

The landscape beyond the parks: a sociocultural analysis of the Belém River and the urban process of Curitiba-PR

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A paisagem além dos parques: uma análise sociocultural do rio Belém e o processo urbano de Curitiba-PR

RESUMO

Objetivo - demonstrar como o rio Belém efetivamente faz parte da paisagem e do contexto sociocultural curitibano, indicando novas possibilidades de se considerar esse espaço atualmente.

Metodologia – para realização dessa investigação, foi utilizada uma abordagem qualitativa, com revisão bibliográfica acerca da história e iconografia do rio Belém em paralelo à urbanização da cidade de Curitiba. Foram utilizadas fontes primárias e secundárias.

Originalidade/relevância – o estudo visa demonstrar a relevância de uma gestão da paisagem mais integradora, levando em conta as águas urbanas, para a promoção de cidades verdadeiramente mais sustentáveis. Sob essa perspectiva, a paisagem não é apenas um cenário relacionado a estética, possuindo também um conteúdo emancipador, sendo o espaço das relações sociais e ambientais que podem originar mudanças concretas na sociedade.

Resultados – o termo “ecológico” vem sendo utilizado de maneira estética, considerando apenas os parques e não os rios urbanos da cidade de Curitiba, o que indica uma visão fragmentada da gestão urbana.

Contribuições teóricas/metodológicas – esse estudo possibilitou compreender como o rio Belém passou por inúmeras transições, se revelando em *geograficidades* distintas ao longo do tempo. A partir do aporte teórico-conceitual da geografia cultural, a pesquisa demonstrou que, ao longo do processo de urbanização, o rio passou por mudanças significativas tanto a nível morfológico, quanto a nível cultural na cidade.

Contribuições sociais e ambientais – breve histórico de ocupação da cidade de Curitiba-PR com relação ao rio Belém, bem como da potencialidade desse espaço (e outros ambientes de águas urbanas) serem realmente considerados partes fundamentais da cidade contemporânea.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Paisagem. Rio Belém. Natureza urbana.

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The landscape beyond the parks: a sociocultural analysis of the Belém River and the urban process of Curitiba-PR

ABSTRACT

Objective – We aim at demonstrating how the Belém River is effectively part of the landscape and sociocultural context of Curitiba, indicating new possibilities for considering this space today.

Methodology – To conduct this research, a qualitative approach was used, with a bibliographic review on the history and iconography of the Belém River in parallel with the urbanization of the city of Curitiba. Primary and secondary sources were used.

Originality/Relevance – The study aims to demonstrate the importance of more inclusive landscape management, taking urban waters into account, for the promotion of more sustainable cities. From this perspective, the landscape is not only a setting related to aesthetics, but also possesses emancipatory content, being the space of social and environmental relations that can lead to concrete changes in society.

Results – the term "ecological" has been used aesthetically, considering only the parks and not the urban rivers of the city of Curitiba, which indicates a fragmented vision of urban management.

Theoretical/Methodological Contributions – This study enabled us to understand how the Belém River underwent numerous transitions, revealing distinct geographies over time. Based on the theoretical and conceptual framework of cultural geography, the research demonstrated that, throughout the urbanization process, the river underwent significant changes both morphologically and culturally within the city.

Social and Environmental Contributions – brief history of the occupation of the city of Curitiba-PR in relation to the Belém River, as well as the potential of this space (and other urban water environments) to be truly considered fundamental parts of the contemporary city.

KEYWORDS: Landscape. Belém river. Urban nature.

El paisaje más allá de los parques: un análisis sociocultural del río Belém y el proceso urbano de Curitiba-PR

RESUMEN

Objetivo – Nuestro objetivo es demostrar cómo el río Belém es efectivamente parte del contexto paisajístico y sociocultural de Curitiba, indicando nuevas posibilidades para considerar este espacio hoy.

Metodología – Para llevar a cabo esta investigación, se empleó un enfoque cualitativo, con una revisión bibliográfica sobre la historia y la iconografía del río Belém en paralelo con la urbanización de la ciudad de Curitiba. Se utilizaron fuentes primarias y secundarias.

