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# PODER PÚBLICO E PATRIMÔNIO FERROVIÁRIO NO MEIO-OESTE CATARINENSE: O CASO DE VIDEIRA

## PUBLIC AUTHORITY AND RAILWAY HERITAGE IN MIDWESTERN SANTA CATARINA: THE CASE OF VIDEIRA

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### Abstract

Railway heritage is an important historical testimony of the economic development and urbanization process in Brazil, supporting the collective memory of many communities. Several levels of the public government manage most railroads legacy and have the power to intervene in its conservation, thus, their decisions have a direct impact on the construction of urban memory in many places. This study aimed to investigate the municipal government actions regarding the management and preservation of the railway heritage, taking as study place the city of Videira, in Santa Catarina State regarding the old São Paulo - Rio Grande Railway (EFSP-RG). We explored issues as the interaction between local public authority and higher political levels, conservation status, new uses and the ways in which the railway heritage has been inserted in the socioeconomic dynamics of the city, as well as the impact of private interests in the preservation of these buildings. We noticed that in the last decades there has been neither an open decision-making process to popular participation, nor an overall view of these buildings conservation. Nowadays we have perceived actions that aim to reintegrate the remaining railway heritage to the urban dynamics, making it necessary to investigate in which extent these initiatives contribute to the valorization of the railway memory.

**Keywords:** Railway heritage, Collective memory, EFSP-RG railway, Videira-SC

Note: This article is based on a paper of the same authors submitted to Arquimemória 5 - International Meeting on Conservation of Built Heritage.

### 1 Introduction

The historical heritage demonstrates its importance by contributing directly to "maintain and preserve the identity of an ethnic, religious, national, tribal or familiar community." (Choay, 2001, p. 18, our translation). However, the memorial function is not inherent to the railway heritage work, but it is something that is acquired in the course of time. When thinking about the monuments, Choay (2001) states that a monument is deliberately created to remember an event, sacrifice, belief, etc. However, the 'historic monument' is not desired as such from the beginning, since it is born later standing out in the urban space in the middle of the built mass. Thus, "Every object from the past can be converted into a historical testimony without having, in its origin, a memorial destination" (Choay, 2001, p. 25, our translation).

It's known that the railways played an important role in the economic development of Brazil between the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. The railroads boosted the expansion of the economic frontier and the urbanization towards the countryside, where several cities emerged and grew along railways. However, with the rise of the road transport from the 1960s, the rail transport became obsolete in the following decades (Silveira, 2003). In many places, the

railroads were shut down and completely abandoned, representing a challenge for local authorities as to what to do with the remaining structures and buildings from the railway activity.

Rail transportation history helps to understand the Brazilian urbanization process, economic development and industrialization and the railway legacy is part of the identity of several communities, thus, preserving their memory is a necessity in many political levels, from the municipal to the federal spheres.

Maurice Halbwachs (2004), studying the collective memory, introduced the individual memory in the social context.

*Our memories remain collective, and we are remembered of them by others, even if they are events in which we were the only involved, and with objects that only we saw. It is because, actually, we are never alone (Halbwachs, 2004, p. 30, our translation).*

This way, the construction of memory is an essential element of identity, individual or collective, and its search is one of the fundamental activities of individuals and societies (Nor, 2007). Le Goff (2003) argue that the lack or loss of collective memory in peoples and nations can determine serious disturbances of collective identity, as amnesia can cause serious disturbances in the personality of an individual. In a similar way, Milton Santos asserts, "when man confronts a space that he did not help to create, whose history he does not know, whose memory is strange to him, this place is the core of a vigorous alienation" (Santos, 1999, p. 263, our translation).

Therefore, this paper proposes us to think about the decisions and attitudes of local public authority about the collective memory safeguarding concerning the railway heritage preservation through the case of the municipality of Videira, located next to the already disabled São Paulo - Rio Grande Railway (EFSP-RG), in the midwest of Santa Catarina State.

This study explored the railway heritage historical contextualization and the relation between the local public government and the higher political levels (the national), regarding the railway heritage and its preservation policies. This study also sought to identify the situation of the railway heritage in the city, as well as the new uses intended for the buildings and spaces left by the railroad activity, besides the way they have been reinserted in the city socioeconomic dynamic. In addition, we also investigated the way in which local power has dealt with private interests, which collide with the preservation of the railway memory and heritage.

