Mercator, Fortaleza, v. 25, e25013, 2026 ISSN:1984-2201

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN WATER AND COAL MINING IN ARTISTIC PRODUCTIONS OF SOUTHERN SANTA CATARINA, BRAZIL

https://doi.org/10.36517/rm2026.e25013

Oliveira, P.M. [a]* - Assunção, V.K. [b] - Candido, T.S. [c]

(a) Master's student in Environmental Sciences
ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0440-0576. **LATTES:** http://lattes.cnpq.br/8150846345260828.
(b) PhD in Social Anthropology
ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0118-2486. **LATTES:** http://lattes.cnpq.br/3938314040854246.
(c) PhD in Environmental Sciences
ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8441-9233. **LATTES:** http://lattes.cnpq.br/1182687082656211.

Article history:
Received 19 February, 2026
Accepted 14 May, 2026
Published 10 June, 2026

(*) CORRESPONDING AUTHOR
Address: UNESC. Avenida Universitária, 1105, Bairro Universitário, Zip Code: 88.806-000, Criciúma (SC), Brazil. Phone: (+55 48) 99613-6500
E-mail: paulam@unesc.net

Abstract

The article analyzes the hydrological degradation of the Coal Region in southern Santa Catarina (Brazil) not only as a chemical and physical phenomenon associated with coal mining, but also as a perceptual crisis that affects regimes of sensibility. It takes as reference the rivers in the region. Drawing on Rancière's notion of the partition of the sensible, the article proposes the concept of the "partition of the sensible of coal" to understand the institutional, economic, and symbolic practices that have organized ways of seeing, speaking, and inhabiting the territory since the early twentieth century. The research adopts a cartographic approach and engages in dialogue with contemporary artistic productions that generate dissensus within the extractivist regime by activating imagination as a field of political dispute, fostering fabulations of post-extractivist horizons grounded in relations of care, coexistence, and multispecies responsibility. By reinscribing rivers as memory, body, and interlocutors of the territory, art contributes to reconfiguring environmental disputes in the field of the sensible, expanding possibilities for other ways of life in the face of the ruins of capitalism.

Keywords: Partition of the Sensible; Cartography; Post-Extractivism; Territory.

Resumo / Resumen

ENCONTROS ENTRE ÁGUA E MINERAÇÃO DE CARVÃO NAS PRODUÇÕES ARTÍSTICAS DO SUL DE SANTA CATARINA, BRASIL

O artigo analisa a degradação hidrológica da Região Carbonífera, no sul de Santa Catarina (Brasil), não apenas como um fenômeno químico e físico associado à mineração de carvão, mas também como uma crise perceptiva que incide sobre os regimes de sensibilidade, tomando como referência os rios da região. A partir da noção de partilha do sensível, de Rancière, propõe-se o conceito de "partilha do sensível do carvão" para compreender as práticas institucionais, econômicas e simbólicas que organizam os modos de ver, dizer e habitar o território desde o início do século 20. A pesquisa adota uma atitude cartográfica e dialoga com produções artísticas contemporâneas que instauram dissensos no regime extrativista ao ativar a imaginação como campo de disputa política, favorecendo fabulações de horizontes pós-extrativistas baseadas em relações de cuidado, coexistência e responsabilidade multiespécie. Ao reinscrever os rios como memória, corpo e interlocutores do território, a arte contribui para reconfigurar as disputas ambientais no campo do sensível, ampliando possibilidades para outros modos de vida frente às ruínas do capitalismo.

Palavras-chave: Partilha do Sensível; Cartografia; Pós-Extrativismo; Território.

ENCUENTROS ENTRE EL AGUA Y LA MINERÍA DEL CARBÓN EN LAS PRODUÇÕES ARTÍSTICAS DEL SUR DE SANTA CATARINA, BRASIL

El artículo analiza la degradación hidrológica de la Región Carbonífera, en el sur de Santa Catarina (Brasil), no solo como un fenómeno químico y físico asociado a la minería del carbón, sino también como una crisis perceptiva que incide en los regímenes de sensibilidad. Toma como referencia los ríos de la región. A partir de la noción de partición de lo sensible de Rancière, se propone el concepto de "partición de lo sensible del carbón" para comprender las prácticas institucionales, económicas y simbólicas que han organizado los modos de ver, decir y habitar el territorio desde comienzos del siglo 20. La investigación adopta una actitud cartográfica y dialoga con producciones artísticas contemporáneas que instauran disensos en el régimen extractivista al activar la imaginación como campo de disputa política, favoreciendo fabulaciones de horizontes pos-extractivistas basadas en relaciones de cuidado, coexistencia y responsabilidad multiespecie. Al reinscribir los ríos como memoria, cuerpo e interlocutores del territorio, el arte contribuye a reconfigurar las disputas ambientales en el campo de lo sensible, ampliando las posibilidades de otros modos de vida frente a las ruinas del capitalismo.

Palabras-clave: Partición de lo Sensible; Cartografía; Pos-Extractivismo; Territorio.

