

BELÉM, COP 30 AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY: MEGA-EVENTS, GENTRIFICATION AND SOCIO-SPATIAL EXCLUSION



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Ana Beatriz Amaral de Castro¹ and Daniella Maria dos Santos Dias².

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the urban transformations in Belém in the context of **COP 30**, analyzing how the interventions promoted under the discourse of sustainability and urban development impact the **right to the city**. The research is anchored in the literature on mega-events and urban restructuring (COELHO, 2020; SOARES, 2013; SOUZA, 2018), from the perspective of the commodification of space and gentrification as a strategy for real estate valuation (SMITH, 2002; SÁNCHEZ, 2001), as well as in the criticism of the financialization of the city in large urban projects (BHIMANI; DE LISIO, 2023). The study seeks to answer the following question: *In what way do the urban transformations driven by the preparation of Belém for COP 30 reproduce dynamics of commodification of urban space and violate the right to the city?* The methodology adopted combines documentary analysis of urban and environmental policies, institutional discourses and government regulations (BRASIL, 2023; BRAZIL, 2024), in addition to a critical review of the literature on event cities and their impacts on socio-spatial segregation (SILVA, 2023; EZZAT; EL-SAYED, 2022). The results indicate that the implemented policies prioritize real estate appreciation and the reconfiguration of central and tourist areas, while the peripheries remain on the margins of urban infrastructure and investments, reinforcing historical socio-spatial inequalities (MALHEIROS; ROCHA, 2013). This phenomenon highlights the instrumentalization of COP 30 to meet global economic and political interests to the detriment of the right to the city, understood from the critical perspective of David Harvey (2012), as the collective right to democratic participation in decision-making processes about the production of urban space. However, the event also represents an opportunity for Belém to reposition its urban development model, as long as the interventions are guided by principles of social inclusion and socio-environmental justice.

Keywords: COP 30. Bethlehem. Gentrification. Social exclusion. Event cities.

¹ Undergraduate student in Law
Federal University of Pará
beatrizadcastro@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7373-221X>
<https://lattes.cnpq.br/1186734322284980>

² Dr. in Law
Federal University of Pará
diasdaniella@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1234-5279>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/1345611606547188>

INTRODUCTION

The choice of Belém as the venue for COP 30 inserts the city in a process of urban reconfiguration that transcends the realization of the event itself, connecting it to a broader logic of mega-events and strategic urban development. The climate conference, presented as an opportunity for economic growth, modernization and international projection, also raises concerns about its social, environmental and urban impacts, especially in a context of historical socio-spatial inequalities. If, on the one hand, COP 30 can boost investments and infrastructure, on the other hand, it can accentuate processes of commodification of urban space, gentrification and social exclusion.

Given this scenario, this study seeks to answer the following research question: How do the urban transformations driven by the preparation of Belém for COP 30 reproduce dynamics of commodification of urban space and violate the right to the city?

The central hypothesis is that the interventions planned for COP 30 follow a neoliberal urban development model, based on real estate appreciation and the requalification of strategic areas according to global economic interests, without equitably contemplating the needs of vulnerable populations. Thus, Belém can repeat what happened in other cities that hosted mega-events, where urban improvements ended up displacing low-income communities, boosting real estate speculation and deepening inequalities.

The research gap of this study lies in the lack of critical investigations on the impacts of COP 30 in Belém, especially with regard to the commodification of urban space and the processes of silent expulsion promoted by territorial restructuring. Although the literature on mega-events points to trends of elitism and forced evictions in other cities, there is still little systematization of the specific effects of this dynamic in the Amazonian reality and in medium-sized cities such as Belém. In addition, government and institutional discourses often promote the event as an opportunity for development, without an in-depth analysis of who will really benefit from these urban transformations.

In view of this, the present work aims to critically analyze the impacts of COP 30 on the urban structure of Belém, focusing on the processes of commodification of space, gentrification and social exclusion. To this end, it seeks to: (i) examine mega-events as catalysts for the commodification of urban space, investigating how investments and territorial restructuring promote real estate appreciation and change urban dynamics; (ii) analyze the impact of COP 30 on the urban reconfiguration of Belém, with emphasis on the

processes of gentrification and displacement of vulnerable populations;
(iii) understand the governmental and institutional narratives that legitimize urban interventions, contrasting them with the real impacts perceived by the local population.

