



Inhabiting the present, building the past: oral history and heritage in São Paulo's Modern housing complexes

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss cultural heritage and the place of memory in the housing complexes built by the Retirement and Pension Institutes (IAPs) in the City of São Paulo in the 1940s and 50s. Based on an oral history project featuring residents of these complexes, we discuss the construction of the past and its meanings in the present, in light of the architectural and urban transformation processes in the city. To what extent are the housing complexes considered cultural references by these social actors? How would we think about perpetuating these buildings for future generations, in light of the constitutional requirements for expanding what is considered as cultural heritage? The residents' perceptions, considering their past and present experiences, have shown deep connections to the historical housing programs promoted by the IAPs in Brazil, whether in their appropriation or criticism. From the oral history, this paper intends to discuss the life trajectories in the housing complexes and their relationship with modern-day preservation practices.

Keywords: Oral history, Social housing, Retirement and Pension Institutes

Introduction

This article is part of the debate on the expansion of research on social housing and cultural heritage in Brazil, and intends to present the oral history research conducted with residents of housing complexes built by the Retirement and Pension Institutes (IAPs) between the 1940s and 1950s in São Paulo and the surrounding metropolitan area¹. In an unprecedented way, we conducted fifty interviews with residents of the housing complexes focusing on life stories, forms of dwelling and work, urban history and the meanings of cultural heritage.

this perspective, it is important to understand the housing complexes as part of historical and urban processes and, as such, as plausible housing and quality of life solutions. The preservation of housing complexes has been a major challenge for the administrators, resulting in a broader understanding of historical relationships of the dwelling experience, the State's capacity to supervise and manage these spaces, and the need to establish a dialogue with residents in the quest for collective constructions of meaning for heritage.

The Federal Constitution (1989) legally transformed the principles applicable to cultural heritage in Brazil, to include expressions that go beyond grandiose landmarks and a wide range of cultural themes. Where fundamental and in-depth technical knowledge (from outside) intersect with local experiences and values is where new, solid bonds can be created, allowing the housing complexes to remain for future generations. In

It is important to problematize the preservation of social housing in Brazil and Latin America, mobilizing the recent critical literature on identities and alterity in contemporary cultural heritage (HARRISON, 2013), aiming at overcoming the colonizing perspective of preservationist discourses through memory and everyday life experiences. To that end, it is crucial to build arguments, actions, debates, and disputes about

1. This work included the research assistance of *Faculdade de Arquitetura da Universidade de São Paulo (FAU-USP)* undergraduate students Pedro Felix and Danilo Ferreira, fellows of the *University of São Paulo, Unified Scholarship Program* between August 2015 and August 2016. (Nascimento, august 2016)

the preservation of heritage, in a critical manner and together with the civil society.

Smith (1995) used the term “authorized heritage discourse” to describe the practices that developed from the 1960s onwards for European heritage, supported primarily by UNESCO. The designation of heritage is based on practices and self-reinforcing expertise that is allowed to speak about heritage (thus the term authorized discourse). This discourse of authority over heritage creates and legitimizes the concept of heritage and determines who can speak about it and its meanings.

Authorized heritage discourse focuses on aesthetically pleasing objects that current generations must care for and protect for future generations, and became the basis of heritage practices after the 1960s. Thus, it builds senses of identity that are based largely on the past. In this process, there is a significant emphasis on materiality as the carrier of meanings that are naturalized and treated as intrinsic. Heritage passively manifests itself in the discourse of materiality, in a tendency to refuse contradictory arguments. Historian Ulpiano Meneses (2009) also draws attention to the naturalization of cultural heritage valuations in Brazil, with engagements that are often passive to materialities and a tendency to exclude contradictory or contentious discourses. However, immaterial heritage in Brazil comprised other concepts from the 2000s onwards that, in many aspects, helped to place subjects

at the center of valuation in heritage policies. By revolving around the concept of “cultural reference”, subjects and their significances can ascribe meaning to social practices as well as to any pre-existing characteristics. Still according to Meneses (2017), this has made overcoming the false dichotomy of material/immaterial an even greater challenge, leaving the built heritage encapsulated in aesthetic discourses and creating the need to repopulating heritage.

