

## **Spatial Organization of Caçador City, Santa Catarina State, Brazil: Transformations on the Urban Landscape (1917-1950)**

### **Organização Espacial da Cidade de Caçador, Santa Catarina, Brasil: Transformações na Paisagem Urbana (1917-1950)**

Enviado em: 13-11-2025

Aceito em: 13-01-2026

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#### **Abstract**

To understand how the urban space of the municipality of Caçador, Santa Catarina State, South region of Brazil, was structured, this article will conduct an analysis of this process. Through images, maps, reports, and bibliographic references related to the theme, we aim to exemplify how the structuring of the urban landscape occurred. Initially, a study will be conducted on the first layouts that gave rise to the spatial organization of the municipality of Caçador, emphasizing the main transformations that took place between 1917 and 1934, the year the municipality became emancipated. In the second part, through the analysis of municipal decrees and laws, we aim to understand the governmental actions and their impacts on the configuration of this urban landscape, until 1950.

**Keywords:** Urban Landscape; Local History; Caçador City.

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## Resumo

Para compreender como o espaço urbano do município de Caçador, no estado de Santa Catarina, região Sul do Brasil, foi estruturado, este artigo realizará uma análise desse processo. Através de imagens, mapas, relatórios e referências bibliográficas relacionadas ao tema, buscamos exemplificar como ocorreu a estruturação da paisagem urbana. Inicialmente, será conduzido um estudo sobre os primeiros traçados que deram origem à organização espacial do município de Caçador, destacando as principais transformações ocorridas entre 1917 e 1934, ano em que o município se emancipou. Na segunda parte, através da análise de decretos e leis municipais, buscamos entender as ações governamentais e seus impactos na configuração dessa paisagem urbana, até 1950.

**Palavras-chave:** Paisagem urbana; História Local; Cidade de Caçador.

## Introduction

The study of urban spatial organization provides a window into the intricate web of historical, economic, and social transformations that define a region's evolution. The municipality of Caçador, situated in the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil, serves as a compelling case study for exploring these dynamics during the critical period from 1917 to 1950. This article seeks to provide a thorough examination of Caçador's urban landscape, tracing the influence of the São Paulo – Rio Grande Railway and subsequent governmental interventions that played pivotal roles in the region's development.

Initially, the establishment of the railway station in 1910 marked the beginning of intensified territorial occupation, transforming a predominantly rural area into a burgeoning urban center. This infrastructure not only facilitated the movement of goods and people but also introduced new economic, social, and cultural dynamics that were previously absent in the region. Through a detailed analysis of historical documents, images, maps, and legislative frameworks, this study aims to reconstruct the processes that underpinned the spatial organization of Caçador.

Importantly, the article emphasizes the dual forces of technological advancement and political action in shaping urban landscapes. It explores how the railway served as a catalyst for economic growth while also acting as a conduit for cultural exchange and modernization. The study further investigates the role of governmental policies post-emancipation in structuring the urban environment,

highlighting the creation of norms, regulations, and urban planning strategies that guided Caçador's transformation.

### **The Initial Layouts (1917 – 1934)**

The installation of the São Paulo – Rio Grande Railway facilitated the integration of population centers residing in the contested region and their connection with other regions of the country. From the railway stations, new economic, social, and aesthetic bases were established for this territory.

Regarding the territory that would become the municipality of Caçador, it was only after the installation of the Rio Caçador Station in 1910 that the occupation of this territory intensified. At the time, the region was predominantly rural, composed of dense forests of araucarias, imbuías, and other species. Near the station, there was only a small population center composed of a few houses (Valentini, 2010).

The station was built on one of the few flat areas available, located on the left bank of the Rio do Peixe in Santa Catarina State, in the locality of Fazenda Faxinal do Bom Sucesso, which at the time belonged to the municipality of Campos Novos. The owner of the farm, Francisco Corrêa de Mello, settled in the region in 1881, being considered in local historiography as a pioneer in the occupation of this post-traditional groups territory (Caçador, 2019).

According to the agreements between the Brazil Railway Company and the Brazilian government, the lands on the railway margin, extending up to 15 kilometers on each side, would belong to the construction company. However, since Francisco Corrêa de Mello had the title to the property, only 510,052 square meters relating to the "frame" of the Rio Caçador Station, as well as the lands on the farm's margin, were demarcated, respecting his ownership title (Thomé, 1982, p.28).

Over the subsequent years, with the end of the Guerra do Contestado (1912 – 1916) and the signing of the "boundary agreement" between the states of Santa Catarina and Paraná (1916), numerous enterprises were established, mainly in the timber sector, intensifying the occupation of this territory. Alongside these transformations, there also arose a need for new products and services, driving the region's development and expanding the urban spatial organization.

