



# Maringá and its historical heritage: a case study on the cathedral of the Assumption

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**ABSTRACT.** The most tangible register of a civilization's evolution is the heritage it preserves over the years. It is a vehicle for the transmission of peoples' memory and culture. Although the city of Maringá in the state of Paraná, Brazil, is just 66 years old, it has several important buildings within its urban context whose preservation is not guaranteed by law. In fact, they are in danger of disappearing amid the city's fast growth. Current research, surveying the preservation state of historical buildings in the municipality, is based on published studies, research at the City Hall, reports by the Historical Heritage Commission and *in loco* visits, with special emphasis on the Cathedral of the Assumption, the city's symbol, whose preservation is still not legally guaranteed. The history of the building of the Cathedral, its most relevant external and internal architectonic features and its furniture for future inventories are focused. Current study raised the historic deployment of the Cathedral, its most relevant architectural features, both exterior and interior, including some of its details, to serve as a basis for inventories for future legal registrations and interventions.

**Keywords:** historical interest, inventory, city symbol.

## Maringá e seu Patrimônio histórico: estudo de caso da Catedral Basílica Menor de Nossa Senhora da Glória

**RESUMO.** Os registros mais palpáveis da evolução de uma civilização são, sem dúvida, os remanescentes que esta civilização consegue preservar ao longo dos anos, sendo estes os responsáveis pela transmissão da memória e cultura do povo. A cidade de Maringá, apesar de ser uma cidade jovem, com 66 anos de idade, possui diversas obras importantes em seu contexto urbano, muitas delas sem preservação garantida por lei, correndo o risco de desaparecer em meio ao crescimento acelerado pelo qual a cidade passa. O presente trabalho levantou o estado que se encontra a preservação no município, com base em estudos publicados, levantamentos junto à Prefeitura Municipal, Comissão de Patrimônio Histórico e visitas *in loco*, dando especial enfoque à Catedral Basílica Menor de Nossa Senhora da Glória, edifício símbolo da cidade, que ainda não possui sua preservação garantida. Como resultado, o estudo levantou o histórico de implantação da Catedral, suas características arquitetônicas mais relevantes, tanto exteriores como interiores, incluindo parte de seu mobiliário, visando auxiliar futuros inventários para pedidos de tombamentos e futuras intervenções que possam vir a ocorrer.

**Palavras-chave:** interesse histórico, inventário, símbolo da cidade.

### Introduction

#### Context and aims

Maringá, lying to the northeast of the southern state of Paraná, Brazil, was founded in 1947 by the real estate firm Companhia de Terras Norte do Paraná (CTNP). It was planned by the engineer Jorge de Macedo Vieira who characterized the city by an organic design according to the natural curve levels of the land. In fact, the plan was inspired by Ebenezer Howard's garden cities, with plenty of greenery, which is one of the most characteristic landmarks of Maringá.

The 66-year-old Maringá has great difficulties in maintaining and preserving significant buildings lying within its urban contours. In fact, it is a common issue in young cities whose artistic and cultural value of their heritage is not greatly appreciated due to immaturity.

The predominance of a concept in urban planning focused on space economy with a priority for traffic flow, tissue density and rational use of the urban structure places the historical and aesthetic features on a lower plane. Argan (1992, p. 86) defines the phenomenon as a "[...] rejection of heritage by pragmatism [...]".

The replacement of History and Memory by Modernity resulted in the radically discarding of traditional urban street networks, historical buildings, landmarks and city reference sites, popular and modernist architecture, chapels, feasts, traditions, which as a matter of course are the community's most cherished features (BOSI, 1979).

A city's constructed milieu is the most tangible and uncontested register of civilization since it transmits the people's culture and memory. The conservation of material (architecture) and immaterial (habits, typical dances and food) heritage guarantees the survival of the city's living traditions and history.

When a city complex is dealt with as a living organism within a developing process, activities with regard to its history and its vocation are undertaken and local inventories of historical, artistic, archeological and landscape interest are prepared that would guide urban and territorial policies. Systematic interpretations of space and its qualification through pictures are consequently undertaken. As a rule, the criteria for the preservation of a given site are foregrounded on either the artistic or the historical or sentimental values (KÜHL, 2005/2006).

