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## The production of urban space in Frecheirinha-CE: The production pole of underwear in Sertão Cearense

## La producción del espacio urbano en Frecheirinha-CE: El polo de producción de ropa interior en el Sertão Cearense

## A produção do espaço urbano em Frecheirinha-CE: O polo produtor de peças íntimas no Sertão Cearense

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### Abstract

We will present an analysis of the production process of urban space in Frecheirinha-CE, as well as the processes that help to build spatial materialities through the spatial circuit of textile production following underwear, role in the productive restructuring process; identify the agents involved, analyzing the articulations undertaken between them in the space cooperation circles; culminating with the organization of the territory in question. To better understand the current paradigm of textile and underwear production, we need to detach our views from the molds of traditional production. Located in the Northwest region of the State of Ceará, a small town of approximately 13 thousand inhabitants, it houses more than 30 factories of intimate parts, in addition to a trade that depends on this activity.

**Keywords:** production of urban space; spatial circuits; productive restructuring, underwear industry.

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### Resumen

Presentaremos un análisis del proceso de producción del espacio urbano en Frecheirinha-CE, así como los procesos que ayudan a construir materialidades espaciales a través del circuito espacial de producción textil después de la ropa interior, papel en el proceso de reestructuración productiva; identificar a los agentes implicados, analizando las articulaciones emprendidas entre

ellos en los círculos de cooperación espacial; culminando con la ordenación del territorio en cuestión. Para entender mejor el paradigma actual de la producción textil y de ropa interior, necesitamos desvincularnos de los moldes de la producción tradicional. Ubicada en la región Noroeste del Estado de Ceará, una pequeña ciudad de aproximadamente 13 mil habitantes, alberga más de 30 fábricas de partes íntimas, además de un comercio que depende de esa actividad.

Palabras clave: producción de espacio urbano; circuitos espaciales; reestructuración productiva, industria de la ropa interior.

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### Resumo

O artigo analisa o processo de produção do espaço urbano em Frecheirinha-CE, bem como os processos que auxiliam para a construção das materialidades espaciais pelo circuito espacial da produção têxtil no seguimento de peças íntimas, papel no processo de reestruturação produtiva; identificar os agentes envolvidos, analisando as articulações empreendidas entre eles nos círculos de cooperação do espaço; culminando com a organização o território em questão. Para compreender melhor o paradigma atual da produção têxtil e de peças íntimas precisamos desvincular nossos olhares aos moldes da produção tradicional. Localizada na região Noroeste do Estado do Ceará, cidade pequena de aproximadamente 13 mil habitantes, abriga mais de 30 fábricas de peças íntimas, além de uma comércio depende dessa atividade.

**Palavras-chave:** produção do espaço urbano; circuitos espaciais; reestruturação produtiva, indústria de peças íntimas.

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### Introduction

The Productive Restructuring elects new spaces and the emergence of a new territorial division of labor, makes peripheral areas without industrial traditions appear as new production spaces, such as the city Frecheirinha-CE, locus of our research, located in the northwest portion of the State of Ceará, 289 km from Fortaleza, is connected to the capital by the federal highway BR 222, the aforementioned highway connects the capital of Ceará to the city of Marabá, in Pará,

passing through the States of Piauí and Maranhão in a current extension of 1811, 6 km.

The municipality, according to IBGE data, has an estimated population of 14,134 in 2020, of which almost half live in the municipal seat. In this space, we have productive arrangements aimed at the production of underwear, bed, table and bath, with more than 30 formal industries, and a large contingent of informal workers, who live directly and indirectly from the actions provided by the factories.

Another important point is the commercial activities that are developed and linked to the factories. Inherited in the colonial period and put to the test in this new economic order. New products need to be thought about this new productive dynamic. In reality, it is interesting to glimpse, at the very least, the way in which the world is structured in current history. Thus, Santos and Silveira (2001) show us how technology transforms the use of territory, and the global period helps in this metamorphosis.

