

**Territorialization of public policies in vulnerable territories  
in Londrina/Paraná/Brazil: challenges and advances**

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## **SUMMARY**

This research aims to reflect on the scope of public health, epidemiology and social assistance policies in vulnerable territories in the North Zone of Londrina-PR, represented by the vulnerable territories (favelas) called Aparecidinha and Flores do Campo, in 2023, based on the work of CRAS Norte A and Norte B, the Department of Epidemiology and Health Information (DEPIS) and the municipal Health Department. This is a qualitative study, based on a survey of secondary information (scientific literature and official documents). It was found that health, epidemiology and care have faced challenges such as: guaranteeing the management of policies in accordance with the law, maintaining the efficiency of the services provided and tackling complex social problems in the face of the reality experienced by the population. The conclusion is that the social context in the areas of socio-economic vulnerability and lack of ownership of urban land in the North Zone of Londrina makes it very difficult to conduct and implement public policies that are essential for the quality of life of families, particularly those that fall under the Department of Epidemiology and Health Information (DEPIS).

**KEYWORDS:** Public policy. Vulnerable territory. Quality of life.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

In recent decades, most Brazilian cities have started to concentrate a greater number of inhabitants compared to the countryside since the intensification of the urban-industrial process from the mid-20th century onwards.

This increase in urban inhabitants, with the concentration of private property/urban land and intensification of the process of socio-spatial segregation in the urban area, the working class with lower monthly income has been located increasingly distant from the central area that concentrates the various urban facilities. And increasing the demand for a series of urban policies, among which those focused on housing, education, security, health and social assistance stand out, the latter two being the thematic focus of this research.

In Londrina, a municipality located in the north of the state of Paraná, this demand for public policies in the city was intensified from the 1950s onwards, when amidst the transformations in agriculture in the north of Paraná (Padis, 1981), the number of residents in urban area began to grow, thus demanding actions from public management that culminated in the structuring of the supply of various public services over the following decades, which ended up arriving at different times and intensity for residents in different areas of the city, fostering uneven development of the city.

Therefore, this work is a research with a qualitative approach, based on the proposal of Minayo (2010), which enables the detailed study of human groups in their context, contemplating individual and collective aspects, as well as their interpersonal and institutional relationships, and exploratory type, carried out by collecting information from secondary sources (bibliographic and documentary). The literature review would also help in creating new interpretations to achieve the objectives set.

The aim, therefore, is to reflect on the scope of public health, epidemiology and social assistance policies in vulnerable territories in the North Zone of Londrina, represented by the vulnerable territories of Aparecidinha and Flores do Campo in 2023.

In this research, vulnerable territories are considered to be those which, according to Antonello (2022, p. 278), present “[...] a lack of technical (basic sanitation, energy, garbage collection, etc.) and social infrastructure (health, education), in addition to the precariousness

of housing, generally located in unsuitable areas (banks of urban rivers, old landfills, areas with steep slopes)". Considering these characteristics, it is essential to carry out research that focuses on the reality of these territories, which require intervention from public authorities through socio-territorial policies.

In addition to the introduction with the contextualization of the theme, objective and methodological procedures, the final text is organized into three other topics, the first being a theoretical discussion on the idea of Territorialization of Public Social Policies in the city. The second corresponds to a characterization of the reality in the vulnerable territories of Aparecidinha and Flores do Campo, with socioeconomic data from these portions chosen as the spatial scope of the research. Finally, the third topic consists of analyzing the spatial dynamics of public health and social assistance policies implemented in these territories, as well as the impacts regarding the population's use and access to these services.

## **2 TERRITORIALIZATION OF PUBLIC SOCIAL POLICIES IN URBAN SPACE**

The field of public policy is a branch of political science in the United States (Arretche, 2003) that investigates the role of the State in executing government programs, which focuses especially on actions aimed at guaranteeing social rights, such as education, health, food, work, transportation, among others. The literature does not offer a universally accepted definition of public policy, but according to Souza (2006), a more simplified and widely accepted definition is that of Thomas Dye, who presents the concept of public policy as everything that the State does or leaves to do. Souza (2006) also points out that it is a multidisciplinary field whose main objective is government action, the analysis of these actions and the forwarding of proposals to change their direction.

