


## URBAN PARKS IN ANÁPOLIS (GO): BETWEEN REAL ESTATE VALUATION AND THE SOCIAL FUNCTION IN PUBLIC SPACES

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### ABSTRACT

Urban parks are essential for the socio-spatial dynamics of cities, playing a fundamental role in the leisure and quality of life of the population. This article analyzes the distribution and social function of parks in the city of Anápolis-GO, focusing on how these spaces are appropriated and used by citizens. The research maps some parks, relating their historical and current location to themes of socio-spatial inequality, real estate speculation and the performance of the public power. The discussion is based on the understanding that, although urban policies often seek to democratize public space, in practice, these initiatives tend to reinforce inequalities. The analysis shows that parks located in more valued areas attract greater investment and activities, while those in peripheral regions face abandonment and contempt. Examples such as Parque da Cidade and Parque das Águas illustrate this disparity: the former, deteriorated and restricted to local use, reflects social exclusion, while the latter, well maintained, serves a diverse audience. The study concludes that the appropriation of parks by different social groups is influenced by political, economic and cultural factors, highlighting the need for a critical review of urban practices in Anápolis to promote a fairer distribution of public spaces. The research indicates that the valorization of urban space and sustainability discourses are linked to market interests, raising questions about the true social function of parks in the contemporary city.

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## INTRODUCTION

Parks are open and common spaces for leisure, such spaces are coveted within urban areas, as they correspond to fundamental places in the socio-spatial dynamics that have repercussions on the daily dimension of the population.

The disputes for spaces that promote leisure and quality of life produce benefits to physical and mental health, significantly impacting the appreciation of the territory, as a used space. In this sense, the performance of the public power through actions aimed at the development of urban policies is fundamental in the process of democratization of public spaces present in urban space. However, as Machado (2023, p. 70) warns, "[...] Sometimes, public policies, as much as they appear as democratic in the law, in practice, unfold, expanding the urban socio-spatial inequalities, characteristic of capitalist cities".

At first, it is necessary to understand not only the existential aspect of the park, but also the respective process of implementation in order to understand if it, as a public space, fulfills a social function in the urban space.

The present discussion has the city of Anápolis-GO as the object of analysis, with the purpose of mapping the parks and their proper distributions in order to identify their socio-territorial relations, analyzing the daily relations in each of these spaces. In theory, it aims to understand more comprehensively how people live and appropriate park spaces in the city.

The behavioral factors linked to the use and analysis of the landscape are considered as important pieces for the interpretation of these spaces, this perception of both value and quality of the space is perceived at first through the relationship of the user with the landscape. Thus, we understand that if in that place the basic needs of urban life are met, by identifying the inherent characteristics of urban spaces considered to be of quality, our perception of the value and quality of this space will be built.

Social relations are built from the way we use and appropriate spaces, as we emphasize in this work on public space, with a focus on urban parks intended for leisure and social interactions.

In the context of social relations, in which human action is materialized, Santos (1988, p. 71) points out that these "are not possible without materiality, which fixes social relations of the past. Therefore, the constructed materiality will be a source of social relations, which also take place through objects." The author also adds to the discussion the issue of agents, identified as subjects who have multiple and different social relations that materialize spatially, even at different times.

The presence of quality public space is directly linked to this perception of its use by the community. When an area has a park, squares, wide sidewalks and a constant flow of people playing sports and playing with children, the notion of safety linked to these spaces changes significantly. This, in turn, influences the perception of areas that lack urban infrastructure.

By the way, when we come across situations in which the parks are located in regions of the city with a marked real estate and territorial appreciation, we notice that the public interest often converges with private interests. In these cases, the quality of urban infrastructure becomes an important factor, reflected in the availability of public transport, the shorter distances to be travelled and the greater offer of routes, equipment and services.

Certainly, the capitalist form of production of spaces destined for real estate speculation is influenced by several extremely relevant factors that configure the value of this territory and, consequently, the purchasing power of those who will enjoy this infrastructure. These factors are in line with what governs the construction of space and landscape in cities. Santos (1988) presents it as:

Space results from the marriage of society and landscape. Space contains movement. Therefore, landscape and space are a dialectical pair. They complement and oppose each other. An analytical effort requires us to separate them as different categories, if we do not want to run the risk of not recognizing the movement of society (Santos, 1988, p.25).

