

Artistic Occupations in the Historical Center of São Luís (MA): Reflections on the revitalization and preservation of the cultural heritage of São Luís

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Abstract— *Ours is an exploratory and descriptive field research, using bibliographic research and semi-structured interviews, aiming to discuss how the occupations "A Vida é uma Festa" and "O Circo Tá na Rua" in the Historic Center of São Luís contribute to the revitalization, democratization, preservation, and valorization of the heritage of the city. It conceptualizes cultural heritage and depict the artistic occupations of São Luís. It also punctuates how these artistic occupations give new meaning to spaces and enable the dynamic permanence of the idea that cultural heritage is not limited to ruins, mansions, works and monuments, but a living and under reconstruction by the political, social and cultural relations between those who inhabit it. Besides that, our study emphasizes the relationship between occupations and heritage, approaching the dynamic perspective that advocates for its continuous development, with changes arising from the contemporary uses that are given to it, placing subjects as a part of it. Finally, it ends by emphasizing that artistic occupations claim the preservation and valorization of heritage through its use, by means of bringing people closer to the cultural assets that make up the history of the place and the nation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Historic Center of São Luís (HCSL) is nationally known for having one of the largest civil architectural ensembles with traces of European origin that stands out as one of the main city postcards (Chaves, 2012). Despite being part of the history of the capital, traces of neglect are visible in the space. Some initiatives were taken by the government to revitalize the space; one of them was the development of an occupation policy by artistic collectives.

As one of the main exponents of both the State of Maranhão and Brazil in terms of heritage (Chaves, 2012; Costa, 2017), the HCSL has been an object of study in

many different fields of knowledge. Investigating its nuances is essential not only to make the assets located there evident, but also to make known actions that favor the preservation and valorization of this space, which, over time, gained relevance not only for its architectural heritage, but also for its cultural richness. Therefore, this study aims to discuss the implications of artistic occupations present in the HCSL and highlight how these can contribute, not only to its revitalization, but also to the democratization, preservation, and valorization of the cultural heritage of the capital of Maranhão, starting from the occupation of its public spaces.

In this perspective, ours is an exploratory and descriptive study (Sampieri, Collado, & Lucio, 2013), which uses as instruments the bibliographic research (Marconi & Lakatos, 2017) as a mechanism to dialogue with authors dealing with Cultural Heritage and Artistic Occupations, among them Choay (2009), Garcia (2017), Paiva and Gabbay (2016), Medeiros (2002), and Fonseca (2009). With a qualitative approach (Marconi & Lakatos, 2017), an analysis of the productions was carried out, seeking to conjugate the categories tackled by the authors to the object of investigation, notably, occupations in the Historic Center of São Luís, Maranhão. To this end, the collectives *A Vida é uma Festa* and *O Circo Tá na Rua* located in the Historic Center of São Luís were investigated, with a view to analyzing how they contribute to the revitalization, democratization, preservation, and valorization of the cultural heritage of the city, based on empirical data from semi-structured interviews, whose testimonies were collected between October and November 2019, through field research with the support of the log book (Sampieri, Collado, & Lucio, 2013).

The article is divided into three main sections. The first section deals with artistic occupations, especially in terms of how these are constituted. The second section discusses cultural heritage in its theoretical-conceptual perspective, and also talks about listed heritage. The third section discusses the implications of artistic occupations in the Historic Center of São Luís, and how they contribute to the preservation and valorization of the cultural heritage of Maranhão. It depicts the Historical Center of São Luís, in addition to reflecting on the role of artistic occupations and their implications for the cultural heritage of the city.

II. ARTISTIC OCCUPATIONS AND PUBLIC SPACE

In the mid-twentieth century, there was considerable interest in analyzing the typical social processes of certain urban spaces. Studies such as those by Walter Benjamin, Georg Simmel, Max Weber and Guy Debord – the latter a pioneer in the problematizations regarding everyday life – gain important visibility, in order to break its logic alienated by the capital (Conceição, 2011). Conceição (2011) observes that there is a peculiar complexity in the relationship between people and the city and the spaces present in it, which results directly from the enjoyment of historical, political, economic, social, and individual transformations. Paiva and Gabbay (2016, p. 4) expand this perspective by stating that “[...] the city as a psychic space, thanks to the production of a chain of collectively sustained affections [...]” in the public space, seen as a place of democracy, relationships are established between

individuals of common production: spaces for exchanges, contacts, dialogues, and affections.

