

## Amazonia, Territorial Dynamics, and Agrarian Conflicts: A review of a short-term trajectory<sup>12</sup>

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### Abstract

This paper examines the socioeconomic and territorial transformations that have reshaped the Brazilian Amazon between 1960 and 2022, with a focus on the structural shifts affecting its agrarian landscape — home to Indigenous peoples, traditional communities, and campesinos, and comprising protected territories. Anchored in the concepts of territorial dynamics, spatial planning, and agrarian conflicts, and employing periodization as a methodological tool, the study identifies distinct phases of structural change and their environmental and social repercussions. The global rise of neo-extractive economies has weakened environmental policies, eroded protected territories, and undermined the territorial rights of rural communities, exacerbating conflicts that profoundly impact thousands of Indigenous, campesino, and traditional families subjected to the so-called modernization of the Amazon.

**Keywords:** Amazon; territorial rights; agrarian space; nature; social justice.

### Amazônia, dinâmicas territoriais e conflitos agrários: revisão de uma trajetória de curta duração

### Resumo

O texto analisa as mudanças socioeconômicas e territoriais que a Amazônia brasileira vem experienciando no período de 1960 a 2022. Prioriza as modificações estruturais que atingiram o mundo agrário amazônico — espaço vivido pelos povos indígenas, comunidades tradicionais e camponeses, composto pelos territórios protegidos. A partir dos conceitos de dinâmicas territoriais, ordenamentos territoriais e conflitos agrários, convergentes ao recurso metodológico de periodização, estabeleceram-se momentos distintos de transformações estruturais e os impactos resultantes, tanto ao meio ambiente quanto aos grupos sociais vulnerabilizados nesses processos. Com a ascensão global das economias neoextrativas, a política ambiental, os territórios protegidos e os direitos territoriais dos povos e comunidade rurais foram fragilizados, atingindo as territorialidades humanas com inúmeras situações de conflitos que atravessam a vida de milhares de famílias camponesas, indígenas e de comunidades tradicionais que sofrem com a chamada modernização da Amazônia.

**Palavras-chave:** Amazônia; direitos territoriais; espaço agrário; natureza; justiça social.

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## Amazonie, dynamiques territoriales et conflits agraires: analyse d'une trajectoire à court terme

### Résumé

**Résumé:** Ce texte analyse les changements socio-économiques et territoriaux qu'a connus l'Amazonie brésilienne entre 1960 et 2022. Il met l'accent sur les transformations structurelles qui ont affecté le monde agraire amazonien, un espace habité par des peuples autochtones, des communautés traditionnelles et des paysans vivant en territoire protégé. En nous basant sur les concepts de dynamique territoriale, d'aménagement du territoire et de conflits agraires, et en utilisant la méthode de la périodisation, nous avons identifié des moments distincts de transformations structurelles ainsi que leurs impacts sur l'environnement et les groupes sociaux rendus vulnérables par ces proces. Avec l'essor mondial des économies néo-extractives, la politique environnementale, les territoires protégés et les droits territoriaux des populations et des communautés rurales ont été affaiblis, affectant la territorialité humaine par d'innombrables situations de conflit qui touchent la vie de milliers de familles paysannes, de peuples autochtones et de communautés traditionnelles souffrant de la soi-disant modernisation de l'Amazonie.

**Mots-clés:** Amazonie; droits territoriaux; espace agraire; nature; justice sociale.

### Introduction

This study seeks to examine the socioeconomic and territorial transformations that have reshaped the Brazilian Amazon between 1960 and 2022. Over these six decades, profound structural shifts have reconfigured its spatial organization, particularly in the agrarian landscape — home to Indigenous peoples, traditional communities, and *campesinos* (both farmers and extractive communities), whose diverse modes of existence and labor are intrinsically linked to nature.

The Amazonian agrarian world encompasses forested areas, riverine territories, agropastoral and forestry lands, traditional territories, and rural settlements. Throughout this period, these social groups have been analyzed in relation to sociogeographic transformations shaped by agricultural frontiers, large-scale development projects, environmental protection policies, territorial governance, social rights, and agrarian and territorial conflicts.

This analysis is grounded in territorial dynamics, spatial planning, and agrarian conflicts, offering a framework to understand structural transformations and their consequences, both for the environment and vulnerable social groups caught in these processes. Ultimately, the study highlights the erosion of territorial rights among Amazonian peoples, and, consequently, the destabilization of the human territorialities that define the region's intricate relationship between people and nature.

The methodological approach of periodization will serve as an analytical tool to structure these processes (Santos, 1996), highlighting the distinct structural shifts that have

shaped territorial governance in the Amazon. Across these phases, shaped by state intervention and territorial dynamics, our central inquiry concerns the role of spatial planning in the region. While this question invites multiple interpretations, our analytical focus remains on the broader relationship between the state, society, regional space, and the Amazon itself. A review of relevant literature, particularly news reports documenting key agrarian conflicts, provides empirical grounding for this study. These sources reveal the persistent and systemic nature of land disputes, which have profoundly impacted the lives of thousands of peasants, Indigenous, and other traditional community families, all of whom have faced the disruptive forces of Amazonian modernization since the 1960s.

This reflection is structured into thematic sections that trace the analytical trajectory shaping Amazon's territorial transformations. The study begins by outlining key conceptual frameworks — territorial dynamics, spatial planning, and agrarian and territorial conflicts. It then proceeds with a periodization of Amazonian development. The first phase (1960–2002) examines the region's role within state-led regional planning and its long-standing function as a resource reserve. The subsequent period (2003–2016) is analyzed through the lens of socioeconomic development and environmental protection policies. Finally, the study turns to the most recent phase (2016–2022), marked by environmental rollbacks and intensified assaults on territorial rights, with severe consequences for the Amazon. The concluding section reflects institutional limitations, shifting political power dynamics, and the evolving significance of the Amazon over this extended historical trajectory.

### **Territorial dynamics, spatial planning, and agrarian conflicts: conceptual foundations**

Social science research on the transformation of the Amazon into a state-planned region — particularly<sup>3</sup> since the territorial restructuring of the 1960s — has produced analytical frameworks that remain essential for understanding the human and environmental transformations that have unfolded over recent decades.