Whose understanding must go through three trends, which are constitutive - also called uniqueness. The authors base the development of their ideas as follows:

The first of these trends is the technical unity, that is, the planetarization of a technical system that covers all places. , whose material base is the technique of information, culminating previously called the knowability of the planet. . The third of these is the uniqueness of the motor or the surplus value that has become global, legitimized by a dense normative apparatus. These three uniqueities are the basis of the phenomenon of globalization and of the 57 contemporary transformations of geographic space. (SANTOS; SILVEIRA, 2001, p. 189).

We can then start by understanding the meaning of the Territory for our research. The concept of territory has been discussed, especially among geographers in the face of the great territorial transformations that have taken place in contemporary society. The territory is increasingly analyzed, on different scales, as

until then it did not happen, from the analysis of the microterritory to the global one, considering the processes of fragmentation and economic centralization. Other approaches are added to the economic aspects, such as: the social, the political, the anthropological, etc. The use of territory can be studied through social, economic, political, cultural relations, etc. so we will understand how these relationships interfere in the territory. It can be seen, then, that the use of territory occurs from social relations. The modifications imposed by the agents involved; reaction that, in turn, will influence the social practices of these same agents. The research starts from the idea of the use of the territory – socially constructed space – that is, it analyzes the relationships in the constructed space in Frecheirinha through the intimate parts industries. Souza (1995, p. 78) apud Lira (2009): It is in Geography that the territory gains a differentiated amplitude, since the geographic space is produced from the social dynamics, related to complex interests.

With the idea that the territory is fundamentally a space defined and delimited by and based on power relations, Souza makes it clear that it is, essentially, social action, through its appropriation, that gives rise to the social territory. Without the relationship of ownership, use, limits will not be defined, and consequently there will be no territory. Thus, the new productive territories bring us the idea of spaces articulated with other elements, which some authors call systems of actions that guarantee the organization and structuring of fixed and flows necessary for the production and commercialization of garments, according to the rationality of capital.

### **The Space Circuit in Frecheirinha**

To start our investigation, it is necessary for us to understand some important concepts, in this case the spatial circuit of production appears to explain the accumulation that forms according to each stage of production, circulation, trade and consumption (Santos, 2004) until the raw material is transformed into consumption - therefore, into money and profit for the agent who commands the circuit of

production. The spatial circuit of production in Frecheirinha and its cooperation circuit reveals its important role in the constitution of the place within a regional, national and even global dynamic.

Thus, in its subdivisions upper and lower circuit, both with their distinct characteristics, they reveal how the dynamics of capital and work work, complementing them within this context. Thus, the circuit in question, the clothing – underwear segment, happens this way; production is subdivided into stages that are complementary in order to take the product to the final consumer. So we have in Frecheirinha:

1. Production Stage: The design of the piece takes place, in this stage professionals specialists in the design of the pieces create their design, choose the fabric, the details, the colors, the way of modeling and what the type of sewing will be, think about the part and its purpose. It is in production that we have ramifications within the industries that generate more jobs.

2. Distribution stage: in this stage the organization takes place according to the public, and how the product is being conveyed, which places will be profitable to put it up for sale, especially in Frecheirinha, we have our own stores, wholesale and retail; home delivery (representatives) sale in multi-brand stores, retail chains, etc.

3. After product distribution, marketing takes place according to the needs of each sector. Underwear products are sold in various ways, from high-end stores to door-to-door sales. Each public and each industry captures market needs and organizes production according to needs.

Small industries sell their products at fairs, especially the Aprozível fair, which will be described in the next chapter. In many cases, they concentrate all stages of production in a single space, with few people in charge, in many cases they outsource sewing to small workshops, which thus generate income for other micro producers.

They generate activities and materialities characteristic of the lower circuit in the city. The manufacture of underwear has a remarkable characteristic in terms of

labor, because in this form of production, there is a need for intense labor, required by the fact that sewing is a delicate, unique activity, with details thought out that are not add quality by being mechanically produced.

