



POLITECNICO
MILANO 1863

Department of Architecture and Urban Studies – DASTU

Master's Degree in Urban Planning and Policy Design

**Heritage of the Modern in Milan and Porto Alegre:
A Comparative Study, between Governance and Perception**

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Academic Year 2024/2025

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Abstract

This dissertation reflects on the governance of 20th-century architectural and urban heritage through a comparative study of Milan (Italy) and Porto Alegre (Brazil). It investigates how historical trajectories, legal instruments, planning practices, and public perception have shaped the recognition, protection, and transformation of modern heritage in cities marked by intense processes of modernization. Instead of treating modern architecture as a stylistic or chronological category, the research approaches it as a governance condition embedded within growth-oriented urban contexts.

The comparison is developed through a reconstruction of heritage legislation, urban planning frameworks, and public discourse across the 20th century, considering the two cities' trajectories as parallel tracks shaped by different institutional cultures yet exposed to similar redevelopment pressures. This approach allows the study to identify shared structural tensions in the governance of modern heritage, beyond national or legal specificities.

Public perception is addressed as a mediating layer between institutional frameworks and preservation outcomes. Through the analysis of media narratives and urban imaginaries, the study shows how heritage recognition depends on symbolic framing and narrative legitimacy as much as on formal protection. The research argues that the vulnerability of 20th-century heritage stems less from its recency than from misalignments between governance tools, temporal interpretations of modernity, and collective meaning-making.

Keywords: modern heritage, heritage governance, perception, 20th-century heritage, urban imaginaries, media narratives, historic center, heritage legislation;

Abstract (Italiano)

Questa tesi riflette sulla governance del patrimonio architettonico e urbano del XX secolo attraverso uno studio comparativo tra Milano (Italia) e Porto Alegre (Brasile). Esamina come le traiettorie storiche, gli strumenti giuridici, le pratiche di pianificazione e la percezione pubblica abbiano plasmato il riconoscimento, la protezione e la trasformazione del patrimonio moderno in città caratterizzate da intensi processi di modernizzazione. Anziché trattare l'architettura moderna come una categoria stilistica o cronologica, la ricerca la affronta come una condizione di governance inserita in contesti urbani orientati alla crescita.

Il confronto viene sviluppato attraverso una ricostruzione della legislazione sul patrimonio culturale, dei quadri di pianificazione urbana e del dibattito pubblico nel corso del XX secolo, considerando le traiettorie delle due città come percorsi paralleli plasmati da culture istituzionali diverse ma esposti a pressioni di riqualificazione simili. Questo approccio consente allo studio di identificare tensioni strutturali condivise nella governance del patrimonio culturale moderno, al di là delle specificità nazionali o giuridiche.

La percezione pubblica è affrontata come uno strato mediatore tra i quadri istituzionali e i risultati della conservazione. Attraverso l'analisi delle narrazioni dei media e degli immaginari urbani, la tesi mostra come il riconoscimento del patrimonio dipenda tanto dall'inquadramento simbolico e dalla legittimità narrativa quanto dalla protezione formale. La ricerca sostiene che la vulnerabilità del patrimonio del XX secolo deriva meno dalla sua recente origine che dal disallineamento tra gli strumenti di governance, le interpretazioni temporali della modernità e la costruzione collettiva di significato.

Parole chiave: patrimonio moderno, governance del patrimonio, percezione, patrimonio del XX secolo, immaginari urbani, narrazioni mediatiche, centro storico, legislazione sul patrimonio;

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank first and foremost my supervisor, Prof. Giuseppe Bertrando Bonfantini, and architect Liliane Janine Nizzola for guiding me through the construction of this thesis and for the careful attention they paid during our many meetings and discussions.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for granting me, for two consecutive years, the MAECI Scholarship, which enabled me to pursue this master's degree.

To my friends Ana Claudia Ocampo, Yuhan Cai, Xu Haoyuan, Daniel Hagos, Yazan Kondakji, Caridad Pineda Fernandez de Cordova, Mariu Ochoa and Natalia Gomez. Together, you all have been my home in Italy.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the friends, colleagues, and supervisors I encountered during my internship experiences, particularly at Triennale Milano and 3im. Your support and interest in my thesis are greatly appreciated. Special thanks to Assanali Kaidarov, Mohamed Elmubarak, and Peiwen Han for their understanding, support, and friendship.

I am also thankful to my professors at Politecnico di Milano, especially Prof. Carolina Pacchi, Cristina Renzoni, Alessandro Balducci, and Vasco Barbosa Brandão. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge my professors and friends at the University of Passo Fundo in Brazil: Prof. Carla Portal Vasconcellos, Greice Rampanelli, and João Telmo.

I extend my appreciation to the many friends who stayed back in my hometown, including Miléia Alves, Cecília Weiler, Bruna Casagrande, Thaís Rossetto, Natália Boff, and others, for their long-distance support and inspiration. A special thanks to Patricia Ferri for everything. Finally, I want to thank my family for their unwavering support, my parents, Antonio and Neusa, for believing in me, my brother Matheus for all his help with research in Porto Alegre, and Mercedes for all the encouragement.

0. Glossary

Acronyms

AACs - *Áreas de Ambiência Cultural* (Cultural Ambiance Areas)

AEICs - *Áreas Especiais de Interesse Cultural* (Special Areas of Cultural Interest)

CBC - *Codice dei Beni Culturali*

CF - *Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil*

COMPAHC - *Conselho Municipal do Patrimônio Histórico e Cultural de Porto Alegre*

DPH - *Departamento do Patrimônio Histórico*

DPM - *Diretoria de Patrimônio e Memória*

EC - *Estatuto da Cidade* (City Statute)

EIVC - *Estudo de Impacto de Vizinhança Cultural* (Cultural Neighbourhood Impact Assessment)

EPAHC - *Equipe do Patrimônio Histórico e Cultural*

EVU - *Estudo de Viabilidade Urbanística* (Urban Feasibility Study)

IAB - *Instituto dos Arquitetos do Brasil*

IPCBPOA - *Inventário do Patrimônio Cultural de Bens Imóveis do Município de Porto Alegre*
(Municipal Inventory for Cultural Heritage)

IPHAE - *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico do Estado* (State Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage)

IPHAN - *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional* (National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage)

LU - *Legge Urbanistica* (Italian Planning Law)

MARGS - *Museu de Arte do Rio Grande do Sul*

NAF - *Nuclei di Antica Formazione*

PA - *Piani di Ampliamento* (Urban Expansion Plans)

PC - *Programmi Complessi* (Complex Programs)

PD - *Plano Diretor* (Master Plan)

PDDU - *Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Urbano*

PDDUA - *Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Urbano e Ambiental* (Urban and Environmental Master Plan)

PDR - *Piano delle Regole*

PGM - *Plano Geral de Melhoramentos* (General Master Plan) usually refers to the 1914 Porto Alegre Master Plan

PGT - *Piano di Governo del Territorio*

PP - *Piani Particolareggiati* (Detailed Plans)

PPA - *Programmi Pluriennali di Attuazione* (Multi-year Implementation Programs)

PR - *Piani di Recupero* (Rehabilitation Plans)

PRCH - *Programa de Reabilitação do Centro Histórico* (Historic Center Rehabilitation Program)

PRG - *Piano Regolatore Generale*

PSC - *Piano Strutturale Comunale* (Municipal Structural Plan)

PTC - *Piano Territoriale di Coordinamento* (Territorial Coordination Plan)

RUE - *Regolamento Urbanistico Edilizio* (Urban Building Regulation)

SHUPOA - *Sítio Histórico Urbano de Porto Alegre* (Historical Urban Site of Porto Alegre)

SMC - *Secretaria Municipal da Cultura*

SPHAN - *Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional*

TDC - *Transferência do Direito de Construir* (Transfer of Development Rights) or TPC - *Transferência de Potencial Construtivo*

ZT - *Zone Territoriali Omogenee* (Homogeneous Territorial Zones)

Foreign-language terms

Abraço simbólico - Literally “symbolic hug,” a form of peaceful protest in which participants encircle a building or site to express collective attachment and opposition to demolition or transformation.

Beni culturali - The Italian legal category encompassing cultural heritage assets, including buildings, landscapes, and artifacts recognized for their historical, artistic, or cultural value.

Casarões - Large historic residential buildings, often dating from the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, typically associated with elite families.

Competência comum - Refers to the shared responsibility of the Union, the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities to act jointly in certain policy areas. The Constitution establishes that all levels may participate in the implementation, protection, and enforcement of specific collective interests.

Facere - A legal principle meaning “to do,” referring to positive obligations. In the context of heritage protection, it includes active responsibilities such as maintenance, restoration, adaptive reuse, or public accessibility.

Flânerie - The practice of wandering and observing the city without a predetermined purpose.

Flâneur - A figure originating in nineteenth-century European cultural theory, describing an urban observer who experiences the city through walking and visual exploration.

Non facere - A legal principle meaning “not to do,” referring to prohibitive obligations imposed on property owners.

Piani del colore - Italian urban planning tools regulating the color schemes and surface treatments of building façades, particularly in historic areas.

Piano di massima - An Italian planning instrument outlining general development guidelines or strategic orientations without establishing detailed, binding regulations.

Tombamento - A Brazilian legal instrument for heritage protection through which a cultural asset is formally listed and subject to preservation constraints. It can be applied at municipal, state, or federal levels, with differing degrees of legal rigidity and enforcement.

Tutela - An Italian legal concept referring to the protection or safeguarding of cultural heritage by the state. It emphasizes conservation and regulatory control, often prioritizing preservation over transformation, and operates through binding legal constraints enforced by heritage authorities.

Urbanistica - The Italian field of urban planning, encompassing regulatory frameworks, zoning instruments, and spatial governance practices.

Valorizzazione - An Italian heritage policy concept referring to the enhancement, activation, or promotion of cultural assets. Unlike tutela, it focuses on use, accessibility, social meaning, and economic integration, highlighting the productive and relational dimensions of heritage rather than its sole protection.

1. Introduction

“Heritage is a political resource.”

(Smith, 2022, p.623)

1.1 Research Subject and Relevance

This thesis conducts a comparative study of heritage governance and perception in Milan (Italy) and Porto Alegre (Brazil), focusing on how 20th-century heritage buildings and landscapes are preserved, managed, and perceived within two modern urban centers. The 20th century produced a large body of architecture that differs from traditional monuments, both in form and in meaning. Modern works, industrial sites, and rapidly changing urban centers often resist easy classification as “heritage,” which makes their conservation especially contested. As Scalco (2017) emphasizes, a more recent heritage is fragile due to the lack of legal protection and awareness of architectural culture. Their vulnerability lies not only in their relative recency but also in the tension between conservation needs and the strong economic pressures driving redevelopment. Rather than simply contrasting differences, the comparison seeks to place the two cities in dialogue, using each as a lens through which to reinterpret and critically assess the other.

By examining how legal instruments and planning traditions have shaped popular perceptions of

what is considered “heritage-worthy,” this study aims to reveal the structural tensions and shared challenges of preserving 20th-century heritage, both in architectural and urban form. A brief historical overview of each city will also contextualize these dynamics, with particular attention to the difficulty of protecting heritage in contexts with a contested definition of the boundaries or existence of a “historic center.”

1.2 The Two Cities

By comparing the cases of Milan and Porto Alegre, this study offers a cross-cultural analysis of how different institutional trajectories have influenced the ways heritage is governed, valued, and integrated into urban planning, especially regarding the “legacy of the modern”. Firstly, the selection of the countries was due to their distinct approaches to heritage, as a policy and as a concern.

At the national scale, the choice of Italy and Brazil is grounded in the author’s situated perspective between the two contexts, which has made evident profound differences in heritage concerns and governance cultures. Italy has a well-established system of protection that reflects its rich tradition of preserving monuments and cultural heritage (Choay, 2001; Smith, 2006). While this framework has ensured a high degree of material preservation, it has also contributed to the perception of the historic center as an “island,” partially detached from broader processes of urban transformation, raising concerns about the rigidity of protection mechanisms and the difficulty of accommodating functional change within protected areas. Yet this framework historically privileged classical and pre-modern works, whereas 20th-century architecture is only now beginning to be recognized. Brazilian heritage governance, on the other hand, developed in the 1930s, prioritizing colonial towns and exceptional modern monuments as part of a nation-building project (Fonseca, 2005). As Del Curto and Salvo (2024) point out, Brazilian legislation allows for the protection of recent heritage almost concurrently with its construction, while in Italy, protection follows a slower historiographic process.

On the other hand, the selection of Porto Alegre and Milan, particularly, was based on convergence and similarities rather than their differences. Both cities had a rapid urban growth during the 20th century, making architecture from that period not a marginal layer but a dominant component of the urban fabric. Milan’s 20th-century production occupies what Visone (2017) calls a “complex historical–critical position,” divided between the monumental architecture of the Fascist era and the speculative building practices of the post-war decades. Industrial expansion and post-war reconstruction transformed its built environment, creating tensions between historic preservation and modernization

(Pallini & Bonfante, 2015). Similarly, Porto Alegre's expansion was marked by structured interventions and plans that introduced new avenues, infrastructure, and reclaimed areas, gradually reshaping the city's morphology. As Souza (2005) emphasizes, the city's growth was not merely organic but guided by successive visions of modernization and improvement.

Furthermore, the two cities are comparable in terms of population size and metropolitan scale. Milan has around 1.4 million inhabitants, totaling almost 3.2 million in the metro area, according to the last census (ISTAT, 2025), while Porto Alegre has 1.3 million and 4 million in the metropolitan region (IBGE, 2025). These similarities in size and growth make for a suitable comparison.

In addition, both cities position themselves as centers of economic growth, innovation, and modernization within their respective national and regional contexts. Both Milan and Porto Alegre have been shaped by ambitious urban agendas oriented toward development and competitiveness. A fourth similarity arises regarding the discussion about the boundaries or the existence of a historic center per se, despite different reasons, as will be discussed further. Milan and Porto Alegre have undergone periods of intense reconstruction, large-scale intervention, and processes comparable to "Haussmannization," which have profoundly reconfigured their urban structures, resulting, however, in markedly different outcomes in terms of urban fabric, building typologies, and state of conservation. These contrasting results generate distinct heritage-related challenges, making the comparison particularly productive and opening the possibility for mutual learning between the two contexts.

Together, these three factors make the two cities particularly interesting for a comparative investigation into the governance and perception of 20th-century heritage. As a reflection of national governance, the two cities employ distinct approaches to institutionalizing heritage protection and represent contrasting trajectories in heritage governance. As Olmo (2010) and Fonseca (2005) remind us, both Italian and Brazilian traditions demonstrate how architecture can act as a vehicle for identity and cultural memory, but also as a site of conflict between elite narratives and everyday urban life.

1.3 Three Research Hypotheses

The value and understanding of 20th-century architectural heritage remains contested in cities oriented toward growth and modernization. This study focuses on how Milan and Porto Alegre, two urban centers with different planning traditions, govern, preserve, and perceive their built heritage regarding the last century. It proposes three research hypotheses, based on three key elements discussed

throughout the study: time and modernization, governance and legal frameworks, and finally, public perception and discourse.

Firstly, the likelihood of 20th-century architecture being recognized and protected as heritage decreases as its original conception is associated with ideas of progress, the future, and modernization. This hypothesis proposes that the modernist project, built around ideas of rupture, innovation, and social transformation, creates a temporal dissonance in public perception, therefore influencing heritage frameworks, which tend to value historical continuity, tradition, and long-standing cultural symbolism.

In this sense, it is expected that modern architecture will be less readily recognized as heritage precisely because it was conceived as an architectural break from the past, rather than as a continuation of it. Consequently, buildings that were once celebrated as embodiments of the future may later be devalued or overlooked within heritage policies that prioritize older or more “historically legible” periods.

In cities oriented toward economic growth and urban transformation, like Milan and Porto Alegre, the hypothesis further predicts that modern architecture will be particularly vulnerable to demolition, alteration, or redevelopment. It suggests that the values of modernization and development can often outweigh the perceived value of preserving modernist buildings due to this temporal dissonance in public perception.

Therefore, the study expects to find that the tension between modernity and heritage is not universal but mediated by different cultural, political, and identity-building factors. In contexts where heritage recognition is generally difficult, such as Porto Alegre, modern architecture is expected to be particularly vulnerable because it is perceived as lacking historical depth, cultural relevance, or public legibility. Conversely, in Milan, the recognition of 20th-century buildings is anticipated to be more contested, as modern architecture is evaluated not only for its age or style but also for its symbolic meaning, political associations, and the presence of reconstruction practices that challenge authenticity.

As a result, the study anticipates that modern architecture’s eligibility for heritage recognition is shaped less by chronology alone than by the interaction between public perception, symbolic meaning, and the capacity of governance frameworks to translate modernity into heritage value.

The second hypothesis regards governance. It assumes that in contexts with intense growth and transformation during the 20th century, urban legislation and planning frameworks are also strongly influenced by narratives of progress and modernization. If this scenario is true, then real estate interests prevail over the protection of heritage in legislation and planning tools.

Rather than presuming a direct or uniform dominance of real estate interests, this hypothesis tests whether legislative and planning tools systematically prioritize redevelopment objectives over

heritage concerns. It proposes that when preservation mechanisms are not central to urban regulation, or are introduced late, weakly, or indirectly, 20th-century architectural heritage becomes structurally vulnerable within the legal system. In such contexts, heritage protection may appear as an exception, a discretionary measure, or a secondary consideration within broader planning strategies focused on urban renewal.

The hypothesis further anticipates that this imbalance is observable through the evolution of legislation and planning instruments over time. By tracing zoning regulations, master plans, heritage laws, and related policy tools that directly or indirectly affect heritage, the study examines whether protection frameworks for modern architecture were consistently integrated into planning systems or whether they remained fragmented and reactive. This approach allows the research to evaluate how heritage concerns were articulated (or omitted) within the regulatory apparatus that governed urban transformation.

Accordingly, the hypothesis expects that in cities shaped by sustained redevelopment pressures, the regulatory environment tends to favor interventions aligned with real estate development, even when heritage considerations are formally acknowledged. This does not imply that preservation is entirely absent, but rather that heritage protection may lack the legal strength or clarity necessary to counterbalance redevelopment dynamics. The study, therefore, examines governance not as a determinant of outcomes, but as a framework that conditions the relative visibility, legitimacy, and enforceability of heritage protection within urban planning practice.

By focusing on legislation and planning tools across the 20th century, the analysis of these instruments seeks to identify patterns, gaps, and contradictions within planning systems, allowing the hypothesis to be evaluated in terms of consistency, orientation, and institutional priorities rather than through direct causal claims.

Finally, the third hypothesis seeks to identify the role of public perception and media narratives in defining what is heritage-worthy. It assumes that heritage recognition is not determined solely by institutional frameworks or architectural value, but is also influenced by the ways in which buildings, urban spaces, and periods are collectively perceived, narrated, and symbolically framed. Within this hypothesis, public perception is understood as an active and evolving process, shaped through discourse, representation, and collective interpretation rather than as a fixed or spontaneous response to the built environment.

The hypothesis proposes that 20th-century architecture is less likely to be recognized as heritage when it lacks visibility within dominant urban narratives or when it is associated with ambiguous,

contested, or contradictory meanings. It anticipates that public understanding of modern architecture is influenced by how the city's past and present are represented through media, visual culture, and everyday discourse, and that these representations contribute to defining what is considered heritage-worthy. Rather than focusing on material qualities alone, the hypothesis tests whether symbolic framing and narrative circulation play a significant role in legitimizing or marginalizing modern architecture within collective memory.

By analyzing media discourse, visual materials, and cultural commentary, the study tests whether the public perception of 20th-century heritage is shaped by processes of narration and representation that either reinforce or undermine its heritage value. This hypothesis thus allows the research to explore how heritage legitimacy is constructed not only through laws and policies, but also through cultural visibility, symbolic meaning, and the collective imagination.

The three research hypotheses were chosen because they are fundamentally intertwined with each other. Rather than arguing that heritage is defined solely by public perception, this research understands perception as a mediating force between institutional frameworks and heritage recognition. Public perception does not create heritage independently, but it conditions the social legitimacy, effectiveness, and durability of heritage policies. Thus, if public perception can be constructed or manipulated, so can what is considered heritage-worthy.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design: Qualitative Comparative Case Study

This research employs a qualitative, comparative case study methodology, focusing on the cities of Milan (Italy) and Porto Alegre (Brazil). Both cities underwent significant urban transformations during the twentieth century, providing rich grounds to examine how modernization, planning tools, and heritage governance shape public perception of urban heritage.

The study is structured around a 20th-century contextual framework, emphasizing how historical urban evolution contributed to the construction of a modern city image, and how urban planning tools and legislation often favored real estate interests, sometimes at the expense of broader public or cultural considerations, as shown in the diagram below (Diagram 1).

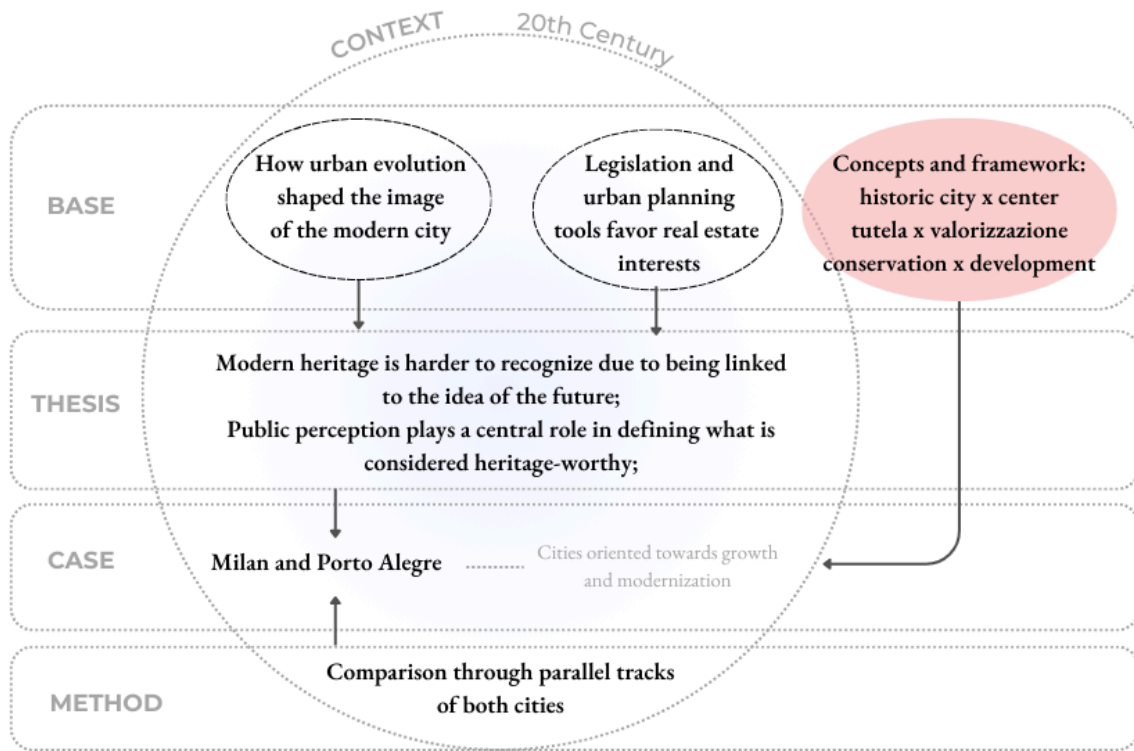


Diagram 1: Research framework.
 Source: created by the author.

This framework also considers key conceptual distinctions, including the difference between historic center versus historic city, and the dual dimensions of valorization and safeguarding, showing how they are treated in both countries. Furthermore, contemporary discussions regarding development and preservation are taken into consideration. Together, these elements inform the central thesis: public perception of heritage is strongly influenced by prevailing ideas of progress and modernization.

Within this approach, Milan and Porto Alegre serve as parallel case studies, allowing the analysis of how similar processes, industrialization, urban expansion, modernization, and legislative interventions produced divergent cultural and institutional responses to twentieth-century heritage. Examining the two cities along comparable analytical lines reveals the interplay between urban evolution, planning tools, and public perception in both cities. The comparative design highlights not only the historical and institutional specificities of Milan and Porto Alegre but also broader implications for understanding how modernization and the ideology of progress shape what is recognized, valued, or disregarded as urban heritage.

2.2 Data Sources and Documentary Analysis

This study was based on a systematic documentary and bibliographic analysis, drawing on urban planning legislation, policy instruments, institutional reports, official planning documents, and a substantial body of scholarly literature on Milan and Porto Alegre. The aim was to understand how legal, planning, and interpretive frameworks in each city have shaped the treatment, recognition, and management of 20th-century buildings within the contemporary urban environment.

The corpus of sources included constitutional provisions, national and regional laws, municipal master plans, supplementary regulations, institutional resolutions, and technical guidelines related to urban development and heritage protection. These were complemented by books, academic studies, and historical analyses that provided essential contextualization of planning practices and heritage debates. Materials were collected from official government portals, planning archives, institutional repositories, and academic libraries.

In the Italian case, the analysis examined how planning instruments at national, regional, and municipal levels shaped the treatment of twentieth-century heritage. Particular attention was given to the evolution of territorial governance in Lombardy and to the ways Milan incorporated tools such as the *Piano Regolatore* and, later, the *Piano di Governo del Territorio*. The introduction of designations like

the *Nuclei di Antica Formazione* was considered as part of a broader effort to align urban planning approaches with cultural-heritage considerations. These documents were examined to identify how heritage considerations entered urban planning practice, the extent to which 20th-century buildings and urban fabric were acknowledged within planning categories, and how public authorities mediated the relationship between urban development and heritage protection over time.

In Brazil, the research examined how the national heritage system, rooted in the institutional role of IPHAN (*Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional*) and the legal mechanism of *tombamento*, was operationalized at the municipal scale in Porto Alegre. Federal and municipal legislation, including master plans, heritage inventories, municipal decrees, planning guidelines, and programs such as the *Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Urbano e Ambiental*, were analyzed to trace the gradual incorporation of heritage objectives into urban policy. Particular emphasis was placed on how municipal tools evolved from an object-based approach toward more contextual or area-based strategies, and how these changes influenced the treatment of modern urban fabric.

In both cities, the documentary analysis was conducted comparatively and chronologically, tracing how legal and administrative responsibilities for heritage regulation were defined, how planning instruments addressed (or at times disregarded) 20th-century architecture, and how heritage considerations gradually entered formal planning practice. This process also made it possible to identify broader tensions between development priorities, prevailing modernization narratives, and emerging preservation concerns, providing a clearer view of how each city constructed its approach to modern-era urban heritage.

This approach made it possible to reconstruct the practical and institutional conditions under which 20th-century buildings and urban fabric entered (or failed to enter) the realm of protected urban heritage. It provided the primary empirical foundation for the comparative analysis developed in the subsequent chapters.

2.3 Framework for Public Perception Analysis

To understand how 20th-century architectural heritage is perceived by both the public and experts, the research analyzed a set of secondary textual sources, including local and national newspapers and media reports on preservation-related controversies or projects, academic publications such as architectural journals, conference papers, and research reports, as well as opinion pieces, editorials, and other cultural commentary that reflect prevailing societal attitudes toward 20th-century built heritage.

This component enables the study to assess how legislation influences public sentiment and professional discourse.

2.4 Scope, Limitations, and Ethical Considerations

This research is limited to planning-related legislation and public discourse. It does not engage with fieldwork or interviews. The focus is on how urban planning frameworks and legal instruments impact the treatment of 20th-century heritage buildings, especially in the context of local development pressures and conservation strategies.

3. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

“We inherit a legacy no less precious for being often indecipherable or inconvenient. To be is to have been, and to project our messy, malleable past into our unknown future”. (Lowenthal, 1985, xxv)

3.1 Heritage Governance: Definitions and Concepts

Heritage governance can be understood as the set of principles, rules, and institutional practices through which societies define, protect, and transmit their cultural legacy. It goes beyond merely legal instruments or administrative structures to encompass the interpretation of heritage, meaning, how societies perceive what is worthy of preservation, and negotiate the tension between continuity and change (Sokka et al., 2021). This relational and political dimension distinguishes heritage governance from heritage management by stressing how heritage is defined, regulated, and re-signified over time (Iaione et al., 2022). Heritage governance involves technical expertise and juridical frameworks, but increasingly foregrounds the active participation of diverse social groups, reflecting a plural and negotiated process (Sokka et al., 2021; Iaione et al., 2022). This participatory nature aligns with



Figure 1. Porto Alegre's urban palimpsest in the historic center, where different styles coexist in the same area. Photograph taken at Rua José Montauray.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.

contemporary governance models that emphasize collaboration among government authorities, civil society, market actors, and citizens, where heritage is co-created and contested rather than passively managed (Sokka et al., 2021).

In Italy, heritage governance has its roots in a historical tradition centered on the concept of the monument, which from the seventeenth century onward epitomized permanence, greatness, and universal value. As Smith (2006) highlights, the term "monument" holds particular significance in the European context, and Choay (2001) contextualizes its seventeenth-century affirmation as a symbol of power and beauty (see Visual Atlas Figures [A1](#) and [A2](#)). She notes that the monument emerged as both a witness to history and a work of art that triggers public memories and values: "The monument became a bearer of history and art, showing the glory of past centuries" (Choay, 2001, p. 27).

This robust institutional tradition has given Italian heritage governance a strong capacity for safeguarding, establishing one of the most consolidated systems of protection in Europe. However, this framework historically centered on classical and pre-modern monuments, reflecting a concept of the monument rooted in antiquity and upheld by a limited scholarly and artistic elite (Choay, 2001). By contrast, the heritage status of modern architecture has been far more contested. As Olmo (2010, p. 13) observes, since the 1950s, the very notion of the monument has been destabilized by urban transformation and reconstruction: the "crisis of the culture of the monument" coincided with the expansion of modern cities, where historic centers became contested sites between conservation and development. This destabilization helps explain why twentieth-century works often struggle to be designated and requalified as heritage, caught between the demand for authenticity and the pressures of contemporary adaptation.

By contrast, Brazilian heritage governance has historically faced greater difficulty in preserving historic centers as cohesive entities. The preservation efforts that stand out most visibly are those directed toward colonial towns such as Ouro Preto, Olinda, or even the historic center of Salvador (see Visual Atlas [Figure A3](#)). Although they represent different landscapes, the architectural unity of their fabric made them immediately legible as "heritage" and therefore easier to monumentalize. Fonseca (2005) further argues that these monuments serve more as abstract and distant symbols of the nation rather than as effective markers of a national identity that most of the population can connect with or that contribute to Brazil's image abroad.

Conversely, cities that underwent continuous transformations, however, such as Porto Alegre (Figure 1), have proven harder to frame within this model. Their historic cores present a palimpsest of layers from different periods, producing an urban fabric that is less cohesive and therefore less easily

recognized as heritage-worthy. Thus, the limitations in recognition and protection also come from a gap between diverse cultural traditions and identities and the national narrative promoted by the state (Fonseca, 2005).

This vulnerability is amplified by the attractiveness of central areas for investment, as city centers often combine mixed uses. Residential heritage, aside from a few prominent manor houses (*casarões*), is largely overlooked and seldom deemed worthy of protection (Figure 2). The focus on modern monuments and colonial centers was not accidental. Brazilian heritage governance took shape through a centralized and selective model. The institutionalization of preservation in the 1930s, through the *Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional* (SPHAN), privileged monuments and sites of exceptional artistic or historical value as instruments of a broader nation-building project. Early designations were not neutral: they actively constructed an imaginary of Brazilian heritage and culture, where colonial towns embodied the legacy of the past, and modern monuments represented the legacy of the future, making an image of Brazil as a nation both rooted in history and projecting modernity.

What emerges, therefore, is a contrast between two trajectories. In both cases, heritage governance reflects not only legal and institutional design but also broader perceptions and practices. As Lowenthal (1985) reminds us, heritage is not inherited as a fixed truth but as a malleable and often inconvenient legacy. Governance, then, is the arena where societies decide how to make sense of this legacy, how to transform it into a usable past, and how to reconcile the permanence of monuments with the fluidity of urban life.

To better understand how heritage governance operates in Porto Alegre and Milan, it is useful to distinguish between two fundamental concepts that will be dealt with later: perception, which shapes what societies value as heritage, and practice, which translates those values into concrete interventions in the urban landscape. These concepts will provide the analytical tools for examining the Italian and Brazilian cases in subsequent chapters.

Perception in heritage refers to the ways individuals and communities become aware of, interpret, and emotionally engage with cultural and historic environments. It involves the cognitive and affective processes through which heritage gains meaning beyond its physical presence. As Smith (2006) contends, heritage is a social construct shaped by the meanings people attribute to places, objects, and traditions over time. This dynamic view of perception recognizes that heritage is not just something we inherit; it is an ongoing interpretation that can differ among various groups and contexts. Additionally, perception is shaped by social, cultural, political, and economic factors that influence how we recognize and value heritage. Rather than being static, perception is constantly reshaped by our experiences,



Figure 2. Different treatment in Porto Alegre's *casarões*, on the left *Casa Civil* building on the right, on the same street just a few meters away *Palacete Chaves*, both from the beginning of the 20th Century.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.

memories, and social interactions, which makes heritage a living dialogue that spans generations (Lowenthal, 1985).

Unlike perception, which focuses on the intangible meanings attributed to heritage, practice concerns the concrete interventions, policies, and design strategies that physically define heritage in cities. As Smith (2006) describes:

The practice of heritage may be defined as the management and conservation protocols, techniques and procedures that heritage managers, archaeologists, architects, museum curators and other experts undertake. It may also be an economic and/or leisure practice, and/or a social and cultural practice... of meaning and identity making. These practices, as well as the meaning of the material 'things' of heritage, are constituted by the discourses that simultaneously reflect these practices while also constructing them. (Smith, 2006, p.15)

These practices, shaped by professional and popular discourses alike, enact and reproduce the values and identities attributed to heritage. Urban planning, in particular, turns these frameworks and discursive understandings into tangible interventions, shaping how built assets are preserved, adapted, or transformed within evolving urban contexts.

3.2 Dual Dimensions

In the Italian tradition of heritage protection, as outlined by Di Stefano (1996), two essential and interconnected dimensions stand out: '*tutela*' (safeguarding) and '*valorizzazione*' (valorization/enhancement). *Tutela* is understood as a public duty to safeguard monuments as carriers of multiple cultural values. The concept of *tutela* emerges as a juridical institution designed not merely for generic protection, but for active vigilance exercised by a state protective authority acting in the public interest with the character of a public duty, imposing obligations and restrictions (Di Stefano, 1996, p. 13).

Complementary, *valorizzazione*, according to Article 6 of the *Codice dei Beni Culturali* ¹(Legislative Decree 42/2004, Art. 6) corresponds to the act:

¹ It consists on Italy's main law for protecting and enhancing cultural and landscape heritage. It regulates conservation, promotes public enjoyment, and encourages sustainable use of heritage in line with contemporary needs.

of carrying out functions and regulating activities aimed at promoting knowledge of cultural heritage and ensuring the best conditions for its public use and enjoyment, with the goal of fostering the development of culture. It also includes the promotion and support of conservation interventions for cultural heritage. Regarding the landscape, *valorizzazione* also encompasses the rehabilitation of protected or degraded properties and areas, or the creation of new landscape values that are coherent and integrated. (Legislative Decree 42/2004, Art. 6, para. 1; translated by the author)

Therefore, by definition, *valorizzazione* differs from *tutela* by shifting the focus from safeguarding integrity to fostering accessibility, participation, and cultural identity. While not reducible to economic concerns, *valorizzazione* recognizes that heritage can acquire a productive and social function when integrated into collective life. Di Stefano (1996) interprets this through the concept of *valore di attualità* (value of present-day relevance), where the original utility of a heritage asset can evolve into new forms of social use and public enjoyment (Di Stefano, 1996, p. 43). He further argues that value emerges not only from subjective or social attributions but also from the capacity of heritage to attract and engage society: “Demonstrating the existence of such attraction, therefore, increases the demand for the asset; this demand dictates its value” (Di Stefano, 1996, p. 90).

This Italian approach reflects a historically preservationist mindset, in which heritage protection is primarily a matter of safeguarding cultural and historical values rather than guiding urban development. *Tutela* and *valorizzazione* are conceived as instruments of cultural stewardship, emerging from a legal and institutional framework focused on monuments and historical sites, rather than urban growth or planning objectives. Consequently, heritage governance in Italy often operates independently of broader urban planning strategies, emphasizing integrity, authenticity, and public access rather than mediating urban transformation.

This dual focus on *tutela* and *valorizzazione* marks a significant difference between Italian and Brazilian heritage traditions: while Italian heritage policy integrates both protection and active enhancement, the Brazilian context lacks this second dimension of valorization. Brazilian heritage governance has historically relied on a mechanism called *tombamento*², which primarily serves as a

² *Tombamento* is the principal legal instrument for heritage protection in Brazil, established by the 1937 Decreto-Lei n. 25. It entails the official inscription of a property into one of the heritage books (*livros do tombo*) maintained by IPHAN (Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional), or by state and municipal agencies, which subjects the asset to restrictions on alteration, demolition, or transfer in order to preserve its cultural value.

prohibitive measure. This ensures the legal protection of heritage sites but seldom facilitates their actual use or incorporation into community life. The absence of a valorization framework has often left protected centers vulnerable to neglect or decay, since safeguarding alone does not generate the cultural participation, public access, or planning tools necessary to sustain heritage in dynamic urban contexts. As a result, heritage is frequently perceived as an obstacle to development rather than a shared cultural resource, revealing the limitations of a one-dimensional model of protection.

In Italy, Di Stefano (1996) advocates that through the transformation of urban historic centers, heritage valorization entails integrating conservation within urban planning and social dynamics, acknowledging that “preservation of the architectural fabric is no longer possible unless it is integrated into society and considered a fundamental element of urban planning” (Di Stefano, 1996, p. 92).

Building on this point, authors highlight (Di Stefano, 1996; Bonfantini, 2020) how, historically, attention initially focused on historic centers and the urgent need to defend them against the extensive and often concealed pressures of the building industry, which purported to respect the ancient environment but in practice threatened it. This concern resonated with broader European debates on safeguarding architectural heritage and ultimately informed the drafting of the Granada Convention³ in 1985 (Di Stefano, 1996, p. 92).

After the Second World War, many cities suffered bombardments that affected their historic centers, as seen in several German cities, such as Cologne, as well as in Milan. As a result, the monuments and central zones in these areas had to be reconstructed (Mirri, 1994). Interestingly, it was only after the war that concern for preserving historic centers in Italy increased. As a result, real estate speculation surrounding the pre-existing city created a fracture between the old and the new city, which had a significant impact on public perception as well (Mirri, 1994). It was during this period that the term “historic center” began to develop and take on a clearer definition.

It is important to remember here that not all cities have a “historic center,” and not every center is historic. Additionally, some cities may have historic areas that are not located in the center. American terminology significantly differs regarding what is referred to as the city center; for instance, the term ‘downtown’ is more commonly used to denote the commercial center of a city (Mirri, 1994). In Brazilian cities, the term '*centro*' encompasses both the historic center and the downtown or commercial district; its interpretation varies by context, making it difficult to distinguish between the two.

³ The Granada Convention (Council of Europe, 1985), officially the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, is a landmark international treaty establishing common principles for the protection of architectural heritage across member states. It defines heritage broadly to include monuments, groups of buildings (such as historic centres), and sites, emphasizing their cultural, historical, and social value.



Figure 3. Reproduction made by Clovis Silveira de Oliveira (1983) of the earliest known map of Porto Alegre, originally drafted by Capitão Eng. Alexandre José Montanha in July 1772. This cartographic document visualizes what could be the closest to the historic center definition by Longo & Graziano (2009), the pre-industrial fabric where early streets, plazas, and civic-religious landmarks emerged.

Source: Montanha, A. J. (1772). Planta de Porto Alegre [Map]. Reproduced by C. S. de Oliveira, 1983. Acervo SBiev.



Figure 4. An example of the cohesive arrangement of colours, heights, and rhythm in a building in the historic centre of Milan. Photograph taken on Largo Augusto.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026.

Given the ambiguity of the concept, it is important to clarify what is meant by “historic center.” Bonfantini’s (2013) triadic reading of the definition of historic centers proposes understanding them as a layered concept: temporal, perceptual, and morphological. Firstly, some authors (Longo & Graziano, 2009) consider historic centers as the portion of the urban fabric dating back to the pre-industrial period. When adhering to this definition, it is important to consider some sharp nuances regarding Porto Alegre’s historic center, for instance. While the chronological criterion proposed by Longo & Graziano (2009) would technically encompass Porto Alegre’s colonial nucleus (Figure 3), founded in the 18th century, the scale and subsequent transformations of this area complicate a strict application of the “pre-industrial city” definition. In practice, much of what is today recognized as the historic center of Porto Alegre consists of 19th- and early 20th-century layers, which makes the following perceptual and morphological definitions more productive for this context.

The second definition, proposed by Mioni and Pedrazzini (2005), classified historic centers as a “state of mind” (p.13), meaning that they are recognizable through a process of perception. This portion of the territory can be read almost instinctively as *antica* or just older than the rest. It consists of the part that has given that location its name, or has been inhabited by many generations before the advent of motorization and mass consumption (Mioni & Pedrazzini, 2005, p.13). This definition may assume that a historic center can only exist in juxtaposition with more recent urban development, and thus only exists by comparison (Mirri, 1994). Once more, applying this resolution in Porto Alegre is complex. Similar to Milan, Porto Alegre is structured as a palimpsest, characterized by layers of urban development that have accumulated over time. Nevertheless, whereas Milan’s city center retains a fairly legible urban core (through elements such as building heights, colors, elements, ornaments, etc.) (Figure 4, also see Visual Atlas [Figure A4, A5](#)), Porto Alegre’s perception of its historic center is less immediate, relying more on the experience of the livability of the *downtown* rather than on clear visual cues. Perhaps in this case, “a common collective imagination allows one to discern what is meant by 'historic center' more similarly in the manner of a Lynchian⁴ *district*” (Bonfantini, 2013, p.154).

The third definition, introduced by Gabellini (2010), specifically refers to the concept of a palimpsest in a European context as a means of distinguishing the historic center. According to her, an intermediate distance (ranging from 3,000 to 6,000 meters) can be used to indicate the morphological urban fabric, a “footprint”, or *patterns* (Gabellini, 2010, p. 30) of the historic center, particularly in comparison to newer developments. “Historic centers and *nuclei* ... present themselves as distinct families

⁴ In *The Image of the City* (1960), Kevin Lynch defines a “district” as a recognizable area of a city with a distinct identity, legible to both inhabitants and visitors, shaped by its physical form and the shared perception of those who experience it.

of patterns with fairly definite characteristics, ‘milestones’ in the urban continuum, sometimes separated by large open spaces, and other times fully integrated with their surroundings” (Gabellini, 2010, p. 30). Although the author explicitly mentions the European context, and in particular Italy, perhaps this definition is the one that could fit better in an attempt to apply it to the Brazilian case. The various land reclamation processes in Porto Alegre may help outline the shape of the historic center and indicate urban expansion, similar to how the location of Milan’s old walls created a more concentric urban layout (Figure 5, Figure 6, see also Visual Atlas [Figure A6](#)). However, regardless of the clues leading to an identifiable “footprint” (the size of the blocks, the proximity of the buildings and closeness to the water - in Porto Alegre’s case) in cities with “large urban areas or those that have experienced armed conflicts or natural disasters” (Mirri, 1994, p. 6), as in both Milan and Porto Alegre, it is often challenging to reach a consensus on defining the boundaries of a historic center.

These three definitions together illustrate that the historic center is a complex and context-dependent concept. Bonfantini (2013, p.154) aptly summarizes the challenge: the notion of the historic center is “vivid and intuitive, yet analytically elusive.” Comparing the cases of Milan and Porto Alegre demonstrates that, while both cities are palimpsests, perceptual cues, historical layering, and morphological legibility vary significantly, shaping not only how historic centers are identified but also how they are experienced, valued, and preserved in practice.

Nevertheless, challenges regarding terminology persist, and, as stated, many mismatches can occur simply in the definition of ‘center’, especially across different contexts, such as those in Europe and Latin America. However, the adjective ‘historic’ is perhaps the leading cause for confusion. As Mirri (1994) points out, what is ‘historic’ today? A historic center derives its significance when viewed alongside the contemporary urban landscape surrounding it. It is precisely this comparison that emphasizes its value. This might imply that this newer urban development may not be old enough to be considered ‘heritage-worthy’. In Brazil, the issue is further compounded by a “lack of specific legislation on city centers..., which brings socio-economic problems and fails to avoid the systematic distortion of the monuments’ surroundings or the destruction of many buildings of contemporary value by real estate speculation” (Azevedo, 2017, p. 84) (see Visual Atlas [Figure A7](#)).

