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Studying Built Architecture as an Intangible Heritage in Unequally Divided Cities[1]

Architecture as an intangible heritage?

This essay reflects on how built architecture can be studied as an "intangible heritage," focusing on the specificities of city life in the Iberian-American states.[2] According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),

the 'intangible cultural heritage' means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledges, skills — as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and <u>*cultural spaces associated therewith*</u> *— that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.*
(2003, p. 2; emphasis added)

The essay proposes considering to what extent the rich critical theory of space drawing from the seminal early 1970s work of scholars like French philosopher Henri Lefebvre ([1974] 1991) — or of geographers like the Swede Torsten Hägerstrand (1970) and the Brazilian Milton Santos — may enable us to go beyond the above-mentioned conventional definition encompassing space only as "cultural spaces associated" with intangible heritage.[3] Can we consider space, including built architecture as it is conceived through professional knowledge, as an intangible heritage in itself? How can we undertake research on space as an intangible heritage? This reflection is issued from a concern with the ways in which the concept of architecture as an intangible heritage may be enabling for those citizens invested in challenging the contemporary dual urban planning regimes — characterized by persistencies of the rationalities of colonialism and development — that often are integral to the government of cities in both regions.

By "dual urban planning regime" I understand an actual way of managing spatial change in a specific city that includes two distinct sets of planning techniques employed by the state apparatus, fostering unequally divided cities like Rio de Janeiro or Lisbon, among many others.[4] Elsewhere, I have examined in detail the history of the "de facto management of the clandestine" by local municipalities in the late Twentieth-Century Lisbon area (Castela, 2011, p. 11), and I have briefly mentioned the explicitness of the duality in official colonial plans for Mozambican cities like Lourenço Marques (present-day Maputo), Beira, or Quelimane (Castela, 2010, p. 14).[5] Such dual planning regimes rely on a professional understanding of architecture that focuses on what Lefebvre proposed defining as "conceptualized space" ([1974] 1991, p. 38), and arguably on a definition of architectural heritage against which Lisbon's "clandestine" housing or Maputo's often self-built *bairros* (i.e., neighborhoods) are defined as being necessarily outside the domain of heritage.

I suggest that architecture research — and architectural history in particular — can further explore its articulation of critical theories of space, working towards an understanding of built architecture as a

1. *Taxis in Quelimane,* **Tiago Castela (2014).**

"constantly recreated" heritage, assembling professional representations, quotidian spatial practices and experiences, and symbolic imaginations.[6] In addition, I propose that historical research methods informed by an ethnographic perspective are crucial for this endeavor. The essay turns first to dichotomies of heritage practice and discourse in Maputo and Lisbon to illustrate the urgency of this methodological question. Even though Maputo is not located in the two above-mentioned regions, its past as the capital of Mozambique during Portuguese occupation, as well as the persistencies of that past, can help us to ask critical questions of cities like Rio de Janeiro or Lisbon. Afterwards, the essay examines how the history itself of a critical theory of space impedes mere cursory evocations in architecture research. For example, the conceptions of space defended by mid-Twentieth-Century architectural historians Sigfried Giedion and Bruno Zevi were crucial for Lefebvre's work; addressing this neglected provenance, as well as the wealth of specialized knowledge on built architecture, demands an active engagement with the present-day critical theory of space by architecture researchers, practitioners of a discipline that has the responsibility to contribute to the transdisciplinary debate on space. The essay concludes by questioning the politics of historicity in Rio and Lisbon.

