

**Urban Parks on the Political Agenda of the Municipality of
Sao Paulo-SP**

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ABSTRACT

Urban parks perform different and important functions in cities, providing numerous environmental benefits and improving the quality of life of the city population. Studies that address the value of urban parks, as well as discuss the relevance of municipal planning and public policies aimed at building environmentally healthy cities, are essential. These aspects justify the development of this study, which aimed to identify whether urban parks are part of the political agenda of the previous and current management of the Municipality of São Paulo/SP. For the development of the theoretical framework of this study, a systematic review was carried out in the ProQuest, Scielo, Scopus databases, in which articles published between 2010 and 2020 were sought. In order to identify whether urban parks are part of the political agenda of the previous and current management of the Municipality of São Paulo/SP, a documentary research was carried out, and for that the Government Plan and the Guidelines of the Government Plan of the current/re-elected management from the city of São Paulo were consulted. The data revealed the importance of urban parks for the maintenance of environmental quality in urban areas and for the quality of life of the population that resides and transits through cities. Furthermore, it showed that urban parks are part of the political agenda of the previous and current/re-elected management of the municipality of São Paulo. Thus, urban parks are among the themes to which municipal management has dedicated its attention and has been developing a set of alternative actions for the maintenance of parks.

Keywords: Urban Green Areas; Urban Parks; Urban Planning; Public policy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The city of São Paulo is the most important financial center in Brazil, recognized for its heterogeneous culture, arising from migratory processes, which contributed to the expansion of the metropolis. This growth, which occurred in a disorderly manner, caused environmental degradation, such as: soil sealing and soil contamination; release of atmospheric pollutants; disposal of solid and liquid waste in effluents; occupation of preservation areas, among others (BRANCO, 2011).

Contemporary urban problems, such as: air pollution, water pollution and noise pollution, floods, traffic jams, among others, cause serious damage to the physical and mental health of the city population. In addition, population growth and city growth, associated with the absence of public policies capable of reconciling this growth with the maintenance of green areas, have suppressed vegetation in metropolises, making cities less and less welcoming (LONDE; MENDES, 2014).

São Paulo presents inequality in its vegetation coverage. Although the municipality is fully inserted in the Atlantic Forest biome, only 40% of its territory has green areas (SOS MATA ATLÂNTICA, 2019). Seeking to change this situation, the Secretariat for the Green and the Environment, "*Secretaria do Verde e do Meio Ambiente*" (SVMA), decided to expand the system of green areas in the City of São Paulo and launched, at the end of 2008, the 100 Parks Program, with the objective of expanding and distributing, in a balanced way, parks throughout the municipality, in 2012 (SVMA, 2019; BRANCO, 2011).

Currently, the city of São Paulo has 108 parks in place (CSP, 2022). In line with the proposal presented by the SVMA, Limnios and Furlan (2013) also suggest the creation of more parks in the City as a way to promote social balance. After all, the quality of the urban landscape is measured by the set of infrastructure elements (CAMARA; MOSCARELLI, 2019) that compose it. However, the increase in the number of green areas in São Paulo City, through the implementation of new parks, is not enough to guarantee the quality of life of São Paulo City residents (LIMNIOS; FURLAN, 2013).

Londe and Mendes (2014) observed that several Brazilian cities have shown high growth in recent decades and this growth has forced the government to spend significant sums of resources to provide these cities with equipment and infrastructure capable of meeting the desires of the inhabitants. However, investments in health, security, education and sanitation services are a priority. In this way, the environmental quality is left in second plan.

In the municipality of São Paulo, the Municipal Strategic Master Plan (SMP), approved in July 2014, guides the development of the City, seeking social, environmental and economic balance, thus effectively improving the quality of life of the city population (SMDU, 2016a). The SMP also proposes the implementation of another 167 new parks, which will be added to the existing ones, expanding the amount of green areas in São Paulo, transforming it into a more sustainable city (SMDU, 2016b).

Muñoz and Freitas (2017) highlighted that urban parks are important elements for environmental quality and social interaction in large cities. These green areas provide various ecosystem services to society, including: microclimate regulation; thermal comfort; removal of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere; noise pollution control; protection of springs and water resources, urban drainage, among others. In this way, the ecosystem services provided by urban parks provide well-being to the urban population. In addition, urban parks are also relevant areas for promoting environmental education and biodiversity conservation (MUÑOZ; FREITAS, 2017).

