
Memory, history and historiography in the construction of a crossroad city (Ponta Grossa-PR, 1890-1964)

Memória, história e historiografia na construção de uma cidade encruzilhada (Ponta Grossa-PR, 1890-1964)

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Abstract

This paper problematizes the idea of the “crossroad city” in the memories constituted around the construction and heyday of the railroad in Ponta Grossa. To this end, it investigates how the various social agents involved registered the presence of the railroad in the city, in an attempt to capture its numerous meanings. Thus, it establishes a dialogue with the local historiography, seeking the meanings constructed for the railroad in the history of Ponta Grossa, scrutinizing the intricate dynamics of creation, questioning and crystallization of concepts.

Keywords: City, Memory, History, Historiography.

Resumo

O artigo problematiza a ideia da “cidade encruzilhada” nas memórias constituídas em torno da chegada e do auge da ferrovia em Ponta Grossa. Para tanto, investiga como a presença da estrada de ferro na cidade foi registrada pelos vários agentes sociais envolvidos, na tentativa de captar suas inúmeras significações. Estabelece um diálogo com a historiografia local indagando quais os sentidos construídos para a ferrovia na história de Ponta Grossa, esmiuçando a intrincada dinâmica de criação, questionamento e cristalização de conceitos.

Palavras-Chave: Cidade, Memória, História, Historiografia.

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Ponta Grossa is a city born and raised on the side of the road [...] Road and rail junction *fulfills a destiny of crossroads, of commercial entrepot, of focus of industrial and cultural irradiation* [...] since the beginning of Brazil, the land of the Campos Gerais [...] was favorable to the passage of caravans, *bandeiras* [exploratory expeditions] troops of wagons, railroad tracks, black ribbon of asphalt [...]. And Ponta Grossa became the *crossroads* of all these paths ¹

On the basis of what criterion does a historian discuss the struggles and the agents of a time that is not their own? This question widens when we remember that this era projects its strength and its categories onto the present and on who history is. ²

The expression “Ponta Grossa-crossroad city” impresses for its powerful performance as an incontestable explanatory key to the city’s history. Greatly, it articulated the economic, political and social development of the city to its supposedly privileged geographic location.

Year after year, anniversary after anniversary of the city, this explanation has been reproduced in official speeches by the City Hall, in the production of texts in public or private schools, in editorials and special sections published in local newspapers ³.

However, the purpose of this article is to discuss what I consider to be the most disturbing aspect of this issue: the difficulty of critically problematizing this explanatory key in the academic intellectual production itself - research projects and undergraduate and graduate studies, articles and other analyses about the social-historical processes in the city of Ponta Grossa with its present and past projects of social reordering.

This is disturbing mainly because, despite the overwhelming wave of revisionisms and delegitimization of history and the craft of historians/teachers in this discipline, I still believe that we should consider how social processes create meanings and how these interfere in the very constitution of history and historiography.

¹ WANKE, E. T. *O Vão da Pombinha*. Ponta Grossa, 1964. p. 77. Emphasis added.

² VESENTINI, Carlos Alberto. *A teia do fato: uma proposta de estudo sobre a memória histórica*. São Paulo: Ed Hucitec, 1997, p.15.

³ PONTA GROSSA abraça o futuro. *Diário dos Campos*. September, 2019. Caderno Especial. <https://www.diariodoscamos.com.br/especiais/niver-pg-196-anos>. Access on 30/09/2019

I agree with researcher Yara Aun Khoury⁴ that these meanings and the ways in which they are constituted in memory are especially important in the political position we assume. More than that, we need to reflect on the implications underlying the historian's procedures when building knowledge that is also established as memory. As Walter Benjamin has also warned us: "the only historian capable of fanning the spark of hope in the past is the one who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious".⁵

To face the debate around the constitution of the thesis of the *crossroad city* as a process of production of a historical memory, I deepened the understanding of the impact of the historian's work in the constitution of memories. Also, the relevance of realizing historiography itself as a process of institution of memories as historian Yara Aun Khoury has warned.⁶

In this sense, I must confess that I thought the theoretical references available were outdated. I questioned if these "old dated texts" - jargon used among historians to designate historical productions and reflections and historiographical works considered by some to be "outdated" - could help to clarify the way I understood the problem at hand and the concerns it caused me. Now I realize that what guarantees the critical and/or theoretical vitality of a text are precisely the problems that it helps to understand. Due to this reason, perhaps as 'dated' as the references that I carry with me in times of abundant revisionism and negationism, I decided to face this reflection.

In a text that explores the plurality of forms of constitution of memory, which emphasizes the difference and the existing contacts between memory and history, historian Júlio Pimental points out that this frequently tense relationship highlights the mechanisms of production of narratives and the establishment of dialogues between distinct temporalities. This relationship produces historiography and defines the variety of memory experiences, the multiplicity of concepts and terms applied to the incessant production of past references, which operate as supports for memory builders. There are many theoretical/epistemological paths in this debate on memory and history, which inevitably deal with different strategies. All of them also deal with a central problem: the weight of the past in their own representations, their

⁴ KHOURY, Yara Aun. Muitas memórias, outras histórias: cultura e o sujeito na história. In: *Muitas memórias, Outras Histórias*. São Paulo: Editora Olho d' Água, 2004, p. 116-138.

⁵ BENJAMIN, Walter. On the concept of History. In: BENJAMIN, Walter. *Selected Writings*, volume 4 1938-1940. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

⁶ KHOURY, op.cit.

uses, their connections with the context, their political, social and intellectual projections.

History and Memory despite apparent similarities [...] differ. The substratum of both is perhaps the same: the past. It is primarily to the past as temporality that the construction of memory or the historical operation refers. The dissonance between these two actions, however, is great: the memory woven about a certain event or set of events makes the historical perception that one can have of these episodes difficult. It remakes itineraries of attribution of meanings.⁷

Following this path I arrive at the notion of *historical memory*, intensely debated in the Brazilian historiography of the 1970s and 1980s. Such historiography was concerned with the rescue of the buried speeches of projects condemned to the dimension of silence by the web that the political success of their opponents produced/constructed. I return here to what is, in my opinion, a powerful reflection on the processes of constitution of historical memory and the role of the historian's work on it.

Historian Carlos Alberto Vesentini, in the introduction of the book "A Teia do Fato"⁸ points out that the work began in the 1970s, when he experienced numerous concerns with the weft of memory and the ideological appropriations around "identity" in a society marked by authoritarianism and social exclusion. In this work of powerful intellectual scope, he proposed deep questionings to the historian's procedures, allowing the understanding of the overlapping plots in the enchainment of the historical-social experiences and of the necessary reordering of the multiple lived-times. When working with the Brazilian political trajectory in the 1920s and 1930s, the author sharply revised the notions of Revolution and Republic. He problematized the hegemony of the winner's memory, redefining research procedures towards the universe of social groups that, defeated in the clashes of class, alter the victors' projects and remain as an active force in what is lived.

