

## **Tamanduateí yesterday and today: perspectives for an urban river**

Le Tamanduateí hier et demain : perspectives pour une rivière urbaine

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### **RÉSUMÉ**

Le Tamanduateí est une importante rivière située dans la région métropolitaine de São Paulo au Brésil (MRSP), qui traverse quatre villes entre sa source et son embouchure, et qui a joué un rôle crucial dans la formation et le développement de ces villes et de leurs citoyens. Dans cet article, nous visons à analyser comment ces villes et leurs citoyens étaient intimement liés au Tamanduateí et comment cette relation a évolué vers une complète déconnexion physique et culturelle depuis que la rivière et sa zone inondable sont considérées comme un obstacle à l'expansion urbaine. Cependant, nous visons aussi bien à explorer comment un mouvement mondial pour la revitalisation des rivières urbaines, à partir des années 1980, s'est reflété dans la région métropolitaine de São Paulo, et comment les projets et les initiatives urbaines proposées autour du Tamanduateí indiquent également un mouvement de reconnexion vers la rivière, et comment les défis rencontrés pour telle réalisation signalent la nécessité de perception par la société du rôle social de la rivière et des potentiels pour sa réappropriation comme bien commun.

### **ABSTRACT**

The *Tamanduateí* River is an important river in the Metropolitan Region of *São Paulo*, Brazil (MRSP), crossing four cities from its source to its mouth and having had a crucial role in the formation and development of these cities and their citizens. In this paper we aim to analyse how these cities and their citizens were intimately connected to the *Tamanduateí* River and how this relationship developed to an utter physical and cultural disconnection once the river and its floodplain were considered to be in the way of urban expansion. However, we also aim to explore how a global movement for the revitalization of urban rivers, from the 1980s onward, has had its reflections in the MRSP and how the urban projects and initiatives being proposed in relationship to the *Tamanduateí* river also point to a movement of reconnection towards the river, yet, how the challenges faced for such accomplishment point to the need for the perception in society of the social role of the river and the potentials for its reappropriation as a common good.

### **KEYWORDS**

Tamanduateí River, urban rivers revitalization, social value of rivers, reconnection with urban rivers, urban open spaces

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The formation of many cities worldwide is highly related to the existence of a river: the populations would benefit from the easy access to the water for navigation, leisure, domestic activities, economic and cultural purposes. Such process happened with the *Tamanduateí*, a river that nowadays comprises 35 km of extension from its source in the city of *Mauá*, until its mouth in the city of *São Paulo*, in a path that goes through the cities of *São Caetano* and *Santo André*, as well. The river's path along the cities of the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo (MRSP, in Brazil) mark its importance for the formation of these different cities and its populations, in addition to its fundamental role in their development as they are nowadays.

However, as happened to many rivers in the world, the *Tamanduateí* also went from a river of great importance in people's everyday lives – essential for the communication between cities and the installation of people and industries nearby – to a degraded environ, continuously deprived of its role of a living structure within the urban environment. Being rectified and channelized, as well as receiving paved avenues enclosing its margins – once the habitat of fauna and flora – the river is seen as an open sewer and as more of a disturbance than a benefaction to the citizens who see it every day, mainly after the fulfilment of the Plan of Avenues of the engineer Francisco Prestes Maia (1896-1965) and its reflexes on the MRSP, since the channelized river is often blamed for the damaging floods that run through the marginal avenues (SILVA, 2016).

In spite of this, since the 1980s new experiences of revitalization of urban rivers have been arousing all around the world, with different scales of intervention, and constituting a global movement for the acknowledgment of the role of rivers and the different possibilities – and advantages – of reincorporating them into the urban fabric and citizens' lives (GORSKI, 2010). In this sense, the present work aims to apprehend the history of the *Tamanduateí* River in its inherent connexion with the cities it crosses, recognizing the importance it had and, also, how it connects the MRSP cities with this global movement for the revitalization of rivers, investigating what has been proposed in this sense up to now and looking towards new perspectives for the river: an ecological axis, a public urban space, a place for meeting people and not what has come to be the objectification of the river. We also aim at showing the challenges and paths these initiatives have been facing in Brazil – in this specific case – bringing forward discussion of what could be done to bring the *Tamanduateí* and human back to interaction.

