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Preserving architecture of the 20th century:
the Iphan between practices and concepts

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to discuss decisions made by Iphan to declare different works from twentieth century Brazilian architecture as historic landmarks, dividing them into two groups: the first from 1947 to 1967, and the second from 1983 to the present. National theoretical perspectives on the history of preservation, processes for selecting and determining the value of works and their links with aesthetic and stylistic criteria established by the architectural narrative will be explored. We will discuss Iphan's selection practices, looking for connections between the history of architecture and the writing of that history throughout the little over 70 years of the Institution. The work is based on an analysis of Iphan's processes for registering cultural landmarks in the twentieth century. The nearly forty cases that were studied included technical opinions, memos and meeting minutes, which raise questions about the history of architecture and the dynamics for determining the value of historic landmarks and their being rooted in cultural practices and the writing of history. In comparing the historiography pertaining to architecture and national heritage, it will be possible to discuss the relationship between the listing of works from modern architecture and the history of the institution, posing questions about established chronological markers and raising new interpretations.

Keywords: Modern architecture. Iphan. Preservation.

Introduction

National heritage sites and the determination of their value are intertwined with the maneuvers of modern architecture, whose practices were dictated by parameters and worldviews belonging to a group which with great ingenuity and professional and political talent succeeded in achieving their architectural and urbanistic project with the State.¹ With Gustavo Capanema at the head of the Ministry of Education and Health, the modernists found their niche in the Vargas administration and Iphan, with respect to the area of education, and would enjoy relative autonomy within the general policies of the period, which served as a privileged place of the modernists.²

In chronological and stylistic terms, the vast majority of the historic landmarks listed by Iphan up to the 1970s were buildings and cities from the colonial period, forming a homogeneous set. The exceptions to this group of historic landmarks draw attention, the most evident ones being works from the modern movement. Some of them were newly constructed or not even finalized by the time of their legal protection. What would justify declaring such recent buildings to be historic landmarks? Under what pretexts were these works protected?

Even though at Iphan artistic criteria has prevailed over historical criteria in the assessment of value, the combination of historical and artistic factors has always been important in the history of intellectual thought and heritage policies – hence, the initial surprise with the unprecedented move to declare the first historic landmarks of modern architecture in Brazil, whose legal protection conformed with the objectives of the modern architects who occupied positions in the government agency for the preservation of works, formulated the policies and wrote the history of architecture.

Modern Brazilian architecture, in terms of heritage, was directly involved in the shaping of national theoretical perspectives on the history of preservation. The selection processes and determination of value stem from heritage practices based on aesthetic and stylistic criteria established by the dominant architectural narrative at the time. The preservation of modern buildings from the onset of Iphan was guided and supported by the history of so-called canonical architecture, whose affirmation took on the form of an intellectual battle. What it sought to preserve was directly tied to the narrative plot and the version of national architecture built up until then.

Lucio Costa assumed a prominent role in Iphan as an expert on colonial architecture and a protagonist of the modern movement. From 1937 until 1972, he

1. The union, in the 1930s, between the vanguard and the State, in implementing nation building projects is a phenomenon that also occurred outside Brazil. In countries such as Mexico and Argentina, architectural modernism became the privileged domain for representing the state, though it was hard-won. Adrián Gorelik, *Das vanguardas a Brasília*, pp. 26-29. On the relationship between the state and architecture, see the superb Master's dissertation by Carlos Martins, *Arquitetura e Estado no Brasil*, 1987.

2. Cecília Londres Fonseca, *O patrimônio em processo*, 1997, p. 98.

was Director of the Division of Studies and Listing of Historic Landmarks, and his role in Iphan extended beyond the realm of studies and examining requests for declaring historic landmarks, and involved active participation in the overarching activities of the institution.³ Costa would be a central figure in formulating what Carlos Martins called the “narrative plot” of Brazilian architecture.

Modern architecture and its affirmation in the cultural and architectural sphere took on the form of a battle in 1930, with Costa taking over the management of the ENBA, which was followed by the dispute with José Mariano Filho. From that time on, significant steps were taken in the direction of consolidating the modern group, with Costa at the helm.⁴ Securing a place in the official agency responsible for the nation’s historic and artistic heritage would represent an important conquest by the modern architects – a victory that would be inseparable from the value they themselves ascribed to modern architecture.

The first historic landmarks, historiography and consecration of the MES building – 1946 to 1967

If in Iphan’s actions an intimate relationship existed between architecture deemed important to safeguard and the writing of the history of that same architecture, these relationships served to protect modern architecture. Modern architects took advantage of declaring historic landmarks as a means of affirming the architecture being defended, as an assurance of materiality and proof of originality, not only for future generations, but against threats in the present. Being listed as a historic landmark was the ultimate proof of victory.

In the case of the first buildings from the modern movement that Iphan listed as historic landmarks, the relationship with the history of architecture was pragmatic. The majority of the buildings registered were designed by architects who were essential figures in the narrative plot and whose works were threatened with incompleteness or mutilation, thus ensuring their permanence as material proof of the national modern movement. The rationale for early recognition was based on the supposition that these buildings were already monuments destined to be listed, “sooner or later, in the Registry of Historic Landmarks” as Lucio Costa stated when advocating that the Pampulha Church should be protected.

