

# **Artistic Occupations in the Historical Center of São Luís (Maranhão): implications for the preservation and valorization of the cultural heritage of Maranhão**

## **PhD. Conceição de Maria Belfort de Carvalho**

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Cultura e Sociedade (PGCULT),

Universidade Federal do Maranhão,

São Luís, Maranhão, Brazil.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6234-527X>

Email: [cbelfort@globo.com](mailto:cbelfort@globo.com)

## **Msc. Donny Wallesson dos Santos**

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Políticas Públicas (PGPP),

Universidade Federal do Maranhão,

São Luís, Maranhão, Brazil.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6556-4251>

Email: [dws87@outlook.com](mailto:dws87@outlook.com)

## **Msc. Maurício José Morais Costa (Corresponding author)**

Centro Universitário UNDB

São Luís, Maranhão, Brazil.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0759-9285>

Email: [mauriciojosemorais@gmail.com](mailto:mauriciojosemorais@gmail.com)

## **PhD. Kláutenys Dellene Guedes Cutrim**

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Cultura e Sociedade (PGCULT),

Universidade Federal do Maranhão,

São Luís, Maranhão, Brazil.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8668-4188>

Email: [kdguedes@gmail.com](mailto:kdguedes@gmail.com)

## **PhD. Arkley Marques Bandeira**

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Cultura e Sociedade (PGCULT),

Universidade Federal do Maranhão,

São Luís, Maranhão, Brazil.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7646-7526>

Email: [arkleymbandeira@gmail.com](mailto:arkleymbandeira@gmail.com)

**Msc. Vanderley Rabelo de Jesus**

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Cultura e Sociedade (PGCULT),  
Universidade Federal do Maranhão,  
São Luís, Maranhão, Brazil.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7955-1638>

Email: [vanderleydejesus21@gmail.com](mailto:vanderleydejesus21@gmail.com)

**Abstract**

*Study about the implications of artistic occupations in the Historic Center of São Luís for the preservation and valorization of the cultural heritage in the State of Maranhão. It aims to discuss the implications of artistic occupations present in the Historic Center and how they can contribute to the revitalization, preservation, and valorization of the cultural heritage of the capital. It is an exploratory and descriptive study, which uses documentary research and bibliographic research as a reasoning mechanism. It addresses artistic occupations and cultural heritage in its theoretical-conceptual perspectives. It also 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 characterizes the Old Center of São Luís, the role of artistic occupations and its implications for the cultural heritage of São Luís. And it points out that artistic occupations permeate time and space, bringing resignifications and enabling the dynamic permanence of the idea that cultural heritage is not limited to ruins, inexorable monumental mansions or untouchable works and documents.*

**Keywords:** Artistic Occupations; Historic Center of São Luís; Cultural Heritage; History and Memory.

**1. Introduction**

The city of São Luís, as well as other historical Brazilian cities, carries the marks of a long period of Portuguese colonization, whose effects can be seen in its architectural arrangements, located mostly in its historic center. Such architectural arrangements were responsible not only for portraying an entire historical legacy, but were also decisive for the city to earn the title of World Heritage, granted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1997 (Silva, 2017).

The Historic Center of São Luís (HCSL) is known nationally for having one of the largest civilian architectural ensembles with traces of European origin and stands out as one of the main postcards of the city. Despite being part of the history of the capital, the abandonment of the place is visible. Some initiatives were taken by the government in order to revitalize this space; one of them was the development of a policy of occupation by artistic collectives.

Being one of the main exponents, both of the State of Maranhão and of Brazil in terms of heritage, the HCSL has been the object of study in many different fields of knowledge. Investigate its nuances is essential not only to make assets located there more evident, but also to make known the actions that favor the preservation and the valorization of this space that, over time, became relevant not only for its architectural heritage, but as well for its cultural wealth. Considering this, the present study has the overall

objective of discussing the implications of artistic occupations present in HCSL and highlighting how these can contribute not only to its revitalization, but also to the preservation and valorization of the cultural heritage of the capital of Maranhão.

