

## The mobile practices and the public space in the surroundings of Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station

### As práticas sociais da mobilidade e o espaço público no entorno da Estação Jardim Helena-Vila Mara

### Las prácticas sociales de la movilidad y el espacio público en torno a la Estación Jardim Helena-Vila Mara

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#### Abstract

This article analyzes Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station, located in the east of the city of São Paulo, based on its condition as the center of the neighborhood. It aims to investigate how this place is constituted based on the daily use of the public spaces in its surroundings, especially by rail transport passengers. This work contributes to the study of railway stations by approaching them as a dynamic public place that, in



relation to the city, receives the mobile practices. Therefore, this article includes in the analysis of railway stations the experience of commuters, valuing mobilities as an indispensable dimension of contemporary urban life.

**Keywords:** Mobile practices; Public spaces; Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station.

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa a Estação Jardim Helena-Vila Mara, localizada na zona leste do município de São Paulo, com base na sua condição de centro do bairro e tem por objetivo investigar como esse lugar se constitui a partir do uso cotidiano dos espaços públicos do seu entorno, sobretudo pelos passageiros do transporte sobre trilhos. Este trabalho visa contribuir para os estudos das estações ferroviárias ao abordá-las como um local público dinâmico que, em relação com a cidade, recebe as práticas sociais das pessoas em movimento. Com isso, este artigo incorpora, nas análises das estações ferroviárias, a experiência dos passageiros em seus deslocamentos habituais, valorizando a mobilidade como uma faceta indispensável da vida urbana contemporânea.

**Palavras-chave:** Práticas sociais da mobilidade; Espaços públicos; Estação Jardim Helena-Vila Mara.

## Resumen

Este artículo analiza la Estación Jardim Helena-Vila Mara, ubicada en la zona este de la ciudad de São Paulo, a partir de su condición de centro del barrio y tiene como objetivo investigar cómo se constituye este lugar a partir del uso cotidiano de los espacios públicos en su entorno, especialmente por parte de los pasajeros del transporte ferroviario. Este trabajo contribuye al estudio de las estaciones de ferrocarril abordándolas como un lugar público dinámico que, en relación con la ciudad, recibe las prácticas sociales de las personas en movimiento. Por lo tanto, este artículo incluye en el análisis de las estaciones ferroviarias la experiencia de los pasajeros en sus desplazamientos habituales, valorando la movilidad como una dimensión indispensable de la vida urbana contemporánea.

**Palabras clave:** Prácticas sociales de movilidad; Espacios públicos; Estación Jardim Helena-Vila Mara.



## INTRODUCTION

**M**oving from one place to another in urban areas occurs through a succession of everyday, customary, regular, repetitive, and even banal facts. Observing the passengers' experiences in these situations with due rigor values the act of moving around as something intrinsic to contemporary urban life and allows us to expand the repercussions of mobilities on social relations.

Also, considering people who move around in spaces of transport infrastructures, such as train stations, makes it possible to address how people behave in spaces, what social relationships they establish with each other when they are moving, and how they experience time and space while moving.

Railway stations are everyday public places where mobility takes place as a fundamental dimension of urban life and social relations<sup>1</sup>. The focus on people's use of railway station spaces opens up the possibility of studying the multiple dimensions of the relationship between transport infrastructure and the city – in the case of this article, the relationship between the railway station and the surrounding public space.

This relationship is intrinsic to railway stations. As elements that actively participate in transport dynamics, they are access points to the urban train system and transfer points between means of transport. Stations also play a role in urban dynamics, as they are specific locations in the city that, in close relation to the public spaces around them, encourage diverse uses and attract a significant number of people.

From this perspective, this article analyzes Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station, located in Itaim Paulista, the easternmost part of São Paulo city, as a dynamic public place closely associated with public spaces and urban life in the surrounding area. A convergence point, this transport infrastructure is essential for the displacement of residents in the region and, consequently, for the other activities in the surrounding areas. Therefore, this paper aims to highlight how this place is constructed through the mobile practices of passengers in their routine displacement that spread from the station to the surrounding public spaces.

