

THE BICYCLE AS ELEMENT OF THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF FORTALEZA: EXPERIENCES AND IMAGINARIES LANDSCAPE ABOUT THE CITY

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ABSTRACT: The presence of bicycles in Fortaleza, a Brazilian capital that has expanded the offer of cycling routes, cycle paths and cycle lanes, is noted in several regions of the city and can be perceived as a fundamental element in the landscape and has a strong influence on changes to the urban fabric of Fortaleza, from the intense citizen demonstration in defense of it as a means of transport or through urban art. The study is based on exploratory, bibliographic and documentary research, with participant observation and focus groups; brings reflections on the bicycle as a symbolic asset, as a communicative element, an inducer of the right to the city and an instrument of sustainable urban development. Dialoguing with Armando Silva (2014), Jane Jacobs (2011), Michel Maffesoli (2014), Fernanda Sánchez (2010), Jean-Mar Besse (2014), we argue the importance of the bicycle artifact as a dynamic element in the composition of the cultural landscape of Fortaleza.

KEYWORDS: Bicycle. Fortaleza. Urban experience. Cultural landscape.

A BICICLETA COMO ELEMENTO DA PAISAGEM CULTURAL DE FORTALEZA: EXPERIÊNCIAS E IMAGINÁRIOS SOBRE A CIDADE

RESUMO: A presença das bicicletas em Fortaleza, uma capital brasileira que tem ampliado a oferta de rotas cicláveis, ciclovias e ciclofaixas, é notada em diversas regiões da cidade e pode ser percebida como elemento fundamental na paisagem e tem forte influência nas alterações do tecido urbano de Fortaleza, desde a intensa manifestação cidadã em sua defesa como meio de transporte ou através da arte urbana. O estudo baseia-se em pesquisa exploratória, bibliográfica e documental, com

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observação participante e realização de grupo focal; traz reflexões sobre a bicicleta como bem simbólico, como elemento comunicativo, indutor do direito à cidade e instrumento de desenvolvimento urbano sustentável. Dialogando com Armando Silva (2014), Jane Jacobs (2011), Michel Maffesoli (2014), Fernanda Sánchez (2010), Jean-Mar Besse (2014), arguimos a importância do artefato bicicleta como elemento dinâmico na composição da paisagem cultural de Fortaleza.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Bicicleta. Fortaleza. Experiência urbana. Paisagem cultural.

Introduction

Looking at the elements that make up “cycling” in Fortaleza allows us to first understand that cyclists use this mode of transport as a means of communicating from one point to another in the city, and more than that, in multiple interactions with this city, which, as a living character, also presents countless appearances. This study highlights several manifestations, from cyclist meetings, street painting, graffiti, stencils on roads, banners and posters in actions organized as popular participation that promote public policies aimed at cycling mobility and the valorization of active transport for sustainable urban development. This article is part of the doctoral research of the first author, supervised by the second, and aims to outline a brief history of the use of bicycles in Fortaleza based on the legal frameworks of public mobility policies in the city, with the hypothesis that the social participation and communication strategies of cyclists, supported by urban art, interventions, meetings, graffiti, banners, stencils and mobilization via the internet were fundamental to promoting programs, actions and municipal management plans that brought about transformations in urban space, today giving visibility to cyclists and thus expanding safe access to public space, as well as strengthening the fight for the right to the city.

As in many cities in Brazil, the spatial dimension of Fortaleza has changed in recent decades, its urban form, its roads, its properties, transforming the daily life and cultural practices of the place. The arrival of the bicycle was initially experienced as a

privilege, a technological artifact, then as a means of transport, and gradually it became a means of communication between one point in the city and another, as a means of accessing public spaces, as a service and as an element of the urban and cultural landscape.

The images of bicycles in large cities, as well as in Fortaleza, are constructed and deconstructed daily, appearing as an important element of the urban cultural landscape, through their users, whether they are in specific attire or conventional clothing, in the attire of app delivery people, post office workers, in night groups, day groups, pairs, families or individually. The purpose of this paper is focused on the investigation of the bicycle as a product and cultural practice in the city of Fortaleza, arguing the importance of this artifact and symbolic asset in the dynamics of the city's sustainable urban development.