In this perspective, it is an exploratory and descriptive study, which uses documentary research as instruments of theoretical foundation, since it uses documents, images, materials, which portray collectives of artists and other artistic occupations. In addition, the investigation uses bibliographic research as a mechanism to dialogue with authors that address the themes of Cultural Heritage and Artistic Occupations. Among them, Choay (2006), Garcia (2017), Paiva and Gabbay (2016), Medeiros (2002), Fonseca (2009). The research used materials from databases and digital repositories, such as the Brazilian Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), Scielo, Google Scholar, whose searches used the following descriptors: a) Artistic Occupations; b) Equity; c) Cultural Heritage; d) Social Movements; e) Memory. The productions were analyzed qualitatively, through technical reading, with the perspective of identifying the pertinence with the investigated theme.

## **2 Artistic Occupations and Public Space: brief considerations**

History shows, over time, the symbolic construction of spaces in the city to become the stage of popular participation in decisions of public interest in an attempt to equate the power between state and civil society, since ancient times, with the decision-making arenas of ancient Greece, until the current popular uprisings, with the occupation of squares and streets. In this sense, the perception of the public space permeates both the urban aspect - non-private locations, of universal and free use by the population - to those places of decision-making for public interests, such as buildings and institutional areas of the government (Sartori; Garcia, 2013).

The countless ways in which an individual can relate to the city are receiving attention from researchers. In the mid-twentieth century, there was a considerable interest in analyzing the social processes characteristic of certain urban spaces. Studies such as those of Walter Benjamin, Georg Simmel, Max Weber and Guy Debord – the latter a pioneer when it came to problematizing everyday life – are gaining important visibility, in order to break their logic, which is alienated by capital (Conceição, 2013). Conceição (2011) notes that there is a peculiar complexity in the relationship of people with the city and with the spaces that are established in it, which results directly from the enjoyment of historical, political, economic, social and individual transformations. Amplifying what Conceição (2011) has observed, Paiva and Gabbay (2016, p. 4, ) say that “ [...] the city as a psychic space, thanks to the production of a chain of affections collectively sustained [...] (Our translation)” in the public space, seen as place of democracy, relationships are established between individuals of common production: spaces for exchanges, contacts, dialogues and affections.

In this perspective of the public space as a place of democracy, Sartori and Garcia (2013) ratify the rich complexity of exploring the relationships that belong to it, characterizing it as a space for the formation and discussion of the public agenda, negotiated by the effective participation of civil society in its elaboration. But they also point out that the prevalence of private interests over the public interest in the use of city spaces, that is, the elites (bourgeoisie and state) hold the power to use the spaces to the detriment

of the needs and rights of the population to enjoy them. Corroborating this idea, Paiva and Gabbay (2016) found a causal relationship between the occupation of public spaces and the privatization of cities. Developing countries, like Brazil, adopt a North Americanized urbanization model that imposes itself on the population: a global city full of shopping centers, malls, and large buildings, in a state of continuous surveillance and asepsis.

This phenomenon is called gentrification. The term was coined by the British sociologist Ruth Glass, in the 1960s, and refers to the real estate and social group transformations in certain districts of London, United Kingdom, of that period. The concept continues to be used to describe processes of transformation of the urban space in which certain regions with specific characteristics - especially industrial areas, workers, ports and historic centers - face processes of land rehabilitation and valorization (Garcia, 2017). Sociologist Rogério Proença de Sousa Leite (2001) states that the term is used to designate the transformation of cultural spaces, which carry a heritage legacy, into products that will feed the market flow, mainly from tourism, and direct cultural policies to look at cultural goods only as merchandise. The gentrification phenomenon is shown as an important bias in the understanding of these relationships. Its concept runs through the requalification of public spaces for the democratization of culture when in fact it is creating barriers for the local population to enjoy cultural public goods, through the overvaluation of the image of the space with new buildings, renovation of squares and public cultural facilities that attract a portion of the population with greater financial capital.