This dialectic between space and society is also reflected in the perceptions surrounding private initiatives. The belief that the presence of private initiatives transforms urban spaces into areas with more positive and beneficial activities than those managed by the government strengthens this connection. This phenomenon means that, even among the most vulnerable populations, private space is seen as something not only positive, but also desirable and achievable. However, this centralization of the production of space according to the specific interests of a portion of society ignores the need for a more equitable distribution of urban equipment. As Carlos (2015) argues, this dynamic reflects the model of capitalist accumulation in which we live and the social relations that are produced within it. Thus, the privileged access of some to the city contrasts with the total absence of access by others, evoking a process of urban barbarism.

An inequality that is based on the centralized possession of the social wealth generated by an entire society in the hands of a social class, which also holds power, and which allows the conditions of its reproduction to be established in an alliance between the political and economic planes against the social one, (Carlos, 2015, p.43).

Here there is also a dispute of narratives, because, from the moment that the spaces of the parks that have not been swallowed up by real estate speculation are seen as less valuable, it is up to us to analyze who the narrative of the right to public space has. The consequences of the public-private partnership, as pointed out by Carlos (2015), are part of the process of maintaining inequalities, affecting less favored regions to the detriment of the value attributed to space.

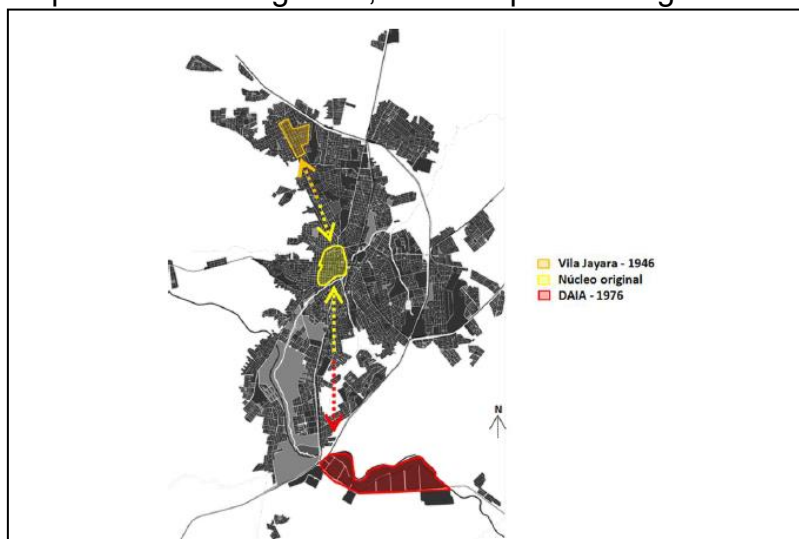
In this sense, the question of the location of the city's parks is a central point for understanding the dynamics of production of urban space. Would the parks be examples of equipment that contribute to these areas being considered consolidated of high standard? Or does the location of parks in areas located outside the city center or with greater real estate appreciation, break with the imbalances and injustices in the distribution of equipment throughout the city?

The city, as Harvey (2005, p. 176) points out, within the capitalist urban context "has to seem like an innovative, stimulating, creative and safe place to live or visit, to have fun and consume". Market urbanism, based on the ideal of consumption, has a broad impact on the production of public space and the urban quality of cities. These movements focused exclusively on the market, without considering social welfare, widen the social inequalities present in urban areas.

## **THE PARKS IN THE CITY OF ANÁPOLIS**

Historically, the urban space of Anápolis developed following the north-south axis. These factors are crucial in the decision to implement public spaces, which are not far from this axis of development. Observing the images (Figure 1), it is possible to see that the divisions of implantation are clear, with a park standing out at each end of the north-south axis.

Figure 1: Organic representation of growth, in which poles and growth lines are configured.



Source: Medeiros, 2016.