When thinking about "projects" with a progressive movement towards the realization of the historical process, Vesentini is concerned with the historical memory that the winners project. In this field of concerns, he poses major questions to the historian's craft and that particularly helped me to

⁷ PIMENTEL, Júlio. Os muitos tempos da memória. *Projeto História*. São Paulo, (17), November, 1998, p. 206.

⁸ VESENTINI, Carlos Alberto. *A teia do fato: uma proposta de estudo sobre a memória histórica*. São Paulo: Ed Hucitec, 1997.

reflect on the issue of the crossroad city and how it has been incorporated into studies on the history of Ponta Grossa.

Vesentini points out that in unveiling the historical memory production processes we encounter in our craft, we need to pay attention to the review of periodization and the critique of the periodizing framework. Moreover, to its replacement by the perception of the process, rethinking the “web of the fact”, the procedures and social processes that articulate it as such, since documentation is not a “neutral”, but an “active” agent in the organization of memory.

When discussing social reordering projects based on the problematic of historical memory and identifying components of the historical process elided by the construction of the winners, he states:

Such projects were intended by making use of proposals or a set of proposals, engendered in the process of struggle and capable of assuming a general character [...] progressively becoming the very ‘being’ of history, as it gave it meaning.⁹

For Vesentini, power can constantly appropriate and re-elaborate memory in different historical moments. Winner and power reiterate the same exclusionary procedure; therefore, the need arises to point out and face the survivability and coherence of this broad construction that composes the memory since its initial projection by the winners. This construction is configured as a set that resists evidence - such as facts and documents - and absorbs them. Through them, through this same evidence, historians interrogate the past.

These facts and documents, constantly amplified and translated by the accumulation of bibliographies on the subject, whose interpretations are not free from the meshes of coherence and indications of that set defined by the winners. Memory elaborates and organizes itself in a way that a large overarching explanation seems to flow from it. Furthermore, with a capacity of attraction that keeps and traps the reflection inside of it, either by having indicative poles for examination, or by the possibility of integrating new elements. This coherent logic also operates in a manner that when the examination is carried out either through the inherited fact or through the analysis of the documents, they are already, a priori, thought in it, i.e., their general guidelines have already commanded the study. For Vesentini:

⁹Idem, p.17.

Understanding history as a memory and perceiving the integration that occurs continuously between the heritage received and projected to us and the reflection on this past constitutes an issue and seems relevant to me for what is understood by historiography only. This could leave to the uninformed reader that the perception on which it dwells - themes, facts, agents - has objective existence independent of its engendering in the process of struggle and the force of its projection and recovery, as a theme, at each specific moment that resumes and remakes it. This movement and this action must be considered.¹⁰

Thus the historian warns that the relationship between fact and memory as a whole is a key issue. It allows showing the fact as a point of location of meanings and as a place where the realization of history is glimpsed, even when considering a broader temporal perspective. It is also necessary to consider the apparatus and institutions which disseminated some facts, imposing themselves on the social whole before the possibility of any specific reflection on them. Thus, to grasp the operations by which the ruling power, at the end of a process of struggle, establishes that fact as a broad idea, through which both the exercise of political power and the temporality that characterizes history are united in the same movement. When the logic and coherence glimpsed in this memory come out and impose themselves by conforming the notion of time, they are able to join the very operations with which we review the past.

It is in this sense [...] that I have introduced a closer angle into the discussion: that of examining the historian's own work in this web, and that of inquiring into the relationship of proximity that we establish with the fact. I have developed part of this effort from a very precise angle: the link between reflection on the inherited past and our own struggles.¹¹

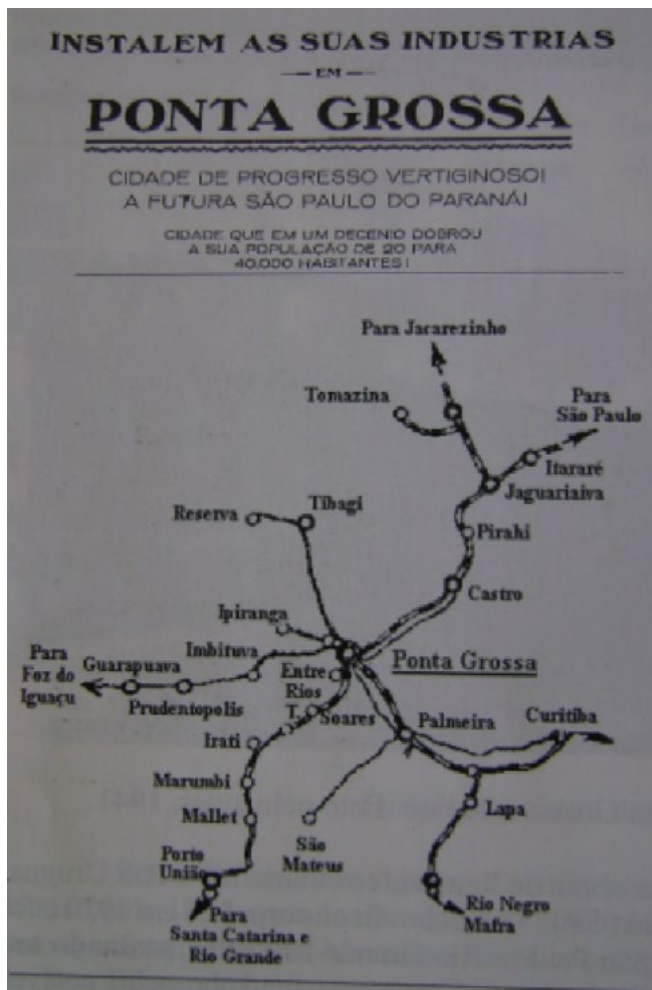
The presence of the railroad - (in 1893 the Paraná Railroad connected the city with the state capital and the state coast, and in 1896 the São Paulo-Rio Grande Railroad - EFSPRG) - reconfigured the city of Ponta Grossa into an mandatory point of passage for people and goods moving through Paraná and from the south to the southeast of Brazil.

¹⁰ Idem, p.18.

¹¹ Idem, p.20.

It also attracted immigrant workers from different regions of the country, fostered the economic activities and the adoption of some habits from other urban centers. Consequently, the railroad strengthened the importance of the city in the regional scenario, as we can see from the advertising image circulated about the city in the 1940s and which entitled it: “The future São Paulo of Paraná”.

Figure 1 - Advertisement of Ponta Grossa: The future São Paulo of Paraná, 1940s.¹²



¹² LANGE, Francisco Lothar Paulo. *Os Campos Gerais e sua princesa*. Curitiba: Copel, 1998, p. 184.