State-led regional planning on the Amazon was grounded in territorial control and state-induced human occupation, reflecting a vision of territorial organization centered on state power (Couto and Silva, 1967; Meira Matos, 1980; Becker, 2004). The spatial interventions enacted under this framework sought to establish new infrastructure—highway

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<sup>3</sup> The Legal Amazon was established as a planning region by the federal government in 1953. It encompasses the Northern region states (Rondônia, Acre, Amazonas, Pará, Roraima, Amapá, and Tocantins) as well as parts of Mato Grosso (Central-West) and Maranhão (Northeast). The initial legal framework for the region was the Economic Valorization Plan of the Amazon (Law No. 1,806, January 6, 1953), later modified by Law No. 5,173 (October 27, 1966), which established the Superintendence for the Development of the Amazon (SUDAM). The Legal Amazon covers an area of 5 million km<sup>2</sup> (59% of Brazil's territory), with a population of 29,627,458 inhabitants (14.59% of the national population).

networks, electrical grids, communication systems, and urban centers—intended to mitigate geographical isolation and facilitate human settlement through state-sponsored migration. This strategy was closely tied to the imperatives of capitalist modernization, including agrarian colonization and intensive resource extraction. In the ensuing decades, these modernization efforts opened the region to national and global economic flows, embedding Amazonian society and its economy within the circuits of neo-extractive capitalism—an outcome that was, in many ways, inherent to the original framework of regional planning for the Amazon (Becker, 2004).

Within this historical trajectory, the Amazon can be analyzed through the lens of territorial dynamics, understood as “a geographic notion that corresponds to the movement of society as registered in the territory, serving as a catalyst for significant and structural transformations, and carrying a genetic-structural dimension” (Costa Silva, 2010, p. 38). Territorial dynamics operate as a horizontal structuring concept, spanning local, regional, and national scales to capture the socio-spatial transformations shaping the region. These are not just any processes but those that impose foundational socio-economic and environmental conditions, redefining the key variables that shape places and regions. The actors shaping these territorial dynamics are diverse, ranging from the state — with its legal, political, and regulatory powers over land and resources — to private enterprises, local communities, organized civil society, and social movements. These actors engage in a political and existential relationship with the territory, either reinforcing or contesting the spatial interventions that drive territorial transformation.

Over the six decades analyzed in this study (1960–2022), territorial dynamics in the Amazon — driven by various actors but predominantly shaped by the state — have increasingly distanced the region from its original ecological state. This transformation entails the conversion of natural landscapes into economic assets, rendering nature a resource for capital accumulation. The resulting spatial modifications have profoundly affected rural areas, urban settlements, and the broader regional environment (Kohlhepp, 2002; Castro, 2012).

The early decades of Amazonian modernization (1960s–1980s) were marked by widespread deforestation, environmental degradation, agrarian conflicts, and systematic violations of human and territorial rights — particularly targeting Indigenous peoples, traditional communities, and migrant peasants drawn to state-led colonization, mining, and agribusiness projects<sup>4</sup>. This era of unchecked territorial expansion was denounced by figures such as José Lutzenberger, who testified before the United States Congress on the *ecological devastation caused by the Polonoroeste program in Rondônia*. Additionally, documentary filmmakers Adrian Cowell and Vicente Rios exposed the socio-environmental

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<sup>4</sup> The Brazilian military dictatorship lasted 21 years, spanning April 1964 to March 1985.

*destruction of this period, most notably in “The Decade of Destruction”* (Lutzenberger, 1985; Ferreira, 2022).

Efforts to regulate land use and contain the rapid expansion of frontier economies only began to take shape in the 1980s, when the Brazilian government introduced its first environmental governance structures. The 1981 National Environmental Policy established key regulatory instruments, including Environmental Zoning, later formalized as the Ecological-Economic Zoning (ZEE) framework. Rondônia became the first state to implement ZEE in 1991, largely in response to the environmental fallout from agricultural colonization programs in the 1970s and 1980s, which promoted livestock farming as a model for economic development (Costa Silva, 2016).

In 1989, the federal government established the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), followed by the creation of the Ministry of the Environment (MMA) in 1992—institutions that spearheaded key territorial planning agendas, particularly for the Amazon. Environmental policy was subsequently updated within the framework<sup>5</sup> of sustainable development — a dominant concept in the 1990s — and territorial planning (OT), both in its political-territorial and legal-normative dimensions. Politically, OT embodies the state's overarching vision for the sustainable economic and social development of a given region, encompassing productive activities at multiple scales and their interactions with broader social dynamics. This necessitates state-led negotiations, coordination, and management of multi-layered and multi-temporal interests, often in conflict within public policy, particularly in environmental protection. Legally, territorial planning is realized through the implementation of regulatory instruments, among which the Macro-Zoning Plan for the Legal Amazon (2010) and the establishment of various state-level Ecological-Economic Zoning (ZEE) initiatives stand out as critical milestones (Mello-Théry, 2011).

Social groups whose territorialities are rooted in rural spaces were also impacted by the spiral of economic modernization. The lived territories of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities in the Amazon suffered extensive environmental and social disruptions, compelling them to engage in political mobilization to defend their histories, ancestral lands, cultural identities, and the development of public policies tailored to their needs. Another key aspect of Amazonian economic modernization has been the intensification of agrarian and territorial conflicts, which have taken on multi-layered political dimensions, ranging from local disputes to national crises — particularly in regions hosting large-scale enterprises. The state itself was responsible for triggering many of these conflicts, particularly in areas designated for large development projects, where the appropriation of

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<sup>5</sup> The concept of sustainable development gained prominence in the 1990s, particularly following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Eco-92) held in Rio de Janeiro.

public lands led to new enclosures that displaced peasants, Indigenous groups, and traditional communities.

Methodologically, agrarian conflicts refer to struggles over public land, typically pitting settlers, squatters, landless peasants, rural communities, and small-scale farmers against large landowning capitalists. These conflicts arise either from the transformation of latifundia into peasant territories (peasant struggles) or from resistance against the violence and encroachments imposed by capital (Oliveira, 2007). Such dynamics unfold across numerous encampments, agrarian reform settlements, and traditional rural communities (Conceição; Ribeiro; Costa Silva, 2019). Fundamentally, these conflicts crystallize the dialectic between peasant family landholding and capitalist private property—an enduring feature of peasant history in Brazil, where access to land has always been a struggle requiring confrontation.

Territorial conflicts encompass the struggles and resistance of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities, both in officially recognized territories and in areas still awaiting legal recognition as traditional lands<sup>6</sup>. These traditional territories, classified as public lands under the management of federal and state governments, serve as spaces for communal living, cultural practices, and productive activities for the social groups that inhabit and shape them. They also play a crucial role in conserving ecosystems and preserving native forests<sup>7</sup>.

