



The Dawn of Modernity in Rio de Janeiro: Historiographic Approaches to Digital Mapping the Everyday Life of a Changing City

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Abstract

The present paper deals with an important moment in the history of Rio de Janeiro in the 20th century, when big transformations took place in its central area, in the beginning of the 1920s. At that time, while the International Exhibition that celebrated the Centenary of the Brazilian Independence took place, in 1922, Castelo Hill, the place of its first occupation, in the 16th century, was being demolished. Those two events, simultaneous in time and space, revealed, at the time, different visions about the city's development in its way into Modernity, in a narrative clash which stirred its everyday life in the first years of that decade.

To build a graphic interpretation of that moment, we seek to explore methodologies that allow the transformation of the primary sources known as "urban micronarratives", small everyday life narratives, in mappable information of time and space. Conceptually supported by the Italian Microhistory authors, specially in the seminal texts of Carlo Ginzburg, Carlo Poni and Giovanni Levi, this study seeks to articulate the Mapping and Digital Modelling fields, to bring new points of view to a period of Rio's history that still keeps aspects not yet entirely explored in historiography.

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Introduction

The beginning of the 20th century was, for Rio, a time of big urban transformations. Becoming Capital of the Republic in 1889, its structure, however, was still from the colonial times, even if it experienced a significative growth from the beginning of the 19th century with the transfer of the Portuguese Court to the city, in 1808.

Despite the existence of urban plans proposed from the second half of the 19th century (Andreatta 2008; Rabha 2008), it was only in the first years of the 20th century that important interventions took place. The construction of a new port, with landfills of great extensions on the shoreline, and the opening of the Central Avenue, a bourgeois place undoubtedly, built after the demolition of an extensive area, started a series of interventions in the central area which would be frequently repeated in the 20th century.¹

The second "act" of this movement happened at the beginning of the 1920s and, in a certain way, can be understood as the conclusion of the interventions made two decades earlier, if we consider Castelo Hill's issue. One of the four hills which secularly defined the city's limits and where its occupation began in the 16th century (Abreu 1997, 72), Castelo Hill, at the time of its demolition, was the homeplace of about 4000 people (Kessel 1997, 41), an impoverished population of small merchants, mainly Portuguese descendants, black and multi-ethnic people (Paixão 2008, 215). It was also the place of many important historical buildings, such as the Jesuitic School, the Saint Sebastian Church and the ruins of a 18th century Portuguese fort that named the hill.

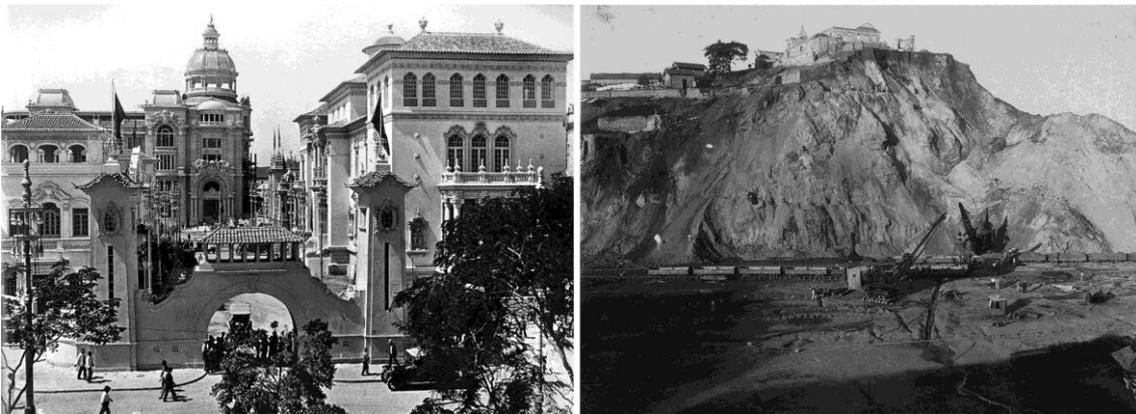


Figure 1. One of the Exhibition gates (left) and the Castelo Hill demolition (right). Side by side, the future and the past of the city look at each other in Rio's central area.