As a result of this problematization, the emergence of civil society in Brazil, in the 1980s, built spaces for debates and democratization. Sartori and Garcia (2013) point out the neoliberalism of the following decade as causing, in a large part of the population, a feeling of “non-belonging” to society, due to the socioeconomic imbalances, constituted by a picture of extreme poverty and reduction of popular participation spaces, making it essential “[...] the consolidation of public spaces that advocate the universalization of social rights through their recognition and representativeness within the scope of civil society. (Our translation)” (Sartori; Garcia, 2013, p. 8).

Amid governmental instabilities of change of power, artistic occupations remain alive and active, as their common production, carried out by civil society, goes beyond the systematic and mechanical idea of artistic practice as a rational and conscious product, made by public policy, in an impetus of struggle and resistance for its maintenance (Paiva; Gabbay, 2016). Entering the artistic perception of the use of public spaces, the practices of artistic making on the street inevitably create bonds between the body of the individual and the urban body, creating visible and invisible connections between everyone who participates in the action. This way of appropriating the space, creating social bonds, goes against the spatial relations arising from the metropolization, in which being and sharing with the other disappears and the radical transformations in traditions practiced by the local community (Moreaux, 2013).

Such collectives of people that emerge in cities identify and legitimize their real problems and propose ways to solve them, something that was once common in small cities today is necessary in large cities, in a real need to reorganize the city and its public spaces (Duran, 2008). Thus, Garcia (2017) points out about new socio-spatial configurations of culture and city that such resignifications of the public space occur because there is a collective identity surpassed in symbolic values of expansion of the characteristics common to residents and users of that space through the construction of signs of well-being and satisfaction.

To speak about the art occupations requires also to talk about heritage. After all, the idea of heritage is built on a relationship that involves artistic and cultural goods.

### **3 Cultural heritage: from definitions to recognition**

To think the Cultural Heritage and what it represents leads us to the need to remember - even if only briefly - its constitution and conceptualization. Beforehand, it begins, by looking in the lexicon of the word for a first attempt to establish a concept. Vogt (2008) emphasizes that Patrimony has its origin in Latin *patrimonium*, which means paternal inheritance, or that which integrates the *parter*, that is, the father.

Silva (2017) complements, emphasizing that, in the context of the Portuguese language, the term “patrimônio” is defined as that which is inherited from parents – family assets. In this sense, Choay (2006) highlights that the concept of heritage is related to family structures, however, over time it also had other meanings, adding genetic, historical and cultural aspects. Relating itself as different aspects, not only from a patriarchal perspective, but closely associated with a monument, this to the detriment of the influence of Architecture, Visual Arts, Anthropology and History (Pereira, 2017), the focus is on the genesis of what is meant by “patrimony” started in the 18th century, this considering that in Antiquity Classical and in the Medieval Age the term also had great notoriety (Choay, 2006).

The concept of a monument provided reflexive conditions so that the concept of heritage itself could be outlined. Reigl (2014) points out that monuments have always had values and meanings, something that was accentuated in the middle of the 15th century, just when the perspective of memory was transformed through the appreciation that enshrined the historical and artistic value of ancient monuments. Alois Reigl's contributed significantly to the reflections on heritage in the 20th century, which even influenced Françoise Choay in his studies on the theme.

The change in the concept of a monument, which from archaeological value came to represent the testimony of past centuries, gave way to the concept of historical monument (Pereira, 2017; Choay, 2006). In this sense, Pereira (2017) points out that with the advent of the nation state, historical monuments started to represent the assets of a nation. Fonseca (2009) and Pereira (2017) dialogue through their studies, emphasizing that, in the middle of the 18th century, the State's actions were scarce, with a view to the preservation of historical monuments, which gave precedent for their destruction. According to Fonseca (2009), aiming at the maintenance of historical monuments, in France the position of Inspector of Historical Monuments was created and, later, the Commission of Historical Monuments with the intention of combating the depredation of the property of the time.

According to Rocha (2018), the historical construction of the meaning of heritage has expanded and changed, leaving only the historical monuments, but highlighting elements such as language, rhythms, tastes, and flavors. Therefore, it stands out that “Cultural heritage is a symbolic construction process that has dimensions such as sociocultural, natural, technical, political, and economic. (Our translation)” (Fernandes, 2017, p. 32).

