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MAPPING OF RELIGIOUS CENTERS OF AFRICAN ORIGIN IN THE METROPOLITAN REGION OF THE STATE OF RIO DE JANEIRO

Mapeamento de Casas Religiosas de Matriz Africana na Região Metropolitana do Estado do Rio de Janeiro

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ABSTRACT

Despite the enormous African legacy in Brazilian society, the traditional centers of African religion are not recognized by Brazilian legislation as are other predominant religions within the country, thereby ignoring the social function of such centers as well as depriving such institutions of the benefits of recognition under the Constitution. Furthermore, these African religious centers had historically suffered formal persecution from the State. Today, such centers of African religion continue to suffer prejudice and persecution from certain Protestant Christian religions. In an effort to give support to the role such centers play in their respective communities, a geographical survey was conducted to reveal their prevalence. This article evaluates the thematic maps produced by the Project for the Mapping of Religious Centers of African Origin in the Metropolitan Region of the State of Rio de Janeiro, developed by the departments of Geography, Social Services and Social Sciences at the Pontifical University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RIO) in partnership with Brazil's Special Secretariat of Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality. The maps, which present information derived from surveys conducted at over 800 religious centers of African origin, were studied in terms of the geographical areas used as research evaluation units and in terms of representation techniques and mapped variables. The maps were shown to be very efficient in locating these religious centers and in presenting the social responsibility actions developed in their communities. The maps and research demonstrate the current prejudice suffered by centers of African religion, where half of those surveyed confirmed the incidence of intolerance to African religion.

Keywords: Religions of African Origin, Social Mapping, Participatory Mapping, Geographic Information Systems.

RESUMO

Apesar do enorme legado africano na cultura brasileira, as casas religiosas de matriz africana não são reconhecidas pela legislação brasileira como outras religiões predominantes no país, bem como ignoram a função social dessas casas, além de privarem estas instituições dos benefícios garantidos pela constituição. Além disso, historicamente estas casas religiosas de matriz africana tem sido perseguidas pelo estado e ainda hoje continuam a ser prejudicadas por certas igrejas protestantes. Num esforço para dar suporte aos objetivos foi conduzida nas casas, numa perspectiva da comunidade, uma pesquisa geográfica que revelou suas prevalências. Este artigo avaliou os mapas temáticos produzidos no

Projeto de Mapeamento de Casas Religiosas de Matriz Africana na região metropolitana do estado do Rio de Janeiro desenvolvida pelos departamentos de Geografia, Serviço Social e Ciências Sociais ambos da PUC-RIO em parceria com a Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial da Presidência da Republica do Brasil. Os mapas, que representaram informações derivadas de questionários aplicados em mais de 800 casas religiosas de matriz africana, foram estudados em relação aos recortes geográficos utilizados como unidades de avaliação da pesquisa e em relação às técnicas de representação e das variáveis mapeadas. Os mapas se mostraram muito eficientes na localização das casas religiosas de matriz africana e na apresentação das ações de responsabilidade sócio ambiental empreendidas no seu entorno. Os mapas e a pesquisa demonstraram o atual prejuízo sofrido pelas casas religiosas de matriz africana onde metade destas confirmaram a incidência de intolerância com a religião africana

Palavras-Chave: Matriz Religiosa de Origem Africana, Mapeamento Social, Cartografia Participativa, Sistema de Informações Geográficas

1. INTRODUCTION

Maps have followed the history of humanity as a way of marking out territory, expressing power relations and special arrangements. Maps build content, define relationships and establish hierarchies, and regardless of the degree of technique used to create them, they always express intentions and values (MASSEY, 2008).

Maps are currently being used to represent space in real time. New geotechnology (BATTY, 1993; BURROUGH, 1998), such as geographic information systems, global positioning systems and images derived from satellite sensors increase our understanding of both the planet as a whole and of individual locations, identifying buildings, trees and other features of the landscape within a relatively small area. Digital maps used on mobile phones and other devices allow large-scale images to be reproduced on a much smaller scale, meaning they have become commonplace and simple (IGBP, 2006).

Despite the internet providing more democratic access to information, the geographical data it contains has intentionalities and mysteries just like the older traditional maps before it, and it certainly has its darker side. The world of cartographical representation is now expanding beyond what was considered official, assumed and consolidated, and different organizations across the world are starting to organize and make this kind of data available, opening up a wide range of new spatial discourses (CÂMARA, 1996). Maps in their constructed intentionality will never provide a full understanding of the reality that they are designed to represent (GUIMARÃES, 2007).

Maps have evolved, and in the digital era they now provide an accurate description

of coverage patterns and the use of constructed objects, their distribution and their boundaries, on a global scale covering the majority of the world's population. However, this type of geographic data contains errors in its expression of the natural ambiguities that are usually found in the world of the subjective, the individual and the collective. Cartographers and geographers seek to use symbols in their cartographic representations that will give them a more similar appearance to what is perceived and experienced on the ground. These maps are also part of a wider context, known as social cartography, where geographer cartographers interact with the object and are influenced by their perception and the mapped object is active and expresses itself within the cartographical representations. The creation of maps that break with the rigidity of geometry and reflect how beliefs and culture are spread across space is still a huge challenge for geographers, cartographers and social scientists (MERHY, 2010).

On the other hand, cultural mapping can be used to represent processes that express stories, values and feelings that go unnoticed or are obscured by the state. In this context, Afro-Brazilian culture has little visibility in Brazil and perceptions of the black community are formed as a result of serious economic inequalities that result in low levels of education and in legal transgressions (REGO, 2014).

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) 2010 census shows that the population influenced by Afro-Brazilian culture descendent from religions of African origin is small (around 3%) compared to the Afrodescendent population (over 30%). At the same time, the state does not recognize the religious practices that take place in the

country's *casas de santo* (holy centers), and these invisible institutions do not receive any of the subsidies from which recognized religions such as Catholicism, Protestantism or Evangelism benefit

Likewise, religious centers of African origin are not in any way regulated by the state, yet they perform an enormous social role that is spread out and consistent but at the same time concealed. Religious practices of African influence that involve dancing and singing were considered by law to be promiscuous activities until the 1970s and were repressed by the state. Even today there is a lot of intolerance towards these types of religion. This has been widely documented in the national press and has included physical aggression towards both followers and their places of worship.

Therefore, qualitative research through surveys identifying the scope, social actions developed and religious intolerance experienced by these centers in a determined area can be mapped to show their distribution, how they behave as a network and how they fit into the local social context

This article describes a research project that aimed to identify religious centers of African origin in the metropolitan region of the state of Rio de Janeiro using maps, making use of a network constructed by the individuals involved with the centers being mapped. It seeks to evaluate the maps produced in relation to the geographical areas used and variables relating to social, cultural and environmental actions developed in the surrounding areas that were investigated using participatory surveys.

2. MAPPING RELIGIONS

The Mapping Religious Centers of African Origin in the Metropolitan Region of the State of Rio de Janeiro project was developed by the departments of Social Services, Social Sciences and Geography at PUC-RIO in partnership with Brazil's Special Secretariat of Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality.

The project sought to both identify and consolidate the unmapped role of Afro-Brazilian religious culture that is an integral part of the daily lives of most of the population living in the metropolitan region of the state of Rio de Janeiro. It brought together different visions and disciplines to form a multidisciplinary perspective with which geographers, anthropologists and social workers sought opportunities to expand their knowledge and activities (REGO, 2014).

Aware of the proximity and interaction within this culture, the value of the mapping process and based on its working methodology, the project created a board, which it named the Griot Board, made up of 14 recognized leaders from the Umbanda and Candomblé denominations. This board guided and supported the research project, guaranteeing respect and consistency in how, when and which types of approaches were applied (DENISE, 2014).