The study is part of the debate on the right to the city, opposing it to the logic of market-oriented urban planning. By reflecting on these tensions, the research aims to contribute with a critical look at the challenges of urbanization in Belém and point out ways for COP 30 to leave a legacy that prioritizes inclusion and socio-spatial justice.

To achieve this goal, the article is structured in four main sections, in addition to the introduction and final considerations. Chapter 2 discusses the relationship between mega-events and the commodification of urban space, analyzing the dynamics of investment and territorial reconfiguration that accompany the realization of COP 30. Chapter 3 examines gentrification and silent eviction as a consequence of the urban transformations promoted by the event, with a focus on real estate speculation and the displacement of vulnerable communities. Chapter 4 analyzes the governmental and institutional narratives that justify urban interventions in Belém, contrasting official discourses with the impacts perceived by the population. Finally, in the final considerations, the findings of the research are synthesized and reflections on alternatives for a more equitable and inclusive urbanization are proposed.

In this way, the study seeks not only to examine the urban effects of COP 30, but also to problematize the way in which this event can consolidate a model of an exclusionary and commodified city, contributing to an essential debate on the urban future of Belém and the challenges of guaranteeing the right to the city in the midst of the dynamics of global capital.

MEGA-EVENTS AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF URBAN SPACE: INVESTMENT DYNAMICS AND TERRITORIAL RECONFIGURATION

Belém, known for its strategic location on the banks of the Guamá and Guajará rivers and for its rich cultural heritage, was chosen to host the 30th Conference of the Parties (COP 30) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, scheduled for this year 2025, inserting the city in a context of global prominence.

However, the preparation for events of this magnitude often generates a clash between the need for modernization and the persistence of social inequalities. This

process highlights a recurrent dynamic: the urban reconfiguration aimed at meeting tourist interests. In Belém, this trend is nothing new — and never has been.

During the Rubber Cycle, between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the city underwent a significant urban remodeling, marked by the construction of boulevards, squares and imposing buildings, such as the Ver-o-Peso Market (MALHEIROS; ROCHA, 2013). These interventions sought to project an image of modernity inspired by European models, but resulted in the displacement of low-income populations to peripheral areas and without adequate infrastructure. (MALHEIROS; ROCK)

Likewise, the renovations and constructions for COP 30 seem to rescue this historical logic, prioritizing strategic areas to the detriment of the needs of local communities. The main planned interventions and their estimated budgets are described in the table below, formed from data from the liberal newspaper³ and G1⁴:

Table 1 – Expected values for the main works of COP30.

City Park	R\$ 980 million
Future Port II	R\$ 568.4 million
Tucunduba Macrodrainage	R\$ 841 million
Revitalization of Júlio César Avenue	R\$ 140 million
Nova Tamandaré	R\$ 154.2 million
New Dock	R\$ 310.8 million
Renovation of the Ver-o-Peso Complex	R\$ 64 million
Duplication of Avenida Bernardo Sayão	R\$ 246.7 million
São Brás Market	R\$ 118.3 million
Igarapé São Joaquim Urban Park	R\$ 150 million
Igarapé Mata Fome Macrodrainage Program	R\$ 401.8 million
Renovation of the Gunnar Vingren Environmental Park	R\$ 32 million
Innovation and Bioeconomy District	R\$ 7 million

Source: Liberal Newspaper, 2024. G1, 2024.

These works aim not only to improve urban infrastructure, but also to project a modern and sustainable image of Belém, connecting the city to the demands of a global audience. However, they end up neglecting the real needs of the population of Belém.

We cite as an example, data from the Water and Sanitation Institute, which reveal that 82.88% of the population of Belém does not have adequate access to sanitary

³ THE LIBERAL. New Dock, City Park and more: see 13 works and services that Belém will receive until COP 30. Available at: <https://www.oliberal.com/economia/nova-doca-parque-da-cidade-e-mais-veja-13-obras-e-servicos-que-belem-vai-receber-ate-a-cop-30-1.820708>. Accessed on: 12 Dec. 2024.

