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HERITAGE IN A LOGIC OF DELETION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESSES OF MEANING OF HERITAGE PRESENT IN THE LOGIC OF DELETION IN SÃO PAULO

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Abstract: The importance given to a reading that understands the architectural heritage in its most authentic form, that is, that values the contingent cultural qualities associated with the building, has been a central theme of debate in the universe of heritage safeguarding. We recognize that architecture will be conditioned by existing cultural meaning. However, we observe preservationist approaches that capture the cultural significance and the identification of values and attributes, from a more objective perspective regarding the relevance of the historic building, which hardly considers spontaneous manifestations of affective bonds and belonging, which may come to represent different forms. of symbolic appropriations of urban spaces and of an integrated and living memory. By conceiving the architectural heritage as a social construction, always in transformation, the present work problematizes the paradoxes of patrimonialization in the valorization of the memory of São Paulo through the analysis of the processes of intrinsic meaning in the appropriations of architectural heritage located in the historic center of the city of São Paulo. The territory is characterized by erasure policies, resulting from the construction of São Paulo's collective memory. The observed results will be discussed in the light of the theoretical debate on the manifestation of memory as an intrinsic phenomenon in the process of occupation and resistance. In search of a more democratic heritage safeguard, this analysis seeks to contribute to the signaling and recognition of new narratives, in order to assign value, define strategies linked to cultural heritage and go beyond an interpretation of architectural heritage solely by its materiality.

Keywords: Architectural heritage; use; appropriation; cultural significance; memory; erasure.

INTRODUCTION

By conceiving the architectural heritage as a social construction, always in transformation, the present work problematizes the paradoxes of patrimonialization in the valorization of the memory of São Paulo through the analysis of the processes of intrinsic meaning in the appropriations of architectural heritage located in the historic center of the city of São Paulo, in Brazil. The selected territory is characterized by erasure policies, resulting from the construction of the collective memory of São Paulo.

Based on a historical analysis of the city's development, we observe, in the central region of São Paulo's urban fabric, a search for utopia, associated with a need for novelty which, in turn, is driven by processes of erasure. Throughout the work, we reflect on how these processes of erasure are characteristic of Brazilian and São Paulo culture, whose cultural values of the nation were built under a logic of historical-cultural erasure.

Brazil is a country constituted by a culture, which for too long was built on the basis of an authorized discourse, which consolidated the power of a white oligarchy. As the last country in Latin America to abolish slavery (Lei Áurea, 1888), Brazil carries a history of enslavement and elimination of its original peoples.

According to historian Laurentino Gomes, freedom never meant, for former slaves and their descendants, an opportunity for social mobility or a better life (GOMES, 2019). This construction was established from the prioritization of certain historical narratives to the detriment of others and which maintained the coloniality of power (SCHENKMAN, 2021).

The romanticization of a historical past, which does not recognize difficult memories, was a characteristic aspect in the construction of collective memory in Brazil and São Paulo.

The search for the primitive, in a cult to

preserve the architecture of the colony, and for the new architecture, modernist, were approaches that marked the field of heritage safeguarding, which began in 1920, with the will of the ruling class to map what was national, original and modern, in a context of industrialization of the country and post-World War I (SCHENKMAN, 2021). The legal instrument responsible for heritage protection appears with Decree-Law Number 25 of 11/30/1937, which is tipping. The notion of heritage was aligned with a rupture with the past, proposing an awareness of historicization (CHUVA, 2009).

In São Paulo, the “patrimony of São Paulo” gained greater visibility in 1969, with the creation of CONDEPHAAT (Council for the Defense of the Historical, Archaeological, Artistic and Tourist Heritage of the State of São Paulo). In the midst of the military regime (1964-1985), the historical heritage suffered a tourist appeal and was constituted by landmarks and/or monuments of the traditional history and modernization of São Paulo.

The Municipal Secretary of Culture of São Paulo was created in 1975, in order to have the Department of Historical Heritage (DPH) and the municipal tipping began to be operationalized in 1988 by CONPRESP (Municipal Council for the Preservation of Historical, Cultural and Environmental Heritage of the City of São Paulo).

Different from the idea of forming a national identity, in a more orthodox approach, the safeguarding of heritage at the municipal level has developed in a newer and more democratic sense, where architectural heritage is analyzed as a cultural process.

Even open to a more democratic perspective of heritage interpretation, preservation bodies are in the midst of real estate production conflicts, where tipping (main instrument of preservation bodies) presents itself as a great

controversy, as it intervenes directly in land rent (SCHENKMAN, 2021).