For part of the population, these transformations were received with great enthusiasm, generating a universe of representations closely related to the idea of modernity. On the other hand, these changes also led to the destruction of pre-existing socioeconomic relations in the region. In this perspective, Márcia Espig argues that:

The railway represented a civilizing element; however, it was not a peaceful or consensual relationship. It created a dichotomy between civilized and savage or backward; progress is presented as inexorable and seen solely in its positive aspects. Those who do not adhere to it are deemed disposable; thus, the railway becomes an instrument for imposing a capitalist order and reinforcing and/or creating codes of behavior and morality (Espig, 2008, p.164).

This landscape, which gradually takes shape, is an urban landscape, differentiated, more dynamic, and is the place where the modern experience finds its space. It is precisely from the railway station, an element of articulation, that this experience materializes, not only through material modernization but also through cultural modernization. It is through it that novelties arrive, that contact between the urban centers and the interior occurs. Thus, "the modernization of the city simultaneously inspires and forces the modernization of the souls of its citizens" (Berman, 2007, p.177).

Regarding the spatial organization of the municipality of Caçador, analyzing the early maps and images, we can see that during the first decades after its installation, the Rio Caçador Station became a conditioning element in the urban expansion process, serving as a physical reference for its initial layouts.

The first population centers established themselves around the Rio Caçador Station. On the left side of the Rio do Peixe, on lands where the Fazenda Faxinal do Bom Sucesso was located, developed the settlement known as "Rio Caçador." On the right side of the Rio do Peixe, in territory belonging to the state of Paraná, emerged the community "Vila Caçador," later named Santelmo, belonging to the municipality of Porto União da Vitória.

Regarding "Vila Caçador," its development was directly related to the interests and agreements established by the Brazil Railway Company during the construction process of the São Paulo – Rio Grande Railway. According to established agreements, the company was obliged to promote the settlement of lands on or near the railway margins.

In 1917, the company designed within the property known as "Rio Preto," on the right side of the Rio do Peixe, near the Rio Caçador Station, the "Vila Caçador," a small urban center composed of smallholdings and colonial lots (Thomé, 1982, p.50). Parallel to this project and the growing process of occupying the region, these lots began to be marketed to immigrants, mostly descendants of Italians and Germans from Rio Grande do Sul.

As explained by Julio César Corrente, this process reflects some current characteristics of the municipality. In the place where "Vila Caçador" was designed, the oldest neighborhoods of the city are located, such as Bairro dos Municípios and Sorgatto, in addition to a significant number of residents of Italian origin (Caçador, 2019).

On the other side of the river, in the settlement of Rio Caçador, from the sale of part of the lands belonging to Francisco Corrêa de Mello, the first urban lots appeared. In the collection of the Historical and Anthropological Museum of the Contestado Region, one of the first plans related to the urban layout of the municipality was found (Figure 1). It consists of a set of urban lots located where the city center is currently located.

Figure 1 - Measurements of Urban Plots in the Rio Caçador Settlement (1925).



Source: Collection of the Historical and Anthropological Museum of the Contestado Region. Organization and design of the authors.

Analyzing Figure 2, it is possible to visualize the construction of the Church Matriz, in the middle of a clearing opened under the forest, the Church stands out in the landscape. Around it, the few residences express the small developing urban center. To those who observe this image, the first street layouts convey an urban air contrasting with the untouched forest of araucarias in the background. According to the prevailing discourses at the time, especially the idea of progress, the image symbolizes a notion of the advance of "civilization" against "backwardness," represented in the image by the forest.



Figure 2 - Rio Caçador (1924).



Source: Municipal Archive of Caçador.

Interestingly, the land where the Cathedral of Caçador is currently located, in the central region of the municipality, was a donation made by Francisco Corrêa de Mello. At the time, in 1924, the Catholic Church received the equivalent of four urban lots (3,200 m<sup>2</sup>) for the construction of a Church, on the condition that the Catholic Church maintain the Matriz on the donation site under penalty of rescinding the act (Thomé, 1982, p.41-42).