⁴ G1. 500 days to the COP in the Amazon: how are the works that add up to more than R\$ 4 billion in Belém. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/pa/para/noticia/2024/06/28/500-dias-para-a-cop-na-amazonia-como-estao-as-obras-que-somam-mais-de-r-4-bilhoes-em-belem.ghtml>. Accessed on: 13 Dec. 2024.

sewage, while more than 23% live without regular water supply.⁵ In addition, the city was ranked as the fourth worst capital in the country in terms of quality of life in a study based on the Social Progress Index (SPI), which measures the well-being of the population through three main dimensions: Basic Human Needs, Fundamentals for Well-being, and Opportunities. Among the factors analyzed are life expectancy, homicide rates, pollution, and access to higher education.⁶ And instead of meeting these critical demands, resources are being largely directed to urban beautification projects in order to mask the reality of the city.

Therefore, COP 30, which could be an opportunity to promote more equitable and inclusive urban development, runs the risk of perpetuating socio-spatial inequalities and reproducing an urbanization model subordinated to the interests of capital and aesthetics. And for this not to happen, it needs to overcome the historical challenges of exclusion and prioritize the sustainable legacy for all residents.

After all, modernizing a city should not only mean making it more attractive to the eyes of the world, but also fairer and more accessible to those who live in it.

In this sense, it is necessary to understand how the investments associated with the event directly impact the structure of the city and reinforce the logic of commodification of urban space.

In Belém, the conference has been used as a justification to remodel the urban space with a focus on economic and tourist attractiveness, intensifying a series of investments directed to strategic areas, especially those of high visibility, such as the historic center and the riverfront, which is the so-called "COP Polygon",⁷ designed to include key areas such as the airport, hotels, conference spaces and the Docks shopping center, where the main planned changes are concentrated.

⁵BRAZIL SANITATION PANEL. Location: Belém. Available at: <https://www.painelsaneamento.org.br/localidade/index?id=151>. Accessed on: 12 Dec. 2024.

⁶ VER-O-FATO. *Pará has the worst quality of life in Brazil; Belém is the 4th worst capital, says study*. Available at: <https://ver-o-fato.com.br/para-tem-a-pior-qualidade-de-vida-do-brasil-belem-e-a-4a-pior-capital-diz-estudo/>. Accessed in: 02/10/2025

⁷ FOLHA DE S.PAULO. *Pará bets on Airbnb, temporary village and cruises to try to overcome the bottleneck of rooms at COP30*. Folha de S.Paulo, 14 May 2024. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2024/05/para-aposta-em-airbnb-vila-provisoria-e-cruzeiros-para-tentar-vencer-gargalo-de-quartos-na-cop30.shtml>. Accessed on: 28 Jan. 2025.

Figure 1 – Area called "cop polygon".



Source: Folha de São Paulo, 2024

Figure 2 – Indication of the main locations of the polygon.

- Polígono da COP**
Região que compreende hotéis, aeroporto, a sede da COP e o centro comercial das docas, onde devem se concentrar as atividades do evento
- 1 Baía do Guajará**
Onde ficarão atracados os cruzeiros
- 2 Porto Futuro 2**
Local está em reforma e terá um espaço dedicado à bioeconomia; fica ao lado da estação das docas e do mercado Ver-O-Peso, polos comerciais e de lazer da região
- 3 Parque da Cidade de Belém**
Local onde ficarão os principais pavilhões da COP e onde devem acontecer as maiores reuniões do evento
- 4 Palácio Lauro Sodré**
Sede do governo do Pará
- 5 Parque Estadual do Utinga Camillo Vianna**
Deve receber a chamada Aldeia COP, estrutura que sediará debates sobre questões indígenas

Source: Folha de São Paulo, 2024

Among the main spaces that will suffer direct impacts, the COP Polygon stands out, which includes the airport, hotels and the commercial center of Docas, where the event's activities will be concentrated. This region tends to receive urban and mobility improvements, reflecting the pattern of requalification associated with global mega-events. In addition, Guajará Bay will be used as an anchorage point for cruise ships that will serve as temporary accommodation, evidencing the demand for tourist infrastructure.

Another strategic point is Porto Futuro 2, which is under renovation and should receive a space dedicated to the bioeconomy, consolidating itself as a commercial and leisure hub. Located near the Ver-o-Peso Market, this project suggests an effort of real estate appreciation and economic requalification. The Belém City Park, on the other hand, should host the main pavilions of COP 30, being the place where the most relevant meetings and conferences will take place. The Lauro Sodré Palace, seat of the Government of Pará, is also part of this process, acting as a strategic point for negotiations and political meetings.