Considering the public space as a place of democracy, Sartori and Garcia (2013) ratify the rich complexity of exploring the relationships belonging to it, characterizing it as a space for training and discussion of the public agenda, negotiated by the effective participation of civil society in its elaboration. But they also highlight the prevalence of private interests over public interests in the use of city spaces, that is, the elites (bourgeoisie and the State) hold the power to use spaces to the detriment of the needs and right of the population to enjoy them.

Corroborating this idea, Paiva and Gabbay (2016) find a relationship of causality between the occupation of public spaces and the privatization of cities. Developing countries, such as Brazil, adopt a North American urbanization model that imposes itself on the population: a global city full of commercial centers, malls, large buildings, in a state of continuous surveillance and asepsis.

Taking into account the artistic perception of the use of public spaces, the practices of art making in the street inevitably create bonds between the body of the individuals and the urban body, creating visible and invisible connections between everyone who participates in the action. This way of appropriating space, creating social bonds, goes against the spatial relationships arising from metropolization, in which the “being there”, the sharing with the other, and the radical transformations in traditions practiced by the local community disappear (Moreaux, 2013).

These collectives that emerge in cities tend to identify and legitimize their real problems and propose ways to solve them, something that was once common in small cities, is now necessary in large metropolises, in a real need to reorganize the city and its public spaces (Durán, 2008). Therefore, Garcia (2017) emphasizes on new socio-spatial configurations of culture and city that such re-significations of public space occur because there is a collective identity built on symbolic values that expand the common characteristics of residents and users of that space through the construction of signs of well-being and satisfaction.

Artistic-cultural occupations can be considered as a model of collective action that uses artistic practices in empty, abandoned, or underutilized urban spaces, as a political tool for reflection and mobilization of society, in order to promote full participation in its management and use, placing itself as a social movement of demand and resistance to the commodification of public space by the capitalist system, promoting the practice of direct democracy, citizenship and the right to the city.

III. INDENTATIONS AND EQUATIONS

When reflecting upon Cultural Heritage and what it represents leads us to the need to recall – even if briefly – its constitution and conceptualization. Although countless decades have passed, its semantic construction is still marked by new categorizations and appropriations. Beforehand, a first attempt to establish a concept was made by looking in the lexicon of the word. Vogt (2008) emphasizes that Patrimony comes from the Latin *patrimonium*, which means paternal inheritance, or that which integrates the *parter*, that is, the father.

Silva (2017) complements, stressing that, in the Portuguese language, the term “heritage” is defined as that inherited from parents, family assets. In this sense, Choay (2009) highlights that the concept of heritage is related to family structures, however, over time it also started to encompass other meanings, aggregating genetic, historical, and cultural aspects. Relating itself to different aspects, not only from a patriarchal perspective, but also one closely associated with monuments – this at the expense of the influence of Architecture, Visual Arts, Anthropology and History (Pereira, 2017) – it is emphasized that the genesis of what is understood by heritage began in the 18th century, and in Classical Antiquity and the Medieval Age the term also had great notoriety (Choay, 2009).

The views pointed out by Pereira (2017) and Choay (2009) reverberate in the views of the society regarding the cultural heritage, since it is seen as something untouchable, with restricted access, which reveals the resistance that the population has in the face of occupations in the Historic Center of São Luís, for example, sometimes seen as something transgressive. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the concept of monument provided reflective conditions for the concept of heritage itself to be outlined, given the historical importance given to the demarcation, control, and enumeration of monuments, as Studart (2017) points out.

According to Rocha (2018), the historical construction of the meaning of heritage has expanded and changed, no longer contemplating only historical monuments, but also including elements such as language, rhythms, tastes and flavors. Thus, we can emphasize that "Cultural heritage is a process of symbolic construction that has sociocultural, natural, technical, political and economic dimensions." (Fernandes, 2017, p. 32).

Thus, it can be said that the arrival of the 20th century brought with it the expansion of the patrimonial domain, considering that everything related to heritage, especially its objects, needed to find "resonance" in society, whose actions of conceptualization and application were outlining themselves. After World War II, the purposes and values

of heritage were re-qualified, especially in contemporary Western societies, as explained by Choay (2009) and Grimaldi (2016).