## **2 Industrial heritage and railway heritage**

The demolition of two buildings in the early 1960s, the Doric porch of Euston Station and the Coal Exchange building, both in London, attracted the public attention to a topic beginning to gain relevance, the industrial heritage preservation (Buchanan, 2005; Kühl, 2009; Cordeiro, 2011). In spite of the protests, it was not possible to save the buildings, expressive testimonies of the industrialization process of England. After more than five decades, situations that endanger the built heritage have unfortunately been recurrent in several places, especially in countries where preservation has faced more difficulties.

These facts emphasize the incipience and the limited range of the discussion about the industrial heritage preservation, including Brazil. The broadest and most reasoned debate on this subject began in England in the 1950s, when the term industrial archeology was highlighted, in particular, due to a paper written by Michael Rix<sup>1</sup>, for *The Amateur Historian*, in 1955, in which this term was first published (Kühl, 2009; Campagnol, 2011).

The discussion reached international relevance with the 'First International Conference for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage' in Ironbridge, Great Britain, in 1973. In the event's third edition 'The International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage' (TICCIH) was officially founded aiming to promote international cooperation in preserving, conserving, investigating, documenting, researching, interpreting, and advancing education of the industrial heritage (Campagnol, 2008; Ticcih, 2017). Another important moment was the approval of the Nizhny Tagil Charter in Russia, in July 2003, at the XII International Conference of Ticcih, the Charter defined key concepts related to industrial heritage, as well as guidelines for its preservation (Ticcih, 2017).

Since the first discussions about the industrial heritage, the presence of rail transport has been evident, as indicated in the case of the Euston Station. Although railway heritage has specificities compared with other types of industrial heritage, both are related, once the industrialization process was directly associated with the railroads, as Kühl (2009, p. 40, our translation) asserts:

*It is considered that the industrialization process is closely linked to the rail transport development, especially in the second phase of what has been called the Industrial Revolution. Large-scale industrialization is directly associated with this means of transportation, since it has boosted the railroads and, in turn, has been driven by them; moreover, for their operation, railroads must have an industrial structure.*

Although there are some differences, this process has also occurred in Brazil. Despite the country's late industrialization process, comparing with Europe, the railroads have been associated with agro-industry and economic dynamics since the beginning of its implantation, as well as the urbanization process intensification.

## **3 The railways in Brazil**

The first Brazilian railroad was the Mauá Railroad, built in 1854, in Rio de Janeiro, an enterprise led by Irineu Evangelista de Sousa, the Viscount of Mauá. With only 14.5km the railroad connected Mauá harbor to Fragoso station, on the way to Petrópolis (IBGE, 1954). From the end of the 19th century, specially the third quarter, several projects were executed in the Brazilian railway sector, financed by both foreign and domestic capital, mainly derived from coffee monoculture. The main objective was to transport domestic production from the inland territories to the harbors on the coast. Thus, the industrialization and urbanization processes accelerated and advanced towards the countryside (Silveira, 2003).

Despite the economic instability and the political crisis that began in Brazil in the late the 19th century, the rail transport continued to receive investments. The rail network peak of growth occurred in the period between 1890s and the 1930s. During this period, most of the Brazilian railways were leased to foreign companies (IBGE, 1954; Silveira, 2003). However, economic and political crises led the Union and the States to take over the railroads during the 'First Republic' period. Among the government's objectives was the control resumption of rail transport, its orientation to the internal market and the greater integration of the rail network. Thus, in 1930, many railroads were already run by the public authority, however, the rail transport situation did not improve due to the government intervention. In the 1940s, economic instabilities derived from the Second World War and the failure to build a more integrated rail network affected the sector (Silveira, 2003; IPHAN, 2017a).

