

From the heyday of the railroads to neglect: historical context and state of deterioration of the New Railway Station in Campina Grande-PB.

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SUMMARY

The history of railway stations in Brazil played a structuring role in many cities in the country, reflecting exponential growth in various spheres of society. The deactivation of railway stations and/or their disuse in several municipalities and the lack of appropriation by cities and users of this urban transport equipment are a risk to their resistance/existence, weakening the important historical-cultural-social role to which they belong. The New Railway Station (Estação Ferroviária Nova) in Campina Grande city, Paraíba state, representing one of its facilities and greatly influencing the development of the city, is an example of the detrimental process due to the public and private sectors' neglect, with its buildings (listed by IPHAEP) in ruin and without any pretensions of public policies to soften and/or reverse this process. This work aims to discuss the importance and structuring role of the New Railway Station in Campina Grande, as well as the historical and formal aspects that characterize signs of abandonment and how they can impact the uses and appropriations by the users. To accomplish this, steps were needed to collect information, such as field surveys; bibliographic and documentary research; literary reviews; databases in the city hall, among other forms of data composition. The present study resulted in a dynamic overview and chronological understanding of the apex of the New Railway Station, from its inauguration to its decadence; through historical, formal, social, and heritage expressions, it was possible to understand in which context the station was placed and the processes followed until its current state of deterioration.

KEYWORDS: Railway station. Abandonment. urban trails.

1 INTRODUCTION

Railways have played an essential role in the urban and social developments of many Brazilian cities. On a broad sense, trains had become an important component in that historical context, impacting the whole country in terms of social, political, economic, and cultural aspects. In the city of Campina Grande, in the state of Paraíba and located 113 km away from its capital, the New Railway Station (*Estação Ferroviária Nova*) is an example of the technological advances that highlighted the city within a regional scenario. The station's construction had started in 1957 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the arrival of trains in the city, and was inaugurated in 1961 (TENÓRIO, 1996; ARANHA, 2001).

Although the New Railway Station was inaugurated to meet the demands of its time, Brazil was then undergoing an automobile-centered road expansion, gradually replacing the railroads. In addition, there were constant problems involving the rail transport system – such as lack of train maintenance, high rates, and constant workers strikes. The culminating aspect towards the decay of this form of transportation and its progressive disuse might have been the Goal Plan promoted by President Juscelino Kubitschek, adopting a “modern” approach of industrialization. After 1980, not resisting this process, the Old Railway Station (*Estação Ferroviária Velha*) and the New Railway Station of Campina Grande were deactivated, although still used for cargo transport and for sporadic purposes during June – for traditional square-dance parties.

The recognition of historic buildings as cultural expressions of the memory and the identity of a people brings the concern with the current physical state, management, and appropriations under which these places are found to be. This study aims to discuss the importance and structuring role of the New Railway Station in Campina Grande, as well as the configurational and contextual aspects that show signs of abandonment, while also bringing light to how these characteristics might impact the uses and appropriations by its users and visitors. The research was carried out in three main stages: 1) to collect information about the

historical, economic, social, and cultural aspects of the station; 2) to carry out a field survey; and 3) to present the results and their discussion.

2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This study has been mainly carried out through a hypothetico-deductive method, which – according to Prodanov and Freitas (2013) – is related to scientific inquiry based on initial hypotheses that serve as guides for research investigation. In this adaptation, bibliographic research was included, making connections with existing bases and possible techniques of verification through the search for documents or bibliographies in the dialectical method (MARCONI & LAKATOS, 2003, p.225).

According to Padua's (1996, p.29) interpretation, bibliographic research is "an activity of search, inquiry, investigation, inquiry into reality, it is an activity that will allow us, in the field of science, to elaborate knowledge". This type of research allows the subject to be constantly under discussion. Since the starting point of the investigation is called a thesis, which is a positive proposition, its development can generate opposing opinions, conceptualized as antithesis. Afterwards, result might yet again assume an antagonistic position, called synthesis. In this sense, dialectics assume that nothing is defined or finished; the object of analysis is always in motion.