The duality arises when, slowly, heritage discourse broadened from historic centers to historic cities, at the end of the nineteenth century (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2014). This “operative” concept emerges with the development of a new discipline, urbanism.



Figure 5. Zoom in on the historic center of the plan of Porto Alegre from 1839 by Luís Pereira Dias, showing trench and fortified walls indicated in red along with areas of land reclamation that happened throughout the 20th-century. These 'limits' can help to establish a boundary of what could be considered the historic center of the city.

Source: Luís Pereira Dias. (1839). Planta da Cidade de Porto Alegre [Map]. Acervos Biev. Modified by the author.

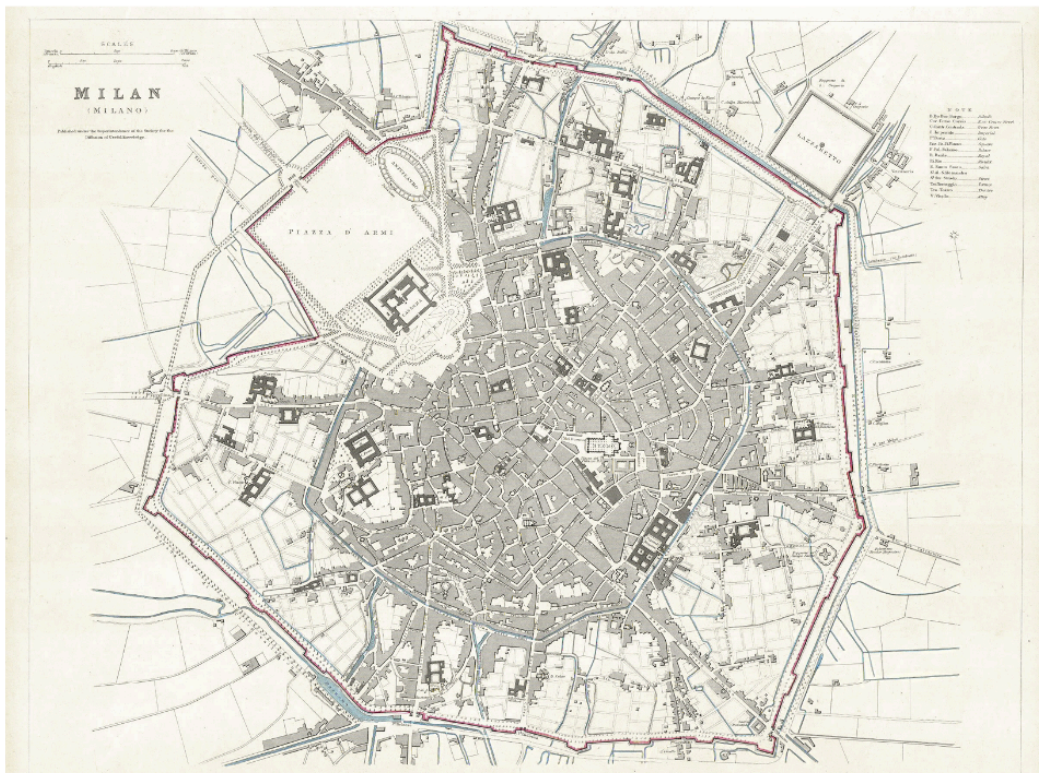


Figure 6. Zoomed-in view of the historic centre of Milan from an 1832 city map, highlighting the former Spanish bastions (Cerchia dei Bastioni), which can defined the city's urban center.

Source: Adapted from Stagni (1832), Milano 1832-1947: Mapped storiche. StagniWeb.

The conceptual expansion was formalized by the Washington Charter⁵, which recognizes the historic significance of “historic urban areas, large and small, including cities, towns and historic centers or quarters, together with their natural and man-made environments” (ICOMOS, 1987) and calls for their protection as a collective cultural legacy. The delay in this recognition can be explained by the complexity of the urban organism itself, and the dual nature of the site, which contains great monuments of high artistic value and also a ‘minor’ architecture and urban fabric exposed to transformation (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2014, p. 13).

Bonfantini (2013) traces the evolution of attitudes toward the historic city in Italy, noting how the postwar notion of the *centro storico* evolved into a broader conception of the *città storica*. “One could say that the historic city is the ensemble of the historic parts of the settlement, among which the historic center is included” (Bonfantini, 2013, p. 154).

This shift redefines the historic dimension of urban space: from a clearly bounded, insular object (the center) to a broader, more indeterminate category (the historic city). In doing so, it challenges the exclusive focus on a delimited core and instead extends attention to a wider constellation of elements embedded within urban relationships that cannot be neatly circumscribed. Ultimately, identifying which parts of a city should be regarded as “historic” is not self-evident, but remains open to interpretation (Bonfantini, 2013).

This reconceptualization has gradually taken form through a combined use of planning instruments and strategic programs (Bonfantini, 2018), that regard the historic center not merely as a protected island but as an infrastructural element that “permeates the urban fabric and qualifies its habitability,” thus reinforcing the idea that the historic city can be an active contributor to contemporary urban life (Bonfantini, 2020, p. 190). The turning point came with the redefinition of the historic city in the Rome masterplan (PRG) that began in the late 1990s (see Visual Atlas [Figure A8](#)). As Rossi notes, planning instruments must remain flexible and adaptive: “In order not to become rapidly obsolete and not to freeze knowledge at a given date, [they]⁶ must be continuously corrected, updated, implemented, and adapted to future management processes.” (Rossi, 2003, p. 158). Rome, being a policentric city, has formally abandoned the defensive, isolating concept of the historic center in favor of the integrated and transversal logic of the historic city.

⁵ To address the challenges of standardizing conservation practice, various institutions sought to establish common guidelines. A key outcome of these efforts was the creation of international ‘charters’, formal documents developed through consensus among conservation professionals and experts. One of the earliest and most influential of these was the Athens Charter, issued in 1931 (Muñoz Viñas, 2005, p. 6).

⁶ Rossi’s remark refers to the Carta per la Qualità, one of the operational tools created within the new *Piano Regolatore Generale* of Rome.

This semantic shift can represent a reorientation of urban planning itself. Bologna can be noted as an example. It has pushed this trajectory further by demonstrating how long-term planning and short-term policy actions can work in concert. It first introduced the *città storica* into its planning framework through the 2008 Municipal Structural Plan (Piano Strutturale Comunale) and the 2009 Urban Building Regulation (Regolamento Urbanistico Edilizio). It later expanded its strategy through the ‘Di nuovo in centro’ program (2011–2016), which coordinated public policies across mobility, accessibility, public space, and cultural and economic promotion. Bonfantini (2018) emphasizes that the coexistence of plan-based and program-based tools constitutes a complementary system in which one provides structural and legal continuity, while the other enables flexibility, responsiveness, and local experimentation.

This approach towards the *città storica* can be particularly significant for cities such as Milan and Porto Alegre, where cultural heritage manifests in fragmented forms and is under continuous threat from speculative urban development. Rather than relying on a single planning instrument or conceptual model, these cities may benefit from integrating both stable, long-term urban visions and flexible programmatic tools, a strategy Bonfantini (2018) views not as mutually exclusive but as potentially complementary. While in cities like Naples⁷ (see Visual Atlas [Figure A9](#)) or Ivrea⁸, the concept of the *città storica* has been operationalized through the expansion of historic perimeters to include nineteenth- and twentieth-century districts, this strategy is less applicable to contexts such as Milan, where no clearly delimited historic core exists. Here, Bonfantini’s later proposition that ‘historicity’ should be understood not as an absolute chronological category but as a relative and critical tool becomes more relevant. In this sense, “‘historic’ becomes an attribute that functions as an indicator and selector of qualities rooted in the past, even the recent past, that deserve safeguarding. It implies a process of choice and selection within the body of the existing city, identifying what calls for permanence and persistence rather than transformation” (Bonfantini, 2013, p.155). This reflects the inherently fluid, negotiated, and contested character of heritage in the context of ongoing urban transformation.

⁷ A key urban planning proposal to modify the General Urban Plan (PRG) of Naples in 1995 by significantly expanding the perimeter of the historic center to include more peripheral areas of later developments.

⁸ The city of Ivrea adopted a similar dual approach to Naples regarding historic preservation and urban planning. The Ivrea General Urban Plan (PRG) of the early 2000s formally included both the ancient historic center and the modern industrial city developed under Adriano Olivetti from the 1930s to 1960s. Olivetti, a key industrialist, shaped Ivrea as a model industrial town with modernist architecture. The PRG recognized this industrial city as equal heritage to the old core, expanding protections.

3.3 Contemporary Debates on 20th-Century Heritage: Conservation vs. Development

‘We have partly domesticated the past, where they do things differently, and brought it into the present as a marketable commodity’ (Lowenthal, 1985, xxv)

In contemporary urban contexts, land and real estate are increasingly framed in terms of their market value, often overshadowing their cultural and historical significance (Carughi & Visone, 2017). As Olmo (2010, p.XVI) observes, “construction has, over the course of the twentieth century, become rhetoric, calculation, measurement... with an economicist reduction of building, where patrimonial value has gradually been replaced by monetary value.” Since the 70s, the restoration of historic centers has become increasingly driven by the real estate community, aiming to benefit medium to high-income classes (Mirri, 1994). This economic prioritization has contributed to the erosion of protective legislation for heritage, as regulatory frameworks struggle to withstand the growing pressures of redevelopment. There is a dichotomy between the protection of heritage as an asset and the protection of a heritage in respect for its identity and continuity of its function (Carughi & Visone, 2017). Indeed, as Olmo (2010, p. 13) notes, “it is perhaps memory, if not history, that proves to be the hardest and most explicit terrain of confrontation,” highlighting how struggles over memory expose the contradictions behind the abstraction and commodification of urban space. The tension between conservation and development is thus not merely a matter of aesthetics or historical memory, but a reflection of broader socio-economic forces that challenge the preservation of recent heritage in the face of lucrative urban transformation. Or as Choay puts it “against the social forces of destruction that threaten them, antique buildings have as their sole protection – unpredictable, if not ineffectual – the passion for knowledge and the love of art” (Choay, 2001, p. 33).

As Berman (1988, p. 35) notes, modern life embodies a contradiction: “our desire to be rooted in a stable and coherent personal and social past, and our insatiable desire for growth... growth that destroys both the physical and social landscapes of our past.” This paradox is at the heart of contemporary heritage debates, where conservation and development are less opposing forces than twin expressions of modernity itself.

Another interesting factor discussed by some authors is the concept of time (Visone, 2017; Di Maio, 2017; Mirri, 1994). The question of whether there is a time limit for recognizing architecture as part of the national cultural heritage is particularly relevant to the debate about what deserves to be considered heritage and what should be preserved. Is it time that lies at the heart of the

process of monumentalization of architecture? As Olmo (2010, p. 89) reminds us, the history of 20th-century architecture struggles with periodization: terms like “contemporary” are inherently ambiguous, tied less to clear historical demarcations than to a Bergsonian⁹ conception of time. This ambiguity complicates heritage debates, as what is deemed ‘modern’ is at once a beginning and a decline, a value and an aporia, which makes the identification of heritage-worthy assets particularly fraught.

Time continues to persist as a practical criterion in legislation regarding heritage. Numerous countries' conservation statutes stipulate a designated temporal period that must elapse prior to an object's classification as worthy of legal protection (Di Maio, 2017). In Italy, the minimum age limit for a building to be classified as heritage is 50 years if the architect is still alive and 70 years for public properties (Law No.106/2011). Thus, a matter of time has prevented important works from being recognized in Milan, such as the Palazzo INA (1953-1958) by Piero Bottoni (Figure 7a, see also Visual Atlas [Figure A10](#)). However, as Rossi observes, heritage should not be reduced to a chronological cutoff: “It is now commonly accepted that a building constructed before a certain date [...] should be considered a heritage asset to be safeguarded [...]. Symmetrical to this assumption is the equally widespread opinion according to which everything built after the same date has no intrinsic value [...]” (Rossi, 2003, p. 157).

In contrast, Brazilian legislation does not impose a time limit for protection. One notable example is the Edifício Gustavo Capanema (1939-1943) (Figure 7b), which was included in 1948 as a monument, just 5 years after its completion (Azevedo, 2017, p. 84). It is worth noting that the authors of this building were the same group of intellectuals and architects who were instrumental in creating the law for the protection of historical and artistic heritage and were also responsible for its governing institutions.

The first dichotomy to appear in relation to time limits is between “historiographies and the law, that is, the extent to which historiographical criteria are binding upon the action of protection” (Visone, 2017, p. 14). Although time frames related to heritage are sometimes clearly defined, such as the length of a generation (roughly 25 years) or the “Fifty Years Rule”, or tied to periods of significant development, they can also be vague. These definitions may vary, “be indefinite, unofficially established by an unwritten law, ranked in a more or less articulated fashion” (Visone, 2017, p.15). As a result, the gaps and ambiguities in these time limits are often exploited for economic gain and influenced by market forces.

⁹Henri Bergson's concept of *la durée* (duration) refers to time as a continuous, qualitative flow of lived experience, as opposed to a sequence of divisible, measurable units. See Henri Bergson (1889), *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*.



Figure 7A. Palazzo INA, Milan (1953–1958) by Piero Bottoni. View of the building's façade along Corso Sempione. In recent years, the building has become the focus of intense controversy: while it remains a landmark of post-war rationalist architecture, its original mosaic façade and architectural integrity are perceived to be at risk.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026.

Figure 7B. Palácio Gustavo Capanema, Rio de Janeiro. A modernist icon designed by Lúcio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, Affonso Eduardo Reidy et al. Unlike Palazzo INA in Milan, the Capanema Palace was protected with tombamento by IPHAN in 1948, just three years after its completion, reflecting early recognition of its architectural and cultural value.

Source: IPHAN Archive.

In both cases, it is important to keep in mind Alois Riegl's classification of heritage values. According to Riegl, modern concepts attribute historical value to any monument that either represents a significant event or holds importance in terms of development. However, since the number of monuments to be classified could be infinite, it is necessary to establish criteria for selection. This criterion should focus on assets that represent significant stages in the evolutionary processes within a specific area of human activity (Riegl, 2011). In this context, time serves as a marker rather than a defining factor. The monument or asset should be preserved because it testifies to the evolution of time or its respective period, rather than solely due to its age. Economically speaking, that could translate to the value of existence, meaning its importance is on the non-use value, completely separate from its fruition (Di Maio, 2017, p. 471). Therefore, contradicting the logic of consuming a product, which says the value of a product is based on its utility, heritage goods should enjoy a non-marketable value, their existence value, which is not at all related to time.

Nonetheless, when considering 20th-century heritage, it becomes challenging to separate from market value logic, as its existence value is increasingly questioned, and concerns about its historical significance emerge. Yet, there are other aspects worth considering. Many so-called "monuments of the modern" emerged not as a natural continuation of 19th-century styles but as a radical departure from traditional academic values (Visone, 2017) (see Visual Atlas [Figure A11](#)). Di Stefano (1996) highlights how the late 19th-century city underwent significant transformations, including reshaping, demolition, and fragmentation, largely due to infrastructural projects and speculative development (p. 12). Consequently, the artistic value of these monuments can be even more pronounced (Riegl, 2011). Many modern monuments are celebrated for their exceptional architectural features, often making them more valuable than their older counterparts.

Beyond the question of authorship, the legacy of modern architecture was also shaped by literary and cultural imaginaries that framed the city in the twentieth century. As Olmo (2010, p. 97) notes, works such as Benjamin's *Moscow*¹⁰ or Calvino's *Invisible Cities*¹¹ did not merely describe urban life but actively informed how modernity and urban space were conceptualized. This entanglement of architecture with narrative imagination suggests that the heritage of modernity cannot be evaluated solely through disciplinary or professional criteria. Instead, its monumentalization is complicated by the fact that meaning and value emerge from a wider field of cultural production, where architects, writers, critics, and communities all contribute to shaping the identity of modern heritage.

¹⁰ Benjamin, W. (1986). *Moscow diary* (R. Sieburth, Trans.). Harvard University Press.

¹¹ Calvino, I. (1972). *Le città invisibili* [*Invisible Cities*]. Giulio Einaudi Editore.

The challenge of preserving more recent heritages, specifically from the twentieth century, stems from the historical fracture that initially created them. As Olmo (2010, p. 14) remarks, “to conserve buildings that were designed for a limited duration, to respond to the immediate demands of a population seeking to elevate its culture and income, appears truly complex,” underscoring how modern works, often conceived for immediacy, resist traditional paradigms of heritage conservation. The concept of an “eternal present” (Visone, 2017, p.19) diminishes public memory and recognition, leading to blurred perceptions of heritage values. As a result, real estate pressures are increasingly encroaching on these spaces within the city. For investors, architectural and urban spaces are increasingly perceived not as cultural or historical entities but as interchangeable assets, stripped of depth, identity, and geographic specificity. What emerges is an “opaque visibility,” in which speculative capital dominates the ways space is produced and valued (Olmo, 2010).

4. Historical Contextualization of Milan and Porto Alegre

“To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world -- and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, “all that is solid melts into air.” (Berman, 1988, p.15)

Each city can be read as a palimpsest in which modernization itself became a historical layer. This chapter examines how twentieth-century urban growth in Milan and Porto Alegre shaped the physical and symbolic layers of their cityscapes, asking what portion of these transformations has come to be understood as the legacy of the modern. By tracing key moments of modernization and spatial restructuring, it seeks to identify which “layers of the palimpsest” are today perceived as heritage and

which remain excluded from institutional recognition. In both cases, the analysis investigates how modernization not only redefined the urban form but also reoriented collective ideas of what is “heritage-worthy.”

The evolution of cities over the 20th century has shaped their physical form as well as the way societies interpret and value their built heritage. Processes of modernization, industrialization, and large-scale urban planning redefined spatial hierarchies and collective perceptions of what constitutes “heritage.” In both Milan and Porto Alegre, waves of expansion and architectural experimentation produced layered urban fabrics where historical continuity became uneven and the boundaries of so-called “historic centers” increasingly ambiguous. These transformations influenced collective memory and cultural perception, directly and indirectly determining which buildings or areas were later recognized as worthy of preservation and which were overlooked or replaced.

In Milan, successive phases of reconstruction and modernization created a cityscape where medieval and Renaissance landmarks coexist with Fascist monumentalism and postwar modernism. The twentieth century imposed new rhythms of development that often placed preservation and progress in tension. As Del Curto and Salvo (2024) note, “Italian twentieth-century architectural production occupies a complex historical-critical position, marked by historical events that separate the first half of the century, associated with the Fascist dictatorship, from the second, linked to building speculation and aggression against historic urban centers” (Del Curto & Salvo, 2024, p. 3). The coexistence of these distinct layers continues to challenge the city’s planning and conservation policies, revealing how historical memory is negotiated within a dynamic metropolitan context.

Porto Alegre followed a different yet comparable trajectory. Its development was characterized by continuous territorial transformation through land reclamation, infrastructural modernization, and planned urban expansion. Over time, these interventions generated a central area defined less by cohesion than by coexistence, a palimpsest where neoclassic influences, eclectic architecture, and modernist ensembles overlap within a rapidly changing environment. This constant reconfiguration fostered a perception of progress as part of the city’s identity, but it also complicated the later recognition and governance of heritage within its planning framework.

By examining Milan and Porto Alegre side by side, this chapter situates each city’s twentieth-century evolution as the foundation for understanding its contemporary approaches to heritage governance. Both cases illustrate how modernization can simultaneously erase and produce heritage, and how the management of twentieth-century architecture depends on reconciling urban growth with the preservation of cultural meaning.

The chapter is organized into two parallel analyses. Section 4.1 examines Milan, tracing how twentieth-century planning and architectural production reshaped its heritage landscape. Section 4.2 applies the same analytical lens to Porto Alegre, highlighting both convergences and divergences in how modernization redefined heritage values.

4.1 Milan: The Construction of the Modern City

In Milan, the question of what constitutes the modern layer of heritage emerges through the coexistence of late-nineteenth-century expansion, Fascist monumentalism, post-war reconstruction, and late-industrial redevelopment. This section examines how these successive transformations were experienced and represented, thereby shaping the city's modern identity and influencing the perception of its twentieth-century legacy. Rather than describing urban growth in purely physical terms, the aim is to understand how Milan's modernization became both an architectural and a cultural process, and how the changing image of the city produced, in turn, new ways of valuing and forgetting its past.

Before exploring the evolution of the city itself, it is essential to acknowledge the insights of Gambi and Gozzoli (1997), who emphasize that studying the *forma urbis* of Milan involves more than merely tracing building types or street networks. They advocate for a history of the city's form that considers what it expresses and reflects, paying attention to the symbolic and perceptual dimensions of urban transformation. The authors clarify that this approach is contingent upon how each era perceives those forms, as they are “seen, interpreted, and visually transmitted” (Gambi & Gozzoli, 1997, p. 3). This historical awareness of the city's image serves as the conceptual foundation for viewing the “modern” as a layer within a broader cultural palimpsest.

Following Italian unification, this understanding became particularly pertinent as Milan rapidly transformed into a modern industrial metropolis. By 1871, the population had surged to around 199,000 inhabitants, and by 1911, it reached 599,000¹². This demographic explosion marked a significant urban shift as well as highlighted the city's evolving identity within the complex tapestry of its historical narrative. This rapid growth was guided by the urban plan drafted by Cesare Beruto, whose framework oriented the city's enlargements for decades to come (Gambi & Gozzoli, 1997, p. 303). As the authors note, the Vallardi maps of 1888 to 1897 (Figure 8) became “the mirror of a fervent and almost ubiquitous work of redesign and recomposition of the city's structure” (p. 303). These cartographic images recorded a city simultaneously built, imagined, and anticipated.

¹² Italian National Institute of Statistics. (n.d.). Total resident population and population in localities of the largest municipalities at Censuses 1861–2001 and year 2014, reference year borders [Dataset]. Serie Storiche.

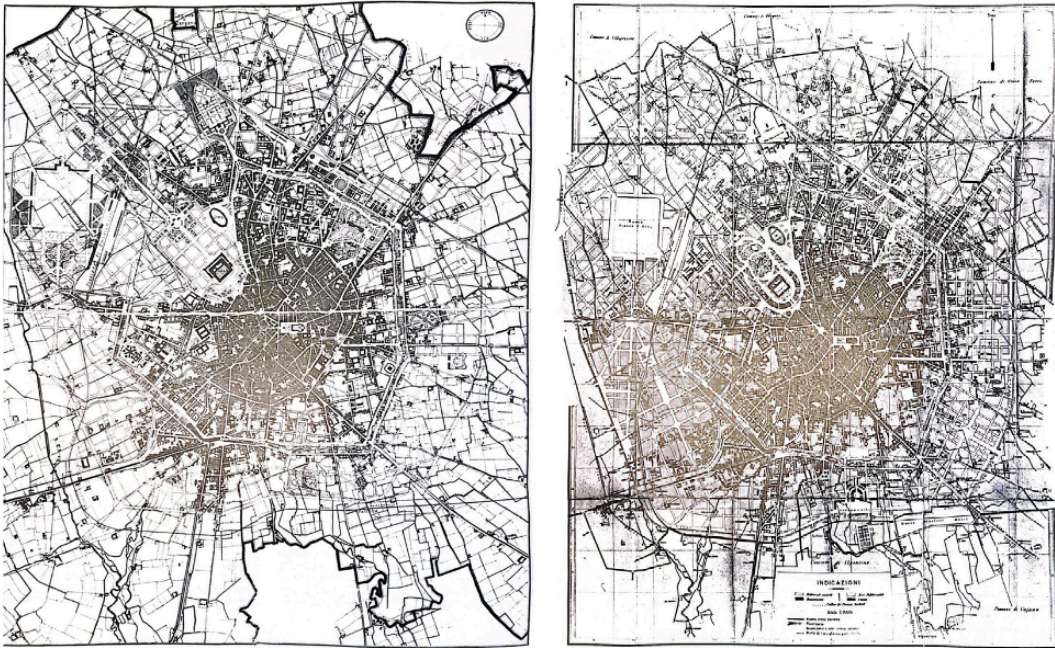


Figure 8. On the left, map of Cesare Beruto's 1884 master plan for Milan. Only limited modifications were introduced in the version approved in 1888, on the right, mainly affecting the redesign of the areas around the Sforza Castle and the new residential districts planned to the west and south of the former Piazza d'Armi (today's Fiera district), the opening of a new streets, specifically connecting the Duomo with Castello, the redesign of Piazza Cordusio into an elliptical shape.

Source: Gambi, L., & Gozzoli, M. C. (1997). *Le città nella storia d'Italia: Milano* (3rd ed.), p. 304. Bari: Editori Laterza.

The maps reflected urban expansion but also the need for new “targeted surgical” urban interventions in the city’s core. One example is the new street system proposed by Beruto, specifically the construction of Via Dante, which began in 1886 and was completed by the end of the century. Indeed, the architecture lining Via Dante (Figure 9, also see Visual Atlas [Figure A12](#)), entirely rebuilt between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, stands today as an early expression of this continuous renewal. Another example of these surgical interventions was the redesigned Piazza Cordusio, now elliptical rather than irregular (Figure 10), along with the widened medieval streets of Orefici, Spadari, and Speronari, which embodied a modern ideal of geometry, order, and circulation (Gambi & Gozzoli, 1997, p. 303). It is important to remember that this new “renewal” attitude emerged before the reconstruction period following the war, dating back to the nineteenth century, and could be considered the first layer of modernity onto the historic city.

While some authors emphasize the fractures and ambivalences generated by this process, other historians have situated Milan’s modernization within a broader European trajectory that frames urban transformation as a historically necessary, if deeply problematic, reconfiguration of the city. Leonardo Benevolo, for instance, interprets late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century interventions not as the execution of a coherent ideological project, but as the outcome of a contingent compromise between public authority and private initiative, made possible by new technical, legal, and administrative instruments (Benevolo, 2019, pp. 173–174). In this reading, modernization responds to unprecedented demographic growth and infrastructural demands through large-scale public works (networks of water, sanitation, transport, lighting, and new civic facilities) that become a lasting model for European cities.

At the same time, Benevolo (2019, p.185) stresses that the reorganization of the street network and the surrounding building fabric introduced a rigid separation between public and private space that profoundly altered the inherited urban structure. The widening and straightening of streets, while improving circulation, hygiene, and administrative control, also led to the erosion of medieval fabrics, the standardization of building fronts, and the transformation of streets into corridors of interchangeable, rent-driven architecture. Rather than a simple act of erasure or an unequivocal advance, this process produced an ambiguous relationship with the historical city: monuments were preserved but isolated, detached from their everyday urban context, while the traditional integration of street, façade, and social life was progressively dismantled.

Applied to Milan, Benevolo’s framework suggests that modernization should be understood neither solely as a rupture with historical continuity nor as a purely emancipatory project, but as a reorganization of the inherited city under industrial pressures, one that rendered the metropolis more



Figure 9. Photograph of Via Dante, Milan. Constructed under Beruto's late-nineteenth-century plan, Via Dante illustrates a targeted urban intervention that modernized circulation and reshaped the historic city core.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026.

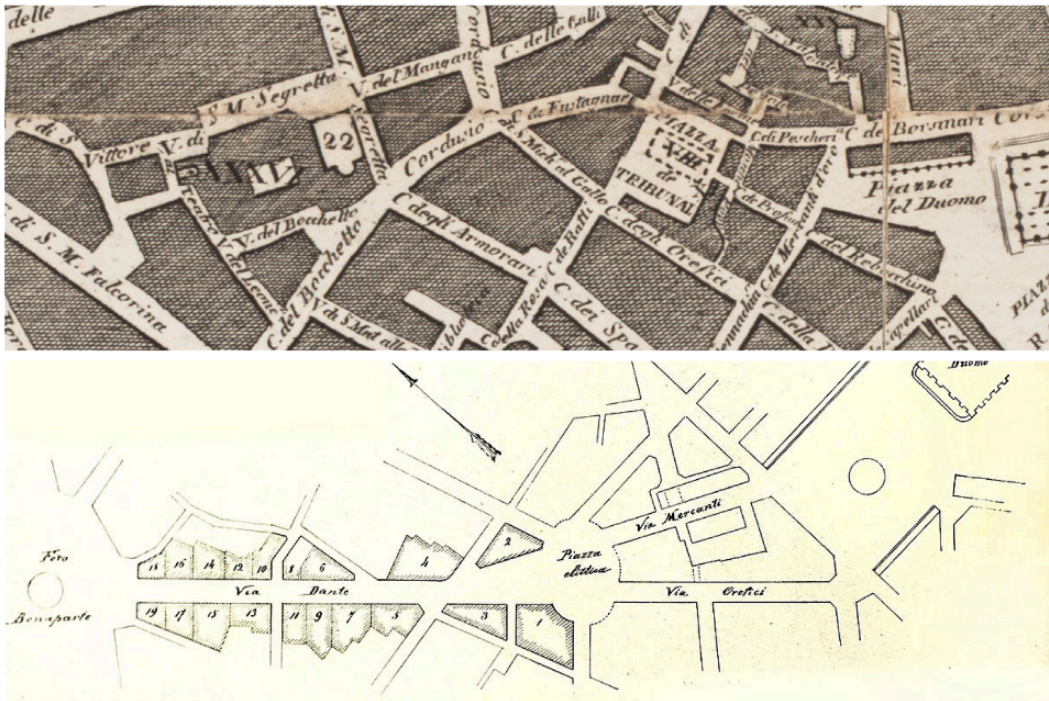


Figure 10. Comparison of the Via Dante and Cordusio's urban fabric. On the top, a fragment of a historical map showing the Cordusio area of Milan around 1820. At the bottom, the plan of the Via Dante and Piazza Cordusio in L'Edilizia Moderna, April 1893.

Source: Wikimedia Commons. (n.d.). Zona Cordusio a Milano nel 1820 [Map]. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zona_Cordusio_a_Milano_nel_1820.jpg

Comitato di Redazione. (1893). Pianta della Via Dante con indicazione delle nuove fabbriche [Image]. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pianta_della_Via_Dante_con_indicazione_delle_nuove_fabbriche_in_L%27Edilizia_Moderna_aprile_1893_tagliato.jpg

legible and governable, yet simultaneously weakened the experiential and symbolic continuity of the urban environment.

Against this interpretive background, the traditional image of Milan began to be progressively replaced by one oriented toward growth and transformation. This shift in perception is not simply a matter of taste or ideology, but reflects a broader transformation in the relationship between public authority and private initiative in the industrial city. Benevolo (2019, p. 173) argues that modernization was not the outcome of a single political program, but “stems from an adventurous comparison of institutions and men, resolved by chance as well as by necessity”(Benevolo, 2019, p. 173).

This change is perceptible both in cartographic representations and in contemporary writings, which increasingly abandoned the detailed recognition of historical stratifications. Authors became “less willing to identify and highlight the inheritances ... of the urban history sedimented and imprinted within the circles” (Gambi and Gozzoli, 1997, p. 281). In other words, the emerging modern attitude tended to displace earlier layers of memory in favor of a forward-looking vision of the city.

This transformation of the city’s image finds clear expression in literary and cultural accounts of the period. Key cultural moments can serve as evidence of this process, especially as recorded in novels and writings. Tarchetti¹³ described the demolition of the *Coperto dei Figini* (Figure 11) as an event oscillating “between regret and joy”. De Marchi portrayed the newly built *Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II* as “the quadrant of a barometer ... [which] marks the rhythm of city life” (Gambi and Gozzoli, 1997, p. 282). Capuana articulated the experience of the new iron-and-glass structures as “a satisfaction of material well-being that appeases the eye and satisfies utilitarian needs”¹⁴. These qualitative descriptions reveal that modernization was experienced as both advancement and loss.

The ambivalence expressed by these authors is consistent with Benevolo’s understanding of modern urban change as a contradictory process: the same interventions that improve hygiene and circulation also destroy the old city’s fabric. Benevolo (2019, p. 175) notes that the new streets were intended to “make unhealthy neighborhoods disappear, while facilitating hygiene and circulation.”

At the same time, these authors not only described and testified to the city’s evolution, intentional or unintentional, but also shaped people’s new imaginary of it. When De Marchi writes “the constructions of the new Milan that stood as if by magic, and the large straights and the luxury shops and the movement of trams and the comings and goings of busy people, who think about making money,

¹³ The writer and poet Igino Ugo Tarchetti chose the Coperto dei Figini, a Renaissance palace demolished in 1864 next to Duomo, as the main theme for his social criticism novel *Paolina*, published in 1867.

¹⁴ Emilio De Marchi, an Italian writer and poet from the nineteenth century, and Luigi Capuana, an Italian writer, literary critic and journalist, wrote two articles in 1881 with descriptions of the building.



Figure 11. On the left, view of *Piazza del Duomo* with the *Coperto dei Figini*, by Angelo Inganni (1838). This romantic veduta by Inganni depicts the porticoed, two-story structure built in 1467 by Guiniforte Solari. On the right, view of the *Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II*, both function as vibrant commercial and social hubs with cafés and shops.

Source: Inganni, A. (1838). *Piazza del Duomo e il Coperto dei Figini* [Dipinto]. Lombardia Beni Culturali. <https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/opere-arte/schede/Q1010-00043/>
Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026.

who work, who produce" (De Marchi, as cited in Gambi & Gozzoli, 1997, p. 288), he creates this image of an evolving modern city that cannot be stopped, that needs to be bustling, frenetic, and even chaotic.

This literary ambivalence is not limited to Milan. Benevolo notes that, from the 1850s onward, intellectuals across Europe began to distance themselves from the mechanisms of public intervention in the modern city. He explains that the new urban regularity and technical complexity were criticized by contemporary writers as "vulgar and annoying novelties," reflecting a growing cultural discomfort with the industrial transformation of urban space (Benevolo, 2019, p. 183).

Benevolo's observation reveals that modernity was experienced not only as a technical and functional reorganization of the city, but also as a cultural rupture. This rupture became increasingly visible in the material fabric of Milan, where the expansion of industry, transport, and large-scale public works reshaped both daily life and collective imagination. The city entered the twentieth century as both industrial capital and symbolic laboratory of Italian modernity. The station, the factory, and the new boulevards became emblems of modern Milan, spaces where speed, circulation, and production replaced the contemplative temporality of the historic city. That represents the imposition of modern life, created by the end of the nineteenth century and solidified in the twentieth.

Later, in the 1930s, the Fascist era added another distinctive architectural layer to this imaginary. Under authoritarian rule, large-scale public works such as the *Stazione Centrale*¹⁵ (Figure 12) and the *Palazzo dell'Arte* (Figure 13) expressed a vision of power rooted in both technological achievement and historic reference.

At the urban scale, modernization took on a far more disruptive intensity. As Gambi and Gozzoli (1997) observe, the 1930s witnessed "the brutal disruption of the historic urban complex" (Gambi & Gozzoli, 1997, p. 321), when the old fabric was systematically reconfigured to consolidate Milan's new financial core. The redevelopment around *Piazza San Babila* (Figure 14), *Cordusio*, and the new *Corso del Littorio* (now *Corso Matteotti*) embedded banks, insurance companies, and corporate headquarters into the "old heart of the city," following what the authors describe as "enormous and reckless demolitions."

The new Palace of Justice (1932–1940) (Figure 15), erected over a former monastic quarter, exemplified what the authors call a "*edificio pacchiano*" (Gambi & Gozzoli, 1997, p. 321) (a gaudy or ostentatious building), replacing the Renaissance city with a monumental expression of power. At the same time, the reconstruction of the southern side of Piazza del Duomo and the erasure of the historic

¹⁵ Designed by Ulisse Stacchini and completed in 1931, the station synthesizes late-Liberty and Art-Deco devices with explicit references to Roman monumentalism (for instance, imperial iconography and the use of inscriptions), producing an architectural rhetoric of power, modern mobility, and state representation.



Figure 12. Milano Centrale (façade and *Piazza Duca d'Aosta*), photograph by Alberto Modiano, ca. 1931–1935. The image foregrounds the station's monumental ambitions through its compositional focus on the central portico and sculptural crowns. The photograph is evidence of how early Milan projected modernity through scale, materiality, and sculptural ornament.

Source: Modiano, A. (photographer). (ca. 1931–1935). Milano Centrale, façade and Piazza Duca d'Aosta [Gelatin silver print]. Lombardia Beni Culturali, Photographic Collection. <https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/fotografie/schede/IMM-LOM80-0000049/>



Figure 13. *Palazzo dell'Arte (Triennale)*, Milan, 1932–1933. Illustrating how Milan's modernization project was not limited to reworking historic fabric, but also involved creating new symbols of modern civic identity through purpose-built monumental architecture.

Source: Stabilimento Fototecnico Crimella (Photographer). (1933). Palazzo dell'Arte (Triennale), Milan — construction photographs [Photographs]. Lombardia Beni Culturali. <https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/fotografie/schede/IMM-3a130-0007436/>.



Figure 14. Piazza San Babila, Milan: pre-modern (pre-1891, left) and mid-20th-century redevelopment (right). The left image depicts the square before major modernization interventions, characterized by narrow streets, small-scale buildings, and the dense historic urban fabric. The right image shows the square following extensive 1930s urban restructuring, when the medieval street network was widened, and new modernist buildings were inserted into the historic core. Notably, the Colonna del Leone remains the sole enduring structure from the pre-modern square.

Source: Wikimedia Commons. (n.d.). Piazza San Babila in Milan, pre-1891 [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons. Webuild Group. (n.d.). San Babila, luogo testimone delle evoluzioni sociali. Webuild M4 Milano.



Figure 15. Palazzo di Giustizia on Via Manara (left) and view of the façade on Via San Barnaba, with the Casa del Mutilato in the background (right).

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026

Verziere market (see Visual Atlas [Figure A13](#)) marked an “*invasione sconcia*” (an indecorous invasion) of Milan’s traditional scenography (Gambi & Gozzoli, 1997, p. 321). Together, these projects reveal a transformation driven not only by functional necessity but also by the regime’s symbolic will to dominate space.

Other revealing elements are the Touring Club maps of the 1930s. These maps documented only certain areas of urban reality, specifically those that represented the upper levels of the social structure and the governing powers of the city (Gambi & Gozzoli, 1997, p. 323). Industrial districts and workers’ housing disappeared from representation, while financial and governmental institutions were highlighted in bright colors. Not only is the visual image of Milan thus re-coded to reflect hierarchy and control, turning cartography itself into an instrument of ideology, but it also suggests an effort to frame the city through a narrative of progress and development, one that tends to reflect the priorities of specific social and institutional actors.

By the early 1940s, critics like Giuseppe Pagano¹⁶ denounced this condition as an “urbanistic anarchy” born from “artificial earthquakes and the most deplorable demolitions,” in a city that had “paid for its industrial prosperity with an unenviable primacy of ugliness” (Gambi & Gozzoli, 1997, p. 327). In this sense, authoritarian modernization created built forms treated unevenly: some later celebrated as icons of modern heritage, others condemned as the architectural legacy of coercion and loss.

After World War II, the urgency of reconstruction transformed Milan into a field of experimentation where speculation and renewal blurred the notion of continuity. Gambi and Gozzoli (1997) describe postwar Milan as “a city rebuilt in fragments, without an overall design, where the economic forces of reconstruction dictated form more than planning ideals” (p. 249).

The war’s devastation created both a *tabula rasa* and an opportunity for unprecedented growth. According to Grandi and Pracchi (1980, p. 280), the city’s urban policy allowed the development of private real-estate activity, showing the speculative traits that would later characterize Milanese postwar building practices: “that fragile equation between morality and style, once an essential component of Persico’s and Pagano’s rationalism¹⁷, was squandered.” The ideals of social responsibility and

¹⁶ Giuseppe Pagano (1896–1945) was a prominent Italian rationalist architect, photographer, and editor who was a key figure in Italian architecture in the first half of the 20th century. He is also known for his political engagement, which led him from Fascism to the anti-fascist Resistance. He died as a prisoner in the Mauthausen concentration camp.

¹⁷ Edoardo Persico (1900–1936) was a leading figure of Italian Rationalist architecture in the 1930s. Along with Pagano as editors of the journal *Casabella*, they advocated for an ethically grounded modernism that combined functional rigor with social purpose. Their approach sought to reconcile modern architecture with moral and civic responsibility, opposing both decorative historicism and market-driven formalism.

architectural ethics that had animated the prewar avant-garde were gradually redefined as market-driven considerations assumed a greater role.

In this context, rationalism itself underwent a process of exhaustion and institutionalization. As Grandi and Pracchi (1980) observe, the widespread diffusion of rationalist principles eventually led to their “sclerosis and exhaustion,” as the architectural language of the Modern Movement was gradually assimilated and transformed into “the official style of speculative urban growth” (p. 280). What had originated as an avant-garde pursuit of moral and formal clarity was thus reduced to a conventional aesthetic of efficiency, easily appropriated by the economic forces of reconstruction. The modern vocabulary that once sought to express social renewal had become a visual code for progress and profitability, marking the transition from ethical modernity to instrumental modernism.

However, not all historians interpret modernization exclusively in negative terms. Benevolo (2019) argues that the industrial city’s transformation was not the result of a single political program, but the product of a contingent compromise between public and private forces, which made large-scale public works and infrastructural systems possible. In this perspective, the new urban forms were not only instruments of power, but also responses to unprecedented demographic and technical pressures (Benevolo, 2019, pp. 173–175).

Seen together, these interpretations reveal the inherently ambivalent character of Milan’s postwar reconstruction. This fragmentary rebuilding, though responsive to immediate needs, also effaced much of Milan’s nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century fabric. The thinning out of the urban texture opened new spatial forms: some reconstructed sectors achieved notable urban quality, while others fragmented continuity and accelerated the loss of fine-grain scale.

At the same time, and partly as a consequence of this incomplete and adaptive rebuilding process, the absence of a comprehensive urban vision opened space for architectural experimentation. In the postwar decades, Milanese architects sought to reconcile modern construction with historical continuity and urban identity. This tendency found emblematic expression in BBPR’s *Torre Velasca* (1958) (Figure 16), a project that reinterpreted the city’s medieval skyline through a modern structural vocabulary, and in Gio Ponti and Pier Luigi Nervi’s *Grattacielo Pirelli* (1960) (Figure 17, see also Visual Atlas [Figure A14](#)), which celebrated the technological optimism of reconstruction. As Grandi and Pracchi (1980) note, the Milanese context fostered “a pragmatic modernism, capable of adaptation rather than dogmatic purity” (p. 283).

Within this interpretive framework, the position articulated by Rogers, one of the central figures of Milanese postwar architecture, emerges. Through his theoretical writings and projects with BBPR,



Figure 16. Torre Velasca, Milan, designed by BBPR. The photographs highlight the tower's distinctive "mushroom" profile, a reinterpretation of the city's medieval silhouettes through modern structural and material language, and the contrasts with other layers of Milan.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026

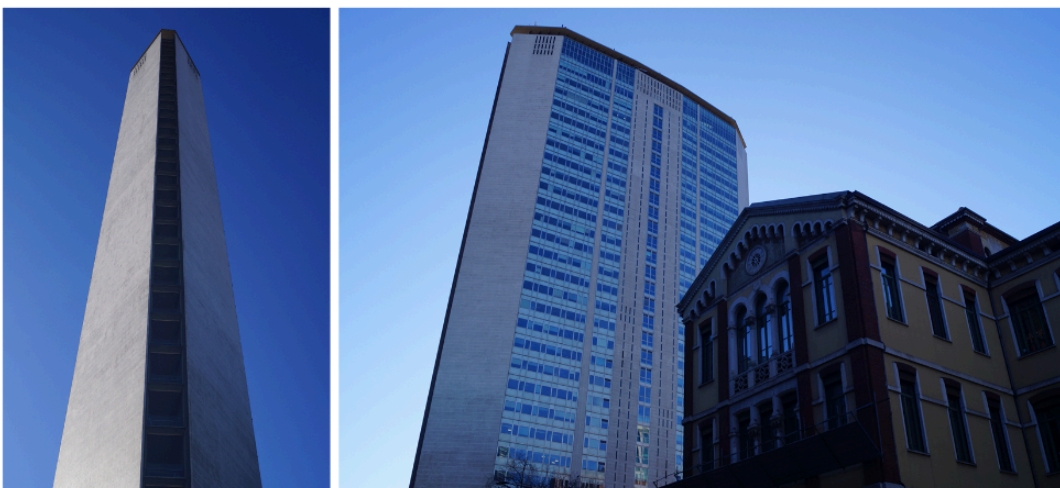


Figure 17. Grattacielo Pirelli, Milan. The images emphasize the tower's vertical presence and slender silhouette. By juxtaposing the tower against its surroundings, the photograph visualizes the continuity and rupture inherent in the city's modernization.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026

Rogers (1958) explicitly rejected the notion of modernity as rupture, advocating instead for a “method of continuity” (*continuità*) between past and present. In his view, modern architecture was not opposed to history but constituted one of its phases, and therefore bore the responsibility to engage with the existing city, its scale, and its collective memory. *Torre Velasca*, in this sense, was conceived not as a nostalgic gesture but as a critical reinterpretation of historical forms through modern construction, aiming to anchor innovation within Milan’s long urban tradition. From this perspective, postwar modernization appears not simply as speculative expansion, but as a conscious cultural project seeking to restore meaning and identity to a city fractured by war.

