

**Overcoming the dichotomy between nature and culture for the  
management of the natural heritage in the city: the multiple  
representations of the Dois Irmãos Forest, Recife – PE**

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## ABSTRACT

This article discusses the issue of heritage management of Atlantic Forest fragments in Brazil, especially in the city of Recife. As ecosystems in urban territory, established as Protected Units, the forest remnants are carriers of socio-cultural meanings, recognized by the natural and cultural values they evoke. The empirical object investigated is the Nature Conservation Unit Mata de Dois Irmãos, which was analyzed as a heritage asset focusing not only on natural processes, but especially on human processes apprehended from the interrelationship established with the site, directly or indirectly. The observation was mediated by semi-structured interviews, listening to local agents (residents), as well as specialists and public managers who are somehow involved with this heritage site. From the analysis, it was possible to apprehend representations that translate the values that are attributed to the ecosystem in question. The results obtained showed the essence contained in the intertwining between the natural and cultural dimensions, interpreted from the expressions and attitudes exposed by those who interact with the urban environment in which it is inserted and with which it relates, which gives relevance to the sociocultural dimension in the existence and permanence of ecosystems, and should be taken into account in the operational process of conservation management of the natural heritage in the city.

**Keywords:** Urban Natural Heritage. Conservation Units. Atlantic forest.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, historically, the perspective that focuses on nature and that reverberates in the processes and instruments for protecting ecosystems has traditionally been oriented toward valuing the monumental character of the sites. In these, the natural attributes are emphasized based on the exuberance expressed in scenic beauty, in the uniqueness of the biodiversity and ecological processes, and in the diversity of geophysical formations. In face of the preponderance of these factors, the aspects related to the cultural attributes of the places, notably the ways of life, production, and the coexistence of traditional populations related to the ecosystems, especially in urban areas, were neglected or ignored (MOURA, 2022).

The Federal Constitution of Brazil of 1937, which brings in its core the duty of the State in the preservation of "historical, artistic and natural assets, as well as landscapes or particular places endowed by nature" (BRASIL, 1937, article 134, original in portuguese)<sup>1</sup>, made evident, already in the first decades of the twentieth century, the importance of Brazilian ecosystems for the conformation of a national identity. This factor is expressed in the constitution itself, when it determines that "the attacks against them will be equated to those committed against the national heritage" (BRASIL, 1937, article 134, original in portuguese)<sup>2</sup>.

Once related to the national heritage, many of these ecosystems are categorized as natural monuments, inserting itself among the assets of outstanding relevance for the characterization of the nation's identity. This occurred in the context of the Estado Novo Brasileiro (Brazilian New State), which Miceli (1987, p.44, original in portuguese) identifies as an "authoritarian regime engaged in building an illuminist 'national identity' in the dependent

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<sup>1</sup>"históricos, artísticos e naturais, assim como as paisagens ou locais particulares dotados pela natureza" (BRASIL, 1937, artigo 134)

<sup>2</sup>"os atentados contra eles cometidos serão equiparados aos cometidos contra o patrimônio nacional" (BRASIL, 1937, artigo 134).

tropics”<sup>3</sup>. The natural monument began to identify and compose the national ideology, whose importance is highlighted by Scifoni (2006), when she affirms that when it appears in the country's highest law, it becomes equivalent to an artistic and historical monument, endowed with the conventional values of the cultural assets evaluation process.

The idea of the natural monument, present at the time in discussions about the protection of Brazilian ecosystems, comes from international experiences that aimed to protect vast natural sites. In the context of heritage conservation, these experiences amalgamated the traditional and dichotomous notions between nature and culture. This separation was sanctioned by the preservationist experience in the creation of protected areas, led by the United States from the nineteenth century onwards, which until then valued natural assets through their condition of untouchability (wilderness), that is, by the level of human interference in the territories (BRESSAN, 1996; DIEGUES, 2001).