Therefore, trying to control the situation, in 1957, the 'Federal Railroad Network' (RFFSA) <sup>2</sup>, was created. It was a state-owned company whose purpose was to manage the Brazilian federal railroads (Silveira, 2003; IPHAN, 2017a). Although there was a slight reaction in the sector its decline was observed from the 1960s, with the road transport prioritization. In the 1990s, RFFSA was included in the National Privatization Program (PND), its properties were privatized and many railroads, already obsolete, were abandoned <sup>3</sup>. With RFFSA extinction, in 2007, the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN) was entrusted with "receiving and managing the movable and immovable assets of artistic, historical and cultural value, originating from the extinct RFFSA, as well as watching over its custody and maintenance" (Silveira, 2003; BRASIL, 2007; RFFSA, 2007; IPHAN, 2017b).

### **3.1 The São Paulo – Rio Grande Railway**

Although the São Paulo - Rio Grande Railway (EFSP-RG) had been inaugurated in 1910, its construction concession was granted in the Empire period, in November 1889. Even with the Republic Proclamation, the Interim Government recognized the concession and ratified it in April 1890. The construction of this railroad, following a north-south direction, integrated the south-east and south railroad networks of the country, through the southern states inland. It also enabled the connection of the former Brazilian capital, Rio de Janeiro, with the railroads of Argentina and Uruguay<sup>4</sup> (Thomé, 2010).

The construction effectively began in November 1895, from the city of Ponta Grossa in Paraná State. This city was used as a starting point for two work fronts, one to the north, towards Itararé, in São Paulo State, and another to the south, towards the Uruguay river, the border between the states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. In April 1904, the railroad had already reached the Iguazu river, on the border between the states of Paraná and Santa Catarina. At that time, both the Paraná and the Rio Grande do Sul sections were in operation, missing only the Santa Catarina's stretch, between the Iguazu and Uruguay rivers. The EFSP-RG company had been presenting constant deficits which led to an initial delay on the works in Santa Catarina's stretch. In January 1907, the works were resumed and, in June of the same year, the federal government gave an ultimatum to the company, setting the end of 1910 as the maximum deadline for the Santa Catarina's stretch conclusion and the start of the railway line operation (Brazil, 1907; Goularti Filho, 2009).

However, still in 1906, Brazil Railway Company (BRC), a holding company of the American businessman Percival Farquhar, had taken over the EFSP-RG concession. Farquhar bought most of this railroad shares and concluded its construction. EFSP-RG was inaugurated in December 1910, when the connection of the Santa Catarina's stretch with the Rio Grande do Sul's stretch was made, through the construction of the bridge over the Uruguay river. In the same year, the railways of Santa Catarina and Paraná, under the management of BRC, formed the Railroad Network Paraná-Santa Catarina (RVFPSC). Farquhar would lease 40% of the Brazilian railroad network, creating a big monopoly<sup>5</sup> (Silveira, 2003; Goularti Filho, 2009; Thomé, 2010; Lanna, 2012).

Shortly after the EFSP-RG inauguration, the BRC began to accumulate deficits which led it to a crisis. The Farquhar's holding ended up declaring bankruptcy in July 1917. Despite this, EFSP-RG continued to operate.

With the Revolution of 1930 EFSP-RG was taken by the revolutionary forces and, in 1942, it was effectively taken over and incorporated into the Parana-Santa Catarina Road Network (RVPC) (Silveira, 2003; Goularti Filho, 2009; Thomé, 2010; Lanna, 2012).

RVPC operated until 1957, when it was extinguished and integrated to RFFSA. However, with the road transport rise in the 1960s, EFSP-RG began to lose more and more importance in the local economy. In the 1990s, with the RFFSA privatization, its operation was delivered to the private sector, initially to Sul Atlântico S/A and later to América Latina Logística (ALL), today Rumo Logística (RFFSA, 2007; Goularti Filho, 2009; Thomé, 2010).

The transfer process occurred between 1996 and 1998, when EFSP-RG was disabled and practically abandoned. Since then, the only movement observed on the railroad was from rare chemical weeding trains and some touristic trains (Goularti Filho, 2009; Thomé, 2010). As consequence of the railroad closing in the region, structures, buildings and spaces, previously used by railway activity, lost their function generating empty spaces in the urban network, most of these in central urban areas, as the case of Videira.