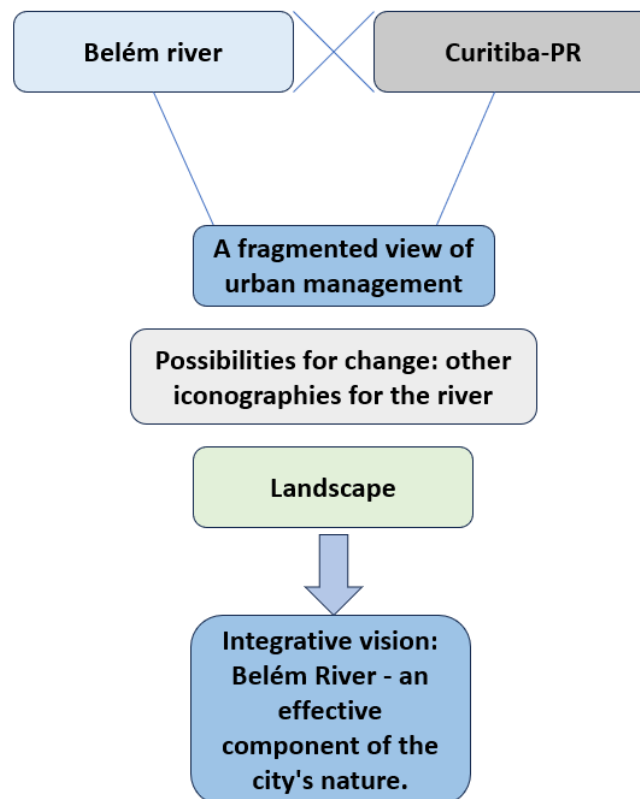
Originalidad/Relevancia – El estudio pretende demostrar la importancia de una gestión del paisaje más inclusiva, considerando las aguas urbanas, para promover ciudades más sostenibles. Desde esta perspectiva, el paisaje no es solo un entorno estético, sino que también posee un contenido emancipador, al ser el espacio de relaciones sociales y ambientales que puede impulsar cambios concretos en la sociedad.

Contribuciones Teóricas/Metodológicas – Este estudio nos permitió comprender cómo el río Belém experimentó numerosas transiciones, revelando geografías distintivas a lo largo del tiempo. Basándose en el marco teórico y conceptual de la geografía cultural, la investigación demostró que, a lo largo del proceso de urbanización, el río experimentó cambios significativos, tanto morfológicos como culturales, dentro de la ciudad.

Contribuciones Sociales y Ambientales – Breve historia de la ocupación de la ciudad de Curitiba-PR en relación al río Belém, así como el potencial de este espacio (y otros ambientes acuáticos urbanos) para ser verdaderamente considerados partes fundamentales de la ciudad contemporánea.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Paisaje. Río Belém. Naturaleza urbana.

GRAPHICAL SUMMARY



Source: prepared by the author

1 INTRODUCTION

Rivers and human groups have a long history of socio-environmental, cultural and political relations, in which water elements have undergone numerous resignifications within the most diverse social and geographical contexts. If, on the one hand, the presence of water bodies has already represented the fertility of the land for the cultivation of food species, being associated with the first sedentarization processes in agricultural settlements about 12,000 years ago (Mazoyer; Roudart, 2010), on the other hand, they also functioned as a landmark in space, facilitating the geographical location, integration, and territorial displacement of people and goods over the centuries (Syse, 2016).

It should be noted that rivers are also associated with local mythological and spiritual aspects, in many cases being synonymous with purification and life, even being considered as gods and other entities, as can be seen in various contemporary indigenous and Asian cultures (Zhao, 1989). An example of this can be found in the work *Ancestral Future*, by indigenous author Ailton Krenak (2022, p. 60), in which he discusses cities and the damages caused by urbanization in the context of intense capitalism. He argues that we have to look at the past not with nostalgic and romantic eyes, but rather in recognition of the diverse beings that have been cohabiting the planet with us. And, in this sense, rivers are part of this ancestry that needs to be rescued in today's world (Krenak, 2022, p. 11).

During centuries of spatial and economic transformations of the industrial revolutions, social organizations were shaped with the construction of villages and, later, cities, where many rivers that functioned as delimiters of territorial expansion ended up being overtaken by urban logic. From this perspective, landscape architect Maria Cecília Gorski addresses the fact that there has been a certain rupture between cities and rivers (Gorski, 2008), where the growing urban society began to use streams to dispose industrial and/or domestic waste, indicating that urbanization has brought with it a new negative meaning for the water components of the landscape (Gorski, 2008, p. 30).

