Introduction

The Tamanduateí river was essential for the formation of the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo (MRSP)'s cities (Mauá, Santo André, São Caetano and São Paulo), growing along the river’s margins, as it was a means of transportation, provision of food and water and leisure for them.

This valorisation of the river was turned over mainly after the fulfilment of the engineer Francisco Prestes Maia’s (1896-1965) Plan of Avenues, in the 1930s onwards, with the rectification, channelization of the river and its confinement between marginal avenues.

Since the 1980s new experiences of revitalization of urban rivers have been arousing all around the world, part of a global movement for the acknowledgment of the role of rivers and their importance in the urban fabric.

Our findings specific to the MRSP show that both examples of the old, aggressive approach to the river, as well as the new manifestations of inclusion and recognition to the river have been arousing along the Tamanduateí with different actors shaping contrasting experiences:

- The interests promoted by high profit water retention tanks and avenues
- Urban projects integrating citizens and nature and smaller scale social projects and community initiatives.

We aim to, through analysing both practices, bring forward discussion of what could be done to bring the Tamanduateí and human interactions back and, indeed, revitalize this urban river.

Methods

- Literature review of papers and books;
- Survey of projects, maps, photographs and newspapers on the cities’ municipal archives;
- Participation in expeditions and scientific events;
- Production of a river-cities timeline;
- Production of a critical-analytical text.

Results and Discussion

As a conclusion, we could realize that the disconnected relationship the Tamanduateí has had with the citizens of the MRSP since the 20th century has been progressively – although slowly – transforming, since the 1990s with popular initiatives and new urban projects. About such projects and their implementation we could conclude:

Effective transformation in this relationship has gone through a cultural change in the perception of the river, regarding its social value and enormous potential in uniting people, cities, fauna, flora, mobility and leisure;

Many of these latter new 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.

The smaller, more punctual projects, could reach more connection to the river, however small the scale of the intervention was.

The river is a common good and a natural living structure, society has to understand and relate to those values so that old and aggressive practices don’t continue to be implemented by actors more connected to the land value and profit generated by such practices.

References