

New centralities in medium-sized cities: analysis of the subcenters of the Tomba and Cidade Nova districts in Feira de Santana, Bahia

**Novas centralidades em cidades médias: análise dos subcentros
dos Bairros Tomba e Cidade Nova em Feira de Santana, Bahia**

**Nuevas centralidades en ciudades medianas: análisis de los
subcentros de los barrios Tomba y Cidade Nova en Feira de
Santana – Bahia**

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to analyze the changes in urban centrality in Feira de Santana due to the consolidation of subcenters and to reflect on the alterations triggered by this process in its urban and economic dynamics, through the investigation of the Tomba and Cidade Nova districts. The methodology was based on bibliographic studies to provide a theoretical framework of the center, decentralization, and subcenters; fieldwork including the survey of tertiary establishments in the studied areas, data collection through interviews, and application of qualitative-quantitative questionnaires on the Google Forms platform, as well as the development of land use and occupancy maps and flow maps. The subcenters of Tomba and Cidade Nova can be considered the main expressions of centrality outside the central area of Feira de Santana, due to the diversity of tertiary activities that they offer and the decentralization experienced by the city. The emergence of new centralities affects the role of the Traditional Center, which was once considered the sole polarizing nucleus of the city and which now, due to changes in urban centrality, tends to relatively lose this role.

Keywords: Subcenters. Centralities. Feira de Santana.

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é analisar as mudanças ocorridas na centralidade urbana de Feira de Santana em função da consolidação de subcentros e refletir sobre as alterações desencadeadas por esse processo em suas dinâmicas urbana e econômica, por meio da investigação do Tomba e Cidade Nova. A metodologia pauta-se em estudos bibliográficos, com vista a oferecer aporte teórico sobre centro, descentralização e subcentros; trabalhos de campo, com levantamento de estabelecimentos terciários nas áreas estudadas; coleta de dados através da realização de entrevistas e aplicação de questionários quali-quantitativos no Google Forms; e elaboração de mapas de uso e ocupação do solo e de fluxos. Os subcentros do Tomba e Cidade Nova podem ser considerados as maiores expressões de centralidade fora da área central de Feira de Santana, em virtude da oferta diversificada de atividades terciárias e da descentralização que a cidade vivencia. A emergência de novas centralidades impacta no papel do Centro Tradicional, que antes figurava-se como o único núcleo polarizador da cidade, que ante as mudanças ocorridas na centralidade urbana tende a perder, relativamente, esse papel.

Palavras-chave: Subcentros. Centralidades. Feira de Santana.

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es analizar los cambios ocurridos en la centralidad urbana de Feira de Santana debido a la consolidación de subcentros, y reflexionar sobre las alteraciones desencadenadas por este proceso en sus dinámicas urbana y económica, mediante la investigación de los barrios Tomba y Cidade Nova. La metodología se basó en estudios bibliográficos para ofrecer un marco teórico sobre centro, descentralización y subcentros; trabajos de campo que incluyeron el levantamiento de establecimientos terciarios en las áreas estudiadas, la recopilación de datos a través de entrevistas y la aplicación de cuestionarios cuali-cuantitativos en lo Google Forms, así como la elaboración de mapas de uso y ocupación del suelo y de flujos. Los subcentros de Tomba y Cidade Nova pueden considerarse las principales expresiones de centralidad fuera del área central en Feira de Santana, debido a la diversidad de actividades terciarias que ofrecen y a la descentralización que experimenta la ciudad. La aparición de nuevas centralidades afecta el papel del Centro Tradicional, que antes se consideraba el único núcleo polarizador de la ciudad y que ahora, debido a los cambios en la centralidad urbana, tiende a perder relativamente esta función.

Palabras-clave: Subcentros. Centralidades. Feira de Santana.

Introduction

The capitalist mode of production has brought about significant changes as regards the organization and production of urban space, bringing about processes of urban restructuring and transformations in cities. In this sense, the most remarkable changes in the current situation include the emergence of new urban centers and the subsequent consolidation of new areas of concentration of tertiary activities (commerce and services) beyond the main center, as is the case with as subcenters.

For a long time, urban centrality was expressed in the traditional center, characterizing cities as monocentric. Due to the urban transformations that occurred during the 20th century, such as changes in urbanization, means of transportation,

technological development, and attractive elements in non-central areas, the decentralization of activities began, followed by the subsequent emergence of new expressions of urban centrality. Many cities have begun to have other central areas, in addition to the traditional center, which characterize them as poly(multi)nucleated (Santos, 2013), and, thus, according to Alves (2011), decentralization (re)creates and (re)organizes the urban space according to new centralities.

Lefebvre (2002 p.113) argues that polycentrality is the “[...] trend that is oriented either toward the establishment of different centers (which, albeit analogous, is occasionally complementary), or toward dispersion and segregation.” Due to the dynamic nature of urban space, decentralization occurs in conjunction with the generation of new expressions of centrality, constituting a dialectical pair. In other words, decentralization strengthens the emergence of new centralities and segregation.

Decentralization relatively diminishes the role of the traditional center and gives rise to new expressions of centrality, such as subcenters and offshoots of the old center. Regarding subcenters, Santos (2007) highlights that their emergence occurs in response to changes in the intra-urban space, resulting from the capitalist mode of production, such as the advent of means of transportation, urban expansion, and demographic growth. According to Sposito (1991, p. 10), subcenters comprise “[...] areas where the same activities as the main center are located, with commercial and service diversity, but on a smaller scale and with a lower incidence of specialized activities. Such activities are aimed at a more restricted public, whether at the functional or economic level.”

The subcenter corresponds to a smaller area that offers activities similar to those found in the main center, differing from it mainly because it serves a specific public (Santos, 2007). Demographic growth and the expansion of urban space are factors that contribute, for example, to the emergence of these subcenters. Given the new flows and actions of the agents producing the urban space, these new areas emerge, occupied by tertiary activities and directed at a more immediate resident public. Nevertheless, the dynamics that trigger decentralization and, concomitantly, the emergence of new structures equipped with centrality result in an increasingly segmented urban space, given the conflicts of interest.

In the case of the city of Feira de Santana, located in the state of Bahia, Brazil, the significant tertiary activity caused changes in the organization of the urban space and led to decentralization and the emergence of new expressions of centrality in specific areas, in order to meet more local demands. With urban expansion and population growth, a single center monopolizing commercial and service activities was no longer sufficient to serve the local and regional population, thereby leading to the emergence of subcenters.

In this scenario, a number of districts stand out for offering commercial and service establishments that are aimed at their residents, and it is possible to see the Tomba and Cidade Nova districts as significant subcenters. They have similar characteristics, such as being located respectively in the southern and northern parts of the city, on the sides of highways; and concentrating commercial and service activities that include street markets, clothing stores, bank branches, snack bars, gyms, lottery retailers, etc., which can meet the demands of the most local residents.

In view of the above, it is necessary to understand the changes in the logic of centrality in the city of Feira de Santana, driven by the formation of subcenters in popular districts, such as Cidade Nova and Tomba, and to reflect on the changes triggered by this process in their urban and economic dynamics.

The text is based on a review of the literature on the center, on decentralization, and on subcenters, in addition to documentary research, with consultations of data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* – IBGE) and the Municipal Public Archive, in search of information, maps and images of the areas under analysis, consulted remotely, as it occurred in the context of COVID-19. In the fieldwork, with the aim of identifying the types of use of the soil, a survey/mapping of commercial and service establishments was carried out, which provided the basis for vectorizing households on QGIS. Additionally, direct observations and photo records were made with the aim of understanding the reality researched and comparing it with old images.

Questionnaires were applied through Google Forms to residents and merchants, with the goal of providing an understanding of their assessment regarding the concentration of tertiary activities in the districts and how the strengthening of these new centralities impacts the Traditional Center of Feira de Santana. Also, interviews

were conducted with residents of each area, with the aim of learning about their history and the changes in the dynamics of the districts. The questionnaires and interviews were also applied remotely, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The text is organized into two sections: the first problematizes the concepts of center, urban centrality, and decentralization while contextualizing the reality of Feira de Santana; following it, the subcenters are highlighted. The article concludes with an analysis of the consolidation of Tomba and Cidade Nova as subcenters, in the context of the restructuring of the city of Feira de Santana, mainly in view of the redefinition of centrality and competition with the traditional center.

Feira de Santana and the new expressions of urban centrality

The structural organization of cities is marked by intense transformations over time, which accompany the current mode of production, in order to ensure the interests of hegemonic agents. In the case of the capitalist mode of production, the city is the agent responsible for promoting, to a greater extent, the expanded reproduction of capital, thanks to the flows of people, goods, and financial resources. According to Sposito (1991), in order to analyze the production and structuring of cities, one must understand the role of the center.

With that, the urban space reveals the contradictions existing in the capitalist mode of production, from the moment that, as a commodity, its appropriation occurs through the acquisition of the right to property, through private consumption. Space has a use value and, in turn, takes on an exchange value, given that it assumes a price to be paid by individuals so that they can enjoy the right to property. Therefore, the use of unequal portions of space is given by those who have the greatest purchasing power to acquire such a right, making access difficult for those social classes that have less power (Oliveira, 2008).