The most up-to-date notions on heritage conservation reiterate that it is crucial to consider the heritage values conferred by the set of diverse actors that relate to the asset to be safeguarded (IUCN, 2002; ICOMOS, 2013). In this way, it is considered fundamental the historical and cultural relationship maintained between people, the site, and their places. However, when it comes to the conceptual evolution of the so-called "natural heritage", when the process occurred based on a dichotomous perspective, local population groups, with less political influence, were marginalized (DIEGUES, 2001). This factor occurred significantly, bringing up a challenge in nations of the global south, where the man-nature relations are, in some communities and traditional peoples, inseparable, given the level of economic, cultural and social dependence that these people maintain with their surroundings (MOURA, 2022).

In 1972, with the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the values related to the aesthetics of the landscape and the monumental character of the natural environment were once again highlighted and considered as references for heritage evaluation. Scifoni (2006) states that, differently from the understanding of natural monument, the new definitions of natural heritage, in the global scenario, already bring the ecological criteria as fundamental parameters, when considering the habitat zones of threatened animal or plant species and the "natural sites or precisely delimited natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty" (UNESCO, 1972, p. 2).

It is important to highlight that the determinations of that Convention, although still embedded in dichotomous conceptions, brought some progress to the insertion of the cultural dimension to the safeguarding processes of sites considered as natural. Pereira (2018) points out that, at that moment, the discussions about nature were expanded to include aspects related to culture and to previous experiences in cultural policies. These new ideas contributed to the effervescence of later discussions about people related to ecosystems, and their representations of the territories, as a counterpoint to the notion of wilderness and the strict natural monument.

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<sup>3</sup>“regime autoritário empenhado em construir uma ‘identidade nacional’ iluminista no trópico dependente” Miceli (1987, p.44).

In Brazil, in the 1980s, the heritage perspective on nature reached a new support in the Federal Constitution of 1988 since, in Article 225, the understanding of national biomes as national heritage is strengthened. Natural heritage itself was not defined, however, the definition of Brazilian cultural heritage included "[...] urban complexes and sites of historical, landscape, artistic, archaeological, paleontological, ecological, and scientific value" (BRASIL, 1988, article 225, original in portuguese)<sup>4</sup>. According to Pereira (2018), the Federal Constitution innovated by recognizing nature as an identity element and necessary for the perpetuation of the **memory of the forming groups of Brazilian society**.

In light of the above, it is observed that the relationship between nature and the culture of the people raises the discussion, in Brazil, about the scope and competence of public agencies related to the conservation management of national ecosystems, especially with regard to those of smaller territorial extension. It is important to highlight that, in the 2000s, aiming at the conservation of the national biomes, in accordance with the aforementioned article 225 of the Federal Constitution of 1988, the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC) was instituted through federal law 9.985, of July 18, 2000, which establishes the norms and criteria for the creation of Conservation Units nationwide. According to the SNUC, the management of the units is the responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment, through its executive, advisory and deliberative agencies (ICMBio, IBAMA, state agencies, municipal agencies, and CONAMA). There is no mention of sharing scopes with the Institute of National Historical and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN), the agency responsible for the conservation of the Brazilian cultural heritage, nor is there any mention of the Natural Heritage category, in face of the sociocultural content cited and referenced in the Brazilian Federal Constitution.

It is noticeable, therefore, that there is a clear theoretical and methodological schism in the understanding of nature as a heritage asset. On one hand, there is the idea that emphasizes the essential meanings for the people who interact historically with the natural elements. On the other hand, there is the notion that, by understanding the importance of ecosystems for the conservation of biodiversity, rejects political action based on the integration between the natural and human dimensions. In this context, the problem of conservation of the Atlantic Forest in Brazil emerges, whose conservation policy actions are based on the institution of protected areas, established through the SNUC, aiming more strongly at the preservation of the ecological features of the environment.

By using as empirical object an Atlantic Forest Conservation Unit (UC) in the city of Recife, the Dois Irmãos forest, this article aimed to raise the main aspects related to the representations that different agents elaborate about the ecosystem, a consequence of the man-nature relations established with the territory. Thus, the meanings of the UC are discussed beyond its traditional natural attributes, entering the core of the discussion of ecosystems and landscapes heritage: overcoming the historical dichotomy established between nature and culture.