In addition, it should be noted that “Heritage is currently used for a wide range of activities. In the cultural sphere, it was incorporated due to its artistic and handcrafted productivity, in addition to the vision that considers artifacts and intangible assets as worthy of preservation. (Our translation)” (Silva, 2017, p. 16).

Such elements are important exponents for the consolidation of the understanding of heritage and what it represents, not being restricted only to architectural constructions.

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

It is known that among the institutions responsible for the representation, appreciation and preservation of cultural heritage is UNESCO, responsible for chancelling a patrimonial asset as a Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Figueira, 2016). According to Gonçalves (1996), adding cultural heritages in the official listing of protected cultural properties is the legal mechanism, in which these cultural assets are officially recognized as heritage. In the author's words, "Putting them in the list is, therefore, the declaratory act of incorporating a good into the national historical and artistic heritage." (Gonçalves, 1996, p. 66). Adding them to list of protected cultural properties is the method by which the State appropriates cultural assets, which in turn are part of the national heritage.

Choay (2009, p. 222) points out that the recognition process takes into account aspects such as "[...] valorization of architectural heritage in general and, in particular, its reuse or, in other words, its integration in contemporary life [...] (Our translation)." Figueira (2016) states that historic cities occupy a central place among the goods recognized internationally as heritage. With such recognition, urban arrangements, neighborhoods, as well as the city receive a "seal" of heritage protection endorsed by UNESCO, in which its elements contextualize and represent significant stages in the history of humanity (Norrild, 2002; Figueira, 2016).

The Historic Center of São Luís is part of the city's heritage and in recent years it has been a space for diverse activities, among them the Book Fair, festivals of alternative and popular Brazilian music, interventions, and artistic occupations. Such practices not only resignify, but give a new perspective to this space loaded with memory and symbols of the culture of Maranhão. In the following section, we discuss how such practices, especially artistic occupations, affect citizenship actions, preservation, and enhancement of the State's public heritage.

## **4 Artistic Occupations and their implications for valuing the Cultural Heritage of São**

### **Luís (Maranhão)**

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 landscape value (Cutrim; Costa; Oliveira, 2017). The central region of the capital of Maranhão had its appearance associated with the main economic locus, the port, and its coastal region. The region of Praia Grande was the big commercial hub of the early days of the colonization of São Luís, becoming the loading and unloading point of the marketing flow of import and export, constituting, the genesis of the city and its society.

Since the center of São Luís resulted from human actions, overlapping for different periods of time, and considering the advancement of trade and relations business established in Praia Grande, its historical and

cultural value was consolidated, and today it is considered one of the important spaces in the capital of Maranhão (Noronha, 2015). The Historic Center of São Luís has an extension of approximately 220 ha, comprising the neighborhoods of Praia Grande, Desterro, Apicum, Codozinho, Lira, Belira, Macaúba, Coreia and Madre Deus, as it can be seen in Figure 1:

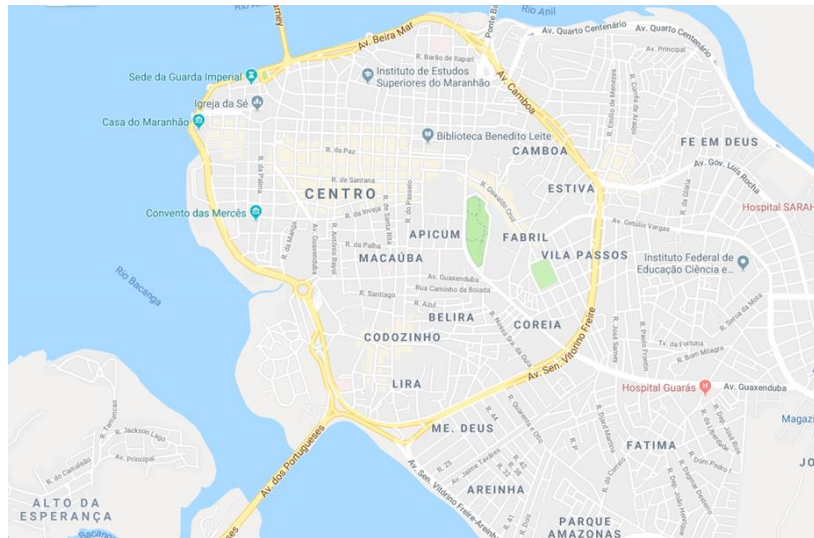


Figure 1. Map of the center of São Luís, Maranhão

Founded by the French around 1612, the Historic Center had then its core 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, responsible for planning all that 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 in this period some churches have been damaged, such as the Desterro Church and the Church of São João Batista, the latter 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).