Firstly, we outline a brief history of the use of bicycles in Fortaleza based on the legal frameworks of official public policies on cycling mobility in the city. And we question how the uses of the bicycle, in its multiple meanings and representations, figure, illustrate and permeate the urban, socio-environmental, political and communicative development of the city? What communicative arrangements can be identified from the actions organized by cyclists? In the first phase of the research, data were used about bicycles and the right to the city, and their impacts on urban policy, as well as a historical survey about bicycles in the city in records from the first newspapers, in 1950, such as *Correio do Ceará*. The entire bibliographic review and qualitative data helped us to understand more comprehensively the relationship between the bicycle as a means of active transport, that is, a means of transport powered by humans, as well as “living in the city”, observing how these movements and collective demonstrations and organizations made the process of implementing the cycling

structure in the city of Fortaleza possible.

In the second phase of the research, we mapped and collected photographic records made publicly available on the Internet based on hashtags referring to bicycles and groups and movements already known to the researcher. This section required georeferencing in order to ensure that the records had been made in Fortaleza. As labels or markers, hashtags are considered metadata, as they facilitate the grouping and searching of information in the digital environment. Together with the records from the researcher's collection and her participant observation (ANGROSINO, 2012), we collected data that we call “digital traces” that date back to the period of demonstrations prior to the municipal cycle path plan. The images inserted here are understood as an important record and representation of the city, of the subjects involved in the social cause, of oneself, of others and of a complex physical and socio-environmental space.

Bicycle, Landscape, City, Leisure and Right to the City

The transformations in the urban space of the city of Fortaleza have been causing a series of impacts in different dimensions of living in the city; impacts that redefine social representations, meanings, flows, rights, communications, images and imaginaries. Taking on a new guise these days, the theme of coming and going, of the right to the city, for example, is transformed, encompassing people's right to access the most diverse places, services, equipment and goods provided by the city. And even if the ways of transporting people and goods change and advance, whether they are collective, active, road, private or public, there are still many barriers, natural or artificial, structural obstacles, that prevent or hinder people's access to different places in a large city, such as Fortaleza, for example.

The right to move around safely is often sublimated by other “benefits” of the

capitalist system. Sometimes we have the impression that a shopping mall is worth more than a park, an overpass is worth more than a few trees, cars are worth more than people or bicycles.

However, the bicycle, with its lightness and charm, flows through the city like water between stones, entering and exiting alleys, climbing bridges, descending hills and constantly transforming the urban landscape, the images and imagination of those who live and visit the city. Fortaleza has been learning to ride a bike, like a child, who around the age of five or seven ventures into exploring the movement resulting from its own propulsion, supported by two or four training wheels. This city has been maturing and changing its urban form to let people on their bikes pass through. Just like a child who changes bikes as his body grows, the city has been changing its shape, its design, expanding its cycle path network.

American journalist and urban planner Jane Jacobs (2011), who wrote about working-class neighborhoods in New York and became world-renowned for reflecting on the meanings of living and moving around in big cities, defends the idea that public spaces, squares and streets are safer the more people move through them. The use of streets by cyclists and pedestrians means that more people are walking on the streets, making them safer and more lively. We agree with her and recognize the importance of sidewalks, streets, public spaces and the people moving around on them.

The concept of the “eye of the street”, developed by Jacobs, is very important to cyclists. The eyes of the street are the people who, consciously or unconsciously, use public spaces and/or tend to contemplate them, exercising a natural surveillance over what happens there. Jane Jacobs (2011) uses as a counterexample some very vertical buildings, in which the corridors were inaccessible to the eye, despite being publicly

accessible, and therefore suffered enormously from vandalism and violence. What the eyes don't see, the heart doesn't feel.

Another urban planner, whom we will refer to during this work, Fausto Nilo (2023), usually says that from the fifth floor onwards, if a woman is attacked and starts screaming for help on the street, no one will be able to hear her, and so the sense of community is lost. It is from below, from the ground, where cyclists pass, that this research is conducted, although it focuses on the city that builds very tall buildings every year, the most recent being 51 stories and 170 meters high, we will discuss the spaces where encounters take place, where glances meet, and where people come into contact with the city. In addition to being very diverse, Fortaleza presents itself in its urban and geographical form as a large city, and in its governmental and institutional image as a capital full of challenges and inequalities. This city, where the way of moving around can express many meanings, concepts and prejudices.

