The influence of the railway and the central station in the transformation of the urban landscape of São José do Rio Pardo/SP-Brazil

La influencia del ferrocarril y la estación central en la transformación del paisaje urbano de São José do Rio Pardo/SP-Brasil

A influência da ferrovia e da estação central na transformação da paisagem urbana de São José do Rio Pardo/SP-Brasil

Abstract

The present work presents the modernization caused by the railway in the constitution of the urban landscape between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, considering as a clipping the city of São José do Rio Pardo, located in the northeast of the state of São Paulo, Brazil. The analyses are based on the decisive influence of the construction of the railway structure, which stood out in the development and configuration of the Rio-Pardense urban space as part of a dynamic work. To this end, this article contextualizes and characterizes the material properties of the Central Station, emphasizing its influence on the conformation of the landscape. Diverse primary sources were used in this study, such as reports of the Mogiana Railway Company, building projects, registration plan, news, and a vast iconographic collection. The theoretical framework consists of the contributions of Santos (2004, 2012), especially on the concepts of landscape and roughness.

Keywords: Railway, stations, urban modernization, landscape, São José do Rio Pardo - city.

Resumen

El presente trabajo presenta la modernización provocada por el ferrocarril en la constitución del paisaje urbano entre finales del siglo XIX y principios del siglo XX, considerando como recorte la ciudad de São José do Rio Pardo, ubicada en el noreste del estado de São Paulo, Brasil. Los análisis se basan en el supuesto de que fue decisiva la influencia ejercida por la instalación de la estructura ferroviaria que, como parte de un trabajo dinámico, se destacó en la construcción y configuración del espacio urbano rio-pardense. Contextualiza y caracteriza las propiedades materiales de la Estación Central, enfatizando su influencia en la conformación del paisaje. Impregna el estudio con diversas documentación primaria, como informes de la Compañía Ferroviaria Mogiana, proyectos de edificación, plano catastral, noticias periodísticas y un vasto acervo iconográfico. Orienta la discusión a partir de Santos (2004, 2012), especialmente sobre los conceptos de paisaje y rugosidad.

Palabras clave: Ferrocarril, estaciones, modernización urbana, paisaje urbano, São José do Rio Pardo - ciudad.

Resumo

O presente trabalho apresenta a modernização provocada pela ferrovia na constituição da paisagem urbana entre o final do século XIX e início do século XX, considerando como recorte a cidade de São José do Rio Pardo, localizada no nordeste do estado de São Paulo, Brasil. As análises se baseiam no pressuposto de que foi decisiva a influência exercida pela instalação da estrutura ferroviária que, como parte de uma obra dinâmica, se destacou na construção e configuração do espaço urbano rio-pardense. O referencial teórico é constituído pelas contribuições de Santos (2004, 2012), especialmente sobre os conceitos de paisagem e rugosidade.

Palavras-chave: Ferrovia, estações, modernização urbana, paisagem urbana, São José do Rio Pardo - cidade.

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Introduction

The concept of landscape within the field of cultural heritage has expanded in recent decades, ceasing to be a mere supporting character for assuming the leading role. Widely used in Geography and the Arts, the concept of cultural landscape had its relevance discussed internationally until being coined as a cultural good that illustrates social and spatial evolution over time, under the influence of physical constraints and/or opportunities offered by their natural environment and of successive social, economic, and cultural forces, both external and internal. 

In the meantime, landscape analysis and understanding has been set in a complex relationship between materiality and the society that both constitutes and shapes it. When discussing urban landscape, Santos (2012) describes two constituent elements: the natural and social objects, whose combination comprises a common trait among different landscapes. Recognising such combination and identifying the interconnection of tangible and intangible values, both at local and international levels, has been set in a complex relationship between materiality and the society that both constitutes and shapes it. When discussing urban landscape, Santos (2012) describes two constituent elements: the natural and social objects, whose combination comprises a common trait among different landscapes. Recognising such combination and identifying the interconnection of tangible and intangible values, both at local and international levels, has been set in a complex relationship between materiality and the society that both constitutes and shapes it.

Thus, we conceive the city, its spaces and buildings as the result of social expressions concerning the place, its elements, and features such as topography, land use and occupation, visual relations, vegetation, spatial organisation and urban structure.

