Walking as an intervention: apprehensions of the railway in Bauru-SP

Lucas do Nascimento Souza
Master, São Paulo State University, Brazil.
arqlucasnascimento@gmail.com

Evandro Fiorin
Assistant Professor, São Paulo State University, Brazil.
evandrofiorn@gmail.com

Laís da Silva Rodrigues
Master’s student, São Paulo State University, Brazil.
laissrodrigues3@gmail.com
SUMMARY
How to analyze urban areas in the contemporary modern city upon the plurality of forms of appropriation of public spaces? This paper seeks to contribute to qualitative studies on urban perception through the method of cartography. Thus, this writing does not deal with the search for information or data collection, but with the immersion in the ongoing process present in the territory of the old railway bed in the city of Bauru-SP. The text highlights a research practice little explored in this spatial cutout, which tends to contribute to the impact on urban perception and future interventions in this area, as the decanted sociospatial layers are revolved and an urban imaginary little explored is accessed through the development as a research modality.


INTRODUÇÃO
What theoretical and methodological criteria should the architect and urban planner follow when analyzing urban areas in the face of the transformations perceived in the contemporary city? How to describe or represent, from qualitative research, the desires and hardships of public spaces in our cities? In an attempt to validate a research modality that gives visibility to the collective imagination present in the urban stretch of the old railroad in the city of Bauru, this writing tends to contribute, in addition to expanding the debate on methods of qualitative analysis of urban spaces, as well. for the theoretical framework used in studies on urban perception, specifically in the context of the city of Bauru, from a research modality little explored in this urban context. In an attempt to answer the questions announced above, this work is divided into four points. The first one deals with the issues involved and makes a brief presentation of the urban context where the field experience will be carried out; the second addresses the methodological path traced and the third presents the data produced from the experience of walking as an aesthetic practice; and, finally, the fourth points out some considerations that do not intend to systematize or conclude the experience, but rather to launch possible directions about the explored urban context and some notes on the research modality used, the objective is to raise new reflections on its application, which may give visibility to the possibility of use for the analysis and singular interpretation of contemporary urban spaces.

The city of Bauru, located Midwest of São Paulo, has its railway bed as a testimony to the past of economic and social strength at the beginning of the 20th century. The rail transport that leveraged the city starts to decline after the second half of the century and has its debacle marked at the beginning of the 21st century. The railway buildings that originated in the city’s “golden age” are now mostly deprecated and underutilized. Parallel to the neglect of heritage, we have a vast railway bed that is configured by the junction of empty spaces, apart from the traditional city. No less pulsating, these spaces are off the path of proposals for improvements and urban interventions, but under the watchful eyes of the Others. If the path taken by locomotives carrying and bringing cargo and passengers through what had already been considered the largest railway junction in Latin America before could be considered a non-place1, it hasn’t been like that for a long time. “Imagine, 25 years ago this was quite different. We knew what time it was by the train whistle; we had the right times. After it stopped, it has

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1 “If a place can be defined as identity, relational and historical, a space that cannot be defined either as identity or as relational or as historical will define a non-place”. (Augé, 2002, p. 73)
gotten worse and worse, as you see it there”. The series of abandoned wagons in the middle of the rubble and high grass represents today the landscape of many residents of Jardim Santana, a neighborhood crossed by the railway. Further on, to the west, there is the remaining industrial heritage of the Antarctica Paulista Company, a brick chimney. Following, we arrive at the stretch which this essay focuses on, the spatial cutout of the railway bed in the center of the city. The area houses heritage buildings that remain from the railway activity in the city, which currently has little use in cargo transport, serving mainly to transport fuel.

More than a product of the perception of space, the landscapes of the railway bed are testimonies of the social fabric in which man continuously intervenes. This research is based on the assumption of the inseparability of research and intervention, based on the fact that all research is intervention, as announced by Passos and Barros (2009). In this sense, we attribute walking as an aesthetic tool for interpreting the landscape, where, from this, it is possible to describe and modify spaces that reveal the need to be understood and given meanings, as defended by Careri (2013).

