

THE PRESERVATION OF THE HISTORICAL URBAN NUCLEI THAT SUPPORTED THE RURAL ACTIVITY RELATED TO THE GOLDEN EXTRACTION CYCLES IN THE 1700's , IN THE INTERIOR OF THE STATE OF MINAS GERAIS, BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

The present paper discusses, in the Brazilian historical heritage's context, resulting from the Portuguese colonization, the condition of the historical urban nuclei that supported the rural activity, related to the golden extraction cycles in the 1700's , in the interior of the State of Minas Gerais, in Brazilian southeast.

These historical urban nuclei, due to their isolation regarding the main Brazilian colonial urban centres and, principally, regarding the Portuguese cities, were adapted in special way as for the interpretation of the predominant architectural and urban design styles of their time. These spaces were constituted basically by religious buildings, squares and civil buildings of residential, commercials and services uses, being government buildings practically non existent.

Due to being relatively recent (original of the century XVIII), these spaces, related to the local elites, had few generations in the possession and in their use. The daily relation of his current users leads to devaluation of the architectural and urban complex as built heritage. This devaluation is accented because the preservation strategies of the architectural and historical towns in the state of Minas Gerais are principally focused in the major colonial cities: Ouro Preto, Diamantina, Tiradentes and São João Del Rei. In this way currently few original urban localities from rural base from the colonial period in the State of Minas Gerais are preserved. As only a few examples of these places are preserved it's possible to consider that the cities of Entre Rios de Minas and Santana dos Montes keep their original features preserved.

At present, the region suffers an economical transformation with the installation of great industries. This economical transformation produces a pressure that, added to the positivist idea of progress has been leading the owners to intend to get rid of the real estate in a substitution by buildings with multiple floors and limited architecture quality, whose massive insertion would destruct the historical heritage. The local governments have the same positivist attitude and have been adopting, in the strategies of urban planning and management, parameters that can cause damages to the preservation of the historical towns. The destruction of this heritage and the homogenization of these spaces would turn these places into anonymous and equal peripheries, similar to many others by the planet.

In this context the work discusses current strategies and tools of urban planning and management that seek to reconcile the preservation of the colonial architecture and historical towns with the local economical development.

DELIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH OBJECT

The research object of this work was delimited from the interest of the technical staff involved in discussing the current condition of specific urban areas developed during the 18th century in the interior of the Captaincy of Minas Geraes, Brazil, but did not have the mining as a major economic activity.

This discussion was developed through the research on the process of formation of these spaces in the 18th century, during their process of occupation in the 19th century, its valuation as heritage building and the strategies for the preservation of these cities in the actuality.

To perform this discussion a portion of territory was selected, located in the center of the current state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, which corresponded, in the 18th

century, the northeastern portion of the County of Rio das Mortes and the south-west frontier of the County of Villa Rica.

Situated in the study area, the towns of Entre Rios de Minas and Santana dos Montes were highlighted for more discussions, particularly on the policies currently adopted in relation to built heritage.

The choice of these two cities is due to the fact that both have been formed in the 18th century, had not been constituted as major mining areas and their current state of preservation provides an appropriate analysis on built heritage. Additionally, the two cities have different policies about the preservation of heritage buildings, which allows a comparison between the two situations and a discussion about the strategies and tools adopted.

The development of this research occurred through a survey of current topographic maps, historical maps, field surveys, reports, images, interviews with residents, socio-spatial analysis and studies on the current urban legislation.

CONTEXT

In the 18th century, the current state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, was known as Captaincy of Minas Geraes, then Portuguese colony. This period is marked by the intense presence of the auriferous extraction, which produced an economical vigorous cycle, principally in his first five decades.

This process, of international reach, was the main organizing strength of the territory, and it was not restricted to the areas of mining, including also the flows, principally those of support to the mining and those linked to the export from the extracted gold. This condition is shown up by the fact that the four Counties that formed the Captaincy of Minas Geraes in the century XVIII (Villa Rica, Rio das Mortes, Sabará and Serro Frio) were linked to important centres of mining. In this context it is possible to infer the basic categories for the analysis of this colonial space in the century XVIII:

- localities and small towns of support to the mining;
- Routes;
- localities of support to the merchants passage (then known as “tropeiros”);
- localities of support to the rural activity;
- Farmhouses.

