

# THE BRAZILIAN RESPONSES TO THE 1975 AMSTERDAM DECLARATION

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**ABSTRACT** Brazil is a continental country with a large range of diverse cultural heritages. It is quite a challenge to make a short resumé of its history on integrated conservation since the → *Amsterdam Declaration* (see appendix) in 1975. Therefore, this paper seeks to provide a national panorama of heritage issues, illustrated with local case studies, and to discuss obstacles to implementing and monitoring cultural heritage policies in Brazil. To understand such obstacles, it is first necessary to mention the origins of cultural heritage policies in Brazil which predate the → *Amsterdam Declaration*. Then, the paper lists the first Brazilian positions related to the guidelines of the → *Amsterdam Declaration*, and analyzes their effects in the context of the cultural heritage in Brazil. The paper also addresses the role of the official Brazilian institutions and what their failings are with regard to putting in practice cultural heritage policies. There then follows an assessment of the performance of non-governmental institutions that try to make local public managers more aware of their responsibility for protecting the built environment and the urban landscape. In so doing, the paper emphasizes the role of a particular kind of non-governmental organization, the base of which rests first and foremost on the efficiency of social networks, and in particular uses case studies arising from some recent situations in Recife, in northeastern Brazil.

## 1. THE ORIGINS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE POLICIES IN BRAZIL

Until the 1920s, projects related to the protection of heritage were rejected in the National Congress based on constitutional clauses that granted a citizen's right to property. Therefore, the defenders of these clauses did not admit any restriction to this right. Starting in the 1930s, the Brazilian government, the so-called New State, introduced in practice some political, economic and cultural policies in order to place Brazil in the international scene as a modern nation, concerned about its past in order to be able to build its future. On 13 January 1937, Law nº 378 created the *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional* (the National Agency for the Cultural Historical and Artistic Heritage) – IPHAN – as the institution responsible for implementing and monitoring the preservation policy for the national cultural heritage. Given the continental distances in Brazil, IPHAN, which is an Agency of the Ministry of Culture, set up offices strategically located in a few of Brazil's oldest cities such as Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Salvador and Recife. Inspired by the modernist Brazilian movement, which had been crystallized during the 1922 Modern Art Week, the creation of the federal agency aimed to rescue the feature of a half-breed country, in order to promote a genuine national culture. One of the main objectives was to re-define the Brazilian cultural heritage, by establishing a dialogue with modernity and references that ordinary people had maintained. The ambitious aim was nothing less than reinventing the Nation by giving value to its past which most of the population knew little of. At first (1937–1970), the training of architects, engineers and the labour force was done in contact directly with workers and artisans whose everyday skills and practices were examined and evaluated. Heads of IPHAN's Offices like Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade (Andrade 2012), Lúcio Costa and Renato Soeiro in Rio de Janeiro, Luiz Saia in São Paulo, Godofredo Filho in Salvador, and Ayrton Carvalho in Pernambuco performed important

roles in training architects, engineers and craftsmen. All of them were responsible for training many non-academic professionals and master craftsmen endowed with practical skills. In spite of the importance of this altruistic task, since then, the relatively small numbers of specialized staff have not been sufficient to maintain all the existing listed buildings and sites in a good state of conservation. According to the modernizing strategy of the New State government, IPHAN focused above all on isolated buildings and some historical sites of exceptional value. Nevertheless, the government wished to invest in its modern image, and promoted some changes in the academic curriculum of the National Fine Arts School in Rio de Janeiro. To do so, the architect Lucio Costa was invited to put forward a new curriculum, based on the modernist ideas of Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus movement. In 1939, Lucio Costa and his followers gained international recognition at the Brazilian Pavilion at the World Fair in New York as strong representatives of a new way of using reinforced concrete in modern buildings, among whom Oscar Niemeyer deserves special mention. Lucio Costa's attitude, on taking up an important post in IPHAN, assured the conservation of a wide range of cultural values, listed buildings and sites, at the same time as he became recognized as one of the most modern Brazilian architects. Thereafter, his performance represented a prime example of the dilemma that many Brazilian specialists have had to face: making a mark as a standard-bearer of modernism and, simultaneously, fighting to preserve the cultural heritage.