Despite its demolition being speculated since the beginning of the 19th century (Medeiros, 1813, 13), it was only at the beginning of the 1920s that political, technical and historical conditions made it possible (Kessel 2001). The arrival of Carlos Sampaio at the City Hall, an engineer who since the end of the 19th century asked for its demolition rights; the hydraulic force technology with water jet streams for the hill's dismantle; and, finally, the proximity of the Centenary's date, defined that place's fate. That decision had stirred the everyday life debates of the city's future as a capital of a country that pretended to enter in the Modernity.

Concluded in less than two years, in the same time the Exhibition took place, the demolition opened a huge space in the central area of the city, which was gradually occupied in the following decades, according to the constantly changing urban plans (Vilas Boas 2007), originating a very contradictory area known as the Castelo Esplanade. Even entirely occupied nowadays, the emptiness left by the hill is great, and this gap appears not only in academic studies and books

¹ Huge interventions were put in practice in the central area of the city in the XXth century, which defined it as a kind of experimental field of urban projects. Thus, the opening of the Central Avenue (1906); the Castelo Hill's demolition (1922); the Santo Antônio's Hill demolition (1950s); and the Flamengo Landfill (1960s) left deep marks in its structure and contributed to define the urban "mosaic" that exists nowadays.

about it² but also in the persistence of its memory in movies and other art forms that seek, somehow, to recover its presence in the citizens' imagination.



Figure 2. The huge empty space left in the following years of the conclusion of the demolition works. Near the shoreline (above) we can see the area where the Exhibition took place.

Thus, this research seeks to bring a new look at the small scale of everyday's life. We understand it can put us in contact with the most fundamental substrate of the city, revealing the human aspect it formed, and fill a gap in Rio's urban historiography, where previous studies were more focused in the big processes and actors of that city's moment. We'll turn ourselves to the everyday life of Castelo Hill in the former years of its demolition, continuing with the studies related to its digital reconstruction (Vilas Boas 2007) which brought a graphical dimension to its history unseen before in the city's historiography.

This time, we seek to extend this research beyond a morphological approach of the area, a city's dimension which digital models are very well succeeded as a research and representation tool. Now, we seek a graphic approach that could look into details for the Castelo Hill's habitants, those 4000 people which were expelled from their homes³. Their presence in History is diffuse and disperse in documents in the small scale of everyday life, where traces of their existence can be potentially traced.

We'll search the primary sources understood as "urban micronarratives" for information that can reveal small fragments of their lives. Everyday life narratives, containing mappable information in time and space, could allow the creation of databases about those people and their relationship with the urban space, creating conditions for the development of the social mapping of Castelo Hill and the widening of the communicative dimensions of the digital models that describe it.

² Two academic researches help to support the present study: the author's Ph.D. thesis (AUTHOR, 2007), that studied the process of transformation of the area through the use of digital urban models; and the Master degree's thesis that presented a study about the population which lived in the hill right before its demolition (Paixão, 2008). In an editorial scope, we can highlight the important book "Era uma Vez o Morro do Castelo" [Once upon a Time there was the Castelo Hill] (Nonato et al, 2000), among others.

³ In their majority, the Castelo Hill habitants lived in rented houses, so the indemnities were directed to the owners. The people just had to leave their homes. The government installed temporary dwellings in another area of the city, but due to their precarious conditions, they had few adhesions. Generally, they dispersed themselves in the city right after the demolition. (PAIXÃO, 2008).

Originally dispersed in old documents, newspapers and magazines, their transformation in digital information will imply in a series of methodological procedures not yet explored in the context of previous researches done by the author and his research group, which was focused until now in the use of digital urban models in historical reconstruction of interactive and immersive environments (Vilas Boas 2015). Also, their articulation with databases and digital mapping still presents a significant problem in the field (Tamborrino and Rinaudo 2016), which defines a strong experimental character in the first stage of the research.

Thus, these are the paths that we are now going to unravel.