From a communicational perspective, Janice Caiafa (2002) interprets the urban environment as a rich field of exchanges where transformative subjectivities can emerge through the collective occupation of public spaces. When looking at communication, subjectivity and transportation in cities, Caiafa challenges us to realize that

Considering communication phenomena in conjunction with transport issues, especially with regard to urban mobility, may not be without benefit for these two fields of study, which are generally separate, and no less so for understanding social life in cities. This is, in fact, an old idea in the field of communication studies that has been forgotten and is still little explored today (CAIAFA, 2002, p.8).

By proposing research on the bicycle as a dynamic component of urban communication, its importance as a symbol in the city of Fortaleza and the communication processes established there is evoked.

This is still a curious approach, however, relevant to the theme of urban

communication. The trivial communication, most easily perceived among the growing number of bicycle users, is in the use of digital social networks. In the appropriation and use of various digital channels by social movements defending bicycle mobility in Brazil and in Fortaleza. However, this is not the only perspective that we hope to develop in this study.

By recognizing the city as a rich field of diverse visual perceptions, with routes, layouts, points, maps, flows, images and imaginaries that, in different ways, connect cyclists and non-cyclists and communicate with them at all times, we hope to build a work from a broader point of view regarding urban communication and mobility.

At the same time, understanding the meanings and representations of a city through the use of bicycles presents itself as a multidisciplinary issue, encompassing readings and references that may touch on different areas: communication, engineering, urban planning, education, politics, psychology, social sciences.

Just like law, where the theme is more directed towards the right to the city (LEFEBVRE, 1969; HARVEY, 2014), which in turn confront two main assessments: that of capital and human rights, in an aspect that encompasses, among others, the right to resistance, to occupy public spaces.

Through an urban policy with a neoliberal economic profile, the state sometimes appears as the promoter and safeguard of the right to the city, and other times as the violator itself, either through lack of assistance or through the permeability of influence from private and corporate interests. In shaping the urbanization process, promoting the city as an excellent space for big business, joint urban operations, and major works, the state apparatus favors corporate capital and big business, in turn, a perfect representative of the automobile society, whether popular or luxury, and privileges more directed towards industrial and financial development than towards the

construction of citizenship (HARVEY, 2014; SANTOS; SILVEIRA, 2011).

In this line, by observing a city that occupies second place in the armoring market in Brazil³ is also realizing that cities definitely assume a central role in the creation and dynamization of symbolic goods acquired or coveted by their population. Even though new generations are exchanging the dream of owning their own car at 18 for other experiences, and the automobile is becoming obsolete for some futurists, if we compare the value of this symbolic asset by the number of examples we see on the streets, to the detriment of the bicycle, it is easy to say “who wins”, in a brief visual sample.

So far we have an initial way of elucidating relevant issues of contemporary society, since the bicycle, like the automobile, are manufactured, or rather, goods, that were born with industrialization and developed in and for the urban space.

Transformations in Urban Space, Bicycle and Power Relations in the City

Between the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, a series of historical transformations took place in Brazil. Abolition of slavery, when Ceará “Land of Light” stands out, wage labor and a series of social and economic transformations. And the main Brazilian cities are undergoing intense urban and social reforms. Beautifying, sanitizing and hygienic measures are taken so that the urban space is organized and the population is disciplined. Fortaleza becomes the seventh largest Brazilian capital in terms of population, consolidating itself as an industrial economic hub, with large cotton exports, which brings several consequences and changes to the urban landscape. In 1875, the organization of the urban grid, a new urban plan, the alignment of streets and the opening of avenues systematized the expansion of the city

³ Ceará ranks 2nd in the armoring market in Brazil, says supplier. The survey was carried out according to data from the company UDura (O POVO, 2018).

(PONTE, 2001).

Urban reforms brought changes to the face of the city through entertainment and cultural temples, the elites created clubs and doctors recommended sports practices, including the use of bicycles. Praça dos Mártires, known as Passeio Público, was an important leisure area in the 19th century, concentrating sporting activities such as skating and bicycle racing.

Accompanying the elegant clubs, a private space for bourgeois leisure, came the sports recreations - recommended by medical knowledge - and practiced in urban territories conquered by the elites of the Capital: the skatingrink (1877), skating on the Passeio Público; the byciolette sportif (1900), cycling in the squares, and the turf (1895), horse racing in Campo do Prado, an area neighboring the Benfica neighborhood, where large farms were located (PONTE, 2001).