Therefore, public policies need to be very well articulated (MELLO-THÉRY, 2011), because green areas, such as parks, play different and important roles in urban space, providing numerous environmental benefits, improving quality of life and promoting health and well-being of the city population (LONDE; MENDES, 2014). Therefore, studies that address the value of urban parks, as well as discuss the relevance of municipal planning and public policies aimed at building environmentally healthy and sustainable cities, are of vital importance (LONDE; MENDES, 2014). These aspects justify the development of this research, which aimed at identifying whether urban parks are part of the political agenda of the current management of the city of São Paulo/SP.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 Data collection procedures

For the development of this study, a systematic review was carried out. According to Sampaio and Mancini (2007), it is a research method that makes use of the literature to obtain data on a given subject. To carry out this review, an investigation protocol was elaborated following the guidelines of Donato and Donato (2019), Pereira and Galvão (2014) and Okoli and Schabram (2010).

This systematic review was carried out in the ProQuest, Scielo, Scopus databases, in which articles published between 2010 and 2020 that report the importance of parks for urban environments and how public policies are articulated for these green areas were searched. These databases were chosen because they allow the search for articles written and published in different languages. In this way, it was possible to consider as many languages as possible, as suggested by Donato and Donato (2019).

Seeking to ensure quality and accuracy to the investigation, Boolean operators were used which, according to Donato and Donato (2019) and Pereira and Galvão (2014), allow combining the terms that will be used in the research. The Boolean operators adopted in this study were: and - which, according to Donato and Donato (2019), make it possible to combine research segments and/or different concepts, that is, it can be used to locate different terms

(PEREIRA; GALVÃO, 2014); or - which allows you to search for synonyms or related terms (DONATO; DONATO (2019), thus retrieving articles that address one or another topic (PEREIRA; GALVÃO, 2014); quotation marks - which bring together the words in the search for phrases (DONATO & DONATO, 2019).

Okoli and Schabram (2010) emphasized that it is important to understand and correctly use Boolean operators to perform a more fruitful search in databases. The operators adopted in this research were applied at the intersection of the keywords: "urban parks"; "urban planning"; "urban green areas"; "public policy". The search for articles in the databases made it possible to raise a significant volume of studies: Scopus - 749 articles; ProQuest - 407 articles; Scielo - 5 articles.

In the Scopus and ProQuest databases, the option was to sort the most cited works. Thus, in each crossing carried out in these databases, when possible, the most cited articles were selected, resulting in 40 articles chosen in the ProQuest database and 29 articles chosen in the Scopus database. Considering that only 5 articles were collected in the Scielo database, all of them were selected for this research. The 74 articles from the screening were "imported" and submitted to automatic analysis by the *Mendeley software*, for verification and exclusion of duplicate works.

In order to identify whether urban parks are part of the political agenda of the current management of the Municipality of São Paulo/SP, a documentary research was carried out, which according to Cechinel et al. (2016) consists of studying documents that have not yet received analytical treatment in relation to a given object of study. For this, the internet pages of the political party to which the re-elected mayor was linked in the term between the years 2017-2021 were consulted.

In this way, it was possible to access the Government Plan and the Guidelines of the Government Plan. These documents present, according to the decision-makers' perception, the situation of the Municipality of São Paulo until 2020, that is, before the end of the mayor's term, which ran from 2017 to 2020, and the agenda for the next term of office of the then re-elected mayor, which runs from 2021 to 2024.

The data presented in the Government Plan and in the Government Plan Guidelines were analyzed for the development of this research. Thus, when we refer to the "previous management" throughout the text, we are referring to the mandate that ran between 2017 and 2020, and when we refer to the "current management", we are referring to the mandate that runs between 2021 and 2024. It is worth remembering that, between 2017 and 2021, three different politicians occupied the city hall of São Paulo and, until the end of this research, the third politician to take over the city hall remains in office.

