

**Historical Site Teresinense: the production of Cícero Ferraz and the new  
centrality of Av. Frei Serafim**

**Camila Soares de Figueiredo**

Mestranda, UFC, Brasil  
camilafigueiredo@alu.ufc.br

## SUMMARY

Architecture is inevitably involved in the most diverse processes that determine urban dynamics, and, therefore, it is important to contextualize it, understanding its heritage relevance, as well as the historical, cultural and urban value of the place where it is built. This article seeks, therefore, to build a panorama that links the urban evolution of the city of Teresina to the work of engineer Cícero Ferraz de Sousa Martins, who stands out as a relevant sample of the architecture produced during the first half of the 20th century in the capital of Piauí. This relationship is structured in the study of Avenida Frei Serafim, which houses a large part of this engineer's productions and whose construction represents, for Teresina, a milestone in its urbanization, giving the city a centrality independent of its initial site. Therefore, the methodology used is based on bibliographic research and data collection in public collections and virtual repositories, especially regarding the particularities of Avenida Frei Serafim and the productions of Cícero Ferraz. Thus, the research develops from the urban evolution of the city to the construction of the public place in question, emphasizing its consolidation as part of the historic urban site. Then, there is an articulation between different urban scales, through the construction-lot connection, as well as an analysis of the potential of this avenue as a "timeline" regarding the architectural development of the capital. Therefore, the work strives to reinforce the inseparability between architecture and urbanism while also ratifying the urgency that must be had in overcoming superficial and strictly formal diagnoses in this field.

**KEYWORDS:** Urban historic site. Urban evolution. Frei Serafim Avenue.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The city of Teresina was founded in the year of 1852, as a planned capital, which arose with the purpose to fill the political and economic gaps left by the previous one, Oeiras (FAÇANHA, 1998). Despite not being part of Teresina's initial site, since the city originated by the margins of Parnaíba river, back in the 19th century, Frei Serafim Avenue had an important role in its urban evolution, taking what can be called "new centrality". The first decades of the 20th century, with the ending of the first centenary of the new capital, were determinant for the consolidation of this location as one of the main urban and architectural landmarks in the city, where would be located some of the main architectonic productions of the time, like the buildings projected by the engineer Cícero Ferraz de Sousa Martins.

The representative building of this avenue might suggest that the ways to build and to attach its buildings to the lot would be homogeneous and would follow the trend that were disseminating during that century in the rest of Brazil. However, the location presented examples with diverse deployments, in many cases, being influenced by the most frequent patterns of the century, while in other cases, were resulted from some incentive by the municipal codes that, directly and indirectly, would legislate over this. For this reason, inside the patrimonial perspective, and even though it was not part of the initial core of the city formation, the Frei Serafim Avenue can be understood as a relevant component of Teresina's historic center, and should be analyzed as such. It represents the materialization of historic, architectonic and urban values, besides aggregating meaning to the memory and social relations, becoming indispensable for the city's story to be told.

This article, therefore, refers to an architectonic and urban analysis of the city of Teresina, focusing on the insertion of the production of Cícero Ferraz in the urban context of the capital, especially in the Frei Serafim Avenue, overcoming strictly formal analysis of this relevant local heritage. The structure of the research was made by drawing an evolutionary line, which has its origin the initial occupation of the city, going through the determinations of the Saraiva's Plan and its consequences for the capital's urban layout, to the consolidation of the site in which

the architectonic production in study is located. From that, it is expected to analyze the meaning of such buildings inside this grid, understanding the block and lot dynamic they express. As a result, it is evaluated the relevance of such study for stimulating a reflection over the need of analyzing the architecture inside a broader perspective, overcoming formal and stylistic labels, and understanding it as one of many elements that composes the city, becoming inexplicable out of it.

