

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS, ORGANIZED CIVIL SOCIETY AND PROTECTION FOR WORLD HERITAGE CITIES: THE CASE OF THE OLINDA SOCIETY FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE HISTORICAL CENTER OF OLINDA[♦]

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to show the management and conservation process of World Heritage cities, and so to verify the relationships existing among the concepts and guidelines set out in the Heritage Charters, and the way that organized civil society has acted in the defense of heritage values and in local identity and public heritage policies.

The article is founded on the history to date of the preservation of the Historical Center of Olinda, taking as the focus of its approach the experience undergone by the residents of this historical center, organized through an association, the "Sociedade Olindense de Defesa da Cidade Alta - SODECA". ("Olinda Society for the Defense of the High Town - SODECA in Portuguese). SODECA's activities have been especially marked by seeking to maintain the quality of life of the inhabitants, the identity of the place and the historical and landscape values of Olinda, while being sequentially confronted with the preservation track record of municipal management. It is relevant to stress that overseeing SODECA's activities helps the monitoring of the results achieved by means of using the international documents for the conservation of the site.

The article was drawn up according to a historical and analytical methodology which reports the content of the Heritage Charters, and the context of national and municipal heritage policy, by punctuating and underlining SODECA's activities. The historical area was defined from 1984, the year this association was founded, to 1992, when new municipal legislation was instituted through a process shared with these residents.

Key-words: shared responsibility, conservation management and Heritage Charters.

1. Introduction

One of the greatest challenges to protecting built environments designated as being of heritage interest is to reconcile the maintenance of the values and identities of the place

[♦] Olinda has been classified by UNESCO as a Historical Center, while in Brazilian legislation it was classified in 1968, as the Historical Site of Olinda. In this article, the term Historical Center follows the UNESCO register.

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with the dynamics of the process of territorial transformation. In this context, the international documents, resulting from the CONVENTIONS safeguarding this cultural legacy, also known as Heritage Charters, assume a relevant role in the national guidance of public management and of town planning practices which aim at the permanence of the historical heritage.

The first international encounters (1931 and 1964) granted special importance to monuments as historical or artistic objects, or, moreover, tackled drawing up the notion of an urban grouping and the means and methodologies of restoration. In the second half of the last century (between 1970 and 1990), the encounters sought to associate the objectives of conservation with the policies of economic and urban development, at national and local level. The documents resulting from these, directly or indirectly, influenced heritage policies and formatted new topics, such as: the methodology of planning and of integrated conservation, the democratization of the planning process, the public financing of conservation and shared responsibility. More recently, international encounters have advanced in the concepts of sustainable development and cultural diversity (between 1990 and 2006).

Although the CONVENTIONS represent significant efforts with a view to formulating common guidelines, there is increasingly more constant and harsh criticism of the public interventions drawn up for historical sites. Authors denounce that the new town planning practices introduce modifications with uniformizing tendencies, leading to the loss of values and authenticity of the heritage historical areas (Azevedo in Arantes, 1984: 219-229; Magnavita in Zancheti, 2002: 149-156; Arantes, 2004; Pontual and Milet, 2007). These become objects of market pressure, led by the overwhelming influence of the dominant economic groups, and give rise to transformations of their traditional character. Such groups, linked to the real estate market, tourism, or even cultural producers, find cover among public authorities, and build a hegemonic alliance which alleges the outdated appropriateness of international theories and methodologies protecting the CULTURAL HERITAGE. Thus, for want of substantial support from the managing institutions, CULTURAL HERITAGE remains under threat, with, more often than not, the occurrence of the destruction of old vestiges, the substitution of uses, modifications in the built structures, and dilution of memory and local identity. As a consequence, Jokilehto (in Zancheti, 2002) warned of the risk of the old social fabric disintegrating, on account of residents abandoning these areas, thus generating loss of cultural continuity. These issues translate a significant amount of the criticisms, which denounce the feature of cultures being homogenized.

In an endeavor to combat this posture, at the core of the criticism there rests the demand for effective participation by civil society in the process of conservation and giving value to the historical and cultural heritage. Voices have echoed in this direction, understanding that over and above preserving the built stock, it is of fundamental importance to maintain its traditional social fabric. Such reflections have been brought up-to-date with the international safeguard debates, especially registered in the Declaration of Amsterdam (1975), in the Washington Charter (1986) and in the Charter of Petrópolis (1987).