In a synthetic analysis of the territory occupied by the city of Anápolis, the central area has characteristics common to urban centers that concentrate diversified services and activities, since the origin of the urban core, at the beginning of the twentieth century, manifesting itself both in subcenters and in the presence of the commercial axis of Avenida Brasil, which extends linearly from north to south, as highlighted by Medeiros (2016, p. 7).

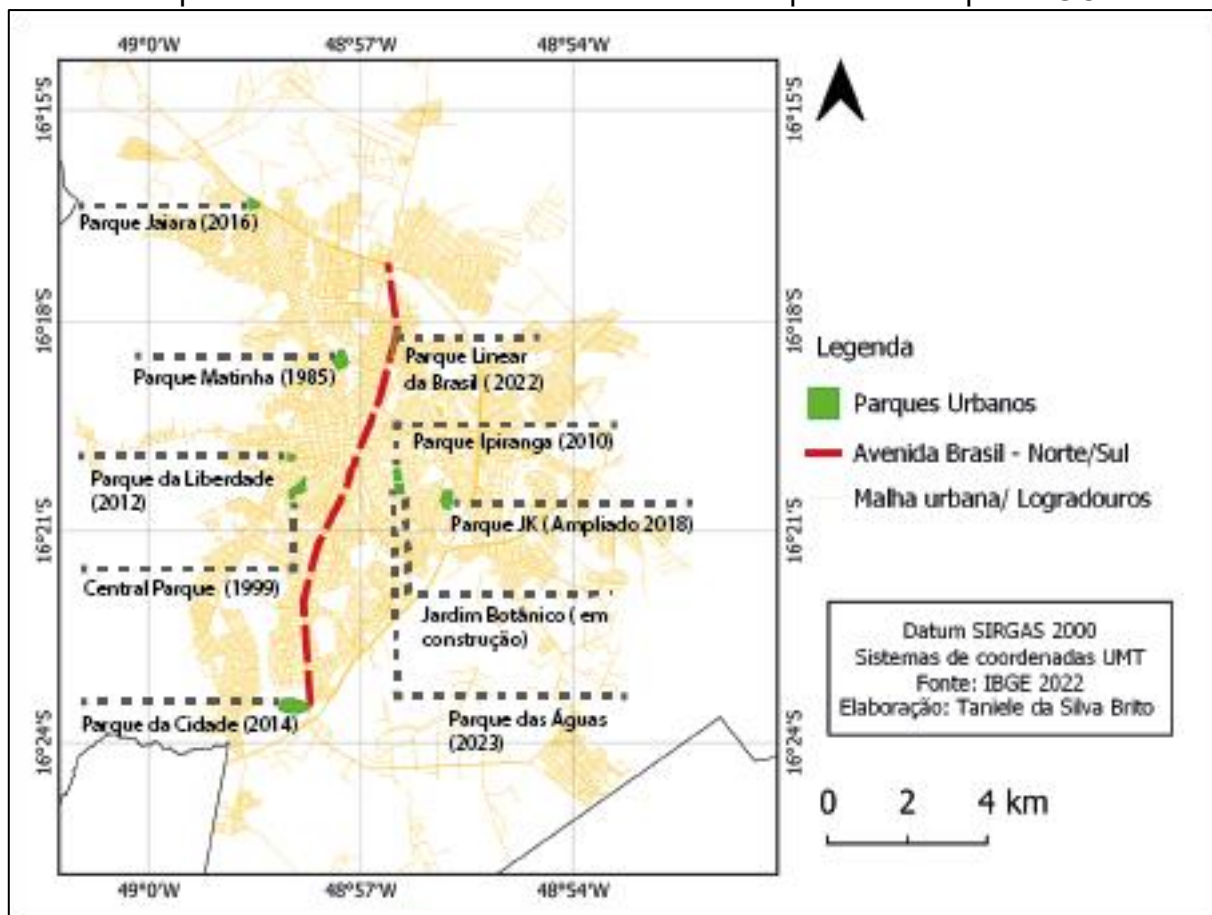
While the original urban nucleus was consolidated, the external dynamizers continued to be decisive over the years for the conformation of the morphological configuration of Anápolis by generating the "growth poles" in sequence to the initial poles determined by the headquarters and railway station.

