

# The Material and Immaterial Urban Remains of a Railway Heritage – the case of Araraquara/SP (Brazil)

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## 1. Introduction

The aim of this article<sup>1</sup> is to contribute to the *Estrada de Ferro Araraquara (E.F.A.)* safeguard. In the mid-XIX century, the railway was responsible for the design of the main existing transport routes, urban centers and the territorial occupation of São Paulo State (Saes, 1981). The railway had an important role in the coffee market growth and it was the initial impetus to the industrial development in the western region of the State; meanwhile, the paved roads seemed to emerge as a better system when the acceleration of the national territorial consolidation and the modernization of the economic foundations were valuable opportunities, thus, the road system expanded in a higher rate than the railway system. Araraquara made part of this scenario. Recently, due to the construction of a new railway branch out of the city, the urban railway tracks are being deactivated, therefore, it is important to reuse it and to preserve its memory.

Currently, due to the industrial displacement from the inside of the urban grid to its suburbs, which is the Araraquara railway situation, the industrial heritage has been the focus of many urban discussions. Some artists' and researchers' work support the railway heritage safeguard. When many studies about Araraquara are put in parallel, the railway influence in its cultural, economic and demographic development is highlighted. Therefore, this article will present a reflection about the preservation of the urban tracks of Araraquara from the comprehension of its importance as a material and immaterial heritage.

## 2. Material Railway Heritage

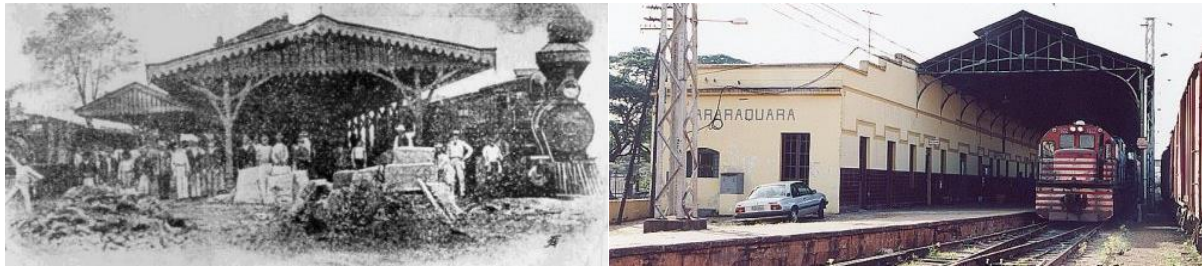
The Italian José Bertoni, merchant and the Italy's General Consulate representative in Araraquara, was chosen to build the first railway station of the city, when the railway tracks arrived in São Carlos, just 20 km far from Araraquara (Martins; Bergamin, 2012). The whole building was built by wood, it was small, extended by a covered patio and located relatively far away from the urban center. This infrastructure does not exist anymore, the building was rebuilt in 1915, when it

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assumed the architecture partially preserved as the *Railway Museum Francisco Aurelino de Araújo* (2011).



*Figura 1 –Araraquara railway station in 1910 and 2002. Fonte: W. L. C. Barcellone (2009).*

After the construction of the first station, the railway turned to be a second urban centrality, because it attracted the city growth in its direction and the emergence of many new urban services, neighborhoods and industries in the other side of a river that the city was flanked by. In 1896 (Martins; Bergamin, 2012), the *Companhia de Ferro Araraquara* was created, but, due to a sequence of epidemics diseases during 1890s, the first headquarters was located in the State Capital, the city of São Paulo. The railway infrastructure was expanded through the construction of a maneuvering yard and workshops, which increased an urban gap between the two sides of the railway tracks. From 1900, the City Hall and the Railway Company have developed a number of initiatives for the opening of roads to connect both parts of the city.

Still in the mid-XIX century, the land became a valuable product, consequently, many allotments were designed. The urban planning, from this moment on, took in account the transportation system to develop the urban grid. Thus, the circulation areas were one of the themes developed in the elaboration of some municipal rules, known as *Código de Posturas*. Araraquara first *Código de Posturas* date in 1867 (Lança, 2009), before the railway arrival. This document was revised in 1902, after the epidemics of smallpox (1890) and yellow fever (1895). While the *Código de Posturas* had concerns about the mobility, any significant rule to the railway integration in the urban life was found over the years. In 1997, 130 years after the first *Código de Posturas* creation, the requirements created to the railway were still insignificants in terms of urban concern. The only proposition of the *Código de Posturas* of this year was the construction of a parking lot to 15 vehicles<sup>2</sup>.