Detailing further, for Höfling (2001), public policies are mostly the responsibility of the State, but it should not be confused with the Government or limited only to public bureaucracy, as the decision-making process for these policies involves both state bodies and institutions. and individuals in society. It is possible to consider the State as the set of permanent institutions, such as legislative bodies, courts and the army, that allow the operation of the government. On the other hand, Government can be understood as the set of programs and projects developed by members of civil society (politicians, technicians and civil society bodies, for example).

In this context, public policies are understood as the implementation of a government project by the State, which is carried out through programs and actions directed at specific segments of society, with its implementation and maintenance resulting from a decision-making process that involves government bodies and various agents of the society linked to the policy in question (Höfling, 2001).

Along the same lines, social policies also encompass measures adopted by the State to promote a standard of social protection and reduce inequalities caused by socioeconomic development, with the main objective of redistributing social benefits. These are ways in which the State interferes, with the intention of maintaining social relations within a certain social structure (Höfling, 2001).

In this way, some elements are clear: public policy makes a distinction between the government's intentions and its effective actions; public policy includes different actors and

decision levels, however it is implemented by governments, but is not limited to formal participants only, as informal participants also play an important role; public policy is broad and goes beyond laws and rules; public policy consists of a set of intentional actions that aim to achieve certain objectives. And despite the immediate effects, public policy is designed for the long term (Silva, 2023). After the decision and proposition of public policy, subsequent processes are necessary that include implementation, execution and evaluation (Souza, 2006, p. 36).

According to Rocha (2012), the difficulty in guiding public policies lies in the way in which they are implemented and spatialized. In Brazil, as well as throughout Latin America, there are great social contrasts in the urban space, where political networks spread when they use poverty and the denial of rights as bases to maintain a certain "power". For the author, the use of spatial practices as public policies aims to preserve the political and economic status quo, rather than guaranteeing rights. In this context, it is understood that public policies are focused in a fragmented, privatized and elite manner.

On the other hand, Lindo (2011) addresses the link between public policies and territory from the perspective that power is present in all stages of public policy, from its definition to its analysis. Additionally, identifying the manifestations of social and economic disparities is conditioned by observing how power relations are established in the production and reproduction of the territory. Haesbaert (2004) supports this idea by stating that social relations are mediated spatially or geographically and are intrinsically linked to the composition of the territory. Considering this, the territory is understood as a place that has been historically influenced by social interactions.

The concept of territory is complex and has several dimensions with complementary interpretations. Fuini (2014) highlights this by rescuing the various notions of territory as dimensions of the concept, namely: 1) Politics: the territory is controlled and delimited by a certain power, generally the State; 2) Economic: economic relations occur in space, where territory is seen as a source of resources and is involved in class clashes, in addition to being the result of the territorial division of labor; 3) Cultural: which refers to symbology and subjectivity; the territory as a result of the appropriation of a group in relation to its lived space; and 4) Natural: based on interactions between society and nature.

Taking into account such complementarity, the configuration of the territory implies the notion of 'territoriality', which is presented by Saquet (2011) at four levels: (i) Social relations (identities, differences, networks, inequalities and conflicts); (ii) Spatial appropriations (concrete and symbolic); (iii) Behaviors, objectives, desires and needs; (iv) Spatio-temporal practices (multidimensional activities carried out in socio-environmental relations). Thus, territoriality, as a social construction, is essential to understand the process of 'territorialization', referring to the rooting and identification of an organization, group or individual with a territory, covering political, economic and material aspects, in addition to cultural dimensions. and symbolic that are predominantly immaterial (Haesbaert, 2005).