Methodology

For interpreting these impacts, we must both pay attention to urban fragments – understood as "roughness" (Santos, 2004) – and recognise that this process is part of a broader discussion about the stations within the landscape. The Central Station, considered a significant remnant of São Paulo's railway heritage and of the development of São José do Rio Pardo, is a significant remnant of São Paulo's railway heritage and of the development of São José do Rio Pardo. We do not intend here to overvalue the image, but to discuss the process as a historical artifact and recognize, even if the permanences are dwindling, the materialization of this landscape.

The railway and the urban modernization of São José do Rio Pardo

The advance of coffee production to the interior of the state in the mid-19th century was accompanied by the installation of railway lines. These had the function of streamlining transport, reducing production costs, increasing productivity and reducing losses as a result of the long and time-consuming trips made by mules and ox carts. At the same time, the railways made it possible to increase the range of action for farmers, made accumulation possible through the appropriation and valorization of land cut by the road, and contributed to the integration of the city into a business network (Matos, 1990). Besides major companies such as Companhia Paulista (1868) and Companhia Mogiana (1872), diverse railway branches emerged, being 'commanded by the interests of coffee managers, producers, and merchants' (MONBEIG, 1998, p. 157), following no systematic plan. These were decisive factors for founding the Companhia Ramal Ferreiro do Rio Pardo, in 1884, after Companhia Mogiana declared it had no interest in extending its trails to São José do Rio Pardo, located in the northeast of the state, 250 kilometers away from the capital of São Paulo (Missura, 2003).

Like other companies, the Ramal Ferreiro do Rio Pardo 'sought basically to perform export activities,' serving the interests of private groups, especially coffee farmers, 1


1 In 1971, Companhia Mogiana was declared extinct and its assets were incorporated to the collection of Ferrovia Paulista SA (FEPASA) and, in 1998, FEPASA was incorporated to the Federal Railway Network SA (RFFSA). The RFFSA was declared extinct by Provisional Measure no. 353 of 22 January 2007, sanctioned by Law no. 11.483 (2007).
according to the conveniences of the moment’ (Kühl, 1998, p. 135) – which likewise determined the railway route. Despite the conflict among its board of shareholders, mostly composed of coffee farmers who disagreed, aspiring the proximity of the railway tracks to their own lands, the Ramal Férreo was also in tension with Mogiana, which did not agree with the junction on its tracks. According to Missura (2003), the clash lasted for months, resulting in construction embargoes, shareholders exit, and political and economic weakening of the group. However, these issues did not prevent the arrival of the first train on August 27, 1887 and the inauguration of the Central Station on September 7 of the same year.

Saes (1981) discusses the gradual occupation of the Rio-Pardense territory in the light of its rather precarious urbanisation process, especially after the railway construction, highlighting its key role on expanding coffee plantations and stimulating the development of numerous activities, thus modifying the urban dynamics. As emphasised by Missura (2003, p. 64-65), “the railway comprised a major advance in the Rio-Pardense context, for the village showed no significant progress from its foundation, in 1865, until the railway arrival, in 1887.”

Within the scope of this city, whose occupation was marked by the donation of land by farmers for religious heritage, the railroad meant a gradual but drastic transformation in the domestic and urban life, intensifying communication and changing the habits and rhythm of the city. Kühl (1998) reports that the railway brought new architectural types to São Paulo, such as the station complex, warehouses, depots, and locomotive workshops. “Gathered in a set of buildings of very diverse functions, these constructions respond to programs and requirements hitherto unknown, besides having to address issues related to the passengers and goods transportation.” (Kühl, 1998, p. 58).

These works required a large workforce with diversified qualification, which contributed to the incipient Rio-Pardense urban centre. Decision-making regarding the space required for track construction, the route to be followed, works execution, and equipment installations reverberated across the urban organisation. Despite the discussions about the Ramal route and the construction site of its main station, the chosen area was the bottom of Pardo River Valley, on the banks of the urban centre, avoiding deviations and bridges.

