

**When roads challenge futures: first reflections about mobility in the city  
of José Bonifácio (SP)<sup>1</sup>**

**Marcelo de Trói**

Ph.D. in Culture and Society, coordinator of the research line Bodies  
, Cities and Territorialities Dissidents in the Center for Research and Extension in Cultures,  
Gender, and Sexualities (NuCuS) at the Federal University of Bahia  
troimarcelo@gmail.com

**Weber Reis**

Actor, director, theater teacher,  
Master of Arts from the Art Institute of the State University of Campinas (Unicamp)  
weberreis@bol.com.br

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Based both on an observation job occurred from 2018 to 2021 and on informal conversations with mobile agents in José Bonifácio, a municipality in the countryside of São Paulo State, this text seeks to circumscribe a research field and to point out ways for future research on mobility. The text demonstrates how mobility, subjectivity, culture, and urban space work in a small city. We observed how some changes happened in the last decades regarding the ways of moving in this city, which resulted in lifestyle and culture changed, as well. Even without claiming to be definitive, we attempted to understand how the bicycle became the most popular mode of transportation in activity. Historical advantages regarding this mode can be used in order to build a more sustainable city in tune with the new demands of climate change.

**KEYWORDS:** Mobility. Culture. Cities.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

When it comes to the subject of mobility, there is no doubt that lives in metropolises are the most susceptible to severe problems regarding how they move around and are, in fact, worthy of researchers' attention. However, by failing to look at small cities, we miss essential aspects of Brazilian cities that deserve attention since 34% of the Brazilian population lives in cities with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants (IBGE, 2010). When analyzing research trends on small cities in Brazil, Orlando Moreira Júnior (2014) stated that, despite being minorities in urban studies, they have become more and more relevant within academic investigations.

What we witnessed in the first decade of the 21st century with the so-called "milagrinho brasileiro" (Brazilian little miracle) (CARVALHO, 2018), was a disorderly growth of cities, even the small ones. It is still a tradition in the complex process of Brazilian urbanization that produces city "outside the city", with peripheral expansion over rural areas, "eternally deprived of infrastructures, equipment and services that characterize urbanity" (ROLNIK, 2009, p. 33). The explosion of the speculative real estate market and the urban growth are reflected in "social disparities, inefficiency and great environmental degradation" (ROLNIK, KLINK, 2011, p. 90), conflicts in the dialectical relations between urbanity and rurality, relevant to think about mobility in these places.

This article was born as a partnership, walking together between 2018-2021 in José Bonifácio, a city located in the northwest of São Paulo state. In this strolling through the city, crossing borders either more or less rural, the childhood memories of these two people who have spent seasons outside the city, opened up. Along with them, questions, queries, and tough conclusions about urbanity emerged. We then started to intentionally think the production of urban space in the municipality and the issues related to mobility and the cultural relationships implicit in these issues.

The text seeks, from the multidisciplinary field, to discuss problems that have become vital in metropolises but are still little observed in smaller cities. We intend to demarcate this field of research and point paths for future investigations that may contribute to build a city accessible to all people.

Using statistics about José Bonifácio city (IBGE, 2010), direct observation, and informal conversations with mobile agents, namely people who use active modes of transportation<sup>2</sup> (GUIA INCLUINDO A BICICLETA NOS PLANOS, 2015), our purpose is to demonstrate the relationships between mobility, subjectivity, culture, and urban space; identify some recent

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<sup>2</sup> Which includes cyclists, wheelchair users, skeletons, etc., that is, modes of transportation powered by human propulsion called "non-motorized" in the National Plan for Urban Mobility (BRASIL, 2012).

changes in the ways of moving in the city and, therefore, some changes in lifestyle and city culture; understand, even if only provisionally, the reason for the diffusion of the active mode of transportation; and, finally, identify advantages and future challenges in building a sustainable city in tune with the demands of the climate change.

We will present our theoretical framework in the first part of the text. We will explore our memories to observe the changes in society and the urban fabric of José Bonifácio. Next, we will address the specific issues of mobility and lifestyles built in connection with automobility. Then, we will point out the importance of bicycle culture and walkability. In the final considerations, we will present the challenges for the municipality, which include adopting public policies provided by Brazilian laws and an enhancement of the society participation as an essential mainstay in the socio-cultural and urban reality change process.

## **2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES AND THEORETICAL REFERENCES**

In the last decades, José Bonifácio has suffered and keeps suffering from disorganized urbanization or, to quote Lefebvre (2001), a "technocratic and systematized urbanism", "suburbanization", with the increase in the number of cars, depletion of the central areas and dissipation of urban consciousness. To think about this problem, we will use theoretical references from studies on mobility and culture from a multidisciplinary approach.

Social conflict in urban space reflects production relations since "society is a stratified organization characterized by contradictions and unequal patterns of development" (LEFEBVRE, 2001, p. 88). Henri Lefebvre's studies in the 1960s led to the "turn of mobilities," as reflected by Sheller (2017), establishing some continuity between these theories. The "new mobility paradigm" set social theory on new paths, allowing "sociologists, geographers, anthropologists, media studies scholars, artists, architects, and many others to move together in a new agency" (SHELLER, 2017, p. 6) destabilizing the separate fields and disciplines of the social sciences.

