



## **Practices for Safeguarding the Cultural Heritage in Brazil: Town-Planning and Institutional Dimensions**

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Historical centers have been the subject of examinations and interventions, involving multiple contributions, tackled in different ways. Sometimes they are substrata for theoretical elaborations, sometimes they are chosen as the target of public and private interventions. Thus they acquire objectivity when they are inserted into at least one of two dimensions: that of constituting a field of knowledge and that of creating institutions that safeguard the heritage. In Brazil, modernist town planning and the conceptual framework of urban conservation arose simultaneously. If initially the adoption of modernist town planning was predominant among the town planners who drew up town planning legislation, thereafter the conceptual framework emerged and put forward arguments for the formulation of thinking on the future of the city. The conservationist framework in Brazil took shape as part of the nationalist wave of nationalism that began in 1922, with the centenary of national independence from Portugal and the Week of Modern Art. However, in the 1960s it moved on to being adopted as an understanding at odds with the urban transformations brought about by verticalization in historical centers. Conceptions and interventions were then being tried out, especially experiences borrowed from France. In 1937, the Service for the National Artistic Historical Heritage (Sphan) was set up, its mission being to identify, promote and safeguard the historical heritage of Brazil, for which the main instrument was Decree-Law no. 25, which established the instruments for determining listings and the cone of visibility. However, the application of these instruments was centralized at the federal level even with the creation of the Regional Districts of Minas Gerais, Pernambuco, Salvador and São Paulo, in 1946. Town planning and institutional controversies arising from verticalization in the vicinity of listed buildings were permanent. The historical centers of Rio de Janeiro and Recife, in which the main monuments listed by Sphan lay, underwent changes brought about by the intensification of the construction of vertical buildings, thus replacing the typology of town house called *sobrado*. How these controversies moved forward are different: in Rio de Janeiro, the presence of the architect Lúcio Costa led to solutions in the sense of the spread of modernist architecture. While in Recife, the activities of the engineer and head of the 1st District Ayrton Carvalho gave rise to the adoption of town planning instruments such as the *Plano de Gabaritos*, in 1965, which limited the height of buildings, as a conciliatory measure between the desires for verticalization and conservation. The narrative shows that the practice of modernist town planning and urban conservation in Brazil unlike what has been set out in different studies is not dual or ambiguous, but rather is a constitutive part of the activity of the town planner when designing for the future, the new and what is appropriate. Intervening in heritage assets so as to safeguard those means to think through and undertake interventions, operating as a presentification of the urban legacy, which is to say that the soul of the past is a living presence today.

**KEY WORDS:** Practices for safeguarding, town-planning, institutional dimension, controversies, planning history, Brazil.