

# The factory in the past and the Bangu Mall in the present.

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**Abstract.** During three months of ethnography inside of Bangu Shopping points that are discussed in this article were well observed and analyzed to understand why and what made Bangu Shopping the place that dialogue with your own neighborhood more than any mall in Rio de Janeiro. Bangu shopping was born in a way different from any other shopping. It was born preserving the history of itself. The methodology used was participant observation to collect qualitative databases of how far and important de Bangu shopping was for its own community, in a meaning of being a shopping not just used to an expensive way or luxury. The article wants to understand and observe that Bangu shopping is as important to the neighborhood as it was to the factory before.

**Keywords.** Mall, Bangu, popular, neighborhood

## 1. Introduction

It is important to start this discussion that Bangu Shopping before being a mall was a factory. The factory, for sure, brings people, better, brings families. Named as “Companhia Progresso Industrial do Brasil”, the factory was founded on February 6, 1889. The creator was Commander Manuel Antônio da Costa Pereira, considered the founder of the Bangu neighborhood, when it was still a large farm, in the year 1673.

The factory had its own functions in 1889 and in the beginning, as put the geography, Márcio Piñon<sup>1</sup>, the point was to construct a factory farm to produce cotton close to de manufacture, but after a time, the goal changed. It begins as a “factory city”, with a train and the village composed by the people who most work at the factory.

The factory in Bangu had its first bosses, the British, who constructed a growing proletarian neighborhood. The factory financed houses for all its employees. It is important to highlight that these

houses were built with materials that came from Europe. The idea was to always maintain the model of English architecture<sup>2</sup>. The photo down here was taken at a journal website with the name Diary of Rio.



**Fig. 1 - Bangu Factory, 1889**

The present article in its search treats the beginning of shopping as a second phase of the Bangu factory. Not just because the construction of the mall preserved parts of the factory, but indeed, the mall represents a point that the neighborhood passes through or uses everyday. But what makes this mall kind of unique are the pieces that it will discuss in this article.

First, Bangu was born with the factory, there are no doubts about this fact. But the part it is not common to discuss is the labor life of the families who gave not just life to the factory but also to a neighborhood that started to receive their infrastructure as a city not a village. This type of relationship between people and work is nowadays something that is not usual anymore. The factory created a line that not even the time handled it to put on the past. Inside of the Bangu mall there are plant records in photographs around the mall telling the history of the factory not for their products or machines, but for workers.

It is, for sure, not the intention to romanticize the relationship between workers and their own job. This article is aware of the system and how it is composing or not composing the salary. And also aware of the failures and oligarchical opinions that construct Brazil and the shadow of how it is this labor relationship until the discussion nowadays. But the correct intention is to understand that the history of Bangu and this popular shopping is, of course, concretized by the factory, but the real beginning, the ground zero are the families that composed the factory and the neighborhood.

There is another collection of historical photos that are organized in timeline at the movie theater which is exactly where the people wait in the line to get into to watch the movies. And a type of them are with names of the workers and a little bit of what happened that day to be photographed. The fact is: the factory Bangu created a neighborhood by itself. This type of relationship between what was and what is gives us the indication for the second point of the article.

Bangu shopping plays in a good way with its own history. Most of the modern world, the mall, like the escalator, is built on top of the bricks that raised not just a factory but a neighborhood. And some of those bricks are with the emblem of "Murray's Patent" around the mall, just composing the local architecture with the contrast between what it was and what it is.

Not just on the walls, but inside of some stores parts of them preserved the old building. The reader of this article can argue that it is nothing compared to the outdoors and the lighting that probably makes all this "old stuff" just a regular old thing. This article does not disagree with the fact that things pass though the daily as another normal thing with no interest, not just because people do not care, but because there are few incentives and devaluation with national history due to the deficit in public and quality education. It is important to highlight that having access to culture and history is expensive and rare in Brazil.

And using the databases that confirm to the word this failure, not this in Brazil, that what makes de Bangu shopping a local that preserves history in a popular meaning. Showing through photographs, the preserved building and telling in short lines the birth of a neighborhood that is actually alive.

This type of preservation that is not in museums or specific areas is not common in Brazil, the most of them are monuments and in the downtown or tourist areas of this country. In other words, Bangu Shopping revolutionizes the art of preserving and making history. Putting the new and the old together and accessible, making Bangu Shopping a center of Bangu as one day the factory did once.

The third point that we are going to discuss about it is that this building is still the heart of Bangu. The article written by Mateus Rosada<sup>3</sup> shows and complete with the information of the Portuguese colonies, as Brazil it was on day, built its villages under an urbanistic plan where the church was located at ground zero.

The fact this article is going to debate it is the mall, unless, in Bangu marks the ground zero of the neighborhood. It is also important to declare that there is indeed a catholic church in Bangu which confirms the permanence and historical roots of a former colony in which the church is ground zero. But in these pages that are talking about this mindset not through geography but also about the center of all types of memories and encounters of Bangu. The photograph of the mall was taken from the shopping website.



Fig 2- Bangu Mall, 2023.