Debates for the landmarking of modern housing legacy trigger a reflection on the “authorized heritage discourse” (SMITH, 2006) uttered by experts. While many of the housing complexes are disregarded due to assessment of their aesthetic-stylistic values – which are often the basis of heritage valuations –, their permanence and preservation actions create the possibility of expanding the field of heritage and going beyond the authorized interpretative framework. In Brazil, the intellectual involvement of modern architects with heritage policies and the interlacement of architectural historiography and selective actions have hindered the preservation of social housing buildings. (NASCIMENTO, 2016) In the case of social housing, the historiographical legitimacy made possible by the expanded research agenda and the acknowledgment of modern housing by authors such as Cavalcanti (1987), Bonduki (1998), Antunes (1997), Aravecchia-Botas (2016) and Bruna (2010) and especially by the Social Housing Pioneers Research Group coordinated by Bonduki have not been enough to validate

preservation discourses. The historiography of the last 20 years implicitly corresponded to the “canonical version” of the history of Brazilian architecture. There are questions over whether recent heritage-making practices have been able to overcome these ties with historiographical legitimacy. To what extent have we been able to push the preservation of modern architecture beyond the writing of history and in a way that is more receptive to the practices and representations of social subjects in their valuations and meanings?.

Investigations into the cultural and social history of architecture in Mexico (by Graciela de Garay), Argentina (by Rosa Aboy) and France (by Michel and Derainne) use oral history accounts provided by residents to show how much social subjects get involved with the housing project. So many years after the buildings were first occupied and the social housing program was discontinued, the objects, the memories and the materials remain. Dialoguing about life in the housing complexes, with the methodological contributions of oral history, helps problematize and scale the impact of modern projects in the life of workers and the meaning of the dwelling models in the daily routines and the historical processes experienced by residents of the housing complexes. And at the same time, these conversations trigger a reflection on the interests and conditions of social housing preservation in contemporary cities, as part of the history of work and workers in Brazil.

Housing complexes and preservation: the place of social subjects

Numerous housing complexes were built throughout Brazil as part of the country's public housing policies between the late 1930s and early 1960s. The State managed and organized housing for the working class until the 1960s when, until the official housing policy was replaced with the National Housing Bank (BNH), which held other formal and ideological conventions. Between 1930 and 1964, there was great diversity in the housing complexes built in Brazil, with no prevailing style for the projects. The wide range of housing complexes featured varying typological, technological, urbanistic and theoretical approaches. One of these productions were buildings placed inside the consolidated urban tissue, such as the *Japurá* (designed by Eduardo Kneese de Melo) and the *Anchieta* (by Roberto Bros.) in São Paulo. Other constructions were a large block of flat-structured buildings between green spaces and detached houses such as the *Realengo* and the *Vila Guiomar* (designed by Carlos Frederico Ferreira), spectacular and exceptional solutions such as the *Pedregulho* housing complex and massive productions of the IAPI complexes: *Bangu*, *Moça Bonita* and *Penha* in Rio de Janeiro. All these buildings are important and have a significant urban impact, regardless of whether they were designed by renowned architects or inside government offices. (KOURY, 2019)

Research into the preservation problems of Brazilian housing complexes has shown that there is a diverse array of factors taken into account for conservation decisions. Preservation depends on a positive interplay between several factors, which may be the degree to which the project was built to design specifications, its form of occupation, or the bonds of affection established by the residents, which may lead to more incisive actions. The prevalence of one of these factors can be a positive or a negative influence on the conservation or architectural characterization of a housing complex (NASCIMENTO, 2016, Chapter 8).

At this moment, however, we are interested in discussing more than just physical preservation as an end in itself, but to think about the bonds of memory and belonging that the residents built with the dwelling spaces. The State built housing complexes as part of a policy for workers. Studies carried out by Ngela Castro Gomes in the 1980s showed that workers played a key role in building the authoritarian state of the Vargas Administration, as well as the dichotomy in the role of society in the shaping of authoritarian states (ROLLEMBERG & QUADRAT, 2010). The question is: which standards of domesticity of the modern, national, unionized worker who was willing to meet the demands for social order shaped by the logic of work were met by the private sector? How did the relationships between the State, residents, production of architectural structures and mediation by social workers occur? These are questions that promote

the current understanding of the leading role of residents in the construction of their stories and, consequently, allow us to think about preserving these buildings.

Research has shown the essential role of residents in the appropriation of modern homes and in the assimilation, rejection or resistance to the proposed ways of life, whether in the domestic spheres and in the social, cultural and sporting activities taking place within the estates. (NASCIMENTO, 2016) The collective living experience that resulted from the government programs led to forms of social organization and produced very strong and lasting experiences, constantly narrated and reinterpreted by residents. Currently, the use of dwelling spaces is lined with memorial meanings, full of stories of residents' appropriation of their modern homes and of collective living spaces, evidencing the strength of state-sponsored programs at that time and the fertile field of research on the social history of housing, which is still largely unexplored.