As we will see further, these factors contributed to most of the studies and reflections produced during the 20th century on Ponta Grossa, inside and outside the field of historiography, assuming the arrival of the railroad as a decisive factor in the urban conformation, economy and politics of the city. Evidently, this idea consolidated in a memory that articulated and still articulates the peak of railroad activities to the apogee of the city itself, which would have occurred mainly until the end of the 1940s.

However, the meanings attributed to the past never emerge disconnected from the dilemmas of the present time. Based on this assumption, I put forward the thesis that the memories forged by different social subjects around the dismantling and decay of the railroad could be configured as the reverse of the representations created around its peak. Investigating such a perspective demanded a dialogue with the memories built mainly around the arrival and heyday of the railroad in Ponta Grossa. I understand that the discussion about the dismantling and privatization of the railroad and its impact on the lives of railroad workers and on the city could not be scaled without assessing how the representation of the peak and the railroad boom were constructed and became part of the city's history.

Thus, I choose to investigate the period documents in order to point out how the arrival and presence of the railroad in the city were registered by the various social agents involved, in an attempt to capture its numerous meanings.

Simultaneously, I established a dialogue with local historiography in order to investigate which meanings were constructed for the railroad in the history of Ponta Grossa, scrutinizing the intricate dynamics of creation, questioning, and crystallization of concepts.

The reflection on these issues pointed out a crucial element in the analysis of the memories constituted around the arrival of the railroad in Ponta Grossa: the thesis of *the privileged geographical location* that would have allowed and greatly facilitated the installation of trains and tracks in the city and even in the region. The assertion that Ponta Grossa was/is a meeting of paths, a *crossroad city*:

The hotel where I stayed is in the old part of the city, an area I already knew from other times and which is not at all attractive. It still tells us about the sleepy and heavy soul of the old village that the city used to be. As we had agreed to walk together, I didn't want to stray too far away. So what he had seen so far

only served to mask what was worth seeing. Now I see: a lot has been built in Ponta Grossa.¹³

Decisive even for the life of the *crossroad city* was the inauguration of the railroad [...] in 1889 the São Paulo - Rio Grande Railroad was inaugurated, with maintenance workshops in Ponta Grossa. Being by the railroad junction got Ponta Grossa off to the 20th century on the right foot [...]. Progress came.¹⁴

The first citation is part of a work written by Nestor Vítor, an intellectual from Paraná, in 1913. It was a result of his observations and impressions visiting several cities in Paraná (including Ponta Grossa), in the early 20th century. The second is by Eno Wanke, whose work became part of the local historiography.

Two powerful ideas about the history of Ponta Grossa emerge from the writings of these authors: that of the crossroad city and that of the railroad construction as a decisive factor in its urban development.

Both are among the most cited passages in the documents, mainly those authored by historians about the city of Ponta Grossa and its urbanization process. In almost all the readings carried out, these quotes corroborate the fully accepted starting point that the city was experiencing an evident process of urban growth and development in the early 20th century. To the perception that the city abandoned “the sleepy and rather heavy soul of the old village” is added the realization that the noise of the train whistles had caused such awakening.

However, more than questioning whether or not these citations correspond to the process experienced by the city in that period, what is impressive is their recurrence in most of the works of researchers carried out within or outside the scope of history.

I assume that historiography also produces memories, authorized versions or majority-accepted readings of certain historical processes. So, these frequent quotes deserve discussion. It perhaps can be started not by questioning the history of the railroad in the city, but about how the history of this city was/is told and what role the railroad plays within it.

By establishing a dialogue with local historiography and investigating which meanings were constructed for the railroad in the history of Ponta

¹³ SANTOS, Nestor Vitor dos. *Terra do Futuro* (Impressões sobre o Paraná). Curitiba: Prefeitura Municipal de Curitiba, 1996, p. 214.

¹⁴ WANKE, Eno Teodoro. *O Vôo da Pombinha*. Ponta Grossa, 1964, p.76.

Grossa, I analyze the intricate dynamics of creation, questioning, and crystallization of concepts.

This is a constructed memory, put into circulation and (not without disputes) mostly accepted as the history of the railroad in the city, as two very recent writings denote. The first was published by the Ponta Grossa City Hall on its official website, accessed in September 2019; the second is in an interview published by the *Nuntiare Magazine* of the Journalism Course of the State University of Ponta Grossa (UEPG), in December 2018:

It was with the arrival of the railroad tracks that Ponta Grossa became a major commercial, cultural, and social center. The railroad transformed the city into a major junction, standing out in the Campos Gerais Region and in Paraná.¹⁵

“Ponta Grossa is, by definition, a “crossroad city”. Five railroad branches serve it, and, even now that the urban railroad stretches have been eradicated, the historical presence of the tracks is very strong. Not only the central park where one of the largest railroad warehouses in the country was located, but especially the old branches of Uvaranas and Oficinas still have a strong presence”, details Joel Larocca Junior, Engineer, Architect, Urban Planner, and researcher in Urban Planning, Social Interest Housing and Urbanization Costs.¹⁶

Thus, the representation of the “crossroad city”, the “city where paths meet”, the “great highway-railroad junction of Paraná” has been a starting point and a naturally accepted premise in the discussion about Ponta Grossa. The permanence of this image in contemporary productions from important political and intellectual spaces in the weaving of discourses and social practices in the city and about it attests to the strength of such construction.

I dare to say that this historical interpretation of the city is one of the most powerful memories about Ponta Grossa. Moreover, its existence has corroborated the articulated and re-articulated discourses about it, supporting most of the political and economic strategies of urban development over the last decades, including those to minimize and/or eradicate the railroad presence in the city center even before the privatization process in 1997.

¹⁵ Prefeitura Municipal de Ponta Grossa. <http://www.pontagrossa.pr.gov.br/pontagrossa>. Access on 30/09/2019.

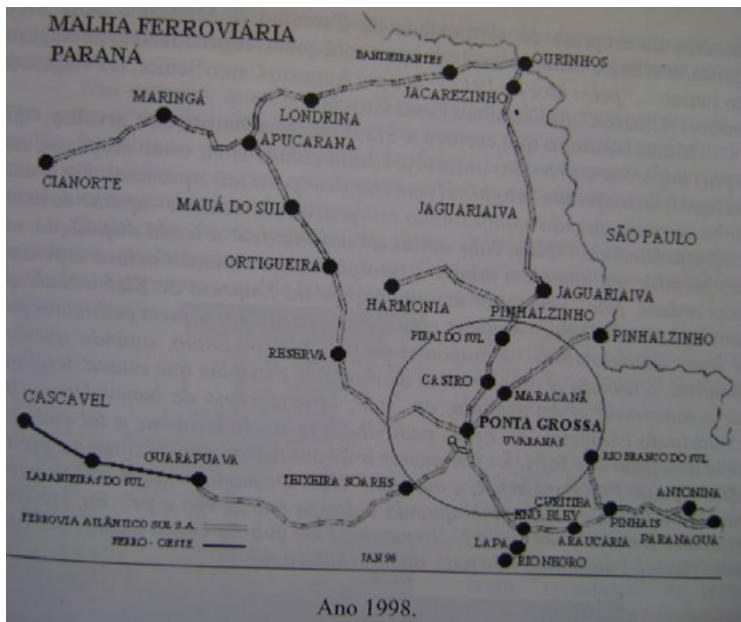
¹⁶ OS FLUXOS dos Campos Gerais: como a cidade encruzilhada concentra diferentes trajetos. *Revista Nuntiare*. December, 2018 <https://nuntiare.sites.uepg.br/2018/12/12/os-fluxos-dos-campos-gerais-como-a-cidade-encruzilhada-concentra-diferentes-trajetos/>. Access on 30/09/2019

Hence the question: How is the image of a city constructed as a crossroads? What projects can or could this construction be of interest to?