Dichotomies of heritage practice and discourse in Maputo and Lisbon

Historical research on built architecture as an intangible heritage, if informed by an ethnographic attention to actual city life, could foster an erosion of the reproduction of unequal urban division in heritage discourse and practice, characterized by a conceptual and methodological dichotomy in many cities in the Iberian states of the European region and in Ibero-American states. The following considerations on the dichotomies of heritage practice and discourse in Maputo or Lisbon draw on the valuable debates on built heritage within tradition studies;[7] as well as on the diverse literature on informal spatial production in cities in Brazil and elsewhere in the Ibero-American region.[8]

In Maputo, architectural heritage discourse focuses on professionally designed built architecture in the city's southeastern section — the former *cidade de cimento* (i.e., cement city) of the Portuguese settlers — and foregrounds professional representations of architecture, neglecting the ways in which such architecture is practiced and experienced, or diversely plays a role in the affective landscapes of citizens.[9] In contrast, discourse on the coevally created former *caniço* (i.e., wicker) neighborhood of Mafalala disregards both the area's architecture and architectural history, as well as the history of its urban spatiality, focusing instead on cultural and political heritage, for instance through the Mafalala Festival.[10] In order to understand this situated dichotomy of heritage practice and discourse, it is necessary to note that contemporary discourse on the *bairros* — notably those created after independence,

unlike Mafalala — is often characterized by persistencies of the late colonial trope of an unchanging, defective built environment in the "suburbs" of Mozambican cities. In particular, the idea of "ruralization" is today frequent. The Mozambican biologist and novelist of Portuguese descent Mia Couto famously states in one of his chronicles: "assaulted by rurality, the city resists" (Couto, 2010; my translation). Even urban scholars have adopted this approach: for example, a Mozambican geographer states: "The characteristics of the peripheral neighborhoods of the cities of Mozambique... are fundamentally rural" (Araújo, 2002, p. 11; my translation). Such arguments resonate with those advanced by social science research on post-democratization urban extensions in Portugal from the 1980s onwards (Castela, 2011, p. 125), neglecting the rich scholarly literature that has critically addressed the opposition between urban and rural (Castela, 2015b, 26). In the case of present-day Maputo, "ruralization" seems to enable one to rearticulate the colonial discursive reproduction of urban division, but without repeating the idea of the "primitive" advanced by conservative settlers, or the idea of a specifically "black" urbanity fleetingly proposed by more progressive settlers such as historian Alexandre Lobato (1970, p. 14). An example of the former idea is the wartime statement of a Portuguese settler and *vereador* (i.e., alderperson) in 1970, probably inspired by the coeval creation of bleak and easily policed segregated "townships" in neighboring South Africa:

most of the population of the suburbs are currently living in _palhotas_ [i.e., straw huts] or _barracas de madeira e zinco_ [i.e. zinc and wood shacks], _in their primitive form..._ the ordered construction of shacks, built with brick walls, covered with roof tiles or zinc, would provide the look of a poor neighborhood, yes, but clean and with a pleasant look.[11]

In the Lisbon area of Portugal, a conceptual dichotomy also characterizes heritage discourse and practice. Here the conditions are lacking for a valuation analogous to the one undertaken by the Mafalala Festival of a formerly marginalized space, arguably due to the post-imperial status of the Portuguese state: no post-democratization head of state was restricted to life in a "clandestine" subdivision such as Brandoa or Casal de Cambra during the Salazar and Caetano dictatorships.[12] In addition, the history of the Twentieth-Century extensions of the city — regardless of whether such extensions were created formally or informally — is mostly overlooked, including by scholars and by local officials. For instance, in Casal de Cambra such officials have chosen to foreground, within the domain of "historic-cultural" heritage, the "recovery" of the ruins of a Sixteenth Century chapel which until recently played no role in the creation of this urban extension,[13] while mentioning only in passing the crucial role of the *Centro Social* (i.e., Social Center) collectively built in the late 1970s by residents and formally donated to the local government at the time (Castela, 2011, p. 120).[14]

Studying built architecture as an intangible heritage can illuminate the elisions of urban history in its construction of a domain of built heritage. In particular, it helps us to understand how specific informally produced architecture is often conceived synchronically as expressing a timeless cultural heritage, notably of rurality. Indeed, situated urban histories in Iberia and in the Ibero-American region often articulate specific colonial and developmental rationalities that foster the celebration of certain kinds of built heritage, and the forgetting of others.

Space: from architectural history to a critical theory of space and back?