The legal protection of the Ministry of Education and Health (MES) building, the second modern work to be declared a historic landmark in 1948, and the first to have its request formalized in 1946, was not threatened with demoli-

3. José Pessoa, “Introdução: o que convém preservar”, 1999, p. 11.

4. See Otávio Leonídio, *Op. Cit.*, 2007, Chapter 2.

tion or incompleteness. The danger hanging over it posed an even greater threat: ideological enemies. The enemies of the modern movement were those who vehemently fought against the position taken by the group with respect to the Ministry of Education and Health building, and persisted in the fight, with new advocates joining the ranks who would question the writing of history from that point on. Lucio Costa celebrated the victory of the MES building on the basis of arms he had also conquered in another domain, “Heritage”, the realm in which the national memory is built.

The listing of the MES building ascribed value to the miracle of Brazilian architecture. The building was the milestone that marked what Lucio Costa declared to be true national architecture – genuine in its adaptation of international experiences by local architects, to expressions at the national level.

Martins argues that the history inaugurated by the book and exhibition “Brazil Builds”, apart from setting off a wave of international publicity for modern Brazilian architecture, structured the idea of inseparability between the originality of Brazilian architecture and its identification with the connection between modernity and tradition, sustained by the need for ideological affirmation by the Vargas state apparatus.⁵ Iphan would play a crucial role in producing the book “Brazil Builds”. Lucio Costa, as Iphan official and Lucio Costa as militant modern architect, both stepped up to the plate, and the book would represent the proclamation of one single purpose.

The proposal to have the building declared a historic landmark was one of the gestures of commemoration of the modern group for the major achievements of Brazilian architecture and was aimed at consolidating what was understood as the victory of modern architecture in Brazil. Otávio Leonídio recounts that on October 3, 1945, the day the building was inaugurated, Costa wrote a letter to Minister Gustavo Capanema, which was the embryo for the text “Testimony of a Rio architect”, published in 1951, which in essence represented the beginning of the systematization of the history of Brazilian architecture. The text was an important step toward consolidating an architectural movement that was striving to flourish, by transforming it into a monument.⁶ In the letter celebrating the events surrounding the MES, the architect realized that the Ministry building was a key building, a national monument: “(...) the definitive milestone of the new Brazilian architecture (...)”.⁷

The decision confirmed the building as a historic and cultural landmark, which the historiography had already deemed as such. The justification for the request to protect the Ministry building, sent in March 1948 by architect Alcides Rocha Miranda, was based on the fact “that it was the world’s first monumental building for public services that was planned and executed in strict accordance

5. *Idem*.

6. Otávio Leonídio, *Op. Cit.*, 2007, p. 288-290.

7. Lucio Costa. “Depoimento de um arquiteto carioca, 1951” In *Registro de uma vivência*, 1997, p. 194

with the principles of modern architecture.”⁸

The proposal to protect the Saint Francis of Assisi Church in Pampulha, made in October 1947, demonstrates the conviction in regard to Niemeyer’s crucial role in the national architecture. This time, it was Lucio Costa himself, as Director of the Division of Studies and Listing of Historic Landmarks, of Iphan, who signed the request forwarded to Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade.

The Saint Francis of Assisi Church was completed in 1944 and exalted by critics as a national and international icon. The Pampulha complex marked the beginning of a new phase in Oscar Niemeyer’s production, referred to by the architect himself as the effective beginning of that which would characterize the body of his works, whose unique traits had only previously been sketched.⁹

The request to make it a historic landmark was motivated by the resistance of sectors within the Minas Gerais church to consecrate the building, due to the socialist beliefs of the author of the design.¹⁰ Completed since 1944, it still remained closed at the time the protection request was made and, according to Costa, was being sacked, and its constituent elements, such as the altar, benches and Stations of the Cross, were being removed for other churches. The state of incompleteness of the church was divesting it of the possibility to serve as material proof of the history of the architecture that was unfolding. In its complete form and used as a temple, it would be a showcase for national architecture, if unfinished or deprived of its unique features, it would undermine the strength of the arguments so ardently advocated in favor of the new style. Costa personally fought for the protection of the Saint Francis of Assisi Church, which was promptly agreed to by the director of Iphan. Less than one month transpired between the request for “preventive listing” and the notification sent to the Mayor of Belo Horizonte announcing the decision to declare it a historic landmark, demonstrating, in the speedy resolution, the conviction insofar as the building’s significance as a national artistic heritage.¹¹

The ingenious idea of a preventive listing avoided the possible discomfort involving a proposal for legal protection of something which had barely been in existence or which was destined to “early ruin”. The rationale for making it a historic landmark stemmed from arguments already used in Iphan for protecting buildings from earlier eras, namely, the importance of “saving” something exceptional in serious danger of disappearing.

The threat of loss or nostalgia for something that ceases to exist in its entirety was common in heritage policies in modern national societies, found in dis-

8. Memorandum from Alcides da Rocha Miranda to Lucio Costa, the Director of the Division of Studies and Listing of Historic Landmarks. March 8, 1948.