Walking proves to be useful to architecture as a cognitive and design instrument, as a means of recognize a geography within the chaos of the peripheres and as a means through which to invent new modalities of intervention in metropolitan public spaces, to research them, to make them visible. (CARERI, 2013, p. 32)

The nomadism present since the time of Abel, presented by Careri (2013), brings the experimentation and mapping of space through its path in between the pastures, a characteristic similar to that perceived by the flâneur, described by Walter Benjamin “the one who still has fragments of the true historical experience and, by recognizing the distance that distances it from this experience, it represents the search for a current historical consciousness” (BIONDILLO, 2014, p. 9). “The flâneur pays attention to every detail of the streets and sees in them his source of inspiration, feeling 'a mysterious expression of the joy of the multiplication of the number’” (BENJAMIN, 1989, p. 187). Careri (2013) shows us that, given some passages through art history, the Dada route, the visit, passing through the surrealist wandering, is where the term “drift” appears, coined by Internacional Writer in the 1950s. Supported by psychogeography, the drift aims to explore the psychic effects produced in the individual given the urban context in which he is inserted. Thus, our starting point presupposes these experiences, but does not have specific guidelines or preconceived formulas, as the cartographic method does not draw work plans, it is constituted at the moment when the idea of researching begins. This direction is composed of clues, trails to be followed, gaps that sharpen our gaze and our senses, leading us to a possibility of perceiving and interacting with space as a unique form of interpretation. As formulated by Deleuze and Guattari (1995), cartography does not deal with the representation of objects, but with the monitoring of processes, therefore, a non-definitive means. The research procedures adopted here are directly linked to the activation of several human sensory devices: vision, smell, touch and especially hearing, this being the most sensitive:

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2 Excerpt from an informal dialogue with a resident of Santana district, in the middle of one of the routes taken by the railway.

3 Caim and Abel, the first murder of humanity, treated in the work Walkscapes: walking as an aesthetic practice (CARERI, 2013).
the one to which we are most vulnerable and perhaps the most important when we zigzag through the train tracks. In such a way, the research modality that this writing seeks to give visibility to, meets the need for a more attentive look at the configurations that are intended to be implemented in our urban spaces, often emerged by the encouragement of agents that produce urban space, such as the public power, the private sector and the interests of the market, which, from real estate speculation, ruin the human character of spaces by creating autonomous and independent zones, which, indirectly, end up making spaces such as the railway bed, a great void. Some mishaps of the urban model of modern planning, influenced by the CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architecture), from the Charter of Athens, where we can cite Le Corbusier as one of the main exponents of rationality and sectored thinking in urbanism even in the first half from the 20th century, it goes against the grain of some aspects present in Bauru’s railway bed, such as the series of connections and interweaving of forces that emerge from space and reveal a rhizomatic structure, which does not close in on itself. Deleuze and Guattari (2007) expose the concept of rhizome in opposition to the hierarchical structure, which does not conform to points or positions, only lines – a perception in the middle, between the rails. The traces of these spaces, graffiti, places at the mercy of time, and many other aspects observed show the existence of multiple connections, which must be interpreted in their power and multiplicity. Within the limits of the study area dealt with here, we have the example of Rodrigues Alves Avenue, Bauru-SP, like so many others, brought from the Haussmannian urban ideal of the 19th century. A large channel created to transport production and cargo brought by the railroad. Brasília, the most polished example of modernist rationalism, also elucidates the panorama of road axes to the detriment of public spaces and people, not to mention squares and other places said to be designed for people. In such a way, this writing permeates the criticism of the modern model of urbanism for being in the opposite direction to the needs and anxieties perceived in the public spaces of our cities, especially those places on the margins of the old railway bed in Bauru.

OBJECTIVES

Promote the expansion of debate and visibility of qualitative studies on urban perception from cartography and walking as a research modality.