### **2 OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of this study is to establish a connection between the process of the urban evolution of the city of Teresina and the buildings projected by the engineer Cícero Ferraz de Sousa Martins, aiming to recognize the dialectical relation that exists between them. In order to accomplish it, some specific objectives were established: to understand the dynamics that instigated the emergence of the city and its initial historic site; to analyze the new centrality attributed to the Frei Serafim Avenue because of its significance from the 20th century onwards; to highlight the relevance of Teresina's historical site as a local heritage; to understand the urban evolution of the city through the use of the lot by Cícero Ferraz; to investigate the Frei Serafim Avenue as a timeline in the urban evolution of the capital from the capability of its architecture to tell the story of the city.

### **3 METHODS**

About the methodological procedures, articulated according to the objectives mentioned before, the development of this analysis was divided in theoretical and practical assumptions. On the theoretical side, the study had its foundation, initially on bibliographical researches in books which address the relation between architectural work and urban structures, as well as in those which focus on the formation of the history of the local architecture, in addition to theses and dissertations which discuss this dynamic of urban expansion of the city of Teresina. In relation to the practical assumptions, it was made the gathering and analysis of specific data, documents, law's codes, and iconographic sources in public collections and virtual repositories, in order to analyze the relation between "making architecture" and the urban evolution of the capital.

### **4 RESULTS**

#### **4.1 The urban evolution from Teresina to Frei Serafim**

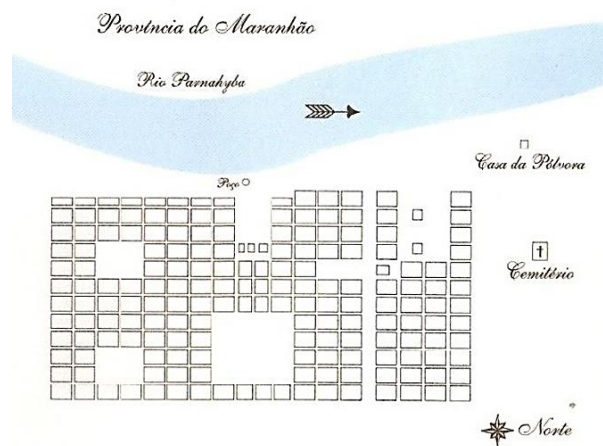
Teresina's urbanization process, similarly to its conception, was also attached to the presence of Parnaíba River, which represented an important connection between the northeastern coast and Brazilian mid north, in addition to providing a bigger competitiveness in relation to the Maranhão province, located on the opposite side of the river. Furthermore, its territory was cut by the Poti river, which could provide other types of connections, consolidating its role as the capital (FAÇANHA, 1998).

In relation to the choice of the site to the city establishment, some areas of the territory were considered with great potential. Nonetheless, the central region, known as Chapada do Corisco, was chosen by the province president, Antônio José Saraiva, who saw, in its flat topography and lower chance of flooding, favorable characteristics for the development

of a capital. From this choice, it was finally possible to draw an urban plan to the new province headquarters, known as Saraiva's Plan, which brought the first determinations of this new urban site. Among them is the definition of the main uses, which designates, for example, that the economic activities should be developed along the riverbank of Parnaíba river, taking into account the strategic character attributed to it (CHAVES, 1994).

As for the urban structure, Saraiva's proposal prioritized the orthogonality (Figure 1), justified by the bigger facility to project the roads, and to embed the buildings, whereas this drawing similar to a chessboard enables a space optimization on the land and an easy setting of the building in right angle (SILVA FILHO, 2007). The starting point of this plan was the main church, from which the streets would be distributed without hierarchy and with no contact with the Parnaíba river, except by the so-called Grande street, whose bigger size differentiated it from the rest. Moreover, despite being a planned city, with the clear delimitation of what would be urban area and expansion area, the urban growing of Teresina was not controlled, since, in addition to the occupation scheduled on the plan, there were also concomitant occupancy north and south on the territory, that were not foreseen in that initial moment (MONTEIRO, 1987)

Figure 1 - Saraiva's Plan Tracing



Source: <https://g1.globo.com/pi/piaui/noticia/2019/08/16/aniversario-de-teresina-o-surgimento-dos-bairros-e-a-expansao-da-cidade-ao-longo-dos-seus-167-anos.ghtml>