This is an open access article under the CC-BY 3.0 Creative Commons license

INTRODUCTION

The Carboniferous Region, located in the southern part of Santa Catarina, Brazil, consists of a group of municipalities whose urban, economic, and social structures have been strongly associated with coal mining since the late nineteenth century. This association intensified significantly at the beginning of the twentieth century (CAROLA, 2010). This regime not only structured the regional economy but also organized the occupation of territories, labor, and forms of sociability, producing cities that grew on and around the mines, the sterile tailings, and the continuously poisoned waterways (LOPES; SANTO; GALATTO, 2009).

Characterized in academic literature as contaminated by decades of coal mining, the region's degradation is evidenced by technical instruments such as water acidity indicators, tailings volumes, and maps of degraded areas (ALEXANDRE, 1999; MENEZES et al., 2024b). While these diagnoses are important, they do not fully explain why mining is still viewed as the primary driver of economic growth in the region, despite its declining economic significance in recent decades (CAROLA, 2010). This perception persists despite the widely recognized negative impacts of mining.

The regional development linked to the coal industry has caused significant and lasting environmental impacts. One of the most considerable issues is the compromised environmental quality of the region's main river basins. Menezes et al. (2024b) advocate for recognizing water as a common good and a subject of rights. However, their research highlights severe environmental degradation, revealing elevated levels of iron and manganese that exceed established limits, as well as concerning levels of biochemical oxygen demand and coliform bacteria. Even in regions where mining has stopped, issues related to acid mine drainage (AMD) persist. This ongoing problem arises from the oxidation of sulfide minerals found in coal tailings (MENEZES et al., 2024b). As a result, contamination is not merely a one-time issue but a systemic challenge that is deeply embedded in the area's geology and hydrology.

Despite the ongoing negative impact of mining on the water bodies in the municipalities of the Coal Region, mining continues to play a significant role in the history and identity of these communities. This connection is expressed through monuments, flags, and anthems that celebrate the economic growth brought about by extractive activities (CAROLA, 2010). These narratives are founded on a developmentalist ideology, shaped by a Eurocentric and universalist perspective of ongoing technical and economic advancement (KOTHARI et al., 2019). In this framework, water contamination is perceived as an externality of the development process.

Thus, we begin with the understanding that the region's water crisis is also a crisis of perception. This means that historically, people have viewed the river primarily as a resource rather than as a living entity deserving of existence. Drawing inspiration from Rancière's concept of "distribution of the sensible" (2009), we explore how certain artistic productions can challenge this perception. Our goal is to create openings that allow us to envision possibilities for a future that moves beyond extractive practices (ACOSTA, 2016).

The decision to mobilize art into this work stems from its ability to create alternative visions of the future, inspiring hope beyond the established norms. Krogh et al. (2025) assert that artistic practices can highlight the unusual aspects of the built environment while also offering immersive techniques that foster a deeper connection to our surroundings. By promoting the displacement of perspectives, such practices create conditions for imagining alternative relationships between humans and non-humans, expanding the field of the possible and creating tension with the hegemonic ways of inhabiting and projecting the future.

We focused on three rivers in the Carboniferous Region: the Criciúma River, the Palmeiras River, and the Mãe Luzia River. These rivers served as the main points of discussion for local environmental debates, aesthetic theory, and cartography as a methodology for sensitive monitoring. These debates focus on the analysis of two artistic works that re-center water in the artistic experience. They are understood not only as representations of mining's impacts but also as separate ways of perceiving the territory. This perspective highlights perceptual conflicts that expand the political landscape of environmental struggles.

By connecting the field more closely with studies on sensibility (RANCIÈRE, 2009; 2012), we aim to contribute to discussions in the Global South regarding the coloniality of thought and nature (ALIMONDA, 2025; ARÁOZ, 2023), the creation of sacrificial zones (ACSELRAD, 2002; SOUZA, 2021), and transitions away from extractive practices (ACOSTA, 2016). These possibilities arise through the imagination and fabulation that permeate everyday life and shape important aspects of culture and politics (HARAWAY, 2016; 2023). Along with restoring and reconstructing waterways, we believe it is essential to change how we perceive and listen to rivers and their surroundings. This approach can create new opportunities for life amid the remnants of capitalism (TSING, 2022). In this effort, art can serve as a valuable ally in environmental research.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE SENSIBILITY OF COAL

Due to the Carboniferous Region, Santa Catarina is the second-largest coal distributor in Brazil. However, only 25 to 30% of the extracted coal is utilized, resulting in approximately 75% of the production being waste materials, including pyrite and carbonaceous tailings (LOPES; SANTO; GALATTO, 2009). These tailings have accumulated in the region since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Once the coal deposits were depleted, mining companies relocated their operations to other suitable extraction sites, leaving behind barren piles of tailings and abandoned pits, often filled with acidic water (LOPES; SANTO; GALATTO, 2009). This has led to significant alterations in the landscape of the coal-producing areas, leaving visible and lasting impacts on the environment. (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Watercourse polluted by mining in the Carboniferous Region. Source: Authors' collection, 2024.