Far from merely evidencing or legitimizing a “happy” geographical coincidence as an unequivocal and founding fact of the city’s history, I assume that this image covered up a historical process full of interests and conflicts, in which the legitimization of some urban development projects are imbricated while others were silenced.

Nevertheless, when looking at the maps of the city’s railroad and road routes, the condition of a junction is evident, even today, as shown in the map below, in 1998:

Figure 02: Map of Rail Routes in PR, 1998.¹⁷



For historian Célia Rocha Calvo, junctions are symbolic markers, as they express the way in which the city is organized in space.

The plan inscribed in these records functions as a guidance provider and also for advertising its spaces. When looking at the city in the maps and guides, one can say that these instruments stimulate the imagination of those who are looking

¹⁷ LANGE, Idem, p. 185.

for a destination, since the maps represent a set of information that, at the same time, form an image about the territory where the angled city is located, both in the referents of those who produced them and those who seek to orient themselves in space in these maps.¹⁸

This perception helped to problematize the image of Ponta Grossa as a crossroad city. I suggest that, possibly, it was due to the implementation of road projects, highways or railroads, that Ponta Grossa was geographically articulated in the region and in the state as a junction.

However, such articulation occurred throughout a historical process full of disputes that, when materialized in the form of works and road layouts, ratified the strategic position. In this sense, the supposed naturalization of a crossroads city may have covered up deeper social conflicts throughout the history of Ponta Grossa.

For historian Carmencita Ditzel¹⁹ the image of the crossroads city links and/or justifies the urban growth and development process of Ponta Grossa to a privileged and strategic geographical location. This must be specially highlighted because the arrival and permanence of the two railroads (Estrada de Ferro do Paraná and Estrada de Ferro São Paulo - Rio Grande) was and still is oftentimes, read and understood from this key of interpretation.

In 1964, Wanke wrote a 13-page text entitled *A Encruzilhada do Paraná* (The Crossroads of Paraná). The representation of Ponta Grossa as the crossroads of Paraná was incorporated almost universally to the history of the city. This has vastly influenced the historiography produced about it, without, in fact, questioning the roots of such construction.

However, I think that such an image is one of the most powerful tools for the production of a certain memory about the city and even about the Campos Gerais region. Linked to the political projects of social sectors, it worked as a lever that should legitimize and ratify the “natural” and undisputed economic and political preponderance in the region and in the state of Paraná.

However, the naturalization of a certain social phenomenon empties the historical process of its conflicts and inconsistencies, hides subjects and

¹⁸ Calvo, Célia Rocha. CALVO, Célia Rocha. *Muitas memórias e Outras histórias de uma cidade: experiências e viveres lembranças de viveres urbanos - Uberlândia, 1938-1990*. São Paulo: Programa de Pós-graduação em História - PUC-SP, 2001. Doctoral dissertation, p. 36.

¹⁹ DITZEL, Carmencita de Holleben Mello. *O Arraial e o Fogo da Cultura: os euclidianos ponta-grossenses*. Ponta Grossa, UEPG, Master's Thesis, 1998.

interests. It prevents one from reading the history of groups, places or events from the perspective of what the whole social “happening” really is: a broad and complex process of dispute.

Hence, let us dialogue with Wanke’s work further:

Ponta Grossa is a city born and raised by the road [...] Road and rail junction fulfills a destiny of crossroads, of commercial entrepot, of focus of industrial and cultural irradiation [...] since the beginning of Brazil, the land of the Campos Gerais [...] was favorable to the passage of caravans, *bandeiras* (exploratory expeditions), troops of wagons, railroad tracks, black ribbon of asphalt [...]. And Ponta Grossa became the *crossroads* of all these paths.²⁰

We should note that the “crossroads destination” justifies that of commercial entrepot and focus of industrial and cultural irradiation. Thus, “the crossroads of all these paths” can only be perceived to the extent that it produces determined social, economic, political and cultural conditions. The crossroads condition justifies, explains and/or legitimizes a whole set of characteristics of the city and its historical development.

As the map²¹ below demonstrates (and has already been fully documented by researchers)²², the initial constitution of the city of Ponta Grossa, in the south-central part of the State of Paraná, in the region known as Campos Gerais, is linked to *tropeirismo* (activity of cattle drovers). During the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, it gave rise to numerous cities throughout the south and southeast of the country: Ponta Grossa, Vacaria, Lajes, Palmas, Lapa, Castro, Sorocaba, among others.

²⁰ WANKE, Eno Teodoro. *A Encruzilhada do Paraná*. Mimeo: Ponta Grossa, 1964. Emphasis added.

²¹ Mapa da região “cortada” pelos caminhos (2007). Revista Globo Rural, special edition, issue 1:1; apud ZUCCHERELLI, Moara. *A Rota dos Tropeiros - Projeto Turístico na Região dos Campos Gerais: um olhar antropológico*. Curitiba, 2008, p.13.

²² Among others, I highlight mainly: CHAVES, Niltonci Batista. *A Cidade Civilizada*. Discursos e representações sociais no jornal Diário dos Campos - década de 1930. Curitiba: Aos Quatro Ventos, 2001; DITZEL, Carmencita de Holleben Mello; SAHR, Cícilian Luiza Löwen. *Espaço e Cultura*. Ponta Grossa e os Campos Gerais. Ponta Grossa: Ed. UEPG, 2001; GONÇALVES Maria Aparecida Cezar; PINTO Elizabete Alves. *Ponta Grossa: um século de vida (1823-1923)*. Ponta Grossa: Kluger Artes Gráficas LTDA., 1983; MONASTIRSKY, Leonel Brizola. *Cidade e Ferrovia: a mitificação do pátio central da RFFSA em Ponta Grossa*. Florianópolis: UFSC, 1997. Master’s Dissertation; SILVA, Edson Armando et al. *O povo faz a história*. Ponta Grossa 1920 - 1945. Research Report. Ponta Grossa: UEPG, 1994.