Regarding State action, Faure (2004) states that the traditional view of territory, as a space for exercising national sovereignty, has been transformed since the 1980s due to two aspects: 1) the first refers to the increasingly important role that analyzes of the conditions for implementing public policies play in studies of government action at local levels; 2) the second, more current, arises from the growing strengthening of local communities.

In this context, it is mentioned that the concept of 'territorialization' was developed based on the evolution of the terminology used by scientists and experts to describe government intervention in relation to the concepts of 'territorial' and 'territorialized'. According to the author, these authors indicate the crisis of the administrative model of the traditional State, revealing new political issues related to the decentralization that occurred in most national political systems. In this sense, the term 'territorialization' indicates that territory has become a crucial aspect for governance, as central bodies are more attentive to the specific characteristics of territories and allow the participation of local/regional actors in the formulation and implementation of policies public.

In the Base Report Territorialization of Public Policies in Portugal, prepared by the Institute for Regional Financing and Development (IFDR, 2010) to support the Territorial Examination of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – OECD of 2008, the Territorialization of Public Policies (TPP) is defined as the creation and execution of programs and projects with significant territorial impact, based on strategic frameworks formulated specifically for the area in question. The participation, both formal and informal, of the institutions and actors involved is considered during the process of preparing these frameworks. According to this perspective, it is insufficient for investments to have a significant territorial impact for a public policy to be considered territorialized, if there is no popular participation.

In general, public policies have been implemented in Brazil based on the territorialization of two visions: a) territorial rearrangement/realignment seeking to modernize conventional regional development policies, emphasizing the importance of consideration on a smaller scale, as is the example of micro or mesoregions, instead of the macro regions of the country, b) a strategy that emphasizes the application of public policies targeted at different portions, normally with a sectoral and personalized or comprehensive focus, with the aim of achieving greater effectiveness in the decentralization of these policies (Delgado, 2007).

According to Rossi (2013), the territorial focus in public policies encompasses the analysis of the methods used to recognize and maintain the territories that such policies contribute to in constant evolution. In fact, as Public Policies have a direct impact on the production of space, it is essential to analyze the way in which public actions affect and trigger new dynamics and spatial changes in the different areas where they are implemented. The achievement of spatial reproduction occurs through the formation of territories, as well as the spatial processes and practices involved in territorializations, deterritorializations and (re)territorializations. This understanding is in accordance with the perspective presented by Corrêa (2007).

In other words, we can highlight that public policies have the power to reconfigure territories by selectively affecting geographic space (Lima, 2008). This occurs because they model characteristics in the landscape according to social elements and behaviors, reconfiguring structures and movements in the environment. When this urban perspective is considered, it is possible to see that public policies are differentiated by spatial selectivity. This is because its implementation is related to ongoing power struggles between particular interests and the struggle for the full guarantee of urban rights, the choice of the location where the policy will be implemented and the direction of resources.

By seeing public policies as spatial practices, that is, actions carried out by social agents with the aim of achieving their private projects individually, which may be irregular and not follow a specific pattern, with temporally and spatially located scales (Corrêa, 2007), it is possible to affirm that its influence plays a significant role in the dynamics of cities, as it shows that spatialization can make a difference, since its effectiveness is directly related to the games of interests between different groups, which impose spatial priorities in the allocation of basic resources.

Therefore, this discussion can serve as an important methodological source to analyze the relationship between public policies and vulnerable territories present in urban space. And for discussion from this perspective, we will present the case of the territorialization of public health policy in Londrina-PR, specifically the cases of Aparecidinha and Flores do Campo.

### **3 THE VULNERABLE TERRITORIES APARECIDINHA AND FLORES DO CAMPO IN THE CITY OF LONDRINA**

Vulnerable territories (irregular occupations according to the designation used by Londrina's municipal management) are part of the unequal structure that organizes urban space, understood as a commodity, its purpose being the exchange value that underlies capitalist profit.