9. Danilo Matoso Macedo, *Da matéria à invenção*, 2008, p.165.

10. José Pessoa, “Cedo ou tarde serão consideradas obras de arte”, 2006.

11. Memorandum from Lucio Costa, Director of the DET to General Director Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade, October 8, 1947.

courses on historical preservation in different contexts. José Reginaldo Gonçalves, in what he called the rhetoric of loss, argues that the rationale for the protection of heritage was built in the face of situations of imminent destruction or disappearance.¹²

The risk of losing something genuine and original, deemed as a national landmark, mobilized intellectuals at Iphan. This heroic sentiment to preserve something unprotected and highly threatened was common, therefore, in the processes to preserve works from the colonial period and modern movement. If the older ones could “hardly” be salvaged (being the object of works to restore them to their presumably authentic state)¹³, efforts should be made to spare works of art produced in contemporary times from suffering the same fate. This is one of the arguments put forth by Lucio Costa to justify making the Pampulha Church a historic landmark: “(...) It would be criminal to see it come to ruin for lack of appropriate preservation measures, or be obliged to intervene afterwards in order to conduct a difficult and costly renovation (...)”.¹⁴

Three of the four sites that were declared historic landmarks after the Pampulha Church were guided by this same nostalgic sense of loss. The Seaplane Terminal, the Cathedral of Brasília and Flamengo Park, all declared historic landmarks during the mandate of Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade, were, for different reasons, at risk of destruction or incompleteness.

Catetinho was an exception to this rule. It was the first building in Brasília, designed by Oscar Niemeyer, as a residence for Juscelino Kubitschek whenever he would visit the city to inspect the construction works in the new capital. The request came from the Presidency of the Republic, in 1959, and was intended to mark the beginning of the great feat which was the planned city of Brasília. Making it a historic landmark was not exactly based on the architecture, although it was designed by Niemeyer, but on historical grounds, falling under the category of “historic houses”, or residences of renowned Brazilian figures.¹⁵ It stands out that among the buildings that were first protected in the twentieth century this was the only work that was recorded exclusively in the Historic Landmark Registry; all the others were recorded in the Fine Arts Registry.¹⁶

Due to the fact that the three works cited above were works of art, heirs of the “good tradition” of Brazilian construction, it was argued that they were worthy of the efforts toward their physical maintenance. The Seaplane Terminal in Rio de Janeiro was the third in a series of modern works to be protected, preceding

12. José Reginaldo Gonçalves, *A retórica da perda*, 2002.

13. With respect to Iphan's restoration policy, see the following PhD theses: *Um estado completo que jamais pode ter existido*, by Antônio Luiz Dias de Andrade, 1993; *Restauração: diálogos entre teoria e prática no Brasil nas experiências do Iphan*, by Cláudia dos Reis e Cunha, 2010; and *Restauração arquitetônica*, by Cristiane Gonçalves, 2010.

14. Memorandum from Lucio Costa, Director of the DET to General Director Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade, October 8, 1947.

15. Expert opinion on declaring Catetinho a historic landmark, Apud José Pessôa, Op. Cit., 2006, p.160.

16. The file for making the building a historic landmark is missing from the Iphan Archive Registry and it was not possible to study its documentation. Therefore, we were unable to study the determination of its value due to the absence of the primary sources. The information utilized was from José Pessôa, Op. Cit., 2006, p. 160.

the request for Catetinho. In December 1956, Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade informed the Director of the National Heritage Service of the decision to make the building a historic landmark, so that the owner could be notified.

The request for protection arose from Lucio Costa due to the threat to demolish the building in order to build Avenida Perimetral, a viaduct which began at that point – one of the points of Flamengo Park – and would skirt the entire seafont of downtown Rio de Janeiro, passing alongside the port and ending at

FIGURE 1

Seaplane Terminal and Avenida Perimetral under construction, Rio de Janeiro.

Source: Iphan, Historic Landmark Process No. 0552-T-83, Former Seaplane Terminal.



Avenida Brazil. The Seaplane Terminal had already been shut down since the 1950s and the news of its loss or mutilation led the Institute of Architects of Brazil (IAB) to rally in an effort to stop it, even proposing to use the building as its headquarters.¹⁷

The physical protection of the Seaplane Terminal, due to the decisive action taken by Iphan, meant that it would be possible to preserve the works of modern Brazilian architecture, which at this point in time, in the mid-50s, was already well established. Paulo Santos, architect, professor at the National School of Architecture and council member of Iphan, in response to the Ministry of Aviation, the owner of the property, which contested the decision to make the building a historic landmark, said that the viaduct would not detract from the intrinsic feature of the building and gave his assent to the federal protection of the Seaplane Terminal.

17. The building was the result of a public competition (around the same time as the competition for the Santos Dumont Passenger Terminal, designed by the Roberto Brothers) won by the team of Attilio Correia Lima with the collaboration of Renato Soeiro, Jorge Ferreira, Renato Mesquita and Tomás Estrela. Built between 1937 and 1938, it was among the first public buildings which used the language of the modern movement, such as the free structure of reinforced concrete, large glass panels, support columns and cantilevered upper levels. In Bruand's opinion, the winning proposals by Attilio Correia Lima for the Seaplane Terminal and by the Roberto Brothers for the ABI (Brazilian Press Association) headquarters and Santos Dumont Airport were "clear evidence that something had suddenly changed". Yves Bruand, *Arquitetura contemporânea no Brasil*, 1981, p. 103.