In addition to these central structures, the Utinga Camillo Vianna State Park stands out, where the creation of the COP Village is planned, a space for debates on indigenous and socio-environmental issues. This initiative reinforces the symbolic character of the event and its relationship with the Amazon, while highlighting the need for effective inclusion of traditional populations in decision-making processes.

It is noted that the choice of intervention areas reveals a clear priority in central and attractive regions for the market, while the peripheries, which already face severe structural deficits, remain outside the scope of investments, evidencing a mismatch between local demands and the logic of the event.

These changes drive a phenomenon called commodification, in which previously degraded areas undergo requalification and restructuring, but within a logic focused on land valuation and real estate speculation. This process attracts large investors and networks in the tourism sector, making urban space a tradable asset in the global market.

These investments generate significant economic impacts in sectors such as tourism, civil construction and services, promoting employment and international visibility. However, these gains are unevenly distributed, mainly benefiting privileged economic groups, as Soares (2013, p. 197) points out

The construction (or renovation) of new stadiums and major urban mobility works are playing the role of catalysts for the restructuring of city space. However, this urban expansion does not represent a movement of redistribution of infrastructure and urban equipment throughout the city, nor of the implementation of housing policies that favor the lower income sectors of the population.

This phenomenon, described in the context of the World Cup, is also manifested in Belém's preparation for COP 30, highlighting how mega-events often drive investments that reinforce the commodification of urban space and deepen socio-spatial inequalities. In this sense, the discourse of modernization and sustainability that accompanies these projects functions as an instrument of legitimization of these transformations, often masking dynamics that perpetuate historical inequalities and restrict the access of local populations to the benefits generated by urban interventions.

In this way, Belém's preparation for COP 30 follows a pattern observed in other mega-events, in which investments aimed at urban restructuring prioritize economic and tourist interests to the detriment of the needs of the local population. Although interventions are often justified by the discourse of modernization and sustainable development, in practice, they accelerate processes of real estate appreciation and land speculation, creating an environment conducive to socio-spatial exclusion. This scenario paves the way for gentrification and silent eviction, phenomena in which low-income communities are gradually displaced from central spaces, often without effective protection mechanisms or participation in urban planning.

In short, the reorganization of the urban space of Belém for COP 30 reflects an urban development model guided by economic and tourist interests, concentrating investments in certain areas and boosting land appreciation. However, there is a risk of gentrification processes and population displacement, especially in regions neighboring these intervention zones. If previous experiences show that mega-events often result in the commodification of urban space, promoting transformations that benefit specific sectors of the economy to the detriment of the needs of the local population, the way in which public policies will be conducted for COP 30 will be decisive in defining whether these changes will result in an inclusive and sustainable legacy or in the expansion of socio-spatial inequalities in Belém.

GENTRIFICATION AND SILENT EXPULSION: THE SOCIAL COST OF URBAN RESTRUCTURING

In this context, one of the main pressures faced in the organization of mega-events is the need to requalify urban spaces and adapt them to the requirements of an international audience within reduced timeframes — in the case of Belém, in just two years. This process, often justified by the discourse of modernization and development, has as a side effect gentrification, a phenomenon in which areas historically occupied by low-income populations undergo interventions that raise real estate values, becoming inaccessible to their original residents. Although these changes are presented as urban improvements, they often result in the forced displacement of communities, which find themselves excluded from the new urban pattern without enough time for adaptation or decent housing alternatives. This silent expulsion occurs in a systematic way, consolidating a model of urban development that prioritizes economic interests to the detriment of the right to the city.

In this process, urban transformation occurs in such a way that areas occupied by low-income populations undergo interventions that promote real estate appreciation, resulting in the gradual replacement of these residents by groups with higher purchasing power. These abrupt and apparently positive changes hide the need to carry out the

expropriation of several families so that these works can be completed⁸, without offering adequate time for them to plan or any dignified alternative.

In addition, the compensation paid is often below the real value of the properties, making them insufficient for these families to be able to resettle in areas that guarantee minimum quality of life conditions.

In this sense, Cruz, Marinho and Ferreira (2018, p. 2) point out that:

Displacement, expropriation and relocation are necessary actions within the logic of 'capitalist development', considering that the areas occupied by local populations are now attractive to the market, whether the real estate market and the mass tourism industry, in Belém, or to the large mining entrepreneurs, who dispute, appropriate and reconfigure the territory used, transforming it for the benefit of capital

This process was evident at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, when the city's restructuring led to the removal of approximately 1.5 million people. Under the guise of modernization, historic neighborhoods were demolished to make way for high-end infrastructure and new expressways. The Chinese government has offered minimal compensation to the displaced, forcing many to resettle in other areas without the same access to services and jobs.

