

Struggling and Dying for land in Amazon: a case study of the State of Pará

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Abstract

Understanding the reality of Socio-Territorial Movements and the process of struggle for land in the Amazon involves a deeper analysis of the cruelty and specialized extermination of certain stakeholders and organizations that lead the struggle and resistance. Our objective in this work is to discuss the total lack of interest and the necropolitics created on different profiles (peasants, leaders, unionists, landless, squatters, settlers, and other stakeholders), in addition to the way in which the extermination process manifests itself as part of the reality of the agricultural frontier in the Amazon. After an extensive and dedicated analysis of data by the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), including interviews, mapping and analysis of journalistic material, we were able to conclude that the main way to promote the real preservation of the Amazon and its territories is through policies that care for the safety of living people. After all, the scenario presented in recent decades is that there is a permanent and systematic process that points to the specialization of murders of less favoured class leaders as a way of investing in obtaining land and illegal property in the Amazonian region of the state of Pará.

Palavras-chave: Necropolitic; Amazon; agricultural frontier.

Lutando e morrendo por terra na Amazônia: um estudo de caso do Estado do Pará

Resumo

Compreender a realidade dos Movimentos Socioterritoriais e, portanto, o processo de luta pela terra na Amazônia envolve, obrigatoriamente, a realização de uma análise mais profunda sobre o extermínio especializado de certos sujeitos e organizações que protagonizam a luta e a resistência. O nosso objetivo neste trabalho é discutir o total desinteresse e a necropolítica criada sobre diferentes perfis (camponeses, lideranças, sindicalistas, sem-terra, posseiros, assentados, dentre outros) bem como a forma como o processo de extermínio se manifesta como parte da realidade da fronteira agrícola na Amazônia. Após uma extensa e dedicada análise de dados da Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), a realização de entrevistas, o mapeamento e a análise de material jornalístico, pudemos concluir que a principal forma de promover a real preservação da Amazônia e seus territórios é por meio de políticas que cuidem da segurança das pessoas vivas. Afinal, o



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cenário apresentado nas últimas décadas é de que existe um processo permanente e sistemático que aponta a especialização dos assassinato em lideranças das classes menos abastadas como forma de investir na obtenção de terras e na propriedade grilada na Amazônia paraense.

Keywords: Necropolítica; Amazônia; Fronteira Agrícola.

Luchando y muriendo por tierra en la Amazonia: un estudio de caso del Estado de Pará

Resumen

Comprender la realidad de los Movimientos Socioterritoriales y, por lo tanto, el proceso de lucha por la tierra en la Amazonia, implica necesariamente, realizar un análisis más profundo sobre el exterminio especializado dirigido a determinados sujetos y organizaciones que son protagonistas de luchas y resistencias. Nuestro objetivo en este trabajo, es discutir el total desinterés y la necropolítica creada sobre diferentes perfiles (campesinos, líderes, sindicalistas, sin tierras, ocupantes, asentados, entre otros), así como, la forma en que el proceso de exterminio se manifiesta como parte de una realidad puesta en la frontera agrícola de la Amazonia. Después de un extenso y dedicado análisis de datos proveniente de la Comisión Pastoral de la Tierra (CPT), la realización de entrevistas, mapeamiento y análisis de material periodísticos, pudimos concluir que la principal forma de promover la real preservación de la Amazonia y sus territorios, es mediante políticas que cuiden la seguridad de las personas vivas. Finalmente, el escenario presente en las últimas décadas, es que existe un proceso permanente y sistemático que muestra una especialización en los asesinatos de líderes provenientes de las clases menos opulentas, como una forma de invertir en la obtención de tierras y en la propiedad ilegal de tierras públicas en la Amazonia paraense.

Palabras-clave: Necropolítica; Amazonia; Frontera Agrícola.

Introduction

The advance of the agricultural frontier in Brazil has had a profound impact on the Amazon Region. Under the auspices of the nostalgic discourses of the “demographic void” and capitalist development, former actors, including landowners, land grabbers, loggers, etc., add to agribusiness, composing a scenario of violence and environmental degradation.

The truth is that the Eastern Amazon is not just about mega-infrastructure projects, adventurous migratory flows, colonization projects, and initiatives to extract wealth. Although it is the reality in some places, the appropriation of land combined with situated necropolitics is configured as the most important of the Great Projects of the Eastern Amazon to establish the monopoly of the metabolization of resources.

Deforestation and illegal appropriation of land already occur considering the possibility of amnesty and have become a common strategy in the Amazon. Ignoring environmental issues, first, the lands are illegally occupied, then it articulates politically to

build amnesties through political disputes. Deforestation, expropriation, and other forms of violence find in amnesties the baptism for private property in the Amazon to formally enter the global market, with brutal violence as a possibility and a reality.

Data from the "Pastoral Commission of the Land" revealed that between 1985 and 2019, 1,815 murders in Brazil's countryside were recorded, with 1,202 murders recorded in the Amazon, representing 62% of the total. In the Eastern Amazon, where the agricultural frontier is more intense, the number of murders totaled 929, representing 51% of the country's total. Among the states with the highest expression of violence is the state of Pará, with 564 murders (31% of the national total), and the state of Mato Grosso, with 147 (8.09% of the national total).

Preliminary research carried out through the systematization and analysis of journalistic content, interviews, and fieldwork in conflict areas has shown us the specialization of murders and the occurrence of massacres involving shooters, landowners, private sectors, and military police. Among the profile of those killed, we highlight the leaders, trade unionists, landless people, indigenous people, settlers, *quilombolas*, and riverine people. Especially the refinement of brutality and the executions are evidence of extermination as an option for disrupting of social organizations and activists in the Amazon.