When it comes to the transformation of the use of the city, we must remember that the twentieth century was decisive in the changes in the manufacture of a billion cars (URRY, 2004), the creation of urban centers with problems related to the loss of quality of life, mobility and accessibility, in addition to accidents and damage to the environment. As is known, fossil fuel-based means of transportation are one of the main responsible for CO<sub>2</sub> (carbon dioxide) emissions. Such events relate directly to the Anthropocene, a new geological period in which the Earth is "actively modified by human action" (LATOURETTE, 2014, p.12).

The first methodological task here is to understand how cities and the so-called natural spaces have been suffering from human intervention, mainly from the processes of consumer capitalism that come along with globalization. Thus, if the car is a colonial object inserted in a project of modernity successfully implanted by mobility (TROI, ROCHA, 2020; TROI, 2021a, 2021b) and which itself institutes a regime of the government of cars and for cars, the *carcracy* (TROI, 2017), we need to pay attention to other social practices. Interactions between people, spatial conditions, and mobility determine different ways of life.

It is visible that the number of cyclists has been increasing in José Bonifácio, which suggests what John Urry (2004) calls a "post-car era". This new era of mobility would go through a process of "de-privatization" of the automobile, besides the use of new fuels, new mobile combinations: "There will be a mixed flow of slow semi-public micro cars, bicycles, many hybrid

vehicles, pedestrians and mass transport, integrated into a mobility of physical and virtual access" (URRY, 2004, p.35).

This system, underway in the countries of the global North, may be a reality in the South where small cities are possibly ready to encourage active transportation use, even before the popularization of complex sharing systems, precisely because the bicycle culture is already widespread among its population. Even with the dominance of cars in the urban landscape, the presence of bicycles is visible. One of our hypotheses is that this "dissident body" (TROI, 2018) of the "carcratic norm" would be able to engender what Lefebvre (2000) calls the "epistemological logic" of the new space, "the space of social practice – the one that sensitive phenomena occupy, without excluding the imaginary, projects and projections, symbols, utopias" (LEFEBVRE, 2000, p.31). For him, social practice presupposes using the body, transforming society, and modifying space.

### **3 DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 A CITY UNDER THE EFFECTS OF NATIONAL CHANGES**

São Paulo's countryside is historically marked by being a doorway to colonization in Brazil, considering that the Tietê River played a crucial role in the colonizer's displacement. The path of the "bandeirantes", who spread colonial terror in this territory, destroying about 30 Guarani people (BUENO, 2016, p. 104), the countryside of São Paulo was constituted, culturally, by the lack of environmental preservation values. Ideas of progress and development use to exceed any alternative ways to avoid human impact on the environment. The result is a devastated region from the point of view of native vegetation, highly populated, in which coloniality<sup>3</sup> has found solid bases to structure itself.

José Bonifácio was born on the trail of the "tropeiros" (muleteers), heirs to the culture of the "bandeiras" (early settlers), who guided exploratory expeditions into the hinterland of the country. The city, founded in 1906, has an area of 860 km<sup>2</sup> (which includes its extensive rural area and small districts) and is 454 meters above sea level. Distant 483 km from São Paulo city, the capital, its estimated population is 32,763 inhabitants (IBGE, 2010), its urban perimeter is bounded on the northwest by SP 425, the Assis Chateaubriand highway, and on the southeast by BR 153, the Transbrasiliana highway. With intense Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish colonization, but also Arab peoples, the city is primarily white (77.12%), followed by brown and black people (22.42%), and no one declared himself to be indigenous (IBGE, 2010). The demographic density of the municipality (inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>), which was 21.44 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> in 1980, rose to 28.81 in 1993 and practically doubled in 2021, reaching 42.12 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, following the urban trend that occurred nationally. Urbanization increased from 62% in 1980 to 92.33% in 2020 (SÃO PAULO, 2021a). Green areas no longer exist where we used to walk 31 years ago.

Many cities in São Paulo's countryside resemble José Bonifácio's urban configurations: a type of urbanization common in the 1920s and 1930s, dominated by the "spirit of geometry", "exactness" and "order" (LE CORBUSIER, 1929, p. 35 apud GEGNER, 2006, p.754). Church in the central square, streets with checkered blocks, and similar social transformations in the last 20

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<sup>3</sup> From Walter Mignolo (2015), we think of coloniality as a permanent effect of modernity and colonization.

years, so that further studies in this field may represent the outline of a regularity to be observed in future research.

Weber Reis (2010) identified the impacts of globalization on local culture based on a research around the character "Zé Mané", inspired by the "caipira" (peasant) culture. There were already conflicts between the mainly urban space and the rural areas around the city, such as the farm Irmãos Vieira, "old rural property that saw little José Bonifácio grow up to one of its borders, a small stream rising near its lands" (REIS, 2010, p.27-28). Areas mentioned in this study no longer exist or have decreased in the last 11 years.