In this sense, we can question the characteristics of this rupture, which promoted not only changes in space, through the channeling and rectification of rivers, but also in the image given to the water component: often associated with diseases, bad smell, sewage and destruction (caused by floods, given that the banks of the streams were occupied by constructions); which are precisely issues that are not intrinsic to rivers, but instead, have been originated as effects of urbanization and fragmented urban planning, often disassociated from local geographical, climatic and biological aspects (Lyra; Constantino, 2024, p. 28).

In the Brazilian context, this becomes even more evident during the twentieth century, with the boom in urban expansion and the metropolization of space (Ferreira, 2016). In many cases, the river has become the site of the unhealthy and what, according to sanitary parameters, should be hidden in underground galleries in cities. By placing rivers as part of a drainage system built by civil engineering works, an approach disassociated from the knowledge of the dynamics of watersheds and the cultural and historical relations between people and water was originated (Gorski, 2008). Precisely for this reason, Krenak (2022, p. 66) argues that, most of the time, urban planning in Brazil is done against the landscape, as it does not bring

nature to the center of urban action, in addition to promoting spatial inequalities at the social level.

Within the panorama of the Brazilian Paraná state, the city of Curitiba¹ constitutes a peculiar case. It had its origin as a village, known as *Vila de Nossa Senhora da Luz dos Pinhais*, in 1693, and was located between two rivers: the Belém and the Ivo, both considered relevant, from the perspective of maintaining life, as they served to supply the population that began to settle there, and from the economic perspective, as they were rivers useful for navigation, fishing and, above all, for the extraction of alluvial gold, found in the valley regions of the rivers (Mota, 2012).

According to data from the cultural project entitled *Portraits of Belém: the trajectory of an urban river*², released in 2012, until the end of the nineteenth century, the city had little industrial predominance, with the exception of *mate* (a typical South American herb). This fact contributed to a low level of water pollution by industrial waste, and the population still used water from the Belém River (the only river with a source and mouth within the city limits) for supply, given that there was still no plumbing that carried drinking water to the houses. However, the precarious sewage network, as well as the geographical aspects of Curitiba, with its terrain of slopes and valleys, and the formation of swamps and floodable areas at certain times of the year, have become a problem and a management challenge over time in an expanding urban context (Mota, 2012).

From the end of the nineteenth century, especially with the concern to make the urban form of Curitiba more similar to the capitals considered "developed", in addition to a sanitarian view of the spread of diseases, such as cholera, precisely in places of abundant and stagnant water, changes were made to end the swamps near the city center (Duarte, 2006, p. 110). Among these modifications, we can mention the creation of the Public Promenade in 1857, the first urban park in Curitiba, as a way to sanitize and change the course of some parts of the Belém River, in order to solve the problem of flooded areas and diseases, and promote *beautification* within the aesthetic standards in force at the time.

Even so, Duarte (2006, p. 111) argues that at the beginning of the twentieth century the Belém River was seen in a negative way due to the recurrent floods, despite the modifications made previously. For this reason, in the 1930s, the French urbanist Alfred Agache was hired by the state government to formulate an urbanization plan for the city, in which more works were considered, including: the channeling of the Belém River (carried out in parts during the 1970s), the elaboration of rainwater collectors and the creation of avenues bordering the rivers (including some over the river). However, it should be noted that these works did not effectively solve the issue of flooding, and, in addition, during the 1950s, clandestine sewage disposal connections were made by residences, businesses and new industries located along the river, making it polluted and smelly throughout its course (Duarte, 2006, p. 112).

Under the management of Mayor Jaime Lerner, in 1979, other projects were developed to depollute the waters of the river, where the creation of a large leisure area was

¹ After several changes in the economic and settlement cycles of the village, Curitiba received its current name in 1721 and, later in the nineteenth century, with the newly created province of Paraná, it was given the function of city and capital of the province (Mota, 2012).

² Project financed and promoted by the Cultural Foundation of Curitiba, in 2012.

also planned, with parks, bike paths and tanks to prevent flooding, going from the source, in the Cachoeira neighborhood (north), to the Iguaçú Park (south). However, much of this has not been completed, as shown in the documentary *Landscapes of the Belém River*³, made in 2016, by highlighting and analyzing that each part of the path of this river has distinct stories and landscapes.

From this perspective, in the text "Discourses of urban sustainability" (1999), Acserald discusses that the materiality of cities is something constructed from the political-economic sphere, and, therefore, the material reproduction of cities also depends on ongoing political legitimations (Acserald, 1999, p. 85). So, what types of urban policies and actions have been reproducing the structures that provide a material basis for Brazilian cities, and in particular the city of Curitiba, in contemporary times? What does this imply for waterways? Are there ways to consider rivers as a heritage, related to another meaning of natural sites in urban spaces? These are some of the questions that this article proposes to discuss.