In this way, we challenged ourselves to understand the combination between the materialization of a new era, where the frontier is considered a space of transition and legal appropriation of land, and the violence (murders) is an integral part of a policy where the State decides politically and produces death or lets others do it. The "necropolitics" by motivations and rural sectors is one of the elements of an understanding based on the agrarian question in the Amazon

Pioneer frontier in the Amazon: the violent face of land theft in the Plantationocene

The pioneer front or so-called frontier is still a dynamic and constant phenomenon in the neoliberal project of accumulation and appropriation, which characterizes the agrarian question in some spaces with "colonial" heritages in Brazil. Also seen as a space where the peasantry and other social actors' expropriation occurs, the frontier's advance is based on violent processes that separate the population from access to land and other sources of wealth (HARVEY, 2004). Therefore, the frontier must be considered a relevant part of the present reality in the analysis of rural changes and the dynamics of capitalism (IORIS, 2016, 2018), especially as it touches on the relevant point of the creation of "private property".

When confronting the relevance of the Amazon with the general reflections on critical agrarian studies in the contemporary world by Edelman & Wolford (2017), we were

provoked to try to understand how the Plantationcencene manifests itself in the Amazon. Likewise, we consider it important to know how it would fit in as a relevant part of the expansion of capitalist accumulation in the form of private property associated with modernity, large-scale production, neoliberal reason, development and market-orientation, etc. This concern materializes because we believe that the Plantationcencene (WOLFORD, 2021; HARAWAY, 2015) manifests itself in a particularly violent and unequal way in this region of the globe, adding contributions to the debates around necropolitics.

The Amazon frontier is an area where capitalist expansion develops unevenly, imposing the end of the peasantry and other ways of life and, in some cases, brutally through the murder of counter-hegemonic subjects. This means that the agrarian question and the materialization of the Plantationcencene on the Amazon frontier is not only a social, political, and economically violent process but dominated by brutal mechanisms that show a precise combination between deaths and the creation of private property through theft of land (*grilagem*).

The relevance of the debate on Plantationcencene carried out by several authors (WOLFORD, 2021; HARAWAY, 2015) is suggestive for the interpretation of the Amazonian case. The relationships based on the discourse of modernity, development, entrepreneurship, prosperity, concentration, exploitation, and neoliberal reason (DARDOT & LAVAL, 2014), which subsidize a relevant part of this era, border the areas of forests and other ways of life (peasants, *quilombolas*, fishers, indigenous people, extractivist, riverside dwellers, etc.).

In these frontier areas, violent forms of reproduction of capitalist relations still occur, whether against nature (such as deforestation by fires, illegal mining in indigenous and public lands, or timber trafficking) or the popular classes of society, their individuals, and people? According to the National Institute of Space Research (INPE), the Amazon went from 68,345 fires in 2018 to 103,161 in 2020, and the state of Pará concentrated 38,603 of these fires in the same year. According to PRODES (Project for Monitoring Deforestation in the Legal Amazon by Satellite), deforestation also increased, going from 7,536 km² in 2018 to 13,038 km² in 2021, with the state of Pará recording an increase of 2,744 km² to 5,238 km² in the same period. Meanwhile, data from the local agricultural survey by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) indicates that between 2017 and 2020, there was an increase from 11,676,727 to 12,932,584 hectares of soybeans planted in the Amazon. The state of Pará stood out in the production of this grain, with a rise from 500,385 to 643,267 hectares in 2020.

The perspective presented from the critical reading of the Plantationcencene is even more curious in the Amazonian case, as it allows us to think about where and how it has been integrated into this new era. Historically analyzed as an element of the process of land

accumulation carried out by international investors and institutions (banks, companies, churches, etc.), the pioneer front (frontier) began in the "hereditary captaincies" during the colonization process (civilization frontier) and currently assumes other directions and agricultural interests (FERNANDES, WELCH & GONÇALVES, 2012; MARTINS, 1980).

Between the past and the present, the frontier is another aspect of the materialization of the Plantationcene, which emerges as a new era for the social organizations. It has manifested in the form of hegemonic ideologies committed to accumulation through dispossession (HARVEY, 2004). In areas undergoing colonization, such as the Amazon, the frontier is manifested in the sum of areas of activity. It is in these poles (SANTOS, 2008) that agrarian phenomena take place. Phenomena related to land acquisition, also discussed by Wily (2011), are effectively carried out on a local scale, but when added together, they show transformations at other scales (such as national, regional, micro-regional, etc.). Affected by neoliberal reason, as in the case of President Jair Bolsonaro's public defence of agribusiness in Brazil, governments place the State at the service of capitalism, as one of the organizers and promoters of change and electing the opponents of the nation and the development model (*sem terras*, indigenous people, *quilombolas*, critical intellectuals, etc.).

The lack of inspection and control over deforestation, the contempt for the problems caused by fires, subsidies and incentives, declarations, and public policies, show not only indifference but direct action in the destruction process. All these problems, which did not exist until the capitalist and colonial "arrival of the frontier," represent the agrarian question in transformation. They are expressions of the dynamics of the pioneer front produced by capitalism, a process of illegal land appropriation based on violence (such as deforestation, murders, threats, etc.), also treated by the cosmopolitical critiques that the white man is "eating it all" (KOPENAWA & ALBERT, 2013).

Not only as a consolidated process of this "modern era" characterized by large-scale, export-oriented production/exploitation (commodities), land alienation, (neo)colonial racism, dependency, dualisms, modernity, etc. but where capitalism is still to form and territorialize itself in the face of different non-capitalist relationships and ways of life. It is a question of reflecting on specific situations because, in the 21st century, some communities in the Amazon are still experiencing both the most modern (Agribusiness) and the most ancient (large landowners) faces simultaneously. Despite the Brazilian colonial history being dominated by the plantation model in different regions, Rosario (1986), Santos (1980), and Hebetete (2004) drew attention to the fact that the Amazon had an agrarian formation different from some of those general aspects treated (harboured?) about Brazil, Gilberto Freyre (2006), Caio Prado Junior (1974), and Celso Furtado (2000), which is

currently evidenced as a frontier still to be explored by capitalism unable to sustainably deal with the biome.