An academic multidisciplinary interaction with significant participation from the Griot Board proposed a set of eight variables including social, political, anthropological and geographical aspects relating to religious centers of African origin, which were consolidated into a final 16-question survey that was conducted in the 847 centers found in the study area. This network of centers was established by the Griot Board and the leaders of surveyed centers, who identified other centers that could participate in the research project (DENISE, 2014).

The results of these surveys were georeferenced and structured into tables and digital geographical archives were produced to support the creation of different maps. In addition to 56 thematic maps presenting the variables in printing format, poster maps were produced for the schools adjacent to the centers to raise awareness about religious intolerance. With the support of Rio de Janeiro State's official press office, a booklet was published describing the project and providing the main maps it generated. To expand the availability of this information, the data was also made available using GIS web tools (ESRI, 2010) at the following web address: <http://139.82.34.143/terreiros/>.

The project identified the striking role of religious centers of African origin in the support of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, and demonstrated a lack of institutional support for these activities. It also warned that almost half of these centers had suffered as a result of some form of intolerance (DENISE, 2014).

The project as a whole identifies a need for state mechanisms to support these religious centers, widening the potential of their social and political actions and their culture and values (REGO, 2014).

3. OBJECTIVES

This article discusses the Mapping of Religious Centers of African Origin in the Metropolitan Region of the State of Rio de Janeiro research project, and analyzes the 56 thematic maps it produced and its methods, procedures and limitations according to the following aspects:

- In terms of the geographical areas used on the maps as operational and research evaluation units,
- In terms of representation techniques and mapped variables.

4. METHODOLOGY

The maps of different areas representing the information obtained in the surveys were critically analyzed. They were visualized and printed and data was crossed with other geographical data obtained from geographic information systems, identifying the possibilities and limitations of the cartographic representation options used.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main maps produced by the project comprised 56 thematic maps that were developed to be used as spatial research instruments. These were analyzed on two levels: in terms of the geographical areas used and in terms of the relationship between the representation techniques used and the mapped variables.

5.1 Geographical areas

When cartographic representations are used to symbolize socio-spatial phenomena and are used correctly as a tool for analysis, it is possible to identify both the defined geographical areas and the scale of representation. Aiming to represent the different spatial relations obtained from the geographical data generated by the project, the mapping was conducted on the scales described below.

Primarily, on a small scale, where the whole network was mapped using the methodology used to identify the centers, allowing their scope and their grouping patterns to be observed. This general mapping process, presented in scales of

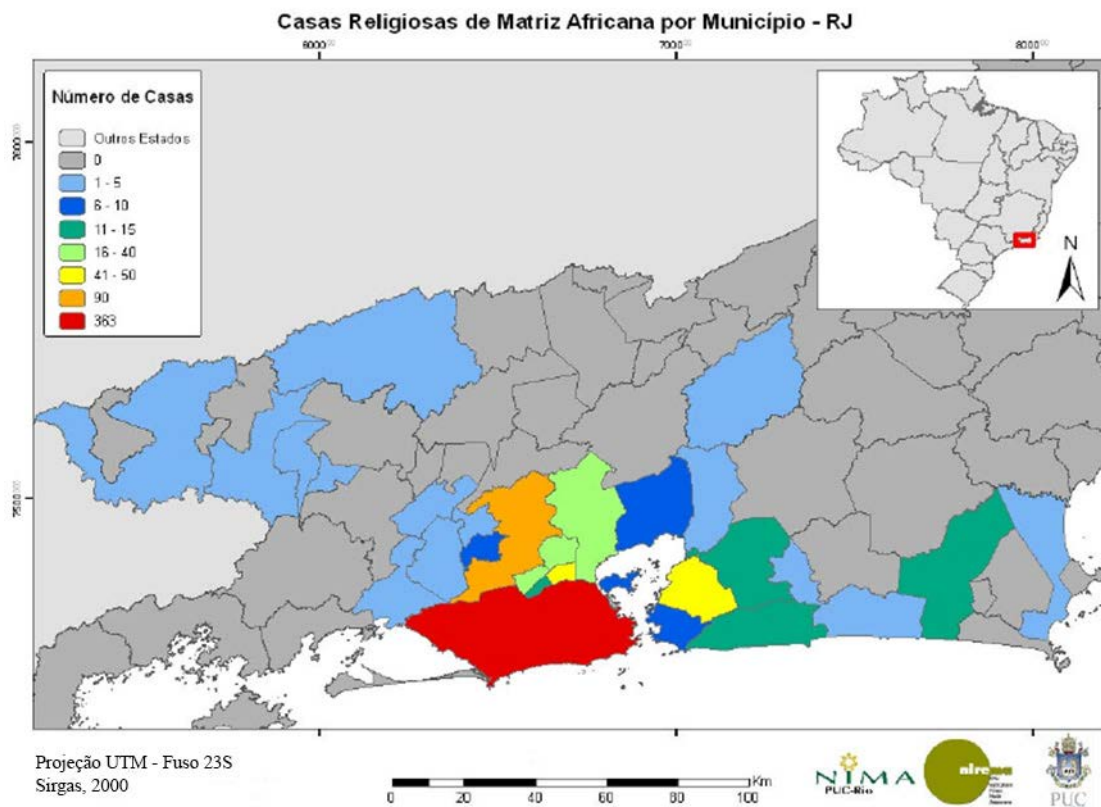


Fig. 1 - Map Religious Centers of African Origin (Casas Religiosas de matriz Africana) According to Municipality – RJ indicating the number of religious centers of African origin that participated in the survey according to municipality.

1:500,000 or less, suggests that the network is concentrated in the north and west zones of the city and the Baixada Fluminense, with some branches extending to other areas in the state such as the coastal region and the southern and eastern regions and with a few centers in the mountain region. Initially, it was expected that this network would behave rhizomatically, expanding until it included most of the city's centers. This, however, was not the case.

Figure 1 clearly shows that the network is concentrated in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro and the Baixada Fluminense and that it closes in on itself, suggesting that there are strong links between the centers in terms of values and principles.

In order to establish the spatial occurrence of religious centers of African origin and then analyze and map this data, seven research areas were defined: the Baixada Fluminense, the Coastal Baixada, the East and the North

Guanabara Bay, the Mountain Region, the South Fluminense Region, the South Metropolitan Region and the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro, which was divided into the North Zone and the West Zone, as presented in Figure 2.

These boundaries allow spatial patterns to be identified based on the reading of the 1:350,000 to 1:150,000 scale graphs taken from the surveys conducted.

Figures 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 below present the project's six main research areas, excluding the mountain region as it contains just one religious center. In addition to the grey polygons in the background representing the different municipalities and neighborhoods, the six maps present the geographical distribution of religious centers using georeferenced points that are proportional in size to the number of members at each center.