As such, traditional territories exist outside the framework of capitalist land ownership, functioning instead as collective and communal spaces. The expansion of agribusiness and neo-extractive economies — both of which depend on the relentless consumption of natural resources — intensifies conflicts over public land. These disputes expose the contradictions between capitalist accumulation, which seeks to dominate and concentrate land and resources, and the territorialities of Indigenous and traditional communities, which are grounded in non-capitalist communal, productive, and cultural relationships with the land. This struggle is not merely territorial but also political and ontological. In recent years, Indigenous peoples and their territories have borne the brunt of agrarian violence in Brazil, with the Amazon emerging as the primary battleground where agribusiness exerts pressure on these communities due to the “availability” of public lands designated as protected areas.

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<sup>6</sup> There is a rich diversity of traditional communities in the Amazon, including caboclos, caiçaras, extractivists, jangadeiros, fishermen, quilombolas, riverine populations, and rubber tappers.

<sup>7</sup> In 2007, the federal government implemented the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities, recognizing the value and respect for the socio-environmental and cultural diversity of these groups.

## **The Amazon: a region of state planning and a natural resource reserve (1960–2002)**

A review of the literature on key transformations in the Amazon between 1960 and 2002 highlights the region's geopolitical significance for the Brazilian state, particularly in its efforts to integrate the Amazon into national productive circuits and absorb migratory flows from economically distressed regions. Throughout these four decades, the dominant regional planning paradigm conceptualized the Amazon as a “natural resource reserve” primed for extraction, leading to its formal classification as the Legal Amazon — a region designated for strategic state intervention.

During this period, the Brazilian state, in partnership with national and multinational corporations, prioritized large-scale infrastructure projects — including hydroelectric dams, highways, agricultural colonization schemes, agribusiness expansion, mining, logging, and urban development—which fundamentally altered the spatial organization of the region. The Amazon transitioned from a historically isolated, extraction-based economy to a peripherally integrated hub within globalized neo-extractive economies (Castro, 2012).

Systematizing research on the Amazon, Becker (2004) proposes a broad periodization to capture the region's major structural transformations: (i) the territorial formation phase (1616-1930), which saw the appropriation and delineation of the Amazon's boundaries; (ii) the regional planning phase (1930-1985), spanning from the economic strategies of the Vargas government (1930–1945) to the military regime's territorial interventions (1964-1985); and (iii) the so-called *heartland* enigma phase (1985-1996), characterized by the emergence of a socio-environmental frontier and the contemporary trends of national and South American integration megaprojects. Becker analyzes the Amazon as a space where state power is structured, framing these processes through the lens of political geography and emphasizing concepts such as spatial structure, frontier, territory, regionalization, social groups, environmental governance, and biodiversity.

Finally, Becker updates these processes and proposes a new regionalization of the Amazon, dividing it into three sub-regions: *the Macroregion of Consolidated Settlement*, characterized by economic, technological, and demographic density, concentrated in the eastern portion; *Central Amazon*, encompassing western Pará, northern Mato Grosso, and northern Rondônia, marked by the expansion of the agricultural frontier, road construction, deforestation fronts, environmental crimes, and territorial conflicts; and *Western Amazon*, covering the states of Acre, Amazonas, and Roraima, distinguished by extensive forest cover, vast protected areas, and the strong presence of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities. In recent years, the agricultural frontier has been shifting toward Western

Amazonia. In terms of economic-spatial structures, the Amazon exhibits significant internal regional differences, challenging any notion of spatial homogeneity.

Kohlhepp (2002), in turn, presents a periodization focusing on the 1970s through the 1990s, when state policies profoundly reshaped the territorial structures of the Amazon. His analysis centers on regional development, identifying six phases of territorial transformation: (1) The National Integration Program (PIN) in the early 1970s, marked by major transportation projects that opened the Amazon to economic flows and demographic expansion (population growth, migration, and land access); (2) The Polamazônia Program (1974–1980), which established agricultural and mineral development hubs, expanding neo-extractive economies on national and international scales; (3) The implementation of Integrated Rural Development Programs in the 1980s, particularly the Integrated Development Program for Northwest Brazil (Polonoroeste), linked to the BR-364 highway in Mato Grosso and Rondônia (Southern Amazon); (4) The launch of large-scale mineral and agricultural projects in the 1980s, such as the Grande Carajás Program (PGC), which enabled iron ore and other mineral extraction with strong international integration; (5) The 1990s saw the introduction of the Pilot Program for the Conservation of Brazilian Tropical Forests (PPG-7), aimed at slowing frontier expansion, strengthening environmental governance, and establishing protected territories (Conservation Units, Indigenous Lands, and Quilombola Territories); and (6) The National Integration and Development Axes (ENIDs) in the late 1990s, which guided the Brazil in Action and Advance Brazil programs under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2002). These programs focused on expanding logistical infrastructure (highways, waterways, and ports) to facilitate the export of agricultural and mineral *commodities* such as soy, corn, and iron ore.

Kohlhepp's analysis is grounded in the understanding of spatial structures shaped by economic flows that have redefined the Amazon. The concept of regional development, as envisioned by policymakers and state agencies, always anchored in economic growth and natural resource exploitation, has been *the dominant force* shaping Amazon's trajectory. All major investments in intensive land and resource extraction have been justified by this ideological framework, yet they have not led to significant improvements in social indicators such as quality of life, access to justice, and upward social mobility<sup>8</sup>.

Mello and Théry (2001), using the concepts of territorial policies and territorial configurations alongside cartographic models, also examine how state interventions and

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<sup>8</sup> A 2024 study by the Sustainable Cities Institute (ICS), based on UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators, found that the capitals of Brazil's northern region have the worst quality-of-life indices. Manaus (Amazonas) and Belém (Pará) have the highest rates of informal settlements. Porto Velho (Rondônia) and Macapá (Amapá) have the lowest water and sanitation coverage. Macapá (Amapá) has the highest infant mortality rate, followed by Rio Branco (Acre) and Belém (Pará). (See: ICS – Sustainable Cities Institute, "Map of Inequality in Brazilian Capitals", São Paulo, 2024).