Current analysis investigates the historical material heritage of Maringá, with special emphasis on the Cathedral and Basilica of the Assumption, the second highest monument (124 m) in Latin America. Albeit the city's greatest symbol, its preservation is still not guaranteed by law. Current essay aims at collecting data and relevant aspects for the monument's future heritage process. The state-of-the-art heritage situation in Maringá is forwarded to be a help in the elaboration of a possible inventory of the Cathedral by means of a diagnostic survey of the monument's most important features. Discussions on the cultural features of the city are highly important so that the municipality's memory could be preserved and no detail would be lost within the urbanization process and within the fast growth context witnessed by the city. Basic concepts were taken from the *Teoria del Restauro* [Theory of Restoration] by Cesare Brandi (2004), who excluded empiricism in the practice of the conservation of heritage and works of art, and formulated one of the most important methods currently used among scholars.

### Review of the literature

The idea of heritage comprises the role of memory and tradition in the construction of collective identities and resources used by modern States to legitimate the idea of a nation. Concern on

the conservation of cultural property and goods started in the 15<sup>th</sup> century when interventions in buildings were foregrounded on some type of cultural motivation instead of underscoring utilitarian issues. However, it was only in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that preservation and conservation were systematized, accompanied by criteria and methodologies. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became a science underscored by formal, historical, symbolic and memorial values (KÜHL, 2005/2006). Heritage preservation is the maintenance of a certain cultural good and aims at impairing the degradation process (CASTRIOTA, 2007).

The founder of the Central Institute for Restoration in 1939 and an important theoretician in restoration, Cesare Brandi stated that conservation may be interpreted as

[...] a methodological moment of acknowledging a work of art in its physical consistency and in its dual aesthetic and historical polarity, aiming at its transmission to future generations (BRANDI, 2004, p. 31).

Analyzing Brandi's theory, Kühl (2005/2006, p. 24-25) remarked that

[...] since the dialectic relationship lies between aesthetic and historical instances of the [artistic] work (or set of works), these statements require an interpretative effort in each individual case.

Brandi's theory is the most accepted in the field of restoration since it does not forward a single and ideal formula of intervention. Brandi actually selects a series of criteria, in order of importance, that underpin restoration activities without discarding the specificity of each work.

According to Brandi's theory, restoration is based on the analysis of the work's compliance with its physical aspects, as a symbolic image, and on its transformation throughout time, by means of tools supplied by the philosophy and historiography of Art, Criticism and Aesthetics. Brandi (2004) also remarks that restoration should re-establish the potential unity of the work of art, as far as possible, without any artistic or historical falsehood. Artistic or historical falsehood is the representation as authentic of a restored work of art that had been degraded by time.

However, restoration is only one of many types of intervention in buildings. It is generally applied when a work of art demonstrates a degree of degradation and de-characterization. A critically based intervention should be undertaken by certain agents who guide and legitimate the process of value attribution and preservation (FONSECA, 2005). The ideal thing is the conservation of the building,

with periodic maintenance, avoiding the need for the more expensive restorations.

Due to awareness in conservation and restoration theories, heritage preservation by the State to warrant the protection of historical buildings is forwarded. State preservation is an administrative act by the power politics, through specific legislation, to conserve cultural goods from destruction or de-characterization. Heritage preservation may be undertaken either by the Brazilian government through the Institute for National Historical and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN), or by the state government through the Institute for the Historical and Artistic Heritage of the State, or by municipal administration through specific or federal legislation (SÃO PAULO, 2001).

The Institute for National Historical and Artistic Heritage, established in the late 1930s, is the federal organ responsible for preservation issues. Article 216 of the Brazilian Constitution defines the concept of cultural heritage and establishes the responsibility of the administration, through the help of the community, to preserve, conserve and administer the country's artistic heritage. Through specific laws, Brazilian states and municipalities, non-government organizations and other interested organs are involved in developing issues on the preservation of culture. The local government of Maringá has specific legislation that applies policies involving the city's cultural heritage (Municipal Law 2297 of 1987).

It is mainly through material heritage, particularly architecture, that the habits, architectonic and constructive typology and other characteristics of a society within a specific period may be identified. According to Pelegrini (2003, p. 65):

Public and private buildings, products of a given historical period, are visual registers of the expectations, needs and social contradictions. The architectonic design and space organization are the result of social and economic context in which they arose. However, so that they could be better perceived, efforts should be undertaken to detect the physical factors inherent to the architectonic production under analysis.