A similarly affirmative reading, though from an external and more explicitly technological perspective, emerges from other authors who identified postwar Milan as a key site in the evolution of European modernism. Banham (1960) praised the city’s ability to merge advanced engineering, industrial expertise, and architectural form, particularly in works such as the *Grattacielo Pirelli*, which he regarded as a benchmark of structural elegance and technical rationality (Banham, 1960). Rather than interpreting Milan’s vertical expansion as merely symbolic or speculative, Banham framed it as evidence of a mature industrial culture capable of producing architecture that was both economically efficient and formally innovative. This reading positions Milan’s postwar skyline not as a betrayal of modernist ideals, but as one of their most refined realizations.

Yet this affirmative interpretation does not negate the broader transformations affecting the city’s image during the economic boom. During the 1950s, Milan’s transformation paralleled its emergence as Italy’s industrial and financial hub. The city’s new image was increasingly shaped by the architecture of banks, insurance firms, and corporate headquarters, buildings conceived to convey authority, order, and modernity. As Grandi and Pracchi (1980) observe, “the image of the tertiary sector architecture, from the 1950s onward, relied mostly on curtain-wall envelopes, used more as an evocation or ‘quotation’ of modern technology, to signify efficiency and prestige, rather than as the result of genuine industrialized building” (p. 325) (Figure 18). In this phase, modernity increasingly functioned as an image, producing a cityscape in which symbolic efficiency often replaced the ethical and constructive rigor that had characterized earlier modernist ambitions.

At the urban scale, postwar planning consolidated large-scale ambitions. The municipality’s vision extended modernization beyond the historic center, conceiving “a two-core structure, the old center around the Duomo and the new one dominated by the Cemetery, that would make it evolve toward an ellipsoidal form... the X-shaped grid (Figure 19) of new axes is entirely polarized toward the ‘New Center,’ intentionally abstracting, as if to deny, the ancient fabric” (Grandi & Pracchi, 1980, p.



Figure 18. Torre Galfa, Milan. It was conceived between 1956 and 1959 by architect Melchiorre Bega, intended for the oil-refinery company S.A.R.O.M., and later became part of the broader *centro direzionale* development. Rather than reconstructing or layering over historic urban fabric, the building asserts a new model: corporate identity and modernity expressed through surface, geometry, and verticality. In addition, this image helps illustrate the idea described by Visone as the concept of an “eternal present” (Visone, 2017, p.19), a building that is almost 65 years old still appears very recent, and therefore, harder to monumentalize or protect.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026

323). This abstraction of the historic city, often more conceptual than physical, reveals how modernization reframed the relationship between past and present. Rather than erasing history outright, the plan relegated it to a secondary role within a forward-looking spatial logic, where continuity was acknowledged but strategically subordinated to expansion and efficiency.

From the 1960s onwards, Milan entered a new phase of transformation in which the decline of its industrial base gave rise to extensive redevelopment of former production areas. Districts such as Bicocca, Bovisa and Porta Nuova that were once engines of industrial growth have been progressively reimagined as centers of culture, residence, and innovation. These interventions reveal the complex dynamics between spatial renewal and heritage recognition that characterizes the city's post-industrial identity. While reuse projects like the *Fabbrica del Vapore* and the reconversion of the *Tortona–Porta Genova* area have demonstrated the potential of industrial architecture to host contemporary life while preserving collective memory, institutional heritage frameworks have struggled to keep pace (Figure 20). As will be discussed in Chapter 5, protection policies still tend to privilege monuments of recognized artistic or historical value, leaving much of the twentieth-century and industrial legacy outside formal conservation.

This imbalance exposes a deeper paradox in Milan's cultural geography, the need to preserve what was once built to signify the future, and forms the connective thread of comparison with Porto Alegre. The post-industrial landscape, the factories, warehouses, and infrastructures that once embodied progress, have become simultaneously visible and invisible: visible through their renewed forms and functions, yet invisible in the realm of institutional recognition. As Grandi (1980) suggests, the rediscovery of history and the environment during the late twentieth century constituted an "internal critique of modernism, not its negation" (p. 348). In this light, the repurposing of industrial sites can be read as a continuation of Milan's long dialogue between modernization and memory, where new uses reinterpret rather than replace the modern city. The ongoing regeneration of Bicocca and Porta Nuova, as well as the more recent creative districts, testify to a form of heritage that is not fixed but negotiated, one that measures modernity itself as a tradition in transformation.

Seen through this lens, Milan's modernity cannot be reduced to a single historical phase or aesthetic language but must be understood as a succession of redefinitions, each constructing its own idea of progress and erasing parts of what came before. From the nineteenth-century "surgical" openings of *Via Dante* and *Cordusio* to the monumental ambitions of Fascism, from the moral optimism of post-war reconstruction to the speculative modernism of the economic boom, every act of renewal added a new layer to the city's palimpsest while obscuring others. What is now recognized as the "legacy of the

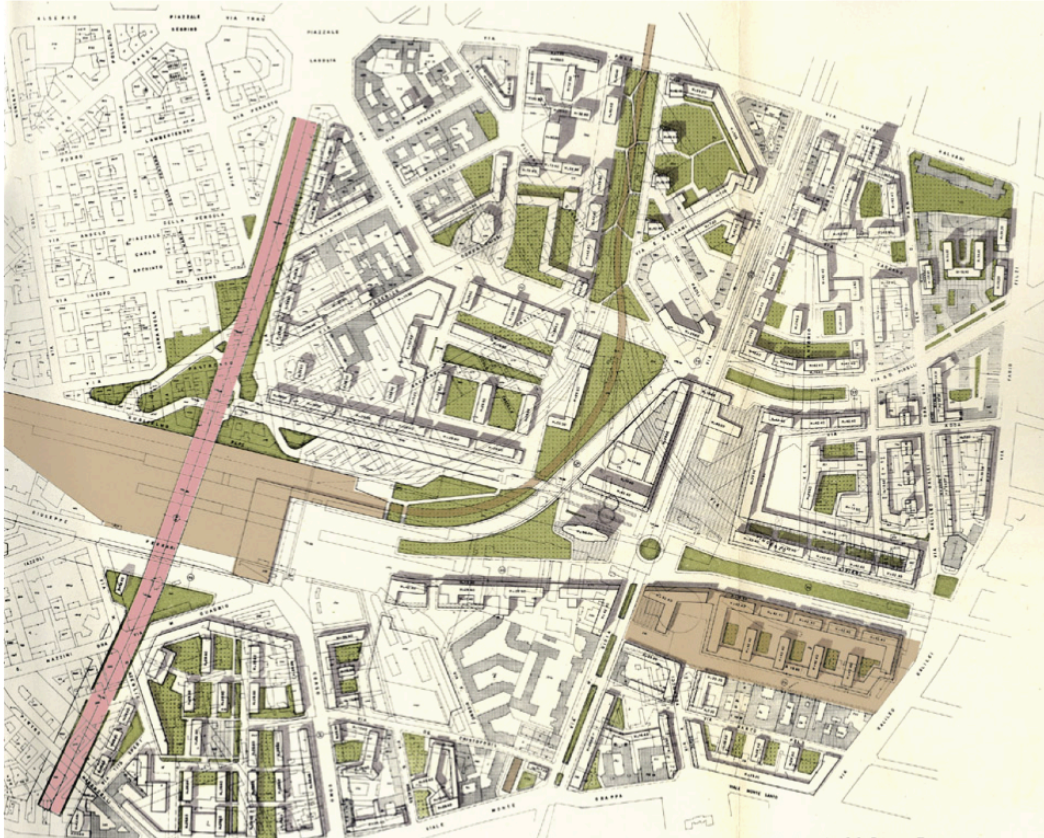


Figure 19. Centro Direzionale plan from the 1953 master plan of Milan. The planned X-shaped grid of major axes was intended to reorient traffic, growth, and symbolic centrality toward this new node.

Source: Stagniweb. (n.d.). Piano regolatore di Milano, 1953 — schema centro direzionale e assi attrezzati [Map image]. Retrieved from <https://www.stagniweb.it/foto6.asp?Col=4&File=prg1953&Inizio=16&Iniziol=1&Righe=15&Righel=50>



Figure 20. Industrial heritage transformation in the Porta Genova-Tortona district. The historical photograph (left) shows the former Ansaldo industrial complex during its operational phase. The contemporary view (right), taken inside the BASE cultural hub, located within the remaining structures of the same industrial compound, illustrates how these spaces have been reappropriated and reprogrammed for creative, cultural, and social uses.

Source: Urbanfile. (2021). Milano Porta Genova: l'area ex industriale di via Tortona e Savona [Photograph]. Urbanfile Blog. <https://blog.urbanfile.org/2021/09/20/milano-porta-genova-larea-ex-industriale-di-via-tortona-e-savona/>

modern” in Milan is therefore fragmentary and selective: a heritage of discontinuities, where memory and modernization coexist in tension. This uneven recognition reveals how twentieth-century growth not only reshaped the city’s physical form but also reoriented its collective perception of value, transforming modernity itself into an object of historical reflection. In this sense, Milan exemplifies the broader question at the heart of this chapter: how the modern becomes heritage, and how cities learn (or fail) to see their own twentieth century as part of the historical continuum. The next section will explore how similar processes unfolded in Porto Alegre, under different political and institutional conditions, yet driven by comparable tensions between modernization, erasure, and remembrance.

4.2 Porto Alegre: 20th-century Landscape, Modernization and the Modern Imaginary

In Porto Alegre, the question of what constitutes the modern layer of heritage also emerges through successive cycles of modernization, reclamation, and redevelopment. From the late nineteenth century onwards, the city’s expansion along the Guaíba shoreline and the continuous reshaping of its central area produced a landscape in permanent transformation (Figure 21). This section examines how these successive “modernizations”, from the eclectic and hygienist ideals of the early twentieth century to the authoritarian modernism of the mid-century and the post-industrial redevelopments, have come to structure both the image and the imaginary of the modern city. The aim is not to trace urban growth chronologically, but to ask which of these layers are today recognized as part of the city’s modern heritage, and which remain excluded from its collective memory.

The urban landscape of Porto Alegre throughout the twentieth century was decisively shaped by successive processes of land reclamation along the shores of the Guaíba River and by the layered transformation of its central area. Over time, the city expanded through cycles of infill, urban reform, and administrative redefinition, producing a continuously evolving urban core where modernization became a structural principle of growth. These transformations, while spatial in nature, also generated long-term implications for how the built environment would later be perceived and governed as heritage.

Founded in 1772 on a promontory along the Guaíba, Porto Alegre’s early development was defined by its fluvial geography and strategic position as a port settlement (Figure 22). As Souza (1995) explains, the initial settlement developed on the northern shore of the promontory, chosen for its favorable port conditions and protection from southern winds. The city’s early occupation was enclosed by a defensive wall, “which passed along the current streets Pinto Bandeira, Praça Annes Dias, João Pessoa and República,” (Figure 23, see also Visual Atlas [Figure A15](#)), delimiting what was then the urban

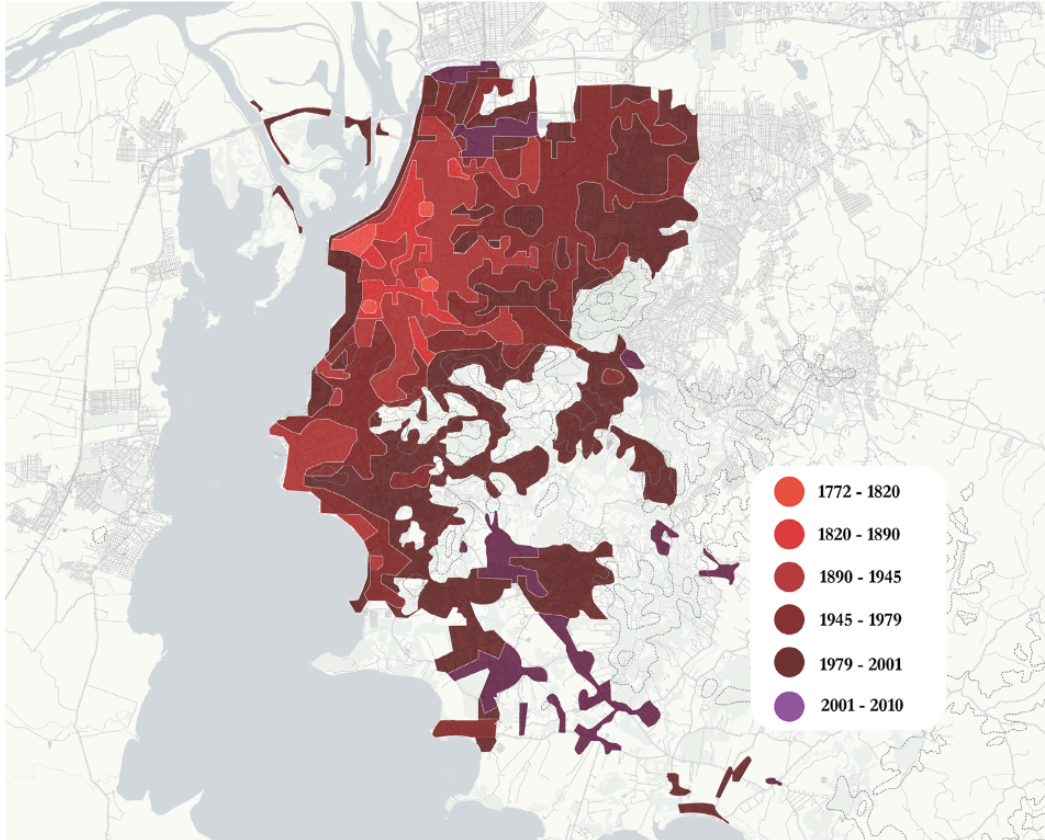


Figure 21. Map of Porto Alegre's municipality urban expansion since 1772 until 2010. The map illustrates the progressive growth of the city from its original nucleus, located on the northern part of the promontory, through successive phases of 19th- and 20th-century expansion.

Source: Elaborated by the author.



Figure 22. View of Porto Alegre, watercolor by Jean-Baptiste Debret, 1827. The work depicts the city when it still occupied only the original peninsula. This image is included here not only as a historical document but also as an example of how Porto Alegre was constructed and narrated visually.

Source: Bandeira, J., & Corrêa do Lago, P. (2013). Debret e o Brasil: obra completa, 1816-1831 (Capivara). Museu Castro Maya (collection).

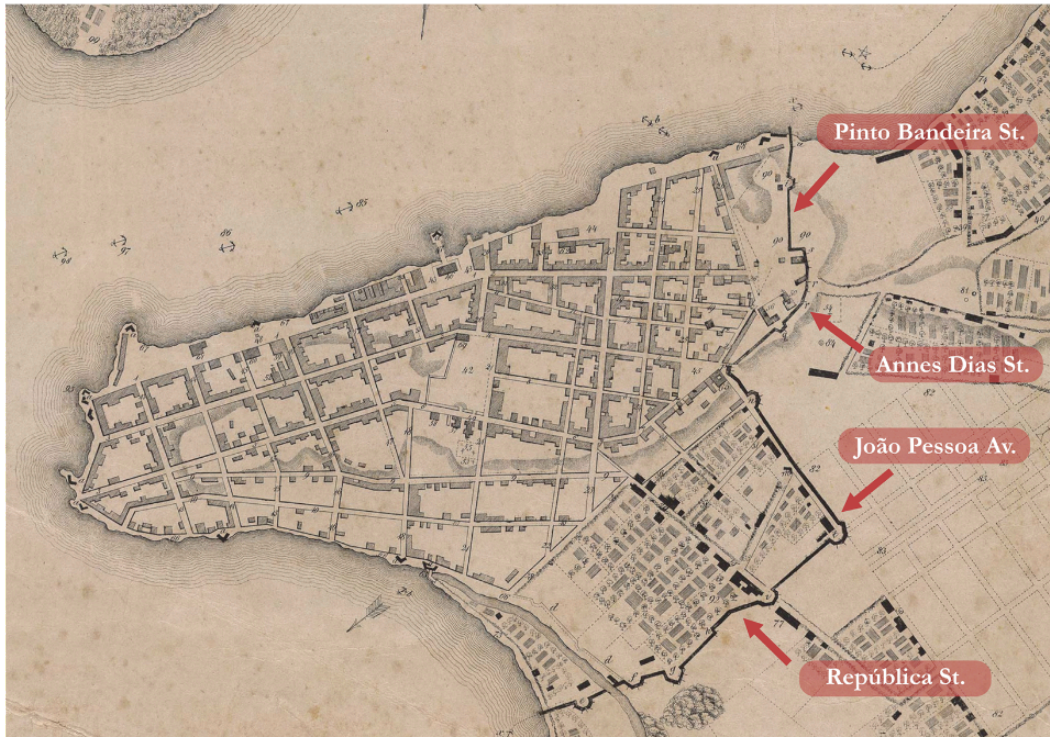


Figure 23. Zoom in on the historic center of the plan of Porto Alegre from 1839 by Luís Pereira Dias, showing trench and fortified walls, with indication of where current streets are located.

Source: Luís Pereira Dias. (1839). Planta da Cidade de Porto Alegre [Map]. Acervos Biev. Modified by the author.

nucleus (Souza, 1995, p. 118). This fortified perimeter structured the city's first phase of population densification. In subsequent decades, however, "the urban area came to be defined by the City Hall and approved by the Council, often expanded merely to collect more taxes" (Souza, 1995, p. 118).

During the nineteenth century, the city grew from a compact colonial nucleus enclosed by defensive walls into a regional commercial hub driven by agricultural exports and waves of German and Italian immigration (Trusiani, 2010; Souza, 1995). Industrialization and port growth had already prepared the way for a modernizing city aiming to establish itself as the capital of a thriving southern area by the turn of the 20th century.

The land reclamation projects were particularly decisive in the city's evolution (Figure 24). Along with administrative expansions, these projects progressively dissolved the perceptible limits of the historic core and established a pattern of constant territorial transformation that would persist throughout the next century. According to Souza (1995), "the increase of land in the center through reclamation corresponds to three times the original area" (Souza, 1995, p. 118). The first major interventions occurred in the nineteenth century, when the shoreline, once located at *Rua da Praia* (today Andradas Street), was progressively pushed outward. The culmination of this process was the construction of the *Cais Mauá*, inaugurated in 1922 (Figure 25), which established a monumental waterfront of warehouses and docks separated from the city by rail lines and, later, by a three-meter floodwall built after the devastating flood of 1941 (Souza, 2010) (see Visual Atlas [Figure A16](#) and [A17](#)).

Nevertheless, the notion of a dissolved historic center is not universally accepted. As Trusiani (2010) observes, the denomination *centro histórico* was formally "adopted by municipal law and has become widely used by the population, local businesses, and public institutions" (Trusiani, 2010, p. 24). This formal and social recognition reinforces the existence of a clearly perceived historic core, even as its spatial boundaries have been repeatedly reshaped by land reclamation and modernization. In this sense, the historic center of Porto Alegre is less defined by visually discernible boundaries than by its symbolic and administrative recognition, remaining a spatial referent collectively understood as the city's historic core. The dialectic of Porto Alegre's contemporary development is encapsulated by the presence of these two readings, one of which emphasizes continuity and the other transformation: a city that redefines itself through the exact processes that threaten to erase its origins.

This tension between modernization and continuity became explicit with the *Plano Geral de Melhoramentos* of 1914 (Figure 26), intrinsically linked to the northern waterfront reclamation. Conceived as both an infrastructural and symbolic operation, the plan sought to adapt the street network, improve sanitation in flood-prone areas, and embellish the city's image through monumental

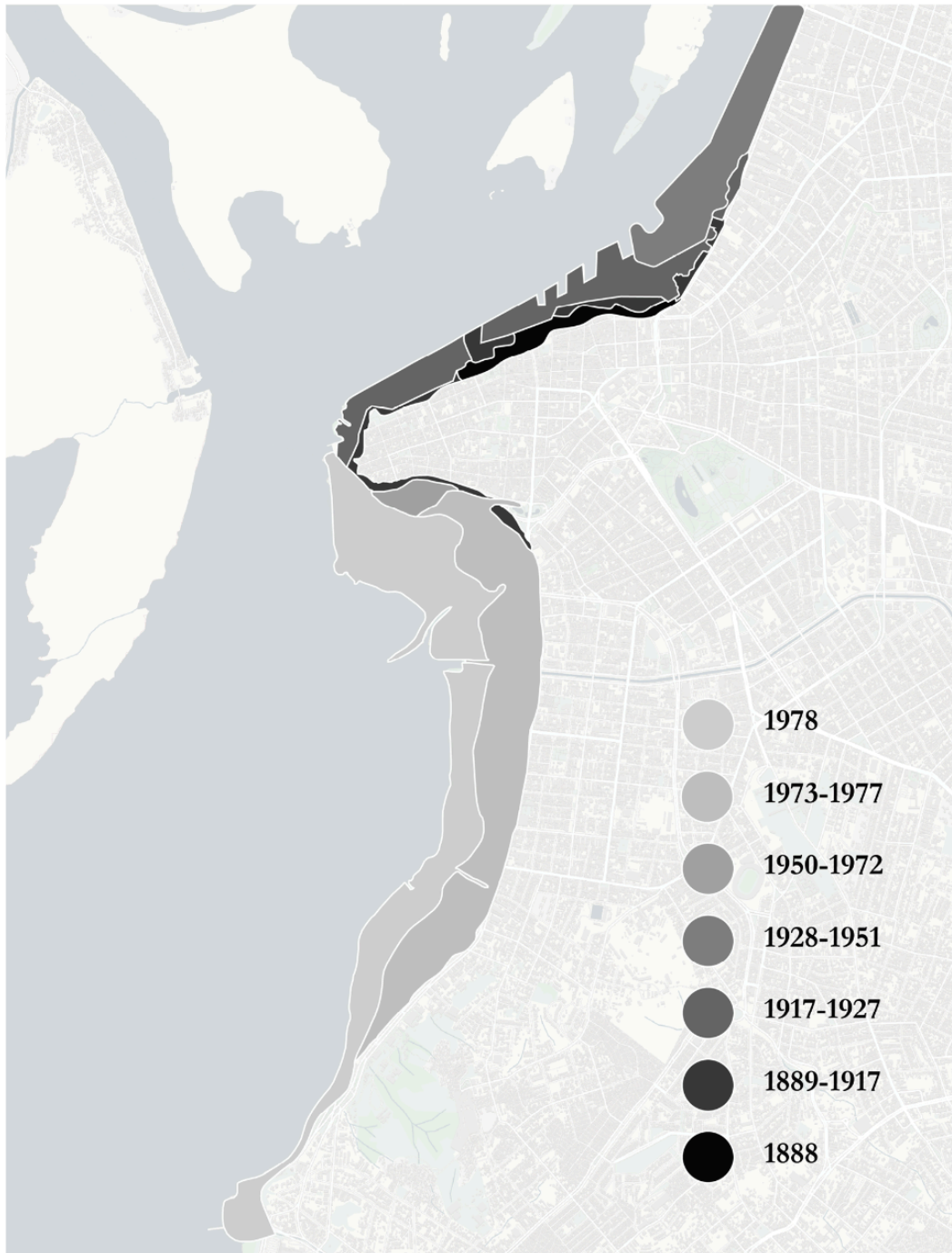


Figure 24. Map of land reclamation over time. The map highlights the landfill areas, showing how the historic center expanded onto the Guaíba River. The alignment of streets and blocks over the reclaimed land suggests a quasi-concentric urban pattern reminiscent of European examples such as Milan. The historic Rua da Praia, despite its name (literally Beach Street), no longer runs along the original shoreline, reflecting how successive reclamation projects reshaped both the city's relationship with the river and its urban footprint.

Source: Elaborated by the author.

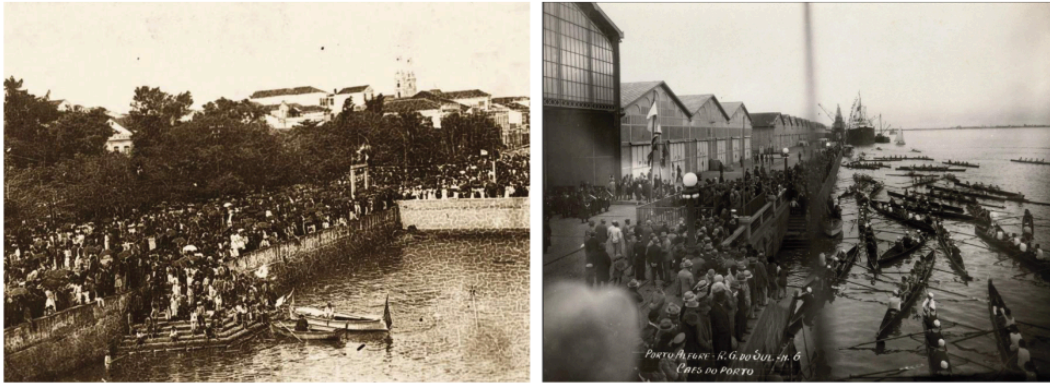


Figure 25. Photograph of Cais da Alfândega with Igreja das Dores in the background in the end of the 19th century (left), showing the area before the construction of the docks and landfills that later extended the shoreline. It is possible to see the old gate (still remaining structure) at the Praça da Alfândega. Photograph of a competition in the docks (Cais do Porto) around 1930 (right). In this photograph is possible to see the area of the landreclamation for the construction of the docks and how it separated the rest of the city from the water.

Source: Prati. (n.d.). Cais da Alfândega and Igreja das Dores, Porto Alegre, late 19th century [Photograph]. <https://prati.com.br/porto-alegre/porto-alegre-cais-da-alfandega-e-igreja-das-dores-final-seculo-xix.html>
 Biblioteca Digital de Literatura e Fotografia. (n.d.). Cais do Porto, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul [Photograph]. https://issuu.com/bdlf/docs/a_ca_mara_na_cidade_crop3



Figure 26. General plan for urban improvements of Porto Alegre, 1914 (Plano Geral de Melhoramentos de Porto Alegre), elaborated by João Moreira Maciel. In this plan, we are presented with a proposal for the opening of Borges de Medeiros Avenue, the “forecast” of Farrapos Avenue (opened in 1940), and studies for the treatment of the Redenção Park area, which began to be envisioned in landscape terms with the 1935 exhibition and was completed around 1940.

Source: Maciel, J. M. (1914). Plano geral de melhoramentos de Porto Alegre 1914 [Urban plan]. Acervos BIEV. <https://www.acervosbiev.com/colecao-iconografias/plano-geral-de-melhoramentos-de-porto-alegre-1914/>

avenues and public works. As Fialho (2007) notes, the 1914 plan was a technical document as well as a cartographic projection of ideas, a drawing that translated aspirations for a modern capital into spatial form. The plan outlined transformations that would only be realized decades later, such as the opening of Borges de Medeiros Avenue (Figure 27), the layout of the Farrapos Avenue (completed in 1940), and the landscape design of Redenção Park. Yet even before these works materialized, the map itself circulated as an image of progress: an emblem of what the city could become. In its geometry and graphic order, the plan anticipated a new urban imaginary in which Porto Alegre was envisioned as rational, hygienic, and monumental. Inspired by Parisian reforms, these boulevards were planned to extend the city beyond its historic core (Souza, 2010). As Cuty (2007, p. 245) observes, the inauguration of the docks and the opening of the new avenues were “the most significant reflection of the capital’s need to communicate quickly and effectively with its region of influence.” Like in Milan, modernization was experienced both as an achievement and as an erasure, a visual rewriting of the city’s historical core. The PGM thus consolidated both new infrastructures and a cartographic image of modernity, in which drawing became a tool for imagining the city’s future.

However, not all readings stress rupture and loss. Several local historians and urbanists emphasize that the PGM and the subsequent reclamation works were read by contemporaries as necessary steps toward modernization, projects that made the city more sanitary, better connected, and more capable of regional leadership. Souza’s detailed study of the 1914 plan shows how the document functioned as a projective image of progress that organized investments, sanitation works, and new avenues, and that for municipal elites and many residents it signalled an exit from provincial status toward a more modern capital (Souza, 2010). Likewise, Pesavento (1999) highlights that these reforms entered the cultural repertoire of the city as desirable signs of civility and modern life, often celebrated in local discourse and literary representations (Pesavento, 1999). Read together, these perspectives complicate a solely negative account: many modernization measures were at once instruments of social control and infrastructural advancement, experienced by contemporaries as improvements in mobility, hygiene, and civic prestige.

At the same time, the spatial configuration of the historic center maintained traces of its earlier topography. As Trusiani (2010) describes, Porto Alegre’s traditional urban core revolved around two main squares, the Praça da Alfândega, located near the port area, and the Praça da Matriz, situated on the promontory above, where civil and religious powers were concentrated. The connection between these two points formed a transversal axis to the river, defined by *Rua da Ladeira*, which intersected *Rua da Praia*, the city’s oldest thoroughfare (Figure 28). The first port, built between 1856 and 1857, consisted



Figure 27. Opening of Borges de Medeiros Avenue and construction of the Otávio Rocha Viaduct in the late 1920s. These photographs capture a pivotal moment in the city's transformation: the erasure of older, hilly topography and the imposition of a new urban geometry, a broad boulevard carved through the "morrinho" that once separated the historic core from the southern zones. The newly laid tram tracks suggest an early commitment to modern mass transit, signalling the ambition not only to connect disparate zones but to reimagine the mobility and social rhythms of Porto Alegre. Comparison with 2025 photographs where it is possible to see the urban palimpsest as a result of the plans.

Source: Museu de Porto Alegre Joaquim Felizardo. (n.d.). Abertura da Av. Borges de Medeiros e construção do Viaduto Otávio Rocha [Photograph]. Fototeca Sioma Breitman. Retrieved from <https://miltonribeiro.ars.blog.br/2020/12/05/a-historia-do-viaduto-otavio-rocha-o-viaduto-da-borges-com-belas-fotos/> Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.



Figure 28. Main squares and historic axis in the traditional center of Porto Alegre. The map highlights the two foundational public spaces of the city's early urban structure, Praça da Alfândega, near the former port zone, and Praça da Matriz. These squares are connected by Rua da Ladeira, the historic transversal route linking the waterfront to the plateau and intersecting the city's oldest street, Rua da Praia. Together, these elements form the core of the Sítio Histórico Urbano de Porto Alegre, listed by IPHAN in 2000.

Source: Elaborated by the author.

of a long pier with adjacent warehouses along the riverbank. However, the morphology of the city center changed profoundly at the turn of the twentieth century, when the construction of the new port established a monumental connection with *Praça da Alfândega*, now framed by eclectic buildings erected during the 1920s and 1930s (Figure 29) (Trusiani, 2010, p. 19). This transformation can be traced through both cartographic evidence and the narratives that emerged during this period of intense modernization.

Among these, Dyonelio Machado's novel *Os Ratos* (1935) offers a unique reading of Porto Alegre's urban landscape and the modern imaginary it produced. Machado gives voice to the other side of the modern project, the lived and fragmented city that resulted from those same transformations. Through the errant wanderings of his anti-hero Naziazeno, a minor public servant traversing the central streets in search of a loan, the novel performs a kind of literary cartography. His path traces key sites of modernization, the *Cais Mauá*, *Praça da Alfândega*, and the *Mercado Público* (see Visual Atlas [Figure A18](#)), revealing the city as both a physical and symbolic construction.

Machado's descriptions portray Porto Alegre as a modern city, harsh, mineral, and dehumanized, bound to ideals of hygiene, order, and progress: "The city has no trees. The street is a solid block of scorching granite" (Machado, 2004, p. 38). The narrative also attests to the city's evolution, particularly in the depiction of the land reclamation processes that reshaped the historic waterfront: "The old warehouses now extend over the reclaimed sand, just as they once jutted out into the river's waters" (Machado, 2004, p. 53). Furthermore, throughout the novel, the recurring reference to the *obras*, or simply construction works, attest to the changing landscape and atmosphere of the city: "Those plumes of dark smoke rising, bent over the heavy vapor-filled sky, are from the 'works'. The smoke comes from the power plant," (Machado, 2004, p. 57) and "The office is at the back, in an old townhouse. That whole area has gradually been transformed, invaded by the 'works'" (Machado, 2004, p. 19). Those passages capture the feeling of modernization as a disruption and invasion of existing forms, echoing the *obras* that reshaped Porto Alegre since the 1910s (*Cais Mauá*, *Usina do Gasômetro*, etc.), and reflecting the material presence of urban transformation in everyday life (see Visual Atlas [Figure A19](#)).

The reference to the *obras* here can also be connected to the second parallel point between Porto Alegre and Milan. Much like in Milan, Porto Alegre underwent many "surgical" interventions, simply referred to here as *obras*. There are mainly three periods where they became evident. First, the plan of 1939 during the Vargas Era was designed during the Estado Novo dictatorship. During that time, the municipality carried out large-scale works such as the opening of radial avenues (Avenida Farrapos, Protásio Alves, Salgado Filho), the canalization of the Arroio Dilúvio, and the construction of key public



Figure 29. At the top, early-20th-century view of Praça da Alfândega, showing the twin landmark buildings that embodied the city's transition from port-based commerce to institutional and civic modernity. On the left, the building initially housing the fiscal and state administration (today part of Museu de Arte do Rio Grande do Sul (MARGS)); on the right, the former Central Post Office (today Memorial do Rio Grande do Sul). On the bottom, current state of the square.

Source: Praça da Alfândega, Porto Alegre (c. 1930) [Photograph]. (n.d.). In *A Câmara na Cidade*. Acervo Prati. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/bdlf/docs/a_ca_mara_na_cidade_crop3 Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.

buildings. Simultaneously, as Luccas (2004) notes, the verticalization of the historic center of Porto Alegre began with the construction of successive tall structures, such as the Frederico Mentz (Hotel Jung) (Figure 30) and Imperial buildings by Agnello Nilo de Lucca, the *Palácio do Comércio* (1937) by Joseph Lutzenberger, and the *Edifício Sulacap* (1938) by Arnaldo Gladosch (Figure 31). From their employment of traditional architectural elements, such as Sulacap's four-sided roof tower, to their incorporation into the urban fabric, these buildings exhibited a traditional design orientation. Solid masses, segmented openings, and finishes that strengthened a classic character were highlighted in façade compositions (Luccas, 2004). At the same time, their forms and details still reflected echoes of the Art Deco aesthetic.

The beginning of verticalization in the historic center set the stage for later, larger-scale planning initiatives, showing a continuity in the city's modernization efforts that culminated in the more technocratic interventions of the 1959 *Plano Diretor*. Present as a second wave of surgical expansion, the plan prioritized circulation and infrastructure. It envisioned major new arteries and perimetral ring roads, marking a decisive turn toward car-oriented urbanism (Figure 32).

At the same time, Porto Alegre's modernization was not limited to infrastructural planning; it also took shape through a new architectural language that redefined the city's symbolic and functional core. One of the earliest and most experimental expressions of this shift was the *Pavilhão Mata Borrão*, conceived by Marcos Hekman (see Visual Atlas [Figure A20](#)). Built in the late 1950s as a temporary exhibition pavilion, it became an early marker of architectural experimentation in the city, though its existence proved short-lived, as it was demolished only a decade later. Soon afterward, the *Palácio da Justiça* (built 1953–1968, designed by Luís Fernando Corona and Carlos Maximiliano Fayet) (Figure 33) introduced a new civic-institutional typology into the consolidated fabric of the historic center. Its adoption of the five points of modern architecture (free plan, pilotis, free façade, horizontal windows, and roof terrace) represented a break with the neoclassical and eclectic buildings that had long defined the area. The building's history, however, also reveals the fragility of modern heritage: delays, resource shortages, and alterations gradually distanced it from the original design, and only the 2002–2006 restoration, led by Fayet himself, reestablished key architectural features and reaffirmed its value. A similar dynamic can be seen in the *Edifício Armênia* (1955–1962), by Ari Canarim, one of the first modernist apartment buildings in Porto Alegre (see Visual Atlas [Figure A21](#)). Together, these examples demonstrate that architectural modernization in Porto Alegre unfolded in parallel with infrastructural change, contributing to a more complex and layered understanding of what constitutes the city's modern heritage.

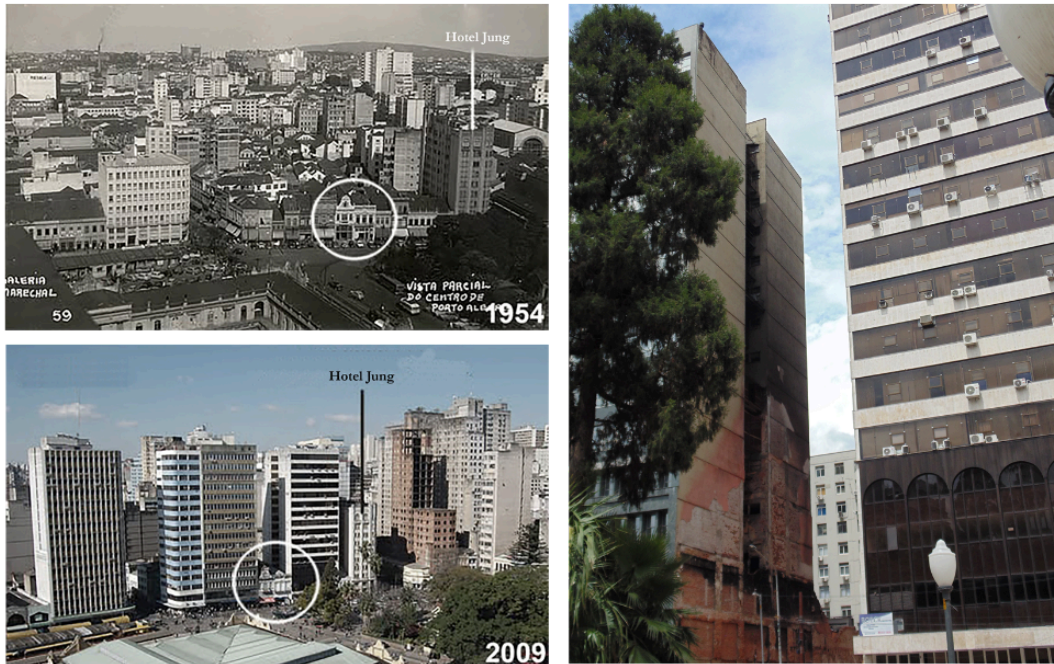


Figure 30. Comparison of the same urban view in Porto Alegre, 1954 (top) and 2009 (bottom). Two houses from the 1880s (one dating to 1884) remain visible in the picture, as does the Hotel Jung. The 2009 photo illustrates how multiple layers of heritage were absorbed or replaced by urban development, rendering the historic center visually heterogeneous and complicating its legibility as a coherent historic space. At right, the site after the houses caught on fire on November 2025, under unexplained circumstances, reinforcing the ongoing logic of substitution and the fragility of heritage protection mechanisms.

Source: Francisco, R. [@RodrigoFrancisco]. (n.d.). [Photograph of Porto Alegre urban view, Rua dos Andradas, 2009] [Photograph]. Modified by the author. Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.



Figure 31. Edifício Imperial (left), also known as Cine Imperial, located on Rua dos Andradas next to the Clube do Comércio, constructed 1931–1933 by Egon Weindörfer and Agnello Nilo de Lucca, originally combining cinema, apartments, and offices. Edifício Sulacap (center), designed by Arnaldo Gladosch in 1938 and completed 1943–1949, is a mixed residential and commercial block that became the tallest building in Porto Alegre at the time. Palácio do Comércio (right), built 1937–1940 by Joseph Franz Seraph Lutzenberger, headquarters of the Associação Comercial de Porto Alegre, an important Art Déco commercial landmark.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.

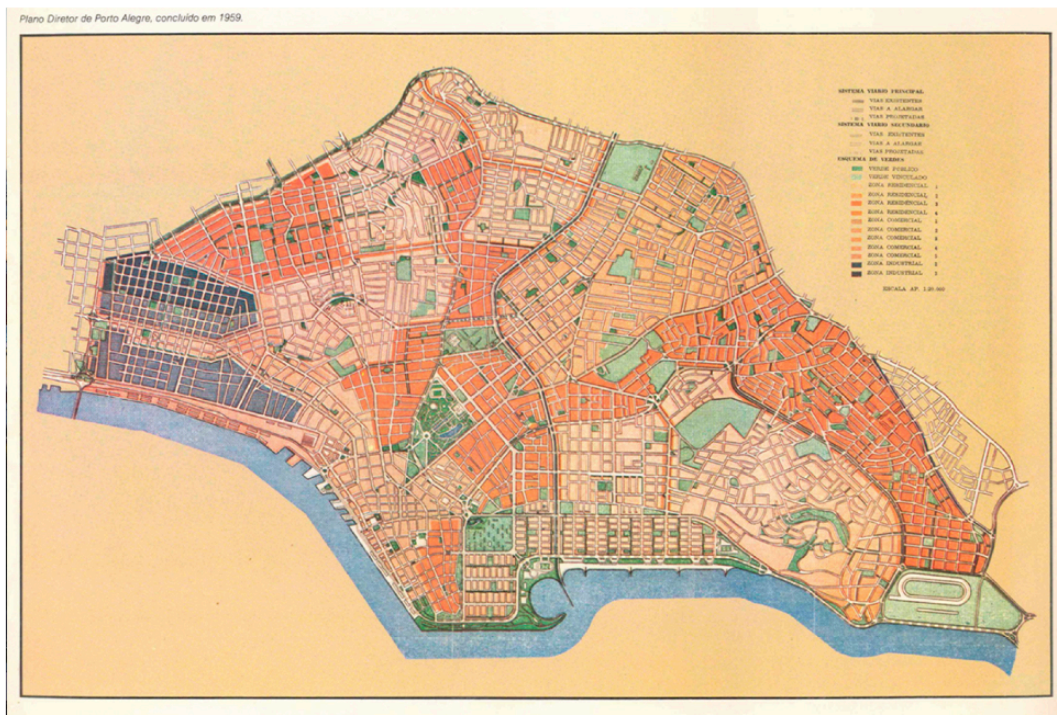


Figure 32. Plan of 1959, a landmark map created under Edvaldo Pereira Paiva and Demétrio Ribeiro. The map reflects a mid-20th-century vision of modernization: it aimed not only to manage urban growth but to channel it according to rational, functionalist principles.

Source: ArchDaily Brasil. (2020). O que podemos aprender com a evolução urbana de Porto Alegre [Article]. ArchDaily Brasil. <https://www.archdaily.com.br/br/1007992/o-que-podemos-aprender-com-a-evolucao-urbana-de-porto-alegre>



Figure 33. Drawing of the Palácio da Justiça by Fayet and a photograph of the building located on Praça Marechal Deodoro (Praça da Matriz). The building's clean geometric forms, open façades, and structural clarity introduce modernist principles into the historic urban fabric.

Source: Marques, S. M. (2009, February). Carlos Maximiliano Fayet. *Arquitextos*, (9)105.03. Vitruvius. <https://vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/arquitextos/09.105/74>
Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025



Figure 34. Old aerial view of the construction of the Elevada da Conceição (left), and its current condition (right). The images attest to how the American idealization of car ownership literally cut through the old city, changing drastically the urban landscape and infrastructure.

Source: Elevada da Conceição. (n.d.). Elevada da Conceição – Porto Alegre [Map/Photograph]. Wikimapia. <https://wikimapia.org/934488/pt/Elevada-da-Concei%C3%A7%C3%A3o>
Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.

This shift became even more evident with the gradual dismantling of the city's tram system, which culminated in its complete removal in 1970. Along with the construction of the *Túnel da Conceição*, in 1972 to link elevated expressways (Figure 34), the replacement of trams not only reshaped mobility patterns but also embodied a broader ideological transition, the association of progress with motorization and the pursuit of a modern, "Americanized" urban ideal (see Visual Atlas [Figure A22](#)).