Falcão (1984) and Bosi (1987) recognize the fundamental role of integrating civil society into the conservation planning of historical sites and consider the population the subject and actor of preservation. Hardoy and Gutman (1992: 68; 332) stress:

"The experiences of social participation made concrete in European countries, above all in the city of Bologna (Italy), displayed the viability of answers which actively included the presence of the users as the main targets of a plan for

conserving historical centers." And they added: "If the population is not organized or mobilized, it is rare to manage to sanction the legislation needed and to mount indispensable projects."

However, there is controversy as to the applicability of these recommendations in the practice of the conservation of Historical Sites in Brazil. Indeed, in everyday life, although heritage policy may often adopt guidelines and principles contained in international documents, when public management tackles the built heritage, it seems to conflict with conservation principles, methodologies and instruments which emanate from the laws and protection plans.

The object of study of this article is how organized civil society has acted, objectify to ensure the protection of the Historical Center of Olinda classified by UNESCO, in 1982, as a World Heritage Site. The focus of approach is the experience of protection developed by organized civil society through the "Sociedade Olindense de Defesa da Cidade Alta - SODECA" ("Olinda Society for the Defense of the High City - SODECA in Portuguese"), very often, aiming to legitimize its demands, by appealing to the terms and contents of the Heritage Charters.

SODECA, although it has never had a seat on the decision-making instances of public management, made itself present in the management of the Historical Center of Olinda by means of acting intensely towards its residents, politicians, and opinion-formers. It is also worth stressing that the importance of reflection on SODECA's activities in the context of the preservation policy for Olinda is due to the inspection, suggestion-making and coordinating role which this entity performed in the context of the municipal policy for preservation.

2. The context of preservation of the Historical Centre of Olinda

Having been preserved in its urban lay-out, landscape and architectonic grouping, Olinda corresponds, at the topological level, to the process of colonial occupation implemented by the Portuguese in Northeast Brazil beginning in the 16th century.

Since 1938, it has had a federal law for protection by Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (IPHAN), which targets individual monuments, later acquiring historical site listing (1968). In this moment, the historical area was 1.2 km², that widened in 1979 to 10.4 km², then now (images 1 and 2).

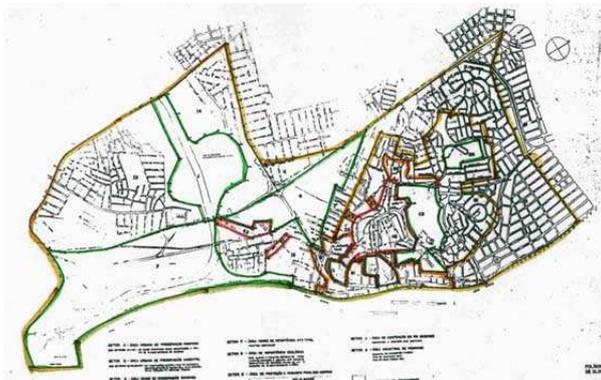


Image 1: Historic Centre of Olinda. Source: CECI, 2006.



Image 2: Olinda landscape. Source: CECI, 2006.

Beside these laws, the Historical Centre of Olinda has protection in the municipal (1973) and state (1978) spheres. This period marked passing from a national policy to a local policy for preservation, especially when was included, in 1973, in the Programa de Recuperação de Cidades Históricas - PCH ("Program for Recovering Historical Cities" -

PCH in Portuguese), and, in 1979, when the municipality of Olinda implemented, as a pioneer, the System for Preserving Historical Sites. Because of this experience, stood out in the national and Latin-American context of safeguarding.

Simultaneously with this framework for constructing heritage policy, there occurred in Olinda an intense process of town planning transformations, regional integration and increasing population density. These contributed to the appearance of new actors for preserving Olinda.

The Ribeira Movement, in 1964, responsible for the emergence of artistic and cultural vigorous activity on the historical site, led by local plastic artists, was the first milestone of this process (Barbosa e Guerra, 2004; Bonald, 1983; Melo, 1982). It contributed to displaying the historical and landscape values of the place and to the introduction of new residents, who identifying themselves with the bucolic style of life, adopted the oldest part of Olinda as a place of residence. It was these new residents, notably plastic artists, architects, historians and economists, who were the first to mobilize in the defense of preservation.