In the midst of a society that walks towards the value of novelty, heritage protection starts to have a character of resistance to the right through memory. The identification of the different forms of cultural manifestations becomes urgent, especially those with a greater tendency to denial.

From the development of a more democratic patrimonial safeguard, in order to be open to the various narratives, it is up to us to be attentive to the different forms of cultural and mnemonic manifestations, in order to seek to build a healthy, diverse and integrated collective memory.

As part of the central area of the city of São Paulo, “Largo do Paissandu”, is an example of a territory that manifests the logic of historical and cultural erasure in São Paulo, adjacent to the authorized discourse and justified by a need for innovation. The place is marked by a past of demolitions and relocations of expropriated buildings and others intentionally closed by their owners, resulting in an imposed emptiness in constant waiting for a utopian time, which would be represented by the appreciation of land prices.

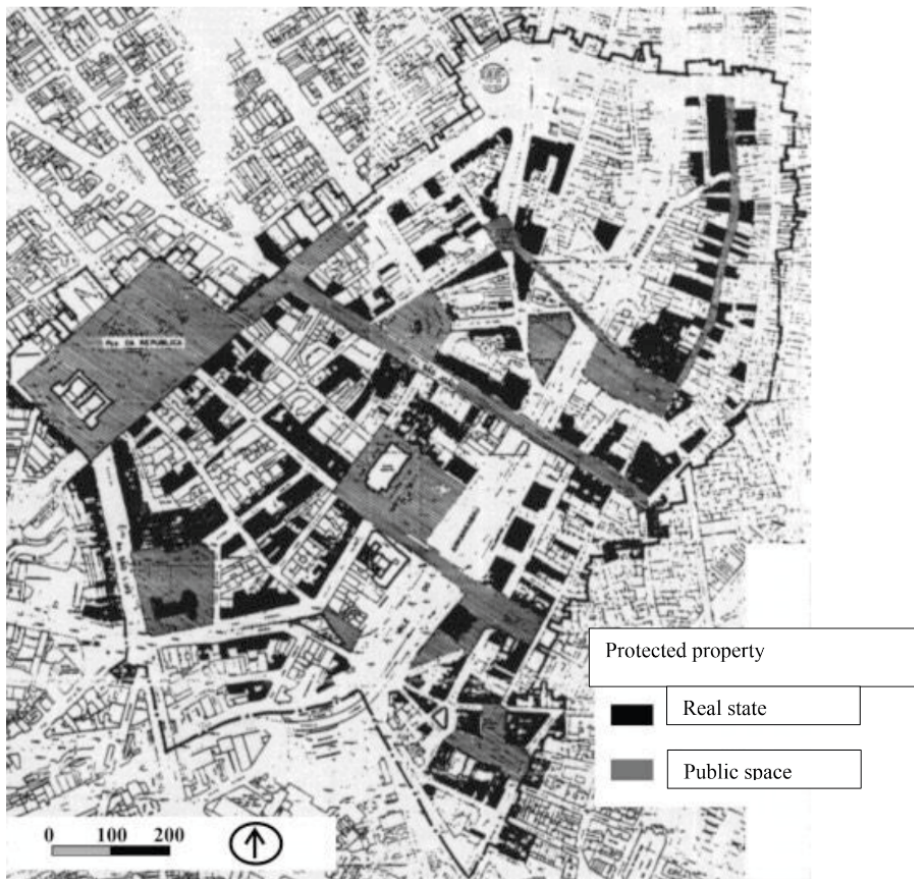
The “Igreja da Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Homens Pretos” located in the center of “Largo do Paissandú”, reflects a historical past of expropriations and expulsions. The church was expropriated and relocated in the center of the Largo in 1906, as a result of the expropriation process resulting from law nº 670. Although the Brotherhood claimed at that time its historical value, the expropriation continued.

Currently, the church is protected by Resolution 37/1992 and is marked as one of the 293 buildings identified in the perimeter referring to Parque Anhangabaú. In Resolution 37/1992, CONPRESP decided to protect the area of Vale do Anhangabaú, considering



Image from 1924, with a view of the ` Igreja Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Homens Pretos ` inserted in ` Largo do Paissandu `.

Image source: prefeitura.sp.gov.br. Accessed on 07/15/2019.