Based on this, we highlight that “Heritage is currently the enjoyment of a wide range of activities. In the cultural sphere, it was incorporated due to its artistic and artisanal productivity, in addition to the vision that considers artifacts and intangible goods as worthy of preservation.” (Silva, 2017, p. 16). In the arrangement of elements that intend to delineate the cultural heritage presented by Silva (2017), it is possible to include artistic occupations, as they are also responsible for remarkable artistic production and for their presence in the redefinition of public spaces, such as those that are the target of this study. As explained above, the heritage assets listed here are important exponents for the consolidation of the understanding of heritage and what it represents, not restricted only to architectural constructions.

Supporting this notion, Rocha (2018, p. 28) states that Heritage can be understood as “[...] historical and cultural assets, of a collective character, that is, belonging to a certain social group with the intention of expressing a given moment or collective memory, serving to build and/or reinforce the identity memory of this group.” Furthermore, it is pertinent to emphasize that on the threshold of the 20th century, the historical and artistic national heritage began to encompass nature, which, according to Medeiros (2002, p. 41), is “[...] understood, then, as 'landscape', and to archaeological objects and sites [...].” So, there was a new moment for heritage, as its dimensions transcended national boundaries, conquering international spaces, paving the way for UNESCO (Pereira, 2017; Medeiros, 2002).

Heritage preservation emerges from the need for spaces capable of preserving and safeguarding memory. Memory is also placed as an important category related to heritage. In this sense, patrimonialization stands out as a political-institutional mechanism that reinforces the importance of heritage as an entity responsible for the public memory of a people. Consequently, according to Funari and Pelegrini (2009), patrimonializing consists in legitimizing a public good, which in turn must be preserved.

Therefore, cultural heritage – both material and immaterial – is endowed with several dimensions, which must not only be preserved, but because they represent an entire historical legacy of our ancestors, they must be passed on to future generations. With that, the heritage will acquire new meanings and interpretations, that is, it will compose new realities. Therefore, it must be understood as a discursive formation, responsible for mapping symbolic contents, not restricted to the simple description of how a

particular nation is formed, but, above all, how it builds its cultural identity.

The Historic Center of São Luís is part of the heritage of the city and in recent years it has been a space for diversified activities, including the Book Fair, alternative and popular Brazilian music festivals, artistic interventions and occupations. Such practices not only give new meaning, but also give a new perspective to this space loaded with memory and symbols of the culture of Maranhão. In the next section, such practices will be discussed, especially how artistic occupations affect citizenship actions, preservation and valorization of the public heritage of the State.

It is pertinent to emphasize that identifying, preserving, and conserving material and intangible assets is not enough by itself, not when wanting actions to be consolidated. Interdisciplinary work with the population is essential in the spaces of socialization of cultural heritage, highlighting the artistic occupations, especially those that act as vectors for the requalification and redefinition of public spaces in São Luís, installed in the Historic Center of the capital. In this sense, the next section goes on to address how such occupations can be remarkable vectors for promoting the development of policies and actions for the preservation of cultural heritage, as well as vectors for encouraging tourism, conscious use of public spaces, and the strengthening and practice of citizenship.

IV. THE ARTISTIC OCCUPATIONS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE VALORIZATION OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SÃO LUÍS-MA

The Historic Center of São Luís is internationally known for its beauty and for being an area of great historical and cultural value, as well as architectural and scenic value (Cutrim; Costa; Oliveira, 2017). The central region of the capital of Maranhão had its emergence associated with the main economic locus of the city: the port and its coastal region. The Praia Grande region was the great commercial nucleus in the beginning of the colonization of São Luís, becoming the loading and unloading point of the market flow of import and export, constituting the genesis of the city and its society.

As the center of São Luís is the result of human actions, overlapped by different periods of time, and considering the advance of trade and commercial relations established in Praia Grande, its historical and cultural value was consolidated, and today it is considered one of the most important spaces of the capital of Maranhão (Noronha, 2015). The Historic Center of São Luís has unique characteristics. It is a place where the culture and

history of Maranhão are expressed through tangible and intangible elements, in aromas and flavors, cultural manifestations and occupations, responsible for keeping alive and recovering all the memory and identity of the place (Cutrim, Costa, & Oliveira, 2017, Santos & Lorêdo, 2013, Ferreira, 2008).

