



Memory, management, cultural policies and inclusion in the case of Vila Itororó

Memória, gestão, políticas culturais e inclusão no caso da Vila Itororó

Memoria, Gestión, políticas culturales e inclusión en el caso de Vila Itororó

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Abstract

Through tools such as bibliographic research, field research, and the analysis of images and maps, this article seeks to understand the process of protecting Vila Itororó in São Paulo, aiming to determine whether a participatory project methodology was applied to promote the inclusion of the population. It aims to explain the historical and cultural value of the Vila that warranted its designation as a heritage site, as well as the proposal to change its use from a residential area to a recreational space. It



is understood that linking the protection of historical and cultural heritage to urban planning can create conditions for social inclusion and improvements in the quality of urban life if the historical and cultural heritage is assigned value and function that are developed together with the population.

Keywords: Cultural heritage; Urban planning; Participation; Architecture and urbanism.

Resumo

Este artigo busca, por meio de instrumentos como a pesquisa bibliográfica, pesquisa de campo e leitura de imagens e mapas, conhecer o processo de proteção da Vila Itooró, em São Paulo, de modo a entender se foi aplicada uma metodologia participativa de projeto para promover a inclusão da população. Interessa explicar qual é o valor histórico e cultural da Vila que a fez passível de tombamento e como se deu a proposta de mudança de uso que, originalmente era residencial e passou a servir como espaço de lazer. Entende-se que vincular a proteção do bem histórico e cultural ao planejamento urbano, pode gerar condições para a inclusão social e a melhoria da qualidade de vida urbana se for atribuído ao patrimônio histórico e cultural um valor e uma função construídos juntos com a população.

Palavras-chave: Patrimônio cultural; Planejamento urbano; Participação; Arquitetura e urbanismo.

Resumen

Este artículo busca, a través de instrumentos como investigación bibliográfica, investigación de campo y lectura de imágenes y mapas, comprender el proceso de protección de Vila Itooró, en São Paulo, con el fin de comprender si se aplicó una metodología de proyecto participativo para promover la inclusión de la población. Es interesante explicar el valor histórico y cultural de la localidad que la convirtió en objeto de catalogación y cómo surgió la propuesta de cambiar su uso, que en origen era residencial y pasó a servir como espacio de ocio. Se entiende que vincular la protección de los bienes históricos y culturales a la planificación urbana puede generar condiciones para la inclusión social y la mejora de la calidad de vida urbana si se le da al patrimonio histórico y cultural un valor y una función construida junto con la población.

Palabras clave: Patrimonio cultural; Planificación urbana; Participación; Arquitectura y urbanismo.



INTRODUCTION

Over the past fifty years, the process of globalization of cities, along with technological and productive transformations, has led to the decline of industrial, port, and railway areas, as well as historic city centers, as new urban centers have developed (Somekh; Campos Neto, 2005). Areas with well-established urban infrastructure have been replaced by new economic hubs in more recently urbanized regions, giving rise to urban voids—spaces within the city that, due to being unused or underutilized, have undergone a process of degradation, often reaching a derelict state (Cavalcanti, 2018). The post-industrial society, in which factory systems and class structures developed, has been replaced by a cognitive society (Ascher, 2010) characterized by a global nature and a scenario of societal transformation.

In this context, the crisis and abandonment of spaces within the urban fabric created a need to improve the image of these degraded city areas. In conjunction with real estate capital, public authorities began investing in ways to recover spaces that had lost their function within the city's dynamics by proposing new uses. It is within this discourse that culture emerges as a tool in urban policies to attract people and capital (Kara-José, 2007). The discourse of culture has been widely employed in intervention projects involving areas and assets of historical value, aiming to refine their image and propose new uses. In Brazil, the 1970s were marked by a renewed interest in urban preservation, during which the reuse of old city structures was linked to the creation of spaces for commerce, services, and cultural and leisure activities (Vargas; Castilho, 2006).