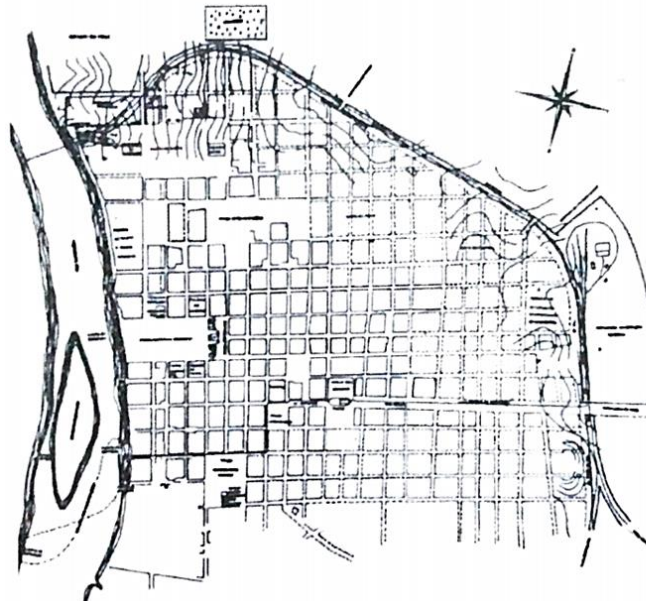
After the first five decades, the Saraiva's plan, which was only slightly modified when compared to the initial proposal, had to be adapted to new demands, especially regarding the adequacy to the new uses and to a bigger number of inhabitants. Thus, the first hundred blocks were expanded with ten additional units to the north, while a new road was opened to the south, demanding a terrain adaptation. That adjustment was necessary considering that, differently from the center and starting point of the city, the rest of the region received a series of natural components, which made necessary the execution of burials and excavations in order to allow such expansion (LIMA, 2002).

In addition to these scheduled expansions, many others were happening in an unofficial way, instigated by the dirt roads that were multiplying on the territory (FAÇANHA, 1998). Facing this inevitable expansion of the initial plan, a new territory known as Alto da Jurubeba was chosen to receive São Benedito's church, one of the most remarkable in Teresina's

history. Its conception took two decades and somehow was coupled with the capital's two rivers, since its implantation's proposal was to make the frontal part of the city face its starting point and also the Parnaíba river, which still held a big symbolic value to the city's structure. Meanwhile, behind the temple there was an informal road which the workers used to cross the Poti river in search for water and inputs for its construction, and ended up delimiting where Frei Serafim avenue would be located in the future, consolidated as the main avenue of the city in the middle of the 20th century (MATOS, 2011).

In the following decades, the city went through a series of transformations which included the construction of the Maranhão and Miguel Rosa avenues, in addition to the implantation of a railway, which somehow represented a barrier for the urban grid development, stimulations a bigger growth to the north and south (Figure 2). Afterward, the city's transformations started gaining more consistency with the modernization and beautification attempts which were disseminated in the end of the 1930s (FAÇANHA, 1998).

Figure 2- City's plan in 1922 with the railway under construction and the beginning of the outline of Frei Serafim avenue.



Source: MATOS, 2011.

It took almost one hundred years before Teresina's grid to reach the margins of Poti river, which was possible by the extension of the Frei Serafim avenue beyond Miguel Rosa avenue, during the 1930s and 1940s, breaking the physical barrier provided by the railway, and consolidating as an official urban grid road. Even though the urban grid was already developing spontaneously out of the determined by the Saraiva's Plan, in that moment, this significant location was settling down as a new development axis in the city, connecting the capital's central region and east zone, more specifically, to the Poti river (MATOS, 2017).