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<sup>4</sup>"[...] conjuntos urbanos e sítios de valor histórico, paisagístico, artístico, arqueológico, paleontológico, ecológico e científico" (BRASIL, 1988, artigo 225).

## **2. ATLANTIC FOREST AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF CONSERVATION UNITS AS A NATURAL HERITAGE**

The Atlantic Forest biome, considered the largest Brazilian tropical forest biome, along with the Amazon Rainforest, has been subjected to anthropic pressures since the 16th century, at the time of the Portuguese occupation of the Brazilian coast, covering an area that has been gradually reducing in extension. Previously, the coverage area corresponded to 16% of the national territory, equivalent to an area of 1.3 million km<sup>2</sup> (VALENTINI et al., 2012).

The situation of this biome, considered one of the most threatened in the world, is alarming. It is currently distributed in a segmented manner, revealing its condition as a fragmented biome in parcels or remaining areas. The challenge for conservation management of the Atlantic Forest lies precisely in its fractioned and dispersed condition, which complicates the preservation of the various ecosystems, which are under the control of different management instances, federal, state and municipal.

One of the issues for the Atlantic Forest heritage conservation management lies in not only privileging the so-called natural monuments or areas of greater territorial extension, but also considering the smaller ecosystem fragments. It is understood that when the responsibility for managing fragmented units falls to municipal and state agencies, the understanding of the heritage dimension must observe two scales of intervention: the biome, as a natural asset given its biodiversity, geodiversity and global ecological importance, and the ecosystem fragment itself, as a unique heritage testimony in its singularities and local characteristics, endowed with meanings associated with their socio-environmental specificities.

In Recife, the Atlantic Forest remnants or fragments are instituted as Conservation Units, in light of the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC), through the Municipal System of Protected Units of Recife (SMUP, 2014 - municipal law No. 18,014, May 10, 2014), in which the objectives of conservation of ecological processes are primarily emphasized. Under the sanction of the SMUP, 25 Atlantic Forest fragments in the city are recognized as Nature Conservation Units, inserted in the set of municipal Protected Units, characterized as:

[...] spaces and the natural and artificial elements of the municipal territory, under special attention and care by reason of some specific and/or unique attribute they present, endowed with significant environmental or landscape interest [...]. (RECIFE, 2014, p. 4, art. 6, original in portuguese)<sup>5</sup>.

Thus, these Conservation Units represent important ecosystems that are habitat to native species of flora and fauna of the Atlantic Forest being crucial for the safeguarding of biodiversity. However, in addition to their natural attributes, they incorporate the local socio-cultural features, represented by some communities that aggregate to these areas, developing cultural and social relations with each fragment of nature itself. In this sense, the history of the

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<sup>5</sup>[...] espaços e os elementos naturais e artificiais do território municipal, sob atenção e cuidado especial em virtude de algum atributo específico e/ou único que apresentam, dotados de significativo interesse ambiental ou paisagístico [...] (RECIFE, 2014, p. 4, art. 6).

formation of the city of Recife is also an account of how the natural territory is appropriated by the inhabitants, imprinting on the city's memory the intrinsic relationship between different population groups and nature, through cultural manifestations, subsistence activities, and the set of beliefs and myths that are revealed in the broad intangible dimension that involves these forest remnants.