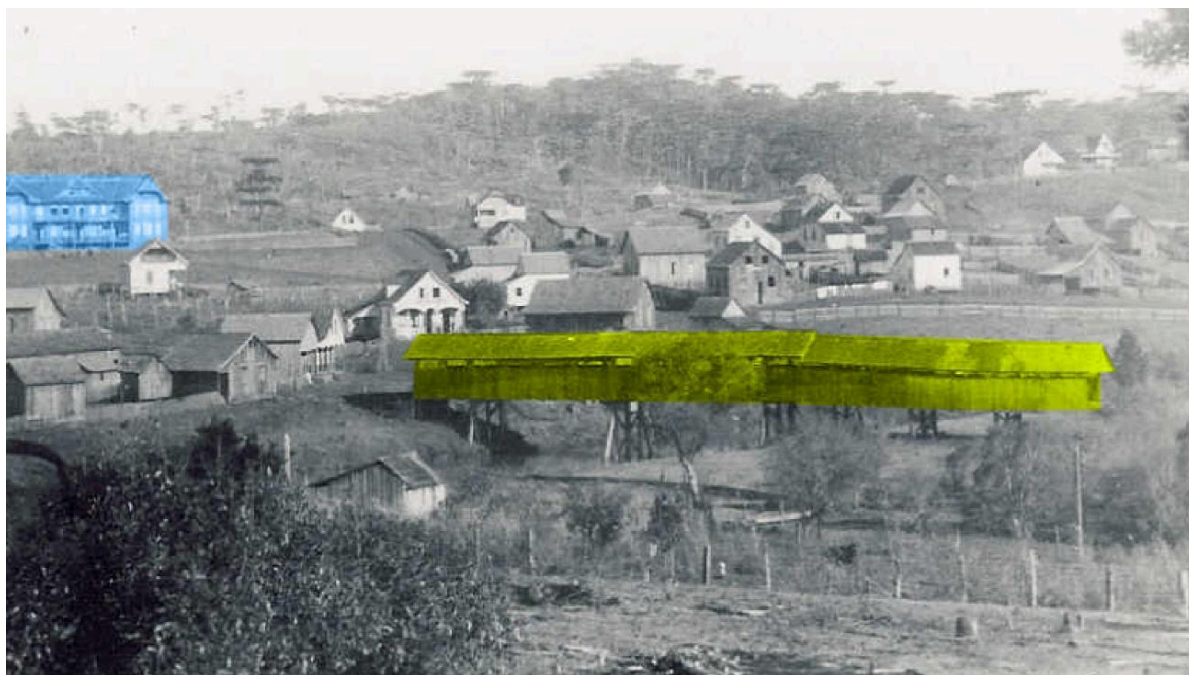
Another noteworthy fact is that, unlike other population centers where the Church became a reference point for urban layouts and was considered the central point of the settlements and later cities, in Caçador, it was the Railway Station, in its first decades post-installation, the conditioning element in this process, surpassing the Church.

Despite being distinct villages belonging to different municipalities, the proximity between the two localities allowed for parallel development between the two communities. Products and services were shared, with the Railway Station as a

common element, used for cargo transportation, passenger transport, and merchandise circulation. This process intensified from 1924, with the construction of a wooden bridge over the Rio do Peixe, linking the two localities, an initiative of businessman Antônio Bortolon (Caçador, 2019).

In Figure 3, it is possible to observe the Antônio Bortolon Wooden Bridge uniting the two communities. In the foreground, at the bottom of the image, the territory belonging to the Rio Caçador community is highlighted, in the center of the image, in yellow, is the Antônio Bortolon Wooden Bridge, and at the top, Vila Caçador. Further analyzing Figure 3, near the lateral margin in the Vila Caçador settlement, it is possible to observe the old Colégio Aurora, highlighted in blue. Founded in 1928, the school was closely related to the development of the municipality of Caçador. A reference in education, families from the entire region sent their children to study at the institution.

Figure 3 - Bridge Antônio Bortolon (1934).



Source: Municipal Archive of Caçador. Adaptated by the authors.

These memories remain alive in the local population's memory. In an interview with the "Museu do Contestado," resident Ardelino Grando states:



The railroad was not only important for the timber industry; it contributed to the education sector, the trade sector. [...] Students who study at the Aurora gymnasium. [...] Students came from Videira, Joaçaba, Erechim, and came by train, and returned to visit their families by train and stayed in the boarding school here (Fundação municipal de Cultura, 2010).

It is noted that in the 1920s, the settlement of Rio Caçador already stood out due to its degree of development. In this context, on January 9, 1923, through Municipal Law No. 289, the settlement of "Rio Caçador" was elevated to the status of District of Campos Novos, an important step towards its future emancipation (Campos Novos, 1923).

As described in Municipal Law No. 289, the settlement came to be called "Paz do Rio Caçador." This document also established its boundaries:

Art 1º - The district of Paz do Rio Caçador is created, with its headquarters at the station of the same name. Art 2º - Its boundaries are as follows: Starting from the Barra do Rio Veado, on the Rio do Peixe, upstream until finding a large curve, then onwards in a straight line, in the opposite direction to the traveled terrain, until finding the boundaries of the municipality of Curitibaanos, along these boundaries with various directions, until reaching the Rio Caçador; dividing with the municipality of Porto União and through the said river downstream until the Barra do Rio Veado starting point. Art 3º - Provisions to the contrary are revoked. (Campos Novos, 1923).

In Figure 4, the urban configuration of the District of Paz do Rio Caçador in the 1930s can be observed. In the image, it is possible to visualize the extensive yard of the Railway Station composed of several piles of wood, evidencing the timber potential. In the following decades, Caçador would come to be known as the "Timber Capital," becoming the largest exporter of pine in America (Valentini, 2010).