The Historic Center of São Luís has an extension of approximately 220 hectares, comprising the neighborhoods of Praia Grande, Desterro, Apicum, Codozinho, Lira, Belira, Macaúba, Coreia and Madre Deus.

Founded by the French around 1612, the Historic Center had then its nucleus established. After the battle of Guaxenduba, the Portuguese, then led by Jerônimo de Albuquerque, brought to São Luís in 1615 the engineer Francisco Frias de Mesquita, in charge of planning the entire space (Mendes, Sousa, & Marques, 2016).

The urban plan of São Luís presented the same architectural models of other historic cities, such as Rio de Janeiro and Recife (Costa, 2017; Mendes, Sousa, & Marques, 2016). In mid-1641, São Luís was then taken by the Dutch, led by Maurício de Nassau. It is noteworthy that during this period some churches were damaged, such as the Church of Desterro, the Church of São João Batist – the latter was only recovered about twenty years after the expulsion of the Dutch, in 1644, in a movement led by Teixeira de Melo (Branco et al., 2017; Mendes, Sousa, & Marques, 2016).

Thus, the Historic Center of São Luís “[...] depicts the homogeneous remnants of the 18th and 19th centuries represented by the townhouses with facades covered in Portuguese tiles [...]” (Mendes, Sousa, & Marques, 2016, p. 4). The Historic Center of São Luís has a unique architectural ensemble, which expresses all the economic power of the capital in the colonial period, especially due to the abundance of Portuguese tiles. São Luís was considered one of the most prosperous cities in the country, thanks to the large production of cotton, rice, among other genres (Silva, 2009a).

Although it expressed the heyday of the capital of Maranhão in the colonial period, the Historic Center, from the 20th century onwards, was abandoned. This was due to the departure of older residents, who were occupying finest spaces of the city, and the fall of commerce in the place, resulting in “[...] processes of ruination of several constructions in the urban fabric of that area [...]” (Silva, 2009a, p. 2).

It is noteworthy that in the 1940s, people in power were already seeking to put in effect the prerogatives of Decree-Law No. 25/1937, whose objective was to protect the heritage assets of great value to the country. With this, the fight to protect the architectural ensemble of the

Historical Center of São Luís gains strength. According to Andrès (1998, p. 104), Maranhão takes an important step with the “Federal Listing of Sambaqui do Pindahy, Process 211-T-39; Inscription No. 6, Archaeological, Ethnographic and Landscape Book, page 02, 19/01/1940 [...]”, the first federal listing in the State (Silva, 2009a).

Other listings were also made, these being fundamental for the Historic Center of São Luís to acquire even more value, especially for its architectural arrangement. Actions aimed at preserving the heritage properties of the State, especially those located in São Luís, were consolidated in 1974 by the Service for the Historical and Artistic National Heritage (SPHAN) (Cutrim, Costa, & Oliveira, 2017).

In a moment of great importance not only for Maranhão, but for Brazil, the Historic Center of São Luís was born, thanks to the actions of the Institute for National Artistic and Historical Heritage (IPHAN). According to Cutrim, Costa and Oliveira (2017), the Historic Center concentrated the main preservation activities, as it brought together a grandiose architectural ensemble and “[...] because it is a living historic city, due to its very nature of capital that despite its expansion, São Luís continued to preserve the urban fabric of the 17th century and its original architectural ensemble.” (Mendes, Sousa, & Marques, 2016, p. 4-5).

After the national recognition of the architectural ensemble of Center of São Luís, on December 6, 1997, the Historic Center was internationally recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), receiving, in addition to the listing, the title of Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Silva, 2017; Mendes, Sousa, & Marques, 2016).

In recent years, The Historic Center of São Luís has been a space for diversified activities, including the Book Fair, alternative and popular Brazilian music festivals, artistic interventions and occupations. Such practices not only give new meaning, but also give a new perspective to this space loaded with memory and symbols of the culture of Maranhão. In the next section, we will discuss how such practices, especially artistic occupations, affect citizenship, preservation, and valorization actions of the public heritage of the State.