2 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research is to demonstrate how the Belém River is effectively part of the landscape and the sociocultural context of Curitiba, indicating new possibilities of considering this space today.

To this end, a brief historical contextualization of the changes in the urban form of the city in relation to the Belém River was carried out, as well as the urban thinking that continues to reproduce the morphological structures of Curitiba.

In this panorama, the specific objectives intended to contribute to the stages of data acquisition, in order to advance in the understanding and analysis of the geographical context of Curitiba. They are:

1. Identify the different landscapes of the Belém River in its hydrographic basin;
2. Present the socio-environmental function of the parks and forests created in some sections of the river;
3. Investigate the existence of alternative examples in the forms of coexistence between society and the river;
4. Think of new perspectives for this river, as a cultural and environmental heritage of the city.

3 METHODOLOGY

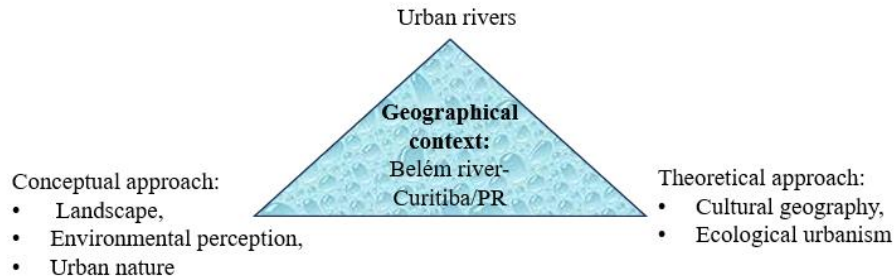
From the thematic of city and nature, this text aimed to investigate the phenomenon of urban rivers through the case study of the Belém River, in Curitiba. The research used a qualitative and explanatory approach, in order to describe the complexity of the geographical phenomenon and to explain its characteristics, in order to present some type of propositional action.

To this end, this research encompassed a theoretical-conceptual approach, as can be

³ Documentary available at: <https://www.youtube.com/@paisagensdoriobelem2620>. Accessed on: 24 jul. 2025.

seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Visualization of the theoretical-conceptual approach



Source: Prepared by the author (2025).

The theoretical-methodological contribution of Cultural Geography helped in the understanding of the spatial processes that contribute to the different experiences in the landscape of this river, seeking to reveal the meaning of these experiences and the sociocultural dynamics in force in Curitiba. And, of equal relevance, research related to ecological urbanism has contributed both to the understanding of the management aspect and to the importance of urban nature in sociocultural terms for contemporary cities.

The method of analysis, therefore, intended to delimit the bibliography, considered as a source, enabling the acquisition of information and elucidations about the research theme and the areas of knowledge. Thus, the sources are produced texts and other iconographic and audiovisual data, which in this research were organized as follows:

Table 1 – Primary and secondary sources

Primary sources	Secondary sources
Historical documents	Scientific literature review articles
Original articles and books	Descriptive books that were based on already published research
Original references obtained from official government and tourist websites and social media pages	Any other information already presented and discussed in other media
Photographs and field notes	-----

Source: Prepared by the author (2025).

The primary sources correspond to academic research and original data about the city of Curitiba, about the empirical context of the Belém River, in addition to the classic references within the theoretical-methodological framework of Cultural Geography; of Urban and Environmental Planning and Ecological Urbanism, offering research within their theoretical fields.

The secondary sources are the documents and information published as state of the art, configuring a broad panorama of the study of urban rivers not only in Curitiba, but also in other urban realities. These references are essential in verifying the consolidated knowledge about the emergence of cities, urbanization and rivers.

administration of architect and urban planner Jaime Lerner, that follow the route of the river from Celesti Santi Street to Cândido Abreu Avenue, creating a landscape environment inviting walks and contemplation. In this context, it is interesting to note that the São Lourenço Park is part of the *Belém River Permanent Preservation Area*, sheltering from forests with remnants of araucaria forest, in addition to the lake formed by the Belém River, which contributes to the containment of floods in nearby neighborhoods.

Figure 3 – Belém River Lake in São Lourenço Park



Source: Personal archive (2022).