The same dynamic was observed in Brazil, especially in Rio de Janeiro during the build-up to the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games. The redevelopment of the city was promoted as a positive legacy, but the reality was marked by forced evictions and an increase in the cost of living. In this regard, Bhimani and De Lisio (2023) analyze the impact of financialization in the context of mega-events in Rio de Janeiro, addressing how the development of Porto Maravilha, launched in view of the 2016 Olympic Games, is a significant example of how the financialization of housing is intertwined with mega-sporting events.

The project, which initially presented itself as an initiative for social inclusion and democratization of urban space, ended up being co-opted by the financial market, facilitating the creation of an urban environment aimed exclusively at investors and economic elites.⁹

⁸ DIÁRIO DO PARÁ. Government announces expropriation of properties on Tamandaré Avenue. Available at: <https://diariodopara.com.br/para/governo-anuncia-desapropriacao-de-imoveis-na-avenida-tamandare/>. Accessed on: 25 jan. 2025.

In addition to direct evictions, a more subtle process took place: rapid real estate appreciation in neighborhoods traditionally occupied by low-income families made them financially unaffordable for their original residents, forcing them to gradually relocate to other areas.

These examples demonstrate that quiet eviction does not only happen through direct evictions, but also through a structural change that transforms the economic and social profile of cities. Thus, the logic of the market began to dictate the guidelines of urban planning, subordinating the social functions of space to the maximization of profits and the construction of an image of modernity (MARCO; SAINTS; MÖLLER, 2020)

Thus, the great dilemma that arises is: in what way do the urban transformations driven by the preparation of Belém for COP 30 reproduce dynamics of commodification of urban space and violate the right to the city? If international experiences are anything to go by, it is essential that Belém understands the impacts of these interventions and implements policies that prevent gentrification and protect populations in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability, ensuring truly inclusive and sustainable urban development.

To avoid further harming these communities, it is essential that resettlement policies are guided by principles of dignity and social justice. This includes providing fair compensation, ensuring affordable housing in areas with access to basic services, and actively participating affected communities in the planning process.

Otherwise, the impacts of COP 30 will extend far beyond 2025, leaving as a legacy a city model shaped by corporate interests and real estate speculation dynamics, to the detriment of the right to the city and the democratic participation of its inhabitants in urban planning. This process reinforces a global pattern in which mega-events are used as catalysts for urban restructuring, often subordinating the needs of local people to international economic and political agendas. Given this scenario, it becomes essential to question: will Belém be transformed to ensure fair and inclusive urban development or will it become another example of an event city captured by external interests?

CITY FOR WHOM? GOVERNMENT NARRATIVES AND THE URBAN TRANSFORMATION OF BELÉM FOR COP 30

The concept of the right to the city, developed by David Harvey (2012), establishes that urban space must be collectively appropriated, guaranteeing local populations not only access, but also the ability to transform it in a democratic way.

Harvey points out that the struggle for the right to the city is, above all, a political struggle, as it involves the dispute for control of urbanization processes. In a world where the production of space is dominated by financial capital and urban entrepreneurship, guaranteeing this right means claiming the city as a common good, where popular participation defines the priorities of urban planning

However, in planning for major events, this ideal is often eclipsed by political and economic interests. Instead of serving as an opportunity to promote inclusive urban planning, aligned with the principles of the right to the city, the public policies adopted tend to follow an opposite logic: instead of addressing the city's structural deficits, they prioritize aesthetic interventions and urban beautification works, masking socio-spatial inequalities instead of effectively reducing them.

This model of urban transformation is part of the concept of "spectacle city", formulated from the criticism of urbanism focused on the consumption and commodification of public space.

The spectacle city is characterized by large urban projects that focus on the construction of monumental infrastructures, modernization of central areas and requalification of strategic spaces, often at the expense of the removal or marginalization of the poorest populations (TEOBALDO, 2010), such as the transformation of Ver-o-Peso into a gourmet space and the requalification of canals (such as the Canal da Doca and Tamandaré) for luxury developments.