V. ARTISTIC OCCUPATIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SÃO LUÍS

Although the movements of artistic occupation in the Historic Center of São Luís have been around for a long time (consider, for example, the 30 years of the collective A Vida é uma Festa), it was through the extinction of the

Ministry of Culture, in May 2016, by the interim government of Michel Temer, that the term occupation takes on a greater meaning of struggle and resistance on the part of the local artistic class, by the movement called OcupaMinc-MA , with São Luís being one of the pioneer capitals in the occupation of IPHAN buildings throughout Brazil, under the allegation of the illegitimacy of the current government and the loss of basic social rights.

Since then, in the artistic world of the collectives operating in the historic center of the capital of Maranhão – although they already had characteristics of occupations – the format of public spaces occupation as a mechanism of civil society for the maintenance and guarantee of free public cultural activities for the community became part of the discourse and the slogans of the actions, in a more incisive way.

Duran (2008) sees these collectives as legitimate representatives of the most diverse categories of society, which occupy public spaces not only with the intention of using them for entertainment and leisure only, but to identify the problems present there and find collective ways to solve them, in opposition to the spectacle culture of governments that create well-trained and apathetic audiences, consumers of a ready-made narrative that does not problematize the space in which it is inserted.

Specifically in São Luís, there were two actions that came close to the fostering of artistic production in the format of occupations: the public notice Pontos de Cultura, carried out by the City Hall through the Municipal Department of Culture, in 2016, and 04 public notices for occupation in specific points of the historic center of the city, in 2017. It is important to emphasize that both actions were mainly aimed at popular culture groups and collectives. (Maranhão, 2017; Brazil, 2015). Given the non-continuity of public policies in changes of government, which does not only occur in Maranhão, but across the country, there is always a deficit of affirmative actions in the field of culture, especially those focused on the format of artistic occupations.

It is in this scenario of incipient development actions and instability in the maintenance of cultural policies that some occupations resist acting in the Historic Center of São Luís. To better elucidate the discussion, two occupations with different characteristics of spaces, artistic segments, forms of occupation, and length of trajectory, in order to relate them to aspects of preservation and heritage valorization.

The first one is A Vida é uma Festa which, in short, is a meeting of former musicians who frequent the Historic Center of São Luís on an open stage of improvisation and musical shows. It has become a traditional attraction and

has been taking place every Thursday night at Praia Grande for the last 30 years. The program occupies the street Ladeira do Comércio, in the back of the Creativity Center Odylo Costa Filho with a wooden platform, speakers, microphones and some musical instruments, building a clear invitation for anyone to participate on the open stage.

Coordinated by Zé Maria Medeiros, singer and composer from Maranhão, the meeting is filled with various songs and sounds from the local popular culture, added to the traditional rhythm of Tambor de Crioula circles and musical shows, sometimes improvised, sometimes with invited local groups. The flagship of the actions of the collective is the preservation of the traditions of popular culture from Maranhão, with instruments typical of the traditional rhythms of the State, such as zabumbas and pandeirões from the feast Bumba-meu-boi and the tambor grande or rufador, meia or socador and crivador or perenga, used in the Tambor de Crioula.

Furthermore, A Vida é uma Festa has occupied the address Casarão nº 210 on Comércio street for 28 years, in addition to the area on the street in front of the property. The original movement was called Companhia Circense and, before the occupation, promoted music and circus shows in the streets of the Historic Center of São Luís. In the first 10 years, the Company continued to promote activities inside and outside the occupied property, with the event A Vida é uma Festa taking place there every Thursday night with attractions such as the traditional Tambor de Crioula and musical shows. With the ending of the initial formation, the latter remained as the main action of the occupation.

In turn, the collective O Circo Tá na Rua, as the name implies, occupies the Nauro Machado Square, located on the Estrela street next to the João do Vale Theater, offering free and public circus training. Different from the first, this occupation has existed for seven years and brings to the public space a proposal of educational action, given that many of the direct collaborators of the collective started their career as circus artists with the practice developed in the meetings. The group provides various materials from the circus universe for the population to experiment and learn about, such as stilts, juggling materials, a tatami area for floor acrobatics and the allusion to traditional tightropes and wire through the slackline, the practice of balancing oneself on a tensioned tape.