It is in this sense that Santos (2013) reveals the importance of thinking about urban structuring according to the paradigm of conflict, as the interests and actions of the agents involved are key pieces for the debate on urban spatial processes, when considering the different ways of appropriating urban land and the role that such processes play in the accumulation of capital.

The city, therefore, is configured differently, in which spaces are designated that concentrate more activities and, subsequently, have greater power of articulation than other parts of the urban fabric (Oliveira, 2008), with the center being, above all, one of these spaces. Therefore, it is crucial to characterize this part of the urban structure and, above all, differentiate it from the concept of urban centrality.

According to Lefebvre (2002, p. 93), “there is no city, nor urban reality, without a center. More than that, the urban space is a space where each point can virtually attract to itself everything that populates the surroundings: things, works, people.” Also, according to the author, centrality is the essence of the urban phenomenon, which must be considered from the perspective of the dialectical movement, in which it is constructed and destroyed at the same time – it creates and shatters it. In this perspective, Villaça (2001) conceives of the center through the dialectic in which the center and the non-center should not be disconnected, because no area is or is not a center – it becomes or ceases to be.

According to Villaça (2001), the center arises from the need for unwanted but obligatory separations. In his words, the emergence of the center is a response to the need for a location that meets the common interests of a community; therefore, activities need to be concentrated, in theory, at the point where distances are minimal for everyone. Consequently, this location becomes a dispute for control of travel time.

According to Sposito (1991), the urban center is not necessarily in the center as a geographic location, as it corresponds to a physical form of the urban space where tertiary activities are concentrated and this concentration favors a significant flow of people, goods, capital, etc.

Regarding the differentiation of the concepts of center and centrality, Sposito (1996, p. 121) presents centrality by its fleetingness, by movement, as “[...] it concerns flows, fluidity, that is, it is the expression of the dynamics of definition/redefinition of central areas and flows within the city.” It can be concluded that it consists of logics of attraction of flows that allow it to materialize in different urban forms, as it is dynamic and subject to changes in space-time. The center differs from centrality because the first corresponds to the urban form – it is the location of the city where a series of functions of articulation and agglutination of activities that play a key role in urban structuring are

linked. In turn, centrality corresponds to what moves in the territory – the flows – which do not necessarily need to be associated with a fixed structure (Sposito, 1991, 1996).

Villaça (2001) and Corrêa (1989) present the center as the location that distinguishes itself from the others in the city space, either by the concentration of activities or by the valuation of urban land. Central areas stand out for presenting relatively higher values, thanks to their locational advantages, such as circulation of people, goods, infrastructure, articulation power, and accessibility.

The center is traditionally a privileged place in the intra-urban space, as it plays a role in bringing together, attracting, generating flows, and having a high value for urban land. For that reason, it is highly disputed by different agents. This dispute, however, in view of all the advantages it presents, associated with the very strategy of capitalism, leads the center to saturation and, as a consequence, materializes the decentralization of part of the originally central activities. A single center is no longer sufficient to serve the city as a whole, in view of demographic growth and the city's own expansion. As Lefebvre states,

[...] in the course of its realization, concentration weakens and breaks down every time. What is needed, thus, is another center, a periphery, an elsewhere. Another place and another place. This movement, produced by the urban, produces, in turn, the urban. Creation is interrupted, but in turn, in order to create (Lefebvre, 2002, p.111-112).

The decentralization of activities leads to the emergence of new centralities in the intra-urban space beyond the main center. As Tourinho (2004) points out, the centrality has distanced itself conceptually and physically from the center and has become almost autonomous. And, currently, it no longer makes sense to associate centrality only with the single center, in many cities, since it, due to its fluidity, manifests itself in other points or forms of the urban space.

With regard to decentralization, Corrêa (1989) points out a few factors that can cause the collapse of the single center and, subsequently, contribute to the displacement of activities that, for a time, were exclusive to the center, such as increased land value, rents, and taxes; difficulties in expanding businesses due to the lack of physical space; traffic congestion and lack of amenities, etc. Conversely, areas emerge that present attractions for the generation of new centralities, such as unoccupied land and low land

value; infrastructure, ease of transportation, topographical qualities of the terrain, possibility of land control, and amenities.

Decentralization is also linked to the demographic and spatial growth of the city, in which the distances between the central area and residential areas increase. Competition for the new consumer market that emerges triggers the decentralization of commercial forms, in which stores in the central area tend to open branches, in addition to the emergence of already decentralized activities, which enjoy the benefits of locations outside the central area. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that, for this process to occur, a market is needed to justify this location (Corrêa, 1989).

Therefore, the structural organization of cities was for a long time marked by monocentrism. It had a single center responsible for densifying commercial and service activities. The 20th century, however, marked the rupture of this structure and the centrality in the intra-urban space ceased to be exclusive to the center and began to be present in other areas. A few factors were essential to the rupture of this structure and made decentralization possible, such as intense urbanization, the massive use of individual transportation, and the need to reproduce capital and maximize profits through new commercial structures (Alves, 2011).

The rupture in the structuring of urban space that marked the 20th century, due to the saturation of the center, led to urban restructuring. According to Sposito (2001), the term should only be used in historical moments when changes in urban structuring are significant. Such changes should indicate ruptures in the structuring that was in force at the time. For this reason, decentralization and the emergence of new centralities redefine the role of the traditional center and substantiate urban restructuring, at a time when the structuring ceases to be monocentric, assuming polycentricity.

The establishment of several central areas spread across the city, which play different roles in the intra-urban space characterizes it as polycentric. In Lefebvre's (2002 p.113) view, this is the "[...] trend that is directed either toward the establishment of different centers (which, albeit analogous, is occasionally complementary), or toward dispersion and segregation." The dynamics that involve decentralization and the generation of new expressions of centrality are centered on dialectics, given that tertiary activities, while being centralized, are re-centralized in new locations that have attributes that materialize this process.

The new expressions of centrality reflect a new organization in cities and characterize them as poly(multi)nucleated and, as a consequence, there is a trend towards the weakening of the traditional center. Therefore, the center ceases to act as the maximum unifying and polarizing area of the city. Despite this propensity for crisis, however, traditional centers have not completely lost their importance and influence for the city as a whole (Villação, 2001).

The emergence of new centralities is linked to the intense transformations that have occurred in the intra- and inter-urban spaces of capitalist cities. According to Sposito (1996), the phenomenon of redefining these areas is not new, nor is it exclusive to metropolises. The author emphasizes that new commercial enterprises, such as hypermarkets and shopping malls, are important elements that contribute to redefining the role of the center. Further, the advent of transportation and new forms of consumption have become decisive factors for the emergence of new forms of centralities.

Decentralization does not occur by accident, and the existence of factors that permeate the concretization of the phenomenon, as highlighted by Corrêa (1989), reveals the game that benefits certain agents of the urban space. The State's role as an infrastructure provider in areas outside the central axis allows the action of landowners and real estate agents. The locational advantages that are allocated enable the appreciation of urban land and the implementation of new activities linked to the tertiary sector, which trigger an increase in consumption. These aspects allow for the maximization of profits and the expanded reproduction of capital.

In view of the above, it is clear that decentralization, as well as the creation of centralities, have been essential for redefining the role of the city center, acting in the reorganization and reconfiguration of urban space, with Feira de Santana being an interesting case to be problematized.

Known as the *Princess of the Sertão* ("*Princesa do Sertão*"), Feira de Santana is located in the interior of Bahia, 108 kilometers from the capital Salvador. According to data from the 2022 Census of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), it had a total population of 616,272 people (IBGE, 2024). It is part of the Portal do Sertão Identity Territory, according to the regionalization implemented by the Bahia State Planning Secretariat (*Secretaria de Planejamento do Estado da Bahia* –