Around the Station, highlighted in red, various enterprises were established. Analyzing Figure 4, it is possible to visualize next to the Station, in yellow, the presence of a restaurant, which was used daily by residents, travelers, and passengers. On the street above the Railway Station, highlighted in blue, there is a two-story building, the Hotel União, which also served as accommodation for travelers and passengers. The installation of these enterprises was directly linked to the influence exerted by the railway in this territory.

Figure 4 - Rio Caçador (1930).



Source: Municipal Archive of Caçador. Adapted by the authors.

However, it is necessary to emphasize that this urban development, although directly linked to the installation of the São Paulo – Rio Grande Railway, needs to be complemented. In fact, during the period under analysis, without the presence of the railway, the formation of the urban core of Caçador would not have been possible. However, it is essential to point out the human and natural factors, as without individual efforts and the natural wealth present in the region, this process would not have been possible. In this sense, it can be affirmed that Caçador developed with the same intensity due to the installation of the railway and the social and environmental factors present in its territory. In the year 1932, faced with the strong resistance of Campos Novos to the desire for emancipation, the District of Paz do Rio Caçador became part of Curitibaanos (Caçador, 2019). Less than a decade after being elevated to a district of Campos Novos, on February 22, 1934, Decree No. 508 was signed, giving rise to the Municipality of Caçador (Santa Catarina, 1934).

With political and administrative independence, the directions of the newly emancipated municipality began to be traced by public officials who bore the responsibility for the growth, development, and the very future of the municipality of Caçador. The pioneering responsibility for the Caçador executive fell to Senhor Leônidas Coelho de Souza, the municipality's first mayor, and the Legislative Chamber

began its activities solemnly on April 5, 1935, thus marking the democratic field of discussion, debate, and struggle for the common good (VALENTINI, 2010, p.21).

Regarding the transformations in the landscape of this territory, specifically its spatial organization, it was precisely from its political emancipation that a greater concern of public bodies was observed in search of structuring the urban space. Through a series of decrees and laws, the urban perimeter was delimited, its division into areas and neighborhoods, as well as the creation of norms and bodies responsible for the urban development of the municipality.

### **Public Policies and Urban Space Organization (1934 – 1950).**

Urban space is in constant transformation. Resulting from a dynamic and complex relationship, its organization is directly related to the actions employed by the social agents who are part of it. Moreover, other factors can be listed that may interfere in this process, such as relief, vegetation, climate, economy, technology, political and sociocultural aspects. According to Landim (2004, p.24), "the city can only be recognized through its urban landscape, and this landscape is the result of the economic, social, and cultural elements that produced it in a given period and context."

In studying this topic, we seek to understand the role of the State, at the municipal level, in the spatial organization of the city of Caçador, paying attention to the instruments employed in this relationship and the social dynamics of which it is a part. It should be emphasized that the State is configured as one of the main social agents, responsible for the implementation of public services, the elaboration of laws and norms linked to land use, and although there is legislation that regulates its actions, it is not a neutral relationship, reflecting, in many cases, the interest of certain groups (Corrêa, 1989). Thus, Corrêa reveals that:

This complex and varied range of possibilities for action by the Capitalist State does not occur by chance. Nor does it process in a socially neutral way, as if the State were an institution that governed according to a rationality based on the principles of social, economic, and spatial balance, hovering above social classes and their conflicts. Its action is marked by the conflicts of interests of the different members of the class society, as well as the alliances between them. It tends to privilege the interests of that segment or segments of the ruling class that, at each moment, are in power (Corrêa, 1989, p. 25-26).

Moving on to the analysis of this structuring process, it can be affirmed that it was only after its emancipation in 1934 that the first governmental efforts occurred in favor of an effective policy related to the organization of the urban perimeter. As agreed by Decree No. 508, of 1934, the district "Paz do Rio Caçador" obtained its political autonomy and was renamed "Caçador." In the first two articles of the decree, the municipal boundaries were established, giving rise to the territorial bases of Caçador. On the occasion, it was agreed:

Art. 1º. - The Municipality of Caçador is created, whose territory will be constituted of the districts of Santelmo, Taquara Verde, and part of São João dos Pobres, separated from Porto União; Rio Caçador, from Curitiba; Rio das Antas, from Campos Novos, and São Bento de Cruzeiro [...] Art. 2º. - The headquarters of the new Municipality will be constituted by the settlements of Rio Caçador and Santelmo, which will be called Caçador (Santa Catarina, 1934).

It is important to highlight that the political emancipation of Caçador occurred during the so-called "Vargas Era," a historical period that begins in 1930 and extends until 1945, marked by strong authoritarianism centered on the figure of then president of Brazil, Getúlio Vargas. In this line, federal policies had direct implications on the political organization of the municipality. In 1937, with the installation of the political regime known as the "Estado Novo" and the new republican constitution, the autonomy of the states was limited, and they were governed by state intervenors, responsible for appointing municipal mayors. According to Valentini (2010), this period, which begins in 1937 with the Estado Novo and extends until 1947, was marked by strong authoritarianism and signaled a hiatus in the municipal legislative activities of Caçador, as the mayors appointed by the state intervenors began to legislate through decree-laws.