This study was then developed in three main stages, reflected in the structure of this paper. First, bibliographic research was carried out to achieve the chronological and contextual framework of the events involving the New Railway Station, by consulting city council documents, cartographies, and regulations, among other data. The second stage consisted in field trips to collect data and on-site empirical analysis, including the use of photographic records and walkthroughs. Finally, the obtained data was quantified and analyzed, enriching the discussion about the researched concepts by the description and systematization of the information compiled throughout the entire research process.

3 HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION OF RAILWAY STATIONS IN BRAZIL

Railroads in Brazil were constructed between the 19th and 20th centuries, influencing the European perspective of progress and the search to include the most modern happenings in the world. The good relationship and economic exchanges the country had with England were also a bridge to knowledge and familiarity with rail transport (TENÓRIO, 1996).

Despite the economic importance, the first railroads had connections with inland areas and short-distance routes, which aimed to reduce the dependence and cost of transport by donkeys and mules, thus replacing them. Vieira (2010, p.2) discusses other objectives besides the trade ones concerning the expansion of railroads in Brazil. According to the author, it was a "way of integrating the hinterland to the political and economic center, the southeast of the country, and ensure that the nation project, envisioned by the Brazilian elites, was carried out." Reinforcing this integration, Arruda argues that:

The transformation or “modernization” process was not restricted to Rio de Janeiro and urban reforms. The idea of “progress” was quite widespread in the country and predated the republic itself. It was not limited to the Rio-São Paulo axis or urban transformation, but through the construction of new railway and telegraph axes, it intended to connect the countryside with the country’s capital (ARRUDA, 2000, p. 103).

The first attempt to introduce railroads in Brazil was law No. 101 of October 31, 1835, which according to Thomé (1983), despite not attracting entrepreneurs, was the first step towards the installation of this mode of transport in the country. It did not ensure any advantages in an incipient sector with no defined results. During the Regent Feijó government and due to not having attracted private investors based on the aforementioned law, which did not ensure any advantages to entrepreneurs, in 1852, a new law was approved including reformulated points aiming to attract the interest of national or foreign entrepreneurs with greater privileges, interest guarantees, and freedom of construction and exploitation throughout the country; however, prioritizing attention to the connections between the provinces of São Paulo and Minas (largest coffee producing centers), in line with the initial trigger to implement railroads at that time: the reduction of losses in coffee production, both due to the issue of highways deteriorated, such as the difficulty and delay in traction transport (TENÓRIO, 1996).

Law No. 641, enacted on June 26, 1852, may also have been a positive factor for the inauguration of the first Brazilian railroad. Two years after the aforementioned law was introduced, the Petrópolis Railroad was planned, and consequently inaugurated. The first stretch was inaugurated by D. Pedro II, connecting Porto Mauá to Fragoso, Rio de Janeiro state, and was 14.5 km long (IPHAN, 2010).

Hobsbawn (1986, p.61) describes the arrival of trains as: “the iron road, pushing its huge smoke-plumed snakes at the speed of wind across countries and continents,” trains reflected for a long time what was most modern and futuristic, glimpsing through transport the clearing of places with speed desired by many. Although there was a strong impact on the export of primary products, mainly in the agricultural sector, railway stations permeate (consciously or not) the focus on only cargo transport; it is hard to measure all the aspects that were directly and indirectly influenced by the rails.

The aforementioned author also defined the arrival of trains as the greatest and most significant technological innovation of the 19th century. It was synonymous with prosperity and modernity at that time, shaping behaviors, materials, information, and social dynamics in that context. The stations did not only serve as a place for embarkation and disembarkation, departure and arrival but also places of permanence for interpersonal exchanges between citizens who used these facilities. Cities held inauguration events attended by important figures from society, politicians, journalists, and businesspeople in the region.

