociability. The process was accompanied by the NAU along its timeline of collecting and interpreting information from the field.

The participation of NAU at the Museu da Imigração was possible through the invitation of EXPOMUS, which had won the bid for the revitalization project of these traditional facilities. I was responsible for developing the concept for module VI for the exposition that would open the Museum entitled: “Contemporary Migrations.” With that concept as a base, the Bom Retiro neighborhood was chosen to exemplify the many nuances and realities of the migration process in São Paulo, going beyond the common treatment of the subject that emphasizes groups of immigrants in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Moreover, through one of its research teams – NAU Migration – NAU conducted research to evaluate the reception, documentation, and representations of the demands of the population living near the Museum in the Mooca neighborhood.

Immaterial Heritage: a street in Londrina

It has become common to assign each one of the facets of heritage – whether architectural, historical, artistic, archaeological or immaterial – to a specialist in the field who is in charge of defining the criteria, setting the norms, and establishing the proper delimitations. The last to enter into the conversation was the anthropologist, always attentive to the knowledge, festivals, celebrations, practices, and other aspects of traditional folk culture. As is widely known, each one of those facets has a history and form of legitimacy: the first, also known as “brick and mortar,” is the most consolidated in heritage practices, whose paradigm promotes emblematic Luso-Brazilian baroque edifications.

There are, as is also known, political and ideological reasons for this choice: the same can be said about the temporal depth, expressed in the

“historical,” which also delimitates the reach and limitations of heritage. The more conservative vision of these facets often excludes more recent cities with their pioneers, settlers, migrants and wooden buildings, as is seen in the following case.

On the other hand, there is an approach that seeks to comprise the diversity of all these aspects, temporalities, and emphases, thus overcoming the difficulties that stem from the multiple criteria for defining heritage: it is known by the consecrated expression “cultural heritage.” Even if this reference to “culture” points to a broader idea, when it is analyzed carefully, one notices more of a rhetorical, expedient nature than a conceptual one. The debates about culture – and not just within anthropology – are never-ending, which makes it necessary to constantly distinguish theoretical trends and conceptual distinctions to avoid recourse to common sense. Certainly, there is a positive aspect in this regard: while this approach may not easily resolve the multiple issues involved, it points to the need for a wider approach as well as the search for new means to deal with heritage.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to go beyond this theoretical shortcut, which ends up generalizing and dissolving differences, to move forward in the pursuit of characterizing what constitutes heritage, at a more detailed level, as something worth registering and in need of protection. It is necessary to look for innovative criteria and wider frameworks. Once more, I suggest that anthropology can contribute to the debate.

I will now discuss a concrete case to illustrate this issue. I was recently invited to write the presentation text for a compilation entitled, *Rua Sergipe: patrimônio cultural Londrinense* (Magalhães, 2012), with contributions from many of the members of the IPAC/Londrina (PR).¹⁴ Each of the authors – architects, historians, and social scientists – focused on the aspect of heritage of their interest. I would like to call attention to one of these aspects.

14 The continuous education project *Inventário e Proteção do Acervo Cultural de Londrina - IPAC/LDA* (Inventory and Protection of the cultural heritage of Londrina - IPAC/LDA) was born in 1986 at the Universidade Estadual de Londrina - UEL – as a response to advice offered by José Guilherme Cantor Magnani – who at the time was the Cultural Heritage Coordinator at the State Cultural Secretariat of Paraná. The proposal was to develop a policy to study and intervene in the material and immaterial heritage of Paraná’s northern region. By selecting Londrina as the starting point for work under the state’s cultural heritage policy, Magnani made an instigating choice, because the city and the region are part of a new colonization, and this would demand an updated and broader theoretical and methodological approach towards the concepts and practices in use at the time.” (<http://www.uel.br/projetos/ipaclda/>)

In this case we were dealing with recuperating the present dynamics of the street Rua Sergipe by showing its vitality and diversity by using the categories of turf, circuit, patch, route and gateway to detect regularities and patterns. There is, certainly, a continuity between the “old” Rua Sergipe, from the glorious times of the founding of the city and the buildings and activities of that era – which for this reason are a source of representations – and the current use.

In the book in which she describes the everyday life of a U.S. city in opposition to the artificiality of modernist urbanism (1992), Jane Jacobs uses the interesting expression the “sidewalk ballet” to refer to the vitality of the multiple uses that a street offers to urban dynamics. In terms of heritage, this aspect corresponds, in a way, with a more recent description: *immaterial* heritage. In the specific case of this street, it embraces a wide range of practices and attributes; meeting places, behaviors, gestures, expressions, bar recipes, games, celebrations. Some are ephemeral, others lack durable material support, and others are somehow the result of a multiplicity of constitutive elements.

These categories allow us to identify, among the presumed chaos, some regularities that grant a particular shape to that street. Moreover, the field-work performed and identified new categories, *native* ones – the “place of pause”, among others – that enriched and brought meaningful nuances to the set of categories that already existed.

This initiative attests to the need to transcend the consecrated classifications and face the issue of heritage not just in its contemporaneity, but also to submit it to innovative research projects, using new instruments and perspectives, such as the one this book documents, about a normal, recently established city.

