

Alteration and Rehabilitation of Public Spaces of Original Settlements in the Metropolitan Environment of Campinas

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Abstract. This article explores the intricate relationship between urbanization, cultural preservation, and public spaces in Brazil, focusing on Campinas as a case study. Rapid urban growth has led to the erosion of cultural identity and public spaces, prompting questions about the preservation of cultural heritage amidst urbanization. Campinas, known for its diverse districts and distinctive "village" atmosphere, serves as a compelling case study in this context. Through a comprehensive approach including a literature review and a case study centered on the original settlement of Barao Geraldo within Campinas, the research highlights the challenges facing cultural preservation efforts in Brazil and demonstrates the importance of preserving public spaces in enhancing cultural identity and quality of life for residents. Despite challenges such as resistance to participation in surveys, insights gained from the questionnaire provide valuable understanding of visitor demographics and perceptions. In conclusion, initiatives aimed at preserving public spaces play a crucial role in safeguarding cultural heritage and maintaining the unique identity of cities amidst rapid urbanization.

Keywords. Public spaces, preservation, Campinas, Praça do Coco, original settlements, historic.

1. Introduction

Urbanization in Brazil has been significantly influenced by historical changes and population movements [1]. This marked a major shift as cities became more appealing, attracting people looking for new jobs and lifestyles away from the countryside. These changes not only transformed where people lived but also complicated the relationship between city and country life. Additionally, the growth of small urban areas within rural regions added to this complexity, requiring a careful approach to rural development considering wider societal trends and environmental factors. The rapid spread of modern communication and transportation systems further sped up this urbanization process in rural areas, showing how closely linked urban and rural development are in Brazil.

Despite Brazil's rich cultural heritage, preservation efforts face numerous challenges [2]. These obstacles include a lack of comprehensive understanding of heritage, hesitancy in intervention strategies, limited community involvement in

decision-making, inadequate financial support, conflicts between preservation and development goals, and inflexibility in adaptation strategies. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach to heritage conservation, emphasizing the importance of broadening the concept of heritage, fostering community engagement, securing adequate financial resources, and adopting flexible adaptation strategies [2].

In the context of Brazil's rapid urban growth, the emergence of numerous metropolitan cities has led to a curious phenomenon: the erosion of cultural identity and public spaces. This raises questions about the relationship between urbanization and cultural preservation. Campinas, a city characterized by its diverse districts and renowned "village" atmosphere, offers a compelling case study in this regard. This article focuses on exploring the significance of preserving public spaces within the original settlement of Barao Geraldo, in Campinas, demonstrating its value in enhancing the city's cultural identity and quality of life for its residents.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Literature Review

Initially, to establish a solid historical foundation for the research, a comprehensive literature review was conducted using article databases and local journals. This process identified essential insights that were subsequently considered for the execution of the case study. The following section (Section 3) outlines these key insights.

2.2 Case Study

To directly assess the significance of historic public spaces, the "Praça do Coco" was selected as a case study. The study employed an architectural analysis and a questionnaire administered both online via Google Forms and in person.

The analysis involved creating systematic sketches based on information gathered via Google Earth and on-site visits. This comprehensive approach encompassed typology, edges, functions, and content of the PS.

The questionnaire consisted of three main sections: the first section (section A) aimed to gather statistical data such as age, occupation, and place of residence. The second one (section B) focused on exploring the relationship between the respondents and the Barão Geraldo district, assessing whether the district embodies a sense of community. And the third one (section C) aimed to identify and describe the respondents' perceptions and connections to the "Praça do Coco," examining aspects such as the community's perception of the space, primary activities, and frequency of visitation.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Literature Review: Story of Barão Geraldo

Barão Geraldo began in the second decade of the 20th century when several Italian, Portuguese, and Lebanese immigrants bought small farms from the Italian milkman Plínio Aveniente next to the "Barão Geraldo Station" of the extinct Funilense Railroad. They built a rural neighborhood based on polyculture and self-sufficiency. Up until then, all the land sold by Plínio belonged to Fazenda Rio das Pedras, which, at that time, belonged to the company "Viúva Barbosa & Filhos" [3].

The railroad of the Funilense Agricultural Rail Company was initiated in 1890 and financed by the government and the farmers of the Southern Brazilian Company to connect Campinas to the Ester Mill and to a colonial nucleus later named "Colonial Nucleus Campos Sales" to streamline the transportation of sugarcane from the Funil Farm of José Guatemozin Nogueira and the cereals produced in the region. After many years of difficulties and negotiations, Funilense was inaugurated on September 18, 1899, with its final station at the Ester Mill under the name "Barão Geraldo de Rezende" (which gave rise to the current

municipality of Cosmópolis)[4].