Available at <https://institutocidadessustentaveis.shinyapps.io/mapadesigualdadecapitais/>.



socioeconomic dynamics have shaped sub-regional differentiation within the Amazon. Analyzing the spatial structure of the region, they identify three major phases of intervention. The first, in the 1970s, was characterized by special programs (mineral, energy, and agricultural), highway construction, and agricultural colonization, which integrated the region into national economic flows, accelerating migration and interregional connectivity. The 1980s saw the rise of agricultural and mineral development hubs that increasingly tied the Amazon to global markets, fragmenting the regional fabric and generating a new social dynamic defined by urban expansion, mass migration (the emergence of an immigrant society), and the commodification of land and nature through agricultural frontier expansion.

In the 1990s, the export corridors proposed under the National Integration and Development Axes (ENIDs) reflected a regional planning strategy designed to support the infrastructure demands of emerging agricultural and mineral commodity production. During this period, scholars also highlighted the introduction of environmental planning policies and legal frameworks for territorial governance, particularly the establishment of Territorial Zoning under the Ministry of the Environment. These institutional initiatives aimed to reconcile neo-extractive economies with environmental sustainability, positioning the 1990s as a pivotal decade for debates and pathways concerning sustainable development in the region.

Overall, between 1960 and 2002, the territorial organization of the Amazon shifted from a region historically structured around traditional extractivist and fluvial networks—both in its regional geography and national connectivity—to a space increasingly dominated by global neo-extractive expansion. Large-scale agricultural, energy, and mineral exploitation projects became defining features of the regional landscape, evolving *alongside* a competing territorial logic expressed in the formation of protected areas and escalating social struggles.

In summary, regional planning prioritized the transformation of natural spaces into agricultural frontiers and the appropriation of nature as a stock of resources. The exploitation and commodification of nature as a mechanism for capital accumulation and reproduction became the unifying economic and political force consolidating regional elites. The concept of the frontier remained in constant tension with that of socio-environmental sustainability—a conflict that persists in contemporary Amazonian political dynamics.

### **The Amazon: socioeconomic development and environmental protection (2003-2016)**

The 2000s marked the beginning of the Workers' Party administrations (Governo Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva: 2003–2010; Governo Dilma Rousseff: 2011–2016), which sought to reconcile three overarching agendas: socioeconomic development, social progress, and environmental protection. The political strategy of these governments emphasized state

strengthening, social investment, large-scale infrastructure projects under the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC), job creation, increased workers' income, environmental preservation, and economic growth with social inclusion, among other priorities.

At the time, the Amazon faced severe environmental governance challenges, including rising deforestation rates, agricultural expansion, political and economic pressure on protected areas, land speculation, and intensifying agrarian and territorial conflicts. Brazil's integration into global markets, driven by its reliance on agricultural and mineral commodity exports, further strained the Amazon, reinforcing the drive to convert natural landscapes into neo-extractive production zones.

In response to these challenges, in 2004, the federal government launched the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Legal Amazon (PPCDAm), structured around three pillars: land and territorial regularization, environmental monitoring and enforcement, and the promotion of sustainable economic activities. Under the Ministry of the Environment (MMA), the PPCDAm expanded interministerial efforts to combat deforestation and strengthen environmental management, yielding significant socio-environmental gains. As a partial outcome, between 2004 and 2012, deforestation rates in the Amazon dropped by 80%, from 27,800 km<sup>2</sup> per year to 4,600 km<sup>2</sup> per year (Gandour, 2021). Additionally, the Amazon Region Protected Areas Program (Arpa), established in 2002 at the end of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's administration, provided financial support for the creation, consolidation, and maintenance of conservation units in the Amazon. This initiative led to a substantial increase in the number of federally and state-protected areas, particularly in the states of Pará, Amapá, Amazonas, and Acre (Nogueira and Oliveira Neto, 2017). Institutional environmental governance was further strengthened in 2007 with the creation of the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBIO), which assumed responsibility for the administration and protection of federal conservation units. Meanwhile, the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA)—founded in 1989—remained focused on enforcement, deforestation control, and environmental licensing.

In 2008, the federal government launched the Sustainable Amazon Plan (PAS), reinforcing its commitment to environmental protection, land regularization, interinstitutional governance, deforestation control, biodiversity conservation, water resource management, and climate change mitigation policies. The strengthening of institutional coordination between federal, state, and municipal agencies played a decisive role in curbing deforestation, earning Brazil international recognition for its efforts in reducing forest loss.

Among the key regulatory instruments introduced was the Macroeconomic and Ecological-Economic Zoning of the Legal Amazon (MacroZEE), enacted under Decree No.

7,378 on December 1, 2010. Designed to promote sustainable regional development, this framework outlined strategic production and environmental management policies aligned with the ecological, economic, cultural, and social diversity of the Amazon. It served as a legal and technical guideline for territorial governance, particularly when integrated with state-level Ecological-Economic Zoning (ZEE) programs aimed at stabilizing land use patterns and limiting the spread of neo-extractive industries.

Additional tools proved crucial in combating deforestation, including the Real-Time Deforestation Detection System (Deter), developed in 2004 by the National Institute for Space Research (INPE). This system enabled near-instantaneous monitoring of clear-cutting activities and gradual forest degradation, aiding enforcement agencies in tracking illegal deforestation. Moreover, starting in 2008, the Ministry of the Environment began publishing an annual list of municipalities with the highest deforestation rates, which helped prioritize monitoring and enforcement efforts in these critical zones.

The establishment of conservation units, Indigenous lands, and Quilombola territories—especially in forested regions—was instrumental in securing cultural and socioeconomic protections for Indigenous and traditional communities while also acting as a barrier against agricultural expansion (Boucher et al., 2014; Costa Silva, 2024). Across multiple subregions of the Amazon, protected areas effectively limited deforestation.

While the Workers' Party administrations institutionalized environmental policies and expanded social and territorial rights for Indigenous and traditional communities, their developmental agenda also generated significant socio-environmental impacts. The construction of hydroelectric dams such as Jirau and Santo Antônio (both in Rondônia) and Belo Monte (Pará) led to forced displacements, riverine community uprooting, Indigenous protests, and widespread social unrest (Cavalcante and Santos, 2012; Miranda Neto and Herrera, 2018; Borges, 2022).

Despite achieving notable environmental milestones, these policies faced intense opposition from agribusiness interests and neo-extractive industries, whose influence was deeply entrenched in the BBB Caucus (Bancada da Bíblia, Bala e Boi — the Evangelical, Pro-Gun, and Agribusiness Congressional Lobby) and supported by sectors of the Armed Forces.

The BBB Caucus viewed the formalization of protected areas as a direct threat to economic growth, arguing that such lands “locked away” vast reserves of public land that could otherwise be exploited for agriculture, mining, logging, and energy projects. This anti-environmental stance fueled persistent political efforts to undermine conservation policies and roll back territorial protections for Indigenous and traditional communities (Costa Silva, 2022).