With the exception of the urban nuclei of the daily support of the mining, in which that activity was predominating regarding the rest, in other categories exemplified in this work were common the cases of concomitance of functions. The farmhouses, referential centres of the agricultural production, belonged, generally, to families with financial favorable conditions, with significant extensions of land (typical of the agrarian structure of the time). These farmhouses were also marked by the presence of a fixed population in their spaces. Several of these farmhouses included in their construction small chapels and spaces reserved to the “tropeiros” to spend the night, characteristics of other categories here analysed.

As for the places of support to the passage of merchants and of support to the rural activity, these two situations here analyzed several times were concomitants. Several places of support to the rural activity were located along ways that were constituted in spaces crossed by merchants. Due to being part of this net of ways, in these urban nuclei basic informations were disseminated for the society of the time.

It is possible to be said that the location of these places regarding the net of ways was a defining element as for his predominant characteristic and his possible area of influence. If located in the most internalized and isolated extremities, more circumscribed were his characteristics as spaces of support to primary activities, being of support to the mining or to the farming activities. When the urban nuclei were located in points of confluence of routes, bigger it would be his aptitude for the commerce and the services, typical activities of support to the routes of merchants passage.

As well as in other situations in which there are activities of exchange, the routes fulfilled, in the context approached in the present work, an important role in the configuration of the space.

The occupation of the analyzed Counties, however, did not happen extensively and homogeneously along the territory. The rough landform and the presence of extensive portions of forests forced the occupation concentrated in determined points, mostly near by the mining regions, while extensive portions of territory remained depopulated along the century XVIII. There was, still, in the Minas Geraes, numerous native groups that were living, in his majority, remote of the mining. Beside that, the activity of mining used in wide scale labour slave from the African continent.

The major urban centres of the time related to the auriferous mining, has received more attention in the development of different studies, while many nuclei mentioned in this work were an object of less attention. Such a fact is due, in wide scale, the fact of the golden extraction occurred in the period have been important ballast of international economic processes, which detached the major urban centres of mining of the Minas Geraes in a context of first order in the western economy. In these centres was established a vigorous artistic and cultural production linked to this wealth. Besides, the isolation of these nuclei of mining guaranteed a relative autonomy and independence for their cultural and artistic production, facts that, in some form, justifies the privileged focus of this production related with the mining.

In the recent years the researches turned to the routes and ways that linked the principal mining centres to the kingdom and to the ports has been gaining more attention, in the academic environment and in the search for the development of the tourist activity and, as result, the nucleuses of support to the rural activity and to the merchants passage gained more attention too.

In this tendency the present work makes a contribution to the study of these urban nuclei of support to the rural activity.

This investigation began when the authors of this work acted in the approach of the territorial organization of the cities of Entre Rios de Minas, Jeceaba and São Brás do Suaçuí, situated in the Minas Gerais State, Brazil. On that occasion was identified a net of urban localities that presents aspects and reminiscences of space configurations related to a possible economical activity of the century XVIII. Throughout the development of the mentioned works it was possible to identify that great part of these urban centres were originated in the 18th century. In this way the present study gives continuity to this research, and turns his focus to the urban nuclei situated in the northeast portion of then County of the Rio das Mortes and in the south-west frontier of the County of Villa Rica (located in the central portion of the current State of Minas Gerais, Brazil). It is emphasized that the compatibility of the historical and current maps does not happen in the precise form, due principally to the considerable difference of methods and technologies available in the different periods. The imprecisions happen, principally, with regard to the name of the places and his location in the map.

As for the cartographical representation, in the current map was identified a net of local roads that links urban localities like Bituri, Faleiros, Montijo, Coelhos, Madrugada da Pedra, Pedra Branca, Pedra Negra, Cayuaba, Serra do Camapuã, Camapuã de Cima, São José das Mercês to the cities of São Brás do Suaçuí and Entre Rios de Minas. In the same context, in the current map were emphasized the cities of Lagoa Dourada and Santana dos Montes.

In the historical map selected like base for comparison (dated of 1778 and prepared by José Joaquim da Rocha, one of the major cartographers of the time), were identified, in the studied area, the localities of Brumado, Olhos D'água, Suaçuí, Lagoa Dourada, Morro do Xapeo, among others.

On basis of the available historical data, was noticed that the locality of Brumado corresponds to the current city of Entre Rios de Minas, the locality of Suassuí corresponds to the current city of São Brás do Suaçuí, Morro do Xapeo corresponds to the current city of Santana dos Montes and Lagoa Dourada corresponds to the city of the same name. Regarding the locality of Olhos D'água, the chapel is today preserved, being object of recent restoration, with characteristics of the construction related to the century XVIII. The urban locality, however, was not

developed and in the current days it consists, practically, in the religious construction.