In this collective the management is collaborative. The coordination of actions is not centered on a single person. The organizational structure of the collective takes place through direct collaborators, who participate in actions beyond the weekly training sessions, and indirect

collaborators, who are all those who attend training assiduously and thus collaborate to maintain the collective. It is worth mentioning the networking of the group with other sociocultural groups from different neighborhoods of the island as a strategy to strengthen the occupation of public spaces.

Regarding the interventions carried out, Article 17 of Decree 25/1937 – which organizes the protection of the national historical and artistic heritage – establishes that listed federal assets cannot be painted, restored or repaired without prior authorization from the competent body, under penalty of fine of 50% of the cost to correct the damage done (Iphan, 1937). Brandão (2016) comments on the contradiction between the positive aspect of artistic-cultural occupations in making use of spaces open to the population and the illegality of interventions that operate without the authorization of the technical staff of preservation agencies.

In contrast to what was observed in the 1937 instrument, such interventions are considered by Brandão (2016, p. 69) as “[...] responses sensitive to the historical object. These are the cases of interventions associated with the identity of the groups or that pose as creative solutions to the needs of use.”. These are works of art that consider the authenticity of the property, do not modify its original concrete structure, but demonstrate the relationship of the occupants with the materiality of the occupied place, adding a new layer of history to the existing one attributed to the building.

From the relationship between occupations and cultural heritage, the main phenomenon elucidated by the occupants as a motivation to give new meaning to spaces, is given by the so-called “urban voids, spaces abandoned by the owners and by the public administration that generate public safety problems for the community. Regarding the Urbanism theory, these voids are spaces that have lost their social function or do not suit the population's needs, generating an opposite, generally negative, evasion effect of people who inhabit and visit the place, in addition to focusing on illicit activities and urban violence (Borde, 2006).

In this case, the reinterpretation of the square's space occurs as a transposition caused by the absence of the Circo da Cidade. The urban void that the removal of the equipment left, both in the urban fabric and in the imagination of the artistic class, especially the circus segment, mobilizes the need for a public space that meets the needs of cultural production in this area and meets an artistic demand lack of public cultural equipment specific to their activities.

In both occupations, it is observed that the main collaboration with the preservation and enhancement of the Historic Center of São Luís as a cultural heritage is the presence of the people in the heritage space. As stated by Gonçalves (1996, p. 97, emphasis added), when analyzing the speech of the director of SPHAN, Rodrigo Melo de Franco Andrade, who held the position in 1937 and remained until the end of the 1960s, “[...] the main factor in the process of disappearance of the national historical and artistic heritage is the indifference of the population [...]”, which overcomes social class distinctions and is linked to the loss of Brazilian cultural identity.

It is noted that not only in the cultural facilities, but also in the streets of the Historic Center, there is space for artistic work, as stated by the occupation A Vida é um Festa (2019, verbal information): “[...] We always worked with the idea of making art on the street [...] I think this is very important, the street is an open, democratic space. People can choose to be there [...]”. The dynamics of use of the city given by the artists goes against that pointed out by Oliveira Neto (2012), where, since the beginning of the 20th century, the privatization of living spaces has been adopted as a synonym for security and social well-being, placing living spaces in hermetic zones, such as shopping malls and gated communities, while the street becomes a place of danger and social vulnerability.

In this sense, the actions carried out by artistic-cultural occupations are sometimes marginalized. The Collective O Circo Tá na Rua reports on such situations:

The police, nowadays, we just try to ignore it, right, to ignore its existence. The police action Blitz Urbana already wanted to stop us, the police already tried to blur it [injure, prevent]. We don't try to fight either, they stay in their lane, and we stay in ours [...] with these guys [the police] we realize that there is a barrier: they don't care about us and we're ignoring them too. The Blitz Urbana has already tried twice to take us out of the square because we don't have a permit to be there, and we don't do anything but put the materials, we don't drill into the square, we don't do anything, everything that we put in, we take out, and we even clean the space when we do something that dirties the place. (O Circo Tá na Rua, 2019, verbal information).

It is common to find reports of confrontation with the Military Police in other experiences of artistic-cultural occupation, especially when it comes to actions considered transgressive, such as the use of graffiti in the research by Monasterios (2011), Nasser (2018) and Chagas (2015) . When there is subversion to the institutionalization of art

and the proposal to change the urban landscape taken care of by the public administration, the occupation movements end up in direct confrontation with the police, in addition to repossession actions and other attempts to impede the carrying out of activities.