Today, São Paulo's Strategic Master Plan proposes urban planning tools for a city that must address complex and pressing issues; however, as Nakano and Guatella (2016) demonstrate, the proposed solutions do not always involve a well-considered plan:

When discussing the patterns of building verticalization driven by the real estate development market, it becomes evident how these parameters influence the creation of urban forms that can be more or less detrimental to urban vitality, particularly in public spaces (Nakano; Guatella, 2016, p. 152, our translation).

The conservation of historic neighborhoods is closely related to the city's growth guidelines. Conservation is understood, in fact, as a requirement for development (Meneses, 1978; Yázigi, 2012). However, there is significant tension between urban transformation and preservation. Vila Itororó, in São Paulo, serves as an example of +this tension (Barbour, 2017).



1. WHAT IS VILA ITORORÓ?¹

Vila Itororó is a housing complex designed and built in the early 20th century by the Portuguese entrepreneur Francisco de Castro, to include a residential mansion, rental housing, and a sports complex. Its architecture - often described as bizarre, picturesque, and surrealist (Feldman; Castro, 2017; Barbour, 2017) - is one of its most distinctive features, as it incorporates elements from various styles and demonstrates innovation through the (re)use of demolition materials, such as ornaments from the old São José Theater². The importance of Vila Itororó to the city of São Paulo, however, stems not only from its curious architecture but also from its representation as a model of the city's housing evolution (Feldman; Castro, 2017).

Located in what is now identified as the Bela Vista district, within the Sé subprefecture, the Vila occupies a block bordered by Pedroso, Martiniano de Carvalho, Monsenhor Passalacqua, and Maestro Cardim streets. It is situated in an area with significant topographical variation, near the Itororó Valley, where the stream now runs through an underground canal beneath 23 de maio avenue.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the Vila and its surroundings by comparing a 1930 map with a recent satellite image:

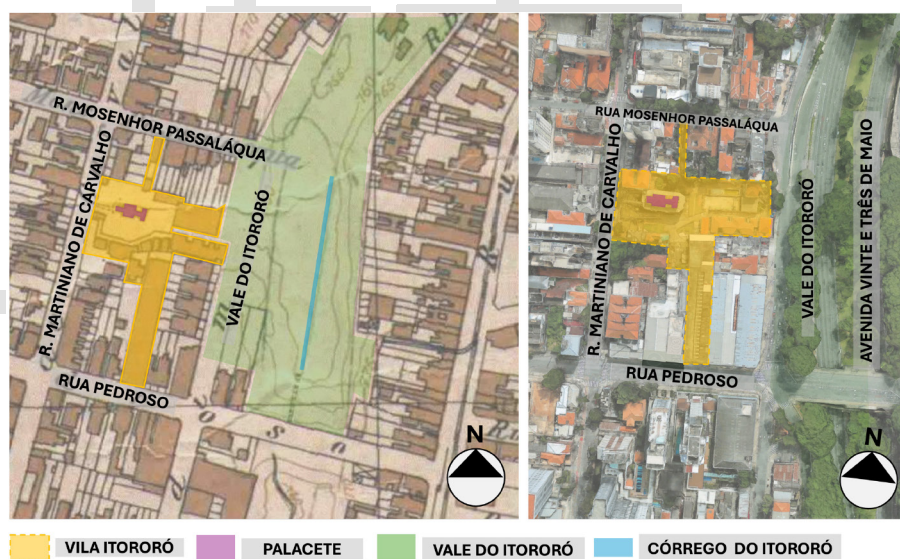


Figure 1: Location of Vila Itororó and its relationship with the surroundings, comparing an excerpt from the 1930 map of São Paulo and a 2023 satellite image. The 1930 base is available on the Digital Map of the City of São Paulo at the link: https://geosampa.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/PaginasPublicas/_SBC.aspx Last accessed in October 2024, and the satellite image base was taken from Google Earth.