Figure 03: Map of the the region cut off by the trails (2007).²³



With its history initially linked to the *tropeirismo* activity, to the farms and to a rural rhythm of life, Ponta Grossa gradually became a considerable urban center in the Campos Gerais. After the arrival of the railroads at the end of the 19th century, it became an obligatory point of passage for goods and people moving around Paraná, practically eradicating the old way of life built around the *tropeirismo*:

²³ Legend:

Red: First Troop Path or Viamão Trail, 1728.

Green: Vacaria dos Pinhais Trail, Traditional Route of Tropeirismo.

Blue: Palmas Trail or Mission Trail, opened in the 19th Century.

At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, any traveler, trader or adventurer heading overland from São Paulo to the extreme south of the country should cross the lands of the Castro District, reaching the neighborhood of Ponta Grossa. At the time it constituted an *obligatory place of passage*, connected to the Viamão Trail [...]. This is how Ponta Grossa emerges [...] as a settlement supporting the drovers' path, and its inhabitants dispersed by farms, in the course of the 19th century, would concentrate and converge to the most central point of its territory that, if on the one hand is restricted spatially, on the other hand expands socially.²⁴

The point is not about contesting what has already been the subject of so much research supported by documents. In this sense, we do not dispute the fact that the integration of Ponta Grossa to the Viamão Trail²⁵ influenced the historical development of the city. The evidence gathered and discussed in this regard is not mere literary fiction. Nor is it the purpose of this discussion to deny or confirm the influence of geographical location on city development.

What I problematize here is the memory production process, to understand how such geographic location was appropriated in discourses that produced representations and based specific practices about the city throughout its history.

On the other hand, it is necessary to observe how local historiography has reflected and/or reproduced this memory, since the premise that much of the city's history is linked to its strategic location appears in a more or less elaborate fashion in several passages of works about it.

For Carmencita Ditzel²⁶ this representation of the city built by Wanke is repeated in many texts and ends up being incorporated into the local imagination. However, the historian herself wrote the following excerpt in a newspaper article, in the Commemorative Edition of the city's 178th anniversary, celebrated in 2001:

²⁴ GONCALVES; PINTO, Idem, p 17-18. According to the historians, other roads also converged to Ponta Grossa. One of them came from the missionary region of Rio Grande do Sul, connected to Corrientes in Argentina, which cut through the interior of Paraná, reached the hinterlands of Palmas, Guarapuava and Imbituva in Paraná and in Ponta Grossa reached the Viamão Trail. Another route started in Paranaguá (PR) reached Curitiba and in Registro de Iguazu joined the traditional path.

²⁵ The Viamão Trail, also known as Estrada Real, started in Viamão (RS), crossed the fields of Vacaria, Lages, Curitiba, Papanduva, Rio Negro, Campo do Tenente, Lapa, Palmeira, Ponta Grossa, Castro, Pirafó do Sul, Jaguariaíva, Itararé, reaching Sorocaba, (SP).

²⁶ DITZEL, Carmencita de Holleben Mello. *Manifestações Autoritárias: O Integralismo nos Campos Gerais (1932-1955)*. Florianópolis, SC: UFSC, 2004. Doctoral dissertation.

The importance of the city comes largely from its *strategic location*: a highway-railroad junction in the interior of the state connecting the main economic regions and the political centers [...]. First the troops (groups of drovers), then the railroad. Ponta Grossa has always been a place of passage, a crossroads city.²⁷

The local geographer and railroad researcher, Leonel Brizola Monastirsky also states:

The implementation of the railroad contributed to Ponta Grossa's society experiencing a rapid process of urban modernization. Commercial activity combined with the strategic location, which has always been the city's economic benchmark, was boosted by rail transport.²⁸

Several papers repeat similar excerpts. Although this representation of the city has served as an influential assumption to explain the historiographical production on the urban development of Ponta Grossa since its beginning (when it was still “road of the troops”), the most disquieting aspect to note is that the expression “crossroad city” only begins to appear in this way from 1964 onwards. A clue to the possible reasons for this may come from Wanke's own text.

When approaching the history of Ponta Grossa during the 20th century, he emphasized the importance of the arrival of the railroads, the presence of the large yerba mate mills, the leather and wood processing industries, the brickworks - “because there weren't enough bricks”. In addition, he addressed the huge number of outsiders “attracted by the promise of good business”, the installation of electricity and piped water, when “the city came of age” and the “crossroads of Paraná was definitely illuminated”. The author concludes his explanation thus: “The city grew, became the second most populated in the state, and only recently, with the advent of the North of Paraná, lost this condition of which it was so proud”.²⁹

The mention of the “advent of the North of Paraná” helps us to understand why the image of the crossroad city appears precisely in 1964.

²⁷ Idem. A “cidade encruzilhada”. In: *Os Velhos Campos Gerais e a Nova Ponta Grossa*. *Jornal Diário dos Campos*. (Edição Especial - 178 Anos de PG) September, 2001, p.7A. Emphasis added.

²⁸ MONASTIRSKY, Leonel Brizola. *Cidade e Ferrovia: a mitificação do pátio central da RFFSA em Ponta Grossa*. Florianópolis: UFSC, 1997. Master's thesis, p. 56.

²⁹ Wanke, Eno Teodoro. *O Vôo da Pombinha*. Ponta Grossa, 1964, p.77.

Analyzing the 1950s and the role of Ponta Grossa in the regional scenario from that moment on, historian Niltonci Batista Chaves states that this decade was crucial for Paraná's formatting. In addition to completing its occupation process, the state witnessed the opening of new and important regions, such as the north and the west, and saw the birth of important centers, such as Londrina and Maringá. These centers assumed economically favorable positions, propitiated mainly by coffee production and by the improvement of the road sector.

In this context, Ponta Grossa ended up suffering a strong impact, both in its economy and in its political prestige, as the new centers that emerged in the state began to rival the city:

On the one hand, if at the beginning of the 1950s Ponta Grossa presented socioeconomic indicators to sustain it as the main city in the interior, on the other hand, times were changing. *The changes heavily impacted Campos Gerais and its major city. [...] in the 1940s/1950s, Ponta Grossa, until then accustomed to reign absolute in the interior of Paraná since the beginning of the 20th century, began to compete for space with other cities and this directly influenced the city's destiny.*³⁰

Historian Adriana Cançado shares this opinion in her doctoral dissertation, defended in 2008³¹. For her, the axis of importance was shifted to the north of the state, suppressing the city's symbols capable of anchoring and objectifying the collectively shared representations in relation to expectations about it. The time of the railroads came to mean the past and the longing for progress and development gained new symbols, such as the implementation of industries and highways. Therefore, the conception of progress, which the city had always fed on, was re-signified³².

³⁰ CHAVES, Niltonci Batista. Do Centro Comercio e Industria ao Selo Social. Ponta Grossa: Editora da UEPG, 2006, p.85. Emphasis added.

³¹ This paper aims to analyze the articulations between the economic and political fields through the Rainha da Soja (Soy Queen) contest, held during the 1970s in Ponta Grossa, in which the elected young women, belonging to families of recognized economic and symbolic capital in the city, represented the multinational industry SANBRA, soybean processing and exporting company, and the Ponta Grossa City Hall.