The ongoing study aims to understand the relationships between the role of social agents and the buildings through appropriation, resistance or rejection of the modern dwelling. The research process consisted of field visits to the selected groups and oral interviews. The interviews were conducted with residents able to establish memories of their ways of life at the time the housing program was implemented, in the 1950s. Almost all respondents belong to the



Figure 1. The *Mooca* Housing Complex, 2016. Source: Flávia Brito do Nascimento.



Figure 2. The *Vila Guiomar* Housing Complex, 2016. Source: Flávia Brito do Nascimento.

generation of the first families who received a unit from the IAPs.

A questionnaire was drafted with semi-structured questions and some key points to establish guidelines and relationships between reported memories and historiographic data. The interviews addressed issues such as the acquisition and moving dates, the procedures in the acquisition process, the requirements proposed by the IAPs, and how the selection process was announced to the public. There were also questions of a socioeconomic nature, regarding the number of family members, how they were accommodated in the rooms of the house, information about the furniture and its arrangement. These questions aimed to understand the context surrounding the daily lives and the household dynamics of these families, by analyzing the role played by each of their members. For the most part, the interviews were held in the residents' apartments at the housing complexes.

Housing complexes in the city: urban and social trajectories

Of all the housing estates built between 1940 and 1950, the study focused on five complexes located in the cities of São Paulo and Santo André, in the metropolitan area, where it was possible to have access to the residents. Three of the complexes were built by the Industry Workers' Retirement Institute (IAPI) – *Vila Guiomar*

in Santo André, *Mooca* in the namesake working-class neighborhood in São Paulo, and *Várzea do Carmo* in the Glicério neighborhood in São Paulo. The other two buildings were built by the Bank Workers' Retirement Institute (IAPB) – *Nove de Julho* in the Itaim Bibi neighborhood and *Santa Cruz* in the Vila Mariana neighborhood, both in São Paulo. The industry workers who moved in the first three buildings had a higher educational and income levels than the bank workers. While all of these buildings were part of a broader workers' housing program of the Vargas Administration, there are important differences to point out regarding program organization, the resident population profile and architectural styles.

The three housing complexes promoted by the IAPI – *Mooca* (Figure 1), *Vila Guiomar* (Figure 2) and *Várzea do Carmo* (Figure 3) – are part of the institute's first foray into housing and, in their materiality, represent the ideas and actions taken on this issue at the time. Founded in 1936, the institute became the largest social security body in the country, a position it held until being absorbed by the National Institute of Social Security (INPS) in 1966. Like the other Retirement and Pension Institutes, the IAPI aimed to provide social security to its members, and promoted social housing as a way of investing its resources. IAPI played an important role in the modernization of public administration, and was one of the first public agencies to use civil service exams. As the leading promoter of social housing



Figure 3. The *Várzea do Carmo* Housing Complex, 2015. Source: Flávia Brito do Nascimento.

in Brazil, the institute created an Engineering Department and staffed it with several architects and engineers (many of them hired through civil service exams). The main creator of the IAPI housing program was the Rio de Janeiro architect Carlos Frederico Ferreira. Having graduated from the National School of Fine Arts (ENBA), Ferreira became influenced by modern architecture after attending the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAMs), and decided to apply to the concepts of construction streamlining, serialization and standardization to the IAPI housing program. The *Realengo* building complex, designed by Ferreira in Rio de Janeiro in 1938, was the first housing project planned and built by the IAPI. It combines the various dwelling forms and experiences available at the time, with apartment buildings, detached houses, and several different construction streamlining techniques. After this inaugural experience, the IAPI tried out other arrangements, hiring professionals from outside its technical staff – who were naturally still required to follow its technical guidelines (BONDUKI & KOURY, 2014, p. 15-101; ARAVECCHIA-BOTAS, 2016).

The housing complexes in São Paulo in which we carried out our oral history project were designed and built in the first years of the institute, before it had a full technical staff in place or any guidelines for its dwelling models. In some cases, the public body used private architects to execute the projects. The first such case is the *Várzea do Carmo* complex, designed by Atílio Correa Lima and his staff. The four-story flat building

was designed in 1938 and offered three-bedroom units. It was followed by the *Anchieta* (designed by the Roberto brothers in 1941) and the *Japurá* (by Eduardo Kneese de Mello in 1942) buildings, which were not included in the study due to its architecture style and occupation characteristics, as well as the lack of access to residents. (ARAVECCHIA-BOTAS, 2016)

The *Vila Guiomar* (designed by Carlos Frederico Ferreira in 1942) building in the city of Santo André, São Paulo, is one of the largest housing complexes studied, with 1,411 residential units distributed across flat buildings and single-family homes in a large plot of land. Finally, there is the *Mooca* building, designed in 1946 by Rio de Janeiro architect Paulo Antunes Ribeiro, who carried out other projects for IAPI. This complex features flat buildings among vast green spaces. All the housing complexes included in the scope of the research were located in areas that were industrial neighborhoods in São Paulo at the time.