The design of the city, the flows, the urban planning follow the trends of industrial development, we know. The simultaneous development of the automobile industry and capitalism is also expressed in the terms used to designate ways of organizing production (Fordism, post-Fordism, Toyotism). On the other hand, the limit drawn by the great social and economic crisis of “combustion capitalism” is undeniable, and until a few years ago, no one could have imagined it.

Claiming the right to the city in the sense that I propose here is equivalent to claiming some kind of configurative power over the processes of urbanization, over the way in which our cities are made and remade, and presupposes doing so in a radical and fundamental way (HARVEY, 2014, p. 30).

It was through the need to establish an automobile system that much of the urban planning of many Brazilian capitals and the Federal District was directed. President JK himself was a poster boy, who made a point of driving and posing with the cars. And little by little, an imaginary about automobiles in the JK era is formed. And what about the imagery about the bicycle in the same period? Advertisements and articles in Fortaleza newspapers in the 1950s give us clues. The ad reads: “the best bicycle currently built. For comfort and ease of pedaling, the three-speed Hercules hub

features new control. Syncho-Switch on the handlebar is truly the best shifter available today. Hercules. For sale in good houses in the industry”. In the illustration, a woman of average height with black hair is cycling, wearing a skirt, leaning on the handlebars with just one hand, while the other waves, like a beauty queen.

Figure 1



Source: Correio do Ceará Newspaper, January 2, 1950

As stated by Schetino (2007) in his book, *Pedaling towards modernity*, the bicycle arrived in the country at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, and its presence soon became popular. Since then, it has been on the streets, in various images, in the imagination of children, adults, memories of the elderly, as well as in advertising, films and scientific publications, and in the news. During the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, over the last two years, there was news of a shortage of bicycles on the market, increased production and high demand.

With the pandemic, cycling has become a much more sought-after activity, and not even the biggest manufacturers in the sector were prepared for this (...) because we are in need of outdoor group activities; or perhaps just because the pandemic has made us crave simple pleasures, like the wind blowing on our faces, bicycle sales are rising around the world (ZHONG, 2020, p.1).

When it's not in the sports media, it's in reports that reference the benefits to health, well-being, the environment and the economy. On the roads of small Brazilian municipalities, the bicycle culture highlights its individual and collective benefits, as shown by Soares and Guth, in *O Brasil que pedala* (2018).

Let us move on. As a cyclist, I can say that we have a Fortaleza that is sometimes a project, sometimes a political actor. In recent decades, cities have gained undeniable prominence both in terms of the daily lives of citizens, in the conservation of heritage, and in the promotion of major urban transformations. The city definitely assumes a central role in the creation and promotion of symbolic assets (BORJA; CASTELLS, 1996).

Just like Fortaleza, in many capitals. The growing number of cyclists riding in Brazilian cities demands an effort from local governments to develop actions to make cities more suitable for the safe use of bicycles, an item that, although often discriminated against as a toy, is a vehicle for transporting passengers. Experiencing cities by bicycle seems to be a more humanized experience, when compared to mechanical environments such as buses, trains, cars and subways (GUATTARI, 1988).

Fortaleza is a city that has very interesting characteristics when we look at its cycling routes. Unlike some cities that adopt temporary cycle lanes, those that have been built here are permanent structures, which change the urban form of the city and its uses. In March 2020, the city government announced that it had implemented around 78.2 km of new cycle paths and cycle lanes, a growth that placed it among the cities in Latin America that built the newest cycling infrastructure, a public policy that was even pointed out by its managers as a safe strategy to encourage individual transport and thus reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

The bicycle is urgent, colorful and vibrant in the city of Fortaleza, both as a

sporting activity, a means of transport and as a leisure practice institutionalized by the municipal administration:

In October 2014, the Local Authority created the Rota Leste leisure cycle lane, which runs on Sundays from 7 am to 1 pm, and is approximately ten kilometers long. The route starts at the Avenida Washington Soares cycle path, in the east of the city, and heads towards the center, continuing to a historic landmark in the city, Passeio Público. The route passes through parks and historical and cultural sites such as the Unifor Campus, the Cocó Ecological Park, Praça Portugal, the Museum of Industry and the Forte de Nossa Senhora da Assunção. In addition to a well-signposted route with several support points, cyclists also have the possibility of taking guided tours of historical sites that operate from nine in the morning to noon, and have facilities to park bicycles in a reserved and safe space (CRUZ, CAVALCANTI and MARTINS, 2018, p. 256.).