The agrarian changes on the Amazon frontier, understood from the situational analysis, have signaled a process that mixes archaic and modern actions of capitalism (such as agribusinesses, mining, logistical enterprises, hydroelectric plants, etc.). This means that elements of Kautsky's (1998) and Lenin's (1982) readings on the advance of capitalist relations take place in complex realities that experience not only the end of the peasantry but a wide range of non-capitalist links. The class dynamics, analyzed by Bernstein (2010), are cooled as a result of the timid participation of the Amazonians, mainly migrant farmers from different regions (South, Southeast, and Midwest), in the process of intra- and inter-class metamorphosis.

Pierre Monbeig (1984) was the one who conducted initial studies in Brazilian geography on the pioneering front, highlighting its economic impulses, changes in land tenure, and some social transformations, among other aspects related to the creation of private property (e.g., the land grabbing) through land appropriation processes. Santos (1980), Hebette (2004), Rosário (1986), Martins (1980, 1981, 2016), Becker (2004), Oliveira (1987), Porto-Gonçalves (2015, 2017), Loureiro (2015), Schmink & Wood (2012) and Ioris (2016, 2018) are able to convince us that the specificities of this process in the Amazon are linked to the biome, colonialism, capitalism, scales, structures, and the State, as well as extractivists, riverside dwellers, peasants, *quilombolas*, Amazonian townspeople, and indigenous people.

Based on Marxist vocabulary and theory, Martins (1980, 1981) and Oliveira (1987), analyzed the Amazon frontier to highlight the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, such as expropriation, private property, land monopolization, violence, repression and the absence of the State for certain social actors. Both authors criticized the precarious colonization of the Amazon as a way of settling conflicts over land in other regions, with the policies for the creation of agrarian reform settlements instruments to promote the pioneer front, the result of political, geopolitical, social environmental and economic strategies. For Martins (2016), the border is a consequence of the expansion of a national project over occupied territories that lead to the meeting and disagreement of different social actors and groups in a scenario of ambition and death. The national project based on capitalist rationality has expressed several conflicts, manifesting into a civilizational frontier in a process that reveals perverse faces of the "ends of the human" (MARTINS, 2016, p. 10).

On the frontier, violent processes are more visible and frequent, than outside of it. Its expression is recognized by Martins (2016), when emphasizing the degradation of the Amazon people and its sacrificial character. Whether in the form of projects or policies aimed at the actions and intentions of the State and Capitalism (such as large projects), as we see

in Becker (2004), Aragon (2018), Brito & Castro (2018) and Fearnside (2018), or under in other aspects, it is seen as a pattern where subjects whose way of life are based on socio-territorial relations (such as peasants, indigenous people, riverine people and others traditional communities) are immersed in a conflicting reality with unequal conditions.

Hebette (2004) dedicated herself to analyzing migrations, public policies, colonization, development processes, large projects, the creation of roads in association with the formation of large estates and new elites, environmental contradictions, the agrarian question, and conflicts in the countryside, as well as the Amazonian peasantry. In the author's analysis perspective, they are structural elements and problems of the capitalist agrarian question, marked by an appropriation that was born and continues to reproduce itself, following a plan pertinent to the critical debate on the Plantationcene phenomenon, that is, oriented towards export, concentrator, expropriator, etc.

The approach by Ioris (2018) interprets the frontier produced by the advances of agribusiness in the Amazon since the Marxist critique. From his perspective, it is understood as an economic, political, social, and cultural expression of changes in the environment, especially in a society based on the unequal participation of social actors and on the accumulation of wealth imposed by neoliberalism.

The frontier is an integral part of the reality of the agrarian question, and it is the area where the process of advancing capitalist relations is more evident, being the space where the center-margin relationship is consolidated (IORIS, 2018). Changing the landscape and producing new places, the frontier is created by producing private property (MARTINS, 1980, 1981, 2016; LOUREIRO, 2015).

The frontier between national territories, civilization frontier, occupation or colonization frontier, economic frontier, and agricultural frontier, among others, were some of the expressions to deal with this phenomenon representing different intentions. Over the last few decades, researchers have dedicated themselves to explaining the border as a colonial-capitalist historical fact and a contemporary reality in Brazil. Although the readings are devoted to critical thinking, it is still necessary to go further to understand what we currently identify as agrarian necropolitics taking place on the agricultural frontier.

The Marxist critique of use value and exchange value are evidence of the great inequality that exists in this space, an important criticism that motivates the actions of different peasant movements in the state of Pará: Associação de Pequenos Rural Producers de Marabá – ASPARMAB –; associate of Sem Terra – AST; Association of United Workers of Vila Aparecida – ATUVA; National Confederation of Agricultural Workers - ATUVA; Fruit of the Earth; League of Poor Peasants – LCP; Movement Conquering Our Land – MCNT; Workers Movement. Landless Rurales – MST; Organization of Workers in the Field – OTC; Union of Small and Medium Rural Producers – SIMPRA.

The actions of these institutions in resistance to this new era evidence the conflict that already concentrates 511 land occupations between 1988-2020 in Pará. Fernandes' book (2000) recognizes land occupations organized by peasant movements as the primary form of access to land. This fact allowed the establishment of 1) the most significant number of settled families in the country, totalling 292,296, representing 26.1% of the national total; 2) the most significant number of rural settlements created, with 1,140, representing 12.1% of the national total, surpassing the Central-West, Southeast and South regions; 3) concentration of 24.4% of the total area destined to agrarian reform in the country, with a sum of just over 20 million hectares, surpassing the Midwest, Northeast, South and Southeast regions; 4) the number of settlements that exceed the Southeast and South regions of Brazil (SOBREIRO FILHO; GIRARDI, 2020).