A part of this group, pressured for changes in the city, created the Associação de Moradores e Amigos de Olinda Antiga (Association of Residents and Friends of Old Olinda - AMOA in Portuguese), which acted in defense of the historical center between 1979 and 1981. Once organized into an Association, they criticized the municipal policies, then just started, which recommended the substitution of the function of dormitory town, then exercised by Olinda, for that of a metropolitan center of cultural leisure and national and international tourist center. It is worth stressing that such policies, implemented in the 1970s, corresponded to the international discussions which extolled the addition of cultural tourism as a strategy for recovering degraded historical areas. These guidelines caused changes of use in the historical site, by introducing bars, restaurants, discos and antique shops, which collided with its predominantly residential character and attracted a huge number of vehicles to the area. This situation was alert by the members of AMOA through graffiti on the walls of historical centre (images 3 and 4).



Image 3: Graffiti on the walls, by the residents, 1979. Source: Arquivo Público Mun. de Olinda - Antonino Guimarães.



Image 4: Graffiti on the walls, by the residents, 1979. Source: Arquivo Público Mun. de Olinda - Antonino Guimarães.

However, this Association has a short life due to the partners were predominantly new residents in historical center, with no legitimation next to traditional residents.

Within the framework of municipal policy, 1984 deserves highlighting. This year marks the beginning of the Pilot Project for Olinda, PPO, the methodological bases of which extolled the participation of the local residents in the discussions and in the

preservationist practice of its cultural legacy. It unleashed tasks of persuasion by part of the resident population on heritage issues (FCPSHO/PMO, 1984).

Considered as an institutional milestone in the context of local preservation, the PPO resulted from the concentration of efforts at the national, state and municipal levels, for the recovery of the housing heritage together with the residents. At the executive stage, besides setting up the practice of dialogue with the population, heritage education tasks were drawn up in which the specialists designed and they distributed explanatory booklets and pamphlets. The plan also encouraged the creation of residents' associations and councils. Thus, at the same time, in which the participation of local residents contributed to legitimizing the institutional proposals, these actors were strengthened with the basic concepts from the field of preservation.

In according to Bosi (1987), the conception of this project referenced its bases to the contents and recommendations of the Eger Encounter, 1985, which confers ample importance to the participation of the "community", as follows:

"5. The protection of cities and historical groupings should respond to the needs and aspirations of the community. It should satisfy both the demands of contemporary life and the preservation of architectonic and cultural values;

6. The participation of the community is necessary for the success of preservation. This participation should be ensured at the start of the studies which will lead to the adoption of the plan and will continue throughout the safeguarding process; (...)

8. The styles of life which are appropriate to preserve or to favor are, essentially, those of the community, thus avoiding the imposition of the use of spaces or introducing activities alien to the vocation of the assets and the values to be preserved. (...) What is important is respect for the right and aspirations of the community, whose economic and social activities frequently depend on the structures of their neighborhood." (Eger Encounter, 1985)

Though little known and not constituting one of the official safeguard declarations, this Charter represented preservation thinking at that moment and put the experience of Olinda in tune with the international discussions on protection.

3. The constitution of SODECA: mission and guidelines for activities

SODECA came into being in 1984, in a context of consolidating municipal policy for preservation and almost simultaneously, when the Pilot Project for Olinda was implemented. This new entity emerged, probably, as a result of the tepid response of the municipality to the demands of the population, who were insisting on having control of the transformations of use, which having been announced beforehand, were then being consolidated, thus increasingly turning the historical center as an established place for leisure and tourism.

At bottom what motivated this group of residents was the pre-eminence of salvaging and protecting the residential character of the site, the quality of life of the population and the cultural values under threat at that time. Other contributory factors were the increase in the flow of vehicles, the worsening of levels of violence, the risks to the preservation of the site and to the welfare and peace of mind of the resident population, consonant with the predatory effects arising from carnival, which even at that time brought in large flows of people. Thus, in response to these transformations, in 1984 the residents organized SODECA, and thus continued the preservationist experience of civil society begun at the end of the 1970s.

SODECA was mainly composed of long-standing residents of the site, who possessed affective ties with the place and cordial and easy relationships with the other residents. Other important feature was the participation of architects, historians, archaeologists, lawyers, journalists, and so forth, acting directly as opinion former. For example, the lawyer Roberto Freire, the architect Arnaldo Gedanken and Alexandre Aguiar. Besides these people, other members included the journalist Selênio Homem, the economist Cristovam Brito, the schoolteacher and the officer of the Town Hall Elma Bezerra Marques da Silva, the architect Vera Milet, the historians Denis Bernardes and Ulysses Pernambucano, the environmentalist Clóvis Cavalcanti, in addition to Juvino Nery, Francisco Caraciolo, José de Oliveira Serpa, Antônio Aurélio Sales, Severino Lima de Oliveira and Cláudia Nigro (Diário de Pernambuco, 1985).