Other public initiatives seem to contribute to the railway urban alienation. In 1900, the national Law n° 498 was launched; this law gave some tax exemption to land owners able to build working-class neighborhoods out of the city center (Rolnik, 1999). At this moment, some of them, like *Vila Xavier*, were built in Araraquara on the opposite side of the railway, far from the urban grid; they were built by the Railway Company. Thus, to connect the new suburb to the urban center, some

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<sup>2</sup> Item “c”, paragraph 2, Article 232, III section, XIII chapter of the Lei Complementar n° 18, December 22, 1997;

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tunnels were constructed with the involvement of the railway workers. The older houses of the working-class neighborhoods were ready in 1920.

After the First World War, the national railway situation was not prosperous. The *Companhia de Ferro Araraquara* bankrupted in 1914; due to that, in 1916, the *The São Paulo Northern Railway Co.* became the railway manager, the company was coordinated by the French Paul Deleuse (Martins; Bergamin, 2012). However, this company did not invest in the railway, consequently, in 1919, there was a strike, thus, the Government reclaimed the railway and, at this moment, the *Companhia de Estrada de Ferro Araraquarense (E.F.A.)* was created.

During the 1920s, the urban growth was further accelerated due to a coffee price decrease and the banks acceptance of mortgages as loan guarantee. As an effort to control the economy, the Federal Government started to charge some taxes over new coffee plantations, thus, the investors redirected their finances to the property sector (Rolnik, 1999).

Therefore, Araraquara was developing very fast, some paved roads started to be built, in the end of the 1930s, to connect the city to the State Capital, like the highway Washington Luís, inaugurated in 1948. Around 1938, *Vila Xavier* became a part of a urban project called *Cidade Ferroviária* (Railway City), but it was only in 1947 that the worker's houses construction started; they were inaugurated in 1948 (Martins; Bergamin, 2012). Some years later, in 1954, more 200 houses were ready next by the old maneuvering yard and workshops; currently these two buildings are used by América Latina Logística – ALL. Even the rail tracks, currently used by this same company, were changed; in the beginning the railway tracks of E.F.A were built by a narrow gauge (1,00m), unlike the tracks that arrived to Araraquara from São Paulo, thus, in 1952, all the railway tracks were replaced by the large gauge (1,60m) (Dardes, 1987).

Besides these urban infrastructures and services, the railway is related to many others, like: a big house of the German Carlos Neck, an old director of Cia. Araraquara, built in 1910, considered a “beauty reference”; the Railway Professional School built by the railway workers (1930); a tunnel built by the railway workers under the railway tracks almost 600 meters far from the *Nestlé* industry (1940); a viaduct of almost 400 meters of extension built by the railway workers; the *Associação Ferroviária de Esportes (A.F.E.)* built to and by the railway workers during the 1950s, where the *Ferroviária* soccer time was created; and a tank of oil. Even the industrial meccanization of the city started by the railway, which, in conjunction with *Fábrica Lupo*, received the first IBM computers of Araraquara (Bergamin, 2013).

From the 1950s, the country industrialization grew. In Araraquara, an Industrial District was built between 1962 and 1976, which contributed to the unorganized urban growth, resulting in the spread of many working-class neighborhoods. Therefore, the property speculation was so intense that

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Araraquara gained many urban gaps, a urban process that needed to be controlled by the Municipal Government around the 1970s (Zequim, 2007). Since then, the regularization of an allotment was possible only if the area already had all the urban infrastructure necessary, like energy and water systems.

The National Law nº 10.257, approved on July 10, 2001, called *Estatuto da Cidade*, was created to try to create a more social and inclusive policy, trying to avoid this urban speculation. This Law establishes some guidelines to be followed by all Brazilian municipalities, and to this end, it requires the creation of a master plan (*Plano Diretor*) to all cities. The first *Plano Diretor* of Araraquara was launched in 1971, which does not have any kind of important quote about the railway. The only urban strategy to the railway area was the creation of a *non aedificandi* area of 15 meters of width in both sides of the railway tracks. Besides that, even the concerns about the urban heritage is not mentioned along this document.