METODOLOGY

“It is not easy to see things through the middle, and not from top to bottom, from left to right or vice versa: try and you will see that everything changes” (DELEUZE and GUATTARI, 2007, p. 35). Nomadism is rhizomatic. The nomadic field is not apprehended by establishing a beginning, middle and end. The nomadic seizure takes place. This sense is present in the rhizome:

A rhizome neither begins nor ends, it is always found in the middle, between things, inter-being, intermezzo. The tree is a filiation, but the rhizome is an alliance. The tree imposes the verb “to be”, but the rhizome has as tissue the conjunction “and... and... and...”. There is in this conjunction enough force to shake and uproot the verb to be. Where are you going? Where do you come from? Where do you want
to go? These are useless questions. Making blank slate, starting or starting from scratch, looking for a beginning, or a foundation, imply a false conception of travel and movement. (Methodical, pedagogical, initiatory, symbolic...). (DELEUZE and GUATTARI, 2007, p. 37)

How to allow space to dominate us? Careri (2013, p. 80) is categorical in stating that "the path develops between traps and dangers, causing those who walk in a strong state of apprehension, in both meanings, of feeling fear and of learning". Perhaps the answer lies in walking. “The space presents itself as an active and pulsating subject, an autonomous producer of affections and relationships. It is a living organism, with its own character, an interlocutor who has mood swings and who can be visited to establish a reciprocal exchange” (CARERI, 2013, p. 39).

In this sense, we resume here that the research does not start when going to the field, nor does it have pre-established technical apparatus that will subsidize the exploration, as exploration itself is the path, so that the reciprocal process of interaction emerges with the place. It would not be possible to make use of the cartographic method without going into the field, nor describing any impressions whatsoever, even if looking back, as research is intrinsically linked to the practice of the route. “The support point is the experience understood as a know-how, that is, a knowledge that comes, that emerges from doing. This primacy of experience directs the work of researching from know-how to make-know-how, from knowledge in experience to the experience of knowing. There is the methodological “path”” (PASSOS and BARROS, 2015, p. 17).

Data production occurs right at the beginning of field research, which already disfigures a simple data collection, as this process permeates all stages of the research, from analysis, treatment, to publication of results, according to Passos and Kastrup (2015).

This route has been postponed several times. Fear and insecurity meant that the approach to the unknown was delayed. How to get in there? How to get through that dangerous stretch? The answer has always been in place. There, and at the same time, here, inside us. We just needed to rescue it from within, recognize it as scientific data and part of the experience. The membrane had to be ripped open. We already knew that we had to get rid of the moorings. But it is not easy. This work deals, above all, with the report of anguished researchers, anxious for the rupture of a stigma left behind by the curricular matrices themselves over years of studies. That space has life. It has action. Has reaction. There are people. It has a hole. And house. It’s shelter. It’s resistance. The insistence of architecture courses on crowding an imported linear park and putting on a sign “I am Bauru” blinded anyone who was there. A mere wish, also imported, from the so-called contemporary post-modernist architects who roam the interior of São Paulo. Break.

Well, here is this data, partially reproduced by me. I say partially because neither writing nor recording nor drawings can represent them. Nor should they, and I don’t want to either. It’s not the goal. The hardest thing happened. It was necessary to tear this membrane and allow me to fall. Not waiting, not provoking, but being susceptible to. Hole.
Men’s physical presence in an unmapped space – and the variation in the perceptions they receive when crossing it – is a way of transforming the landscape, which, although it leaves no tangible signs, culturally modifies the meaning of the way of the space, and consequently, the space itself, turning it into a place. Walking produces places. (CARERI, 2013, p. 51)

Using Careri’s (2013) statements, that walking produces places, and, as explained at the beginning of this paper, that, by assuming that we intervene in space when researching, it is worth emphasizing how the process of production of knowledge and subjectivity takes place. With the method it is worked, assuming different postures during the research until reaching the desired end result. Hence the importance of the distinction between research method and modality.