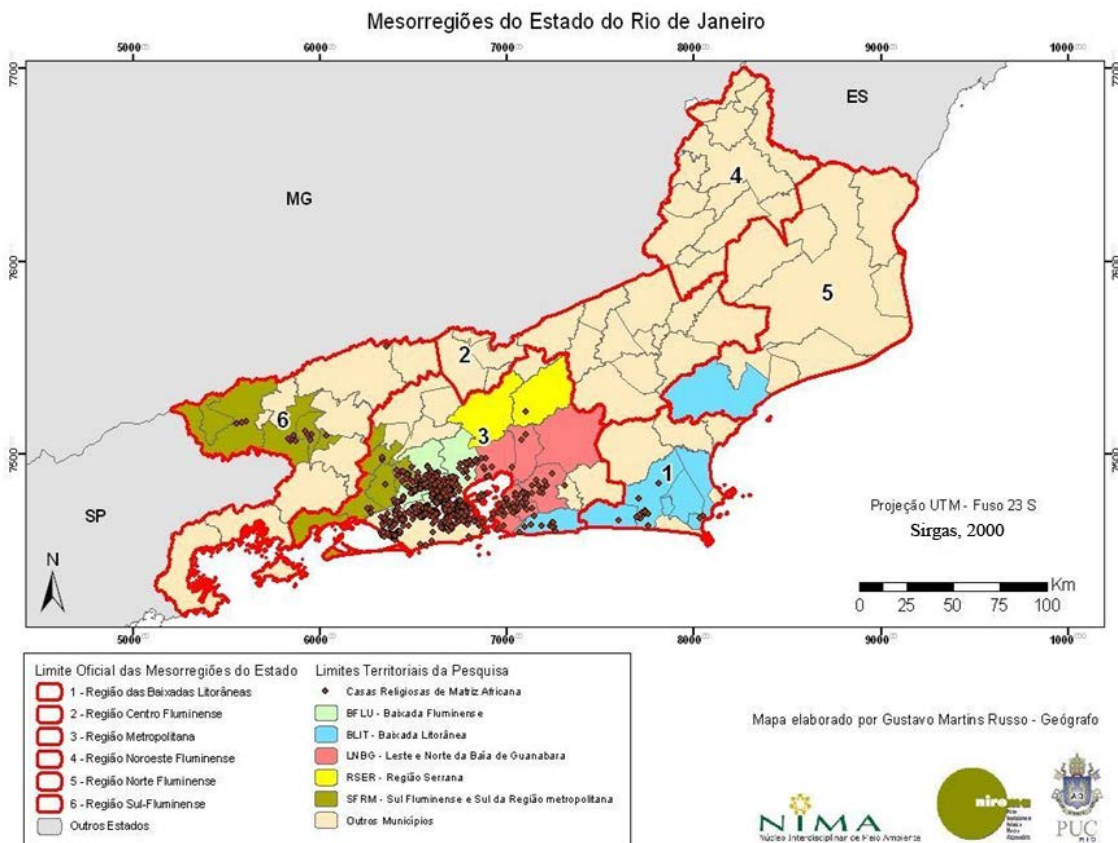


Fig. 2 - The map Mesoregions in the State of Rio de Janeiro show the occurrence of religious centers of African origin in the state of Rio de Janeiro and the five Territorial Research Areas used for the thematic maps: FLU – Baixada Fluminense, BLIT – Coastal Fluminense, LNBG – East and North Guanabara Bay, RSER – Mountain Region, SFRM – South Fluminense and South. In the background the boundaries of six the state's mesoregions are presented.

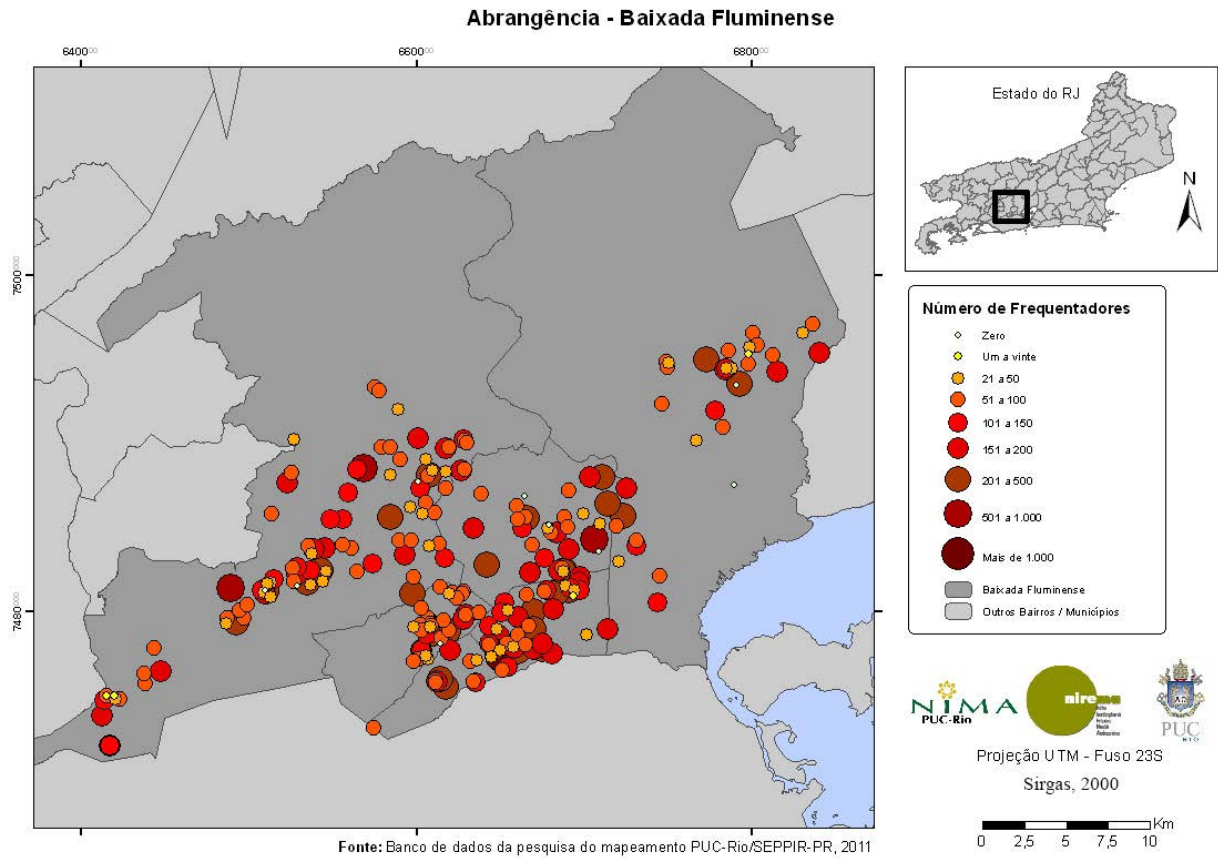


Fig. 3 - Prevalence of religious centers in the Baixada Fluminense research area.