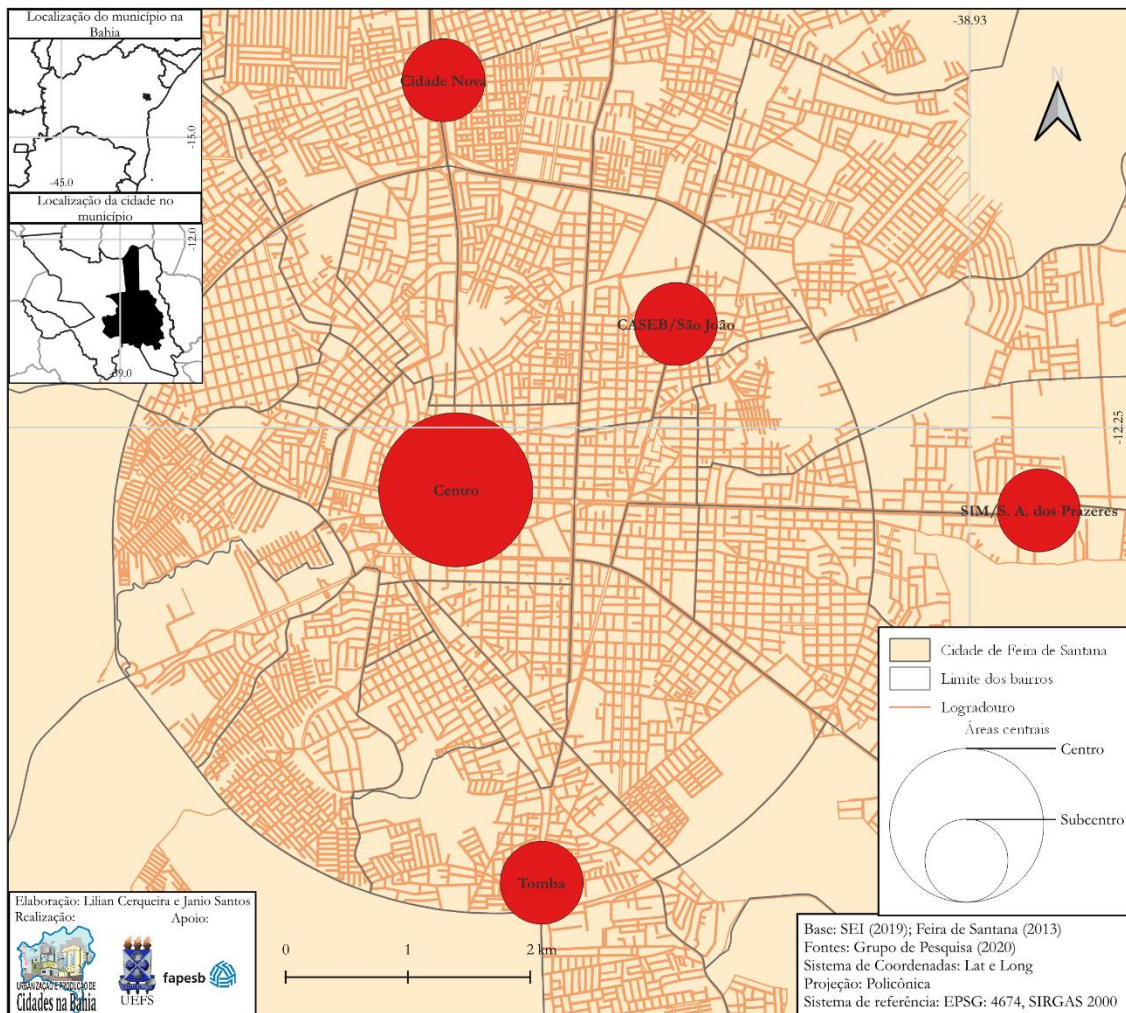
SEPLAN). It is one of the most important municipalities in the state, with the tertiary sector being the most relevant activity in terms of the socio-spatial and socioeconomic organization of the municipality. This can be explained by its strategic location, given that its origins are related to a commercial and service sector that gradually gained great prominence (Teles, 2017).

The second half of the 20th century was decisive for the expansion of the city of Feira de Santana. According to Teles (2017), in the mid-1960s, albeit incipiently, signs of industrial activity began to emerge in the city. Nevertheless, in 1970, this gained more strength through federal government policies aimed at modernization, through the development of industry. Thus, the Subaé Industrial Center (*Centro Industrial Subaé – CIS*) was established in the Tomba district, in the southern area of the city. Its installation represented changes in the urban dynamics, as it became one of the main attractions for the arrival of migrants, who came in search of job opportunities.

The commercial center of the city of Feira de Santana is located, for the most part, in the district of the same name, extending, however, to surrounding areas. It includes the avenues (“*avenidas*”) Senhor do Passos, Presidente Dutra, and part of Getúlio Vargas; the Presidente Médici square (“*praça*”), where Feiraguai is located; and the streets (“*ruas*”) Marechal Deodoro, Conselheiro Franco, Sales Barbosa, and Barão do Rio Branco. It is a major area, where some of the main urban facilities are located.

The significant tertiary activity caused changes in the organization of the urban space of Feira de Santana and led to decentralization and the emergence of new expressions of centralities in specific areas, to meet local demand and to make urban restructuring concrete. With urban expansion and population growth, a center that monopolized commercial and service activities was no longer sufficient to meet the demands of Feira de Santana and the surrounding region, resulting in the emergence of subcenters. Thus, a number of districts stand out for offering commercial and service establishments. Based on on-site observation and reading of other research on Feira de Santana, it was possible to delimit the following subcenters: Tomba, Cidade Nova, Caseb/São João, and Sim/Santo Antônio dos Prazeres, which show greater prominence in the current dynamics of the city (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Location of the center and subcenters in Feira de Santana, 2021



Source: Grupo de Pesquisa, 2020.

The subcenters of the Tomba and Cidade Nova districts have very similar characteristics: They are located respectively in the southern and northern parts of the city, on the sides of highways, and have a tertiary sector that is responsible for meeting the consumption demand of local residents, as well as banks, clothing stores, snack bars, and gyms, among other establishments. Caseb/São João was driven by the installation of Boulevard Shopping, the first large-scale shopping mall in the city. Attracted by the flow of people, a number of establishments were set up along João Durval Avenue and within the aforementioned districts, which strengthened the new expression of centrality.

Another important factor in the emergence of new centralities is the tendency of higher-income classes (who originally lived in the city center and its surroundings) to

move to more distant districts. Thus, new spaces for specific consumption emerge, mainly aimed at this resident public. In Feira de Santana, this movement is relatively new and, currently, Sim/Santo Antônio dos Prazeres are districts that are growing due to the residence of middle and high-income classes.

Despite the strengthening of these new centralities in Feira de Santana, the existing subcenters act to complement the activities found in the Center. This area is very important both for the city's economic dynamics and for its residents, as the center is the area where most of the commercial activities, services and flows of people and capital are concentrated.

Decentralization in Feira de Santana and the formation of the Tomba and Cidade Nova subcenters

Regarding the definition of subcenter, a number of authors have developed studies on the subject. Villaça (2001) makes it clear that the concept is empirical, although there is some acceptance that certain establishments are necessary to make up the commercial agglomeration, such as department stores, branches of downtown stores, independent professionals, and restaurants. The author emphasizes that the term subcenter is attributed to locations that concentrate commercial and service activities in a varied way, comprising a smaller replica of the center that partly competes with it, although it does not quite equal it. The difference revolves around the scope of its urban structures: while the subcenter is responsible for serving only a portion of the city, the center performs the same role for the entire city.

According to Corrêa (1989), the subcenter is a central nucleus on a reduced scale, concentrating various types of stores and services. These can be either branches that started their activities in the central nucleus or activities that were already decentralized. In this sense, it corresponds to a smaller area, which offers activities similar to those found in the main center and which differs from it, mainly, in that it serves a more specific public.

The displacement of the population to live in areas further away from the center, as a result of its saturation due to excessive centrality, has led to the emergence of new central areas to meet the primary demand of the immediate population. This occurs both in popular districts and in those aimed at the population with greater purchasing power.

The strengthening of new central areas, as is the case of the subcenters, relatively reduces the polarizing role of the center and accentuates social fragmentation, given that the locations are directed to specific publics, as demonstrated by Sposito and Góes (2013). While the center was the place where all social classes faced one another, the new central areas have caused the center to move away as a place where everyone was present, which made the urban space more complex and segmented.

With regard to Feira de Santana, Antón, Medeiros and Santos (2013) stress that, in the late 1960s, the logic of the city's production underwent major transformations, mainly as a result of the replacement of rail transportation, the main means of transportation at the time, by road transportation, which was a key factor in the changes that occurred to the city's centrality. Rail was the dominant means of transportation, and Feira de Santana was not part of the main railway routes. Nevertheless, with the rise of road transport and its privileged location, it became part of the main road routes to various parts of the country. The authors, however, are not addressing intra-urban centrality.

Moreover, aspects are present such as the strengthening of the industry, with the creation of the CIS; construction of housing complexes; removal of the street market from the center, the "flagship" of tertiary activity until the 1970s, as a result of industrial development; strong commercial and service activity; implementation of the shopping mall in the 1990s; and expansion of real estate interests (Santos, Santos, Reis, 2021). All of this was crucial for the changes that took place in the logic of the structuring of the urban space of Feira de Santana, which enabled relative decentralization in the city.

Freitas, Gomes and Borges (2013) highlight that, between the 2000 and 2010 Censuses, there was a decrease in occupation in the central area of the city and neighboring areas, located in the Anel de Contorno. Nevertheless, based on the analysis of the document commissioned by the Municipality, it is clear that only the Center and a few nearby districts showed a decrease in their growth rate during the period, such as Capuchinhos and Serraria Brasil (Prisma, 2014). Reasons that may explain this include the change in land use values, the availability of cheaper land outside the Anel de Contorno region, and the concentration of commercial and service activities in the Center.