Around the world, several capitals, such as Paris, Barcelona, London, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Lima and Bogotá, have also invested in cycle paths and cycle lanes as a way of combating contamination in transport, with many of them opting to build temporary cycle lanes. Making a comparison in Latin America, Fortaleza, with its new 78.2 km of cycle paths, implemented more cycle infrastructure in this period than Lima, with 46 km, and Buenos Aires, with 17 km, with the capital of Ceará behind only Bogotá with 84 km, according to a publication by WRI Brasil, which also shows Fortaleza ahead of Paris, with 50 km of new cycle paths (FORTALEZA, 2014, p.1).

Coordinated by the Municipal Authority for Traffic and Citizenship (AMC), through the Immediate Action Plan for Transportation and Traffic of Fortaleza (PAITT), the Program for Expansion of the Cycle Network in Fortaleza has included several neighborhoods, such as Cocó, Papicu, Cidade 2000, Fátima, Benfica, Jardim América, Cidade dos Funcionários, Bom Jardim, Granja Lisboa. An interesting and very peculiar point about Fortaleza is that there are neighborhoods that do not have basic sanitation, poor or non-existent public facilities, but that have cycle paths, cycle lanes, traffic lights and specific signs for cyclists.

Although the indicators related to education in Fortaleza are very good, in the

2022 School Census, Fortaleza stands out, it is the 1st in the ranking in coverage in Elementary Education, the 1st capital of Brazil and 1st in the North and Northeast in coverage in Full-Time care, in the neighborhoods on the outskirts there are the highest crime rates and the worst infrastructure situations are found. Fortaleza is unfortunately one of the 50 most violent cities in the world. This is revealed by the annual ranking prepared by the Mexican NGO Citizen Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice, based on data from 2022.

Most districts in the center and surrounding areas have a large proportion of homes with access to sewage services. On the other hand, neighborhoods on the outskirts are the most deprived in terms of public sewage policies. This is what we find Plano Diretor Cicloviário Integrado de Fortaleza [Integrated Cycle Path Master Plan of Fortaleza] (PDCI, 2015). This is reflected in all other urban infrastructure issues. In this regard, Rosana Batista (2021) and Jane Jacobs (2011) agree: the precariousness of the outskirts reflects the lack of assistance from the state, and the lack of infrastructure, whether transport or sanitation, makes the suburbs even further away from the city's elements of power, such as noble areas, which reflect monuments, altars and places of propaganda.

This forgetting and/or erasure of the peripheries, however, is not exclusive to the lands of Alencarina, it is, in fact, common in globalized cities. (...) More than just suburbs, they are areas designed to store precariousness that do not match the monuments of wealth and power present in postcards and tourist advertisements. To learn about them and connect with them, even if only temporarily, the routes function as true communication channels. You just need to want to contact them (BATISTA, 2021, p. 52).

It's something everyone already knows: a busy street can guarantee safety; a deserted street cannot. But how does this actually happen? And what makes a street busy or avoided? (...) A street with infrastructure to receive strangers and have security as an asset due to their presence (JACOBS, 2011, p. 35).

Another interesting aspect that the use of bicycles in the outskirts of Fortaleza brings is that it questions the discourse of insecurity in the most underserved

neighborhoods. Made up of small, anonymous and routine gestures, in children who go to school on the back of their parents' bicycles, this ballet of people on the cycle paths and cycle lanes that is performed day and night without ever repeating, just like the sunset screens in the sky, become, without intention, largely responsible for the occupation, use and even safety of the street, as journalist and urban planner Jane Jacobs believes, when attributing the uses of public spaces to the feeling of safety in these places.

Seemingly unpretentious and random, street contacts are also decisive for the flourishing of public life, as they force the appearance of difference and end up stimulating tolerance and peaceful coexistence between strangers (NOBRE (2011), *apud* JACOBS, 2011, p. 5).

Although it may seem sentimental, the use of bicycles in Fortaleza also reflects urbanization as a class phenomenon and the quality of urban life as a commodity, as explained above, regarding the distribution of infrastructure and resources in the city.

Popular Participation in Defense of the Bicycle as a Means of Transportation

On August 4, 2013, around 12 protesters from Massa Crítica painted lines on Avenida Ana Bilhar, which led to the demarcation of a bike path in the area. With the aim of emphasizing the need for safety for cyclists and drawing the attention of public authorities to improvements in mobility.