³² This resignification did not only occur in Ponta Grossa. Studies point to similar dynamics in other Brazilian cities. The example of the city of Criciúma in Santa Catarina is very interesting and has been worked on in NASCIMENTO, Durval do. *As Curvas do Trem: A presença da Estrada de Ferro no Sul de Santa Catarina. (1880-1975) cidade, modernidade e vida urbana.* Criciúma: UNESCO, 2004.

Recognized as an important railroad and commercial entrepot during the 1930s, due to the railroads and the commerce of yerba mate and wood, Ponta Grossa lost this place due to multiple factors. Amongst them it is possible to mention the escalation of the yerba mate and timber industries crises, in the south and southwest of Paraná, and the consolidation of the coffee cycle in the north of the state [...] in the 1940s and 1950s, with the colonization of the North and the intense coffee production, the axis of importance shifted to the North of the state [...].³³

This perspective had already been approached by the geographer Leonel Brizola Monastirsky. For him, although Ponta Grossa already had some important urban elements, the installation of railroads brought a great impetus to the urban development of Ponta Grossa in the early 20th century. The railroad and its structure greatly boosted economic relations and caused changes in the social and cultural behavior of the local inhabitants, creating a process that he calls “railroad mythification”. However, the author also states that, starting in the 1950s, there was a significant change in the role played by the city of Ponta Grossa, due to changes in the dynamics of transports in Brazil:

[...] Ponta Grossa saw its role as a trading post diminished. With the highways, other cities in the state also assumed the role of centers for the convergence of transport routes, diluting the exclusivity and importance that Ponta Grossa had for being part of the railroad structure [...] The city’s development process was decelerated, and faced plenty of difficulties in adapting to the new economic order that took over the state [...].³⁴

A careful reading of an article published in the Bulletin of the Commercial Association of Ponta Grossa (ACIPG), in 1967, suggestively entitled *A Hora de Plantar Chaminés* (Time to Plant Chimneys), strengthens this idea. The text discusses the development situation in Paraná, particularly after the advent of coffee in the northern state, and highlights its extraordinary growth from 1954 onwards. However, it highlights the inability of the Paraná executive to integrate the “two great economies of the state”, i.e. between the northern area and the Curitiba - Ponta Grossa axis.

³³ CANÇADO, A. M. *Majestades da Cidade Princesa: Concurso da Rainha da Soja de Ponta Grossa, Paraná (1970-1980)*. Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba, 2008. Doctoral thesis., p.81-82.

³⁴ MONASTIRSKY, Leonel Brizola. “A mitificação da ferrovia em Ponta Grossa”. In: DITZEL, Carmencita de Holleben Mello; SAHR, Cicilian Luiza Löwen. *Espaço e Cultura. Ponta Grossa e os Campos Gerais*. Ponta Grossa: Ed. UEPG, 2001, p.48.

Also according to the article, the latter had benefited from the dynamics of the coffee-growing economy, through the income increase into the banking, commercial and public administration mechanisms, as well as participating in the supply of manufactured goods and food for the immense wave of migrants arriving in the coffee region.

However, the text highlights the limits of coffee production, caused by the violent fluctuations due to frosting in the state and the oscillation of international prices. Such instability indicated the possibility of a setback in Paraná's economic development, strongly based on the primary sector and with 30% of its income based on coffee.

A solution for strengthening would be the creation of a more stable economic structure. This would only be possible with the diversification of agricultural production and the establishment of new industrial branches perfectly viable in other regions.

In this sense, it would be necessary to form industrial development poles, with small, medium and large industries destined to act as state and national development companies.

Therefore, after thorough examination of the various infrastructure factors of the consumer market, the availability of raw materials, water and electricity, in addition to more adequate means of transport and communication, the Interstate Commission of the Paraná Basin - Uruguay established the implementation of a "development hub" on the Curitiba - Ponta Grossa axis, mainly because the economy of northern Paraná was a very autonomous unit, linked to the economy of São Paulo. The Commission concluded that the installation of a development pole in the coffee region would be a "marking element of this distinction" and would create obstacles for an "effective economic and political integration of Paraná". Precisely from this moment on, we begin to understand the objectives of the argumentation and the conjuncture analysis made until then, because, with the subtitle Privileged Situation, the text continues:

With road and railroad access to all regions of the state and other important centers of the national economy such as São Paulo, Guanabara and the south of the country, Ponta Grossa *would inevitably have to be placed as a priority* in any national plan of economic and industrial development. The *agricultural production of [...] city remains stationary*, due to the low productivity of its land [...]. The creation of a solid industrial structure in the central region of the state will represent the guarantee of the *economic*

*and social integration of Paraná, expanding the development into the empty space between the two great economic regions represented by Curitiba and northern Paraná.*³⁵

I have underlined some passages in the previous paragraphs for they weave the argumentative web that allows the understanding of the concerns and interests at stake at that moment. The fact that the Commercial Association (ACIPG) prepared and disseminated a text like this for the class it represented exposes the reading carried out on the new situation of the city in the state context.

The text aimed to organize and legitimize a strategy that would allow the city to emerge from the ostracism in which it found itself: a phenomenon that was both economic and symbolic. Although at the beginning of the argument Ponta Grossa is placed as a component of the second axis of the state economy, soon afterwards there are references to economic voids between Curitiba and the north of Paraná. In this context, Ponta Grossa (meaning the commercial and industrial class represented by ACIPG) yearned to become an industrial development hub, to remedy the imbalance and unevenness existing in the state's economy.

To legitimize this claim, the privileged and strategic geographic situation was, once again, an argument capable of raising the city to a “necessarily priority” position in any national and state development project, since only Ponta Grossa could integrate the two regions of the state and fill the existing gaps. However, even with this unquestionably privileged situation, it was an economically stationary municipality, lacking in the production of important wealth for the state. Wealth that could place other regions in an outstanding situation, even if they were not constituted in rail and road junctions.

Connected to such internal issues, the rearticulation of the transportation system in the Brazilian State project forced the city, which until then lived on the image of a railroad junction, to reinforce the idea that such image was not only due to the connection with the railroad tracks. In fact, its whole history could be told as “an encounter of paths”, which would justify the maintenance of its condition of entrepot, despite the advent of the North of Paraná.

Hence, it is possible to understand the construction of the image of Ponta Grossa as a crossroad city since its beginnings, as one of the many

³⁵ A HORA de Plantar Chaminés. *Boletim Informativo da ACIPG*. Ponta Grossa, march/april, 1967, p.02. Emphasis added.

material and symbolic resources that were used in an attempt to fill the economic and political void created by the city's inadequacy to the new times.

Ultimately, this image, built precisely at that moment, traced a link between the past, present and future of the city: that of a commercial entrepot and focus of cultural and industrial irradiation in the state.