After World War II, the subsequent economic period was characterized by a policy of substituting imports, which led to Brazil creating its own national industries, in some specific fields, such as the manufacture of automobiles. It is also from the 1950s that the foundation of Brasilia, the new national capital, dates and this was above all a motif of national pride. Therefore, all these signs of progress had a strong impact on most Brazilians and contributed to a concept of development heavily based on economic growth. This remains true today and is why integrated conservation practices are so hard to implement in Brazil. In general, many Brazilian people are better disposed towards receiving and accepting modernist expressions of art and architecture than accepting the idea of preservation. In other words, for many Brazilians, it is as if old artefacts, monuments, buildings and historic sites are incompatible with the image of Brazil as a modern nation and therefore ought only to be preserved in other countries. This was symbolized, for example, in the destruction of many examples of the *Belle Époque* in Rio, from the 1900s until the 1930s, and the demolition of the former commercial centre in Recife in the early twentieth century. Nowadays, this way of thinking is more and more reinforced by entrepreneurial interests, particularly in the real estate sector.

During the 1960s and the 1970s, Brazil played a significant part in international forums on cultural conservation, and was represented by the architect Silva Telles<sup>1</sup> and, later by the designer Aloísio Magalhães.<sup>2</sup> The former published many important books on heritage conservation as the *Atlas dos Monumentos Históricos e Artísticos do Brasil* (Atlas of Historic and Artistic Monuments of Brazil) that played an essential pedagogical role for historians, architects and school students. The latter was Secretary of Culture at the Education and Culture Ministry and had been a Director of IPHAN. He was in charge of the *Olinda Dossier*<sup>3</sup> that resulted in the Declaration of Olinda as a World Heritage site, in 1982, by UNESCO. According to Fonseca, Magalhães' ideas were registered in his speeches and practical seminar interventions rather than in academic texts (Fonseca 1991, 77). By the end of the 1960s, UNESCO consultant Michel Parent<sup>4</sup> had visited many historic towns in different regions of Brazil, such as São Luís, in the northern region, Olinda and Salvador, in the northeast region, and Ouro Preto, in the southeast region. The technical report he produced was fundamental for the subsequent plans drawn up in the following decades, such as the *Olinda World Heritage Declaration*. Starting in the 1970s, many governmental programs, supported by different funding agencies such as World Heritage, BIRD, IDB as well as national funds, were set up and they invested large sums of money in restoring some of the built cultural heritage. In 1973, the *Programa de Cidades Históricas* (the Integrated Programme for the Reconstruction of Historic Towns in Northeast Brazil, PCH) began (Andrade 2012, 307–312). That was one of the important governmental actions that contributed to awakening public managers to the

significance of their local cultural heritage, even before the → *Amsterdam Declaration* was published. In its first phase, the PCH covered the entire Northeast region, supported by significant financial funds for recuperating both buildings and urban sites of cultural interest and for tourism. In this same period, Paulo Ormino de Azevedo, a UNESCO consultant from the city of Salvador, coordinated the Inventory for the protection of the cultural heritage of Bahia, which acted as a pioneering reference in the national context (Andrade Junior 2013). He also spent time in the town of Olinda as a collaborator for the local organization of the cultural heritage protection system. Some important ventures were carried out such as the *Plano de Desenvolvimento Local Integrado* (Integrated Local Development Plan, PDLI) for Olinda. Another example was given by the urban planning guidelines for understanding the limits of the colonial town of Igarassu (Andrade 1974), in the metropolitan area of Recife, in order to delimit the historic area. This also has influenced other works in the national context such as the local plans for the towns of Ouro Preto and Mariana.