In the first decades of the 20th century the Frei Serafim Avenue was already standing out by its spatiality, and also caught attention by its more elaborated aesthetic, marked by its lightning and afforestation work. Furthermore, it represented an important occupation and urban development axis, which attributed to it a type of new centrality that moved from the

starting point of the city. This location took over the role of the capital's main public space, which before was the Marechal Deodoro square, and directed the urban grid evolution to the Poti river, enabling the later settlement across the river, which would consolidate as the most prosperous zone of Teresina in the following decades (MATOS, 2017).

### **4.2 Frei Serafim avenue and a new centrality**

As mentioned before, Frei Serafim avenue took on a certain significance from the 20th century in Teresina, not only for the spatial imposing that it presented at the time, but also for all the influence it exerted as an urban development axis. It makes clear that not only the buildings projected in this location materialized the relevance of this avenue to the city's evolution, since its urban influence extended to the following blocks, creating an urbanizing spot which surpassed the area two kilometers long and 40 meters wide.

The beginning of that century was decisive for the avenue consolidation, receiving lots of equipment that reaffirmed its centrality (Figure 3), and that started gaining bigger proportions in the following decades:

Only from the 30s and 40s onwards, better residences, the first bungalows, the great buildings (Convento dos Capuchinhos, Colégio das Irmãs, Hospital Getúlio Vargas, Seminário Sagrado Coração de Jesus, Estação Ferroviária) were built around the avenue. It was urbanized with paving, with the construction of the median strip, the installation of public lightning and with the beginning of afforestation with oiti tree; the urbanization coincided with the mayor Luís Pires Chaves' management, who excitedly called that location "city of dreams" (MATOS, 2011, p.14, our translation).

Over the decades, the location was continually equipped, some uses were modified while lands were being sold, constructions were being demolished and contemporary buildings were being inserted in anachronistic surroundings. Frei Serafim Avenue was being constantly invigorated, staying as a priority in the city's urban layout while its buildings assumed architectural features adequate to each era. This can be exemplified by the modernist wave that came with the 1970s and was concentrated in the end of the avenue. Therefore, it can be concluded that the avenue follows some type of timeline, telling a little about the capital's urban evolution that also reflects on the architectural styles gradually inserted in this location (MATOS, 2011).

### **4.3 Teresina's historical site**

As mentioned before, Teresina has in its initial core a fragment of significant importance for its consolidation and urban evolution, since the choices regarding this occupation had direct influence over the characteristics acquired by the city in the future decades. Nonetheless, it is impossible to restrict to this first blocks all the relevance of the urban structuring of the city, since there were other development axes also imperative to the consolidation of Teresina's grid, besides materializing important moments of the capital's history, creating an influence area that goes beyond the rigid limits of an initial occupation, as it is for Frei Serafim Avenue.

Considering that, it is important to highlight the existence of different perceptions about the definition of historic centers, which can lead to a strict path, associated to the formal

aspects of the city, or it can consider a broader patrimonial perspective, which makes use of the historical processes and the heterogeneity of these centers. In that context, the Petrópolis Letter brings a definition of Historical Site that enlightens this broader interpretation of heritage in the urban context, defining that:

The urban historical site - UHS - is part of a wide context that embrace the natural and built landscapes, as well as the experience of its population in a space of values produced in the past and in the present, in a dynamic process of transformation, having the new urban spaces being understood in its dimension of environmental token in formation (IPHAN, 1987, p. 1, our translation).

This heritage letter brings the cultural perspective to the analysis of these sites, understanding that the heritage built there is also the result of a social condition, which is essential to every preservationist consideration. Another topic of the Petrópolis Letter that can be directly related to the historical site of Teresina, is the defense of polyfunctionality, rejecting a preservation perspective which restrain it to certain uses, once understood the plurality and heterogeneity of these societies, and consequently, these sites (IPHAN, 1987).