Conclusion

To finish I will now turn to a text by Ulpiano B. de Menezes, *A cidade como um bem cultural* (The City as a Cultural Good). It was published in a compilation by the 9^o SR/IPHAN, and followed by guest commentaries from Antonio Augusto Arantes, Edgar Assis Carvalho, Paulo Ormino de Azevedo and myself (MORI, Victor Hugo; SOUZA, Marise Campos et alii (org.): 2006). I will profit from an observation Menezes made about my commentary (a kind of

rebuttal), about the category of *circuit*, to return to the elements I developed throughout this work: 1) anthropology and its relationships with heritage and 2) the city and questions about the forms of museological representations.

In that article, Ulpiano presents the concept of city as a cultural good, in contrast to the more typical idea of “cultural goods in the city” or even the idea of “cultural use,” with the latter promoted through a strategy of allocating heritage goods for a supposedly nobler purpose, that of becoming cultural spaces.

To consider the city as a cultural good is a posture that broadens the reach of preservation policies: the idea would be to move beyond cataloging a limited series of elements worthy of protection. In fact, it is the city (as artifact, as a result of a field of forces, and as representation, according to the author) that supports the complex game of meanings created through social processes and that can be condensed and identified, in more specific ways, in this or that place, building, or object.

But it is not the presence of a monument that makes the city worthy of contemplation, realization, or knowledge; it is the presence of a web of meanings that makes this or that “good” noteworthy, and, therefore, worthy of protection. To place the city in the forefront, as a cultural good (as opposed to fragmenting it into the “cultural goods” that compose it), creates space for preservationist practices. We are talking here about a position that offers an alternative to the celebrated analyses of “urban problems.”

This argument reminds me of a passage in *Tristes Tropiques* where Lévi-Strauss qualifies the city as the “supremely human achievement”:

So it is not in any metaphorical sense that we are justified in comparing — as has so often been done — a town with a symphony or a poem; they are objects of a similar nature. The town is perhaps even more precious than a work of art in that it stands at the meeting point of nature and artifice. Consisting, as it does, of a community of animals who enclose their biological history within its boundaries and at the same time mold it according to their every intention as thinking beings, the town, in both its development and its form, belongs simultaneously to biological procreation, organic evolution, and aesthetic creation. It is at one and the same time an object of nature and subject of culture; an individual and a group; reality and dream; the supremely human achievement ([1955] 2012: 124).

This sentence may seem extemporaneous when faced with the scale and the problems of contemporary megacities. We must keep in mind the context in which it appears: Lévi-Strauss was talking of the Brazilian cities that he saw in the 1930s (São Paulo, the cities in northern Paraná and Goiânia) but also Karachi and Calcutta in India, and the archeological sites of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, from 5,000 years ago. Beyond the historical and typological differences, what interests me is to identify the structural principles, perceptible in the *longue durée*. It is in this sense that the city, in the words of the author, “represents civilization in its most complex and exquisite form” (ibid: 126).

Yet, even if this perspective offers a good antecedent for the idea of the city as an artifact, conceived as a totality, one question remains: how to represent this city? What to choose? I think that the category of *circuit* recuperates that idea of unity or totality, but

It is obviously neither the kind of totality that evokes an organic, functional, whole, free of conflicts, nor a totality that corresponds, in the case of the city, to its political-administrative boundaries. (...). Nevertheless, to renounce that kind of totality does not mean to assume the extreme opposite position, say, to dive deeply into fragmentation. If we cannot delimit a unique order, it does not mean that there is none; there are particular, segmented orders and there are ordinances, regularities (Magnani, 2002: 16).

If, on one hand, the idea of *circuit*, points to the idea of totality, it is not a reification. The example I used in my comments to Ulpiano’s article – which happens to be about cinema – helps clarify the question of how to represent the apparent paradox of an urban singularity-diversity in a museological space. What interests me, more than an isolated good in itself, is the *circuit* within which it acquires meaning.

This category (Magnani, 2007)¹⁵ emerged from the need to name a modality of relationship with the city that did not fit into forms of co-presence between actors and space. If within the limits of a *turf* and of the *patch*, it is

15 “It has to do with a category that describes the exercise of a practice or the availability of a specific service through establishments, facilities, and spaces that do not maintain in themselves a relation of spatial continuity, but which are recognized as a whole by its customary users. The notion of circuit also points to a use of the space and of urban facilities – therefore enabling the exercise of sociability through encounters, communication and code switching – yet in a form more independent in relationship to the space, without regard to continuity, as usually occurs with a patch and a turf. But like them, it has an objective and perceptible existence: it can be recorded, described, and located” (Magnani, 2007:20)

possible to identify a particular slice in the landscape along with its users, the *circuit* presents another dynamic of interaction between the two. Take for example a kind of cultural practice that presupposes given facilities in its very use, and establishes lasting links between its enthusiasts, creating a community of interests: that of the cinephiles.