### **3.2 The EFSP-RG as a railway cultural heritage**

As well as railroads in other places of Brazil, EFSP-RG has a historical link with the memory of the midwest region of Santa Catarina as a whole, as well as with the memory of its cities in particular. Since its construction, the railroad was associated with the colonization of the region, the development of the timber industry and, later, with the agro-industry, the main economic activities that would boost the cities growth in the region (Thomé, 2010).

A particular feature in the EFSP-RG history is the fact that it is pointed out as one of the factors for the outbreak of an episode known as Contestado War, a relevant set of events in the history of Santa Catarina and Brazil. At the time of the railroad construction, the lands of the western mesoregion of the State were mostly vacant. Part of the payment for the EFSP-RG construction involved the transfer of a 30km wide strip of land along the railroad. However, there were families who lived there without the legal land possession. These people were expelled from the places they inhabited, both by Brazil Railway Company and its subsidiaries, and by colonels who occupied their lands. The expulsion led the population revolt that, without prospects, joined forces and entered into combat against the public power that defended the private capital interests and the colonels (Thomé, 1992, 2010).

The railroad and the properties of Farquhar companies were among the main targets of the revolted army, so rails, bridges, stations and other buildings were destroyed during the conflict. The railroad also played a central role in the government's military plans, carrying troops, equipment, and supplies. Some places and towns in the region were marked by their strategic role in the conflict or by being the scene of important events. In the city of Calmon, for example, the Southern Brazil Lumber and Colonization Company built one of its sawmills to explore the wood on its received lands. It was burned in an attack in September 1914, as well as the village and the station (Fig. 1), which was reconstructed later (Thomé, 1992, 2010; Giesbrecht, 2014).



**Fig. 1:** Calmon Railway Station. Source:Tiago N. de Wergenes, 2017.

Several stations were also strategic in the government's military actions, serving as base for troops. At the Rio Caçador's train station, for example, a weapons and cargo depot was installed, next to it was one of the four airfields built for the conflict in the region, when, for the first time, the Brazilian Army used military aircraft (Thomé, 1992, 2010).

Besides EFSP-RG had a rich history of disputes and economic development in the Santa Catarina Midwest, it also left marks on the landscape. Railway yards, stations and other buildings are present in the memory of the population and in the urban landscapes of the region, mainly in historical centers. Rail transport and industrialization were closely associated, this relationship is expressed when sheds and chimneys are observed near the rails, pointing the region's urban landscapes (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2:** The old Frigorífico Ouro, in Capinzal (currently abandoned), on the right, covered by the woods, is the railway. Source:Tiago N. de Wergenes, 2017.

The factors discussed here demonstrate the historical relevance of EFSP-RG and its heritage both to the midwest region and to Santa Catarina State. In addition to the historical aspect, the railway buildings and spaces impose themselves as pre existences in the urban landscape, standing out from the rest of the scenario. They are concrete testimonies of these cities' history and contribute to the preservation of both the urban memory and the railroad.

#### **4 The local public authority and the railway heritage in Videira-SC**



After the railroad was disabled and the dissolution of RFFSA in 1999, some of the company properties were sold, both to private buyers and to local prefectures, which specially bought the stations. This was the case of Videira station, but other buildings were also part of this city's railway heritage, such as workers' houses and a telegraph station.

However, only two houses remained from the railway village of Videira. One of them, until recently, was an engineering office (Fig. 3), whereas the other was transformed into a warehouse for a building materials store (Fig. 4). In 2004, this store "recovered" the house and made a mural, which represents the history of the municipality, in the wall that restrains the land where the building is located. The store has an agreement with the city government, which aims to preserve the building. The store building is where the telegraph station once was, built probably in the 1940s, in Art Déco architecture style, in the administration of RVPSC as well as the railway village houses.

In an attempt to recover part of its lost heritage, the Municipality made a "replica" (Fig. 5) of the destroyed telegraph station in 2004, in front of the place where it was previously located, opposite to the street, next to the train station. In addition to these buildings, there is also a water tank (Fig. 6) located next to an old rail turning wye<sup>6</sup>, in the city downtown, but in a place further away from the station. The building was incorporated into a skatepark that is part of a bigger square built on the rail turning wye terrain. On the water tank, graffiti was made representing the railroad history, whereas the RVPSC's coat of arms is still present in the upper part of the building.