Assunção et al. (2024) emphasize the suffering endured by communities living near abandoned mines. They reveal how residents experience inequality, environmental degradation, and imbalanced power dynamics that render their knowledge, emotions, and pain invisible. Daily life is marked by various forms of violence, including the loss of access to drinking water, the constant presence of black

dust, intense noise, and cracks in their homes. One interviewee, Mr. Gonçalo, vividly describes the transformation of the territory, particularly noting how the wells have dried up.

> Water, for us, was… we were rich, as they say… we were rich, we had water, right? Water at will, the well was always full, you could turn it on all day, and the water would come by default, there was always water! But not now. (ASSUNÇÃO et al., 2024, p. 10).

In the framework of the coloniality of nature, biophysical elements and territories are produced by dominant power as marginalized spaces, intended to serve the existing accumulation system, which legitimizes processes of exploitation, destruction, and territorial reconfiguration (PORTO-GONÇALVES, 2002). This rationality extends beyond the society-nature relationship, operating through social relations permeated by power asymmetries and violence, where nature serves both as a means and an object of domination (ALIMONDA, 2025).

In this context, the watercourses of the Carboniferous Region provide compelling evidence of environmental degradation resulting from the interplay between colonial extractivism (ACOSTA, 2016) and the coloniality of nature (ALIMONDA, 2025). For instance, the Mãe Luzia River, which once supported subsistence practices, community displacement, and social interactions in various cities within the region, has now become associated with contamination, risk, and abandonment. In the words of Santa Catarina writer Celestino Sachet (n.d.), the Mãe Luzia River: "was a blue-green poem; today, a dark yellow sewer with coal water mixed with foul-smelling sulfur, a deadly poison for any branch of life". A similar process affects other rivers in the territory, such as the Criciúma River (in Criciúma) and the Palmeiras River (in Orleans).

Extractivism in the southern region of Santa Catarina exemplifies what Rancière (2009) calls the "distribution of the sensible". This concept describes a framework that determines how we perceive and inhabit the world around us. We introduce the idea of "distribution of the sensibility of coal" to address the array of institutional, economic, and symbolic practices that normalize mining as the region's destiny. These practices establish what is deemed valuable, what remains in the shadows, and who possesses authority within the mining sensibility regime. Consequently, devastation is not viewed as an undesirable byproduct; rather, it is regarded as an integral part of the capitalist model that transforms lives into a resource (TSING, 2022).

In his research, Adami (2015) interviewed residents of Criciúma to explore their experiences with the river. One of the responses he received was, "Why do you want to study the Criciúma River if it's not even a river? It's just a stream" (p. 22). This question highlights how the impact of coal extends beyond physical and material destruction to include erasures and changes in perception. By denying the Criciúma River's existence as a river, it is stripped of the opportunity to be recognized, to be heard, and to compete for meaning within the territory.

Classified as a national critical area since 1980, the Coal Region faces one of the most serious environmental liabilities in Brazil, in a context in which "coal mining has not ceased to produce new impacts, which have contributed to the worsening of the situation" (MENEZES et al., 2024a, p. 105). This condition is part of a broader geography of "sacrifice zones" (ACSELRAD, 2002; SOUZA, 2021) and, in the context of the Global South, "manifests itself not on one, but on several scales simultaneously" (SOUZA, 2021, p. 432). According to Acselrad (2002), sacrifice zones are defined not only by the tangible concentration of degradation but also by a political and symbolic framework that normalizes inequality in exposure to environmental risk.

In this scenario, territories and populations are systematically exposed to environmental damage due to a "social construction of risk" (ACSELRAD, 2002). The contamination of watercourses places southern Santa Catarina within the context of sacrifice zones, where water, soil, and human bodies have historically been exploited for profit. This situation turns Latin America into a laboratory for expropriations (ARÁOZ, 2023). In these processes, environmental risks are socially produced and unequally distributed, limiting affected individuals' ability to participate in decision-making (ACSELRAD, 2002).

According to Alimonda (2025), the colonial project utilizes a form of biopower that influences both bodies and territories—what he describes as "physical-geographical spaces" (p. 359). This process

not only shapes individual subjectivities but also informs specific understandings of nature. This coloniality of nature is deeply embedded in the ways of sharing sensory experiences that define the Western world and, by extension, the Carboniferous Region of Santa Catarina.

The naturalization of this process has historical roots, as illustrated by specific legal norms and guidelines. For example, Decree No. 20.089/1931 establishes regulations requiring the government to purchase 10% of the national coal used by the government and granting preferential transportation to Companhia de Navegação Lloyd Brasileiro and Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil. Additionally, Decree-Law No. 2.667/1940 authorizes the Federal Government to assist national coal mining companies in ways it deems appropriate, including providing support for the necessary infrastructure and facilities to facilitate and reduce the cost of transporting national coal.

Rancière (2009) refers to a set of practices that determine the distribution of places and functions—defining who is allowed to speak, who can be seen, and who possesses the competence to act—as the "police". "Dissent", characterized by a challenge to the police order, aims to reconfigure the frameworks of visibility and listening by shifting what is perceived as self-evident. This concept of dissent is inseparable from political and aesthetic regimes (RANCIÈRE, 2009): "dissent is not a conflict of ideas or feelings, but of regimes of sensoriality, and that is why art, in the regime of aesthetic separation, ends up touching on politics" (RANCIÈRE, 2009, p. 59).