It is not about individual consumers: the nature of the activity that brings them together and characterizes them supposes a network based on an exchange of information, critiques and controversies, in short, the search for and exhibition of knowledge. The territorial basis of their practice can shape a contiguous *patch*, but can also establish a network: it is scattered throughout the city - and not only in the so-called art cinemas that constitute it - but also in libraries, debates, special exhibitions at public institutions and private foundations and at events such as showings, festivals, releases, etc..

The *circuit* articulates these two dimensions. If this category is applied to other practices - paying attention to the passages and links between them - what you find is less the image of something fragmented and isolated within the cityscape, and more a kind of articulated (but not necessarily contiguous) whole that has specific participants, rules, consumer guidelines, patterns of sociability, schedules, etc.. Notice, *a propos*, the consequence that this kind of reading would have on protection measures that are truly committed to meaningful cultural practices and based on a living and active network of actors. It would be meaningless, for example, to declare the protection of a specific isolated cinema without taking into account the *circuit* or the *patch* in which it is located.

Returning to cinema, we need to consider not only the space involved, but the history: in the case of São Paulo there is no way to ignore the importance of the *boca do lixo*, a quadrangle in the Luz neighborhood and a center of the film industry in the 1920s and 1930s. Its production was characterized first by low cost films and later by the *pornoanchada* of the 1970s. Yet we must consider much more: the old and imposing movie theatres downtown, in the so-called cinelândia of the 1940s and 1950s - most of them still in activity exhibiting porn films; the Companhia Cinematográfica Vera Cruz, the most important Brazilian film studio in the 1950s; Amácio Mazzaropi's filmography, filled with one blockbuster after another until the 1970s; the Cinemateca Brasileira with its fine catalog; the art cinemas; the screening rooms in shopping centers, and finally the role of the The São Paulo

International Film Festival, already in its 35th edition. An isolated good – this or that theater, listing, or facility – acquires meaning when it is incorporated into a *circuit* or is at the interior of a *patch*, which in this case may be considered to be its “surroundings” in the technical jargon.

At the boca do lixo region, you have a consistent *circuit*, one in which each point contributes with its specificity to a practice whose common denominator — the fruition of cinema — is fostered by the limitless number of services constituted over time and distributed through the cityspace. The same logic can be applied to the *patch*, as is found at the corner between Avenida Paulista and Rua da Consolação when the Cine Belas Artes and the Riviera bar were its main points – and which have now moved to the Baixa Augusta region and Rua Frei Caneca. In these cases, the clearly recognizable *routes* of the visitors appear at the level of walking, which is different from what happens with the *circuit* because the latter does not depend upon a spatial continuity.

In this way, whether as a question of heritage to be identified, protected, and preserved – as we saw in the cases of the Cine Belas Artes, the Parque do Povo, Santana de Parnaíba, and Rua Sergipe in Londrina, or with the challenges of museology put forth by the dynamics and diversity of the cities in the cases of the Museu da Cidade de São Paulo, the Museu do futebol, and the Museu do Imaginário do Povo Brasileiro, anthropology, and specially urban anthropology, with its distinct method of ethnography, categories of analyses, and research strategies, may open a fruitful dialog with the disciplines traditionally engaged with the different dimensions of heritage and museology.

Translated by Diana Paola Gómez Mateus and revised by Craig William Schuetze

Accepted for publication on February 22, 2013.

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The City Museum of São Paulo

A New Design for City Museums in the Era of the Megacity

Maria Ignez Mantovani Franco

Abstract

The City Museum of São Paulo as subject of study and museological challenge tries explicitly to present a multidisciplinary methodology – already tested in 2003 and 2004 – that enunciates the conception of a new model of city museum, whose objective is the analysis of the great metropolis São Paulo, articulated upon the collection of contemporary items to be pursued by methods of social mobilization, maintaining a dialogue with the proper logic of a globalised world, but canonically erected over the founding precepts of sociomuseology.

Focusing on territory museums, that model tries to stimulate an alternative new path that observes and interacts with the reality that is inherent to contemporaneity, to Latin American megacities, as it endeavors to understand the dynamics, as well as the problems that characterise human life in those vast and complex territories.