Defending that all research is intervention requires the cartographer to dive into the plane of experience, where knowing and doing become inseparable, preventing any pretension to neutrality or even supposition of a knowing subject and object prior to the relationship that links them. Launched on an implicational level, the terms of the knowledge production relationship, more than articulated, are constituted there. Knowing is, therefore, doing, creating a reality of oneself and the world, which has political consequences. When we are no longer content with the mere representation of the object, when we bet that all knowledge is a transformation of reality, the research process gains a complexity that forces us to push the limits of our methodological procedures. The method, thus, reverses its meaning, giving primacy to the path that is being traced without predetermined determinations or prescriptions. There are always methodological clues and the ethical-political direction that evaluates the effects of experience (of knowing, researching, practicing, etc.) in order to extract the necessary deviations from the process of creation. (PASSOS and BARROS, 2015, p. 30, emphasis added)

The rhizome, described by Deleuze and Guattari, is not only identified in the structure of acting forces, in the multiple entrances of the iron bed, but also in the way of interpretation and production of space. It is also a tool for reproducing the subjectivities apprehended in space, through which we try to outline the aesthetic form to which we are affected. “The question is to produce the unconscious and, with it, new statements, other desires: the rhizome is this production of the unconscious itself”. (Deleuze and Guattari, 2007, p. 28).

The area of the Bauru railroad shelters subaltern subjectivities and plural expressions of society. It can also be read as a Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ)⁴, which Bey (2004) does not define, but casts “exploratory beams” on a place, physical or not, as a tactic, perception and

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practice of freedom and political strategy. Bauru’s iron bed is a possible TAZ, as it has a free
dynamic, with the possibility of anarchist use, a dynamic that has not yet been reached by the
envelope of the powers of the contemporary city, and which, if equipped at the service of the
State and organizations, has the possibility of reappearing in other places, as it is not a definition
but a tactic, a reality that is not apprehended by the rigid cartography of political and closed
maps. “When the rhizome is closed, arborified, it’s over, nothing more passes from desire;
because it is always by rhizome that desire moves and is produced”. (DELEUZE and GUATTARI,
2007, p. 23). Hence the need for cartography as a unique modality of space exploration.

The aim is, therefore, to experience estrangement. Almost as an ethnographer, the
cartographer can and should get in touch with the Other, allow the Other to be part of his space
perception process, as an agent of that place. It is giving up our body, our senses and our places
to Others. It is putting yourself in the place of the itinerant, the wanderer, the one who carries
the nomad’s experiences within himself. It is to allow the space, just like that which receives the
manifestations of Others, to express in us its fears, its anxieties, its desires. This is far from the
technical script for the analysis of urban spaces.

RESULTS

When we proposed to follow this process, we supported ourselves with some artifacts
that could allow us to revolve the experience, that is, to explain it and demonstrate it after the
phenomenon of the journey, without defining this stage as a completed data collection, but
rather a production of data, unfinished, of course. The possibility of returning to the experience
aims to raise reflections and achieve the proposed objective, contribute to qualitative research
around underexplored methodologies, in the case of Bauru, enabling new connections and the
tracing of new perspectives for this space. We equipped ourselves with a popular model cell
phone with a camera good enough for the records (important to note that there was no data
connection on the device, we were not connected to the internet so there would be no
interference from outside the experience). In addition to the cell phone, we also carry a
notebook, our field diary⁵, already used for other purposes, in order to record thoughts, actions
or any other phenomenon that emerged from space. Accompanied by the notebook, an Indian
ink pen.

[...] the researcher is, therefore, included in the research process and
gives himself back, he too, in the operation of analyzing the
implications. The registration of research work thus gains the function
of a device, not exactly to conclude the work or present its final results,
but as a trigger for research developments”. (BARROS and PASSOS,
2015, p. 173)

It is important to highlight that the narrative of the data produced in this work is not
made through their representations or writings, but is found in the route taken through the
railway tracks, in the central station and in the workshops. The idea of using the terms
“membrane, rupture and hole” is an allusion to the overcome difficulties related to the process

⁵ The whole field journal can be accessed virtually. Available at:<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gf9aHR9xCR15XyP2Df0RGzsQWzpS0Slg/view?usp=sharing>.
of immersion in the research modality, and, consequently, to the path to be taken. Areas recognized as dangerous should be accessed, membranes should be ripped open. Concepts and prejudices should be redefined, ruptured. And holes had to be overcome, or, they would serve as a gateway to an unknown world. Along the way, the sense of hole alternates between the characteristics of the ground and the portals we would have access to, such as Alice, who dives into the rabbit hole and starts to communicate with the animals, beings of that country.