Another example of the disputes promoted in the Amazon, still based on the Land Struggle Database (DATALUTA), showed us that in 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, 243 reports were released about the political actions carried out by political organizations that defend forests (such as indigenous peoples, extractivist, *quilombolas*, etc.), of which 176 included the term "territory." The Amazon was at the forefront of the process of struggle and resistance this year, representing 51.37% (296) of the national total of actions carried out. The state of Pará, for example, registered the most significant number of actions (12.15%), a higher expression than the South and Southeast regions of Brazil. The states of Mato Grosso (9.54%) and Amazonas (7.81%) followed the list, representing the first three places, all in the Amazon.

The Eldorado of land concentration: intentions and articulations in state of Pará, Amazon Region

For several generations of Brazilians, it is not uncommon to have to deal daily with complaints about illegalities related to land, deforestation, and fires in the Amazon. It is also clear that the Amazon has few inspection institutions and policies considering its size, approximately two-thirds of the Brazilian territory. However, the inclusion of new areas in the market is of national interest. In this sense, Torres et al. (2017) critically emphasize the expression "owner is the one who deforests." This is because the lands of the eastern Amazon have edaphoclimatic conditions and favorable locations for extracting above-average income if associated with ongoing logistics projects (GONÇALVES et al., 2019).

It is against an ambitious scenario that the establishment of private property emerges as a central issue in the Amazon. Although private ownership has collected failures to establish a history of development and preservation of the Amazon, there is no sign of an

alternative future in sight. INCRA (National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform) holds data on properties and areas made available by the National Rural Registry System (SNCR). The state of Pará, considered the critical area of the Eastern Amazon, has just over 124 million hectares.

Although the data is declaratory and presents overlapping areas, it expresses the intentionality of accumulation, dispute, and illegal appropriation of land. Even with inaccuracies, the data testifies to the existence of the intent to accumulate in areas of the Amazonian agricultural frontier and in a country that has historically legalized land grabbing, a phenomenon that becomes more blatant as the dimensions of the declared areas are verified.

After being analyzed and confronted with overlaps, the 2018 data totalled approximately 130 million hectares defined as public lands or private lands, even in a federative unit characterized by indigenous and environmental reserves. Analyzing them, we found just over 10 million hectares were owned by the *Instituto de Terras do Pará* (ITERPA), 1.6 million in the name of the Regional Management of Union Heritage, and 41 million under the ownership of INCRA. The state of Pará still has approximately 160 thousand properties declared in more than 80 million hectares.

Making an analysis that excluded declared public lands and focused on properties over 2 thousand hectares, we identified just over 6.9 properties concentrated on around 60 million hectares. Even in the face of the excessive concentration in the declarations, the data related to properties above 100 thousand hectares is even more alarming since 56 properties together were revealed to have just over 27 million hectares.

Other factors also demonstrate how it is possible to verify its concentration: 1) Although 82.53% of the number of properties are distributed in areas between 1 and 200 hectares, it holds only 5.72% of the total declared hectares (7,659 million); 2) 45% of the declared area is related to properties above 2,000 hectares (60,906 million), an area restricted to only 4.28% of the number of properties (6,948); 3) The properties that claim to have more than 100 thousand hectares covering 27 million hectares distributed over only 56 properties, that is, 0.03% of the total properties declared to have just over 20% of the territory of the state of Pará.

In addition to the declarations, the legislative policy has been generous with agribusiness and land grabbing. Over the last few decades, we have seen several state and federal bills (Provisional Measure (MP) 910/19, Bill 510/2021, Law 8.878/2019). The most recent legislation reaffirms the interest in regularizing occupied lands. The state government did not behave differently and also favored the process of land regularization in the state of Pará. This initiative was developed under the order of PL 129/2019, and had its outcome in

Law 8,878 of July 8, 2019. In addition, the Law directly mentioned the exclusion of peasant social movements as beneficiaries of the new policy.

From biopower to the general panorama of necropolitics in the Amazon

Biopower was the subject of Michel Foucault's debate between 1974-1979, generally understood to be an analysis of the relationship between the body and power and manifests in the way power penetrates and is exposed in the body through a set of mechanisms and procedures (FOUCAULT, 2003, 2007, 2008). With a more refined view of the analysis of power relations, Foucault highlighted the unfolding of biopower in two distinct and complementary ways. On the one hand, the disciplinary devices and mechanisms fulfill the function of training the body in the context of the interests of the production relations of a capitalist society. This process is more clearly evidenced in everyday institutions and is understood as the anatomic-politics.

On the other hand, biopolitics is interested in an agenda focused on the most fundamental biological characteristics of the human being (FOUCAULT, 2007). It is dedicated to composing a policy on life and death, especially when dealing with strategies related to management, prolongation, or other dynamics that involve life or birth. The figure of the State, representative of sovereignty capable of deciding who lives and who dies, is who figures and seeks to politically apply the actions committed to the implementation of technologies of life.

Biopower, especially biopolitics, problematizes the conduct and behavior of governments, with the State being the institution with the most complex power mechanisms (FOUCAULT, 2007). Regardless of how, the mechanisms of power, as an intrinsic part of all relationships, are not restricted to the governments that operate the State. Other institutions and political actors also promote it, including going beyond social contracts and exercising roles that are competent to others or "nobody." The struggles, clashes, and confrontations within our societies highlight the strategies of power.

In the case of the Amazon, the high concentration of murders and the flexibilization in the legalization of illegally occupied land makes us wonder if the security mechanisms have failed or been successful. This questioning stems from the fact that the State of Pará alone represented 31.12% of murders in the Brazilian countryside. Although it is clear that the State is aware of the reality of prevention and punishment, the negligence of attributing criminal aggravation to crimes motivated by environmental and agrarian issues shows a posture of weak or disinterested repression against crimes that impact the trade balance and the elite pocket.

