

São Paulo: an exercise to forget the past

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“To be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradiction... is to be both revolutionary and conservative”.

(Berman, 1986, p.13)

Introduction

IN AN article published in the *Advanced Studies* journal in 2003, the historian Carlos Guilherme Mota (2003, p.241) addressed the transformations experienced by the city of São Paulo and that explain how it became “one of the three largest and most problem-plagued metropolises on the planet”, a place that challenges the “intelligence of urban planners, historians, social scientists, architects and politicians [...] and its citizens”. The text was significantly titled “São Paulo: exercises of memory.”

The text presented here, not by chance, has an apparently similar title, but with a different tune. The difference lies in that here the transformations are assessed with the aim of pointing out the extent to which they lead to oblivion, since they focus on elements that are considered cultural heritage. The analogy is also in the understanding that preserving the built cultural heritage in São Paulo also challenges the intelligence of urban planners, historians, social scientists, architects, politicians and its citizens.

Cultural heritage expressed in buildings can be considered a *place of memory* (Nora, 1993), an element capable of helping to remember and of contributing to the social memory and the feeling of collective belonging. These elements are subject to changes typical of urban dynamics and time, which contribute to their demise.

The survival of the cultural heritage is ensured, often, by policies that have the deliberate purpose of maintaining it as a reference of life stories and memories. These policies correspond to the “set of interventions by public actors aimed to produce and impose memories common to a given society”. These policies, in turn, are opposed by actions that lead to oblivion, the result “of an active and voluntary behavior, sometimes structured, directly attributable to the public actors in charge of developing and transmitting the official public memory” (Michel, 2010, p. 14).

The purpose of the paper is to analyze the disappearance of the material

cultural heritage of the city of São Paulo and its ensuing implications. In this regard, the text is organized into six sections, including the Introduction. It starts by discussing the actual meaning of cultural heritage, the reasons for its preservation and the purposes of measures to this end. Next, the author addresses initiatives for the protection of the city's heritage assets at federal, state and municipal level, which contributed to the preservation of legacies of the past.

The effectiveness of the protection of heritage assets in São Paulo, however, is questionable, and therefore the analysis focuses on understanding the practices that repeal public protection and indicate the weakness of cultural heritage protection in São Paulo. In an attempt to understand and explain the reasons for this weakness, the paper discusses the meanings of modernity in São Paulo and the endless search for the new, something that has become a characteristic of São Paulo. The text concludes with considerations about the desired model of city, which involves the protection or demolition of materials that are a testament to the past.

Heritage and na identity sign

Heritage is a complex, ambiguous and polysemic concept; a social construction whose meaning always takes on new attributes according to the historical time and to who uses it and for what purpose.

Although the breadth of the concept is its most striking feature (Poulot, 2009), it is defined here as the set of natural or cultural, tangible or intangible elements inherited from the past or created in the present, in which a certain group of individuals recognize signs of their identity (Castillo Ruiz, 1996; Choy, 2001; Hernández-Hernández, 2002; González-Varas, 2003). These assets are the result of the dialectic between man and the environment, the community and its territory, and link the human being to his past, at either the collective or individual, public or private level (Canclini, 1994). Heritage, to use the expression of Pierre Bourdieu (1999), is this symbolic capital that has links with the identity and that should be protected not so much for its aesthetic and antique values but for what it means and represents.

Given these conceptions, the concern to safeguard what is called heritage is essential to maintain the feeling of rooting of the individual with his living space, for the development of his identities: "a way of constructing meaning that influences and organizes both our actions and the conception we have of ourselves" (Hall, 2001, p.50).

Protecting the heritage involves a plurality of discourses and practices. Groups that work in its defense, in most cases do so in response to problems resulting from the changes of the contemporary world and from the uncertainties that these changes generate in view of globalization projects (Hernandez-Ramirez, 2008).

If this is the point that unites them, there are differences in the conduct of their demands that explain different proposals and equally different re-

sponses. These differences are expressed in the territorial scope of action, in the institutionalization character of each one, in the conception of heritage and in the activities they lead.

Some groups operate in very large territorial areas such as the Iberian-American SOS Monuments network; others, by contrast, focus their action on neighborhoods; some are linked to institutions, while others are independent and base much of their action on the confrontation with public institutions. With regard to actions, some defend the built cultural heritage and aspire to its restoration and conservation, whereas others have an integral vision and aspire to social uses and the introduction of new referents. There are still those who market heritage, especially in the field of tourism, with arguments in favor of local and ecologically sustainable development (*ibid.*).