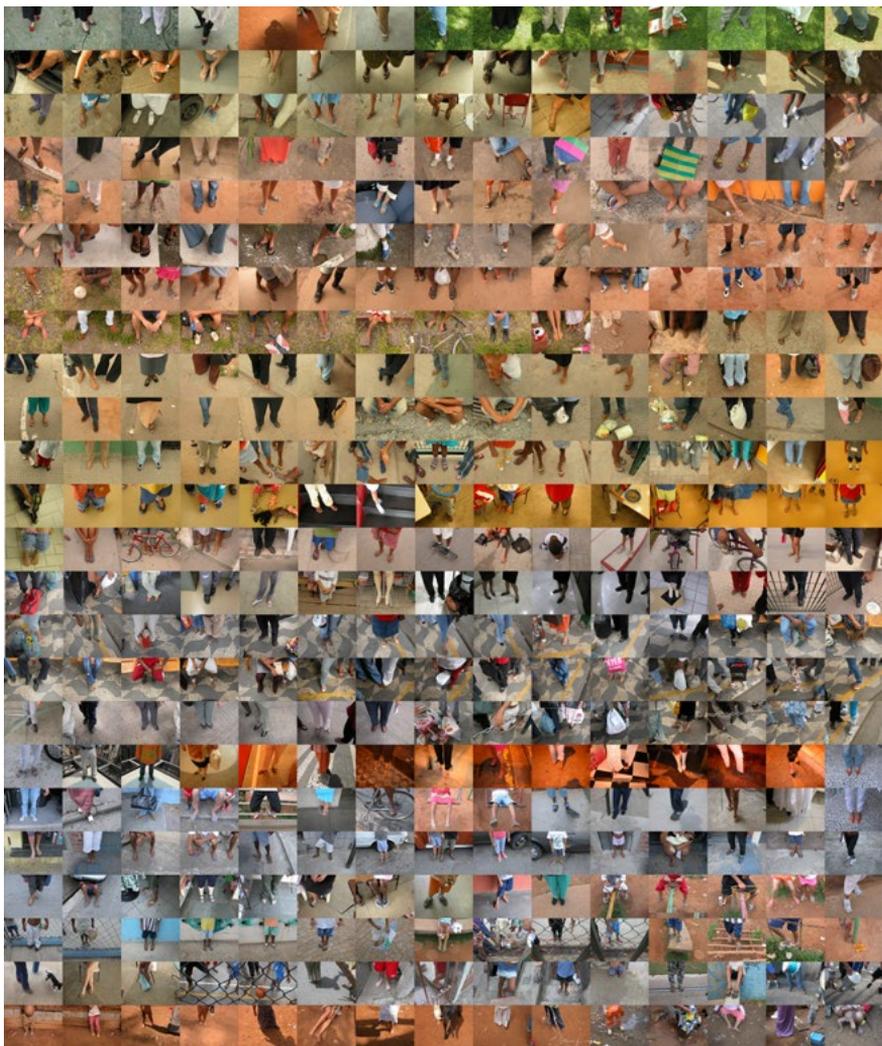
Keywords: City Museum, Sociomuseology, Territory Museum, Contemporary Collection, São Paulo

Resumo

O Museu da Cidade de São Paulo, como objeto de estudo e de problematização museológica, busca explicitar uma metodologia interdisciplinar – já posta em teste em 2003 e 2004 – que enuncia a concepção de um novo modelo de museu de cidade, que tem como objeto de análise a grande metrópole São Paulo, que se articula sobre as premissas de coleta contemporânea de acervo, empreendida por meio de métodos de mobilização social, em interlocução com as lógicas próprias do mundo globalizado, porém canonicamente erigida sobre os preceitos fundadores da Sociomuseologia.

Com foco no cenário dos museus de território, este modelo busca fomentar um caminho novo e alternativo, que observa e interage em relação a uma realidade inerente à contemporaneidade, às megacidades latino-americanas, na medida em que busca problematizar e compreender as dinâmicas próprias da vida humana nestes imensos e complexos territórios.

Palavras-chave: Museu de Cidade, Sociomuseologia, Museu de Território, Coleta Contemporânea, São Paulo



Antonio Saggese photographic essay with images taken during the “Expedição São Paulo 450 Anos”, and edited by the photographer.

The City Museum of São Paulo

A New Design for City Museums in the Era of the Megacity

Maria Ignez Mantovani Franco

The City is a tomography of the present, pointing to the future and looking back to the past.

Today, city growth averages one million people every week. In 1950 there were 86 cities with more than one million inhabitants, today they are some 400 across the world. However the most significant effect of the urban process is, without doubt, the explosion of megacities. It took one century for the urban population – around 3.4 billion – to surpass the world’s rural population, but United Nations projections indicate that by 2025 the urban population will reach 61 per cent of the total.



Figure 1. Social and environmental diversity: a slum lives cheek by jowl with a high standard building at Morumbi quarter, in São Paulo. Photo: Tuca Vieira.

In the case of São Paulo, creating a new city museum requires, at the outset, that one should consider some 1,500 square kilometres, corresponding to the administrative area, as the geographic area of study. That is, the area of the Municipality, politically divided into 96 districts where 11 million people live. However, approximately 20 million people live in the wider metropolitan area. During the last decades, studies confirmed by satellite images have indicated that two conurbation¹ axes are clearly distinguished and expanding: one extends towards Rio de Janeiro, 400 kilometres from São Paulo, and another is in the direction of Campinas, 100 kilometers away. Travelling along either axis one cannot help concluding that it is difficult to talk about São Paulo as a subject for a museum and, at the same time, ignore Greater São Paulo with its vast conurbation which is continually expanding and changing.

This theoretical model – a territorial museum – is nourished by the clear and evident notion that the city is something which undergoes mutations, a permanently pulsating being. The City Museum of São Paulo has as its artefact that very metropolis, and it requires dynamic structures capable of undertaking real time mutations, in order to cope with the oscillations of social life in the big city.

