


ESPAÇOS TEATRAIS E OS DESAFIOS PARA A DESCENTRALIZAÇÃO CULTURAL EM BELO HORIZONTE**THEATER SPACES AND THE CHALLENGES OF CULTURAL DECENTRALIZATION IN BELO HORIZONTE****LOS ESPACIOS TEATRALES Y LOS RETOS DE LA DESCENTRALIZACIÓN CULTURAL EN BELO HORIZONTE**

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RESUMO

O artigo analisa a distribuição territorial dos espaços teatrais em Belo Horizonte. A pesquisa adota abordagem qualitativa, descritiva e exploratória, utilizando dados secundários sobre a configuração urbana da cidade e um survey aplicado a 64 espaços teatrais identificados, dos quais 25 responderam ao questionário. A análise dos dados foi conduzida por meio da técnica de análise de conteúdo categorial temática, resultando em dez dimensões analíticas. Os resultados evidenciam a concentração dos equipamentos culturais na região Centro-Sul, responsável por 67% dos espaços teatrais mapeados, em contraste com a ausência ou escassez desses equipamentos nas regiões periféricas. Tal concentração implica em desigualdades no acesso à infraestrutura, financiamento, visibilidade e participação cultural. O estudo demonstra que a centralização dos teatros não apenas reflete padrões históricos de urbanização excludente, mas também limita o desenvolvimento de políticas públicas de cultura efetivamente descentralizadas. Assim, busca-se contribuir para o debate sobre equidade cultural no espaço urbano e reforça a urgência de políticas públicas que articulem justiça territorial, inclusão e diversidade cultural.

Palavras-chave: Espaços teatrais; Descentralização cultural; Políticas públicas; Belo Horizonte; Acesso à cultura.

ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the territorial distribution of theatrical venues in Belo Horizonte. The research adopts a qualitative, descriptive and exploratory approach, using secondary data on the city's urban configuration and a survey applied to 64 identified theater spaces, 25 of which answered the questionnaire. The data was analyzed using the thematic categorical content analysis technique, resulting in ten analytical dimensions. The results show a

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concentration of cultural facilities in the Center-South region, responsible for 67% of the theatrical venues mapped, in contrast to the absence or scarcity of these facilities in the peripheral regions. This concentration implies inequalities in access to infrastructure, funding, visibility and cultural participation. The study shows that the centralization of theaters not only reflects historical patterns of exclusionary urbanization, but also limits the development of effectively decentralized public culture policies. It thus seeks to contribute to the debate on cultural equity in the urban space and reinforces the urgency of public policies that articulate territorial justice, inclusion and cultural diversity.

Keywords: Theatrical spaces; Cultural decentralization; Public policies; Belo Horizonte; Access to culture.

RESUMEN

El artículo analiza la distribución territorial de los espacios teatrales en Belo Horizonte. La investigación adopta un enfoque cualitativo, descriptivo y exploratorio, utilizando datos secundarios sobre la configuración urbana de la ciudad y una encuesta aplicada a 64 espacios teatrales identificados, 25 de los cuales respondieron al cuestionario. Los datos se analizaron mediante la técnica de análisis de contenido categórico temático, lo que dio lugar a diez dimensiones analíticas. Los resultados muestran la concentración de equipamientos culturales en la región Centro-Sur, responsable del 67% de los teatros mapeados, en contraste con la ausencia o escasez de estos equipamientos en las regiones periféricas. Esta concentración implica desigualdades en el acceso a las infraestructuras, la financiación, la visibilidad y la participación cultural. El estudio muestra que la centralización de los teatros no sólo refleja patrones históricos de urbanización excluyente, sino que también limita el desarrollo de políticas públicas de cultura efectivamente descentralizadas. Así, pretende contribuir al debate sobre la equidad cultural en el espacio urbano y refuerza la urgencia de políticas públicas que articulen justicia territorial, inclusión y diversidad cultural.

Palabras clave: Espacios teatrales; Descentralización cultural; Políticas públicas; Belo Horizonte; Acceso a la cultura.