As an exchange value, urban space substantiates land and real estate speculation, placing population groups with low purchasing power at risk and vulnerability, as these, in the absence of conditions to buy or rent housing in the city, end up having the option of the occupation of areas that do not offer the minimum conditions for the reproduction of life with quality and safety, as they are far from the city center, therefore, physically distant from urban services and equipment, in environmentally inappropriate locations, such as hillsides and voucher funds. Maricato (2003) places the State's non-compliance with the illegal occupation undertaken by the popular classes as an action that does not qualify as a policy of tolerance, but rather passivity in the face of the problems of regularization, given that:

The population that settles there not only compromises the resources that are fundamental to all residents of the city, such as water sources. But it is installed without any public service or urban infrastructure works. In many cases, drainage problems, risks to life due to landslides, obstacles to the installation of water and sewage networks make future urbanization unfeasible or extremely expensive (Maricato, 2003, p. 158).

In the case of the city of Londrina (PR), irregular occupations arise from a phenomenon associated with the urbanization process that began, especially in the second half of the 20th century, in which a large number of peasants moved to the city, in a process of modernization of the field. To a large extent, the peasant population was destined for the outskirts of the city of Londrina, due to the more affordable price compared to a city that was structured via segregationist logic with the differential valuation of land based on location and the formation of urban voids that supported the speculation, with this context being responsible for the formation of the first informal occupations in the 1950s (Zanon, 2023), with the North Zone

being the area of greatest expansion, in which the vulnerable territories that are the focus of this analysis are located.

According to the document “Profile of Londrina: year 2023”, there were 55 irregular occupations (vulnerable territories) in the city, accounting for 8,689 inhabitants, and seven of these occupations are on private land, with emphasis on the concentration of these homes in the East Zones and North (Londrina, 2024). In this sense, the vulnerable territories of Residencial do Flores do Campo and Nossa Senhora Aparecida (popularly known as Aparecidinha), are part of this context of unequal urbanization through which the city of Londrina developed, both located in the North Zone with a population of 902 and 2,131 inhabitants, respectively (Londrina, 2024).

The territory of Aparecidinha is located on private land, which is in the process of being purchased by the City Hall, represented in the agreement by Companhia de Habitação de Londrina (COHAB-LD), for a value of 5.6 million reais (Sehn, 2023). Until the aforementioned agreement, the Aparecidinha occupation went through two occupation movements, the first of which was between the years 2000 and 2012, and in the latter year the families were removed to Jardim Horizonte II. Due to the fact that the private land remained unused, that is, without fulfilling its social function, two years after the removal, in 2014 new families returned to occupy the site, appropriating the lots and buildings that remained from the former residents (Delfino, 2022). Currently, the occupation is in the process of land regularization, with the acquisition of the land by the city hall being an important step. However, issues such as the feasibility of land regularization or removal of families to other neighborhoods still remain, even if the core of the housing issue is not be resolved, that is, the intense socioeconomic inequality that restricts the constitutional right to decent housing for many.

The vulnerable territory Residencial Flores do Campo is part of a popular housing project under the Minha Casa Minha Vida Program (PMCMV), which began in 2013, based on a contract signed with the company called Formula Empreendimento Imobiliário, which for lack of transfer of public resources and due to a moment of crisis followed by its bankruptcy in 2015, had its work suspended and the foundations of the houses were left idle. This context, associated with the large housing deficit in Londrina and the moment of crisis that the country was facing, led to the occupation of these structures, in 2016, by people who were experiencing financial difficulties (Silva, 2021).

The condition that interconnects these two realities is the denial of the right to housing and the movement to struggle and demand basic rights, mainly related to the conformation of the social function of land. However, these two occupations are far from urban equipment and services, with precarious or non-existent basic infrastructure, which compromises the quality of life and safety of these people, who are unable to envisage changes due to the socioeconomic conditions that link the vulnerable population to housing in risk areas (Table 1).