Since the mechanisms of prevention or punishment cannot constrain murders, we recognize the existence of other social groups who politically decide about life, to the detriment of the state monopoly of power and violence. In this context, the combination of murders motivated by agrarian issues and the illegal appropriation of land is expressed as a relevant phenomenon for understanding some concepts of biopower in the frontier areas where the Plantationcene is produced and reproduced, although it is also different.

This means that even in the face of the State as sovereign (FOUCAULT, 2003), the decision about life and death has been crossed by agrarian intentions, with the border being the most “luminous” space where the monopoly of political decision on life is not restricted to the State. This power is the pact between the State, governments and some sectors of society. On the one hand, we have the selectivity of bodies left to die and, on the other hand, murdered as elements that help to understand how State behavior and economic transformations also combine their mechanisms of power to decide or let someone else arbitrate over life.

The essay by Achille Mbembe (2019) seeks to go beyond the discussions of contemporary forms of biopolitics debated by Foucault, proposing the concepts of necropower and necropolitics. Despite the eclecticism and little theoretical unification, which is also not a general theory of power, the understanding of sovereignty through the power and the ability to decide who should live and who should die, the decision about mortality or life as an instrument of power demonstration, including racism, are elements that are resignified or reconnected with the notion of politics about death. Necropolitics is about the ways in which power subjugates life in contemporary times, a fact that promotes transformations in other relationships (resistance, sacrifice, and terror) and that produces topographies based on cruelty (plantation).

Some analyzes in the Amazonian context show differences from a regional perspective. An example is that in the “plantation” system characterized by slavery, the enslaved person was seen as an object (MBEMBE, 2019). In the Amazon, these people are not seen as an object due to historical issues of land conditions. Although it concentrates on cases of slave labor (SOBREIRO FILHO & SODRE, 2021), the life of certain social actors in specific places has become an obstacle or a complicating factor for the appropriation of land and the rationality of accumulation. This is because the lives of indigenous people, peasants, riverine people, and *quilombolas* are located on the colonial-capitalist frontier, which, when it arrived, already encountered different social actors.

Unaccustomed to the capitalist, developmentalist interests and reasons and hegemonic customs, they are uninteresting, degenerate, disposable, eliminable lives and bodies for which the State and society do not usually express their mourning. It is a different process, for they do not operate on the grounds that their life is above interest in the land or

that it is more valuable and important. Unlike the slave who was kept alive (MBEMBE, 2019), in some cases, because it is a property and an investment, elimination appears as the absolute domination of life in the Amazon, meaning the policy of death as a mechanism of land appropriation, an investment that stands out in pioneering areas. A place where life can be arbitrated by a parallel power that challenges the sovereignty of the state, although it coexists and interacts.

These are people who generally own the so-called public lands, or no-man's lands, places of poverty, and areas to be appropriated and trained for development. Violent disputes against these social actors are frequent, manifesting in the form of threats, aggressions, looting, destruction of plantations, torture, enclosures, etc. But murders have become the most extreme social form of violence motivated by land issues. They have proved to be an effective dismantling, intimidating, and annihilating instrument for ensuring the illegal appropriation of land.

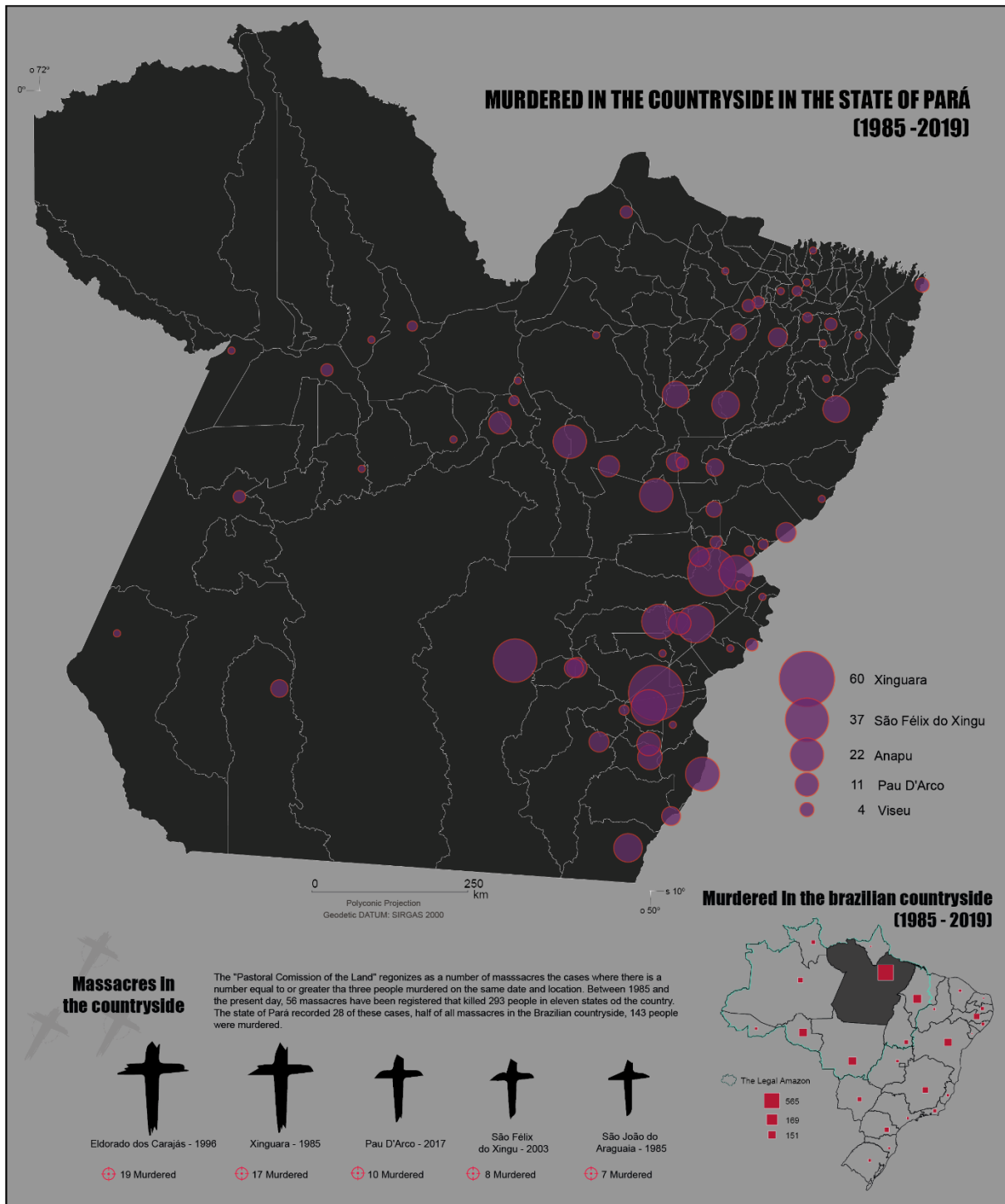
Although Sobreiro Filho & Sodr  (2021) have given clues, we will seek to compare Brazil, the Amazon, the Eastern Amazon, and the state of Par  to highlight the concentration of violence and specializations. Data from the Pastoral Land Commission on murders (1985-2019) indicates that the federative units belonging to the Amazon biome accounted for 66.22% of the total murders in the Brazilian countryside; that is, of the 1,815 murders that occurred in Brazil, 1,202 were in the Amazon.