After the construction of the railway system, coffee plantation became a source of wealth, increasing production by more than five times. The region also experienced a growth in its population, which went from 4,255 inhabitants in 1886 (Bassanezi, 1999) to 9,207 in 1890 (Synopse Do Recenseamento, 1898, p. 128). Such a growth is justified by the work supply in coffee plantations and the improvement of urban living conditions, which also cooperated in services provision due to the needs to meet new demands. At the end of the 19th century, when the railways had already been constructed, the city was characterised by an immigrant population, markedly Italian, but also Spanish, Portuguese, Austrians, Swedes, and Danish, contributing to the local cultural and social formation (Del Guerra, 2000).

The city space, once formed by meager blocks and characterised by sparse wattle and daub houses covered with thatch, underwent significant transformations at the beginning of the twentieth century, as a result of the population density and the new social and legal abolition of slavery.
and immigration), economic (coffee industry growth, urban market formation, and industrialisation) and political conjuncture (proclamation of the Republic). The nonperfect streets, but remarkably geometrised with orthogonal roads, were now outlined and complete, and new streets were built. The easy, fast, flexible grid shredding of terrains met the accelerated urban occupation leveraged by coffee production and driven by the railway tracks. The steep streets emerged in a similar manner, following the railway route, without fully respecting the local topography, as well as squares do Mercado, Matriz and Rosário. The urban centre expanded mainly towards the south, where the topography, without considerable upward and downward slopes, favoured buildings construction, and towards the east, until the Macaúbas creek, whose transposition posed both an obstacle and an advantage, for the proximity to the watercourse was helpful at a time of scarce hydraulic systems. The Pardo River was the limit at the west of the urban centre, which was exceed after the railway construction at the bottom of its valley, whose flat terrain avoided deviations, bridges, and the uneven terrain of the rugged topography (Figure 1).

Gradually, numerous buildings were constructed in the vicinity of the railway track that bordered the centre from north to south, as shown in Figure 02. The Central Station, in Largo da Estação (now Praça Tiradentes), was built as an expansion axis towards the west, attracting hotels and restaurants (Figure 2).

Passing the Mogiana Station and tracks, at the lower part of the Pardo River, lied the old Slaughterhouse – removed at the request of engineer Euclides da Cunha, for making way to the notorious metal bridge building site – the result

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6 Further information can be found in author (2019).
7 The metal bridge imported from Germany was built under the responsibility of Arthur Pio Deschamps de
of the economic conjuncture and convenience provided by the railway (Del Guerra, 2010). More than that, this bridge evinced the strategic transit of goods between the south of Minas Gerais and São Paulo through São José do Rio Pardo, revealing its coffee production economic reputation through the money used in the construction of a railway branch. The Slaughterhouse transfer was undeniably associated to a symbolic notion of ugliness and unhealthiness that was undesirable to the Station vicinity – which often played the role of city gateway and thus had to present itself as a pleasant, fragrant, and embellished place. Other infrastructure and beautification works were performed to further improve the city image, such as draining the land between Largo da Estação and the Pardo River, building stone prop walls covered by cast iron parapet, and constructing and afforesting the Euclides da Cunha avenue.

Infrastructure improvements also included the inauguration of the lighting system in 1897 (Maschietto, 1979, p. 26-32) and water plumbing and sewage collection in 1903 (Rosa, 1900), implementing significant changes with regard to health, circulation, housing, customs, and habits.

The arrival of construction professionals such as the Italians Luigi Prezzia, Giovanni Delucca, Giuseppe Quercia, and Paschoal Artese; the import of building materials and techniques such as the use of brick masonry, French tile, and elements for capturing and conducting rainwater; the concepts of hygiene and health; and the construction of institutional buildings attracted farmers to the urban area. In this moment, the city acquired a more relevant role as a commercial, political, cultural, and economic centre, leading to a greater number of exquisite buildings that assimilated the architecture of imported materials. As well summarized by Reis Filho (2011), the urban space underwent changes preceded, above all, by socio-economic and technological changes during the second half of the 19th century, which implied profound transformations and new architectural and constructive solutions.

The railways therefore brought, on their tracks, new construction resources, but above all a new way of building. In fact, the railway stations buildings, whether imported or built on site, always corresponded to new models and presented a perfect finish, something achieved with the employment of mechanical officers with systematic preparation. New architectural and constructive solutions were thus disseminated across the countryside, influencing architecture in various aspects (Reis Filho, 2011, p. 156).