The study was conducted through visits that allowed the observation of mobile practices at the station and in adjacent public spaces. Two visits happened on weekdays, between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. These days and times were chosen so that the analysis would show the station and its surroundings as a dynamic place, made up of different rhythms created by people walking at different times. In this manner, the analysis covered the periods at the peak of rush hours in the early morning and late afternoon, but also less intense behavior at other times

<sup>1</sup> This is the hypothesis of the doctoral thesis that originated this article entitled “Estações ferroviárias de São Paulo: locais públicos da mobilidade” (São Paulo railway stations: public places of mobility), supervised by Prof. Dr. Fernanda Fernandes da Silva and defended by the author at Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo da Universidade de São Paulo (FAUUSP) in 2023. The case study of Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station is in chapter 8 of the thesis.



throughout the day. The results are presented in reports detailing the situations identified, accompanied by photos that portray the main mobile practices.

## Places and mobile practices

Recent theoretical contributions in social and human sciences allow us to broaden our approaches to the concept of mobility, seeking to understand it based on the complex social processes involved and not just as a possibility of numerically quantifiable displacement – a deterministic method traditionally adopted in transport studies.

British sociologist John Urry was the initial contributor to this theoretical and methodological effort, called new mobilities paradigm, which has spread since the beginning of the 21st century in several research studies on mobility in different disciplines, approaches, and geographical contexts.

Although broad in their methods and objectives, the research field of these studies starts from the observation of the growing movement of people, objects, and information at all scales. It also assumes the importance of displacement, whether physical or virtual, as fundamental element for understanding contemporary practices, the consequences of which are reflected in people's lives.

According to Urry (2007), this new paradigm allows us to understand the social world as a wide range of economic, social and political practices, infrastructures, and ideologies that involve, imply, or restrict various kinds of movement of people, objects, and information.

Urry (2007) argues that the proliferation of displacements driven by new mobility systems is not as significant as the social relations that these means produce. For the sociologist, social relations between entities in circulation are crucial, as they occur in specific places, involve various connections, greater or shorter distances, supported by more or less rapid means, regardless of physical movement.

According to Urry (2007), the new mobilities paradigm is a social and human sciences effort to understand the increase in the quantity and complexity of displacement in the contemporary world, mobilizing analyses that were historically static, fixed, and concerned with non-spatial social structures.

The approach proposed by Urry focuses on mobile spatializations, i.e., spatial configurations that are determined by the continuous action of displacement. As Freire-Medeiros and Lages (2020) summarize when interpreting the purpose of the new mobilities paradigm, it is an epistemic shift that avoids both the “fetishism of movement”, by not falling into the romanticization of fluidity and nomadism, and the “spatial fetishism” of notions such as fixed territory.



As geographers Alves, D'Antona and Marandola Junior (2020) emphasize, the new mobilities paradigm is not a new theory that replaces others, but a theoretical and methodological effort that brings together approaches present in the various disciplines of the social and human sciences. It does not qualify as a theoretical corpus per se but as a direction or a new motto that allows us to think and understand the world in a certain way and under certain premises. Freire-Medeiros and Lages (2020) also highlight this aspect when referring to the new mobilities paradigm as an analytical perspective that, in turn, is not limited to a specific object or scale, nor is it the exclusive domain of a theoretical current or a disciplinary field.

In a seminal text that coined the term, Sheller and Urry (2006) highlight the transdisciplinary content of the new paradigm, which essentially results from a transversal interpretation lens focused on mobilities as a product of the interaction between different disciplines, theories, methods, questions and solutions. According to them, it is not about defending a new narrative in favor of mobility or fluidity, nor a totalizing or reductive description of the contemporary world, but an effort that suggests a set of questions, theories, and methodologies resulting from the transdisciplinary collaboration between sociology, geography, history, anthropology and that has been spreading to other disciplines.

In short, the new paradigm seeks to place mobilities and its social, economic, cultural, and political implications at the center of analyses, reflecting the role that the movement of people, ideas, objects, and information plays in social life. It then refers to a broad project of establishing movement-oriented research.

Within this broad scope, two theoretical contributions discussed below are fundamental to the analysis intended by this article regarding the relationship between Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station and the surrounding public space based on passenger use: the need for relatively fixed places that enable mobilities and the mobile practices as a relationship between bodies in movement and the various technologies, systems, and spaces that involve displacement.

