



The scholar architecture in the construction of the republican imaginary

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RESUMO. Este artigo apresenta resultados de uma pesquisa, ainda em andamento, sobre instituições escolares. Tem por objeto de estudo o Grupo Escolar Barão de Mipibu, com recorte temporal de 1909 a 1920. Objetiva analisar, através do grupo escolar em estudo, como a arquitetura escolar contribuiu com a construção do imaginário republicano na sociedade norte-rio-grandense. Para embasar este trabalho, foram utilizados alguns autores, a saber: Moreira (2005), Escolano (2001), Bencostta (2005) e Le Goff (2004). Compreende-se que este estudo é importante para colaborar com a História da Educação brasileira, bem como com a da escola primária no Brasil. Por fim, entende-se que o Grupo Escolar Barão de Mipibu, inserido no contexto de criação de grupos escolares pelo país, foi instrumento da formação do imaginário social republicano por meio do seu espaço físico e da sua arquitetura.

Palavras-chave: arquitetura; educação; República; imaginário.

A arquitetura escolar na construção do imaginário republicano

ABSTRACT. This article presents the results of an ongoing research on school institutions. Its object of study is the Scholar Group Barão de Mipibu, with a time frame from 1909 to 1920. It aims to analyze, through the studied school group, how the scholar architecture contributed to the republican imaginary construction in the Rio Grande do Norte's society. To base our study, we used some authors, specifically: Moreira (2005), Escolano (2001), Bencostta (2005) and Le Goff (2004). This study is important to collaborate with the Brazilian History of Education, as well as the primary school in Brazil. At last, we understand that the Scholar Group Barão de Mipibu set in the context of creation of scholar groups throughout the country, was an instrument of the republican social imaginary formation through its physical space and its architecture.

Keywords: architecture; Education; Republic and imaginary.

La arquitectura escolar en la construcción del imaginario republicano

RESUMEN. El presente artículo presenta resultados de una investigación, aún en curso, sobre instituciones escolares. Tiene por objeto de estudio el Grupo Escolar Barão de Mipibu, con recorte temporal de 1909 a 1920. El objetivo es analizar, a través del grupo escolar en estudio, cómo la arquitectura escolar contribuyó con la construcción del imaginario republicano en la sociedad norte-rio-grandense. Para guiar este trabajo, fueron utilizados algunos autores, a saber: Moreira (2005), Escolano (2001), Bencostta (2005) y Le Goff (2004). Se comprende que este estudio es importante para colaborar con la Historia de la Educación brasileña, así como con la de la escuela primaria en Brasil. Por fin, se entiende que el Grupo Escolar Barão de Mipibu, insertado en el contexto de creación de grupos escolares por el país, fue instrumento de la formación del imaginario social republicano a través de su espacio físico y de su arquitectura.

Palabras-clave: arquitectura; educación; República; imaginario.

Introduction

From the second half of the 19th century, it is noticed that it increased, on the part of the elites, the concern about the building of proper environments for teaching. This happens due to some reasons, which are: the strengthening of the Imperial State, that aimed

to consolidate its structures, allocating the education in the discourse of the Modern States achievements; the discussions about the hygienic issues of medicine, which criticized the places destined to teaching, alleging that the need of hygiene on the environments where the classes happened, with the concern about

ventilation, cleaning and illumination; besides that, the difficulties that the government faced to carry out the supervision of schools because of its isolations and the distance between that and the high costs of the space rent, which boosted the reasons by which the discourse of a proper place for school to become the issue of discussion and interest. Those factors raised questions about the need of the building of primary schools, but these issues were gradually presented.

Only through the advent of the Republic that the school buildings for primary education became an object of the government and they were created by means of consolidation of the new regime, as a raised flag to disseminate the republican ideas and values, as stated by Azevedo and Stamatto (2012, p. 32): "The school buildings were part of the reading production of modernity and of the progress made by the local elites and became one of the favorite targets for the diffusion of republican ideas"¹.