This healthy relationship between the occupation and the government also appears in the history of the occupation A Vida é uma Festa:

The culture secretary, who put us here, was at the time with PRODETUR, which was the body in charge of the revitalization project for Praia Grande, in the Historic Center. At the beginning, when they revitalized this here, which was an abandoned area, many buildings were handed over, it wasn't even lending, they were handed over to people... When at the end of his term, he [the secretary] gave us an authorization to occupy this building, it was the entire building, then the Government changed, we had to divide the building, on top was COTEATRO, below us, and that's where we are today [...]. (A Vida é uma Festa, 2019, verbal information).

Some possible inferences can be drawn from the above account. The first concerns the possible relationship of greater proximity between the government and artistic and cultural activities, or the second, such proximity was due to personal ties of proximity/friendship with the members of the occupation. Rubim (2007) points out such interferences in the personal relationships of those in political positions in the direction of public policies for culture in Brazil with the purpose of contemplating their own interests, preventing the artistic class and the population in general from fully accessing them.

It is noteworthy that this analysis does not condemn the granting of public spaces for artistic-cultural use to be carried out in an easy way, nor the proximity of the public entity with local cultural agents of the most varied artistic formats and segments, but that it is part of the public agenda federal, state and municipal recognition and insertion of artistic-cultural occupations as legitimate actions that contemplate the dimensions of the concept of culture proposed in the PNC 2010-2020.

From this recognition of the actions of occupations in their symbolic dimension, by valuing the ways of living, the citizen dimension, by promoting universal access to cultural goods and public facilities in the city and, in the economic dimension, by their activities valuing sustainable use and community spaces, avoiding their predatory and destructive use in commercial monopolies, as well as the attempt to promote a fair and sustainable economic development, sustaining “[...] flows of formation,

production and diffusion suited to the singularities constituting the different artistic and multiple cultural expressions [...]” (Brasil, 2008a, p. 12).

It is noted that artistic occupations claim the preservation and enhancement of heritage through their use, through bringing people closer to the cultural assets that make up the history of the place and the nation. The distancing produced both by the laws and by the commercialization industry of cultural capital vanishes when the population takes over the spaces and from them develops actions aimed at social well-being, with a view to revitalizing underutilized public spaces and, in fact, contribute to the democratization of culture.

Far from simplifying the safeguarding of the heritage of the Historic Center of São Luís to the use of public spaces by the population, the relationship that people develop with the space is highlighted in strengthening their identity recognition with the cultural assets present in the heritage areas. The idea of socialized heritage, in which subjects inhabit, use and become part of the place, is corroborated, recognizing the memory and history of that space as part of their own identity (Almeida, 2017; Choay, 2009).

The relationship between occupations and heritage approaches the dynamic perspective that advocates its continuous development, with changes arising from the contemporary uses that are given to it, placing the subjects as part of it, as shown in the report below:

[...] These artistic occupations, they know what those spots are, they don't go there for nothing, they are careful, they know what it is, or maybe it was that big house, and then they say: “- let's preserve this place because there can be more [...] feedback from this place, the more I take care of this place, I can stay longer in it, I can make more people have this experience in this place, and I continue to preserve my São Luis, right?” With all the history it carries, and I end up putting one more story in this space... as an artistic occupation, which preserves this place, which wants to give it more movement. (O Circo Tá na Rua, 2019, verbal information).

This practice, from the social function of the public heritage space for people, presents itself as a resistance to the patrimonialism process that is sometimes inherent in the revitalization programs of historic centers in Brazil. It is the conduct on the part of the public sphere that generates the indistinction between the public and the private, due to the use of State power for its own interests, generally in common with those of large companies with financial capital to invest in the urban restructuring of

these locations that correspond to their profitable interests (Almeida, 2017).

Through the context, after the characterization and analysis of the occupations studied here, the collective acts of occupation are placed, in addition to the political stance of resistance, as practical actions that demonstrate the reinterpretation of these spaces, seeking to contemplate cultural, social, economic issues, as well as agents promoting citizenship through active, direct social participation, aware of the preservation of heritage and willing to transform it into the benefit of the city. It can be said that both housing and artistic-cultural occupations are neglected in urban restructuring programs in progress since 2019, when compared to investments with marketing purposes, confirming the business direction that is being given to the Historic Center of St. Louis.