Therefore, it is acknowledged that the patrimonial understanding of the Conservation Units in the city cannot be supported only by the legal categorization in force. On the contrary, it emerges as the result of a historical and cultural process that must be interpreted in light of the imbricated symbolic relations between the urban communities and their adjacent territory. The comprehension of heritage, according to this approach, is based on the theoretical-conceptual principles and guidelines embodied in the area of integrated conservation, which has been expanded by encompassing the natural and cultural dimensions in a heritage asset. According to Bezerra (2011):

The heritage is understood as the set of natural and human, material and immaterial processes, whose values attributed by the social groups involved should be conserved and maintained aiming at its permanence and continuity for the present and future generations (BEZERRA, 2011, p.275, original in portuguese).<sup>6</sup>

It is admitted, therefore, that the Conservation Units inserted in the urban context are endowed with a strong socio-cultural content, the result of a historical relationship of interdependence between the urban and natural environments. This means that the urban settlements, especially the communities that occupy the margins of ecosystems, develop socio-environmental relations with nature, especially for subsistence and subjective approximations related to cultural identity (MOURA et al., 2020). Often, ecosystem remnants reveal themselves as remnants of a territory's physiographic past, whose current conformation reflects the dynamics of the relationship between the original nature and the historical process of human occupation (BEZERRA, 2017). On this point, Scifoni (2006) highlights:

The protected natural area is both a testimony to the evolution of ecological processes and the physical environment and the result of the historical process of the social appropriation of nature; appropriation that takes place in differentiated ways, in greater or lesser intensity and provides a social content to natural areas. The natural heritage is thus inscribed in the memory of the various groups that compose the society and considers their bond with a nature transformed into an object of cultural action, an object of social appropriation (SCIFONI, 2006, p. 72, original in portuguese).<sup>7</sup>

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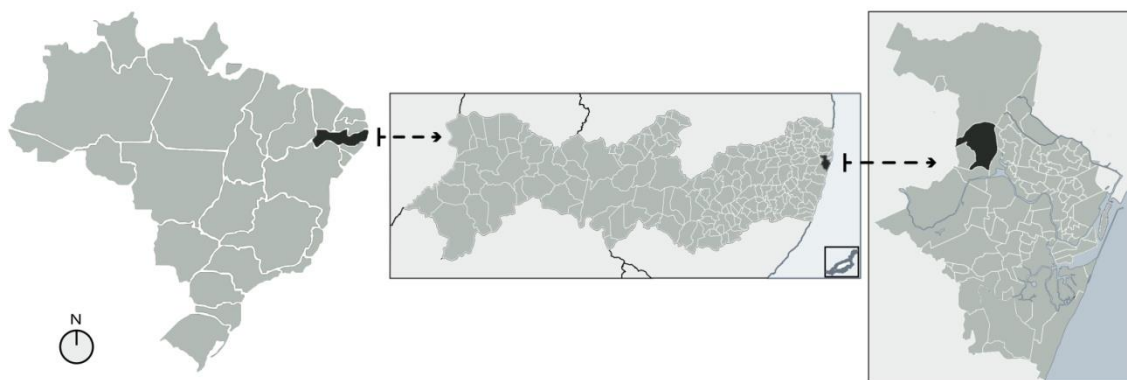
<sup>6</sup>“O patrimônio é entendido como sendo o conjunto de processos naturais e humanos, materiais e imateriais, cujos valores atribuídos pelos grupos sociais envolvidos devem ser conservados e mantidos visando à sua permanência e continuidade para as presentes e futuras gerações” (BEZERRA, 2011, p.275).

<sup>7</sup> “A área natural protegida é, assim, tanto testemunho da evolução de processos ecológicos e do meio físico como resultado do processo histórico da apropriação social da natureza; apropriação que se dá de forma diferenciada, em maior ou menor intensidade e fornece um conteúdo social às áreas naturais. O

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Considering the discussion presented in this research, this paper focused on the study of the Dois Irmãos forest (Figure 1), a UC in the city of Recife. This forest is part of the green cordon constituted by the set of Atlantic Forest fragments that surround the urban area, being emblematic for the city, besides being one of the only UCs that had a Management Plan at the time of the primary data collection (between the years 2016 and 2017).

Figure 1 - Location map of the Conservation Unit Mata de Dois Irmãos.



Source: elaborated by the authors, 2022.