Even with the productive restructuring after 1990, this type of production remains with very traditional activities, plus technology. With the industrial deconcentration, the clothing sector and its segments, were being attracted to other places in the national territory, one of these attractive territories was the State of Ceará. Thus, the possibilities of long-distance transport and communication also make possible the increasing fragmentation of the spatial circuit of production. Industrial deconcentration of some stages of production fragmented across the territory, but there are command centers for these productions, thus observing where the primitive stages of production are being carried out and where the financial command is carried out, for example.

We have activities in the spatial circuits of production being carried out in lower and higher circuits, places that command production, production is not always concentrated. The territorial division of labor expresses the productive specialization of places in tasks that add more value within the spatial circuits of production. However, the command of the circuits is located in few places.

The fragmentation of production, in the sewing branch within the spatial circuit of production, happens mainly due to the price paid to labor, and the tax incentives provided by the States that need industries that employ large numbers of people, and in return the industries pay a lower wage. We agree with Lencioni, (1991 p.15) that the urban-industrial restructuring is conditioned by the processes of concentration and centralization in the reproduction of capital and its manifestation is configured in the deconcentration of the metropolis (...) production are forms of capital centralization such as associations of private capital companies, absorptions and mergers and subcontracting. Thus, the clothing industry, especially the segment of underwear, has become a subject of great relevance in the fashion world, and many investors have been researching this segment of the market.

This late process was perceived in Europe and the United States in the 1980s, as Silva (2013, p. 6) points out. 1980s, when the great haute couture brands, such as Gucci, Armani and Louis Vuitton, began to be bought and controlled by large corporations, generally financial conglomerates. These brands were bought by corporations such as the French LVMH, whose market value is close to US\$ 54 billion. Epoca magazine, following the magazine's analysis, the author states:

The group owns more than 50 luxury brands, including Dior and Fendi. Its main rival in the world is the PPR group, also French, which takes care of brands like Gucci and Balenciaga. In Brazil, the holding company Inbrands was created in 2008, with 50% of UBS Pactual (Swiss-Brazilian bank), 42.5% of Alvarenga (founding partner of Ellus) and 7.5% of Breia (partner of Ellus). To create the holding company, the bank invested an estimated amount of R\$100 million, while Alvarenga and his partner contributed the company's equity, which earns R\$200 million a year. (EPOCA, 2008 APUD SILVA 2013, p. 6)

We can see that the people who administer and manage the production circuits seek capital appreciation, and these prefer to install their units in metropolises. Leaving the factory floor for peripheral areas. Even if they divide the stages of production, the intelligence of companies needs places where scientific rationality, communication and circulation density and quaternary services are present (legal, IT, logistics, financial, advertising agencies, etc.) ; for this reason the seats of power are found in very few places.

Upper and lower production circuits. In general terms, the spatial circuit of underwear production reveals its important role in the regional economic dynamics of Ceará. Theoretically, Santos (1979) presents the spatial circuits of production and divides them into superior and inferior circuits, each one having unique characteristics in relation to the type of production, consumption, people involved, invested capital and workforce.

The two work and are complementary. Frecheirinha currently houses industries specialized in the production of underwear, supplying its production to local, regional, national markets and a small slice to the international market. It

concentrates the production and distribution, trade and consumption of these pieces. There is a specificity in this space, the production circuit of these pieces, adds characteristics of the lower circuit, despite being the hub of its production.

Didactically, we are going to show how this intimate garment manufacturing circuit works, highlighting the proximities and distances between the upper and lower production circuits. (Large industries and small sewing workshops). We will use this concept to analyze the territorial dynamics of this city and its impact on the territory.

According to Santos (2004) the upper production circuit aggregates large companies operating from continental to global levels. For the author, the upper circuit is linked to more modern activities, those with intense use of technology and financial logistics.