The Bank Workers' Retirement Institute had different characteristics from the IAPI, which are reflected in its housing program. Created for bank workers, which was seen as a prestigious career in the 1940s and 50s, the institute usually built single-tower buildings in more central areas of the city, popularly known as “banker's buildings”. The São Paulo complexes used in his study have different design characteristics, as they consist of serial buildings featuring several housing units, as is the case with the *Santa Cruz* building designed by Marcial Fleury de Oliveira.



Figure 4. The *Nove de Julho* Housing Complex, 2016. Source: Flávia Brito do Nascimento.

The *Nove de Julho* Housing Complex (1945) is a three-tower building designed by the staff of the Bank Workers' Retirement Institute (Figure 4). Both of these buildings were located in areas that represented the city's urban expansion boundaries at the time of construction (BONDUKI & KOURY, 2014, p. 179-233).

With the exception of the *Várzea do Carmo* Housing Complex, the urban ensemble surrounding the projects has changed drastically since construction, a process that has become even more pronounced in recent years. Their locations have appreciated significantly, with upscale apartments and commercial properties changing the neighborhood and the ways in which the city is occupied. The *Várzea do Carmo* Housing Complex is the only one that did not have its surroundings targeted by real estate appreciation or undergo significant appreciation. Located in the *Várzea do Tamanduateí* neighborhood, in the East Zone of São Paulo, the *Várzea do Carmo* Housing Complex is surrounded by expressways and public facilities, such as the INSS (Social Security) office building, close to downtown, near a historic hill in the *Tamanduateí* River floodplain. Although some newer, more luxurious buildings have sprung up around them, they are few and only border one side of the complex, which is rather large. The area has not become a housing neighborhood, but residents nonetheless feel a strong sense of place identification, and mention this as an affective and real estate value.

In *Mooca*, deindustrialization led to the closure of several factories, where relatives of the housing complex residents worked. Factories were sold and demolished to build upscale gated communities. The working-class neighborhood in the photo featured on the brochure for the complex, with the smokestack in the background, is now surrounded by high-rise luxury buildings. The change in urban landscape has also changed the profile of the residents of the housing complex. (RUFINONI, 2013)

A similar situation took place with the *Nove de Julho* housing complex, consisting of three tall towers that share a common garden. The opening of *Nove de Julho* Avenue, which became one of the main thoroughfares in the city, split up the complex and led to a real estate boom in the neighborhood. The Itaim Bibi district is currently one of the most high-end neighborhoods in the city because of its upscale residential buildings and vibrant commercial centers. Residents reported that this neighborhood was barely occupied and was considered to be in the city's outskirts in the 1940s and 1950s.

At the *Vila Guiomar* complex, in Santo André, the real estate appreciation of the surrounding neighborhood has been even more pronounced. Due to its size, the complex has become an urban island in the midst of a middle-class neighborhood in the city, located in close proximity to the city's downtown, near the City Hall Square and the train station. (COSTA, 2015; SILVA, 2018)



Figure 5. The *Santa Cruz* Housing Complex, 2015. Source: Flávia Brito do Nascimento.

The *Santa Cruz* Housing Complex (Figure 5) is located in the *Chácara Klabin* neighborhood, on the banks of the *Ipiranga Stream*, which has been channelized to give way to *Ricardo Jaffet Avenue*. When the complex was built, the river was open and along its banks there were industrial facilities such as the *Arno factory* and a garbage incinerator, both of which were recently shut down. (CANDRO, 2017) The land in this district was owned by the *Klabin family*, which subdivided the neighborhood and built some of their private houses on the higher ground, such as the *Modernist House*.

The less valued part of the land was used for industrial and housing purposes. One of the city's largest slums, known as *Vergueiro*, developed in the river's floodplains and remained there until the 1970s, when its residents were removed. The *Santa Cruz* housing complex was relatively isolated from the city, with no public transportation serving the neighborhood. That meant the bank workers had resort to shuttle buses to commute to work in the downtown area. Shopping was reduced to small greengrocers and the store of the *Bank Retirement Institute*, as one resident tells us²:

(...) it was all uninhabited, there was nothing. What was around? Ranches. Ranches all around. Well, what did we use to do around here? On Saturdays, my dad, my mom and I, sometimes my sister, we used to go shopping at the market in *Ipiranga*, because there was nothing here. Yeah, this was a farm here, in front of the *Santa*