The spatialization, intended by the republicans, was consolidated through the implementations of School Groups, which were inspired in the groups that already existed in Europe and United States.

The school group architecture

The new model of primary school chosen by the republican government, in its discourse, was presented differently of the Empire educational system, in which the teacher characterized the school, in other words, the schoolmaster. There was not a proper environment for teaching, and it could happen in a rent space by the state authorities or at the teacher's house, in which separated a room of their house to accommodate the students during class time. There was not a proper environment for teaching, and it could happen in a rent space by the state authorities or at the teacher's house, in which separated a room of their house to accommodate the students during class time.

The school groups, in their form, were generally characterized by the union of three or more isolated schools in the same building, structured with, at least, a mixed preschool education (boys and girls), a female and a male elementary school. That way it's possible to define the school group structure.

The isolated schools gathered in a School Group began to be organized in a system of degrees or grades, being known by the name of graduated or serial schools. Besides that, the classes happened at the same time in separated rooms.

According to Moreira (2005), the buildings constructed specifically to be a School Group had a semicircular panopticon model, which made available the central room layout in a way that was possible for the principal to be attentive to the progress of the classes in the other rooms.

The school groups construction brought a new idea of school, revealing itself as a discourse that established a value system, such as organization, order, discipline and vigilance. It was becoming as a "[...] cultural construct that expresses and reflects, beyond of its materiality, particular discourses" (Escolano, 2001, p. 26)².

Those values that were disseminated within the school groups through the architecture went beyond those who studied there, because the space reorganization for the elementary school was also focused on the redefinition of the occupation of its place in the city. The graduate school reached not only the pedagogical system, but also the whole society.

The presence of the School Groups in the cities contributed in the modification of their scenario, because it appeared as a symbol of development and modernity, becoming part of the "[...] set of properties to be seen by the local population [...]" (Stamatto, 2005, p. 78) along with the other buildings that were being implanted in that period. Stem from the beautification of the city, the republicans sought to spawn the idea of modernity in the society's imaginary and that the Republic was bringing progress to the people. The city's architecture had a function to show the republican government the modernity ideas, progress and hygiene, the power that was instituted in this new regime.

The building of school environments was included in the modernization of cities, as a strategy that, "[...] should work as a focal point in the urban scene, in order to become visible, as a sign of a republican ideal, an architectural discursive grammar that exalted the new regime" (Bencostta, 2005, p. 97)³.

That way, the school building became an urban gear that helped in the cities beautification (Moreira, 2005). The school became a great propagator of the values and social rules of the new republic, conveying to the imaginary the work of maximum social value built by the republican government (Monarcha, 1999).

¹ Freely translated: "Os prédios escolares fizeram parte da produção da leitura da modernidade e do progresso feita pelas elites locais e se transformaram em um dos alvos prediletos para a difusão do ideário republicano".

² Freely translate: "constructo cultural que expressa e reflete, para além de sua materialidade, determinados discursos".

³ Freely translated: "[...] deveriam funcionar como ponto de destaque na cena urbana, de modo que se tornasse visível, enquanto signo de um ideal republicano, uma gramática discursiva arquitetônica que enaltecia o novo regime".

The construction of school buildings, transferred to the Republic and implemented through the school groups, became a symbol of the republican in the search of internalize the idea of progress that the Republic intended for Brazil. The school buildings began to contains a significant symbology in the republican imaginary.

Le Goff (2004), when analyzed the construction of the cathedral's imaginary in the Middle Age, presented them associated to the genesis states and explained that before being only a city monument, they became State monuments, because this turned into the responsible for authorizing the cathedrals buildings. In a similar way, it was possible to observe the importance of the school groups in relation to the republican government, because before they were a local scope monument, they became First Republic monuments.

The school group buildings began to exercise a social role to be represented as a government symbol, which was intended to lead the country to modernity and progress. Within this educational space, there was a network of important symbols in the diffusion of this role that was noticed, since the school group physical structure until the students behave and what was taught.