Although São Luís had a trade widely developed for the time, it also stood out because of its great names and literary productions. According to Braga (2013) and Silva (2009a), the 19th century brought with it important advances, among them the expansion of typography and the rise of print in the State of Maranhão. In this statement, it is emphasized that the capital of Maranhão gained prominence, both for its intellectuals and for its architectural arrangement, which maintained the colonial features, evidencing the period of great commercial and economic success, represented by the tiles that predominated in its facades.

Therefore, we can say that the Historical Center of São Luís “[...] portrays the homogeneous ensembles from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represented by the two-story façades covered in Portuguese tiles [...]” (Mendes; Sousa; Marques, 2016, p. 4). The Historic Center of São Luís presents 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 things (Silva, 2009a).

Although it expressed the apogee of the capital of Maranhão in the colonial period, the Historic Center, from the 20th century onwards, was being abandoned. This was due to the departure of the older residents, who were occupying other more noble spaces in the city, and also by the drop in trade in the place, causing a “[...] process of ruining various buildings in the urban fabric of that area [...] (Our translation)” (Silva, 2009a, p. 2).

It is noteworthy that in the 1940s there already those interested to put into effect the prerogatives of the Decree-Law 25/1937, whose aim was to protect the heritage assets of great value to the country. With this, the fight to protect the architectural complex of center of São Luís gains enthusiasm. According to Andrès (1998, 104 p.), Maranhão gave an important step, by "adding the Sambaqui do Pindahy in the official listing of protected properties with the Process 211-T-39; Inscription nº 6, Archaeological, Ethnographic and Landscape Book, pages. 02, 19/01/1940 [...]”, it was the first addition to the list of federally protected properties in the state (Silva, 2009a). According to Silva (2009a), the addition of the Chapel São José da Quinta das Laranjeiras to this in the book of Fine Arts, in April 1940, was also another milestone in Maranhão. In addition, the author highlights the inclusion of Fountain of Ribeirão in 1950 and the Cathedral Church of Nossa Senhora da Vitória in 1954 in the same book, in other words, the State already had some previously listed spaces (Wall; Braga, 2014; Silva, 2009a ).

It is noted that other actions to add more properties to the list were carried out, which are fundamental for the Historic Center of São Luís to acquire even more value, above all due to its architectural arrangement. The actions aimed at preserving the patrimonial assets of Maranhão, especially those located in São Luís, were consolidated in 1974 by the Service for the Protection of Historical and Artistic Heritage (SPHAN) (Cutrim; Costa; Oliveira, 2017).

Consolidating itself as 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 National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN). According to Cutrim, Costa and Oliveira (2017), the Historic Center concentrated the main preservation activities, since it brought together a grandiose architectural set and “[...] because it is a living historic city, due to its very nature of capital that, despite its expansion, continued to preserve the 17th century urban fabric 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, beyond the addition to the list of protected properties, the title of Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Silva, 2017; Mendes; Sousa; Marques, 2016).

The Historic Center of São Luís, in recent years has been a space for diversified activities, among them the Book Fair, festivals of alternative and popular Brazilian music, interventions and artistic 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 following section, we discuss how such practices, especially artistic occupations, affect citizenship actions, preservation, and enhancement of the State's public heritage.