The Castelo Hill: A Place on the Eve of Demolition

In the years before its demolition, Castelo Hill was fiercely debated, and newspapers became an important space for the exposition of ideas about its future. Favorable and contrary opinions about the demolition clashed, in a discussion that reflected, in its essence, different notions about a much desired Modernity (Motta 1994).

For many, its presence was inappropriately close to the Central Avenue, being itself the result of a first debate about Modernity two decades earlier, that its pauper environment shouldn't be acceptable along with the impressive new buildings of the area. According to the "Revista da Semana", a popular magazine in the beginning of 20th century,

"Rio is the most paradoxical city in the world. Sitting fifty meters from the Theatre where Parsifal is sung (...) which is sufficient to prove the high degree of our culture and aesthetic sensibility, twenty meters from the Beaux-Art Palace (...), fifteen meters from a grand library, goats can be seen grazing in the slopes of Castelo Hill." (Revista da Semana 1920).

Essentially, the debate was about the necessity of its demolition or the viability of its improvement. Propositions were made, and contrary voices against its disappearing denounced the option for the demolition in light of its meaning for the city's history, two decades before the official constitution of the historical heritage protection in Brazil (Pereira Jr. 2018). The article written by the famous writer Monteiro Lobato in its defense is remarkable. According to him,

"There, in Castelo Hill, the city was born, so was its first school; Estácio, the city's founder, was buried there (...). Live anachronism, 16th century ajar to the 20th's century curiosity, fossilized surveillance of eras forever lost, it's a white-bearded old man squatted, facing the shore, remembering how much have already passed in front of his eyes. But, he's sad. (...) Always hears conspiracy whispers where a refrain sounds insistently: we need to raze Castelo Hill. (...) And he suspects his end is near. Nowadays, men are soulless businessmen. They want money. To get it, they will sell everything. They will sell even their own souls if they have them. How can it resist the tide, if its status - age, beauty, picturesque, historicity - aren't valuable in the market?" (Lobato 1920).

The hill's architectonic heritage formed a rich historical set, which for centuries was a reference in the city's landscape. Its spatial structure was defined by three significative buildings: the old Jesuit complex; the ruins of a 18th century's portuguese fort; and the Saint Sebastian Church, the city's patron saint. Even in precarious state, as many reports told us, they were a part of the city's social dynamics, as we can see in the last mass celebrated in the hill, which reunited hundreds of people (Careta 1921), in an event that was registered in the city's chronicles.

Its antiquity values were points of discussion about its demolition, as well as its habitants were involved in the debate because not only their environment, but also their presence and way of life were not adequate for that desired city. Around this theme, favorable and contrary voices also raised. According to "O Malho", another popular magazine, in a Senate session,

"another Senator (...) asked where the artists and workers that live in Castelo Hill would go. And condemned the inhumane inertia of the City Hall, that didn't provide the construction of houses for hundreds of people. Lost words (...). No one wants to know about these sad things. Let them arrange themselves, in any way they can!" (O Malho, 16/07/1921).

Precarious dwellings were made available, but they weren't properly occupied by the people, that dispersed in the city. Their narratives didn't pass into History, written in most cases by the public power's actors and by the press, which were in their majority favorable to the demolition and their expulsion. Only in the 80s, already through the optics of Cultural History and Microhistory, the hill's inhabitants began to be the subject of studies about the city's urban transformations in the beginning of the century.



Figure 3. The Jesuit Complex (left) and the Saint Sebastian church (right) in the day of the last mass.

In this context, the interview made in 1985, in the scope of the project "Arquivo Vivo" [Live Archive], of the "Museu da Imagem e do Som" [Museum of Image and Sound], in Rio de Janeiro (Paixão 2008) is of fundamental importance. In this work, historians heard Florinda Alói and Francisco Alói Moreno, old residents of Castelo Hill. Their narratives put us in direct contact with the memories of two young people in the time of its demolition. A precious recording, obviously affected by the subjectivities of their affective memory almost 70 years later, which revealed some aspects of their everyday life and their community relationships.