The result was that modernization transformed the landscape. Concerning the city center, this was more evident along *Rua dos Andradas* (Figure 35). Souza (2010) observed that "the architectural typology was gradually replaced by tall buildings along its entire length, including in the surroundings of the square" (Souza, 2010, p. 124). This verticalization, which intensified after the 1970s, redefined the skyline of the historic center, introducing a modernist morphology that contrasted sharply with earlier urban scales. The transformation of *Rua da Praia* exemplified how modernization, driven by economic growth, new infrastructure, and changing aesthetic values, overlaid the historic city with new forms, gradually normalizing the replacement of the old by the new as a symbol of progress. A revealing example of this dynamic is the successive replacement of the Caixa Econômica Federal building on *Rua dos Andradas*. The first late 19th-century branch, visible in photographs from 1910, was demolished and replaced by a new brutalist structure, which was itself imploded in 1976 to make way for the current building (Figure 36). This sequence of demolitions within a single site illustrates how the logic of modernization repeatedly erased its own recent past, normalizing replacement as an urban strategy.

Finally, the 1979 *Plano Diretor* marked the third moment of surgical interventions with the culmination of the authoritarian-modernist model, producing a visible imprint: for example, six new viaducts built under the municipal government of Telmo Thompson Flores; the Viaduto Loureiro da Silva (1970) over Avenida Salgado Filho; the Viaduto Dom Pedro I (1971-72) on the 2nd perimetral route; and the Viaduto Tiradentes (1972) over Avenida Protásio Alves. As a result, the notion of a city center in Porto Alegre gradually expanded beyond what could historically be defined as its original core, producing an urban configuration increasingly comparable to the American concept of *downtown*, a high-rise, multifunctional, and economically dynamic center detached from its foundational origins.

The second half of the century reinforced this trend with new reclamations in the Praia de Belas area. These landfills enabled the construction of modernist ensembles such as the *Parque Marinha do Brasil*, the *Centro Administrativo do Estado*, and the continuation of Borges de Medeiros Avenue, which, along with the Edvaldo Pereira Paiva expressway, reshaped the city's relationship with its waterfront (Souza, 2010) (Figure 37). These projects followed international modernist precedents, privileging large open spaces, expressways, and monumental public buildings. By the late twentieth century, this structure



Figure 35. Rua dos Andradas/Rua da Praia in four different periods. From left to right and top to bottom, end of the 19th century, around 1910s, 1961, and 2025. Between the first and second photographs, the same houses are visible on the left side of the road. From the last three images, the lamp post is the most recognizable resemblance. The images also testify to the process of verticalization that occurred along the 20th century.

Source: A Câmara na Cidade. Acervo Prati. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/bdlf/docs/a_ca_mara_na_cidade_crop3.
Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.



Figure 36. Successive buildings of Caixa Econômica Federal on Rua dos Andradas, Porto Alegre. The late-19th-century branch photographed in 1910 (left). The mid-20th-century replacement photographed in 1976, shortly before its demolition later that year (center). The current building constructed after 1976, on the same site occupied by both previous structures (right).

Source: Wikimedia Commons. (n.d.). Porto Alegre Caixa Econômica Federal 1 [Photograph]. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Porto_Alegre_Caixa_Econ%C3%B4mica_Federal_1.jpg
Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.



Figure 37. Aerial view of the center of Porto Alegre, showing the newly reclaimed land from the 1990s. The photograph highlights the verticalization process throughout the historic center, with the docks visible in the left background and Redenção Park in the right background. Between Redenção Park and the newly created Parque Harmonia (the green landfill area in the foreground) stands the Centro Administrativo do Estado (CAFF), recognizable by its two towers with sloped walls. In the foreground, the Edvaldo Pereira Paiva expressway connects the Gasômetro to the Praia de Belas area (located to the left, outside the frame).

Source: Simon, G. (2011). Especial 1 – O tempo em que Porto Alegre ousava. PortoImagem. <https://portoimagem.wordpress.com/2011/05/14/especial-1-o-tempo-em-que-porto-alegre-ousava/>

no longer maintained a balance between central vitality and suburban growth, as the emergence of shopping centers as new symbols of modernity gradually shifted commercial and symbolic functions away from the old core. This evolution anticipated the formation of a metropolitan region comprising more than thirty municipalities and approximately four million inhabitants (Trusiani, 2010).

During the closing decades of the 20th century, Porto Alegre's central area had become a palimpsest of modernity, where land reclamations, infrastructure, and verticalization coexisted with remnants of earlier periods. The city's sustained pursuit of modernization both redefined its urban form and challenged the stability of heritage values. In a context built on continuous renewal, the very notion of what constitutes "heritage" became fluid. Porto Alegre's evolution thus reveals a paradox: the same processes that transformed its historic landscape also generated the modern fabric that now demands recognition and preservation. The city embodies a condition where transformation itself has become a historical identity, and where the traces of progress, once symbols of rupture, now emerge as objects of heritage consciousness.

As Souza (2010) notes, "to recognize that the city is a plural object, with marks from different eras, is to understand that the constructions of today may become the permanences of tomorrow" (Souza, 2010, p. 116). The management of twentieth-century architecture in Porto Alegre thus emerges within this context: a city historically oriented toward modernization, now confronted with the challenge of recognizing the heritage value of its own modern fabric.

4.3 The Legacy of Modernity: Preservation, Erasure, or Cultural Recognition?

The historical trajectories of Milan and Porto Alegre show that modernization simultaneously produced and erased heritage, shaping both the physical and symbolic image of the cities. From the late nineteenth century through the twentieth, the evolution of both cities was guided by a vision of urban progress and development, projecting an image of a “city of the future” oriented toward industrial growth, mobility, and modern life. In this process, concerns for conserving heritage, particularly the historic centers, emerged only later: after World War II in Milan and in the 1970s in Porto Alegre. By that point, the imaginary of a frenetic, motorized, and industrially driven city had already become firmly entrenched.

In Milan (Figure 38), this vision of modernity was codified in urban plans and architectural interventions as well as in maps and literary narratives, which emphasized the growth of boulevards, the restructuring of the city core, and the erasure of industrial neighborhoods and workers’ housing, privileging the upper classes (Gambi & Gozzoli, 1997). Similarly, in Porto Alegre, the modern city was promoted through legislation, as will be discussed in the next chapter, that articulated a democratic discourse, yet in practice often favored real estate interests and wealthier populations, prioritizing certain urban processes over the outcomes for the broader population (Figure 39).

What is regarded here as ‘surgical urban interventions’, consisting of carefully targeted demolitions, openings of boulevards, or large-scale reconstructions, occurred mainly during periods of authoritarian rule in both cities, reflecting the power of the state to shape the urban environment according to its vision of progress.

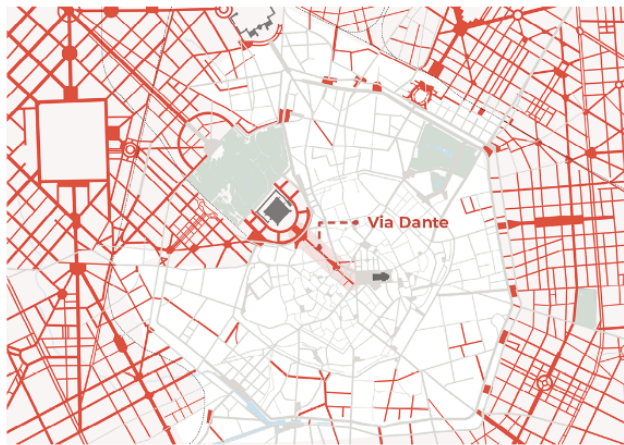
Regarding the historic centers, both cities present a confusing spatial and conceptual boundary, but for different reasons. Milan’s so-called historic center cannot be considered historic in the strict sense: it was heavily reconstructed and is better understood as the concentric core of the city rather than a visually continuous historic fabric. Porto Alegre, in contrast, is even less visually cohesive, but local narratives continue to refer to the area as the historic center. This parallel, the uncertainty of defining the historic center in both cases, reveals one of the conceptual threads that links the evolution of these two cities, highlighting the role of perception and imagination in shaping urban identity.

Taken together, these observations emphasize that the “legacy of the modern” is not an intrinsic property of the built environment but a negotiated cultural construct, forged through planning tools, public discourse, literature, and, as will be addressed in the next chapter, legislation. The modern city, in both Milan and Porto Alegre, was imagined as dynamic, industrial, and forward-looking, and only later



1884

Milan appears as a compact and clearly bounded city, still strongly defined by its historical walls. The urban fabric is dense and continuous, with a fine-grained street network concentrated within the perimeter. Development outside the boundary is minimal and discontinuous, highlighting the clear distinction between the consolidated city and the surrounding rural landscape.



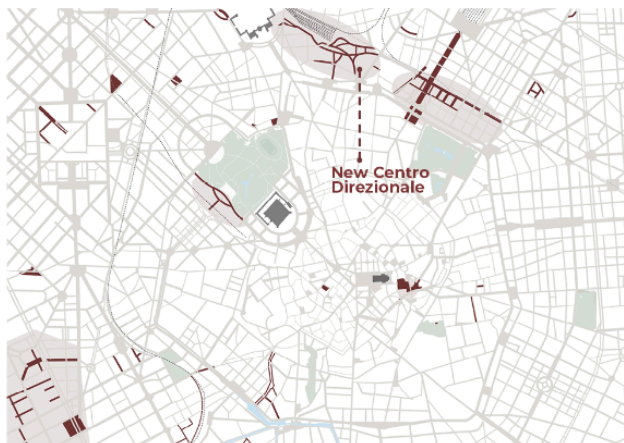
1910

Initial expansion beyond the historic core. The street network extends outward from the center, forming new radial connections and early peripheral grids. While the historic city remains the most compact early Haussmannization operations begin to appear in Via Dante for instance.



1965

Milan is represented as a fully expanded and structurally transformed city. The urban fabric becomes more extensive and fragmented, with a reduced distinction between center and periphery due to yet another layer of surgical interventions. Major infrastructural corridors reorganize the street network, and large-scale developments interrupt the continuity of the historic fabric.



1990

Most similar to the current state, the urban fabric remains largely unchanged from 1965, with some connection improvements around Garibaldi and Centrale areas.

Figure 38. Urban fabric evolution of Milan
Source: Elaborated by the author.



1916

The city's original settlement is largely unchanged with the main narrow streets and shoreline. Rua da Praia/ Rua dos Andradas still represents the last street before the water.



1941

The first waves of land reclamations are already visible with the advancement to the water and the construction of major avenues, such as Mauá Avenue and João Pessoa along the park. It is possible to see the start of the canalization of the Arroio Dilúvio and the viaduct Otávio Rocha is constructed.



1956

Yet new land reclamation layers are added. The last part of the Arroio Dilúvio is canalized, along with the opening of new avenues along it.



1986

New surgical interventions appear, such as the construction of the Conceição Tunnel and passageways that cut through the old urban fabric. A whole new park, avenues and connections are built in land reclamations areas.

Figure 39. Urban fabric evolution of Porto Alegre

Source: Elaborated by the author.

did the discourse on heritage and preservation emerge. Yet, because this image was so powerful, and since it was crafted in the twentieth century, it seems so recent to the layman's perspective that the heritage from this period, representing progress and modernity, is often disregarded or undervalued, a point that will be explored further in the following chapters.

5. Heritage Planning Frameworks

“There is actually no substantial difference in how regulations are applied to twentieth-century architectural heritage as opposed to the heritage of previous centuries, but this is possibly one of the most sensitive issues”. (Grignolo, 2017, p.443)

If Chapter 4 identified the modern layer within each urban palimpsest, Chapter 5 examines how planning and legal frameworks determine which of these layers become formally inscribed as heritage. This chapter will analyze the heritage planning frameworks in both Milan and Porto Alegre. As Scalco (2017) points out, “the political climate, legislation, and economic background all contribute to the evolution of architectural awareness in different countries” (p. 421). Additionally, it is widely recognized that 20th-century heritage is considered more vulnerable in terms of legal protection, particularly due to the limited awareness of modern architecture (Scalco, 2017).

Furthermore, as Del Curto and Salvo (2024) note, both countries exhibit notable differences in their approaches to architectural historiography, conservation, and restoration, particularly regarding

20th-century buildings. In the context of Brazil, the normatives pertaining to the preservation of cultural heritage “can be initiated almost concurrently with the achievement of the building itself placing no chronological limits on the protection of cultural heritage” (Del Curto & Salvo, 2024, p. 2). While in Italy, the development of historiography unfolds in a more gradual and intentional manner, especially in relation to recent architectural heritage (Del Curto & Salvo, 2024).

Both cities present different approaches to 20th-century heritage governance. Unlike Porto Alegre, where heritage protection is primarily articulated through specific heritage instruments (*tombamento*, inventories, councils), Milan’s approach to 20th-century heritage has historically been mediated by urban planning tools. Heritage recognition often occurs indirectly, through zoning categories, morphological controls, and area-based regulations rather than explicit monument designation. Therefore, it is imperative to reconstruct the normative framework that governed the protection of heritage in both cities, serving as case studies for developing the hypothesis of this thesis.

5.1 Milan: Normative Evolution and Urban Planning Tools

Even with the population increase established by the industrial revolution in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century, the country lacked a cohesive and defined legislative structure for implementing comprehensive spatial planning (Bernardini, 2024, p. 16). In this scenario, Italian town planning was initially dominated by administrative management processes to support cities’ expansion.

Although the 1865 law on expropriation (Law No. 2359/1865) offered basic tools for public works, such as the introduction of the *piani regolatori* (urban plans), including the *piani di ampliamento* (expansion urban plans), there was no national planning law. Urban interventions were primarily reactive, top-down, and mainly concerned with protecting the interests of the private sector (Bernardini, 2024). Cultural concerns, particularly heritage management, were not included in its scope, although the land expropriated often contained heritage assets. This exclusion occurred because heritage was typically approached through preservationist traditions linked to art history rather than through territorial governance. As a result, the emphasis was placed more on protecting individual monuments or artistic objects rather than on shaping urban form or public space.

This delineates the two parallel legal frameworks that have emerged within the Italian context since that time: the system of cultural heritage (*beni culturali*), overseen by the Ministry of Culture and articulated through instruments such as the 2004 *Codice dei Beni Culturali e del Paesaggio* (Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code), and the town planning branch (*urbanistica*), historically managed by the

former Ministry of Public Works, now Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport. While urban planning laws provide spatial governance tools, they do not establish specific heritage protection measures, making heritage a peripheral concern within town planning.

This chapter analyzes the evolution of Milan's urban planning legislation, regulatory frameworks, and planning tools over the past century, with particular attention to how heritage protection has been addressed within this context. It identifies gaps and instances in which integration could be strengthened by emphasizing significant points of interaction and conflict between urban development policies and heritage concerns.

5.1.1 Constitutional and National Framework: The Foundation of Italian Heritage Protection

The evolution of heritage planning tools in Milan cannot be understood without examining the broader Italian constitutional and legislative framework that established the philosophical and legal basis for heritage protection. Article 9 of the Italian Constitution, adopted in 1948, represents the cornerstone of Italy's approach to cultural heritage by declaring that "The Republic promotes the development of culture and scientific and technical research. It safeguards natural landscape and the historical and artistic heritage of the Nation" (Art 9 Constitution of the Italian Republic). This constitutional mandate established heritage protection as a fundamental principle of the Italian Republic, providing the legal foundation for all subsequent heritage legislation.

While Article 9 enshrines the protection of cultural heritage as a constitutional principle, Article 117 clarifies how this principle is implemented by distributing powers between the State and the Regions, an important distinction to understanding heritage governance in practice. Specifically regarding the dual dimensions of heritage policy in Italy, paragraph 2 assigns the exclusive competence for the *tutela* of cultural heritage to the State, while paragraph 3 provides for concurrent legislative powers in matters of *valorizzazione* of cultural assets, as well as the promotion and organization of cultural activities. This dual structure forms a complex but deliberate governance model, where the State safeguards national interests through *tutela*, while the Regions participate actively in *valorizzazione* initiatives tied to local development and cultural identity. As Piperata (2023) observes, even more than two decades after the 2001 constitutional reform, the distribution of legislative competencies between the State and the Regions remains a central and unresolved issue, with continuing difficulties in clearly defining the respective legislative domains of each level of government.

This constitutional framework is implemented through Legislative Decree 42/2004, the *Codice dei Beni Culturali e del Paesaggio*, which operationalizes the principles of *tutela* and *valorizzazione*. While the distinction may appear stable and clearly defined, in practice, the legal framework surrounding protection is far more dynamic. Piperata (2023) highlights that assumptions about the stability of *tutela* are often overly simplistic because even this traditionally rigid domain is undergoing reinterpretation and expansion, challenging long-held views about the immutability of the State's protective role.

A significant evolution in heritage governance lies in the shifting nature of *tutela* itself. Traditionally framed as a negative obligation, primarily aimed at restricting harmful interventions (*non facere*), *tutela* is increasingly interpreted in more dynamic and affirmative terms. Recent jurisprudence reflects a broader understanding of protection as encompassing not only the prevention of damage, but also the active promotion of cultural continuity and specific uses (*facere*). As Piperata (2023) points out, cultural heritage is no longer safeguarded solely through prohibitive constraints, but also through positive obligations designed to sustain cultural practices over time.

In Milan, these constitutional principles and legislative instruments did not remain abstract. They directly structured urban planning and heritage strategies, shaping both the tools adopted by the municipality and the way citizens perceived cultural heritage. Alongside constitutional provisions and the Code, urban planning legislation played an ambivalent role in relation to heritage: while it appeared to recognize the importance of historical values, its practical effect was often to separate protection from urban planning.

5.1.2 The 1942 Planning Law

Law 1150 of 17 August 1942, known as the Italian Planning Law (*Legge Urbanistica*), established the hierarchical planning system that dominated Italian urban planning for decades and significantly influenced heritage planning in Milan. This law introduced three levels of planning instruments: the *Piano Territoriale di Coordinamento* (PTC) at the regional level, the *Piano Regolatore Generale* (PRG) at the municipal level, and detailed plans (*Piani Particolareggiati*) for specific areas. As Mirri (1994) explains, the master plan had two central functions: the division of municipal territory into functional zones (zoning) and the localization of areas reserved for public works, a system that consolidated planning as a tool of comprehensive territorial regulation. As Erba (1979) explains, by extending planning jurisdiction to the whole municipal territory, the 1942 law introduced zoning as a

legal mechanism that also established the power of plans to impose limits on private property, a key shift in defining public interest over land use (Erba, 1979, p. 25).

Scholars have interpreted its relationship with heritage conservation in contrasting ways. On one hand, the law explicitly recognized “the need for conservation and protection of historical values, as well as a whole set of relations between architecture and urban spaces” (Scattoni & Falco, 2011, p. 13), which marked a step forward compared to earlier laws and suggested that planning could serve both historical protection and urban growth. Provisions restricting speculation and enabling the acquisition of land for public purposes also indirectly supported heritage conservation by giving local governments tools to regulate urban expansion.

In relation to historic centers, Article 7, paragraph 5 of the law required general regulatory plans to include a survey of areas of historical, artistic, and archaeological value, together with the indication of protection constraints already established under the 1939 legislation (Mirri, 1994). Scholars such as Ferri¹⁸ have highlighted this provision as one of the most significant tools for the protection of historic centers.

On the other hand, other authors argue that the law “excluded protection from its range of application, as enriched in the 1939 acts¹⁹, thus entailing its final separation from city planning” (Carughi, 2017, p. 265). These two interpretations can be reconciled by noting that while the law nominally included heritage protection among planning objectives, in practice it relegated such protection to a separate legal and administrative sphere, limiting its integration into urban planning instruments.

Nonetheless, the persistence of the 1942 framework is remarkable. As Mirri (1994) notes, the law was enacted in wartime and could not be implemented immediately. Even after the end of the conflict, reconstruction proceeded through ad hoc reconstruction plans, whose simplified procedures often undermined the regulatory intent of the 1942 law. Yet, despite these limitations, the framework endured: from the 1970s, Italy ceased issuing national urban planning laws and delegated legislative authority to the regions, meaning that Milan’s heritage planning evolved within a framework established during the fascist period, though adapted through regional and local innovations.

¹⁸ P.G. Ferri, co-author of ‘Diritto dei beni culturali, Rome 1993.

¹⁹ Law No. 1089 of 1 June 1939 (*Legge Bottai sulla tutela delle cose d’interesse artistico o storico*), which established comprehensive rules for the protection of immovable and movable cultural property of historical, archaeological, or artistic interest, and Law No. 1497 of 29 June 1939 (*Protezione delle bellezze naturali*), which extended protection to natural landscapes and sites of scenic or environmental value. Together, these laws created the foundational legal framework for cultural heritage and landscape conservation in Italy, operating in parallel with but largely independent from urban planning legislation.

5.1.3 Post-War Reconstruction 1945-1960s

The conflict between growing heritage consciousness and development needs in Milan predates World War II, yet intensified markedly during the postwar reconstruction period. Franchi and Chiumeo (1972) emphasize how private initiatives notably conditioned the urban planning process in Milan, particularly by accelerating projects in areas deemed financially advantageous, thereby subordinating planning policies to speculative interests (Franchi & Chiumeo, 1972). Notably, the Albertini Plan of 1934, conceived as a '*piano di massima*,' functioned as a guiding framework, granted municipal authorities discretionary powers that frequently favored private interests over preservation. The plan emphasized that the creation of a new road network was indispensable, even if it meant sacrificing the “traditional environments” of the old city (Franchi & Chiumeo, 1972, p. 81).

Following World War II, the city faced immediate reconstruction demands that challenged existing mechanisms of heritage governance. A fifth of the national economic heritage had been destroyed, with major urban centers such as Milan suffering severe damage. At the same time, communication routes, roads, bridges, and railways were disrupted (Mirri, 1994). At this time, Milan became a focal point for the expectations surrounding the first large-scale implementation of the 1942 Planning Law, which established the PRG as a compulsory instrument nationwide (Togni, 2022). The 1953 PRG, Milan's first official master plan both in regulatory definition and development forecast, introduced functional zoning according to the 1942 national law and outlined the last axes of development of the city.

Political shifts in the late 1940s reinforced speculative tendencies. As Boatti (1989) shows, Milan's new administration openly favored reconstruction projects at the expense of the PRG, relaxing regulatory constraints and even resorting to temporary permits to allow building under the older Albertini plan, thereby legitimizing speculative practices (Boatti, 1989, p. 44). By the time the 1953 plan was approved, little remained of its 1948 predecessor²⁰ with real estate interests firmly embedded in the municipal administration and technical offices (Boatti, 1989, p. 45). The implementation of the PRG led to enormous growth, both in the historic center, with a significant increase in building density, and in the suburbs, with uncontrolled expansion. As Mirri (1994) notes, construction during this period concentrated primarily in the outer areas of cities, while historic centers, many already damaged, were frequently neglected or degraded. Peripheral development altered urban landscapes and encroached upon

²⁰1948 Milan Reconstruction Plan (Piano di Ricostruzione), approved in 1949 under the framework of Law 17 August 1942, n. 1150. It focused on rebuilding war-damaged areas, organizing urban functions, introducing green spaces, improving infrastructure, and providing public housing

historic cores, whereas interventions within the old city tended to involve gutting and removal of residents, rather than comprehensive conservation.

This permissive environment had serious consequences for the historic city. Already reduced by demolitions, wartime bombing, and early reconstruction, Milan's heritage became further exposed to speculative redevelopment. Boatti (1989) argues that the 1953 Plan, rather than protecting what remained, created new pressures and substantial incentives for speculation in the historic center (Boatti, 1989, p. 50). Large portions of the urban fabric remained governed by the outdated 1865 building regulations²¹, effectively turning the historic centre into a "hunting ground" for speculative interventions (Boatti, 1989).

During this period, with a shift in perspective, the notion of the *centro storico* entered the postwar cultural debate as it came to define an entire part of the city, now recognized as a "unified monument" to be protected. The historic center became, in Bonfantini's (2020) words, "a prized island to safeguard, but also an urban space 'taken away'" (p. 190), increasingly treated as something separate from the rest of the city and subject to special forms of preservation and regulation.

Over the following decades, a critical vision of the city emerged as an exemplary case of the failure of modern planning ideas and the triumph of speculation, considering the plan as a completely private plan developed in accordance with the real estate regime's requirements (Togni, 2022; see also Boatti, 1989). This position has reduced the significance and relevance of the following planning agreements over time to a simple tool of speculation and disruption of planning policies.

5.1.4 1960s and New Standards

The 1960s in Italy marked an important period of reform, particularly following the Gubbio Charter²². In the cultural heritage sector, this reformist momentum eventually led to the creation of the Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage (Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali) in 1974. At the same time, the decade also witnessed significant efforts to modernize urban planning and construction practices (Mirri, 1994).

²¹ The 1865 Milan building regulations (*Regolamento Edilizio del 1865*) established rules on building heights, street widths, plot coverage, and basic safety, but by the mid-20th century they were outdated and did not address modern urban needs, leaving the historic center vulnerable to speculative development.

²² The Gubbio Charter was a 1960 Italian declaration that marked a new phase in the protection of historical city centers, emphasizing their social and economic maintenance. It highlighted the importance of maintaining the social structure and economic activities within historical centers, moving beyond modernist planning principles.

Yet despite this reformist momentum, the national legislative framework dating back to 1942 remained largely unchanged. In this context, municipalities increasingly relied on new administrative practices to manage rapid urban change, among which planning agreements (*convenzioni urbanistiche*) were particularly prevalent. These agreements, though not explicitly defined in Law No. 1150/1942, were authorized under its flexible provisions, allowing municipalities to negotiate urban development arrangements with private stakeholders. As Togni (2022) notes, “with the Planning Law 1150/1942 ... the role of private parties in the implementation of planning tools was finally regulated. Still, it was only with the amendments introduced by Law 765/1967 that we began to speak explicitly of planning agreements, including them in the public discipline of building and planning activities” (Togni, 2022, p. 40). This legal ambiguity allowed negotiated urbanism to expand in the absence of fully developed national planning instruments.

Precisely because they were long-standing instruments not clearly framed by legislation, planning agreements offer insights into the economic and political power relations between the public and private sectors, the intertwining of entrepreneurial strategies, design cultures, and administrative organization, and the negotiation processes that shaped urban development (Togni, 2022). Milan was one of the first cities that attempted to utilize planning agreements to handle complicated urban changes, especially in places where strict master plans were not effective. Projects in sensitive historical settings and of architectural relevance were made possible by these agreements. Giovanni Muzio's Turati Tower is a prime example, where the city negotiated terms for a major building close to the historic center (Togni, 2022). Despite the lack of official heritage tools, Milan started to build a model that incidentally affected heritage planning during this time, which struck a compromise between the demands of urban growth and spatial and cultural preservation.

One significant regulation that contributed to this effect was Ministerial Decree 1444/1968 (Decreto sugli Standard), which organized zoning and established parametric standards for public spaces and functions. This decree introduced the concept of *Zone Territoriali Omogenee* (Homogeneous Territorial Zones), creating the famous classification system in which Zone A consists of conservation areas (historic centers), Zone B comprises completed urban areas, Zone C consists of expansion areas, and Zone D covers industrial areas. Regarding Zone A, it included both the historic center itself and a surrounding area that constitutes an integral part of the historic center. This encompasses a larger area than what is defined as the historic center by the *Legge Ponte* (Mirri, 1994).

This innovation was based on the *Legge Ponte* (Law 765/1967), which introduced the first formal legal definition of historic centers (Mirri, 1994). While some scholars, such as Canevari (1989),

argued that the law lacked revolutionary content, it did begin to influence urban expansion by imposing limitations on the indiscriminate use of land. In fact, in Milan, the implementation of the law was delayed for a year due to the complications arising from pressure exerted by economic groups affected by its provisions (Canevari, 1989, p. 112).

Up to this point, the trajectory of heritage governance in Milan unveils as a paradox. While the introduction of instruments such as the 1942 Planning Law, the Legge Ponte of 1967, and the 1968 Ministerial Decree on standards gradually expanded the formal recognition of historic centers as areas requiring special regulation, in practice, the persistence of negotiated urbanism through planning agreements reinforced the dominance of private interests and speculative logics.

As a result, Milan's heritage was not safeguarded through systematic conservation policies but rather incidentally protected, and at times even exposed, through ad hoc planning practices. For instance, the expansion of Zone A under the 1968 decree formalized the idea of the historic center as a conservation category, yet this broader definition also exposed more territory to pressure from conflicting urban interests.

Administrative practices in Milan have historically depended on flexible and often opaque negotiations that blurred the distinction between public interest and private speculation. This approach has resulted in a fragmented method of heritage preservation, where preservation efforts were never fully integrated into urban planning. Del Curto and Salvo (2024) describe this situation as a “struggle with a long-standing inertia in embracing maintenance as a protective practice” (Del Curto & Salvo, 2024, p. 4).

5.1.5 1970s and 1980s: Regional Decentralization and Milan's 1980 PRG, the Regional Framework

The 1970s marked a turning point in Italian planning, shaped both by administrative decentralization and by new approaches to conservation. During this decade, the *centro storico* was no longer seen solely as an asset to be protected. It also came to be treated as a resource with economic and housing value, contributing to responses to the housing crisis (Mirri, 1994). Added to the scale of the building waste and of the “decay intentionally pursued as a means to speculate on the values of the central areas” (De Marco, 2017, p. 303), the city became a resource not to be wasted. Institutional reforms reinforced this shift. With the creation of the Regions in 1970 (Law 281/1970) and, later, the transfer of responsibility for master plan approval from the Ministry of Public Works to regional governments (Law 616/1977), the governance of urban planning and heritage underwent profound

change. As Mirri (1994) observes, the 1977 reform gave practical effect to Articles 9 and 117 of the Constitution: the State formally transferred matters such as urban planning and cultural heritage to the competence of the Regions (Mirri, 1994, p. 87). During the second regional legislature, Lombardy itself began to address the protection of historic and environmental assets through its own legislative instruments, emphasizing both protection and valorization, and thereby extending heritage governance to the regional level (Erba, 1979, p. 49).

The concept of *conservazione attraverso la trasformazione* (conservation through transformation) emerged prominently in the 1970s through the *Piani di Recupero* (rehabilitation plans), serving as one of the most significant instruments established by Law 865/1971. It was also the first recognition on a legislative basis of the need to rehabilitate historic centers (Mirri, 1994). The *Piani di Recupero* (PR) was defined as a planning tool aimed at identifying specific urban areas or buildings requiring intervention, coordinating a set of integrated actions such as restoration, restructuring, upgrading of public infrastructure, and social housing improvements, and allowing a combination of preservation measures balancing heritage conservation with functional and social modernization.

Law No. 10/1977 (Bucalossi) codified the idea that building rights are regulated public goods, introducing the requirement for paid building concessions issued by municipalities and separating building rights from land ownership. Although it set the stage for more coordinated urban renewal, its direct impact on heritage conservation was limited, as it prioritized modernization and planning control. It did not provide explicit sectoral tools or funding for heritage protection. While it facilitated integration of conservation into broader planning, actual heritage safeguarding continued to depend substantially on earlier and subsequent specialist laws and local initiative.

The approval of Milan's new *Piano Regolatore Generale* (PRG) by the Lombardy Regional Council in 1980 represented the culmination of the decentralization process that had begun in the late 1960s and 1970s. It established the framework within which Milan's urban and heritage planning would operate for the following decades. Although formally a general variance to the 1953 plan, it amounted to a comprehensive rethinking of Milan's spatial, social, and economic development strategies.

As noted by Comune di Milano in 1980, the plan explicitly "propose[d] to modify the type of development of the past, seeking ways to achieve a balance between Milan and the surrounding territory and to resolve the city's internal contradictions," defining "policies of containment of expansion and development of processes of redevelopment and recovery of the existing urban fabric" (Comune di Milano, 1980, p. 38). This formulation confirms that the new PRG replaced the postwar logic of growth with one of spatial and environmental equilibrium.

This transformation was rooted in the political and legislative innovations of the preceding decade. The Regional Law 51/1975 had already introduced the obligation for municipalities to approve *Programmi Pluriennali di Attuazione* (multi-year implementation programs), linking planning forecasts to both public and private financial resources. The first of these, adopted by the Milan City Council in July 1977, marked “an important act for Milan’s urban policy, confirming the intention to continue along the bold and progressive path set by the 1976 General Variant” (Erba, 1986, p. 155). As the municipal report also explains, “Regional Law 15.4.1975 n. 51 introduced the instrument of the program for the implementation of the Master Plan, extending the obligation of programming also to areas within the built-up perimeter (zones B2 and B3)” (Comune di Milano, 1980, p. 12). This law, along with its Milanese implementation, formalized the regionalization of planning powers and represented an early attempt to coordinate urban management with fiscal policy. In extending the *Programma Pluriennale di Attuazione* to already built-up zones (B2 and B3), Milan effectively brought the existing city, including its historic and socially mixed districts, within the framework of scheduled implementation.

Most importantly, the Regional Law 51/1975 explicitly required local plans to include a normative apparatus for historic centers, marking a shift from ad hoc heritage measures toward integrated regulatory frameworks. As clarified by Article 17 of Lombardy’s Regional Law 51/1975, the municipal master plans were now required to enumerate and regulate all heritage assets and areas of environmental interest, integrating conservation measures into the functional structure of urban planning (Erba, 1979, p. 185).

“The general town plan, with regard to the historic center and areas of historical, artistic, and environmental interest, must: (1) list and subject to specific regulation all historic and monumental assets deserving of protection, restoration, and conservation, as well as environmental interest zones; (2) define the organization of roads and parking areas to promote pedestrian mobility and public transport.” (Erba, 1979, p. 185).

The 1976 General Variant, approved by Milan’s first left-wing municipal administration, defined a new set of priorities in line with the evolving metropolitan condition. Its objectives explicitly included “the enhancement of the city’s historical and cultural central areas,” alongside limits to expansion, restructuring of degraded areas, and the protection of existing productive activities (Erba, 1986, p. 147).

This marked a decisive shift from the 1953 plan's developmentalism toward a more socially and environmentally conscious framework, placing heritage conservation within the broader goal of urban restructuring. In this regard, the PRG's own documentation emphasized that "one of the principal objectives of the new Plan is the valorization of the built city, the full use of the resources it offers, and the safeguarding of its peculiar character understood as a common heritage of all citizens" (Comune di Milano, 1980, p. 18).

A crucial legal milestone in this transition was the National Law 457/1978, which replaced earlier ad hoc recovery measures with a standardized framework for building rehabilitation (*piani di recupero*). Milan's administration had already initiated this direction between 1975 and 1978, focusing "on implementing the program for the recovery of existing buildings and safeguarding the population and activities within them," before adopting the new national framework (Erba, 1986, p. 155). Complementing this national law, Lombardy Regional Law 39/1984 provided the first formal regional mechanisms for intervention on buildings of historical, architectural, artistic, or archaeological value, while Regional Laws 86/1983 and 41/1985 addressed the protection of natural and cultural areas, including metropolitan parks surrounding Milan. The integration of these instruments signaled both regional and national recognition of the importance of existing urban fabric and a clear move away from the expansionist paradigms of postwar planning.

By the early 1980s, Milan had entered what Oliva (1986) describes as "a profoundly different situation from that of ten years earlier," marked by demographic decline and a structural transformation of the economy (Oliva, 1986, p. 166). The 1981 census recorded 1,603,150 inhabitants, 124,850 fewer than in 1971, and by 1985 the city had lost nearly 250,000 residents, as industrial employment fell by 30 percent while tertiary activities increased, reaching over 520,000 workers. This shift toward the service economy redefined the urban hierarchy and produced renewed pressure on the historic core, where administrative and commercial functions sought to concentrate. The resulting "new tertiary concentration and Milan's neocentrism" (Oliva, 1986, p. 167) signaled the limitations of earlier decentralization policies and indirectly reshaped heritage governance: historic districts and existing building stock, once protected under the safeguarding logic of the 1976 General Variant, became key targets for reuse and functional transformation. The municipal plan itself had anticipated this challenge, warning that "the regulatory system of the new Master Plan sought to halt the processes of replacement and transformation that heavily affected the historic center, to favor interventions that... would not conflict with the specific objectives of zone A" (Comune di Milano, 1980, p. 20).

Although the 1980 PRG was conceived as a regulatory framework to “safeguard and restructure the existing city,” its implementation, as the author notes, “was only partially initiated ... because some of the fundamental assumptions and choices on which it was based entered into crisis,” especially those concerning the protection of established urban fabric (Oliva, 1986, p. 166). The plan thus evolved into a mechanism for accommodating economic change rather than strictly preserving heritage, embedding conservation within broader policies of urban redevelopment and functional conversion that characterized Milan’s governance of the built environment throughout the 1980s. This evolution also reflected the broader institutional tensions described by the PRG itself, which recognized that its regional examination “took place in the absence of the Regional Territorial Plan ... which was supposed to outline the framework of the regional territorial structure and coordinate public investment programs” (Comune di Milano, 1980, p. 39), revealing the structural limits of Italy’s newly regionalized planning system.

5.1.6 The 1990s: Complex Programs and Negotiated Planning

Entering the 1990s, Milan’s urban planning strategy underwent a significant transformation, responding to challenges of industrial decline and the complex needs of built heritage management. Drawing on frameworks set in the previous decade, Milan’s approach became increasingly oriented towards large-scale urban regeneration, negotiated interventions, and adaptive reuse of existing heritage, notably industrial sites. Balducci (2003) emphasizes that local politicians in Milan endorsed a “policy of planning by projects” focused on “large-scale interventions capable of boosting infrastructure levels in the city centre” (Balducci, 2003, p. 64). This reflected a shift from rigid master planning toward more flexible, project-based governance models.

Large-scale projects exemplifying this trend included the redevelopment of disused industrial zones, such as Garibaldi-Repubblica’s new business district, Portello-Fiera trade fair centre, and the Pirelli-Bicocca enterprise zone initially envisioned as a technological hub. These initiatives demonstrated the instrumental role of heritage-sensitive redevelopment within Milan’s urban strategy (Balducci, 2003, p. 63).

Established by Laws 179/1992 and 493/1993 and operationalized through Ministerial Decree 1169/1998, *Programmi Complessi* permitted flexible interventions and regulatory departures, facilitating the revitalization of urban areas most affected by structural economic changes. Milan became a laboratory for these negotiated planning approaches, with landmark projects such as Bicocca and Porta

Garibaldi exemplifying the integration of heritage conservation within contemporary urban development.

While these programmes enabled the regeneration of abandoned industrial areas and supported reuse, critics argue they often privileged market logics and project-based exceptions over coherent strategic governance. For instance, Serra (2021) finds that in Milan “the risk of encouraging real estate speculation, in the same way as financial markets” is a key outcome of the market-based planning instruments (Serra, 2021, p. 1). This substantiates the claim that governance regimes shifted toward enabling investment-led, project-based transformation rather than integrated long-term strategic planning.

At the same time, institutional recognition of industrial heritage began to advance: regional inventories and census efforts, coordinated by organizations such as *Fondazione Luigi Micheletti* and the *Centro per la Cultura d’Impresa*, documented Lombardy’s industrial archaeology (censuses 1982–87, database activity through the 1990s), providing an empirical base for later protective measures.

5.1.7 2000s: Planned Conservation and the *Piano di Governo del Territorio*

The Italian heritage legislation reached a key milestone with the *Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio* (Legislative Decree 42/2004), which consolidated earlier regulations into a comprehensive legal framework. Several clauses proved particularly important for historic planning. Article 29 defines conservation as “a coherent, coordinated and scheduled set of activities of maintenance, prevention, and structural enhancement,” establishing what is commonly referred to in the literature as *conservazione programmata* (planned conservation). While the decree does not explicitly frame this as a shift from reactive to proactive management, this structured and programmatic approach can be interpreted as encouraging a more anticipatory and systematic form of heritage governance.

The decree further reinforced the integration between heritage protection and territorial planning, stipulating that “territorial government bodies concerned shall incorporate the same prescriptions into building regulations and urban planning instruments” (*Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio*, Legislative Decree No. 42, 2004, art. 145). In addition, it provides a framework for defining the physical and morphological characteristics of the existing built environment and sets out methods for interventions that respect the current urban structure. The legislation also emphasizes criteria for enhancing protected buildings, linking conservation objectives to broader planning and development goals.

Building on these national provisions, the regulatory structure for historic planning in Milan was further elaborated at the regional level with the passage of the Lombardy Regional Law 12/2005 (Law for Territorial Governance). This law established the *Piano di Governo del Territorio* (PGT), composed of three parts: the *Documento di Piano*, a strategic planning document; the *Piano dei Servizi*, an infrastructure and services plan; and the *Piano delle Regole*, a land use regulatory framework, replacing the previous PRG system. Article 10 of Law 12/2005 specifically addressed heritage planning by requiring the *Piano delle Regole* to identify *nuclei di antica formazione* and other cultural heritage objects subject to protection, thereby translating principles that had been developing in Italian planning discourse since the 1960s into formal legal instruments.

The law also outlines categories of intervention, ranging from ordinary maintenance through extraordinary maintenance, restoration, conservative renovation, restructuring, and new construction, with the appropriate type of intervention determined through morphological analysis. These provisions suggest that the incorporation of twentieth-century layers into Milan's heritage framework has been gradual and mediated by multiple factors. Recognition of modern urban fabric has relied on a combination of procedural enablement (municipal planning capacity), programmatic instruments (PRG orientations, Programmi/PII), and sectoral protection under national and regional legislation (Codice 42/2004 and PGT obligations). Consequently, while some modern layers have been integrated into the heritage field, portions of mid-century and industrial fabric remain peripheral to conservation efforts.

5.1.8 Interpreting Milan's Approach: Planning as Heritage Governance

The preceding analysis of Milan's heritage governance reveals a set of practices and norms that reflect both strengths and limitations in how the city has dealt with its twentieth-century built environment. Importantly, the protection and valorisation of modern architecture in Milan cannot be understood simply as the application of a single tool or procedure; rather, it emerges from the interaction of planning frameworks, landscape review processes, and cultural debates over what should be preserved. Instruments such as the PRG, the PGT, and categories like the NAF have progressively incorporated historical considerations into planning practice.

However, this integration remains indirect and selective, privileging older urban fabrics and morphologically coherent areas, while leaving much of the 20th-century built environment in an ambiguous position. Modern architecture is often acknowledged analytically but rarely translated into binding protective measures.

As a result, Milan presents a paradox: a highly articulated planning system with strong analytical capacity, yet limited effectiveness in safeguarding 20th-century heritage. What is at stake, however, is not simply the effectiveness of planning instruments, but the way in which planning itself becomes a filter of heritage value. This gap between recognition and implementation contributes to a public perception in which modern heritage is seen as negotiable, replaceable, or secondary to development pressures. This matters because it produces a form of implicit heritage governance, where what is preserved is shaped less by historical or social meaning and more by compatibility with established planning categories.

The consequence is a selective historical narrative of the modern city. While Milan's planning framework has successfully limited large-scale erasure and speculative disruption, it has also contributed to a depoliticized reading of twentieth-century heritage. The social tensions, ideological fractures, and economic forces that shaped the modern city are rarely addressed explicitly within heritage discourse. Instead, they are absorbed into a neutralized urban morphology, where heritage value is inferred from form rather than debated through meaning.

Table 1. Summary of Milan’s Normative and Planning Evolution regarding Heritage²³

Instrument/Law	Type	Date	Level	Main Content	Effect on Heritage Practice	
Law No. 2359 on Expropriation (Legge sulle espropriazioni per pubblica utilità)	Law	1865	National	Introduced <i>piani regolatori</i> and <i>piani di ampliamento</i> for urban expansion	Indirect	Enabled early municipal planning (e.g., Beruto Plan, 1884), but heritage was not yet a planning concern, preservation remained tied to art-historical protection of monuments.
Laws No. 1089 and 1497/1939 – Protection of Artistic, Historic, and Landscape Heritage	Law	1939	National	Created the modern <i>tutela</i> system for cultural and natural heritage; established procedures for listing and protection.	Direct	Formed the legal foundation for heritage protection, but it was separate from urban planning.
Law No. 1150 – Italian Urban Planning Law (Legge Urbanistica)	Law	1942	National	Established hierarchical planning (PTC, PRG). Introduced zoning and mandatory inclusion of historic and archaeological surveys.	Indirect	Formally recognized the need to identify historic areas, but practically separated planning from heritage tutela. Milan’s PRG (1953).
Italian Constitution	Constitution	1948	National	Art. 9 Established the protection of landscapes and historical-artistic heritage as a constitutional principle. Art. 117 clarifies the implementation by distributing powers between the State and the Regions, an important distinction to understanding heritage governance in practice.	Direct	Provided constitutional legitimacy for heritage protection.
Law No. 765 – Legge	Law	1967	National	Amended the 1942 Planning Law.	Direct	First national acknowledgment of

²³ The timeline reveals the presence of two parallel trajectories:

- (1) the town planning lineage: focused on spatial regulation and municipal control;
- (2) the heritage lineage: rooted in cultural tutela and art-historical preservation.