**Fig. 3 e Fig. 4:** Remaining houses from the railway village of Videira. Source: Tiago N. de Wergenes, 2017.





**Fig. 5 e Fig. 6:** The telegraph station replica and the railway water tank in Videira. Source: Tiago N. de Wergenes, 2017.

Although the historical buildings have had their structures preserved and the "good intentions" of the actions taken regarding their conservation, it cannot be denied that their character was detracted to a certain extent. In the remaining houses of the railway village, for example, although maintenance actions are visible, aesthetic changes can be noticed in the painting, covering, etc., and expansions were made too. In addition, the telegraph station replica shows differences concerning the original building, despite a sign on it indicating that it is a replica, the inscription does not mention anything about the location of the first building.

On the other hand, although changes were made in its internal part, the Videira station is the best conserved building of the railway heritage. The building (Fig. 7), according to Giesbrecht (2016), was built in the 1940s. Since 1999 it has belonged to the Municipality, which currently rents the building for a handicrafts association and a beer bar. There is a contract signed between the owner of this establishment and the city prefecture that aims to preserve the building through a public-private partnership. Therefore, the responsibility for the building maintenance is divided by both parts. The contract also requires that the beer bar prioritizes the marketing of products from the region and the municipality, which is well-known for wine production, as a way to promote local culture and tourism.



**Fig. 7:** Videira's train station, on the side of the Station, in the background, it's visible the the telegraph station replica. Source: Tiago N. de Wergenes, 2017.

As to tourism, in Videira, as well as in the neighboring cities of Tangará and Pinheiro Preto, the railway heritage is generally associated with the European settler's cultural memory, since the railroad was the gateway for European immigrants and their descendants who colonized these places. The Italian ethnicity stood out in the economic formation and in the identity creation of these cities, visible in agroindustry, wine production, etc. In Videira and Tangará, for example, the stations are used as spaces to promote the local culture and products. Despite the railroad reactivation was attempted in the past for tourism between these and other cities, only the section between Piratuba, in the south of Rio do Peixe Valley, and Marcelino Ramos, in Rio Grande do Sul, is currently used for touristic purposes.

While in Videira the properties of the extinct RFFSA were alienated, in other municipalities these remained under the ownership of the company and now they belong to the Union, as a result of Law 11,483, enacted in 2007. In general, these buildings remained abandoned or informally occupied for a long time. Moreover, we realized that a greater number of railway heritage elements of these cities remained preserved.

Events resulting from the RFFSA extinction, such as the involvement of IPHAN in the properties administration of artistic, historical and cultural interest in RFFSA's heritage, had repercussions in the midwest of Santa Catarina State. Several properties of the extinct company were cataloged by IPHAN and included in the List of the Railway Cultural Heritage (LPCF)<sup>7</sup>, an instrument created to assist the heritage management. However, in Videira, no building was included in the list, since they no longer belonged to RFFSA when LPCF was created, nor is there any municipal legislation that protects the railway memory and heritage.

The launch of the 'Program for the destination of the extinct RFFSA heritage to support local development', in 2009<sup>8</sup>, was another important fact. The program, in particular, opened a dialogue window between the federal and local governments, allowing new uses for the railway buildings. Some municipalities also implemented requalification projects for their old rail yards, building squares and parks, such as Caçador in 2009 and, more recently, the municipality of Videira in 2014. This fact raises other issues regarding railways role in the memory of these cities, for example, to understand how initiatives aimed to requalify these spaces could evoke and value the identity and history of the places, as well as railway itself.

## **5 Final considerations**

Videira is among the cities in the Midwest of Santa Catarina State which has economically developed the most in the last decades, driven by the agro-industry. This fact, in turn, also stimulated the property market growth. It is believed that this feature, together with the city geography (located between the Peixe river and the surrounding mountains), explains the fact that there was so much pressure and subsequent use of the spaces that were occupied by the railroad yard and the village before, located in a highly valued central area.