### **Places that enable mobilities**

Contrary to a superficial interpretation that mobilities imply and evoke only qualities of movement, flow, dynamism and speed, researchers of the new paradigm emphasize that mobilities depend on a wide range of systems that are, mostly and at least partially, immobile. Although the main part of the research interest focuses on what moves, they reiterate that there must also be a concern with the infrastructures that enable mobilities.

Sheller and Urry (2006) point out that the study of mobilities within the scope of the new mobilities paradigm must also consider the immobile infrastructures that allow and organize the intermittent flow of people, objects and information. As



flows require places to materialize, they claim that there is a direct relationship between mobilities and materialities.

To represent the importance of the physical presence of these infrastructures, Hannam, Sheller and Urry (2006) use the figure of moorings. Thus, they add a sense of spatial fixity in the notion of mobilities and mobility systems. According to them, the functioning of these systems requires spatial, infrastructural, and institutional ties that configure and enable mobilities. Urry (2007), when dealing with these physical ties, calls these places immobile platforms.

Such mobility systems therefore have physical elements with a relatively static materiality that establish spatial ties in certain places. Most of the time, they are spatially fixed elements, but, as Sheller and Urry (2006) point out, their attributes are only relatively rigid, since they are constantly reconfigured, in a contingent and complex way, by people's actions, the circulation of objects and the operation of machines.

Moreover, these infrastructures are increasingly interdependent and integrated, organized as nodes in a complex network of circulation services that adapt and evolve with each other, so that some expand and multiply. On the other hand, others may, over time, lose importance in terms of reach and impact or even cease to exist. Thus, they are also in constant movement among themselves.

Therefore, places that enable mobilities are dependent of those who visit them. They are dynamic, in transformation, which can be slow or fast, with smaller or bigger implications, based on relationships with human and non-human agents. They are relational, always existing in relation to people, objects and machines that operate within them. They are hybrids that unite materialities and mobilities and combine objects, technologies and sociabilities (Sheller; Urry, 2006).

As Urry (2007) accurately summarizes, all places, and especially those focused on mobility, are mutable. They depend in part on the practices that occur in them over time. In successive transformations, spaces and practices are linked in exceptionally complex and diverse ways. Thus, rather than being commonly seen as something that erodes the sense of belonging, mobilities and practices reinterpret and add new meanings to spaces as dynamic instances.

## The mobile practices

Geographer Tim Cresswell, in a context more suited to his discipline, contributes to the new mobilities paradigm by linking mobility more deeply to spatial issues and social practices.

Highlighting the importance of investigating the content of displacement, Cresswell (2006) treats them both in their qualitative, ethical and political order and with a



quantitative, utilitarian and practical focus. In his approach, mobility seen as a mere movement from A to B can be equated with the abstract concept of space, apparently natural and devoid of meaning, history or ideology. Whereas mobility, imbued with its content as a social practice, can be the equivalent of the concept of place as a dynamic instance full of meaning and power.

The content of the displacement that Cresswell (2006) mentions is more precisely analyzed when he refers to mobility as a socially produced movement in three relational moments: movement, representation and practice.

Initially, it treats mobility as a brute fact of an empirical reality, which is observable and measurable. A movement that can be analyzed and used as data of reality by professionals working in transport planning. In this dimension, it approaches pure movement and is more abstract (Cresswell, 2006).

Secondly, mobility is a representation that captures and make sense of it through the production of meanings. These ideas about movement are transmitted through a diverse set of representational strategies that range from cinema to law, from medicine to photography, from literature to philosophy. Thus, the brute fact of moving from A to B becomes synonymous with freedom, transgression, creativity, among others (Cresswell, 2006).

Ultimately, moving is an irreducibly experienced, lived and embodied practice. It is a way of being in the world. For example, the way of walking says a lot about the person, who may be sad, in love, happy or having another feeling that varies according to the mood at the time (Cresswell, 2006).

From this perspective, Cresswell (2006) insists that, in order to understand the meaning of mobility, it is necessary to consider the interface between the materiality of physical bodies moving through spaces with characteristics that are equally material and figures moving through representational images. The ways of moving are therefore closely linked to the meanings given to mobility through representation, while representations of mobility are also based on the ways in which mobility is practiced and embodied.