Thus, as Lefebvre (2008) proposes, art could deal precisely with this future, in not only artistic, but urban creations, on a social scale, transforming daily practices into ways of living the city as a work of art, of belonging to the urban thing. Aligning, as artistic-cultural occupations do, with the idea of culture present in the PNC (2010-2020) (Brazil, 2008a), as a transversal concept that permeates all instances of human life, not in a contemplative way, but as a structuring element of the social being, which relates to others, to the space around them, understanding the city as a project under construction, exorable by the collaborative collective action between public authorities and civil society.

Artistic-cultural occupations build new meanings in urban spaces as they, in addition to giving them new uses, instigate the population to rethink the city, strengthening its relationship with the public space through appropriation strategies with the use of art, in its entertainment and leisure dimensions, as well as training and professionalization. In the case of the Historic Center of São Luís, practices related to the artistic segments of Music, Theatre, Circus and Popular Culture were identified, in the form of presentations and workshops.

A kind of political resistance is articulated in the public space on the part of those who occupy them, both to preserve it as an area of promotion and enjoyment of local cultural production, ensuring that there are spaces that contemplate its artistic diversity, as well as to pressure the public sphere to direct investments in cultural facilities that meet the needs of the population, especially for those who still inhabit the Historic Center of São Luís, and not only for tourist and spectacularization purposes.

In summary, artistic-cultural occupations show potential as a social movement of collective mobilization of action in public spaces, mainly based on the claim of the

right to the city, using artistic practice as a tool for transforming urban ways of life, minimizing the effects of widespread commodification that affects people's daily lives, as well as promoting the dissemination and democratization of cultural goods and the exercise of citizenship, through free access to public spaces, without distinction of gender, race or social class.

VI. CONCLUSION

Since the first attempts to draw a concept of heritage, people realized its concept was related to several other concepts, representing aspects involve notions such as affiliation, monuments, identity traits, among other elements. We understood, after all, that even when different terminology is used – material, immaterial, cultural heritage, etc. – these concepts converge in the different dimensions that the heritage contemplates.

All the elements that constitute the perception of heritage are nothing more than heritage assets that, regardless of their typology or classification, must be preserved and kept alive, as they portray the memory, identity, history, knowledge, and practices of a people, therefore, they must be there for the next generations. Thus, we now realize that the conceptions of heritage will be re-signified over the years, reflecting the different realities demarcated in space and time.

The researchers found regarding the preservation and revitalization of the Historic Center of São Luís contemplate mostly the architectural issue of Material Heritage and others related to the Intangible Heritage of traditional segments of popular culture such as Tambor de Crioula and Capoeira. Against this solidification, from the idea of heritage as a contemplation of the past and traditions, occupations are anchored in currents that understand it as a set of collective goods, belonging to the collective memory of those who live there and build their identity in the everyday of established relationships with that heritage space, as well as in the production of new cultural goods.

Strictly speaking, it is possible to observe the peculiarities that each artistic-cultural action adds to the public space. Micropolitical actions of resistance, occupation and appropriation by the artistic class generate demands that reverberate in the community that inhabits the Historic Center, in those who are just passing through, such as tourists, national, foreign, or local, as well as in the public entity, in particular in the institutions responsible for the administration, maintenance, planning and preservation of the historical heritage that comprise it.

Thus, artistic occupations permeate time and space, bringing new meanings to it and enabling the dynamic permanence of the idea that cultural heritage is not limited to ruins, monumental mansions or untouchable works and documents. Moving away from the hegemonic conceptions of national identity and the overvaluation of the traditional, they bring to the public space new possibilities for thinking about and problematizing heritage preservation policies that, in addition to preserving history, need to allow the people to recognize themselves as part of it. and can actively participate in its enhancement and (re)construction.

Re-signifying the public heritage space is directly linked to guaranteeing the right to the city, recognizing its dynamics as a project under collective construction, with the participation of the public, private and civil spheres of society. The artistic-cultural occupations are placed, in measure, as a sentient thermometer for the balance of the relationship between these spheres, acting in a form of protest and resistance to the imbalance of interests that impact the city's space, as well as a continuous alert mechanism for reflection on the place that the population occupies in this context, confirming the need for direct social participation in the social field of power dispute between such social agents.

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