The reasons for preserving the assets that make up the cultural heritage express differences in their discourses and practices, and all contribute to the protection and dissemination of this legacy to a wider audience, resulting in encouragement to citizen participation. These discourses and practices are also found in the city of São Paulo.

Defense of the built cultural heritage within the city of São Paulo

The protection of cultural heritage in Brazil occurs through protective measures such as “designation”, a legal procedure through which the government designates an to be part of the collective heritage. It is a procedure that declares or recognizes the cultural value of assets which, for their special characteristics are preserved in the interest of collectivity. It is both the administrative act and the operation of including the asset in the list of designated assets. The legal effects on designated heritage assets restrict the disposal, change of neighboring landscape and the modification of the asset. Finally, it forces the owner to preserve it (Silva, 2003, p.139).

This government action is upheld in Decree-Law No. 25 of 1937, which organized the protection of the national historical and artistic heritage. This instrument was reaffirmed in the 1988 Constitution, which establishes in paragraph 1 of Article 216 that “The Government shall, with the cooperation of the community, promote and protect the Brazilian cultural heritage by means of inventories, registers, vigilance, monument protection decrees, expropriation and other forms of precaution and preservation” (IPHAN, 2006, p.20).

This Constitution also stated in Article 30 that “The municipalities have the power to promote the protection of the local historic and cultural heritage, with due regard for federal and state legislation and supervision.” Thus, responsibility for protection has become an action shared by the federal, state and municipal governments (*ibid.*, p. 17).

Regarding the city of São Paulo, from the beginning of the public protection of cultural heritage (1937) to 1968, all initiatives for the defense of heritage

assets were implemented at federal level, under the responsibility of the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Service (SPHAN, currently IPHAN).

This same institution also designated as national heritage *Casa da Sede do Sítio Mirim* (Main House of the Mirim Farm), considered a “unique example of the architecture from the Bandeiras^{TN} period”, built around 1750 (IPHAN, 2011). *Casa Grande do Tatuapé* (Big House of Tatuapé) is another asset whose designation as national heritage was motivated by the fact that it is considered “a typical example of the architecture of the second century of occupation of the São Paulo plateau and one of the few houses from that period that does not have a hipped roof.” There is also Luz Station, built in 1860 by the São Paulo Railway Company to connect “the prosperous coffee production region in the interior of São Paulo to the main export port, Santos [...] a monumental iron and brick building designed in England, with an area of 7,520 square meters” (ibid.).

SPAHN understood that these elements deserved to be protected because they referred to the formation of the country and expressed in their architecture stories dating back to the Bandeiras, coffee production and industrialization periods.

In 1968 the protection of heritage assets in São Paulo was enhanced by the creation of the Council for the Defense of Historical, Archaeological, Artistic and Tourism Heritage (CONDEPHAAT), a state government institution established by Law No. 10247 of October 1968. The creation of this body “was within the contours of the civic cult of the past and of the pragmatic enshrinement of this same past as a product of cultural consumption valued by the tourism industry” (Roberts, 2000, p.34).

Based on this judgment, the following buildings were also designated as national heritage assets: *Indústrias Reunidas Francisco Matarazzo*, in Água Branca, “an example of early twentieth century architecture”; the property where Mário de Andrade used to live, “a two-story townhouse in eclectic style, built in brickwork, designed by Oscar Americano in the early 1920s and closely related to the life and work (of Mario de Andrade)” (CONDEPHAAT, 1998).

Casa de Dona Yaya (Yaya’s House), in Bela Vista, is another asset whose conservation was justified by the fact that it is “a significant surviving example of the transformation of the neighborhood due to the growth of the city.” The same reason applied to the designation of *Castelinho da Brigadeiro* (Little Castle on Brigadeiro Avenue) “a rare example, in São Paulo, of residential architecture inspired by the art nouveau style, designed by the Italian Giuseppe Sachetti [...] built in brickwork between the years 1907 and 1911”; and to *Antiga Casa de Dona Veridiana* (Veridiana’s Old House) or “Vila Maria” Ranch, a mansion built in 1884. The building was protected on the grounds that it is a “signifi-

^{TN} Bandeiras were expeditions led by citizens of São Paulo, designed to enslave indigenous peoples and to find precious metals and stones and also expand the Brazilian territory beyond the Treaty of Tordesillas.

cant document of the occupation pattern of a suburban village at the turn of the nineteenth century in the city of São Paulo”, which expresses the characteristics of the São Paulo of that time and combines “elements of the French Renaissance and reminiscences of the Italian Renaissance” and is “a landmark of the origin of the Higienópolis neighborhood” (ibid.).