Referring to Henri Lefebvre's theory of space production, the three relational moments proposed by Cresswell must be evaluated together and in relation to each other based on dialectically interconnected processes. Like Lefebvre's triadic structure, Cresswell's interpretation of mobility is based on three concepts that must not negate each other in order to generate a third. Although distinct from each other, they exist in interaction, in conflict, or in alliance, though they are not reconciled in a synthesis. They assume equal importance and take a similar position in relation to others. If one of them is left out, the other two lose meaning.

The recognition of practices, present in Cresswell's interpretation, and the need for places that enable mobilities, defended by Hannam, Sheller and Urry, are



the theoretical bases for the analysis of the relationship between Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station and the surrounding public space. Especially highlighting the connection between mobility, materiality and social practices in the conformation of this place based on everyday use, this approach emphasizes both the spatial issue and an analysis of the mobile practices of the individuals who go to the station.

### **Public space and mobile practices at Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station: the center of the neighborhood**

The Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station is located in Itaim Paulista, in the far eastern region of São Paulo city. Approximately 25 km away from the city's central core, this region is a categorical representation of how the process of occupation of São Paulo took place, supported by the peripheral pattern of urbanization. A pattern that forced a large part of the lower-income population to settle in the most remote parts of the city, which currently have a high housing density, without an equivalent number of jobs and which do not have adequate infrastructure and urban services for the large population.

Until the beginning of the 20th century, Itaim Paulista was predominantly rural and irrelevant to the city. The implementation, in the 1920s, of the railway and the old São Paulo-Rio de Janeiro highway was crucial in changing this situation and promoting the development of the region, which was highly intense from 1950 onwards.

In the second half of the 20th century, urban occupation – which until then had been scarce, with disconnected land settlements far from the railway station – was transformed into a populous residential suburb of low-income class people. Residences and streets spread across the existing voids and, unlike what happened in some nearby neighborhoods, did not receive large-scale industries (Langenbuch, 1971).

By advancing rapidly and in a disorderly manner through land settlements, housing complexes, and unlawful occupations on the banks of various watercourses, urbanization was not accompanied by sufficient jobs, infrastructure, and urban services for the region's residents.

For the mobility of inhabitants, this process created a disjointed and insufficient road system, with few arterial routes. Medium and high capacity public transport alternatives were and still are scarce, restricted to rail passenger transport. The result is difficulty in getting around, both internally and to the distant central area of the city.

Despite its shortcomings, the Itaim Paulista region is now consolidated and has a reasonable offer of commerce and services, although jobs remain numerically

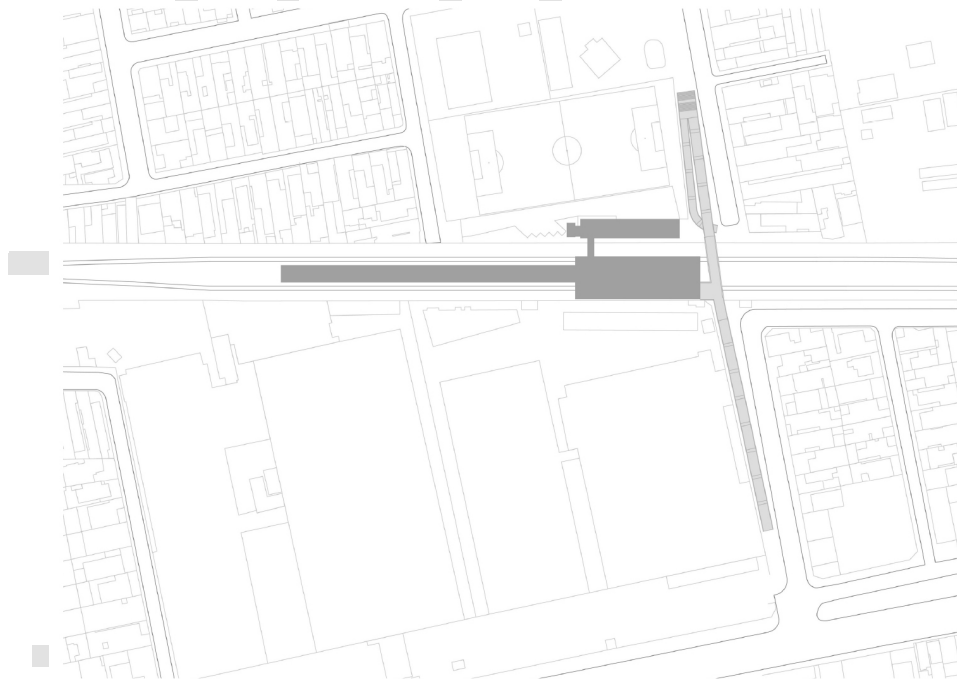


low. In this urban context marked by residential occupation by lower-income class people, the Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station was opened in 2008 on Line 12-Safira, operated by the São Paulo Metropolitan Train Company (CPTM).