<i>Ponte</i>				Introduced a preliminary definition of historic centers as zones to be regulated.		<i>centri storici</i> as special planning zones.
Ministerial Decree No. 1444 – Urban Standards Decree	Decree	1968	National	Established Zone Territoriali Omogenee (A–D), introducing zoning parameters and mandatory public-space standards.	Direct	Zone A is designated for conservation of historic centers; linked urban form and heritage regulation.
Law No. 865 – Housing Law and Piani di Recupero	Law	1971	National	Introduced rehabilitation plans combining restoration, infrastructure improvement, and housing renewal.	Indirect	Recognized rehabilitation of historic centers as part of planning policy (“conservation through transformation”).
Law No. 10 – <i>Bucalossi Law</i>	Law	1977	National	Defined building rights as regulated public goods; introduced paid building concessions managed by municipalities.	Indirect	Strengthened municipal control, enabling integration of conservation into local planning, but not a specific heritage law.
Law No. 281 / Law No. 616	Law	1970 / 1977	National/Regional	Created Italian Regions and transferred competence for urban planning and heritage implementation to the regional level.	Indirect	Enabled regional participation in heritage management.
Milan <i>Variante generale</i> to the PRG	Plan	1980	Regional/Municipal	Comprehensive revision of the 1953 PRG	Indirect	Recognized need for reuse and reconnection of industrial areas; industrial heritage is partly acknowledged.
Programmi Complessi (Laws 179/1992 & 493/1993; DM 1169/1998)	Law/Program	1992 / 1993 / 1998	National	Introduced flexible planning instruments allowing negotiated urban regeneration between public and private actors.	Indirect	Encouraged reuse and rehabilitation of disused areas, but heritage outcomes are dependent on market logic.
Regional Law No. 9 – Lombardy <i>Programmi Integrati d’Intervento (PII)</i>	Regional Law	1999	Regional	Lombardy’s adaptation of Programmi Complessi, institutionalizing negotiated planning at the regional level.	Indirect	Enabled regeneration projects involving heritage sites but prioritized economic feasibility.

Legislative Decree No. 42 – <i>Codice dei Beni Culturali e del Paesaggio</i>	Decree	2004	National	Unified heritage legislation; introduced the concept of planned conservation (conservazione programmata) and required planning integration.	Direct	Established a link between tutela and territorial governance.
Regional Law No. 12 – <i>Norme per il Piano di Governo del Territorio</i>	Regional Law	2005	Regional	Replaced PRG with <i>Piano di Governo del Territorio (PGT)</i> ; mandated identification of <i>Nuclei di Antica Formazione (NAF)</i> and morphological analysis.	Direct	Operationalized integration of heritage into urban planning; applied morphological and typological principles.

5.2 Porto Alegre: Legislative Evolution Regarding Heritage

The legislative evolution of heritage planning in Porto Alegre cannot be understood apart from Brazil's broader institutional history and the interplay between national, state, and municipal governance. Heritage protection in Brazil emerged from a centralized framework rooted in the creation of the *Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional* (SPHAN), which later became the *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional* (IPHAN), the principal federal agency for heritage protection, in 1937 through Decree-Law No. 25/1937, which defined national criteria for identifying and safeguarding monuments of exceptional historical or artistic value (Vasconcellos et al., 2022). As Trusiani (2010) explains, “in its early years, IPHAN was primarily concerned with protecting colonial historic centers and the most representative constructions of that period, which were at risk of disappearing. Subsequently, state and municipal protection laws were enacted, derived from this model” (Trusiani, 2010, p. 16).

Thus, this section reconstructs the normative trajectory from that point, tracing its development from a national perspective but focusing on Porto Alegre's approach to heritage governance by examining its municipal legislation, planning tools, and milestones.

5.2.1 National Framework: Institutional Foundations of Heritage Protection in Brazil

The formal recognition of cultural heritage as an object of mandatory public protection in Brazil predates Decree-Law No. 25/1937. As Fonseca (2005) reminds us, the 1934 Constitution already assigned concurrent competence to the Union and the States to “protect natural beauties and monuments of historical or artistic value” (art. 10 of the Preliminary Provisions), thereby signaling a juridical concern with collective values before the regulatory text of 1937. It was, however, as mentioned above, Decree-Law No. 25 of 30 November 1937 that operationalized state protection in concrete legal terms. The decree both specified the cultural values that justify state intervention and set out the legal regime of *tombamento* for movable and immovable goods (Fonseca, 2005). In Porto Alegre, the effects of this new legal framework were felt very rapidly. Within the first months of its enactment, two of the city's most emblematic institutions, the *Igreja de Nossa Senhora das Dores* (see Visual Atlas [Figure A23](#)) and the *Museu Júlio de Castilhos*, were listed in the *Livro do Tombo das Belas Artes* in May and June 1938, respectively (Simões, 2024, p. 121).

This legal framework established two key principles that shaped subsequent heritage governance. First, as Fonseca (2005) notes, “it is the cultural value attributed to the good that justifies its recognition as heritage and, consequently, its protection by the State” (p. 32). Second, the *tombamento* mechanism redefined property relations by subordinating private ownership to collective interest. Decree-Law No. 25 thus consolidated “the prevalence of collective interest over private interest and the indispensable tutelage of the State” (Vasconcellos et al., 2022, p. 288).

This duality has important practical implications, as later discussed in the case of Porto Alegre. Because *tombamento* operates on the intersection between thing and value, it constrains the exercise of private property rights in defense of diffuse public interests, values that are not easily quantified or commodified and whose beneficiaries are collective rather than individual. Fonseca (2005) stresses that the legal protection, therefore, needs to be understood not merely as safeguarding material objects but as preserving socially attributed meanings that are produced, reproduced, and renegotiated through social practices (Fonseca, 2005). From an urban planning perspective, this means that a purely object-centered preservation regime (i.e., isolated listings of monuments) is insufficient when the objective is to conserve urban values that depend on context, surroundings, and spatial relations. This limitation would become evident in Porto Alegre during the 1990s, when protection measures focused on individual buildings rather than on their broader urban fabric (see Visual Atlas [Figure A24](#)).

The constitutional reform of 1988 marked a turning point in Brazilian heritage governance by expanding the definition of cultural heritage and decentralizing its management. Article 216 of the Federal Constitution defined cultural heritage as “the material and immaterial assets, individually or collectively, that bear reference to the identity, action, and memory of the different groups that form Brazilian society” (Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil, 1988, art. 216). This formulation represented a significant conceptual shift from the earlier patrimonial model based primarily on architectural monuments to a more inclusive understanding that embraced cultural practices, traditions, and collective memory. Furthermore, by establishing *competência comum* (shared competence) among the Union, States, and Municipalities, the 1988 Constitution institutionalized a multilevel governance framework, granting local administrations greater autonomy and responsibility in defining, protecting, and managing heritage. In Rio Grande do Sul, the *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico do Estado* (IPHAE) complemented federal policies by recognizing ensembles and buildings of regional relevance. Consequently, Porto Alegre operates within a multilevel system in which federal, state, and municipal instruments coexist, highlighting the complexity of heritage governance in practice. This framework also

laid the legal foundation for later municipal initiatives that would reinterpret heritage not merely as a set of physical assets, but as a living component of urban identity and social life.

In practice, however, this framework proved more aspirational than transformative. As Fonseca (2005) notes, despite the broadened constitutional discourse, the mechanisms of implementation largely reproduced the centralized, object-oriented model. The decentralization of competence was not matched by adequate technical capacity or institutional coordination at the municipal level, resulting in uneven and fragmented protection policies. This gap between principle and practice became particularly evident in Porto Alegre's 1999 Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Urbano Ambiental (PDDUA)²⁴. Trusiani (2010, p. 38) emphasizes that while the municipal government sought to strengthen the PDDUA as a process, promoting public debate and participation, the actual product was of questionable quality. In practice, the plan often served the interests of those who used urban instruments for private gain, rather than prioritizing the social and collective needs of the population, facing the challenges of reconciling modernization with conservation.

Subsequent legislation provided more concrete tools for integrating heritage into urban planning. The *Estatuto da Cidade* (Law No. 10.257/2001) introduced new urban planning instruments, such as *transferência do direito de construir* (Transfer of Development Rights), which could be employed indirectly to support heritage protection. While some of these tools are primarily intended for land-use regulation and urban development, they enable municipalities to mitigate development pressures on historic properties and integrate heritage considerations into broader planning strategies (Vasconcellos et al., 2022). For instance, TDC allows owners restricted by heritage or zoning regulations to transfer unused building rights to other properties. This mechanism provides an indirect economic compensation for preservation obligations, encouraging owners to maintain protected structures rather than pursuing demolition or overdevelopment.

In short, the national legal tradition highlights three interrelated points critical for analyzing heritage governance in urban planning: (1) protection is legitimized by culturally attributed value rather than materiality alone; (2) *tombamento* creates a dual regime of property, balancing private ownership with collective cultural values; and (3) the shift from a centralized, monument-focused model to a decentralized, planning-oriented approach (post-1988) opens the possibility of integrating heritage into

²⁴ The 1999 Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Urbano Ambiental (PDDUA) of Porto Alegre was enacted as Lei Complementar Municipal nº 311/1999, formally revising the earlier 1979 PDDU. The plan introduced instruments such as the Progressive Territorial Tax and the Construction Index Reserve, which could theoretically support urban improvements and heritage preservation. However, their practical application was only partial, and institutional and technical limitations constrained their effectiveness in protecting historic properties.

territorial management, but also demands institutional capacity to translate symbolic protection into enforceable urban regulations (Fonseca, 2005; Vasconcellos et al., 2022).

5.2.2 Early Municipal Legislation: Heritage Amid Urban Modernization (1930s–1970s)

Until the 1970s, Porto Alegre's municipal urban legislation prioritized hygiene, infrastructure development, and zoning regulations while remaining entirely absent from heritage protection considerations. The technocratic approach that dominated the period reflected broader modernist planning principles that emphasized functional efficiency over historical continuity.

The 1939 Plan and its subsequent revisions²⁵ in 1959 and 1979 exemplified what municipal planners understood as progressive urbanism, establishing regulations for street hierarchies, building alignments, and land-use control (Cuty, 2007). These instruments made no provisions for historical or architectural protection, reflecting the dominant modernist discourse that, as Cuty (2007) observes, resulted in buildings that “constructed the new by destroying the old” (Cuty, 2007, p. 244).

This legislative absence exemplified broader Brazilian planning trends, where modernist discourses marginalized historical continuity in favor of progress and rationalization. Porto Alegre's modernization projects, including the opening of major avenues such as Borges de Medeiros in the 40s and urban renewal interventions in the historic center, frequently involved demolitions of late-19th and early-20th-century structures, reflecting what Berman (1988) describes as the modern imperative that “everything that bourgeois society builds is built to be torn down... all these are made to be broken tomorrow, smashed or shredded or pulverized or dissolved” (Berman, 1988, p. 99).

Furthermore, the first *Plano Diretor* of 1959 institutionalized what heritage scholars now recognize as systematic heritage destruction through replacement policies. As Trusiani (2010) notes, subsequent planning instruments “encouraged and promoted the replacement of old buildings with new constructions, without this operation resulting in any improvement in the quality of the new buildings” (Trusiani, 2010, p. 20). This planning ideology of tabula rasa embodied Paoli's (1992, p. 25) observation that “the constant pursuit of the new, which challenges comprehension and intervention in the city” often overshadowed the importance of various other issues related to urban space.

²⁵The Gladosch Plan (1939) was conceived during the *Estado Novo* dictatorship (1937–1945), when urban modernization served nationalist and centralized state goals. The first Master Plan (1959) was developed in a period of postwar optimism, though still marked by technocratic approaches to planning. The first Urban Development Plan (1979), in turn, was also conceived under an authoritarian regime, during Brazil's military dictatorship (1964–1985). It is noteworthy that the most significant transformations in Porto Alegre's urban planning history tend to coincide with authoritarian regimes rather than periods of democracy (Souza, 2010).

Despite legislative gaps in the municipal sphere, cultural institutions and civil society began mobilizing for preservation during this period. The *Museu de Arte do Rio Grande do Sul* (MARGS), established in 1954, and local branches of the *Instituto dos Arquitetos do Brasil* (IAB-RS) became important advocates for valuing heritage. However, without municipal legal instruments, protection efforts remained limited to federal and state levels through *tombamentos* implemented by IPHAN and IPHAE.

As Cuty (2007) notes, the first organized efforts to defend heritage in Porto Alegre emerged only in the early 1970s. Prior to this period, initiatives in this area were largely dependent on support from IPHAN, despite previous plans emphasizing the importance of preserving the city's cultural heritage. The turning point came when movements for heritage protection emerged as a direct reaction to automobile-centered urbanism that destroyed large portions of the historic fabric to accommodate road widening and viaduct construction (Trusiani, 2010, p. 25).

Following this initiative, the *Lei Orgânica do Município* (Municipal Charter) of 1970, which explicitly recognized the importance of the city's cultural heritage, represented a significant milestone. In line with this law, a commission was formed to create an initial inventory of 59 properties that should be protected, notably dominated by buildings of historical value or reflecting Portuguese or Azorean architectural heritage. (Cuty, 2007). It reflected the first municipal gesture toward heritage, but without administrative structure or enforcement mechanisms. Starting from this time, initial physical interventions frequently utilized *fachadismo*, a technique focused on maintaining just the façade or certain components of a structure, a method that continues to be used in Porto Alegre today (Cuty, 2007, p. 247).

Moreover, during this period, the *Conselho Municipal do Patrimônio Histórico e Cultural de Porto Alegre* (COMPAHC) was officially established, constituting the municipal heritage council, as mandated by Law No. 4.139/1976. Further institutionalization occurred with the first Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Urbano (PDDU)²⁶ in 1979, which formally recognized the importance of heritage preservation through protective and incentive-based provisions. According to Cuty (2007), the planning group responsible for the *Subárea de Paisagem Urbana*²⁷ developed a more comprehensive inventory, listing approximately 2,000 properties across various neighborhoods, reflecting planners' awareness of the geographical breadth of preservation efforts. This was the first systematic mapping of heritage

²⁶ The *Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Urbano* (PDDU) of Porto Alegre was established by *Lei Complementar nº 43*, enacted on July 21, 1979, during Brazil's military dictatorship. It served as the city's first comprehensive urban development plan.

²⁷ A planning category or zone within Porto Alegre's first PDDU (1979). It was used to designate parts of the city where urban form, historical character, and cultural landscape were considered in planning decisions.

potential, serving as an analytical tool for future policy, but it was not yet a legal protection list. The properties were classified into two categories: those of sociocultural interest, which were to be preserved, and those of volumetric adequacy, which could be replaced if necessary (Cuty, 2007).

However, the administration's inventory of the capital's real estate assets in the early 1970s, followed by the creation of a municipal preservation council and protective legislation, had limited effectiveness. As Trusiani (2010) observes, these efforts "had the effect of slowing down the demolition of cataloged properties, without being able to completely stop this process" (Trusiani, 2010, p. 20). The persistence of demolitions through the 1980s demonstrated the limitations of early preservation initiatives when confronted with speculative urban development pressures and insufficient legal frameworks.

Therefore, the period between the 1930s and 1970s established the foundational tension between heritage preservation and urban modernization that would continue to characterize Porto Alegre's urban development. The municipal legislative evolution so far demonstrated that "preservation still depends on private will rather than on public interest", highlighting the urgent need for more robust institutional frameworks to protect the city's cultural memory (Vasconcellos et al., 2022, p. 292).

5.2.3 Institutionalization of Municipal Heritage Policy (1980s–1990s)

The institutional structures established during the 1970s, particularly the creation of the COMPAHC and the inclusion of heritage considerations in the PDDU, provided the foundation upon which a more coherent municipal preservation policy would gradually emerge. Yet, despite these early initiatives, the local system still lacked technical capacity and operational continuity, conditions that would only be addressed in the following decade.

The process of political democratization in the 1980s offered the necessary conditions for this institutional maturation. Within a national context marked by the 1988 Federal Constitution and its emphasis on decentralized governance, Porto Alegre began to consolidate administrative mechanisms and technical expertise for the protection of cultural assets at the local level.

A decisive step in this direction came with the establishment of the *Equipe do Patrimônio Histórico e Cultural* (EPAHC) through Portaria nº 45 of 1981. Currently integrated into the *Diretoria de Patrimônio e Memória* (DPM) of the *Secretaria Municipal da Cultura* (SMC), the EPAHC became the municipality's principal technical agency for heritage preservation. It assumed responsibility for

inventorying immovable heritage, preparing feasibility studies for *tombamento*, and issuing technical opinions, which were later forwarded to the COMPAHC for deliberation and legal designation.

In 1989, the EPAHC launched a comprehensive inventory of the central area of Porto Alegre, which soon expanded to adjacent neighborhoods and involved collaboration with other municipal departments (Cuty, 2007). This initiative marked a turning point because much of the built stock listed in the 1977 survey had already been altered or demolished, underscoring the urgency of systematic documentation. More importantly, the project broadened the city's understanding of what constituted heritage value, recognizing not only colonial and eclectic buildings but also notable examples from the 1940s to 1960s, representative of Art Deco and early modernist architecture.

According to Cuty (2007), this renewed perspective led to a reformulation of heritage assessment criteria, reflecting a shift from stylistic or historical hierarchies toward multidimensional evaluation. The EPAHC introduced four analytical dimensions that remain influential today: the cultural dimension, which considers the historical or symbolic significance of an asset for local communities; the morphological dimension, emphasizing architectural typology and design value; the technical dimension, which evaluates constructive systems and material integrity; and the landscape dimension, which interprets the relationship between heritage assets and their surrounding urban context.

The COMPAHC was restructured under Municipal Decree No. 9.162/88, which formalized its composition and competencies, solidifying its role as a deliberative body responsible for heritage review in urban planning. In conjunction with this restructuring, the establishment of the *Departamento do Patrimônio Histórico* (DPH) within the SMC marked a significant shift towards integrating cultural preservation with participatory planning. This new orientation aimed to reflect and address broader discourses on the right to the city, urban environmentalism, and community participation, thereby enhancing the role of heritage within the urban planning process.

5.2.4 Integration with Urban Planning: The 1999 PDDUA

Two years prior to the *Estatuto da Cidade* (Law 10.257/2001), Porto Alegre's 1999 *Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Urbano e Ambiental* (Urban and Environmental Development Master Plan, Law Complementary No. 434/1999) had already established principles of democratic and participatory urban management, social equity, and cultural enrichment (Trusiani, 2010). It marked a decisive shift in the conceptual relationship between urban planning and cultural heritage for the city. As Trusiani (2010) observes, the 1999 PDDUA introduced a conceptual evolution in the treatment of cultural assets

through the creation of *Áreas Especiais de Interesse Cultural* (AEICs). These zones established legal requirements for the conservation, rehabilitation, and reuse of ensembles with recognized cultural or environmental value (Trusiani, 2010, p. 36).

The institutional context for this reform emerged earlier in the 1990s, during the participatory planning process that culminated in the *Congresso Cidade Constituinte* of 1996. This event, part of the broader participatory planning movement initiated in 1993, established guidelines that explicitly connected heritage preservation with urban revitalization. Among the most significant outcomes was the proposal for a *Programa de Corredores Culturais* (Cultural Corridors Program), conceived to revitalize commercial areas in the historic center, for instance, *Rua da Praia*, through the restoration of architectural heritage, improvement of urban furniture, regulation of advertising, and management of informal commerce (Cuty, 2007, p. 248).

The resulting *Corredor Cultural* program, implemented by the SMC, expanded the discourse of heritage preservation beyond architectural form. As Cuty (2007) notes, it promoted reflection on urban and cultural identity, engaging residents, merchants, and users of the central area in discussions about processes of transformation and loss. The initiative emphasized that preservation should not merely safeguard architectural typologies but also reanimate the social meanings and everyday practices embedded in historic urban spaces.

This resonates with a second dimension of heritage governance that is still lacking in the Brazilian context, the valorization of heritage assets. As Cuty (2007) situates the deterioration of Brazilian historic centers within long-term urban processes, noting that the degradation of these areas resulted from intense real estate valorization during the early decades of the twentieth century. Following industrialization, many Brazilian centers underwent a rapid process of verticalization. Initially, this allowed for an intense economic and symbolic revalorization of these areas. However, its excessive and uncontrolled application, with no attention to the quality of space or the comfort of the population, very quickly produced negative consequences, leading to the degradation of central areas as early as the 1960s (Cuty, 2007). As Xavier (2003) explains, “when the value of the land surpassed that of the building, demolition followed,” leading within three decades to the replacement of much of the nineteenth-century building stock with a denser and more verticalized urban fabric (p. 57).

The decline of Porto Alegre’s historic center was attributed mainly to chaotic traffic and a lack of security, which drove residents away to the suburbs. From then on, it assumed the specialized function of a place for business, services, and shopping, with a high flow of people during the day and minimal activity at night. This emptiness outside business hours was reversed beginning with the successive crises

of the 1980s, when the old buildings started to be occupied by lower-income groups seeking accessibility, low rents, and the area's vitality (Cuty, 2007). This long history of incremental modernization and of verticalization in the city centre has produced a fragmented urban fabric in which isolated protective acts do not always preserve the surrounding spatial relations that give built assets their broader significance (Souza, 2010).

Within this historical and conceptual framework, the 1999 PDDUA represented a turning point. The AEICs institutionalized the notion that preservation could function as a strategic instrument of urban planning rather than as an external constraint. However, Trusiani (2010) points out several substantial weaknesses in both the formulation and implementation of the 1999 plan. As he observes, “no explicit reference to conservation or the memory of the urban cultural heritage appeared among its primary objectives,” reflecting an “almost hesitant, or even absent, approach” to the theme (Trusiani, 2010, p. 31).

The AEICs, while formally defined as zones of special cultural interest, lacked methodological clarity and were often superimposed on local projects initiated outside the plan, with scarce relations to the new instruments,” revealing a bias toward transformation rather than safeguarding (Trusiani, 2010). The plan's implementation, according to Trusiani, “presented itself as an interesting social discussion, though with few operative and practical effects for its intended beneficiaries” (p. 31). In other words, the participatory process became an end in itself, while the material outcomes, particularly in the historic center, remained limited or contradictory.

Another questionable point was the use of the term “flexibility”. Conceived as a mechanism to reconcile preservation with development, flexibility was often “used to justify the reduction of distance between buildings, the increase of heights, [and] the reduction of parking requirements,” undermining the very environmental and morphological principles the plan was meant to protect (Trusiani, 2010, p. 39). The supposed harmony between heritage protection and urban growth thus revealed deep contradictions, with cultural assets instrumentalized as symbolic capital within speculative logics rather than safeguarded as collective goods.

The debate over the AEICs persisted until 2008, with civic groups urging stronger municipal action to safeguard the city's heritage (Trusiani, 2010, p. 100). Four years after Decree No. 14.530²⁸, however, the situation remained stagnant, and instead of consolidating the legal framework, the

²⁸ Decree No. 14.530 (2004) was a temporary municipal measure issued to regulate the AEICs after their creation in the 1999 PDDUA. Because the plan had established AEICs conceptually but without detailed operational norms, the decree introduced precautionary guidelines to manage interventions in these culturally sensitive zones until a definitive law could be approved by the City Council.

municipality introduced, through *Portaria* 59/2008, amendments that diverged from the PDDUA's original principles. These included the creation of *Áreas de Ambiência Cultural* (AACs), transitional zones with more permissive rules, which diluted AEIC protections and enabled alterations and demolitions within historically sensitive areas (Trusiani, 2010, p.101).

The 1999 PDDUA represents a significant yet paradoxical moment in Porto Alegre's planning history. As Trusiani (2010) shows, it established a framework for integrating cultural heritage into urban regulation via AEICs, but faced conceptual ambiguity and limited operational effectiveness. Furthermore, Rigatti (2010) shows that the subsequent revisions of the PD, including the 2010 reform, failed to resolve the technical and legal impasse surrounding AEICs, exposing the political reluctance to confront the construction industry's influence. His analysis underscores that the persistence of "administrative inertia" and the postponement of key decisions were not technical accidents but political choices that subordinated public heritage interests to private urban renewal agendas (Rigatti, 2010, p. 105). The result, as both authors imply, is a fragmented governance model in which participatory rhetoric masks asymmetries of power, leading to the erosion of Porto Alegre's historic urban landscapes and to growing disillusionment among civic actors.

5.2.5 Recent Developments: Heritage, Participation, and the Metropolitan Scale (2010–Present)

Even before the 2010 revision of the PDDUA, Porto Alegre had already experienced important milestones in the institutionalization of heritage protection. The early 2000s were marked by the implementation of the *Programa Monumenta*²⁹. Locally, the project began in 2002 and focused on the historic center, specifically on the listed *Sítio Histórico Urbano de Porto Alegre*, which encompasses the *Praças da Matriz* and da *Alfândega*, both *tombadas* by the IPHAN in 2000, as well as the *Igreja Nossa Senhora das Dores*, *tombada* in 1938, the oldest church in the city (Seixas & Mog, 2023, p. 197). The program financed the restoration of several buildings within and around these sites, contributing to the physical renewal of the historic core. Beyond its architectural impact, the program also produced indirect socioeconomic effects. As Simões (2024) observes, the program stimulated the market for historic properties, increased municipal fiscal revenue allocated to cultural activities, and encouraged residential use within heritage buildings. However, as Cuty (2012, p. 24) notes, the Monumenta "did not constitute

²⁹Federal initiative financed by the Inter-American Development Bank that supported the restoration of historic centers across Brazil.

urban legislation but a program of interventions with limited duration and resources,” lacking the legal permanence required to ensure ongoing protection. Consequently, the initiative generated visible improvements in individual properties but failed to establish a lasting regulatory framework capable of safeguarding the historic ensemble as an integrated urban landscape.

Another significant step toward local institutionalization came with the approval of Lei Complementar nº 601/2008, the first municipal law to regulate the *Inventário do Patrimônio Cultural de Bens Imóveis do Município de Porto Alegre* (Simões, 2024, p. 155). The 2008 law filled an important legal gap by establishing municipal criteria for identifying, classifying, and managing heritage assets. It introduced two categories of listings, *bens de estruturação* and *bens de compatibilização*, with distinct preservation requirements (Simões, 2024, p. 156). The first referred to buildings that, due to their architectural or historical value, could not be demolished or mutilated, while the second allowed for controlled modification or demolition, provided that new interventions respected the surrounding urban context. It also introduced compensatory mechanisms such as the *Transferência de Potencial Construtivo* (TPC), which allowed owners of listed properties to transfer part of their unused building rights to other sites within the same macrozone (Simões, 2024). This mechanism, implemented at the municipal level, is one of the key instruments proposed by the EC. In practical terms, the TPC sought to offset the economic limitations associated with heritage designation by treating the unbuilt potential of a protected property as a transferable asset.

A more structural approach was introduced through the 2010 revision of Porto Alegre’s PDDUA (Law Complementary No. 646/2010), which represented a formal attempt to embed heritage within the city’s spatial regulation and planning apparatus. This revision incorporated the *Inventário do Patrimônio Cultural* into the municipal urban information system and established new regulations for the AEICs. Interventions within those areas now require an *Estudo de Impacto de Vizinhança Cultural*, or Cultural Neighbourhood Impact Assessment (EIVC). According to Simões (2024), the revision of the plan “expanded the AEICs, determining that licensing, use, and construction projects for assets present in these areas began to be processed as Special Projects, reducing predictability regarding changes in the assets to be preserved” (Simões, 2024, p. 161).

On a federal level, IPHAN’s Portaria nº 483/2016 formally established the protective area and regulations surrounding the aforementioned *Sítio Histórico Urbano de Porto Alegre*. The ordinance defined three perimeter sectors for the protection of the site’s surroundings, introducing height limits, alignment controls, and criteria for advertising, construction, and public space interventions. Its objective was to “protect the areas that constitute the contexts composed of streets, buildings, and urban

equipment whose characteristics interfere with the valorization and visibility of the protected assets” (IPHAN, 2016, art. 2). By regulating the urban surroundings rather than isolated monuments, Portaria nº 483 represented an attempt to integrate cultural heritage with urban morphology and visual integrity (Simões, 2024, p. 167). However, a critical step back from this ordinance was that the new polygonal area for the Monumenta Project (Figure 40) was significantly smaller than the one established in 2002 (which in 2002 encompassed 24.5 hectares and 280 properties), reducing the scope of IPHAN’s own area of action and control (see Visual Atlas [Figure A25](#)).

At the municipal scale, the same period was marked by growing political tension around the management of built heritage. In 2016, the City Council approved Lei Complementar nº 804/2016, which modified *Lei Complementar nº 601/2008* by expanding the possibility of TPC beyond the original macrozone, allowing it to be applied anywhere in the city. This change detached the compensatory mechanism from its territorial rationale, converting it into a more flexible, market-oriented instrument (Simões, 2024, p. 169). Soon after, in 2017, the City Council went further by revoking the 2008 law entirely through *Lei Complementar nº 829/2018*, under the pretext of “simplifying bureaucracy” and reducing confusion in heritage management (Simões, 2024, p. 170). This revocation exposed the city’s power plays between conservation and development interests. It momentarily undermined the legal framework for protecting inventoried assets, highlighting the fragility of preservation policies amid competing pressures for urban development.

Following this legislative rupture, the municipality initiated a new drafting process for replacement legislation, resulting in the Lei nº 12.585/2019, which reestablished the IPCBIPOA, the Municipal Inventory. Although presented as a modernization measure, the new law introduced significant conceptual and procedural weaknesses. It delegated full responsibility for maintenance and restoration costs to property owners (art. 15), blurred the technical distinctions between “preservation,” “conservation,” and “restoration,” and, most critically, allowed owners to request the removal of their properties from the inventory through administrative procedure (art. 8) (Porto Alegre, 2019a). These provisions substantially weakened the protective function of the inventory, effectively transforming it from a regulatory instrument into a voluntary registry (Simões, 2024, p. 172). The new law also altered the parameters of the TPC, reflecting a shift in municipal policy toward stimulating real estate development under the rhetoric of “revitalization.” As Simões (2024) notes, such changes redefined the TPC as a mechanism for economic leverage rather than a tool for preservation, aligning heritage regulation with speculative logics rather than cultural or spatial coherence.

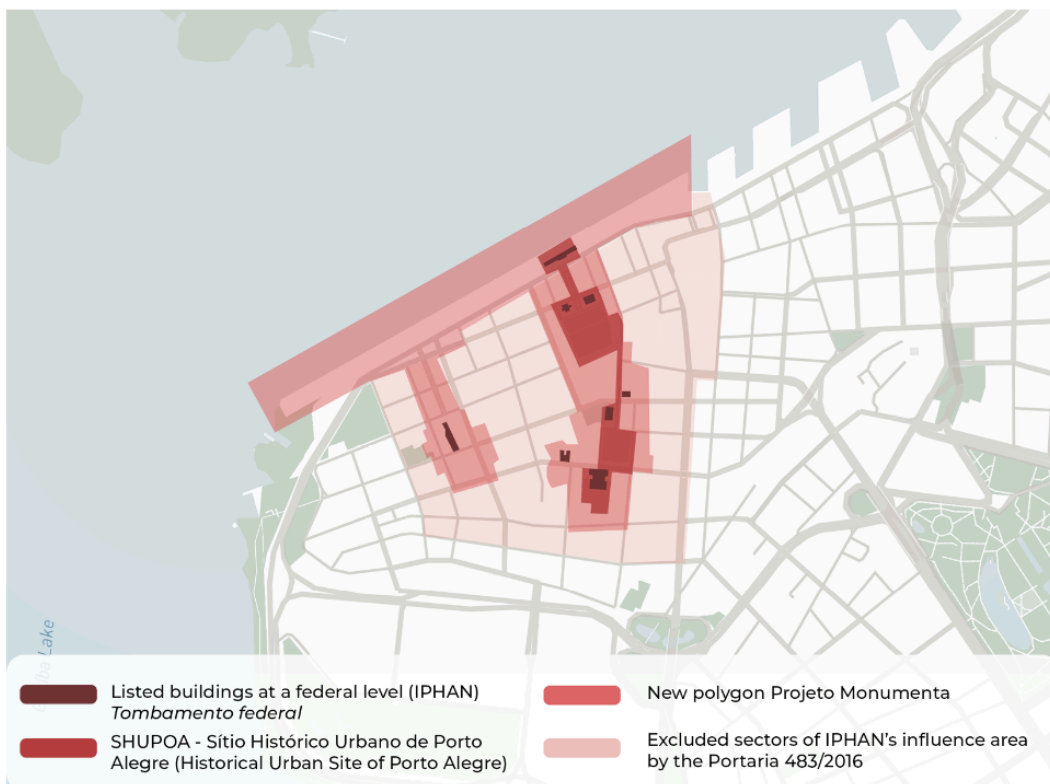


Figure 40. New surrounding polygon of the listed heritage assets in the Historic Center of Porto Alegre, published in the Official Gazette of the Union (DOU) on December 7, 2016.

Source: Elaborated by the author.

The adoption of Lei Complementar nº 930/2021, establishing the *Programa de Reabilitação do Centro Histórico* (PRCH; Historic Center Rehabilitation Program), reinforced this neoliberal orientation. While its stated goal was to “requalify the historic center through multiple interventions aimed at enhancing its social, economic, environmental, and functional potentialities” (Porto Alegre, 2021, art. 1), in practice, the law loosened height and density controls in the name of “revitalization.” This approach contradicted the heritage-sensitive zoning principles of the PDDUA.

Finally, Lei nº 13.288/2022 further dismantled the remaining regulatory protections by redefining *bens de compatibilização* as properties that “do not generate any administrative burden or restriction on urban property” (Porto Alegre, 2022c, art. 3). This amendment exempted such properties from heritage oversight and removed their analysis from the *Estudo de Viabilidade Urbanística* (EVU; Urban Feasibility Study)³⁰ process, effectively eliminating the mechanism that once ensured morphological coherence between historic and contemporary constructions (see Visual Atlas [Figure A26](#)).

5.2.6 Porto Alegre’s Landscape of Laws

Taken together, the succession of municipal reforms, federal regulations, and planning instruments has produced a highly complex but fragmented normative landscape, or as Simões (2024) calls it, a “landscape of laws”. While this framework has reinforced a selective and uneven representation of Porto Alegre’s urban memory, it has also clearly defined the material boundaries of what is recognized as the city’s cultural heritage and its perception. The predominance of architectural and market-driven criteria over historical and social considerations has limited the inclusion of groups and narratives that shaped the city’s development and unveiled the capitalist power play dynamics that govern the city’s historic center urban planning.

The consequence is a double fragmentation: juridical fragmentation across overlapping laws and institutions, and mnemonic fragmentation in the representation of urban memory. Heritage governance thus becomes complicit in reproducing unequal power relations, reinforcing a version of the past that is legible, marketable, and politically acceptable (see Visual Atlas [Figure A27](#)).

³⁰ *The Estudo de Viabilidade Urbanística* (EVU) or Urban Feasibility Study is a preliminary analysis instrument that evaluates the urban conditions for the implementation and operation of projects or activities in locations considered special, or that require a differentiated assessment.

Table 2. Summary of Porto Alegre’s Normative and Planning Evolution regarding Heritage

Instrument/Law	Type	Date	Level	Main Content	Effect on Heritage Practice	
Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil	Constitution	1988	National	The 1988 Constitution (Art. 216) expanded the concept of cultural heritage to include material and immaterial assets and established shared competence (Union, States, Municipalities).	Direct	Established legal and conceptual foundation for cultural heritage protection and decentralized governance.
Decree-Law No. 25 – Creation of SPHAN (now IPHAN)	Decree/Law	1937	National	Defined the concept of national heritage and established the <i>tombamento</i> system for cultural assets; created the federal institution responsible for heritage protection.	Direct	Institutionalized heritage protection nationwide through a centralized model.
Lei Orgânica Municipal de Porto Alegre (Municipal Charter)	Law	1970/ 1990 ³¹	Municipal	First municipal law to recognize cultural heritage and establish a preliminary inventory of 59 properties for protection.	Direct	Introduced heritage recognition at the municipal level, though without strong enforcement.
Law No. 4.139 – Creation of COMPAHC	Law	1976	Municipal	Established the Conselho Municipal do Patrimônio Histórico e Cultural (COMPAHC) to advise on heritage protection and approve listings.	Direct	Formalized a local institutional mechanism for heritage review and listing.
<i>Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Urbano</i> (PDDU)	Plan	1979	Municipal	First municipal master plan to include heritage as a consideration; created a 2,000-property inventory distinguishing “preserve” and “replace” categories.	Indirect	Recognized heritage in planning but lacked legal protection mechanisms; inventory was not binding.
<i>Portaria</i> No. 45 – Creation of EPAHC	Decree	1981	Municipal	Created the Equipe do Patrimônio Histórico e Cultural, a technical body within the Municipal Secretariat of Culture for inventories and studies.	Direct	Provided technical capacity for heritage management at the municipal level.
Municipal Decree No. 9.162 – Restructuring of	Decree	1988	Municipal	Defined COMPAHC’s competencies and composition, strengthening its institutional	Direct	Consolidated decision-making framework for heritage within municipal administration.

³¹ The current Lei Orgânica was promulgated in 1990 following the 1988 Constitution. Earlier municipal organic frameworks existed before 1988, but the *vigente* Lei Orgânica dates from 1990.

COMPAHC				autonomy.		
<i>Plano Diretor de Desenvolvimento Urbano e Ambiental (PDDUA)</i>	Plan/Law	1999	Municipal	Introduced Áreas Especiais de Interesse Cultural (AEICs) as zones for conservation, rehabilitation, and reuse of heritage ensembles; promoted participatory planning.	Direct	Integrated heritage into planning, but implementation was inconsistent and often subordinated to development.
Law No. 10.257 – Estatuto da Cidade	Law	2001	National	Provided planning guidelines for municipalities to follow and urban development tools.	Indirect	Enabled heritage compensation instruments; framework for TDC, later used in Porto Alegre.
<i>Programa Monumenta</i>	Program	2002	National	Federally funded restoration program for historic centers; implemented in Porto Alegre’s <i>Sítio Histórico Urbano</i> .	Direct	Improved built heritage physically, but lacked permanent legal integration into planning.
Lei Complementar No. 601 – Municipal Heritage Inventory Law	Law	2008	Municipal	Regulated the <i>Inventário do Patrimônio Cultural de Bens Imóveis</i> ; introduced categories <i>bens de estruturação</i> and <i>bens de compatibilização</i> , and <i>Transferência de Potencial Construtivo (TPC)</i> .	Direct	Established the first municipal legal basis for protection, classification, and compensation mechanisms.
Portaria IPHAN No. 483	Ordinance	2016	National	Defined protective perimeter and controls for the <i>Sítio Histórico Urbano de Porto Alegre</i> (height, alignment, advertising, etc.).	Direct	Extended protection from individual buildings to their urban context.
Lei Complementar No. 804 – Expansion of TPC	Law	2016	Municipal	Expanded TPC applicability to all city zones, detaching it from the original macrozones.	Indirect	Weakened link between compensation and heritage preservation, favoring market flexibility.
Lei Complementar No. 829 – Revocation of Law No. 601/2008	Law	2018	Municipal	Revoked the previous heritage inventory law under the pretext of simplifying procedures.	Direct	Temporarily dismantled the municipal protection framework.
Lei No. 12.585 – New Heritage Inventory Law	Law	2019	Municipal	Reestablished the municipal heritage inventory with weaker protection; allowed owners to request delisting and made maintenance a private duty.	Direct	Reduced protection scope, transforming inventory into a voluntary registry.

Lei Complementar No. 930 – Historic Center Rehabilitation Program	Law	2021	Municipal	Promoted requalification of the historic center through urban revitalization measures and relaxed zoning constraints.	Indirect	Stimulated redevelopment but risked compromising the authenticity of protected areas.
Lei No. 13.288 – Amendment to Inventory Rules	Law	2022	Municipal	Redefined <i>bens de compatibilização</i> to exclude administrative burdens; removed them from heritage review.	Direct	Further eroded heritage oversight and morphological coherence.

5.3 Why Two Different Normative Scenarios Emerge

The previous sections demonstrated that Milan and Porto Alegre have followed markedly different historical, legal, and institutional trajectories in the governance of cultural heritage. In Milan, heritage protection emerged within a dual and parallel legal tradition, one structured around the *beni culturali* system and another around *urbanistica*, which evolved separately and only gradually converged over time. Heritage protection in Italy was institutionalized early through national legislation, most notably Laws No. 1089 and 1497 of 1939, and later consolidated by Article 9 of the Italian Constitution, which established the safeguarding of “the historical and artistic heritage of the Nation” as a constitutional principle (Italian Republic Constitution, 1948, art. 9). Urban planning, by contrast, evolved through the 1942 Planning Law (Law No. 1150/1942) as an autonomous spatial governance system, in which heritage concerns remained largely peripheral.

As a consequence, twentieth-century architecture entered the heritage field only gradually and indirectly. While urban planning instruments progressively acknowledged the need to regulate historic fabrics, particularly after the introduction of the Zone A designation by Ministerial Decree No. 1444/1968, modern architecture rarely qualified for direct *tutela*. Instead, its protection has largely occurred through planning-based mechanisms. The introduction of the *Piano di Governo del Territorio* (PGT) under Lombardy Regional Law No. 12/2005 marked a decisive turning point by mandating morphological and typological analysis and the identification of *Nuclei di Antica Formazione* (NAF).

Although these tools represent an important step toward recognizing historical urban fabrics, they were introduced relatively late and primarily addressed pre-modern or morphologically coherent areas. Compared to other European cities that developed systematic approaches earlier, Milan’s framework appears more incremental than pioneering. Nevertheless, Milan exemplifies a normative scenario characterized by institutional continuity, strong central oversight, and a gradual, planning-mediated extension of heritage recognition to modern urban layers.

Porto Alegre, by contrast, evolved within a national legal framework that was conceptually more inclusive from the outset. Brazilian heritage legislation, particularly following Decree-Law No. 25/1937 and later the 1988 Federal Constitution, placed no chronological limits on what could be recognized as cultural heritage. As Del Curto and Salvo (2024) emphasize, Brazilian norms allow heritage protection to be initiated “almost concurrently with the achievement of the building itself,” a principle that theoretically favors the early recognition of modern architecture. Article 216 of the Constitution further

expanded the definition of heritage to include material and immaterial assets that reference collective identity and memory, establishing shared competence across governmental levels (Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil, 1988, art. 216).

However, this legal openness has been undermined by a pattern of institutional instability and legislative volatility at the municipal level. As demonstrated in Section 5.2.5, Porto Alegre's heritage framework has been repeatedly reshaped through reforms, revocations, and reinterpretations. The municipal inventory, initially conceived as a regulatory protection instrument, was progressively weakened, most notably with Lei nº 12.585/2019, which allowed property owners to request delisting and transferred maintenance responsibilities entirely to the private sphere. Simões (2024) characterizes this shift as transforming the inventory "from a regulatory instrument into a voluntary registry," eroding its protective capacity.

A similar reorientation occurred with the TPC, which evolved from a compensatory preservation mechanism into what Simões (2024) describes as "a mechanism for economic leverage rather than a tool for preservation," increasingly aligned with speculative redevelopment rather than cultural or morphological continuity. Subsequent laws, including Lei Complementar nº 930/2021 and Lei nº 13.288/2022, further diluted heritage oversight by loosening zoning controls and redefining protected categories to eliminate administrative constraints. Together, these changes produced what Simões (2024) terms a fragmented "landscape of laws," in which heritage policy becomes contingent upon shifting political and market priorities.

These differing genealogies explain why the two cities today embody two contrasting normative scenarios for the governance of modern heritage. The two scenarios emerge precisely because each city's normative trajectory rests on fundamentally different legal architectures and institutional traditions. Milan, grounded in a stable national tradition and a strong central authority in cultural matters, developed a planning-based model in which protection often occurs indirectly through morphological rules, typological studies, and spatial governance. By contrast, Porto Alegre's scenario is shaped by legislative volatility at the municipal level and the growing influence of market-driven mechanisms, visible in the successive reinterpretations of key instruments. Whereas Milan's trajectory results in a slow but institutionally consistent extension of heritage protection to modern architecture, Porto Alegre's framework reveals how inclusive legal capacity can be undermined by unstable governance and deregulation.