Figure 4 – Landscape of the Belém River lake in São Lourenço Park



Source: Personal archive (2022).

Figure 5 – Information sign "Here the Belém River Passes", in São Lourenço Park



Source: Personal archive (2022).

Figure 6 – Entrance to Bosque do Papa (Wooden bridge over the Belém River)



Source: Personal archive (2022).

Figure 7 – Bike path following the route of the Belém River near Bosque do Papa



Source: Personal archive (2022).

From these images, we can notice the landscaping given to the surroundings of the Belém River, in which, for example, the bike path (marked with the red arrow) and the river (marked with the blue arrow) in Figure 7 form a recreation and tourism area for residents and visitors. In Figures 3, 4 and 5 we can observe that an aesthetic meaning of relevance is conferred to the river inside the parks and their surroundings, despite the fact that Belém is already polluted in these spaces. But what is the meaning of the river beyond the parks? What is the city's relationship with this very important element of Curitiba's landscape?

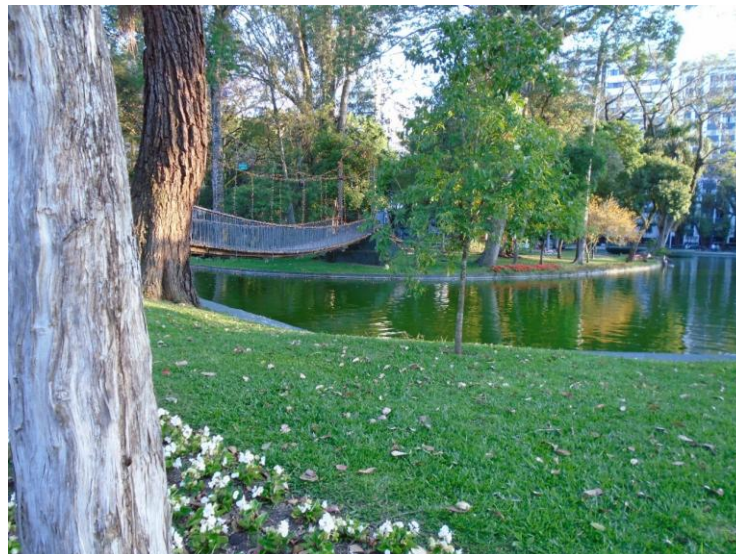
When it reaches the central areas of the capital of Paraná, especially in the Civic Center, the river submerges and disappears, already polluted, in canals on Luiz Leão Street, Largo Bittencourt Street and Mariano Torres Street (its body of water having been diverted from the Passeio Público park, by means of pipes) until it returns to the surface next to the road-rail (Duarte, 2006). The most critical areas for flooding are precisely in the neighborhoods of the Belém-South basin, such as: Prado Velho, Rebouças, Vila Hauer and Boqueirão (where Belém has its mouth in the Nautical Park, meeting another important river, the Iguaçu). In these places, the watercourse runs in urban meanders in the midst of slum areas along its banks and housing complexes, as well as universities, such as the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (Duarte, 2006).

Figure 8 – Cândido Abreu Avenue, part built on the Belém River in the Civic Center



Source: Personal archive (2022).

Figure 9 – Artificial lake supplied by the channeling of the Belém River in the Public Promenade, Civic Center



Source: Personal archive (2022).