INTRODUCTION

Cultural spaces are important pillars in the contemporary social structure, acting not only as places for artistic enjoyment and leisure, but also as engines of economic development, critical training and social inclusion (CANCLINI, 2008). Within the scope of cultural policies, they are recognized as strategic vectors of the so-called creative economy, promoting the generation of jobs, the dynamization of territories and the appreciation of cultural diversity.

Among these spaces, theaters stand out for the complexity of their functions and for their historical capacity to articulate art, citizenship and social transformation. According to Fischer Lichte and Wihstutz (2013), theater operates as a privileged space for symbolic production and the construction of shared meanings, promoting the encounter between different social groups and contributing to critical reflection on reality. At the same time, its production chain moves a significant set of professionals, goods and services, generating a significant impact on the urban cultural economy (BRITO; 2012).

However, the territorial distribution of theatrical spaces in Brazilian cities tends to reproduce historical inequalities. Some studies indicate that cultural facilities, especially theaters, are located in central areas with higher purchasing power, making it difficult for peripheral populations to access these cultural experiences (SILVA, 2022; GOMES, 2013). This restrictive territorial configuration limits the scope of public policies on culture and compromises the democratization of access to cultural goods, especially in metropolises marked by strong socio-spatial segregation, such as Belo Horizonte.

Understanding the logic of distribution of theatrical spaces, therefore, is fundamental to rethink decentralization strategies and to strengthen more equitable public policies. In this sense, this article aims to analyze the characteristics and distribution of theatrical spaces in Belo Horizonte, as well as to examine the possible consequences arising from this territorial configuration. It is assumed that, similarly to what occurs in other Brazilian capitals, the theatrical spaces in Belo Horizonte have a significant concentration in central regions, which can reinforce barriers to access and cultural inequalities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The decentralization of public policies represents a decisive inflection in the state management model, as it transfers to the local levels — states and municipalities — the responsibility for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of actions in various areas. This process highlighted weaknesses of the centralized model, such as the distance between policymakers and the publics served, the disconnection between programs and



territorial realities, and the absence of consistent impact evaluation mechanisms. In the field of culture, such logic demands effective intergovernability and partnerships between different spheres and sectors. Maccari and Montiel (2012) highlight that culture should be treated as a transversal component of development, requiring interministerial and intergovernmental channels, in addition to the engagement of the private sector and civil society in the consolidation of cultural policies.

Although there are different interpretations of decentralization, there is convergence around three central trends: (1) the distribution of competences among the federative entities; (2) the existence of intergovernmental coordination mechanisms; and (3) the expansion of social participation in management processes. However, the role of cultural facilities in this process is little discussed. The geographic and symbolic centralization of these spaces restricts access to culture and deepens historical inequalities. Thus, the decentralization of cultural facilities must be understood as an essential strategy to democratize access, strengthen local identities and consolidate culture as a right – not just as a service offer.

The criticism of centralization is not limited to budget distribution, but also covers the location of equipment and the function they perform in the territories. Botelho (2003) demonstrates that the public and private cultural centers of São Paulo are mostly concentrated in the central and western regions of the city, reflecting historical patterns of urbanization and social exclusion. Although physical decentralization initiatives, such as culture houses and municipal libraries, have expanded territorial coverage, access remains unequal, as it depends on variables such as schooling, income, and cultural capital. For the author, geographical proximity does not guarantee symbolic appropriation, revealing limitations of policies focused exclusively on infrastructure (BOTELHO, 2003).

In this sense, the decentralization of cultural spaces requires an integrated approach that considers infrastructure, management, mediation and articulation with other social rights. Botelho (2003) proposes a policy of active decentralization that recognizes and values popular and community cultural practices, articulating them with education and understanding the school as a space that forms audiences. The strengthening of cultural centers and coexistence in peripheral areas assumes, therefore, a strategic character, as long as it is linked to policies of accessibility, training and recognition of local knowledge.

The centralization of cultural equipment and resources continues to be one of the biggest barriers to the consolidation of democratic public policies in Brazil. Guimarães (2020) observes that investment in culture is more concentrated than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) itself: although the Southeast accounts for about 53% of the national GDP, it



absorbs almost 80% of the resources raised via the Rouanet Law. This asymmetry results from the tax incentive model that transfers the management of development from the State to the market, benefiting regions of greater economic attractiveness and limiting access to peripheral and community projects. It is, therefore, a matter of decentralization of management without effective deconcentration of resources. The author also points out that it is not enough to transfer decision-making power to the private sponsor if the criteria of territorial equity are not ensured (GUIMARÃES, 2020).