The testimonies told us about their families and neighborhood. Born in Castelo Hill, children of an Italian father, fruits sellers in the city market, and whose mother was a dressmaker, the narrative didn't have any relation with the dominant opinion about the place. To the Alói brothers, the hill was a place of joyfulness, where Italian and Portuguese immigrants lived, occupying many rent houses and inns. According to Francisco Alói, referring to the "Chácara da Floresta", one of the biggest rent houses of the place, "it was almost a family. If someone became ill or a family member became tired, a priest or a friendly person would take care of them." (Paixão 2008, 176).

Generally, their narratives describe a population formed by small businessmen, with their way of life, samba schools and soccer teams (Paixão 2008, 177), a greatly lively community, apparently distinct of the narratives that described them, as well as their homeplaces, as

"an undesirable crown, full of unhygienic dwellings, artless, tasteless, a refuge for a part of the population without neatness habits, conserving in the middle of the city a mimicry of the great Mediterranean cities' neighborhoods" (O Malho 20/08/1921).

In this posthumous process of reconstruction of its social landscape, tracing the inhabitants isn't an easy task, because of the scarcity of registers of their presence in that territory. We can identify some of the few moments where the interest in knowing them appeared in the city's historiography. The first moment in this trajectory was the interview done in the 80s, that was already mentioned. After it, in the chapter "E os moradores?" [What about the residents?] in the book "Era uma Vez o Morro do Castelo" (Nonato et al. 2000), the authors did a compilation of some contemporary citations and past reports that talked about the residents, highlighting an interview done with some of them by the newspaper "A Notícia", in September 1920.



Figure 4. A partial view of Castelo Square, one of the public spaces in the hill. It's interesting to see how the presence of the photographer attracted the curiosity of the children. In the background, adults stand on the door of a typical bar of the place.

More recently, a Master's degree thesis (Paixão 2008) brought important contributions, mainly because it researched primary sources which widened substantially the universe of the residents that we can have access to. The documental series refer to the police occurrences registered between years 1916 and 1922 by the police station of "Freguesia São José", in the administrative area that Castelo Hill belonged, preserved in the microfilm collection of the "Casa de Rui Barbosa", a traditional cultural institution in Rio de Janeiro.

Even though they originated in official records, restrict to occurrences somehow related to police activity, the documents opened a window to the past and to that population, revealing momentary and fragmentary aspects of the life of 553 people (Paixão 2008, 155). Considering a universe of residents of about 4000 people (Kessel, 1997, 41), we have around 13% of the hill's population potentially identifiable with their names, addresses, and jobs, which give us a starting point for the continuity of the research.

A Methodological Approach on the Urban Micronarratives

The documentation related to the police occurrences is important because it is linked directly to the people who lived there and give us fundamental information for the construction of a database as a first step for mapping them. In this sense, we should trace some considerations about the research strategies that will be used to expand the documental set and enlarge the population which can be identified, also dispersed in other primary sources. In a second moment, we are interested in advancing beyond the statistical data, and seek to map and reconstruct aspects of their urban everyday life in its articulation between human and architectonic dimensions, which is understood, in a general way, by the notion of "Urbanity" (Aguiar and Netto 2012).

So, we widened our sights to other sources that reveal aspects of the city's everyday life in those years, defining them as "urban micronarratives", narrative fragments, without apparent historical reverberation, related to a small and granulated scale of time. As research sources, they

should contain the identification of events, people and places, information that could be located in time and space, constituting a necessary condition for their transformation in graphic and mappable information.



Figure 5. Some examples of "Urban Micronarratives".

From this definition, the police occurrences can be understood as a specific category of urban micronarratives, subjected to the specificities of their production and origin. Other micronarratives are possible, each one revealing some aspects of the cities, their population and their time.

In the present context of the research, we also explore old newspapers and magazines which had an important role in the process of urban transformation. Made available by the National Library in digitized version sensible to keyword search, the system opens a way for a universe of information previously hidden in their printed versions. Thus, in an initial approach, we can recognize three main categories of information that can be transformed into mappable data, which one of them interest us particularly.