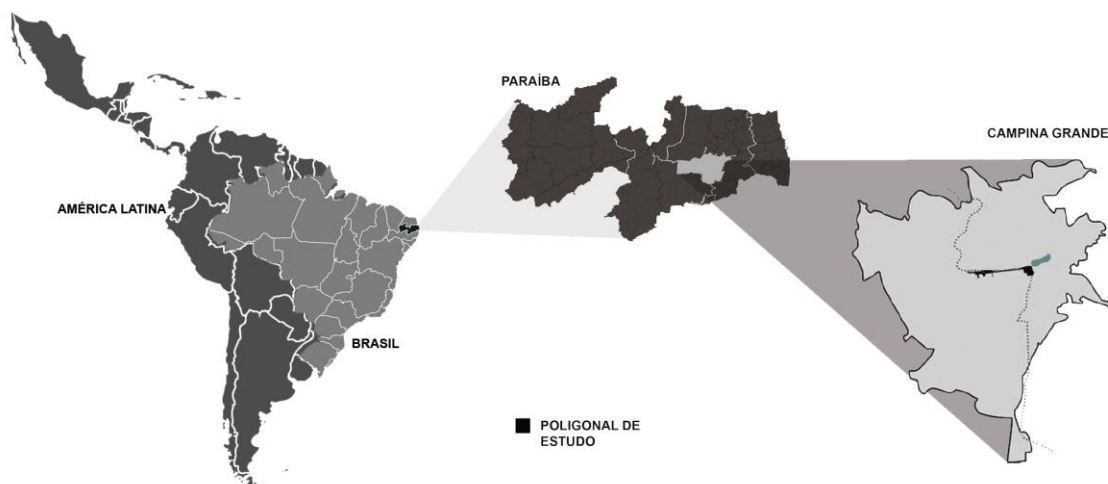
According to Silveira (2002), between 1930 and 1995, there was a decrease in the importance of railroads in the Brazilian industrial capitalist period, going through the phase of low growth or zero growth and later decay. It was also triggered by the changes proposed by President Juscelino Kubitschek’s government, which had a Goal Plan addressing industrialization and modernity. Regarding the transport sector and its respective resources, knowing that the

railways were expanding, one decision of those responsible for the railroads was to switch from coal to diesel; it was considerable progress in improving the use of environmental resources and optimizing the train economy. However, it was not enough to compete directly with road transport, which presented itself as a proposal of agility, practicality, and economy in terms of locomotion, which was a massive competitor. As trains were underused in the 1980s, this caused the closure of passenger transport in many stations in the country. After that time, the primary function of trains became transporting loads of materials and products in large quantities (SANTOS, 2019).

4 THE RISE AND FALL OF THE NEW RAILWAY STATION IN CAMPINA GRANDE: A CASE STUDY

Campina Grande is a medium-sized city and one of the most populous in the state. It is located in the Agreste mesoregion of Paraíba State, in the Central Eastern Zone of Paraíba State on the Borborema plateau, as can be seen in Figure 1. According to the IBGE (2013), it has more than 400,000 inhabitants and an area of 591,658 km². The city is divided into 52 districts, including seven districts, and at least a quarter has a railroad cutting through its area.

Figure 1 – Map of Latin America, Brazil, Paraíba, Campina Grande, and the railway station.



Source: The author, 2022.

Soon after the first Brazilian rail transport emerged in 1907, there was an important event in the history of Campina Grande. The city received the first Great Western Of Brazil Railway train (Figure 2 shows this moment), which, considering all the growth based on cereal and mainly cotton production, was responsible for the radical change in the urban fabric and the social context of the municipality (COSTA, 2003). Mello (1995, p.162) discusses the relevance of implementing railroads, stating that “no city in Paraíba (...) has benefited as much from rail transport as Campina Grande. Converted into the most important urban center of the whole of the northeastern hinterlands, comprising cotton, commerce, and railroads, the three aspects responsible for progress”.

After implementing the railway station in Campina Grande, which was already known for its strategic location, as well as cotton production and exports (one of its main products), sales were boosted, becoming one of the largest centers in the world (ARANHA, 2001).

In 1957, the New Railway Station building was built in Campina Grande, aiming to improve rail services and commemorate the 50th anniversary of the train's arrival in the city. It was inaugurated in 1961 by *Rede Ferroviária Nordeste* – RFN. There was a need for greater adaptation to the demands required, such as a greater area for maneuvers, better resources for its users, and specific buildings for support and machinery; as well as a connection of the RFN with the *Rede Viação Cearense*, which according to Oliveira (2015) was one of the proposals for the nationalization plan for railroads in the RFFSA network by the national development plan of Juscelino Kubitschek's government.