## 2. Research Methods

The methodology applied for data collection was a participant observer researcher. In which, it was possible to be inside the shopping Bangu for the three months that followed the internship period. The parts were done inside of the mall, outside and the museum of Bangu.

And also the information from official social medias from Bangu Shopping and the reports on the comments or through the hashtag “ #BanguShopping with photos and moments that compose this building until nowadays.

The point was to pass quiet hours during the weekend days to observe the groups that regular passes or work ate at the mall and how much they interact with the historical points of the factory, including inside of some stores. Furthermore, It was also the point to interact daily not just as an observant researcher, however using the mall during these three months constantly.

There were not any interviews, not official ones, although the conversations during the time passed inside and out was important to understand the types of relationships between the mall and the neighborhood.

### **3. Factory in the 18 century and Mall in the 21 century**

As already mentioned in this article, the factory gave life to a new neighborhood. And what meaning “ gave birth” is more than just bringing families and constructing a village. But it means creating an identity, in other words, creating what means living at Bangu.

The factory was not supposed to stand without other buildings that would put the factory as a center. One of them was the train station. The dislocation of workshops from elsewhere was very important to consolidate the factory as a center of the region, not just from Bangu. As mentioned earlier, the geography Márcio Piñon, the train was quite the key for the continued function of the new organization upon Bangu: the modern contorns was getting alive, in other words a city was borning in the end of the 19th century.

It is not as with any other city or factory that was connected with the neighborhood as It this article is showing. It is not mentioned that the type of strategy was in Bangu something different from elsewhere. No. But to put lights on the fact that did not change although created the lifestyle in Bangu.

Another fact that is registered on the Bangu Museum was the football. This type of game was essential to create this connection, which includes an area ceded by the factory to practice as a leisure activity to your works. What was already expected, a football club was indeed to be created in a certain time.

The Bangu Athletic Club<sup>4</sup> was founded in 1904, according to the official website of the club, the

popular game between the works became more serious so a definition of a club was necessary to become legal with all the bureaucracy. On the website it is possible to have access to the original text of the founding minutes from April17.

The factory did not just put Bangu on the map of football just creating a time. The first stadium was close by the factory, as of course, confirms to the present that Bangu factory grew up in its own neighborhood.

However, a fire in 1936 burned out the bleachers, and once again this extension of the factory, which means, the football club of Bangu created by selling the old to construct the Guilherme da Silveira Filho Proletarian Stadium, now well-known as Moça Bonita Stadium. It is not for any circumstances that all these efforts were made by the factory. For all and multiple motives they created a link with the community around that it is possible to feel until nowadays.

There are indeed people that go to Bangu games and have shirts to the club of passion. There are multiples of them and there are other clubs that are passionate about it, but never lose the feeling of cheering for Bangu Football Club in the “Carioca Championship”.

This part of football is recorded in the first and most used entrance to the shopping. There is a statue of Thomas Donohoe, that is considered to bring football and play the fist game, in Bangu. Although, there is Charles Miller, from São Paulo, who is considered the father of sport in Brazil. As mentioned in this article the official social media of the mall was part of the search and it was possible to take this picture below of the entrance of the mall.



**Fig 3-** Statue of Thomas Donohoe, 2014.

This sensation of getting close to the history makes Bangu Shopping fascinated. Beyond the museum, the shopping is a museum alive. The movement of the factory provided informal commerce around it, with the names known as camels, and which has its popular market next to the Bangu Mall to this day.

The bankruptcy of the Bangu factory in 1990 due to national economic changes and international demands, added to internal problems and the death of the heir, did not shake the center of commercial and cultural exchanges that had been created around the old factory.

And for this fact president of ACERB( Commercial and Business Association of the Bangu Region) thought that would be interested bring the idea that already exists in that period of construct a mall in Bangu, specific because it was a region with people who could and want it to spend money, could be exactly in the location of the old factory.

The mall was inaugurated October 30, 2007. And since then they promoted events that put the clients in contact with the local history that gets mixed with the history of their own factory.

From fairs to statues. From keeping the factory's bricks to photographs of what Bangu and the factory were like before turning into a mall, he has always been concerned with keeping history alive.

And when it is said " keeping history alive" the meaning is literally not just to put all this in contact with the modern urban world. But to put in proud telling a local history. As already mentioned the workers build not only this factory but also a neighborhood. A cultural way of living. Made famous points to have fun, to bring the family to a walk, the places to buy.

All of this is for many ways inside of the mall preserved and with proud talk by the people who use the place. From the oldest to the youngest, the history of their own neighborhood is close to their lives with no effort.

Bangu shopping, in order to grow, did not need to erase what that building used to be. Contrary to what often happens in an urban reform, Bangu shopping chooses to preserve and, in addition, keep the local history alive in the local memory and its visitors in general.

Despite fears of changing local commercial dynamics, over the years Bangu shopping has become almost like a new facet of the factory itself. By choosing to keep his memory he consequently kept the spirit that attracts all the popular local cleaners and more.