Table 1 – Information on the vulnerable territories of Aparecidinha and Flores do Campo, 2023

	APARECIDINHA		FLORES DO CAMPO	
Number of interviewed families	569		205	
Total of people	1540	Men: 48,8%	589	Men: 48%
		Women: 51,2%		Women: 52%
Average Family number	2,7		2,9	
Average Family wage	924,20		793,27	
Average per capita income	341,50		276,10	

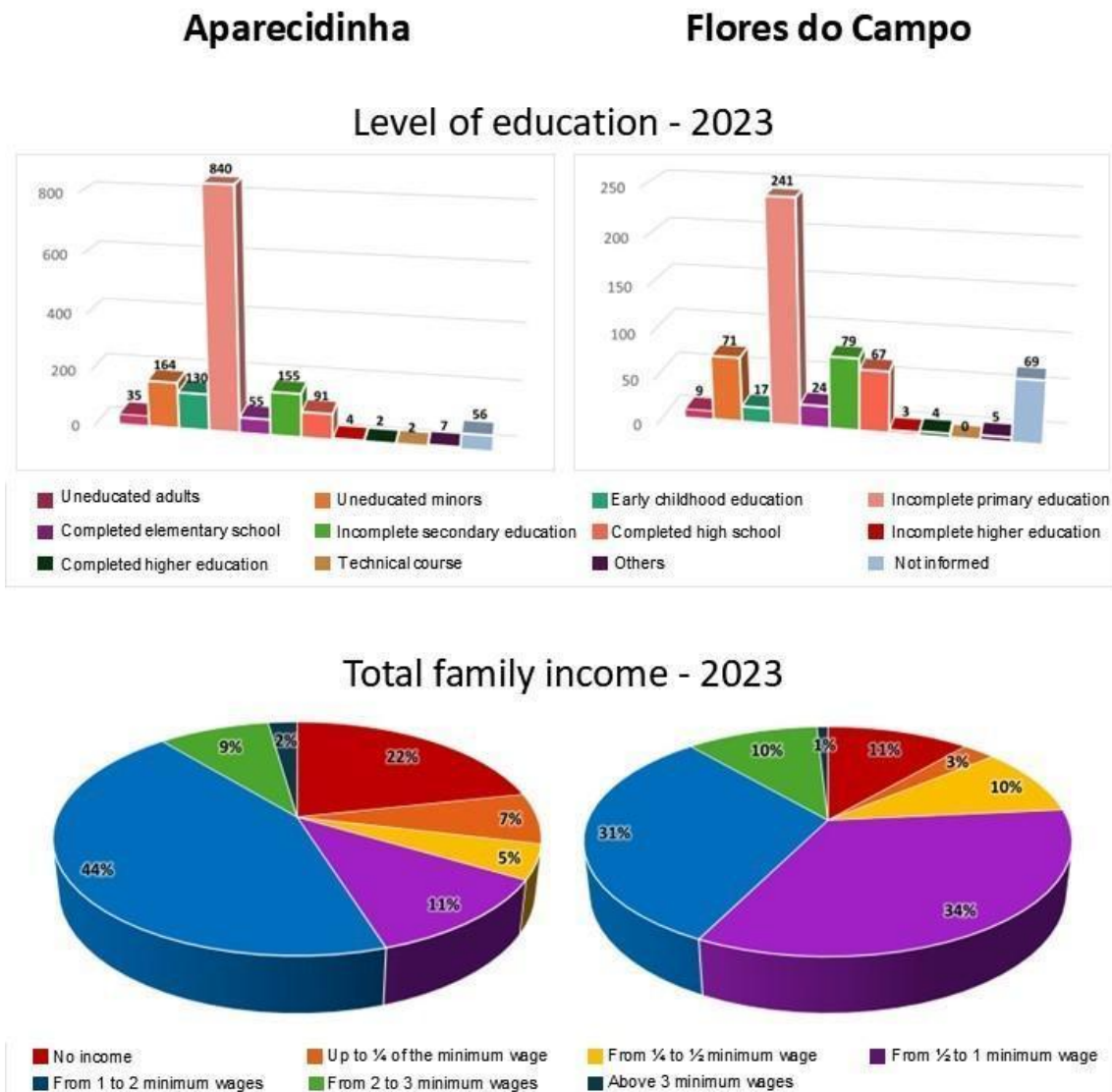
Source: Londrina – COHAB-LD, 2023. Organized by the authors.