For the Armed Forces, the expansion of Indigenous and Quilombola territories was seen as a challenge to national sovereignty, particularly after Brazil ratified the International Labor Organization's Convention No. 169 in 2003. This treaty legally recognized the land and resource rights of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities. The discourse of the "internal enemy" resurfaced, with many military officials and conservative parliamentarians—later aligned with the far right—accusing non-governmental organizations of serving foreign governments, allegedly undermining national and territorial sovereignty.

The Brazilian economic landscape provided new foundations that intensified pressures on environmental policies during the PT governments. With the expansion of agricultural and mineral commodities, Brazil pushed forward new agricultural frontiers focused on exports, particularly in the Amazon region and the Matopiba — an area encompassing the southern portion of Maranhão and Piauí, the western part of Bahia (both in the Northeast region), and the state of Tocantins (in the North).

In the Amazon, agribusiness-driven deforestation was especially pronounced in Mato Grosso, which, since the 1990s, had emerged as a major producer of soy, corn, and beef. As this sector expanded, livestock and logging activities were displaced toward new frontiers, especially the *cerrado* ecoregion, further internalizing Amazonian deforestation. Agribusiness exerted both direct and indirect pressure on the Amazon rainforest and the Cerrado biome, shifting livestock and logging economies to new frontiers and further expanding *the* internal agricultural frontiers of the Amazon.

To sustain agribusiness growth and facilitate its logistical flow, the new transportation infrastructure was essential to ensure territorial fluidity (Santos; Silveira, 2001; Arroyo, 2005). Two key developments in the Amazon crystallized this process: first, in 1997, the establishment of the Madeira-Amazonas Waterway, with ports operated by the Amaggi and Cargill groups in Porto Velho (Rondônia), transferring cargo to Itacoatiara (Amazonas) and Santarém (Pará), respectively; and second, in 2003, the opening of Cargill's grain terminal in Santarém. These ports and waterways opened the Amazon rainforest to new agribusiness frontiers, with pressure emanating from Mato Grosso toward both the Southwestern Amazon (Rondônia, southern Amazonas, and eastern Acre) and the western portion of Pará, with Santarém as its strategic hub (Conceição, 2023). In western Pará, the "privatization" of the banks of the Teles Pires and Tapajós rivers, through the construction of private ports, drove up land prices and spurred a rush for public lands, extending to the perimeters and interiors of Conservation Units and Indigenous Territories. This process was further compounded by the influx of gold miners who invaded numerous Indigenous Lands in Pará, Amazonas, and Roraima, including the Yanomami and Munduruku territories.

Agribusiness thus consolidated itself as both an economic and political force with a clear agenda aimed at dismantling environmental policies and challenging the territorial rights of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities. These political propositions reflect a territorial project fundamentally at odds with the Amazon's ecological and regional character, yet one fully integrated into global *commodity* flows that shape the region (Costa Silva, 2022; 2024). Consequently, agribusiness cannot be understood merely as an agricultural production sector but rather as a hegemonic political force, backed by private institutions, with a defined political and territorial agenda focused on privatizing public lands and spaces. These ideas and ideologies are actively presented and contested within the broader social fabric, with their influence particularly evident in electoral processes where *agribusiness* support is strategically mobilized.

In summary, during the PT governments, the vision of socioeconomic development combined with environmental protection faced persistent contradictions within regional development policies. These tensions became increasingly entrenched during the economic crisis that struck Dilma Rousseff's administration, ultimately serving as the foundation for a political crisis that allowed coup-driven sectors to sabotage the government and fabricate allegations of fiscal misconduct to "justify" the 2016 *golpimpeachment* (coup-impeachment) (Gentili, 2016).

### **The Amazon under the Temer and Bolsonaro Governments (2016–2022): the Anti-Science, Anti-Traditional Peoples, and Anti-Amazon Pact**

The political heirs of the *golpimpeachment* were the administrations of Michel Temer (August 2016–2018) and Jair Bolsonaro (2019–2022), which reinstated neoliberalism in Brazil, marked by the dismantling of environmental policies, environmental racism, mass dispossession, and encouragement of agribanditry (Costa Silva, 2022). Environmental policy and ecological concerns were treated as obstacles to economic development, particularly when they clashed with the political agenda of rentier sectors and neo-extractive economies.

The core logic of the *golpimpeachment* imposed a neoliberal order that sought to erode social and territorial rights through clear objectives: reducing social investment, privatization, and dismantling public enterprises. The neoliberal agenda included the partial privatization of Petrobras—coupled with a pricing policy designed to benefit foreign shareholders—the labor reform that stripped workers of key rights, Constitutional Amendment Proposal (PEC 55/2016), which capped public spending (resulting in drastic cuts to social investment), amendments to multiple environmental regulations, and the weakening of regulatory agencies overseeing environmental governance. The Amazon would become a central battlefield for these governments, which actively sought to reopen agricultural

frontiers, including in sub-regions that had been previously protected under Ecological-Economic Zoning (ZEE) policies.

In September 2016, the Temer administration ratified the Paris Agreement, positioning Brazil as a key actor in the global fight against climate change and signaling, at the international level, a commitment to environmental protection. In 2016, it also established the Alcatrazes Wildlife Refuge, and in 2017, expanded the Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park. These were the highlights of its environmental policy. However, in 2017, the Temer government attempted to reopen the National Copper and Associated Reserves (RENCA), located in the states of Pará and Amapá, to accommodate demands from mining companies and garimpeiros, disregarding environmental regulations. Due to pressure from social movements and environmental activists in Brazil and abroad, the initiative ultimately failed, but it served as a prelude to the new direction environmental policy would take.

During Temer's administration, a systematic dismantling of ICMBio and IBAMA's environmental management and enforcement mechanisms took place, alongside the ratification of Provisional Measure 759, which effectively granted amnesty to land grabbers (grileiros), allowing for the regularization of public lands occupied until 2011 and increasing the maximum property size eligible for legalization from 1,500 to 2,500 hectares (Ribeiro et al., 2018). This measure transferred vast tracts of public land to the land-grabbing industry, despite initially being framed as a program aimed at regularizing land tenure for smallholders and settlers in agrarian reform settlements. Temer's administration also saw a marked increase in deforestation on private rural properties and within protected areas, further exacerbating the weakening of environmental and territorial governance institutions (IBAMA, ICMBio, and FUNAI<sup>9</sup>). Additionally, in a bid to cater to the agribusiness lobby, the Temer government actively dismantled environmental governance in the Amazon, weakened environmental licensing requirements, halted the demarcation of Indigenous Lands, and sought to reduce the size of protected areas—legitimizing land grabbing and environmental crimes.