On the one hand, the expansion of the city beyond the Anel de Contorno region benefited the real estate sector, though the construction of gated communities in new areas, and resulted in the displacement of high- and middle-income inhabitants, in search of exclusive, theoretically safe housing, and forming a new housing profile in the outskirts. On the other hand, however, affordable housing complexes and occupations remain installed in this part of the city, as highlighted by Santos, Santos, and Reis (2021). Also, given the growth of districts outside the central zone, the emergence of new centralities has become inevitable, particularly as this expansion presented itself as an attractive choice for the implementation of commercial and service establishments.

Regarding lower-income areas, Tomba is located in the southern part of Feira de Santana, at the access to the BA-502 highway, which connects this city to São Gonçalo dos Campos. According to the 2022 Census, it was the most populous district in Feira de Santana, with 59,591 inhabitants. Cidade Nova is located in the northern area, on the banks of the BR-116 highway, which is an important access route to central north of Bahia, being characterized by high flows – as of 2022, it had 8,546 inhabitants¹ (IBGE, 2024). In turn, the population of Tomba grew by 8.33% in relation to the 2010 Census, when it had 55,007 inhabitants, and the Cidade Nova district had a decrease of 14.32% in the same period, when it had 9,974 inhabitants (Prisma, 2014).

We did not find information highlighting the exact context in which Cidade Nova changed from a housing complex to a district. Nevertheless, in Municipal Act 943, of March 23, 1984, it was possible to find mention of Cidade Nova as a district. Regarding Tomba, the 1968 plan does not mention any specific districts, but it is possible to find a reference to a public transportation line to the former. Officially, the first law that refers to the Tomba district is Municipal Act 965, of April 1, 1985 (Feira de Santana, 1968, 1984, 1985).

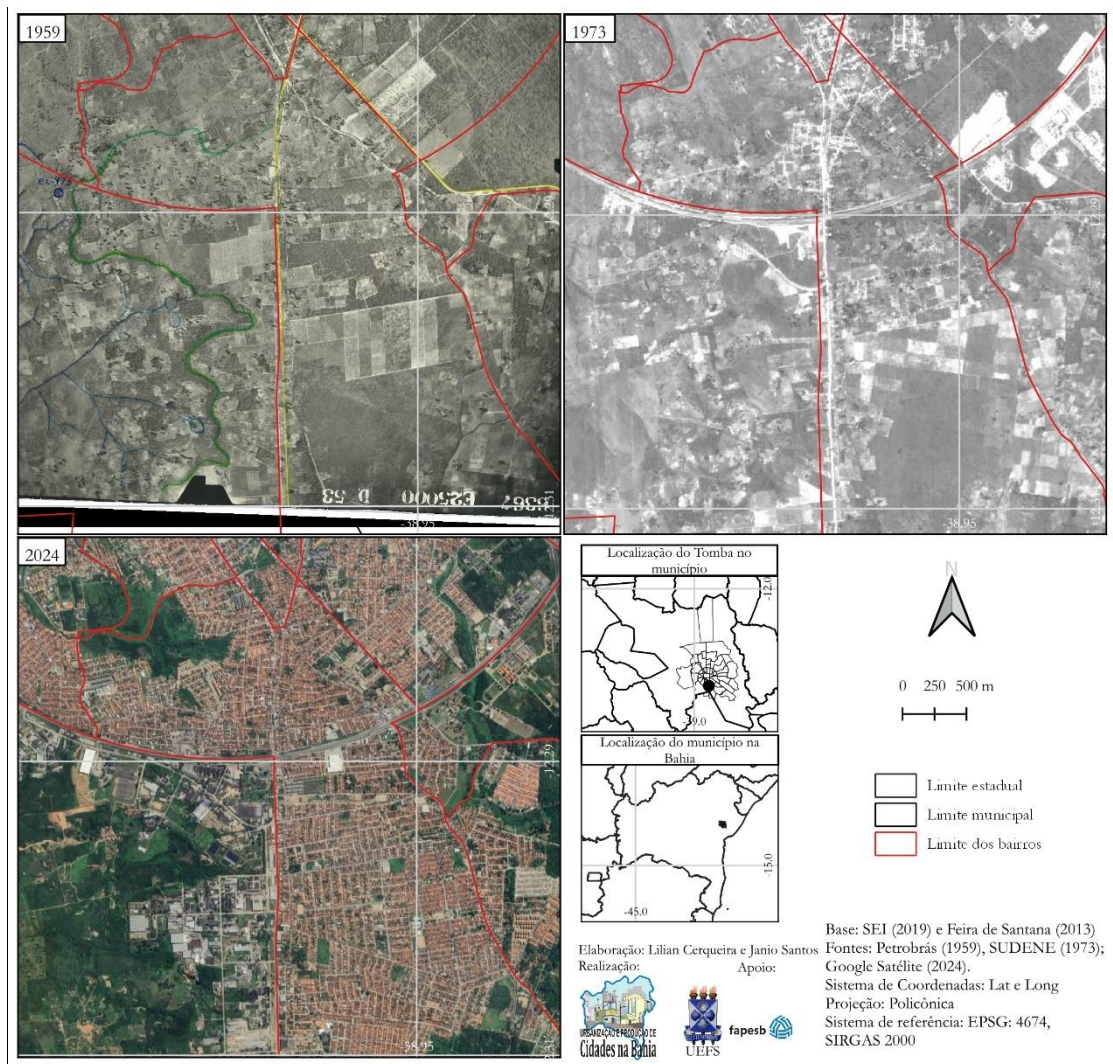
¹ Data from census sectors restricted to districts. In the case of Tomba, only the sum of the resident population of the urban sectors was considered, as the rural sectors extend to other neighborhoods.

Figure 2 and Figure 3 show the transformations in the areas under study. In 1959, the districts did not officially exist and both areas still had essentially rural characteristics, even though Tomba already had a number of spaced-out residences. In 1973, changes were observed in 14 years, with the presence of the Anel de Contorno, greater density of residences, and the presence of housing complexes. Finally, in 2024, the most current configuration of the districts is shown, with high occupancy rates and population density.

The history of Tomba is linked to the railway line, which for a long time was the main connection between Feira de Santana and Cachoeira. In the 1960s, it had rural characteristics, with the presence of farms belonging to Mr. Macário Barreto and Ms. Lola. In the 1970s, these properties were divided into lots, and the district began to expand in terms of territory and demographics. Nevertheless, the process became more expressive with the installation of the CIS (Araújo, 2015). According to Freitas (2014), the CIS Master Plan made clear the need to build affordable housing to house the workforce that came to Feira de Santana in search of employment in the industry. In the period from the 1960s to the 1980s, a significant migration rates were observed. The installation of CIS Tomba and CIS BR-324 in 1970, as well as the construction of housing complexes aimed at industrial workers, encouraged the search for housing and reinforced the occupation of the south-southeastern portion of the city.

Tomba was the second district that received the most housing complexes aimed at the low-income population. According to Santo (2012), this fact can be explained by the low value of land in the southern portion of the city, as well as its location between two industrial complexes. The implementation of CIS Tomba, coupled with the construction of housing complexes, were key elements in the expansion of this district – and it was with the main goal of meeting the industry’s demand that the government began to invest in its infrastructure.

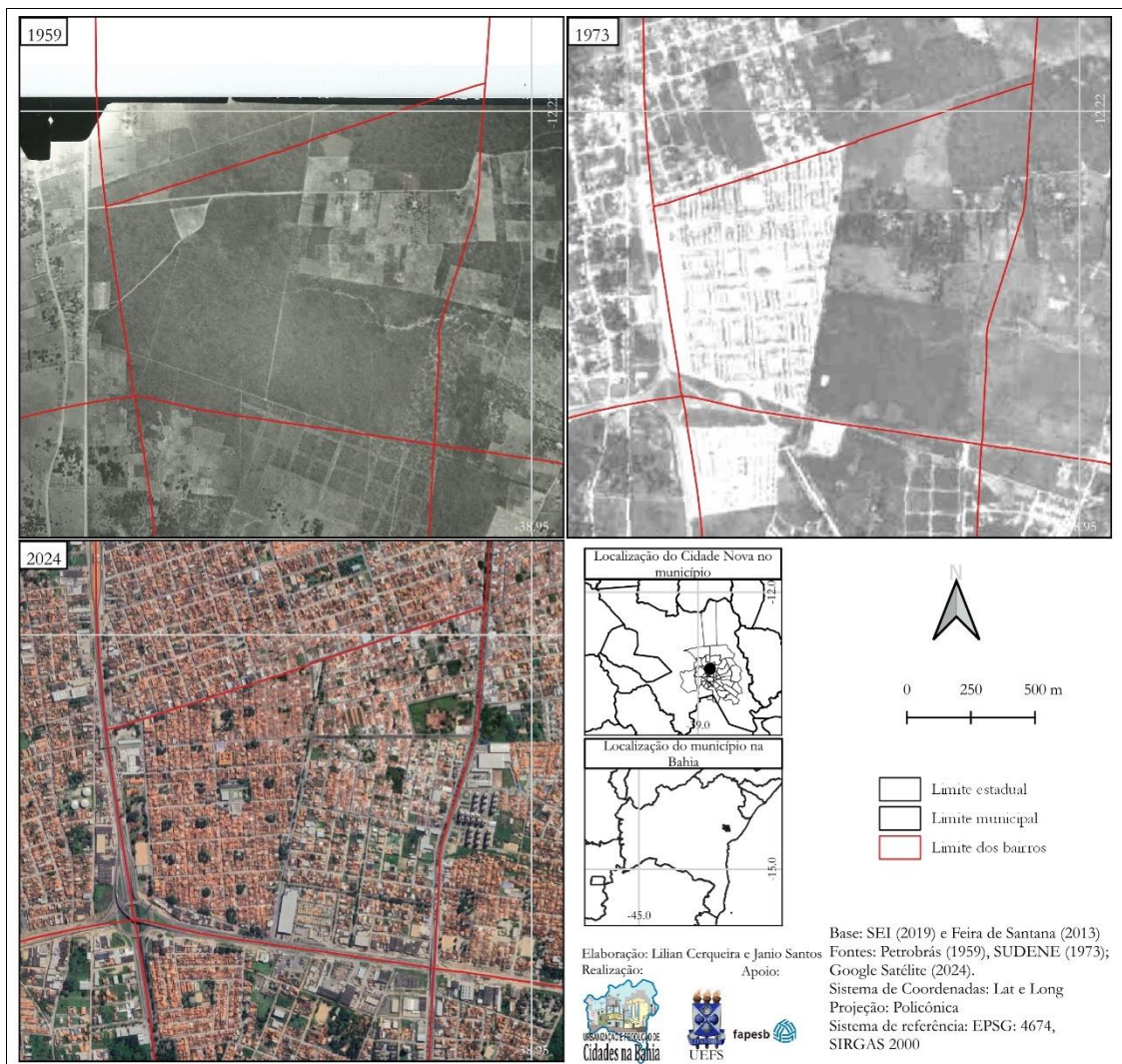
Figure 2: Transformations in the Tomba district, Feira de Santana, Bahia, 1959, 1973, and 2024