Initially, we can cite the news related with people and events recognized by History, but depicted in the scope of everyday life, like the article "The President of the Republic visits Castelo Hill" (Revista da Semana, 1921), which tells us about the visit of President Epitácio Pessoa along with Mayor Carlos Sampaio to the ongoing demolition's works.

Even though it doesn't have a narrative in the traditional sense, interesting information also is found in the publicity ads in the researched sources. Present in great quantity, mainly in the magazines' pages, the information on the ads is fully mappable and reveals to us the small scale details of the city, not only shop names and addresses, but also the kind of products and target consumers. Mapped together, they can reveal the city's "commercial landscape" at the time, another dimension of its urbanity.

Finally, we can also identify ordinary news of everyday life, related to common events and people, that didn't leave marks in History besides these registers. In general present in everyday news, many times related to reports about accidents or even police occurrences, these registers are particularly interesting because they allow us to expand on Castelo Hill residents' database. One article that is particularly representative is the one published in the section "Pequenos Factos" [Small Facts], in the 35th edition of the "A Notícia" newspaper, on February 4th, 1916. According to the newspaper,

"the shoemaker Joaquim dos Santos, Portuguese, 45 years old, married and resident in Castelo Hill, São Sebastião lane n. 35, when working this morning in a workshop in Prainha street, was injured by his knife in the left arm. He was medicated after in the central office, then he went to his residence." (A Notícia, 1916).

Small news like this one report us on ordinary events of the city's everyday life and give us some information about the people who lived there. They make the creation of a database with the

necessary information for the location of these people in the urban space possible, not only from a demographic perspective but also related to the fact itself. Considering their totality, Castelo Hill's urban micronarratives can give us subsidies for the graphic reconstruction of a network of small happenings which describes a part of its everyday life dimension in the years before its disappearing.

Not only in the scope of criminal activities, but also in a general scope of others urban micronarratives, we walk methodologically by the paths of Microhistory, specifically in the articulation between Demographic History and Social History, according to the debate put in the pages of the famous "Quaderni Storici" in the '70s, about the necessity to extrapolate what the statistical data of a historical series show us in favor of a look to the relations embedded in it. According to Lima, in his extensive analysis about the Italian historiography,

"the quantitative procedures, alone, weren't enough to reveal all the dynamics of the social behaviors which they were related to. Each behavior, therefore, before being inserted in the set of a data series that repeat itself, should be put in accordance with other behaviors. Thus, the richness of an analysis that started from the confrontation of the series would be the very thing that allows us to reveal how these different attitudes crossed themselves in many concrete situations." (Lima 2006).

Mapping, Representation and Social Dynamics: Limits and Possibilities

In its long trajectory in map representations, Rio gained its first precise register in the year 1870 (Czajkowski 2000), from the elaboration of a cadastral map which registered in detail the land structure of its central area and allowed identify the city's addresses. By its accuracy, this map was used as a basis for the development of many projects done later, and its update, for the first time done from aerial photographs, would only be done in the 1930s.

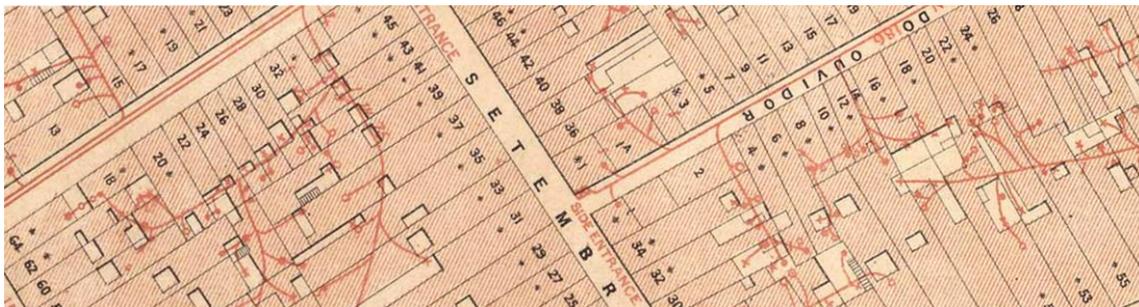


Figure 6. The first detailed cadastral map of Rio published in 1870.