2.2 Data analysis

The 74 articles destined for analysis in the *Mendeley software* went through: selection of titles (SAMPAIO; MANCINI, 2007) – articles with titles consistent with the interests of this research were considered; selection of abstracts (TOLEDO; NARDOCCI, 2011) – when the titles were not clear enough for the articles to be approved or excluded from this research, they were intended for screening by reading the abstracts; selection by complete reading – applied when the abstracts were not tangible, in these cases the articles passed to the last screening, that is, they were read in full and those that did not match the objective of this study were disregarded.

In order to identify whether urban parks are part of the municipal agenda, the Government Plan and the Guidelines of the Government Plan of the re-elected mayor were read in full. In this way, it was possible to evaluate each document, analyzing them critically,

observing the following elements: context, authors, interests, reliability, nature of the text and key concepts, as guided by Cechinel *et al.* (2016).

3. THEORETICAL REFERENCE

3.1 Urban parks and the dynamics of cities

Cities are places where social relationships are established, therefore, the improvement of environmental quality in urban areas promotes benefits both for the health and well-being of the population that resides and transits through cities. Therefore, urban green areas constitute a valuable asset for the planning and development of a healthier and more sustainable built environment (VARGAS; ROLDÁN, 2018; LONDE; MENDES, 2014).

Urban spaces and the actors inserted in them are very dynamic and constantly change, both in terms of architecture and the patterns of use of these spaces. In this way, parks are environmentally, culturally and historically relevant objects for cities, because they improve the quality of the urban landscape, enhancing nature and providing diverse environments. Such environments can be used for multiple purposes, which is why parks are attractive to a wide range of users (CAMARA; MOSCARELLI, 2019).

Grijalva *et al.* (2019) observed that the global trend of urban growth makes the management of green areas, such as parks, an important issue, especially in arid and semi-arid cities, where the difficulty is to maintain and/or increase vegetation cover without increasing consumption of water for irrigation. In this context, Vargas and Roldán (2018) emphasized that the improvement in the supply of parks in urban areas must be accompanied by procedures that prevent these spaces from becoming a nuisance for the surrounding residents. Because, according to Silva Júnior and Santos (2017), social issues, such as violence, poor infrastructure, among others, can affect the social representations of urban parks and their effects on the feeling of belonging, as well as on the appreciation of nature and the biodiversity conservation.

For Muñoz and Freitas (2017) it is necessary to understand the dynamics of parks to base urban planning strategies with sustainability parameters. For, in addition to the conservation and characterization of biodiversity, urban parks maintain and preserve water sources, remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, increase soil permeability - enabling urban drainage, enhance the landscape and culture in cities, improve the quality of life for the urban population, among other benefits (MUÑOZ; FREITAS, 2017) related to the provision of ecosystem and environmental services.

Lo and Jim (2010) stressed that citizens attribute multiple values to urban parks and these spaces perform various functions in cities. The floristic and faunal composition, for example, plays a sociocultural role and that is why parks are recognized as a common good for city citizens. In this context, Skandrani and Prévot (2015) showed that a wide range of uses and individual practices attributed to urban green spaces, such as parks, enable citizens to experience their freedom both with nature and with social relations.

3.2 Urban parks and public policies

Urban parks are, in short, considered free spaces, with a predominance of arboreal vegetation, accessible to the city population (LONDE; MENDES, 2014). These spaces have become targets of studies in academia since the 20th century, when discussions on topics such as quality of life, sustainability, public spaces, green infrastructure, among others, entered the public policy agenda (REIS BATISTA, 2014). However, according to Martínez and Sainz-

Santamaría (2017), public policy makers neglect the importance of urban parks, even though these spaces provide services that favor the health, safety and recreation of citizens.

According to Muñoz and Freitas (2017), the adoption of public policies aimed at the sustainable management of urban areas depends on expanding the knowledge of the human population about the ecological dynamics established in cities. In addition, it is necessary to recover the natural heritage through management plans that make it possible to restore the flora and recover degraded areas. In this way, the ecosystem services provided by urban green areas, such as parks, will be maintained and conserved (MUÑOZ; FREITAS, 2017).