In Teresina, the initial core of its occupation had a significant change of uses over the decades. In it, the imposing residences no longer had the function of home, and started receiving the commercial activities that grew progressively, as a reflection of its consolidation as a capital. On the other hand, the Frei Serafim Avenue, with its late centrality and dislocated from this first core, had the beginning of its history marked by the construction of imposing residences, which narrate the capital's history in every fragment built, but that also had their use modified in favor of economic demands, providing the coexistence between houses, commerce and services. Nonetheless, the loss of the initial character that many of these buildings had, especially because of the transformation of the historical center into a shopping center, does not limit its relevance as a preservation object, and much less the valuation of these areas of the city as historical sites.

This wider vision of what is urban heritage is concerned about exploring all historical constructions, as well as the evolution of these sites, extrapolating the superficial analysis that deal only with stylistic questions and with the urban conformation of a certain place. It is about an embracing and democratic preservation perspective, which exceeds the materiality of the heritage and involves all the construction trajectory of the city, considering how society got involved in this process. However, it brings as a controversy the possibility of creating certain ambiguities in the moment of defining what really is heritage and what is preservable (DUARTE JÚNIOR, 2012).

Continuing in this perspective of expanding looks regarding the comprehension of historical sites, the concept of "Urban environmental heritage" arises. It talks about a perspective that considers as heritage in the urban scale a set of objects that contribute to the construction of the city's image, but that are also valued and appropriated by society. Thus, it is important that these elements add some meaning to the ones who experience those spaces and have the ability to legitimate, integrate and change the urban environment, that is, the concept does not exist out of the social perspective, and because of that it can be in constant transformation (SOMEKH, 2017).

In this sense, it is possible to understand how the dynamic of Teresina's urban heritage can be perceived beyond the delimitation of blocks restricted to the city's initial core, seeing this

construction also as a continuous process, being conceived by experiences and memories of a society that keeps assigning values and meaning to the spaces during this whole evolutionary pace.

#### **4.4 The urban evolution through the lot: Cícero Ferraz in the Frei Serafim Avenue**

As it can be understood from this analysis of urban historical sites, the architectural practice has always been deeply connected to urbanism, making it impossible to explain it fully without it. This relation has never been static, it is always gaining new conformations as the cities were evolving and fitting in the new times. Therefore, Reis Filho (1970, p.9) introduces in his book this need of "pushing the limits of the analysis of purely formal problems, to relate the architecture to a wider frame, especially with the urban structures and the conditions of social and cultural evolution of Brazil".

That said, it is important to relate these diverse forms of making architecture to the structure of the cities where they have been inserted, explaining an interdependence relation that not only narrates the Brazilian architectural and urban history, but also the country's history. The way this production relates to the city is explained by the association between construction and lot, which takes on diverse features, adapting to the context in which they are inserted. This articulation ends up working as an important tool of analysis, that says a lot about how the cities and societies have been developing through the centuries.

Even though the avenue only appeared officially in the period of the first republic, it is still possible to identify the presence of the typical implantation from the beginning of the last century in the residence of Mrs. Elvina Ferraz Martins (Figure 3 - a), mother of the engineer Cícero Ferraz de Sousa Martins. It is an example whose projection occupies 303m<sup>2</sup> in a 1653m<sup>2</sup> lot, and that is characterized for presenting an alignment with the street, being implanted over the front limit of the lot, which refers to a certain heritage of traditional architecture. Furthermore, it presents the clearance of one of the side limits to the construction of a garden, materializing the first achievement in relation to the setbacks reached by the urban constructions.

Another type of implantation that can be observed in the Frei Serafim Avenue is the presence of a high basement aligned to the public highway, while one of its sides detaches from the lot's limits, with the presence of a front porch and side entrance. It is the residence of the manufacturer Álvaro Freire (Figure 3- b), also projected by the engineer Cícero Ferraz de Sousa Martins, constructed in a large lot, having an area of 805m<sup>2</sup>, while the construction has a projection of 257m<sup>2</sup>. Despite also being constructed in the mid-twentieth century, it brought a relation between the architecture and the lot that in the previous century would spread massively through Brazilian cities.

