

THE ECONOMICS OF DEVELOPMENT IN BRAZILIAN CONSERVATION POLICY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE CITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO CONSERVATION AREAS

Julio Cesar Ribeiro Sampaio

Federal University Rural of Rio de Janeiro - UFRRJ, Institute of Technology, Brazil
julio.sampaio.ufrrj@gmail.com

Abstract. The trajectory of cultural heritage protection is based on a set of indicators that have been used over the years to justify the safeguard of cultural property. Recognition of the merits of these particularities, which differentiate buildings, urban areas, paintings, sculptures, etc., in conservation strategies that contribute to the construction of the future of societies, is essential to appreciation of the value of this cultural legacy. This work deals with the discussion of the role of the economic indicators in the conservation of the cultural heritage, whose scope, in this case, will be restricted to buildings and urban areas, that is, monuments and sites.

Initially, the article will make a brief review of the trajectory of the protection of buildings and urban areas, from the emergence of the first artistic and historical indicators, which form the basis of the pioneering protection legislations, until the entry onto the scene of the economic angle on conservation, the focus of this whole discussion. In the following part, the work will concentrate on the study of the basic references on this theme: the publication, "Economics in Urban Conservation" by Nathaniel Lichfield (1988); the British experiences of urban regeneration since the 1980s; the Brazilian experience in Pelourinho, the historical centre of Salvador, Bahia State; among others. The analysis of this material will contribute toward the construction of the conceptual framework that will be employed in the final part of the work, the evaluation of the form in which the economic aspect, especially the application of the sustainable development concept, is present in Brazilian Conservation Policy, emphasis being placed on the initiatives on the part of the Rio de Janeiro City Hall with regard to conservation areas.

1. The Economics of Development

Protection of cultural assets in the manner it is currently structured is, according to Françoise Choay (2001), reminiscent of that at the end of the XVIII century, based on the French pioneering experience of the inventory of the national cultural heritage and creation of the national statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. However, it is opportune to highlight that Cevat Erder (1986), cites protection initiatives for cultural assets in Ancient Times, specifically in Rome and Jukka Jokilehto (1999) also comments something similar in the Renaissance of the XVI century.

The pioneering protection initiatives had artistic and historical indicators as references. The first parameter reminds one of the diverse phases of the history of the arts, especially architecture, at the moments contributions of the past were employed as sources of inspiration for the elaboration and construction of architectural manifestations. The historical approach to the protection policies is correlated with initiatives to understand the historical trajectories, the construction of national identities and memory.

Urban buildings and areas were certainly outstanding in this context. In the 19th century and at the beginning of the XX, they were interpreted as national historical and artistic heritage. They were only considered representative of the regional and local contexts as of the second half of the XX century. In 1972, they also began to express universal culture with the creation of the Paris Convention of UNESCO, which regulates the elaboration of the listing of humanity's cultural and natural assets. The legal instruments of the protection policies throughout this trajectory prioritized the artistic and historical values. Since the 1960s, the affective question has been incorporated into the protection legislation, due especially to the mobilization of residents and conservationists associations opposed to the devastating effects of the urban policies in the post-war period in the urban areas with potential for protection. In the following decade, particularly after the 1972 United Nations Conference about the environment, the environmental issue also began to be considered in conservation. It still remained to discuss the economic importance of protecting, recovering and revitalizing urban buildings and areas.

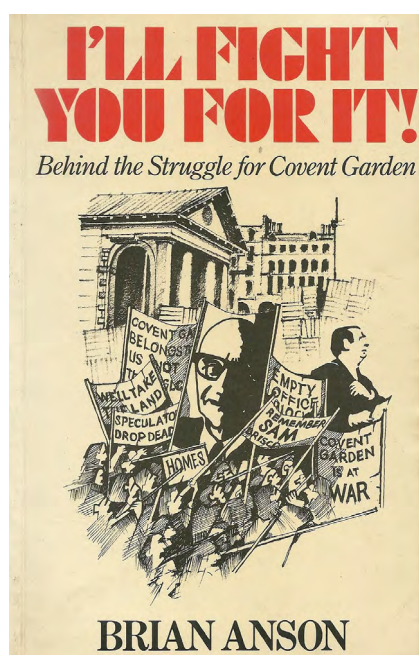


Figure 1. Gentrification: people revolt against the redevelopment of Covent Garden, London, 1970s. Anson, 1981.

Listed buildings, architectural ensembles, districts and cities initially had their potential for economic exploitation linked to tourism. This phenomenon would be intensified as of the 1960s through UNESCO missions in various countries, including Brazil, which was visited by Michel Parent in 1967, the same year as the publication of the Quito Norms set by the Organization of American States, which extolled the role of tourism in conservation, and, consequently, in the economic development of the region. This view is still broadly accepted in the specialised literature and the conservation policies. However the collateral social and economic effects, above all the gentrification processes, partly contradict the efficacy of this strategy.