With regard to the others urban localities identified in the current map, the registers referring to the beginning of these occupations are very vague. In many of these nucleuses, the religious and civil buildings were altered along the time and lost his original characteristics. However, it can be noticed that the morphology of the occupation and of the net of local roads repeats standards similar to the adopted ones in the 18th century.

On the other side, there are other towns identified in the current map and in the map of the 18th century that belong to the same process, but will not be analysed in the present work.

The urban nuclei of support to the rural activity and to the passage of merchants, due to their isolation regarding the principal brazilian urban centres and, principally, regarding the Portuguese metropolis, were adapted in special way as for the interpretation of the architectural and urban predominant styles of their time.

Such places were constituted basically by religious constructions, squares and civil constructions of use residential, commercial and services. Government buildings were practically non-existent in this initial occupation.

These places had the major function of weekend's dwelling of the rural owners, who used to go to their houses in the urban nuclei due to religious cults, which were the base of the local sociability. The major utility of these localities was the installation of an urban identity, still incipient, from a rural base's economy. The urban space produced is endowed of landscape beauty, as a result of a good relation with the natural site. The constructions are simple, with few ornamentation, but are endowed of rhythm and harmony.

These spaces had a predominantly functional characteristic punctuated by elements that gave a symbolic level to the places, particularly the religious constructions. The squares, more what elements of landscape composition, were also functional spaces, destined for the permanence of animals of load and mounts, commerce and services of street, among others.

These occupations were integrating chains of command and religious, political and social control, because, in spite of the absence of administrative constructions, the religious constructions were fulfilling this role, due the fact that, in the period, State and Church were linked.

THE OCCUPATION OF THE STUDY AREA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

During the 19th century, with the decline of the gold cycle, the region in study is strengthened by the growth of the farming activity. While the County of Villa Rica, predominantly linked to processes of golden extraction in the 18th century, suffer a population fall, the County of the Rio das Mortes increases its population from 82.781 for 213.617 inhabitants, in a comparison done from the population counts of 1776 and 1821 (Graça Filho, 2002). The principal products of the time were the bovine, equine, pigs, cotton, corn, bean and rice, which were not constituted in activities of monoculture. In the region of study is also emphasized the activity focused to the creation of horses, being an important event the development of the breed Campolina in the end of the 19th century (Entre Rios de Minas, 2008).

The inauguration of the Oeste de Minas Railroad in 1881 gives impulse to the farming activities of the region, due to the significant increase of the flow of the local products, principally towards the City of Rio de Janeiro, as well as the import of manufactured products (Graça Filho, 2002). The railroad stations induced changes in the space configuration and in the hierarchy of the places, because the proximity of the places of shipment and arrival of loads and storage of products influenced the territory with a bigger degree of urbanization.

Due to the reported facts is identified, in the period, an increase in the complexity of some of these urban spaces.

The current city of Entre Rios de Minas, called, in the end of the 19th century, Brumado do Suassuí, raisin to the condition of small town (1875) and, soon, to the condition of city (1880), starting to have government buildings like the "Casa de

Câmara e Cadeia” (typical historical building of Brazil) and even a small theater, which would have existed near the Municipal Palace. Some decades before, in 1832, the Chapel of “Nossa Senhora das Brotas” passes to the condition of parish, what gives to it regional importance. On basis of the data available in the municipal archives (Entre Rios de Minas, 2008), there is a description of “Brumado do Suassuí” in 1886 in which the principal constructions of the time are quoted. Besides the Church and its square, the place had six quite regular streets, two hundred and eight houses, among which ten were “sobrados” (typical constructions of the time with two floors).

Among the investigated data there was identified also a description of the space of Sta. Anna do Morro do Chapéu, current Santana dos Montes. Such a description dated from 1897 (Arquivo Público Mineiro, 1897) registers that the locality, in 1836, had, besides the Chapel and its square, 24 residences. There are, in this document, reference to two houses of business of farm in the urban nucleus, linked to the commerce of products turned to the farming activities. In Sta. Anna do Morro do Chapéu there was a considerable number of farms linked to the urban locality by a net of routes. These elements, associated to the landform, to the hydrography, to the natural vegetation and to the cultures, composed a local singular scenery.

THE RECOGNITION OF THE COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE OF MINAS GERAIS AS HISTORICAL, ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE EARLY DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the first half of the century XX, principally since the decade of 20, there is in Brazil, by part of important intellectual groups involved in the Brazilian Modernist Movement, an action in the sense to exalt values and peculiarities of the country.