Figure 2 – Arrival of the Great Western of Brazil Railway in 1907.



Source: OLIVEIRA, 2020.

According to Table 1 and based on information collected by the municipal government of Campina Grande, Costa (2003) highlighted the impact after stations were built in territorial expansion. Table 1 shows a percentage increase of the urban network, that is, the years after the 1907 and 1964 (the respective opening dates of the Old Railway Station and the New Railway Station) show a percentage discrepancy in the urban development of the municipality.

Table 1 – Expansion of the urban network in Campina Grande-PB.

Year	Urban area	Number of buildings	Addition of the urban network	Increase in percentage
1790	0.8 km ²	410	–	–
1907	1.3 km ²	731	0.5 km ²	162
1930	3.5 km ²	7,069	2.2 km ²	269
1945	4.2 km ²	13,259	0.7 km ²	120
1964	10.9 km ²	21,640	6.7 km ²	243
1980	45.3 km ²	42,120	34.3 km ²	416
2005	100 km ²	85,000	54.7 km ²	201

Source: COSTA (2003) apud PORTO, 2007.

Although the stations have been deactivated, the Old Railway Station and the New Railway Station are important components in the context of the municipality. Carrion (1998) points out that there is an association between the historical points of the spaces and their origins with the appreciation of the cultural heritage and the cities' past. Therefore, the dialogical analysis of architecture begins by understanding the architectural context, its development process, and its occupation, presented as an important part in highlighting the concept of place resulting from the social dynamics, histories, economies, policies, and cultural aspects involved. (SALCEDO et al. 2015).

In the 1980s, not resisting the growth and predominance of road transport, passenger transport was closed in the stations in Campina Grande. Currently, the railroads carry freight transport, and in June, the *fórró* train travels from Campina Grande to Galante (city district) to the sound of *fórró* (a musical genre and dance from the Northeast of Brazil). The buildings of both the Old Railway Station and the New Railway Station were listed by IPHAEP in 2001. In the Old Railway Station, there is the Cotton Museum (*Museu do Algodão*) (valuing the product that was extremely important for the city's growth at the time). Although the New Railway Station was implemented more recently, the buildings have visibly deteriorated. Some no longer have roofs and are unused, showing abandonment and having a negative impact on their users (RODRIGUES, 2009).

The New Railway Station is located in the West Zone of Campina Grande. The rail yard consisted of the following buildings: Building 1 - used as a transshipment/sorting depot (today it has a roof); Building 2 - built in the 1970s and was designed to house the engineering and administration sector (8th residence), where technicians such as engineers, surveyors, security guards worked; Building 3 - the building destined to the new station - built in Art Deco style, where passengers embarked and disembarked and where small objects were housed; Building 4 - permanent shed, tool shop (rails, sleepers, clamps), workshop, gas station (one of the oldest buildings of all).

As can be seen in Figure 3, the area consists of five buildings where the station is located and their attributions in relation to functions. Afonso (2017) defined this as follows:

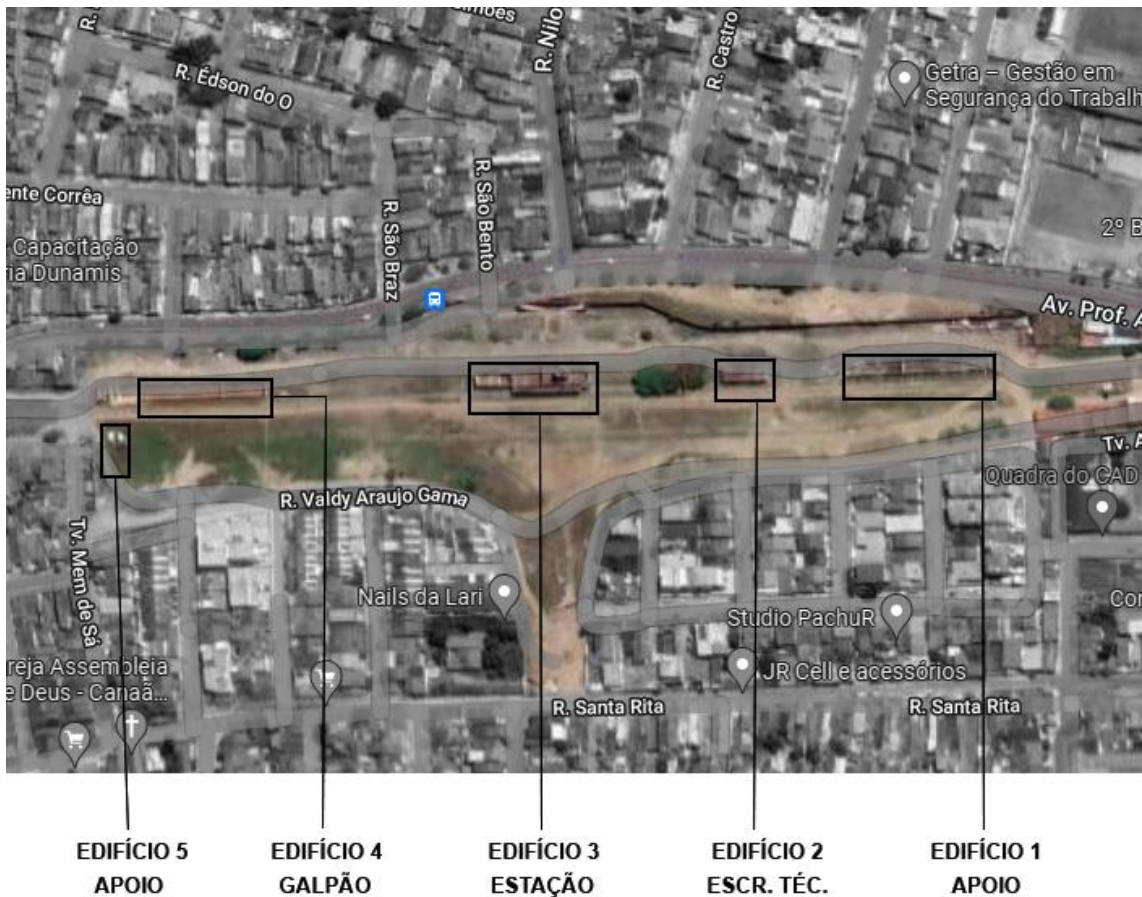
The rail yard comprises the following buildings: 1) Building 1- was used as a transshipment/sorting depot- it has a roof; Building 2- built in the 1970s and was

designed to house the engineering and administration sector (8th engineering residence), where technicians such as engineers, surveyors, security guards worked; Building 3- the building destined for the new station - Art Dèco-style building, where passengers embark and disembark, and it also housed the station bell, the clock, and the machinist's castle; building 4 - large shed - permanent shed; tool shop (rails, sleepers, clamps), workshop, gas station - one of the oldest buildings, even before the station; building 5- permanent depot. (AFONSO, 2017, p.4).

According to the argument put forward by Araújo and Sousa (2015), it must be agreed that logistics and infrastructure factors are allies in the development of a city and contributed to Campina Grande playing a key role due to its economic growth. Even with expectations that Campina Grande would continue to meet trade demands, however, industrial production slowed down due to the inability to meet the expensive export and transport values of products when compared to places that attributed greater investments in the sector. Considering all these oscillations and necessary strategies, adding to the lack of investments in the municipality, Campina Grande did not keep up with competitiveness, and its presence in this area was losing ground.

Despite the decrease in train users, strategies were implemented to encourage transport use. In the 1970s, the *Asa Branca* Train was introduced (which operated between Fortaleza and Recife). Its differentials included entertainment that brought its users together; it was equipped with a restaurant, musical performances, waiters/waitresses, more comfortable seats, and shorter journeys compared to traditional trains. Following the change from highways to railroads as a result of the aspects mentioned above, in 1980, it culminated in the closure of passenger transport at stations in Campina Grande. After that time, the trains were responsible for transporting loads of materials and products in large quantities (SANTOS, 2019). Due to its economic and cultural importance for the State, the railway stations were listed on 08/03/2001 with listing decree nº 22.082 by the Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage of the State of Paraíba.