Based on the concept of segregation of social classes, Villaça (2001) defines it as a process in which different social classes tend to be concentrated in different regions or a set of neighborhoods. Certainly, territorial relations are different from those seen in a metropolis, because, in the case of a medium-sized city like Anápolis, these relations of segregation take place, but on a smaller scale.

From this perspective, understanding and identifying where the parks are within the territory makes us have a better idea of the processes of segregation and direction of investments destined to public spaces in the city. With this, the following urban parks were surveyed (Map 1), in order to understand their insertion in the territory: Antônio Marmo Canedo Park (Parque da Matinha); Linear park of Avenida Brasil Norte; Ipiranga Park;

Water Park; JK Park; City Park; Jaiara Park; Central Park Senador Onofre Quinan; and, Liberty Park.

Map 1: Location and date of creation of urban parks in Anápolis -GO



By identifying, dating and naming the parks, we understand that each of them falls within a

specific context, whether of concentration or distancing. This allows us to understand the impacts of these parks and the social and territorial reflexes associated with their implementation in each region of the city of Anápolis.

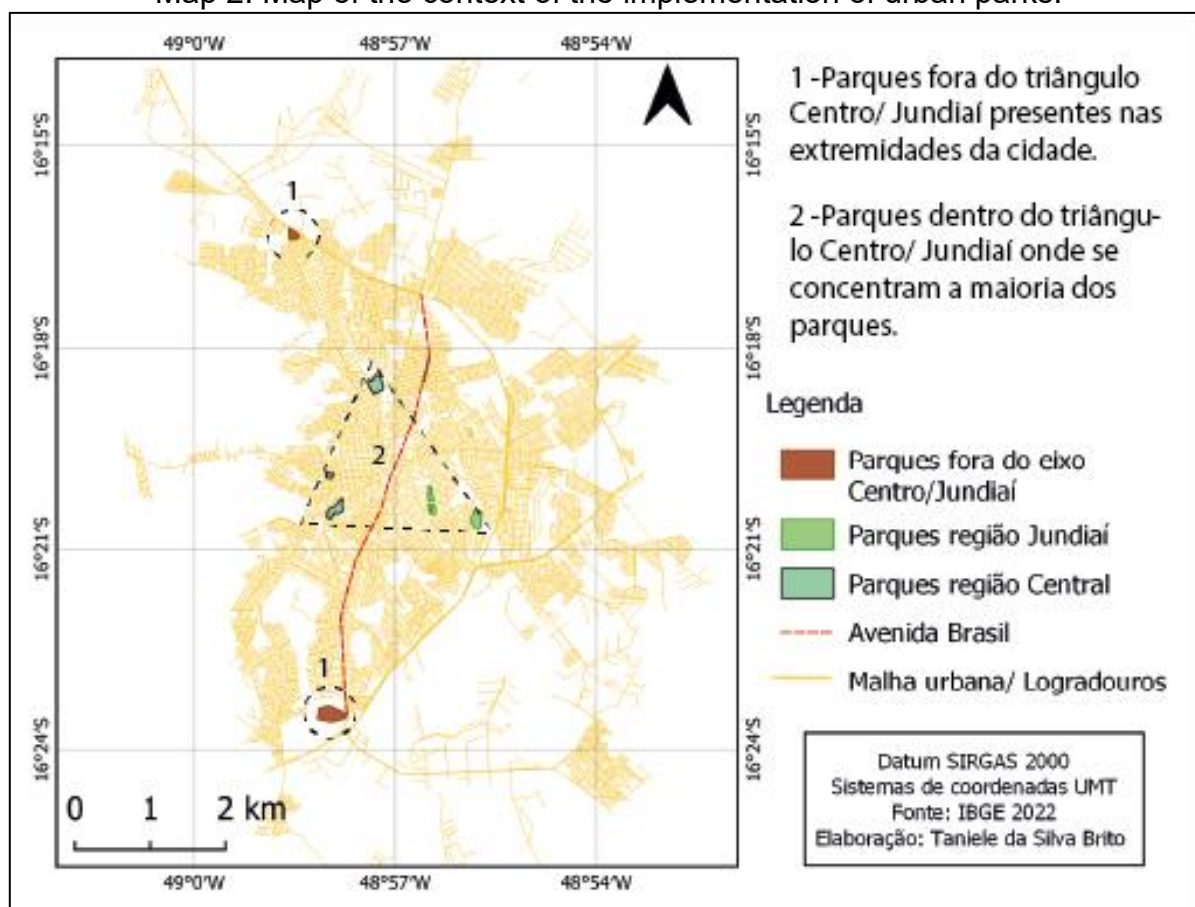
The analysis of intentionality in the implementation of the parks can be observed through their creation dates. The oldest parks are concentrated in the central region, reflecting the focus of urban and speculative development that predominated during their respective periods of implementation. The consolidation of Parque Ipiranga marks the emergence of a new area of interest, which, although linked to the central area, presents characteristics of a new centrality. This transformation, driven by private speculative capital associated with public interests, makes the space one of the most coveted in the