At this juncture, the conversation about the sharing of sensory experiences prompts us to shift our analysis toward methods of challenging this regime. If mining creates a framework of sharing that normalizes subjugation and disposability, we must consider not only what is acknowledged or ignored, but also how this regime can be disrupted. According to Haraway (2016), it is crucial to establish kinship relationships with other beings and the territories we occupy. This approach can help us find alternative ways to address the impacts of the capitalist system of exploitation in our everyday lives.

In this context, art can serve as a practice that intervenes in the ways of distribution of the sensible, initiating what Rancière (2012) terms "aesthetic effectiveness". By creating tension in the (in)visibility regimes generated by the coloniality of nature, art becomes a vital domain for the emergence of new worlds, as it challenges what was previously considered given, natural, or inevitable (BOURRIAUD, 2009b).

According to Rancière (2012), artistic practices do not simply serve as representations or forms of denunciation; instead, they function as sensitive interventions that reshape what can be perceived, felt, and imagined. By creating dissent within the police order that supports extractivism, these artworks challenge existing sensibilities and open up possibilities for imagining diverse ways of existing and relating to the territory. Based on this understanding of art as both a political and aesthetic practice, we investigate how artistic productions can help foster a post-extractivist imagination.

METHODOLOGICAL PATH

Engagement with artistic productions and theoretical discussions aligns with the cartographic perspective put forth by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in 1995, particularly represented by the concept of the rhizome. Unlike a traditional arborescent model of knowledge, which is hierarchical and linear, the rhizome can be disrupted or broken. It has no definitive beginning or end; instead, it exists in a continuous state of connection, situated in the spaces between ideas, and can form links in any direction. Passos, Kastrup, and Escóssia (2009) argue that cartography is also an ethical and aesthetic practice that positions the subject of research—the "researcher-cartographer" (COSTA, 2014, p. 70)—as a being affected by and engaged with the issues in the field of investigation. This viewpoint supports the critique of positivism's scientific neutrality, as becoming intertwined with the "corpus" is not only inevitable but also one of the practice's main objectives.

Cartography, in this context, is not merely a method but rather a research mindset. When we create maps, we do not adhere to a predetermined route; instead, we allow our interactions with materials, landscapes, and the affected communities to reveal what is significant (COSTA, 2014). This research is interested in the flows, forces, and affections that permeate the ways of seeing, saying, and feeling the common, especially in what is shared as sensible (RANCIÈRE, 2009). Cartography, therefore, suggests methods of producing knowledge that are not reduced to technical fragmentation or

utilitarian calculation, valuing relationships, intensities, and other interconnections (AMORIM; CESTARI, 2021).

This work focuses on two productions related to water: "Rio Criciúma: Instruções para Escuta" (2015) by Daniele Zacarão and "Meios" (2025) by Leandro Jung. The analysis of the first production was based on images and information provided by the artist, while the analysis of the second production relied on materials from the Art and Culture Department at the University of the Extreme South of Santa Catarina (Unesc). The artists were born and reside in municipalities affected by coal mining. Their work can be seen as narratives of individuals directly impacted by the environmental degradation caused by the coal industry. This also aligns with the accounts of those interviewed by Adami (2015) and Assunção et al. (2024).

According to Bourriaud (2011), artists can influence the course of life by shaping their connection with the world through their artistic work. This process allows them to propose and transform alternative models of perception that can be embraced in everyday life. One important aspect of this transformation concerns how we interact with and share our relationships with water, a significant struggle within the realm of sensibility.

To broaden the discussion surrounding the productions, we drew on comments made by participants in Zacarão's (2015) intervention on the Coletivo Laborativo Facebook page. Additionally, we included entries from the guestbook of the exhibition "Mutatis Mutandis: Quando a arte se propõe a pensar o que tem de ser mudado" ("Mutatis Mutandis: When Art Proposes to Reflect on What Needs to Change"), which features Jung's (2025) proposal. These records provided information about the profiles of the participating subjects, as well as some of the interactions generated during the periods in which they actually occurred, especially regarding Zacarão's intervention, which took place a decade ago but remains potent in its potential to fissure the regimes of sensibility.

WATER IN THE ARTISTIC PRODUCTIONS OF THE CARBONIFEROUS REGION

The artistic works of Daniele Zacarão and Leandro Jung engage in a dialogue with the Criciúma and Palmeiras rivers, located in the cities of Criciúma and Orleans, respectively, in Santa Catarina, Brazil. In both cases, art acts through infiltration, drawing inspiration from the rivers themselves to create sensitive displacements that once again emphasize the rivers as vital sources of life and memory (BOURRIAUD, 2011). This stands in contrast to the distribution of coal's sensibility, which historically distanced these rivers from social interaction and disrupted both material and symbolic relationships with the surrounding territory.