By articulating a critical theory of space, architecture research — and architectural history in particular — can understand the built environment not as a physical or even mental space, but also as a "constantly recreated" intangible heritage: a plural assemblage of spatial representations, practices, and imaginations, to evoke the "conceptual triad" proposed in the early 1970s by Lefebvre in *Production de l'Espace,* i.e., Production of the Space ([1974] 1991, p. 33). In addition, space as intangible heritage can also be conceived as a situated "socio-economic web," continuously produced by constrained time-space paths (Hägerstrand, 1970, p. 10) in the city, often a divided and yet shared space (Santos, [1975] 1979). Even though the contributions of Lefebvre, Hägerstrand, or Santos are relatively known within the field of architecture research in the Iberian states of the European region and in Ibero-American states, the implications of a critical theory of space for heritage studies are arguably understudied. For the purposes of this essay, it is worth examining the hitherto neglected issue of how Lefebvre's work in particular drew on discussions on space in mid-Twentieth-Century architectural history, and to suggest how architecture research can intervene in the debate on a critical theory of space by reflecting on the before-mentioned dichotomies of heritage practice and discourse.

From the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, Lefebvre published a series of reflections towards a critical theory of space, or what he called "a history of space" ([1974] 1991, p. 126).[15] In the frame of postwar technocratic urbanism and as a professor at the new suburban campus of Nanterre, surrounded by squatter settlements partly inhabited by low-income wage-laborers of Portuguese origin, in 1968 he started by proposing a defense of a "right to the city" as the right to plural centralities instead of a center-peripheries dichotomy ([1968] 1974).[16] By 1970, Lefebvre had started arguing that urbanized social life itself was becoming dominant everywhere, independently of built environments being characterized as urban or rural.[17] Later, as he proceeded to develop a critical theory of space itself, Lefebvre was explicitly inspired by the 1940s work of two architectural historians of the modern movement, Sigfried Giedion and Bruno Zevi. Both were European scholars that had left the region for North American

universities with the rise of authoritarian regimes in the 1930s, sharing a concern for new ways to conceive the built environment and to envision its future, as well as hoping to contribute for the reformation of the professional domain of architects. Both drew from the Hegelian perspective on history of earlier architectural historians like Wöllflin — Giedion's teacher at Munich — and his mentor Jakob Burckhardt, who focused on developing a conception of formal periods within architectural history.[18] Giedion in particular explicitly evoked early Twentieth-Century debates within mathematics and physics on space-time (Minkowski, 1909). For Giedion, the architecture of the modern movement reflected the spirit of the time, which was space-time, with consequences for the conception, perception, and representation of architecture: respectively, "many-sidedness" ([1941] 1974), p. 435), "self-conscious enlargement" (p. 436), and multiple planes without "a single point of reference" (p. 437). In contrast, for Zevi conceiving architecture as space, notably as interior space, issued from a defense of the "organic architecture" of North American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, and was the basis for a future architecture envisioned as humanist and democratic, vis-à-vis the monumental architecture of the state apparatus of the recently ended Mussolini dictatorship in Italy. Within this frame, the role of a second generation of modern architects was to reestablish a cultural order, by acknowledging that "organic space" was the current spatial epoch following previous "ages of space." More importantly for contemporary reflections on built architecture as an intangible heritage, Zevi heralded a concern for going beyond conceptions of built architecture as a physical space, arguing that space is "alive and positive."[19]

Writing almost three decades later, Lefebvre considered that Giedion in particular had maintained the conception of "a pre-existing space... in which all human emotions and expectations proceed to invest themselves and make themselves tangible" ([1974] 1991, p. 127). Lefebvre argued that both Giedion and Zevi heralded "a history of space... without helping to institute it" (p. 128), since his conception of social space as a social product entailed privileging a conception of space as existing only in and through spatial practice, not as a professionally designed built environment to be appropriated through use. For Lefebvre was not invested in mainly serving the professional domain through his reflections, unlike Giedion and Zevi. Instead, his approach to space was intended to provide a perspective on political order that could serve as a tool for those struggling against the subjection to unequal relations of production, at a time of the formation of a "Western Europe" through the postwar development project and partial occupation by the United States army. Within the frame of this concern about political futures, the idea of spatial production seems to assume two different, albeit not contradictory meanings: a broader one, denoting that "(social) space is a (social) product" (p. 26); and a more specific one, denoting space as a product in contrast to space as a collective *oeuvre* (i.e., a work of art).[20]