The municipality went through other changes due to the transformation in the countryside with soybean and sugarcane mono cultures and the installation of alcohol plants. Deforestation has contributed to the feeling of climate change in the city, and the burning of sugar cane plantations, an illegal practice prohibited by state law<sup>4</sup>, continues to occur and causes visible atmospheric impacts on a daily basis<sup>5</sup>. Mono culture has attracted migrants from the north and northeast of the country, increasing the city's population. In less than ten years, it is estimated an increase of 8,652 people in the city (IBGE, 2021).

Of all the changes, the most radical are the modifications in the central area. Once dynamic, attended by night and day walkers, with the expected diversity of segments for a livable downtown, the area was emptied. Until the 1990s, the center was rich in social interactions, where young people met at the footing, a coming and going of people on the weekends. Another change was the emergence of new neighborhoods in areas of the city that used to be a pasture land, reaching the edge of the urbanized part towards the BR 153 road. When we were children and teenagers, the so-called "Estrada da Bica" (Waterspout Road) was a region with much more vegetation, now mostly pasture land, ready to receive new subdivisions. This road gathers a natural force that could become a sizable green preservation area. However, everything leads us to believe it is threatened by real estate speculation and that it could soon be plotted as other similar regions.

Built-up and urbanized areas have increased dramatically from 2010 to 2018. In these years of observing the rural and urban landscape, we witnessed large tracts of forest surrounding small rivers that should be protected against the deforestation of its riparian woodlands. Municipal law 3.068 of 2002 provides the institution of subdivisions and closed condominiums, and it is true that, since then, they have not proliferated as expected. However, subdivisions for the construction of new neighborhoods continue to prosper, giving birth to new neighborhoods with urban expansions towards what used to be rural areas. Among the transformations of the last decades, one can include the "Minha Casa, Minha Vida" (My house, my life) program that also reached the municipality. According to urbanist Erminia Maricato, the program "made cities worse," worsened access difficulties, and created vulnerable neighborhoods, with municipal councils including farms in the urban perimeter to attract investments (FELLET, 2018, no pagination).

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4 State law 11.241 of Sept. 19, 2002, foresees the end of 100% of burning in areas that can be mechanized in 2021.

5 In 2019, fires were recorded in several cities in northwestern São Paulo, including the municipality, and 89 fines were imposed in noncompliance with the law, as reported: <https://www.novacana.com/n/cana/meio-ambiente/proibido-fogo-canaviais-89-multas-regiao-sao-jose-rio-preto-sp-120719>. Accessed on: 04 May 2021.

**Figure 1: Tree removed in the field near a spring**



Source: Marcelo de Trói (April to August 2021).

**Figure 2: Billboard advertises the benefits for the new middle class with an emphasis on comfort**



Source: Marcelo de Trói (April to August 2021).

**Figure 3: Next to it, the area with lots ready for sale: "condominization" has reached the countryside**



Source: Marcelo de Trói (April to August 2021).

Many of these new subdivisions have green planned areas and public spaces for the construction of squares, but nothing compared to the vegetal exuberance that existed there before. These condominiums have little dialogue with mobility issues and are made for the cisheteronormative bourgeois nuclear family<sup>6</sup> (VERGUEIRO, 2015, p. 56). Usually, the houses are designed to have two or more car spaces. The idea of “an own house and a car” combo, an urban strategy that started to be implemented in the United States in the 1950s, populates the

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6 In queer theory, the concept emphasizes the norms that affect the bodies, establishing non-trans gender bodies and heterosexuality as the standard of normality. In this sense, everything outside this norm is considered abnormal, unhealthy, and criminal, depending on the country.

imagination of the Brazilian middle class. Encouraged by advertisings, the construction of heterosexual family nuclei and parameters based on gender and sexuality adhere to this way of subjectification. We cannot fail to emphasize the role of the Church in the construction of more conservative and disciplined societies, in which the constitution of the heterosexual bourgeois nuclear family is practically specific and desirable, especially in a city with a Christian, Catholic, and Evangelical majority<sup>7</sup> (IBGE, 2010).

### 3.2 A CAR-CRATIC CITY

At what moment and how the car becomes the extraordinary character of the cities, changing its topography, altering the urban space, and becoming a fundamental piece in the game of interactions of the social web? To what extent the carcracy, namely, "regime that produces radical differentiations in the subjects of the city, in the city itself as a subject, in the territories, in the drivers, in our unconscious and subjectivity" (TROI, 2017, p. 274), is responsible for segregation, precariousness, and disputes in the urban space in José Bonifácio? If global capitalism is transforming the planet, cities suffer immediate transformations such as real estate speculation, the creation of precariousness zones, and the dominance of the carcracy in the urban landscape. The logic of the metropolis did not take long to reach small and medium-sized cities that did not hesitate to adopt an urbanism that supresses "what is left of the city to make room for cars" (LEFEBVRE, 2001, p.31).