The Bolsonaro administration (2019–2022) intensified this environmental dismantling, openly waging an anti-environment, anti-Indigenous, and anti-traditional communities' agenda. From his electoral campaign onward, Bolsonaro displayed both outright contempt and profound ignorance regarding Brazil's socio-environmental diversity, making clear his vision to transform the Amazon through brute force (violence) and unchecked deforestation (fire). His rhetoric resonated among conservative sectors, the military, and especially within the extractive economy lobby, which had already been pressuring PT governments to loosen environmental protections, strip Indigenous and

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<sup>9</sup> The National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples (FUNAI) was created in 1967 as the federal agency responsible for protecting the social and territorial rights of Indigenous peoples.

traditional communities of their territorial rights, and revise the boundaries of Conservation Units and other protected areas.

During the 2018 presidential campaign, these narratives gained traction, amplified by the media and social networks. A key moment in Bolsonaro's consolidation of agribusiness support occurred on October 2, 2018, when the Parliamentary Agricultural Front (FPA) —then coordinated by federal deputy Tereza Cristina (Folha, 2018), who would later become Bolsonaro's Minister of Agriculture—endorsed his candidacy. The FPA presented the ruralist caucus's priorities, which explicitly called for revising environmental policies, reducing the territorial rights of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities, and facilitating large-scale privatization of public lands, effectively undermining territorial governance.

The FPA's agenda, which conditioned agribusiness support for Bolsonaro's campaign, proposed a sweeping transformation of environmental policy through a series of legislative measures designed to increase "productivity" and enhance the sector's "environmental" reputation — essentially removing the legal and regulatory constraints that, in the agribusiness sector's view, hindered Brazil's economic development. Of the ten priority proposals outlined by the FPA, six directly targeted environmental and territorial policies, posing significant threats to Indigenous and traditional communities' constitutionally protected rights. These included: changes to environmental licensing regulations; streamlined processes for rural and urban land tenure regularization; a bill imposing 19 conditions for Indigenous land demarcation; re-evaluation of pesticide regulations by the National Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA); the revocation of decrees on the demarcation of Indigenous, Quilombola, and agrarian reform lands (issued at the end of Dilma Rousseff's administration); and the removal of FUNAI from environmental licensing processes for projects impacting Indigenous territories.

Bolsonaro's administration actively implemented this agenda, turning the Amazon into a frontier for agribanditry (Costa Silva, 2024). The government embraced a revisionist environmental policy, asserting—without euphemism—that Brazil was being "harmed" by the expansion of Conservation Units, Indigenous Lands, and Quilombola Territories. On April 22, 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, during a ministerial meeting, Bolsonaro's Environment Minister, Ricardo Salles, delivered one of the most revealing speeches about the political function that environmental policy would serve under this administration. Salles explicitly advised the cabinet that the government should exploit the media's focus on the pandemic to push through sweeping deregulation<sup>10</sup> and dismantling of environmental protections. As he stated:

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<sup>10</sup> Examples of regulatory decrees, ordinances, and normative instructions illustrate administrative measures that do not require congressional approval but can significantly impact policies.

“So, we need to make an effort while we are in this moment of relative media silence, because all they talk about is COVID, and we take **advantage to** push everything through—changing all the regulations and simplifying norms. Whether it is IPHAN, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of the Environment, or any other ministry. Now is the time to join forces to push through a wholesale simplification of regulations, which is what we need in all areas” (G1, 2020, emphasis added).

Within this broader agenda, Bolsonaro’s environmental governance was characterized by the dismissal of IBAMA inspectors, a sharp reduction in environmental fines, amnesty for illegal deforesters, and a notable militarization of environmental agencies. Three overarching trends defined his administration’s environmental and territorial policies: anti-science, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Amazonian stances—all of which had far-reaching consequences throughout the Amazon region.

The first crisis, which we classify as “pseudoscientific” erupted in July 2019 when the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) released deforestation data for the Amazon. The report indicated that “clear-cut deforestation areas over the last three months (April, May, and June 2019) totaled 1,907.1 km<sup>2</sup>. In 2018, the same period recorded 1,528.2 km<sup>2</sup>, representing a 24.8% increase” (INPE, 2019). Notably, during Bolsonaro’s first six months in office (January to June 2019), IBAMA was effectively barred from conducting environmental inspections and *on-site* monitoring of deforested areas. This political signal emboldened agribusiness and land grabbers to accelerate environmental degradation and deforestation across the region.

In response, the Bolsonaro administration discredited INPE, insinuating that its leadership was “serving” foreign NGOs and that its data was potentially inaccurate. Similar arguments were echoed by several ministers, including those from the Ministry of the Environment (MMA) and the Ministry of Science, Technology, Innovation, and Communications (MCTIC). This period marked the government’s systematic disavowal of both scientific institutions and public agencies responsible for environmental research and management in Brazil<sup>11</sup>.

Subsequent INPE data would confirm the trajectory of Bolsonaro’s environmental policies: rising deforestation rates and the systematic dismantling of regulatory agencies accelerated forest loss. The administration’s denialist rhetoric sought to delegitimize environmental institutions, universities, scientists, and social movements while also freezing the Amazon Fund. These efforts resonated with Bolsonaro’s political and social base

<sup>11</sup> Similar attacks on scientific institutions occurred during the Bolsonaro administration, notably in 2019, when the president questioned the methodology of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) regarding unemployment data, insinuating that the institute was outdated and failed to reflect Brazil’s economic reality. In 2021, similar discrediting efforts targeted the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) and the Butantan Institute, as Bolsonaro cast doubt on the validity and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines produced by these institutions. Additionally, budget cuts to universities and research institutions were a central part of his administration’s broader agenda of undermining scientific credibility.



(Caetano, 2021). Encouraged by the government's attacks on environmental protections, landowners in Pará coordinated the largest mass burning event in the Amazon's recent history, from August 10 to 17, 2019 (Brasil de Fato, 2019). Known as "Fire Day" (August 10, 2019), the coordinated blazes originated in Novo Progresso, Pará, and rapidly spread across the Amazon, clearing land for new agricultural frontiers linked to environmental crime. Satellite data showed that between August 2018 and August 2019, fire hotspots increased by 145.48%. The areas set ablaze were later converted into soybean fields and cattle pastures. For these landowners, turning forests into pasture and soy monocultures — despite the illegality — signified "progress".