Within the scope of the Cultura Viva Program, the experience of the Culture Points – due to their network configuration, community base and territorial action – exemplifies a model that combines administrative decentralization and social inclusion, as it promotes direct transfer of resources and values local cultural practices (GUIMARÃES, 2020). Here, decentralization is not restricted to the multiplication of cultural poles; it is also manifested in the symbolic transfer of power, by recognizing historical subjects previously excluded from formal cultural policies.

These analyses converge in the criticism of models that confuse territorial deconcentration with full decentralization. Therefore, a substantive decentralization — political, budgetary, symbolic, and territorial — is required, which expands the presence of the State as an articulator of cultural networks, promotes equity in the distribution of resources, and strengthens spaces of belonging in historically neglected territories.

The expansion of cultural centers as multifunctional spaces for coexistence, learning and artistic enjoyment configures a significant advance in the policy of access to culture, especially when aligned with local demands. These spaces are fundamental in contemporary cities, as they host artistic manifestations and leisure activities and function as vectors of social inclusion, community integration and human development. Reichert et al. (2022) emphasize that such centers should be planned so that "any type of person or age group can enjoy it equally, thus ensuring better well-being", preserving quality of life, fostering cultural practice, and rescuing identities (p. 72). In this way, these facilities transcend the cultural offer, becoming environments for coexistence, exchange of knowledge and strengthening of social bonds — indispensable elements to the urban structure.

The authors add that the presence of these centers in the territories promotes urban requalification, citizen participation and resignification of public spaces. Articulating leisure, art, education, and creative economy, these centers operate as "health promotion equipment" and favor "the appreciation of culture, leisure, knowledge, and creativity" (REICHERT et al., 2022, p. 75). However, physical implantation, in isolation, is insufficient:



these spaces must be located in accessible, well-structured regions endowed with "a complete and functional program of needs", ensuring that "all people can enjoy this space without any hindrance" (REICHERT et al., 2022, p. 73). The defense of decentralization is thus associated with territorial justice and the recognition of local specificities, promoting expanded access to culture as a right and collective experience.

Theatrical buildings make up a significant portion of the historical and cultural heritage of several countries (SANDU et al., 2021). From this perspective, theater, as an artistic form, is no longer seen only as an occupant of a physical support — the scenic space — to be understood as a fluid process of relationships. Fischer Lichte and Wihstutz (2013) propose a topological approach to performative space, stating that it is performatively generated and constantly remodeled through practice. Dialoguing with this view, Aguiar (2010) argues that "the theatrical space, in its various instances and uses, is perceived as a transversal element in constant movement" (p. 3), mobilizing meanings, memories and knowledge through the intertwining between bodies and contexts.

This multiplicity is also discussed by Neto (2012), who addresses the coexistence of different spatial layers in the theatrical phenomenon, intertwining architectural, scenic, dramatic, subjective and fictional dimensions. Likewise, Danckwardt (2001) emphasizes the centrality of the relationship between stage and audience in the conformation of theatrical buildings, stating, when quoting Styan, that "if in a theater there is no interaction between stage and audience, the spectacle is dead, bad or non-existent" (p. 174). Different spatial models — Italian, arena, multiple, among others — reflect changes in the forms of reception, visibility and participation.

In the field of cultural policies, Lima (2018) argues that the theatrical space can constitute a place of coexistence, creation, and engagement, as artists and collectives build their own environments of aesthetic and political sharing. This understanding is deepened by Lima et al. (2022), who see the scenic space as a territory of symbolic dispute and reinvention of ways of collective life. Andrade (2021) broadens the debate by dealing with the expansion of scenic languages into the digital field, indicating that technological devices unleash new sensitive spatialities. Fusaro (2022) corroborates this perspective, presenting the scenic space as an expanded, sensory, interactive, immersive, and accessible environment — articulating theater, education, and technology.

