

TRAVEL OF STUDIES: CITIES OF JOÃO PESSOA, MACEIO, NATAL AND RECIFE. A LOOK INTO THE URBAN SPACE AND BRAZILIAN ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to present the methodology and the final results of the elective course "Travel of Studies" which belongs to the new pedagogical project from the Architecture and Urbanism course at the University Federal of Pernambuco. It was offered for the first time in 2013. The discipline was organized to occur in four long weekends through visits of four capitals of the Northeast of Brazil: Recife, João Pessoa, Natal and Maceió. The purpose was to allow the students to apprehend the cities through four axes: intervention in historical center (axis 1), production of urban space (axis 2), production of coastline space (axis 3) and contemporary architecture (axis 4). After the four visits were complete, we prepared a poster with the comparison of the cities based on the identification of the similarities and differences of each axis we have studied.

KEY WORDS: production of space, gentrification, urban intervention, patrimony, tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Studies' Travel is a discipline that belongs to a new educational project of the Architecture and Urbanism course of the Federal University of Pernambuco. It was offered for the first time in 2013 and is already in its third edition. A different and new proposal to verify on site the structuring processes and the production of the urban space, as well as the architecture associated with this production. The main idea is to develop a greater critical ability to visualize and practice the theories learnt in classroom in the others disciplines.

The discipline was organized in twelve guided tours through the four capitals of the Northeast Region of Brazil. These visits were divided in three days for each city through long weekends from Friday to Sunday, throughout the semester. For each day of trip, an axis was studied. On the first day, the goal was visiting the historic city center. On the second day, the study of the production of urban space was the key. Finally, the third day was devoted to the recognition of important local architectural production. The involvement of local researchers was essential for the success of the guided visits.

We have visited *Recife*, *João Pessoa*, *Maceió* and *Natal* (picture 1). We have used the same methodological approach for all of them with the objective of allowing students to go through comparisons among the cities for each axis. This methodology will be described below.



Picture 1: Map of Brazil with focus on four the capitals visited. Credit of Sérgio Silva, 2014.

AXIS 1: INTERVENTION IN HISTORICAL CENTERS

We started with the axis intervention in historical centers, where we focused on researches on practices of conservation and restoration of built heritage. The activity counted with the participation of Professors from local universities and researchers who work in public institutes like IPHAN (Institute of National Patrimony Historic Artistic). The idea was to present the main guidelines of the process of preservation in historical centers, showing the particularities of each process and the differences that occur in the intervention in each city.

The students could see different paradigms and actions to restore the built heritage and historic sites in each and all of the four capitals visited. These practices are not the same in every city because that depends on the level of government involvement and the tools used.

In Maceio, the IPHAN – AL protects the neighborhood of Jaraguá, which mainly worked as ports for the cotton production from *Alagoas*. The protection encompasses the limits of *Sá e Albuquerque* street (picture 2), where we find important buildings that represented institutions like the Association of Commerce of Alagoas. For restoration, the theories of *Cesari Brandi* and the Letter of Italian Restoration by 1972 were followed.



Picture 2: Aspects of street *Sá e Albuquerque* in Maceió/Alagoas with focus on Museum of Image and Sound. Photography from Cristina Araujo, 2013.

In *João Pessoa*, capital of *Paraíba*, the historic center (picture 3) was preserved through people's participation. In the beginning, the main buildings were located in front of *Paraíba* River, on the high points of the hills. In one side, the commerce next to the train station and in the other side, the religious ordinations. The popular participation helped the training of technicians specialized on conservation through the creation of Workshop -School for Restoration of *João Pessoa*.

Part of the historic center of *Natal* is through IPHAN – RN. The main church, *Nossa Senhora da Apresentação*, (picture 4) was built in the first years of colonization of *Rio Grande do Norte*, in the beginning of century XVII. The process of protection is from 1992.



Picture 3: Historic center of *João Pessoa* and Square *Antonio Navarro*: 13 buildings besides the square have been preserved. Photography from Cristina Araujo, 2013.