Figure 4: men besides their machines at a gas station in José Bonifácio around the 1930s



Source: José Bonifácio Cultural Center (collection).

In São Paulo, the first car appeared at the end of the 19th century. Almost two decades later, in the 1920s, the first car would appear in José Bonifácio (a fact that can be proven by photos of the time). In the past and more strongly today, the great amusement of young people is to "flank" the streets of the city in their cars and motorcycles, in a continuous movement that runs the circuit of the bars, with the difference that nowadays the number of cars is greater.

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<sup>7</sup> An estimated 24,445 Catholics, 6,452 Evangelicals, and 952 people with no religion are in the municipality (IBGE, 2021). From the political point of view, the city is conservative: Jair Bolsonaro received 75.65% of the valid votes in the second round of 2018 and 65.53% in the 2nd round of 2022 (TSE, 2022). A poster in the city in support of the president was signed by "local agro-entrepreneurs".

**Figure 5: "9 de Julho" Avenue, downtown city, in the 1980s, with the presence of cyclists.**



Source: unknown - Bonifacianos on a FaceBook Group<sup>8</sup>.

**Figure 6: "9 de Julho" Avenue, downtown area, in October 2021.**



Source: Marcelo de Trói.

The first municipal law used to regulate vehicles in José Bonifácio dates from September 03, 1927<sup>9</sup>. However, mobility has not been a dilemma for the urbanization and structuring of the city. It has impacted people's subjectivity as a symbol of social status and subjectivation of masculinities, which is visible in the demonstrations of speed by drivers, especially young people. Not surprisingly, they have been the preferred victims of traffic accidents.

Motorized logic seemed to be prescribed for José Bonifácio. In the 1920s, the roads surrounding the region were from 1897. They were described as the "only artery of civilization" in the region (that of São José do Rio Preto), and considered the most prominent "agricultural center of the country. The records of the time would state: "the automobile and the locomotive will march together into a marvelously beautiful future" (CAVALHEIRO, LAURITO, 1979, p. 444-445). In 1951, such "arteries" seemed to have evolved just a little: "It is a good thing that bus engines in the United States are solid and powerful; but what jumps inside those buses! I had the impression of having crushed my kidneys at a certain point. The road is full of puddles and, in many places, dead ends" (ANGIONI, 2006, p. 69).

The increase in consumption and the incentives of the last governments to the automobile industry, a fact repeated throughout Brazilian history, is reflected in the increase of

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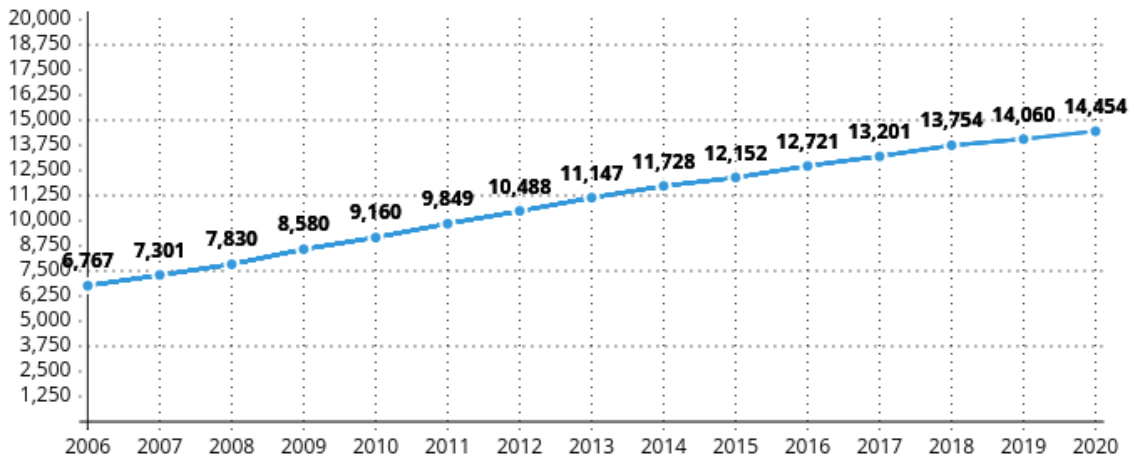
<sup>8</sup> Available: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/781413631888012/permalink/1996622933700403/>. Accessed on: 18 Oct. 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Available: <http://transparenciadocs.josebonifacio.sp.gov.br/>. Accessed on: 08 May. 2021.



automobile units in José Bonifácio, which jumped from 6,767 units in 2006 to 14,454 in 2020. Motorcycles, on the other hand, jumped from 3,441 units in 2006 to 7,003 in 2020, as shown in graph 1:

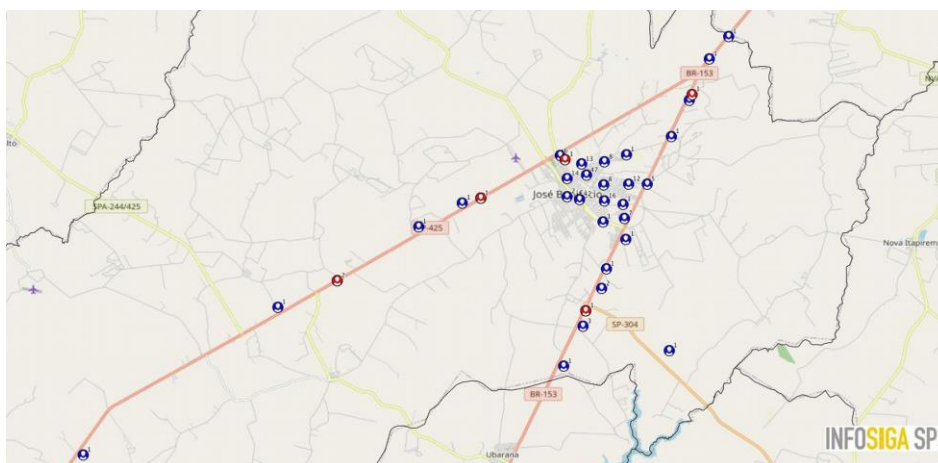
**Graph 1: evolution of the number of cars in the city of José Bonifácio (2006-2020).**



Source: IBGE (2021)

The automobile increase has modified the city to the point of generating the need to install several traffic lights. Data from INFOSIGA (SÃO PAULO, 2021b) reveal that for the total number of accidents occurred between 2015 and 2020, 80% of the victims were male, aged between 18 and 39 years, while 20% were female, showing that the agency with the speed and the use of motorized mobility and its consequences find in men their preferred victims. Besides the fact that the number of accidents has increased considerably with the increase in the fleet, the data shows that more than 85% occur on municipal roads and not on the highways, as shown in Figure 5:

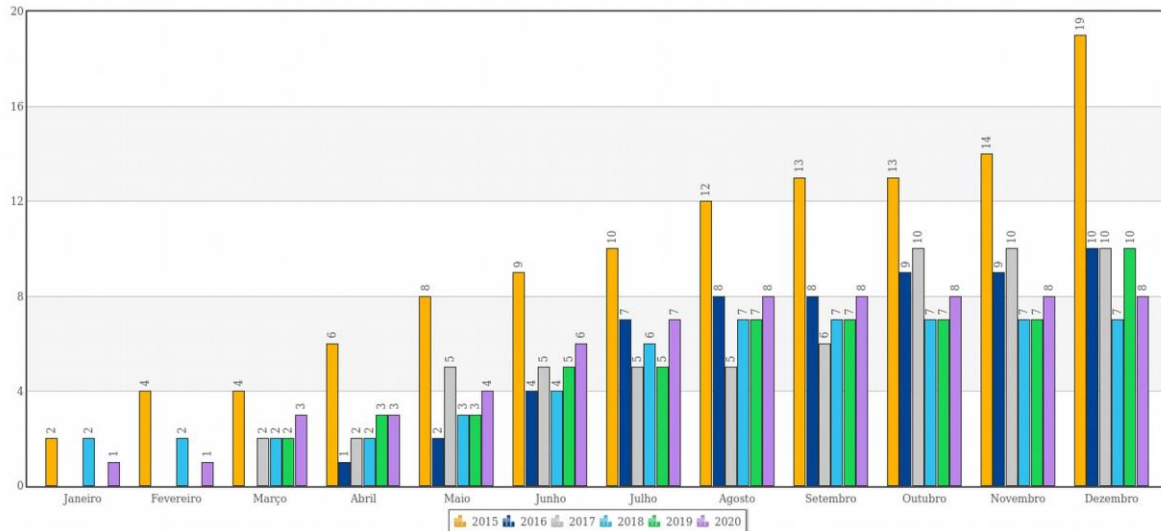
**Figure 5: map of car accidents (hit-and-run, crash, and collision) in José Bonifácio in 2020. The red dots indicate fatalities, and the blue is non-fatal victims. The red line on the left is highway SP 425 and on the right is BR 153 (right). The urban area concentrates most of the accidents.**



Source: INFOSIGA (SÃO PAULO, 2021b)

The number of deaths from accidents between 2015-2020 on both municipal roads and highways reached the number of 400 people, as shown in Chart 2:

**Graph 2 shows the number of year-to-date monthly deaths from traffic accidents (2015-2020).**



Source: INFOSIGA (SÃO PAULO, 2021b)

Since 2015, the number of deaths on municipal roads and highways has represented a drop. In 2020, even with the Covid-19 pandemic, the rates did not differ much from 2019. The decrease in car use can also explain the drop in claims due to the increase in fuel prices from 2015. Of the data available from the INFOSIGA system, 70.77% of these victims were drivers, followed by passengers (16.92%) and pedestrians (6.15%); about 6.15% of the deaths were without data.