Source: Petrobrás (1959); SUDENE (1973); Google Satélite (2024).

Regarding the expansion of Tomba, the State was one of the agents responsible for the implementation of the process. Initially, we have a district located on the outskirts, which was not a priority for the government, lacking appropriate infrastructure. With the implementation of the industrial complex, a movement was implemented to offer basic infrastructure, mainly to serve the industries and part of the migrants who came to Feira de Santana in search of employment. The implementation of the CIS was responsible, above all, for promoting a new dynamic in the city, largely made possible by the State, which created conditions for redefining the use of urban land to meet this new logic, by promoting important spatial changes (Freitas, 2014; Teles, 2017).

Figure 3: Transformations in the Cidade Nova district, Feira de Santana, Bahia, 1959, 1973 and 2024



Source: Petrobrás (1959); SUDENE (1973); Google Satélite (2024).

The formation of Cidade Nova is connected to the actions of the State in the 1960s and 1970s. Population growth, coupled with the increase in the urbanization rate and driven by the implementation of the CIS in Feira de Santana, promoted urban expansion beyond the Anel de Contorno region. In the late 1960s, construction of the first housing complexes in Feira de Santana began.

According to Freitas (2014), in the aforementioned context, the establishment of affordable housing districts can be seen in areas further away from the center, which were not intensely affected by real estate speculation. Initially, two housing complexes were built by URBIS outside the Anel de Contorno region: Feira I and Feira II, which currently correspond to the Cidade Nova district, completed in 1969 and 1971, with the construction of 1,636 residences. These complexes were designed to house the working classes, some of whom were responsible for making up the CIS workforce. According to the author, the planning of these districts far from the center reflects the unequal production of urban space.

There is no doubt about how the State's actions made possible the urban expansion of Feira de Santana, both in the north and south, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, a period in which this action was even more significant. The city expanded in the north, stimulated mainly by the implementation of UEFS and BR 116-Norte, while the south axis had the CIS and BA-502 as its main vectors (Santo, 2012).

Tomba and Cidade Nova share similar characteristics, such as being located outside the Anel de Contorno region and being close to highways BA-502 and BR-116 Norte, respectively. Nevertheless, it is difficult to define the exact moment when these districts began to present this new tertiary dynamic. Until the 1960s and 1970s, the city's street market, a key element in the formation of Feira de Santana, took place in the city center. With its displacement to the Supply Center and the urban expansion itself, the activity spread to other districts, such as Tomba and Cidade Nova.

The street market in the Tomba district is one of the oldest in the region, having been in operation for over 30 years, and being held every Sunday at Praça Macário Barreto, where the first establishments initially emerged, comprising small markets and grocery stores, typical of local businesses, aimed at meeting the demands of the residents themselves. Over the years, the supply of commerce and services became

more diversified and not only limited to the square, but also covering other streets, such as São João and Salvador. The tertiary sector arose to meet the needs of residents, since the existence of potential consumers allowed local residents, who were not employed, to invest in small businesses in order to obtain some form of income.²

In Cidade Nova, the open-air market first arose in the 1970s, with commerce emerging following the establishment of the district itself³. Initially, activities were concentrated on Rua 1, Rua 2, and Rua Tostão. The first establishments included a large pharmacy, Santa Terezinha, in addition three smaller ones, while the first major supermarket was Paes Mendonça, where Mercantil Rodrigues currently operates, on Rua Carlos Alberto. Currently, the main establishments are distributed along streets Carlos Alberto and ACM (formerly Rua 1). Another location mentioned was Avenida Fraga Maia, which has been part of the district, given that Cidade Nova was still a housing complex at the time of its construction and was only later promoted to the category of district.

The emergence of street markets in the study areas comprise initial milestones for the formation of the subcenters. Nevertheless, other more recent structures were also essential, such as the change in transportation in Feira de Santana, with the implementation of the Integrated Transportation System (*Sistema Integrado de Transporte – SIT*) in 2005. The project established the construction of three Integrated Terminals: Central, North, and South, the latter two of which are located, respectively, in the Cidade Nova and Tomba districts (Santos, Santos, Reis, 2021). The location of these two terminals reveals the strategic position and importance of both districts as generators and receivers of flows.

Over the years, Tomba and Cidade Nova have presented a greater diversity of tertiary establishments, such as the presence of banking services, supermarkets belonging to nationwide chains, which, for a time, were located exclusively in the central area of Feira de Santana, in addition to establishments that were established outside the central area.

² Interview conducted with a resident of the Tomba district, April 23, 2021. Interviewer: Lilian Cerqueira.

³ Interview conducted with a resident of the Cidade Nova district, April 2021. Interviewer: Lilian Cerqueira.

In the case of Cidade Nova, it is possible to find Cesta do Povo, on Avenida Frei Félix de Pacaúba, near the North Terminal, one Banco do Brasil branch on Rua Antônio Carlos Magalhães (ACM) and a Mercantil Rodrigues supermarket, on Avenida Eduardo Froes da Mota, opened in 2016. In Tomba, a Todo Dia chain supermarket, opened in 2009, on Rua Papa João XXIII, considered one of the main streets in the area, in addition to GBarbosa, from the Cencosud group, which is, in turn, located in what is known as “Tomba II,” outside the main activity area.

The presence of these commercial and service establishments reveals the decentralization of the activities originally belonging to the center of Feira de Santana, with the recentralization in Cidade Nova and Tomba. This highlights the degree of complexity of the tertiary activities that are developed, particularly in terms of diversification and scope. Such activities do not only serve the population of the districts, but also of neighboring districts, comprising alternatives for residents who do not prefer to shop in the center. The complexity present in Cidade Nova and Tomba consolidates them as subcenters, which differentiates them from districts that develop only a few tertiary establishments, focusing on meeting the primary needs of their residents.