In other words, peak and decline are opposite sides of the same coin. Both were integral elements of the same memory: the inevitable progress of Ponta Grossa, due to its privileged geographical situation. For this reason, it was necessary first to leave behind the wagons and the *tropeirismo* to justify the arrival of the train; then, tearing up the city rails as a sign of the new times, those of the highway.

By analyzing the construction of the image of the crossroad city, we advance to the idea that the images of the rise and fall of the railroad in the city, as we have them today, were built basically at the same historical moment. They respond to the same challenge: the need for affirmation as an important, strategic, and modern city in face of the economic, political, and cultural changes that were taking place in Paraná and in the country itself.

After all, a place whose great referential had always been a 'natural' condition of commercial and cultural entrepot due to its strategic location, could not, by any means, be excluded from the new map drawn within the development guidelines for Brazil and for the State of Paraná from the 1950s on.

The condition of "meeting of paths" would be resumed as a strong justification for maintaining or rearticulating a position of political and economic prominence within the new context in the state.

However, would this deeply rooted representation of a city that exists, produces and explains itself as a crossroad city or a place where paths meet be an original creation by Teodoro Wanke? I do not think so.

It would be more prudent to state that if, on the one hand, the theoretical formulation appears as such in 1964 and is later incorporated by historiography, assuming, then, the air of a concept capable of giving plausibility to the entire history of the city; on the other hand, this image has existed for a longer time.

In a work by Pedro Novaes on the founding of Ponta Grossa, published in 1943, there is earlier evidence of the perception that combines the urban development of the city with its strategic location:

The commercial movement of the Neighborhood, the importance of its location, *centralizing several roads*, the influx of residents, the presence of wealthy and capable farmers, fulfilled [sic] the aspirations of the residents and imposed the need for the Neighborhood to be elevated to the *Freguezia*[sic]³⁶

In fact, it is not possible to determine when the city-junction/ crossroad city image appeared. For a historian, despite certain post-modern currents that decree the death of history as a discourse on reality, the safest path, it seems to me, is still that of sources. Therefore, in an attempt to apprehend the way in which this crossroad city image becomes reality and how the railroad is represented and incorporated into this imaginary, I look back, emphasizing some studies that broaden the field of these problematizations.

Thus, I went back to the City Council Minutes from 1888 to 1913, to the pages of the newspaper *O Progresso* from 1910, 1912, 1913 and 1915, and to the Municipal By-Laws from 1862, 1891 and 1915 to envision the dynamics of the city before and immediately after the arrival of the two railroads, and to measure part of the impact of this event on the daily life and representation of the town.

The research in the City Council Minutes revealed that in the last decade of the 19th century, precisely the moment of installation of the two railroads in Ponta Grossa, there are few direct references to the presence of the railroad in the city. Even so, the analysis of the documentation enabled composing a picture of the municipality in which the railroads were installed and this is also of interest.

In that context, the standardization of the urbanization process is evident. The minutes show frequent discussions on the Code of Postures, as well as its constant adjustments to a city that was visibly complexifying.

Concerns with lighting, cleaning and maintenance of the Slaughterhouse³⁷, the Market, the Municipal Jail and the city streets are constantly discussed by the town councilors': "[...] the city streets, many of which are dirty and there are even dead birds like chickens, crows, as well as cats, etc, etc".³⁸

³⁶ NOVAES, Pedro. *A Fundação de Ponta Grossa*. Ponta Grossa: Prefeitura Municipal de Ponta Grossa, 1943, p.26-27. Emphasis added.

³⁷ To better understand the discussion about the Municipal Slaughterhouse of Ponta Grossa, I recommend reading the work: ROCHA, Lucas Ericksen da. *Passagens e Novas Fronteiras dos Abates: O matadouro Municipal de Ponta Grossa e a historicidade de matança animal centralizada*. Ponta Grossa, UEPG, 2015. Master's thesis.

³⁸ ATA da Câmara Municipal de Ponta Grossa, December, 1894.

“Municipality rights” were also created over a series of commercial activities: vinegar, yerba mate, and carbonated drinks factories, steam-powered sawmills, grocery stores, bakeries, hotels, street vendors (of fruits, sweets, ice cream, soft drinks, shoes, ready-made clothes, hats, and other unspecified products), farm hawkers, haberdashery and perfume shops. The Chamber’s concessions for the opening of factories of candles, soap, lard, matches, ceramic products, jerked beef, sum to these petitions.

Between 1898-1899, town councilor Teófilo Cunha proposed municipal taxation of a number of goods:

For each kilo of cheese (illegible) réis, for each 15 kilos of horsehair 500rs, for each cowhide 200rs, per carload of palm heart 500rs, for each 15 kilos of wool 500rs, per sheep slaughtered in the slaughterhouse 500rs, per sheep sold in the market 500rs, per carload of lime 100rs, per carload of corn meal, per basquet [sic] of bananas that are not imported by the merchant [...].³⁹

The documentation gives a glimpse of the culture and way of life of the people from Ponta Grossa, showing habits and customs, as well as an urban dynamic in terms of service provision and considerable commercial and industrial activity.

Taxation on street vendors may indicate that they represented a significant portion of commercial activity, to the point of signaling possibilities of gains for municipal coffers. On the other hand, the attempt to cover these commercial activities, formal or informal, was allied with constant references to the need for increased revenue to meet the demands of the city.

In this set, the references to the railroad articulate it to a certain existing urban dynamic. Based on documentation evidence, it would be impossible to state that the railroad founded this urbanization; it does not create it, but rather potentiates it.

The railroad and its impact appear in the reports about the daily life of the city, in the tasks of its residents, in their ways of survival and work in commerce, in boarding houses, in hotels, in moments of leisure and between the lines of the speeches. and laws that, in turn, aim to regulate this urban life.

Ponta Grossa City Council decrees:

Article 1: Persons who do not have commercial establishments in this municipality and who bring by rail or any other means of

³⁹ ATA da Câmara Municipal de Ponta Grossa, February, 1898.

transportation (rice, coffee, sugar, brandy, wheat flour, jerked beef, bacon) to sell in this municipality are subject to the tax. of art.28, 29 and 30 of the Municipal Postures [sic]
The City Council waived the compensation and ceded to the São Paulo Rio Grande Railroad Company [EFSPRG] the land necessary for the route, station and (illegible).⁴⁰

However, in 1910, the EFSPRG extended its route to the city of Guarapuava, installing a branch line there.⁴¹ The problem started because, instead of starting the branch line to Guarapuava in Ponta Grossa, the Company did it from kilometer 178/179, 12 kilometers away from Ponta Grossa. The episode was depicted in *O Progresso* newspaper, as “The issue of Guarapuava Branch”⁴². It negatively impacted people in Ponta Grossa and seems to have challenged the city’s self-image, or at least that which is consistent with the projects of certain local social sectors.