The data from the municipality, although low, when in fact they might not exist, reflect the tragedy that happens in Brazil regarding traffic violence. According to the World Health Organization- WHO, we are the fourth country in the number of deaths in this kind of accident. According to the National Road Safety Observatory<sup>1</sup>, an institution dedicated to developing actions to reduce these rates, 44,812 people died in Brazilian traffic in 2012. This number is 5% higher than in 2010, when the World Road Safety Decade (2010-2020), proclaimed by the UN to encourage countries to promote actions to halve the number of deaths, began.

Among the impacts of deaths and public expenses for the rescue of accident victims, there is a series of impacts on subjectivity that are often difficult to measure, but that has changed our relationship with the city since the car started to conquer hegemony in urban landscapes. As stated in previous paragraphs, the automobile creates identity, which is defined in research that demonstrates the close approximation between masculinity and motorization, even emerging the exciting concept of "petromasculinity": "For many, extracting and burning fuel was a practice of white masculinity and American sovereignty, such that the explosive power of combustion could be roughly equated with virility" (DAGGETT, 2018, p. 32). Such normative adhere to the imagery of automobiles, with solid components that alter behaviors and social relations, reflections present in several studies (ASSAILLY, 2018; MÖSER, 2015;

PRECIADO, 2010; GILROY, 2001; LUDD, 2005). In them, the relationship of motorized mobility to constructing ways of life that ultimately aim to homogenize the latent differences between complex and democratic societies is evident. The advent of the car in the United States, and similarly in the Western world, changed how people dated, socially interacted in urban space, changed public health with increased problems related to obesity and the respiratory system and fostered subjective aspects of masculinities (LUTZ, FERNANDEZ, 2010).

The expressed relations between mobility, identity, sexuality, and the violent processes of normalization that begin with modernity have created different bodily experiences for those who occupy the city. Thus, it is increasingly clear that the gender, sexuality, race, and class of the subjects provide different ways of relating to the urban space and to the other people who build the city. Hence, mobilities play a central role in the relationship of these bodies with the city space. Richard Sennett (2003) narrated the history of cities through the body experience and affirmed that the automobile establishes a kind of dome that prevents interactions, causing the driver's disinterest to the urban space: "The physical condition of the body on the move reinforces the disconnection from space" (SENNETT, 2003, p.18).

The consequences of the relationship between subjectivity and mobility in urban space are often universal phenomena with close connections to the globalization process and the rise of the consumer capitalism, often meaning a recognition of social status for specific subjects. This leads us to understand that the idea of a genuinely democratic city is not extended to all citizens and all bodies, marked by differences expressed in the ways of being and occupying the city. By isolating individuals and preventing face-to-face social interactions, the overuse of the car has contributed to the decrease of conviviality in the city and, consequently, a disconnection from the social sense of coexistence of differences in the urban space.

### **3.3 AND THE BICYCLE RESISTS**

Starting in 1954, the municipality of José Bonifácio began to charge not only for motor vehicle licensing but also for bicycles. This leads us to believe that in the 1950s, the bicycle presence was strong enough to improve dividends for the municipality. In 1964, Law 595 exempted bicycles and animal-drawn vehicles from paying the licensing tax.

Although the presence of cars is increasing, a large number of people from different ages still use active modes of transportation such as bicycling and walking. In the last decades, the city has even propitiated the appearance of skeletons, a phenomenon notable in large urban centers, which gave rise to a lane for the practice of this specific mobility. Thus, from direct observation over these years, we have noticed a diversity in the ways of moving around the city. However, there is no sign of a public policy for using these modes in the city, nor is there any concern with this issue from a political point of view.

We often notice older men using older model bicycles without gears and carrying some rear compartments full of tools (drills, pliers, wrenches), which leads us to believe they are self-employed professionals. Other bicycles are adapted to carry weight on the front (bike courier). We also find teenagers with motorized bicycles that emit smoke like cars, creating a paradox from the point of view of a mode of transportation that is genuinely ecological.

In the late afternoon, when we usually prefer to walk during these years, we always come across young people using bicycles as a means of transportation<sup>10</sup>. In the meat packing plant and the textile factory, it is visible that the number of workers' bicycles parked reveals that it is a suitable means of transportation for these categories. These facts may be further explored in future quantitative research.

### **3.4 WOMEN ON THE MOVE**

With an incipient urban public transportation service and one of the most expensive fares in the country at R\$4.15 (four reais and fifteen cents)<sup>11</sup>, it is not surprising that those who do not use cars for economic reasons prefer to walk or use the bicycle as a way to get around the city. The high fare follows the Brazilian trend as one of the countries with the highest urban transportation fares. Recently, the Mobilize Institute<sup>12</sup> compared fare and average income to demonstrate why Brazilians are abandoning the use of buses and trains and migrating to motorcycles, bikes, and car apps. What becomes apparent in the study is that public transportation fare increases much more than inflation indexes, compromising a good part of the citizens' income and preventing the use of public transportation, which, most of the time, presents an inferior service in terms of schedules, vehicle comfort, and route lines. Improving the condition of public transportation is a fundamental and essential condition for the population to stop using private transportation.