The issue of representativeness and access is addressed by Bersilli and Müller (2023), who observe the persistence of exclusions in cultural spaces. The authors defend the application of Universal Design in the planning of theaters, making them inclusive for people with disabilities, as well as for bodies of all colors and genders. Along these lines,



Brito (2012) introduces the notion of "scenic action" as a form of urban reconfiguration and promotion of cultural debate: "any and all forms of expression, uniting action and discourse, carried out by one or more individuals, in order to provoke debate on the cultural and social development of the city" (p. 69).

With a similar approach, Lima (2018) analyzes the appropriation of the city by groups that displace the scene beyond closed rooms, while Lima et al. (2022) highlight collective experiences of urban theatricalization, in which art is converted into political action of the territories. In the architectural sphere, Danckwardt (2001) reaffirms the historical influence of the stage-audience relationship in the configuration of the scenic plans, highlighting transitions from the imposing frontality of the Italian-style theaters to the participatory circularity of contemporary arenas.

Lima (2023) contributes by examining the adaptation of industrial warehouses for theatrical use, showing how these spaces are part of the urban cultural circuit through the memory of work and community relations. At the same time, Neto (2012) emphasizes the formative function of theater in educational spaces, indicating that, when inserted in schools, theater enhances encounters between sensitive, ethical and political.

For this work, "theatrical space" is understood as any cultural equipment where the craft of theater is manifested through actions, scenes or shows, configured or not as an Italian stage.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The present research adopts a qualitative, descriptive and exploratory approach, with the objective of investigating aspects that are still little known and offering an initial and comprehensive overview of the subject. The unit of analysis selected was the city of Belo Horizonte, capital of the state of Minas Gerais.

Initially, a survey of the geographic distribution of the municipality was carried out, based on secondary data from IBGE (2024) and Embrapa (2025). Next, the existing theater spaces in the city were identified, based on a spreadsheet provided by the City of Belo Horizonte containing information on 64 theater facilities, including location and institutional contact data.

In the next step, a survey was applied using the contacts of the previously mapped spaces. The questionnaire, made available in digital format, combined structured and semi-structured questions. This stage resulted in 25 valid answers, a number that represents less than half of the spaces initially identified. Such discrepancy, however, does not compromise



the validity of the methodology adopted, since it arises from the voluntary and self-declaratory nature of the instrument applied.

While the institutional survey is based on administrative and technical records, the survey carried out in 2025 depended on the willingness of managers to collaborate with the survey and provide updated data. In this way, the data collected represent a more accurate portrait of the spaces that are effectively active and with structured management at the time of collection, even though they do not cover the entire theatrical sector of the city.

The data analysis was conducted based on the thematic categorical content analysis technique, as proposed by Bardin (2016), with the objective of identifying and systematizing the main dimensions that structure the functioning of theatrical spaces in Belo Horizonte. The research corpus was composed of the answers to the digital form, applied between the months of April and May 2025, with those responsible for the 25 participating spaces.

According to Bardin (2016), categorical analysis consists of organizing content into thematic units classified by homogeneous and excluding categories, allowing the systematic interpretation of empirical material. In the present study, the categorization was based on the sections of the questionnaire and on the recurrence and relevance of the contents mentioned, resulting in the definition of ten major categories of analysis: General Identification of the Space; Management and Legal Nature; Infrastructure and Operation; Programming and Occupation; Capacity and Relationship with the Public; Curatorship and Use of Space; Financing and Sustainability; Communication and Dissemination; Education, Training and Cultural Production; and Accessibility.

The adoption of this technique made it possible to classify the answers into coherent thematic blocks, which allowed to highlight recurrent aspects in the functioning of theatrical spaces. With this, it was possible to identify trends, gaps and potentialities that underlie the analysis of the research, also enabling comparisons between the spaces located in the central areas and in other regions of the city. Next, an excerpt of these results is presented, with the objective of analyzing the characteristics and distribution of theatrical spaces in Belo Horizonte, as well as discussing the possible consequences arising from the territorial configuration observed.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Belo Horizonte is administratively subdivided into nine regional offices: Barreiro, Center-South, East, Northeast, Northwest, North, West, Pampulha and Venda Nova. This territorial division has as its main purpose to optimize public management and guide the



implementation of specific policies in areas such as health, education, culture, sports and leisure, considering the particular characteristics and demands of each region.