It was precisely in this political context that the first decrees and regulations concerning the regulation and spatial organization of the municipality were established. Among these actions, the highlight is Decree-Law No. 01 of 1938, which determined the increase of Caçador's urban perimeter. As justification, the following arguments were presented:

Considering that this increase in constructions, the municipal services were carried out in the construction of several streets, slopes, and other necessary services. Considering that the City Hall has carried out in new streets not included in the current urban perimeter, several useful and necessary services, whose streets should be incorporated into the urban frame of the Municipal Headquarters (Caçador, 1938).

The increase in the urban perimeter was justified as a necessity in view of the municipality's growth and the number of constructions. Thus, in 1938, the territorial limits of the urban area were redefined, increasing its extension. According to the documentation in force during this period, it is also possible to perceive a governmental effort related to the improvement of the urban center. In this sense, the report published in the newspaper "A Imprensa" of the municipality of Caçador on February 4, 1940, stands out, which reports the work carried out by the municipal government related to the installation of curbs, painting of houses and walls, and the paving of sidewalks.

The curb installation service began for the continuation of paving in the section that goes from the corner of Mr. Elias Abdala to the end of the block. This improvement is of great importance for our city, as it will partially solve the traffic, on the main road of the city. The 25 de Março street, with the painting of houses, walls, and paving, will honor our progress. We know that Mr. Tte Guedes, Municipal Mayor, will also attack the construction of the street facing the Railway Station, to give it an aspect compatible with our city status. Very well, Mr. Mayor (A Imprensa, February 4, 1940, p.1).

The works aimed to offer the population of Caçador greater urban mobility and safety. Through these actions, it sought to solve problems related to city traffic, providing better circulation conditions, and of course, urban beautification, making the city's appearance more attractive to residents and visitors. Analyzing Figure 5, an image of Carlos Sperança Street in the 1940s, it is possible to observe the transformations that Caçador was experiencing. The image draws attention for the contrast between masonry buildings, some still under construction, sharing the space with wooden houses. Also noted is the installation of curbs amid the dirt road and the use of carts in the city's central area, sharing the space with motor vehicles.



Figure 5 - Street Carlos Sperança (Decade of 1940).



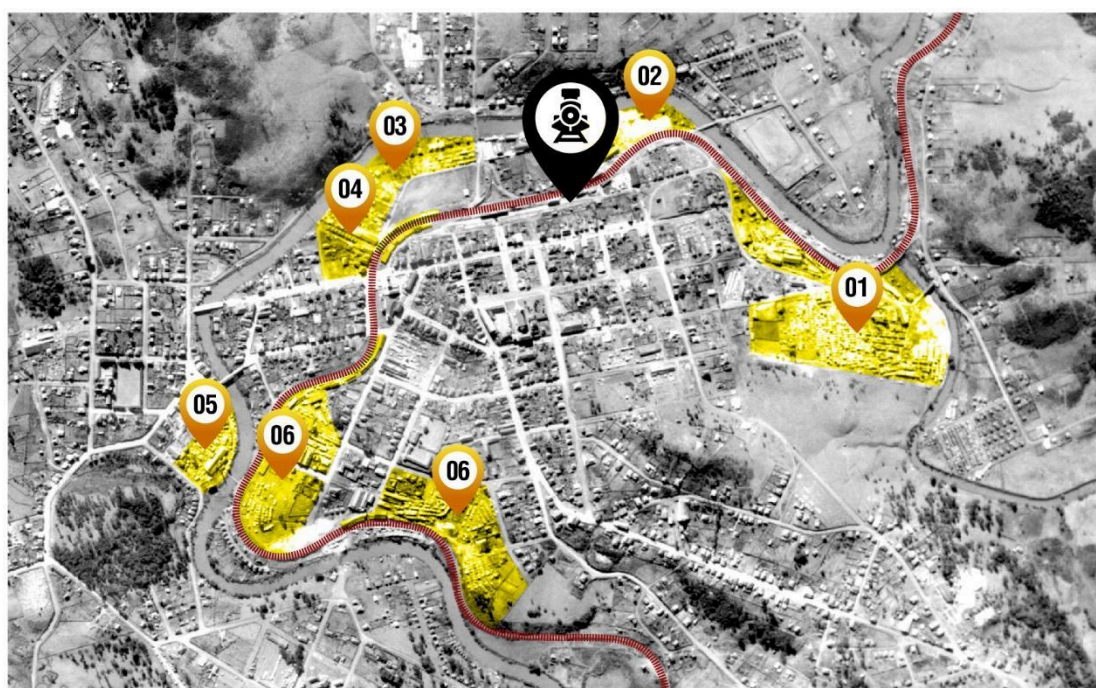
Source: Municipal Archive of Caçador.