In spite of urgent need to preserve historical heritage, serious difficulties exist in Brazil for its materialization. According to Lemos (2004, p. 91), "[...] the correct foregrounding in heritage preservation lies in conscious-awareness and in systematic education of the population and the ruling class [...]" There is also a lack of organized institutions and, in the case of architectonic goods, of social interest, coupled to real estate speculation. The latter are actually the

main difficulties for the historical preservation in Brazilian cities and town. These problems are heightened when the towns have been only recently established since the population does not have clear ideas and convictions of the importance of historical buildings within the cultural context.

### Material and methods

A survey on historical building in Maringá, Paraná State, Brazil was undertaken. It was based on the various documents at the Paraná Basin Museum of the State University of Maringá, Maringá, Paraná State, Brazil, and on extant literature to identify aspects which refer to the establishment and development of the municipality and the building considered relevant within the urban context. Another survey was undertaken at the archives of the Historical Heritage Commission of the town hall of Maringá to identify the buildings legally under municipal historical administration. An analysis of published studies by authors interested in the preservation of the city's historical heritage was carried out so that the research could be academically foregrounded.

A diagnostic investigation was also undertaken with photos of the most salient items of the Cathedral of the Assumption. Research was based on documents and information provided by the church secretariat, on studies by Verri Júnior (2003) on the works of the architect José Augusto Bellucci in Maringá and on the inventories from the research project endeavored by students of Architecture and Urbanism of the State University of Maringá under the surveillance of Dra. Aline Montagna da Silveira (2003).

### Results and discussion

#### Maringá and its historical heritage

In the late 1940s, Brazil was experiencing a period of great expansion in coffee production and new regions for cash crops were required. This expansion reached its peak when the northern region of the state of Paraná was colonized mainly by private enterprises. The period was also characterized by an excellent moment in modern architecture, consolidated in Brazil during the 1930s, with its peak in the 1950s when Brasília, the new capital, was constructed. According to Verri Júnior (2003), the influence mentioned above affected the urban design of Maringá, planned by Jorge de Macedo Vieira, who was inspired the idea of the garden city and mainly by certain buildings,

the product of modernist architects that visited the fledging city after the 1950s when they were attracted by its fast growth. The São Paulo architect José Antônio Bellucci, engaged by the CMNP to plan some buildings in Maringá, is also worthy of mention

The city's heritage currently consists of four cultural goods legally protected and preserved by state legislation.

- The Santa Cruz chapel (Figure 1) was built between 1946 and 1956 and legally a city heritage as from 1988. Besides its religious value, the chapel typifies the architecture of the period;

- The countryside chapel of São Bonifácio (Figure 1) was built between 1939 and 1940, when Maringá was still a district of the municipality of the neighboring town Mandaguari. The chapel witnessed the first religious events of the future city's initial nucleus. It is a city heritage as from 1994;

- The Grande Hotel Bandeirantes (Figure 1) was built between 1951 and 1955 and became a city heritage as from 2005. Besides its historical importance due to sheltering investors from Brazil and from abroad, and to banquets for the high society of the period, its architecture is representative of the São Paulo's modern rationalist design of the 1950s;

- The Festa Junina do Seu Zico Borghi became a city heritage as from 2008 and is its only immaterial heritage. The June Feast is an annual event and is traditional since 1982.

The city of Maringá has three other cultural goods legally decreed heritage by municipal law. The premises of the former headquarters of the Companhia Melhoramentos Norte do Paraná (CMNP) became a heritage as from 2004. They were the main economic center during the early years of Maringá and triggered the development of most of the northwestern region of the state of Paraná through the construction of the railway, land distribution and the planning, localization and design of several towns and cities (Figure 2). The second cultural good is the chapel Nossa Senhora Aparecida, built in 1949 by local inhabitants between the Zauna and Guaiapó Roads, and still in excellent conditions of preservation (Figure 2). The third good, a tiled panel painting which illustrates the life of rural workers on the coffee plantations, was decreed a heritage in 2011. The painting was paid for in 1956 by mayor Américo Dias Ferraz and may be seen in the former Colúmbia Bar, currently called Mercado 1 Real.



**Figure 1.** Santa Cruz chapel; São Bonifácio chapel; Grande Hotel Bandeirantes.

Source: The author (2009) (Santa Cruz chapel and Grande Hotel Bandeirantes) / Silveira (2003) (São Bonifácio chapel).