1 This section of the article was written based on information from the book "Vila Itororó: uma história em três atos" by Sarah Feldman and Ana Castro (2017), as well as notes and newspaper articles about Vila Itororó found in the digital archive of the newspaper O Estado de São Paulo, which are referenced in the Bibliographic References. Additional information was obtained from the official Vila Itororó website, maintained by the São Paulo City Hall: <https://vilaitororo.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/historia/> last accessed in October 2024.

2 Jones, Frances. *Português construiu Vila Itororó*. O Estado de S. Paulo, São Paulo, year 116, n. 37132, 7 Aug. 1995. Cidades, p.22. SCARANCE, Ge. *Vila guarda relíquias do teatro São José*. O Estado de S. Paulo, São Paulo, year 119, n. 38208, 29 May. 1998. *Seu bairro: centro*, p. 212.



Historically, the decision to build Vila Itororó on a valley-bottom plot – despite its proximity to the city center and various urban amenities – was driven by the intended uses outlined by its first owner and builder, the Portuguese entrepreneur Francisco de Castro: housing, rental housing, and leisure space. The affordable price of the lot, its closeness to the city center – an already developed urban area – and the promise of urbanization in the region motivated him to invest in this plot, which was composed of backlot areas with access to multiple streets (Feldman; Castro, 2017).

Between 1910 and 1920, a large mansion, a set of two-story rental houses, a garden, and a swimming pool, the first private pool in the city, supplied by water from the Itororó stream, were built³. The mansion underwent the most transformations during this initial decade: in his ambition to expand it, Francisco de Castro modified the façade and layout, incorporating ornaments and structural elements from the demolition of other buildings in the city. This phased construction process, which blended various architectural styles, gave Vila Itororó its distinctive, picturesque appearance, resembling a collage. Figure 2⁴ illustrates the stages of the mansion's construction throughout the 1910s and the transition between architectural styles:



Figure 2: Phases of the construction of the Vila Itororó Mansion. Images taken from the book “Vila Itororó: uma história em três atos” (Feldman; Castro, p. 51, p. 74-75, 2017).

For the leisure area, Castro concentrated on the landscape design, decorating it with sculptures and statues. He also aspired to establish a hydrogymnastics club, utilizing the pool's structure and its proximity to the Itororó stream. Regarding the two-story houses, Castro's idea was to install rental housing as a way to generate income, capitalizing on a system that was popular and highly profitable in São Paulo at the time (Feldman; Castro, 2017). The uniqueness of the Vila caught the attention of intellectuals of the period, who, through Francisco de Castro, began to

3 O Estado de São Paulo: *Na Vila Itororó, abandono ameaça história da cidade*, May 21, 1977.

4 These figures can also be found at: <https://vilaitororo.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/programacao/publicacoes/vila-itororo-uma-historia-em-tres-atos-por-sarah-feldman-e-ana-castro/> Last access: February 18, 2025



frequent the site for cultural events that also involved families from the São Paulo elite⁵ (Feldman; Castro, 2017). Amidst columns, gargoyles, caryatids, medallions, and statues, the first years of Vila Itororó were marked by dreams and prosperity. Figure 3⁶ below shows the relationship of the Vila with its surroundings and the urban landscape in the early 1920s:

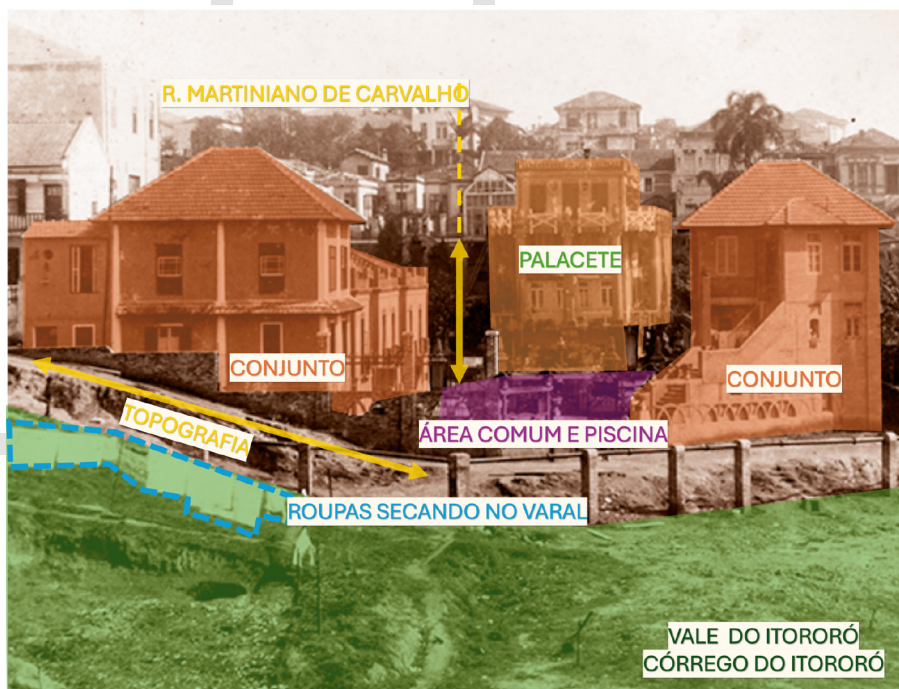


Figure 3: Study of the relationship between Vila Itororó and its surroundings and urban landscape in the 1920s. Analysis made by the author based on the data provided in the book “Vila Itororó: uma história em três atos” (Feldman; Castro, p. 81, 2017).

However, with the death of Francisco de Castro in 1932, there was a shift in the future plans for the Vila, which was auctioned off in the following year. Its assets were publicly acquired by creditors, and later, the set of houses was donated to the Santa Casa de Indaiatuba charity institution, becoming the property of Augusto de Oliveira Camargo⁷. The new owner exploited the Vila’s rental housing function, extending it to the mansion, which was subdivided into independent housing units on each floor. Various families of different sizes lived in these spaces; the larger the space and the better its condition, considering its location on the lot, the higher the rent charged. The infrastructure of the leisure area – including the pool – was rented out, until the 1990s, to the Clube Éden de Futebol, which separated the space from the residents’ access to Vila Itororó (Feldman; Castro, 2017).

5 O Estado de São Paulo: *Itororó, uma velha vila que vai acabar*, Mar. 12, 1975.

O futuro da Vila Itororó: um grande centro cultural. O Estado de S. Paulo, São Paulo, year 96, n. 30662, 12 Jan. 1978, p.42.

6 The base of Figure 2 can also be found at: <https://vilaitororo.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/programacao/publicacoes/vila-itororo-uma-historia-em-tres-atos-por-sarah-feldman-e-ana-castro/> Last access: February 18, 2025

7 O Estado de São Paulo: *Itororó, uma velha vila que vai acabar*, Mar. 12, 1975.



The development of Vila Itororó in São Paulo followed a process in which, between the 1940s and 1970s, the city underwent a social and cultural transformation due to its growth, the emergence of new urban centers, and economic hubs (Feldman; Castro, 2017). As the central region was vacated by families with purchasing power seeking to move to these new spaces, there was a devaluation of the older, already consolidated areas, allowing for lower rents in areas with good urban infrastructure. This was reflected in Vila Itororó, which began to house lower-income families, especially due to the migration of people from other parts of the country seeking better living conditions in São Paulo, attracted by its location and affordable housing options.

Consequently, in the 1970s, when the preservation of historically and culturally significant assets began to gain momentum in Brazilian cities, Vila Itororó attracted the attention of architects, urban planners, and historians who recognized its peculiar architecture as worthy of protection. The then-degraded condition of the space prompted them to seek solutions to address the situation, which would eventually lead to the Vila being officially listed as a protected heritage site. With the completion of the Vinte e Três de Maio Avenue in 1969, there was an increase in the value of its surrounding area, which attracted real estate speculation to the Vila Itororó site, seeing the potential for lucrative projects and developments. In light of the risk to the Vila, there was a mobilization of those interested in preserving and protecting it from possible destruction—either due to poor conservation or to the implementation of a new development project.