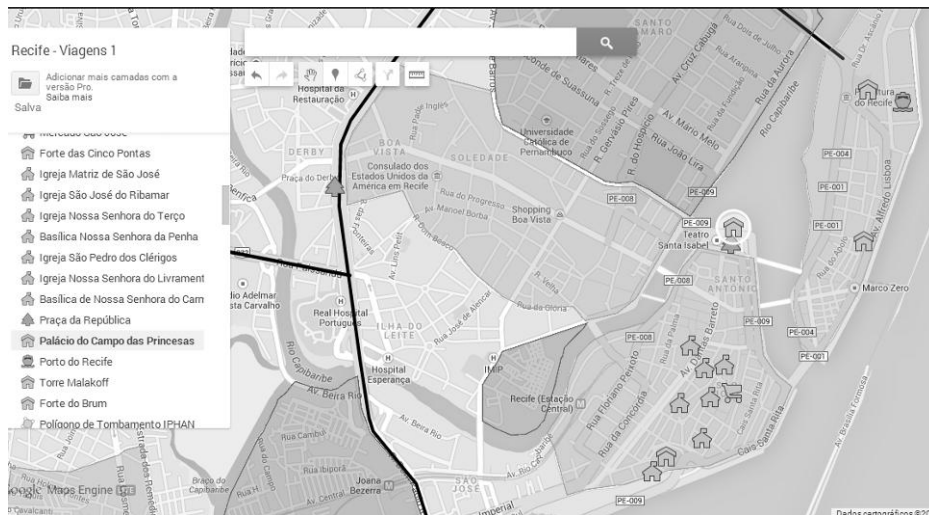
Picture 4: Church *Nossa Senhora da Apresentação* in Natal. Photography from Cristina Araujo, 2013.

Finally, in Recife, we observed that the protection occurs on the three levels: national, state and municipal. Sometimes these protections present some overlap. While IPHAN (national level) works with protection tool, the municipality works with preservation zones and preservation of special buildings. The neighborhood Old *Recife* was visited and the students could observe the main aspects of street *Bom Jesus da Lapa*, opened on century XVII (picture 5).

For all cities, the students have produced maps on Google Engine program showing preserved areas and the building as well (picture 6).



Picture 5: Aspects from street *Bom Jesus da Lapa* in downtown, *Recife*. Photography from Cristina Araujo, 2014.



Picture 6: Map of *Recife* downtown made by Google Engine. It has the polygon of preservation by IPHAN, the points that represent the preserved building and the associated database.

Credit: Yanne Andrade, 2014.

AXIS 2: PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE

On the second day trip, the students rode on a bus along the main structuring axes of the cities through the historic center. The assumption is that Brazilian cities have the same pattern of

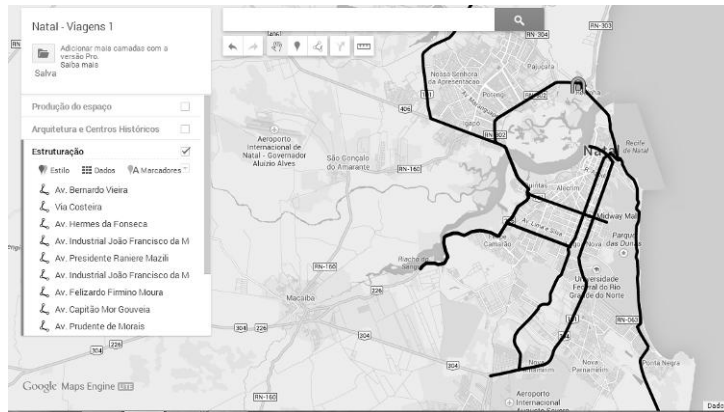
structuring of space beginning from the historic center. This process is controlled by the high-income classes that determine the places where they would live, always choosing the best localizations and the best access to the center. This geography of production of space could be mapped starting understanding their structuring axes, primary and secondary centers.

When the high-income classes move, they produce new spaces with an obvious association with real estate that belongs to the same class. To move, they carry with them their urban equipment, creating new centralities. In this process, when the historic center begins to be occupied by popular classes, the center is no more the center and it will be recognized as old center or degraded area.

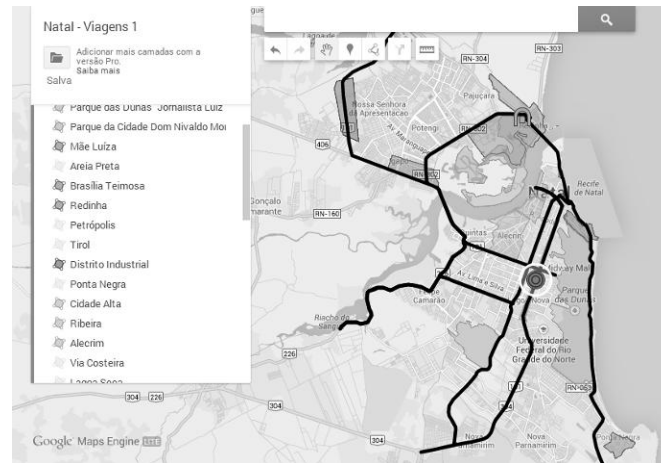
So, the production of space from (and to) high-income class occurs from the determination of locations that accounts the displacement and accessibility to the center and the binding capacity of the point (location). From this point of view, we can define structuring axes that help to understand the pattern of socio-spatial segregation in Brazilian cities: the elite always has privileged areas on the territory according to access and binding capacity point. In the opposite side, the locations that are produced to popular classes face more difficulties on transport and access. The secondary centers that serve the popular classes are not the same that the elite uses: structuring axes separate residential zones and their centers.