#### ***4.2 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 are of long-standing (see about 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 gains a greater significance through the struggle and resistance on the part of the local artistic class, by the movement called *OcupaMinc-MA*, being São Luís, one of the pioneer capitals in the occupation of IPHAN buildings throughout Brazil, under the allegation of illegitimacy of the government and loss of basic social rights. Since then, in the artistic milieu of collectives operating in the historic center of the capital of Maranhão – even though they already had the characteristics of occupations – became part of the discourse and the slogan of the actions, and in a more incisive way, the format of occupation of public spaces as a mechanism of the civil society for the maintenance and guarantee of public, free and community cultural activities. Duran (2008) sees these collectives as legitimate representatives of the most diverse categories of society, who occupy public spaces not only with the intention of using them for entertainment and leisure only, but identify the problems there and find collective ways to solve them, in opposition to the culture of spectacles of the governments that create trained and listless audiences, consumers of a ready narrative that does not problematize the space in which it is inserted.

Regarding public cultural policies aimed at the format of artistic occupation, it is already common to see notices of promotion for occupation and public cultural equipment, such as cultural centers, theaters, rooms, among others. In 2012, in Rio de Janeiro, the *Lei do Artista de Rua* (Law of the Street Artist) No. 5,429/2012) enters into force, which allows great freedom for occasional presentations in public spaces. Another action taken at the federal level was the *Programa Cultura Viva*, created in 2004 by the then Ministry for Culture, Gilberto Gil, and made effective in 2014, which encouraged the creation of the project *Pontos e Pontões de Cultura*, which aimed to decentralize the artistic practice throughout the rural towns of the country (Menezes, 2017).

Specifically in São Luís, there were two actions that came close to fostering the artistic practice in the form of occupations: the Public Notice Pontos de Cultura, carried out by the City Hall through the Municipal Secretariat for Culture, in 2016, and 04 others public notices of occupation at specific points in the Historic Center of the city, in 2017. It is important to observe that both actions were mainly aimed at popular culture groups and collectives (Maranhão, 2017; Brasil, 2015). In view of the non-continuity of public policies in the period of change of government – something that does not happen only in Maranhão, but in the whole country – there is always a deficit of affirmative actions in force in the field of culture, especially those aimed to the format of artistic occupations .

It is in this scenario of incipient fostering actions and instabilities in maintaining cultural policies that some occupations keep working in the Historic Center of São Luís. To better clarify the discussion, two occupations with different characteristics of spaces, artistic segments and forms were taken as examples of occupation and length of trajectory, in order to relate them to aspects of heritage preservation and appreciation. The first of these is *A Vida é a Festa* (Life is a party) which, in short, is a meeting of former musicians who frequent the historic center of São Luís on an open stage of improvisations and musical shows. Their actions take place every Thursday night at Praia Grande, for the last 30 years. The program occupies the street *Ladeira do Comércio*, at the back of the Odylo Costa Filho Creativity Center, 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, a singer and composer from Maranhão, the meeting is filled with several songs and sounds from local popular culture, added to the traditional *Tambor de Crioula* and musical shows, sometimes improvised, sometimes with local groups – which are invited. It is possible to observe that the flagship of the collective actions is the maintenance of the traditions of the popular culture of Maranhão, with instruments typical of the traditional rhythms of Maranhão, such as *zabumbas* and *pandeirões* of the *Bumba-meu-boi* and the *tambor grande* or *rufador*, *meião* or *socador* and *crivador* or *perenga*, which form the pairing of the *Tambor de Crioula*, among others.

In turn, the collective *O Circo Tá na Rua* (The circus is in the street), occupies the square Nauro Machado, located on street Estrela next to the João do Vale Theater, with free and public circus training. Unlike the first, this occupation has existed for five years and brings to the public space a proposal for formative action, given that many of the collective's direct collaborators began their career as circus artists with the practice developed at the meetings. Just as the previous occupation, the group offers various materials of the circus universe for people to experience and learn, such as stilts, many juggling acts, a tatami area for floor acrobatics and the allusion to traditional tightrope and strings through the slackline, a practice of balancing the strip while walking on a tensioned strip.