The research that subsidized the analysis conducted in this paper was developed within the Research Group Conservation of Natural Heritage (CNPq/PROPESQ/UFPE), a component of the Landscape Laboratory of the Department of Architecture and Urbanism of the Federal University of Pernambuco. To achieve the proposed objectives, a data survey was carried out in primary sources, through the application and recording of semi-structured interviews with local agents.

The interviews were applied to a sample universe of 16 actors, divided into 3 specific categories, corresponding to 3 public managers, 2 specialists and 11 local residents. The questions in the interviews focused on the knowledge that these actors or agents had regarding the studied asset; the importance given to this natural element in the urban, socio-economic and environmental context of the city; and what it represents or means to each group per se.

The interviews were systematized through the literal transcription of all the material collected, which was later analyzed using the Content Analysis method proposed by Laurence Bardin (BARDIN, 1977). Through this method, it is possible to understand the textual content being investigated via a condensed unit composed of key words highlighted from the text. In the case of the interviews, these key words emphasize the main representations of the agents

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patrimônio natural inscreve-se, assim, na memória dos diversos grupos que compõem a sociedade e leva em conta o vínculo destes com uma natureza transformada em objeto de ação cultural, em objeto de apropriação social” (SCIFONI, 2006, p. 72).

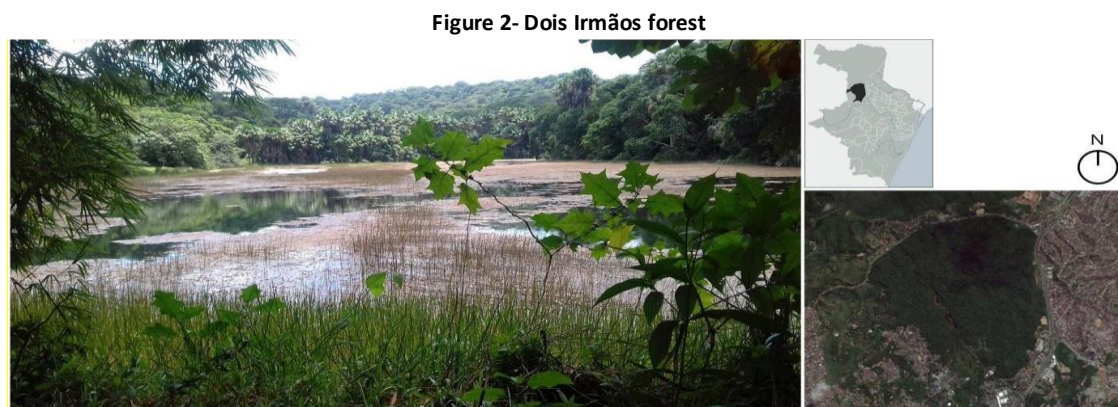


about the conservation unit, contemplating their visions, their demands, their fears and their desires for the territory in which they are inserted.

Thus, it was possible to understand the dynamics and sociocultural content of the relationships established between these main actors and the natural asset in question. In the following lines, the main sociocultural representations identified during the analysis of the investigated ecosystem will be exposed and discussed.

#### 4. THE MULTIPLE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DOIS IRMÃOS FOREST

The Dois Irmãos forest is one of the most relevant Atlantic Forest remnants in the city of Recife, covering approximately 385 hectares of area. Located in the northwestern limit of the city, the Conservation Unit composes the territory of the natural environment that surrounds Recife (Figure 2).



Source: Célio Rocha, published in (MOURA et al., 2020, p.182); Satellite Image: Google Earth, 2021.