While the Western Amazon (states of Amazonas, Acre, Rond nia, and Roraima) represented 15.04% of the national total of murders, the Eastern Amazon (states of Amap , Maranh o, Mato Grosso, Tocantins, and Par ) added up to 51%, that is, 929 murders. This confirms the uneven distribution of death policy on the Amazon frontier (SOBREIRO FILHO & SODR , 2021).

Although the state of Rond nia, with 8.3% of the national total (151 murders), deserves to be highlighted because of its polarizing character in Western Amazonia, Eastern Amazonia shows disproportionality: Par , with 31.12% of the national total (565 deaths); Maranh o, with 9.31% (169); Mato Grosso, with 8.09% (147); Tocantins, with 2.25% (41); and Amap , with 0.38% (7). The unequal concentration is evident when we compare states where the agricultural frontier and the illegal appropriation of land are not in dispute. In consolidation, S o Paulo (Southeast) and Santa Catarina (South) account for less than 1% of the total. The Northeast (26.83%), Southeast (7.98%), and South (4.57%) regions are lower than the 31.12% combined by a single state (Par ) of the Eastern Amazon. The time perspective also helps us understand that the violence is a phenomenon that permeates the border created by the Plantation, both in the state of Par , recidivist for over nine years with more than 50% of deaths in rural areas. Only Amaz nia concentrates more than 50% of two murders for 31 times/years, 60% for 23 times/years, and 70% for 13 times/years.

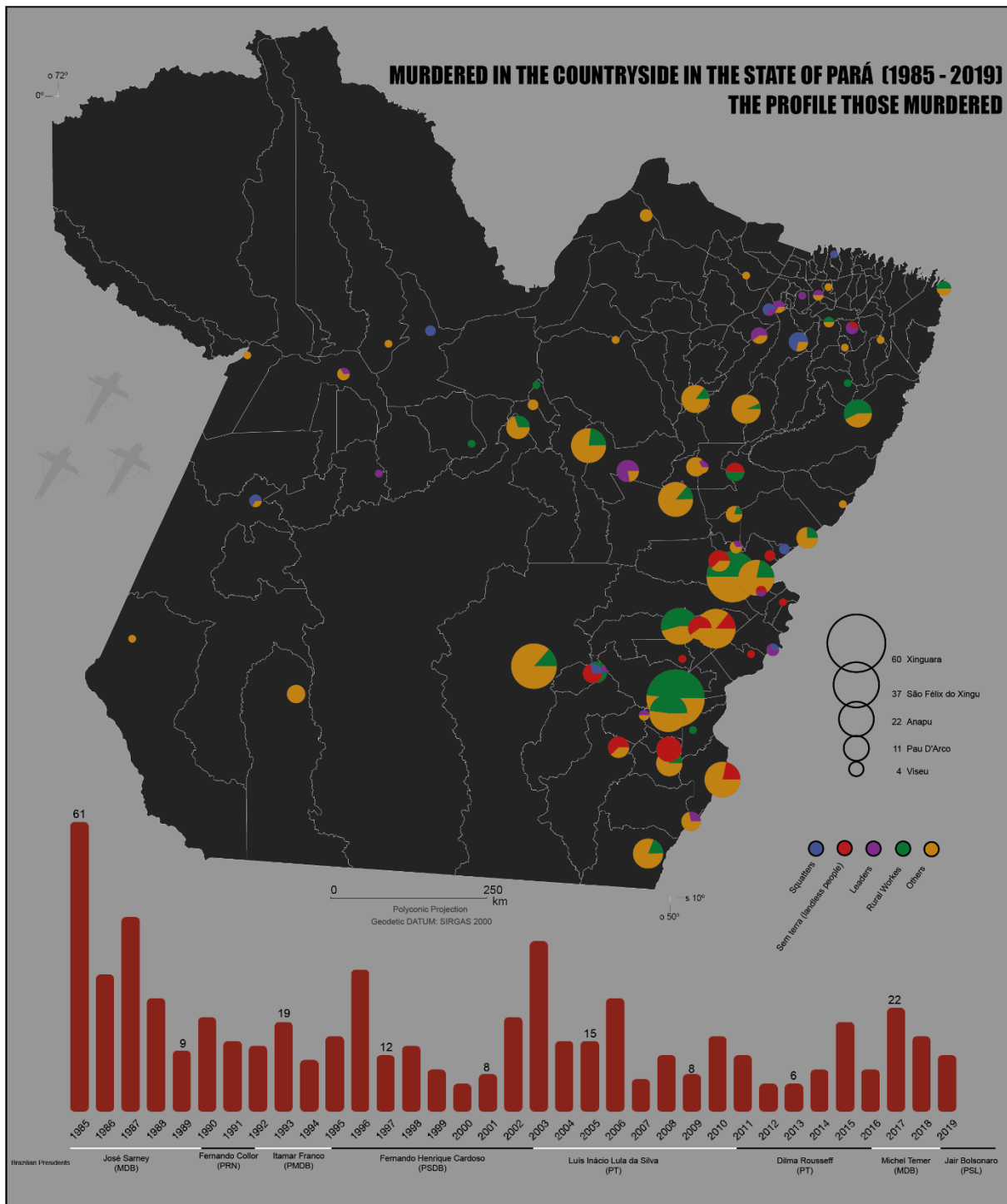
The profile of those murdered (maps 01 and 02) is quite diverse: lawyers, environmentalists, tenants, peasants, children, union leaders, community leaders, family members, public officials, *sem terras*, squatters, religious people, workers, etc. They are people that, in one way or another, have their trajectories locked up and motivated by the dispute over land. Although diverse, some profiles stand out more than others: squatters (20.55% - 373 cases); *Sem-terra* (15.48% - 281); Leadership (10.30% - 187); Rural Workers (8.81% - 160); Indigenous people (8.76% - 159); Settled from agrarian reform (5.78% - 105); and Farmers (5.45% - 99). Seven profiles show little more than 75% two assassinated in all the Brazilian territory, all strongly linked to the debate on the ground.