## 2 METHODS

The methodology applied to this research consisted fundamentally in the literary review of papers and books related to the history and geography of the cities the river crosses, as well as to researches related more specifically to the river *Tamanduateí*. In addition, the methodology also dwell on the survey of projects, maps, photographs and newspapers in the archives and libraries of each of the cities the river crosses, shedding knowledge on the interventions associated to the river coupled with what has been planned for it and how it has been seen in different periods of time. The study of this research material led to the production of a timeline associating the development of the *Tamanduateí* River and its interaction with the MRSP cities and citizens, as well as a critical analytical text reflecting on the past, present and future possibilities for the *Tamanduateí*.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a result of the research we could perceive how the *Tamanduateí* River was indeed of fundamental importance in the choosing of the place where the city of São Paulo would be established – close to the water, to the communication provided by the river and to food sources – and how the city and its personalities were inherently connected to the river, with the washerwomen and the water carriers, for example, working close to the people who enjoyed leisure in the river's floodplain. The river itself was important, additionally, in the connection from the interior of the Brazilian colony to the coast, which led to the formation of the cities that would today constitute the MRSP alongside the *Tamanduateí* River. In this sense, the river has always been a means of connection between people, locally and regionally, and also of goods – a fact that also led to the gradual occupation of the areas near the river for the development of agriculture and, later, industrial activities. In 1867, the installation of the railway *Santos-Jundiaí* in the *Tamanduateí's* floodplain expanded this process, accelerating the growth of the city of São Paulo through the exportation of coffee beans and the installation of its first industries. This

economic growth was reflected in the urban area, with an increase in investments towards the public spaces and also of the urbanization of the city and its neighbour cities. On the other hand, the increase of urbanization also meant that the river's floodplain would be ever more considered important space for the expansion of the cities, resulting in the channelization, rectification and enclosure of the river between marginal avenues, especially after the already appointed Plan of Avenues in the 1930s.

This process of interventions in the river's channel, from changing its path to moulding its area of expansion as well as the increase of pollutants being thrown into the river contributed to the degradation of its image from a crucial structure in social life to an environment of decay in the urban fabric. The increase of the scale of the car in the cities also contributed to the deeper distances between the *Tamanduateí* and people, both physically and culturally. From the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards the river has been accompanied by multiple *gray infrastructure* projects that isolate it from the population. However, in opposition to the propagation of such projects, we could also identify projects and initiatives since the 1990s that put the river in the centre of big scale urban intervention projects or even smaller, punctual community mobilizations. In any of these scales, the common point between them was finding that the global movement towards the revitalization of urban rivers had started to reverberate in the MRSP, in Brazil, and the processes it faced in this specific territory.

Some of the projects found proposed the river as the main axis for the growth of the city, the mobility in the metropolitan area and the development of public spaces, as seen in the project "Eixo Tamanduatehy" (*Tamanduatehy Axis*) – from 1998 – and in the project of the "Revitalization of the Dom Pedro II park" – from 2011, aiming to revitalize a park within the *Tamanduateí* floodplain, considered to be one of the main public spaces of *São Paulo* in the 1920s. The river was also considered in projects of urban intervention such as that of the revitalization of the "Parque do Gato" – an area of slum housing near the river's mouth – in which new social habitation should be provided alongside a landscape that would invite the eyes and the coexistence back to the river. More punctual projects have aroused likewise, as the example of a square made by local communities in a stream affluent to the *Tamanduateí* (the *Maria Quitéria Square*) and the example of growing initiatives that focus on reconnecting people with the city's rivers, pointing to their existence and their importance nowadays with excursions in the river basin, for example (such as the initiative *Rios e Ruas* – Rivers and Streets). However, many of these initiatives, especially the bigger ones, made by public and private investments weren't concluded or done as were initially planned, with and promoting real connection to the river whereas the smaller, more punctual ones, could reach more connection to the river, however small the scale of the intervention was.

## 4 CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, we could realize that the *Tamanduateí* went from a relationship of connection with the citizens of the MRSP to that of disconnection mainly from the 1930s, but that this process has been progressively – although slowly – in transformation, since the 1990s with initiatives and new urban projects that propose a reconnection between cities, citizens and the river. For such, we could also conclude that in spite of new projects being proposed, effective transformation in this relationship has to go through a cultural change in the perception of the river, evolving to the perception of the *social value* of the river and its enormous potential in uniting people, cities, fauna, flora, mobility and leisure. Hence, we hope that this work, in identifying the past and present perceptions and values associated to the river in its relationship with the cities and citizens, as well as how it has been treated throughout time, can generate discussion and consciousness as how the river being a common good, for new connections to thrive, it has to be treated, in project and implementation, also, as a common goal and society has to understand and relate to that, so that old and aggressive practices don't continue to be implemented.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

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