On the other hand, the controversial and paradigmatic urban regeneration schemes of the 1980s in the UK, the revitalization of obsolete urban buildings and areas of the Industrial Revolution era, critically discussed by Patsy Healey (1992), had a predominantly profit-driven view determined by the new world economic order of the post-industrial period. The main aspects valued in these ventures were the inducing factors of national economic restructuring.

With further reference to the economic sphere, Nathaniel Lichfield (1988), highlighted the conflicts between the developmentalists, concentrated on increasing productive activities, and the conservationists, who preached rational use, albeit democratic, of the protected legacies so that future generations can also enjoy this heritage. In this

analysis, Lichfield developed the concept of obsolescence that evaluated the causes and consequences of the loss of vitality of protected urban buildings and areas, which is fundamental in establishing the strategies and respective interventions of conservation.

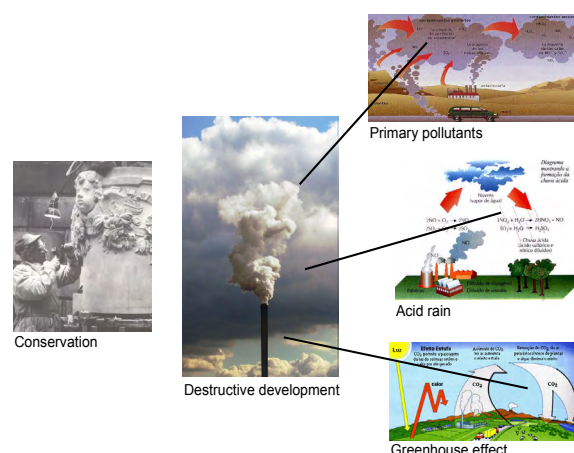


Figure 2. Conflicts between conservationists and the developmentalists. Photographs by Feilden (1981), Vivaterra (2011) and diagrams by Rezende (2011).

To date, the advantage of conservation in relation to new property developments has not been approached in depth by the economic urban conservation literature. It would be important to empirically test that it is cheaper to conserve and revitalize than construct new buildings. For this it would be important to develop a matrix whose left column took into account expenditure on resources of energy, minerals, transport and fuel; traffic congestion, various types of pollution, deforestation, among other factors, in order to produce new bricks, cement, steel, pipes, nails, glass, doors, windows, etc, which would be incorporated into new constructions. In the right column, there would be the expenditures on restoration procedures: the interventions of consolidations, reconstructions, adaptations, etc of the architectural elements that would not need to be produced and moved from one place to another. This comparison would be developed through the concept of sustainability, along the lines of what was discussed during and after the production of the 1987 Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, which has been bringing the development models adopted by the main world economies into question.

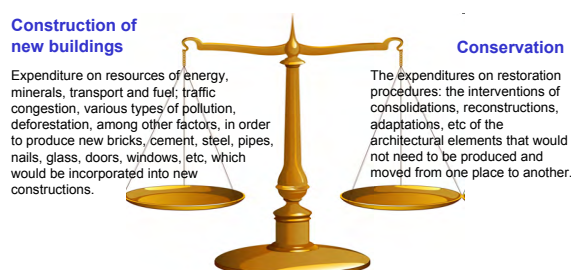


Figure 3. To construct or to conserve?

In this evaluation process, another controversial factor must also be taken into account: discussion of the costs of the artistic, historical and affective values of the buildings and urban areas. Which parameters would be used to calculate the value of a Gothic architectural ensemble, of a Renaissance stylistic solution, of a Modernistic architectural element, etc? What would a Baroque carving be worth? One can imagine this must be as difficult as attempting to make some protective legislation to determine the value of damage in order to fine whoever decharacterizes a listed building. Even so, in an initial approach to the problem, it would be important to understand that these aspects possess the same characteristic as the energy and mineral resources stressed by the environmentalists: they are not renewable. Their loss represents exhaustion on the part of authenticity and integrity of humanity's built environment. The conservation of these factors is, without doubt, an attitude of sustainability, mainly when the results of this undertaking are socialized.



Figure 4. How much are they? Author's photographs, 2009 left and 2011 right.

2. The Brazilian context

The approach to the economic question in the conservation of urban buildings and areas in Brazil reflects the world trend reported above. The re-use of the built-up heritage in the first Brazilian plan on a large scale of the

type, Historical Cities Program (PCH) issued by the Federal Government in the 1970s and 1980s, channelled the conservation strategies towards tourist activities, which were considered as the main options in development of the affected areas. The urban regeneration actions in the Pelourinho, the historical centre of Salvador, in the first half of the 1990s, financed by the Bahia State Government, headed in this direction, and promoted the largest case of gentrification in the history of urban area conservation in the country.