Map 1: Murdered in the countryside in the state of Pará (1985-2019).



Source: Pastoral Commission of the Land, 2022.

Map 2: Murdered in the countryside in the state of Pará (1985-2019) – The profile those murdered.



Source: Pastoral Commission of the Land, 2022.

In the Amazon, the profile is not so different, being composed of: Squatters (24.79%); Landless (15.97%); Leaders (10.31%); Indigenous people (7.57%); Rural Workers (7.57%); Agrarian Reform Settlers (6.32%). In the Eastern Amazon, squatters (27.52%), landless (15.05%), leaders (8.92%) and rural workers (8.06%) stand out, with only four profiles account for 59% of the total number of murders. This translates the specialization of

assassinations, the power that crosses certain groups in an unequal way. But despite the specialization, there is still a diverse group of subjects, such as trade unionists, politicians, riverside people, *quilombola*, religious, indigenous people, civil servants, union leaders, children, press, pastoral workers, environmentalists, unionists' wives, etc.

Finally, of the 565 murders in the state of Pará, we found that although there are more than thirty profiles, only four correspond to 63% of those murdered, namely: 143 squatters (25.30%), 109 Landless (19.29%), 59 rural workers (10.44%), and 47 settlers (8.31%). It can be highlighted that 38% of squatters, 44% of settlers and 58% of rural workers murdered in rural areas in Brazil are concentrated in Pará. Among the different profiles, we find union and union leaders, community and religious leaders, children, civil servants, prospectors and family members of union presidents. While these data translate to us, in a way, a political strategy of land appropriation based on the discretion over death. More than three decades of records on the Amazon frontier also show a lack of reaction from the public authorities, leading some social actors from the Amazon to be forced to soften the most immediate agendas of struggle in order to have to fight for their lives.

How to die struggling for territory in Pará

As important as the debate on the preservation of the Amazon rainforest, it is also essential to preserve people's lives. Especially since resistances are not made with martyr armies. It is not new that one of the instruments for creating large estates and agribusiness in the Amazon is violence. Seeking to compose some general elements that drew attention throughout the analysis of journalistic materials, a field diary and interviews with some leaders and members of social movements and traditional communities in Pará, I highlight:

- The occurrence of murders contradicts the discourse of “demographic void,” used as a factor for omitting deaths and legitimizing land appropriation. This narrative harms the preservation of life and favors the camouflage of violence and the actors involved. Furthermore, for the “camouflaged,” “backward,” and “deprived of knowledge,” it becomes even more difficult to fight and resist because it is a permanent demoralization in favor of the accumulation of land and other resources. This also stems from the fact that the training imposed on the Amazon has trivialized the understanding of violence. Some members who are more susceptible to murder are considered “unproductive” by a society where some other social members feel authorized to kill. The success of the aliens on the frontier is equivalent to the demoralization of the Amazonians. Unlike other activities, violence has not hindered the formation of private property and appropriation of resources. State behavior is not interested in condolences, only when they generate economic consequences;
- In many cases, physical extermination appears as the only way landowners, including loggers, land grabbers, etc., know to contain the advance of ideas of struggle and resistance. In this way, they kill leaders, militants, and sympathizers. These are members with counter-hegemonic ideas or minimally sympathetic to preservation.

They recognize they can not find virtues or a prosperous future in large estates and agribusiness. They criticize its reputation and defend the most profitable ways of life for the Amazon, as well as fighting so that the rejected people of the Amazon are not the Amazonian protagonists themselves. Unquestionable situations like these pose dilemmas to large estates, with some understanding of political assassination as the only option. Taking away the enemy's ability to fight has been essential in their repertoire of actions. This shows us that while the Amazonians resist, the large estates aim to enter and dominate the enemy's territory. When feeling threatened, like a wounded wolf, it attacks everyone to defend itself. Killing becomes a way for "owners" and despoilers to manifest power in bodies and at the border. They act to rule by death, even if the most profound truth reveals their threatened status, by acting immediately in defiance of the law. Most of the deaths testify that power relations were questioned and challenged. This shows us that large land; properties tend to kill and be brutal more for their weaknesses, inconsistencies, and limitations than for any other reason.