Maria José de Oliveira Santos is 68 years old and a cleaning lady. She learned to ride a bike by herself. Born in Paraná, she arrived in José Bonifácio in 1978. She says that since then, she has noticed the presence of bicycles in the city. She always used the artifact to work in rural areas. She believes that today, the number of users is much larger than back then, as well as the number of cars on the streets. She never wanted to drive motorized vehicles because she never felt confident. About the bicycle, she claims:

I love my bicycle. I love it. I cannot be without a bicycle. Here is a magnificent city for this. They respect it. There should be more incentives. With the price of gasoline, people should use more the bike than the car. The mayor could help, promote lectures, and orient people. There are many bicycle commuters, but people want to ride their cars. There are many benefits. Bicycle is everything. For my health, it is ten times better. I know many bike people; I see them riding in front of my house. More women cycle. It is a sport, and everybody likes it. I would not change my bike for anything. I love my bicycle like a sister, more than a sister, because the bicycle takes me everywhere, and my sister does not take me.<sup>13</sup>

Maria José has never heard of climate change, but she knows that the climate is no longer the same. She remembers when it was cold in José Bonifácio and when the sun "was not

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10 In a trial count on July 26, 2021 (Monday), between 4:50 pm and 5:20 pm, at the entrance to the neighborhood known as Vitorino, we counted the passage of 45 cars, 41 motorcycles, 11 bicycles, 06 walkers, and 02 buses/trucks.

11 The new value was instituted by decree 3.151/2020. In São Paulo capital, with the R\$4.40 fare paid, it is possible to cross 40 km between the north-south end of the city (Tucuruvi-Grajaú), while the distance between the two ends in José Bonifácio is about 6 km. With the pandemic, the service was canceled and, as of September 2021, had not been resumed.

12 Information about the institute at: <<https://www.mobilize.org.br>>. Accessed on: 08 May 2021.

13 A conversation with unstructured questions was conducted on Aug. 24, 2021, at the interviewee's home.

so hot". She believes that cars are responsible because they release much smoke. The cleaning lady is one of the people over 60 that we usually see pedaling in the city streets.

Despite the scorching sun, walking is another active mode of transportation in the city. Among these walkers there are many older people, like Neusa Alvares Fornereto, 84 years old. She says she has never had a "drive" and does everything on foot, but she would have a car if she could afford it. Nevertheless, she recognizes the disadvantages of its use:

For health, it is a disadvantage to have a car. If you have a car, you do not walk. Walking is good for circulation, health, seeing people, and going through different streets. When I go downtown, I always take a different route. That is nice, and you do not stay on the same path. One day I go down one street; another day, I go down another. The sidewalks in José Bonifácio are terrible, and you cannot walk on the sidewalk. Everything is uneven. I always walk on the curb. You have to be very careful. Some people do not respect the traffic lights or the stop sign. You have to be attentive. I don't think that anyone could get comfortable. A friend stands still and says she envies me because she cannot walk. Health comes first.<sup>14</sup>

Neusa said that people walk more these days, even though cars have also increased. She believes that the public authorities could build their lanes for walkers, but because of the topographical unevenness, she needs help to standardize the sidewalks. She has heard of climate change and blames humans, deforestation, and fires, and she believes that cars contribute a lot to the problem.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

In this discussion, considering bicycling and walkability is to reflect on social practices linked to this scenario. The use of the bicycle, for example, can reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by up to 18%, according to a study by Cebrap - Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (TORRES-FREIRE et al., 2018), generating a social impact through "low carbon practices" (SHELLER, 2017), practices in which walking and other active forms of transportation are included. A new agreement signed in 2016 by 195 countries determines the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, in which Brazil has committed to reducing these levels by 43% by 2030 (ECONOMIA DA BICICLETA NO BRASIL, 2018).

New research in this field will not fail to reflect on the "re-spatialization of future worlds" (SHELLER, 2017, p.12) from the events cited above and, at this point, we want to believe that there is a social change underway and that is expressed in the conflicts of all cities that rely on the mobility model established in the late nineteenth century from the invention of the automobile and the use of fossil fuel and a production chain entirely tied to this system. A system that has the power to remake "space-time" and that places social life "locked in the mode that automobility generates and presupposes" (URRY, 2004, p. 27).

Although the carcratic logic prevails in the city of José Bonifácio and also populates the imaginary, especially those of young people, there is a relevant use of the bicycle as a transportation model and people who have not surrendered to cars, possibly due to economic factors. Even without disseminating a policy of urban mobility, cycling, as happened in the capital of São Paulo with the implementation of bicycle lanes, the bicycle marks a presence in

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14 A conversation with unstructured questions was conducted on Aug. 24, 2021, at the interviewee's home.

the city, contributing to another urban and mobile paradigm, reflecting the ongoing changes suggested by Urry (2004).

Despite the predominance of cars in the city's urban landscape, we did not find data that point out that in José Bonifácio there is direct violence against cyclists, as already observed in the capital. This happens because the bicycle, in the past and still today, is a suitable means of locomotion mainly because of the rural character still present in the city.