The second major policy shift was the administration's attack on Indigenous land rights. Through Normative Instruction (IN) No. 9/2020, the Bolsonaro government authorized the National Indigenous Foundation (FUNAI) to certify land titles for squatters, land grabbers, and developers on Indigenous territories (TIs), claiming that the new regulation would "resolve land conflicts" and "provide greater legal security" for invaders of Indigenous lands.

This legal maneuver had profound territorial and political implications. IN 09/2020 stipulated that FUNAI could only intervene and recognize rural properties within fully formalized Indigenous lands — those already homologated, designated as Indigenous reserves, or officially recognized as Indigenous dominial lands. This provision deliberately ignored territories in earlier stages of the recognition process, including lands that had been identified, demarcated, and declared but not yet homologated — despite their legal standing within the demarcation process. At the time, a technical report by the Indigenistas Associados (INA) — an association of FUNAI employees — indicated that of Brazil's 699 Indigenous lands, 246 (35%) remained in limbo, awaiting official recognition (INA, 2020). This meant that the territorial rights of Indigenous peoples seeking legal recognition of their ancestral lands would be disregarded by FUNAI and the Brazilian state. The measure also disregarded protections for Indigenous groups in voluntary isolation, as documented in various Amazonian territories.

By redefining FUNAI's role as a land certification agency, the Bolsonaro administration catered to agribusiness demands to legitimize ongoing land invasions, particularly in the Amazon, home to the largest concentration—both in number and size—of Indigenous lands. Economically, those who obtained certified property titles under this policy could exploit Indigenous territories for cattle ranching, logging, and agribusiness, fueling new conflicts between settlers and Indigenous communities. Underlying this normative act was a broader revisionist project, one that sought to undermine the historical significance of Indigenous peoples in Brazil's territorial formation while weakening their constitutional land rights.

The erosion of territorial rights, encouragement of Indigenous land invasions, environmental racism, and an aggressive social media campaign against Indigenous peoples formed the core agenda of the agribusiness caucus (Bancada Ruralista) and the BBB caucus. This strategy was combined with an intense ideological campaign portraying agribusiness as a symbol of modernity and the path to Brazil's economic development, with profound territorial repercussions in the Amazon. In this climate of manufactured "doubt" over "who truly owns the land," rural elites accelerated invasions of Indigenous territories. The extent of these land disputes was documented by the Observatory of Agribusiness in Brazil:

[A total of] 1,692 cases of farm encroachments on Indigenous lands demarcated by FUNAI were identified. Together, these properties occupy 1,187,214.07 hectares within 213 Indigenous Territories—an area the size of Lebanon. The legal battle is far from over: 95.5% of this total fall within lands is still undergoing the demarcation process. [...] Among the rural properties overlapping Indigenous lands, 18.6% are currently used for agribusiness. Of this total, 55.6% is occupied by pastureland, amounting to 123,098.91 hectares—an area equivalent to the city of Rio de Janeiro, the second-largest metropolis in Brazil. Another 34.6% of the disputed agribusiness land within Indigenous territories is used for soybean cultivation, totaling 76,498.55 hectares. [...] The grain, beef, timber, sugar, ethanol, and fruit industries are the primary drivers of these encroachments. Multinational corporations linked to farms operating on Indigenous lands include Bunge, Amaggi, Bom Futuro, Lactalis, Cosan, Ducoco, and Nichio. Banks and investment funds are directly involved in the economic pressures exerted against Indigenous Territories, with Itaú (through its subsidiary Kinea) and Bradesco topping the list, followed by XP, Gávea Investimentos, IFC, and Mubadala. Between 2008 and 2021, 46,900 hectares of overlapping farmland in Indigenous lands were deforested (De Olho nos Ruralistas, 2023).

Itaú (through its subsidiary Kinea) and Bradesco are the main names on the list, followed by XP, Gávea Investimentos, IFC and Mubadala. Between 2008 and 2021, 46,900 hectares were deforested in areas of overlapping farms on indigenous lands” (De Olho nos Ruralistas, 2023). Designed to safeguard the cultural and territorial rights of Indigenous peoples, FUNAI under Bolsonaro actively encouraged land invasions, reversing its institutional mandate to accommodate agribusiness demands for land grabs and the privatization of public lands. As a result, under Bolsonaro's administration, the large-scale invasion of protected areas became de facto public policy, as environmental and territorial management agencies were systematically weakened, allowing these processes to escalate unchecked — particularly in the Amazon.

The third major crisis lay in Bolsonaro's overtly anti-environmental governance, a political stance that amounted to an explicit anti-Amazon agenda (Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019). The scale of environmental destruction was staggering, both in sheer magnitude and in the level of societal support it garnered under the guise of agribusiness-driven "progress"

(Silva and Costa Silva, 2022). A Piauí magazine report summarized the environmental devastation under Bolsonaro's administration using the following key metrics:

- "i) The average annual deforestation rate in the Amazon under Bolsonaro was 11,400 km<sup>2</sup> — compared to 7,200 km<sup>2</sup> in the preceding four years — representing a 58% increase. In total, 45,600 km<sup>2</sup> of forest were cleared, an area equivalent to the state of Rio de Janeiro.
- ii) The Ministry of the Environment's annual budget was R\$2.56 billion — lower than during the Temer (R\$3.21 billion) and Dilma (R\$3.42 billion) administrations — amounting to a 25% budget cut compared to Dilma's tenure.
- iii) Environmental enforcement agencies operated at reduced capacity, with 37% of enforcement positions left vacant, while environmental fines decreased by 35%". (Gorziza; Buono, 2023)

The Bolsonaro administration's method for expanding neo-extractivist economies in the Amazon combined a strong political base in Congress (via the BBB caucus) with the systematic dismantling of environmental and territorial governance agencies. This enabled the expansion of agribusiness into multiple sub-regions of the Amazon, leading not only to intensified deforestation and protected area invasions but also to a surge in rural conflicts.