The school groups in Rio Grande do Norte

Rio Grande do Norte, not showing itself different from the other Brazilian states, also aimed to modernize its capital to serve as an example to the other cities of the state. Natal, RN's capital, counted on various refurbishes in public buildings, squares constructions, with afforestations, extension of main roads, opening of theater and cinema with neoclassical and art nouveau characteristics, the deployment of Normal, Domestic Schools and of the Augusto Severo School Group, model in 1909 (Figure 1), which inaugurated a period of several school group creation by Rio Grande do Norte.



Figure 1. Augusto Severo School Group (1907).

Source: Moreira (2005, p. 80).

The Groups built in the State's countryside should follow the guidelines given by the Law of that time, which presented the same direction as the Augusto Severo Model School Group. In which refer to the ground being located in a dry and elevated environments, spacious, well ventilated and elegant spaces, sewage system, board, archive and covered and uncovered for children's break (Decreto n. 239, 1910).

However, the majority of these groups has its creation declared, but without possess its own building, constructed for that purpose. Many of these were created and started to function in rented buildings or in the stewardship or in the city's parish hall, only working in its own building years after the creation Decree, due to economic, political and social issues in their localities.

The serial schools in Rio Grande do Norte's countryside were built with pomp aspects in their architecture, even though they did not presented the same amount of ornaments in the facades found in the Model Group. They possessed central staircases, doors and raised windows, seeking to revel the opulence of such a construction in front of the urban area in which was located, because as simple as it appeared in face of the Augusto Severo Model School Group, for the local population they represented actual monuments. They were presented in significant locations in the cities (Moreira, 2005), along with other institutions that had their space built in the social imaginary as instituted powers, namely, the stewardship (temporal power) and the church (religious power).

In which concerns about the built spaces, it is important to highlight that the plan of the groups was hired to architects and ngineers and the construction should be located close to other important buildings of the city, such as the City Hall, Police, House of Representatives, Church, among others and, preemptive, with the main squares in front of its facade or by its side (Azevedo, & Stamatto, 2012, p. 28)⁴.

The school institution raised as a new power, the knowledge, place of ignorance liberation, that's why it needed to be located in a central place, composing the main urban part. The position of the school building was beginning to have a prominent place.

In São José do Mipibu's city, located in the Potiguar harsh, far from the capital Natal, about 40km (Figure 2), it's perceived the same

⁴ Freely translated: "Em relação aos espaços edificados, é importante salientar que a planta dos grupos escolares era contratada a arquitetos e a engenheiros e a construção deveria situar-se próxima aos demais prédios importantes da cidade, como a Intendência (Prefeitura), a Polícia, a Cassa Legislativa, a Igreja, entre outros, e, de preferência, com a praça principal a sua frente ou ao seu lado"

construction space of the city, placing the main local powers in a spotlight central region (Figure 3).

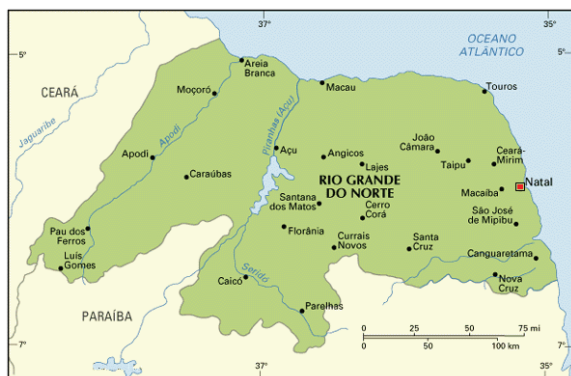


Figure 2. Rio Grande do Norte's Map / localization of São José de Mipibu and Natal.

Source: Guianet (2000).

The Figure 3 reveals the spatial configuration in São José do Mipibu municipality, in the 1940's, in a highlighted position the Barão de Mipibu School Group, in the city's center, presenting as one of the instituted powers even before 1909, more precisely in the year of 1879, and that had a great influence on the local society.



Figure 3. Aerial view of the old city of São José de Mipibu (1950's decade of the 20th century)⁵.

Source: Amaral (2014).