2. THE PROCESS OF PROTECTING VILA ITORORÓ⁸

Before addressing the protection process of Vila Itororó, it is important to revisit the preservation of cultural heritage in Brazil. This issue has been debated since the early 20th century when Mario de Andrade proposed Decree-Law No. 25 in 1937, along with the creation of SPHAN (now the Institute of Historical, Artistic, and National Heritage). At this time, the concept of Historical and Artistic Heritage was introduced, covering architecture and monuments representing the history of the nation, often restricted to the scale of the lot. Years later, in the 1960s, the debate over the preservation of cultural heritage took on a new perspective, heavily influenced by the Venice Charter (1964), whose recommendations expanded the concept of heritage, treating it based on the idea of urban fabric, no longer restricting it to the lot or its monumentality.

Within this approach, the concept of urban environmental heritage stood out, largely discussed by Ulpiano Bezerra de Menezes (Menezes, 1978) and Eduardo Yázigi (Yázigi, 2012). Both authors emphasize the importance of the relationship between what is subject to protection and people, that is, how they articulate with one another. Along these lines, Yázigi (2012) introduced this relationship through

⁸ This section of the article was written based on information extracted from notes and news articles found in the digital collection of the newspaper O Estado de São Paulo, which are referenced in the References section.



the idea of ambience. In São Paulo, this awareness grew throughout the 1970s and 1980s, when efforts were made towards preserving heritage on an urban scale, such as with the IGEPAC (*Inventário Geral do Patrimônio Ambiental, Cultural de Urbano de São Paulo*).

In 1975, the Department of Historical Heritage was created within the Municipal Secretariat of Culture, but it only gained the power of listing in the 1980s. However, its actions followed a line of work that fragmented urban preservation issues. Despite its importance, listing is considered a limited tool regarding the effective preservation of heritage, which led to several processes being initiated without achieving real protection (Somekh, 2017).

It is within this context, of a reflection on historical and cultural heritage in São Paulo, that the first proposal for the restoration project of Vila Itooró emerged, commissioned by Cogep and carried out by architects Benedito Lima de Toledo, Décio Tozzi, and Cláudio Tozzi, curated by Araci Amaral, with landscaping by Burle Marx. Attracted by the original characteristic of the Vila's architecture, which incorporates various styles due to its construction process and the reuse of pieces from demolished works, such as the São José Theater⁹, and its urban position, they proposed a project for the urban recovery of Vila Itooró, whose new use would be as a center for arts, culture, and leisure, including activities such as exhibition spaces and artistic performances, like dance, music, photography, and painting; a center for arts for children and adolescents; and the rental of spaces for restaurants, shops, and art galleries¹⁰. The project was presented to the city hall, which sympathized with the idea and sought ways to make it feasible.

However, at the same time that there was the promise of restoring Vila Itooró and its houses, transforming it into a cultural and leisure center, the reality was that the Vila still served as a residential area and, although filled with tenements, was home to 80 families¹¹. For the architects, urban planners, and admirers of the site, allowing them to continue living in the Vila's buildings aggravated the process of decharacterizing its distinctive architecture. Not only that, but while keeping the families in the Vila posed a risk to its preservation, leaving them in those buildings without proper treatment and care also posed a risk to the families themselves. Ulpiano Bezerra de Menezes discusses the issue of usage and housing in his report on the listing of Vila Itooró, highlighting the importance of linking the intervention project to an urban intervention project (Menezes, 1985).