Cruz Hospital. Do you see the *Modernist House*, have you ever heard of the *Modernist House*? (...) that's the main house of the farm owned by the *Klabin family*, who owned this huge piece of land. There was nothing else here, no schools, no stores. My dad was one of the first people who came here, and they went to *City Hall* to demand that an elementary school be built here. (Respondent VL, February 10, 2015, *Santa Cruz Housing Complex*)

The removal of the slum and the subdivision of the *Chácara Klabin* neighborhood changed the neighborhood's real estate market and brought a new profile of residents in the 1990s. The arrival of the *Green Line Subway* in the 2000s, connecting the district with *Paulista Avenue*, consolidated the change process. The immediate impact of the subway station, which is less than 500 meters from the complex, caused the units to appreciate in value and led to the construction of new residential buildings. This once nearly rural area (with factories, but also ranches owned by Japanese immigrants) is now served by a subway and large avenues that provide immediate access. (CANDRO, 2017; IMBRONITO, 2016)

The city changed and so did its dwellings, in its forms of appropriation, domesticity and family structure. What was once a dwelling condition "of its time" now becomes a dwelling "of another time", in which its ways of working and living have changed radically. The industrial and bank workers who shaped their life experiences in the housing complexes and their meaningful

2. The identity of respondents was not disclosed.

industrial or bank identity are now part of the past. (ARAVECCHIA-BOTAS, 2016) As Madeleine Ribérioux (1992) has pointed out, working life and its everyday senses are as important as industrial production spaces. In this sense, the expansion beyond the strictly architectural boundaries in the valuation of what may be the modern or industrial heritage, must consider the living spaces. (NASCIMENTO & SCIFONI, 2015)

The descendants and the residents of the housing complexes studied still nurture a strong sense of identity, which, which were not only their parents' but also their own. Through the memories, we were able to understand how the house is an important anchor for these subjective experiences. Despite all of the transformations that have taken place, the house and the complex are a the materialization of the previous existence that gives it meaning in the present and connects the commercial heritage to the affective and cultural heritage. The land inherited from the family is part of the common lived experiences.

Living in the present: memory, oral history and housing complexes in temporality

If the city of São Paulo has changed a lot from the period of the construction of the complexes until the 2000s, if the professions that connected the residents have also become extinct or changed, many of the original residents and/or their descendants remain continue to live in the buildings. One of the key goals of the oral

history project was to understand how residents incorporate past experiences into their present lives, and how they resignify the historical place of dwelling.

As already mentioned, one of the distinctive features of the Brazilian housing complexes built between the 1930s and the 1950s is the profile of the resident population.. Although many of the units were sold by the original residents (after new rules took effect in the 1970s), the social configuration, the identity and memory bond still resembles those from the past. The complexes are occupied by workers associated with the Institute that built them. After the first contacts were made in person or with the help of social media, other residents appeared.

In her classic study on the memories of old people in São Paulo, Ecléa Bosi (1994) shows how remembering is a task that involves the dynamics of the present and the tensions between what one wants to forget and what one wants to remember. As a social category, older people remember the past as part of their social role in the present. The interviews were conducted with the residents who moved to the complexes as children or young people and today are generally over sixty years old. The function of memory, at the end of a long life, is to ascribe meaning to our existence. Interviews were conducted with residents who moved to the complex as children or young people and are now generally over sixty years old, by which time the IAP housing program has

been extinct for over 50 years and they are retired. The move to or birth in the housing complex and the passage of time and life experiences are interspersed with the nostalgia of lost childhood, but also with the pride of living there today, with their own history and its historical meanings in the present. This seemed to be a major theme of the general feeling about housing. Today's residents are historically aware of their place and associate such pride to this history.

The oral history project aimed to work with a different historical source from those already used to study housing complexes. Through the memories and experiences of the residents, we sought a historical understanding of these places. The aim was not to extract an alleged truth from the story, which would be impossible, but to learn about the experiences and memories of places that are important to people, from the people who have lived in these places. After extensive historiographical studies on the complexes, knowing the social role of residents in the housing history is essential. The subjectivity of the historian's work and its sources, and the direct, even contradictory and supposed "untrue" testimonies, are an additional source of research. (FERREIRA, 2002) With the definitions of history and memory, where history is an intellectual form of knowledge, a cognitive operation, and memory is in the field of social representations (MENESES, 1992), the oral accounts provided us rich possibilities for understanding the social history of housing and of workers in São Paulo.