The investment of approximately R\$ 5 billion, financed by institutions such as BNDES and Itaipu¹⁰, reveals the magnitude of these projects, but also exposes the disconnect between the resources allocated and urgent social needs, such as basic sanitation and housing. In this process, the State's action is characterized by the prioritization of private interests, often to the detriment of collective well-being, reinforcing the exclusionary logic of the spectacle city, where the valorization of the urban image overlaps the needs of the population.

This dynamic reinforces the colonial character of urbanization in Brazil, where the development of cities comes at the expense of the removal of traditional communities to

¹⁰ BRAZIL. Lula approves works for COP 30 in Belém and highlights investment in the city. *Agência Brasil*, 12 Feb. 2025. Available at: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/politica/noticia/2025-02/lula-aprova-obras-para-cop-30-em-belem-e-destaca-investimento-na-city#:~:text=Os%20recursos%20para%20prepare%20Bel%C3%A9m,desenvolvimento%20urbano%2C%20mobilidade%20e%20saneamento>. Accessed on: 25 jan. 2025.

make way for elitist projects (CHALOI, 2018). Thus, the resistance against these processes is not limited to the struggle for housing, but involves a battle for permanence and recognition of the social and cultural role of the affected groups.

Therefore, the right to the city cannot be reduced to a rhetorical discourse while urban planning practices continue to prioritize the commodification of space and real estate appreciation to the detriment of social inclusion. For COP 30 to truly represent an opportunity for sustainable development and urban transformation, it is essential that public policies incorporate mechanisms for effective popular participation and that investments are directed to strengthening social infrastructure, ensuring concrete benefits for the entire population, and not just for privileged sectors.

Despite the numerous problems, COP 30 has been promoted as a unique opportunity for urban transformation, sustainable development and international projection. However, the way in which the event has been presented by the government spheres reveals a mismatch between the official discourse and the reality of the planned interventions. When analyzing public policies, official discourses and advertising campaigns, it is clear that the justifications for these urban reconfigurations are often more aligned with economic and private interests than with the real needs of the local population. Under the guise of an "environmental and sustainable" event, many of the planned projects are aimed at the requalification of areas that will benefit only a small portion of the population, especially the economically privileged classes.

Thus, it becomes essential to investigate how these institutional narratives shape public perception and legitimize processes of socio-spatial exclusion, naturalizing inequalities under the rhetoric of progress and modernization.

Government speeches around COP 30 emphasize the commitment to sustainability and preservation of the Amazon as central justifications for investments in infrastructure and urban requalification. In this sense, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva highlighted in several speeches that the event will position Belém as a global reference in the fight against climate change, pointing to the conference as a milestone for the modernization of the city and the improvement of the quality of life of its residents

And not only that, the urban planning reports linked to COP 30 often highlight the economic potential of the works, such as the revitalization of strategic areas in the Doca

and Tamandaré canals,¹¹ which are presented as essential to meet the demands of a large-scale international event.

These interventions are strategically designed to project an image of Belém as a modern and sustainable city, in tune with its role as the "capital of the Amazon". However, this narrative, widely promoted by the government and reinforced by the media, often serves to hide an indisputable reality: mega-events tend to privilege economic and corporate interests, while the real demands of the local population remain in the background.

Jorge de La Barre, in *Choque de Futuro: O Rio dos Megaeventos* (2013, p 59), highlights how these events are sold to the population under the promise of progress and participation, while, in practice, they function as spectacles that divert attention from the city's structural problems:

Sold to the population as a "unique opportunity" (for whom?), mega-events also appear as a challenge (for everyone), inviting anyone to go beyond the limits of their merely human condition. The political economy of mega-events is also a policy of festive participation, an invitation to overcome that must involve and delight everyone. One more way out, one more escape from the present and the contingent reality of the human condition...

In this sense, contrary to what is being reported by the media, these urban transformations for the COP have not been shown to promote the redistribution of urban infrastructure and equipment throughout the city, nor the implementation of housing policies that favor the lower income sectors of the population. In fact, it is a temporary escape from the problems that afflict the city of Belém.

The rhetoric of progress and modernization minimizes the local implications of these changes, reinforcing an idealized vision that often does not correspond to the reality experienced by the affected communities. This mismatch between discourse and practice shows how public policies can be instrumentalized to meet economic interests under the pretext of promoting inclusive development.