The activities of SODECA, sometimes, mirrored the content of the International Charters, given that in its legal set-up there was also present part of the segment of architects and historians of the site, who bore affinity with the thematic theme of preservation. Resort to the Heritage Charters is due to the fact of former members of the extinct AMOA having been integrated into SODECA. The alliance between traditional residents and new residents was fruitful and ensured the success of the entity. The latter underlined the arguments in the international documents which ensured scientific legitimacy to the claims of the entity. Thus, such documents had rooted within them the resistance of the residents and their demands in favor of the quality of life, of maintaining the residential character of the site and of the specificity of the Olinda culture.

For the purposes of demonstrating this interface, the period from 1984 to 1992 has been set as the first moment of combative actions by this entity, the main demands being formally compiled. The sources consulted refer to documents, legal opinions and dossiers of this entity, as well as press cuttings which registered some of their collective public manifestations, as rebutting the international safeguard discussions. Formalized in August 1984, SODECA constituted itself as a non-profit-making and non-party political cultural society. Its activities were limited to the historical centre of Olinda, popularly known as the High City. The purposes of SODECA are set out as follows:

- “- To promote and defend the cultural, architectonic and landscape values of Old Olinda;
- To promote and defend the quality of life of the residents in the decisions of public bodies which affect them;
- To support and nurture the activities of kindred societies in the Municipality of Olinda.” (SODECA, 1984)

With these principles, the residents sought to strengthen the preservation of the historical site, showing themselves to be subjects in the process of safeguarding and a force resisting municipal interventions which did not come up to the standards of municipal and federal legislation and to the international recommendations for protection.

SODECA's activities were concentrated on the factors threatening the listed perimeter: the uses of the site, the daily lives of the residents, the protection of the green areas, public Works, the road system and the landscape. Newspaper cuttings register meetings, discussions and lectures promoted by the entity in its headquarters, provisionally in one of the main streets of the historical site, in addition to themed public acts held in public squares.

As a result of the pressure brought about by SODECA, the public authorities opened spaces for discussion and negotiation besides the meetings already mentioned

linked to the PPO. Despite the tough actions of the residents organized into an association, it was not possible to ensure they were represented on the decision-making planning instances such as the Council for the Preservation of Olinda.

In fact, although recorded in the “Minutes of the Council for the Preservation of Olinda” is the need to embrace SODECA into the discussions and decisions on urban planning of the historical center, at no time did the municipality regulate or legitimize the participation of SODECA, although the demands of this Association recurrently corresponded to the issues debated in the international CONVENTIONS and to the national political context and, at times, anticipated them.

4. The timeline and activities of SODECA

Although the activities of SODECA persist to date, the analysis of its experience in this paper is bounded, as an object of investigation, by the interval of time between 1984 and 1992. The division of this into various time periods follows the entity’s contents and modes of acting, as what is being investigated is the evolution of practice and theory. Thus, boundaries are set as being for the periods from 1984 to 1985, 1986 to 1987 and 1988 to 1992, usually considered the years of greatest effervescence of this entity.

4.1 “Olinda is the heritage of its community” (1984 – 1985)

The spearhead of SODECA, in this period, lay along two axes, fighting the intense flow of vehicles and the proliferation of bars and discos in the historical site which substituted residential use. Reacting to the disturbances such threats represented to local well-being, SODECA members organized an Open Charter to residents of the historical site, in which they asserted:

“The life force of a city is a Human element, the citizen who settles in it and who maintains soil-based and sentimental relations with it. It is in this context that the Olinda community which lives on the Historical site, has seen itself, from one hour to the next, sucked dry of its most sacred right, which is that of enjoying a minimum servicing of its welfare. (...)