De La Mora (2019) observed that, although there are social sectors that admit that parks value and improve urban development, these spaces are not a priority in the creation of public policy instruments - norms, programs or strategies. Likewise, public management does not always have bodies specialized in the formulation and implementation of sustainable actions and policies, and, generally, decision makers are also unaware of the problem (DE LA MORA, 2019). However, it is essential that public management develop and support policies for the implementation, maintenance and conservation of urban parks, since the health benefits of the population are related to the quality and quantity of parks available in cities (SANTOS et al., 2019 ; MASIERO, 2016).

Ramos et al. (2016) highlighted that, in a world in which most of the population lives in urbanized areas, and urbanization only tends to grow, it is necessary to plan spaces that allow the approximation of citizens with natural areas. The authors emphasize that urban parks must be recognized and incorporated into the planning, infrastructure and management of cities, because they are configured as opportunities for interaction between citizens and the elements of nature in the urban environment (RAMOS et al., 2016).

Gomes (2014) stressed that urban parks cannot be understood as simple elements of the landscape, because they are equipment capable of changing the dynamics of production and enhancement of urban spaces. The author stressed that urban parks are equipment that, when implemented as public spaces aimed at leisure and environmental conservation, are contradictorily characterized by private appropriation and denial of environmental conservation, as they are generally implemented in empty, idle spaces, with exotic species, considering aesthetic standards (GOMES, 2014).

Lo and Jim (2010) observed that the recreational use of parks is associated with the standard of living in cities, which is characterized by being private and cramped in small dwellings. In this way, people are compelled to frequent open public areas and these are perceived as an extension of the domestic space. That said, the authors emphasized that this pluralistic view of citizen behavior should be considered in urban planning and management.

Therefore, according to Lo and Jim (2012), cities need more green areas, such as parks, to alleviate the unpleasant urban landscape and minimize recurrent problems, such as floods, floods and floods, for example. In addition, the scarcity of green spaces is detrimental to the quality of life and contradicts the search for a more sustainable city. The authors also stressed that public management needs to undergo restructuring and allow greater engagement and participation of citizens in planning and decision-making in relation to urban parks.

For Mello-Théry (2011) public policies must be articulated so that the population perceives green areas, such as parks, as important environments for the functioning of the urban system and engages and defends the environmental quality of their territories. Silva Júnior and Santos (2017) emphasized that citizens, especially those living around urban parks, should be seen as partners for the maintenance and conservation of these spaces and they should participate in management, sharing their desires and desires with employees.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quality of the urban environment comes from the quality of the green areas and these must provide adequate, safe, accessible and, above all, pleasant equipment and infrastructure for the population. The lack of urban green areas demonstrates the indifference of the public power in relation to the physical and mental health of citizens, in addition to the absence of a broad vision of the future and, in particular, the fragility of urban planning and public policies. In this way, the government, in addition to engendering new spaces for leisure, recreation and environmental comfort, must certify, through public policies, the quality of these spaces, transforming these areas into attractive environments for the population to use and, consequently, promoting improvement of quality of life (LONDE; MENDES, 2014).

Based on this premise, it was considered relevant to identify whether urban parks are part of the political agenda of the previous and current management of the municipality of São Paulo/SP. For this, the Government Plan and the Guidelines of the Government Plan of the re-elected mayor were analyzed and in these documents the situation of the city of São Paulo until the end of 2020 was identified - that is, until the end of the mayor's mandate, in relation to environmental quality, and what are the proposals of the re-elected/current management.

The Government Plan and the Government Plan Guidelines present the Programmatic Commitments divided into two contexts, one reports, according to the perception of public managers, the situation of the municipality of São Paulo until the end of 2020, classified as: “*where we are*” and the other presents the proposals for the current mandate, which runs between 2021 and 2024, called: “*where are we going to get*” (PLANO DE GOVERNMENT, 2020; DIRETRIZES DO PLANO DE GOVERNMENT, 2020).

In the Programmatic Commitment Global and Sustainable City, in the context of “*where we are*”, the actions and commitments of the city of São Paulo in defense of the environment are presented. These actions are: possibility of changing the energy matrix; signature of agreements and pacts; implementation of new parks and revitalization of existing ones; increase in vegetation cover by planting trees; concession of parks to the private sector. As well as installation of veterinary hospitals; inauguration of ecopoints, composting yards and health waste treatment centers; banning the use of plastic straws; establishment of the Municipal Plan for the Conservation of the Atlantic Forest (PLANO DE GOVERNMENT, 2020; GUIDELINES DO PLANO DE GOVERNMENT, 2020). In table 1 it is possible to visualize the description of the mentioned actions.