Present-day built architecture research, and architectural history in particular, can articulate Lefebvre's above-mentioned heuristic "conceptual triad" for research on space — based partly on conceptualizations of space by mid-Twentieth-Century architectural historians such as Giedion and Zevi — to study built architecture as intangible heritage. Lefebvre noted how architects and urbanists tended to focus on "conceptualized space," i.e. expert representations of space ([1974] 1991, p. 38), and social scientists such as anthropologists undertook research on "representational spaces," i.e. the domain of symbolic imaginations of space, while spatial practice remained understudied.[21] It is precisely the situated ways of practicing and experiencing the city everyday, practices and experiences that continuously produce urban space, that we can study as intangible heritage. Such a study needs, perforce, to be diachronic; and to employ an ethnographic perspective, i.e., one that considers how spatial practices and experiences are understood by practitioners, to paraphrase from Rabinow (1989, p. 9).[22]

Heritage and the politics of historicity in Rio and Lisbon
Studying built architecture as an intangible heritage — by examining the history of everyday spatial practice and of the lived experience of space — could illuminate the politics of historicity in the construction of a domain of built heritage. Indeed, situated urban histories in Iberia and in the Ibero-American region articulate specific colonial and developmental rationalities that foster the celebration of certain kinds of built heritage, and the forgetting of others.

In both Rio and Lisbon, scholarly research and the heritage state apparatus, as well as the much maligned practices of poverty tourism,[23] focus on a select number of unequal spaces such as Rio's Rocinha or Lisbon's Cova da Moura — often envisioning such neighborhoods as spaces of a bounded cultural heritage. In Rio, one pertinent viewpoint into the politics of historicity would be a study of the creation in 2006 by the municipality of Rio de Janeiro of "a 'cultural corridor'... winding through the main historic points" of Morro da Providência, termed an "Open-Air Museum" (Savova, 2009, p. 3). This project was associated with the creation of the Samba City complex, whose web page states that "this complex for popular art and entertainment is planned so that the visitor feels the emotions of *Carnaval* during the 365 days of the year."[24] A study has shown that for many of the citizens of Providência, "Samba City epitomizes a phenomenon of institutional *heritage centralization* concentrating local practices into an all-in-one, state-supported but also state-controlled, tourist package that could extinguish the 'centre'... of the living heritage it is trying to preserve" (p. 7; emphasis added). Within the neighborhood itself, one could also question the neglect by the heritage state apparatus of the built architecture of the whole neighborhood as an intangible heritage, i.e. of the history of spatial practice and lived spatial experience in

Providência. While the "cultural corridor" was valuably conceived so that tourists would visit a series of buildings that were central to the history of the neighborhood, the concept of intangible heritage itself seems to be restricted to the practices concentrated in the Samba City complex. Both samba and the selected buildings, such as the Cruzeiro chapel and the Nossa Senhora da Penha church, were placed in the project in the realm of history, while a "*típico barraco* [i.e., a typical shack]" was meant to be displayed as an unchanging space.[25]

The focus on a select number of unequal spaces, like Providência, often entails disregarding broader histories of unequal division, attentive to the intangible heritage of the built city as a plural whole. As can be evinced from anthropologist Kesha Fikes' study of the lives of Lisbon citizens of Cape Verdean origin, the normative prospective programs of the state apparatus may lead to the illegalization of certain kinds of spatial practices and lived experiences of the city. For instance, in late 1990s Lisbon a modernization program of "urban hygiene" effectively impeded unlicensed food sales in street spaces: "The department specifically concerned itself with the interests of the civilian with a particular relationship to the urban landscape – one who used it responsibly for leisure and passage" (2009, p. 60). In this case, a knowledge of the history of commercial practices and their repression in Lisbon's street space could have informed a properly political deliberation that was not based on the opposition between a normative model of urban modernity and supposedly non-urban practices, associated by the municipality with a tradition from elsewhere.