Historians have used oral history with criticism and caveats since the mid-twentieth century, but it is unavoidable as a historical source. Oral history is widely used in national historiographical practice, especially because of the growing attention paid to memory themes in contemporary society. (FERREIRA, 2002) Oral sources have contributed to write the history of excluded people, helping them to build identities and movements for the right to memory, as well as helping in the field of public history. However, oral history remains an unexplored field in architecture and urbanism, especially in the face of experiences already carried out in other countries such as Mexico, Argentina and France. (GARAY, 2002, 2004; ABOY, 2005; MICHEL, DRAINNE, 2005)

To carry out the research, we used sources that could explore the depth of material life in housing complexes from the perspective of residents – lower- and middle-class workers. We sought to understand the ways of living in the housing complexes by taking a critical approach towards the sources and by confronting the different perspectives on the working class, government interference and the workers' own opinions on their homes. As Roger Chartier (1988) has shown, "the ways a specific group appropriates an intellectual purpose or a cultural form are more important than the statistical distribution of that purpose or form". According to Meneses (1992), memory has the condition of a social fact: it is a product of the present, responsible for meeting

the demands of the present historical time. Therefore, the memory cannot be rescued, as if it were in some dark corner, waiting for the right time to surface.

The majority of respondents are mostly from the first generation of residents. They were born in the complex or moved there while they were still children. Their parents held various industrial jobs, such as lathe operators, weavers, bodyworkers, production manager or inspector, technical education teacher, or even book dealers. On the other hand, bank workers worked in the banks of downtown São Paulo. Both bank and industry workers used to live in rentals, which they found to be precarious, both physically (small, shared bathroom, in villas, etc.) and/or socially (shared with relatives).

My father's family lived there in *Belém* and my mother's too, closer to *Mooca* but still in the Italian neighborhood. They got married and moved into a one bedroom with a kitchen for a short time in *Belém* too. (Respondent CR, 03/12/2016, *Mooca* Housing Complex).

The move to the housing complexes was seen as a material improvement for the family. The move to the complex was a material improvement for the family. In that sense, respondents mention mostly their mothers' reactions (more space or autonomy), because they were themselves children at the time. They reproduced the familiar lines and narratives about the history of their dwelling. Even though they were small, one-,

two- or three-bedroom apartments for families with three to four children are not a problem, given the previous living conditions. The material conditions of the house are a material gain:

When my mom lived in São Joaquim neighborhood, she lived in those little houses with one bedroom and a kitchen! It didn't matter that it was far, it was ugly... it was mine. That dream of owning a home. When she got here she said, "The first thing I saw was the wind". Her house is on the corner. That way she was able to hang the cloth diapers out to dry (Respondent PC, 02/29/2016, *Várzea do Carmo* Housing Complex).

Renting in previous houses was also seen as precarious housing. However, the respondents mention that, at the IAPs, housing was neither free nor cheap. The rent is remembered as being akin to a mortgage payment. But public housing built for the workers was rented and was owned by the IAP, which managed the tenants, from the selection process to the organization of community life, in some cases with the help of social workers. The social workers were actively involved in various facets of life, both privately and publicly, especially in the IAPI housing complexes.

Housing built during the New State regime were more than just a shelter: they were intended to educate workers. In some cases, the administration of the units was much more than a bureaucratic formality: it was based on such

convictions and was carried out in concert with social work with the active participation of social workers. To a greater or lesser extent, depending on the location and when the projects were completed, the IAPs were very much involved in the administration. (NASCIMENTO, 2008) In the housing complexes of São Paulo, there is no recollection of the social work carried out by the Institutes. They are only mentioned when residents talk of the office where they would go to pay the rent. At the *Mooca* IAPI, this office was in one of the apartments in the complex. The IAPI provided security (with two security guards doing the rounds at night) and cleaning for the buildings. Other than that, there is no mention of the Institute interfering with the.

In the 1960s, the direct administration of the complexes by the institutes, which were essential to the broader project of Brazilian worker ideology – came to an end. With the end of the IAPs and the creation of BNH, the houses were put up for sale, signaling the end of the social project. The residents had to organize themselves into condominiums, and this process determined whether the blocks would be kept together or split up. Respondents report that the purchase process was quite seamless: the amount of rent paid was used towards a down payment. The State's own housing project, which might not have been so clear to residents since it was mostly their parents who had signed the lease agreements, ended up being left aside. After so many years of occupation and the end of the

public housing program, the objects, materials and their memories remain. The fact that the houses were passed down through the family is fundamental. The physical transformations that may be disconcerting to architects and scholars are seen as more natural and even necessary for residents. It drew our attention the fact that the residents saw the changes that took place as necessary, such as the placement of a gate around the perimeter of the *Mooca* and *Santa Cruz* housing complexes. This increased security and was seen as unavoidable in light of the changes that have come, often without warning (Respondent FC, 11/07/2015, *Santa Cruz* Housing Complex). For residents, these physical changes are less significant when compared to what they have lost, such as salaried work, community and family life. Less than the memory of a project or of the moment of construction, residents have their own experience of life and of the temporality lived as affection and valuation parameters.