This pattern of Brazilian occupation has a strong relation with income inequality that historically produces and reproduces the socio-spatial segregation and it generates large pockets of poverty in outline areas and environmentally fragile areas despite the occupation of best areas from the local elite. The crossing of socio-economic data, like income group and home situation provided by statistic official organs allows the mapping of socio-spatial segregation from the boundary of structuring axes that separate high-income classes from the others.

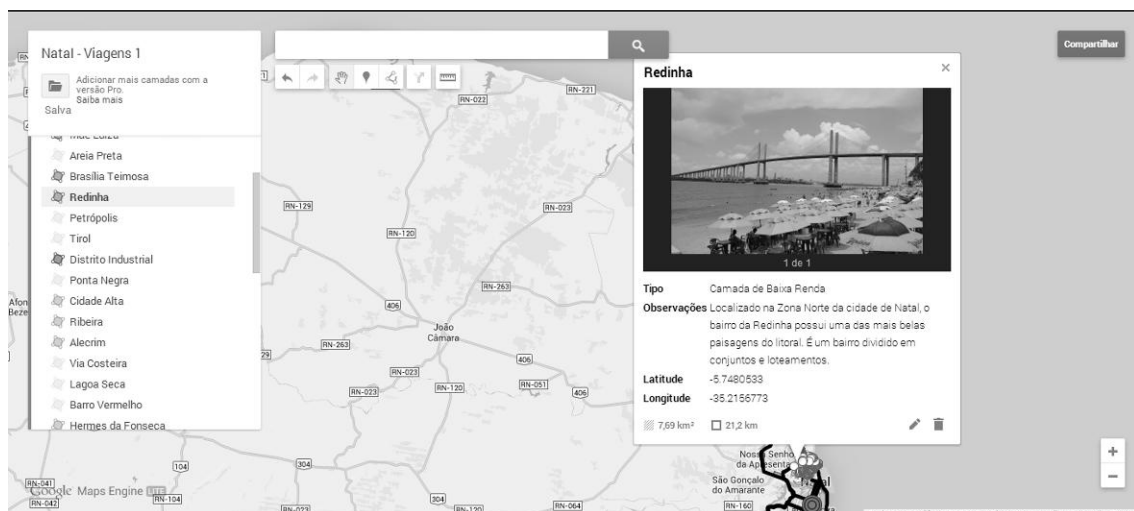
To attest the recurrence of this pattern of occupation, the students went on site by bus with the previous maps in hands. The route always begins from the historic center. With the assistance of local researchers, we went through a lecture on the history of the occupation of the city from the understanding of the road system: structuring axes (picture 7), zones of elite and popular zones, center and secondary centers (picture 8). The students use GPS to capture the point and trace the route and, later, they use Google Engine to produce the final maps and database (picture 9).



Picture 7: Map of *Natal* city with structuring axes. Credit: Yanne Andrade, 2014.



Picture 8: Delimitation (polygons) of high-income classes, popular classes and centers. Credit: Yanne Andrade, 2014.



Picture 9: Demonstration of database associated at a layer. Credit: Yanne Andrade, 2014.

AXIS 3: PRODUCTION OF COASTLINE SPACE

For this study axis, we worked the context of tourism policies that contribute to provide infrastructure in touristic places like improvements on airports and highways. The PRODETUR (Tourism Development Program) on the Northeast Region is the main program in action nowadays.

As a theoretical background, besides the context on public policies, we worked the concepts of verticality, horizontality and roughness used by the geographer Milton Santos. Verticality can be seen like externalities, a set of points that form a space of money flow in the territory. In other words, verticality corresponds to construction of new buildings, which are linked with the new order proclaimed by international capital. As we will see on axis 4, the contemporary architecture is very important to give identity for this new order. On the other hand, we consider horizontality all relations that occurs within the territory itself despite the typical homogenization of verticality. Roughness are the continuities, the remains of the labor division from the past times.