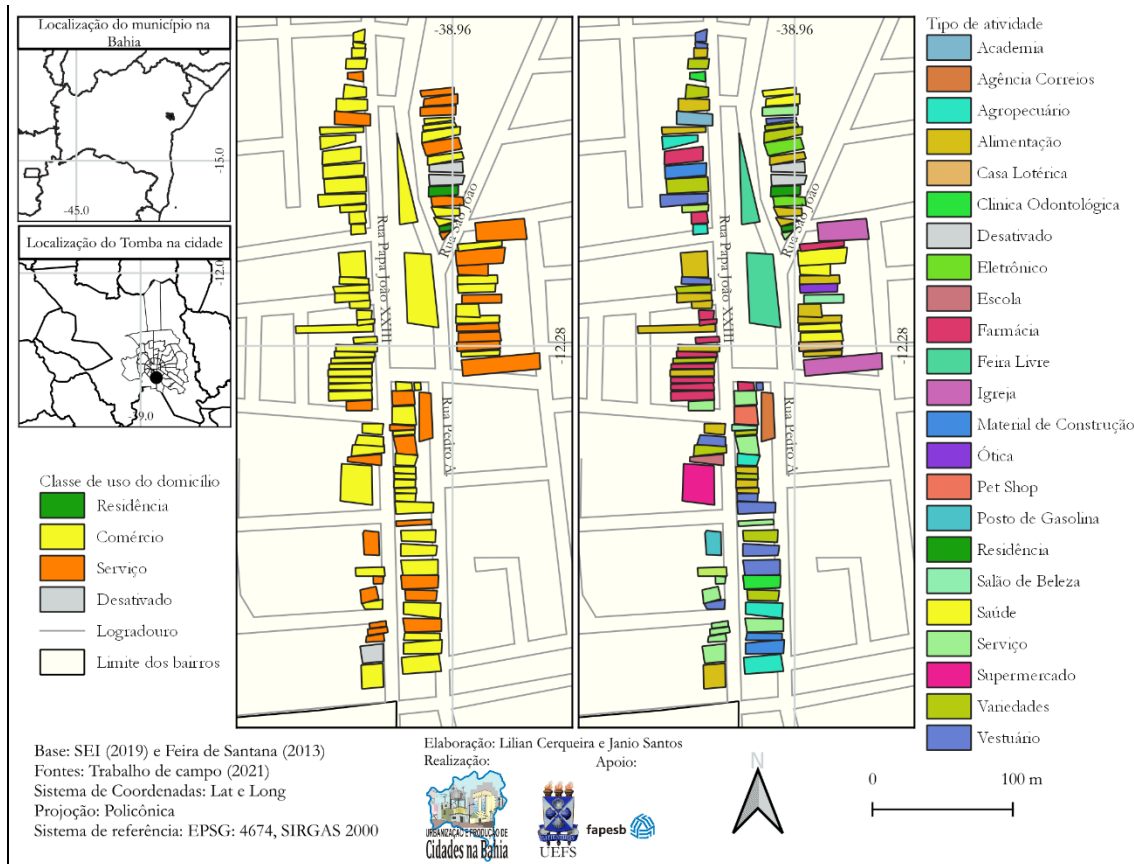
Therefore, it is clear that Cidade Nova and Tomba have the characteristics of subcenters, based on the definitions proposed by Corrêa (1989), Sposito (1991), Villaça (2001), and Santos (2013). The privileged location, the high capacity for agglutinating flows, the open-air market, the implementation of the Integrated Terminals and the installation of banking services, supermarkets of nationally known chains, can be considered key elements for the strengthening of commerce and services, subsequently consolidating the centrality of these two districts.

The subcenters of Tomba and Cidade Nova and the configuration of the intra-urban space of Feira de Santana

The main activity center of the Tomba district comprises the streets Papa João XXIII and Pedro Américo de Brito, where 105 tertiary establishments were found (Figure 4). Due to its large size, the activities are spread across the district's territory. Nevertheless, these streets are where most of the tertiary sector is located, with the presence of various establishments and the open-air market. On Rua Papa João XXIII, it

is possible to find markets and supermarkets, apparel stores, pharmacies, gas stations, hardware stores, schools, dental clinics, and stores selling a variety of products. On Rua Pedro Américo, the number of establishments is slightly lower, but the offer is still diverse, including a dental clinic, a Correios (Brazilian Postal Service) office, an ice cream shop, a lottery retailer, a grocery store, a bakery, and a Subway restaurant.

Figure 4: Use and occupation of households, Rua Pedro Américo de Brito and Rua Papa João XXIII, Tomba subcenter, Feira de Santana, Bahia, 2021



Source: Trabalho de Campo (2021).

Despite its lower intensity, the tertiary activity is also present outside the main core. As mentioned, Tomba is a large district, which is why other locations also deserve attention, such as Rua Comendador Gomes, which features pharmacies, pizzerias, and a GBarbosa branch.

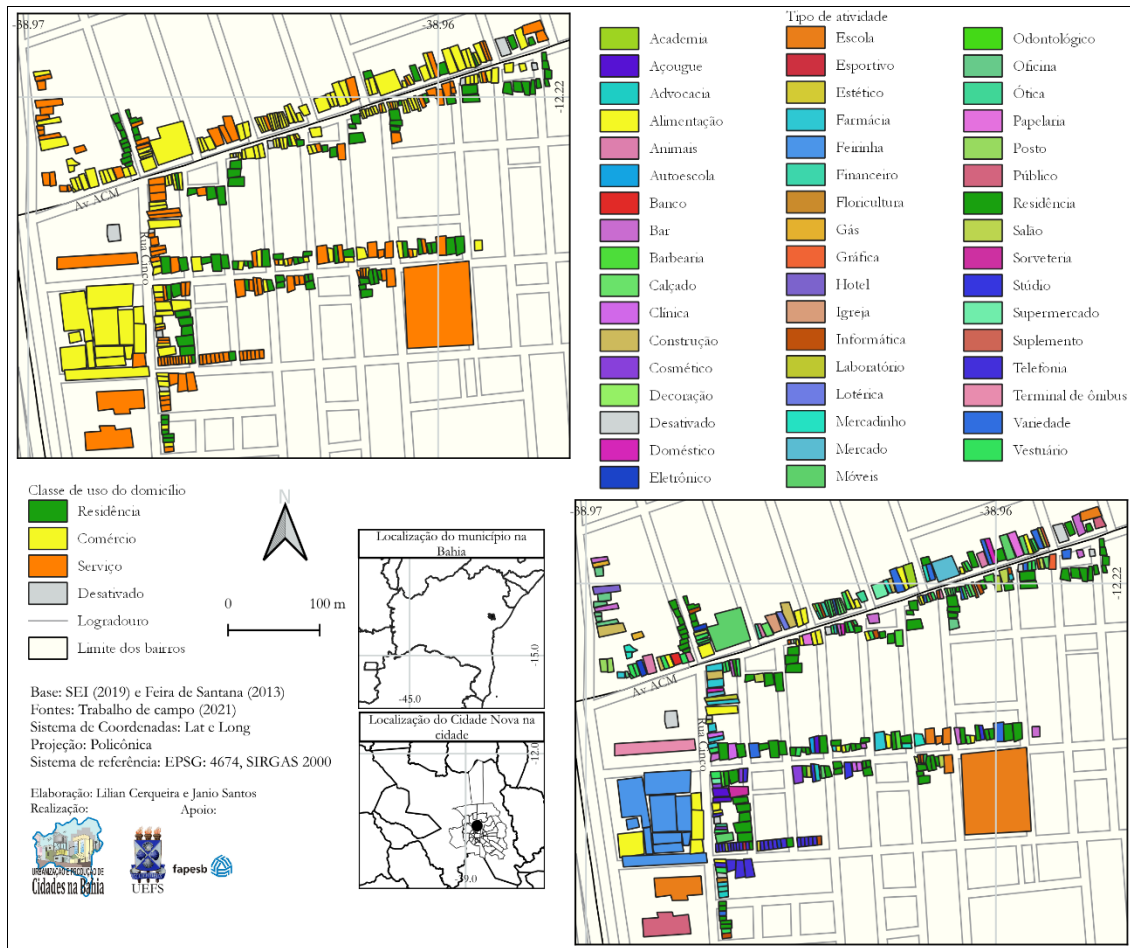
The main activities representing the subcenter are food-related, such as markets, supermarket chains, restaurants, pizzerias, snack bars, and fast food chains, present both on the main streets and throughout the district. In terms of services, pharmacies,

drugstores, and dental clinics, along with apparel stores, represent a significant portion of the activities present in the subcenter.

The streets Pedro Américo and Papa João XXIII have the greatest circulation of capital, goods, pedestrians, and vehicles, whose commercial role predominates, consolidating them as areas of greatest consumption in Tomba, with an intense flow of pedestrians and vehicles. Furthermore, it is on these streets that public transportation runs, being responsible for serving some of the residents. There is a concentration of establishments aimed at immediate consumption, which serve not only the residents of the district itself, but also neighboring areas. The Tomba subcenter does not have a bank branch, although there are ATMs inside a supermarket.

In Cidade Nova, the nucleus of the activities is located around the North Terminal and the street market, where 188 tertiary establishments were found (Figure 5). The main route for the concentration of tertiary establishments is Avenida ACM. Rua 5 and Rua 2, however, also play a major role in the location of activities. Although the main core concentrates most of the commerce and services, there are also tertiary establishments scattered across the district.

Figure 5: Use and occupation of households, Rua Pedro Américo de Brito and Rua Papa João XXIII, subcenter of Cidade Nova, Feira de Santana, Bahia, 2021



Source: Trabalho de Campo (2021).

On Rua 5, there is a positive trend towards the food industry, featuring establishments such as supermarkets, meat packing plants, health food stores, snack bars, and the street market, which generates income for street vendors. It was possible to find vendors with carts outside the space designated for the street market, along the sidewalks. Additionally, the street features a lottery retailer, apparel and hair products stores, and an optical stores. On Rua 2, the combination of land use is more evident, including both tertiary and residential use. Activities are more varied, such as bars, medical, laboratory and dental clinics, women's apparel stores, barbershops, driving schools, pharmacies, beauty salons, fitness and intimate apparel stores, supermarkets, tattoo studios, and optical stores.