In its surroundings are located the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (UFRPE) and the Pharmaceutical Laboratory of Pernambuco (LAFEPE), while in its interior are inserted the zoo of the city and the offices of its management unit. These equipments promote the vocation of the Conservation Unit, seen as one of the most prominent laboratories for studies on biodiversity and ecology of the Atlantic Forest in Recife, being frequent the routine of scientific research in the vicinity (MOURA et al., 2020). The scientific role of the Dois Irmãos forest is unquestionable and becomes a strong argument for its conservation, which led, in 2014, to the publication of its Management Plan by the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainability of the Government of the State of Pernambuco. This Plan highlights it as a natural component of "extreme ecological importance" (PERNAMBUCO, 2014, p.24, original in portuguese)<sup>8</sup>. The representation of the Forest as a scientific laboratory is evident in the speeches of the agents of the three investigated categories, as can be observed in the following interview fragments:

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<sup>8</sup>"extrema importância ecológica" (PERNAMBUCO, 2014, p.24)



We see every day here the people going to collect seedlings, collect undergrowth to study right? There are people that go inside, I think to see the birds, to write things down. It is important to maintain this, I think.<sup>9</sup>

The people from the university come here all the time. It is beautiful to see the kids studying this gift from God. There are also the schools that come with the children. Studying to then know what to preserve.<sup>10</sup>

Dois Irmãos is configured as one of the most important biological laboratories I would say in the Northeast. The location of the forest within the urban perimeter and its extension that allows the survival of a remarkable biodiversity and ecological cycles involving biotic and abiotic factors greatly favor the activity of the researcher in conducting surveys and observations in loco. Of course there is still a lot to improve in relation to the access of researchers to the interior, logistical and security issues, but nowadays I find very characteristic this scientific bias of Dois Irmãos, more than in other forests of the city.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to its function as a natural scientific laboratory, the historical narratives about the Dois Irmãos forest record the presence of the first water distribution station in Recife, in the late nineteenth century, managed by the Beberibe Company. Within the UC, there are four large dams that once served as water supply sources for the city. With the activities of the Beberibe Company, a new period of occupation of the territory surrounding the forest began, when workers started to settle nearby, attracted by this activity and by the new road and railway infrastructures, which allowed the interconnection of the region to the more densely populated areas of Recife's downtown.

The waters of Dois Irmãos inaugurated a new phase of occupation and urban expansion for this region of the western part of the city, previously characterized by the dense cover of the typical ombrophilous forest. The memories related to the activities of the CIA Beberibe are still remembered by the population that settled there, composed of direct descendants of the workers connected to the activities of distribution of the water system. This fact was observed when analyzing the relations established with the place, especially with the bodies of water existing inside the forest. The representation that is shared, especially among the residents, is the result of this historical process of conformation of the urban territory. It is from the transmission of the meanings of water as a resource or from the symbolic appreciation that these bodies of water will be at the core of the representations made about the Conservation Unit. In other words, the Dois Irmãos forest is often associated with its waters:

My family worked there by the dam. That's what gave water to the people. It still does. If I take that dam away, I don't even know what we will do here. The Prata dam is the most important, if you see, the clean clean water.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Man, 35 years old, resident of Dois Irmãos.

<sup>10</sup> Woman, 52 years old, resident of Dois Irmãos.

<sup>11</sup> Woman, public manager of the Secretariat of Environment and Sustainability of the Government of the State of Pernambuco.

<sup>12</sup> Man, 63 years old, resident of Dois Irmãos.

We have to preserve this forest there. Without the trees we don't have those lakes. The dams that give us water. Without them, how can we be? Without water?<sup>13</sup>

There are stories about this forest, right? We grow up here listening to the noises of the forest and our mothers used to scare us saying that it was curupira, that "cumade fulozinha" and such things. I don't believe it, but have you seen that house inside the dam? They say it is haunted, but people invent a lot of things.<sup>14</sup>

There is the legend of the dam there. People used to say that there was a treasure sunk in the Prata River and that the guardian was a lady's ghost. My father used to tell this story to scare us (MOURA et al., 2020).<sup>15</sup>

It is symptomatic that in the Dois Irmãos forest, the symbolic aspects expressed through the manifestation and representation of the immaterial aspect is supported by the existence of water. This element is a great guide for representations, and folklore is the most evident product of social elaboration. A clear parallel can be made between the mysticism of the waters of the UC and Recife as a whole, a city traditionally characterized by the relationship of the urban territory with the aquatic environment. It is from this relationship that the most current myths have always been associated with the hydrography, as Gilberto Freyre (2000) points out when he affirms that the city's amphibious condition evokes the haunting and the enchanted:

Talassic city - wide open to the sea - and, at the same time, cut by two rivers and stained with water by various camboas, streams, canals - "American Venice floating on the waters" - it is natural that in Recife the supernatural is, as in no large city in Brazil, connected to water. To the water of the sea and to the waters of the rivers (FREYRE, 2000, p.34, original in portuguese)<sup>16</sup>.