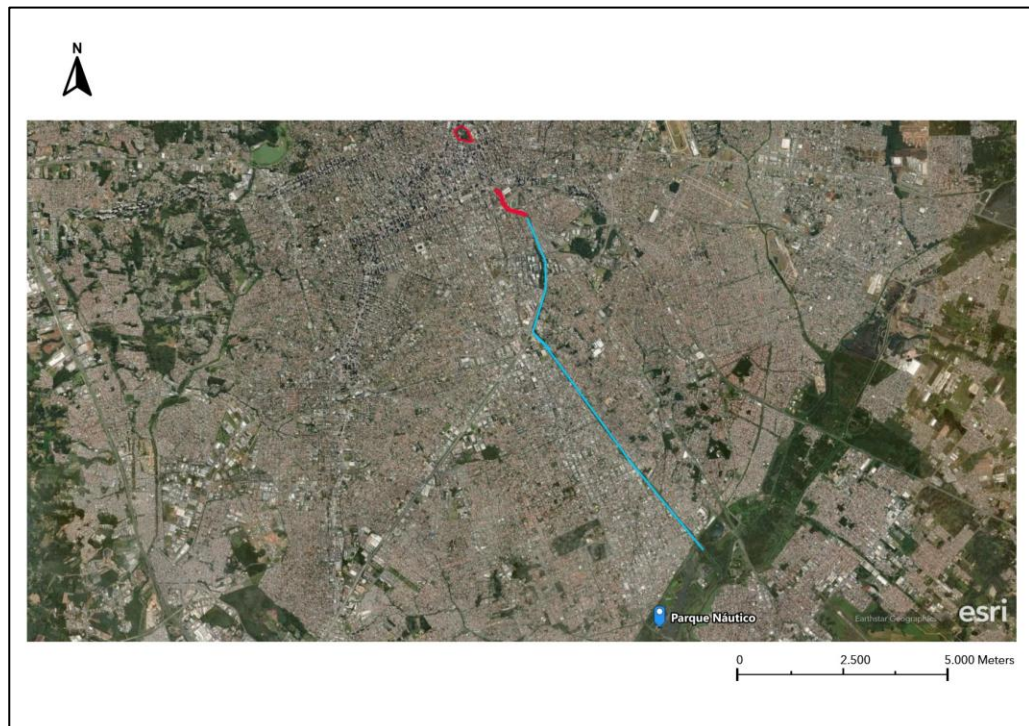
Figures 10 and 11, below, are satellite images adapted from the ArcGIS Earth program, in which we can analyze the detail of the "disappearance" of the Belém River after it was diverted from the Passeio Público park, detailed in red in the image. The entire extension between the red markings represents the built area on the river, which only returns to "appear" in the landscape next to the city's road-rail, in the southernmost portion of downtown Curitiba. In Figure 9 we have a more generalized view of the course of the river (in blue) already fully apparent in the landscape, but rectified (not necessarily channeled) until it reaches its mouth in the Nautical Park, located in the Boqueirão neighborhood (where the ETE-Belém sewage treatment plant is also located).

Figure 10 – Central Area of Curitiba, where the Belém River submerges in underground channels



Source: Satellite image adapted from ArcGIS Earth (2025).

Figure 11 – South-central portion of the Belém River extension



Source: Satellite image adapted from ArcGIS Earth (2025).

According to Siqueira *et al.* (2022, p. 160), the urban growth of Curitiba, as well as

other Brazilian capitals, occurred at an accelerated rate, resulting in a disorderly occupation of watersheds, with serious effects on hydrological cycles due to the high levels of soil waterproofing. An example of this is the historic floods of the Belém River, especially in the center-south of the city, an area precisely where the channeled river passes either underground, below streets and avenues, or in urban meanders without protection of its riverbanks, "causing serious problems of erosion, pollution, and siltation at some points" (Siqueira *et al.*, 2022, p. 165).

Regarding the iconographic aspects of the river, Duarte (2006) carried out a study on the image of the Belém River and the relationship between what is reported in the media and the mental maps produced by a group of 130 interviewees about this watercourse. In the results of this investigation, the words and images most cited by people and the media concerned pollution, misery and sewage (Duarte, 2006, p. 114). The mental maps drawn at the time reflect the idea that the dumping of waste into the river occurs essentially in areas close to slums and irregular occupations (to the south), despite the fact that it has been proven (through research on water quality) that the river already reaches the center of the city with its polluted waters from its course to the north, indicating a preconceived view of relating the problems of the Belém River to poverty.

In addition, in 2012 and 2016, respectively, two projects were carried out to disseminate the history of this river and inventory its landscape components, through photographs and videos⁵. The project *Portraits of Belém: the trajectory of an urban river*⁶ produced a website, in the form of an inventory, about the history of occupation of the city of Curitiba along the Belém River, and the project *Landscapes of the Belém River* included historians and filmmakers in the production of a mini-documentary⁷ also about some historical aspects of this river. All these researches had the role of contextualizing the Belém River in the history of the city, in addition to showing some images that it has in contemporaneity, seeking to draw attention to this water landscape, as a cultural and environmental heritage of Curitiba.

From this perspective, Moreira (2019, p. 185) states that the landscape is mutant and, at the same time, permanent. With this, the author seeks to situate the reader about the "structure of permanence that remakes the landscape every time it changes" (Moreira, 2019, p. 185) or until a radical event entirely changes the way of conceiving space, interfering in the final composition of the landscapes. This aspect is precisely what provides the geographical reading of space over the years, and to understand this structure of permanence is to understand the social, geopolitical, and economic framework behind the spaces where we inhabit.