Your Excellencies would do well to remember that Olinda prior to being a World Heritage Site is, first and foremost, a property of its community.” (Draft Law n° 79/85; ‘Na Ponta da Língua’ <journal>, 1985)

This document evidence the belong’s feeling of these residents in concern to Historical site of Olinda. The strength of the affective ties with the place and the salvaging of the quality of life led them to demand the strengthening of these issues, which set off a chain reaction that led to their first victory. The pressure mounted by SODECA led to the institutionalization of Municipal Law n° 4521/85, created by the local councillor Fernando Gondim in assistance to this residents, which prohibited setting up and running bars, discos and restaurants on the historical centre of Olinda.

At the first moment, this measure signified an important victory, given this problem had previously been the target of heated debate by other residents. Nevertheless, the scant respect for norms set and in force by the most influential groups meant what was not allowed was for the backdrop of threats to the site to be reverted. Since then, this risk added to factors such as property speculation, massive tourism, the absence of adequate policing and the intense traffic flow along the narrow streets, has favored evasion by some of the long-standing residents.

The impossibility of enjoying a tranquil everyday life and the attractive proposals for the sale of properties comprised opportunities for residents to abandon the site, and to

go and live in the neighboring city of Recife or, as often as not, in the Cohab estates located around the historical site. Thus the site's residential character has gradually been substituted for the benefit of commercial exploitation (Architects specialists of IPHAN, in *Jornal do Commercio*, 1984).

Moreover, the demand from tourists in Olinda encouraged commerce to change its profile and so it moved on from furnishing local supplies to selling luxury articles, barely adapted to the purchasing power of the residents. Thus, criticisms were raised as to the threats of transforming the Historical site of Olinda into a "cultural shopping-center" (Antenor Vieira, director of the Center for the Preservation of the Historical Site, in *Jornal do Commercio*, 1984).

These discussions followed in the footsteps of the arguments already drawn up in the 1960s and 1970s for the European context when the criticisms made of the interventions carried out in degraded historical centers led to recommendations having been compiled with a view to adopting principles of integrated conservation and maintaining long-standing residents.

The Declaration of Amsterdam (1975) mirrors the result of this conceptual maturation under which the rehabilitation of these areas should occur without substantial modifications in the social composition of the inhabitants. The experience of recovering the old center of Bologna, targeting residential use, showed that in the first years of intervention, was extremely successful. Nevertheless, the exploitation of the tertiary sector brought with it the process of gentrification, resulting in property values increasing and in the traditional social fabric being replaced. (Lapa and Zancheti in Zancheti, 2002: 33). Even although the physical features between Bologna and Olinda do not display similarity, the intention is to stress that the process of adding value which occurred in Bologna was the target of economic interests and this modified its character, thus also resulting in losses of cultural value. This was one of the main threats that SODECA strove to combat.

4.2 The protection of the landscape and the control of vehicle traffic (1986 - 1987)

Although the mobilization of the residents was especially concentrated on protecting the rigorous zone of federal listed areas, the preservation of the landscape and of the spaces of vegetation around the historical site was also the object of SODECA's activities. Therefore, one of the most significant demands of the entity was the campaign for the protection of the Salgadinho Complex landscape, set out in the federal legislation as a Green Area of Environmental and 'non aedificandi' Importance.

For this locale, the municipality in a joint move with the Caixa Econômica Federal - CEF bank had plans for the construction of a Service Center of the CEF and of a metropolitan park. Although a member external to the official discussions, but following the news via the press, SODECA obtained access to the Protocol of Intentions referring to this Project, and, after a common reflection, published a formal opinion opposing the proposal presented. In addition to demonstrating appropriation of the content presented, the entity identifies signs of de-characterization in the project and disrespect for the norms in force. With a view to impeding the project being carried out, it requested the intervention of the Council for the Preservation of Olinda as the authority able to embargo the works which had already begun.

Also in this published opinion, SODECA called for the need to widen the discussions of the project to a metropolitan scale, believing in a participation of all the

population, including very poor communities near at hand such as the Ilha do Maruim, Santa Tereza and Salgadinho. It appealed to the national political context to prompt the widening of social participation.

“It would be desirable that precisely when the New Republic completes its first year of life, spaces be created or widened for an effective social participation in formulating government policies or projects.” (SODECA, 1986)

Not without reason, these residents organized meetings to mobilize the population of the site, explaining the disagreements as to the project and discussing the need for environmental protection. From time to time, it called for representatives of the environment such as the Pernambuco Association for the Defense of Nature (ASPAN), the Engineering Club, the Naturist Federation of Brazil and the Movement Art & Ecological Thought, to discuss the project. The meetings were called “Ecological Thought” and, in order to back up their struggle, SODECA organized a petition entitled “Manifesto for green in the city”, which, according to documented sources, collected more than three thousand signatures of local residents.