The 1960s: cultural heritage faces new challenges

It was five years before Iphan received another request to register a modern work as a historic landmark. Due to difficulties in completing the cathedral of Brazil's newly inaugurated capital, federal deputies Jonas Bahiense, Pereira da Silva and others prepared a bill proposing that the Cathedral of Brasília be declared a National Monument. They solicited legal protection, viewing it as a means to raise funds for the completion of the works. Lucio Costa denied the request.¹⁸

Costa's refusal, on the grounds that it would be impossible to determine the value of an unfinished work, is surprising. After all, it was a work by Niemeyer, and Lucio Costa was responsible for the layout of the capital. Although the previous works of modern architecture that had been declared historic landmarks were, strictly speaking, completed works, they were all very recent and some of them were not even in use, such as the Pampulha Church. The opinion of the architect indicates that there may have been other possible reasons for the negative response. The first is the underlying motive of the request being tied to raising money for the completion of the work, which is referred to as an "aberration". The second is related to Iphan's administrative procedures and the protection of its autonomy to declare historic landmarks, as opposed to heritage site proposals being issued by the government in the form of bills, since it was the institution's belief that preservation requires administrative and executive procedures.

The director of Iphan, Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade, upheld Lucio Costa's opinion and pointed out the impediments that listing the Cathedral would create for completing the building. He also affirmed the existence of "numerous monumental buildings by Oscar Niemeyer", which indicated the "victory" of modern architecture in the early 1960s. The modern movement was already well-established at that time and its protagonists were reproducing it as a hegemonic language appropriate for new generations. Legitimization achieved through historic landmarks no longer appeared to be a necessary or important expedient for its affirmation. After all, building the nation's capital using modern urban planning, chock full of buildings by Oscar Niemeyer, was no small feat.

Although the work was not being threatened with destruction or mutilation, Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade deemed that given the era there were advantages in the request to register the cathedral as a historic landmark, since the problem was more along the lines of selection, not the value of the work. How could one justify, however, the protection of one single work amidst other equally important ones, such as the National Congress, the Palácio do Planalto,

18. Expert opinion on the "Cathedral of Brasília" by Lucio Costa; May 8, 1962.

the Palácio do Alvorada or the Federal Supreme Court, as Iphan would indeed do forty years later?¹⁹

In 1967 the mayor of Brasília, Wadjo Gomide, submitted a new request to make it a historic landmark which this time was accepted by Lucio Costa and endorsed by deputy director Renato Soeiro. The Cathedral was listed preventively in 1967 given the “conjunction of purposes” worthy of the “spirit of Brasília”.²⁰

Renato Soeiro, as deputy director of Iphan, signed the resolution of the process and highlighted the transcendence of the material values of modern architecture when stating that the silhouette of the unfinished Cathedral of Brasília had already become a definitive part of the capital’s urban landscape. The approval of the request to make the Cathedral a historic landmark was explicitly justified by the prerogative afforded by the law to protect the unfinished work of Flamengo Park, inaugurated in 1965, two years before. It would appear that urban landscape had been incorporated as a value ascribed to heritage.

The proposal to make the Park a historic landmark stemmed from the Governor of the State of Guanabara, Carlos Lacerda, articulated by Lota Macedo Soares, who was responsible for its works. The intent to protect the Park was motivated by fear that “greed” resulting from real estate speculation or lack of understanding on the part of future administrations would destroy it. Preventive protection was something known and tested by Iphan, but its justification via an administrative act was new. New factors had come into play that would become a part of cultural asset management until the present day. Economic power and real estate speculation were felt more strongly in the 1960s, when the phenomenon of growing urbanization was a reality, as a result of the rural to urban transformation taking place in the country. Using the argument of the possible destruction of a large open area reclaimed from the sea, intended for the leisure of the population, was based on the ideological struggle being waged at the time over the project for the landfill when it was proposed to occupy the entire area with highways, leaving no room for the park.

The request to make it a heritage site was in reference to the built landscape and not particularly the buildings, although these were promptly included in the first expert opinion on the subject by Paulo Thedim Barreto, head of the Art Section. Thedim was favorable to declaring it a heritage site, followed by the “agreement” of Lucio Costa, Director of the Division of Studies and Listing of Historic Landmarks.²¹

The emphasis on landscape was reaffirmed by the director of Iphan, also as a justification for the inclusion of the incomplete buildings designed by Affonso Eduardo Reidy, as noted by Thedim. Since the request was aimed at protecting

19. Document No. 1032, of August 20, 1962, from Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade to Parliamentary Advisor Sylvia Bastos Tigre.

20. Expert opinion on the preventive listing of the “Cathedral of Brasília” by Lucio Costa; no date.

21. Historic landmark process of Flamengo Park, No. 0748-T-64.

the park as a whole and not just the buildings, there would be no impediments against this happening. Although still incomplete, Flamengo Park was ready to be inaugurated. Council member Paulo Santos was openly in favor of making it a heritage site, as the only option that would enable its values to be preserved. He was the one who nominated the authors of the design for Flamengo Park, suggesting the partnership of Reidy and Burle Marx for creating something of extraordinary beauty and pride for the city of Rio de Janeiro. This ties him, therefore, to the great creators of the modern movement in Brazil.²²

Even though the request presented by Lota and Lacerda focused on the urban and landscape aspects without reference to the modern movement or the authors of the design, council member Paulo Santos acknowledged the artistic work in question, whose landscape values gained importance due to being expressions of urbanism and modern architecture.