The recent events in Videira show a lack of sensitivity and overall view regarding the city's railway heritage by local governments. The absence of a position from the local public authority, towards private interests, especially when the RFFSA heritage was privatized in the 1990s, left this legacy vulnerable to actions that ended up destroying a large part of the railway structures, affecting the preservation of the city identity and collective memory. The fragmentation of this heritage ended up favoring private economic interests to the detriment of a common interest of the population that was not involved in the process.

The recent local government actions demonstrate an attempt to "recover" the city memory, such as the agreement reached with one of the houses owners remaining in the railway village and the construction of the telegraph station replica. However, it should be noted that these actions do not reverse the fact that the city's railway set character was permanently lost.

Consequently, there is a long way ahead as, at this moment, no railway heritage in the region is legally protected at the state level. In addition, only the train station of Tangará, which was restored<sup>9</sup>, has a legal protection at the municipal level. Under such circumstances, this situation still causes some insecurity. It is questioned to what extent these buildings would be free of changes or even destruction as occurred in the case of Videira, without any legislation or management initiative that effectively protects them in a jointly and coordinated way.

On the other hand, an improvement concerning the railway heritage preservation was observed at the federal level, with the inclusion of IPHAN in the management process and destination of RFFSA legacy after 2007. Although the properties had been abandoned without any maintenance in many cities, it is believed that due to the fact that they remaining under the ownership of RFFSA and then of the Union, it may have contributed to the preservation of these buildings. This situation also allowed the direct inclusion of the most relevant properties in the artistic, historical and cultural field in the IPHAN's LPCF, without depending on the local initiative. Although the registration in LPCF does not represent a definitive legal preservation, it is recognized as a great step in the conservation of these structures and in the safeguarding of the collective memory.

This way, some cases show progress, as some municipalities, including Videira, have taken decisions to insert the railway heritage in touristic activities in the recent years, this makes their conservation more economically viable and contribute to keeping the railway memory alive. It is expected that the survey presented in this study may contribute to a closer look at the legacy of Videira and the midwest of Santa Catarina State railway heritage, in order to strengthen the construction of the urban memory and the cultural identity of the city population.

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**1** According to Minchinton (1983), in his article, Rix (1955) is concerned with discussing the investigation of a series of buildings of the 18th and the 19th centuries linked to the industrialization process in England, which had significant historical importance.

**2** Law 3.115/1957, creation of the Federal Railroad Network (RFFSA).

**3** The RFFSA was dissolved by Decree nº 3.277, in 1999, and extinguished by Law 11.483 in 2007, which also transferred its properties to the Union (RFFSA, 2007).

**4** The EFSP-RG was built from the extension of the Sorocabana Railway, in Itararé, then in the São Paulo Province, to Porto Alegre - Uruguiana Line, in Santa Maria, in Rio Grande do Sul Province (Thomé, 2010).

**5** Farquhar would create two more companies that would work in Santa Catarina State, the Southern Brazil Lumber & Colonization Company, which purpose was to explore the wood of the lands along the railroad, and the Brazil Development & Colonization Company, that was in charge of the colonization of these same lands. Both activities were foreseen in the contract with the Brazilian government, the company had the right to explore the lands up to 15km on either side of the axis of the railway, as well as the obligation to colonize these lands (Thomé, 2010).

**6** Set of rails, interconnected in a triangle shape, that allows to turn the locomotive and its trajectory.

**7** The LPCF was created by the *Portaria* Iphan nº 407/2010 and, until December 15, 2015, it had 639 registered properties. (IPHAN, 2015).

**8** The objective of the program is to "[...] support legal actions in the social, urban and environmental development areas through the regularization, assignment or sharing of the management of the Union properties coming from the extinct Federal Railroad Network - RFFSA, aiming, in turn, ensure the fulfillment of the socio-environmental function of this important public patrimony" (SPU, 2009, p. 2, our translation). In addition to the municipalities, the program is also intended for "non-profit private entities interested in using these properties for the purpose of implementing local social, urban and environmental development programs, projects and actions" (SPU, 2009, p. 2, our translation). The protection of the railway heritage and the encouragement of the preservation and dissemination of the railroad memory are among the program objectives that has a partnership with IPHAN.

**9** The restoration of the building was completed in 2010 (SANTOS, 2013).