The city-countryside dialectic relations, pointed out by Lefebvre (2001), seem evident in José Bonifácio from institutions, class, and property relations. It is possible to find, in the urban landscape, once in a while, a vehicle with animal traction (the so-called "carrinheiros" that have been disappearing over time), that is, these elements expose the rural presence before the fabricated reality of urban space.

About users, there is a visible clipping of class, gender, and race among cyclists that can be verified with more in-depth quantitative research, especially among the working class. It is clear, at least in this first visual contact with the field, that it is black and brown people who use the bicycle more as a means of transportation. At the same time, it is interesting to note the diverse ages of these cyclists, with young, adults, and older people who still ride and can provide data from their life stories, as we pointed out in these preliminary informal conversations.

More researchers must look at small and medium-sized cities because these investigations can contribute to avoid these cities to become what the big Brazilian metropolises represent today: hostile places for total human and non-human development. More analyses must be carried out on the urban aspects of this growth configuration and the social effects of the way of life disputes in cities with up to 50 thousand inhabitants. They can become powerful tools for the construction of public policies.

After a decade of attention to the cities with the creation of the Ministry of Cities and the National Council of Cities and a series of legislations foreseen since the 1988 Constitution (ROLNIK, 2009), in which emphasis was given to the social function of the city, it seems that we are back to square one with increased inattention to the problems that involve popular participation in the process of building the city space. Despite this, José Bonifácio demonstrated advances by complying with the City Statute and creating its Master Plan<sup>15</sup> in 2007, an obligation for municipalities with more than 20 thousand inhabitants. However, several changes were made in the law over these 14 years, some related to the Areas of Permanent Environmental Preservation. No records were found of the effective participation of Bonifacian society in this process.

The city has enormous challenges ahead regarding expanding the city space into formerly rural areas, demanding water, sewage, and electricity infrastructure. Compared to other Brazilian municipalities, the quality of life has improved, despite the decade-long lag in data. According to the latest data available from IBGE (2010), adequate sewage reached 89.9% of households (compared to an average of 96.2% in the state and 83.71% in the country), the forestation of the streets reached 98%, and the Human Development Index was 0.777, considered high if compared to other places in the world (in 2000, the index in the city was 0.681). In this sense, the new census of the IBGE, canceled in 2021 by the federal government,

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15 The first commission to constitute a Master Plan was in 1967. A specific look at the plans can reveal advances and setbacks in mobility and the environment. The documents are available at: <http://transparenciadocs.josebonifacio.sp.gov.br/>. Accessed on: 08 May 2021.

will be essential to update these numbers and verify the improvement or not of the living conditions of the population.

From the point of view of daily life and observation of the city, it is visible that there are dilemmas and challenges to be faced by the population and the city administrators. This article has shown that mobility is a point that deserves attention because an improvement in this field can mean an improvement in people's quality of life and the city's environmental quality.

This article has also shown that cultural aspects are determinant in the use of mobile artifacts, which goes through the construction of imaginaries. With another social practice, the dissidents that do not use the car indicates the possibility of mutation in the urban reality and, ultimately, the transformation of urban space. In this sense, it is fundamental that municipal public power intervene in the urban space ensuring a friendlier city, especially in a city where active transportation is relevant, with walking practices, especially among young people and people over 60.

It is urgent to improve the quality of public transportation in José Bonifácio, and why not make it accessible? Free transportation is already a reality in some Brazilian cities with notable gains in quality of life. Since November 2019, Vargem Grande Paulista, in the metropolitan region of São Paulo, has offered free passes to its residents. With the measure, monthly passengers increased from 36 thousand to 105 thousand. Pirapora de Bom Jesus, another city in the capital's metropolitan region, also adopted the free pass. Another example was the city of Assis, which decreed free public transportation during the Covid 19 pandemic. Besides being feasible, according to studies<sup>16</sup>, this kind of public policy has been increasing according to a survey by the Mobilize Institute, which has already identified several cities in the country that followed the same direction.

This article has evidenced fields of dispute and the urban precariousness caused by the carcracy in a small town in the countryside of São Paulo. It demonstrates that the cultural and historical processes are directly related to the ways of moving and also that the possible changes favoring all the city agents are also in them.

The people who make decisions and occupy municipal power should be inspired by the abolitionist José Bonifácio, who gives name to the city. A historical figure, he had a great interest in ecology and the preservation of natural resources. As a small city, it is in hands of its citizens and the municipal power to change the municipality into an example of a sustainable city, with the ability to answer the demands of the current times, in line with a radical environmental concern, which involves saving energy and reducing emissions into the atmosphere.

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16 Data and the list of cities with zero fares are in the report "More cities adopt 'zero fares' in transportation", available at: <https://www.mobilize.org.br/noticias/11896/mais-cidades-adoptam-tarifa-zero-no-transporte.html>. Accessed on: 08 May 2021.

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