Given that Cidade Nova is located close to the State University of Feira de Santana (UEFS), students living near the campus represent a significant portion of the consumer public, and because it offers a diversity of activities, it plays a major role in the community, given that the supply of commerce and services allows residents to

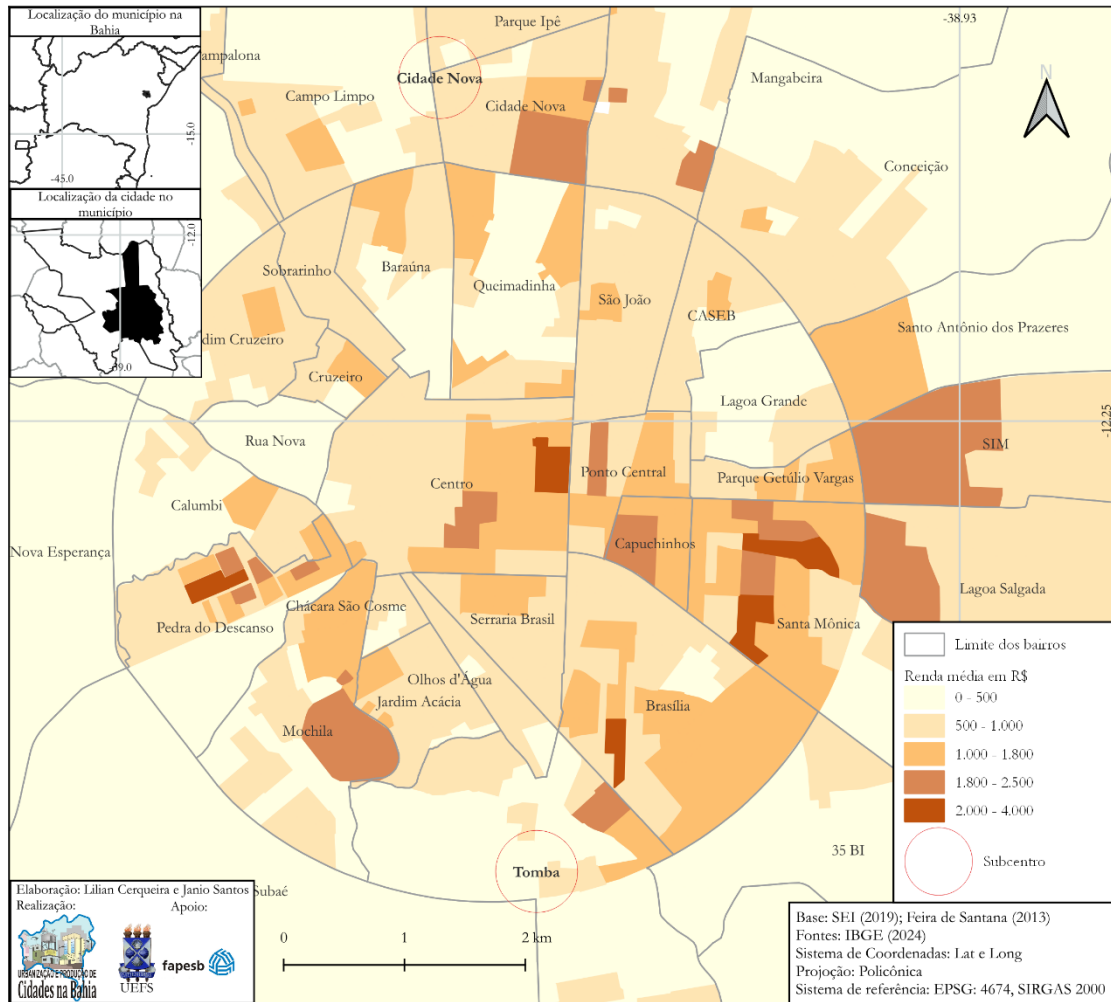
choose to travel to the more traditional central area only in cases of services and products that are not found in the subcenter.

Cidade Nova also has three branches of downtown stores, such as Lupalina, an apparel and footwear store, and two furniture and upholstery stores, namely Global Móveis Decor and Fama Conforto (Fama Móveis). In turn, Tomba, a branch of the hardware store Rede Erguer. Not only do these stores demonstrate the role played by subcenters in the urban/economic dynamics of Feira de Santana, but the supply of tertiary establishments also reinforces them as smaller replicas of the central area, being responsible for serving part of the population.

Corrêa (1989), Villaça (2001), Santos (2013) and Sposito (1991) highlight in their studies the importance of new central areas having certain characteristics to be considered subcenters, such as a wide variety of commerce and services, branches of central stores, and a well-defined public. In this sense, Tomba and Cidade Nova have supermarket chains and fast-food restaurants that represent the degree of complexity and importance for the city's commercial dynamics.

The diversified offer of commercial activities and services, also aimed at adjacent districts and even a number of neighboring municipalities, has been crucial for the consolidation of the subcenters. Based on Figure 6, which shows the average income by census sector of the city of Feira de Santana in 2010, it is possible to see that Tomba is dominated by the low-income population, whose monthly income varies between R\$200.00 and R\$1,000.00. In turn, the Cidade Nova district does not have a homogeneous average income, as residents have monthly incomes between R\$200.00 and R\$1,000.00; R\$1,000.00 and R\$1,800.00; and R\$1,800.00 and R\$2,500.00. It should be noted that, due to the delay in the Census, the information on average income has not yet been updated.

Figure 6: Average income, by urban census sector, Feira de Santana, Bahia, 2010.



Source: IBGE (2024).

The socioeconomic profile of the adjacent districts is another key piece of information for understanding the pattern of tertiary activities offered. That is because there is a clear predominance of the lower-income population. In this sense, the presence of establishments aimed at meeting immediate needs, such as supermarkets, pharmacies, and apparel stores, among other uses, stands out. The infrastructure of the subcenters is really a smaller replica of the city center, with no records of specialized roads, as is common in other urban areas.

Figure 7 shows the trips made on foot and by means not including walking, towards the two subcenters. It is important to highlight that this type of mobility allows for longer distances. Therefore, it is possible to observe that the flows destined for Tomba originate from various parts of the city, although the greatest intensity occurs in the area within the Anel de Contorno region. In relation to Cidade Nova, there is a

greater flow of movement originating from more distant districts, which can be explained by the possibilities of traveling greater distances in a short time. Nevertheless, the flow of movement not carried out on foot towards Tomba is greater, when compared to Cidade Nova.⁴

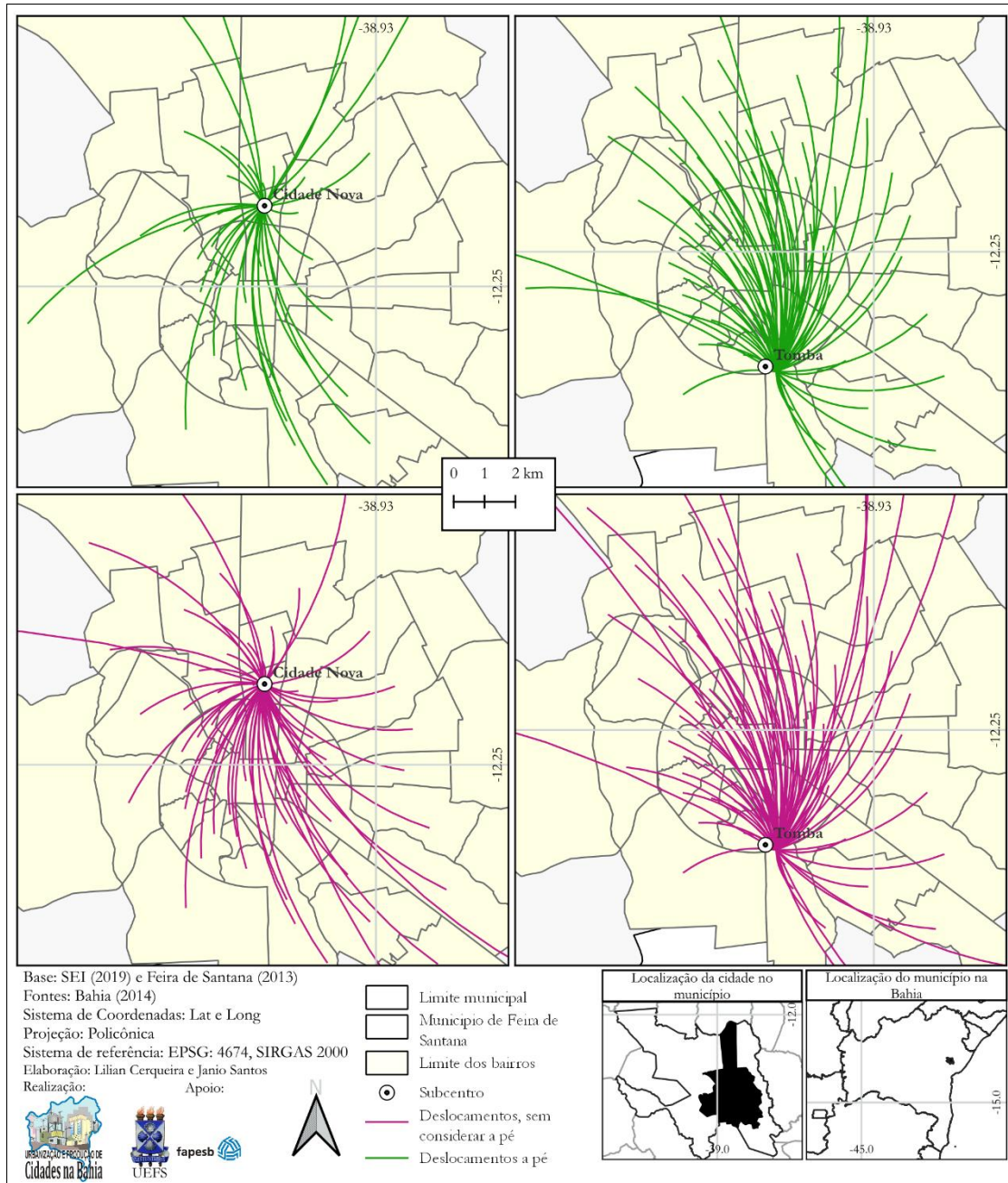
Regarding the reach that tertiary activities have for residents and neighboring districts, in Tomba, 87% claimed to be residents of the district itself, while 13% reported living in others, reaffirming the fact that the reach of consumption goes beyond the limits of the district itself. Regarding the Cidade Nova district, 30% reported being residents of the district and 70% located nearby. As observed, the data allow us to infer that in both districts, tertiary activities serve not only the local population, but also those of adjacent areas.