Situated between two old coffee and sugarcane farms (Rio das Pedras and Santa Genebra), the rural neighborhood became known as "Barão Geraldo" because it centered around the station that was inaugurated in 1908 with that name. It also included a chapel, a football field, and several shops - all neighboring the station - where its residents, in coexistence, began to build a local identity [4].

In the next image we can see both the farms: Rio das Pedras and Santa Genebra and the development of streets and the district in the left is Barão Geraldo.



Fig. 1 - Google Maps image of farm Rio das Pedras and of farm Santa Genebra

3.2 Analysis of the Public Space (PS)

Initially, due to the unavailability of older maps and historical data, it was not possible to locate the historical core of the former village. Nevertheless, the chosen PS, called Praça do Coco, was analyzed in its entirety as the current PS. This decision was based on the rural character of the public space, as well as its popularity among Barão Geraldo's residents, who view Praça do Coco as a historical center and landmark.

Afterwards, it is crucial to define the typology of the public space (PS) and its fundamental shape. To aid in visualizing the urban features, a sketch was created using simplified base maps, including Google Earth and Google Maps. As illustrated below, the selected area, known as "Praça do Coco," is a rectangular square with an elongated width. Therefore, a yellow highlight has been added to emphasize its basic shape.

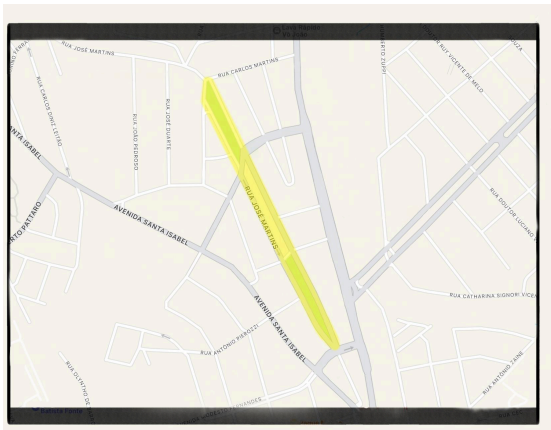


Fig. 2 - Basic Shape of the PS

The entire public space is divided into three main sections, with the well-known "Praça do Coco" comprising just the first upper portion. The remaining two sections are primarily utilized for walks and running, but do not typically accommodate events such as fairs and other activities.

Following the initial examination, an analysis was conducted to identify the boundaries of the public space, which may be defined by buildings, fences, dense tree lines, or other structures. In this case, the barrier delineating the PS from surrounding areas consists primarily of adjacent buildings and tree lines. Consequently, the subsequent map illustrates the results of this analysis, where the end of the yellow highlight delimitates the borders.



Fig. 3 - Edges of the PS

To determine the volume of PS, the chosen approach involved describing its edges. The primary objective was to compare the historical and current formations of the PS. However, At the outset, buildings were identified as a significant factor, particularly due to the presence of family house garages constructed with solid stonewalls, which define the PS boundaries. These structures typically consist of one floor and feature either straight (hip) roofs or gable roofs. The visible surrounding buildings serve various functions, as illustrated in the following map (fig.5), where black represents housing, pink stands for the commercial amenities and red for the public amenities (which are numbered) as Fig. 6 shows.



Fig. 4 - Edges of the PS

Tab. 1 - Meaning of the numbers of Fig. 5.

Number	Element
1	Church
2	District Administrative Building
3	Public school
4	Church



Fig. 5 - In the right, "Praça do coco"; Photograph delimiting the edge of the PS. Source: Author's photograph.

Furthermore, an analysis of the content within the public space was conducted. Primarily, no water features were observed, and there were no public transportation stops present (but there is one just around the corner, about 50 meters of distance). However, all other elements were outlined in the following sketch.



Fig. 6 - Content of the PS

Tab. 1 - Meaning of the numbers of Fig. 7.

Number	Element
1	Rock Pathway
2	"Coco fair"
3	Bathroom Area
4	Historic monuments
5	Playground
6	Restaurant
7	Wooden Pathway

The PS featured a pedestrian walkway (in the sketch represented by the grey outline) extending throughout the entire square, constructed of rocks, as depicted in Fig. 8. Moving deeper into the area, a small wooden pathway adjacent to the restaurant is visible, as illustrated in Fig.9.



Fig. 7 - Pedestrian rock walkway. Source: Author's photograph.



Fig. 8 - Wooden pathway. Source: Author's photograph.