According to official data from the Municipality of Belo Horizonte, systematized by Prodabel (Computer and Information Company of the Municipality of Belo Horizonte), the municipality currently has a total area of 332.27 km² and 487 neighborhoods, although part of these neighborhoods is distributed between two or more regional districts — as is the case of 24 neighborhoods with territorial overlap, especially between the East and Center-South regions, and between Pampulha and Venda Nova (BELO HORIZONTE, 2021), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Regional Administrative Offices of Belo Horizonte

REGIONAL	Population (2010)	Area (km ²) (2018–present)	Density (inhabitants/km ²) (2010)	No. of neighborhoods (2018–present)
Clay pit	282.156	53,6	5.156	73
Center-South	282.286	31,85	9.280	49
East	228.986	27,98	8.334	47
Northeast	281.507	39,46	7.333	69
Northwest	271.143	30,17	8.907	52
North	214.967	32,67	6.509	48
West	316.908	36,06	8.785	67
Pampulha	266.859	51,21	4.848	63
New Sale	230.339	29,27	8.997	44
TOTAL	2.375.151	332,27	7.172	487

Source: Adapted from Embrapa (2015)

In terms of territorial extension, the Barreiro regional stands out, with 53.6 km², followed by Pampulha (51.21 km²) and Nordeste (39.46 km²). On the other hand, the smallest regional in area are the East (27.98 km²) and Venda Nova (29.27 km²). With regard to demographic density, there is a large population concentration in the Center-South region, with 9,280 inhabitants per km², contrasting with lower rates in areas such as Pampulha (4,848 inhabitants/km²) and Barreiro (5,156 inhabitants/km²).

The number of neighborhoods by region also shows significant disparities in the urban configuration of Belo Horizonte. The Barreiro regional has the largest number of neighborhoods, totaling 73, followed by the Northeast (69) and West (67) regions. At the other end, the regional with the lowest number of neighborhoods is Venda Nova, with only 44.

However, when one observes the presence of theatrical spaces in the city, the scenario reveals an even more unequal distribution. Of the 487 officially recognized neighborhoods, only 64 theater spaces were identified. In purely quantitative terms, this would correspond, on average, to one theatrical space for every eight neighborhoods. However, this arithmetic average does not reflect the reality of the territorial distribution of



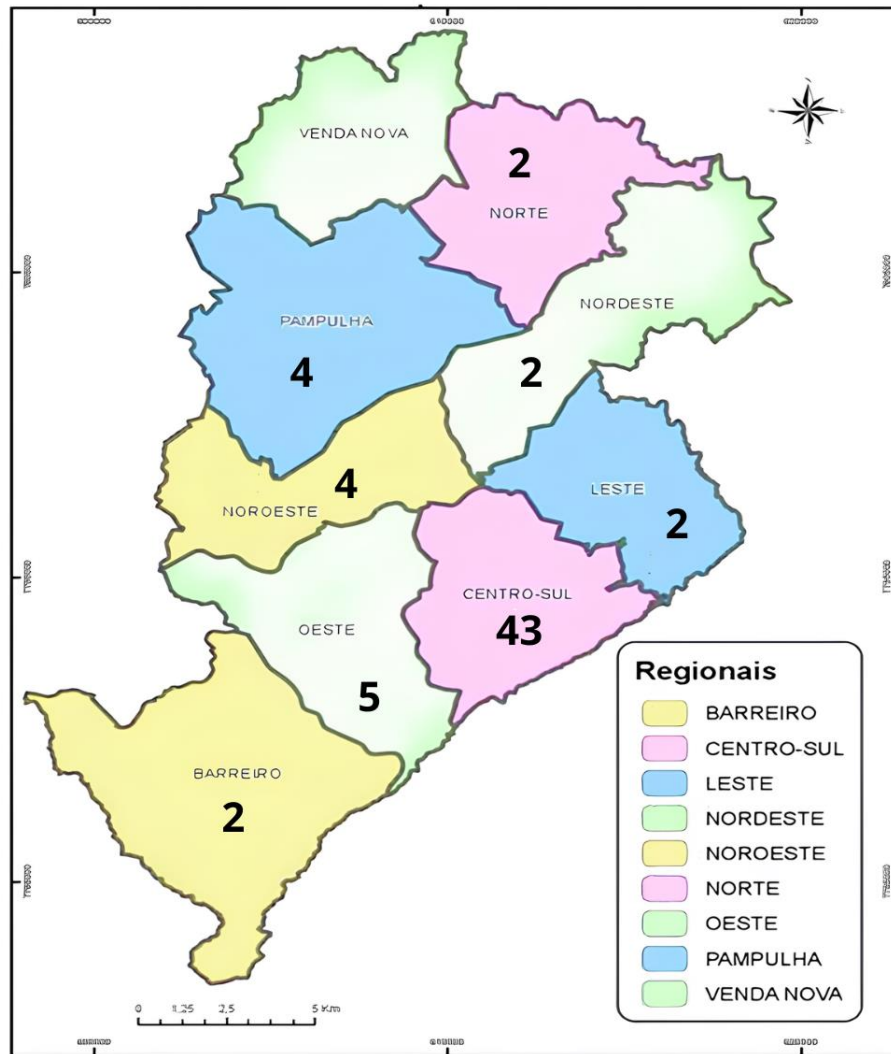
these cultural facilities, which are distributed in only 30 neighborhoods, concentrating predominantly in the central regions of the city, leaving many peripheral areas without coverage. This territorial asymmetry will be detailed throughout the analysis, where it is possible to raise some evidence of the consequences of the centralization of these theatrical spaces.