With the passing time, things changed. The last *Plano Diretor* of Araraquara (2014) established rules and interests in urban cultural heritage conservation, revitalization and preservation, considering the railway as a part of this panorama. The railway area is defined as strategic for the insertion of new "centralities and urban spaces". The area has been called *Avenida Parque Orla Ferroviária* (Park-Avenue Railway), all the railway of the city became a part of the "Corridors and Poles of urban centers" (CEU). The aim of this plan is to transform the area around the railway in a green belt.

Among the projects planned for the *Orla Ferroviária*, some connection routes between the two sides of the railway were designed, as well as: a landscape project (linear park), a feasibility study of a Light Rail Vehicle connected to the bus system, a bike path, the creation of a Public Administrative Centre and leisure/recreation areas with extensive reforestation areas. Therefore, the municipality has established guidelines for the full reintegration of the railway area and the preservation of its memory. However, not only the railway material heritage is bigger than its own infrastructure, but there are many possible ways to preserve its memory, which requires a reflection and an appreciation on the part of citizens.

### 3. Railway Cultural

The railway attracted many immigrants looking for new opportunities, therefore, many industries have emerged from railway workers initiatives, some of them are internationally known. The Italian Antonio Blundi, for example, in 1913 (Hildebrand, 2015), after working for the São Paulo Railway Company (company that connected the West of São Paulo to the coast), has created a coffee peeler patented by the Scottish industry Mac Hardy. The Spanish ex-railway worker Celso Martinez

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Carrera made part of some technological innovation too. In 1909 (Piacentini, 2015), he started the wood furniture factory *Furniture Carrera*, where he created a wooden bed for hospitals. This furniture has a specific design and even then it was only produced in iron. During the First World War, the iron importation got expensive, so the creation of Carrera was very successful. However, the Spanish did not patent the product, thus, one of his employees made it, becoming the owner of the design. Due to this, the factory collapsed.

There were some industries that were not directly related to the railway workers, but they were attracted by the railway infrastructure, as metal workshops and foundries, notably *Serraria Luzitana* of Virgílio Rodrigues and *Cypriano Martinez*. Even the food industry had its history linked to the railway. The pasta industry *Carmona*, of the entrepreneurs Nicholas Carmona and José Carmona, provided food for the cooperative of *Estrada de Ferro Araraquara* in the 1920 (Piacentini, 2014). During the Second World War, due to the shortage of wheat flour, the factory started to produce corn flour. This industry was closed in 1993.

The Araraquara railway memory was taken over by some artists and researchers too. Sidney Rodrigues, an ex-railway worker, was professor at the Fine Arts School of Araraquara, an artist and a poet. One of his poems is called *The Train*. Ignácio de Loyola Brandão Lopes was not a railway worker, but his father was. The journalist reports many railway memories in the book *A morena da estação*. Francisco Bergamim (2013), current press journalist of Araraquara, made an investigation able to collect reports of old railway workers, who have today around 80 years old, preserving, like that, a memory that would get lost.

All interviewed of Bergamim seemed to share the same melancholy in relation to the emergence of FEPASA – Ferrovia Paulista S.A., in 1971. The aim of this company was to manage all the São Paulo State railway system as one big system after the devaluation of the railway. So far, in Araraquara many railway workers were relocated to other offices, when the *Politécnica de São Paulo* (USP) sent its graduating students to assume the operations of the railway.

“And then it became FEPASA, the workshop was closed, everything was over.” (Report of the old railway worker Orlando Steak, cit. for Bergamin, 2013, translated by the author)

### 4. Final Considerations

Since the end of the XIX century, the Araraquara railway has an important role in the city development. The railway workers became a part of the urban identity, being commonly used in the construction of various buildings and infrastructures. However, despite the railway being a common denominator in urban, economic and social studies of Araraquara, currently, this heritage is in danger

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of being lost. Analyzing the long term process of urban growth in parallel to the history of the railway it was possible to understand the relationship between the development of Araraquara and the path of the train, as well as the diversity of material and immaterial value of the railway infrastructure. More than the demographic and economic growth of the region crossed by the *Estrada de Ferro Araraquarense*, many infrastructures have been attracted by the railway, causing the development of a space and a social identity. The appreciation of this heritage might provide an appropriation of its space and memory by the current inhabitants of the city, contributing to its reintegration and safeguard.

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