Bolsonaro's term saw the highest level of agrarian conflicts in Brazil since the country's redemocratization process began in 1985. According to reports from the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), between 2019 and 2022, Brazil recorded 5,943 land conflicts—a 42% increase compared to the previous period (Dilma's second term/Temer's government, 2015–2018). In 2022, the main victims of land conflicts were Indigenous peoples (28%), squatters (19%), quilombolas (16%), landless workers (12%), and rural settlement residents (9%). Traditional territories, home to Indigenous peoples and other rural communities (quilombolas and riverine populations), accounted for 44% of all victims of land-related disputes. The CPT identified the main perpetrators of these conflicts as land grabbers, large landowners, loggers, businessmen, and federal and state governments — all aligned with the hegemonic discourse of agribusiness and extractive economies (CPT, 2023a).

The Amazon became the epicenter of agrarian conflicts, with 1,107 land disputes recorded — representing 55% of all land conflicts in Brazil. In addition, 34 killings of rural leaders, Indigenous activists, and human rights defenders were documented in the region, accounting for 72% of all land-related assassinations nationwide. Over the past decade, the number of families affected by land conflicts in the Amazon has skyrocketed, surpassing 100,000 after 2018 (CPT, 2023b). The region has thus become increasingly defined by chronic disputes, exacerbated by a lack of public security, inadequate protection for human rights defenders, and the systematic impunity surrounding crimes against rural activists and social movement leaders (Chagas, 2023). This pattern of violence has been further

reinforced by the state's inaction in recognizing these conflicts, investigating criminal cases, and prosecuting land-related violence (Jacarandá and Matzembacher, 2018).

Ultimately, under Bolsonaro, and driven by the political force of neo-extractivist economies, the Amazon was reshaped into a new agricultural frontier built on environmental crime, the displacement of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities, and agribusiness banditry (agribanditry) (Costa Silva, 2022). The administration, in coordination with the BBB caucus, aggressively worked to weaken and revise every possible environmental, social, and territorial protection mechanism that safeguarded nature and traditional lands. The data on deforestation and rural conflicts serve as undeniable evidence of the state-orchestrated environmental destruction in the Amazon.

The assault on territorial rights for Indigenous peoples and traditional communities marked a new chapter in Brazilian history, driven by the country's conservative and far-right political sectors. The BBB caucus and its allies advanced a revisionist agenda aimed at dismantling Indigenous land rights, displacing traditional communities, enabling corporate encroachment into both rural settlements and protected areas, and launching a sustained campaign to erode and delegitimize Amazonian culture.

In sum, the Temer and Bolsonaro administrations actively facilitated — and capitalized on — a powerful coalition between neo-extractivist economic sectors (agribusiness, land speculation, energy, illegal mining, and large-scale mineral extraction). This alliance was politically consolidated through a predominantly right-wing and far-right parliamentary bloc, embodied in the BBB caucus, which played a central role in dismantling environmental policies, human rights protections, and Indigenous territorial rights. The BBB caucus, alongside the broader neo-extractivist sectors, operated as a unified political force with an explicit territorial agenda: to open natural areas and protected lands for capital accumulation, thereby reshaping territorial governance. Under Bolsonaro, this coalition found an ideal political environment to advance measures that profoundly altered the socio-environmental landscape and territorial order in the Brazilian Amazon.

During the Temer and Bolsonaro years, Amazonian territorial governance was marked by the large-scale displacement of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities, alongside the institutionalization of environmental crime as a political practice. These administrations fostered a psychosocial<sup>12</sup> climate of unchecked modernization—one that sought to dissolve regulatory frameworks and undermine the rule of law. The Amazon was turned into a frontier of agribanditry, where land grabbing, deforestation, and resource

<sup>12</sup> Milton Santos (1996) developed the concept of psychosphere, which refers to the production of ideas, discourses, imaginaries, and ideological constructs that shape territorial projects, events, or large-scale transformations. For example, the agribusiness sector promotes a psychosphere of modernity, presenting itself as a driver of economic growth while concealing environmental destruction and the displacement of traditional communities. Similar psychosphere narratives emerge around hydroelectric projects, mining, and industrial agricultural commodities.

exploitation were actively encouraged as mechanisms for territorial reconfiguration. At its core, this was a project of erasure — an attempt to obliterate the collective memories, communal lands, and cultural identities of Amazonian peoples. Bolsonaro's agenda for the Amazon was, ultimately, the political realization of barbarism.

## Concluding Remarks

Throughout the so-called modernization of the Amazon, initiated in the 1960s, three key dimensions have emerged as central to regional debates on the socio-economic functionality of the Amazonian space.

First, the existence of a vast reserve of public lands, which — depending on the political and economic context, allows for the Amazon's deeper integration into global commodity circuits. This dynamic reaffirms the theories of the 1960s and 1970s that framed the region as a resource frontier, a perception rooted in the extensive availability of public lands and natural wealth, which enhances both the strategic function of the state and the imperatives of capital. This condition fuels the persistent prospect of new mega-projects, always contingent on shifting political and economic circumstances, generating prosperity for a select few while deepening dispossession for many.

The second dimension is biodiversity — understood as a natural stock — which has increasingly been positioned within the framework of the green economy and the philosophy of sustainable development, particularly since the 1990s. The challenge of extracting economic value from nature has sparked extensive debates and policy initiatives — some of which have been implemented, while others have lacked the political momentum necessary for realization. The prevailing notion has been that a “standing forest” can generate revenue through biodiversity-based economies, offering an alternative to neo-extractivist models. However, only sustained investment in science, technology, and robust, regionally integrated public policies can make this a viable pathway. The sustainable use of the forest and water resources could contribute to this agenda, but its success would require state intervention, regulatory frameworks, and institutional oversight. While some productive practices, such as sustainable forest management and traditional community-based methods, have been effectively applied, others — such as carbon sequestration and the “green credit” market — remain under discussion, with limited experimental implementation.

The third dimension, sociobiodiversity, refers to the practices of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities living in protected areas (Indigenous Lands, Quilombola Territories, and Conservation Units), where conservation is combined with sustainable production, agroecology, and social reproduction. These territories are legally recognized

under the Federal Constitution and complementary legal frameworks, ensuring a minimum level of protection for collective ways of life that are deeply intertwined with the environment.

These three dimensions—land, nature, and territory — reflect the competing socio-economic visions for the Amazon, which remain in dialectical tension within governmental structures and in the spatial practices of different social and economic actors. Within this ongoing struggle, the resistance of Indigenous peoples, traditional communities, peasants, and small-scale farmers—alongside the broader spectrum of rural communities — has been a fundamental political condition for asserting historical and territorial rights. For the peoples of the rivers, forests, and fields, defending land and nature is not only a struggle for survival but also an affirmation of their collective existence.

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