Figure 3 – Satellite top view of new station area.



Source: Google maps, adapted by the author, 2022.

4.1 Current situation of the New Railway Station: results and discussion

One of the great challenges in the experience of contemporary cities is to perceive them in a broad and systemic sense, considering their past to reinvent the future from the understanding of the present. The objective of preserving memory, based on the assumption that history and its meanings has a great deal to offer us, can achieve new (re)meanings in contemporary cities. Reinventing the symbiosis between the past and the present is a task that demands sensitivity from current urbanism in dealing with the use, flows and landscape. Thus, understanding the different ways of socio-spatial appropriation in the territory is a way to design the space that corresponds to the pre-existence of the place.

Memories of cities play a structuring role in the identity of a people. Their characteristics transcend specific contexts and times, whether in the process of cultural, social formation, or even architecture and religion. The New Railway Station is located in the Jardim Quarenta neighborhood, one of the 52 neighborhoods in the municipality, and is located in a residential area surrounded by landmarks in the city; it is directly related to neighborhoods such as Centenário, São José, Liberdade, the Old Railway Station that are predominantly residential. Unlike other stations that use areas for other adapted uses (squares, public markets, bus stations; one of the best-known examples is the High Line Park – New York), the station is

centralized but resembles an urban void, with invisible buildings and non-utilization of a 48,945 m² area.

In some cases of deactivated stations, their non-appropriation by the residents or disuse by the administrative management is due to the lack of connection with the social context. The insertion in the road network is presented as segregated. In some cases of deactivated stations, their non-appropriation by the residents or disuse by the administrative management is due to the lack of connection with the social context and the road network is segregated. However, in the Map shown in Figure 4, it can be observed that the courtyard that houses the station is surrounded by equipment and services important to the city, such as Parks, the Transport Integration Terminal, Old Weir, theater, and museums, among others.

Figure 4 – Map of landmarks of the immediate surroundings of the New Railway Station.



Source: The author, 2022.

Some spaces in cities can serve as barriers imposed by physical or social limitations, regardless of their structural conformation. Some social expressions often promote a segregating and idle role in public areas. In others, the form itself can be considered a limit. Lynch (2006) exemplifies physical barriers: rivers, roads, viaducts, or other equipment/elements that cause a break in continuity. This type of interface defended by the aforementioned author influences the permeability and flow of spaces; the author considers railroads as an example of limits in cities, defining them as an interface of unused linear elements; however, depending on the perspective and use, there can also be seams and lines that connect two regions.

There is a paradox involving protected heritage assets of a society. While this regulation begins to value an important cultural symbol, numerous cases occur similarly to the New Railway Station, there is no monitoring and resources to maintain such urban equipment, consequently leading to the neglect and lack of use and appropriation of the citizens, a progressive deterioration (SILVA, 2019; PMCG, 2020). Not only is the listing or restoration in question, but

as these assets will be made available and enjoyed by society, Viollet Le Duc (2006, p.64) says that "As all the buildings that have been restored have a use, they are meant for a service. This aspect of utility cannot be neglected, to end the role of the restorer of old disused dispositions."

Forneck and Rocha (2020) state that there are two forms of abandonment, i.e., material abandonment, referring to any expression of neglect and deterioration of buildings, gaps, fissures, roofing, cracks, mold, that is, everything visible and explicitly liable to ruin. The other type of abandonment is that of sense, subtly noticed but intensely felt; however, materially, the place has little or no damage. Moreover, it is an invisible area, which is forgotten and ignored. Not necessarily one type of abandonment is related to the other. In the case of the New Railway Station, both types classified by the authors can be observed, invisible to public management, to the citizens who pass by but also expressively abandoned in its formal and structural symptoms. Figure 7 exemplifies from different angles the current situation of deterioration of the area, both by the undergrowth surrounding the buildings, the accumulation of garbage, the inside of the buildings that have been abandoned and have graffiti, and some of the sheds which are almost collapsing.

As can be seen in Figure 5, the components of what was once the heyday of technological advancement, consisting of Art Deco buildings and Protomodern architecture, have not been maintained nowadays. There are broken frames, accumulated waste, cracked walls, roofless buildings, vandalized walls, which is a minefield for social pathologies; this situation interferes directly in its immediate surroundings and consequently in society.