Photo by Silvia Helena Zanirato/fevereiro de 2011

Photo 1 - Castelinho da Brigadeiro (Little Castle on Brigadeiro Avenue)

Among the assets designated by CONDEPHAAT, it is worth highlighting also the workers’ villages, such as Vila Maria Zélia, in Belenzinho, built in 1916; Vila Economizadora, in the Luz neighborhood, which dates back to the early twentieth century; and Vila Itororó, in Bela Vista. The latter was “designed by Portuguese immigrant and master builder Francisco de Castro, using materials from the demolition of buildings like the old São José Theater.” It is a construction started in 1920, “a set formed by thirty-seven buildings occupying, in a creatively manner, through staircases and walkways, the space of an ancient grotto facing the Itororó Valley” (ibid.).

The assets selected by CONDEPHAAT for designation as national heritage translated, for more than two decades, the understanding that sites that are a testament to memorable historical facts, or those endowed with artistic, documental and tourism value, as well as landscape sites that could be exploited by tourist visitation, should be preserved.

The protection of cultural heritage, which was already being implemented in the city, was enhanced in 1985 by the creation of another body, the Municipal Council for the Preservation of the Historical, Cultural and Environmental Heritage of the City of São Paulo (CONPRESP), a collegiate cultural advisory body within the structure of the Municipal Culture Secretariat, established by Law No. 10032 of December 1985. Since then, CONPRESP has been responsible for determining, at the municipal level, the designation of movable and immovable assets of the city of São Paulo. The entity is also responsible for developing guidelines to be followed in the policy of preservation and enhancement of these assets and for promoting strategies to inspect the preservation and use of these assets (São Paulo, 1985).

From its inception to date, CONPRESP has ruled on the protection of about 2,000 buildings, most of them designated as national heritage assets. Among them are *Casa de Chácara da Família Cardoso de Almeida* (Ranch House of Family Cardoso de Almeida), *Casa do Sertanista* (House of the Wilderness Explorer), *Casarão de Henrique Dumont Vilares* (Henrique Dumont Villares' House), *Palacete Helvetia* (Helvetia Mansion), *Palacete São Jorge* (St. George Mansion), Alfredo Becker's house and the workers' houses of Jardim Matarazzo. There are also designated neighborhoods such as Jardins, Pacaembu, Perdizes, Bela Vista, Jardim da Saúde, Interlagos and Sumaré, and areas around designated assets (CONPRESP, 2011).

Together, IPHAN, CONDEPHAAT and CONPRESP have the mission of safeguarding the heritage assets in the city, and so it is not uncommon to see overlapping actions between these entities. Some of these assets, especially those regarded as examples of monumental architecture or of secular history, are carefully restored and converted into cultural centers and museums, including *Solar da Marquesa de Santos* (Marquise of Santos' Mansion), from the eighteenth century; Luz Station, from 1867; *Casa de Dona Veridiana*, from 1884; Julio Prestes Station and the former DOPS building, both from 1938. Others, in turn, experience great maintenance difficulties.

The offensive against cultural heritage in São Paulo

Protection actions taken jointly by IPHAN, CONDEPHAAT and CONPRESP seem to indicate that the cultural heritage of São Paulo is well protected, but it is not quite what is seen. There are built assets which, although legally protected, are in a state of degradation, with their construction compromised, and there are others that had their designation as heritage assets cancelled, i.e., were "removed from the list of heritage assets".

Article 17 of Decree No. 25/1937 establishes that "things designated as heritage assets may not, under any circumstances, be destroyed, demolished or mutilated without prior special authorization from the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Service, or repaired, painted or restored, under penalty of a fine of fifty percent of the damage incurred" (IPHAN, 2006, p.104).

Still, we see practices that repeal the public protection of goods that were at one time considered important to record the memory, stories and experiences. Such practices were established in Brazil in 1941 by Decree-Law No. 3866 (IPHAN, 2006, p.109), which removed the protection determined for a garden in Rio de Janeiro (*Campo de Santana*, from 1873) and two eighteenth century churches. The measure was adopted to enable the expansion, of Getúlio Vargas Avenue. “The garden lost between 20 and 100 meters, but the churches, among them *São Pedro dos Clérigos*, from 1733, of Baroque inspiration and circular shape – simply disappeared” (*Folha de S. Paulo* newspaper, 12.25.2005, p.C03).