MAPPING AND CONSEQUENCES ON THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THEATRICAL SPACES

Based on the survey of the 64 mapped theater spaces, it was possible to analyze their distribution among the nine administrative regions of Belo Horizonte. Although there is a small margin of variation, due to the fact that some neighborhoods simultaneously belong to more than one regional – as already mentioned – this territorial overlap has minimal impact on the results of the analysis.

In general, the data point to a marked concentration of these cultural facilities in certain regions of the city, especially in the central areas. This spatial configuration can be seen more clearly in the following map, which illustrates the geographical distribution of theatrical spaces and reinforces inequalities in access to cultural infrastructure between the different regions.

Figure 1 - Distribution of Theatrical Spaces by the Administrative Regions of Belo Horizonte



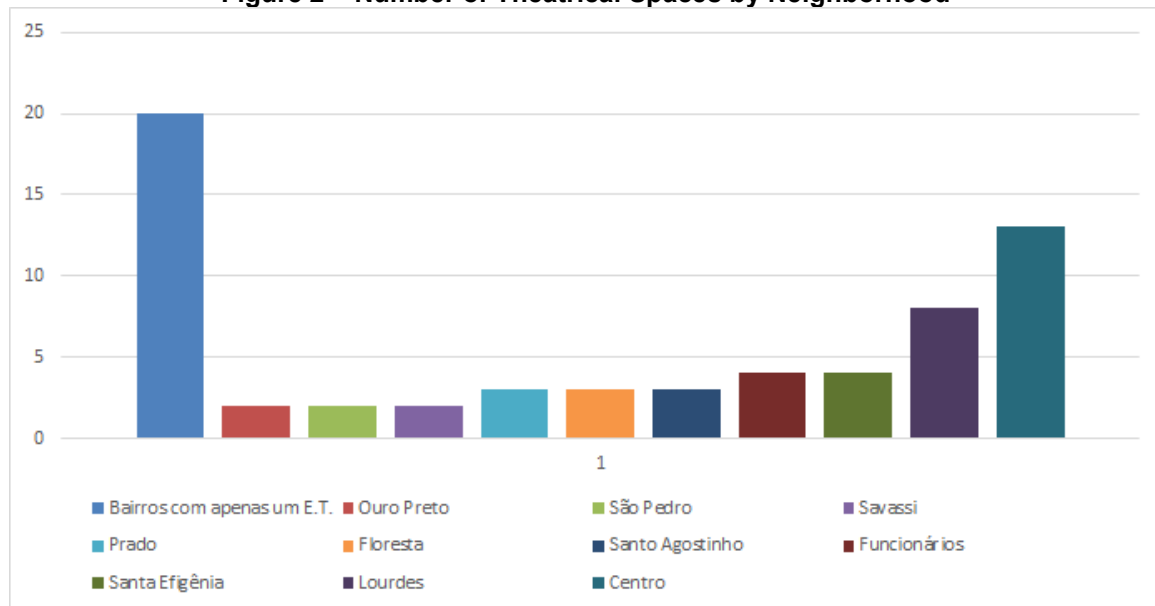
Source: Adapted from Belo Horizonte (2021).