But the landscape also has a subjective character based on daily experiences and daily (re)constructions, indicating the *geographicity* of the space. For the French geographer Eric Dardel, this is consistent with the geographical reality, which is the concrete place of the daily experiences of the human being, giving the landscape a character of synthesis: "Much more than a juxtaposition of picturesque details, the landscape is a set, a convergence, a moment lived, an

⁵ Available digitally and in print at the Cultural Foundation of Curitiba.

⁶ *Portraits of Belém: the trajectory of an urban river*, available at:

<https://retratosdobelem.blogspot.com/search/label/1%20Apresenta%C3%A7%C3%A3o>. Accessed on: 22 jul. 2025.

⁷ Documentary available on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/@paisagensdoriobelem2620/videos>. Accessed on: 24 jul. 2025.

impression, which unites all the elements" (Dardel, 2011, p. 30) and enables the creation of new everyday worlds.

In a complementary way, the French philosopher Jean-Marc Besse presents the idea that "the landscape is the element where humanity naturalizes itself and where nature humanizes itself" (Besse, 2014, p. 41-42). With this statement, the author identifies that the landscape is the means by which nature assumes an iconographic role, materializing as a product of socio-environmental and cultural relations in space, in addition to being a horizon of a new possible space. So, what are the other ways to cohabit the space with this river that is part of the city's cultural landscape? What other iconographies can this river have in the urban space of Curitiba?

Traveling the entire length of Belém allows us to also travel through the history of the city and the socio-spatial relations underway in contemporary times. As seen earlier, in the Belém-North basin there is a concern to preserve the sources of the river, as well as to transform the surroundings of this watercourse into aesthetically pleasing places. However, in the Belém-South basin, the treatment given to the river is totally the opposite by the government. In both cases, there is a lack of an effectively ecological vision for urban planning, which considers the river in its entire course and not only in and around the parks. In this sense, the Belém River is like a cross-section in the urban fabric, showing numerous layers of experiences, sometimes unequal, of the capital of Paraná state. An example of this is the case of the Prado Velho neighborhood (Belém-south), where the occupation of the banks of the river occurs in a peculiar way: on the one hand, by the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUC-PR), on the other side, by Vila Torres, the oldest slum area in the city⁸.

But if geographically the river separates them, symbolically it unites the two areas in favor of improvements in urban quality, understanding that the Belém River is an element that influences the living conditions of the city. In the *SOS Rio Belém project* integrated with the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (2020), for example, researchers from the university and residents of the local community of Vila Torres came together to think about measures to combat the effects of climate change, in view of the vulnerability of being located on the banks of the river and suffering from periodic floods. For the university, it was important to think about the demands of this community and try to claim this from the public authorities of Curitiba: Vila Torres is the one that suffers the most from the effects of torrential rains and contaminated water from the river, which is not channeled in this community.

One of the main objectives of this project, according to the *PUC-PR news website*, came from an idea of the Vila Torres community itself: to implement micro forests in this area of the watershed in order to minimize the effects of erosion and heat islands, in addition to making the soil more permeable. The central point is to recover the banks of the river through Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) and to take advantage of these spaces to promote environmental education both in the community and at the university.

This type of thinking is closely connected to the ideas of urban biophilia, which relate

⁸ According to data from the report "The best and the worst of the worlds", by Diego Antonelli and José Carlos Fernandes (2014), published in the newspaper *Gazeta do Povo*. Available at: <https://www.gazetadopovo.com.br/vida-e-cidadania/o-melhor-e-o-pior-dos-mundos-1vxrtisiaw03zgyui5s6jfo7i/>. Accessed on: 15 Jan. 2026.

physical and mental well-being to the presence of nature in cities. According to Beatley (2016, p. 28):

[...] Evidence also shows that there are many ways in which urban environments can provide this access to nature, and many different forms that nature can take. It's about having access to nearby parks and natural areas to visit and use, and trails to visit and hike, but it's also the views of nature that we sometimes don't even pay attention to, but which, in myriad ways, provide visual access to nature. (Beatley, 2016, p. 28, *our translation*).

When dealing with the subject of access to nature and the perception of biophilia, the author Beatley (2011, 2016), draws on the case study of the city of Oslo, Norway, when addressing the significant changes brought about by urban planning associated with the environment, which modified the way the Akerselva River, Oslo's main river, began to be considered in the urban policies underway in the city. According to the author, the river as an effective part of the landscape is part of the daily life of the population, which transits along its banks and creates connections with this space that is so important in the local context.