The production by artist Daniele Zacarão, printed on easels and displayed at various locations in the urban space overlooking the Criciúma River, was part of the Terceira Semana de Ocupação Urbana (SOU), organized by the Coletivo Laborativo in 2015. This work appropriates the visual language of traffic signs to create a diversion in the city's daily life. The white background, schematic silhouette, and numbered instructions imitate the objectivity of police devices (RANCIÈRE, 2009) that organize flows; however, the order given is not to circulate, but to stop.

In the image on the sign (Figure 2), the crouching person's hands are on the ground at ear level, emphasizing the act of listening. Above the crouching figure are the words inviting passersby to participate: "Listen", displayed in white capital letters on a black background. This provides emphasis and contrast with the other text accompanying the white background of the easel sign, as well as with the phrase "Rio Criciúma" below it. Beneath the crouching person are instructions for listening to the river, presented in a numbered list with a smaller font: "1 – Crouch down. / 2 – Direct your ears to the ground. / 3 – Listen.".

Crouching down and placing an ear to the ground shifts our focus from sight to sound, transforming an observer into an active participant in an unexpected scene: discovering a river that urban development aims to conceal. According to Bourriaud (2009b), "post-production artists produce divergent narrative lines and alternative accounts" (p. 50), wherein art opposes established perceptual norms. By engaging with the Criciúma River, the spaces utilized for the intervention become sites of

creativity and playfulness—a "place of maneuvers" (Bourriaud, 2009b, p. 17) and a battleground for sharing sensibility experiences.

Figure 2 – "Criciúma River: instructions for listening" by artist Daniele Zacarão (1). Source: ZACARÃO, 2015.

The public's reactions to the proposal indicate that the intervention transcended individual experimentation, activating memories, discomforts, and collective perceptions about the city shaped by coal mining activities. One of the comments gathered by the Coletivo Laborativo network emphasizes the need to "show that there is a river above it [the city]", underscoring the importance of reintegrating the Criciúma River into the city's social life.

Another comment draws attention to the connection between artistic production and Adami's book (2015), titled “Rio Criciúma: O rio que a cidade escondeu”. This suggests that the book has the potential to change the prevailing invisibility that characterizes the relationship between the city of Criciúma and the river.

Other reports from participants suggest that the idea of "listening to the river" extends beyond the sounds of water currently underground. It also calls for political awareness of the processes that render the river invisible. One comment notes that the experience offered by the artistic production evokes a sound that is "loaded, dense, and not at all crystalline".

Another remark engages with discussions that question the concept of development, which is often narrowly defined as economic growth (ACOSTA, 2016; ALIMONDA, 2025; ARÁOZ, 2023). This comment states, "The artistic production also prompts a dual interpretation: it highlights the inertia of the authorities while simultaneously drawing the attention of the public. Unfortunately, the Criciúma region, like the entire coal mining area, has paid and continues to pay a heavy price for unplanned development and environmental degradation…" (sic).

In the collage of the artistic intervention (Figure 3), we see a photo of an easel on the ground, surrounded by passersby reading the instructions. Shortly after, the third photo depicts the easel after it was removed by the police (ENGEPLUS, 2015). In this image, the easel is propped up inside a glass enclosure, with two uniformed public administration officials standing beside it. This situation highlights the conflict and reveals how the police force chooses what should or should not be displayed in urban spaces. Listening becomes a minimal political act that displaces the extractive regime. In this

context, the production serves as a laboratory for sensibilities in post-extractive futures, reminding us that territory is not a finished scenario but rather a realm in dispute, as proposed by Rancière (2009).

Figure 3 – "Rio Criciúma: instructions for listening" by artist Daniele Zacarão (2). Source: ENGEPLUS, 2015.

The second artwork analyzed focuses on the concept of art as a practice that can create dissenting durations and bring the territory into the political arena. In this work (Figure 4), artist Leandro Jung creates a thoughtful pathway that traces the course of the Palmeiras River. The exhibition features wooden plaques with popular sayings, photographs of the route, and bottles filled with water from the river itself. This combination creates a unique installation that blends walking with archiving, words with physical matter, and has the potential to "generate durations with a rhythm contrary to those that order everyday life" (BOURRIAUD, 2009a, p. 23), inviting an active debate about the river.

Figure 4 -"Meios" by artist Leandro Jung. Source: Authors' collection, 2025.

In this journey, visitors are invited to understand that meaning lies not only in the final arrangement but also in the process of engagement, which extends the experience. The river stops being a silent channel and becomes a voice for collective memory. Instead of a direct accusation, there is a reorganization of sensibility, with evidence of what once seemed natural in extractivism now sounding intolerable, such as the poisoning of the waters. These innovative methods of sharing sensitive information allow for new interactions, as Haraway (2023) describes them, particularly with what she refers to as "strange relatives". Therefore, the focus is not solely on "saving" the river out of a moral obligation. Instead, it is about recognizing the mutual implications and co-responsibility between humans and water in addressing the damage caused by the mining sensibility regime.