A similar action was implemented by the government of the State of Rio de Janeiro through Decree-Law No. 2 of April 11, 1969, which determined, in Article 8, that “removal from the list of designated heritage assets” could occur when demonstrated that it “was the result of factual error as to its determining cause; or by unwavering demand of the social economic development of the State” (Rio de Janeiro, 1969). In 1981, the State Council for the Designation of National Heritage of Rio de Janeiro was subjected to this measure, as provided for in State Law No. 519/81, which states in Article 6 that a “a designated heritage asset may have the designation cancelled by act of the State Governor, in consultation with the State Council for the Designation of National Heritage “ (Rio de Janeiro, 1981).

Those measures ultimately contributed for spreading the practice of canceling the designation of heritage assets in the country. In São Paulo, especially, decisions in this regard can be found, as seen in the general index of COM-PRESP’s Resolutions, which in February 2011 contained the following list of built assets whose designation had been canceled:

- Former Armour Meatpacking Plant, currently Bordon Meatpacking Plant
- Mansion and shop at 755 Guaicurus Street and 35 Duílio Street.
- Houses at 405-455 Alameda Lane.
- Building named Improvement Company Factory at 182, 184 Vespasiano Street.
- His - Her School at 18 Aluísio Fagundes Street and Eduardo da Silva Magalhães, Cono Matteo and Dr. Milton de Souza Meirelles streets.
- Industrial Shed at 43 Coroados Street.
- Industrial Shed at 140 Campos Vergueiro Street and São Tito Street.
- Industrial Shed at 111 Caio Graco Street and 846, 898 Faustolo Street.
- Industrial Shed at 512, 550 Faustolo Street and Cláudio Street.
- Railway Industrial Shed at 325 Santa Marina Avenue.
- Anhanguera Bridge.
- Atílio Fontana Bridge.
- Jaguaré Bridge.

- Bandstand Square at Residencial Continental park on Eugênio
- Pinto Moreira and Andrea Bolgi streets and Antonio de Souza Noschese Ave.
- Army Headquarters – Supply Battalion at 147 Raimundo Pereira de Magalhães Street.
- House at 182 Emílio Goeldi Street.
- Four Houses on Guaicurus Street.
- Houses on Guaicurus, Faustolo and Coriolano streets. (CONPRESP, 2011)



Photo by Silvia Helena Zanirato/fevereiro de 2011

Photo 2 – House and shops at 755 Guaicurus Street, Lapa.



Photo 3 – Industrial Shed at 512, 550 Faustolo Street.

The number of assets that have been removed from the heritage list is an indication of both the weakness of measures aimed to protect assets considered as cultural heritage and the importance of the “unwavering demand of social economic development.” Understanding the aspects linking this demand to the weakness of protection in the city of São Paulo requires examining in greater detail some components that may contribute to clarifying this relationship.

The urban dynamic of São Paulo and the charm of modernity

The city of São Paulo is, admittedly, a contemporary city. This kind of city corresponds to a social space characterized by the elimination of the old forms of sociability and by an ever transformed morphology. The city displays the fluidity of the landscape, the fugacity of relations and the transitivity of the spatiotemporal frontiers crossed by its residents (Carlos, 2001).

São Paulo seems to totally fit the interpretation coined by Michel De Certeau (1994, p.21) when he referred to New York as a city that “has never learned the art of growing old by playing on all its pasts. Its present invents itself, from hour to hour, in the act of throwing away its previous accomplishments and challenging the future. “

The urban landscape of São Paulo is a palimpsest expressing “the accumulation of unequal times ... times juxtaposed and times superimposed” (Santos, 2002). In this landscape, the historical cultural references inherited from the

past are scarce and restricted to a few buildings that coexist with the signs of modernity: skyscrapers, automobiles, avenues.

São Paulo, according to Milton Santos, quoted by Mota (2003, p.241), was born modern “both on the production side and on the consumption side. This, thanks to the importing, by immigrants, of habits and aspirations, but also to the built environment conducive to change.”

The transformations express this obsession with modernity, the relentless pursuit of the “new”, seen in the systematic change of spaces, which ultimately undermine historical monumental buildings and the vernacular architecture, clusters of houses, chapels, fountains, movie theaters and squares.