In parallel, Kondolf and Pinto (2017) argue that there is a tendency in current ecological urbanism to consider rivers as spaces for coexistence between people, where sociability occurs because of the ecological treatment of the landscape. For them, the scale of the river compared to the scale of the city contributes to the degree of the social function of this water space, indicating that the greater the extension of a body of water, the greater its social relevance (Kondolf; Pinto, 2017, p. 183). In this sense, the perception of proximity to the river occurs according to the urban form of the city and the historical relationship of society with urban waters: the more people know about urban rivers and interact with their presence in the landscape, the more attention is paid to these spaces.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The spatial and historical panorama of the Belém River invites us to reflect on the fact that nature in cities has both social and environmental value. Parks, community gardens, rivers and other natural components have the potential to combat environmental problems, such as through SBNs (Pantaleão; Cortese, 2025), in addition to being strongholds of biophilia in cities. On the other hand, depending on the type of urban planning and the experiences of the population, they can also represent places of phobia, as they are associated with environmental disasters and pollution arising from fragmented urban policies and disassociated from the local socio-environmental context. Thus, urban nature is, in itself, a social point of view on nature, in which urban society relates, manages, experiences and (re)constructs its environment in different ways.

Thus, based on the history of the Belém River in the city of Curitiba, some questions arose about the urban occupation in relation to this watercourse, and the possibilities of new ways to cohabit the space with this element so important to the origin of the city. From what was exposed throughout the research, we can understand the role of the Belém River as a cultural landscape of the city of Curitiba not only based on the projects *Portraits of Belém: the trajectory of an urban river* (2012) and *Landscapes of Belém* (2016), but also from the definition

of the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN), which establishes the cultural landscape as a new typology of recognition of cultural assets located in a given geographical area⁹: [...] a peculiar portion of the territory, representative of the process of interaction between man and the natural environment, to which life and human science have imprinted marks or attributed values (IPHAN, 2009. Our translation).

The marks on the landscape of the Belém River indicate decades of an aesthetic and sanitarian vision of urban planning in Curitiba. However, changes are beginning to emerge from society itself: either through cultural projects that have shown that the Belém River is a cultural landscape of the city, or through the claims of local communities and universities, which understand the importance of the river in terms of quality of life and well-being. All these contemporary approaches to Belém indicate that new paths are possible and can start locally until they expand into a new sociocultural and environmental awareness. The effective influence of this on urban policies is still something to be researched, but in relation to the ancestry of the watercourse, this is already recognized.

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⁹ In line with UNESCO, Iphan regulated the cultural landscape as an instrument for the preservation of Brazilian cultural heritage in 2009, through Ordinance No. 127.

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STATEMENTS

CONTRIBUTION OF EACH AUTHOR

When describing each author's participation in the manuscript, use the following criteria:

- **Study Conception and Design:** Tell them who had the central idea for the study and helped define the objectives and methodology.
- **Data Curation:** Specify who organized and verified the data to ensure its quality.
- **Formal Analysis:** Indicate who performed the data analysis, applying specific methods.
- **Acquisition of Funding:** Identify who has secured the necessary financial resources for the study.
- **Investigation:** Mention who conducted the data collection or hands-on experiments.
- **Methodology:** Point out who developed and adjusted the methodologies applied in the study.
- **Writing - Initial Draft:** Indicate who wrote the first version of the manuscript.
- **Writing - Critical Review:** Inform who reviewed the text, improving clarity and coherence.
- **Proofreading and Final Editing:** Specify who reviewed and adjusted the manuscript to ensure it meets the journal's standards.
- **Supervision:** Indicate who coordinated the work and ensured the overall quality of the study.

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Article with a single author

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

I, **Clara Maria Santos de Lacerda**, declare that the manuscript entitled "[The landscape beyond the parks: a sociocultural analysis of the Belém River and the urban process of Curitiba-PR]":

1. **Financial Ties:** Does not have/has financial ties that may influence the results or interpretation of the work. ("No institution or funding entity was involved in the development of this study").
 2. **Professional Relationships:** Has no professional relationships that may impact the analysis, interpretation or presentation of the results. ("No professional relationship relevant to the contents of this manuscript has been established").
 3. **Personal Conflicts:** Has no personal conflicts of interest related to the content of the manuscript. ("No personal conflicts related to content have been identified").
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