This debate is inserted into the recommendations arising from the Norms of Quito (1967), in which its legal measures propose the zoning of historical areas, taking into account distinct levels of safeguard. Besides being in accord with recent discussions on the environment, in which the Declaration of Nairobi (1982) was an important mile-stone, it registered an advance as to the discussions on the national panorama, given that it was only in 1992, with the Eco-92 Encounter, in Rio de Janeiro, the preservation of the environment was more widely publicized.

The constant skirmishing of SODECA allied to the low receptivity of the municipality, led to the organization of a dossier, by the entity, containing the depredations suffered by the CULTURAL HERITAGE assets of Olinda. The intense flow of vehicles was cited as the main cause. This document was channeled on to the Federal Justice Department, using a public civil suit. Its analysis supported the decision of the district attorney to ban the circulation of vehicles from the Zone of Rigorous Protection, in concordance with SODECA’s opinion, as an extreme resource. This measure bore great repercussions on local everyday life, generating conflicts among the residents and users of the historical site.

With the intention of minimizing these conflicts, SODECA organized a Plebiscite on the site, based on drawing up restrictive and disciplinary measures of access to vehicles. Their proposal took in the opinion of the residents, since there had been prior local consultation. In one of the documents, days before the Plebiscite, SODECA mentioned:

“(…) At the moment when the Constituent National Assembly is drawing up a new Constitution for our country, one of the central issues is exactly the creation of mechanisms for democratizing society, especially those might make possible the direct participation of citizens in the decisions of the public authorities which directly affect communities. This Plebiscite therefore assumes at this moment an important role in the sense of exercising the right of citizenship and so anticipates the new Constitution and so becomes a live example and a reference point for Constituent members and for our country with regard to the real democratization of Brazilian society.” (SODECA, 1987)

In this way, the perception is of its appropriation on the national political context, and that it anticipates the propositions of the Constitution, institutionalized in 1988. They therefore believed in placing the action of the Plebiscite as exemplary on the Brazilian panorama – a model of the practice of citizenship. Even with opinions divided, the result

of the Plebiscite was in favor of banning the flow of vehicles from the city, a position defended by the entity, very much although the arguments and attacks made in order to appeal against such an outcome by some groups was a constant (image 5).



Image 5: Ban on entry to Rua de São Francisco, Olinda, 1987. Source: Arquivo Público Mun. de Olinda – Antonino Guimarães.

4.3 Activities in the Revision of Municipal Legislation and in the Plan for the Circulation of Vehicles (1988 - 1992)

Since the measures of the Plebiscite entered into force, there were great conflicts among the various social groups living on the site. The interests linked to tourism, represented by the owners of bar and restaurants, as well as some of the plastic artists, informal traders and religious orders, fiercely fought this decision. Indeed, the control on access of vehicles meant the numbers visiting the historical site diminished and, consequently, the closure of shops, bars and restaurants.

Since then, the municipality, aiming to annul the conflicts and normatize control of vehicle access began the discussion of town planning legislation on the uses and occupation of the soil. The first propositions of the municipality were rejected by SODECA members who, with the intention of formalizing their decision, issued a formal opinion disagreeing with the proposals presented, above all when these referred to uses of the site.

SODECA was opposed to extending the commercial area of the historical centre, alleging this would come to intensifying the expulsion of inhabitants due to real estate speculation which, naturally, would reach the area. Once again it fought measures which would contribute to transforming the character of the site, warning of the threat of loss of cultural identity. As consequences, they pointed to the worsening of the invasion by 'outsiders', with no cultural or affective link to local values, as well as the flow of vehicles, which led to the mobile barriers laid down in the Plebiscite being broken. It also disagreed with the setting up of top-end-of-the-market commerce, barely associated with the needs and purchasing power of local residents, which reaffirmed the process of white expulsion.