municipality. This dynamic occurs within a context of urban development that differs from that experienced from the 1980s onwards, when the first urban parks were installed.

It is even possible to identify a predominance of implementation of these parks in the triangulated region in the central part of the city that encompasses the traditional center and the Jundiaí neighborhood and surroundings (Map 2).

Map 2: Map of the context of the implementation of urban parks.



On the issue of the use of space, control, and power, Serpa (2021, p. 17) points out that

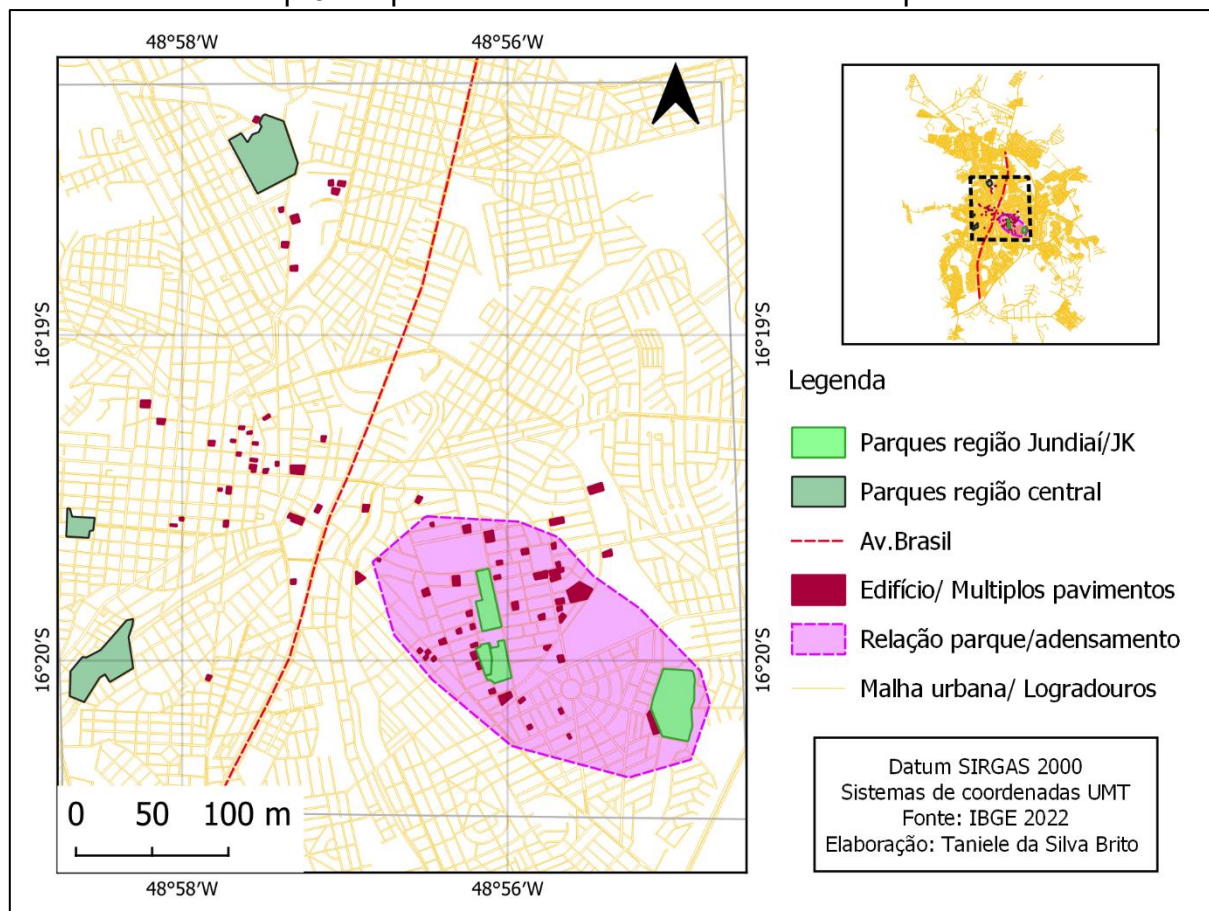
In the contemporary city, the public park is a means of social control, especially of the new middle classes, the final destination of public policies, which ultimately seek to multiply consumption and value urban land in the places where they are applied.