There is a lack of norms and definitions of resources to maintain and preserve existing listed buildings. There are no regulations mandating the use and financial destination for conserving these assets. There is no social integration with the surroundings, and perhaps many users who transit a little close prefer not to have it due to all the abandonment and deterioration that the space represents.

It is important to emphasize that concerning areas that have undergone transformations at different times, all changes over decades are also influenced by the social behavior of citizens; they are different historical contexts and expressions with varying forms of use. The continuous changing process has meant that the stations did not remain in their original use. Morales (2002) conceptualizes precisely this type of area and equipment that have become obsolete, with double conditions, where this joining is complex between the past and the present, defining what the author calls the "Terrain Vague."

This concept does not only refer to the spatial configuration, the voids, and invisibility of buildings and spaces that were once essential for their context, but the concept also refers to the discrepancy in the identity of a people, the memory of a society, areas that work imaginability of what happened and connected with our history. Terrain Vague can be applied to examples such as telegraphs, residual spaces, decommissioned or underused railway lines, and dilapidated buildings (MORALES, 2002).

Figure 5 – Current situation of the buildings at the New Railway Station in Campina Grande.



Source: Personal collection, 2021.

Viegas and Vecchiato (2013) also discuss this process of social transformation that interferes in a certain area arising from its new form of uses (mainly in areas involving industrial workers and the like), classifying it as gentrification; they refer to transitions mainly on a social scale, where the capitalist base and the commercial interests are the guides of valorizing a determined area. Due to the fact that the New Railway station's buildings are listed and lack public policies that revitalize them finding new uses, funding and encouraging maintenance, this heritage suffers as it is not attractive for private investors. It requires bureaucracy for a listed building. It is also a result of gentrification showing the reality of current users altered by conflicts of interest.

Figure 6 – Current situation of the buildings and surroundings at the New Railway Station.



Source: Personal collection, 2021.

5 CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, the rise of the New Railway Station in Campina Grande was described and how it was seen in Brazil at this time. The reasons for deactivating it were also explained. The railroad replacement and inactivation were also understood. It is important to emphasize the essentiality of a people in valuing their memory of heritage. Although it can be permeated by history and generations, actions are needed that maintain these important assets for society, as is the example of the station, one of those responsible for the genesis urban area of Campina Grande.

It is interesting to reflect that one type of abandonment is the result of another; it has an interdependence. The ruins only become ruins if their maintenance is neglected at a given moment. The obsolete areas with idle profiles are due to a lack of use. Therefore, there is a

direct connection between immaterial abandonment in the material. These negligences are not related to society, in the context of the listed heritage, but to urban managers who must guide and equate such elements of use and due maintenance. Bodies (municipal, state, federal, heritage, and cultural) are responsible for criticizing and directing the current situation so that it benefits or minimally does not harm the users (non-users) of these urban voids and their surroundings. To enjoy public spaces and equipment, the population needs the same endowment with the minimum necessary quality, attributes that include walking, safety, comfort, and lighting. It all boils down to critical research and attitudes that cover these bodies' primordial actions to valorize the public good and the non-dissociation of culture gradually.

The importance of regulations is recommended, as well as measures that provide for the allocation of funds to restore and maintain existing structures and adapt them to new uses that benefit their users. This study serves as an alert to professionals, planners, urbanists, architects, and historians, among others, of the historical representativeness and how much the existing functional gap in this extensive "urban void" corroborates social pathologies and segregation. All citizens must have the perspective of valuing our memory by prospecting urban and social developments that do not ruin the trajectory we have followed. Not only understanding, but seeking advances change these alarming realities.

By representing the evolution of human actions with attributions of meanings and representations, the appreciation and conservation of our history reflect and direct our actions in contemporary cities. In his text "Urbanity as a Duty of the Urban", Netto (2012) precisely correlates that the amalgamated urbanities serve as an experience of past otherness and urbanities, reflected in the present and making the becoming of the urban responsible for the future society; creating the link between experience, living, and responsibility.

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