Ethnographically informed architectural histories can enable the knowledge of hitherto neglected forms of spatial practice and lived experience that continuously participate in the production of city life as intangible heritage, i.e., as part of those practices "transmitted from generation to generation… constantly recreated by communities and groups" (UNESCO, 2003, p. 2). This is crucial taking into account how situated planning regimes often endanger forms of urban life seen as unacceptable, or as inadequate uses of a geometrical space understood merely through the lens of technocratic spatial expertise, and therefore imagined as preceding social space. Within this frame, informally produced extensions of the city are often conceived synchronically as expressing a timeless cultural heritage, notably of rurality, disregarding the historicity and contingency of spatial practice and of lived experience as intangible heritage.

1 → This essay draws partly from the results of a research project titled <u>Urban Aspirations in Colonial/Postcolonial Mozambique: Governing the Unequal Division of Cities, 1945-2010</u>, undertaken at the Center for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, Portugal for the Portuguese state Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT, i.e., Foundation for Science and Technology). The project was funded by European Union funds through the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER is the Portuguese acronym), in particular through its COMPETE program (i.e., the "Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade"), as well as by FCT. The reference codes attributed to the research project are EXPL/ATP-EUR/ 1552/2012 and FCOMP-01-0124- FEDER-027615.

2 → This brief essay continues and develops the reflection made in the opening keynote lecture "Towards a Science of Sea Space" of the first international conference <u>Heritage and Memories from the Sea</u>, held at the University of Évora, Portugal in January 2015 (Castela 2015a). My thanks to Filipe Themudo Barata and to João Rocha for their thought-provoking invitation, and hospitality. I also thank an anonymous reviewer.

3 → Among others, once could also mention the influential perspectives on space proposed soon afterwards by French scholar Michel de Certeau, focusing on lived space as a network of everyday spatial practices ([1980] 1984), and by English geographer Doreen Massey, examining for example how gender relations construct space-time ([1992] 1994).

4 → Of course, "urban" division must be distinguished from the division for deliberation that is necessary for a properly political government of cities. For recent conceptions of political division, see the work of Nicole Loraux ([1997] 2002), Jacques Rancière ([2005] 2006), and Chantal Mouffe (2005).

5 → This important question will be addressed in detail in a future text.

6 → The idea of constant recreation is a reference to UNESCO's definition of intangible heritage, including "cultural spaces associated therewith": "This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is <u>constantly recreated</u> by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history" (2003, p. 2; emphasis added).

7 → For a perspective on the rich debate on heritage within tradition studies during the 1990s and early 2000s, see the contributions to the edited volume <u>Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage</u> (AlSayyad, 2001). See also the <u>Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review</u>.

8 → For broad approaches on the advances of the theorization of urban informality in the Ibero-American region, see the literature reviews by Cathy Rakowsky (1994) and AlSayyad (2004). Earlier architectural research on informal spatial production in the region predates the diffusion of Lefebvre's critical theory of space, or of the conceptions of informal labor that started emerging in the field of development economics in the early 1970s: for a study of Rio de Janeiro, see Janice Perlman's <u>The Myth of Marginality</u> (1976); for a perspective issued from professional practice in the extensions of cities in Peru, see John Turner's work (1967; among others); for a study of São Paulo, see the work of Nabil Bonduki (1983). More recently, Lícia Valladares has published a thorough bibliography on the history of research in a specific city (2003).

9 → This is emphatically not a criticism of the valuable and patient work that Mozambican architecture researchers like Luís Lage have done towards the diffusion of the concept of architectural heritage, for example through publications for a broad audience (Morais, Lage, and Malheiro, 2012).

10 → "Festival Mafalala explora o que há de histórico no subúrbio." ["Mafalala Festival explores what is historic in the suburb."] <u>Jornal @ Verdade</u>. October 9, 2014. http://www.verdade.co.mz/cultura/ 49555-festival-mafalala-explora-o-que-ha-de-historico-no-suburbio (accessed November 20, 2015).