This action was inspired in other cultural movements, principally in Europe, that sought, beside the modernization, increase the value of specific cultural aspects of the national cultures.

Cities identified with the culture and the heritage were object of this action. Members of the Modernist group did several travels of recognition to places known as part of the national identity. An important travel of this group to the interior of Minas occurred in 1924, named “Travel of the discovery of Brazil”.

The city of Ouro Preto, with his cultural and artistic collection, was an object of this process, being recognized like national Monument through the Decree nº 22.928/33 (Brasil, 1933). Such a decree determines that “no alteration or modification resulting in the municipal organism of the town of Ouro Preto and, quite so, in all his relations of administrative dependence with the Government of the State of Minas Gerais” (Brasil, 1933). This decree is the first Brazilian standard that sought to safeguard the heritage and is turned into the base of the subsequent thematic policies.

The Service of the National Historical and Artistic Heritage (SPHAN) was created in 1937 and its regulations was given through the Act nº 25 (Brazil, 1937).

Such a regulation organized the protection to the historical national heritage and defined the “Tombamento”¹ like prescriptive instrument of preservation of the heritage and its standards of application.

The city of São João Del Rey was the first one to be registered in the Book of Fine Arts, in March 04, 1938 and had more than 700 objects listed, between them, the churches of the Rosário and of the Pilar. Next, the first inscriptions were done in the Book of Fine Arts relative to Ouro Preto and Tiradentes. The relative inscription to the Ouro Preto happens through the Process nº 70-T, Inscription nº 39, Book of Fine Art, fl. 8, of April, 20, 1938.

The built heritage of Santana dos Montes and Entre Rios de Minas were not identified, at this time, like reference to the nationality, fact considered at this first moment. The built heritage of these cities consisted in urban complexes related to the quotidian activities. Although they had a harmonious space preserved almost in its totality, did not possess the characteristics of monument considered at the time.

¹ “Tombamento” is the Brazilian process of declaring the object as a historical heritage.

This way, without more important economical activities, the two urban centres here focused passed by a period of relative tranquillity as regards to their space and their central areas, whose modifications were isolated and happened due to local processes of replacement of real state stocks.

The decade of 1950 and the two next ones were marked in Brazil by the positivism, in which the idea of progress to any cost was predominant. This progress, influenced by the ideas of the modernism, that had much acceptance in the country, was not only implicated in the introduction the “new”, but also in the elimination of the “old”, related to the delay, to the lack of organization and to the spontaneous. In the name of this modernization, spaces and urban traditional constructions were eliminated. Entre Rios de Minas and Santana dos Montes, by some form, remained out of this process, though without any regulation in this sense, because there wasn't effective local demand for this type of modification of his spaces.

THE RECOGNITION OF THE BUILT HERITAGE NON MONUMENTAL AND THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION OF 1988

The decade of 1980 and, principally, the Brazilian Constituent process of 1988 brought a new light about the vision of heritage, which reflects not only the new postures of important groups of the national society as also current thoughts in academic approaches.

Another basic concept introduced in the Federal Constitution of 1988 (Brazil, 1988) is the Diffuse Right, which refers to the indivisible rights, of which holders are indeterminate persons. Like example can be quoted the right of the consumer, to the public peace, to the public security, to the environment, among others.

This way, though architectural examples connected with the quotidian have been relevant in the local and national politics of protection to the heritage, the explicitness of the matter in the Constitution and the constitutional recognition of the diffuse rights created new favorable condition to the protection of the built heritage not monumental.

Since the second half of the decade of 80, and principally since the decade of 90 of the century XX, the sensibility of the population regarding the preservation of the heritage have been increased, contemplating the categories connected with the quotidian and with the singularities of the local groups.

These new interests regarding the heritage have shocked with the actions come from the real state market, which acts in an optics that still does not include the preservation of the heritage.

THE CITIES OF ENTRE RIOS DE MINAS E SANTANA DOS MONTES AND THEIR CURRENT POLICIES IN THE BUILT HERITAGE PRESERVATION

Despite the good condition of preservation of heritage buildings in Santana dos Montes and Entre Rios de Minas, current policy issues relating to the subject are different for each case, resulting, therefore, on different degrees on maintaining the integrity of those complex.

In Santana dos Montes, the intention is to link the built heritage, the traditional farming practices, the waterfalls and the remarkable landscape with the development and consolidation of tourism.



Figure 1: Church of the Historical Center of Santana dos Montes (2004)

To implement this proposal the local government is promoting a work of identification and protection of the heritage associated with actions to its disclosure.