The selected sayings reflect a collective memory where water plays a significant role in everyday conversation, such as: "Never say, 'I will not drink from this water'", “I cried a river of tears”, and “It went down the river”. When these phrases are placed alongside bottles filled with murky water on display, they create a stark contrast with the mental image of a clear river—one where you could drink the water, have it in your eyes, or fully immerse yourself. The estrangement alters how sensible information is shared, highlighting the disconnect among language, experience, and territory. The Palmeiras River, which has been excluded from the narratives of large coal companies and their political supporters who create common spaces, has become absent from everyday life.

The contamination is not only chemical but also semantic. Everyday language struggles to find a name for a river that has been transformed into tailings. This dissent (RANCIÈRE, 2009) highlights the normalization of the poisoning and death of the rivers in the Carboniferous Region, bringing this issue to the forefront of the debate. In these gaps, artistic productions can lead to unexpected encounters, and their impact strengthens when these encounters become enduring. This allows for experiences that reflect the diversity of other lives (BOURRIAUD, 2009a). Even when hurt, the water continues to express itself through its color, density, and sound, serving as a reminder that the river has not vanished; it has merely been pushed to the edges of visibility.

The glass bottles featured in the exhibition symbolize the world of consumption and suggest the commercialization of life. They evoke Bourriaud's (2009a) diagnosis of the limitations of capitalist modernity, which transforms relationships into commodities, diminishes political alternatives, and celebrates loneliness at the expense of community. The bottled water sourced from the Palmeiras River serves as a living archive of disaster. Unlike a technical report, which measures indices, it draws attention to an uncomfortable presence that refuses to leave.

During its display at the Espaço Cultural Toque de Arte Unesc, as part of the 5th Coletiva de Artistas do Sul exhibition, the production attracted visitors of various ages, professions, and backgrounds, as recorded in the visitors' book maintained by the Art and Culture Sector. In addition to the students and staff of the institution, high school students from schools in Criciúma, Içara, Forquilhinha, Siderópolis, and other neighboring municipalities, including some from Rio Grande do Sul, also visited the space. The variety of professions represented by the participants—such as retirees, lawyers, teachers, athletes, gardeners, web developers, nurses, kitchen and pastry assistants, tattoo artists, journalists, public servants, and nutritionists—shows that the exhibition was attended by people of different ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Different life trajectories can lead to varied reactions to Jung's art, which seeks to engage in dialogue with multiple layers of memory. While it resonates with those who have experienced alternative ways of living with the river, it also connects with individuals who recognize it primarily through the environmental degradation caused by the AMD. Through these diverse critical perceptions of the territory, shaped by aesthetic experience, we can discuss the dynamics of sharing that shape relationships among the city, water, and coal mining. Neither production provides technical solutions to the water crisis; instead, they create something different: they shift the perception of water, which has been relegated to the status of a waste product. By inviting people to listen to the underground or by revealing the limitations of language, they establish disagreements that spark discussions about the value of water, highlighting its importance over coal. The post-extractive imaginary (ACOSTA, 2016) begins when a person crouches down to listen to what the city has buried, and when a cloudy bottle can no longer be mistaken for a neutral commodity.

By destabilizing the sensibility dynamics that support extractivism, alternative forms of coexistence in the Anthropocene—or Capitalocene (HARAWAY, 2016)—become possible. These alternatives are rooted in localized relationships built on cohabitation, care, and shared responsibility. The goal is to inhabit damaged territories without resorting to salvationist solutions, fully committing to "stay with the problem" and to cultivate responsible relationships with the beings and worlds we share (HARAWAY, 2023).

By shifting our gaze from overarching narratives to the diverse ways of life that continue in damaged landscapes, Tsing (2022) suggests that we view extractive territories not only as areas of loss but also as sites of regeneration. In these spaces, new and improvised relationships between humans and non-humans, different temporal experiences, and multispecies coexistence begin to develop.

CONCLUSION

Fiction, defined as the creative ability to imagine and fabricate stories, is not limited to theater or literature; it also influences images and spaces. Surfaces serve as a means for sharing sensory experiences (RANCIÈRE, 2009). Therefore, while the concept of the coal sensibility regime has conditioned us to view the Criciúma and Palmeiras rivers merely as resources or as channels for waste, the works of Zacarão (2015) and Jung (2025) begin to represent these rivers as wounded bodies that carry their own narratives of survival and resistance. In this scenario, the idea of degradation as something inevitable or naturalized should not be taken as a starting point. Instead, it is part of an ongoing conflict. While financial capital tries to impose a symbolic, mathematical, and abstract logic on the world, there remains a material reality related to life's production that cannot be reduced to financial rationality (PORTO-GONÇALVES, 2002).

Considering a post-extractivist imaginary involves more than just overcoming an economic model; it necessitates a deliberate degrowth of extractivism alongside profound changes in the civilizational logic that underpins the exploitation of territories, bodies, and knowledge (ACOSTA, 2016). Artistic productions emerge within fields of tension as practices capable of creating dissent. By persisting in focusing on the wounded territories and addressing the dynamics that flow through them with ethics and responsibility, we acknowledge that separations and dualisms are impossible. In this context, imagination becomes a situated practice of political creativity, capable of creating safe spaces and exploring ways of coexistence that resist the logic of disposability (HARAWAY, 2023). In the opening of sensibility, rivers transform from mere symbols of degradation into interlocutors and entities with which we engage in dialogue, rather than those we seek to dominate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are grateful to the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa e Inovação do Estado de Santa Catarina (FAPESC) for their funding (Call 18/2024).