Source: Image: Resolution Number: 37/CONPRESP/1992

its historical, social and urbanistic value, represented by the various ways of organizing the urban space that make up the central area of the city and considering the landscape and assumed by Vale do Anhangabaú throughout the history of the city of São Paulo, as well as the historical-architectural, environmental and affective value of several adjacent properties.

The listing criteria were carried out by dividing the properties into sets that they considered to be the most representative of the stages of occupation in that area. The typology of its architecture, as to the time of its construction, added to the urban landscape it provided, were the most relevant attributes for the listing, which was justified by the need to preserve such constructions, given the acceleration resulting from real estate speculation at the time.

The resolution covers the preservation of the constituent elements of the urban environment, namely: 293 buildings and 9 public areas. The listed assets were classified into levels of protection.

Having the housing deficit as one of the biggest problems in the city of São Paulo, idle spaces become a problem. Several buildings listed by Resolution 37/1992 are occupied by movements fighting for decent housing. Although the Master Plan and the City Statute point out legal measures for properties that do not fulfill their social function (progressive IPTU and expropriation), several of these situations are not reversed and become the focus of housing struggle movements.

With the emergence of new economic centers, from the 1970s onwards, the center began to change the profile of uses and users. Sectoral transport policies and zoning legislation conditioned the displacement of prestigious central uses to the southwest sector of the city. As a result of the reduction in land prices in the central area, smaller companies began to occupy the region in the

1960s. Thus, the city center became the most popular aspect.

Currently, the city center has become the focus of a major real estate maneuver, which subverts several senses and meanings attributed to the region. The place is characterized by the presence of public policies that promote a great transformation in the territory and that conflict with the present reality. Among them are the Urban Intervention Projects (PIU – Central Sector proposed by the Strategic Master Plan of the Municipality of São Paulo), the Transfer of Building Potential (TPC), the Open Center Program and the Anhangabaú Requalification project.

The narrative that the center is abandoned justifies several interventions that mischaracterize the territory and that highlights the cultural and economic values that govern São Paulo's politics. This movement alerts us to the need for mapping and signaling existing cultural manifestations, in order to avoid movements of gentrification and mischaracterization of the territory.

As Guilherme Wisnik points out, the city of São Paulo is constituted by the democratizing pressures inherent in its metropolization process (ZOCCHIO, 2011). Several works, such as the widening of roads and avenues and their consequent expropriations, indicate different social and economic interests present in the city.

By identifying Resolution 37/1992 as a preservation instrument in effect in the selected perimeter, we observe the distancing from the existing reality in the process of recognizing the cultural significance of an architectural heritage. From the conception of cultural heritage as a social construction, always in transformation, we problematize the paradoxes of patrimonialization in the valorization of São Paulo's memory through the analysis of the appropriations of architectural heritage present in the logic of

São Paulo's erasure.

The present work highlights the importance given to a reading that understands the architectural heritage in its most authentic form.¹, that is, that values the contingent cultural qualities associated with buildings (Nara + 20, 2014). Over the last few decades there has been a series of efforts to define the criteria upon which conservation decisions are made. The set of values that constitute the cultural significance of a good are often not well understood, in order to problematize the identification of attributes.

We observe preservationist approaches that capture the cultural significance and the identification of values and attributes, under a more objective perspective regarding the relevance of the historical building, which hardly considers spontaneous manifestations of affective bonds and belonging, with a social character. This posture facilitates movements of gentrification and mischaracterization of cultural goods.

The paradigm shift from a heritage safeguard more concerned with the material conservation of architectural heritage, to a preservationist debate more concerned with promoting conservation based on values, which encompass the intangible universe of a pre-existing construction, has become more evident, given the occurrence of the destructions subsequent to the Second World War.

It is in the Venice Charter (1964) that the term cultural meaning appears for the first time and is associated with the significant phase that the historic monument encompasses. The definition of the concept will be further discussed in the Carta de Burra (1999), in which the meaning of a heritage would be incorporated in the listed site itself,

in its surrounding area, in its use and in its associations, and may vary in value for different individuals. and groups. Its interpretation would imply that all modes of presentation of a site, including its use and existing activities, are taken into consideration.

We recognize the gulf between the principles developed in the heritage charters and the ways of putting them into practice, as well as the problem related to the generalization of extolled values. However, for the conservation and preservation of a heritage asset, it becomes extremely important to recognize the values that manifest the existing cultural significance, as well as the identification of attributes (tangible and intangible) that reverberate these values.