Perspectives and reactions were registered in the field diary, in addition to photographic records, when the sense of vision was sharpened. Later, there was a combination of light beams that emerged from the space with some photographic records, where associations and connections emerged from the visualized image that gave visibility to a series of interrelationships, the result of what was learned during the wandering through the area and its adjacencies.

Before starting the journey, some fears should be overcome. The encounter with the unknown ends up revealing dormant moods in us, a search for quick answers, and constantly dilated pupils. Careri is categorical when talking about walking in South America: “[...] it means facing many fears: fear of the city, fear of public space, fear of breaking the rules, fear of appropriating space, fear of going beyond barriers that are often non-existent and fear of other citizens, almost always perceived as potential enemies” (CARERI, 2013, p. 170, emphasis added).

Many things happen under the sun. In the iron bed of Bauru it is no different. This space on the margins of society houses many uses, a true confluence of other spaces interacting with each other, generating new spaces, new connections. The overlapping of layers is clear when we see the informal path, with trampled bush, overlapping the tracks. Above the two, tire tracks. The burned clothes evidence the bonfire that took place there. Foucault (2009) describes this overlapping of spaces within other spaces and how they relate to each other as heterotopy. “Heterotopia manages to superimpose, in a single real space, several spaces, several places that by themselves would be incompatible”. (FOUCAULT, 2009, p. 416).

Figure 1 - Mapping of the route taken

Source: Google maps modified by the authors. (2021)
Figure 2 refers to a photomontage elaborated from the perception of confluence and overlapping of different activities and spaces within the railway bed.

Figure 2 – Illustrative photomontage of heterotopia

In such a way, the sense of heterotopia, described by Foucault (2009), is present. The dynamics of the spiral movement that the concertina presents is beyond the announced representation. It connects to the reflective field that we, cartographers in action, enter, influenced by the spatial dynamics of the environment, as it affects us. The sharp and sharp blades penetrate the one who tries to exceed the limits. Property security or segregation? Whose heritage? For whom? What's on one side that can't be connected to the other? The blades, before tearing, issue an alert: entry is prohibited. The station and the entire central station building are surrounded by fences, while barbed wire on the walls...

In the heart of the concertina we have the cube, which is the train station. The wiring of the electrical system throws, at the feet of the cube, repetitive... perspectives. Through the crossing with the spiral of the concertina, it creates a veritable checkered mesh, which alternates accommodating sometimes daylight and sometimes graffiti: present elements that intersperse. Light is always present. At least in this there is no segregation: the sun burns the barren spaces of the iron bed just as it burns the heights of the city. The American cultural industry is present in the immense panel that are the walls below the concertina, represented in a sublime graffiti of the protagonist of the Stranger Things series. The first moment our eyes catch the graffiti, we are led to look towards Eleven's watchful eyes, and we find ourselves meters away from more graffiti, political expressions. The connection that the graffiti eyes create is divine, it speaks for itself. It invites us to be attentive. Watch out! This is the message. Frightened, both eyes pass messages. Farther along a street vendor, yes, street vendor. That's what people call it here. "It's only a street vendor when there's an incident with the police. When it comes out in the newspaper". Another cultural import: we also consume Mexican products. El Chavo del Ocho (1971), as it is recognized in Mexico, its country of origin, is also there in the center of Bauru, there, leaning against the iron bed. Stuffed with silicone fiber, Chiquinha, Jaiminho postman and

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6 Information obtained through an informal conversation with the street vendor.
Chapolin Colorado are bagged. It is beautiful to see how our culture has perpetuated a Roberto Gomes Bolaños classic since 1984, when he arrived in Brazil. It is difficult for anyone not affected by these graffiti, because Chaves is linked to the affective memory of many generations. And it doesn’t stop there⁷. All of this is caught in the sometimes centripetal and sometimes centrifugal movement of the concertina. If we slowly analyze the shapes, we see that the concertina rotates both clockwise and counterclockwise, then it depends on who sees it. Anyway, it involves everything present there, from the blue door of the railway station, on the left, to the hotel heritage, on the right, passing through the clouds, of course, inseparable, tearing the Bolaños characters, Eleven, the sunlight, the station, cars, buses, and everything else there. It’s all one thing, after all, the concertina spiral connects everything. Here we approach the meaning of empty space attributed by Careri (2013), as those nomadic spaces of the city, which harbor realities far from the modern rationalism of city planning and which still connects to their values, and therefore, there are associations between them.