Accordingly, policies for the defense of the cultural built heritage and policies for the production of city space collide with adverse contexts and understandings in which the “new” and the “modern” appear as synonyms with beauty and superiority (Zanirato, 2009).

One cannot lose sight of the fact that urban space is a social product, whose production occurs in order to facilitate the process of capital reproduction (Carlos, 1988). Rightfully so, actions such as densification of land use, deterioration of certain areas, renovation of others, changes to the social and economic content of buildings have one thing in common: the appropriation of the rent of the land (Correa, 1989); actions that are explained in the face of a process led by real estate capital, often facilitated by government (Véras, 2001; Grosten, 2001).

These actions focus on spaces considered to be cultural heritage and, according to the correlation of forces, either protect or not the designated items. The decisions in this regard have both critics and supporters: some advocate protection justified by the need to ensure elements that refer to the collective memory. For these, designation is a legal, convenient and safe measure to protect assets threatened by distortion, destruction and speculation. Others reject it by claiming that designation hinders urban transformations, because it prevents the demolition, expansion and renovation of the property, and this leads to the depreciation of the value of the land. Their positions are in favor of urban transformations as a necessary condition for the economic and social development of areas considered to be in decay. In this sense, they ultimately deny or minimize the value of the built cultural heritage by considering that it is worth less than the benefits derived from the proposed changes.

It is attitudes like these that explain why, despite legal protection, what is seen in many cases are the neglect and destruction of heritage assets in São Paulo. Abandonment, interventions that strip the assets of their original features by changing their historical and landscape aspects, as well as decisions to “remove assets from the heritage list”, and demolitions make sense in this scenario.

Senses that contribute to understanding the article published in the *Folha de S. Paulo* newspaper on January 25, 2008 (p.C14, C15), stating that almost half of the cultural heritage of São Paulo was experiencing conservation problems.

According to the article, the walls of the buildings had cracks, leaks, graffiti, dirt, and many had been stripped of their original features. This was seen in Vila Maria Zélia, in Belenzinho, built in the period 1912 - 1916 where, among the 171 remaining houses of the original 258, only four have preserved the original facade.

The situation repeated itself in 2009, as reported by *O Estado de São Paulo* newspaper (01/04/2009, p.C1) that 40 percent of the 1,813 assets designated or in the process of designation throughout the city were abandoned, destroyed or completely mangled. The article said that there were 429 buildings in the center in these conditions, and that in the East Zone the index reached 94 percent. The workers' villages showed the worst neglect. Vila Portland, with its English-style cottages, designated by CONPRESP in 1992, had cracks, walls about to fall down and insects. The same situation was seen in *Vila Itororó*, built in 1920 and designated in 2005, and in *Vila Economizadora*, as well as in houses in Brás and sheds in Mooca, all designated as cultural heritage sites of São Paulo.

The situation worsened in 2010, as can be seen in articles published in *O Globo* newspaper and on websites that highlight the issue of heritage conservation, such as *Defender* and *São Paulo Antiga*.

According to *O Globo* (1.18.2010), *Vila Itororó*, in Bela Vista, designated by CONPRESP, presented a "high degree of deterioration."

On the website *Defender*, in turn, according to an article posted on July 20 about the demolitions occurred in Alcantara Machado Avenue, in Mooca, "the historical buildings of the neighborhood's industrial past were demolished without permission from the municipal government which, in turn, did nothing to prevent the destruction". They were sheds, workers' houses and a mansion from last century, that were part of the former Labor Textile Industry founded in the 1910s. According to the website, in April 2009 CONDEPHAAT filed a petition for the designation of the entire area, but a construction company had already demolished the entire complex without permission from the municipal government, to build there a gated community. "Neighborhood residents even sent several complaints to the Borough of Mooca requesting the embargo of the demolition site, but the inspection authority was unable to prevent the complete destruction of the historical asset" (*Defender*, 2011).