In 1994, after more than a decade of discussions about the need to preserve the buildings, Vila Itooró was listed by the São Paulo state preservation body, Condephaat (Council for the Defense of Historical, Archaeological, Artistic, and Touristic Heritage of the State), which prohibited its demolition and

9 O Estado de São Paulo: Vila guarda relíquias do Teatro São José, May 29, 1998.

10 O Estado de São Paulo: *Itooró, uma velha Vila que vai acabar*, Mar. 12, 1975.

11 O Estado de São Paulo: *O Futuro da Vila Itooró: um grande centro cultural*, Jan. 12, 1978.



decharacterization without the agency's approval¹². The mansion received level 1 preservation, meaning no characteristic of the property could be altered, while the surrounding houses received level 3, with protection limited to the façades. Then, in 2002, CONPRESP (Municipal Council for the Preservation of Historical, Cultural, and Environmental Heritage of the City of São Paulo) proposed Resolution No. 22/2002, which included Vila Itororó in the list of buildings under level 3 preservation¹³.

With the listing, the idea of establishing a cultural center at the site was once again revived, as it was deemed appropriate by Condephaat for Vila to have a cultural function. The delay in the listing process was due to the need to carefully analyze the houses' projects and the different construction phases, as well as to define alternatives for the residents, who had already received eviction orders. Additionally, the official listing allowed urban instruments proposed by the Zoning Law, such as Z8-200 (cultural heritage zone), to be applied to the area, which attracted the interest of new investors who could help financially support the restoration and the implementation of the cultural center.

However, across different public administrations, the priority of carrying out the project changed, and alongside the listing process, the Vila went through yet another waiting period, with its future still uncertain. Consequently, the second half of the 1990s marked a period of uncertainty for the residents, who were unsure when they would be forced to leave their homes, while Vila increasingly consolidated its image as a space of cultural and historical value in the city of São Paulo, attracting visitors from schools, universities, art courses, and history and memory enthusiasts. In 1997, the institution that owned the Vila, the Fundação Leonor Barros Camargo, part of the Beneficente Augusto de Oliveira Camargo Institution, lost interest in it, ceasing to collect rent from the residents, who remained in their homes.

In 2006, the City Hall signed a decree that declared the Vila Itororó area as being of public utility. The intention at that time was for the resident families to be redirected to housing programs from the Companhia de Desenvolvimento Habitacional Urbano (CDHU). In 2007, the CDHU signed the deed for the acquisition of a building in Bela Vista, where the 80 families living in the Vila would be relocated. These families were given until the end of the following year to vacate their homes¹⁴. They were offered the option of either an apartment, a credit letter, or a property in less central neighborhoods, but none of these options were entirely satisfactory to them.

12 Folha de São Paulo: *Patrimônio Histórico tomba Vila Itororó*, Jun. 14, 1994. Available at: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/1994/6/14/cotidiano/33.html>. Accessed in December, 2023.

13 SÃO PAULO. *Vila Itororó: História*. São Paulo: Secretaria Municipal de Cultura, 2024. Available at: <https://vilaitororo.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/historia>. Accessed on: October 25, 2024.

14 *Estado compra prédio na Bela Vista para famílias da Vila Itororó*. O Estado de S. Paulo, São Paulo, year 128, n.41518. Jun. 20 2007. Cidades, p. C5.



There was also a legal suit filed by the residents, through the Association of Vila Residents (Ama-Vila), against the City Hall, seeking funds and claiming that they had not been included in the negotiations¹⁵. Alongside this impasse, the Municipal Department of Culture, which was responsible for coordinating the proposals for the Vila in conjunction with the City Hall and CONPRESP, prepared to begin the projects once the area was vacated. The residents asked to participate and be included in the process, but this did not happen in the way they hoped¹⁶, and by the end of 2011, the families were relocated, with many accepting – out of lack of options – the 37-square-meter apartments in social housing near the Vila offered by the City Hall and the CDHU in the negotiation. In 2012, the restoration of Vila Itororó began on-site, with the first phase expected to be completed by 2014, though the deadline was extended until 2019.