The reference to landscape values at the time of listing these last two modern works shows how the arguments involving the protection of cultural heritage were changing in the 1960s. Although Brasília was considered a turning point in the history of architecture, representing a chronological milestone for the beginning of new architectural expressions, many other triumphs and achievements lay in store for the modern Brazilian movement in the 1960s, with the construction of highly influential works, such as the Itamaraty Palace, by Niemeyer. In the domain of cultural heritage, Dr. Rodrigo, until 1967, remained at the helm of the institution and the “heroic period” (1937-1967), which coincides with the date of the first set of buildings of modern architecture that were declared historical landmarks by Iphan. Perceptible, albeit subtle, changes in institutional practices had occurred during this period. The continuities and changes in national architecture and heritage practices can be seen, to some extent, in the series of administrative processes of the 1960s, mainly in the listing of Flamengo Park as a heritage site.

At first, the federal listing of modern buildings as historic landmarks was guided by the affirmation of architecture deemed to be genuine and then its consecration through the connection between historiography and legal protection, used in cases where extreme loss was considered imminent. As with the other cases the institution handled during this period, the affirmation of the works sprung from experts, where the purpose was clearly to protect the most important examples of contemporary architecture at the time. The Ministry of Education and Health building, the Saint Francis of Assisi Church and the Seaplane Terminal were listed as national heritage sites due to their exceptional artistic values, as deemed by the group itself. If in the case of the Ministry building the intention was to commemorate the achievements of national architecture, in the case of the church and terminal the legal recourse was used to protect important modern works from being stripped of their identity.

22. *Idem.*

Since these buildings were so close to the founding of Iphan and its mission to preserve the nation's cultural heritage and since the arguments used were linked to the affirmation of modern architecture, these protection measures are didactic examples of the processes involving the determination of value of cultural heritage. They demonstrate the extent to which they are socially-constructed projects and serve particular nation-building purposes, as was Brazil's case during those years. The materialization of the nation through architecture permeated the cultural initiatives of the New State and continued in the following years, when technical knowledge still dictated the choice of the nation's heritage.

Starting with Catetinho, in 1959, the requests sent to Iphan for the protection of modern buildings were signed by mayors or governors interested in the physical and symbolic continuity of their political legacy. The institution at this time was inward-looking, built on routine practices, and not very open to suggestions on national heritage, a task that for decades had been the sole domain of experts. Nevertheless, there are provisions in Decree-Law No 25 which permit owners to make requests, for unusual situations, as the director of Iphan reminded the Advisory Council. In that Catetinho, the Cathedral of Brasília and Flamengo Park were also manifestations of the national modern movement with exceptional and monumental features, they found a place of protection in Iphan. What seems to be more important is that the relevance of these works was being defended by agents outside the institution, or, at least, not by the protagonists and authors of the works. Laymen and scholars were now legitimizing these works by requesting or agreeing to their becoming historic landmarks. That is, the values of modern architecture had already been enshrined.

Paulo Santos, in his expert opinion on Flamengo Park, provides us with insight into the solidity of modern architecture and the construction process of its memory in the 1960s, which would be evidenced in the following decades. The approval given to an unusual object and arguments in favor of landscape are indications of new approaches, which were crystallized in the rationale behind declaring the work of Affonso Eduardo Reidy and Burle Marx a historic landmark for its grandiose and exceptional nature.²³

New historic landmarks and the sacralization of modern architecture – the 1970s and 80s

While the objects and problems related to heritage had started to change, the values of modern architecture exalted in the form of national heritage would be strengthened by the processes to consciously consolidate the movement that took place in the 1940s and 50s, in which Iphan's activities played a part.

23. Historic landmark process of Flamengo Park, No. 0748-T-64.

The emergence of new architectural expressions in the 1980s and questions about the “direction” of Brazilian architecture would constantly be accompanied by the memories and achievements of the modern architects, now hailed as masters. Monumentality and exceptionality would often be listed among the attributes of modern works which would become historic landmarks in the years to come, especially in the 1980s, serving as proof and justifying the place of fame that had been achieved.

The case of the Modernist House in São Paulo is a very eloquent one. The architectural argument is taken to the point where the request is not only restricted to the “pioneer” house in Vila Mariana (as per the “opinion of the architect Lucio Costa”), but includes two other residences designed by the architect, the houses on Bahia Street and Itápolis Street, representing the body of work of Warchavchik, or shall we say, the “evolution” of the work. The opinion of the coordinator of Iphan in São Paulo, Luís Antônio Dias de Andrade, in response to the request by the community to protect the house on Santa Cruz Street, digressed and focused on the value of the architecture, expressing the interpretations of professors from FAU-USP on the pioneer house.²⁴ Artigas, who had worked with the architect, later came to criticize the house for the “constructive dissimulations”, the most obvious being the parapet hiding the roof where there should be concrete slab. In the other houses by Warchavchik, technological changes permitted the use of “true modern architecture”.²⁵

FIGURE 3

Folder with the request by the community to keep the Modernist House.

Source: Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1121-T-84, Modernist House by Warchavchik on Santa Cruz Street.



As José Lira pointed out, the interpretation that Warchavchik’s house was at odds with the architect’s discourse was reiterated by several historians, such as Lemos and Bruand. Built with brick masonry, a brick floor on wooden beams and a parapet hiding the roof made out of clay tiles, the house, in Bruand’s view, betrayed the five points of architecture from Le Corbusier, and was therefore

24. Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1121-T-84, Modernist House by Warchavchik on Santa Cruz Street.