According to Françoise Choay, when we seek to overcome the barrier of the tangible and relate heritage to its intrinsic characteristics, the use of heritage manifests itself as an integral part of its essence, maintaining a relationship with its aesthetic and symbolic purposes (CHOAY, 2001).

In her research on the uses of heritage, Laurajane Smith highlights that heritage is what goes on at heritage sites. Places can serve as cultural tools that facilitate, but are not necessarily vital to, this cultural process. Smith concludes that heritage is living. It is a moment of action and not something frozen in a material form (SMITH, 2006).

Places become heritage sites both because of the meaning-making and memory-making events that take place in them, but also because they give a sense of occasion and reality to the activities that take place in them. Identity would not only be produced or represented by heritage, but would be actively and continually being recreated.

“Although heritage is something that is

1. Authenticity is addressed by this work in line with the Nara Charter on Authenticity (1994). Authenticity is an essential qualifying factor regarding the values attributed to the heritage itself. Knowledge and understanding of these sources of information, regarding the original and subsequent characteristics of cultural heritage and their meaning, are basic requirements for assessing all aspects of authenticity.

done at places, these places become places of heritage both because of the events of meaning making and remembering that occur at them, but also because they lend a sense of occasion and reality to the activities occurring at them. There is an interlinked relationship between the activities that occur at places and the places themselves – but it is this tension between action and material representation that is an important element of heritage. The tension may at once be about creating and maintaining historical and social consensus, but simultaneously it can also be a process of dissent and contestation. (SMITH, 2006. p. 83)

As discussed by Sarah Fieldman, preservation is a social practice that is inserted in the process of conflicts and disputes over territory. We need to look at the specificities of the forms of appropriation, symbolic and economic, of urban spaces in order to assign value and define strategies linked to cultural heritage (FIELDMAN, 2017).

CASE OF STUDY

By recognizing that the processes of appropriation of spaces are dialectical processes, through which people and spaces are linked - in a sociocultural context, from the individual, group and community levels present in society, we reflect on how the processes of meaning of architectural heritage present within the central area of the city of São Paulo and which reflects the logic of São Paulo's erasure.

The methodological route of the present work was developed in four distinct stages, aiming at an integration between all parts. The research intends to contribute to the questioning of the construction of cultural meaning and the role of appropriations in the field of heritage safeguarding.

The work was developed through (i) survey of documentary sources; (ii) architectural analysis of the flagged buildings (iii) a non-participant and participant observation of

the existing appropriations; (iv) in-depth qualitative interviews. These four distinct approaches to data collection aim at a greater understanding of the selected cases and the universe studied.

The immersion in the field started from the deductive method, not having pre-established hypotheses, just a first more generic question, *of how the cultural meaning manifests itself through the appropriation of objects that represent the logic of São Paulo's erasure?* This logic of erasure is approached as a result of the construction of a collective memory marked by an official discourse.

From the analysis of the collected data, certain concepts and theoretical conceptions were presented in line with the reflections carried out. Regarding an interpretation of heritage based on its values, we highlight the analyzes developed by the Austrian Alois Riegl in his work **``O Culto Moderno dos Monumentos``**. Related to studies on patrimonialization as a cultural process, where the use will manifest itself as an intrinsic aspect of this process, we highlight several authors, among them Laurajanne Smith, Françoise Choay and Sarah Fieldman. Regarding studies on the field of memory, we highlight the work of Henri Bergson and Maurice Halbwachs on the "phenomenon of memory" and on "collective memory".

With this work, we do not intend to answer all questions intrinsic to the cultural meaning of the marked architectural heritage, we only propose a more in-depth reflection on the different processes of meaning that may manifest from the appropriations of the cut made and on the need for reinterpretation the same.

The objects, architectural heritage, flagged as the most representative for analysis and which are listed by Resolution 37/1992, were: (i) **``Largo do Paissandú``** and **``Igreja da Nossa do Rosário dos Homens Pretos``**

(included in Protection Level 1, which requires the full preservation of the asset). The Church was recognized by the resolution as an isolated building, in neo-Romanesque style with influence from European religious architecture and with a reference role for the construction of later churches. The Church remains with the religious use promoted by its Brotherhood.

The other buildings analyzed were listed at level 3, where only their facade needs to be preserved. The first of these is the Cotonificio Paulista Building, located at Avenida São João, 340, which was owned by ``Sociedade Anônima Cotonificio Paulista``. This building would also have housed the Municipal Hotel for a period. Currently, the building belongs to the Municipal Hotel and Parking Ltd, and is closed. The building was occupied a few times by movements fighting for housing, however violent expropriations took place, keeping the building unused and with structures that make it impossible to occupy.