The articulation between these documents define a starting point for the location of the micronarratives' information, but it presents specific challenges related to the Castelo Hill's representation. Even though they represent the city in detail, the elaboration of this first map, done 50 years before the demolition, presents the obvious limitation of registering a different context that existed in the beginning of the 1920s. However, this obstacle isn't unpassable, because this document can give us fundamental information about its urban structure. In this point, we support the research in Aldo Rossi's observation, when he states, in the seminal work "The Architecture of the City" that

"the persistences are detectable through the monuments, the physical signals of the past, but also the tracing and the planning. (...) The more significative permanence is given, though, by the streets and the plans; the plans kept under several levels; differentiate themselves in the attributions; many times, deform themselves, but, substantially, they don't change." (Rossi 2001).

On the other side, the 1935's map gives us an important update on the city's structure but also presents its limits. Even though clearly shows the lots, streets, some urban infrastructures, like the tram lines, the map doesn't show the lots' numbers like the first one does. However, its main

gap is Castelo Hill itself, because it was done around 15 years after its demolition and shows us the big blank area that was left, with the first blocks been occupied in the new Castelo Esplanade.



Figure 7. The 1870's map and the 1935's describe the urban structure of the city in fine details. In the left side of both maps we can see a portion of the hill's area.

Other representations in the scale of the city's land division are associated with the legal instrument of the "Alignment Projects" and represent a strategy to complement the limits of the main bases already exposed. These projects began to be produced by the City Hall in the first decade of the 20th century and were part of the urban intervention decrees (Reis, 1977), constituting nowadays sources of great importance to study the public power project's intentions through the 20th century.

Many "Alignment Projects" have never been built and, in other occasions, many were edited for the same place in a short period, complementing, contradicting or even nulling themselves (Vilas Boas 2007), revealing an evident lack of consensus about the directions of the city's development. These documents give a good description of the city in the past and, once articulated, they will make the construction of a detailed description of the central area in the 1920s possible.

Castelo Hill is represented in detail in the "Alignment Project" 1355, published in August 17th, 1920. It is a very interesting document because it registers a detailed land division of the hill at the same time that reveals the first intentions for the post-demolition occupation. The ideas that appeared there didn't survive and were replaced a few times through the 1920s, revealing the lack of planning about how that area could be occupied (Vilas Boas 2007). In this article, we are interested specifically in the information about the hill itself, which allows the identification of its addresses, a fundamental condition for the spatialization of the population and its everyday life.

As an initial condition for their mapping, the urban micronarratives should be decomposed in fragments of information that will compose the database. Firstly, traditional demographic data will be organized, like "name", "occupation", "age", among other data that these narratives present. Then, we'll look more deeply into the information that reveals to us the dynamism in time and space, originated from the relationship between the people and between the people and the place, in a search for the invisible network that defines its social fabric and, ultimately, its urbanity.

The first challenge we face for now is related to the transformation of the different kinds of narratives in a single database structure. Even though they present some similarities between them, their differences are enough to show the difficulty to build a relatively simple database structure able to absorb information about every single narrative extracted from the primary sources, without having to grow it organically to incorporate every new kind of information that could surface and, as a result, be a database so complex that it would be impractical to be managed.



Figure 8. The graphical interpretation of the “Alignment Project” 1355 can enhance the information of Castelo Hill and give a basis for the future mapping of its inhabitants.

The setting of a first database and the mapping of the demographic information is a relatively simple step and, by itself, will give a significant contribution, bringing Castelo Hill's historiography to the intersection between Social History and Geoprocessing, nowadays defined as a field known as HGIS⁴.

Among many examples, we can reference the research done at the Politecnico di Torino about the spatial distribution in the city of the factories' workers in the beginning of the 20th Century (Tamborrino and Rinaudo 2016), where the information of a labor census done by the City Hall in 1914 was articulated with historical maps in a GIS platform. In this research, the authors alert us to the problem of the information's digitization and the need for a coherent structure of the database according to the study's objectives. Furthermore, they anticipate also the problem of the direct articulation between the database with digital urban models caused by the lack of interoperability between the digital file formats.