The gigantic urban area which comprises the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo and the Metropolitan Region of Campinas is the first macrometropolis of the southern hemisphere, inhabited by 22 million people, approximately 12 per cent of the Brazilian population. Its factories form the richest industrial complex in Brazil. They are responsible for 65.3 per cent of the gross product of the State of São Paulo or 21.1 per cent of the Brazilian GNP (gross national product).

Though there is no one universal definition of an urban area, it is safe to assume that the Brazilian macrometropolis² is surpassed only by a few urban agglomerations, such as Tokyo-Yokohama, Shanghai or Mexico City. This suggests that the emerging countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America will, in the next decades, be the biggest generators of megacities.

1 Conurbation – a large urban area formed by cities, towns and villages that developed side by side until they merged into one urban area. (Houaiss, 2001, 826).

2 In his studies to define urban planning for the northwestern part of the United States, Scot Patrick Geddes, at the beginning of the twentieth century, defined the concept of macrometropolis as a widespread urban area, multipolarised by metropolises made up of vast conurbations. The apocalyptic term “necropolis” was also used during that period, assuming that megalopolises were doomed. From: Zanchetta, D. A primeira Macrometrópole do Hemisfério Sul. In: Revista Megacidades – Grandes Reportagens. São Paulo: O Estado de São Paulo, August, 2008: 64.

Although this analysis tries to focus on the municipality of São Paulo as the museum artefact, one cannot deny or ignore the fact that a huge crowd moves daily along the axes that, as tentacles, connect São Paulo to its peripheral regions. Migratory fluxes have intensified along both directions in such a way that today there is social contact in São Paulo between city natives and the inhabitants of the wider urban region. The economic wealth of the State of São Paulo when considered in the general Brazilian context raises serious concerns related to this macroaxis. Besides its natural potentialities, it becomes the target of important political and economical dispute.

Modern urban planning requires multifaceted knowledge involving analysis by architects and urbanists, but it is also a fertile soil for other disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, education and museology. All the different professional standpoints converge in the study of the way of life and organisation of the populations in the megacity.

In the outer edge of the megalopolis, one can identify new social arrangements that articulate and make possible a collectively organised life that goes beyond city government initiatives. Considering the concept of multiple centralities around the core of the megalopolis itself, we see that those outer populations gravitate around other urban landmarks, new social references, new expanded centres, other forms of circulation, communication and social interaction. The word “periphery” is ambiguous since one can always ask: peripheral in relationship to what?

When we look at the global urban scenario it seems correct to state that the need to create museums about the city has never before presented itself with such intensity, especially so in the megalopolises of emerging countries. We need to consider the sheer scale of these cities and adopt a more diversified format, multicentered, able to articulate social forces in a more encompassing way. Possibly we can make evident the fact that museums of cities, within this theoretical model, consider public interest as their priority and that they take actions that give priority to democratic access and enjoyment of the population, involving knowledge about the city where they live and work.

The City Museum of São Paulo project recommended, through exploratory interactions with young people, the adoption of the idea that São Paulo is an “Educating City”. Thus, it should consider itself as an active institution able to translate the feelings and ambitions of its population into a concrete programme for the museum.

Cities are the natural ground for multiculturalism, territories where diversities co-exist, where differences are confronted. Furthermore in Latin America and especially in Brazil, where São Paulo is doubtless its greatest expression, large cities have received multiple migratory fluxes through both immigration and emigration for most of the twentieth century. The consequences are that cities like Rio de Janeiro, Bogotá, Mexico City, Medellín, and so many others, are hybrid spaces, contradictory and multicultural.

Therefore in a large Brazilian city there is a pattern whereby newcomers rapidly find their most closely related ethnic group to which they can attach themselves, a first exercise in getting involved, in belonging; from this first welcome gesture, the newcomer will feel part of the group, but not confined to a ghetto. Members of different groups do not tend to exclude each other – on the contrary, they establish multicultural relationships, they socialise and absorb each other's traditions and contradictions.

Considering the global scenario of intolerance between people, the multiculturalism that characterises Latin American metropolises may be one of their most powerful distinguishing features and strengths. It is possible that Latin American cities have the potential to develop new hybrid models, revealing an aptitude to adapt, possibly in a more ingenious form, to new global challenges.

In 2003, as part of the 450th anniversary of São Paulo's foundation, the Culture Secretary of the city proposed the creation of a City Museum of São Paulo that would value former initiatives in recording city history, but would also aim at broadening more traditional views in acknowledgement of the territorial complexity of São Paulo. The model of a city museum developed during that period is the subject of an in depth investigation and analysis in my doctorate thesis in Museology, which was presented to the "Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias", in Lisbon. In my thesis, first conceived in 2003, the process of making sense of the urban space as a museum artefact took into account the following:

- a) the underlying philosophy of the museum should be established from questions, problems and concerns addressed to the museum by city people and should not follow a dynamic from top down, as is frequently the case;
- b) the present should become the main component of the museum's philosophy and actions;



Figure 2. Boxes used for the transportation of horticultural products in the São Paulo General Warehousing and Centres Company (CEAGESP). Photo: Nair Benedicto/N Imagens.