Therefore, the way in which urban renewal policies are presented to the public seeks to reinforce the idea of population involvement, even if this participation is more symbolic than effective. In this sense, Sánchez (2001, p 42) points out that,

¹¹ STATE SECRETARIAT OF PUBLIC WORKS OF PARÁ. State reinforces investments in COP 30 projects and works and values tourism in Belém. Available at: <https://www.seop.pa.gov.br/noticias/estado-refor%C3%A7a-investimentos-em-projetos-e-obras-da-cop-30-e-valoriza-turismo-em-bel%C3%A9m>. Accessed on: 17 Feb. 2025.

The official campaigns that accompany the policies emphasize, with emphasis, the desire to involve citizens in urban renewal projects. In fact, in both cities, the political groups that have held power in municipal governments for decades have created for the majority of the population a sense of pride and belonging to the city. This feeling generates, however, more than an active participation, a contemplative participation of the city. In fact, it is worth thinking that watching the show creates a strong illusion of participation. It is observed that citizens feel that they participate in and benefit from these policies; Nevertheless, they watch a spectacle of transformations to which they are invited to an apparently preferential place, but which turns out to be only part of the scenery. Citizens contemplate the modernized city as the "extras of a great urban brand advertisement."

Sánchez's observation reinforces the idea that, many times, popular participation in urban transformations promoted by mega-events is merely symbolic. The sense of belonging generated by official discourses and advertising campaigns masks the fact that decisions are made by political and economic groups with specific interests, while the local population becomes spectators of the changes that directly impact their city.

In this way, COP 30 not only reconfigures the urban landscape of Belém, but also redefines power relations in the city, consolidating a planning model that, under the rhetoric of modernization and sustainability, subordinates popular participation to a secondary and symbolic role. The spectacle of urban transformations, widely promoted by the official discourse, creates the illusion of inclusion, while structural decisions remain concentrated in the hands of privileged political and economic actors. Thus, the event presents itself as a milestone in the urban history of Belém, but the central question remains: will these transformations result in a fairer and more accessible city for all or will they only deepen the logic of exclusion and commodification of urban space?

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This work aimed to analyze the impacts of COP 30 on the urban dynamics of Belém, highlighting the contradictions between the discourse of sustainable development and the reality of transformations driven by mega-events. The choice of the city as the host of the global conference inserts Belém in a process of urban requalification that, although it promises economic and environmental benefits, can intensify socio-spatial inequalities and gentrification processes. In this context, it became essential to investigate to what extent the urban interventions and public policies aimed at the realization of the event respect the social function of the city and guarantee the permanence of the population in strategic spaces.

To this end, we sought to understand the role of mega-events in the restructuring of contemporary cities, analyzing how urban interventions promoted in previous global events consolidated processes of real estate appreciation, gentrification and social exclusion. In this sense, the experience of Belém was inserted in a broader context of urban transformations induced by major events, following a pattern of territorial reorganization that prioritizes strategic sectors of the economy to the detriment of the demands of vulnerable populations.

In addition, it was investigated how the urban planning policies adopted in Belém for COP 30 dialogue (or not) with the needs of the local population. The analysis showed that, although the event is promoted as an opportunity for sustainable development and international projection, the policies implemented so far reflect a logic of commodification of urban space. Government actions favor interventions aimed at valuing central and tourist areas, while the peripheries continue to be on the margins of investments, reinforcing historical inequalities.

Finally, the effects of the urban interventions driven by COP 30 on the social and economic fabric of the city were examined, with an emphasis on the modification of the urban structure. The results indicate that these transformations follow a neoliberal urban development model, in which the city is resignified as an economic asset, favoring real estate speculation and accelerating gentrification processes. The study points out that spaces historically occupied by traditional populations and popular classes are gradually being appropriated by the real estate market, which can compromise the city's cultural identity and restrict the access of the original residents to their territories.

Given this scenario, it is essential that public policies aimed at COP 30 do not reinforce an exclusionary and commodified city model, but rather promote urbanization aimed at social inclusion and spatial justice. The city cannot be treated only as a commodity to be sold to the global market, but rather as a space of existence, culture and belonging. The real challenge of COP 30 therefore lies in ensuring a legacy that meets not only economic interests but also the right to the city of its inhabitants, ensuring that the event leaves concrete benefits for the entire population and not just for those who can afford the new urban space that will emerge from this transformation.

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