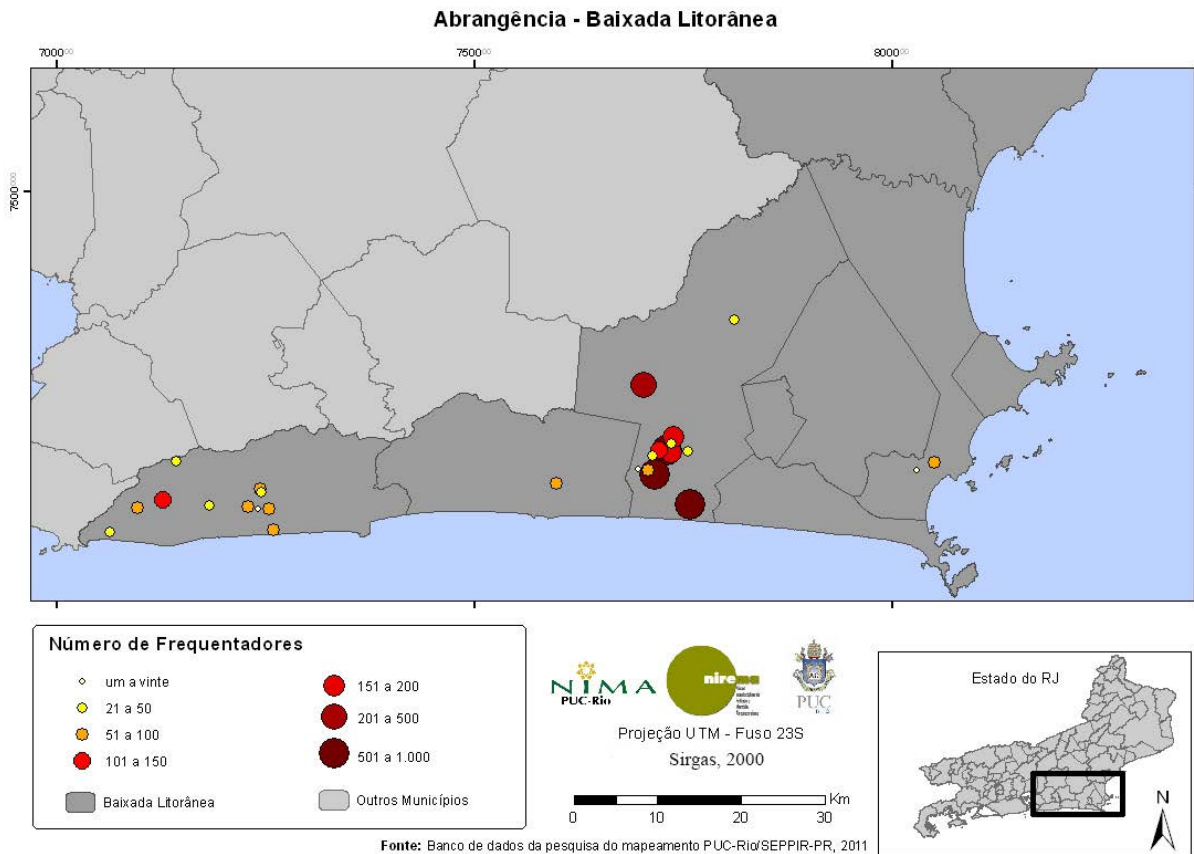


Fig.4 - Prevalence of religious centers in the Coastal Baixada research area.

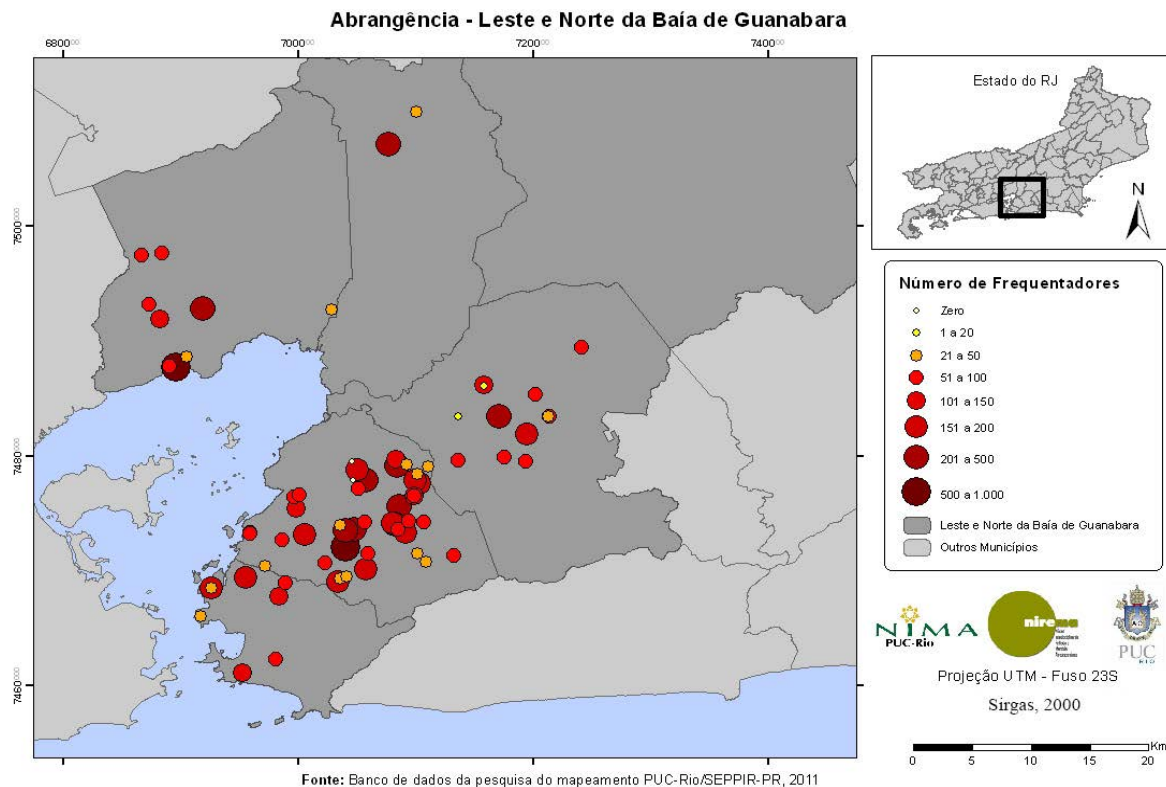


Fig.5 - Prevalence of religious centers in the East and North Guanabara Bay research area.

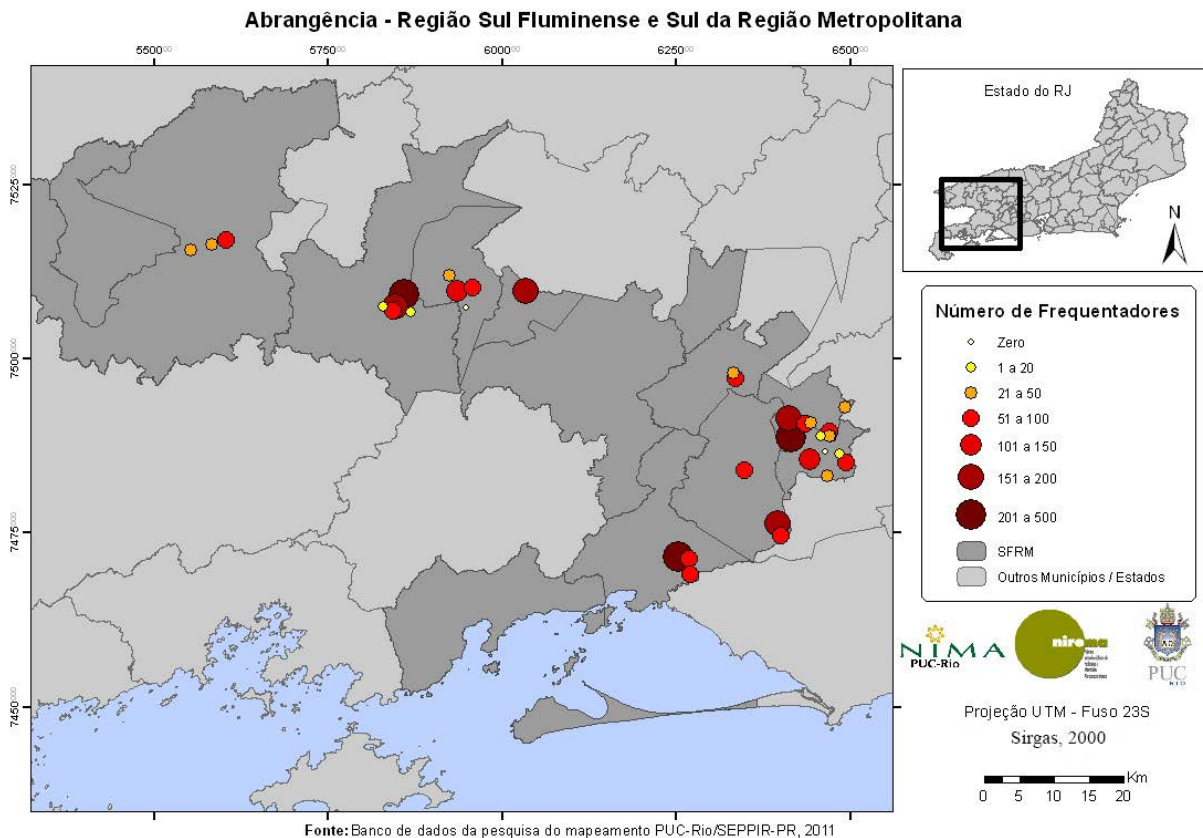


Fig.6 - Prevalence of religious centers in the South Fluminense and South Metropolitan research area.