The data in table 1 refer to a survey carried out by COHAB-LD with families residing in the Flores do Campo and Aparecidinha territories, making it possible to highlight the economic vulnerability that these people face, given that, in both cases, the average family income is less than the minimum wage; since the average number of family members is close to 3 people, resulting in a low average per capita income, which cannot guarantee the basic needs of this population. This condition is more emergent in situations of members with disabilities (53 people in Aparecidinha and 7 people in Flores do Campo), who require the use of assistive devices (14 people in Aparecidinha and none in Flores do Campo) or who have mobility problems. health (258 people in Aparecidinha and 39 in Flores do Campo) (Londrina – COHAB-LD, 2023).

The possibility of changing living conditions becomes impractical as income and education factors are low, which are important requirements for acquiring a formal employment relationship or performing jobs with better pay (figure 1).



Figure 1 – Graphic on age, education and income



Source: Londrina – COHAB-LD, 2023. Organized by the authors.

In the Aparecida occupation, the majority of the population is in the adult age group, between 18 and 59 years old, which corresponds to 58% of the population, followed by 33% of children and adolescents (0 to 17 years old) and 9% of elderly people ( $\geq 60$  years). Among this age composition, income of 1 to 2 minimum wages predominates (44%), with 22% of inhabitants having no income. This composition may be related to the level of education, as 840 people (54.5%) have incomplete primary education, either because they do not have the opportunity to complete it or because they are still studying.

In the territory of Flores do Campo, the structure of age group, income and education is similar to the conditions of Aparecida, since adults between 18 and 59 years old comprise 54% of those interviewed, with 42% being children and adolescents between 0 and 17 years old.

and 4% of elderly people aged 60 years or over. In relation to total family income, wages of half to one minimum wage predominate (34%), followed by income of 1 to 2 minimum wages (31%). In the data relating to education, people who have not completed primary education or who are still studying (41%) predominate.

In this way, it can be stated that the barrier of low educational level, in both cases being the predominance of people who have not completed primary education, ends up interfering with employment possibilities, overlapping the difficulty of access to other urban spaces due to mobility issues, either due to the impossibility of having private transport or the insufficiency of public transport.

#### **4 PUBLIC HEALTH, SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND EPIDEMIOLOGY POLICIES IMPLEMENTED IN VULNERABLE TERRITORIES**

The implementation of public health and social assistance policies targeted at specific territories is essential to promote social justice and reduce inequalities. These policies, when effectively executed, aim to guarantee access to basic services, significantly improving the quality of life of vulnerable populations. Therefore, in addition to the formulation, it is essential to take into account the way of implementing them. This is because,