In the case of Dois Irmãos, there is a belief about the apparition of the ghost of Mrs. Branca Dias in the waters of the dam. According to the legend, known in the city, she was Jewish and exiled, having been persecuted by the Inquisition. Mrs. Branca, who lived in the interior of the Dois Irmãos forest, at the margins of one of the dams, was condemned by the tribunal of the Holy Office in Portugal for the crime of Judaism. Under threat of condemnation, before being captured, she would have thrown all her silver artifacts into the waters of the dam, making it instantly clear and sparkling. Today officially called "Açude do Prata" (Silver Dam), the legendary environment that surrounds it is recognized by this mythical value.

These dams are part of a system of waters and myths in the west of the city, together with Apipucos, where Gilberto Freyre lived, Poço da Panela... But in

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<sup>13</sup> Man, 27 years old, resident of Dois Irmãos.

<sup>14</sup> Woman, 45 years old, resident of Dois Irmãos.

<sup>15</sup> Woman, 55 years old, resident of Dois Irmãos.

<sup>16</sup> Cidade talássica – escancarada ao mar – e, ao mesmo tempo, cortada por dois rios e manchada de água por várias camboas, riachos, canais – “Veneza americana boiando sobre as águas” – é natural que no Recife o sobrenatural esteja, como em nenhuma cidade grande do Brasil, ligado à água. À água do mar e às águas dos rios (FREYRE, 2000, p.34).

Dois Irmãos you still preserve that mystery, that supernatural aura. You see, nowhere in the city do you find, in the middle of the forest, a chalet almost lost there. This awakens a lot in the popular imagination. People talk about Branca Dias, but it is very clear that if she ever existed, it was not in that cottage where she lived. But it is there in the memory and in the mouths of the people. It is culture. Popular culture, right?<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 3- Cottage and Açude do Prata, an enchanted area in the Dois Irmãos forest**



Source: Célio Rocha, published in (MOURA et al., 2020, p.182 and p.188).

Besides the episode of Branca Dias, inside the Conservation Unit, several types of apparitions are reported, related to the natural environment, among which the most traditional ones refer to the "cumade fulozinha" and the "mães d'água" (water mothers) or to local spirits, such as "the lollipop boy".

Both the mythical and utilitarian aspects of the waters and the relevant scientific function of the Dois Irmãos forest refer to the organic process of elaboration of representations by the interacting individuals. Thus, the need for management instruments to overcome pre-established dichotomies is unequivocal. The Dois Irmãos forest corresponds not only to an ecosystem with relevant natural attributes, but also to a symbolic and affective territory, understood through multiple representations that overlap with institutional and legal views. These symbolic values imprint on the UC its condition as an unrecognized heritage, still marginal to discussions about Natural and Cultural Heritage.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The theoretical and conceptual path taken to understand the Natural Heritage, from wilderness and nature seen as a monument of great scenic value to the discussions within UNESCO in the 20th century and beyond, reveals that when dealing with this heritage category, it is recommended a broad knowledge of the singular ecosystems regarding their materiality and immateriality. Special relevance should be given to those inserted in urban areas, and, above all, evaluating the relationship established between these natural assets and

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<sup>17</sup>Man, researcher at the Federal University of Pernambuco.

the communities that interact with them. In this way it is possible to understand the representations evoked by these groups and to what extent they can support the conservation management process.