11 → March 18, 1970, proceedings of the Municipal Chamber of Lourenço Marques, Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique; my translation.

12 → The first two presidents of Mozambique, Samora Machel and Joaquim Chissano, lived in Mafalala during the Portuguese occupation.

13 → "Uma vila que nasceu da clandestinidade." ["A town that was born of clandestinity."] <u>Jornal de Sintra</u>. June 19, 2009.

14 → A line drawing of the chapel is one of the main features of the cover of the map published in the mid-2000s by the Ward Administration of Casal de Cambra. Of course, such legitimation tactics are decisive because lives in the ward were—and still are—endangered due to a state of expectancy for full legalization maintained by the Sintra municipality.

15 → For a biography of Lefebvre issued from a focus on his theory of space, see Andy Merrifield's work (2006). For a thorough examination of Lefebvre's collaborations with architects and urbanists, see the work of Lukasz Stanek (2011).

16 → In addition, Lefebvre conceived the "right to the city" as the right to spaces of exchange not reduced to commercial exchange, as well as the right to political decisions on the future city ([1968] 1974).

17 → One of the aspects of this "urban revolution" was the increasing importance of the commodification of the built environment. Presciently, Lefebvre suggested that the real estate sector was becoming an important circuit of capital accumulation: "Capitalism appears to be out of steam. It found new inspiration in the conquest of space—in trivial terms, in real estate speculation, capital projects (inside and outside the city), the buying and selling of space. And it did so in a worldwide scale" (Lefebvre, [1970] 2003), p. 155). Of course, the phrase "urban revolution" had been famously proposed by Australian archeologist Childe in the early 1950s to denote the emergence of the first cities (1950). Lefebvre's text soon became influential amidst English-language radical geographers through the work of David Harvey (1974). For a recent urban history inspired by Lefebvre's arguments and proposing an understanding of Nineteenth-Century architecture and urbanism in the frame of the emergence of the apparatus of spatial production, see David Scobey's Empire City (2001).

18 → For the seminal essay on the period as a whole encompassing the arts, architecture, and social institutions, see Burckhardt's The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy ([1860] 1990). For Wöllflin's approach on contrasting periods through formal analysis as a method, see Renaissance and Baroque ([1888] 1964).

19 → Zevi stated that "it is in space that life and culture, spiritual interest and social responsibility, meet. For space is not merely a cavity, or void, or 'negation of solidity'; it is alive and positive" ([1948] 1957, p. 242; emphasis added).

20 → Developing his earlier reflections on the commodification of the built environment, Lefebvre argued that space could be both product, "reproducible and...the result of repetitive actions," as well and means of production ([1974] 1991, p. 75). This narrower understanding of spatial production leads Lefebvre to add—to the above-mentioned critique of Giedion and Zevi—the argument that modernist architecture and urbanism, and in particular what he terms the "global concept" of space of the Bauhaus (p. 124), enabled programs for spatial production by state apparatuses that were founded on an imagination of space as a "void waiting to be filled," disregarding the city as a collective and gradual work of art. According to Lefebvre, the space of modernist architecture and urbanism in "the social practice of capitalism... would come to be filled by commercial images, signs, and objects" (p. 125).

21 → "Ethnologists, anthropologists and psychoanalysts are students of such representational spaces... but they nearly always forget to set them alongside those representations of space which coexist, concord or interfere with them; they even more frequently ignore social practice" (Lefebvre, [1974] 1991, p. 41).

22 → For a recent theoretical reflection within geography on the relations between ethnographic research and critical theories of space, see Gillian Hart's article "Denaturalizing Dispossession" (2006).

23 → There is a wealth of literature on poverty tourism. For a contribution including a brief literature review, see the recent article by Gareth Jones and Romola Sanyal, "Spectacle and Suffering" (2015).

24 → "Cidade do samba: A cidade do samba." http://cidadedosambarj.globo.com/ (accessed November 25, 2015).

25 → "Favela será museu a céu aberto." ["Favela will be open-air museum."] Folha de São Paulo. February 15, 2004.

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