The study also pinpointed other cultural goods within the urban context that are worth preserving because of their architectonic value and others for their symbolic and cultural ones. The most relevant premises are the Mayor's Office designed by the architect José Augusto Bellucci; the former airport Gastão Vidigal, with its modern architecture, currently the Transport Department of the municipality; The Paraná Basin Museum, initially a wooden house built in the 1940s, was donated to the

State University of Maringá in 1984 and transformed into a museum; and the Cathedral of the Assumption, under analysis.



**Figure 2.** Chapel Nossa Senhora Aparecida and the premises of the CMNP headquarters.

Source: Maringá Histórica (2011). (Chapel) / Author (2009) (CMNP).

Three other historical buildings were demolished during the hectic growth of the city: the Coffee Mill Santo Antonio, which was one of the few remaining premises symbolizing the fast growth of the region, was demolished in 2004; the Railway Station, one of the most important means of arrival for migrants from all Brazil to work and stay in Maringá and the main export terminus from which millions of coffee sacks were exported to the world, was demolished in the 1990s; the former Bus Station Américo Dias Ferraz whose preservation was hotly debated after bad structural conditions were detected in the building. The core of the discussion was due to the fact that the building was partly particularly owned and partly government owned. Although the former insisted on its preservation, the Bus Station was demolished in 2010 and the space is currently used as a parking place.

### The Cathedral and Basilica of the Assumption: its history

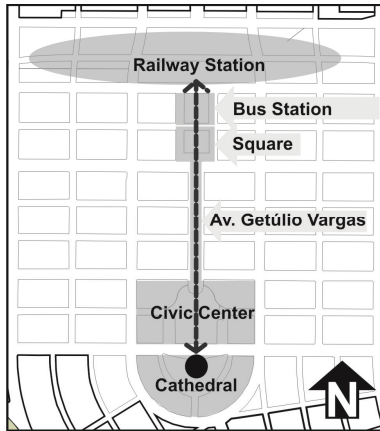
The Cathedral of Maringá, dedicated to the Assumption of Mary, is a landmark in Brazilian modern architecture and is one of the most interesting religious buildings in the country. Conceived by archbishop Dom Jaime Luiz Coelho, the Cathedral was projected by the São Paulo architect José Augusto Bellucci. The 1950s were marked by the *sputniks*, from the Russian word *poustinikki*, literally ‘a fellow traveler’, and the artificial satellite interpreted as the person who traveled beyond the Earth to become closer to God. The cone-shaped church is 124 meters high and is the second highest of all monuments in Latin America.

A piece of marble retrieved from St Peter’s in the Vatican and blessed by Pius XII represented the foundation stone of the Cathedral and put in place on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1958 in a ceremony conducted by the Bishop of Maringá Dom Jaime Luiz Coelho and presided by the Archbishop of Curitiba Dom Manuel da Silveira D’Elboux. The stone was placed in the geometric center of the church at a depth of 4 meters. Building started the following year and concluded on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 1972.

The large square chosen for the building of the Cathedral lies downtown, close to Maringá’s civil center. It is a semi-circular square with the church built on its geometric center, very close to the former wooden Cathedral demolished after the cone-shaped church was concluded. This very fact reinforces its quality as a monument. The huge building was designed to be a landmark and is currently a reference in the city, with its penetration into the skyline and its implantation at the end of a central axis starting from the former Railway and Bus Stations, at one extreme, and the Civic Center and the Cathedral at the other. The Getulio Vargas Avenue, the link between the two ends with a wide central sidewalk, may be characterized as a boulevard. Figure 3 shows respectively the implantation of the Cathedral at the end of the axis and a view of the Cathedral from the Getulio Vargas Avenue.

The effect of such implantation, or rather, a monument in the focal point of an important axis, is related to the North-American City Beautiful Movement for a better aesthetic view and valorization of public spaces in US cities, frequently designed with monument axes. Strictly speaking, one cannot say that this was precisely the intention of the city planner Jorge de Macedo Vieira, since in the urban design no mention is made of a monument in the square where currently the Cathedral stands. In fact, the idea may have

originated from Raymond Unwin's solution for the city of Letchworth, the first British garden city, to link the Railway Station square with the Civic Centre square by means of an axis. Probably it may have been one of his references of Macedo Vieira for the city's original plan.



**Figure 3.** Implantation of the Cathedral at the end of the axis and a view of the Cathedral from the Getulio Vargas Avenue.

Source: Author (2012).

According to Verri Júnior (2003), the architect José Augusto Bellucci was retrieved of his engagement prior to the Cathedral's conclusion because of disagreements with the Bishop, with a public letter published in the newspapers of the city. In fact, the building of the Cathedral has several divergences from the former project, especially with regard to the stained glass windows, furniture and other details.