3. VILA ITORORÓ AS A SPACE FOR CULTURE AND LEISURE



Figure 4: On the left, the Vila Itororó Mansion in 1920. Photo taken from the book “Vila Itororó: uma história em três atos” (Feldman; Castro, p.77, 2017). This image can also be found at: <https://vilaitororo.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/programacao/publicacoes/vila-itororo-uma-historia-em-tres-atos-por-sarah-feldman-e-ana-castro/> Last access: February 18, 2025. On the right, the Mansion one hundred years later. Photo: personal collection, November 2023.

The last and final project proposed for Vila Itororó, which revisits the one designed by Benedito Lima de Toledo, Décio Tozzi, and Cláudio Tozzi in the early 1970s to make it a space for cultural and leisure purposes, was surprising due to adopting

15 Estado compra prédio na Bela Vista para famílias da Vila Itororó. O Estado de S. Paulo, São Paulo, year 128, n.41518. Jun. 20 2007. Cidades, p. C5.

16 BRANCATELLI, R.; BRANDALISE, V. H. Uma solução para a Vila Itororó. O Estado de S. Paulo, São Paulo, year 130, n. 42323, Sep 2, 2009. Cidades, p.41.

CAPITELLI, M. Justiça manda desocupar a Vila Itororó, no centro. O Estado de S. Paulo, São Paulo, year 130, n. 42317, Aug. 27, 2009. Cidades, p. C10.

ZANCHETTA, D. Desocupação da Vila Itororó vai até dezembro. O Estado de S. Paulo, São Paulo, year 131, n. 42599, Jun. 5, 2010. Cidades/ Metrôpoles, C3.



an implementation process of the project open to the community. Although the former residents did not have the opportunity to remain in the space during the intervention, there was an effort on the part of the City Hall and the historical and cultural heritage protection bodies to bring the Bexiga neighborhood and the city of São Paulo together in the restoration process of the Vila. In 2015, alongside the Instituto Pedra¹⁷ – the entity responsible for the revitalization – the open construction site of Vila Itororó was inaugurated, which included a large warehouse offering cultural activities, information, and technical visits related to the restoration process. The cultural center was temporarily open until the Vila was reopened to the public in 2019.

The experience, conceived as a form of heritage education, was important in its attempt to attract people to the historical space undergoing restoration and to involve them in what was happening at the site through cultural activities and engaging with the surrounding community. With support from resources obtained through the Law for Cultural Incentive, the first phase of the works at Vila involved cleaning and draining the site, emergency interventions in the mansion, and the architectural survey of the area, addressing the current state of the buildings and spaces, as well as an inventory of all assets – a process that began in 2014 and was completed only in 2016¹⁸. Once the survey was finished, the restoration of four buildings began, with the process aiming to be as respectful as possible in its interventions, receiving approval from Conpresp and Condephaat in 2015 and 2016. The adjacent warehouse was also renovated, where the technical teams for architecture, heritage education, and cultural activation were installed.

Today, Vila Itororó is a space of the Municipal Secretariat of Culture, open to the city, offering services such as free workshops, the Reference Center for the Promotion of Racial Equality (*Centro de Referência de Promoção da Igualdade Racial* - CRPIR), the free Fab Lab, and a vocational program. Among the available courses, there are workshops for storytelling, crochet, cooking, short and feature films, dance, drawing and engraving, photography, meditation, sustainability, painting, furniture restoration, theater, circus, music, woodcut, yoga, and guided visits to the Vila. The CRPIR works on promoting debates, cultural actions, and activities aimed at racial equality promotion, as well as providing guidance in cases of discrimination. The Fab Lab is part of a network of public digital fabrication laboratories in São Paulo. Lastly, the vocational project focuses on artistic and cultural training for youth and adults¹⁹.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

When reflecting on the history and protection process of Vila Itororó, it is possible to identify that the motivation behind its listing lies in the historical and cultural

17 The Instituto Pedra is a non-profit organization that develops actions in the field of cultural heritage. See: <http://institutopedra.org.br>

18 See: <https://institutopedra.org.br/projetos/Vila-itororo/> Acesso em: dez. 2023.

19 Information taken from the website: <https://vilaitororo.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/>. Acesso em: dez. 2023.