The lack of specific regulation for this space generated new demands on the municipality. In this context, Decree-Law No. 2 of 1944 was drafted. Composed of four chapters, the decree sought to meet a local need, given the demographic and economic growth of the municipality, as well as the lack of regulation of urban space. Through these regulations, the urban planning guidelines for the municipality were established. In its first chapter, the division of the urban area into five Zones was established: Central Zone, First Zone, Second Zone, Third Zone, and Fourth Zone. In the second chapter, the construction norms in the Urban Zones were defined, establishing the types of constructions permitted for each zone, as well as the materials to be used and the number of floors allowed (A Imprensa, 1944, p. 1).

Regarding the types of buildings and their materials, it is essential to recall that during the first decades when the development of the urban core of Caçador began, the constructions were entirely made of wood. Furthermore, as can be seen in Figure 6, an aerial image of the municipality of Caçador in the 1950s, near the railway station

in the central area of the municipality, highlighted in yellow, there were numerous sawmills, which had their yards at the edge of the railway tracks, close to residences and commercial establishments, with no distinction between the urban core and the industrial park.

Figure 6 – Aereal image of Caçador (1957).



-  **Estação Ferroviária Rio Caçador**
-  **Estrada de Ferro São Paulo - Rio Grande**
-  **Serrarias/Madeireiras/Depósitos**

- 01 - Douat S/A.**
- 02 - Irmãos Kurtz.**
- 03 - Hilário Baú & Cia Ltda.**
- 04 - Victório Poletto & Cia. Ltda.**
- 05 - Frederico Reichmann S/A.**
- 06 - S/A Castelli Indústria e Comércio.**

Source: Santa Catarina State Planning Department.

From Decree-Law No. 2 of 1944, the municipal government began to establish norms for industrial constructions in the urban area, especially wooden buildings. Thus, according to art. 2, paragraph (e), it was established that "wooden houses intended for depots, factories, etc. may only be built on the building alignment, in the suburban

frame, at the discretion of the municipality" (A Imprensa, May 14, 1944, p.3). In practice, these changes occurred slowly, as these measures referred only to new constructions.

Alongside these policies, the municipality also began to supervise constructions, as stated in article 27 of the Municipal Code of Postures: "no construction, reconstruction, modification, or alteration of closed additions or reform of properties, walls, and fences facing public roads will be carried out in any part of the urban perimeter without prior license from the municipality" (A Imprensa, February 13, 1944, p.3).

Among the motivations for the elaboration of these public policies, the problems related to the disordered construction of sawmills and their depots near residential and commercial areas stand out. In this sense, one of the greatest concerns was related to the fire hazards in areas intended for timber processing and storage and their proximity to residential areas.

The newspaper "A Imprensa" of the municipality of Caçador presented a report on December 1, 1943, related to a fire in the municipality. The report highlights the concern of the vehicle, as well as the local population, regarding the incident. According to the report:

We were right when we complained about the wooden depots on the streets and squares of the city. The fire on Tuesday, the 23rd, was, unfortunately, the material proof of what we foresaw. A city built mostly of wood, it is incomprehensible that there are piles and piles of boards around the houses, waiting for the first spark to catch fire (A Imprensa, December 1, 1943, p.1).

Among the incidents, perhaps the most notable is precisely the fire at the Rio Caçador Station in 1941, when it was completely destroyed. Not much information was found about this episode. However, as already addressed in the second chapter, it is known that between the 1930s and 1950s, the Rio Caçador station was among the three largest in terms of volumes of sawn wood shipments (Thomé, 2010), playing a prominent role in the municipality.

A central element for the municipality's economic development, the construction of a new station was conceived as a priority for municipal authorities and part of the population. On August 22, 1943, the newspaper "A Imprensa" published a report on the new railway station, describing its architectural project. According to the publication:

The new building will have regular proportions and modern architectural lines, possessing magnificent facilities for public use, including a restaurant, bar, etc. [...] In front of the Station, a retaining wall and staircase will be built for access to the city, with a garden in front of the platform, in the part where the maneuvering triangle lines are located. (A Imprensa, August 22, 1943, p.1).

In the report, a tone of euphoria can be identified regarding the new project. Larger and more modern than the previous station, the new building had a series of novelties, providing, in the newspaper's view, a structure adequate to the municipality's demand. As described in the report, "the project is good, but Caçador well deserves it, for the revenue of almost four million Cruzeiros that it annually gives to the Railway" (A Imprensa, August 22, 1943, p.1). The citation refers to the importance the station would exercise for the municipality of Caçador, as well as for the revenue of the Railway Company managing the railway.

However, the delay in the project's completion caused a series of inconveniences, generating a feeling of commotion regarding the inauguration of the new station. On January 9, 1944, the newspaper "A Imprensa" published a report titled "New Station," providing some information about the situation in which the construction process of the new station was, in addition to exposing some difficulties faced by the population during this period. According to the report, the bidding process was finalized, with only the station's construction remaining. Another highlight in the report refers to the problems related to passenger boarding and disembarking. According to the publication, "nothing is more necessary for Caçador than this building, for those who board here on rainy days are the ones who can judge the current sacrifice" (A Imprensa, January 9, 1944, p.1).