25. Pedro Arantes, *Op. Cit.*, 2004, pp. 13-14.

not truly modern.²⁶ The arguments by Iphan with respect to listing the three houses or not reflected this historiographical interpretation.

The defense of the motion to make the set of three houses historic landmarks was presented by Dora Alcântara and counselor-rapporteur Eduardo Kneese de Mello to the reticent Advisory Council which was uncertain about the actual need for this. Some members believed it would be more effective to focus on just one example in order not to overdo the administrative act. Professor Dora, however, agreed with Antônio Andrade and the studies of architect Luís Fernando Franco and felt the houses formed a small delightful series, “an ‘almost educational’ panorama”, which would be extremely valuable to the historiography of Brazilian architecture.”²⁷

The belief that listing these houses as historic landmarks would perpetuate the era, evoking the values of the historiography of Brazilian architecture, demonstrated the relationship between preservation and the writing of history, woven by Iphan since the time of listing the Ministry of Education and Health building

The listing of the Warchavchik houses falls within the period of resumption of studies on modern architecture by Iphan in the 1980s. Several other requests were submitted to Iphan and processes were initiated, thus revealing a change in operational style in this “era of openness”, which was more responsive to the demands of society. Processes were also opened by experts from the institution, showing their intrinsic involvement with different works, such as Parque Hotel São Clemente and Guinle Park, in 1984, requested by the Regional Board of Iphan, in Rio de Janeiro.

The Guinle Park and Parque Hotel São Clemente requests were initially denied in the review by architect Edgar Jacintho, who questioned the validity of turning contemporary cultural sites into historical landmarks, when this could be decided “with greater certainty by future generations”. He proposed solving the problem by creating a new “ad referendum” legal institution for deciding historic landmarks, with a qualifying period of one generation, at which time it would be more effectively reviewed.²⁸ The request was then studied by Antônio Pedro de Alcântara, who did not question the value of the works by Lucio Costa, and recalled the architect’s deep connection with Iphan.²⁹

Pedro Alcântara not only agreed with the appropriateness of making the works historic landmarks, basing himself upon Leonardo Benévolo and Yves Bruand, but suggested creating a line of work in Iphan about Lucio Costa. The legislative innovation by Jacintho was rejected by architect Dora Alcântara who was vehemently in favor of listing these works, in light of Lucio Costa’s undeniable role

26. José Lira, *Warchavchik: Fraturas da vanguarda*, 2011, pp. 149, 151.

27. Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1121-T-84, *Modernist House by Warchavchik on Santa Cruz Street*.

28. Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1110-T-84, *Guinle Park Residential Complex*. Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1109-T-84, *Hotel do Parque São Clemente, Nova Friburgo (Rio de Janeiro)*.

29. Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1110-T-84, *Guinle Park Residential Complex*.

in the history of Brazilian architecture, and in recognition, therefore, of “significant elements of his work as a national heritage”. In Dora’s opinion, the problem in dealing with modern works was not their historicity, but the large number of works of interest, which would need to be addressed using strict criteria.³⁰

Both Dora Alcântara and council member Kneese de Mello were insistent about the historical value of the works of Lucio Costa, totally apart from their mere architectural significance. From the perspective of the latter who had been debating the issue of the value and historicity of modern architecture in the Condephaat, there was no question as to the “eternal and irreversible” significance of Guinle Park and the Friburgo Hotel. He had been the council member responsible for issuing the expert opinions on the ABI, the Warchavchik houses, Lucio Costa’s works and Brasília, all of which were favorable. He was excited and personally involved with the cause, praising the feats of his colleagues and Brazilian architecture. Established tenets permeated the expert opinions and were reflected in the references to Le Corbusier, Yves Bruand, Lucio Costa and the host of achievements of the group.³¹

Augusto da Silva Telles was unhesitating as far as making the works historic landmarks: there could be no question, since Iphan had already been listing modern works for a long time.³² The practices of the founders with respect to modern architecture were reaffirmed in the 1980s, in addition to the perceived historical meaning attached to them. For their undeniable worth to the nation, and in line with the logic of the established historical narrative, modern works, whether threatened or not, were registered as historic landmarks.

In the 1990s, the theme of modern architecture was institutionalized in Iphan. In 1994, the Regional Superintendency of São Paulo proposed a Modern Architecture Inventory, working together with Condephaat to examine the request for 11 works by architect Rino Levi to be listed as historic landmarks, as well as with Docomomo to study architecture in the city of São Paulo.³³ During this decade, the creation of Docomomo-Brasil, in 1992, headquartered at the Federal University of Bahia, and the progressive interest in modernism, received national attention with the holding of the International Seminar in Brasília,

30. *Idem.*

31. Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1100-T-83, Brazilian Press Association.

32. Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1110-T-84, Guinle Park Residential Complex.