SODECA's published formal opinion identified the similarity between Olinda's and Recife's legislation, while stressing the diversity of context between the two cities. Moreover, it mentioned the municipal and federal normatives on protection, showing that it had appropriated the legal context. In its conclusions:

"However what drives us on us in this campaign which has become tiring is to show that the economic interests of those who wish to transform the listed area

into a magnet for commerce are devastating for culture, the Baroque heritage, human values and the view of the residents desirous only of preserving the native (and adopted) of Olinda (...)" (SODECA, 1988)

Besides setting out their feelings as to the efforts made to preserve the site, by mentioning 'tiring', they indicate the consequences of the external pressures both on Olinda's tangible heritage assets and the intangible ones. By mentioning the wish to preserve 'the native (and adopted) soul' reference was made to the struggle to ensure that long-standing residents remain and those coming from other localities, even other states and regions, fixed their residence on the site.

The Charters of Washington (1986) and Petrópolis (1987), which were contemporaneous with these discussions, deal exactly with the importance of the resident population of historical sites taking part to safeguard the heritage, and encouraging their growth through safeguard associations. As to the uses of the historical areas, they sounded the alert to ensure that the new functions were compatible with the character and vocation of the locale, and pointing out residence as a primary function of built space.

Whereas there was scant reference to the international documents, what is perceived, nevertheless, is the proximity to the discussions established in these CONVENTIONS. The idea of preservation argued for by this group of residents was firmly anchored on the permanence of residential use as the principal factor for the site. Moreover, the expectations for institutionalizing social participation in urban planning decisions were constant.

In continuance of the meetings to discuss the Plan for the Circulation of Vehicles on the historical site, the change of management in 1989 was reflected in tackling these discussions head on, with a new proposal being presented for this end. Not without reason, disagreements were found to be in evidence among the Olinda's resident population, represented by SODECA. In order to underpin its arguments, the entity set out its commitment to local preservation and then resorted to the international documents on safeguards:

"(...) We are committed to Olinda in such a way as to live it with dignity and respect and to preserve it for the generations to come. We incorporate as our own, the principles and norms which have been defined below by UNESCO and ICOMOS, etc, (...)"(SODECA,1989)

Thus, it mentioned the guidelines in relation to the transfer of the circulation of vehicles to outwith the historical site, and controlled the traffic and the car parks in the rigorous zone, judged on the needs for making compatible the coherent use of the building, preventative measures against natural catastrophes and the need for the resident population to take part and be involved in ensuring the success of urban conservation of the old centers. The documents made reference to in this formal opinion were the Charter of Athens, 1993, and the Charter of Washington, 1987. And it concluded: "These principles should guide interventions and proposals for the Historical Site of Olinda, perfected and adapted to local characteristics." (SODECA, 1989)

Besides these, the entity also made reference to the Federal Constitution of 1988, which at this moment became law, specifically clause X of Article 29: "Cooperation of the representative associations in municipal planning" (SODECA, 1989). By this citation, it reinforced its wish for participation, which has still not been institutionalized in municipal plans and projects.

This document registered effectively the reference to the Heritage Charters in the preservationist manifestations of organized civil society in Olinda, emphasizing

reciprocity as to the international issues of safeguards. Even though the results achieved were not surveyed, the appropriation of the preservationist concepts and ideas by these residents is a fact, in which they believed and strove for in their participation in order to guarantee the safeguarding of the site.

5. By way of conclusions

Given this brief report on the activities of organized civil society of the Historical site of Olinda in preservationist causes, the intention is to stress the appropriation by these residents of the issues debated in the international safeguard CONVENTIONS and their use in the practice of local protection.

Understanding the involvement of the residents of historical sites in the process of safeguarding becomes fundamental to the extent that these social actors established a process of co-participation in the management of the Historical Center of Olinda. They introduced democratic practices of management and, from time to time, they anticipated the national political context and the guidelines for protection.

Reflecting on the sense of preservation, based on the involvement of the residents of Olinda, leads us to believe in the relevance of some essential aspects in the process of safeguarding the historical and cultural heritage, namely:

1. SODECA's activities make it possible to monitor the results achieved and the activity coverage of the Heritage Charters;
2. The importance of the path-paving role of the Heritage Charters in the preservation practice of organized civil society faced with the public authorities;
3. The importance of publicizing these documents as a way to introduce and democratize, for all the social body, contents and guidelines for protection which are, in the great majority of cases, appropriated by the small group of experts.;
4. the need to institute channels of participation in order to integrate civil society into the conservation planning process of historical areas, taking into account their expectations in governmental plans and projects.

Admitting such proposals means to narrow the gaps in relationships of conflict between the population and public managers and to set out to cooperate and be co-responsible, in favor of the benefits to CULTURAL HERITAGE.

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