Products intended for this upper circuit are consumed by people of higher classes. At the other end, the lower production circuit, in general, are products produced by a large workforce, with low wages, and the consumers of this slice are people with the lowest purchasing power. In this circuit, people seek methods of survival in the dynamics of capital, in addition to offering employment, it also enables consumption at affordable prices. Thus, production is configured in these circuits, starting from an initial productive activity and comprising several stages of the transformation process. Santos (1979) shows us the steps:

These stages are: production, distribution, trade and consumption. productive circuits reveals the relative situation of places, that is, it defines, at a given moment, the function of a respective fraction of space in the division of labor. In addition, it emphasizes the need to associate the analysis of the circuit with the whole, as it does not reveal the social space, it is necessary to include other dynamics of social instances.

The national textile sector has been responsible for the growth of economic indices worldwide. According to the Brazilian Textile and Apparel Industry Association (ABIT, 2015), Brazil is now the 7th largest textile producer in the world

and has more than 30,000 formal companies, accounting for approximately 4.4% of the national GDP and annual revenue of US\$ 30 billion (2015 data). ABIT points out that the textile sector is responsible for the largest number of jobs generated. We have an average of more than 1.5 million active employees in this sector, so its structure demonstrates a great impact on the country's social and economic outlook. Within this dynamic, the underwear sector has been receiving special attention.

According to Vasconscelos and Holanda (2022), the city of Frecheirinha-CE is inserted in the industrialization process late in relation to the planning policies for the Northeast of the 1960s. government incentives for the development of the industry, from then on it becomes an important space for incentives and capital investment in the Northeast, circumscribed in the intimate fashion circuit. The author states that Sebrae's magazine *Small and medium-sized companies* (09/2014.) highlights the city as an important center for the textile industry, which brings us to the debate regarding the location of the industry and its activities, linked to the territory.

Located on the banks of BR 222, which connects with the states of Pará, Piauí and Maranhão, it certainly helps with the flow of raw materials and goods, that is, it facilitates circulation and consumption. The municipality's economic trajectory for many years was linked to limestone extraction and subsistence agriculture. Currently, industrial activity focused on the production of underwear is the main driver of change in the urban landscape of the city of Freicheirinha

The switch from agriculture plows to sewing machines started when a resident of Frecheirinha decided to set up the first factory, in the 1990s. In a short time, housewives and farmers reinvented themselves, gained a new profession. Since then, other factories have emerged and today clothing represents 60% of the local economy. At first, investments in the Frecheirinha underwear circuit were not

directly encouraged by the State Government, they were constituted only with investments from their owners. (Verbal Information)<sup>2</sup>.

Frecheirinha with a population in the municipality, in 2020 of 14,133, of which 58% reside in the seat of the municipality, is considered a small town. (IBGE, 2020). A city that then enters the new logic of investment aimed at local economies, valuing the territorial potential that emerges in the place. For about twenty-five years this reality has been designed, with the arrival of the first underwear industry.

In people's minds, it is a new opportunity to generate employment and income. Today, there are twenty-two registered companies that generate about 4,000 jobs, with more than 30 small workshops that serve companies with various services. Industrial production, in turn, today represents the main source of income and occupation in the city, especially for female labor. After a field visit, we found that male labor is growing.

The city stands out as an important production center for high quality lingerie, exported to several national and international consumer markets. The productive and territorial changes of this city are also linked to the support policies for the development of the Industry and the interiorization of the investments offered by the State Government in more recent years, with the purpose of encouraging the growth of the economy and integrating the territory of Ceará in this logic of economy flexible and open to markets, even though entrepreneurs are always demanding more incentives. This process of industrialization in the municipality can be observed in different ways, one of them is the growth of the urban population of the city, the urban population grows numerically, with a small decrease in the rural population.

But it is possible to infer that part of the growth of the urban population comes from other municipalities, since the variation of the rural population is small when related to the population dynamics of the city. It is also common to identify among the new industry workers people who live in the districts and commute daily

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<sup>2</sup> Data obtained from the president of the Association of Clothing Industries of Frecheirinha-CE, 2017

to the city. Emphasizing the growth of the urban population as a result of the arrival of industries.