However, to go beyond the demographic information and to look for their interrelational aspects, we will explore other paths of graphic representation, mainly because of the limits of geoprocessing, to represent the dynamism of the individuals in time and space. To do that, we'll look for it in the universe of diagrams for possible ways to articulate, relate and interpret the information of the documental sources to represent the social dynamics of Castelo Hill.

The diagrams constitute one of the most powerful ways to expose analysis, ideas or any other sort of narrative able to be represented. A visual discourse, where different kinds of information are simplified and associated with graphic notes, text blocks, images, among others, to potencialize themselves in the transmission of an idea (Barki 2009). Considering the level of freedom involved in their creation and their commitment to good visual communication to ensure their efficiency, exploring the diagrammatic representation is a possible way to deal with the complexity that could emerge of the relations' network that the micronarratives contain.

Having the diagrams as a conceptual basis, we can refer to the recent advances in the digital data visualization and the multiplicity of solutions to represent the crescent flows of information, not only related to the "big data" field applied to the city analysis (Kitchin 2014; Netto et al. 2018) but also in its articulation with Human Sciences, mainly in the History field. Digital tools, like the open-coded software "Gelphi" (Bastian et al 2009) has been intensively explored among researchers of the Digital Humanities field and opened new horizons for the visualization of big volumes of historical information (Sinclair et al 2013).

In this context, the research done at Stanford University is remarkable. It mapped the network communication between European intellectuals known as the "Republic of Letters", from a database that gather information of 50.000 letters exchanged between 1629 and 1824 (Chang et al., 2009). In this historical context, the research had the objective to explore the flow and the volume of the ideas that circulated in the search for the geographic information related to the origins of the Age of Enlightenment. In this experiment, an important point is the data's nature, that is deeply related to the concepts of flow, time and space, in a similar way to the problem that we face, even though the scales of analysis are much different.

⁴ Historical Geographic Information System.

An Essay of Mapping Urban Micronarratives

As mentioned before, the main documental series used references to police occurrences between 1916 and 1922. In these documents, we can potentially identify around 500 residents and others, in a small number, will be included in the database for their identification from other primary sources. However, a first approach to the police records suggest to us some initial difficulties, because the intricate handwriting could present obstacles that can eventually reduce the universe of people possible to be traced.

Even so, we can exemplify this documental articulation and its preliminary results from one of the police notes, dated March 15th, 1922. On that day, Ms. Maria da Silveira Furtado, resident at Castelo Square n. 26, complained about the theft of her earrings a month before, telling that she suspected of Manoel Martins, who was in jail already.

Nothing more is said in the report, but this register brings us a small fragment of the everyday life on the place, in the context of the city's big transformations. We should remember that, at that date, while Ms. Furtado complained about the theft, the demolition of the hill was ongoing, and also the construction of the Exhibition at its side. In this context, the house where she lived is well identified in the map and can be seen in one picture took just two years before. In this photo, a lady appears in its door, and we can just speculate if she would be Ms. Furtado herself.



Figure 9. The articulation between different documents can represent the life embedded in them and reveal traces of the past urbanity of the city.

Conclusion

The thoughts exposed here bring the main aspects related to a research in its early stages of development. Even with not so mature initial results to be an object of a deeper analysis, we understand that the presented research structure defines a relatively consistent background in which the next stages should be done. Also, with the obstacles already noticed ahead, the related references should give us the subsidies to face and overcome them in the research's development.

This small example that we related showed the potential that the articulation of sources can reveal to us about the everyday life of that place, conducting our imagination to beyond the information originally restricted in the maps, police reports and newspaper news. Amplifying Ms. Furtados' small story to many other people, in a network of social, spatial and temporal relationships, we can perceive the potential that the urban micronarratives' mapping represent for the graphic representation of the urbanity of Rio de Janeiro in the beginning of the 1920s, when the city reclaimed, once more, its entry into Modernity.

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