As for the playground, it is one of the main used areas of the square, as it is shown in Fig.8.



Fig. 9 - Playground being actively used. Source: Author's photograph.

The restaurant is a popular spot among locals, offering the renowned "Água de coco" (Coconut Water), fittingly in line with the square's name, along with a variety of other beverages and appetizers.



Fig. 10 - Restaurant. Source: Author's photograph.

The square features several informative historic monuments that tell the story of Barão Geraldo and Praça do Coco.



Fig. 11 - Historical bench with informative poster telling the story of a local myth called “O boi falô”. Source: Author’s photograph.

Moreover, the PS includes a meticulously maintained bathroom area, offering both male and female options.



Fig. 12- Bathroom area. Source: Author’s photograph.

Finally, the onsite visit provided various insights into the significance of the place. For instance, every Saturday, a city fair takes place at Praça do Coco, fostering a highly immersive experience and a lively atmosphere for the community.



Fig. 13 - Saturday “Art and Culture” district fair event. Source: Author’s photograph.

This fair features performances by local singers, numerous food stalls, and showcases of craftsmanship. It is considered one of the main events of Barão Geraldo.

3.3 Questionnaire Analysis

In summary, the questionnaire yielded a total of 14 responses, with 13 submitted online and only one via paper format. This presented a challenge during the research phase, as there was notable resistance to participating in the survey, despite the significance of the topic. Visitors to the area were primarily families enjoying their weekends or individuals out for a leisurely stroll, contributing to the preference for the online format over in-person interviews.

Nonetheless, the responses obtained offered sufficient insight to provide a general overview. In section A, it was observed that the majority of visitors were young adults aged between 20 and 29, predominantly students or entrepreneurs, and residents of the Barao Geraldo district.

As for section B, it highlighted a distinct interest among residents in visiting local universities and the “Praca do Coco,” indicating an unbiased interest and affection towards the space, since the public space had not been mentioned in the online forms yet. While many respondents were unaware of the historical origins of Barao Geraldo, they perceived the district to possess an urban-village character. Notably, the Coconut Square was mentioned more than five times as a personal point of reference, underscoring its significance to the community.

Regarding Section C, the public space (PS) exhibited a generational tradition of visitation, with a high rate of attendance by community members spending more than one hour per visit. Additionally, this section yielded several noteworthy pieces of information, which are detailed in the following tables.

Tab. 2 - Three most common activities in Praça do Coco.

Activity	Frequency
Walk through it to get to an establishment	76,9%
Meet with friends	69,2%
Cultural events	53,8%

This initial table highlights the main reasons for utilizing the square, emphasizing its primary functions as a gathering space and a thoroughfare to nearby establishments.

Tab. 3 - Three points that would increase visitation rate.

Activity	Frequency
More events (especially during the week)	61,5%
More free time	61,5%
More comfort when walking (high quality sidewalks, more pedestrians pathways)	61,5%

Tab. 4- Three most important public space qualities in the point of view of the interviewees.

Activity	Frequency
Fosters cultural and community events	69,2%
Flexibility of use	61,5%
Emotional bonds	61,5%

Combining the insights from Tables 2 and 3, it can be inferred that strategies to enhance the visitation rate include hosting additional events and investing in improved pathways for enhanced walking comfort.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of Brazil's rapid urban growth alongside the erosion of cultural identity and public spaces underscores the critical need for cultural preservation within metropolitan cities.

Through a literature review and a focused case study in Campinas, it has become evident that the preservation of rural character of public spaces within original settlements, such as Barao Geraldo, holds immense significance. This preservation not only enhances the city's cultural identity but also contributes significantly to the residents' quality of life. The literature review supported the assertion

that urbanization often leads to the neglect of cultural heritage, while the case study in Campinas provided tangible evidence of the importance of preserving public spaces with rural, village like character for maintaining cultural identity.

Therefore, initiatives aimed at preserving public spaces in rapidly urbanizing areas are essential for safeguarding cultural heritage and ensuring the well-being of urban communities. As urbanization continues to shape the landscape of cities worldwide, it is imperative that policymakers, urban planners, and communities alike prioritize the preservation of public spaces to maintain the unique cultural fabric that defines these urban environments.

5. Acknowledgement

In this section, it is important to express gratitude to Ing. arch Dušana Andrášová for her invaluable guidance and patience during the development of this research paper. Her willingness to share her unpublished work that served as the foundation upon which we built our research methods, was fundamental. Additionally, appreciation goes to my colleague in the remote program, Pedro Bueno, for his proactive and supportive contributions.

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