The city's Underwear industry, in recent years, has been internally renewed, according to an interview provided by the president of the Association of Industries, the production of underwear first arises with the purpose of serving a free fair market, including the largest free fair of clothing, outside the Metropolitan Region of Fortaleza, 30 km from Frecheirinha, the Aprazível fair still represents an important place for the sale of underwear produced in Frecheirinha

Today, the owners of the larger industries seek to break away from this image of the fair and have been focusing their production on serving a public with greater purchasing power, directing their products to territories outside Ceará, some of which have an exclusive contract with department stores such as Renner and C & A.

Some are also directly linked to the retail consumer market with the construction of factory outlets in the city. In an interview with some owners of small industries, they need the fair to sell their production. Since they follow in the footsteps of larger industries. The productive circuit in Frecheirinha is a national highlight, in the September 2014 edition of the Small and Medium Business Magazine, it points to the city as an important place to invest in Brazil. (VASCONCELOS; HOLANDA, 2022, p. 170)

In the report, the city appears as an element configured within the structures of Capital and its uses. The main investment points in the northeast territory focused on textile and footwear production. The magazine highlights the importance of the city of Frecheirinha in the production of underwear, a segment that has been present in the city for over twenty years, bringing economic and social growth to the city.

### **The production of underwear in Frecheirinha**

The underwear industry in Frecheirinha has 30 small and medium-sized industrial establishments, totaling approximately 2,000 jobs (direct and indirect). These data from 30 establishments contrast with data from the RAIS-CAGED, which

identifies 197 registered establishments in the territory of that city, of which 156 are in segments dedicated to the production of intimate garments.

The production of underwear was only discovered through the entrepreneurial vision of two people: João Farias Viana and Maria da Conceição Furtado. Around 1990, the then couple decided to go to the neighboring city, Sobral, to buy a set of lingerie to —study the product. At that time Frecheirinha depended only on family farming and lime production. We decided to buy the part, take it apart and learn how to assemble it, recalls businessman João Viana. With production in their backyard, with only three sewing machines and accumulating the functions of execution and administration, the couple managed to evolve in business and create the first factory in Frecheirinha, Di Pérola Lingerie. Everything was done in our backyard, there was no mechanic, there was no salesperson (Verbal Information)<sup>3</sup>

If there was a problem with the machine, we had to go to Fortaleza to fix it. This had a high cost, says Viana. At that time, even before it started, João's wife didn't even know how to sew. She had just gotten her Nursing Assistant degree and her business was health, not intimates. But the business took off.

With the help of two residents of the region – Seu Antônio Francisco and José Maria, at the time truck drivers from Frecheirinha –, Di Pérola's lingerie began to reach other cities and the brand began to become known. About six years after the creation of the pioneering brand and the emergence of companies such as D'Kary Lingerie and Brumarrie Lingerie, the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE) began to act in the training and development of small businesses. At the time, the “Competir” program was created, which, in addition to Sebrae, was supported by the National Service for Industrial Learning in Ceará (Senai/CE) and the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ). (Verbal Information)<sup>4</sup>

Competir's objective was to help small and micro-enterprises in Frecheirinha and neighboring towns to become more competitive, increasing business

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<sup>3</sup> Information provided by João Viana, Resident and entrepreneur of Frecheirinha, January 2017

<sup>4</sup> Idem

productivity, making execution more qualified. With the project, the small backyard garments in the city underwent labor development. —Senai and the Euvaldo Lodi Institute are executors of consultancies and courses. Sebrae subsidizes up to 80% of the project value and the entrepreneur contributes 20% of the costs to carry out the course or consultancy. Firstly, a questionnaire is applied by a Sebrae employee to collect information to support the choice of participating companies. The second stage consists of identifying the current stage of the focus areas covered by the project and verifying whether the companies meet the defined prerequisites to be carried out by a hired consultant. There are also consultancies and, finally, a technical report is issued containing the activities carried out and the results achieved at each stage, (Verbal Information)<sup>5</sup>

Currently, João Viana is responsible for the Hibisco Lingerie brand. It has an average production of 35,000 pieces between lingerie and nightwear and employs at least 140 employees in its factory, not counting the saleswomen in its own store. Maria da Conceição, in addition to managing Di Pérola, is a civil servant and runs a gas station. (verbal information)<sup>6</sup> According to the Ascof representative, “until it became an intimate fashion center, the task was not easy”.