Another important aspect is that from this image of the 40's decade it can be observed that São José de Mipibu's city was still quite rural, with structure still baroque. The modernization and beautification process suffered by many state capitals in Brazil didn't expand to the countryside municipalities in a homogeneous shape. In Mipibu's city, there are some public works that reveal signs of a concern

with the modernization and beautification discourse at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as the construction of a bandstand in the square, the extension of the main streets and the Barão de Mipibu school building, which stands out showing its importance and sumptuousness in the region, opposing to the colonial aspects of the municipality.

Barão de Mipibu School Group

Inserted in this context, the Barão de Mipibu School Group was created in 1909, by the Decree 204, of August 12th of 1909 (Decreto n. 204, 1909). However, it has a particularity, because its building already existed even before its creation, being installed in the House of Public old building, in other words, before even inaugurating the Group in the city, this house was already a place dedicated to the children's education from that region, something rare in Brazilian's education during the Empire.

The building's construction where the Barão de Mipibu School Group was allocated it corresponds to the end of the 19th century, 1879 year; was built under the command of the Baron of Mipibu, Miguel Ribeiro Dantas (Figure 4), who donated a land for this purpose (Barbalho, 1960, p. 21).



Figure 4. Plaque of Honor to the Baron of Mipibu.

Source: Cruz (2013b).

Besides that, in Rio Grande do Norte, there is another building constructed during the imperial period, with the purpose of perform as a school: the School Group Felipe Camarão, in Ceará-Mirim city, under the Baron of Ceará-Mirim orders, Manuel Varela do Nascimento (Medeiros Filho, 2005).

It's important to realize that this kind of building, exclusively created for teaching, it was not something ordinary in the 19th century: the education happened usually in the teacher's house, because "[...] almost no buildings were built to

⁵ Subtitle: 1 – Catholic Church 2 – Barão de Mipibu School Group 3 – Municipal Intendence

shelter schools [...]” (Stamatto, 2005, p. 8)⁶, not being a common practice in the cities, mainly in the countryside. However, this initiative of the Barons reveals the local economic power of the elite and the prestige of the locality of the region, as well as the influence and the contact of the barons with another places which had already began the introducing process of the spaces dedicated to the education as the capital of the country, Rio de Janeiro.

The Group was inaugurated as a female elementary school, a male and a mixed children's school; each school should have the capacity of accommodate at most 40 children, with the exception of the mixed school, which should have to accommodate at most 24 students. For each class it was assigned a teacher, one for women's school, two women for the mixed school and for the men's school, a man, who also would held the position of the institution Principal, however, it is not known if this amount of teachers already taught in local education before the group's foundation.

The building was built with the material manufactured in the region itself, with ceramic bricks and tiles made by the farm's slaves; the mortar was made of clay, whale oil and sea shells. It was built in a dry and elevated place, far from flooded places and with vast, airy and bright space, which reveals its pioneering in the school construction in Rio Grande do Norte.

Regarding its physical structure, was presented modern for the time and preceded the hygienists guidelines, since the building precedes the Republic and were followed in the construction of school groups during the First Republic, as can be observed in the 44th article of the legislation of Rio Grande do Norte. “Art. 44º The school buildings shall be located on high and dry ground, isolated from other buildings away from centers of great industrial activity, marshes and suspect places” (Decreto n. 239, 1910, p. 125)⁷.

Its construction had, since its building, neoclassical characteristics (Figure 5), style chosen to understand that its straight lines, the absence of much filling in the decoration, which brought the idea lightness, harmony and discretion, represented the rationality, order, contrasting to the Baroque, and with all its curves and contours filled, the exuberance of the elements referred to religiosity and ignorance. The neoclassicism aimed to represent the nation's formation, a civilizing process

that was intended since the 19th century (Czarjowski, 2000).