Other works were simultaneously performed in São José do Rio Pardo, such as the construction of the first Mother Church (1898) with a project signed by Ramos de Azevedo, and the Palace of the Court of Justice (1902), under the responsibility of Carlos Ekman (Menezinho, 1986), the French and Italian Bank (1913), the Santa Casa de Misericórdia hospital (1913) and the Priest Euclides asylum (1916). The São José theatre (1905) and school groups, with emphasis on the ‘Cândido Rodrigues’ (1908), are other constructions that represented the search for the modernization of space and integrated the urban landscape (Figure 3). Buildings that are mostly affiliated with eclecticism, built in masonry, with ceramic brick and roof in sawn wood structure covered by cover tile and channel.

This process fostered a novel urban landscape (Figure 4), with novelties in architectural language – marked by eclecticism – and techniques and materials used – ceramic
brick masonry laid with mortar – in civil construction. That is how this landscape was structured: using the Central Station as a symbol and reference due to the meaning of its construction, due to the greatness of its dimension, for what it represented in the urban development and in the economic, social, and cultural framework of the city. Together, railway and station have become a document of the formation, growth, and consolidation of the urban centre. Given its importance in the process of formation, consolidation of the urban core and transformation of the landscape, the next item will deal with the Central Station building.

Contextualization and characterization of the material properties of the central station of São José do Rio Pardo

According to Kühl (1998), stations construction aspired opulence, in line with the importance of the railway company and of the city itself. This explains why the station was often the main gateway to the urban centre, which sought an association with an image of prosperity and civility.

Seven stations were constructed in the municipality of São José do Rio Pardo, namely: Central (1887), Vila Costina (1889), Engenheiro Gomide (1889), Ribeiro do Valle (1890), Dr. José Eugênio (1906), Venerando (1909), and Paula Lima (1914). Being inserted in the urban area and comprising the main station of this branch, our analysis focuses on the Central Station.

Opened in 1887, the first of the railway system, the Central Station comprised a modest masonry building on a flat terrain in the so-called Largo da Estação, on the banks of the Pardo River. With a rectangular shape and two decks, the building presented a classicist architectural composition and was arranged parallel to the tracks, therefore being termed as sideline (Kühl, 1998). The ground floor housed the embarkation and disembarkation platform, the passenger wing, and the necessary services. The facades with regular openings obeyed the same ornamental features, reinforced by vertical reliefs that indicated the structural composition. Based on horizontal friezes, the ornamentation marked the floor division and the platband. The embarkation and disembarkation platform was covered with metallic tiles, and its wooden structure formed a simple shelter. Both the typology and constructive technology employed were in line with the railway architecture of the region, especially regarding the use of exposed brick walls.

Figure 4. Urban landscape of São José do Rio Pardo at the beginning of the 20th century.
The building has undergone numerous interventions due to the increase in coffee production and goods and people transport. According to the company report, a new building was constructed in 1913 to house restaurant, kitchen, pantry, reserved room, waiting room, restroom, as well as a larger warehouse, engine room, pump house, and workshops. However, the original building was maintained, redistributing its functions. The platform was extended to 58 meters and covered with concrete ‘artificial stones’. A marquee covered by zinc sheets and supported by iron frames was installed at the front façade, similar to the Espírito Santo do Pinhal station (1913) (Relatório, 1913, p. 327). The openings followed the regularity, as well as the coverage of the embarkation and disembarkation platform, depicting the audacious technology and aesthetics brought by the railway.