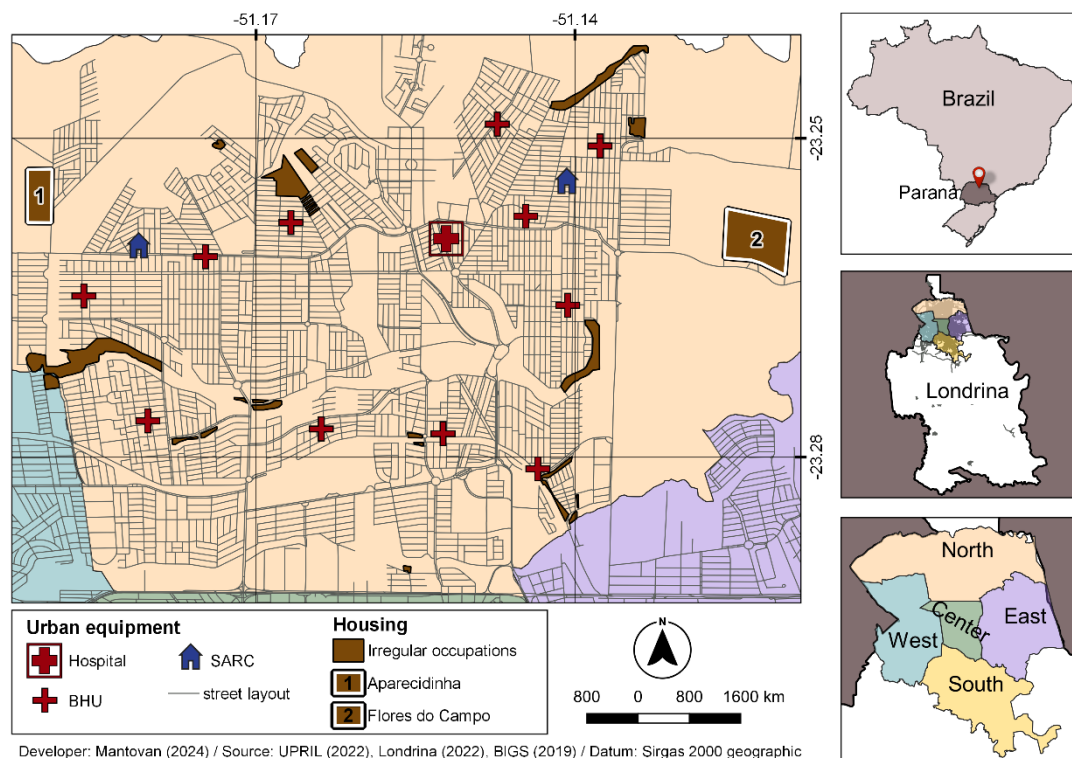
[...] the policy cannot be implemented in a centralized and homogeneous manner across the entire intra-urban territory or from the seat of power. It must be implemented in territories where people are in vulnerable and/or socially excluded situations. Therefore, there is the character of decentralization as a means of intervening in reality to minimize social inequalities (Lindo, 2011, p. 82).

In the city of Londrina, health, epidemiological and social assistance services are organized by coverage area, encompassing neighborhoods. Health equipment is distributed according to the city's areas. When it comes to Basic Health Units/UBS, Londrina had 54 by 2022, offering decentralized care and being located in proximity to a number of the population: 7 units in the Central Zone to serve 139,659 people, 8 units in the East for a total of 79,987 inhabitants, 11 units in the North for 107,734 inhabitants, 7 units in the West to meet the demand of 120,606 people and 9 units in the South Zone to serve a total of 95,927 people. And there were also 12 UBS in the districts of Londrina for a total of 28,938 people.

In the North Zone, the spatial scope of this research, there were 11 UBS responsible for providing health care to the population, such as medical consultations, dressings, dental treatment, vaccinations and collecting laboratory tests. In addition, there is a supply of basic medication and also referrals to specialties depending on what the patient presents (Londrina, 2024). Residents of vulnerable territories have access to UBS, receiving all the care they are entitled to.

In figure 2 it is possible to see that the Basic Health Units closest to the vulnerable territories called Aparecidinha and Flores do Campo are respectively the UBS Chef Newton and UBS Aquiles Stenghel Units. Hospital Zona Norte is the closest facility in cases of medical complications and, in the case of surgeries and specialized care, the patient is transported to other hospitals in the city that serve via SUS.

Figure 2 – Highlighted health and social assistance equipment in the North Zone of Londrina/PR



Source: IPPUL, 2022; Londrina, 2022; IBGE, 2019. Prepared by Mantovan, 2024

The territorialization of UBSs in the North Zone, in theory, would allow a sectoral and personalized approach as discussed by Delgado (2007), while the greater number of families residing in vulnerable territories and exposed to a series of diseases caused by lack of sanitation, running water and precarious construction conditions of the house, is found in this portion of the city, as pointed out by Veiga, Antonello and Alievi (2022): North Zone of the city approximately 49.93%, in the South Zone 30.82%, in the East with 14.77% and, finally, there were in the West and Center Zones, respectively, the percentages of 3.79% and 0.66% families living in a precarious situation. However, the greater demand for primary care in times of epidemics and the shortage of employees, as well as some basic equipment, have compromised the efficiency of the services provided, thus compromising the more personalized approach to care.