value found in the architecture of the set of houses, identified at a time when the debate on preservation was present in the city's construction projections. Parallel to this debate, heritage protection bodies at the state and municipal levels were being structured in São Paulo, which at times interacted with urban planning and at other times were treated in a more traditional manner, focusing on formal material aspects (BARBOUR, 2017). Although the buildings and physical spaces are representative of the historical and cultural value they encompass, the case of Vila Itororó involves a particular issue related to its example, which extends to the choice of its use and function, reviving the debate on the role of cultural assets in the city. In this case, we agree with Barbour (2017) when, mentioning the work of Ulpiano Bezerra de Meneses, she states:

The conclusion we can draw from Ulpiano Bezerra de Meneses' participation is that form has no intrinsic value because the true value of cultural heritage always lies in its use, appropriation, and the transformations that occur over time (Barbour, 2017, p. 220, our translation).

When Vila Itororó is recognized as a property subject to intervention in the 1970s, and a project is proposed to change its use from housing to a cultural center, a reflection arises on how this process should take place: should the preservation of the building consider social preservation? Considering that the protection of historical and cultural heritage must be aligned with urban planning (Somekh, 2016), it is important that its reintegration into the dynamics of the city, its use, takes into account the population and related issues, since its destination will impact an existing and complex system that should not be ignored (Menezes, 1978).

Along these lines of thought, it is understood that historical and cultural heritage should not only be viewed for its materiality but also for the social, cultural, and economic relationships it has with the city, which are crucial as tools for promoting the quality of urban life— as advocated by the concept of urban environmental heritage, which connects preservation with urban planning and the need to promote social inclusion. Therefore, we agree with the following statement:

Heritage can play a role in social inclusion and improving the quality of urban life, if we understand that it can be socially and symbolically constructed by those who interact with it on a daily basis (Barbour, 2017, p. 222, our translation).

In the case of Vila Itororó, the first recovery and change of use project, proposed by Benedito Lima de Toledo, Décio Tozzi, and Cláudio Tozzi, was not carried out in a participatory manner, particularly in defining the new use. Similarly, the mobilization in defense of the Vila did not originate from the local community but rather from the professionals involved in the project. For the architects, Vila Itororó's use should be converted from residential to cultural because this



use better aligned with the contemporary demands of the city at that time. The picturesque property, with imaginative characteristics and in a severely deteriorated state, should be restored and returned to the population as a space for recreation and leisure. Following this line, the city hall and the preservation agencies supported this idea, even if it required expropriating the space.

In this sense, until the beginning of the restoration project and the establishment of the cultural center, the relationship between public authorities and the community, especially the residents of the Vila, was marked by tension and misunderstandings, as the process was not participatory. The project only took a more open approach when the idea of the open worksite was implemented in 2015, which sought to connect with the former residents and the local community, and aimed to provide the city with a temporary space for heritage education and artistic and cultural workshops, until the reopening of Vila Itororó in 2019. This connection with the population continues today with the offering of free workshops, spaces for debate, and the promotion of racial equality.

Nevertheless, it is worth reflecting on the current use and management of the Vila: although there is an effort to open the cultural space to the city and its population, it is possible to identify that, when telling the story of Vila Itororó, the narrative is limited to justifying its historical and cultural value: about the Portuguese Francisco de Castro who built the group of houses for residential purposes and conceived a picturesque, original, and bizarre project by incorporating reused demolition pieces from other buildings, such as the São José theater; the first outdoor pool and the use of sculptures, statues, and columns in its decoration. However, the history of the Vila also encompasses a time when it housed several families as rental housing, whose stories are not as explicitly represented in the construction of its cultural value and physical space. Therefore, how can these different experiences be highlighted while weaving together the narrative of Vila's history? How can the voices of the different actors be emphasized? How can all facets of the history that are responsible for the memory of Vila Itororó be valued?

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