In 1927, a new building (Figure 5), similar to the Amparo station (1921), was constructed on the same site as the previous one (Relatório, 1927, p. 18), thus reaching the overall configuration preserved to the present day. The building has a rectangular shape, geometric lines, walls in ceramic brick masonry, plastered and painted and partly covered with mortar, suggesting panels to mark the building at the foundation height, as well as pilasters resembling carved stonework. A central module lies on the embarkation platform that covers the entire station length, serving as waiting place and standing out for its differentiated scale. In turn, the side blocks, lower and indented, house administrative services, head office, ticket office, luggage, and trains licensing, as shown in Figure 6. With the exception of straight-lintel doors, covered by a large tripartite arch opening that mark the building entrance, the other doors have an arched tailpiece with iron banner and coloured glass. Three double gates in riveted iron, with rectangular banner in iron and glass, provide access to the building. The internal floor is made of hydraulic tile. The central block coverage counts on an elevated four-water roof with French tile – imported from Marseille –, with the lateral closing in transparent glass.
Figure 7. Set formed by the Central Station and Warehouse.
The platform roof is in metallic tile supported by the cast iron structure, and the roof of the entire building is hidden by the platband with vines and pilasters. Forms possibly derived from industrialisation are also present in the station structure, such as panels resembling metal sheets that extend from the ground floor to the platband, denoting an innovative, inventive, and modern vocabulary. The building also includes scales that help accentuate its horizontality.

An extensive shed lies next to the Central Station, which served as a warehouse for various products, including those that arrived in the city to be distributed in the local commerce and those that left - most of which consisted of coffee. With a harmonious spatial solution (Figure 7), this building differs from the central one by its simplicity, boiled down to corrugated plates with mortar embossing that resemble industrial stamping and triglyph-like frames around the openings. It also features rectangular openings and wooden double doors, protected by marquees covered by metallic tiles and supported by ‘French hands’ in cast iron.

Based on the aforementioned features, this is an impressive and remarkable set in the urban landscape, representing innovation and modernisation and conferring a plastic rhythm while symbolising the richness arising from coffee production.

8 After broadening the understanding of what is considered valuable to be recognised as heritage, the railway stations were framed. For further information of this subject, see Choay (2006).

9 Analysis that meets the findings of Oliveira (2020) by highlighting the technologies of railway structures and their influence on the territory.
Other six stations assemble the São José do Rio Pardo railway structure. Simpler than the Central Station, they were built in the rural areas surrounding the urban centre, in the coffee lands of farmers with great economic power and political influence, such as José da Costa Machado e Souza, Venerando Ribeiro da Silva Filho, Vicente Alves de Araújo Dias, and Oliveira Fernandes Pinheiro (Figure 8).

10 The Vila Costina station was built on the farm of the same name in 1889, replacing two stations that existed nearby (RELATÓRIO,..., 1889). It consists of a modest masonry building of rectangular shape built parallel to the tracks, with a simple architectural composition. The entire façade is protected by the extension of a two-water roof. The Engenheiro Gomide station and the Ribeiro do Valle station were inaugurated in 1889 and 1890, respectively on the lands of the Pinheiro farm and the Tubacca farm. These two stations were quite similar: built in rectangular shape with exposed brick masonry and covered with ceramic tile and extended wooden structure of the two-water roof. The Station Dr. José Eugênio, also located on the Tubacca lands, differed from the previous ones due to its double coverage in both sides of the building, similar to the Venerando station, opened in 1909. Despite maintaining the formal and technical-constructive features of the other stations, the Paula Lima, opened in 1914, excelled for its more far-fetched ornaments.

11 The Central Station was recognized as a cultural heritage through Decree No. 3,869, of May 3, 2010, however, it is subject to the precarious and almost null maintenance actions and the constant threats from the real estate sector. Stations located in rural areas have not had their importance legally recognized, and are subject to the actions of time and the interests of the owners of the land where they were built. However, both are representative of railway architecture and, although simple, are worthy of preservation due to their importance for the history of architecture and the city, for the constitution of the landscape, social hybridism, economy, technique, etc. emphasized by Canclini (1994) when approaching the potential of heritage for the development of peripheral communities, for the valorization of culture and for the imaginary construction of the national. In this sense, it is worth noting that it was with the expansion of what is considered valuable to be recognized as heritage (CHOAY, 2006), that railway stations began to be framed “in the current international debates on preservation, in which attention began to turn not only for works of exceptional value, but also for the so-called “minor” architecture, an important witness to the way of building and life of an era, of the structure of a city society. (KÜHL, 1998, p. 322). Therefore, and as defended by Waisman (2013), it is necessary to know fundamental aspects of the local historical, architectural and urban context, where there are assets of significant value to the communities - as is the case of São José do Rio Pardo - in order to avoid the adoption of instruments forged in countries with different realities and lead to mistakes and exclusions of essential aspects.