As part of the expansion of railway services in the eastern region of the city from the 2000s onwards, the railway station offered greater accessibility to residents. Before that, they needed to travel internally in the region to Itaim Paulista Station, opened in the 1920s, to access the trains.

Therefore, the station's history does not include the role of stimulating the occupation of the surrounding area after its implementation, as occurred with the Itaim Paulista Station and many others in the São Paulo metropolitan area. However, despite being opened just over 15 years ago, a relatively short period for the development of urban processes and the long useful life of transport infrastructure, the station plays a fundamental role regarding its surroundings.

By inserting itself in a consolidated urban context, the station highlighted important nearby road axes and concentrated commerce and services in its immediate surroundings. Its two accesses, one to the south and one to the north of the railway, allow residents of the region to use the trains and cross the tracks (Figures 1 and 2).



*Figure 1: Site plan. Source: author, based on Digital Map of the City of São Paulo and archives of the São Paulo Metropolitan Train Company (CPTM).*

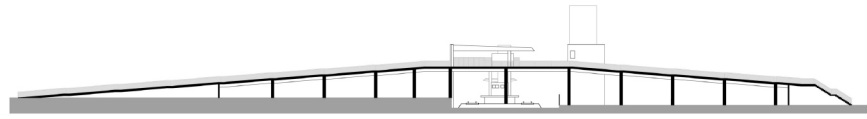


Figure 2: Section. Source: author, based on archives of the São Paulo Metropolitan Train Company (CPTM).

The station was consolidated as a place of convergence. It attracts many people who use public transport and others that cross the walkway that leads to the station. However, the urban dynamics, the characteristics of public spaces and the nature of mobile practices around the station vary on both sides of the railway.

It is more intense in the southern area of the station and closely related to the activities that take place on Marechal Tito Avenue (former São Paulo-Rio de Janeiro highway), which is the main arterial route in the region and connects with São Miguel Paulista and the neighboring municipalities of Itaquaquecetuba, Poá, Suzano and Mogi das Cruzes. The movement of vehicles and buses is intense and the main retail businesses – many of them large scale – in the region are located along the Avenue.

Due to the importance of Marechal Tito Avenue for the region and the passengers who arrive on the buses, the southern access to the station is slightly busier than the other access on the north. It takes place on a long, uncovered 4-meter wide ramp that is located on a narrow plot of land, between the neighboring lot occupied by a wholesaler and the sidewalk of São Gonçalo do Rio das Pedras Street. The successive sections of the ramp occupy practically the entire 120-meter stretch between the avenue and the railway (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Station's south access. Source: author, 2023.



The station is far from the avenue, and only the ramp and the totem signaling the entrance are visible. However, as the ramp is long, it starts almost from the avenue, which makes the route to the station quite smooth and direct.

The narrow space formed by the corner of São Gonçalo do Rio das Pedras Street and Marechal Tito Avenue is home to many activities and a place for those arriving and leaving the station. It includes the start of the ramp, the bus stop, pedestrian crossings, access to the wholesaler, and some informal workers who sell products in stalls, carts, and other structures (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Narrow public space next to the south access. Source: author, 2023.

The passenger flow is characteristic of everyday movements that are repeated on weekdays and are accompanied by a feeling of relative familiarity, predictability, comfort and safety resulting from prior knowledge of the places, routes and means of traveling through them. For these reasons, passenger behavior is largely unreflective, almost automatic. Nevertheless, even though they are usual, such behaviors are still important and should not be underestimated.

Trains are busier in the morning and boarding happens continuously, especially for people getting off the buses and heading towards the station. During the day, the number of pedestrians entering and leaving the station decreases considerably, increasing in the late afternoon, especially after 5 p.m., when many passengers leave the station and head towards the avenue, occupying practically the entire width of the ramp.