- c) the museum should accept the challenge of real time interaction with different populations, looking for references representative of the present time and aiming at a collective construction of the future city;
- d) the exact point when the city was founded would be no longer chosen and revered as the central starting point for the museum – on the contrary, other points of reference and other starting points would be considered through a wider notion of where city boundaries lie;
- e) other forces in different areas of the wider city would be considered as legitimate and equally symbolic and important;
- f) interaction would proceed with an increasing number of citizens, becoming part of networks that constitute the new logic of living – why not say surviving – in the large urban centers like São Paulo;
- g) other means of communication should be explored, using modern technology, but shaping them to the intentions of each museum programme;
- h) a new more humane form of discourse should be adopted that admits and digests different types of knowledge, logic and discourses, favouring a multidisciplinary architecture.

Among the various experiments carried through in association with the development of the City Museum of São Paulo, one of them became widely known: the “Expedição São Paulo: 450 anos” (“São Paulo Journey: 450 years”).

The idea was to obtain a contemporary tomography of the city of São Paulo. An urban journey was undertaken with an interdisciplinary character and two different routes were followed during one week. If we could attach unique values to the “Expedição São Paulo: 450 anos”, they would be the method and the intentionality of the programme. It surely was not a picturesque or naïve trip, nor was it a group of academic people looking to confirm their theses. There was detailed planning and we could count on community leaders linked to the municipal government, who indicated points to be considered in the definition of the routes to be followed by the travellers.

Suggestions on the points of interest to be included in the programme totalled 700. The co-ordination group analysed the suggestions and decided on two final routes: North-South and East-West. Two groups of travellers, of a multidisciplinary nature, were made up of anthropologists, architects, educators, psychoanalysts, archeologists, artists, photographers, filmmakers, museologists, sociologists, geographers, environmentalists, historians, planners and organisers. The travellers were assisted by a group of young students, mostly with a graduate degree in history, with specialization in museology or following the master degree in anthropology. They were responsible for approaching people to be interviewed, for distributing at the various places to be visited printed material concerning the City Museum and the journey itself. They were also responsible for obtaining authorisations for image use. Their most important task, however, was to take notes on forms specially conceived for that purpose, concerning items identified as being of interest for the future museum. Initially the idea was to make a record only and no collection had been foreseen. However, growing enthusiasm led many of the travellers to start on the direct collection of items and it became necessary to arrange for a daily reception of those items in predetermined points in the city. Items thus collected have been deposited at the Iconography and Museums Division of the Municipal Secretariat of Culture of São Paulo.

The dynamics of the “Expedição” included travelling along each route during the day and evening meetings in order to evaluate what had been accomplished and to plan what should be done along the next stretch. Every night each of the groups received a visit from a social actor specifically chosen. While