This contrast should not be read as a hierarchy between "strong" and "weak" systems of protection. Rather, it reveals complementary strengths and structural limits from which each city can

draw important lessons. Milan's experience shows how long-term institutional stability and planning continuity can provide a framework for the gradual recognition of modern heritage, but also how such stability may delay the explicit legal acknowledgment of recent architecture as cultural heritage. Porto Alegre, conversely, illustrates the potential of an inclusive legal architecture capable of recognizing modern buildings almost contemporaneously with their construction, while also exposing the risks of municipal legislative volatility and deregulation when heritage protection becomes contingent on political and economic cycles. Together, these trajectories justify treating Milan and Porto Alegre not merely as different case studies but as representatives of two distinct normative models that shape how the "legacy of the modern" becomes recognized, contested, or neglected within the contemporary urban landscape.

5.3.1 Summary of the main characteristics of the two scenarios

The Milan normative scenario is characterized by a model of indirect heritage protection, in which cultural value is addressed primarily through urban planning instruments rather than through explicit heritage designation. Historically, the protection of the built environment developed in parallel to, and largely separate from, the formal *beni culturali* system, resulting in a framework where planning tools became the main vehicle for regulating historically and architecturally significant areas. Instruments such as the *Piano Regolatore Generale* and later the *Piano di Governo del Territorio* (PGT) integrated heritage concerns through spatial rules, morphological analysis, and typological controls, rather than through direct listing or monument-specific protection. Within this approach, architectural value is often inferred from urban form, continuity, and settlement structure, making heritage protection deeply embedded within the logic of territorial governance.

A second defining feature of the Milan scenario is the presence of a strong and stable central state role in cultural heritage policy. National legislation, culminating in the *Codice dei Beni Culturali e del Paesaggio*, assigns decisive authority to state institutions, particularly the Ministry of Culture, reinforcing a system of technical oversight and administrative tutela. This centralized framework contributes to institutional continuity and legal stability, but it also constrains the speed at which new categories of heritage, especially 20th-century architecture, can be formally recognized. As a result, the inclusion of modern architecture within the heritage domain has proceeded slowly and cautiously, following processes of historiographic consolidation and expert validation rather than proactive legislative expansion.

Finally, the Milan normative scenario is distinguished by a professional, morphology-based approach to heritage governance. Planning practices rely heavily on architectural surveys, typological classification, and urban morphology as tools for evaluating and managing the built environment, as exemplified by the identification of NAF and other spatial categories within the PGT. This method favors analytical rigor and spatial coherence, reinforcing indirect protection mechanisms while limiting discretionary or politically driven interventions. These traits characterize a normative situation where planning laws, technological know-how, and institutional continuity work together to protect 20th-century heritage rather than via explicit acknowledgment.

The Porto Alegre normative scenario is primarily defined by the combination of a formally inclusive national heritage framework and a locally unstable regulatory environment. Within the Brazilian framework, heritage is not constrained by chronological thresholds, enabling even recent or contemporary architecture to be legally recognized as cultural heritage. This openness was institutionalized early through the creation of federal bodies such as SPHAN (later IPHAN) and reinforced by the 1988 Constitution, which broadened the definition of cultural heritage and decentralized responsibility for its protection to states and municipalities. In principle, this legal framework provides Porto Alegre with significant normative tools to safeguard 20th-century and modern architecture.

In practice, however, this inclusive capacity operates within a highly fragmented and unstable regulatory environment. Municipal heritage governance has been repeatedly reshaped through legislative reforms, revocations, and redefinitions of key instruments, particularly the municipal inventory system and the role of expert commissions such as COMPAHC and EPAHC. Laws enacted to strengthen heritage protection, most notably the 2008 inventory legislation, were subsequently weakened or overturned, producing uncertainty around enforcement and undermining institutional continuity. These frequent transformations reflect not only administrative instability but also a municipal heritage policy that is highly sensitive to changes in political leadership.

A further defining aspect of the Porto Alegre scenario is the predominant influence of market forces on heritage-related decision-making. Instruments originally conceived to balance preservation and development, such as the TPC, have gradually been reoriented toward facilitating real-estate valorization and redevelopment. As political cycles introduce new priorities and economic pressures intensify, heritage protection becomes negotiable and contingent, leading to inconsistent enforcement and selective application of norms. Consequently, Porto Alegre's normative scenario is marked by a structural tension

between its broad legal potential for protecting modern heritage and the practical vulnerability of that heritage within a deregulated, market-responsive urban context.

5.3.2 Comparative Synthesis: What Makes These Scenarios “Different”?

5.3.2.1. Governance structure

The most significant divergence between the Milan and Porto Alegre normative scenarios lies in their governance structures and the degree of institutional stability through which heritage policy is produced and enforced. In Milan, heritage governance operates within a centralized and institutionally consolidated framework, grounded in national legislation and coordinated through state-level cultural authorities. The Ministry of Culture, supported by the *Codice dei Beni Culturali e del Paesaggio*, plays a decisive role in defining heritage value and overseeing protection measures. This configuration reinforces a system based on technical expertise, administrative continuity, and legal certainty. At the same time, however, such centralization can introduce rigidity, particularly in relation to 20th-century heritage, whose recognition often depends on historiographic distance and selective activation of formal protection mechanisms.

This centralized structure is accompanied at the municipal level not by legislative autonomy in heritage matters, but by administrative planning procedures that indirectly affect the built environment. Urban planning instruments such as the PRG and later the PGT do not constitute heritage legislation, but operate as spatial and regulatory frameworks that condition transformation through morphological and typological rules, while remaining subordinate to national heritage law. As a result, Milan’s governance model is planning-driven and technically mediated, yet legally stable. However, this reliance on indirect regulation and professional expertise can also produce uneven outcomes: modern buildings may be preserved morphologically without being explicitly recognized as heritage, and protection may become fragmented or negotiable within broader development strategies.

In Porto Alegre, heritage governance operates within a multi-level and formally decentralized institutional structure that grants municipalities substantial regulatory authority, while also allowing state and federal bodies, such as IPHAN, to designate and protect assets of broader significance. Federal listing provides a relatively stable form of protection at the level of individual monuments. However, much of the regulatory environment surrounding heritage, particularly at the municipal scale and in areas of influence around protected sites, remains subject to political turnover, legislative reform, and shifting administrative priorities. While this framework allows heritage policy to respond to local

contexts and priorities, it also exposes protection mechanisms to political turnover and legislative fluctuation. Municipal bodies such as COMPAHC operate within a governance environment marked by recurrent legal reforms and shifting administrative mandates, which weakens continuity and limits the long-term effectiveness of heritage instruments. Consequently, heritage policy becomes more negotiable and sensitive to external pressures, particularly those linked to urban development dynamics.

In conclusion, regarding governance terms, Milan demonstrates the value of binding national and regional heritage frameworks that limit municipal discretion and create a shared and stable rationale for preservation across political cycles. Porto Alegre, by contrast, reveals the risks inherent in a system where municipalities retain the power to repeatedly redefine, weaken, or overturn heritage instruments. At the same time, it demonstrates the value of engaging with recent heritage at earlier stages through inventories, public debate, and provisional recognition, a practice from which Milan could benefit without compromising the stability of its *tutela*-based system.

5.3.2.2 Relationship to 20th-century heritage

The relationship between normative frameworks and 20th-century heritage further clarifies the divergence between the two scenarios. In Milan, the recognition of modern architecture has historically been slow, selective, and mediated by institutional hierarchies, reflecting the structure of the Italian heritage system itself. Italian legislation distinguishes clearly between the dimension of *tutela*, exercised exclusively by the State through formal heritage designation, and that of *valorizzazione*, which concerns the promotion, use, and enhancement of cultural assets and may involve local administrations within defined limits.

Modern architecture, often lacking immediate historical distance or unanimous scholarly recognition, has been addressed primarily through *valorizzazione* practices embedded in planning instruments and administrative procedures. As a result, 20th-century heritage in Milan is protected indirectly, through spatial regulation and technical assessment, rather than through explicit legal recognition.

In Porto Alegre, by contrast, the legal framework allows for the early and direct protection of modern and contemporary architecture through a single normative mechanism: *tombamento*. Despite the legal framework's potential to safeguard 20th-century heritage, Porto Alegre has struggled to achieve consistent protection in practice. Municipal institutional instability, political contestation, and frequent regulatory changes have undermined its effectiveness, creating a persistent gap between the law's intentions and the realities of heritage management. This tension highlights how formal mechanisms

alone are insufficient to ensure preservation, especially for modern and contemporary architecture that often lacks broad public recognition or political support.

Consequently, while Porto Alegre offers earlier legal access to heritage recognition than Milan, modern architecture remains practically vulnerable, exposed to revisions, reinterpretations, or circumvention of protective measures. This contrast reveals how Milan's slow and indirect path produces stability without formal recognition, whereas Porto Alegre's inclusive legal framework generates recognition without guaranteeing long-term protection.

5.3.2.3 Role of planning

Planning plays a markedly different role in the two normative scenarios, revealing how similar instruments can produce contrasting outcomes depending on their legal status and institutional context. In Milan, urban planning does not function as a source of heritage law, but rather as an administrative and regulatory framework that indirectly conditions the transformation of the built environment. In the absence of widespread formal designation of 20th-century architecture, planning becomes the main arena where continuity is ensured through the control of morphology, typology, and spatial relationships. Planning instruments do not confer cultural status on buildings, yet they shape preservation outcomes by limiting demolition, regulating volume, and guiding compatible interventions. As a result, it produces a form of *implicit preservation*, where architectural value is safeguarded not because it is explicitly recognized as heritage, but because it is embedded within broader rules governing the evolution of the urban fabric. Planning thus operates as a long-term regulatory filter, limiting radical transformation even without invoking heritage law.

In Porto Alegre, by contrast, planning plays a discursive and process-oriented role, in which heritage preservation is explicitly emphasized within planning narratives and objectives, particularly in instruments such as the PDDUA. Cultural heritage occupies a central place in the language of planning, framed as a collective value and a component of urban identity. However, this prominence is realized mainly at the level of process rather than outcome. Planning in Porto Alegre unfolds through extended participatory procedures, including public hearings and consultations, where heritage protection is debated, defended, and sometimes reinforced, yet not consistently translated into binding spatial or project-level constraints. As a result, planning becomes a forum of negotiation, where planners, civil society, and economic actors confront one another, producing plans that articulate preservation goals without guaranteeing their material implementation. This explains why, despite a strong planning

discourse on heritage, the protective capacity of planning in Porto Alegre remains uneven and contingent, particularly for modern architecture.

5.3.3 Implications for 20th-Century Heritage Governance

The comparison between Milan and Porto Alegre demonstrates that the vulnerability of 20th-century heritage does not stem from a lack of regulatory frameworks, but rather from the structural conditions under which those frameworks operate. Although the two cities follow different legal traditions and planning cultures, both reveal how modern heritage occupies an unstable position within contemporary governance systems, albeit for fundamentally different reasons. The contrasting normative scenarios highlight that fragility may arise either from excessive indirectness and institutional inertia, as in Milan, or from normative volatility and instrumental reinterpretation, as in Porto Alegre.

In Milan, the principal challenge lies in the indirect nature of protection and the slow historiographic incorporation of modern architecture into the sphere of formal *tutela*. As shown throughout the chapter, much of the 20th-century built environment remains outside explicit heritage recognition, relying instead on planning-based controls and professional mediation to ensure continuity. While this model provides institutional stability and limits abrupt transformation, it also delays acknowledgment of cultural value and makes protection dependent on technical interpretation rather than legal status. Consequently, modern heritage in Milan is preserved unevenly, often without being socially or symbolically recognized as heritage, reinforcing a gap between professional discourse and public awareness.

In Porto Alegre, the challenge is not the *tombamento* mechanism itself but the instability of recognition. Although inventories and legal tools exist to protect heritage, very few assets ever achieve permanent listing, as political shifts can cancel inventories, alter criteria, or redefine protected areas. Modern buildings are especially vulnerable, often excluded from consideration due to their perceived recency. As a result, heritage remains formally visible yet practically exposed: protections can be partial, neglected, or undermined, leaving buildings subject to redevelopment pressures rather than recognized as collective cultural value. As heritage becomes embedded within a dense but mutable “landscape of laws,” its meaning and effectiveness are continuously renegotiated.

Taken together, these dynamics shape the fate of modern heritage in each city. In Milan, modern architecture can be institutionally protected yet culturally invisible; in Porto Alegre, it is formally recognized but remains practically fragile, subject to political shifts and social indifference. These

outcomes are not accidental, but the product of deeply embedded normative structures that condition what heritage is, how it is valued, and whose interests prevail in moments of conflict. By clarifying these structural conditions, this chapter provides the necessary foundation for the next stage of analysis, which examines public perception and social recognition, and how these interact with normative frameworks in shaping broader tensions between conservation, urban development, and collective identity.

6. Public Perception of 20th-Century Heritage

“Yet men also felt ambivalent desire for the city. They saw it as a prey to be captured and conquered. At a still more fundamental level there was the ambiguity of the city itself: Babylon or Jerusalem-or Babylon and Jerusalem, that is, harmony combined with disorder, desire with fear, ruin with salvation.” (Le Goff, 1988, p. 174)

Public perception of twentieth-century heritage is inseparable from the contested nature of heritage itself. As Seixas and Mog (2023, p. 174) argue, heritage is never neutral; it emerges from selections, power relations, and deliberate choices that reflect the interests of different social actors. What is recognized as heritage, and how it is valued, is the product of ongoing negotiation between institutional frameworks, political agendas, and collective cultural imaginaries. Consequently, the way modern architecture is perceived by the public is shaped not only by material form or historical significance but also by the visibility and authority granted by these processes of recognition.

In this sense, urban images conveyed through architecture, street layouts, advertising, photography, posters, stamps, paintings, drawings, or caricatures possess the ability to evoke other times, much like literature does (Pesavento, 1999, p. 14). This insight reminds us that cities are at the same time material constructs but also symbolic and affective landscapes, where memory operates through visual and cultural representations as much as through physical form. The perception of twentieth-century heritage, therefore, extends beyond buildings and planning documents: it emerges from the collective imagination, shaped by how modern spaces have been depicted, narrated, and remembered over time.

This process was particularly reinforced through newspapers, magazines, and many other forms of mass communication that became increasingly embedded in everyday life during the twentieth century. These media documented urban change as well as interpreted and framed it, influencing how citizens perceived notions of progress, modernity, and decay. By shaping public discourse around architecture and urban transformation, they contributed to the construction of a shared understanding of what was considered “modern” or worthy of preservation (see Visual Atlas [Figure A28](#)).

Public perception is further informed by an ongoing negotiation between personal, collective, and institutional narratives of the city. As Nadio Delai (2017) notes that, “the need to re-narrate oneself” reflects a city’s continual effort to find a shared story that reconciles its past, present, and future. Urban heritage is therefore both observed and actively interpreted, debated, and reimaged through processes of collective storytelling. Cities like Milan exemplify how symbolic and cultural narratives are mobilized to produce a sense of common identity, even amid the plurality of voices and experiences. Delai (2017) emphasizes that such narratives emerge not from a single authoritative source but from an accumulation of perspectives: “each individual author tries to extract a piece of the collective symbolic heritage...to arrive at a recomposed picture of the many voices.” (Delai, 2017, p. 28)

While Chapters 4 and 5 were structured as distinct case studies in order to reconstruct the historical and normative specificities of Milan and Porto Alegre, Chapter 6 adopts a comparative and thematic approach. This shift reflects the nature of public perception itself, which operates through shared discursive mechanisms, media representation, symbolic narratives, and institutional framing, rather than through city-specific administrative structures. Given the exploratory and interpretative character of this chapter, the analysis privileges depth of interpretation over exhaustive source mapping for each city.

Accordingly, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first section analyses the construction of the urban imaginary in both cities. It seeks to understand, in the context of Milan and Porto Alegre, the perception of twentieth-century architecture as a two-sided coin: the discourse itself as the object, and

the perceiver as the subject, considering the lens through which it is interpreted. It examines which narratives are constructed by whom and what meanings are attributed to particular symbols, acting as the tools or means through which the discourse is expressed. Together, the object, subject, and symbols interact to form the urban imaginary in each city, analysed here particularly with regard to twentieth-century heritage. The second section examines how journalistic narratives, visual materials, and cultural commentary have contributed to shaping the public perception of twentieth-century heritage, revealing the interplay between media representation, urban experience, and collective memory.

6.1 The Construction of Urban Imaginaries: The Public Discourse in Milan and Porto Alegre

Public discourse is one of the most important components in shaping how cities are collectively understood. Before twentieth-century architecture becomes framed as heritage or not, it is first embedded within narratives of identity, modernity, and aspiration that circulate through media, institutional communication, and cultural production. In this sense, public discourse operates as a discursive field in which meanings and values are constructed and shared, rather than as a mechanism of heritage recognition per se. These narratives do not simply describe the city; they actively reinterpret the present while projecting desired futures, creating a symbolic space in which citizens can envision what the city is supposed to be, even before it is, and, most importantly, what it might become (Figure 41).

As Delai (2017) emphasizes, effective urban narratives are inherently forward-looking: “identity is essentially an exercise projected into the future... to claim not only the pride of what we have been, but above all the pride of what we still want to become” (p. 27). This process unfolds when architecture and urban form become meaningful not only as remnants of the past but as elements mobilized within broader stories of transformation or permanence.

This interpretive function of architecture is not unique to modernity. Long before contemporary concepts of urban branding, architecture was already operating as a form of propaganda. Conscious attempts to shape and promote urban identity are nearly as old as civic governance itself. As Jacques Le Goff observes in his analysis of medieval urban imagination, “in most cases... ideology precedes history. History emulates ideology more often than the reverse” (Le Goff, 1988, p. 173). From this perspective, cities and their architectures are not merely material outcomes of historical processes,



Figure 41. Praça Farroupilha, Porto Alegre. A slogan that reads “44 years connecting futures, preserving the present.” Here, both figuratively and literally, the past recedes into the background, preserved only by the panel by Danúbio Gonçalves that recounts the history of the Revolução Farroupilha.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.

but expressions of imagined orders, aspirations, and ideological projections that seek to structure social reality in advance.

For millennia, monumental architecture and urban design have functioned as powerful instruments of persuasion, deployed to convey authority, dominance, and cultural superiority to both internal and external audiences (Muratovski, 2013). As Le Goff argues, urban images are “physical yet imbued with values embodying fundamental ideological systems” (Le Goff, 1988, p. 171), indicating that architecture operates simultaneously as material form and symbolic language. Within public discourse, such monuments did not merely decorate the city; they staged what has been described as a “theater of progress,”³² offering visible and legible narratives of power and ambition.

Historically, monumental architecture often emerged not at the apex of political or economic strength, but rather at moments when authority needed to be asserted or legitimized. Early monuments frequently served to construct an illusion of power, compensating for limited material or territorial control. As Le Goff suggests in his discussion of urban imagination, “the utopian image of the city and the dream of urban harmony [are] signs of a desire to exorcise the city of its demons, to idealize it by magical means” (Le Goff, 1988, p. 174). Monumentality can thus be understood not simply as a celebration of achieved order, but as a symbolic strategy aimed at projecting stability, progress, and authority precisely at moments when these conditions were most fragile. In the context of the Roman world, early imperial monuments functioned as instruments for constructing the appearance of power and continuity during periods of political transition. Structures such as triumphal arches, forums, and monumental temples were often commissioned in the aftermath of civil conflict or regime change, serving to narrate stability and imperial destiny at moments when authority was still being consolidated rather than fully secured.

The Forum of Augustus, for instance, was conceived not merely as an urban extension but as a carefully staged political narrative, linking the new imperial order to Rome’s mythical and moral foundations (see Visual Atlas [Figure A29](#)). These examples underscore a crucial point: architecture’s propagandistic function lies not in its materiality alone, but in its capacity to narrate authority within the social imagination. Monumentality operates discursively, constructing shared perceptions that may diverge significantly from political or economic realities.

³²Refers to Koolhaas framing New York’s architectural history as a “mythologized” project of perpetual progress, a staged spectacle of modernity, wherein the continuous production of urban form enacts narratives of innovation, ambition, and the cyclical interplay of construction and demolition. Koolhaas, R. (1978). *Delirious New York: A retroactive manifesto for Manhattan*. Oxford University Press.

Over time, this logic of monumental propaganda expanded from individual structures to entire urban ensembles. As cities developed, not only monuments but urban form itself became a medium of representation. Capital cities, in particular, were increasingly designed or restructured as living testimonies of past, present, and future, projecting different narratives, for instance, of national power and cultural coherence (Muratovski, 2013). In the twentieth century, the scale and ambition of architectural propaganda intensified. Newly assertive or ideologically driven regimes turned to urban reconstruction as a means of narrating national destiny. Conceived as a purpose-built capital, Brasília, for instance, functioned less as a response to immediate economic necessity than as a spatial manifesto of national modernization and unity (see Visual Atlas [Figure A30](#)). Its monumental scale and abstract formal language projected an image of progress and state authority that far exceeded the country's infrastructural and social realities at the time.

The affinity between architecture and politics, therefore, lies in their shared reliance on ideology and narrative construction. Both fields employ selective ideals and symbolic languages to guide behavior, shape belief systems, and legitimize particular visions of society (Muratovski, 2013). As Le Goff's work reminds us, cities have long functioned as symbolic containers, at once sites of "harmony combined with disorder, desire with fear, ruin with salvation" (Le Goff, 1988, p.174), onto which societies project competing visions of their collective pasts and imagined futures. Cities continue to rely on architecture and urban form to "re-imagine" themselves within public discourse (Figure 42), selectively foregrounding some histories while obscuring others (Muratovski, 2013).

As Muratovski (2013) explains, the city is produced not only through its material form but also through a symbolic layer of representations that coexist with the physical city. Alongside the "real" city exists an imagined one, a coherent ensemble of meanings drawn from architecture, street layouts, artistic production, and mediated images of urban life. Within this discursive framework, the notion of the urban imaginary as articulated by several scholars (Lynch, 1960; Lefebvre, 1991; Castoriadis, 1987) becomes central to understanding how architecture serves as a visual anchor for broader cultural narratives, offering tangible reference points for otherwise abstract ideas.

Lynch (1960) poses the first layer of the urban imaginary, emerging through the mental images individuals form of the city, structured by elements such as paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks, which together shape the city's legibility and imageability. Lefebvre (1991), by contrast, situates the urban imaginary within the social production of space, adding a second and political dimension emphasizing how spatial meanings are generated through the interaction of perceived, conceived, and lived urban life. Castoriadis (1987) extends this understanding by framing the imaginary as constitutive,

not representational, meaning they actually produce the social reality. This adds a third dimension, which says that before any buildings or urban form, the most important thing is the ideas already embedded and associated through symbols of the social imaginary (Figure 43).

The concept of the historic center, already discussed in Chapter 3, offers a clear example of how urban imaginaries operate. From Lynch's perspective, the center functions primarily as a landmark or node within the urban structure due to its spatial positioning and role in orientation, regardless of whether it is historic or not (Lynch, 1960). Its significance lies in its legibility and its capacity to anchor the mental image of the city. Within Lefebvre's framework, the concept of the historic center is not defined by centrality or perception alone, but its representation is socially and politically produced by the use and design of space (Lefebvre, 1991). That is why this imaginary is not universally shared, if some people feel marginalized by it while others feel included, it produces two different urban imaginaries, for example. And, finally, according to Castoriadis, the idea of the historic center is what matters the most, regardless of the space itself. Meaning comes from shared symbolic foundations, rather than being generated by the use of space (Castoriadis, 1987). For instance, in some societies, the historic center is imagined as a collective repository of memory and identity, while in others it can be conceptualized as obsolete or constraining to transformation. Because it is that underlying worldview, not the age of the buildings, their architectural style, or their material condition, that attributes value to the place. Taken together, these perspectives position the urban imaginary as both a cognitive and socio-symbolic process through which architecture acquires meaning beyond its material form.

It is within this conceptual framework that the urban imaginary of the historic center of Porto Alegre can be more clearly understood. The image associated with this area does not emerge solely from its spatial location or from the contemporary use of its spaces. Rather, it is the underlying idea of origin and continuity that secures the notion of Porto Alegre's historic center within the collective imagination. This idea is strongly supported by the fact that the area corresponds to the site of the city's original settlement and foundation, with a number of remaining buildings that materially testify to this origin.

At the same time, the historic center of Porto Alegre is characterized by a highly heterogeneous urban fabric, shaped by architectural and infrastructural interventions throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. These layers of transformation introduce a parallel imaginary associated with modernization and progress, generating a coexistence of contrasting narratives within the same urban space. As previously discussed, such imaginaries may be intentionally constructed, through urban branding strategies, heritage discourse, or tourism promotion, but they may also emerge unintentionally through repetitive media narratives, popular culture, or shared everyday experiences.



Figure 42. In Milan, the “Residence Futura” building illustrates twentieth-century architecture as a projection of the future. It now persists as heritage, revealing how ideals of progress were materially inscribed in the city.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026.

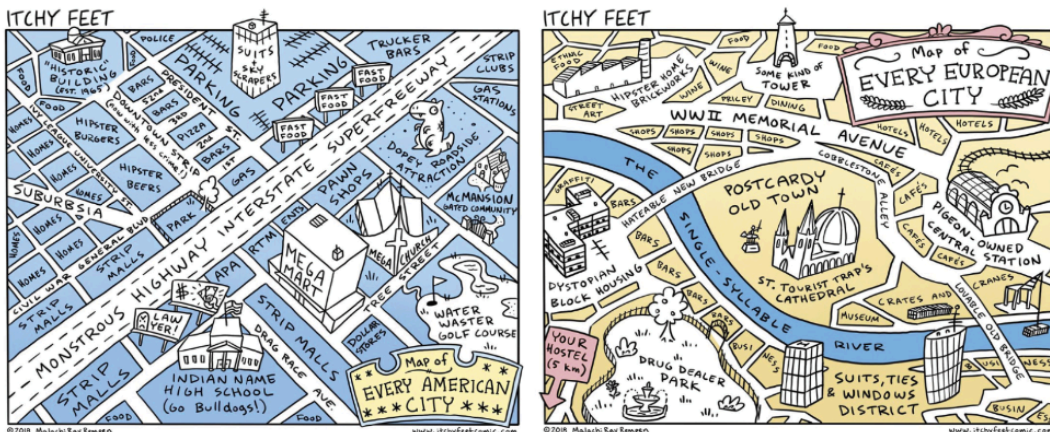


Figure 43. The cartoons illustrate how the social imaginary can produce a coherent image of “the city” through shared symbols, even when detached from any specific or accurate place. Meaning precedes form: before buildings or urban realities exist, ideas already organize perception, expectation, and experience.

Source: Rempen, Malachi Ray (2018). Map of Every European City. Itchy Feet Comic.
 Rempen, Malachi Ray (2018). Map of Every American City. Itchy Feet Comic.



Figure 44. The YesMilano Pins in celebration of each neighbourhood for the Milan Winter Olympics can illustrate some of the symbols use to advertise the city.

Source: Associazione Milano & Partners. Retrieved from <https://www.yesmilano.it/en/when-and-where-find-12-olympic-pins>

In this sense, urban imaginaries can reinforce both aspirational images of creativity, innovation, or cultural vitality, and stigmatizing perceptions associated with crime, decay, or social disorder. Some stereotypes function as urban imaginaries insofar as they become widely shared interpretive frames that shape how a city or neighborhood is perceived, even when such representations are only partially grounded (or not grounded at all) in empirical reality.

In Milan, institutional narratives have long oscillated between historical continuity and modern transformation. The city is publicly represented through a limited but powerful repertoire of symbols (Figure 44). The Duomo acts as the main emblem of historical depth and civic identity, along with the *Castello Sforzesco* and the surrounding areas between the two. Even though most of the in-between areas have been reconstructed in the 20th century, such as Via Dante, this reconstruction does not alter the shared symbolic meanings attached to the concept of the historic center, which persist in public discourse.

At the same time, the skyscrapers, many of which were constructed not long after, around the 50s, such as the *Grattacielo* Pirelli or the Galfa Tower, have a completely different meaning, symbolizing progress, modernity, and the future. This is not accidental or a matter of chance; it is precisely because they were built to represent a vision, the ambition of a cosmopolitan Milan positioned for the global scene.

A similar process happens in Porto Alegre. Landmarks such as the *Igreja das Dores*, the *Praça da Alfândega*, and the *Mercado Público* operate as key reference points within the urban imaginary. These spaces are traditionally associated with historical significance and long-standing commercial and civic functions, reinforcing the image of the historic center as a place of exchange, circulation, and collective encounter, even if most of the urban fabric has changed over the course of the twentieth century.

Much like Milan's fog, the sunset over the Guaíba functions as another symbol in the public discourse about the city (Figure 45). The river and its sunsets have become widely shared visual and affective references, frequently circulated through media, photography, and everyday narratives. Unlike buildings and the urban fabric, these elements are intangible but still very representative of each city, therefore supporting Castoriadis (1987) third dimension of the urban imaginary construction.

Nevertheless, twentieth-century buildings have played a decisive role in reshaping the urban imaginary of Porto Alegre's historic center and, consequently, its everyday use. The *Casa de Cultura Mario Quintana*, housed in the former Hotel Majestic, exemplifies this shift by associating the area with literary production, artistic experimentation, and alternative cultural practices, which has contributed to the attraction of younger populations, artists, and students (Figure 46). In parallel, the *Usina do*

Gasômetro illustrates a broader process of re-signification: originally conceived as an emblem of industrial modernization (Figure 47), it has been progressively reinterpreted as a cultural landmark and as a focal point of public life along the Guaíba waterfront. Its transformation, together with urban interventions such as the redevelopment of the *Orla do Guaíba* linked to the landscape design legacy of Jaime Lerner, has reinforced new patterns of appropriation centered on leisure, social interaction, and cultural consumption, extending the symbolic reach of the historic center toward the river.

Importantly, this symbolic construction influences how twentieth-century architecture itself is perceived: modern buildings are not encountered in isolation, but as part of a broader narrative that frames them as either natural extensions of progress or as disruptions within a historically charged landscape. These elements do not form a single, coherent story; together, they construct a recognizable image of Milan and Porto Alegre as cities where tradition and innovation coexist in tension or harmony, depending upon the lens through which it is seen (see Visual Atlas [Figure A31](#)).

The concept of perception, therefore, encompasses the final, but fundamental, component to be discussed here: the subject. Urban space is not merely seen; it is seen from somewhere, by someone whose position (social, economic, and affective) conditions what can appear and how it appears. This dynamic is clearly illustrated by Charles Baudelaire's prose poem *Les yeux des pauvres* (The eyes of the poor)³³, set on one of Haussmann's newly constructed Parisian boulevards (Baudelaire, 1970). The scene is deceptively simple: a bourgeois couple seated inside a brightly lit café observes a poor family standing outside, gazing through the window at the spectacle of comfort and consumption. Yet the poem stages a profound asymmetry of perception. The same urban space, the same architectural setting, produces radically different experiences depending on the subject who encounters it (Berman, 1988).

This asymmetry is further theorized through the figure of the *flâneur* as developed by Walter Benjamin (Benjamin, 1999). For him, the *flâneur* is the emblematic observer of the modern city: an anonymous and seemingly disengaged stroller who moves through urban space without a fixed purpose, attentive to surfaces, details, and fleeting encounters rather than to coherent or linear historical narratives. Emerging from Baudelaire's writings but reinterpreted within a materialist critique of modernity, the *flâneur* embodies a specific mode of urban perception shaped by the transformations of nineteenth-century Paris under capitalism.

³³ Baudelaire, C. (1869). *Les yeux des pauvres*. In *Le Spleen de Paris: Petits poèmes en prose*. Charles Baudelaire wrote "Les yeux des pauvres" amid the urban transformations of mid-19th-century Paris, developing his prose-poem form to depict the modern city, its social contrasts, and the subjective gaze of the observer during Haussmann's renovation of Paris. These pieces were composed in the 1850s–1860s before posthumous publication in *Le Spleen de Paris* (1869).

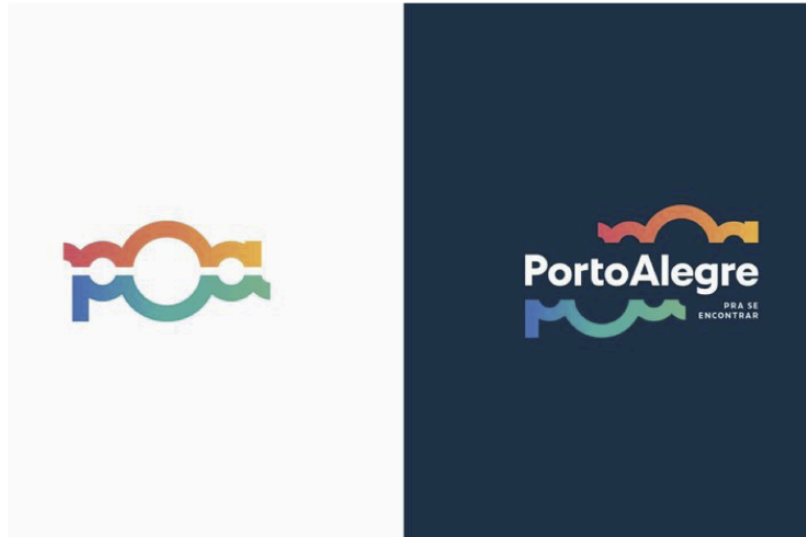


Figure 45. New branding design for the city of Porto Alegre (2022), heavily inspired by the sunset, one of the symbols of the city.

Source: Porto Alegre City Hall. (2022). Pacto Alegre – new brand identity “Horizontes” [Image]. Prefeitura de Porto Alegre.



Figure 46. Official tourism website for Porto Alegre. Here, the former Hotel Majestic Building (the pink building) is associated with the city's cultural attractions.

Source: DestinoPOA. (2026). Screenshot of homepage of DestinoPOA travel website [Screenshot]. DestinoPOA. <https://destinopoa.com.br/>



Figure 47. On the left, Usina do Gasômetro as depicted in a 1932 architecture magazine, emblematic of Porto Alegre's industrial modernization. On the right, the current state of the building, revitalized with public funds yet closed since 2017, the site now faces a contentious re-signification: a February 2026 federal portaria cedes it to the municipality for 21 years (renewable) in exchange for a R\$4 million chimney restoration, explicitly allowing commercial exploitation of most areas by private partners via PPP, raising questions about the privatization of publicly funded heritage amid its transformation into a waterfront cultural and leisure hub.

Source: Wikipedia. (n.d.). Ficheiro:Gasômetro em 1932.jpg [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons. https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Gas%C3%B4metro_em_1932.jpg
Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.

When transposed to the twentieth century, however, the figure of the *flâneur* necessarily changes. As Benjamin (1999) suggests, the conditions that made classical *flânerie* possible were already eroding by the early twentieth century (Benjamin, 1999). Therefore, this points to the emergence of new figures whose experience of the city is marked less by leisurely observation than by anxiety, precarity, and enforced movement. For instance, in the context of Porto Alegre, this shift can be productively illustrated through the literary figure of Naziazeno, the protagonist of *Os Ratos* (1935) by Dyonélio Machado. As discussed in Chapter 4, Naziazeno can be read as a twentieth-century inversion of the *flâneur*: a subject who perceives the city not through leisurely observation, but through tension, repetition, and exhaustion. His perspective exposes aspects of the urban environment that remain invisible within official narratives of progress and modernization, underscoring that perception is not produced solely by dominant discourses or institutional representations, but also by the situated experiences of those who move through urban space under very different conditions.

A similar figure in Milan could be the unnamed narrator of Luciano Bianciardi's *La vita agra* (1962)³⁴. Arriving in the metropolis with a radical mission to blow up the "Torracchione", the skyscraper representing the industrial power responsible for a mining disaster, the protagonist is instead neutralized by the very urban machine he sought to destroy (Bianciardi, 1965). Much like Naziazeno, Bianciardi's anti-hero represents a "negative flânerie" dictated by the rhythms of the neocapitalist "economic miracle." His movement through Milan is not one of detached curiosity but of frantic survival and intellectual precarity. As he navigates the city, the urban landscape is rendered as a series of hostile intersections and alienating offices. In this context, the city is no longer a spectacle to be consumed, but a mechanism of exhaustion that transmutes revolutionary fervor into a weary, cynical conformity, exposing the "bitter life" hidden beneath the glossy surface of Italy's post-war modernization.

Therefore, through these fictional characters, the position of the subject is illustrated here, underscoring that the meanings circulating through symbols (may they be buildings, natural elements, visuals, or else) are never experienced uniformly. Figures like Naziazeno in Porto Alegre or Bianciardi's narrator in Milan reveal how the city can be simultaneously productive and oppressive, inspiring and alienating, depending on the observer's perspective. Yet this asymmetry does not undermine the

³⁴ Bianciardi, L. (1962). *La vita agra*. Rizzoli.

Written in the early 1960s out of the author's growing disenchantment with Italy's post-war economic "miracle" and its effects on everyday life, culture, and labor. Bianciardi, himself living in Milan during the rapid industrial and consumer expansion of the period, drew on autobiographical experience and the real memory of the 1954 Ribolla mine disaster (in which 43 workers died) to dramatize the alienation of the intellectual protagonist. Originally arriving in Milan with a revolutionary mission against industrial power, the narrator gradually succumbs to the bureaucratic, consumption-driven mechanisms of neocapitalist urban life, exposing the disillusionment of the era and critiquing the social impact of modernization and corporate culture.

discursive power of architecture or urban form; rather, it highlights that the symbolic weight of buildings, landmarks, and public spaces operates within a field of shared narratives, expectations, and interpretations. Public discourse constructs the framework in which certain forms, monuments, and spaces come to embody identity, progress, or memory, and the subject interacts with (but does not solely generate) these meanings. In this way, perception completes the circuit of the urban imaginary: it situates individuals within the symbolic city, allowing architecture and narratives to be not just seen or used, but collectively imagined, negotiated, and reinterpreted.

6.2 Influence of Media Narratives on Heritage Value

Having already examined how literature contributed to shaping the image of the modern city in both Milan and Porto Alegre, attention is now directed toward the role of magazines, newspapers, and other forms of communication. Through these media, representations of architecture and urban life were disseminated, influencing public perception of modernization. Periodical media did not merely report architectural developments; they actively constructed visual and ideological narratives that associated particular forms of architecture with broader aspirations of progress, identity, and cultural legitimacy. Newspapers and popular magazines in Europe and the Americas frequently framed metropolitan transformation in terms of technological prowess and civic improvement, valorizing skyscrapers, transportation hubs, and urban renewal projects as icons of modern society (Harvey, 1989). Advertising, similarly, circulated imagery that conflated modern architectural design with consumer culture and future-oriented lifestyles (Marchand, 1998), reinforcing the idea that architectural modernity was both desirable and emblematic of national advancement.

A notable instance of such mediated influence is the *Brazil Builds: Architecture New and Old, 1652-1942* exhibition and accompanying catalogue, originally organised by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1943 and subsequently disseminated internationally through print and press coverage (Figure 48). Curated by Philip Goodwin and documented with extensive photographs by G. E. Kidder Smith, *Brazil Builds* presented a broad historical survey of Brazilian architecture that juxtaposed colonial heritage with the emergent modernism, thus positioning Brazilian modern architecture within a narrative of cultural evolution and global relevance (Goodwin, 1943; Scottá, 2017). By foregrounding works by Lucio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, and other modernists alongside traditional forms, the media narrative crafted through *Brazil Builds* helped naturalize a vision of architectural modernity as both a continuation of cultural heritage and a marker of progress, thereby shaping international perceptions of

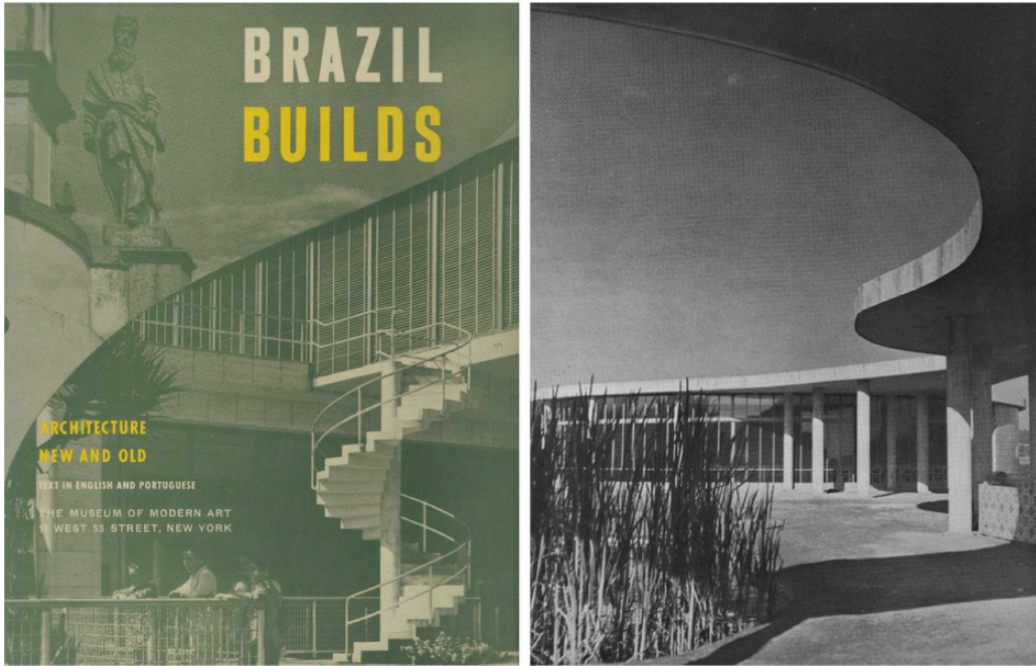


Figure 48. Spread from Brazil Builds MoMA catalogue (1943), curated by Philip Goodwin, juxtaposing colonial heritage with modern Brazilian architecture on the cover.

Source: Museum of Modern Art. (1943). Brazil builds: Architecture new and old, 1652–1942. <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2304>

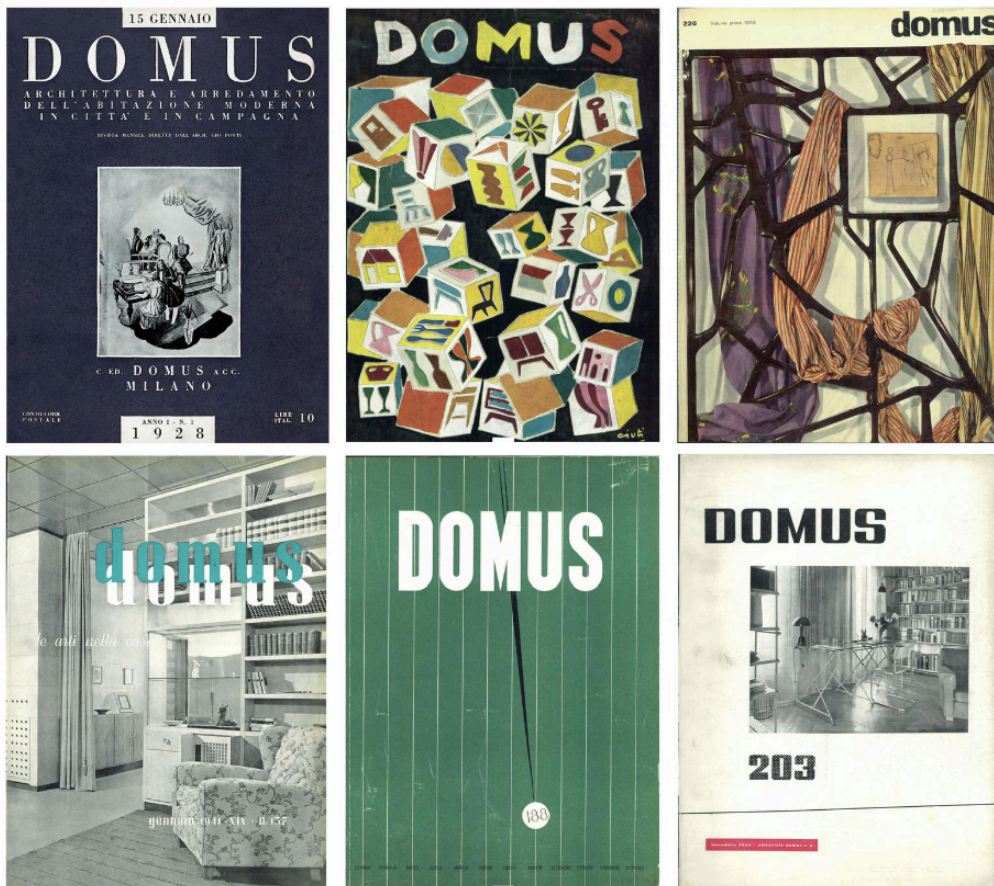


Figure 49. Domus' covers: at the top, the first issue from 1928; no. 156, the last issue edited by Ponti before his departure in 1940; no. 226, the issue marking his return in 1948. At the bottom, the first issue edited by Bontempelli, Pagano, and Bega; issues from the joint editorship of Bega and Ulrich; and issues edited by Bega alone.