Five years after the incident that destroyed the old Rio Caçador station, in 1946, the long-awaited inauguration of the new station, now made of masonry, took place, which performed its function in the municipality until 1998 (Corrente, 2010). In Figure 7, the new building can be visualized.

An important point, little explored until now, refers to the intense passenger movement at the station. During the 1950s, the station was one of the busiest in the region, with an intense flow of trains and passengers (Corrente, 2010). In Figure 7, the intense circulation of people and vehicles at the railway station can be visualized.



Figure 7 – Railway Station of Caçador (Decade of 1950).



Source: Municipal Archive of Caçador.

As described by Julio César Corrente:

The trains were daily, both cargo and passenger trains, the trains that passed were three types of lines properly said, the composition called mixed train that left Porto União for Marcelino Ramos was daily and made the journey on the same day the reverse, Marcelino Ramos to Porto União. Another train was the direct train from São Paulo to Porto Alegre that passed three times a week and the international train from Rio de Janeiro to Montevideo in Uruguay, this passed once a week was the main attraction for the people of Caçador, on this train it was possible to buy newspapers and apples, which in the region there were not, these apples were Argentine. And on the other hand, traveling on the international train was a privilege due to the luxury it had (Corrente, 2010, p.8).

Until the 1960s, the railway was the main means used for the flow of production and passenger transport in the municipality of Caçador. However, since its political emancipation in the 1930s, the municipal government began investing in the



construction of so-called highways, enabling access to other municipalities in the region, in addition to investing in local roads, expanding access to population centers scattered throughout the municipality (Thomé, 1978). These efforts were received enthusiastically and were in line with the policies of the Estado Novo. The federal government, through its national integration project, "march to the West," implemented a series of actions aimed at occupying and exploiting the "sparsely populated" areas, intending to promote national integration and better use of these territories (Ricardo, 1970). The discourse regarding the "march to the West" was deeply related to the idea of modernity, progress, and strong nationalism, which sought to forge national unity. These ideas are evidenced in the speech made by Getúlio Vargas on May 1, 1938.

A country is not just an aggregation of individuals in a territory, but is, above all, a unity of race, a unity of language, a unity of thought. To achieve this supreme ideal, it is necessary, therefore, that everyone walks together in a prodigious ascent... to the prosperity and greatness of Brazil (Vargas apud Capelato, 2009, p.32).

In Lenharo's understanding (1986, p.56), "the March to the West was purposefully based on the image of the Nation that walks on its own forces in search of its realization." This realization would occur through the incorporation of the so-called "empty spaces," expanding the country's political and economic borders. Among the actions necessary to achieve these objectives, one of the most important would be precisely the investment in infrastructure. Thus, as described by Petrolí (2008, p.49), "the 'march' would mean the connection of the interior with the country's economic centers, through the opening of roads, signifying the possibility of improvements in transport and communications."

Analyzing some periodicals from this period, it is possible to find similarities in the discourses propagated by the federal government and newspapers from the municipality of Caçador. To elucidate these comparisons, the analysis of a report published on October 29, 1944, by the newspaper "A Imprensa," regarding the inauguration of the Road Salto – Rio Papuam, responsible for linking the municipality of Caçador to cities of Videira and Curitiba, follows:

The Road: Salto – Rio Papuam is inaugurated, linking the Municipality of Caçador, to Videira and Curitiba, allowing us an incalculable surge in agricultural and industrial movement in this region, encouraging

inter-municipal exchange and providing – a portion of our economic emancipation. This achievement of the dynamic and hard-working Mayor Siqueira Bélo, who has been following *pari passu* the current administration of our country, presenting us with concrete facts in his management, is one of the many works already completed, among others in the initial phase, that make his administration worthy of the best praise. After the inauguration act, during lunch, he was given a significant tribute, speaking on that occasion Mr. Otavio Manoel Ribeiro, highlighting the directive personality of Mr. Mayor, who, as far as possible, has been trying to show himself worthy of the norms set by the Estado Novo. He thanked, with words filled with healthy enthusiasm, and with the sincerity that is peculiar to him, Mr. Mayor Siqueira Belo, standing out for stating that the opening of new roads and new Schools should be the motto of all those who strive to lead with the soul of a true patriot and Brazilian. Concluding, in a brilliant improvisation, Father Antídio Vargas spoke. Possessing rare qualities, notable for his erudition, his words were indelibly engraved in the spirit of those present, ending his speech by saying: "Roads, arteries of material progress, Schools, arteries of intellectual progress, Roads and Schools, arteries of Civilization and therefore of spiritual progress (A Imprensa, October 29, 1944, p.1).