In this the management is collaborative. The coordination of actions is not centered on a single person. The collective's organizational structure occurs through direct collaborators, who participate in the actions in addition to weekly training, and indirect collaborators, who are all those who attend training regularly and thus collaborate to maintain the collective. It is worth mentioning that the group's network performance with other socio-cultural collectives from different districts of the island as a strategy to strengthen the occupation of public spaces.

In both occupations, we can observed that the main collaboration with the preservation and valorization 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, with the emphasis added by ourselves) , when analyzing the speech of SPHAN director , Rodrigo Melo de Franco Andrade, who held the position in 1937 and remained until the end of the sixties, “ [.. .] the main factor in the disappearance of the national historical and artistic heritage is the *indifference of the population* [...] (Our translation) ”, which overcomes the distinctions of social classes and is linked to the loss of Brazilian cultural identity.

In other words, with the excessive consumption of foreign cultural capital, the result of the European cultural heritage, together with the technological import and mass cultural production, requires that the people close ties with its financial materiality for the survival of an independent cultural identity. In addition to knowing the allegories, tales, and stories that build the patrimonial imagery of São Luís, we need the materiality of the concrete space to accomplish this identity construction. In this perspective, regarding the use of heritage, Canclini (1997, p. 194) observes that “[...] the goods gathered in history by each society do not really belong to everyone, even if they formally appear to belong to everyone and are available for everyone to use them [...] (Our translation)”, pointing out a clear distance between what is contained in the law and in the practical reality.

Leite (2001) criticizes the logic of the tourism industry about the assets to be preserved, since it alienates their historical meanings for the local population from the selection of those with monumental characteristics that have potential financial return, building a political orientation that minimizes, or even

neglects, the participation of the community and its constituent citizens. The author states that the revitalization policies of historic centers, in order to raise funds through the use of heritage, engender economic enterprises converging consumption to the ideas of tradition and preservation of the past, “[...] which often transforms these centers in 'enclaves' for the leisure, tourism and cultural consumption of a new middle class [...] (Our translation)” (Leite, 2001, p. 6).

It is possible to observe that artistic occupations demand the preservation and patrimonial valorization through their use, by bringing people closer to the cultural assets that make up the history of the place and the nation. The gap produced both by the laws and by the commodification of the cultural capital fades away at the moment in which the population takes on the spaces and from them develops actions directed to the social welfare with a view to revitalize underutilized public spaces and, in fact, contribute to the democratization of culture.

## **5 Final Considerations**

Since the first attempts to establish a concept for patrimony, it was seen that it was related to different concepts, representing aspects that permeate from the notion of parentage, monuments, as well as identifying features, among other elements. We understand that that, even with different terminologies - material, immaterial, cultural heritage, etc. - these converge in the different dimensions that heritage contemplates. All the elements that constitute the perception of heritage are nothing more than heritage assets, regardless of their typology or classification, they must be preserved and kept alive, as they portray the memory, identity, history, knowledge and actions of a people, therefore, they must reach the next generations. Thus, it is clear that the conceptions of heritage will be reframed over the years, reflecting the different realities demarcated in time and space.

The researches found regarding the preservation and revitalization of the Historic Center of São Luís talk mostly about the architectural issue of Material Heritage and others are related to the Intangible Heritage of traditional segments of popular culture such as *Tambor de Crioula* and *Capoeira*. Against this solidification, the idea of heritage as a contemplation of the past and traditions, the occupations are anchored in the 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 the relationships established with that heritage space, as well as in the production of new cultural goods.

Thus, artistic occupations permeate time and space, bringing new meanings and enabling the dynamic permanence of the idea that cultural heritage is not limited to ruins, inexorable monumental houses 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 and problematizing heritage preservation policies that, in addition to preserving history, are there to allow the people to recognize themselves as part of it and that they can actively participate in its valorization and (re) construction.

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## **Acknowledgment**

Publication funded by the financial aid for CAPES financing research (Finance code 001) according to CAPES Ordinance 206. In accordance with Internal Call No. 01/2020 of the Graduate Program in Culture and Society of the Federal University of Maranhão (PPGCult / UFMA), regarding Payment of Financial Aid to the Researcher of the Graduate Program in Culture and Society ( PPGCult) from the Federal University of Maranhão.