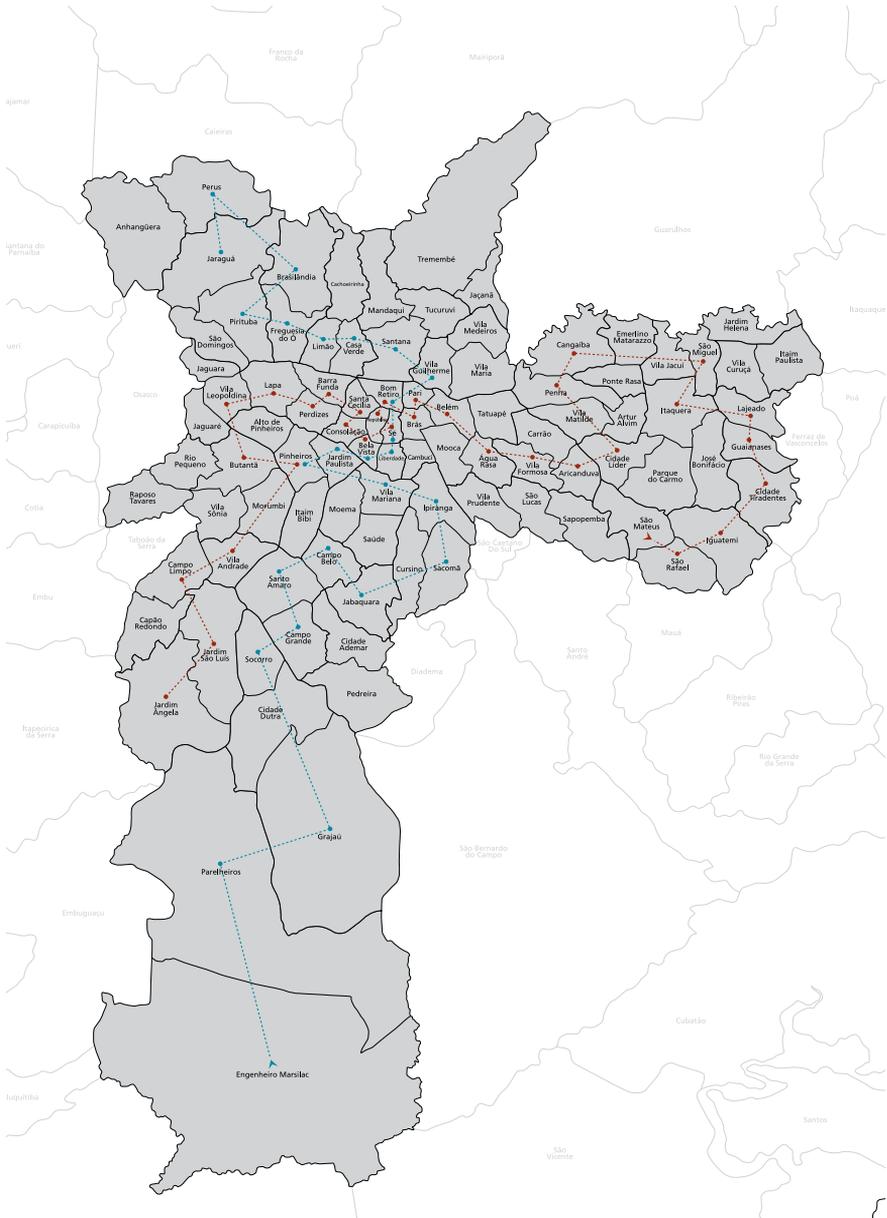


Figure 3. Great São Paulo – The two routes of the “Expedição São Paulo 450 Anos”: North-South and East-West”.

one group heard the intense account of a homeless girl, the other received a deaf and blind woman; both tried to explain how to orient yourself in São Paulo faced with your own limitations. The two groups went by different visiting points: slums, rap and hip hop groups, neighbourhood football clubs, samba clubs, different religious gathering places, telecentres, co-operatives, indigenous villages, social assistance, health, education and cultural centres. The city was seen from an elevated heliport at Avenida Paulista as well as from the bottom of an urban crater created by the impact of a large meteorite at Vargem Grande – at the southern extreme edge of the city – some 400,000 years ago.

The two groups went through the tunnels of the Metro, streets and bowels of the historic centre of the city, narrow passages of slums, internal alleys of low income housing projects, and even cemeteries and maximum security prison cells. Those dynamics allowed them to observe how the city subverts the use of its spaces: a football club that shelters a school, the samba club that takes care of milk distribution, a religious space where the rapper learns how to read a musical score, schools where families find adequate space for their leisure, local clubs where the elders find a suitable space for meeting their equals, the street that stages cultural events and last, but not least, the concrete slab (the “laje”)³ covering some of the houses: the most important social meeting place in the destitute areas visited.

The journey was not a comfortable promenade: violence and insecurity accompanied the travellers on both routes, though both violence and insecurity are part of everyday life in the city. The precarious conditions in which people have to live and lack of suitable public services result in a permanent deprivation. Social and environmental imbalances do not provide for a serene landscape; on the contrary, they create a scenario of conflict, and it became evident that these were territories devastated by insecurity. Contrary to those sensations that were both latent and present, the “Expedição São Paulo” was, without question, an opportunity to demolish so many stereotypes about São Paulo. Discovery was much more intense than apprehension and everyone had the strong feeling that the mission of the City Museum would be to reveal to the public – more than the needs, conflicts and inconsistencies – the hard day to day life of the people of São Paulo; the fraternal

3 Houses built in the “favelas” or in peripheral urban areas may have a concrete slab as their top floor or roof; it is normally used as a space for socialising, leisure and community activities.

generosity between equals; the social networks that assure life and survival in the city; the counterpoint between apparent chaos and the unbelievable capacity for organisation developed by the associations we visited; the environmental issues and the alternative solutions that prevent a complete disintegration of the system.

Discretely a few journalists from “O Estado de São Paulo” – one of the most important large circulation newspapers in Brazil – joined the “Expedição São Paulo”. The day São Paulo commemorated its 450th anniversary, the newspaper published a supplementary section devoted to this interdisciplinary experience, reaching 300,000 readers all over the country.

The last day of the “Expedição São Paulo” was taken by a final evaluation. Both groups met in a city centre hotel and recalled their routes, faces they met, oral statements that were recorded, photographs yet to be developed and items collected. It was a final effort towards an interdisciplinary synthesis, towards the definition of a logic that might give sense to the next phases. It was an intense working day and finally as a result of systematic observations the three founding bases were selected: territory / sociability / imaginarium.⁴

These orienting concepts formed the structural basis for the editorial organisation of all the other products connected to the “Expedição” such as: a book, an exhibition at the Olido Cultural Centre (seat of the Municipal Secretariat of Culture), a video documentary, and the creation of a database in multimedia format that consolidated all the documentation related to contemporary items collected during the journey, in view of the effective creation of the City Museum of São Paulo in 2004.