## 2. THE REPERCUSSION OF THE AMSTERDAM DECLARATION GUIDELINES IN BRAZIL

Since 1975, Aloísio Magalhães had idealized the *Centro Nacional de Referência Cultural* (National Center for Cultural Reference, CNRC), which aimed to establish a basic reference system to support the description and the analysis of Brazilian Culture. According to Costa: “The method developed by Magalhães would allowed a better perception of the relationship between State and Culture and the changes that resulted in new possibilities of preserving heritage, based on the concept of cultural heritage. Particularly, it contributed to opening and decentralizing cultural policies” (Costa 2012, 29, trans. by authors).

In 1980, the joint efforts of IPHAN, the PCH and the *National Centre for Cultural Reference* resulted in the creation of the *Fundação Nacional Pró-Memória* (the National Pro-Memory Foundation). In line with the → *Declaration of Amsterdam* guidelines, this new agency emphasized forming a broad comprehension of the cultural heritage. The National Pro-Memory Foundation adopted all the items of the → *Declaration of Amsterdam*, some of which were already expressed in the *Venice Charter*. Among the items, paragraphs “b” and “d”<sup>5</sup> were particularly taken into account. Unfortunately, after the premature death of Aloísio Magalhães the changes he had proposed, in order to adapt the cultural heritage Brazilian system to the new international trends were only partially and slowly implemented.

By the end of the 1970s, the *Fundação de Desenvolvimento da Região Metropolitana do Recife* (Urban Planning Agency for the Metropolitan area of Recife) had compiled the *Plano de Preservação dos Sítios Históricos da RMR* (Inventory for the Preservation of Historic Sites, PPSH) (FIDEM 1977). For the first time in the metropolitan area of Recife, a complete inventory on historic sites was undertaken, based textually on the guidelines of the → *Declaration of Amsterdam*. That pioneering inventory inspired the Municipal Preservation Law of Recife, promulgated in 1979 that created a special department in the *Empresa de Urbanização do Recife* (The Recife Urban Planning Agency, URB-Recife), for investigating issues related to historic sites, monitoring them and proposing specific policies to protect them. In 1985, federal law n° 7347, the so-called *lei de interesses difusos* (Law of Diffuse Interests) focused on damages to the environment, to the customer, to artistic, aesthetic, historic, tourist and landscape values and rights.

During the 1980s, urban plans for revitalizing some Brazilian historic centres were designed such as those for São Luís, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, and Salvador. Such ventures were directly inspired by the Bologna and Ferrara experiences, in the 1960s, with some gentrification effects. For the first time in Brazil, local governments acted consciously in the spirit of the → *Amsterdam Declaration*, i.e. putting into practice the main guidelines, particularly point “d”: “Architectural conservation must be considered, not as a marginal issue, but as a major objective of town and country planning.”

In 1995, a group of professors and researchers, from the *Programa de Pós-Graduação em Desenvolvimento Urbano* (Urban Development Post-Graduate Programme, MDU) of the *Universidade Federal de Pernambuco* (Pernambuco Federal University, UFPE) in Recife, organized the *First International Seminar on Integrated Conservation* (1995). This seminar brought together a range of distinguished world specialists, either theorists or planners like Jukka Jokilehto from the *International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property* (ICCROM) and Herbert Stovel, coordinator of heritage conservation studies at the School of Canadian Studies. The First Seminar was a very significant venture that, in 1997, enabled, the *Latin America International and Territorial Urban Conservation Course* (ITUC/LA) to be put into practice, an undertaking that was supported by World Heritage, UNESCO, ICCROM, IPHAN and UFPE. The ITUC/LA has mounted and held eight courses, attracting people from all over Brazil and from all parts of Latin America. Besides, every course had the support of a quite diversified list of international lecturers. Since the → *Declaration of Amsterdam*, the ITUC/LA has been the most objective application of its guidelines in Brazil, from an academic viewpoint. Among the newly trained specialists, dozens of them came from different municipal planning departments, in Brazil and abroad. They have since then contributed to improving the evaluation of projects and interventions in existing built environments.