Knowing the actions carried out by the previous management of the municipality of São Paulo, in relation to environmental issues, makes it possible to understand the plans for the current management and, mainly, how urban parks are or are not included in the municipal agenda. For Muñoz and Freitas (2017), understanding the dynamics of cities is essential to underpin urban planning strategies with sustainable principles.

Table 1. Actions carried out by the management of the municipality of São Paulo that were in force between 2017 and 2020, to comply with environmental protection agreements.

PROGRAMMATIC COMMITMENT	CONTEXT	ACTIONS	FULL DESCRIPTION
Global and Sustainable City	Where we are	Possibility of changing the energy matrix:	<i>“São Paulo today has the conditions to be a world protagonist of an agenda to defend the environment and to promote a change in the energy matrix, towards a cleaner and more renewable one.”</i>
		Signing of agreements and pacts:	<i>“The responsibility assumed by the city (and by three other Brazilian capitals) to lead initiatives in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement, participation in the C40, adherence to the UN Global Compact, which commits the municipality with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), demonstrate the relevance and leading role of São Paulo in formulating proposals that guarantee protection and a better quality of life for future generations. The city of São Paulo is also a signatory to the Global Compact for Accessible and Inclusive Cities.”</i>
		Implementation of new parks and revitalization of existing ones:	<i>“In the last four years, the city gained 3 new parks: in Itaquera, Santo Amaro and Parelheiros – the first urban park in the region –, and another 24 received revitalization works. Another 5 natural parks were opened to visitors.”</i>
		Increased vegetation coverage through tree planting:	<i>“Almost 200,000 trees were planted. Today, the vegetation cover of the municipality of São Paulo occupies 48% of the territory, 63 m² per inhabitant.”</i>
		Concession of parks to the private sector:	<i>The option for concessions – the first lot of which included Ibirapuera and 5 other parks on the outskirts – became an example of how to add efficiency to City Hall's work without going back on citizens' rights.</i>
		Installation of veterinary hospitals:	<i>“We installed the 3rd veterinary hospital in the city, in Santo Amaro.”</i>
		Inauguration of ecopoints, composting yards and health waste treatment centers:	<i>“We inaugurated 20 new ecopoints, increasing the amount of waste collected by 144% compared to 2016. We also implemented 4 composting yards (the city had only 1 until September 2018) and we inaugurated the largest healthcare waste treatment center in Latin America.”</i>
		Prohibition of the use of straws and other plastic utensils:	<i>“Other measures taken and imbued with the values that guide us were the prohibition of the use of plastic straws and the supply of plastic disposables in restaurants, bars and other commercial activities.”</i>
		Establishment of the Municipal Plan for the Conservation of the Atlantic Forest:	<i>“And it is impossible not to mention the launch, in partnership with SOS Mata Atlântica, of the Municipal Plan for the Conservation of the Atlantic Forest, focusing on the remnants of vegetation in the city.”</i>

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data available in the Government Plan (2020) and Government Plan Guidelines (2020).

In the context of “*where are we going to get*”, of the Government Plan and Guidelines of the Government Plan, the following are presented as proposals for fulfilling the Global and Sustainable City Programmatic Commitment: increased maintenance of green areas; signature of agreements, pacts and letter of commitment, continuity in concession processes, partnerships and privatizations; implementation of new parks and revitalization of existing ones; inauguration of a veterinary hospital; measures to combat floods; infrastructure investments; grounding growth in the green economy; improve solid waste management (PLANO DE GOVERNMENT, 2020; GUIDELINES DO PLAN DE GOVERNMENT, 2020). Table 2 shows the description of these proposals.

Table 2. Actions that will be carried out by the management of the municipality of São Paulo that will be in force between 2021 and 2024, to comply with environmental protection agreements.