The third type of implantation that can be observed in Frei Serafim Avenue, on the other hand, is the one in which the construction is detached from the lot boundaries. This was a scheme significantly disseminated in Teresina in the 20th century, especially in the upscale residences that had big lands, being largely used by Cícero Ferraz de Sousa Martins in his projects, among which can be mentioned the bungalows of the governor Leônidas Melo (Figure 3 - c), lawyer Ney Ferraz, doctor Lineu Araújo, and also the building projected by Cícero to his family.



Figure 3 - a) Mrs. Elvina Ferraz Martins' residence; b) Manufacturer Álvaro Freire's residence; c) Governor Leônidas Melo's bungalow.



Source: André Gonçalves, 2016; FMC, 1998.

Teresina's municipal codes did not mention the mandatory of a specific type of implantation, bringing only little information that suggested a certain change in the way of thinking of construction inside the lot. In the 1912 code, there were determinations about the chamfers in the corner houses, as well as the mandatory beautiful looking railings, and also garden areas to those built out of the street alignment, which can be seen in the house projected by Cícero Ferraz to the Lobão family, outside the Frei Serafim Avenue, but still under its influence area (PIAUHY, 1912).

The 1939 code, on the other hand, does not bring such clear determinations, but a complete detachment in relation to the lot limits, that were an undeniable widespread model in the capital, due to inspiration in big centers. About that, Moreira (2016) still adds the consequent propagation of metallic railings in the architecture of the time, with the most varied designs, as a consequence of the presence of these setbacks taken by beautiful gardens, assuming a role of decoration and indication of wealth of the richer classes. And considering all the residences produced by Cícero Ferraz de Sousa Martins, only the residence of the businessman João Carvalho, recently demolished, was built on the limits of the sides of the lot, despite presenting a considerable frontal setback.

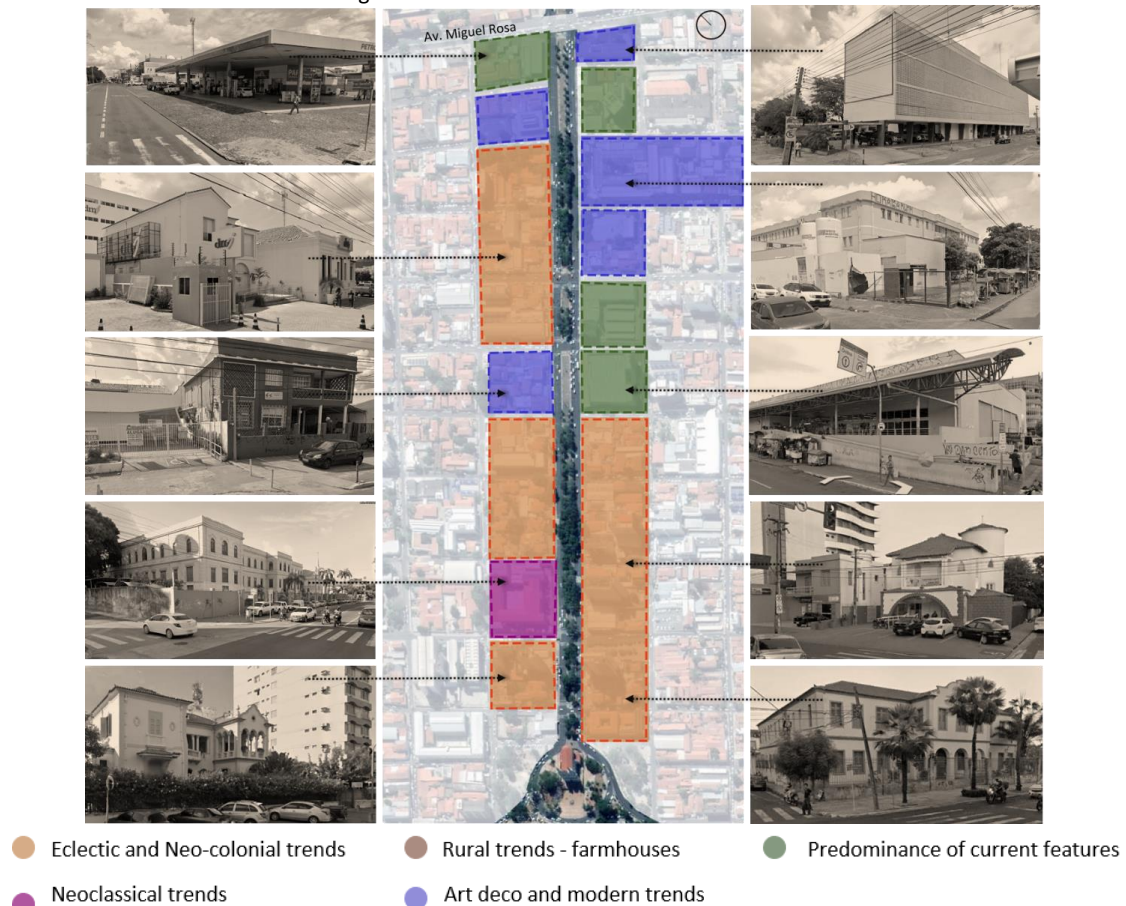
#### 4.5 Frei Serafim Avenue as a timeline