In short, there are marketing intentions, and often allied to political interests, behind the investments in infrastructure that influence the distribution of such public equipment throughout the city. However, it is worth mentioning that the creation of an urban park with



differentiated equipment adds value to the space and contributes to urban densification, as can be seen in Map 3.

Map 3: Map of vertical densification and urban parks.



The relationship between the parks and real estate speculation within the Jundiaí and JK neighborhoods is evident (Map 3), as we also deal with the theme of real estate speculation and within the context of Jundiaí, especially in the surroundings of the Ipiranga park, these relationships are latent.

As Cabral et al. (2020) point out, the verticalization process in Anápolis began in the 1970s, in the pioneering center of the city, and intensified from the 1990s onwards, reaching the Jundiaí neighborhood. With the implementation of Parque Ipiranga, the number of enterprises in the region had a significant jump compared to what was previously observed. The buildings are relatively new, and their constructions are driven by the creation of Parque Ipiranga, which adopted a marketing strategy focused on the environmental and ecological, also receiving the clear incentive of the city hall, which endorses this discourse.

As of 2010, the Municipality of Anápolis incorporated the motto of "sustainable city", based on the 2006 Master Plan, which states that its guiding principle is the provisions of the City Statute, Federal Law No. 10,257/2001, which governs the right to sustainable cities. As reported by the newspaper *Opção* (September 4 to 11, 2011), Mayor Antônio Gomide would be giving a special focus to parks since he took office in 2009, having revitalized the existing parks in the first year of his administration, and, during the second year of construction, the Ipiranga Environmental Park (Medeiros, 2016, p. 17, emphasis added).

Other factors that should boost and make the surroundings of Parque Ipiranga even more attractive for real estate speculation are the creation of recent spaces, such as Parque das Águas and the Botanical Garden, all located close to each other, with the last two integrated.

This proximity of large equipment in areas already valued raises the question of why other regions of the municipality do not receive the same attention in relation to high investments in infrastructure in public spaces.

In another context, a significant number of multi-storey buildings can also be seen in the central neighborhood, however the relationship between buildings and parks is completely different. This is due to the consolidation of the pioneer center even before the creation of the parks, this center is closely linked to commercial and service activities.

Thus, the distance between the buildings and the parks in the central region is perceived. This factor, related to the value of the territory as a function of the use of the parks, differs from what occurs in the surroundings of the parks in Jundiaí. In this context, these parks are characterized as places of community use. The presence of parks in neighborhoods contributes to promoting the discourse of sustainability, which has been appropriated by the real estate market. This, in turn, serves to justify the existence of amenities in the area and the possibility of a higher quality of life.

By visiting the spaces of the central parks, it is possible to identify a pattern of use by the population that lives nearby. Residents report that, even without a large movement, there was a significant improvement in terms of security, for example.

For accessibility is not only physical but also symbolic, and the appropriation of urban public spaces has implications that go beyond the physical design of the new parks. Many of these places remain invisible to the majority of the population, which does not have the school capital to appropriate the design languages and repertoire used in contemporary urban design (Serpa, 2021, p.57).