DATA AVAILABILITY

Not applicable.

REFERENCES

ACOSTA, Alberto. O bem viver: uma oportunidade para imaginar outros mundos. Tradução de Tadeu Breda. São Paulo: Autonomia Literária, Elefante, 2016.

ACSELRAD, Henri. Justiça ambiental e construção social do risco. Desenvolvimento e Meio Ambiente, Curitiba, n. 5, jan./jun. 2002.

ADAMI, Rose Maria. Rio Criciúma: o rio que a cidade escondeu – significados e representações na paisagem. Criciúma: UNESC, 2015.

ALEXANDRE, Nadja Zim. Diagnóstico Ambiental da Região Carbonífera de Santa Catarina: degradação dos recursos naturais. Revista Tecnologia e Ambiente, Criciúma, v. 5, n. 2, jul./dez. 1999.

ALIMONDA, Héctor. Descolonizar la naturaleza: por una ecología política latinoamericana. Textos reunidos de Héctor Alimonda 1982-2017. Compilación de Facundo Martín, Gabriela Merlinsky y Felipe Milanez. Prólogo a cargo de Facundo Martín, Gabriela Merlinsky y Felipe Milanez. 1ª ed. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2025.

AMORIM, Celeste Dias; CESTARI, Luis Artur de Santos. A cartografia e a racionalidade ambiental: em busca da superação da racionalidade instrumental. Práxis Educacional, Vitória da Conquista, v. 17, n. 48, 2021. DOI: 10.22481/praxisedu.v17i48.9168.

ARÁOZ, Horacio Machado. El extractivismo y las raíces del "Antropoceno". Regímenes de sensibilidad, régimen climático y derechos de la Naturaleza. Direito e Práxis, Rio de Janeiro, v. 14, n. 01, 2023.

ASSUNÇÃO, Viviane Kraieski de et al. O sofrimento social nas narrativas de sujeitos afetados pela mineração de carvão no sul do estado de Santa Catarina. In: MENEZES, Carlyle Torres Bezerra de et al. (Orgs.). Impactos do carvão mineral nas pessoas e na natureza. Criciúma: EdiUnesc, 2024.

BOURRIAUD, Nicolas. Estética Relacional. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2009a.

BOURRIAUD, Nicolas. Formas de vida: a arte moderna e a invenção de si. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2011.

BOURRIAUD, Nicolas. Pós-produção: como a arte reprograma o mundo contemporâneo. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2009b.

BRASIL. Decreto nº 20.089, de 9 de junho de 1931. Autoriza a Cia de Navegação Lloyd Brasileiro e a Estrada de Ferro Central do Brasil a contratarem, em nome do Governo, com as companhias nacionais de mineração de carvão, por preço e prazo que combinarem, toda a produção de carvão nacional disponível. Diário Oficial da União, Rio de Janeiro. Disponível em: https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/decret/1930-1939/decreto-20089-9-junho-1931-519084-publicacaooriginal-1-pe.html. Acesso em: 14 jan. 2026.

BRASIL. Decreto-Lei nº 2.667, de 3 de outubro de 1940. Autoriza o fomento às empresas nacionais de mineração de carvão pelo Governo da União e autoriza obras e instalações necessárias para facilitar e baratear o transporte do carvão nacional. Diário Oficial da União, Rio de Janeiro. Disponível em: https://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/declei/1940-1949/decreto-lei-2667-3-outubro-1940-412620-publicacaooriginal-1-pe.html. Acesso em: 14 jan. 2026.

CAROLA, Carlos Renato. Progresso, tecnologia e insensibilidade ambiental socioambiental: a extração do carvão na primeira metade do século XX (1880-1950). In: CAROLA, Carlos Renato (Org.). Memória e cultura do carvão em Santa Catarina: impactos sociais e ambientais. Santa Cruz do Sul: EDUNISC, 2010.

CAROLA, Carlos Renato; DASSI, Nilso. Era uma vez o rio Mãe Luzia… Criciúma: EDIUNESC, 2014.

COSTA, Luciano Bedin da. Cartografia: uma outra forma de pesquisar. Revista Digital do Laboratório de Artes Visuais, Santa Maria, v. 7, n. 2., 2014.

DELEUZE, Gilles; GUATTARI, Félix. Mil platôs: capitalismo e esquizofrenia. V. 1. Tradução de Aurélio Guerra Neto e Célia Pinto Costa. Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34, 1995.

ENGEPLUS. Prefeitura esclarece retirada de placas da praça. Criciúma, 2 dez. 2015. Disponível em: https://engeplus.com.br/noticia/cultura/2015/prefeitura-esclarece-retirada-de-placas-da-praca. Acesso em: 19 jan. 2026.

HARAWAY, Donna. Antropoceno, Capitaloceno, Plantationoceno, Chthuluceno: fazendo parentes. Tradução de Susana Dias, Mara Verônica e Ana Godoy. ClimaCom, Campinas, ano 3, n. 5, 2016.