The Center-South Regional brings together 43 of the 64 spaces identified, which corresponds to approximately 67% of the total. The other regional offices have significantly lower numbers: the West has 5 spaces, the Northeast with 4, Pampulha with 4, and the Barreiro, East, North and Northwest regions have only 2 spaces each. While in the regional of Venda Nova no theatrical space was identified. This distribution shows a marked territorial inequality in access to theatrical infrastructure, with a strong predominance of the expanded center of the capital.

When considering the division by neighborhoods, it can be observed from Figure 2 that 20 of them have only one registered theatrical space, which points to a punctual and isolated performance in various parts of the city. On the other hand, some neighborhoods concentrate a greater number of theaters. The Centro neighborhood, for example, houses 13 spaces, followed by Lourdes, with 8, Santa Efigênia, and Funcionários 4, Floresta,

Santo Agostinho and Prado, have 3 spaces each, while the Savassi, São Pedro, and Ouro Preto neighborhoods register 2 theatrical spaces each.

Figure 2 – Number of Theatrical Spaces by Neighborhood



Source: survey data (2025).

Regarding the location of the 25 spaces that responded to the survey, the data indicate that the Centro neighborhood was the one that most concentrated respondents, with at least four different theaters participating in the survey. This predominance is in line with the urban dynamics of Belo Horizonte, since the Center historically concentrates theaters with a long tradition, institutional equipment, headquarters of cultural groups and a high flow of audience. Regarding the temporality of the foundation of the responding spaces, there is a predominance of foundations from the 1990s onwards, with significant growth in the 2010s. Other neighborhoods with a significant presence among the respondents include Santa Efigênia, Floresta and Funcionários (Employees), all located in the Center-South Region, which reinforces the centralization of theatrical activities in the most central areas of the city.

The centralization of theatrical spaces in the Center-South region of Belo Horizonte directly impacts several categories analyzed in this research, revealing structural, operational and symbolic effects that compromise cultural equity in the urban territory. This geographical concentration, historically related to the symbolic valorization and consolidated infrastructure of the city center, can reinforce inequalities and limit the full development of the other administrative regions.

In the Infrastructure and Operation category, centralized spaces tend to have better physical conditions, access to technical equipment and greater compliance with safety



standards, such as the possession of the Fire Department Inspection Certificate (AVCB). Spaces located in peripheral areas, when they exist, often operate in improvised structures, with little technical adequacy, absence of air conditioning and fragility in security measures, reflecting the lower presence of the public authorities in these regions. Although the survey data indicate that theatrical spaces have a high level of occupation (60% with a rate above 70%) and strong engagement in educational activities (88% promote artistic training), it is still observed that these actions are mostly concentrated in the most central regions. Thus, the benefits of these initiatives are not distributed equitably across the city. The same applies to infrastructure: 80% of the spaces have dressing rooms, but only 64% have air conditioning and 36% have the AVCB in force, indicating that even among the active spaces, there are relevant structural inequalities.

In Programming and Occupation, centralization favors the concentration of regular and diversified cultural activities, since these spaces have greater public circulation, institutional partnerships and visibility. This generates a feedback of public and private investment in the center, while reducing the cultural offer in the peripheries, which can make it difficult to retain the public and train new spectators on the outskirts of the city.

Regarding Capacity and Relationship with the Public, the central location ensures greater urban accessibility, proximity to complementary facilities (such as schools, universities and cultural centers), and ease of dissemination. On the other hand, residents of the most remote regions face difficulties in commuting, resulting in low visitation rates and less presence in educational actions. This contributes to the symbolic and physical distancing of peripheral populations from cultural enjoyment.