In 2003, inspired by three successful ITUC/LA courses, the same group set up a non-governmental organization named the *Centro de Estudos Avançados da Conservação Integrada* (Centre of Advanced Studies on Integrated Conservation, CECI). In the same year, CECI began offering consultancy services on drawing up integrated conservation municipal management plans and mounting a Management and Restoration Course applied to Buildings.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. THE ROLE OF THE BRAZILIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE AGENCY

In the Brazilian federal context, the IPHAN is responsible for implementing and monitoring cultural heritage preservation policy. Among the main obstacles, having insufficient trained specialists seems to be the main failing with regard to staffing the official institution. The lack of cultural heritage official programmes at all levels of the education system is also a serious issue that does not contribute to supporting the attempt by a few academics and representatives to expand awareness about the need to promote integrated conservation. In addition, the entrepreneurial attitude, assumed by governmental managers, particularly illustrated throughout public-private partnerships, offers many opportunities for real estate economic groups to dictate and set a particular strategy of occupying the urban territory. In order to ensure significant profits, they have no hesitation in destroying the *genius loci* of places, and find support for this in Urban Code guidelines and by virtue of the tacit complicity of governmental managers.

The Brazilian federative political structure defines specific attributions to the Union, to the twenty-six states and the federal district and to the five thousand, five hundred and seventy municipalities. Thus, regional and local laws must not disagree with federal ones. Nevertheless, sometimes, local specialists' technical or scientific opinions on cultural heritage are more sensitive to the specific cultural context and their opinion may well be more adequate than federal specialists' opinions. In the historic centre of Recife, two situations have drawn attention to this dysfunction: one concerns footbridges that cross the aerial space of *Madre Deus Street* in a historic site, and the other is with regard to the construction of two twin towers of 41 floors, on the edge of the seafront of San José district, the most ancient historic area in the centre of Recife (Figs. 1a, b).



Figs. 1a, b: Recife highrise projects (Fotos: Lapa, Tinoco)

In the first situation, local specialists advised against the introduction of the footbridges. Nevertheless, their opinion was not taken in account. In the second situation, the *Ministério Público* (Public Prosecution Court), based on the opinion of some local specialists and academics, pronounced against the construction of the twin towers. Once again, the Common Justice Court considered that the current Urban Code is not clear on that issue. The legal verdict created discomfort among local specialists, but the real estate sector won the battle.

Such situations are disastrous at two different levels for the permanence of the cultural heritage: first, because it determines a kind of jurisprudence for other investors and, secondly, it can put at risk both the authenticity and the integrity of the cultural heritage. In the end, the impuissance of the IPHAN Agency to apply the → *Amsterdam Declaration* guidelines correctly was evident.

#### 4. THE ACTION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

To make up for the harm caused by governmental performance, some non-governmental organizations, such as the CECI, offer both training programmes and courses for planners, architects, historians, university students as well as seminars, publications and texts for discussion. CECI also acts as a consultant to governmental officials. Recently, a new kind of non-governmental organization, based above all on the efficiency of the social networks, has performed an important role, encompassing a growing group of citizens who are particularly concerned about urban issues. Among them, the Urban Rights movement,

acting from the region of Recife in northeastern Brazil, has led some movements inspired in the well-known *Occupy Wall Street*.

After the *Urban Rights* movement massively launched its ideas on the social networks, this has aimed to awaken people to the destruction of the local cultural heritage, in accordance with the → *Amsterdam Declaration*: “integrated conservation involves the responsibility of local authorities and calls for citizens’ participation.” After a rowdy public hearing in March 2012, hundreds of people tried to mount a first protest movement called *Occupy Estelita*. Two years later, when the investors decided to demolish some important elements that give evidence of the history of the sugar cane exploitation system, such as the old sugar and molasses warehouses, the protesters denounced them to the *Ministério Público* (Public Prosecution Court) and decided to camp on the site. *Occupy Estelita* grew quickly, lasted 53 days, and attracted thousands of people. In the improvised camp, professors and jurists gave lectures, mini courses and offered artistic activities. In this case, once again the meeting was dispersed by force by the police, supported on a judicial mandate. The *Urban Rights* movement and its corollary *Occupy Estelita* had denounced the disregard of the project named *New Recife* for citizens’ rights, which designed 13 towers varying between 40 and 50 floors each one. This was about the project having proposed a kind of a huge wall on the seafront border, which privatizes access to the aquatic surfaces. The *New Recife* project took no account whatsoever of the neighboring historic district of San José neither did it consider a very poor neighboring community, thereby further sharpening the social and territorial contrast between rich and poor people.