In the turmoil, the reading of the reports that denounced the alleged absurdity of the decision, as well as the blow it would cause to the interests of the city, constitutes a privileged point of observation for the questions that interest us here.

[...] *This imperialism of Ponta Grossa grows more and more for reasons of mercantile strategy. Fated by geographical conditions, it sits between three armies that clash in commercial competition – São Paulo, Rio (and in the near future Rio Grande do Sul) [...] Ponta Grossa as an oasis between several competing businesses, and being a true commercial sanatorium [...] is a city exclusively, a warehouse for goods and a currency exchange. Thus it enjoys a much greater empire than it first appears to have. A blow that strikes it will [...] reverberate in other centers.*⁴³

Initially, I highlight the argument about the commercial “imperialism” of the city in relation to the others thanks to a “fated” (read “predestined”)

⁴⁰ Ata da Câmara Municipal de Ponta Grossa, August 11th, 1894, p. 148.

⁴¹ To better analyze the long process that involved the implementation of railroad tracks in the city of Guarapuava-PR and all the representations and dilemmas built around this expectation, I suggest reading: MELLO, Sílvia Gomes Bento de. *O Gigante e a Locomotiva: Projetos de Modernidade e Estratégias de Territorialização no Paraná (Guarapuava 1919-1954)*. Florianópolis: UFSC, 2003. Master’s Thesis

⁴² I addressed this episode in more depth in the text: “O Ramal de Guarapuava, o colono e o frete: disputas políticas e ambientais na construção da Cidade Encruzilhada (The Guarapuava Branch, the settler and the freight: political and environmental disputes in the construction of Cidade Encruzilhada) (Ponta Grossa-1910). (unpublished)

⁴³ O RAMAL de Guarapuava. *O Progresso*, Ponta Grossa, June 25th, 1910, p. 02, n. 277.

geographic condition. As a result of this same imperialism, the handling of mercantile relations is presented as a real war trench. These statements crudely lay bare the strength of the interests involved. Although the author speaks openly of the “commercial strategy” that sustains this “imperialism”, he naturalizes this situation by making use, throughout the text, of expressions such as: “oasis”, “commercial sanatorium”, “fated by geographical conditions” among others. The decision characterizes the Branch Line as a “thief” of the riches of Ponta Grossa, an incomprehensible disrespect to a privileged geographical position and naturalized as a commercial entrepot.

Now the *Guarapuava Branch Line*, coming like a thief to a dam to divert the excess wealth that remains here as a reservoir of commercial life in the interior of the state, soon results in the *paralysis of the progressive growth of the city* [...] Ponta Grossa will succumb, but as in the old novels it will be defended by its heartthrob, it will die when they pass over the corpse of commerce in Ponta Grossa. Here we are.⁴⁴

Even more peculiar is that at the end of the passage, in a rare moment of explicitness of subjects, the author declares that Ponta Grossa commerce is the heartthrob that would defend the city from harmful aspirations to its development.

On the other hand, the company’s justification seemed based purely on technical railroad engineering issues to facilitate traffic. In fact, to extend the rails from Ponta Grossa, a 3% ramp would be needed to overcome the city level. This would hamper import traffic along the coast, as it would increase the distance to Curitiba by four kilometers.⁴⁵

The alleged change in the railroad routes intended by EFSPRG was a driving force in the articulations of local economic interests in defense of Ponta Grossa: a reaffirmation of its position of dominance, influence, and economic expansion in the interior of Paraná.

However, that was not the first time that the EFSPRG had considered building its routes through a city other than Ponta Grossa. In 1895, Antônio Roxo de Rodrigues⁴⁶, the then CEO of EFSPRG, held an exhibition for the

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ O RAMAL de Guarapuava. *O Progresso*, Ponta Grossa, November 3rd, 1910, n. 333, p. 01.

⁴⁶ Later, the São Paulo-Rio Grande Railroad Station in Ponta Grossa would receive the name of the Chief Executive Officer Antônio Roxo de Rodrigues, becoming known as Estação Roxo Roiz, which is actually a diminutive form of Rodrigues.

company's shareholders. Then, he highlighted the convenience of *changing the route* of the branch line of the road, making it depart from Ponta Grossa and not from Irati, and justified:

In the first place, it will depart from an important center, such as the city of Ponta Grossa, where the terminal point of the Paraná Railroad is located, offering, therefore, immediate communication with the port of Paranaguá. It will not happen with the *primitive route*, which will force to go from Iraty, from there follow the main line to Ponta Grossa, in order to take the Paraná Railroad [...].⁴⁷

Although such information confirms the convenience of installing the EFSPRG branch line in Ponta Grossa, including the existence of the terminal point of another railroad, Paraná Railroad, a reading against the grain may signal that Ponta Grossa was not the natural place where all paths meet.

If decisions often based on disputes and political tensions had not been engendered, other cities, such as Irati or Guarapuava, could have benefited from the condition of commercial centers, favored by the railroad.

In other words, the city's condition as a crossroads has not always existed, naturalized and unquestioned due to a strategic geographical position.

The city of Ponta Grossa has become a crossroads in the course of a historical process marked by multiple intentions and interests, and with fierce disputes around them.

To a certain extent, the railroad and road junction that justifies the condition of crossroad city and lifts Ponta Grossa to it, emerges as a result of political articulations and economic and symbolic disputes carried out by social local sectors. Groups sometimes against, sometimes in favor of the interests and projects of the Railroad itself in the beginning of the 20th century or against the advent of Northern Paraná in the second half of the century. I dare to say that nowadays the defense of another urban and economic development project persists, as can be evidenced by the excerpt below from a recent journalistic article:

The importance of the road section that crosses Campos Gerais for agribusiness and the good performance of the Brazilian economy can be compared to dependence on *the balance between*

⁴⁷ ARQUIVO PÚBLICO DO PARANÁ. Exposição financeira e technica sobre a Estrada de Ferro São Paulo-Rio Grande, apresentada pela Diretoria aos Senhores Accionistas, mai./1895. Rio de Janeiro, Typ. Leuzinger. reg n. nº 017.

sun and rain for the development of crops. The title of largest highway junction in the country is not accidental. Over the past two decades, stretches of the BR 376 (Café Highway), BR 277, PR 323 e PR 153 have consolidated as the largest export corridor in Paraná [...].⁴⁸

Therefore, the position of “Paraná crossroads” has not always been a consensus. As observed throughout this work, in fact “it did not come by chance”. Yet, the thesis that characterizes Ponta Grossa as a crossroad city, a natural junction that articulated the presence of the railroad and then the highways to this alleged strategic geographical position has been one of the most used interpretation keys in the analysis of its history.

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⁴⁸RODOVIAS Da Região impulsionam o agronegócio. *Diário dos Campos*. August, 2018. <https://www.diariodoscampos.com.br/noticia/rodovias-da-regiao-impulsionam-o-agronegocio-do-br>. Access on 30/09/2019.

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