Figure 5. Frontal facade of the old Barão de Mipibu School Group. Construction date: 1879

Source: the author

Another aspect of the classic architecture found in the Barão de Mipibu School Group it is the introduction of the pediment in a triangular form, with classical themes or that emphasize the nation. In the case of the Barão de Mipibu School Group, it could be seen the construction date of the building and find the name of its patron, that was placed already during the Republic when, through the Decree, it was established that “[...] the group it's going to operate in the state [building] itself, located at the Tavares de Lyra Square” (Decreto n. 204, 1909, p. 83)⁸. Besides that, its windows and doors presented a concern with the ventilation and lighting of the school space.

The ground plan in the Barão de Mipibu School Group (Figure 6); provided by the State Department of Education, Culture and Sports (SECD - RN), presents the divisions of the rooms referring to the present time, however, it does not prevent the understanding of the old structure of the building, because it is conserved until today, working as a part of the Barão de Mipibu State School.

From its physical structure, it is possible to realize that the space was built in the 19th century and was in a mural box format. The thickness of the walls and the arrangement of the doors suggests that probably there was three classrooms, the right and the lefts ones being larger and a smaller one in the center. From which it is inferred, the larger ones would be dedicated to women's and men's schools (40 students each) and the smaller to the mixed school (28 students). There was an anteroom, reserved to the reception and a bathroom.

⁶ Freely translated: “quase não foram construídos prédios para abrigar escolas”.

⁷ Freely translated: “Art. 44º Os edifícios das escolas serão situados em terreno elevado e seco, isolados de outros prédios afastados dos centros de grande atividade industrial, dos pântanos e dos lugares suspeitos”

⁸ Freely translated: “o grupo funcionará no próprio estadual [prédio], sito à Praça Tavares de Lyra”