It is necessary to overcome the dichotomy between nature and culture in management instruments, once it is meaningless, because "People integrate the environment and, in the same way, the environment integrates the person" (MORAN, 2008, p.26-27)<sup>18</sup>. Understanding the human being as part of nature "it is necessary to move away from these dichotomies, approaching a synthesis in which the agent or organism acts holistically, doing justice to the nuanced way in which we all make decisions, whatever the context in which we find ourselves" (MORAN, 2008, p.27)<sup>19</sup>.

Understanding the representations, in the processes of planning and management of natural resources conservation, shows itself as an essential requirement in current heritage approaches, especially when we face the fragmentation that occurs in urban ecosystems resulting in a set of parcels that are part of a synthetic whole, where the whole of nature in the city merges with the inhabited urban territory.

Therefore, when the responsibility for protection lies with the state and municipal spheres, the process of ecosystem conservation management should include the result of the relationships established between the ecosystem and the various inhabitants of the urbanized territory, whether traditional or new occupants. Through the identification of the various representations made about the natural assets in the urban environment and the understanding between the different groups participating in the process of developing public policies and actions aimed at conservation, such as the Management Plans, it is expected to achieve the protection objectives and the desires of the population and thus mitigate the local socio-environmental conflicts that are established.

The institution of Conservation Units represents an important operational resource for the conservation of ecosystems. However, the vision that separates nature from anthropic action, still based on wilderness, impedes a complete patrimonial understanding of such units, putting them in the prism of an ecological and biocentric determinism. According to Diegues (2001), the relationships between man and nature provide the empirical knowledge about their socio-environmental importance, the ethno-knowledge, which can become a key factor for the proper apprehension and understanding of natural assets. Hence, the importance of considering populations in heritage management processes is evidenced.

In the specific case of the Nature Conservation Units, understood as natural and cultural heritage assets, a range of possibilities to be considered by the conservation management of the natural fragments is unveiled, given the local specificities. The fragments of nature, spread throughout the urban territory, have in the sociocultural meanings, the guideline that can guide the process of heritage conservation from the identification of cultural

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<sup>18</sup>"As pessoas integram o meio ambiente e, do mesmo modo o meio ambiente integra a pessoa" (MORAN, 2008, p.26-27).

<sup>19</sup>"é necessário se afastar dessas dicotomias, aproximando-se de uma síntese em que o agente ou organismo age de maneira holística, fazendo justiça ao modo nuanceado em que todos nós tomamos decisões, qualquer que seja o contexto em que nos encontramos." (MORAN, 2008, p.27).

and natural values that emerge from the representations, which are imbricated in an environmental totality.

The debate proposed here about the different representations made about the Dois Irmãos forest, as a replicable example, aims to highlight that, in the process of ecosystem conservation, the relationship between the human dimension with the natural elements and the understanding of nature as an identity element of peoples and cultures should be understood beyond the comprehension of nature as a natural resource. Based on this conception of a more holistic and synthetic approach to the natural and cultural reality of the investigated UC, it is believed that good practices of nature conservation will be consolidated, understanding that the meanings attributed to the territory are only valid if they are intersubjectively recognized and socially accepted and embraced by the related human groups. This approach is emphasized by Muñoz Viñas when he states that "Heritage is that which groups or people agree to understand as such, and its values are not something inherent, indisputable, or objective, but something that people project onto it. Heritage does not come from objects, but from subjects [...]" (VIÑAS, 2003, p.152, original in spanish)<sup>20</sup>.

It can be observed, from the case presented, that there is an urgent need to establish an awareness process for the conservation of the Atlantic Forest and other national biomes in which the discussion about the management models in force focuses on the pact to be signed between the interests of conservation of natural attributes and the interests of all correlated actors, without distinction or hierarchy. In this way, the natural site becomes an asset endowed with natural and cultural values, related to social identities

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<sup>20</sup>"El patrimonio es aquello en lo que los grupos o las personas convienen en entender como tal, y sus valores no son ya algo inherente, indiscutible u objetivo, sino algo que las personas proyectan sobre ellos. La patrimonialidad no proviene de los objetos, sino de los sujetos [...]"(VIÑAS, 2003, p.152)

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