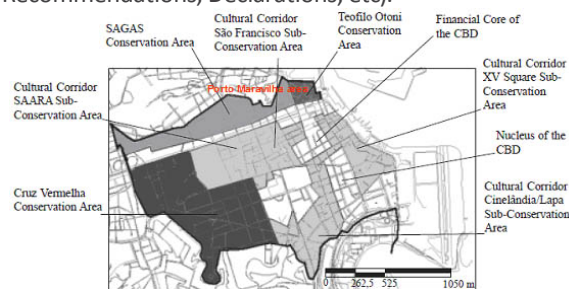


Figure 5. Pelourinho: shopping mall or a World Heritage Site? Bahia State Government, 1994.

The successor to the PCH, the Monumenta Program, began at the end of the 1990s with participation of the federal, state and municipal governments and the Inter-American Development Bank, represents a change of attitude in economic terms. The long term objective of the plan is to stimulate the economic structure of the areas covered in a more diversified manner, placing value on the permanence and participation of local users and stimulating, above all, independence of the conservation strategies for public resources. However, the Monumenta fails in the effective articulation of the conservation strategies adopted with the models of local, regional and national development. The program still cannot be considered a paradigm of Brazilian conservation policy, despite some positive results that were concentrated in isolated cases of conservation in architectural ensembles and urban landscapes.

The conservation policy of the areas designated by the Rio de Janeiro City Hall was begun in 1979 based on the creation of the Cultural Corridor Project, whose aim was to protect the urban environment in the city centre. Throughout the last 32 years, another 21 conservation areas have been created and spread all over the city, the protection covering around 10,900 buildings. The conservation policy of these areas was limited to reforms

of public roadways and the recuperation of buildings, most of which were financed by the users with acceptable results in relation to the conceptual and methodological standards of the specialised literature on conservation, above all international conservation documents regarding buildings and urban areas (UNESCO and ICOMOS Charters, Recommendations, Declarations, etc).



These conservation areas cover around 450 hectare which is equivalent to 70 per cent of total city centre area of 640 hectare. They encompass around 6,150 listed buildings that form the most important group of Brazilian buildings built between the 1890s and 1910s.

Figure 6. Rio de Janeiro City Centre Conservation Areas. Map redrawn from RIOAtlas 98, 1998.

Rio City Hall's first revitalization program of great impact is to occur in the port zone, which will include the conservation area of Saúde, Gamboa and Santo Cristo. This initiative is part of the city's preparations for the Olympic Games in 2016, and is similar to the British urban regeneration interventions in the 1980s mentioned above. The project's main aim is to reintegrate the area into the city's property market based on massive occupation of the empty urban spaces with large buildings. The management of the plan, which is still in the pre-project phase, will be exploited by the private enterprise along the lines of the British development corporations. It is still not clear what the role the protected buildings will play and what the involvement the local population will have in this project. It is feared that there will be a repetition of what happened in the revitalization of Pelourinho.

In all the Brazilian schemes discussed, incompatibilities are observed between development and conservation as highlighted by Lichfield (1988). The vision of sustainability of this emerging developmentalist country, which, in some respects, repeats the same errors made by the industrialised countries in the last two centuries, can harm the authenticity and integrity of its significant cultural heritage. It is not necessary to destroy, demolish or abandon in order to renew protected property stocks or those with potential for protection in order to generate new employment to develop an economy. The field of conservation knowledge, which has been constituted since the mid-XIX century, is replete with creative innovative solutions that can revert to the origins and the problems caused by obsolescence, pointed out by Lichfield (1988).

Taking the above into account, the Brazilian context of protection and conservation of buildings and urban areas will be one of the main beneficiaries of the studies, whose proposal is to convince that is more advantageous to conserve than to construct, especially in the case of Rio de Janeiro's port zone.

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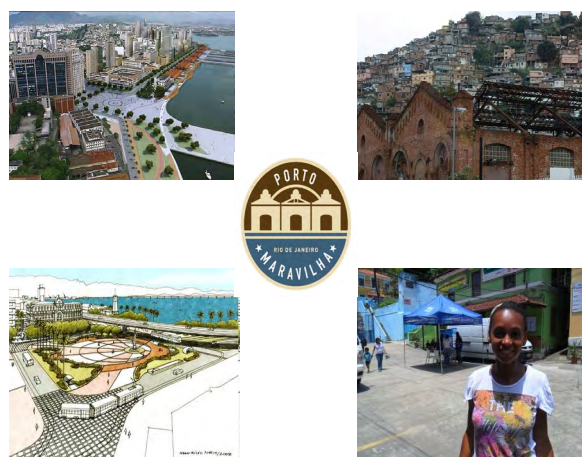


Figure 7. *Where are they go?* Photographs and logo by Rio City Hall, 2011.