Still in figure 2, it can be seen the presence of 2 equipment for social assistance, CRAS North A and North B. The functions of Social Assistance according to PNAS/2004 are: social protection hierarchical between basic protection and special; social surveillance; and the defense of social assistance rights. These services are provided via public devices located close to the territories that most require attention. The services of CRAS (Social Assistance Reference Center) or CREAS (Specialized Social Assistance Reference Center) play a fundamental role in implementing social actions as they are decentralized building structures strategically located in territories close to the population.

The northern portion of the city covered by the 2 CRAS territories has a total of 115,271 inhabitants and the sum of services/monitoring carried out by the two CRAS mentioned totaled

39,152 people served, that is, at least 33.9% of people residing in the North Zone of city are monitored by CRAS according to data from the socio-territorial diagnosis (Londrina, 2023), it is worth highlighting that this region has a high demand for the services offered considering that of these 33.9%, the majority (84.2%) have per capita income up to R\$218.00 (Londrina, 2023). This highlights the importance of CRAS in providing assistance services to the population facing basic survival difficulties. The actions of CRAS are, therefore, essential to guarantee the minimum and provide better living conditions for the inhabitants of these territories.

Finally, another fundamental service for health concerns the work of the Department of Epidemiology and Health Information (DEPIS), which is located in all areas of Londrina, via Agents to Combat Endemic Diseases (ACE), which has carried out constant work of visits to each residence in the neighborhoods, seeking to inspect possible outbreaks of disease proliferation, such as dengue fever, for example, and instructing residents on how to proceed to eliminate these outbreaks and also how to act in the event of symptoms.

These professionals work together with the SUS Primary Care teams and the local community, establishing a direct connection with residents to offer guidance and share information about combating endemic diseases (dengue, malaria and Chagas disease, for example) in the homes and playing a fundamental role in preventing and controlling these diseases through inspection and treatment of outbreaks. The work of the Endemic Disease Combat Agent encompasses different approaches, which do not follow a standardization, but rather a segmented approach by type of disease, as they cover the blocks of the established territorial unit (Silva *et al.*, 2024).

Finally, the ACE's responsibilities allow it to intervene in the population's health and living conditions in a qualitative manner within the spatial scope, aiming at the well-being of citizens according to the socioeconomic context and investments in public health and assistance policies. implemented in the vulnerable territory in question.

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present research highlighted the inherent complexity of implementing public policies in Health, Epidemiology, and Social Assistance in vulnerable areas, such as Aparecidinha and Flores do Campo in the Northern Zone of Londrina, Paraná. It was possible to understand that, despite the efforts of CRAS North A and North B, the Department of Epidemiology and Health Information (DEPIS), and the municipal Health Department, significant challenges persist.

The main obstacles identified relate to the management of public policies in accordance with current legislation, maintaining the efficiency of the services provided, and addressing complex social problems that directly affect the quality of life of the local population. The lack of urban land ownership regularization emerges as a critical factor that exacerbates the socioeconomic vulnerability of these areas and imposes additional barriers to the conduct and implementation of essential public policies.

In this context, the research reinforces the need for more assertive state action that is adapted to local realities, taking into account the specificities of vulnerable territories and promoting a more equitable distribution of resources and services. It is imperative that public

policies are designed and executed in a manner that ensures not only coverage but also effectiveness in meeting the specific demands of these communities.

Finally, the study underscores the importance of ongoing research to monitor the evolution of public policies in vulnerable territories, providing support for continuous adjustments and improvements. There is hope in the transformative capacity of well-founded and implemented policies to significantly contribute to reducing inequalities and promoting fair access to and use of services.

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