Massa Crítica emerges as a collective that, as it seeks to establish some standards and possible paths to follow for the defense, stimulation and “celebration” of urban cycling, has a decentralized structure, which rejects representation, of anarchist origin and inspiration, distancing itself from what the Social Sciences classically understood as a “social movement”: movements based on class conditions that were guided by dialogue and demands that had the State as their privileged interlocutor and source of social transformation. The “new social movements” thus distance themselves from perceiving and doing “politics”, opening up new forms of action and communication for the transformation of social patterns (SAMPAIO, 2018, p. 64).

According to the article in the newspaper O POVO, the traffic authority considered that the painted cycle lane did not offer safety because it did not comply with DENATRAN regulations, and was instead an act of vandalism, so it was removed in the early hours of the 5th to the 6th. On August 10, six days after the cycle lane on Rua Ana Bilhar was painted, the same group organized a second horizontal painting, on the ground, of 1.4km, starting at Antonio Sales and arriving at Engenheiro Santana Júnior. In addition to the demarcation of what would be a cycle lane, there is also an indication for a pedestrian crossing. Once again, the municipal body responsible for traffic, the Municipal Authority for Traffic, Public Services and Citizenship (AMC), reported that the cycle lane and pedestrian crossing were not up to standard, and so they began to be erased on the same day. At the time, there was a direct clash between cycling activists and the erasure service carried out by the city hall was suspended (DIÁRIO DO NORDESTE, 2013).

A month later, after studies and 40 days since the painting of the "popular cycle lane", the city hall announced that it would create a cycle lane on Rua Ana Bilhar, a project that was inaugurated 9 days later, during a bike ride, and which began to receive inspections the following day. According to the secretaries, the act of the members of the Massa Crítica group of painting citizen cycle lanes contributed to the creation of the definitive one, as it generated meetings between managers and cyclists, in this case, representatives of Ciclovida, who demanded solutions.

Figures 2 and 3: Meetings of Massa Crítica Fortaleza



Source: Personal Collection 2008

On September 22, 2013 - when World Car Free Day is celebrated, with the aim of encouraging reflection on the excessive use of automobiles, in addition to proposing to people who drive every day that they reconsider the dependence they have created in relation to cars or motorcycles - the City of Fortaleza inaugurated the cycle lane on Rua Ana Bilhar, and members of Massa Crítica painted a cycle lane, using the stencil graffiti technique, on Rua Oscar Araripe, in Bom Jardim, with the help of local residents, to draw the City's attention to the need to pay attention to the city's peripheral neighborhoods. Once again, the AMC considered that the cycle lane did not comply with the standards, however, unlike the other cases, it did not erase the cycle lane, allowing time to erase the paint.

Stencil graffiti, which uses a cutout of rigid paper and uses it as a mold for painting, appears as the main urban art technique in the actions and interventions of cycle activists in urban spaces. The paint used is generally spray paint, used to fix illustrations and drawings on streets, posts and walls. This is a more practical method when carrying out interventions. Stickers, posters and stencils are used by both graffiti artists and cycling activists, artists, currently throughout the city, as a strategy to intervene on the street more quickly.

Fortaleza is a city that has experienced an artistic effervescence that emphasizes

urban life in a very plural way and that aligns with the global trend of art festivals. In this sense, the city has more recently undergone a series of public interventions, incentives through public notices, and events that emphasize not only investments in public space, more precisely in infrastructure, but also in culture as an element that dynamizes urban life.

This example is the holding of the Concreto Festival in 2013, the first international urban art festival in the Brazilian Northeast. The event integrated the urban graffiti culture of seven countries in the Americas and Europe, in addition to providing a meeting between international, national and local “artists”. As a result, many panels have changed the landscape and the experience of the city, and it is often possible to see bicycles featured in interventions, murals, posts and streets.

If, as an extension of the body, the bicycle functions as a material instrument that provides the subject with functionality and agility, serving as a means of movement and perception of places, this extension can also be understood as the symbolic expansion of the being itself. By perceiving the bicycle as a symbol and cultural representation, various information about the practice of riding a bicycle by its driver can be obtained (PINHEIRO, 2018, p. 54).