Regarding the advantages of living in the districts or their surroundings, the frequency of responses was more linked to the supply of tertiary activities, which offer greater convenience. This can be seen in the following statements by residents of Cidade Nova: “No need to go downtown;” “local stores, basic clinics, lab tests, and banks;” and “a wide range of different commercial establishments, from street markets to electronics.” The following were also similar in relation to Tomba: “It is a district close to the city center, offering a diverse center and various services;” “you can find various products without having to go downtown;” “all of them have a diverse range of stores that meet your daily needs;” and “having a center close to home.”⁵

Figure 7: Trips made on foot and by means not including walking, towards the subcenters of Tomba and Cidade Nova, Feira de Santana, Bahia, 2014

⁴ Data from the origin and destination survey conducted by the government of the state of Bahia in 2014.

⁵ Data from the application of questionnaires to consumers in 2021.



Source: Bahia (2024).

As for disadvantages, issues such as traffic congestion, lack of urban infrastructure and spaces for leisure, and inefficient public transportation are detected in the subcenters. Tomba and Cidade Nova are important areas for the circulation of vehicles, people, and goods. Moreover, the supply of tertiary activities attracts consumers from various parts of the city, as mentioned, requiring adequate infrastructure to meet the entire demand.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the growth of the subcenters is not accompanied by investments from the Municipal Government, as the subcenters' infrastructure does not appear to be sufficient to meet the needs of the resident population itself and of the floating visitors. Therefore, actions directed at these densely populated areas are necessary, promoting greater fluidity in traffic, the provision of leisure spaces, a more efficient security policy, and high-quality public transportation. This includes planning to boost and strengthen the role of the subcenters in the dynamics of Feira de Santana, given their importance, mainly in terms of convenience, as the provision of commercial and service activities minimizes the displacement of the population from these areas to the city center and strengthens local commerce.

For entrepreneurs, the advantages of having an establishment in the subcenters are linked to the "development" of the districts and the fact that some live in the area, as observed in the following excerpts: "Growth of the district;" "the district has everything;" "flow of people passing by, a strong shopping mall, and being close to my house;" "because of the location and the customers;" "I lived there;" "I already lived there – it is where my mother's house is, and we decided to open our bakery next door;" "I came to live in Feira de Santana and ended up opening the establishment in my own house, which was then organized until reaching its current structure;" "it is the place where my father lived, so he opened a small hair salon;" "it is close to my house;" "I came to the city of Feira de Santana looking for work and eventually bought a house and opened by workshop. It was not something that I strategically chose – I ended up coming to Tomba and stayed there to this day;" and "the busy street market." Regarding the location, in general, the entrepreneurs from both subcenters described it as very good, mainly thanks to the intense movement and economic potential of the subcenter.⁶

The justifications given by the interviewees regarding the advantages and location of the establishments are explained by the fact that some of the entrepreneurs opened their establishments after 2010, in a scenario in which the subcenters were already showing a certain degree of solidity and a consolidated flow of visitors. Therefore, starting a business in the area meant taking advantage of all aforementioned features. In establishments opened before 2010, it was possible to note that the answers were related to factors such as living in the subcenter and continuing a family activity.

⁶ Data from the application of questionnaires to entrepreneurs in 2021.

Conversely, the emergence of new establishments can also highlight the effects of structural unemployment, in which opening small businesses is a way of getting around the lack of formal job opportunities. The formation of new centralities, in general, also reveals conflicts in the intra-urban space, given that the configuration of the circulation of goods, people and capital is reflected in changes in the price of urban land. The supply of tertiary activities adds value to the space, as districts begin to concentrate new locational advantages. Thus, it gradually causes the conversion of residential properties to tertiary use, as well as the increase in rental prices, particularly in the most consolidated areas, as occurs in the main axes of Tomba and Cidade Nova.

The emergence and consolidation of new expressions of centrality in Feira de Santana demonstrate the expansion and restructuring of the city, given that the needs of capital for its reproduction demand new structures that increase profit. The consolidation of subcenters is responsible for creating new dynamics, in which the central area ceases to exercise the monopolizing role of tertiary activities.

It is important, however, to emphasize that the new expressions of centrality are not strong enough for the central nucleus to be “abandoned,” mainly because it has a symbolic value for the city’s residents, given the strength of the tertiary sector of Feira de Santana. Furthermore, the subcenters have not yet centralized all tertiary activities. For example, banking services and municipal government agencies are still concentrated in the central area, and thus, consumers in the subcenters are required to travel to the center and resolve more complex issues in these areas. With that, the Center, even with a relatively reduced role in the face of urban restructuring, remains the most important tertiary location for the population of Feira de Santana.

Final remarks

The urban transformations resulting mainly from the city’s strong tertiary economy have reflected in the formation of new expressions of centrality in Feira de Santana. Throughout this text, key elements about this space have been discussed, as well as the formation of subcenters, as is the case with Tomba and Cidade Nova. The city’s economy is based on the tertiary sector, and the transformations that have occurred in the intra-urban space have triggered the relative decentralization of

commercial and service activities that originally took place in the Traditional Center and which have begun to be re-centralized across other parts of the city.

The subcenters developed in the Tomba and Cidade Nova districts are a reflection not only of the tertiary decentralization, but also of other factors linked to the urban expansion experienced in Feira de Santana, such as the strengthening of the secondary sector in the 1970s, following the implementation of the CIS; construction of housing complexes, with the goal, in theory, of addressing the housing issue; and the “migration” of housing of the population with greater purchasing power to areas outside the central zone.

In the specific case of the formation of the Tomba and Cidade Nova subcenters, the decentralization of basic commercial activities occurred immediately to serve, in the case of Tomba, industrial workers; and in the case of Cidade Nova, residents of housing complexes, given that both are located in areas relatively far away from the center, where major urban facilities were concentrated. Gradually, the offer of activities in these districts began to present a greater degree of variety and complexity.

Currently, the Tomba and Cidade Nova subcenters can be considered the most significant expressions of centrality outside the central area, offering apparel stores, supermarkets, pharmacies, pizzerias, butcher shops, hardware materials, lottery retailers, and a postal service office in Tomba, as well as a bank in Cidade Nova, and offer greater convenience for residents and visitors.

The emergence of a new centrality directly impacts the role of the Traditional Center, which previously was the only polarizing nucleus of the city, which, in view of the changes in the centrality, tends to lose this role in relative terms. In the case of Feira de Santana, with the consolidation of the Tomba and Cidade Novo subcenters, financial and public services, among others, did not undergo decentralization processes, so that residents and consumers from these subcenters are required to travel to resolve various daily tasks. The Center of Feira de Santana plays crucial roles for the population, mainly due to the strong tertiary sector that has accompanied it since its formation. Nevertheless, the new dynamics of centrality exercised by the subcenters studied act to weaken, always in a relative manner, the center as a monopolizer of the tertiary sector.

It was also clear that the subcenters require greater attention from the government, due to issues that arise with the consolidation of such spaces, such as

demographic growth and flows, requiring investments in infrastructure, security and public transportation to meet new demands.

Finally, the formation of subcenters in medium-sized cities demonstrates that the logic of urban centrality is revealed by conflicts and disputes between economic and political groups for the access to the benefits made possible by government management in the areas of investments, budget allocations, infrastructure, etc. Therefore, the relationship between the center and the new consumer spaces that are consolidated in the cities, such as subcenters, is not harmonious – it produces tensions. Conflicts are also observed between residents and owners of tertiary establishments, since the replacement of residential homes by commercial and service establishments increases the price of urban land, brings new sounds and dynamics to tertiary roads, and gradually expels residents from these new central areas.

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