33. Antônio Luiz Dias de Andrade and Cecília Rodrigues dos Santos, “Inventário da arquitetura moderna”, 1998. Iphan has still not listed the works of Rino Levi as historic landmarks. The examination process by Condephaat was completed in 2010 and provides consistent documentation about the work of the architect, proposing official recognition of Cine Ipiranga and remnants of the Artistic Culture: Hotel Excelsior, IAB, the Sapiantie Headquarters, the Civic Center of Santo André, the old Sudamericano Bank, the Castor Delgado Residence, the Olivo Gomes house in São José dos Campos, the Olivo Gomes House in Ubatuba and the Prudência Residential Building.

and networks were established that continued to grow after the year 2000.³⁴

The interest of scholars resulted in numerous monographs on architects, institutions, buildings and different figures, highlighting the body of achievements of Brazilian architecture in the twentieth century. There were so many papers based on the idea of critical revisionism of the historiography of Brazilian architecture that, as Carlos Martins noted, after serving as a benchmark for so many years, it ran the risk of becoming cliché.³⁵

During the administration of Glauco Campello as president of Iphan (1994 to 1998), a working group was formed, chaired by Cecília Rodrigues dos Santos (regional coordinator of Iphan in São Paulo), which was commissioned to research the work of Oscar Niemeyer. In light of the vastness of his work throughout the country, numerous different buildings were initially registered with the help of the Oscar Niemeyer Foundation and Docomomo, and it was thus decided to do a gradual study without specific deadlines for its completion. As a result of this work, processes were initiated to list the Aerospace Technical Center (ITA), in São Jose dos Campos, in the state of São Paulo, and Ibirapuera Park in the city of São Paulo, as national landmarks.

The consecration of Niemeyer's work was already an established fact in Iphan from the time of its founding, with the historic landmarks registered during the mandate of Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade. And it continued to be immortalized through the administrative acts that followed, extolling the national genius and uniqueness of his works, wherein the most elucidative act was the listing of 24 works by the architect in 2007, in honor of his 100th birthday. The selection of works to be made historic landmarks started with the list drawn up by the author himself. The tendency toward the aesthetic-stylistic aspects of Niemeyer's buildings is evident in the listing of Ibirapuera where the park is excluded, treated as mere surroundings. The separation between city and work, between park and buildings, monumentalizes the buildings and disassociates them from their history, in addition to not including the gardens, which have a cherished memory in the city of São Paulo.³⁶

34. The 1st and 2nd National Seminars were organized by the Federal University of Bahia (1995, 1997), the 3rd by the São Paulo Biennial Foundation (1999), the 4th by the Federal University of Viçosa (2001), the 5th by the University of São Paulo / São Carlos Campus (2003), the 6th by Fluminense Federal University (2005), the 7th by the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (2007), the 8th by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (2009) and the 9th DOCOMOMO Brasil Seminar by the University of Brasília. In turn, different regional seminars have been organized by the following universities: University of Taubaté (2002), Fine Arts University Center (2004) and Mackenzie Presbyterian University (2005), Catholic University of Pernambuco/Federal University of Pernambuco (2006 and 2008), Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (2006) and Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (2006, 2008 and 2010), Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (2008) and Federal University of Paraíba (2010).

35. "Trama historiográfica e objeto moderno. Interview with Carlos Alberto Ferreira Martins, by Julyane Poltronieri and Máira Issa", *Desígnio*, No. 11/12 March, 2011, p. 169.

36. Simone Scifoni, *Op. cit.*, 2007, p. 101.

The discomfort generated by the exclusive attention given to major figures and modern works was voiced by art historian Marcos Tadeu Ribeiro, with respect to making the Aerospace Technical Center a historic landmark and the denial by the council to do so with the “non-exceptional” Volta Redonda cinema. According to the historian, the institution should treat modernism as a broad cultural process with multiple developments and a nationwide presence, not being limited to those cultural assets which have been assigned greater prominence in the history of art, but also paying heed to other works which are likewise in need of preservation, thereby demonstrating a nationwide coverage of modernism, besides reflecting its “different phases”.³⁷

The decision to register Pampulha and, especially, the city of Cataguases (Minas Gerais) as heritage sites, both in 1995, was in response, as much as possible, to such inquiries. In the case of Pampulha, whose protection was requested by the City Hall of Belo Horizonte for the centennial celebrations of the city, its spaces, as part of the collective memory and history of the city, were taken into consideration. The polygonal historic landmark includes all of Pampulha Lagoon and surrounding area, plus a wide swath of the neighborhood, along with the suggestion to include items from the inventory of the city. The proposal to list Cataguases as a heritage site, done through the joint partnership of the Minas Gerais and São Paulo regional Iphan offices, sought to acknowledge the “modern feeling” found in the urban fabric, the buildings by renowned authors, the works of art and also in what Antônio Luís Dias de Andrade referred to as “modern vernacular architecture”.

FIGURE 4

Map with the Pampulha polygonal listing proposed by Iphan

Source: Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1341-T-94, Pampulha: Architectural and Scenic Site, Belo Horizonte (MG).



To reduce the risk of only recognizing the works of acclaimed authors, which would not encompass the full extension of the legacy of the modern movement in the city, the multi-faceted historic landmark dealt with the problem in its urban dimension. The “unfinished character” of the city as a “place of modernity” was taken into account in the historic center concept proposed by the architect and corroborated by counselor-rapporteur Ítalo Campofiorito.³⁸

37. Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1445-T-99, Set of buildings designed by architect Oscar Niemeyer for the Aerospace Technical Center, São José dos Campos (São Paulo).

38. Cecília Rodrigues dos Santos and Cláudia Freire Lage, “Cataguases: patrimônio da modernidade”, 2005; Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1342-T-94, Cataguases: Minas Gerais: historic, architectural and scenic site.