The number of street vendors in the afternoon is significant, attracting some passengers who get off the trains and consume some product, mainly food and drinks (Figure 5). Other people leaving the station head to the surrounding shops, but the majority cross the avenue and head to the bus stop to continue their journey to their final destination.





Figure 5: Street vendors next to the southern entrance of the station. Source: author, 2023.

In short, the volume of people arriving and leaving the station on this side of the railway and the diversity of activities are relevant. However, the movement of vehicles and buses is intense, traffic lights are not green for long enough for pedestrians to cross the avenue's six lanes, and the sidewalks are narrow. Due to these characteristics, the flow of buses and cars prevails, while pedestrians, who are disadvantaged, are restricted to small spaces (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Pedestrian crossing. Source: author, 2023.

Movement in the north side is less intense, but not negligible. On the contrary, while in the south the flow of vehicles on the avenue sets the pace, in the north it is the residents of Vila Mara, a neighborhood adjacent to the station, who determine the pace by their walking and daily activities. The predominantly residential use, the local retail businesses, and the absence of arterial routes create dynamics characterized by the daily life of the neighborhood.

Predominantly residential, Vila Mara is mostly composed of single-story houses and townhouses on small lots. Among the homes mostly occupied by lower-income class people, there are scattered small businesses that serve their residents, such as hairdressers, snack bars, bars, pizzerias, mini markets, grocers, and mechanic shops. Some of them occupy the front of residential lots and are owned by the inhabitants.

Like the southern side, access to the station is located on São Gonçalo do Rio das Pedras Street. It is one of the main circulation routes north of the railway. It crosses almost the entire neighborhood, distributes part of the internal flow of vehicles and some bus lines pass through it. This street also concentrates an important part of Vila Mara's commerce, like pharmacy, bakery, and butcher's shop, especially in the three blocks closest to the station, where nearly all the properties are used for commercial purposes.

The northern access to the station is slightly less used than the one on the south. The access is via a ramp or an uncovered staircase located on the block adjacent to the railway (Figure 7). This block contains only public facilities and a tree-lined open area with benches, an outdoor gym, a skate park, and a bike rack. There is also a nursery school, a community club (CDC) with a soccer field, and a bus stop, whose lines provide services to the neighborhoods north of the station.



Figure 7: Station's north access during the morning hours. Source: author, 2023.

Unlike what happens on the opposite side, the northern access is in a wide space that receives a number of informal workers' stalls that spread from the access stairs to the corner, forming a continuous corridor. On the southern side, most street vendors use equipment that is set up and dismantled every time, while on the north side, the stalls are fixed and remain in place throughout the day, even when they are empty. The number of these structures is considerable, preventing the view, from the corner, of the totem that signals the entrance to the station,

the stairs, and the access ramp, but maintaining a partial view of the station in the background.

Passenger behavior is quite similar to that found at the southern entrance, with those accustomed to the station's spaces predominating. The volume of passenger boardings at the northern access is also higher in the morning. Most of them walk to the station, while just a few get off the bus or are dropped off by drivers. During this period, few street vendors offer their products at the stalls. During the day, the movement of people decreases, though it does not cease; there are always people walking towards the station. The number of people increases again in the afternoon, especially after 5 p.m., when most people leave the station down the ramp and staircase.

In the late afternoon, most people walk towards the neighborhood, and a few wait at the bus stop or wait for a ride or ride-sharing service. Passengers move through the corridor formed by the stalls, which is too narrow for the number of people. Following the more intense movement, street vendors occupied almost all the stalls that were empty in the morning. Some sell clothes, others electronics, and a few snacks and cookies (Figure 8). In addition to the stalls, a street vendor spreads cell phone accessories on the handrails of the station staircase, and a “pastel”<sup>2</sup> stall is set up on the corner.



Figure 8: People walking between the stalls. Source: author, 2023.