Community life is always referred to as something very positive. All residents fit into a relatively similar profile: young nuclear families. A few families, usually widows, did not fit into that description, as the institutes required proof of family formation. The family member signing the lease agreement had to be married. Childless couples received one-bedroom apartments (as was the case in the *Mooca* housing complex) and larger families were given two-bedroom units or even double apartments. The typological variation of the complexes and houses were

planned to match family growth and/or different sizes. Today, family size difference also serves the same purpose. Many older people, especially widows, live in small apartments on the ground floor of *Mooca* Housing Complex.

Even with the end of the State's housing management project, there were associations that offset the tone for other residents, showing them how to properly live in the complexes. This is a fundamental link that connects people to the past in the complexes. Residents' associations organized various activities, such as parties, carnivals, film screenings, June festivals and soccer championships. Socializing is the most mentioned aspect of a long-lost past. In the *Mooca*, *Santa Cruz* and *Vila Guiomar* complexes, residents created associations to organize social activities on premises. These were independent actions by the residents, with no mediation from the Institutes (Respondent CR, 10/17/2015, *Santa Cruz* Housing Complex; FS Respondent, 11/07/2015, *Santa Cruz* Housing Complex).

The free space was the first thing mentioned by residents when they recalled their childhoods in the complexes. With the exception of the *Nove de Julho* complex, which has high-rising towers, all other housing projects consist of buildings of up to five floors spread out over a large parcel of land. Laid out in parallel, without any fences or gates, the buildings left large, open areas between them, which became occupied with gardens and playgrounds. The absence of cars and parking

lots and even trees, which were few in the newly built complexes, left large open spaces that children claimed as their own. In the memories, the housing complexes are a child's realm, with kids of all ages spending the day around the complex and its surroundings, the working-class neighborhoods of São Paulo.

(...) it was all open, there was a large garden in the middle and there was a playground for the kids behind it. They all had one, the construction company did it themselves, with swing sets and slides. Most residents had five or six children! (...) Because the kids did it, they wouldn't stay in the apartment. They would go down and stay in that huge area, playing, riding their bikes, playing ball. It was crazy! (Respondent PC, 02/29/2016, *Várzea do Carmo* Housing Complex)

Wow, I used to go play on the street. I think the parents would open the front doors and say: Go! The parents used to do just like that. (Respondent CR, 10/17/2015, *Santa Cruz* Housing Complex)

At the *Santa Cruz* Housing Complex, there were also accounts of services available, such as a market where residents would buy basic goods at low prices, and a medical and dental clinic. Elementary school is an important memory in the *Nove de Julho* Housing Complex. The school was an integral part of the housing program. In *Santa Cruz*, the school was a separate building that was widely used by the community to promote other social activities. In the complex, bank workers managed to create a condominium for all blocks, ensuring their unity.

As a result, the gate was installed around the whole complex, and not for each building individually. In other complexes, the condominiums were created individually for each block, which resulted in the isolation of each building and the progressive privatization of semi-public spaces, such as gardens and squares, as was the case in *Mooca*. (FRASSON, 2000, p. 182-191) The city of São Paulo was a big star in the interviews. The city blocks next to the complexes and even the neighborhood were intensely lived by the residents and are remembered in detail. They reminisce of a city with some rural characteristics, with rivers flowing freely and naturally, where residents were able to play and deal with the floods, with small farms where they would buy food, outdoor areas where people walked, played or did daily chores like drying clothes (Respondent FS, 11/07/2015, *Santa Cruz* Housing Complex; Respondent MR, 09/30/2015, *Mooca* Housing Complex).

Right here in São Paulo, where I am, *Mooca* was considered a suburb. And there was a river here on Caçandoca Street. When I was a child, the river was free-flowing and it was all mud there. When we were kids, we swam in the river... The kids swam in the river. (Respondent RJ, 10/03/2015, *Mooca* Housing Complex)

These references build a city that was lived on a daily basis, far from the financial and industrial center, but deeply connected to it. As bank and industry workers, residents lived in the working city, but geographically their children and themselves lived on the boundaries of this central area. As already mentioned, the complexes were

pioneers in occupying certain parts of the city. Worker's housing was built in places of little value, which is evidenced in the oral history.