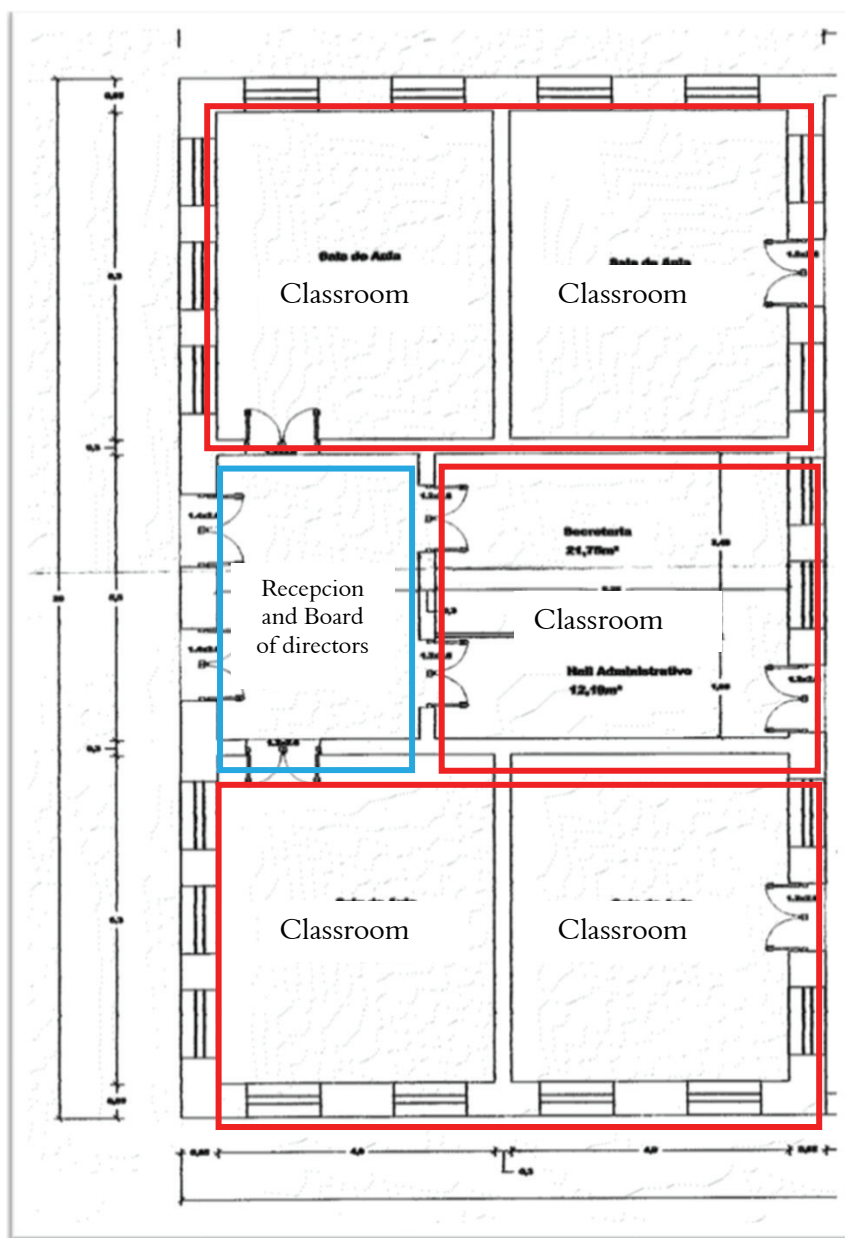


Figure 6. Part of the old ground plan of the School Group Barão de Mipibu (1879)⁹.

Source: Rio Grande do Norte (2014).

⁹By the layout of the three classrooms and by the height of the doors and windows, it is possible to infer that the space entered the 20th century with the same structure, as well as since its foundation had a sexist character, because it is perceived that there was no link between the halls, in other words, the boys and girls classes were separated, there was no contact between them, probably the breaks were also apart.

⁹ Subtitle: The colors in the ground plan image of the Barão de Mipibu School Group correspond to the demonstration of the building structure in its origin. The red markings represent the classrooms (total of 3), and the blue ones correspond to the space for the board and the reception.

The children attended by the Barão de Mipibu School Group were, in general, from the most affluent families of the region and people who lived close to the urban center, because the access was not easy for those who were in the municipality rural area, as well as many of these needed to help their parents in the rural work, making their access to school harder.

The ones who did not attend to the school environment, this were still reached by the republican social imaginary through the building, because to those who passed in front of it was noticeable the greatness and novelty of the elementary school in the city, as well

as the festivities and parades that took place in the square in front of the building, setting the image and the importance of this institution to the locality, being a symbol of the modernity that the Republic sought, disseminated as its own.

When confronted the informations that the ground plan presented with other sources, it can be perceived that the new regime did not make many changes in the Group's land structure, because according to Amaral (2009), in the year of its inauguration as a School Group, its physics structure was similar to the one of the end of 19th century. The inside environment was still consisted by three large and airy classrooms, but it had a novelty, which was an anteroom, where it was the room which the function were of secretary and school management. With the appearance of the principal's figure, it was necessary to creat a space for this purpose. With this, it is inferred that the reception was divided in two rooms to shelter the direction and the reception, as it can be observed in the ground plan of the Barão de Mipibu School Group. A proper space to the direction reveals the importance of this position in the school routine. The prinpal's role could be held by one of the institution's teacher, that accumulated two functions (teacher and principal), this only when it was a small school group. In the case of a bigger one, someone should be nominated only for that job. As the Barão de Mipibu School Group was considered a small group, the principal's function was accumulated by a teacher.

The direction was the connection between the Board of Directors of Public Instruction and the school group, besides that had the obligation of bringing information about the institution's operation, inspect the group's inside order, watch if all determinations were being accomplished.

The physical space and the function exercised by the board in a school group were intimately connected, because if the function was to inspect and set order into the environment, therefore, your room must be strategically positioned in such an appropriate place to this end.

The spatial position of the room, the principal post, its functions and performance of its inner part at the school group as an authority gave the image of order and discipline. The principal, together with the teachers, were the wisdom authorities and in that institution's order, and the image that was constructed by the youth about theses personalities was a vision of respect and submission by the power that they wield. They also configured the image of submission to the government, because it represented them. Although, the Barão de Mipibu School Group building, despite the fact that it

wasn't constructed with this concern, when transformed in a school group, it was adapted, placing the principal's room, located near to the entrance and exit of people in the building and at the proximities of the class rooms.