The block with equipment is also important for the dynamics of the north side, as there are people who sit on the benches throughout the day (Figure 9). The soccer field, skate park and outdoor gym are rarely used. The bike rack, on the other hand, is very popular with station's passengers. Cyclists leave their bikes in the morning, go to work, and return after work to pick them up. It is usually full and

<sup>2</sup> Pastel is a traditional and popular Brazilian snack often sold at street food stalls, typically made of thin, crispy dough filled with ingredients, such as cheese, meat, chicken, or vegetables.



as turnover is low and there is not enough space, only those who arrive very early can park their bikes. Those who cannot park their bikes inside tie them to railings, posts and trees around the bike rack. The large number of bicycles found in this situation indicates that they are important as a mean of transport for the region.



*Figure 9: People sitting at an open space next to the station. Source: author, 2023.*

Another factor that helps to keep the intense dynamic throughout the day is the public pedestrian crossing function. With the intense dynamic in both sides of the railway, many who use the ramp and staircase do not access public transport, but simply cross the tracks.

Unlike the flow of people entering and leaving the station, which has peaks that follow the times when passengers get on and get off, the pedestrian crossing occurs in smaller numbers and at a constant pace throughout the day. There are always people crossing and, at various times of the day, the central point of the path, close to the gate that delimits access to the station, becomes a meeting place for residents, offering a privileged view of the surroundings (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Meeting place at the public pedestrian crossing. Source: author, 2023.

The presence of the station, the importance of São Gonçalo do Rio das Pedras Street for the neighborhood and the concentration of public facilities and commerce make the immediate area around the station a vital center for the residents of Vila Mara. They are the majority of those who use the northern access of the station. Therefore, due to its characteristics and in contrast to what occurs in the southern portion, pedestrians prevail, crossing the railway, accessing the station, shopping or just sitting on benches.

As seen, the dynamics and rhythm of pedestrians are different around Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station. To the south, cars and buses predominate on Marechal Tito Avenue. There are many pedestrians concentrated in the narrow space next to the station entrance who end up obliterated by the wide avenue and the intense flow of vehicles. To the north, the neighborhood's daily life prevails, with many pedestrians walking towards the shops, arriving at and leaving the station on foot or crossing the railway.

The analysis also highlights the temporal variation in mobile practices. There are nuances in the daily routine and in the way mobile practices develop, with a constant movement of people getting on trains early in the morning, a less intense movement throughout the day, and a marked flow of passengers leaving the station in the late afternoon.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station is an essential transport infrastructure, offering one of the few high-capacity mobility alternatives for residents in the region. It is also an important element for urban dynamics, due to the great amount of commercial and service activities in its surroundings. With access located close



to several public facilities, it is a point of convergence qualified as a typically local station that is widely used by residents.

The movement of people marks the station's routine. Most of them are regular rail passengers who get on in the morning and get off in the late afternoon. The usual weekday's routes are complemented by a flow of people that converge from the neighborhood to the area around the station for other reasons, such as crossing the railway to access commercial and service activities on the other side of the tracks. The intense use that people make of the station and its surroundings makes it an important place for urban life.

Given these considerations and from the perspective of mobile practices, people's relationship with the station's spaces and their surroundings occurs through everyday actions when accessing the trains, crossing the railway, or meeting at the station.

The relationship between transport infrastructure and the city goes beyond the mobility of people but reflects the station's importance as a convergence point in the neighborhood. This is evidenced by the interaction between passengers and informal workers who sell products around the station as well as by people who buy from nearby shops. In this manner, Jardim Helena-Vila Mara relates to the city as a public place of mobility marked by the daily life of the neighborhood.

Some positive aspects of the station's architecture contribute to making this space a public place of mobility valued by those who use it. Among these aspects are the entrances in the line of sight of pedestrians and the size of the building suitable for the predominantly horizontal residential construction standard of the surroundings.

The north access located near open spaces and public facilities also proves to be very beneficial in strengthening the relationship of mobility, social practices, and public spaces. However, the south access could be situated in a larger public space, rather than its current limited lot. Furthermore, the narrow sidewalk next to it is not enough to accommodate the movement of people and is hampered by the intense movement of vehicles on the adjacent avenue.

Although the scale of the public spaces adjacent to the south of the railway is unsuitable for the flow of people, the overall integration of the station with the surrounding public spaces is quite intense. By taking advantage of its status as a high-capacity transport alternative, Jardim Helena-Vila Mara Station serves as a connection between people and the public spaces in multiple ways. Therefore, it is an important transport infrastructure that goes beyond its primary function of promoting access to the railway system.



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