The city was not segregating, but welcoming and provided rich experiences, such as contact with nature and life in freedom. Traumatic or even critical memories of collective life rarely came to light in interviews. The memories of a happy past are not necessarily associated with a negative view of the present. Dwelling serves as an anchor for memories that are always reinterpreted. Past conflicts are ascribed new meanings. Traumas are forgotten and erased (POLLAK, 1989). Disagreements, inconsistencies, and even unhappiness emerged when the interviews were compared side by side. Even the floods that would devastate the *Várzea do Carmo* Housing Complex were seen in a positive light (Respondent PC, 02/29/2016, *Várzea do Carmo* Housing Complex).

Displeasures or displacements are mobilized in the memories of the role played by the mother, wife or daughter. But they are almost never protagonists of family existences and memories. The father's job, the city of São Paulo, friends, parties, soccer games, open spaces and the house, are recurrent themes. But when asked about women's leisure or other activities beyond housekeeping, respondents hesitate and mostly claim that caring for so many children and the home left little time for anything other than sewing or the radio (Respondent RJ, 10/03/2015, *Mooca* Housing Complex).

The most intense process of transformation of housing buildings coincides with the end of the institutes and the sale of the units, a moment of great change in urban life in the country and in São Paulo. The accelerated urbanization of the state capital, the growth of the suburbs and the metropolis place the house complexes in another urban setting, more inserted in the formal city and near the center. Nearby rivers are channelized, large avenues are opened, public transportation starts to come closer to home. Such changes are naturally viewed by residents as part of life changes. Gates to protect houses and the replacing gardens with parking lots are seen as necessities imposed by life. It seems to us that the aging or transformation of the complexes occurred with the aging of the people themselves (Respondent RJ, 10/03/2015, *Mooca* Housing Complex).

In some cases, the timing of the interviews (2015-2016) coincided with the return to collective living, in which residents in their old age or middle age share their accounts of life and of belonging to the history of working-class housing. The interviews showed the importance of housing projects developed by the State in the 1940s and 1950s and, above all, the sense of identity between the residents and these models.

In conclusion, it is also worth noting that, in some of the cases, transformations or threats led to an increased sense of belonging or a movement for preservation. In *Mooca* Housing Complex, the

sale of the park area to a private entrepreneur threatened the unity of the complex. The specter of losing the popular open space area and of having a high-rise among the surrounding buildings left residents shocked. The landmarking request to the CONPRESP (Municipal Council for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of the City of São Paulo) showed how much residents had bonds of affection with the spaces of the complex. When asked if she had ever thought that the complex was a landmark, a resident replied "Look, we were forced to think!". The complexes emerged in the memories of the residents and in the demands for preservation as cultural references of a history of work, socialization and daily life. With the focus away from the object itself and its architectural values, the residents presented their memories and sensibilities, and were able to turn the spaces into heritage as part of their working, social and daily lives. Oral history can show us how significant their experiences were and how they mobilize their affections and emotions for heritage. Indeed, repopulating heritage proved to be necessary.

The tense valuations of the *Mooca* Housing Complex are a good example of the complexities of the heritage agenda expansion, despite the increased knowledge of architecture and urbanism history. The residents requested its landmark designation at the municipal level due to the possibility of the open area used as a park being sold and of buildings being built in its place. The city's approval and subsequent designation

show that the heritage authorities were sensitive to social demands. City landmarking indicates the valuations of the residents and justifies it also “considering the identity and affective bonds that residents of *Mooca* Housing Complex have with the place where they live, understood as a place of memory of industrial workers in the region”. Technical studies, based on recent historiographic production, defended their preservation. But in the end only the buildings were preserved, and a height limit for new buildings was determined – i.e., the open area sold will have its use restricted, but not prohibited due to its heritage value. The architectural understanding prevailed over the urban concepts in valuing the cultural asset (Resolution 18 / Conpresp 2018).

It would be essential to think of the housing complexes based on the literature advances, but also from the residents' appropriations, the values, tensions and criticisms of the dwelling experiences. If in the historiography of international architecture, the death of architecture itself has been narrated with the demolition and degradation of housing developments, in Latin America the issues seem to go down another path. Built for certain types of workers, the housing complexes are now incorporated into the urban fabric of cities, but hardly appropriated as part of the social history of work and workers. Housing remains one of the fundamental themes of our cities, which are with various forms of precarious housing. Even in the Latin American context, in which countless modern social housing projects

were built, the attempts to perpetuate this legacy to future generations were still timid.

Understanding the existence of a broader project in which the complexes are inserted creates important affective bonds for preservation. So many years after the buildings were first occupied and the social housing program was discontinued, the objects, the memories and the materials remain. Collecting accounts of life in the housing complexes, with the methodological contributions of oral history, helped us problematize and scale the impact of modern projects in the life of workers and the meaning of the dwelling models in the daily routines and the historical processes experienced by residents of the housing complexes.

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