In this sense, Bauru’s iron bed can be considered a crisis heterotopia, as formulated by Foucault (2009), as it is a place for the leftovers of society, that is, for a portion of the population that are, in relation to the society, in a crisis situation: homeless, drug users, wanderers. But the concept of diversion heterotopia is also perceived: abandoned wagons are housing. Both inside and below, the space between the tracks and the car. The viaducts and bridges that overlap the iron bed cover immense areas that accommodate the homeless. Figure 3 is another illustration of the heterotopia present in the space of the iron bed.

Figure 3 – Photomontage of overlapping temporalities and connections

Source: prepared by the authors (2021)

In the background, we have the central train station, in Art Deco style, 1940s, recalling the past of economic triumph of the city. Then, in the background, we have part of the building of the National Social Security Institute (INSS), from the 1970s, representing the modern architecture that was spreading late in the city. Below, on the bridge of R. Azarias Leite,

⁷ There is at least one more panel of Chaves in Bauru, in Panorama district. More than street art, these anonymous arts represent our city, our state, our country, our culture.
inscriptions and messages of their own order. In the foreground, a unit of Caixa Econômica Federal, from the 2000s, rests on the rails like a dropped box, a reference to the way in which contemporary architecture relates to the old iron bed. “Cities must have icons. Libraries, hospitals, museums. In 100 years people will see and say: What is this? And they will think: It's art”. The phrase by architect Frank Gehry demonstrates an excessive concern with the architectural icons of contemporary cities and their plasticity. Familiar aspect of the star system.

The fence, present throughout the route, reinforcing segregation, says where access is allowed and where it is not. Sketches of a rhizomatic structure pervade all plans, from today to Art Deco architecture.

Figure 4 brings the cartography originating from the route taken for this work and others carried out previously, being part of a broader research still unfinished. Cognitive mapping reveals itself as a singular expression within the research modality delimited here.

Thus, from the walk, our imagination is revolved and the collective imagination acts on us, raising memories, thoughts, desires, impressions and aspects that, when represented, generate cartography. “The aim of cartography is to draw the network of forces to which the object or phenomenon in question is connected” (BARROS and KASTRUP, 2015, p. 57).

At the heart of the cartography we have the junction of the Railroad of Sorocaba, the Brazilian north-west Railroad and São Paulo railroad Inc.. The base of the cartography is a handmade map, the gray represents the urban limit and the shades of red become more vivid according to the hierarchy, from the point of view of the railway: main accesses and transpositions, highways and railroad. From the apprehension carried out in space, some aspects that resemble a rhizomatic structure can be represented (figure 5):

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Figure 4 – Cartography of the railway

![Cartography of the railway](image)

Source: Elaborado pelos autores (2021)

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8 A group of contemporary architects who reproduce an architectural language aimed at the spectacle and disregard users, as well as the surroundings. The popularly known “designer architecture”.
Figure 5 – Observed rhizomatic structure

Source: Authors (2021)

Here we leave the records of the exploration of these wild spaces, so full of meaning and life. Guattari (1996) states that the constituent parts of the creation of a philosophical work, in his case, depend on several variables that are not reproducible. In this sense, and considering the singularity with which we seek to aesthetically represent the subjective experience through Bauru’s iron bed, I leave here in explicit reticence, the request for continuity of exploration through this space that allows for infinite arrangements and connections...

CONCLUSION

This essay does not end here. We hope that it will contribute to the debate on cartography as a research method and increase the visibility of other research modalities on urban perception, and, in addition, it will be a bridge for other works to be developed in the urban context of our public spaces, especially in Bauru. By adopting walking as an aesthetic technique for interpreting the landscape, this paper intends to expand the possibilities of qualitative research, committing to fulfill its scientific role without any methodological harm, as it develops far from the traditional methodology of the practical framework of modern science.

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