These factors related to the differences and experiences of certain audiences are directly linked to the value of the territory. The central region and its adjacent areas are financially less valued when compared to real estate in the Jundiá region. This is partly because, to date, it has not been convenient for real estate speculators to gentrify these areas to the detriment of the valuation and speculation of public spaces.

Next, we highlight the reality of the use of parks, which are at extremes in terms of location and real estate appreciation, as well as the attention it receives from the government for its maintenance.

### **DAILY EXPERIENCES AT THE EXTREMES**

With regard to the use and enhancement of parks in Anápolis, the analysis of daily life was carried out between the City Park and the Water Park. This reading was based on visits to the parks at times generally frequented by the population, with the objective of observing the types of use that establish the daily relationship of users with each one of them. Thus, the City Park and the Water Park were selected.

The first park to be detailed is the City Park. This park arose from judicial agreements aimed at repairing environmental damage resulting from the construction of the North-South Railway, whose urban route passes through a valley bottom that contains springs. In this context, it is perceived that people appropriate the space intensively, although the park presents a state of significant deterioration and lacks maintenance. It is mainly used by nearby residents. Even with the precariousness of the place, people take advantage of it to camp, fish, barbecue and bathe, especially on weekends.

When visiting the park, it was possible to perceive a hostility on the part of the people who frequent it towards the presence of unknown individuals. This reaction can be interpreted as an expression of belonging, since, despite the fact that the park is of municipal size and scope, it was completely neglected by the government, as well as by the city's own population, which also does not consider it an attractive place. The attitude of the visitors towards the park space makes it clear that "strangers" people are not welcome. Even though it is one of the largest parks in the city, it is remarkable how it has become a kind of extension of the backyard of those who frequent it regularly.

Figure 2: City Park, 2023



Source: Taniele Brito (2023).

In the image, it is possible to see families using the lake to fish, bathe and have picnics in the shade of the trees. However, in contrast to this bucolic vision, there is a sense of insecurity that may be linked to the fact that the park is located in a peripheral region, close to the cloverleaf that connects the city to the industrial district and the BR 153/060. On one side of the park, there is difficulty in accessing the urban fabric, while on the other side it is surrounded by the highway, the North-South Railroad tracks and the Juvenile Detention Center. Thus, hostility can be present in the daily lives of these people, and the feeling of "invaded" space can be a source of discomfort.

Several factors impact the situation of Parque da Cidade, making it an abandoned space. Social, economic and political factors, combined with the total absence of maintenance, contribute to the creation of an environment in which prejudices are consolidated, reflecting paradigms in the city of Anápolis.

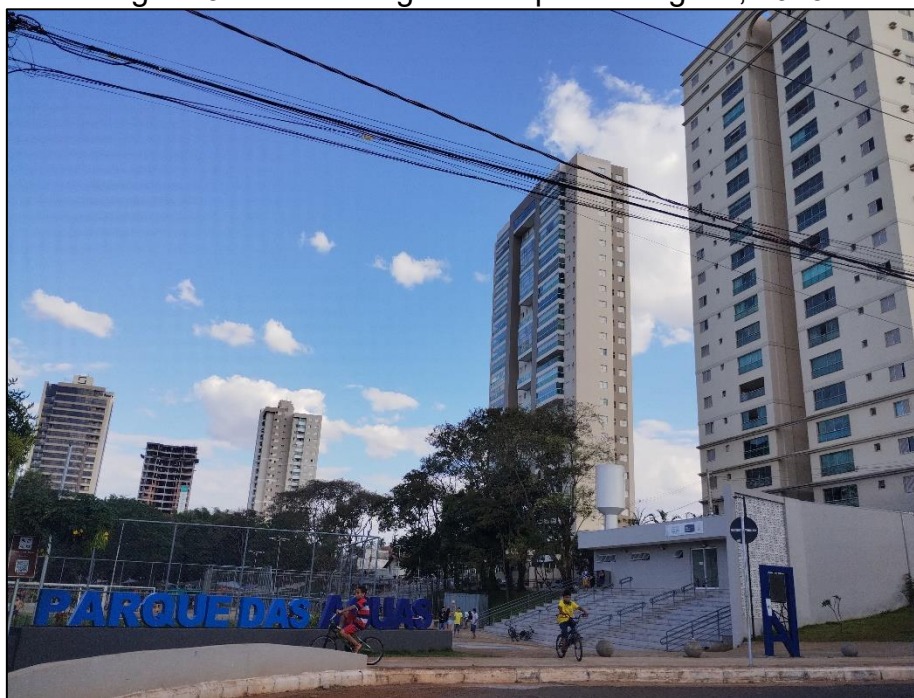
The second park highlighted is Parque das Águas. The relationship between the territory and the public power that is manifested in Parque das Águas contrasts with what is observed in Parque da Cidade. Although the size of Parque das Águas is significantly smaller, it was created in a context of valuing the surroundings of Ipiranga Park, attracting families from different regions and having a reach on a municipal scale.