PROGRAMMATIC COMMITMENT	CONTEXT	PROPOSALS	FULL DESCRIPTION
Global and Sustainable City	Where we want to get	More efforts in the maintenance of green areas:	<i>“We are going to put more efforts in the maintenance of squares, parks and outdoor living spaces, in the resurfacing of roads and in the readjustment and recovery of over 1.5 million m² of sidewalks.”</i>
		Signing of agreements and pacts:	<i>“As in the Paris Agreement, we are going to establish international partnerships focused on preserving the environment. Sign bilateral agreements with countries of international reference in the preservation of the environment, especially with regard to climate issues.”</i>
		Continuity in concession processes, partnerships and privatizations:	<i>“We are going to conclude the planned concessions and privatizations, concentrate the machine on essential services – in particular, health and education – and expand the Descomplica SP units, to make life even easier for people. people and entrepreneurs, establishing São Paulo as a city dedicated to the creative economy. We are going to continue the public-private partnerships program, directing gains from exemptions and grants to priority areas, such as health, education, mobility and urban janitorial work, prioritizing work in the following axes: 1) innovation, technology and connectivity, for example, with the exploration studies of the pipeline network for cabling and connectivity; 2) janitorial and urban furniture, with the design of underpasses for viaducts and the viability of public restrooms and drinking fountains; 3) exploitation of underutilized equipment and public spaces to promote cultural, sports and leisure activities, such as urban parks and public squares.”</i>
		Implementation of new parks and revitalization of existing ones:	<i>“Over the next four years, São Paulo will continue expanding its green areas, either through the expansion of squares and parks, or by planting an average of 100 thousand seedlings/year. The city will gain new parks, such as Augusta and Paraisópolis, which have been awaited by the population for years, and will receive careful and permanent maintenance of the existing units. We will continue with the concession of parks, such as Trianon, Chácara do Jockey and Chuisco. Three EcoParques will be implemented, the first of them in Santo Amaro.”</i>
		Inauguration of a veterinary hospital:	<i>“The fourth veterinary hospital in the city will be created.”</i>
		Commitment Letter:	<i>“The plan is a signatory to the Letter of Commitment of the Permanent Green Forum for Parks, Squares and Green Areas.”</i>

		Measures to fight floods:	<i>"Use technology to fight floods, contribute to the State Government in the important challenge of cleaning up the Pinheiros River and improve sanitation indicators."</i>
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Table 2. Actions that will be carried out in the future management of the municipality of São Paulo to comply with environmental protection agreements.

PROGRAMMATIC COMMITMENT	CONTEXT	PROPOSALS	FULL DESCRIPTION
		Investments in infrastructure:	<i>"New investments in infrastructure will distribute and intensify local development, reduce inequalities between the center and the peripheries and contribute to the recovery of the economy in the post-pandemic."</i>
		Base growth on the green economy:	<i>"We seek to project the city internationally, recognizing São Paulo as a global capital of culture, diversity – natural and human – and sustainability. Our international presence and protagonism must be guided by a development strategy anchored in the new green economy. Accelerated with the covid-19 pandemic, changes in the way of living and living together reinforce the finding that the circular economy will increasingly figure as an economic opportunity. The order is to seek to curb the degradation of natural resources and remunerate the different actors in the production chains more fairly."</i>
		Improve solid waste management.	<i>"Actions linked to the Municipal Policy on Climate Change will be improved and the application of the Municipal Policy on Solid Waste improved. We are going to expand selective collection and increase recycling and composting rates, stimulating the work of collectors' cooperatives and the population's environmental awareness. We will make São Paulo the green capital of the country, environmentally sustainable and balanced."</i>

Source: Prepared by the author based on data available in the Government Plan (2020) and Government Plan Guidelines (2020).

The actions and proposals described in the Government Plan and Guidelines of the Government Plan of the current/re-elected management of the municipality of São Paulo, presented in this study in tables 1 and 2, demonstrate that the Municipality has been adopting sustainable practices and these will be maintained by the current/re-elected management. According to Muñoz and Freitas (2017), urban development cohesive with environmental preservation and conservation and, consequently, the maintenance of ecosystem services, is a contemporary challenge for public management, since public policies in urban areas have been, for a long time, aimed at the construction of housing, schools, health centers, hospitals, viaducts and bridges, while environmental issues were low priority (MUÑOZ; FREITAS, 2017).