In turn, declaring Brasília to be a heritage site, done during Campofiorito's mandate, as president of Iphan, reflected the already familiar stance in favor of preserving twentieth century works of art. It was argued that Brasília, as an urban artifact, should be preserved for future generations in that it represents the ultimate achievement of architecture and, especially, national urban planning. The valuation of Brasília in Iphan began during the mandate of Aloísio Magalhães when the "Working Group for the Preservation of Brasília" was created for the city's bid to be listed as a World Heritage Site, which happened in 1987.³⁹ It should be noted that its preservation was based on the concerns of the author of the project to maintain the city's integrity, threatened in the early 1980s by the movement in favor of densification and change of scales. In making Brasília a historic landmark, especially according to the guidelines of the author of the project, Iphan took sides in the discussion and defended the achievements of the modern movement as national monuments. Initially, the Brasília working group paid special attention to the Plano Piloto, proposing a "dynamic conservation", based on the understanding of the city as a living organism, whose urban design was still in the implementation stage. Lucio Costa, expressing the concerns of the president of Iphan regarding the effectiveness of the proposal to keep the city immune to innovations and fads, suggested the protection of Brasília according to its four scales: monumental, residential, gregarious and bucolic. The final document from Iphan maintained the floor limits for buildings and land subdivision and use that were in effect at the time and backed the suggestion by Lucio Costa to declare the city a national historic landmark.⁴⁰

Final Considerations

The concern with authenticity and wholeness of works from the modern movement, selection criteria based on historiography and the technical knowledge of architects and the valuation of monumental works were benchmarks in the listing of historic landmarks at Iphan. The architects of the heritage institutions also in the role of heirs of tradition ensured the entirety of the material remains of the national architectural narrative, and the listing of historic landmarks generated history.⁴¹

The valuation of the modern movement in Iphan tended to perpetuate the practices of the "old heritage". The discursive arguments of the modern architects in the division,⁴² led by Lucio Costa, were very powerful and compelling. The hegemony built through Iphan's initial activities was converted into social memory, as Lia Motta points out, and affixed in the memory that traditional

39. Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1305-T-90, Brasília-DF: Urban complex.

40. Iphan, Historic landmark process No. 1305-T-90, Brasília-DF: Urban complex.

41. Adriana Lucena, *O IPHAN e a construção do patrimônio moderno brasileiro*, 2008.

42. Lauro Cavalcanti (org.), *Modernistas na repartição*, 2001.

image of heritage. Even with so many changes, the architects in the heritage agencies, or outside them, sought to represent Brazil as idealized through the attribution of aesthetic and national characteristics to the buildings identified, even if not exactly colonial.⁴³ The choice during the era of Rodrigo M. F. Andrade in favor of the “heroic” construction of the national heritage legitimized cultural preservation in Brazil, founding the system for modern-day activities and establishing the image and models for such, which have persisted, despite the political, social and heritage-related changes that have occurred since then. What this means is that, even today, preservation is tied to the listing of historic landmarks and monuments selected on the basis of aesthetic-stylistic criteria.⁴⁴ The significant changes that are underway, effectively changing the profile of the national heritage, such as policies on material, immaterial and cultural landscape heritage, are the result of a long, slow and non-linear process of opposition, acceptance and mutation of the models established in the 1940s and 50s.

By connecting, through the history of architecture, the colonial era with the modern movement, the latter assumed the status of work of art, timeless and worthy of preservation, consistent with the choice of monumental and exceptional. Conscious in the 1980s of the historicity of the 1940s and 50s, experts from heritage institutions, scholars and advisers intertwined narratives of history with those related to heritage, perpetuating for future generations that which is deemed as “good architecture”.

Conceptual and practical limits were imposed on the expansion of the national heritage in the 1960s and 70s, but modern architecture was not overcome. The intentions behind changes in heritage policies, whether in state agencies or at the federal level, did not stray from the continuity of thought on heritage, already established for years, with a significant gap existing between intentions to make changes and actions that were carried out, due to the crystallization of heritage concepts. While state agencies strove to uphold regional works of value, they were not always protected within the processes involving modern architecture, since preference was given to protecting the exceptional works of great, nationally-recognized masters of the movement. In a few cases, such as with “Cine 9 de abril”, a movie theater in Volta Redonda, and the Modernist House, modern architecture was defended by the population and generated requests for protection that were valued as such. Fewer in number, there were some buildings outside the scope established by the Corbusian faction in Brazilian architecture, such as listing the art deco buildings in Goiânia, the Lacerda Elevator, in Salvador, and the buildings of the New State, in Rio de Janeiro.

The listing of historic landmarks, which could overturn established history and introduce new architecture into the narrative, did not occur. During the first

43. Lia Motta, *Patrimônio urbano e memória social: práticas discursivas e seletivas de preservação cultural, 1975 a 1990*, 2000 p. 18-19.

44. *Idem.*

phase of Iphan's activities, until the 1960s, the listing of historic landmarks took place *pari passu* with the writing of history. After the 1980s, Iphan, together with state preservation agencies, such as Inepac and Condephaat, sanctified as cultural heritage that which had already been taught to be and recognized as such. The modern cultural works that were registered also served as historical proof of Brazilian artistic achievements in the twentieth century. The reasons for the silence and invisibility with respect to certain specimens of Brazilian architecture and urbanism are tied to the history of Brazilian architecture and the dynamics for determining the value of Brazilian cultural heritage. These are complex relationships, rooted in cultural practices, the writing of history and in endeavors to transform the national heritage, which sometimes appear intertwined, sometimes separate.

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