The relations are opposite because, in Parque das Águas, which is located on an axis of high speculative territorial value and is part of a broader network of public spaces in the municipality, there is constant investment and maintenance, both by the public authorities and private interests. This ensures that the park does not deteriorate, unlike what happened in the City Park.



The intentionality of the investment is reflected in this relationship. If, for example, the social class currently residing in Jundiaí occupied the area around the City Park, the conditions of abandonment, exclusion and segregation would not be present in that space.

Figure 3: Surroundings of Parque das Águas, 2023



Source: Taniele Brito (2023).

The park's surroundings are characterized by high- and medium-standard buildings, with the park located literally on the doorstep. Despite the issues presented, the park, due to its municipal importance, receives visitors from different parts of the city and, together with Parque Ipiranga, centralizes resistance activities, such as hip-hop battles.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Urban parks are crucial equipment in urban dynamics. Each territory has unique characteristics and particularities, and the way in which these spaces are appropriated varies according to the region in which they are inserted. This appropriation is influenced by political, social, and market factors, as well as issues of race and class. Several elements determine the perception that one has of urban parks in cities.

It is essential to carry out this analysis considering the historical configuration of the city and its contemporary configuration, as well as the impacts of current interactions. This helps in understanding the affected individuals in different socio-spatial realities.

It is observed that the city presents a developmentalist discourse that encompasses other narratives, such as sustainability, especially in the context of urban parks, often called environmental parks. Although there is, in fact, an environmental relationship with these spaces, the often predominant connotation is the market one.

Urban parks play an essential role in the dynamics of contemporary cities, functioning as important social facilities that shape urban life. Each park has characteristics and particularities that reflect the region in which it is located, and the appropriation of these spaces by the local population is influenced by a complex web of factors, including political pressures, social conditions, market dynamics, and issues of race and class. Thus, the perception and value attributed to urban parks vary significantly according to the specific context of each territory.

The analysis of this study reveals the need for a deep understanding of the interactions between parks and the socio-spatial realities in which they are inserted. The historicity of cities, associated with the transformation of their public spaces, provides a basis for understanding how different social groups experience and appropriate these territories. It should be noted that, although the implementation of urban parks in Anápolis-GO is associated with a discourse of sustainable development, reality shows that this narrative often hides market interests that influence the distribution and quality of these spaces.

In addition, spatial segregation and unequal access to quality parks and green areas continue to be pressing issues, where the public-private relationship often results in benefits for certain social groups to the detriment of others. This reality points to a significant challenge for the government: to ensure that the creation and maintenance of parks are not only a reflection of speculative interests, but that they effectively serve to promote social well-being and urban equity.

These considerations underscore the importance of urban planning that not only recognizes the need for green spaces, but also considers the diverse voices and experiences of the community. Therefore, when reflecting on the city's urban parks, it is essential that public policies fight for the democratization of space, ensuring privileged access to all, regardless of social class or geographic location. This would not only enrich urban life but also strengthen the social fabric and community cohesion, contributing to the construction of fairer and more inclusive cities.



The final proposal of this study, therefore, is that future urban interventions, especially those related to public spaces and parks, be guided by principles of equity and accessibility, always seeking the well-being of the entire population, instead of favoring real estate speculation that perpetuates historical inequalities. Ultimately, the transformation of urban parks into true spaces for coexistence and social inclusion is a task that requires commitment and collaboration between civil society and public authorities.

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