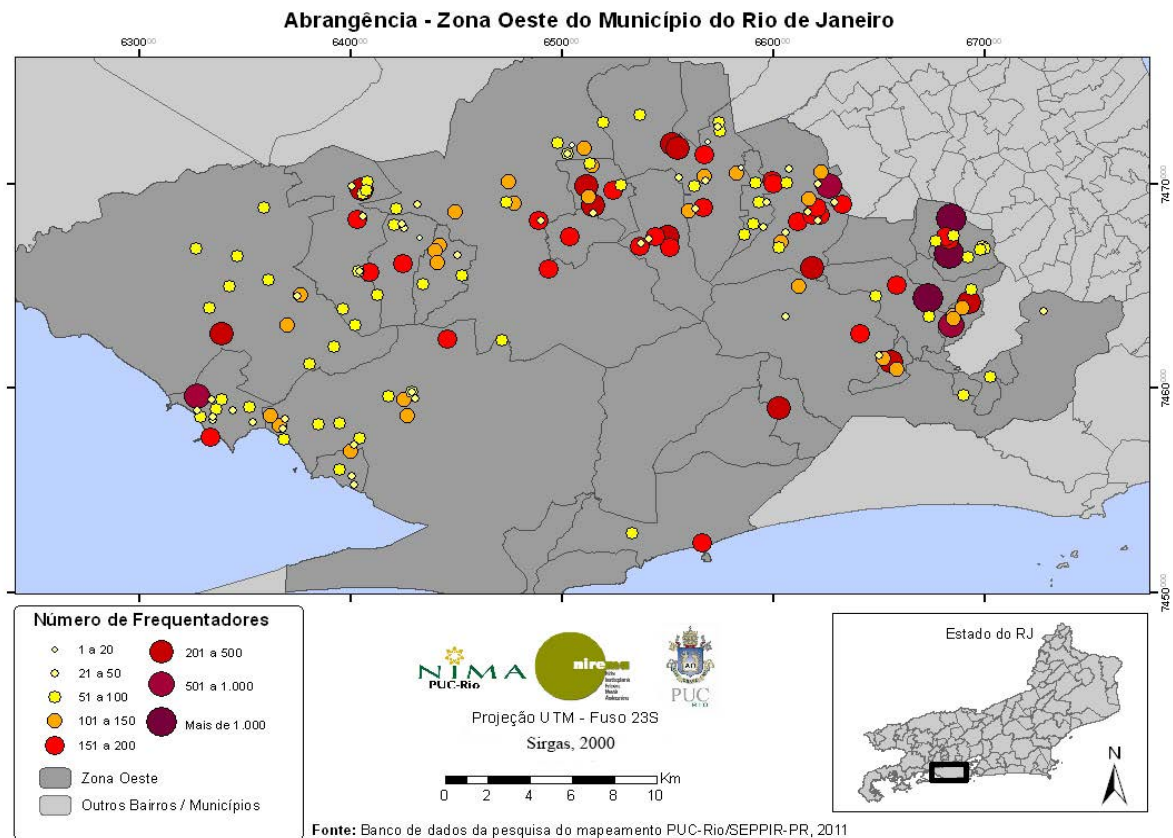


Fig.7 - Prevalence of religious centers in the West Municipal research area.

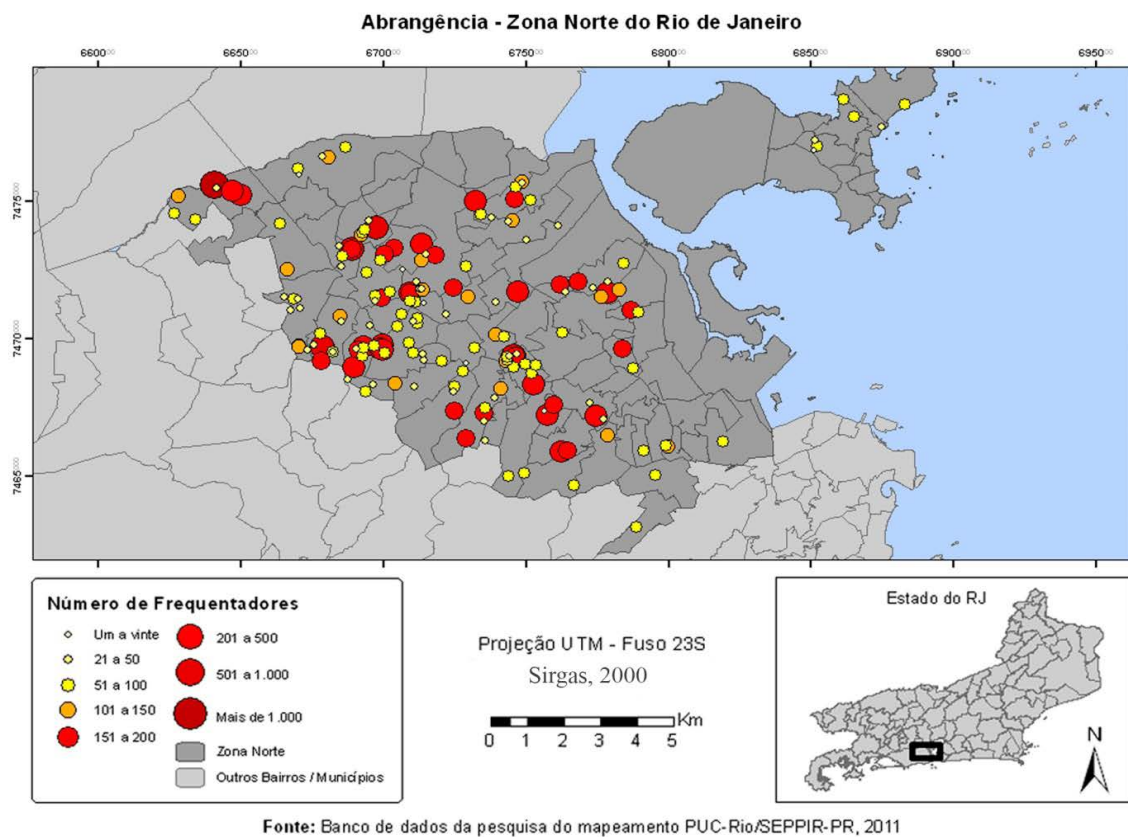


Fig.8 - Prevalence of religious centers in the North Municipal research area.

The geographical divisions adopted by the project, obtained from the pattern of spatial distribution of the centers and statistical evaluations applied to the survey results, made a significant contribution to confirming observations in the field and the statistical patterns discovered, such as the predominance of actions linked to extreme poverty in the Baixada Fluminense region and affirmative action in the East and North Guanabara Bay region, which is currently undergoing a profound spatial transformation. Details of these correlations can be seen in Fonseca and Giacomini (2014).

In this sense the maps produced within the territorial limits of the research, led clearly represent the spatial distribution of religious houses of African origin as well as their specific characteristics in social, frequency and types of social action that confirm the need for support in order differentiated the public policies of support and recognition and calibrate regional actions implemented by the state of Rio de Janeiro.