The remaining areas that composed the Barão de Mipibu School Group were external bathrooms with sumps, sewers, water reservoir and a vacant space used to the children's playground. Nevertheless, it can't be affirmed that the bathrooms of the imperial period were the same as the Republic ones, or if they were built in this period, with the concern of a sewer system installation.

However, it is known that the physical structure of the Republic beginning remained the same until the decade of 1950, because as it is confirmed by the sir Antônio Dantas, ex-student of the School Group:

[...] the front part were three rooms, a large room at the right hand side, a large room at the left hand side and a large room at the middle and the secretary at the lobby, in the entrance. Behind at the right hand side there was a very poor wooden balcony, where they used to do meals (Dantas, 2013)¹⁰.

It is interesting to observe that, even though it was built at the end of the XIX century, its blueprint resembles to others along the country, built in the beginning of the XX century, for instance the School Groups Professor Cleto (Figure 7) and the Concelheiro Zacarias (Figure 8), both in Curitiba at 1911.

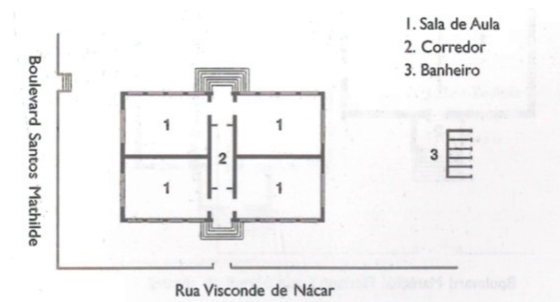


Figure 7. Ground Plan of the Professor Cleto School Group - Curitiba/PR (1911).

Source: Bencostta (2001, p. 127).

That reveals how much the construction of the Barão de Mipibu School Group, during the time of the 'Casa de Instrução Pública', was something innovative in the province of Rio Grande do Norte, and even though it was located in the countryside, it had a certain importance to the regional scenario, because antecede the provincial capital itself in the construction of a building in neoclassical molds.

¹⁰ Freely translation: "[...] a parte da frente eram três salas, uma sala grande do lado direito, uma sala grande do lado esquerdo e uma sala grande no meio e a secretaria na portaria, na entrada. Atrás do lado direito tinha um balcão bem precário de madeira onde se fazia o lanche".



Figure 8. Ground Plan of the Conselheiro Zacarias School Group - Curitiba/PR (1911).

Source: Bencostta (2005, p. 128).

Conclusion

The study about the Barão de Mipibu School Group's architecture allowed to understand the use of education by the republicans, collaborating to the construction of the social imaginary. The school's physical space, along with others school elements, became a place of dissemination of republican symbols, values and ideas. It's understood that the school building exceeded its walls, in which concerns about the respect to the imaginary reach, because even the men and women who had been excluded from the educational system in this period were also struck by this structure. This is noticeable in the spatial location of the school building, in its monumentality that represented the modern and progressive actions of the new government, as well as in the social role that it had, for example, the civic festivities that happened in front of the group and which embraced the whole local community.

It's understood that the worry about construct a building, which gathered the isolated school, was one of the ways of republican imaginary ideal. The construction of school buildings or its adaptation for this purpose became responsible for the image dissemination of one of the Republic achievements, being placed as a place of knowledge, order and power of this new government.

The physical structure, the room's division, the sumptuousness, the architectural beauty that was often compared to the Baroque architecture of the cities colonial period, as it can be observed in the Barão de Mipibu School Group, all of those aspects brought in themselves the formation of a new imaginary: the place image proper to the primary education which didn't exist before. The school building had its own image expressed in its sumptuousness, grandiosity, becoming a place in which knowledge, as well as order and progress, represented flags raised by the republicans.

The insertion of school spaces in the urban context caused a new configuration in this, bringing, along other republican pieces, the image of a new time, constituting a new imaginary through the monumentalities of that time.

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