With most of the region's residents working in the lime industry for civil construction or in agriculture, learning how to cut and sew panties was hard work, as mentioned in the popular Northeastern saying. Prospects in Frecheirinha were minimal, young people turned 18 and went to the South or Southeast to try their hand at life there. The business was to work in civil construction (Verbal Information)<sup>7</sup>

Around here, they only knew how to take care of the “hoe handle”, recalls the president of the Association of Clothing Manufacturers of Frecheirinha (Verbal

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<sup>5</sup> Information provided by the Sebrae Representative in the city of Frecheirinha, January 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Information provided by José Donato, President of the Frecheirinha Association of Underwear Producers, January 2017

<sup>7</sup> Idem

Information)<sup>8</sup> . Donato also comments that the demand for professionals in the clothing industry has grown so much that there are no more idle residents. In Frecheirinha there are jobs for everyone. The factories do not stop growing and we even have to look for people from other cities. Only those who do not want to work do not work (Verbal Information)<sup>9</sup>

We were invited to get to know the internal dynamics of the Hibisco factory at João Viana's enterprise, in line with the logic of capital, we have a mix of technology allied to the factory floor. Around 100 employees work in this factory on the production line and another 18 in the administrative area (verbal information)<sup>10</sup>. According to the Hibisco production sector, the factory values the longevity of its employees, I myself have been here for 13 years, I started as a stockist and today I am a production manager. He showed us the production stages and told us about the routine at this factory. (Verbal Information)<sup>11</sup>

### **Considerations**

Currently, Frecheirinha's economy is based on industrial production, trade and service provision, becoming one of the largest producers of underwear in the State of Ceará. Notably, in the last 30 years this space has been transformed through this activity. The combination of economic, political, social factors and private support, leads to the growth of production, increases the generation of jobs and income, brings technological innovation to the city. Of the 2,000 jobs created in the industry in the first half of 2016 in the city of Frecheirinha, over 70% corresponded to workers at the Diamantes factory, the rest are divided among other industries, with emphasis on Hisbisco, Hardy and Exitus.

The underwear production industry draws attention not only for the volume of employment, but for the consequences that it has been causing in other economic activities, such as the factory stores scattered throughout the commercial center of

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem

<sup>10</sup> Information provided by the Production Manager at Hibisco textile factory in Freicheirinha January 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Idem

the City, which has been restructured in recent years. The city is gradually ceasing to be hostage to public employment. The rural area of the municipality also shelters the urban worker who sells his workforce in the city but returns to the countryside at the end of each working day.

The city has its landscape changed every day at the opening and closing of industrial activities, it is the coming of buses, topiques, motorcycles and bicycles, as part of the industrial workers move from the municipalities of Tianguá and Coreaú. The transport of these workers being paid for by themselves. On average, salaries paid to professionals are around R\$ 1200.00 plus benefits per production.

In the Organic Law of the municipality we have provisions in the fourth chapter that talks about industry, commerce and services, described as follows: industry, commerce and Services. Article 155 emphasizes that it is incumbent upon the municipality to stimulate agricultural, industrial and service production within its territory, in accordance with the provisions of item VIII of article 7 of the Federal Constitution, giving priority to small properties through support plans for small producers who guarantee you, in particular, technical and legal assistance, production flow through the opening and conservation of municipal roads. (FREICHEIRINHA, 2008).

In the center of Freicheirinha there are around 14 factory stores that sell their products wholesale and retail. Some factories invest in the follow-up of underwear and direct-to-consumer sales. In addition to manufacturing the products, they sell them to the final consumer.

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