5.2 Representation techniques and mapped variables

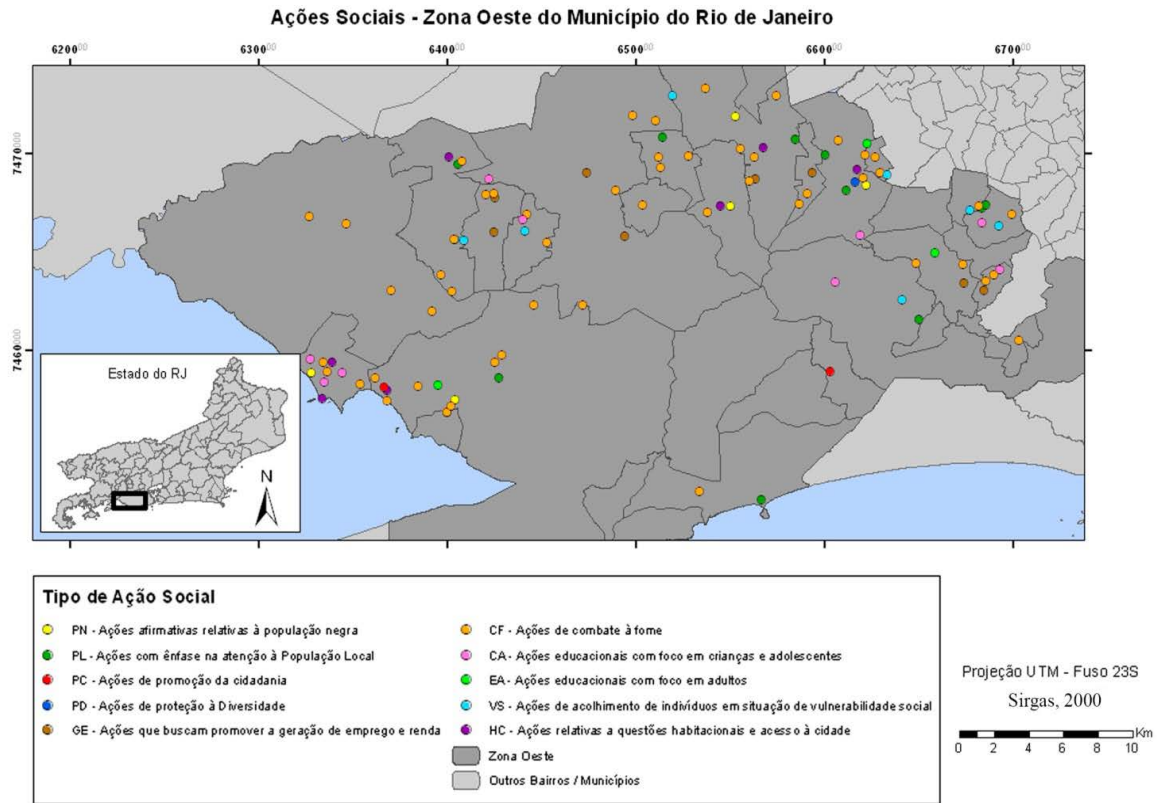
The maps produced from the surveys described seven variables that were used to understand the main characteristics of the centers, such as: social actions, socio-political agency, partnerships, scope, denomination, foundation and intolerance. All of these variables were mapped for each of the research areas described above.

The social action variable indicate the 10 different definitions used for social actions at the centers, which included: affirmative action relating to the black community, local community awareness actions, actions to protect diversity, actions to generate jobs and income, actions to combat hunger, educational actions focusing on children and adolescents, educational actions focusing on adults, actions to shelter people in vulnerable situations, actions relating to housing and access to the city and actions for the preservation of the

environment. The results were confusing in terms of patterns between points and color variations. One problem was the issue of selecting the action with the biggest impact at each center, excluding any others that could demonstrate the center's involvement in local social support. The survey did not contain any quantitative questions that would have allowed the impact of these actions on the surrounding environment to be calculated. Figure 9 presents the mapping of the social action variable in the West Zone research area.

The sociopolitical variable indicate the five different definitions used for social actions at the centers, which included: agent implanting public policy, central solidarity agent, participant of social networks for solidarity, sole agent of solidarity actions and no social actions developed. The results were clear, allowing the spatial distribution of the variable to be identified, which demonstrated that the most frequently occurring type of agency is the sole agent of solidarity actions. This suggests that the centers are relatively isolated, meaning that they are active as an agency but do not receive any support. Figure 10 presents the mapping of the sociopolitical agency variable for the West Zone region.

The partnership variable indicating the five different definitions used for partnerships at religious centers, which included: government, corporate, foundations and founding members of the center. The results were clear and allowed the spatial distribution of this variable to be identified, which demonstrated that the most frequently occurring type of partnership is between members of individual centers. This supports the data shown in the previous map suggesting that centers are relatively isolated but have strong interactions between their members. Figure 11 presents a map of the partnership variable in the West Zone region.



Fonte: Banco de dados da pesquisa do mapeamento PUC-Rio/SEPPiR-PR, 2011

Fig. 9 - Type of social action at religious centers in the West Zone research area.

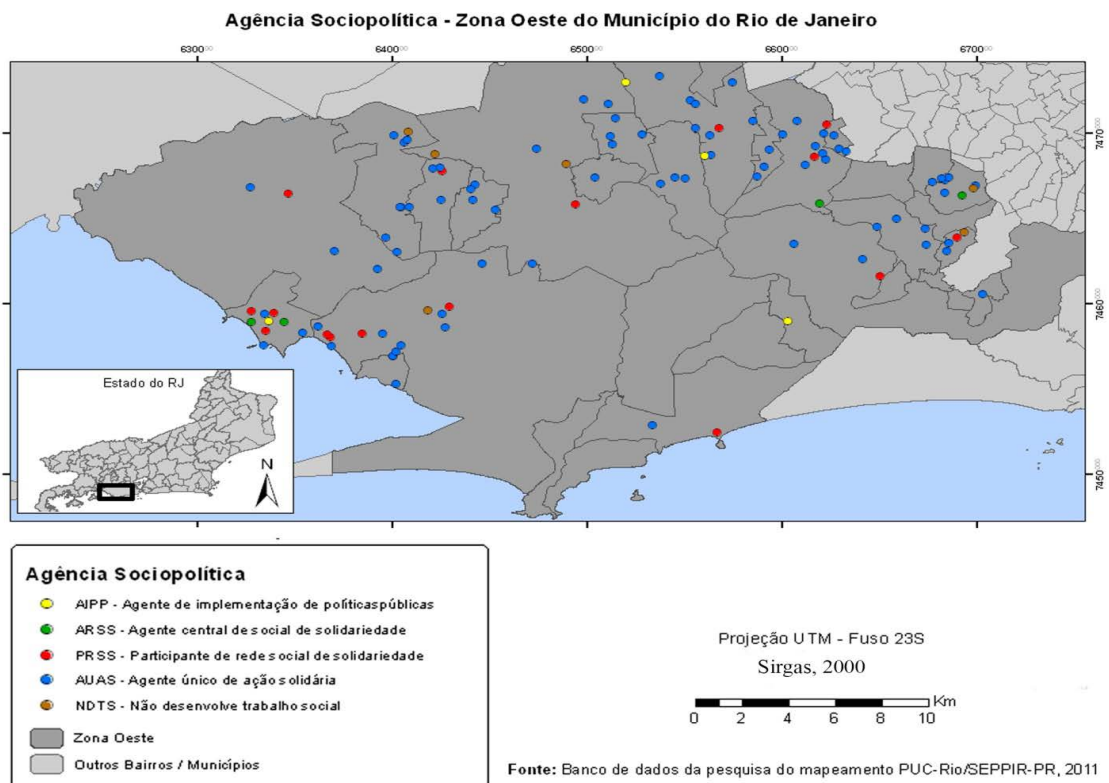


Fig. 10 - Type of sociopolitical agency operating at religious centers in the West Zone research area.