HARAWAY, Donna. Ficar com o problema: fazer parentes no Chthuluceno. São Paulo: n-1, 2023.

JUNG, Leandro. Meios. Mutatis Mutandis: quando a arte se propõe a pensar o que tem de ser mudado [Fotografia]. Criciúma, 2025.

KOTHARI, Ashish et al. Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary. Nova Delhi: Tulika Books, 2019.

KROGH, Katrine; JENSEN, Ole B.; FRANDSEN, Anne Kathrine; HANSEN, Majken Kirkegaard. Framing artistic practices through new materialism to ensure multispecies futuring in the built environment. Futures, Amsterdam, v. 166, n. 2, 2025.

LOPES, Rosana Peporine; SANTO, Eder Luiz; GALATTO, Sérgio Luciano. Mineração de carvão em Santa Catarina: geologia, geoquímica e impactos ambientais. In: MILIOLI, Geraldo; SANTOS, Robson dos; CITADINI-ZANETTE, Vanilde (Coord.). Mineração de carvão, meio ambiente e desenvolvimento sustentável no sul de Santa Catarina: uma abordagem interdisciplinar. Curitiba: Juruá, 2009.

MENEZES, Carlyle Torres Bezerra de et al. Transição energética justa, ecológica e inclusiva e a reconversão socioambiental da região carbonífera sul catarinense. In: MENEZES, Carlyle Torres Bezerra de et al. (Orgs.). Impactos do carvão mineral nas pessoas e na natureza. Criciúma: EdiUnesc, 2024a.

MENEZES, Carlyle Torres Bezerra de; GONÇALVES, Elizabeth Marley Brusch; VIEIRA, Simoni Daminelli; MARTINELLO, Eduardo Fernandes. A revitalização de rios urbanos e a governança das águas: possibilidades e desafios na região sul de Santa Catarina, Brasil. In: SELVA, Vanice Santiago F. et al. (Orgs.). Água, gestão, territórios e sustentabilidade. 1. ed. Ananindeua: Itacaiúnas, 2024b.

PASSOS, Eduardo; KASTRUP, Virginia; ESCÓSSIA, Liliana (Orgs.). Psicologia Social: a cartografia como método de pesquisa. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2009.

PACHECO, Adilson. “Daniele Zacarão - é interessante sua proposta. Ela também provoca dupla interpretação - a inércia das autoridades e ao mesmo tempo chama atenção da população. Infelizmente a região de Criciúma como toda região carbonífera pagou e paga um alto preço pelo desenvilvimento sem planejamento e degradação ambiental…” [Comentário em: 3ª SOU]. In: LABORATIVO. 3ª SOU - Rio Criciúma: instruções para escuta por Daniele Zacarão. Facebook, 30 nov. 2015. Disponível em: https://encurtador.com.br/gvib. Acesso em: 8 mai. 2026.

PORTO-GONÇALVES, Carlos Walter. Da geografia às geo-grafias: um mundo em busca de novas territorialidades. In: CECEÑA, Ana Esther; SADER, Emir. (Orgs.). La Guerra Infinita: hegemonía y terror mundial. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2002.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. A partilha do sensível. 2ª ed. São Paulo: Ed. 34, 2009.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. O espectador emancipado. São Paulo: Editora WMF Martins Fontes, 2012.

SACHET, Celestino. Quem é Celestino Sachet? (Biografia Sentimental). Yumpu Publicações, s/d. Disponível em: https://www.yumpu.com/pt/umdedodeprosa.cce.ufsc.br. Acesso em: 27 jan. 2026.

SOUZA, Marcelo Lopes de. Ecologia-Mundo, Rapina Ambiental e Zona de Sacrifício: provocações a partir da (semi) periferia. In: MITIDIERO JÚNIOR, Marco Antônio et al. (Org.). A Geografia que fala ao Brasil, XIV Encontro Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Geografia. Marília: Lutas Anticapital, 2021.

TSING, Anna. O cogumelo no fim do mundo: Sobre a possibilidade de vida nas ruínas do capitalismo. Tradução de Jorge Menna Barreto e Yudi Rafael. São Paulo: n-1 edições, 2022.

ZACARÃO, Daniele. Rio Criciúma: instruções para escuta. SOU – Semana de Ocupação Urbana, Laborativo, Criciúma, 2015.

Author's Affiliation

Oliveira, P.M. - University of Southern Santa Catarina, Criciúma (SC), Brazil
Assunção, V.K. - Professor at the University of Southern Santa Catarina, Criciúma (SC), Brazil
Candido, T.S. - University of Southern Santa Catarina, Criciúma (SC), Brazil

Authors' Contribution

Oliveira, P.M. - The author contributed to the conception of the study, the research process, the analysis and interpretation of the artistic materials, and the writing of the manuscript.
Assunção, V.K. - The author contributed to the conception of the study, the research process, and the writing and revision of the manuscript.
Candido, T.S. - The author contributed to the writing and revision of the manuscript.

Editors in Charge

Alexandre Queiroz Pereira
Eduardo Von Dentz