Bangu shopping showed and continues to show the power of local history and that its non-erasure generates the maintenance of relationships, however modern and innovative they may be, they do not break with history, they continue to weave it, just like one day the factory of Bangu wove.

#### **4. Is the Mall important as the factory used to be to the neighborhood ?**

The support that the factory gave to the neighborhood and the strength that it gave to its construction was also one of the characteristics that Bangu shopping continued. The tradition, as if it is possible to name it this way, is more than alive.

The mall still has been the center, as an example, of donation. Donations of clothes and food for the victims of Mariana's disaster in 2015 (Vale mining dam burst causing an environmental tragedy and countless deaths) was there as a way of collecting those items.

More than that, the mall receives periodic food and music fairs on its own parking lot. Or receive and promote literary fairs inside the mall. Other things that the mall promises are groups and meetings of entrepreneurship or crafts and local production.

The mall has inside of itself a " Poupa Tempo" it is a services provision around the city of Rio de Janeiro that schedules public services like take the ID or take a drive licency. Witch is very important for the community around because it concentrates a thousand of services in one easy place to find through the maps or it is a known place.

It should also be noted that during the pandemic period (but without the operation of the stores until the present release by the state government) and until the present moment it was concentrated as a point of vaccination and rapid test for covid-19. All of this was written to describe how the mall meets local needs and demands. In other words, the mall still serves the community more than in a way of fast fashion or consumerist lifestyle.

It should also be noted that the mall also houses classrooms of a particular university, in addition to renting its movie theaters for lectures and meetings. one of which it was possible to observe and experience that the opportunity and access to better quality environments for the community are increasingly accessible, even if it is necessary to make it clear that the inequality of access to education and shopping is extremely evident.

The registers found in Bnagu Musum through photographs show the present the use of kids to work in the factory. Even though these days are not allowed and are a crime, the mall is used with kids that sell candies, ask for money or ask the clients to buy some food. Which makes it clear that even some demands from the past that the factory had, the mall also has today. A poor region, with children in situations of social vulnerability.

The Bangu Mall also had a theater in its own space. The culture is shown by the mall as multiples as the demands of its own neighborhood. If the factory in the past created the football club, the great mark of the mall was to bring to the region not just from Bangu, but from the west zone a contact with plays in the theater.

It is great indeed because having access to culture or a place as a theater in Rio de Janeiro is expansive and difficult. On the documentary of Emerica he explain a lot how to access places as a poor and black people like the Municipal Theater in downtown of Rio de Janeiro was historically neglected to people.

Bangu can still count on a space that serves the community culturally and bureaucratically. What the factory did for the neighborhood and its growth, Bangu shopping does for its maintenance and visibility. From the top of the viaduct that crosses both sides of the neighborhood, it is still possible to see the chimney with the symbol of the factory, which today is a symbol of the shopping mall that concentrates the history, tradition and modernity of a region that is outside the circuit of the rich socio-economic zone and tourist in rio de janeiro, but still have its attractions and beauties.

## 5. Conclusion

During the three months of field work, it was possible to see that the second phase of the factory, that is, the mall, continues to absorb local demands, regardless of what they are. Without forgetting to mention the cultural traits that Bangu shopping marks and is marked. Many when they go to the mall wear more casual clothes, and the traditional slippers.

Many students stop by the mall to cut corners and many family outings end with a movie and ice cream. Shopping Bangu somehow showed itself not to run away from a different work logic or to seek the consumerism of its target audience. But it has managed to adapt to the lifestyle of its simpler visitors, with short tickets, but who at other times spend hours and spend a lot in the place.

Shopping Bangu has not lost the originality of being in a low and lower middle class location, while offering other ways of being and living to its consumers. Just like the factory that brought innovations and went with its workers to create what we define today as the Bangu neighborhood, the shopping center transforms as it is culturally and socially transformed.

Three topics were highlighted that were addressed in this article, which not only drew more attention, but also proved to be what is most part of everyday life.

Shopping Bangu is not just leisure on weekends and holidays, shopping is part of the daily life of the local resident, as the factory once did.

It is not correct to say that Bangu shopping was the only one that preserved its historical collection, but it is in fact debatable how much to keep, keep history alive and easily accessible and understood by its residents, keeping a happy and united neighborhood despite the conditions in certain precarious points and certain abandonment of the state.

The shopping center in Bangu was not randomly chosen to be the core of this research, and not only because it was previously an immensely important factory for the construction of the neighborhood. More than that, the day-to-day life of the mall, the public that frequents and does not attend, what is possible to do there or not, what the mall provides or not to its surrounding inhabitants, it is the center of the that a neighborhood on the outskirts worked hard to conquer and many poor neighborhoods in rio de janeiro still have or have precariously.

Access to leisure, state demands, education and culture. Shopping Bangu manages to take root in the aforementioned environments, but it also reveals how expensive it all still is for a portion of the population of Bangu, even though it may conclude that the mall is a time-consuming space because it coexists with different styles and types of people from different rents and sub-neighborhoods. Shopping Bangu thus reveals the joys and needs of being a resident of a Rio de Janeiro suburb.

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