In the field of Curatorship and Use of Space, the concentration of cultural facilities in the central areas favors networking and artistic exchange, expanding the possibilities of participatory curatorships, circulation of shows and the formation of partnerships. On the other hand, in peripheral regions, the scarcity of spaces compromises artistic turnover and hinders the adoption of open models of occupation, restricting opportunities for local artists and collectives. As a consequence, these cultural agents are often forced to seek insertion in the spaces located in the central areas of the city.

As for Financing and Sustainability, centralized spaces have greater visibility, technical capacity and access to public and private financing networks. Considering that most of the spaces (88%) depend on their own resources, which makes them vulnerable to economic fluctuations and the absence of continued financing lines. Centralization reinforces this picture, as spaces in central areas have more visibility and better conditions to raise funds, whether through box office, institutional support, or some incentive laws.



Peripheral spaces, when present, tend to operate in more precarious conditions, facing difficulties in institutionalizing themselves, accessing public notices and raising funds, often operating on the margins of cultural development policies.

Communication and Dissemination is also affected, as the geographical and symbolic visibility of central spaces facilitates public engagement, access to media and the use of social networks with greater impact. Spaces in distant regions, in turn, face visibility barriers and limitations in the reach of communication strategies.

In the field of Education, Training and Cultural Production, geographical concentration limits the dissemination of pedagogical actions on a broader territorial scale, preventing training initiatives from reaching different audiences. Centralization restricts the cultural protagonism of the peripheries and perpetuates the logic of displacement of the public and artists towards the center.

Centralization also has a direct impact on inclusion and accessibility. Of the 25 spaces, 64% have at least one physical accessibility resource, but only 12% offer communication resources in a systematic way. This gap indicates that, even among the most structured spaces, accessibility is still not treated as a priority, which further marginalizes audiences with disabilities.

The general analysis of the data shows that the centralized territorial configuration of theatrical spaces in Belo Horizonte generates multiple consequences: it deepens socio-territorial inequalities, restricts cultural diversity in public policies, hinders the formation of audiences in the peripheries, and structurally and financially weakens spaces located outside the expanded center. Facing this scenario requires public policies that articulate territorial decentralization, equitable financing, strengthening of community cultures, institutional recognition of basic cultural practices, as well as the improvement and maintenance of information systems with public and transparent access such as the Belo Horizonte Cultural Observatory, which brings together cultural indicators from various cultural and creative fields (VITÓRIA et al., 2024; VICTORY; EMMENDOERFER, 2025) that serve as a support for decision-making for the management and governance of organizations.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of the distribution of theatrical spaces in Belo Horizonte revealed a scenario of wide territorial inequality, marked by the concentration of these cultural facilities in the Center-South region of the city. Such a configuration not only reflects historical patterns of urban centralization, but also reproduces structural barriers in access to cultural



enjoyment and production by populations living in peripheral areas. Of the 64 spaces mapped, more than two-thirds are located in central regions, while regions such as Venda Nova do not even have a single identified theater, evidencing a worrying imbalance in the cultural offer of the capital of Minas Gerais.

The data obtained from the *survey* applied to active theatrical spaces indicate that, even among the equipment in operation, there are significant differences in terms of infrastructure, accessibility, financing and cultural mediation strategies. Spaces located in central regions tend to have better physical conditions, greater diversification of activities, more technical resources and easier access to sources of financing, while the few facilities present in the peripheries operate, in general, with structural and institutional precariousness.

The geographical centralization of theatrical spaces therefore compromises cultural equity and limits the transformative potential of theatrical art as an instrument of social inclusion, critical training and community strengthening. The absence of effectively decentralizing public policies contributes to the symbolic marginalization of peripheral territories, reinforcing sociocultural asymmetries that should be precisely addressed by democratic cultural policies.

Given this panorama, it is imperative that public policies on culture advance beyond physical deconcentration and promote substantive decentralization – political, symbolic, budgetary and territorial. This involves the recognition and strengthening of local cultural practices, investment in the creation and maintenance of cultural spaces in underserved regions, as well as the expansion of social participation mechanisms in the management of these facilities.

Finally, this study contributes to the debate on the limits and challenges of democratizing access to culture in Brazilian cities, highlighting the need for a territorialized approach that is sensitive to historical inequalities. It is hoped that the results presented here will support reflections and concrete actions by the government, cultural agents and civil society, in order to build a fairer, more accessible and plural cultural policy.

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