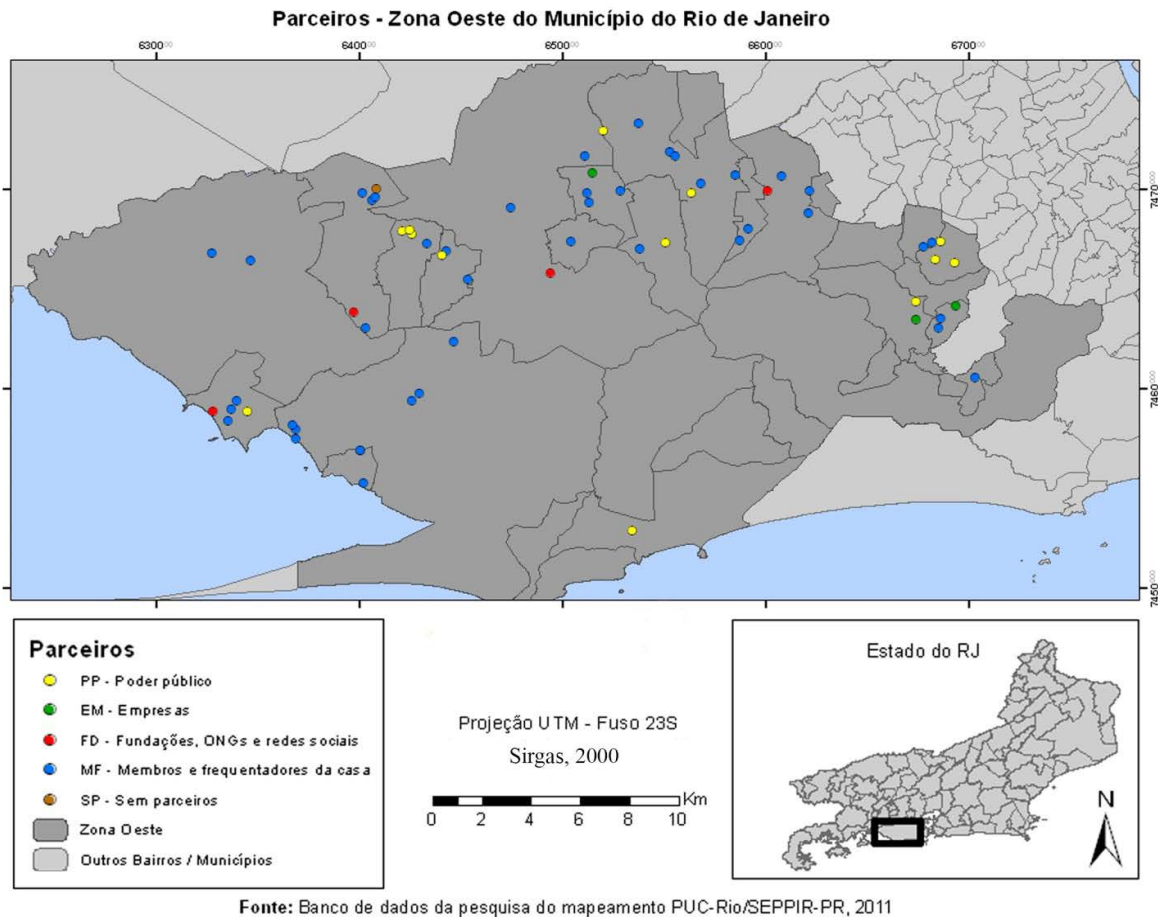


Fig.11 - Type of partnership at religious centers in the West Zone research area.

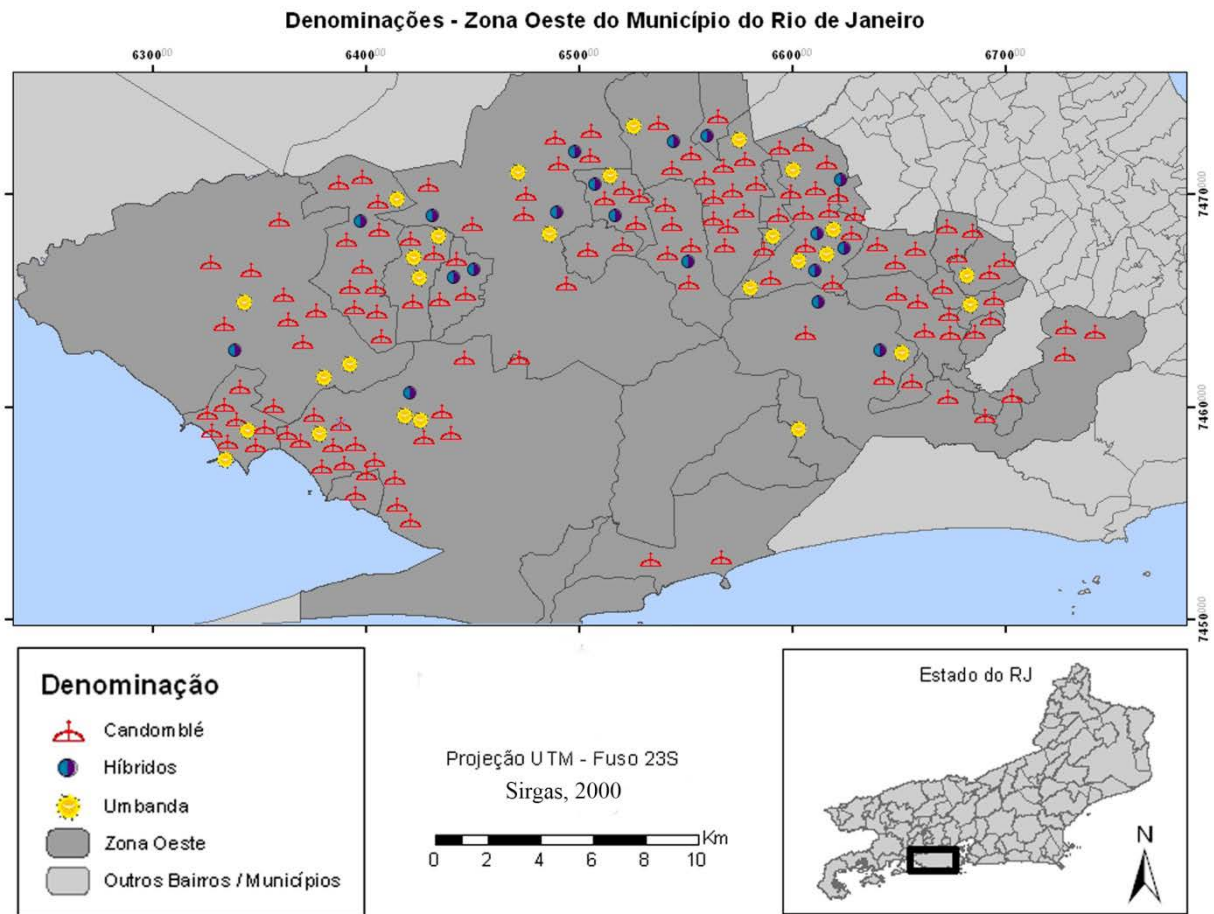
The Prevalence variable indicating the number of members of each center. The results were clear, allowing the spatial distribution of this variable and a hierarchy of the varying proportions and influences to be identified. Figure 7 presents the map for the Prevalence variable in the West Zone region.

The denomination variable indicating the denominations of the centers, which included: Candomblé, Umbanda and hybrid. The symbols for each denomination carry values relating to denomination as discussed and constructed in accordance with the Griot Board.

The results were clear, allowing the spatial distribution of the variable to be identified, mainly due to the small number of definitions and the simplicity of the shapes used. Figure 12 presents a map of the denomination variable for the West Zone region