After a change of government in 2005, the project for the new City Museum was discontinued, with only a group of some small historic houses remaining in the scenario; they met neither the contemporary demands of a city museum, nor the scale of a megalopolis like São Paulo. Some of the questions related to the setting up and running of the City Museum are still awaiting answers. First of all, one should revisit the sequence of studies and negotiations undertaken during the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, aiming at the realisation of the project. This would allow us to produce some fundamental questions:

4 Imaginarium refers to things, real and fantasy, that recurrently occupy our minds. It may include a football team, a film star, folklore items etc.

a) What threat to those who take decisions at a political or institutional level, is represented by creating a museum that is based on the collection of contemporary items? Why is it that collecting items produced today by society is seen, in museological terms, as more threatening than the traditional collection of cultural items that legitimate and sanctify the historical path of an object?

b) Would the model of a historical museum that reveres the past be safer, therefore? Would ancient objects ask less questions than their contemporary counterparts? Would the extraction of objects pertaining to everyday activities, in real time, introduce irreparable voids in our society? Or should we just allow objects, that irrevocably would fall into oblivion, to be discarded by the passing of time and then, as a consequence, we would naturally preserve those with a “vocation” to become museum artefacts?

c) Or should our selection be based on other values and criteria? Could it be the aesthetic value of the object, its social representativeness, its age, the profile of its owner, its monetary value or its intrinsic value? Those values which were adhered to in the past had been great reference points across the centuries, do they apply today to our trans territorial, globalized world? If our society struggles against its own aging, by reverting to the past, why don't we feel an identity with the present?

d) Could it be that a city museum that articulates itself upon contemporary collections is a threatening museological model by means of a simple inversion of the symbolic weight of the objects, or maybe this discourse provides an inversion of more encompassing social senses?

e) Assuming that the selection of an object presupposes a logic of discarding it, are we afraid of the power of museological manipulation of our own lives, of our path, of our memory, that a choice of a contemporary object could determine? Are we more afraid of making a selection or of discarding? Are we less happy by living with what is retained or by abandoning what is discarded?

f) How does the museum fit into this contemporary equation? What history is it intended to legitimate? What do we want to recall, what are we allowed to forget? This new museum, shall it be a territory for new senses, new



Figure 4. COOPERCOSE (Recycling and Selective Collection Cooperative) classification table. Photo: José Guilherme Cantor Magnani.

expectations? If traditional museums had the power to revere and nominate what should not be forgotten, why can't we consider that the city museum has the power of reflecting, of modifying, of restating, of heightening the present, and thus redesign, in real time, our own future? Would there be time to wait for the natural aging of objects? Wouldn't that process be much more contaminated today than it was in the past?

g) Why does our society applaud, consume and "musealise" contemporary art, building "cathedral museums" to keep it, all over the world? Could it be that art speaks about life without presenting so many threats as objects do?

h) Why is an increasing number of science and technology museums being created, making evident to the public the great themes that concern our planet's survival? Wouldn't human extinction be a greater fear than that imposed by the collection of contemporary objects?

i) Why are initiatives focused on making us aware of our common humanity across different cultures supported and implemented without hesitation in different countries? Why are museums of contemporary history so few in Brazil and why are they considered to be threatening? What in our life today is unbearable to the point that we don't want to remember it, to select it, to elect it and place it in a museum?

j) Why should we revere the myth of the founding fathers of the city? That wider area standing outside the city centre, outside the city walls as it were, is it a desirable and commendable object of study? Why is it that fear surfaces whenever we pierce the symbolic surrounding walls and face those vast peripheral areas where most city people actually live? Could it be that a medieval atavism prevents us from going outside the centre, fooling those walls and delving into the complex surrounding urban mesh, nobody's land, as people refer to it?

k) Would it be possible to substitute an imitation for the object? Why not use available technology to express unforgettable feelings, gestures, tastes, odours and images? Would the fascination of motion be more stimulating than the object at rest? Does the object rest, talk or ask questions? Should we give up original items and assume a definitive adoption of virtual interaction? Following the paths of collaborative networks, would it be possible to create virtual collections and even virtual museums, rejecting the imperative logic of generating and maintaining patrimonial institutions? Why should we maintain the original when we already have frozen their images for the future? Are we not even able to modify, edit and recreate them? In the age of human clones, when the logic of ancestral relationships and heredity is openly defied, why not think of the obsolescence of the original object? Why not clone the object, reproduce it and discard it?

l) Could it be that the most important concern is related to "who" chooses the object instead of "what" is chosen? In this new model, would there be many people entitled to choose? Would the History to be told reference people so far unknown? Would silent crowds start to be given a voice? As it speaks, would that crowd use a syntax that we would not follow or understand? If that is a different syntax, many will recognise themselves. What about us? Would we remain with no connection, therefore voiceless?

The City Museum of São Paulo as subject of study and museological challenge tries explicitly to present a multidisciplinary methodology – already tested in 2003 and 2004 – that enunciates the conception of a new model of city museum, whose objective is the analysis of the great metropolis – São Paulo – maintaining a dialogue with the proper logic of a globalised world, but canonically erected over the founding precepts of socio-museology. Focusing on city museums, that model tries to stimulate an alternative new path that observes and interacts with the reality that is inherent to contemporaneity, to Latin American megacities, as it endeavors to understand the dynamics, as well as the problems that characterise human life in those vast and complex territories.

Translated by Luiz Alberto P.N. Franco and revised by Ian Jones.

Accepted for publication on March 22, 2013.

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