Source: Maguolo, M. (2020). "Domus" e le altre. Le riviste di architettura fra guerra e dopoguerra. La Rivista di Engramma (online), (175). Engramma – La tradizione classica nella memoria occidentale. https://www.egramma.it/eOS/index.php?id_articolo=3975

Brazil as a country that was modern, creative, and culturally distinctive (Z. Goodwin, 1943; Scottá, 2017). In doing so, this mediated representation influenced not only professional discourse but also public appreciation of architecture, contributing to the valorization of modernist forms in national heritage discourses in subsequent decades.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in Italy. From the interwar period onward, Milanese and national architectural media played a decisive role in celebrating twentieth-century architecture as an emblem of modernity. Journals such as *Domus* and *Casabella* consistently presented new buildings, infrastructures, and office typologies as material expressions of cultural advancement and technical innovation (Figure 49). Under the direction of Gio Ponti, *Domus* promoted Milan as a center of modern design culture, publishing extensive photographic documentation and critical essays that associated modern architecture with intellectual refinement and industrial excellence (Sparke, 1988, p. 63). Similarly, *Casabella*, particularly during the postwar editorship of Ernesto Nathan Rogers, framed modern architecture as part of a historical continuum rather than a rupture, reinforcing its legitimacy within Milan's urban identity (Rogers, 1958). Through sustained editorial activity, these magazines normalized twentieth-century architecture as both culturally authoritative and emblematic of Milan's status as a "modern city."

At the same time, mass media and institutional communication increasingly contributed to the commodification of this architectural legacy. From the late twentieth century onward, newspapers and lifestyle magazines frequently framed modern buildings as assets within Milan's global competitiveness, emphasizing their adaptability, centrality, and symbolic value in narratives of urban regeneration. In Milan, this logic became evident in the press coverage of office districts, commercial redevelopment, and corporate headquarters housed in twentieth-century buildings, which were often presented less as heritage and more as flexible containers for new economic functions. Media attention to high-profile renovations, such as the redesign of *Palazzo Mondadori*, a landmark modernist building by Oscar Niemeyer in Segrate (Figure 50), has further reinforced a perception of twentieth-century architecture as something to be "updated," branded, and visually refreshed to meet contemporary market expectations.

On the other hand, media discourse has also functioned as a mechanism of delegitimization, shaping perceptions that framed certain modernist expressions as failures, deviations, or regressions (see Visual Atlas Figure [A32](#)). A particularly influential example of this dynamic emerged in mid-twentieth-century Italy through the polemics surrounding Neoliberty, a critical label applied to architectural approaches that sought to reconcile modernism with historical urban forms. As Segura (2013) notes, the debate unfolded prominently in architectural journals such as *Casabella-Continuità*



Figure 50. Mondadori headquarters in Segrate, designed by Oscar Niemeyer and photographed by Carlo Dell'Orto (2017). Constructed 1967–1970 in a park setting by Pietro Porcinai, the building exemplifies modernist corporate architecture outside Milan.

Source: Dell'Orto, C. (2017, October 15). Mondadori headquarters by Oscar Niemeyer, Segrate (Milano) [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mondadori_headquarters_by_Oscar_Niemeyer,_Segrate_\(Milano\)_07.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mondadori_headquarters_by_Oscar_Niemeyer,_Segrate_(Milano)_07.jpg)

and *The Architectural Review*, where British critic Reyner Banham forcefully condemned Italian historicist reinterpretations of modernism as a “retreat” from the modern project (Banham, 1959). Through widely circulated articles, Italian attempts to integrate historical continuity into contemporary architecture were framed not as culturally situated responses, but as symptoms of ideological exhaustion and aesthetic compromise. This mediated rejection extended beyond isolated buildings like Milan’s *Torre Velasca* (Domus, 1961) to a broader distrust of historicist-inflected modern architecture emerging from Italy. The Neoliberty debate thus demonstrates that institutional and media narratives could actively undermine the valuation of certain architectural expressions by casting them as regressive or inadequate, highlighting how mediated discourse can negatively influence collective perception.

A comparable dynamic can be observed in the Brazilian context, where press narratives similarly contributed to ambivalent perceptions of modern architecture. The 1958 article “Muito Edifício, Pouca Arquitetura,” published in *Revista do Globo*, explicitly questioned the success of modern architecture in Porto Alegre, asserting that “modernism did not take hold” in the city. Through interviews with prominent local architects, the article framed the limited diffusion of modern architecture as evidence of cultural inadequacy, regional incompatibility, or professional failure. The title itself appears to echo Lúcio Costa’s earlier article “Muita Construção, Alguma Arquitetura e um Milagre,” published in the commemorative fiftieth-anniversary edition of *Correio da Manhã*. By implicitly invoking this canonical critique, *Revista do Globo* positioned Porto Alegre’s architectural condition in relation to a broader national narrative of modernism, while simultaneously emphasizing the absence of a comparable “miracle” in the local context.

This framing was reinforced by the temporal and material discontinuities that marked the city’s modern architectural production. Alvarez and Silva (2025) argue that by the time key modern projects such as the *Hospital de Clínicas* (Figure 51) and the *Palácio da Justiça* reached effective operation, many years had elapsed, and the architectural influences shaping Porto Alegre had already begun to exceed the scope of the Carioca School³⁵. As Luccas (2004) observes, the city increasingly absorbed heterogeneous references, giving rise to “a crisis resulting from formal diversification and syntactic deformation, with symptoms of the exhaustion of modern architecture” (p. 245). Rather than being interpreted as a layered

³⁵ The Carioca School refers to a strand of Brazilian modern architecture that emerged primarily in Rio de Janeiro from the late 1930s onward, closely associated with architects such as Lúcio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, Affonso Eduardo Reidy, and the team involved in the *Palácio Capanema* (1936–45). Characterized by the creative adaptation of Le Corbusian principles to Brazil’s climatic, cultural, and urban conditions, the Carioca School emphasized pilotis, brise-soleil, free façades, and reinforced concrete structures, while privileging plastic expression, monumental form, and integration with landscape. Internationally disseminated through exhibitions and publications in the 1940s and 1950s, it came to represent a canonical model of Brazilian modernism, often treated as normative in national architectural discourse.

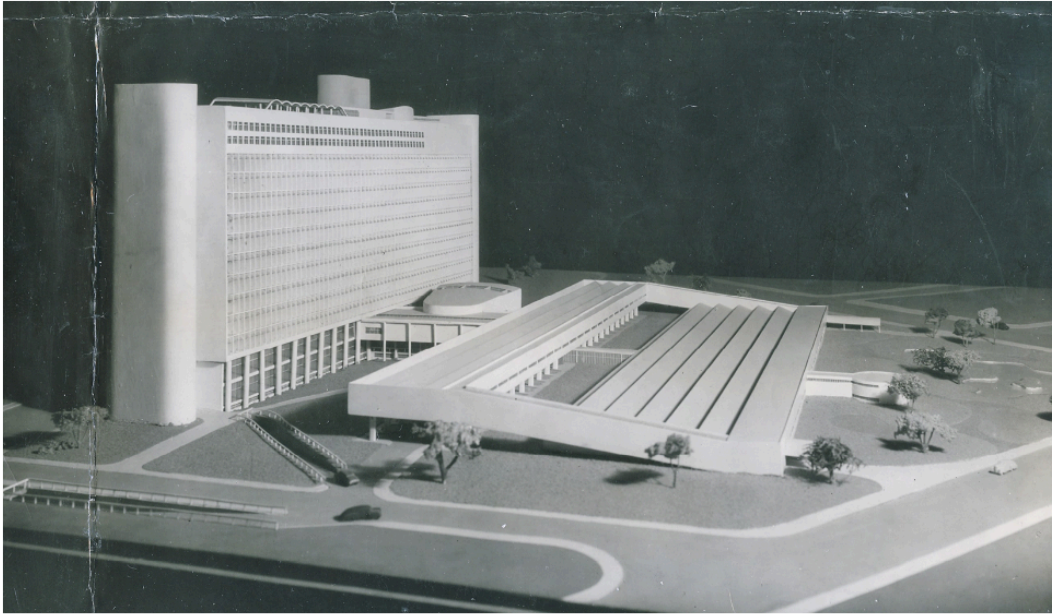


Figure 51. Model (maquette) of the Hospital de Clínicas of the School of Medicine of Porto Alegre, designed by Jorge Machado Moreira. The image anticipates a modernist project whose delayed realization and shifting reception exemplify the temporal discontinuities and critical reframing of modern architecture in Porto Alegre.

Source: Unknown photographer. (1949). Maquette of the Hospital de Clínicas of the School of Medicine of Porto Alegre, by architect Jorge Machado Moreira [Photograph] [Public domain image]. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Correio_da_Manh%C3%A3_AN_022.jpg

and evolving architectural palimpsest, this coexistence of styles was mediated in the press as a sign of failure or loss of direction. In this way, media discourse contributed to positioning Porto Alegre's twentieth-century architecture not as an emerging heritage shaped by complexity and hybridity, but as an unfulfilled promise, thereby influencing its subsequent valuation within local cultural memory.

Over time, however, media and institutional narratives in Porto Alegre increasingly shifted from critique toward strategies of reinterpretation and symbolic revaluation. As Cardoso and Carvalho (2013) note, Porto Alegre's historic center has been positioned as an "identity to be sold" or a referential landmark for the regional capital. This identity, besides carrying meaning for the local population, began being "exported" through the media. Programs such as *Monumenta*, *Viva o Centro*, and related communication platforms, including blogs, museum exhibitions, and newspaper coverage, have actively promoted the historic center as a shared cultural asset and a consumable urban identity. As the authors (Cardoso & Carvalho, 2013) argue, these initiatives rely heavily on interpretation as a communicative technique, employing guided tours, signage, publications, and digital media to translate architectural and historical knowledge into accessible narratives. Through these mediated practices, the historic center was reframed as a carrier of collective memory, fostering public appropriation and renewed interest.

Media can also exert influence on public perception by functioning as an arena of debate rather than merely a channel of representation. In recent years, social media platforms have increasingly become spaces for collective discussion, memory-making, and mobilization around urban heritage. In Porto Alegre, Facebook in particular has played a central role in aggregating dispersed interests into visible publics concerned with the city's architectural and cultural legacy. Groups such as *Amigos do Patrimônio*, *Porto Alegre de Antigamente*, *Patrimônio Histórico e Cultural de Porto Alegre: Debates*, and *Casarões de Porto Alegre* bring together communities ranging from approximately eight thousand to over one hundred thousand participants. Within these digital spaces, debates are structured around the circulation of historical photographs, personal recollections, and commentary on buildings at risk, often infused with a broader sense of nostalgia and attachment to the city's past.

These platforms operate simultaneously as archives, discussion forums, and instruments of mobilization. The sharing of images and memories not only reinforces affective bonds with the built environment but also contributes to the construction of informal heritage narratives that may diverge from official classifications. It was within this digital ecosystem that, in 2023, concerns regarding the former headquarters of the *Secretaria Municipal de Obras e Viação* (SMOV) began to circulate more widely, culminating in a public act and a petition to save the building, a modernist office block completed in 1970 (Figure 52). Through the performance of an "abraço simbólico" (symbolic hug), participants



Figure 52. Grassroots heritage mobilization around the former headquarters of the Secretaria Municipal de Obras e Viação (SMOV). The photograph on the right documents the 2023 “abraço simbólico,” in which participants collectively expressed civic and professional attachment to the building, while the image on the left shows the digital flyer used to organize and disseminate the action.

Source: SENGE-RS. (2023, November 22). Fórum de Entidades promovem abraço simbólico ao prédio da SMOV. SENGE-RS. <https://senge.org.br/noticias/forum-de-entidades-promovem-abraco-simbolico-ao-predio-da-smov/>
 Meinerz, T. (2023, November 29). Cancelado pela Justiça, leilão do prédio da SMOV não tem nova data para acontecer [Photograph]. Jornal do Comércio. <https://www.jornaldocomercio.com/colunas/pensar-a-cidade/2023/11/1132889-cancelado-pela-justica-leilao-do-predio-da-smov-nao-tem-nova-data-para-acontecer.html>

physically and collectively expressed emotional, professional, and civic attachment to the structure in response to its impending auction and potential redevelopment.

Despite these manifestations, institutional recognition did not follow. In February 2024, the COMPACH determined that the building did not meet the criteria for inclusion in Porto Alegre's municipal heritage inventory. The municipality subsequently sought to resume the auction process, previously suspended by judicial order. At the same time, the *Tribunal Regional Federal da 4ª Região* (TRF4) issued an injunction preventing the demolition or significant alteration of the building until the merits of an ongoing civil action concerning its preservation are resolved. Together, these developments reveal a fragmented and contested heritage process in which public mobilization, institutional refusal, and judicial intervention coexist, underscoring the unstable and negotiated nature of twentieth-century architectural heritage in Porto Alegre.

It is interesting to note that the use of the *abraço simbólico* as a form of heritage protest is not an isolated or unprecedented gesture, either in Porto Alegre or in other urban contexts. Rather, it constitutes a recurrent performative strategy through which citizens publicly articulate concern for buildings perceived to be at risk, particularly when institutional channels appear insufficient or unresponsive. In Porto Alegre itself, similar actions have been documented in relation to other heritage sites. In June 2018, for example, a collective demonstration encircled the *Casa Azul*, a long-neglected historic building at Rua Riachuelo that had been closed due to structural risk, as part of the event “O Rio Grande abraça o patrimônio cultural,” which mobilized participants across dozens of municipalities to draw attention to endangered architectural heritage (Figure 53). More recently, in December 2023, protesters performed an abraço simbólico around the *Museu Júlio de Castilhos* in opposition to a proposed 41-storey tower adjacent to the museum, arguing that the development would adversely impact both the building and its historic surroundings (see Visual Atlas [Figure A33](#)).

A similar episode of public concern over the treatment of twentieth-century heritage occurred in Milan in 2021, when a Liberty-style building near the Centrale area, known as the Hotel Demidoff on via Plinio, was repainted in a very dark gray/black tone (Figure 54). The sudden change sparked strong local backlash, with residents and heritage enthusiasts denouncing the color choice as an “obbrobrio” that obscured the building's ornate Liberty details and disrupted the historic streetscape. This reaction highlights how interventions on twentieth-century architecture can quickly become sites of symbolic conflict, in which questions of visibility, authenticity, and historical value are publicly negotiated.

Such episodes can be productively interpreted through broader theoretical perspectives on cultural memory and media. As Erll (2008) and Rigney (2005) emphasize, memory operates



Figure 53. Collective action in defense of architectural heritage in Porto Alegre. Participants encircle the Casa Azul during the “O Rio Grande abraça o patrimônio cultural” event, drawing attention to the endangered historic building at Rua Riachuelo (June 2018).

Source: Ribeiro, M. G. (2018, June 29). Grupo “abraça” prédio com risco de cair em ato pela preservação do patrimônio histórico [Photograph]. *Jornal do Comércio*. https://www.jornaldocomercio.com/_conteudo/galeria_de_imagens/2018/06/635704-grupo-abraca-predio-com-risco-de-cair-em-ato-pela-preservacao-do-patrimonio-historico.html



Figure 54. Liberty-style façade of the Hotel Demidoff near the Centrale area. Before (2015) and after (2022) comparison.

Source: Luperto, L. (2022). Demidoff Hotel in Milan [Photograph]. <https://www.pexels.com/photo/demidoff-hotel-in-milan-13902050/>
 Google Street View (2015).

simultaneously at individual and collective levels, with media playing a decisive role, regardless of the quality of information, in constructing shared frameworks through which the past is recalled and re-signified. In Porto Alegre, as Damin et al. (2018) note, information about cultural heritage is continually reconstructed through changing media environments, transforming the relationship between subject, object, and collective memory. In this sense, media narratives do not merely transmit information about architecture; they actively participate in producing its meaning, influencing how twentieth-century buildings are remembered, valued, or neglected.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that institutional and media narratives function as powerful agents in the construction of heritage value. Across different contexts, media discourse has alternately legitimized, marginalized, commodified, and re-signified twentieth-century architecture, shaping how it is perceived by professionals and the broader public alike. Rather than acting as neutral observers, magazines, newspapers, exhibitions, and social media actively construct the symbolic frameworks through which modern architecture is understood, remembered, and integrated, or excluded, from heritage discourses in both Milan and Porto Alegre.

6.3 Comparative Findings Through a Perceptual Lens

At this stage, urban imaginaries are treated as the analytical outcome, while media narratives are examined as the methodological means through which these imaginaries are constructed. This section, therefore, summarizes the findings by presenting the main contrasts, emphases and recurring representations between the images of both cities interpreted through the researcher's analytical lens. Milan and Porto Alegre present divergent urban imaginaries, divided here into four main contrasts and four emphases or recurring patterns.

The first contrast concerns the material condition and symbolic framing of twentieth-century heritage within the historic centers of Milan and Porto Alegre. In Porto Alegre, the historic center is widely perceived as physically deteriorated and vulnerable: buildings frequently remain unrestored, episodes of decay and abandonment are visible, and heritage structures are often left to endure precarious conditions with limited intervention. This material fragility contributes to an urban imaginary in which twentieth-century architecture (historical buildings and urban fabric in general) appears exposed, unstable, and at risk of disappearance, reinforcing narratives of neglect and institutional disengagement.



Figure 55. Contrasting scenarios. On the left, the different approaches to the conservation of early- and late-20th-century heritage in Porto Alegre. On the right, a more harmonious coexistence in terms of height and preservation conditions in Milan.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025 /2026.

In Milan, by contrast, the urban fabric is generally perceived as cohesive, well-maintained, and visually ordered (Figure 55). Twentieth-century buildings are largely conserved, restored, or renovated, contributing to an image of architectural continuity and care. Here, concern does not primarily revolve around physical abandonment or structural decay, but rather around the extent and nature of alterations introduced through renovation, adaptation, and commercial reuse. The contrast, therefore, does not lie in the presence or absence of twentieth-century architecture, but in the conditions under which it is maintained and transformed: while Porto Alegre's heritage is imagined as struggling to survive, Milan's is perceived as stable yet increasingly subject to transformation and reconfiguration.

A second contrast emerges in the relationship between symbolic recognition and material appearance within the historic centers of both cities. In Porto Alegre, the historic center derives much of its symbolic authority from its status as the site of the city's original settlement. Despite a heterogeneous and fragmented urban fabric shaped by successive twentieth-century interventions, the imaginary of origin and historical continuity remains firmly established in public perception. The historic center is widely recognized and named as such, even when its material coherence is visually disrupted.

Milan presents a contrasting condition. Although its central areas appear cohesive, carefully maintained, and visually legible as a historic urban environment, particularly when compared to Porto Alegre, there is no equally strong or singular imaginary of a historic center in public perception. The extensive reconstruction of the city, following not only the Second World War but even since the end of the nineteenth century, combined with the pervasive presence of global retail, commercial functions, and standardized urban experiences, has diluted the symbolic distinctiveness of the center as a site of historical origin. As a result, while Milan may look like a historic center from an external or comparative perspective, it is not consistently perceived or experienced as such by its inhabitants. This contrast highlights how the recognition of historic centers depends less on material homogeneity or architectural age than on shared symbolic narratives and collective agreement.

The third contrast relates to perceptions of urban scale and infrastructural intervention. In Porto Alegre, twentieth-century infrastructural projects such as viaducts and tunnels are frequently associated with fragmentation of the urban fabric, reinforcing narratives of rupture, loss, and disconnection. These interventions are interpreted not only as technical solutions, but as symbolic disruptions that alter the perceived coherence of the city (review Figure 35). In Milan, despite ambitious modernization processes and the introduction of vertical growth, the city is widely imagined as having preserved its human scale and spatial coherence, even being classified many times as a walkable city or

15-minute city³⁶. Here, infrastructure functions less as a marker of rupture and more as a component of an evolving yet legible urban image. In both cases, infrastructure operates as a narrative device, shaping how transformation is perceived and remembered.

A fourth contrast emerges in the way heritage protection is perceived through legal and institutional frameworks. In Porto Alegre, municipal legislation is often experienced as flexible, inconsistent, or unevenly enforced. This variability is reflected in public narratives that associate twentieth-century heritage with uncertainty and vulnerability, as legal protection appears contingent and subject to changing priorities, parties or interests. The perception of regulatory instability contributes to the broader imaginary of neglect, reinforcing the sense that heritage buildings and urban fabric are exposed to abandonment, modification, or disappearance with limited institutional oversight.

In Milan, by contrast, heritage regulation is commonly perceived as more structured and formalized. The presence of established legal frameworks and institutional procedures contributes to an image of heritage as controlled and managed through a stable regulatory system. While this can reinforce the perception of protection and care, it should not be taken as an absolute truth. As discussed in Chapter 6, urban imaginaries are not constrained by facts but emerge from perceived narratives and public discourse. For example, unlike some other Italian cities that implement detailed *piani del colore* to prescribe specific façade colours, Milan's regulatory framework does not prescribe a fixed palette for building exteriors city-wide. This discrepancy between perception and practice reveals how regulation can be imagined as rigid even when specific constraints are not uniformly applied. Nevertheless, the idea is that legislation becomes more than a technical instrument: it becomes a symbolic component of the city's heritage image, shaping how residents understand what can be changed, what must be protected, and who holds the authority to decide.

Besides these four contrasts, a set of shared emphases and recurring representations emerges across public perception in both cities. One of the most significant of these is what can be described as the temporal compression of the twentieth century. In public discourse, media narratives, and everyday perceptions, the twentieth century is rarely apprehended as a layered, internally differentiated historical period. Instead, it is frequently collapsed into a single symbolic category: "the modern."

³⁶ In Milan, the 15-minute city concept has been explicitly referenced in municipal planning initiatives, notably the *Milano a 15 minuti* programme, which promotes neighbourhood-scale accessibility to services and everyday functions. While widely celebrated in planning discourse as a model for human-scaled and sustainable cities, the concept has also generated critical discussion regarding its feasibility in consolidated urban contexts and its social and economic implications, including the politicization and misunderstanding of the term. These debates are not the focus of this research and are mentioned here only to clarify that references to the 15-minute city reflect a perceived urban image rather than an evaluative assessment of the concept itself.

Within this flattened temporal frame, early modernist experimentation, postwar reconstruction, late-modern infrastructural interventions, and even late twentieth-century transformations are often perceived as belonging to the same undifferentiated phase. As a result, the twentieth century tends to be understood either as a brief transitional moment between the “historic” city and the contemporary one, or as a problem to be corrected, updated, or overcome.

This compression affects how time itself is imagined within the urban landscape. Rather than being experienced as a palimpsest of successive layers, the twentieth century becomes a thin temporal surface positioned between a valorized past and a future-oriented present. In this configuration, modern buildings struggle to acquire symbolic thickness: they are either “not old enough” to be historic or “too old” to be considered contemporary. Heritage recognition is thus deferred, postponed, or denied, not necessarily because of material condition or architectural quality, but because of the way time is collectively perceived and narrated. In both Milan and Porto Alegre, the compression of the twentieth century thus emerges as a key perceptual mechanism through which modern architecture is simultaneously omnipresent and undervalued within the urban imaginary.

Closely connected to this temporal compression is another recurring emphasis: ambivalence. Rather than coherence, stability, or consensus, what repeatedly emerges in public discourse and media narratives is a state of unresolved tension. Twentieth-century buildings are rarely experienced through a single affective register; instead, they are situated at the intersection of admiration and discomfort, pride and rejection, nostalgia and anxiety. This ambivalence is visible in the way modern architecture is simultaneously celebrated and contested. Buildings are often admired in photographs and symbolic representations, where they function as icons of progress, innovation, or urban identity. Skyscrapers, modernist landmarks, and infrastructural works circulate widely as visual shorthand for metropolitan ambition or creative energy. Yet this admiration frequently coexists with unease in everyday use. In lived experience, the same buildings may be perceived as obsolete, alienating, difficult to maintain, or misaligned with contemporary social needs.

This study views ambivalence as a structural feature of contemporary heritage rather than as a failure of heritage discourse. Modern structures are still involved in ongoing social, economic, and political negotiations, in contrast to older heritage, whose symbolic status has frequently been stabilized through prolonged canonization processes. Their meanings are constantly renegotiated rather than settled, resulting in oscillatory rather than convergent affective responses.

A third recurring emphasis across both case studies is the recognition that urban perception is fundamentally situated and uneven. Building on the figures discussed earlier, from Baudelaire’s *Les yeux*

des pauvres and Benjamin's *flâneur* to Naziazeno in *Os Ratos* and Bianciardi's narrator in *La vita agra*, the findings emphasize that urban meaning is never uniformly experienced. The same architectural setting or urban space generates incompatible readings depending on the subject's social position, economic condition, affective state, and mode of inhabitation. Public discourse may circulate dominant narratives of identity, progress, or heritage, but these narratives are always encountered from unequal vantage points, producing divergent and sometimes conflicting perceptions of the city.

Within this framework, cities recurrently appear as simultaneously productive and exhausting, inclusive and exclusionary, symbolic and hostile. Twentieth-century architecture, in particular, occupies a central role in this perceptual asymmetry: it can function as an emblem of opportunity and modernization for some, while embodying precarity, alienation, or institutional indifference for others. Rather than privileging consensus or shared meaning, this analytical lens foregrounds asymmetry as a defining condition of urban perception. Heritage value, in this sense, does not arise from a unified collective gaze, but from the ongoing coexistence of unequal experiences that shape how modern architecture is imagined, contested, and remembered.

Finally, the last recurring pattern to emerge concerns the role of media as a perceptual amplifier, a condition that extends beyond the two case studies. Mediated narratives that affect how people view, remember, and value architecture are increasingly influencing public discourse. Modern communication environments have a tendency to emphasize some meanings while marginalizing others, despite the growth of media platforms and the seeming availability of numerous sources and viewpoints. In this context, repetition often proves more influential than accuracy, and once a narrative is consolidated, whether of value, decay, success, or failure, it becomes difficult to dislodge from public perception.

With regard to twentieth-century architecture, this dynamic has significant implications. Media narratives frequently stabilize simplified interpretations of modern buildings, framing them as either emblematic achievements or problematic remnants, while leaving little room for nuance, historical differentiation, or alternative readings. Through this process, media operates less as a neutral informer and more as a perceptual infrastructure that conditions the field within which modern heritage can be recognized, contested, or ignored. In both Milan and Porto Alegre, the visibility and valuation of twentieth-century architecture are therefore shaped not only by material conditions or institutional frameworks, but by the mediated repetition of particular narratives that structure how modern heritage is collectively imagined.

In conclusion, what emerges from this comparison is that the fate of twentieth-century architecture is shaped less by its material qualities alone than by the perceptual, symbolic, and mediated

frameworks through which it is understood. By foregrounding urban imaginaries rather than formal preservation outcomes, this analysis shows how heritage value is produced through narratives of care or neglect, stability or rupture, recognition or erasure. The contrasts between Milan and Porto Alegre demonstrate that modern heritage is neither inherently protected nor inherently vulnerable; instead, it becomes legible (or invisible) through shared stories about time, regulation, scale, and identity. Recognizing these perceptual mechanisms matters because they condition what societies choose to conserve, transform, or discard. Ultimately, engaging with twentieth-century architecture as a contested and ambivalent heritage requires not only technical or legal interventions, but a critical reworking of the narratives through which modern urban pasts are collectively imagined.

7. Discussion: Rethinking the Governance of 20th-Century

Heritage

“One does not collect Roman temples or amphitheaters. The passion of the collector cannot be mobilized for their protection. Against the social forces of destruction that threaten them, antique buildings have as their sole protection – unpredictable, if not ineffectual – the passion for knowledge and the love of art.” (Choay, 2001, p. 33)

Chapter 7 moves beyond the comparative reconstruction of governance frameworks and public perception to reflect on what these findings change in how 20th-century heritage governance is understood. Rather than confirming linear or cumulative relationships among legal recognition, planning instruments, and preservation outcomes, the cases of Milan and Porto Alegre reveal a series of structural contradictions that complicate prevailing assumptions in heritage theory. In this sense, this chapter is structured not to find answers or solutions, but rather to propose critical thinking and stimulate a debate on the topic.

As outlined in Chapter 3, heritage governance unfolds at the intersection of institutional regulation, cultural value, and socio-economic dynamics; yet the evidence discussed in the following chapters indicates that these dimensions do not necessarily converge in practice. Early recognition does not consistently translate into lasting protection, just as institutional stability does not automatically ensure cultural visibility or shared meaning. By placing governance mechanisms, planning practices, and public perception in direct tension, this chapter reframes 20th-century heritage not as a problem of regulatory absence, but as a condition shaped by misalignments between recognition, protection, and social meaning within growth-oriented urban contexts.

7.1 Public Perception as a Missing Institutional Layer

A first discussion point to emerge from the study concerns the effectiveness of legal recognition when considered in isolation. Framed through a comparison between Milan and Porto Alegre, the study shows that while the timing and scope of legal recognition can influence heritage outcomes, they do not determine protection on their own, particularly in relation to twentieth-century heritage. Early extension of heritage status to modern architecture is often presented as a strategy to anticipate vulnerability and counteract redevelopment pressures. However, the comparative evidence suggests that the relationship between recognition and protection is neither linear nor predictable. Porto Alegre demonstrates that early and flexible forms of recognition do not necessarily result in effective preservation, while the Milanese case shows that delayed, selective, or fragmented recognition does not automatically translate into heightened vulnerability.

Moreover, the comparison suggests that legal protection does not necessarily translate into effective heritage preservation, regardless of the robustness or timing of the legal framework. Despite their contrasting governance models, both cities reveal comparable dynamics, in which twentieth-century heritage remains structurally exposed to transformation, neglect, or erasure even when formally recognized. In Milan, where heritage governance is highly institutionalized and embedded within a dense legal tradition, protection mechanisms may be attenuated through negotiated planning instruments, discretionary exceptions, and selective recognition processes that tend to privilege certain modern works over others. Recognition might be present, yet it is often fragmented and unevenly translated into binding planning constraints, limiting its capacity to consistently guide urban transformation. In Porto Alegre, by contrast, the mechanism of *tombamento* allows, in principle, for early and direct protection; however, in practice, its application is highly selective and difficult even in contexts where historic value is

relatively legible. In urban fabrics characterized by dispersed, layered, or twentieth-century forms, many modern buildings remain outside the scope of protection altogether. Moreover, when *tombamento* does occur, it operates largely as a prohibitive tool detached from broader strategies of valorization, use, or urban integration. As a result, legally protected buildings may remain underused, socially disconnected, or economically marginalized, fostering indifference or resistance rather than collective attachment. What emerges from this point of comparison is not a failure of specific laws, but a structural condition of vulnerability produced when legal recognition is disconnected from planning instruments, institutional capacity, and most importantly, public perception.

Building on this, the study highlights a second fundamental point of discussion: public perception as a missing institutional layer in heritage governance. Rather than functioning as a secondary or “soft” dimension, perception operates as a mediating infrastructure between legal frameworks and their practical effects. The Milan and Porto Alegre scenarios demonstrate how public discourse, media narratives, and urban imaginaries are crucial in determining whether legal recognition results in substantive protection. Where twentieth-century heritage is not collectively perceived as valuable, protection remains fragile and politically exposed, regardless of its formal status.

Moreover, the study suggests that even when protection exists, being capable of conserving material structures, it does not necessarily sustain heritage meaning or visibility over time, raising the third point of discussion: the issue of whether heritage can endure when it is materially preserved but symbolically unrecognized.

In Milan, indirect protection mechanisms embedded within urban planning tools have helped preserve portions of the twentieth-century built fabric. Through instruments regulating volumes, alignments, land use, and façade treatment, many modern buildings have remained present within the urban fabric despite limited or delayed heritage recognition. Yet this form of preservation tends to operate with limited and uneven cultural framing, insufficient to ensure the long-term visibility of twentieth-century heritage. As discussed in Chapter 5.3, buildings may survive as functional or morphological elements of the urban landscape while gradually losing their historical legibility. Detached from narratives of value and from public recognition as heritage, preserved structures risk becoming culturally invisible, maintained as background fabric rather than understood as meaningful components of the city’s twentieth-century history (see Visual Atlas [Figure A34](#)). In this context, protection stabilizes form but not significance, allowing heritage to persist materially while fading symbolically.

The case of Porto Alegre reveals an inverse dynamic. As shown in Chapters 6.2 and 6.3, modern buildings often possess strong symbolic or social meaning within urban imaginaries, even when they lack

consistent planning protection or legal safeguards in practice. Public mobilizations, symbolic actions, and media discourse have contributed to the recognition of certain twentieth-century sites as culturally significant, despite their exclusion from the application of formal preservation frameworks in real life. However, in the absence of indirect or direct protection mechanisms capable of constraining transformation, this symbolic recognition remains precarious. Meaning may exist without material continuity, leaving culturally valued sites vulnerable to demolition or radical alteration. In this sense, Porto Alegre demonstrates that heritage can be symbolically present yet physically absent, highlighting the limits of perception when it is not supported by planning or regulatory instruments.

In this sense, the two cities generate divergent outcomes. In Milan, modern heritage tends to disappear in a figurative sense, gradually fading from collective awareness by being engulfed by the weight of the city's symbols and through alterations and renewal (see Visual Atlas [Figure A35](#)). While in Porto Alegre, it is more often literally lost in physical terms through the volatility of preservation frameworks and the uneven enforcement of legislation, resulting in fires and demolitions. Yet, despite these material losses, heritage in Porto Alegre frequently remains present within collective memory and public discourse.

Furthermore, this contrast mirrors the ways in which the historic center is understood and recognized in both cities. In Milan, there is no widely shared or clearly articulated sense of a historic center, shaped by uncertain boundaries, successive reconstructions, extensive alterations, and processes comparable to Haussmannization. The interplay of these dynamics, along with the commercialization of central areas, marked by the proliferation of international retail chains and standardized commercial uses, has weakened the symbolic cohesion of the historic core, even though the urban fabric remains relatively legible and clearly distinguishable from surrounding areas and peripheral zones.

In Porto Alegre, by contrast, the historic center has undergone equally profound transformations, including street realignments, land reclamation, and successive waves of redevelopment. Nevertheless, a persistent collective understanding of this area as the city's historic center remains. Despite being more vulnerable and far less morphologically legible, often perceived as a heterogeneous assemblage of styles and periods rather than a coherent ensemble, the area continues to function as a symbolic and cultural reference point. This comparison reinforces the argument that heritage may persist symbolically even as it disappears materially, just as it may remain materially legible while losing its place within collective imaginaries.

In conclusion, the comparative study suggests that material preservation alone is insufficient to ensure the survival of heritage when it is not accompanied by symbolic recognition. While indirect

protection mechanisms may prevent demolition and maintain elements of the built fabric, they do not, on their own, sustain heritage as a meaningful cultural construct. Heritage survival, therefore, cannot be reduced to either physical persistence or symbolic presence in isolation. It depends on the convergence of material protection, cultural visibility, and institutional support. Where this convergence is absent, preservation risks becoming purely formal, and recognition purely rhetorical. In this sense, heritage does not simply survive through conservation of form, but through the sustained alignment between what is preserved, what is recognized, and what is collectively understood as worthy of continuity.

7.2 The Temporal Trap of Modern Heritage

One of the most significant insights emerging from this research is that twentieth-century heritage is uniquely unstable not simply because of its relative temporal proximity, but because it is intrinsically bound to the ideology of modernity itself. As demonstrated across both case studies, modern architecture was conceived as forward-looking, aligned with ideas of progress, rupture, and continuous renewal. Rather than aspiring to permanence, it was often designed to embody change, innovation, and adaptability. This origin produces what can be understood as a temporal paradox of modern heritage: buildings initially intended to represent the future are later evaluated through heritage frameworks that prioritize continuity, age, and historical distance.

This mismatch generates a structural condition of vulnerability. Twentieth-century architecture is not merely “too recent” to be recognized as heritage; it is frequently assessed against a symbolic register that is selective. As shown in both Milan and Porto Alegre, modern buildings struggle to be monumentalized in part because their recognition depends less on architectural form than on the narratives through which they can be framed, particularly those tied to identity-building and collective representation. Their association with rupture rather than continuity complicates their incorporation into heritage narratives that rely on symbolic stability and temporal depth. As a result, even architecturally significant or widely published modern works may remain contested, selectively recognized, or excluded from protection within existing governance frameworks.

This finding moves beyond conventional debates on recent or modern heritage by linking temporal perception to governance and cultural recognition. The analysis shows that time alone does not resolve the vulnerability of modern architecture. Instead, heritage recognition depends on how modernity itself is reinterpreted within historiographic narratives, planning practices, and public

imaginaries. Without such reinterpretation, twentieth-century heritage remains caught in a temporal trap, penalized by the very ideology that once justified its production.

This temporal trap is further intensified by a second paradox inherent to modern heritage: the fact that many twentieth-century buildings now considered for preservation were originally conceived as agents of replacement. Modern architecture frequently emerged through the demolition, transformation, or rejection of earlier urban forms that were themselves later recognized as heritage. As a result, preservation efforts are often directed toward safeguarding what once actively displaced the very historical layers that heritage frameworks were designed to protect. This reversal complicates processes of recognition, as modern architecture carries with it the memory of rupture and loss, making its preservation symbolically ambiguous and, at times, politically contested.

Closely related to this temporal paradox is the inadequacy of the historic center as a primary framework for recognizing and managing modern urban heritage. The comparative study demonstrates that twentieth-century heritage rarely conforms to the spatial logic upon which traditional heritage frameworks are built. Historic value in contemporary cities is not confined to compact, coherent cores, but is instead dispersed, fragmented, and layered across urban territories shaped by continuous transformation.

Twentieth-century heritage often coexists within areas already recognized as historic, yet its value remains unevenly acknowledged because heritage governance continues to rely on notions of coherence, stylistic unity, and temporal distance. In this sense, the question is not whether modern heritage lies inside or outside historic perimeters, but how “the historic” is defined in the first place. As shown in Milan, even within a morphologically legible and centrally located urban fabric, selective narratives and planning priorities tend to privilege earlier historical layers, rendering modern elements secondary or conceptually peripheral. In Porto Alegre, where urban form is more heterogeneous and discontinuous, this reliance on spatial coherence further intensifies exclusion, making modern heritage particularly vulnerable within recognition frameworks structured around zones rather than historical processes.

The innovative contribution of this research lies in connecting this spatial limitation directly to planning practice. Cities that continue to treat heritage as an “island,” isolated within predefined centers, struggle to accommodate the palimpsestic nature of modern urban development. Drawing on the *città storica* debate, the analysis reframes heritage not as a fixed zone to be preserved, but as a selective and critical process through which different historical layers are interpreted and negotiated. Within such a framework, twentieth-century architecture cannot be treated as an external or residual category, but as an integral component of the historic city itself. Persisting in center-based frameworks, therefore, does not

merely overlook modern heritage; it actively reinforces its marginalization within both governance structures and collective imaginaries. When heritage governance fails to engage critically with this layered history, preservation risks becoming selective and ahistorical, privileging certain temporal strata while leaving others unresolved within the urban palimpsest.

7.3 Lessons and Limits of 20th Century Heritage Governance

The two parallel tracks between Milan and Porto Alegre reveal that the governance of 20th-century heritage is shaped less by the intrinsic qualities of modern architecture than by the institutional, perceptual, and temporal frameworks through which it is interpreted. Despite operating within distinct legal traditions and planning cultures, both cities expose a set of shared lessons and persistent limits that characterize the governance of modern heritage in cities developed toward growth.

A first lesson concerns the structural mismatch between modern heritage and traditional heritage frameworks. Both cases demonstrate that governance systems originally designed to protect monuments or historic centers struggle to accommodate the diffuse, fragmented, and often ordinary nature of 20th-century urban heritage. Modern architecture not always conforms to the monument-based logic that underpins much heritage legislation. Instead, often it is embedded within everyday urban fabrics, associated with infrastructure, housing, or administrative functions, and frequently linked to contested political or social narratives. As a result, its heritage recognition tends to be partial, delayed, or reactive, emerging only in moments of crisis, such as demolition threats or redevelopment conflicts.

This mismatch is evident in Milan's reliance on planning instruments to indirectly safeguard modern heritage, as well as in Porto Alegre's dependence on object-based listing mechanisms such as *tombamento*. In both contexts, governance frameworks reveal a difficulty in translating modern architecture into stable heritage categories. This suggests that 20th-century heritage governance cannot rely solely on existing tools, but requires adaptive instruments capable of recognizing value beyond age, stylistic unity, or exceptional artistic merit.

A second lesson relates to the central role of urban planning as a mediator between heritage and development. The Milanese case illustrates how planning can function as an implicit form of heritage governance, embedding protection within broader spatial regulations, morphological controls, and urban design strategies. While this approach allows for a more integrated relationship between heritage and urban transformation, it also introduces ambiguity: protection becomes less explicit, more negotiable,

and sometimes dependent on political priorities or market dynamics. Porto Alegre, by contrast, shows the consequences of a weaker integration between heritage policy and urban planning, where protection mechanisms often operate in isolation from development strategies, limiting their effectiveness in shaping long-term urban change.

Together, the cases demonstrate that planning can either reinforce or undermine heritage governance, depending on how clearly heritage values are articulated within regulatory frameworks. The absence of explicit recognition of 20th-century heritage within planning instruments tends to expose modern buildings to redevelopment pressures, even when their cultural value is acknowledged in principle. Thus, a key lesson is that governance effectiveness depends not only on the existence of heritage laws, but on their operationalization within everyday planning practice.

At the same time, the comparison also exposes the limits of governance in the absence of shared cultural recognition. As discussed in previous sections, public perception emerges as a critical yet unstable layer of heritage governance. In Milan, an established architectural culture and specialized media provide platforms through which certain modern buildings enter public and professional debate. However, this visibility is uneven and often confined to specific authors, typologies, or historiographic narratives, leaving large portions of the 20th-century fabric culturally backgrounded. In Porto Alegre, public mobilization around modern heritage more frequently arises from grassroots action rather than sustained institutional endorsement, highlighting the fragility of heritage legitimacy when it is not consistently supported by coherent governance frameworks.

This reveals a fundamental limit: governance mechanisms alone cannot generate heritage value if modern architecture remains culturally ambiguous or symbolically contested. Conversely, strong public attachment without institutional support risks producing episodic and defensive forms of preservation, rather than sustained strategies of care and integration. The governance of 20th-century heritage thus operates within a narrow space between regulation and recognition, where neither dimension is sufficient on its own.

A further limit concerns the temporal paradox of modern heritage, already outlined in earlier chapters. Modern architecture occupies an unstable position between contemporaneity and historicity, often perceived as either “not old enough” to merit protection or “too outdated” to meet current functional demands. Governance frameworks, which frequently rely on temporal thresholds or retrospective historical evaluation, struggle to address this condition. As a result, modern heritage is frequently assessed only after its social, material, or urban relevance has been compromised.

This temporal trap reinforces a reactive mode of governance, where protection follows loss rather than anticipating it. Both Milan and Porto Alegre illustrate how delayed recognition limits the range of possible interventions, reducing governance to defensive measures instead of proactive strategies that could guide transformation while preserving cultural meaning.

The lessons and limits presented here suggest that the governance of 20th-century heritage requires a conceptual shift. Rather than treating modern architecture as an extension of traditional heritage categories, governance frameworks must acknowledge its specific conditions: its proximity to the present, its entanglement with everyday urban life, and its vulnerability to economic and functional pressures. This implies moving beyond a binary opposition between conservation and development, toward an understanding of heritage as a negotiated process embedded within urban change.

Ultimately, the comparison between Milan and Porto Alegre demonstrates that 20th-century heritage governance is not merely a technical or legal challenge, but a cultural and political one. Its effectiveness depends on the ability of institutions, planning systems, and public discourse to construct modernity not as an obstacle to heritage, but as a legitimate part of the urban past worthy of critical recognition and collective care.

8. Conclusion

This thesis investigated how 20th-century architectural and urban heritage is governed and perceived in two cities shaped by intense modernization: Milan and Porto Alegre. By placing these cases in dialogue, the research examined how institutional traditions, planning frameworks, and public narratives influence what is recognized, protected, or overlooked as heritage in the modern urban context. Rather than treating modern heritage as a marginal or residual category, the study approached it as an integral component of cities, deeply entangled with processes of growth, transformation, and identity construction.

The comparative study demonstrates that the governance of 20th-century heritage cannot be explained solely through legal instruments or architectural value. Instead, it emerges from the interaction between temporal perceptions of modernity, governance and planning structures, and public recognition. These dimensions do not necessarily converge. Legal recognition does not automatically translate into effective protection, planning instruments may preserve form without sustaining meaning, and public attachment alone cannot prevent material loss. Modern heritage thus operates within a field of structural misalignments that shape both its vulnerability and its selective recognition.