Other flagship buildings were the Hotel Columbia Palace (1920), located at Avenida São João, 588, and the former Hotel Central, also located at Avenida São João, 288. Both buildings were designed by Ramos de Azevedo and their facades are made in an eclectic style with neoclassical influence. They had the hotel business as an initial use, as a reflection of the coffee economy. Both buildings were unoccupied and had progressive IPTU. They are currently occupied by the decent housing movement MRTSU - ``Movimento Sem Ceto pela Reforma Urbana``.

The Hotel Columbia was expropriated and the Municipal Housing Department is waiting for the approval of the building's Popular Housing project, proposing to transform the building into Social Interest Housing. The Secretariat charges the occupation to carry out the project. Meanwhile, the lack of characterization of the building and

its degraded appearance become strong justifications for the accusation of misuse of the property. As much as the property has been occupied since 2010 by the housing movement, the use assigned in the DPH report is vacant.

Unlike the Hotel Colúmbia, the Hotel Central was not expropriated and the current owner establishes a more appealing posture, not demanding its vacancy. However, there is a lack of incentives for better conservation of the property.

The collapse of the Wilton Paes de Almeida Building was also the focus of analysis in this work. Listed at level 3, the Wilton Paes de Almeida building was one of the properties recognized for the listing of the Anhangabaú area and was identified as part of the fifth typological set of properties most representative of the stages of occupation of the area and verticalization of the Center, characterized by the architecture contemporary, where glass, concrete and steel towers symbolize today's metropolis.

The building that initially housed the ``Companhia Comercial de Vidros do Brasil``, also housed the federal police and in September 2002, the building became the property of the Union. The building was unoccupied in 2003, when it was occupied by a housing movement. On the 1st. May 2018, as a result of a fire, the building collapsed. The site housed 146 families from the Fight for Decent Housing Movement (LMD).

After the collapse, it was suggested that the land be torn down, since the building was no longer there. The lot was decommissioned by Resolution number 03/CONPRESP/2020 and the justifications for the dismantling were the disappearance of the building and the lack of iconographic material for the recovery of the building's constituent elements. was also praised *“the absence of testimonies that could support the maintenance of the building's listing,*

both from a cultural, historical, environmental or social point of view.” (Resolution number 03/CONPRESP/2020). In the void left by the disaster, they will build a new building, which will have the same height as the old building there, but will not be used for occupation movements.

By using a deductive field analysis approach, the work was developed with the analysis of the different existing territorial appropriations. A first methodological route was developed through living in the neighborhood for a period of one and a half years, where an analysis of everyday life and present occupations was aimed at.

With the aim of broadening the preservationist debate, in the sense of offering new approaches to the profound dimensions of the cultural significance of built heritage and the existing relationships between appropriations and collective memory, we seek to understand the processes of subversion of these architectural heritage as memory devices, within the present logic of erasure.

The term “device” is understood from the concept developed by Michel Foucault (1975) and is described as a macro phenomenon that allows us to underline the elusive and complex dimension of the phenomena of visibility and invisibility of the urban space that can lead to the process of patrimonialization (ZAMANT, 2022).

In order to identify the role of marked heritage as memory devices, after identifying the different territorial occupations present in the selected universe, we chose to carry out in-depth qualitative interviews with some of the actors who appropriate the architectural heritage occupied by a housing movement. We analyze the experiences of residents of the two buildings occupied by the housing movement MRTSU. The objective was to deepen the look on the meaning process of these actors.

We approached heritage as a socially

constructed object. When aiming to analyze how the erased memory manifests itself from the territory and its assets, understanding how those who appropriate these buildings attribute meaning to them seemed fundamental.

From the existing appropriations, we seek to recognize aspects of the cultural significance of the historic building, in order to enhance the importance of a heritage reading that recognizes the different reactions and feelings that the heritage extols in those who appropriate it, in order to build public policies that better address heritage, in order to also promote the preservation of its materiality.

Through a qualitative methodology, carried out through in-depth interviews, eight residents of the two occupations were interviewed. The research focused on subjects who narrate their experiences and perceptions. The sample consisted of people in a similar social situation: all occupants of the two buildings selected for research.

The method sought to direct the understanding of the cult of “abandoned heritage”, within a logic of erasure. And, in search of a more democratic position, the work sought to carry out a reading that addresses heritage in the present, as a social construction in transformation, where architecture promotes its space of communication.