The Government Plan and the Guidelines of the Government Plan make it clear that urban parks are included in the municipal agenda, both under the management that ran between 2017 and 2020 (*"In the last four years, the city gained 3 new parks"[...] "another 24 received revitalization works. Another 5 natural parks were opened to visitors." - chart 1*), as well as the re-elected/current management (*"Over the next four years, São Paulo will continue to expand its green areas, either through the expansion of squares and parks, either by planting an average of 100,000 seedlings/year. The city will gain new parks" [...] "and will have careful and permanent maintenance of the existing units." [...] "The plan is a signatory to the Letter of Commitment of the Permanent Green Forum for Parks, Squares and Green Areas." - Table 2 - GOVERNMENT PLAN, 2020; GOVERNMENT PLAN GUIDELINES, 2020*).

The increase in the number of urban parks in the city, according to the second paragraph of article 25 of the PDE: *“balances the relationship between the built environment and green areas, guaranteeing spaces for leisure and recreation for the population”*. In addition to promoting: *“compliance with ecological, landscape, productive, urban, leisure and sociability practices”*, as noted in the second paragraph of article 25 of the PDE (DIÁRIO OFICIAL, 2014).

According to De La Mora (2019), the conservation and proper functioning of urban green areas, such as parks, support a more balanced territorial development, as they positively influence the well-being of the city population and are fundamental for carrying out social activities. Therefore, urban parks must have more political visibility in decision-making, to ensure the perpetuity of these green spaces (DE LA MORA, 2019).

Ibes (2015) pointed out that urban parks are often underestimated, but these spaces are agents of change and have the potential to transform cities into fairer, more sustainable and livable places. Since parks offer benefits to the physical, psychological and social well-being of urban citizens, therefore, public policies must consider socio-environmental aspects to improve the use of these green areas (MOORE *et al.*, 2010).

The Government Plan and the Government Plan Guidelines do not show whether there are and/or will be investments in the maintenance and implementation of linear parks, not even in the proposals to fight floods (*“Use technology to fight floods, contribute to the Government of State in the important challenge of cleaning up the Pinheiros River and improving sanitation indicators.”* - Table 2 - GOVERNMENT PLAN, 2020; GOVERNMENT PLAN GUIDELINES, 2020).

Investing in the maintenance and implementation of this park model is necessary because, according to the first paragraph of article 272 of the PDE: *“progressively and continuously expand the permeable green areas along the valley bottoms, progressively creating linear parks and minimizing the factors that cause floods and the resulting damage, increasing the penetration of rainwater into the soil and installing devices for its retention, when necessary”* (DIÁRIO OFICIAL, 2014).

Thus, linear parks are essential equipment for *“requalification of the city’s environmental systems, considering the sanitation and drainage infrastructure”*, according to the second paragraph of article 26 of the PDE (DIÁRIO OFICIAL, 2014). In addition, riverside (or linear) parks are components that improve the quality of public spaces and, as they are open parks, they promote socialization, stimulate movement and interaction between surrounding residents and other visitors (SILVA-SÁNCHEZ; JACOBI, 2016).

Gomes (2014) highlighted that parks are urban equipment that go beyond spaces intended for the protection of urban biodiversity, environmental quality and quality of life for citizens. Despite being *“non-saleable products”*, the image of these spaces is commodified, enabling the valuation of urban land and, consequently, increasing socio-spatial inequalities.

This aspect is perceived in the Government Plan and in the Guidelines of the Government Plan, as there are actions and proposals aimed at concessions, privatizations and public-private partnerships. In the context of *“where we are”*, it is noted that the previous management of the municipality opted for the concession of 6 parks, including one of the most important parks in São Paulo, because it deems this to be an efficient strategy (*“The option for concessions – whose first lot included Ibirapuera and 5 other parks on the outskirts – it became an example of how to add efficiency to the City Hall’s work without going back on citizens’ rights.”* – table 1 - GOVERNMENT PLAN, 2020; GOVERNMENT PLAN GUIDELINES, 2020).

