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**Heritage and Cultural Identity in Mozambique:  
20 years of WHS**

Casa Muss-amb-ike Espaço de memórias  
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# Heritage and Cultural Identity in Mozambique: 20 years of WHS

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## Abstract

This article shows the relation between the context and the evolution of the program of conservation of the Mozambique Island, with the necessity of a new paradigm in the conservation: the emergency of the social as a function of the conservation.

So far the conservation has been developed on the basis of a paradigm to reconstruct the old one. This paradigm has its roots in the past. We claim the inclusion of the dialogue and the participation of the community, as an activity incorporated in the conservation processes. How to do it?

## 20 YEARS OF CONSERVATION IN MOZAMBIQUE ISLAND

### (CASE STUDY OF A WHS)

The Mozambique Island was classified as World Heritage site in the 15th Session of the Comity of the World-Heritage Site, (Cartago, December of 1991). The Justification of its classification is made on the basis of two criteria: Criteria IV and VI.

### The Emergency of a Significant Site

The Mozambique Island, in the East African Coast, became part of the commercial complex of the Indian Sea. It is the result of the contacts between the great cultural areas: the Bantu and the Indic cultures, and, in XVI century, the Europeans. Feitorias cities were the places for where they drained mineral resources (essentially gold and silver from the mines of the Monomotapa), ivory and slaves. They were also points of contact of people, customs, to know.

The UNESCO classification recognizes that the Mozambique Island is a space where this diversity of living took place. And that's going on.

### The specificity of the site: the challenge of the Urban Conservation

The Island of Mozambique expresses the tensions of the times. From the military function to the slavery field, the village is consolidating its urban form in function of its

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activity. The city of Mozambique is a dual place. Constructed in coral rock and whitewash, with the techniques from India; The heat and the tropical moistness had taken to the construction aired residences. The interior patio, the watering hole are remarkable objects who testified a particular why ok life.

In odder hand the “Makuti” city, made of adobe, in the old quarries of the south, is the space of the Africans. It is there that we find all the commercial activity, the workstations and where e the majority of the population is concentrated.

Gradually lost its defensive and administrative vocation, during century XX , the city looks a new specialization. About the decades of 960, a tourist vocation was planed. The first shares of building conservation had been made. The wars suspend this effort.

The effort for rescue from the ruin, some personalities, added in the “Association of the Friends of the Mozambique Island”, it starts to lobbying. The Report of the Viana de Lima Architect, elaborated in 1983 under request of Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, and the international exposit “Save the Mozambique Island” in 1983 is just the beginning of a consensual movement of this singular site. And from that is conservation was ruled under standard values and techniques.

Without financial and techniques conditions to support the effort of investment in the Mozambique Island the international support from UNESCO was the main instruments for conservation. But the needs for financing are so great that just some efforts in basic infrastructures are made. The main recovery effort continues to be made by the residents, recouping the building for seasonal habitation, guest house or small business. The local authorities, without a social intervention, don’t care to much in the process.

Several are the study missions; several are the considered programs of intervention. Inertia is however very strong. From 2000 UNESCO make use of a cabinet in the Island. In 2004 a Master Plan for the Urban Conservation is approved. In 2007 the works for conservation of São Sebastião Fortress are initiated. In 2009 was just the visible thing.

Which evaluation of 20 years of World Heritage Site we can do? Which values from urban conservation we added in the local heritage? Which dialog we have made between the experts and de local community?. How it is the Urban Conservation a value in the sustainable development?

### **The specificity of the site and the UN Millennium Goals**

In 2000, the international cooperation for the development incorporated in the agenda de “Millennium Goals”. They are eight pragmatic goals. They are the focus for the international cooperation. Mozambique is one of the poorest countries of the world and a privileged partner of the international cooperation.

The Mozambique Island, as World Heritage Site, for its singularity, already it is not only for its buildings. Now, the new challenge is how to incorporate in the conservation process its cultural heritage. The local living and knowledge is also a basis of heritage conservation. Since the implementation of the Millennium Goals, cooperation partners are looking for programs in the basis of sustainable development, as the “Joint Program and Creative Industries Policies on Cultural Strengthening” is an example. From 2008 this program is looking for specific creation services and for inclusive politics, intending to promote entrepreneurs in the sectors of the handicraft and services. It’s a very recent execution programs to be able to evaluate its impact on the life of the inhabitants. But it is an interesting case to analyze the relation enters the valuation of the heritage and the cultural identity of the Island.

## **Conclusion**

Twenty years of conservation in Mozambique Island demonstrate that the conservation processes and the valuation of the cultural identity in Heritage Sites are vulnerable. How incorporate the social focus to preserves the cultural identities in a conservation process is the challenge?

The interpretation of the symbolic dimension of the time and adjusts them modernity process it’s necessary. Then, we have to work with community to identify it’s needs and empowered is abilities. The challenge for the conservation process is to maximize its results for the community. And one of the important goals to achieve is to increase the local capacity.

Until the present the solutions that have been defended and applied are weak and excessively expensive. They implying the mobilization of raised financial and technical resources. The International cooperation isn’t enough to support them. Increase the community participation is one way to build the sustainable future. And the case of the Mozambique Island is an exemplary case to understand the necessity of a new paradigm in the conservation to incorporate the knowledge and experience of the community as is social function.

## **Bibliography**

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