Likewise, we seek to understand the history of each individual and how and why they occupy that space. The predefined questions served as a guideline for the work process, which aimed to understand the construction of collective and individual meanings for the occupants of that territory.

RESULTS

When we recognize patrimonialization through its social construction, which will be manifested and signaled in its spatial appropriations, we observe that the signaled architectural heritage is formally recognized



The architectural assets analyzed were: the Church of N. S. R. H. P., located in the center of ``Largo do Paissandu``, and the occupied or closed buildings on Avenida São João; the Cottonificio Paulista Building, the Hotel Colúmbia Palace, the Hotel Central and the void left by the collapse of the Wilton Paes de Almeida Building.

Source: Ortofoto PMSP 2017.



``Centro Cultural da Ocupação São João`` with mural by Raul Zito.

Image source: Author, 2019.

by cultural meanings that have little dialogue with the latent reality. This non-recognition perpetuates the existing erasure logic.

The appropriations of spaces, present in the territory under analysis, showed us that the urban fabric carries memory in its existence. The church ``Igreja da Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Homens Pretos`` is a point of reference for Afro-descendant culture and a trace of an urbanism and slave-owning society and, in these, its brotherhoods played essential roles for the insertion of its members in a context socioeconomic and cultural-religious. In order to give continuity to religious practices with the assistance, the presence of the church reveals an existing cultural meaning that shapes and organizes its adjacent area. This phenomenon contradicts the conception of the Church as an isolated object.

The analyzed occupations seem to establish a silent and indirect dialogue with the Church. We observed the presence of several signs analogous to the oppressed narratives. Abandonment and appropriation seem to merge into a mnemonic phenomenon of dissociable meaning, where existing occupations seem to be reactive aspects to the logic of erasure intrinsic to the territory. Architecture has the function of emerging a presence from the feeling of absence, materialized by the appropriation of space. The abandonment seems to be transformed by the occupation and the church seems to signal the eternal return of an old narrative.

We found that the appropriations and occupations of the territory sought to enhance a meaning through action. This process demonstrated a need for recognition. The processes of meaning analyzed showed us a duty of memory that we believe is potentiated by the logic of erasure intrinsic to the territory and that reverberates cultural problems existing in São Paulo society. The

erasure imposed on the territory is evident as distinct from spontaneous forgetting and this forced isolation reverberates in a potentiation of the maintenance of anti-memory. The denial of difficult memories conditions a form of isolation and the occupation of these damaged territories ends up having a reparative function (RICOEUR, 2007).

The signposted architectural heritage, located in the area of ``Largo do Paissandú`` and close to the church ``Igreja da Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Homens Pretos`` and occupied by movements fighting for decent housing, seem to represent a claim for the right to memory, existence, visibility. In the midst of a territory marked by erasure policies, the marked occupations show the relationship between abandonment and resistance.

The historic-stylistic value is not an important aspect for those who occupy the analyzed architectural heritage. The state of abandonment and the housing deficit present in the city of São Paulo are the main aspects for such occupations. We observe the struggle, like a cry for presence, the struggle against the cult of absence, even if it is through it that it makes itself exist, because, only by assuming presence, would we be able to fully free ourselves from an oblivion not promoted by erasure, but by the presence of all parties.

``Largo do Paissandú`` and its adjacent constructions manifest the Afro-descendant culture and a slave-owning society, where its legacy was extreme social inequality and a constant logic of erasure.

In order to promote a more democratic preservationist universe that aims to build a healthier collective memory, without imprisonment and fragmentation, we present existing narratives in the territory analyzed and silenced, which show the need to reinterpret the existing cultural meaning.

The process of signification, approached as a continuous phenomenon, reverberates the

past through various associations in a moving present. This identification dialogues with an approach that enables a reinterpretation of its cultural meaning in society, in order to guide the interpretation of heritage as a cultural process.

In the midst of a fragmented society, which denies its difficult memories, we question whether the most modern form of patrimonialization is not based on the analysis of its opposites. We recognize a heterotopic, democratic and free society, not by the fixation of its memories, but by the possibility of revealing all of them. In this

sense, we praise the need for safeguarding heritage in recognizing the manifestation of places that reverberate silenced memories, in order to allow the existence of all of them. We praise the appropriation of spaces as an important attribute to be analyzed in the patrimonialization process.

The recognition of these places through their appropriations and their valuation processes become essential for the construction of preservation policies, macro and micro policies, which value the integrity and authenticity of our architectural heritage.

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