As seen, the Frei Serafim Avenue represents an important mark in Teresina's urban evolution, materializing a tireless desire of modernization that spread throughout the city. Moreover, the location also is the place of important examples of Teresina's architecture, bringing over many blocks, a wide range of styles and ways to build, that narrate a little of the capital's history. In order to analyze it better, it is possible to divide the avenue in two parts, the first one, starting at São Benedito church, which is considered its starting point, up to the proximities of the Miguel Rosa avenue, while the second part begins in the blocks next to this intersection and goes until the Juscelino Kubitschek bridge, that connects the Frei Serafim to the east side of city.

The first segment, where the avenue started being built, is predominantly marked by eclectic and Neo-colonial buildings, which were massively spread through the capital in the first half of the 20th century. Many of them were idealized by the engineer Cícero Ferraz de Sousa Martins, and originated from the wishes of a rising elite (Figure 4). It is also noticeable the presence of a neoclassical building, where works until today a Jesuit school, opened in 1906,

even before the construction of the avenue. From the middle to the end of this first segment it is possible to notice more frequently the presence of modern buildings, or follower of the art deco trend, like the Hospital Getúlio Vargas, also projected by Cícero Ferraz. Moreover, it is noticeable that the presence of more recent works, which occupied empty lands or replaced old buildings that were demolished, is less frequent in this first stage, showing how the eclectic and Neo-colonial character is somehow more valued, including the listing of their facades by the municipal legislation.

Figure 4 - First section of Frei Serafim avenue.