The inauguration of the work was portrayed with immense notoriety by the periodical, which sought to associate the event, the inauguration of the road, with the idea of progress. As described in the report, the work would enable an incalculable surge in the region's progress. Such actions were seen as part of the Estado Novo policies. Two concepts stand out in this speech that of progress, here represented by the material (Roads/Schools), and that of civilization, which can be associated with the effort to overcome that reality. In the view of some government officials, intellectuals, and public opinion, this territory, seen as "sertão" (wilderness), was understood as a sociocultural void, thus it was not just about occupying this territory, but also bringing civilization (Radin, 2009).

This discourse, transformed into memory, solidifies the notions we have today about what it was and how its transformation took place. The sertão, the interior, or even the countryside, began to undergo a process of characterization, being called a 'wild,' 'barbaric,' 'inhospitable' space and its inhabitants as 'routinely uncivilized, barbaric' or even 'savages'" (Arruda, 2000, p.167-168). In contrast, inversely to these values, the coast or even urban spaces were understood as the "driving force of development, of the cultural standard" (Neves, 2003, p. 155). Thus, the integration project established by the "march to the West" aimed precisely to interconnect these symbolic spaces, promoting the incorporation and economic and cultural development of the sertões.

Still concerning the association of roads with the concept of progress, this view dialogues with the discourses and policies in force by the Estado Novo. From the 1930s, the federal government began to implement a series of measures related to the implementation of highways in Brazil, contributing to the gradual decline of the railway system and the proliferation of highways. With great clarity, Finger (2013, p.119) states that in just a century, "the railways underwent a process of birth, peak, and decay."

Although distant from the reality of large urban centers, the modernism expressed by roads and automobiles was present in inland cities. The newspaper "A Imprensa" published, on August 4, 1940, a report titled "Snapshots of Brazilian Progress," which, through data provided by the 1938 Statistical Yearbook of Brazil, provided an overview of the number of national vehicles, counting at the time, with 90 thousand motor vehicles and 57 thousand animal-powered. In the newspaper's view, motor vehicles were synonymous with civilization and progress (A Imprensa, 1940). During this period, the foundations for the road planning of the municipality of Caçador were laid. In this process, Decree-Law No. 25 of 1949 stands out, which created the Municipal Department of Highways and Roads, an agency responsible for the planning, execution, and control of urban roads and local roads accessing rural communities. And the elaboration of the Municipal Road Plan, created in 1950, through Decree-Law No. 11, which established the general guidelines for this planning.

With the gradual growth of Caçador's urban population, in 1950, the City Hall carried out the reorganization of its urban territory, giving rise to neighborhoods. Thus, according to Decree-Law No. 14, the naming of the city's urban neighborhoods took place. In Figure 8, an image from the 1950s of Avenida Barão do Rio Branco, one of the busiest of the period, can be observed. It is noted that it is an urban environment, composed of a wide, paved avenue, with sidewalks and illuminated central beds, suitable for the movement of motor vehicles. On the sides, two to three-story masonry buildings make up the commercial corridor of the municipality.

Figure 8 - Avenue Barão do Rio Branco (Decade of 1950).



Source: Municipal Archive of Caçador.

However, this landscape should not be analyzed only for its material aspect, as its subjectivity must be taken into account, that is, these material transformations brought direct implications to the lives of its inhabitants, such as the generation of new jobs, the introduction of new products and services. Based on the considerations presented, it can be affirmed that Caçador underwent transformations of both material and immaterial character.

Governmental actions did not remain isolated from federal discourses and policies; on the contrary, they constituted part of this strategy and significantly contributed to this process of transformation in the local landscape. Through them, the necessary conditions were created for the realization and reproduction of capitalist society, creating new human environments and destroying old ones. While this

landscape brought a series of solutions to old problems, it also created new challenges for society.

## Conclusions

The transformation of Caçador's urban landscape from 1917 to 1950 offers a microcosm of the broader narrative of modernization driven by infrastructural advancements and strategic political actions. The introduction of the São Paulo – Rio Grande Railway was a significant catalyst for economic growth, reshaping social structures and fostering a sense of modernity within the region. This infrastructural development was complemented by a series of governmental interventions post-emancipation that facilitated urban planning and expansion.

As Caçador evolved from a rural settlement into a dynamic urban center, it navigated a complex interplay of challenges and opportunities that ultimately defined its identity. The study underscores the importance of balancing technological and economic progress with cultural and historical preservation. The lessons drawn from Caçador's transformation are invaluable for contemporary urban planning and development, emphasizing the need for adaptive strategies that respect the legacy of past landscapes while accommodating the demands of modern society.

This historical analysis of Caçador's urban evolution provides critical insights into the processes that shape urban environments. It highlights the impact of infrastructure and policy on spatial organization and underscores the importance of considering socio-cultural dimensions in urban development. Such comprehensive studies are essential for informing future urban policies and ensuring sustainable growth that honors both heritage and innovation.

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