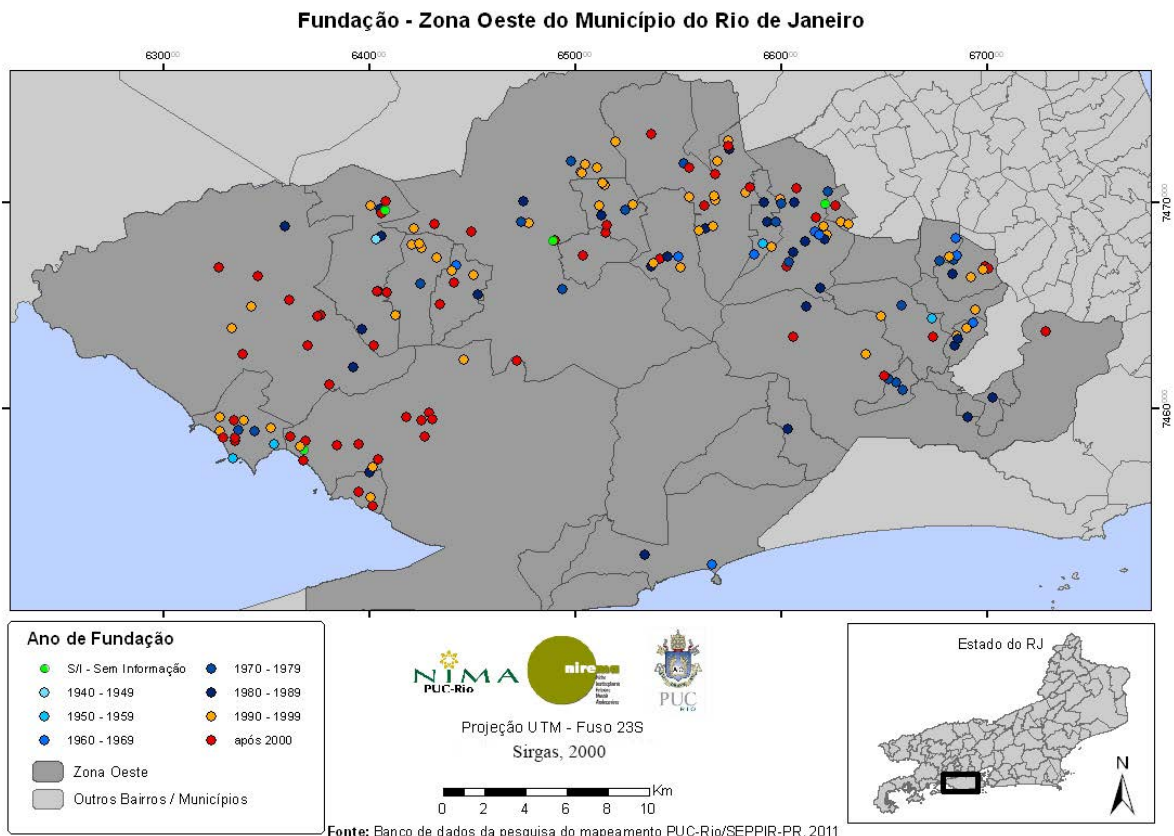
The foundation variable identifying the eight definitions for the year in which the centers were founded, made up of 10-year time periods. The results were clear, allowing the spatial distribution of the variable to be identified. This corroborated information provided by other maps, indicating that the older centers are usually the most visited and have the highest numbers of members. Figure 13 presents a map of the foundation variable in the West Zone region.

The identification of religious intolerance covering four definitions: no registration of occurrence, non-specific, private and public. The results were clear, allowing the spatial distribution of the variable to be identified, and it was established that half of the centers had suffered as a result of some form of intolerance. Figure 14 presents a map of religious intolerance in the West Zone region.



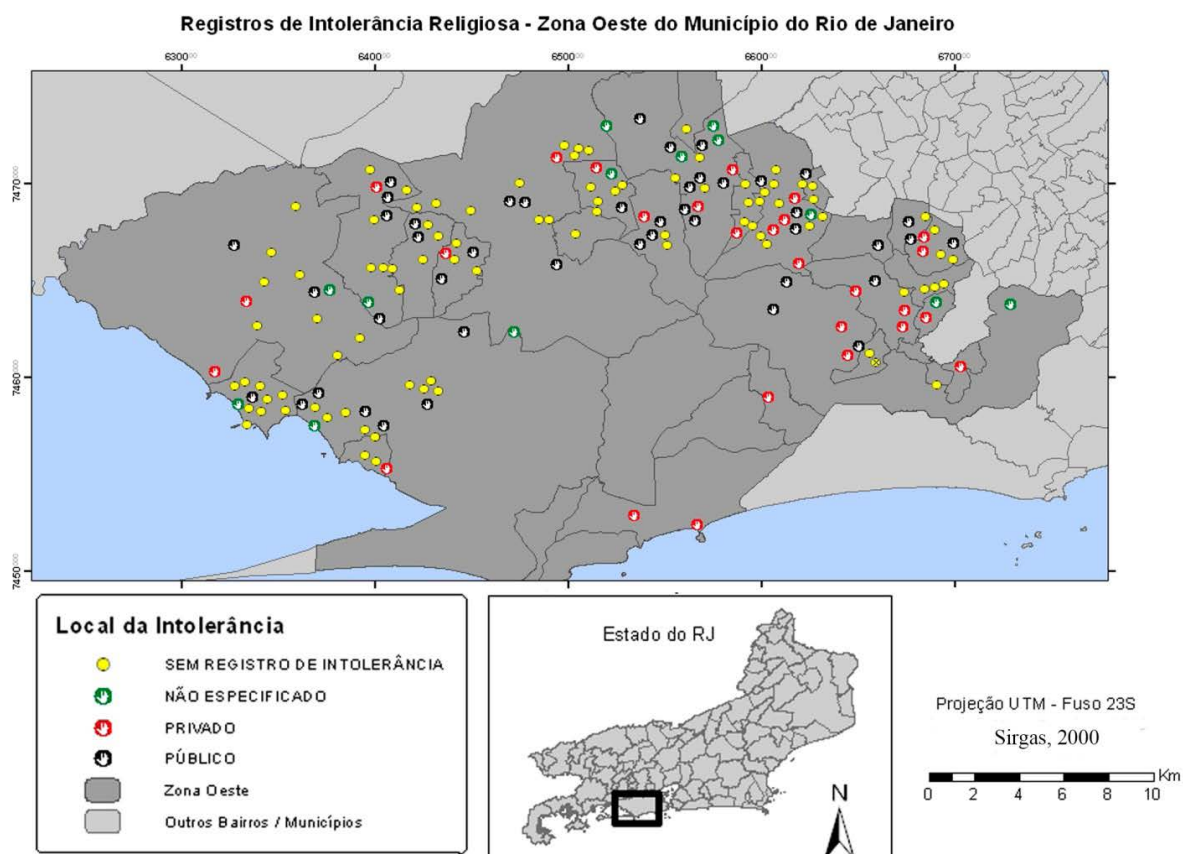
Fonte: Banco de dados da pesquisa do mapeamento PUC-Rio/SEPP-PR, 2011

Fig. 12 - Denomination of religious centers in the West Zone research area.



Fonte: Banco de dados da pesquisa do mapeamento PUC-Rio/SEPP-PR, 2011

Fig.13 - Year that the center was founded in the West Zone research area.



Fonte: Banco de dados da pesquisa do mapeamento PUC-Rio/SEPP-PR, 2011

Fig.14 - Registration of religious intolerance in religious centers the West Zone research area.

The mapping of the seven variables derived from field surveys allowed consistently qualify the source, the social role, the name, scope, and intolerance of religious houses of African origin, which plays a decisive role in understanding the influence of these houses in dynamics of your surroundings both in the positive direction contributing to the improvement of the local population quality as in the negative direction in the identification of religious intolerance actions.

6. CONCLUSION

The project and maps have been proven to be efficient tools for socio-spatial perception. The consolidation of the cartographic representations of religious centers of African origin in a georeferenced environment allowed the physical network to be visualized.

The network takes shape through the different maps produced and the geographical areas developed by the project, spatially representing the surveys conducted at each of the religious centers.

Each map affirms that these centers have

a clear and well-defined role in society, and that although they maintain political partnerships, the extent and scope of these links are usually determined by the center's members, which was observed in centers with over 1000 members. In addition, it is important to highlight that almost half of these centers have suffered as a result of some form of discrimination.

The picture that has been drawn up creates possibilities and opens up opportunities for consistent actions to integrate this network into civil society and the state at each of its political and administrative levels.

From a cartographic and geographic perspective, this study can be considered as just the beginning. The mapped variables may be integrated, generating content that may facilitate in the understanding of the different roles that these centers perform in their surrounding communities. The thematic data may be integrated with information on transport, land relief, coverage and use maps and census data to describe the communities that are influenced by

these centers and the region as a whole in terms of its infrastructure.

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