#### The Cathedral's architectonic characteristics

The Cathedral, built in the shape of a dual cone, an external and an internal one, with a vertical

corridor between them, has 50 m-diameter within a circular design, with an internal diameter of 38 m and planned with a single aisle. The Cathedral is built of concrete with its role of structure and sealing; its concrete's forms may still be seen. Rising from the ground, the dual cone-shaped structures are interlinked with belts that absorb the vertical forces and allows for horizontal openings within the internal cone featuring two galleries measuring 9 and 12 m in height. The structure contains 10 W-shaped pillars as flying buttresses, with the walls of the chapel guaranteeing their stability since they function as bolsters (VERRI JÚNIOR, 2003). The external cone is 114 m high, topped by a 10-m concrete cross, with a total height of 124 m. The church's capacity is for 3,500 persons in the aisle and in the two upper galleries. The aisle is 82 m high up to the circular oculus from where light penetrates and illuminates it. Figure 4 show a current photo of the Cathedral and details of the main entrance.



**Figure 4.** The Cathedral of Maringá and details of the main entrance.

Source: Author (2009).

The Cathedral comprises 16 pyramid-shaped chapels with the four largest ones forming the entrances. The main entrance looks North; the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament looks East and the Baptistery Chapel looks West. The high altar and the bishops' burial crypt are on the south. The chapels are adorned with stained glass windows manufactured by the São Paulo-based firm Arte Sul. The stained glass windows of the largest chapels are almost 20 m high and symbolize the four points of the compass. The other smaller 12 windows are 12 m high and represent the twelve Apostles. The internal designs of the stained glass windows have abstract colored forms with allusions, according to the representatives of the Church in Maringá, to the History of Salvation. Only the stained glass of the main entrance (to the north) reproduces the image of the Assumption of Mary unto Heaven, which justified the title and dedication of the temple. Figure 5 shows the level of the crypt (underground), the main aisle (ground floor) and a transversal cross section, respectively.

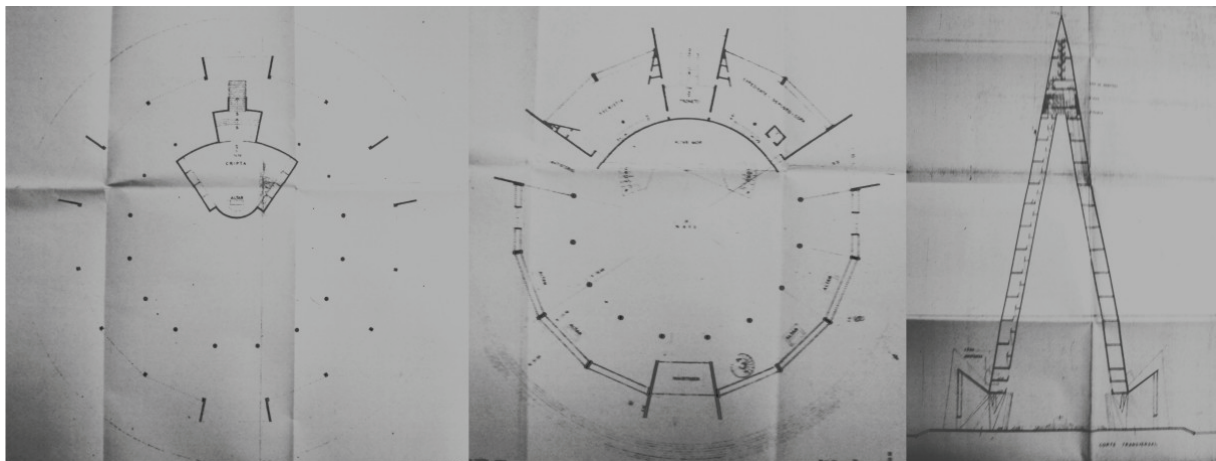
The high altar is formed by a 3.20 x 1.20 m block of white marble brought from Cachoeiro de Itapemirim ES Brazil, and the Crypt is immediately below at underground level. The concrete vertically oversized thrones lie behind the high altar and, according to their planner, architect Manfred Osterroht, represent the perfection desired by human beings in their heavenly ascent, whereas the top curve symbolizes the limitation of material desire. A 7-m huge wooden crucifix, made by the sculptor Conrado Moser, lies at the right side of the high altar. The floor is paved with Old Gold Granite from the state of Espírito Santo, Brazil. The

church's interior has 60 wall paintings of the Way of the Cross, by the artist Zanzal Matar. Figure 6 gives a view of the main entrance from the high altar and vice-versa. The high altar, the thrones, the wooden crucifix, two wall paintings, the stained glass, the W-shaped pillars and the two upper galleries may be perceived.