This sequence of events demonstrates the powerful effects of sensitive actions resulting from collective relationships. Human, social, romantic, work-related relationships, or many others that are named in different ways, are fundamental to the constitution of being and existing in a large city like Fortaleza, which is home to many other cities, in peripheral regions or with high real estate value, formal and informal cities can be seen in a single and larger Fortaleza. On June 12, 2018, the city of Fortaleza took an important step towards ensuring the sustainability of the cycling policy, by sanctioning Law No. 10,752, which provides that all resources from the rotating public parking lot, Zona Azul, must be used to invest in actions aimed at bicycle mobility, including cycle lanes, cycle paths, bicycle parking, among others.

In Fortaleza, in the Fátima neighborhood, on Rua Monsenhor Otávio de Castro,

it is possible to see graffiti on the wall of a residence that pays homage to a cyclist who died on L2 Norte, in Brasília. The image of Raul Aragão with wings on a bicycle was painted in the house of the boy's brothers, in Ceará. Aragão died after being hit by a car at 95 km/h on October 21, 2017.

Figure 4: Graffiti and phrase with hashtag in tribute to the cyclist



Source: Personal Collection

White bicycles, also known as ghostbikes, are often placed on the side of city roads in honor of victims of traffic violence and are intended to raise awareness among the population about respect for cyclists.⁴ In 2016, an 11-year-old child was killed on a cycle path in Fortaleza while cycling with his mother, run over by a driver of a Land Rover who recklessly advanced on a U-turn. The tragedy caused great commotion in Fortaleza and an intense demonstration was organized by the collective of women cyclists from the capital, Ciclanas, and a collective pedal took to the streets of Fortaleza to demand justice and say that “It Was Not an Accident”. In addition to the bicycles, which used to be concentrated in Praça da Gentilândia, in Benfica, cyclists usually install white bicycles every time a cyclist is killed.

⁴ The first ghost bike appeared in 2003, in the city of St. Louis, Missouri, in the United States. The idea came from Patrick Van Der Tuin, a cyclist tired of seeing his friends and other cyclists being run over in the city (CRUZ, 2022).

Figure 6: Ghost Bikes in Fortaleza



Source: Personal Collection 2013

Gathering clues and images that show the bicycle as an important element of the cultural landscape also means observing the way in which individuals appropriate urban space, which is sometimes pleasant and sometimes hostile for those who venture out on this instrument that is a means of transport and leisure.

Jean-Marc Besse (2014) recalls that “there are artists (but also pilgrims) for whom walking is making work, for whom movement creates form”, we would add, in the context of our research, that cycling, venturing out and facing the city by bicycle, and also engaging with this object in an active and activist way is writing a chapter in the history of a place, in our case, the greater Fortaleza. From this perspective, Rogério Oliveira (2018) converges: “The bicycle gives other senses and feelings the opportunity to interact and understand, in other ways, the historicity contained in the landscape”.

For the exploratory phase of the research, which is still ongoing, we have defined a strategy that encompasses the fertile and extensive field: cycling around the city, covering as much distance and time as possible, meeting cyclists, as diverse as possible, approaching them as spontaneously and cordially as possible, inviting them to a subsequent dialogue about the research. At this moment, the understanding regarding the data of this work comes to be extracted from a reality that is constructed together with the observer. Attention to the problem and the objective of the research will occur

in relation to the field, moments in the future of the present study.

Final Considerations

We consider the increase in bicycle use in Fortaleza to be one of the results of the intense action of people who came together to defend this means of transport and we see cycle activists as important actors in the construction of this reality. This study highlights such social movements as drivers of public policies aimed at cyclomobility and the valorization of active transport. With the intense articulation of groups on the streets and digital communities, we have the use of bicycles as an important instrument to guarantee the right to the city and other fundamental rights.

The development of the research has allowed us to confirm preliminary hypotheses of this work: that the intensification of the use of bicycles as a means of transportation in Fortaleza has occurred in the last 10 years, due to multiple factors and also: that the bicycle is an important symbol in the expression and communicability of the city; that public policies, the set of actions promoted by various social actors, favored the quality of urban mobility and were able to return to those who ride bicycles in Fortaleza, in particular, the dignity of no longer being an invisible user; that the right to the city expands as the use of bicycles is encouraged, as this favors belonging, the closer use of public spaces to the detriment of private ones; the humanization of traffic, and the quality of life in general.

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