As for legal protection, the local council developed normative apparatuses that made possible the "tombamento" of buildings and collections. In this respect, it is emphasized the delineation of urban complex as a category of preservation. Such demarcation starts from criteria such as sight lines, neighborhoods and environments, and broach the urban center as a complex whole and not only as solitaires buildings. It is considered this approach appropriate since the buildings, if individually analyzed, might not be consider relevant, which would threaten the integrity of the whole complex.

Besides the historic urban nucleus, the protection extends also to the farmhouses from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which, associated to the network of paths, allows the perception of this spatial structure and its historical process of occupation.



Figure 2: Historical farmhouse preserved in Santana dos Montes (2004)

With regard to inspection, the fact that the relatively small size of the whole complex makes such inspection happens in an immediate way. Added to that the existence of a social pact in favor of the heritage that enhances its preservation.

The consolidation of these intentions and public policy depends on the success of touristic activity, there being a need to increase the relationship with the local tourism and networks abroad. Considering that the phenomenon is very recent (begun in the last ten years), it is not possible to make a extensive analyses of the scenery. It is considered, however, that the strategy adopted in Santana dos Montes is appropriate and is distinguished from other situations in the region.

In Entre Rios de Minas strategies regarding heritage preservation are not very emphatic. Despite the presence of significant local groups seeking to preserve, in

town exists other groups, some of them associated to local elites, who prefers the replacement of historic buildings for new ones. This conflict hampers the establishment of a extensive pact on the preservation of heritage buildings.

Urban studies prepared in 2008 showed that it would be possible to preserve the urban center of historic interest associated with the establishment of normative guidelines that would encourage, in a compensatory manner, the construction of buildings with multiple floors in areas surrounding the historic nucleus, in order to relieve pressure into them. These neighboring areas have been identified to not compromise the perception of the historical complex, while would be established more appropriate areas for location of business activities and services associated with residential use.



Figure 3: View of the City of Entre Rios de Minas at 1960 (Entre Rios de Minas, 2008)



Figure 4: View of the City of Entre Rios de Minas at 2008, illustrating the conflict between the new buildings and the historical buildings

Due to the interests of social actors in favor of the construction of buildings with multiple floors in the historical complex, the proposal made in 2008 was not implemented. In this context prevailed the idea that the center should be the place of the representation of modern space, of the current standards of construction and of the concentration of activities.

Even though the intention to replace buildings prevailed, pro-conservation actors have achieved to ensure the protection of individual buildings, which ensures a level of preservation and perception of historical whole complex. Most of these preservationists actions in Entre Rios de Minas is articulated by the Municipal

Council of Cultural Development - CODEC which was created within the management system established as from the recognition of diffuse rights in the Constitution of 1988.

The inspection, essential element of government's historical and cultural heritage, is precarious in the city.

As for prediction about the preservation of the historic city complex, it is considered that this is a turning point in which the main forces are present, both, of the preservation point of view such as of the replacement of the built heritage. However, it is important to stand out that the prospect of replacing buildings is emphasized by the speculation around the installation of large industrial equipment in the region of Entre Rios de Minas.

In a situation of comparison of the two cities, Santana dos Montes is not under pressure of these regional economic processes, which benefit the maintenance of the integrity of the whole complex.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The situation of Santana dos Montes and Entre Rios de Minas would have remained similar, if were not the economical context that in the last five years differentiated these two cities.

Santana dos Montes is inserted today in a process of local character, though it seeks to enlarge his participation in the regional context, driven principally by the state programs of development of the tourism. In Santana dos Montes there is, also, concerning preservation of the urban and architectural heritage of the city, a relation of protection by the population. At the moment this attitude is coherently with the public local politics.

It is not possible to say that Entre Rios de Minas is completely away of a similar attitude, though today his urban and architectural heritage suffers a potentially expressive level of threats owing to the property speculation caused by the installation and development of industrial activities in the region.

The possibility of the town be benefited or even deteriorated in function of the new economical activities caused great impact in the population, and brought the ambiguity of his posture regarding this heritage, being possible to realize that the values of the positivism and of the development to any cost are still permanent.

The existence of these collections and buildings, which start to be valued in a new cultural context, rouses different feelings in the population. On a side there is the recognition of an identity, and, on other, the idea that the progress would lead to the sacrifice of the memory on behalf of a space with more current characteristics.

The sky-scraper is the standard searched in the imaginary concerning this type of relation with the space. Though this vision permeates good part of the relation of the communities with his urban space, there are many situations of exception that are more and more presents.

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