The vertical movement in the Cathedral is provided by stairs between the external and internal cones. The floors between the cones and above the aisle are divided as follows: first there is an access to the two galleries respectively at a height of 9 and 12 m. Benches for the faithful are available and the church's capacity is therefore enlarged. Above the galleries, at a height of 45 m, there is an ossuary with 2000 small chambers that may be acquired by members of the community.

The Archdiocese Museum furnished with ecclesiastical furniture and objects lies on the same floor. At a height of 81 m, the next floor comprises a belvedere with a beautiful view of the city below. A lift has been planned for tourists but the works have not begun yet on the project. The church bells lie at a height of 84 m, above which there is the machinery room and the steps towards the Cross above. The height from the aisle floor to the base of the Cross is 114 m and may be reached by 580 stairs. Total height of the monument is 124 m.

The premises maintains a trend in modernist architecture of the 1950s and the 1960s called 'brutalist architecture'. The term was first employed in an article in the *The Architectural Review* of December 1953 and alluded to Le Corbusier's use of the *béton brut* (DAMPSEY, 2003).



**Figure 5.** Lower plant of the Crypt, Aisle and cross section, respectively.

Source: Prefeitura Municipal de Maringá (2009).



**Figure 6.** A view from the high altar towards the main entrance and a view of the high altar from the main entrance.

Source: Diocese de Maringá (2009).

According to Banham (1967), the movement refers to a remaking of architectonic language that exploits the quality of the materials employed in their crude form and revealing the constructive techniques and structure forms. The author states that brutalist architecture which emerged in post-war Britain had important repercussions in many countries without any relationships between them, but merely as a sharing of a teaching provided by Le Corbusier's work. Certain relevant characteristics may be underlined in several works of the above-mentioned movement in the Cathedral under analysis, such as the volumetric simplicity that comprise, simultaneously, form and structure and the use of exposed concrete with a valorization of the texture's roughness.

The spaciousness of the building is of paramount important in the case of the Cathedral of the Assumption and is another of Brandi's premises. The contemplation of the building characterized by its immense verticality largely depends on its surroundings so that its interpretation would not be jeopardized. It is thus recommended that no other building should exist within the square surrounding the Cathedral and that the type of neighboring buildings should not compete with it within the city's skyline. This is due to the fact that its most remarkable trait is its role as a landmark and reference of Maringá.

Based on the above specificities, the church premises is salient within modernist and brutalist architecture in Brazil. The architect Bellucci materialized an architectonic work that transcended the role of a temple and produced a consistent architectural premises. In fact, he was a pioneer in developing a modernist architectural project in Maringá and demonstrated with great capacity his profession as an architect. It is worth mentioning that Bellucci, invited by the CMNP, was the architect of a number of other emblematic

buildings, squares, cemetery, and town hall of Maringá, which placed him within the historiography of Brazilian modern architecture. In fact, Bellucci produced a pioneering architecture in the hinterlands of the state of Paraná (VERRI JÚNIOR, 2003).

The Cathedral of the Assumption is a landmark in the architecture of Maringá. Its 124 m-structure was a great challenge at the time it was built, especially due to the recently colonized regions with difficult accesses to the main centers of the country. Currently it is an icon for society and a reference in the urban landscape. Its state of conservation is relatively good due to concerns of mayors, entrepreneurs and church people who endeavor to maintain the cathedral well preserved in the wake of the cultural and economical benefits it brings to the city. However, since its preservation is still not guaranteed by law, its architectonic and historical values may be imperiled.

## Conclusion

The Cathedral of the Assumption of Mary in Maringá is undoubtedly the building-symbol of the city. It is also a landmark in modernist and brutalist architecture for its differentiated aesthetic stance and its courageous structure for the period it was built when technical resources were scanty within a recently colonized region in the Brazilian backlands. Tourists from all parts of the world are enchanted with the building, currently the most visited place in the city. The author hopes that present analysis will help in the inventory process for the legal preservation of the Cathedral, without which it may be jeopardized or disfigured.

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