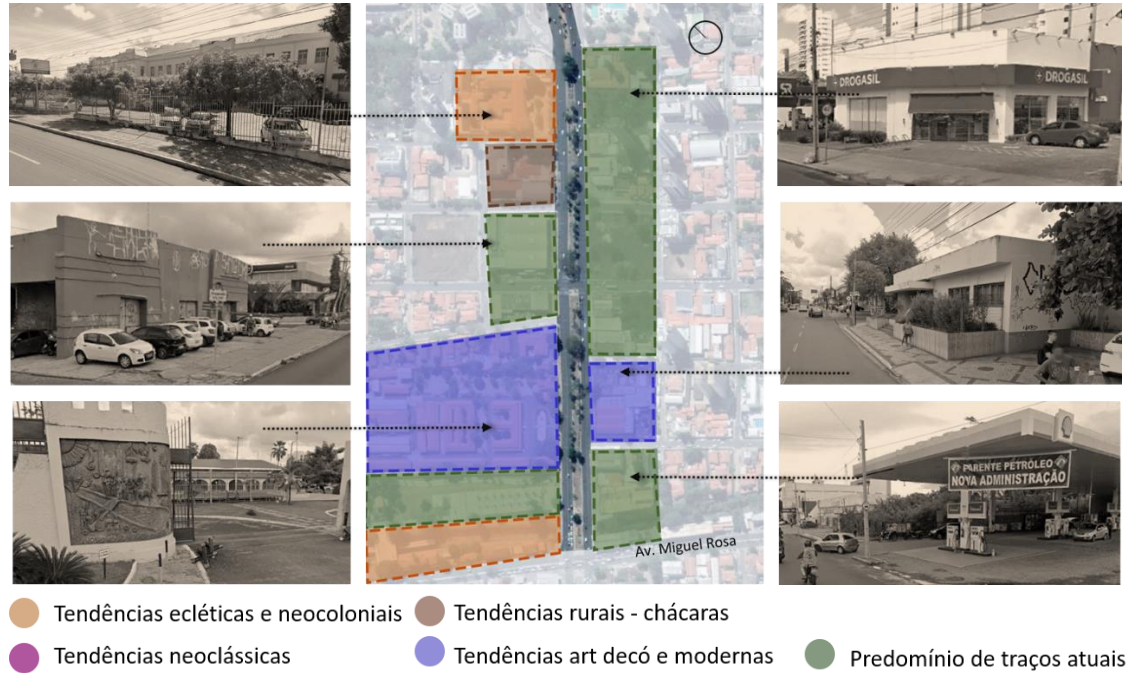


Source: Adaptation from Google Earth, 2021.

On the second segment, which was built later, from the 1950s, few buildings presented traditional architecture features, which can be attributed to the modernist trend, popular at the time (Figure 5). Considering that, there is a justification for the strong growth of modern architecture in this segment, accompanied by numerous examples of an architecture with more up-to-date features, occupying lots where demolished buildings were located. The only more traditional buildings in this stage relate to institutional uses, that aimed at a greater imposing in the choice of these styles, even if at a time much later than their local agitation. It is interesting to reflect about this bigger diffusion of current features, and even more simplified, in this second part of the avenue, whereas it was originated from a more urgent occupation, without many architectonic tools, besides shedding light over the discussion over the modern architecture of

the city not being seen as the same heritage weight as the buildings from early 20th century, what facilitates its demolition in favor of contemporary uses (MATOS, 2011).

Figure 5 - Second section of Frei Serafim avenue.



Source: Adaptation from Google Earth, 2021.

## 5 DISCUSSION

In the urban cultural heritage perspective, this analysis tried to build a panorama regarding the urban development of Teresina, with the purpose of contextualize Cícero Ferraz de Sousa Martins' production and the site where it is located, exploring some relevant topics to the structuring of this theme. It started from the city's urban evolution to the construction of the Frei Serafim avenue, followed by the consolidation of this avenue as part of the capital's historical urban site, and by reflections on this concept applied to Piauí's capital. Associated with that, an analysis was developed on the link between architecture and urbanism, through the construction-lot connection, and on the role of this location as a timeline of the capital's history, which proves the relevance of this historical site beyond the formal aspects.

Considering that, it is possible to understand the relevance of Cícero Ferraz' production to the consolidation of Frei Serafim avenue as part of Teresina's historical site, since his architecture contributed for this location to be able to narrate, in a didactic way, part of the capital's history, and become an imperative element in its evolution. On the other hand, the way this avenue developed, and consolidated as a strategic axis to Teresina's structuring, was also essential for this collection to be productive. Therefore, all of this shows the unity between architecture and urbanism, and the impossibility to explain one without the other.

Moreover, the analysis of the link of these productions within the lot and the city also reinforces the urgency to overcome superficial diagnoses and strictly formal about architecture, while the historical site concept applied to Teresina and to the Frei Serafim avenue shows the relevance of widen the view in urban analysis, besides incorporate social factors as

indispensable in the construction of any diagnose related to the city. Finally, it is worth mentioning the need to instigate this type of reflection about cities, and about their historical sites, for a better comprehension of the elements that constitute it, and to make clear the need to value, document and preserve this heritage and all the stories that it can narrate.

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