The unexpected effects of the protest movement have been so significant that the Town Hall staff has been morally and politically obliged to invite many institutional stakeholders to hearings. These include the regional president of IPHAN, the presidents of the two most representative universities, the regional president of the Lawyers Society, the president of the regional section of the *Brazilian Architects Institute*, the president of the regional section of the Engineers Council, the president of a social movement demanding low-cost housing, etc. All these representatives have been unanimous in holding the view that the demands of the movement represented an unparalleled opportunity to reflect on the need to process a new way of intervening in built environments. Nowadays, the negotiations are still in course and the Town Hall staff has taken some steps towards satisfying the demands of the different stakeholders. The deal is not yet concluded but the real estate sector continues to influence ordinary people’s opinion, on television and other Media by trying to prove the advantages of their propositions, which they claim to be progressive, and in society’s best interests.

## 5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The → *Amsterdam Declaration* guidelines specify clearly the proceedings of integrated conservation so as to reconcile the preservation of the cultural heritage with new ventures. Nevertheless, in Brazil, people’s opinion is so strongly marked by the desire for a modern way of life that it is not simple to reconcile tradition and progress. Since the → *Amsterdam Declaration* in 1975, many attempts have been made to put its guidelines into practice such as cultural heritage reconstructing programmes, training courses, consultancy with public managers and publications. From the 1970s to the 1990s, these ideas had progressed in Brazil, resulting in important plans and projects being drawn up. Nevertheless, from the start of the twenty-first century, IPHAN centralized again many functions that had been attributed to different agencies and foundations, in opposition to the principles of the → *Amsterdam Declaration*. Indeed, IPHAN is not able to cover the whole country efficiently and real estate activities have grown progressively and demanded more and more urban spaces on which to build. Can it be said that protecting the cultural heritage system in Brazil has regressed in the last thirty or so years? The truth is that government urban planning instances have receded, thereby allowing the real estate sector to impose their interests.

Recently, groups concerned about urban issues and diffuse rights like the cultural heritage have been arguing for a new way to comply with the guidelines of the → *Amsterdam Declaration*. Such groups act above all through social networks. Nevertheless, if social networks are a powerful tool, the protest movement has no official spokesperson and is ephemeral because it remains mainly virtual and distant from concrete reality. Implementing the principles of → *Amsterdam Declaration* in Brazil is a permanent challenge that demands the perseverance needed when embarking on a long journey.

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- <sup>1</sup> Augusto Carlos da Silva Telles, who died in 2012, had been a consultant and head of the Listed Heritage at IPHAN for many years. Among his main published works are the *Atlas dos Monumentos Históricos e Artísticos do Brasil* (Atlas of Historic and Artistic Monuments of Brazil) and the *Guia dos Bens Tombados da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro* (Guide of Listed Property of the City of Rio de Janeiro) (see bibliographical references).
- <sup>2</sup> He died in 1982, during the ceremony at which he was going to be invested as President of the *Latin Countries Forum of Ministries of Culture*.
- <sup>3</sup> The Memorandum from IPHAN n° 0118/99 informs that the dossier no longer existed in its original form and many days of research were needed to reconstitute that technical piece.
- <sup>4</sup> The technical reports of Michel Parent, covering his visits to Brazil in 1966/1968, are assembled in the book *As Missões da Unesco no Brasil: Michel Parent* (see bibliographical references).

- <sup>5</sup> b – “the architectural heritage includes not only individual buildings of exceptional quality and their surroundings, but also all areas of towns or villages of historic or cultural interest,” d – “Architectural conservation must be considered, not as a marginal issue, but as a major objective of town and country planning” (Cury 2004).
- <sup>6</sup> For information on the work undertaken, conferences held and covers of books published by CECI, see <http://www.cec-br.org/cec/br/publicacoes/livros/html>.