In the four cities visited, the students have perceived the conflicts between verticality and horizontality on the coastline, the different ways of occupation and the trend of socio-spatial segregation. This trend is stronger in *Reserva do Paiva* and in the edge of *Boa Viagem* in *Recife* (pictures 10 and 11) in spite of the horizontality and roughness in the neighborhood of *Penha* in *João Pessoa* (picture 12) where the residents continued living. Picture 13 shows the result of this axis on Google Engine.



Picture 10: Socio-spatial segregation in *Boa Viagem*: on the edge the high buildings prevent any visual permeability from subsequent blocks. Photography from Cristina Araujo, 2013.



Figure 11: Condominium *Reserva do Paiva* near Recife. The electric fence and the access gate to the beach indicate an exclusive use by select residents. Photography from Cristina Araujo, 2013.



Figure 12: Neighborhood of *Penha*. The local residents remain here despite the strength of tourism to change the uses. Photography from Cristina Araujo, 2013.

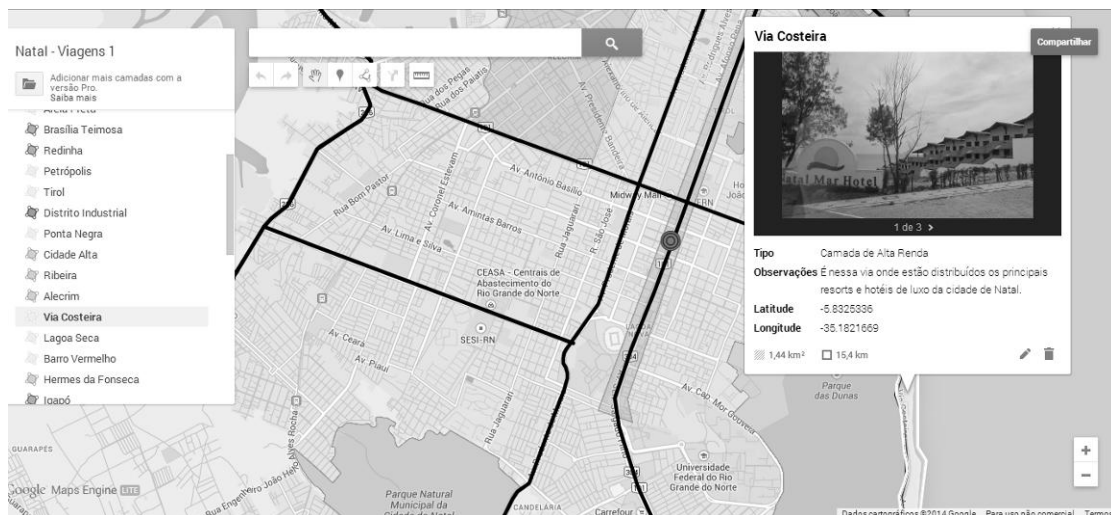


Figure 13: Production of coastline space in *Natal*. Credit: Yanne Andrade, 2014.

AXIS 4: CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

Finally, the last axis intends to show the relations between architecture and production of global cities as gentrification. In this case, tourism assumes the role of globalization. In order to highlight these cities in the international market, the mayors use to bring renowned architects to produce architectural works. However, in most cases, these works are not focused on the welfare of its citizens. A good example is the stadium “Arena Pernambuco” (picture 14). It was built for the World Cup 2014 in Sao Lourenço da Mata, near Recife. The international standard by Fifa was followed but the stadium does not dialogue with its surroundings. There is not public access to arrive there.



Picture 14: Stadium *Arena Pernambuco*: an authentic verticality as Milton Santos says. Photography from Cristina Araujo, 2014.



Picture 15: Arena of the Hill in *Natal*. Photography from Cristina Araujo, 2014.

On the other hand, despite Natal already having the stadium *Arena das Dunas*, in this year a gymnasium called *Arena do Morro* (arena of the hill – picture 15) was opened. It was projected by the Swiss office Herzog & De Meuron to the community *Mãe Luíza* which is renowned for the capacity to resist to the real estate pressure. A true horizontality between the high-income class that lives in the coastline.

CONCLUSION

In the end of the discipline, the students could notice that Brazilian cities have the same process of production of space as described above every time socio-spatial segregation is present. Verticality and horizontality are in a constant conflict. Recognize in practice the theories studied in class was the main objective for this discipline as most egalitarian cities start on the understanding and comprehension of the mode of production which cities and architects have to submit.

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