One of the central contributions of this research lies in reframing 20th-century heritage not as a problem of age or stylistic classification, but as a governance condition rooted in modernity itself. The difficulty of preserving modern architecture reflects broader uncertainties about how cities relate to their recent past, how they negotiate continuity amid transformation, and how cultural value is constructed within growth-oriented urban contexts. Through the comparison of Milan and Porto Alegre, the thesis shows that heritage recognition is not neutral or cumulative, but dependent on narrative alignment, institutional capacity, and the integration of heritage concerns within everyday planning practice.

Ultimately, recognizing the heritage of the modern is not about freezing the recent past, but about developing governance frameworks capable of mediating change while retaining cultural meaning. As cities continue to evolve under pressures of redevelopment, climate adaptation, and social transformation, the question of what is preserved from the 20th century becomes increasingly urgent. Addressing this challenge requires not only new regulatory tools but a broader cultural shift in how modernity itself is understood as part of the urban legacy and as a legitimate object of collective care.

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10. Appendix

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Figure A33. Selected works by Vito and Gustavo Latis, Milan

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10.1 Visual Atlas

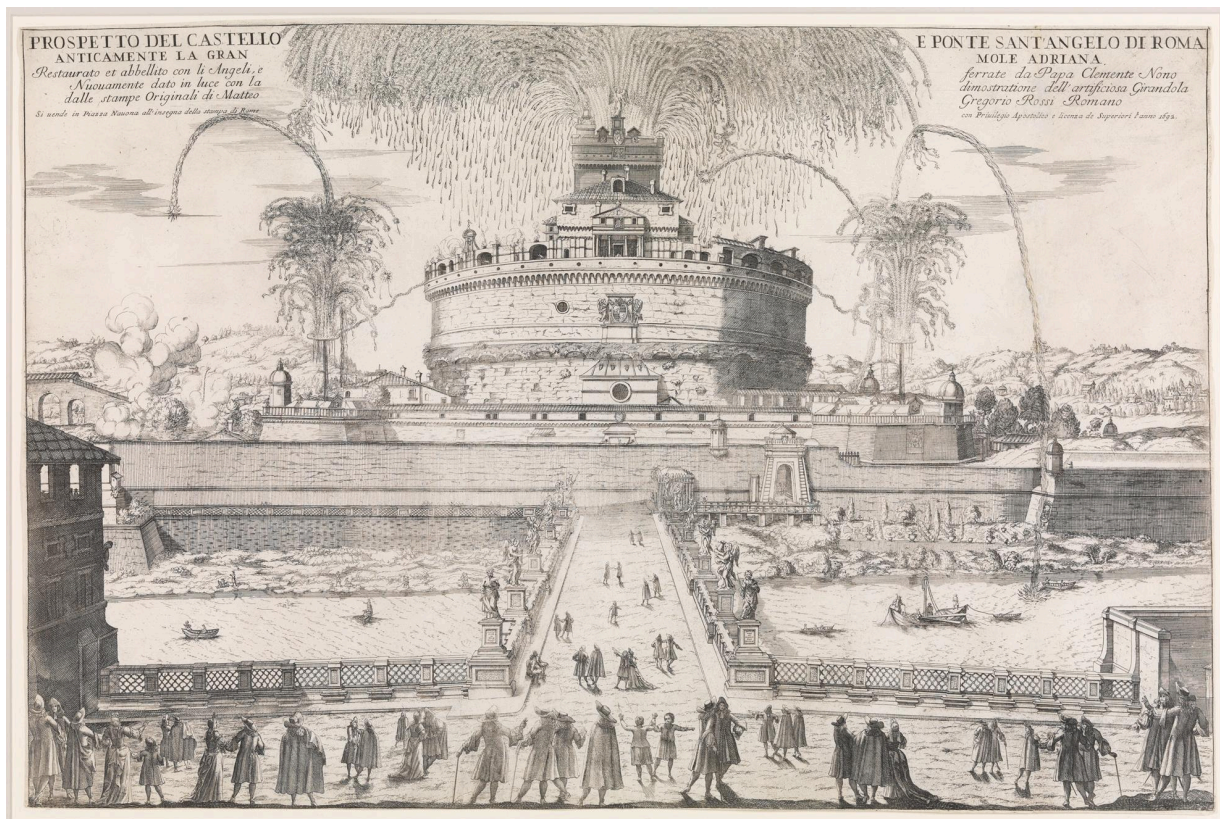


Figure A1. *The Girandola at the Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome (1692)*, by Giovanni Battista Falda, illustrates how, by the seventeenth century, monumental architecture was already celebrated as a visible expression of political authority, collective memory, and urban magnificence. Falda's engraving does not merely document the monument, but stages it as the central focus of a public spectacle emphasizing its enduring symbolic function in the city's identity. Such images helped shape a European understanding of the "monument" as a durable bearer of history and artistic achievement, aligning with the discourses described by Choay (2001) and anticipating modern concepts of heritage governance rooted in permanence, grandeur, and civic representation.

Source: Falda, G. B. (1692). *The Girandola at the Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome* [Etching]. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/341738>



Figure A2. *Cúria Metropolitana de Porto Alegre*. Often cited as an exceptional case in the Brazilian context, the building was described by the historian and cultural critic Athos Damasceno Ferreira as “perhaps the only building in Porto Alegre deserving to be called a monument” (Damasceno, 1940). His remark reflects a conception of the monument aligned with European traditions of permanence, artistic value, and historical testimony, highlighting both the scarcity of monumental architecture in the modern Brazilian city and the persistence of a monument-centered heritage paradigm inherited from Europe.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.

Ferreira, A. D. (1940). *Imagens sentimentais da cidade* (1ª ed.). Porto Alegre: Edições da Livraria do Globo.



Figure A3a. Aerial photograph of the historic center of Salvador, Bahia, showing the dense and recognizable colonial urban fabric and prominent religious buildings. This spatial unity is one reason why preservation policies in Brazil most visibly focused on colonial cities: they presented an immediately legible architectural ensemble that could be codified as national heritage.

Source: Burley, P. R. (2021, October 4). Historic Centre of Salvador da Bahia, Cidade Alta, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Historic_Centre_of_Salvador_de_Bahia_Aerial_View_2021-0915.jpg

Figure A3b. Aerial view of Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais, showing the terraced colonial houses, narrow streets, and prominent baroque churches that structure the historic urban landscape. The spatial continuity and visual unity of the architectural fabric made cities like Ouro Preto easily legible as “heritage,” helping early preservation policies to codify them as national monuments and reinforcing their symbolic role in narratives of Brazilian identity and history.

Source: Rosino (Photographer). (2011). Ouro Preto, Brazil [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ouro_Preto%2C_Brazil%2C_2011_%286288971321%29.jpg

Figure A3c. Historic center of Olinda, Pernambuco. The compact colonial roofs and churches form a visually cohesive heritage ensemble, made easily legible for preservation. In the background, modern skyscrapers mark a clear rupture between the historic fabric and contemporary urban development.

Source: Calvet, L. (2010). Historic Centre of the Town of Olinda [Photograph]. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/120672>



Figure A4. Porto Alegre’s urban palimpsest in the historic center. The pink-orange Paço Municipal in Porto Alegre (Town Hall), built in 1901, sits at the heart of the city’s historic core; around it rise other historically layered edifices, such as the *Edifício União*, built around 1940, and also the *Conjunto Residencial e Comercial T-4*, marked by its blue strips in the facade, consists on mixed used skyscrapers built in the 70s. The mix of architectural styles illustrates how the city’s core is a layered urban palimpsest, making it more difficult to recognize as a cohesive heritage ensemble suitable for traditional preservation models.

Source: Tetraktys. (n.d.). Historic centre of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Porto-alegre-centro.jpg>

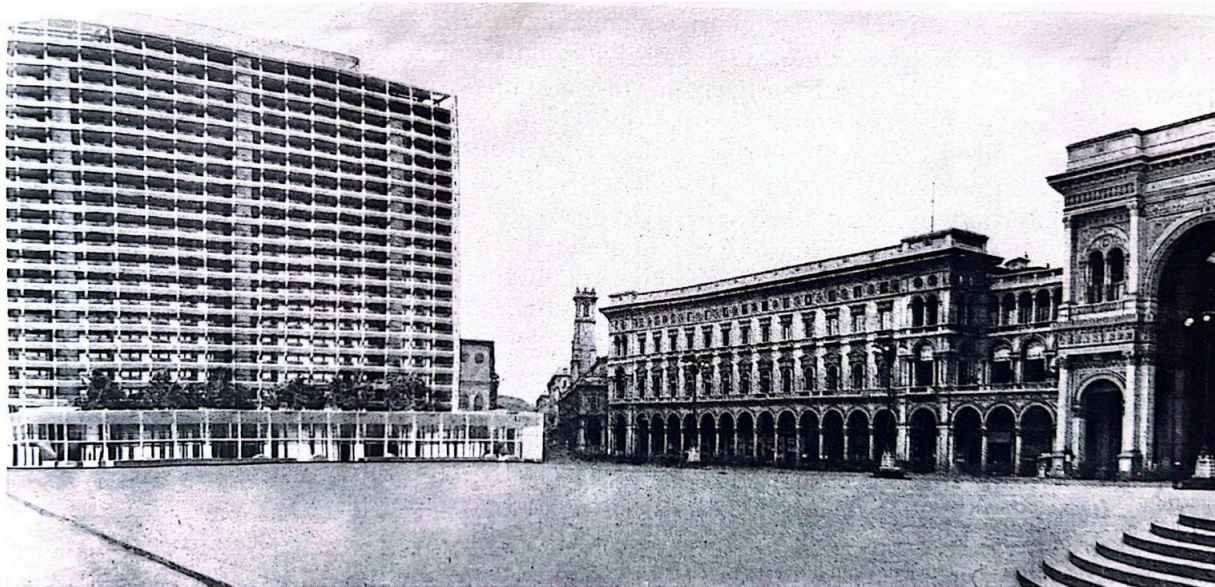


Figure A5. Project for an office building in *Piazza del Duomo*, by Irenio Diotallevi and Franco Marescotti, 1939. Had these type of projects been executed, Milan might have seen tall, modular office buildings adjacent to historic landmarks, somewhat similar to the urban landscape of Porto Alegre (see Figure 3). The visual consistency in terms of height, color, and ornamentation is what makes the historic cores of the two cities perceived so differently from foreign lenses. Milan’s city center retains a fairly legible ensemble and breathing spaces that enhance that readability, making the modern layers in the historic center appear more “discreet” in comparison to Porto Alegre.

Source: Milano: Guida all’architettura moderna (p. 177) by M. Grandi & A. Pracchi, 1980, Bologna: Zanichelli. Original source: G. Pagano, *Vecchio e nuovo*, Costruzioni-Casabella, 145, 2-7 (Jan. 1940); I. Diotallevi & F. Marescotti, *Progetto di un centro per uffici*, *ibid.*, 8-25.



Figure A6. Historic map of Milan, surveyed in 1844 by the Astronomers of Brera and engraved by Giuseppe Cattaneo. The map illustrates the dense, concentric development of the city defined by its former defensive walls, serving here as a reference for discussing how urban morphology and historical boundaries can shape the recognition of historic centers, as in the comparison with Porto Alegre.

Source: Gambi, L., & Gozzoli, M. C. (1997). *Le città nella storia d'Italia: Milano* (3rd ed.), p. 227. Bari: Editori Laterza.



Figure A7. Memorial Luiz Carlos Prestes, Porto Alegre. Designed in 1998 by Oscar Niemeyer, the memorial stands in the Praia de Belas neighborhood along Avenida Ipiranga. Its modern form (red and black curved walls) stands in isolation amidst high-rise buildings, a visual metaphor for the lack of spatial integration, illustrating the absence of a second dimension of heritage valorization in Brazil. In recent years, there have been efforts to secure its formal protection through *tombamento* by IPHAN, driven by both its architectural significance (the only Niemeyer work in Porto Alegre) and its ideological importance, but since its opening, the memorial has been the target of political conflicts. This example illustrates the limits of a protection model focused solely on legal safeguarding, without mechanisms to promote active use, public access, or, as in this case, mainly the incorporation into urban planning, emphasizing the need for policies that combine protection and valorization.

Source: VEJA. (2017, October 26). *Prédio projetado por Niemeyer manterá homenagem a Prestes* [Image]. VEJA. <https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/rio-grande-do-sul/predio-projetado-por-niemeyer-mantera-homenagem-a-prestes/> VEJA



Figure A8. EUR district, Rome. An example of a twentieth-century neighborhood included in the PRG '08 definition of the historic city. The Plan reconceptualizes the historic center not as an isolated core but as part of an articulated and discontinuous urban system extending from central areas toward the peripheries, encompassing both historic villas and modern urban fabrics such as EUR, Città Giardino, and Pigneto.

Source: Estate Romana. (2021, April). EUR - Esposizione Universale Roma [Photograph]. <https://i0.wp.com/www.estateromana.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/EUR-Esposizione-Universale-Roma-1.jpg?fit=1995%2C1136&ssl=1>

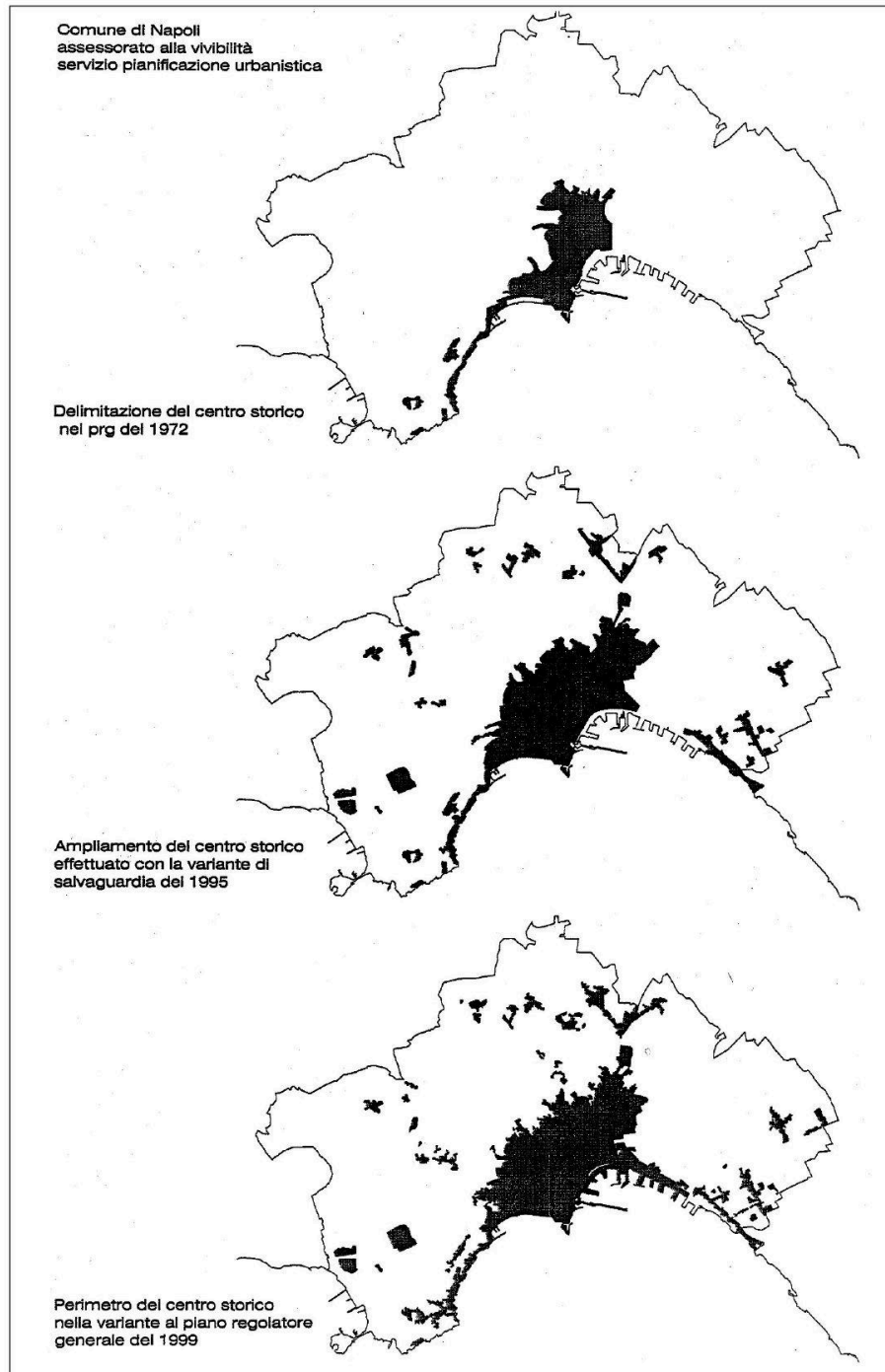


Figure A9. Map of the historic-centre perimeter in Naples according to the Variante generale al PRG. It shows the delineation of the *centro storico* as defined in the 1972 plan, its expansion in the 1995 safeguarding variant, and the proposed boundary in the 1999 general variant.

Source: Comune di Napoli. (n.d.). *Variante generale al Piano Regolatore Generale: Immagini – Cap. 4, Fig. 1* [Map]. Comune di Napoli. Retrieved from <https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/2375>



Figure A10. *Roberto Morisi Building, Via Jacomelli, Milan.*

Completed in 1971, the building by Roberto Morisi is an exemplar of brutalist style in Milan and highlights the limitations of heritage legislation grounded in minimum age requirements, which have historically hindered the recognition and protection of modern architectural works in Italy.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026.



Figure A11. At the top, the Church of San Nicolao della Flue, located at Via Dalmazia 11, southeast of Milan's city center, designed by Ignazio Gardella between 1968 and 1970. At the bottom, on the left its impressive brutalist interior. On the right, the Church of San Giovanni Bono, in the Sant'Ambrogio district, designed by Arrigo Arrighetti and completed around 1968. These buildings exemplify the "monuments of the modern," whose artistic and historical value derives from a radical departure from academic traditions rather than stylistic continuity.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026.



Figure A12. The ancient district of San Nazaro in Milan, 1886. On the left, a glimpse of the church of San Nazaro in Pietrasanta. All the buildings were demolished to open Via Dante. The image highlights the complete removal of existing buildings, not just isolated structures, demonstrating the radical nature of the intervention and the willingness of the municipal administration to overwrite the inherited medieval street network in favor of a new monumental axis.

Source: Anonymous. (before 1885). Milano, contrada San Nazaro [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Milano_contrada_San_Nazaro.jpg

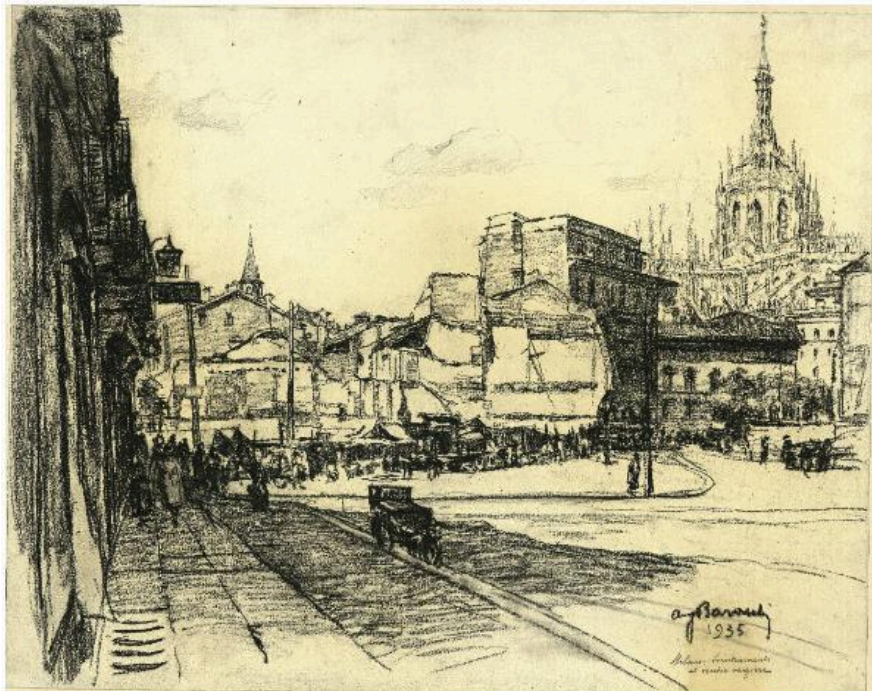


Figure A13. *Sventramento al vecchio Verziere (1936)*, drawing by Augusto Baracchi. The artist's rendering dramatically illustrates the "scorched" character of the redevelopment: historic buildings are torn down to make way for modern, monumental interventions, with the Duomo looming in the distance. The choice of displaying a drawing rather than a picture is deliberate, as it highlights how the narrative of urban transformation is not just documented, but also constructed and mediated through collective imaginaries, shaping public perception of the city's past and its "indecorous invasion" (Gambi & Gozzoli, 1997, p. 321). This image thus serves both as a visual record and as a cultural interpretation of the interventions.

Source: Baracchi, A. (1936). *Sventramento al vecchio Verziere (old Verziere demolition)* [Drawing]. Lombardia Beni Culturali. <https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/opere-arte/schede/10180-00681/>



Figure A14. Demolition of the “Brusada” (June 1955), photo by Calcagni, Fondazione Pirelli. This image shows the removal of the old Pirelli factory complex (Cascina Brusada) from the intersection of Via Pirelli and Via Filzi, with excavations underway, a symbolic erasure of Pirelli’s industrial past to make way for the new corporate and architectural future.

Source: Fondazione Pirelli. (1955, June). *Demolition of the “Brusada” (Cascina Brusada), Milan* [Photograph by Calcagni]. Pirelli Historical Archive.
<https://www.fondazionepirelli.org/archivio-storico/fotografie/detail/IT-PIRELLI-FT0001-0000000171/la-demolizione-della-34-brusada-34-giugno-1955-foto-calcagni.html>

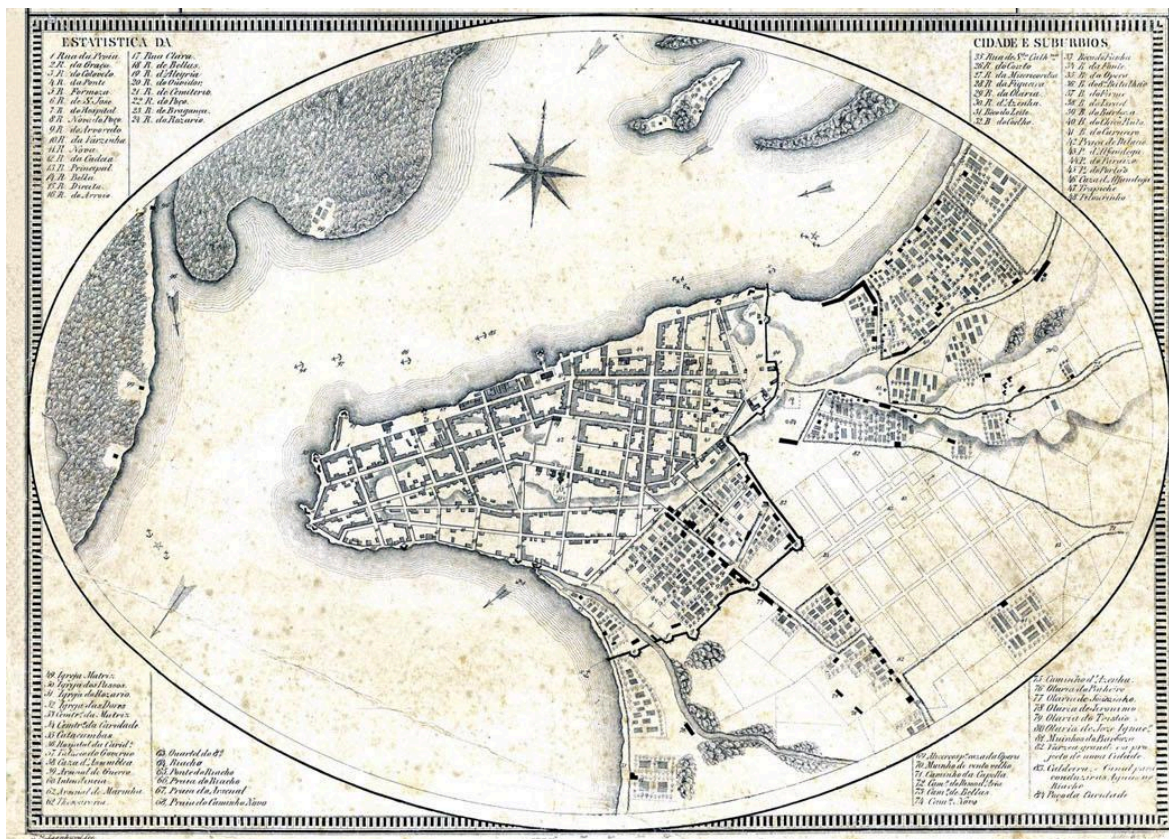


Figure A15. Plan of Porto Alegre from 1839 by Luís Pereira Dias, showing trench and fortified walls, later demolished around 1845. In this plan, it is possible to observe an early project of expansion beyond the walled area where today is the Redenção Park, demonstrating a radial, semicircular growth pattern, constrained only by the waters of the Guaíba River, but not for long.

Source: Luís Pereira Dias. (1839). Planta da Cidade de Porto Alegre [Map]. Acervos Biev. Modified by the author.

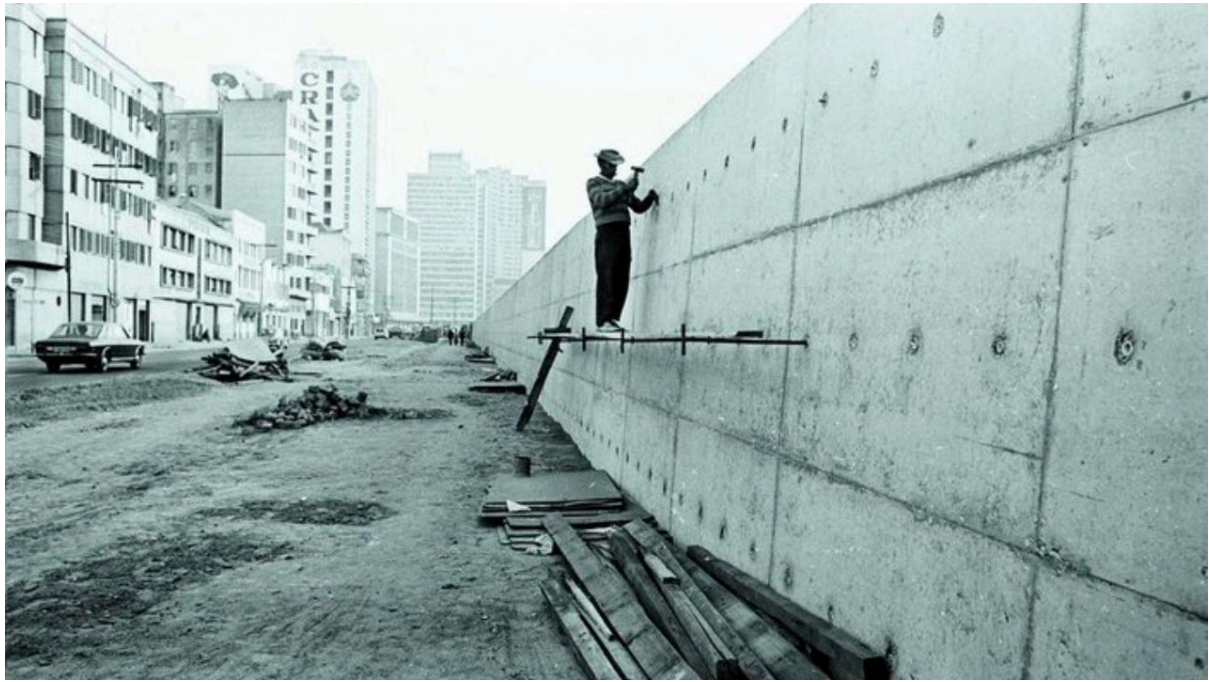


Figure A16. Construction of the Mauá Wall after the 1941 flood in Porto Alegre. The wall has been the target of several debates since its construction because it separated the city from the water, changing its relationship with the shore. In the background, it is possible to see an already highly verticalized cityscape. The flood also triggered other projects, such as the canalization of the *Arroio Dilúvio*, which had already begun a couple of years earlier.

Source: Franken, P. (1941). Construction of the Mauá Wall after the 1941 flood in Porto Alegre [Photograph]. Curtindo Porto Alegre. <https://curtindoportoalegre.com.br/enchente-de-1941-em-porto-alegre/>



Figure A17. Flooding of the Guaíba River in 2023. One year prior to the biggest flood in the history of Porto Alegre. The image presents good evidence of the monumental waterfront of warehouses and docks separated from the city by rail lines, the Mauá Avenue, and by the wall as described by Souza (2010).

Source: Meinerz, T. / J.C. (2023, September 27). Guaíba tem cheia histórica, a maior desde a enchente de 1941 [Photograph]. *Jornal do Comércio*. <https://www.jornaldocomercio.com/geral/2023/09/1124780-quaiba-tem-cheia-historica-a-maior-desde-a-enchente-de-1941.html>



Figure A18. View of *Praça Pereira Parobé* with the *Mercado Público* of Porto Alegre. The image likely dates from the early 20th century. The square was established in 1925-1927 on land reclaimed from the former *Doca das Frutas*, once a dock area connected to the city's waterfront.

Source: Praça Parobé, Porto Alegre (c. 1930) [Photograph]. (n.d.). In *A Câmara na Cidade*. Acervo Prati. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/bdlf/docs/a_ca_mara_na_cidade_crop3



Figure A19. Old aerial view of the *Usina do Gasômetro*, Porto Alegre. Inaugurated in November 1928, with modern equipment, the plant played a key role in the city's modernization and contributed to the early stages of Brazil's national industrialization. Part of an ambitious program of urban transformation initiated by state and municipal governments, the *Usina* was embedded in efforts to redesign streets, squares, and avenues, improve sanitation in the historic center, and construct monumental buildings. According to Guimarães (2002), the building embodied a symbolic fascination with science, electricity, and its generative power, linking the plant to notions of modernity, progress, and civilization. Beyond its symbolic meaning, the plant fostered the use of electricity in industrial, commercial, and domestic contexts, shaping both the city's economic and cultural life and becoming one of Porto Alegre's most iconic structures of the Belle Époque. The smoke rising from the facility, visible in the photograph, signals both its operation and its material presence as an agent of urban transformation.

Source: Curtindo Porto Alegre. (n.d.). Usina do Gasômetro — antiga vista aérea / histórica [Photograph]. Curtindo Porto Alegre. <https://curtindoportoalegre.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/usina-do-gasometro-antigamente-porto-alegre.jpg>

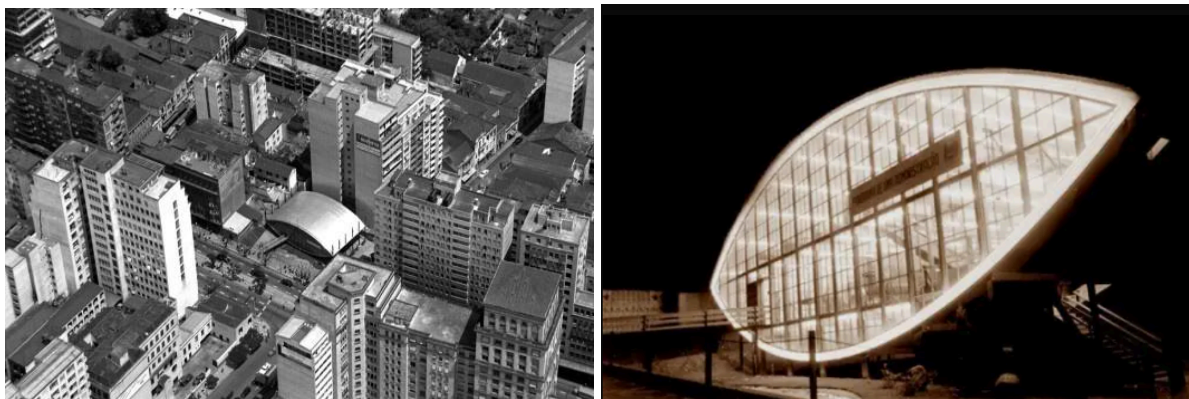


Figure A20. *Pavilhão Mata-Borrão*, Porto Alegre. Aerial or urban-context view of the pavilion and its surroundings (left). Façade at night, shortly before the building's demolition (right). The pavilion, designed by Marcos David Heckman and erected in 1958–1960 in the city center (corner of Av. Borges de Medeiros and Rua Andrade Neves), stood as a short-lived emblem of mid-century experimentation in modern architecture in Porto Alegre.

Source: Luccas, L. H. H. (2011). Quando o efêmero se perpetua: um pavilhão em Porto Alegre no começo dos anos sessenta. *Arquitextos*, 12(135.07). Vitruvius. <https://vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/arquitextos/12.135/4001>



Figure A21. *Edifício Armênia* (Porto Alegre, 1955, architect Ari Canarim). The building is one of the earliest modern residential towers in the city. As a representative of mid-century modernization and changing housing norms, Armênia signals a break with earlier low-rise housing typologies, and also the expansion of modern heritage beyond monumental or institutional buildings into the realm of everyday domestic life.

Source: Donadussi, M. (n.d.). Edifício Armênia, Porto Alegre [Photograph]. ArchDaily Brasil. https://images.adsttc.com/media/images/577f/9b3b/e58e/ce29/1c00/016c/medium_jpg/12_1.jpg



Figure A22. *Construction works of Shopping Iguatemi, Porto Alegre, c. 1982*. Photographed shortly before its inauguration on 14 April 1983, the image documents the late construction phase of one of the city's first large-scale shopping centers, symbolizing the consolidation of a motorized, consumption-oriented, and increasingly "Americanized" urban model in Porto Alegre.

Source: Prati, A. (2016). Porto Alegre - Shopping Iguatemi - década de 1980 [Photograph] <https://prati.com.br/porto-alegre/porto-alegre-shopping-iguatemi-decada-1980.htm>



Figure A23. *Igreja de Nossa Senhora das Dores, Porto Alegre.* One of the first buildings in the city to be listed under Brazil's federal heritage legislation.
Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.



Figure A24. *Rua da Praia (Rua dos Andradas), Porto Alegre.* Protected historic pavement coexists with architecturally dissonant buildings, highlighting how preservation focused on individual elements fails to safeguard urban values dependent on spatial continuity and contextual relations.
Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.



Figure A25. Vacant lot in Praça Parobé after the historic building was destroyed by fire in November 2025. Located within the area excluded from the reduced polygon established for the Monumenta Project.
Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.



Figure A26. Casarão at Rua Duque de Caxias 874, Porto Alegre.

The image shows a historic building whose preserved frontage was integrated into a new development, with significantly taller constructions erected behind it. The case illustrates the urban and morphological outcomes of regulatory frameworks that exempted *bens de compatibilização* from heritage oversight, allowing interventions that prioritize *façade retention* over contextual coherence.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.



Figure A27. Detail of the inscription “Conservar melhorando” (Preserve by improving) on the Monument to Júlio de Castilhos in Praça da Matriz, Porto Alegre, a positivist motto of heritage as improvement that echoes how heritage governance can reproduce selective, market-friendly, and politically acceptable versions of the past, contributing to both juridical and mnemonic fragmentation.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.

A Cidade à época em que surgiu o "Correio do Povo"
Que era Porto Alegre em 1895? - Reminiscências de uma época ingenua e patriarcal -
Coslumes e tradições que desapareceram - Aspectos e recordações de 1895 - A metamorfose da capital

O "Correio do Povo" acompanhou, identificado, "pari passu", o desdobramento vertiginoso da cidade

Em outubro de 1895, não havia a cidade, mas sim o povo. O povo que se agrupava em torno de pontos de encontro, em pontos de encontro...



As ruas da cidade, em 1895, não eram largas e as casas eram de madeira. O povo que se agrupava em torno de pontos de encontro...

As ruas da cidade, em 1895, não eram largas e as casas eram de madeira. O povo que se agrupava em torno de pontos de encontro...

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As ruas da cidade, em 1895, não eram largas e as casas eram de madeira. O povo que se agrupava em torno de pontos de encontro...

Sim!!! mas A BRASILEIRA Vende mais barato RUA URUGUAY, 318 FAZENDAS - MODAS - MIUDEZAS

AO POVO GAUCHO! MUITA ATENÇÃO!!! A NACIONAL

Em trinta e cinco annos...

Porto Alegre, há indubitavelmente uma grande cidade. E uma das mais belas do Brasil, pelo espaço de sua urbanização...

Table with 2 columns: Anos and População. Rows include 1895, 1900, 1905, 1910, 1915, 1920, 1925, 1930.



Favor de não esquecer A Filial da CAMISARIA RIO BRANCO é AV. S. RAFAEL n. 79 (entre Mar. Floriano Vig. José Ignacio. Toldo amarelo). Tel. 642

Figure A28. Excerpt from the newspaper Correio do Povo (01/10/1930, p. 10; Hemeroteca do Arquivo Histórico Municipal Moysés Vellinho), depicting Porto Alegre's urban transformation. The text contrasts the "old, naive, and patriarchal" city with the modernized present, describing it as "a colonial and picturesque city," and noting that "Andradas Street was not yet the modern street it is today." It celebrates modernization: "Porto Alegre today is indisputably a great city, in a continuous work of beautification," and reflects on memory and generational change: "The elderly will enjoy recalling the memories of a city transformed by this multiform force that is evolution. The younger generations, comparing past and present, will also enjoy measuring the progress of their city." Such media narratives shaped public perceptions of urban change, consistently framing progress and modernization as desirable and inevitable, and reinforcing selective understandings of what was considered modern or worthy of preservation. Source: Correio do Povo. (1930, October 1). A cidade à época em que surgiu o "Correio do Povo" [Newspaper page]. Hemeroteca do Arquivo Histórico Municipal Moysés Vellinho. https://www.analuizakoehler.com/becodorosario/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CP_AHMMV_01-10-1930_A-cidade-na-epoca-em-que-surgiu-o-CP-p10_w-scaled.jpg



Figure A29. The Forum of Augustus, Rome, Italy. Conceived as both an urban extension and a political narrative, the forum links the new imperial order to Rome's mythical and moral foundations. Its monumental architecture demonstrates how built space can operate discursively, shaping collective perceptions of authority and power beyond material or economic realities.

Source: Plevko, M. (n.d.). Ruins of the Forum of Augustus, Rome, Italy [Photograph]



Figure A30. Aerial view of Brasília, Brazil. Designed as a purpose-built capital, the city's layout resembles an abstract airplane or bird, with the Monumental Axis forming the "body" and residential superblocks extending as "wings." This plan was more symbolic than functional: the monumental geometry stages political power, guides movement and sightlines, and projects an image of rational order, progress, and national unity.

Source: Barros, O. (2018, May 31). Brasília, seen from the CBERS4 satellite [Photograph]. Flickr. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/153282474@N02/42495688661/>



Figure A31. Metropolitan Cathedral of Porto Alegre, with a taller residential building constructed directly in front. This arrangement illustrates how urban development policies and architectural practices allow modern constructions to visually and symbolically overshadow historic landmarks. It exemplifies how cities negotiate tradition and progress, revealing that heritage is often subordinated to contemporary priorities, shaping the collective perception of the urban landscape.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2025.



Figure A32. *Prédio Rainha da Sucata* (Edifício Tancredo Neves), *Praça da Liberdade*, Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Designed by Éolo Maia and Sylvio de Podestá in the 1980s, this post-modernist building is an example of contested meaning within the city's heritage discourse. Its eclectic mix of materials, forms, and colors, elicited sustained criticism in public and professional media, often framed as visually discordant or aesthetically deficient. The popular nickname "Rainha da Sucata" reflects how media and cultural narratives can delegitimize architectural expression, positioning certain modernist/post-modernist works as failures or regressions rather than as legitimate contributions to urban identity.

Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2022.

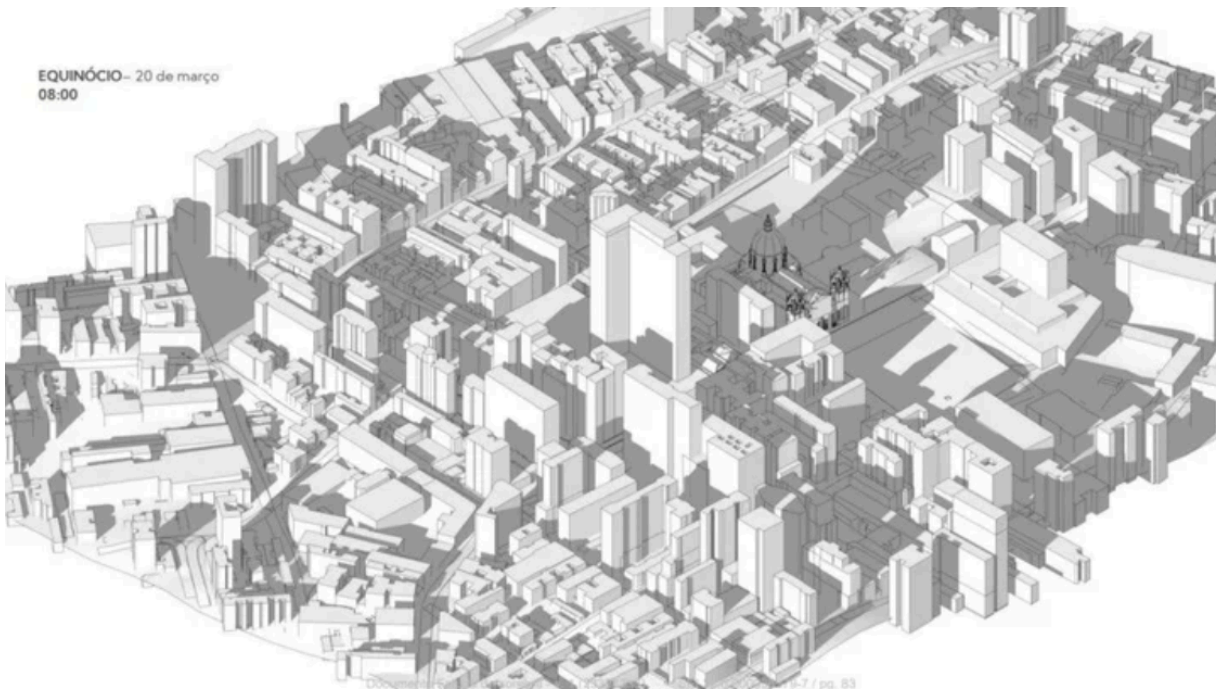


Figure A33. On the top, the proposed high-rise development adjacent to the Museu Júlio de Castilhos in Porto Alegre: a mixed-use tower planned to reach approximately 38–44 storeys (around 98 m in height), significantly exceeding the 15-storey/45 m height limit established for the historic surroundings. On the bottom, a study part of the EVU (Urban and Environmental Feasibility Study) presented by the Public Prosecutor's Office, illustrating the projected shadow impacts of the building on the Metropolitan Cathedral and other historic landmarks in Praça da Matriz and the city's Historic Center. The proposal has generated intense public and legal debate due to concerns regarding heritage preservation, urban landscape integrity, and compliance with protective regulations.

Source: Jornal JA. (2024). Prédio da Melnick na Rua Duque de Caxias em debate na Câmara. <https://www.jornalja.com.br/geral/predio-da-melnick-na-rua-duque-de-caxias-em-debate-na-camara>



Figure A34. Selected works by Vito and Gustavo Latis, Milan, Italy. (a) Residence Cairoli (1958–1971), designed with M. Bega, positioned prominently in front of the Castello Sforzesco, illustrating how the architects negotiated historical context with modernist residential design. (b) Via Rossetti façades (1960), top right and middle left, demonstrating the Latis brothers' characteristic treatment of surfaces. (c) Centro Ariberto (1970), middle right, further highlighting façade articulation and compositional clarity. (d) Building on Via Melzi d'Eril, 26 (1961–1964), showcasing continuity in material choice and formal vocabulary across their body of work. Although these buildings represent significant examples of Milanese modernism, they remain visually and culturally “submerged” within the surrounding historic urban fabric, often overlooked and read as mere background rather than as meaningful markers of the city’s twentieth-century architectural history. Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026.



Figure A35. Buildings in Milan partially framed and surrounded by older historic structures. These images illustrate how certain twentieth-century constructions can become visually understated: despite their prominence, they are often absorbed into the surrounding urban context, making them easy to overlook in everyday perception.
Source: Milena Albrecht Silveira, 2026.