In the blog *São Paulo Antiga* there is an article that reads "the year 2010 will go down in history as one of the most terrible for old buildings." According to the text, "between January and December, precisely 27 buildings registered in the blog ceased to exist, 23 of them in the city of São Paulo, three in Guarulhos and one in the town of Itapetininga." The demolished buildings were listed and among them were two-story houses on Rebolledo Avenue; on Coronel Moura Street, in Pari; at 2421 Rangel Pestana Avenue [Bras]; on Francisco Street Coimbra [Penha]; on Almirante Brazil Street [Bras]; at 107 Julio César da Silva Street [Belenzinho]. There are also houses on Demóstenes Street [Campo Belo]; at 20 Padre Bernardino Bandeira Street [Penha]; at 97

Júlio César da Silva [Belenzinho]; at 517 and 527 Canindé Street; at 598/606 Santo Antônio Street [Bela Vista]; at 146 Sevilha Street [Tucuruvi]; at 1855 Avenida do Estado [Pari]; on Major Angelo Zanchi Street [Penha]; at 250 Vidal Negreiros Street [Pari]; mansions at 960 Pompeia Avenue [Lapa]; on Baião Parente Street [Freguesia do Ó]; at 975 Bom Pastor Street [Ipiranga]; at 311 Machado de Assis Street [Aclimação], at 2575 Brigadeiro Luis Antonio Avenue [Jardim Paulista]; and the warehouses at 20 Luiz de Camões Street [Bras] and 537 Canindé Street [Pari] (*São Paulo Antiga*, 2011).

The articles mentioned bring elements that enable saying that the space production process in the city of São Paulo is one of the major obstacles to the conservation of elements that make up the built cultural heritage. According to the articles posted on *São Paulo Antiga*,

one of the oldest buildings on Augusta Street (corner of Dona Antonia de Queiroz Street), built in 1913, has been demolished. The building remained closed for decades and deteriorated. When it was demolished, it already presented a serious risk of collapse. An Esser Company project will be built at the site. (ibid.).

A similar conclusion is seen in an article published in the *Defender* (2011) regarding the demolitions occurred in Mooca, since “the region is in the sights of the municipal government and in the forefront of Urban Operation Mooca / Vila Carioca, which foresees the construction of a 30,000 square-meter park and the revitalization of Dom Pedro I Avenue”.

The preservation of the built cultural heritage in São Paulo is, in fact, at risk, in view of the “unwavering demand of the social economic development” of the city.



Photo by Sílvia Helena Zamirato/fevereiro 2011

Photo 4 – Vila Itororó, Bexiga.

Final remarks

The situation of cultural heritage in São Paulo indicates that its protection raises different views and interests, and is related to the desired city model, as it involves the maintenance or not of material testaments to the past, especially those not provided with elements that characterize them as exceptional.

Unsurprisingly this question is marked by conflicts, evidenced by the discussions held during CONDEPHAAT's initiative to preserve the mansions on Paulista Avenue, which resulted in the destruction of most of those buildings because the owners did not accept the decisions of the government (Rodrigues, 1996, p.198).

Nor is it news that state actions for heritage protection are implemented through social mobilization that forces the government to adopt protection policies. Therefore, citizens need to feel identified with the elements to be preserved, to recognize themselves in them, so that they will become, in fact, representatives of them and for them. The recognition of the collective belonging of assets entails joint efforts for their conservation, and the more collective and representative they are, the better protected they will be.

As an important point, it must be clear that the designation of heritage assets is one of the legal instruments that support actions to protect cultural

heritage and expresses the primacy of public interest over private interest. It is an act that does not change the ownership of the asset, does not eliminate the possibility of real estate transaction, and does not preclude the remodeling and adaptation of buildings for new uses, but requires the owner to submit any proposed changes to the bodies responsible for the designation of heritage assets.



Photo by Silvia Helena Zanirato

Photo 5 – Vila Itororó, Bexiga.

The understanding of this act by society at large is important not only to limit the rapacious activity of the urban land construction and speculation sectors, which seek to appropriate the rent of the land, but also to claim new uses for cultural assets, compatible with social needs.

It is also necessary to defend the maintenance and conservation of heritage in the face not only of antiquity, aesthetics and exceptionalism, but also for their social and intangible dimensions, for the social effects consubstantial with the process of disappearance of these assets.

Modernity in São Paulo does not need to turn out to be, according to Baudelaire, in the famous text by Marshal Berman (1986, p.138), “a perpetually renewed form of suicide”, or a “scorpion that stings itself with its own tail.” For it not to entail the destruction of references and, with it, the loss of life experiences, city dwellers must preserve their references and safeguard their roots, protect their heritage.

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ABSTRACT – This text aims to reflect about the treatment of cultural heritage in São Paulo, which involves considering, firstly, registration as a measure of public protection and enhancement of the cultural heritage and, secondly, decisions that lead to revoking a deferred protection and contribute to the distortion of cultural heritage, their abandonment and often, their demolition.

KEYWORDS: Cultural heritage, São Paulo, Registration, Cancel registration.

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