In the context of *“where are we going to get”*, it is noted that the current/re-elected management of the municipality will continue these measures because it believes that concessions, privatizations and public-private partnerships will allow the Municipality to concentrate investments in essential services (*“Let’s conclude the concessions and planned privatizations, concentrate the machine on essential services – in particular, health and*

education” [...] “We are going to continue the program of public-private partnerships, directing the gains from exemptions and grants to priority areas, such as health , education, mobility and urban janitorial work, prioritizing work in the following axes: [...] 3) making the most of equipment and underutilized public spaces to promote cultural, sports and leisure activities, such as urban parks and public squares.” - table 2 - GOVERNMENT PLAN, 2020; GOVERNMENT PLAN GUIDELINES, 2020), making it clear that environmental quality and green infrastructure is not perceived as an essential service for the City.

For Sampaio *et al.* (2016) the management and maintenance of urban parks requires a lot of financial resources that, traditionally, are supplied by the municipality. Due to this, the concession of parks to the private sector is considered by the current/re-elected management of the City of São Paulo as necessary for the continuity of the quality of management, maintenance and services offered in these spaces.

Martins *et al.* (2016) observed that periods of crisis are open doors to failure and/or enable the construction of new achievements. At that time, when Brazil was going through a period of recession, concessions and public-private partnerships (PPPs) began to be seen as an innovative mechanism for the development of new projects (PDP, 2018), as they are tools that allow the recovery of investment capacity, suffocated by the economic crisis (MARTINS *et al.*, 2016).

It is necessary to consider, according to Rodrigues and Abrucio (2019), that “*the insufficiency of the State should not be used as the main argument for the defense of concessions*”. For, in addition to limiting State interventions, the neoliberal proposal for concessions of services and public goods leads to an increase in tariffs, a reduction in jobs and a compromise in the quality of services provided. In the management of urban parks, according to Rodrigues and Abrucio (2019), concessions create a situation of dependency that compromises the public functions of these forest fragments.

However, public managers must provide better opportunities for citizens to reconnect with nature and experience biodiversity in public spaces, such as urban parks (SKANDRANI; PRÉVOT, 2015). Gomes (2014) argues that, in the process of production of urban space, the participation of the population is necessary. Because, according to the author, the actions of different actors can result in less excluding public policies. In this way, the participatory process becomes more democratic, and decisions about public investments become collectively deliberated, contributing to the construction and strengthening of citizenship (GOMES, 2014).

Analyzing the processes that relate public power to the implementation of public policies makes it possible to understand the dynamics of continuous transformation of cities. In addition to elucidating why some policies and legal instruments appear to be more advanced than the capacity to implement public management, especially integrated and long-term policies, such as those aimed at environmental protection and urban regeneration (SILVA-SÁNCHEZ; JACOBI, 2016).

5. CONCLUSION

Urban parks are spaces for the conservation of urban nature, providing ecosystem and environmental services. In addition, they provide infrastructure that makes it possible to carry out leisure activities, recreation and social interaction, as well as minimize recurrent problems in urban areas - such as floods, inundations, floods and the damage resulting from these events, as they have permeable soil, which allows rainwater drainage. Therefore, parks improve the physical and emotional health of city citizens and environmental health.

Data analysis revealed the importance of urban parks for maintaining environmental quality in urban areas and for the quality of life of the population that resides and transits

through cities. Data analysis also showed that the benefits provided by urban parks are perceived and valued by the management of the municipality of São Paulo, which is why these spaces are part of the political agenda of the previous management of the municipality and will remain on the agenda of the current/re-elected management.

Therefore, despite not being perceived as essential services, urban parks are among the themes to which municipal management has devoted its attention and has been developing a set of alternative actions to maintain these green spaces. Among the actions, investments in: implementation of new parks, maintenance of existing units, concession of these spaces to the private sector stand out.

The concession of urban parks to the private sector is the action that most generates debates between supporters and opponents, so it is suggested that more in-depth studies be carried out on the advantages and disadvantages of this measure. As well as the perception of those who frequent these spaces, as these actors will be directly affected by the change in management – from public to private.

That said, it is suggested that public policies aimed at urban parks be based on the wishes and desires of visitors who enjoy the services, activities, events and infrastructure offered in these spaces. In addition to being performed in such a way that regulars are involved in decision-making, because when human beings feel responsible for a certain environment, they tend to preserve, care for and take care of that place more. It is also suggested that, at the end of the current mandate, a new study be carried out, to verify whether the City Hall carried out the actions proposed in the Government Plan and in the Guidelines of the Government Plan.

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