12 José da Costa Machado e Souza, from Baependi-MG, acquired the Vila Costina farm, where the station of the same name was built. He was among the organisers of the Companhia do Ramal Férreo do Rio Pardo, working as its director and lawyer (Del Guerra, 2001). He was president of the province of Minas Gerais from 1867 to 1868 and member of the Standing Committee of the Republican Party of Sao Paulo (1899).

13 Venerando Ribeiro da Silva Filho was among the group of farmers who donated lands for the patrimony of the church dedicated to São José – decisive for the formation of the city (DEL GUERRA, 2005). Having great purchasing and political powers, Venerando built a station on his lands, which received his own name.

14 Vicente Alves de Araújo Dias arrived in São José do Rio Pardo in the 1870s, coming from Cabo Verde-MG. He purchased an extensive land, forming the Tubacca farm, and dedicated himself almost exclusively to growing coffee. Vicente was part of an oligarchy that acted in politics at the state level. The stations Ribeiro do Valle and Dr. José Eugênio were built on his lands.

15 Colonel Oliveira Fernandes Pinheiro (1857-1936) was a native of Lavras do Funil-MG. In his childhood, he moved to Mococa with his family, where he acquired lands....
Our examination was made following the approach of Santos, (2012), who understands landscape as a witness of a time. This is because, according to Santos, landscape is not fixed; still. Every time society goes through a change, the economic, social, and political relations likewise change, in varying rhythms and intensities. The same occurs in relation to the space and the landscape, which undergoes a series of chances to adapt to new social needs. The shape is altered, renewed, suppressed to give way to another form that meets the new demands of the social structure (Santos, 2012, p. 54).

Santos (2012, p. 54) also states that the ‘landscape is the result of accumulations of times,’ for its changes are partial; that is, ‘some of its elements do not change – at least in appearance.’ These elements, denominated by Santos (2004, p. 172-173) as ‘roughness’ (Santos, 2004, p. 172-173), are testimonies, for they comprise ‘a durable form that does not dissolve with the change of processes; on the contrary, some processes adapt to pre-existing forms while others create new ways to insert themselves within these forms’ (Santos, 2004, p. 173). Thus, Santos (2004, p. 173) describes roughness as ‘the historical time that has become a landscape, incorporated into space.’

According to this analysis, the singularity of the São José do Rio Pardo Central Station is understood as a roughness of a time simultaneously past and present, since it participates in life and being indispensable to the historical understanding of the formation of the Rio-Pardense urban, especially at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. Construction that was also made possible by the effective action of coffee farmers who were also politicians and, therefore, determined the actions according to their interests, with the railroad and urban development with the implementation of infrastructure as a sure instrument for the application of capital. Thus, it is opportune and necessary to recognize these buildings as “roughness” of a material and social relationship that transform the landscape in the process of local urban development.

References


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Figures

Figure 1. Development of Rio-Pardense urban nucleus between 1865 and 1887. Source: the author.

Figure 2. Expansion of the urban network towards the Railway Station and the construction of buildings bordering the railway track. Source: Collection of the Rio-Pardense Memory Center Rodolpho José Del Guerra.

Figure 3. Urban expansion in 1916, with emphasis on the location of the main buildings built in the period (Source: Collection of the Rio-Pardense Memory Center Rodolpho José Del Guerra and the author.

Figure 4. Urban landscape of São José do Rio Pardo at the beginning of the 20th century. Source: Collection of the Rio-Pardense Memory Center Rodolpho José Del Guerra and the author.

Figure 5: São José do Rio Pardo Central Station. Source: Collection of the Rio-Pardense Memory Center Rodolpho José Del Guerra and the author.

Figure 6: Infographic of the Central Station and Warehouse of São José do Rio Pardo. Design: Isadora Berto Corrêa (2019), based on metric survey and design made available by the Secretariat of Public Works of São José do Rio Pardo.

Figure 7. Set formed by the Central Station and Warehouse. Source: the author.

Figure 8. Stations located in the municipality of São José do Rio Pardo. Source: the author.