- The murders in the Amazon contribute to landowners continuing to place new goods on the global market, including land. In addition to the imposition of exchange value, the policy of death in the Amazon dialogues with markets, globalization, profit, the moral system, and the State. The despoiling action also occurs through the extermination of lives based on the lack of State action, for example, when dealing with crimes with investigations that are rarely concluded. Often the culprits themselves are hired, or their performance is non-existent, ending up on the local scale or in the massacres carried out by the Military Police as in Pau D'Arco and Eldorado dos Carajás. This means that the institutions that have the possibility to use the instruments of domination to promote the regulation of punishments have a controversial history. Instead of promoting the implementation of techniques for diagnosing violence, surveillance and punishment against the masterminds of illegal land appropriations, negligence and the inability to provide security and investigation are the ideal opportunities for punishing activists;

Two other reflections call our attention. Firstly, this violence composes a market where protagonists sell their labor and others buy. There is a market around violence for illegal accumulation and expropriation, with prices set according to the importance of the protagonist. They are gunmen or workers who trust their silence, guilt, and freedom in building land as a commodity. The second point is that brutal (economically valuable) violence becomes part of the commodity, an investment infiltrated directly and indirectly into the commodities produced through violent action. As negative marketing can be very harmful, there is a different treatment (such as indifference) concerning the analysis and circulation of violent information so as not to harm the image of agribusiness. Indifference, in the case of the Amazonians, is a facilitator; after all, the same expressions of violence tend to produce different impacts on national public opinion. The production of commodities dialogues, in a way, with global moral and ethical ballasts that reject violence. One of the remedies for the supposed derogatory and symbolic potential has been the strategic complementarity between conflict and tension:

- In the countryside, murder fuels tension and censorship, which are the key ingredients before, during, and after conflicts. Tension has demobilizing implications

(e.g., rape followed by death impacts women in a specific way), especially when death is a possibility. A part of the silence derives from the fear of researching the topic. It must also be considered that in a scenario of little public security, where police are involved in massacres, with a market of violence, clientelism, murdered priests, inconclusive investigations, etc., few dare to analyze such cases. The death of researchers and the tension around it jeopardizes the analysis of the phenomenon;

- The behavior of large estates is also expressed in a system of rewards. Threatening and attacking, but not killing, is a way of giving “generosity” and “pity.” They are perverse awards linked to violence, which makes power relations explicit. Not extending the violence to the rest of the family is another example, as well as death without torture, sexual violence, or a slightly mutilated body. The smallest threats to landowners can lead to less brutal forms of violence. They are like perverse rewards legislated, judged, and enforced by landowners. The agrarian dynamics produced by the plantation frontier demonstrate that control over the body is not exclusively mediated by the State, a feature expressed in the fact that oppressors impose a specific moral and ethical system, acting in certain regions with the polarization of violence, as well as typifying and deciding on the forms of punishment against bodies and land. The presence of the latifundium at its birth imposes a set of norms, discourses, actions, behaviors, symbols, codes, etc. In this regard, it is not uncommon to deal with the banality of the fact that “the violence in this region is not unexpected”;

On the border, death is a commodity. An interview with a landless woman threatened with death translated the pricing of life “- We are cautious. The price of the head of João Batista is estimated at 15 thousand (R\$). The others are cheaper.” Pricing for kills and famous gunslingers is nothing new. On the other hand, the State assumes the organizer of this cruel process in rural areas and has never committed itself to carrying out structural agrarian reform. In his last interview that he did while still alive, landless leadership Ulisses Manaças highlighted:

Because 96 was the year of the Eldorado dos Carajás massacre, it was a milestone, a watershed, because the social movement began to realize at the same time that the forces of state repression were collaborators in the process of violence. Since the State made self-criticism for the participation in that massacre, and at the same time specialized in how to deal with conflicts in the countryside. The State equipped itself and created specific troops to carry out the repossessions. The State reorganized itself to face conflicts in the countryside. This supposed for us that we would have a decrease in violence, but that is not what happened. There are several seasonal cycles of bursts of violence. We had a decrease in murders but not a decrease in conflicts. So, there is a big contradiction in that. Conflicts have multiplied, in addition to cases of torture, violent evictions, whether by the State or clandestine evictions organized by landowners, attacks, attempts to take workers' lives, and forced displacement of whole populations. Therefore, this generated several processes of violence. Psychological violence is caused by the eviction of entire families who have nowhere to go and are thrown on the street with a partial action by the judiciary, which guarantees the landowners repossession—favoring land grabbers on illegal lands without, at the same time, calling for a dialogue with the population disputing the land. At the same time, you have the connivance of the judiciary because of the process of the non-conviction of those who ordered and carried out the murders in the countryside. If you are going to analyze it,

we do not have convictions in the last cases. Very few have. Only six murderers went to trial.

Emblematic cases of impunity are repeated. The murder of Dorothy Stang, a missionary defending local communities whose murderer and mastermind are at large, and the Eldorado dos Carajás Massacre, in which the colonel and the major are responding in freedom and soldiers were acquitted, exemplify the problem of impunity in the border. In the absence of the State, land developers act as legislators and judges in breach of the law. Violence is no longer a monopoly of the State, which now shares this task with security companies and shooters:

The executors are shooters, security companies, and the police. Here are these three, shall we say, the operators of this system. Sent by whom? Who orders murder in the foreground? Those who order murder in the foreground are the large landowners, landowners, and land grabbers; more, so to speak, organized companies of the so-called Agribusiness, which already hire security companies. We had several conflicts. For example, we had a conflict on the Maria Bonita farm, which belongs to Banco Opportunity. Therefore, a financial system for a security company. We had conflicts at the Cedro farm, also owned by Daniel Dantas, who is the main shareholder at the bank of Opportunity and who is actually a big thief, who grabbed land in the region and bought several land properties with the gates closed. This significant capital also hires and hires in a specialized way. There was the case of a federal deputy, who is a federal deputy for the PTB, getting involved in the scheme of the *Sanguessuga* mafia, which was the ambulance mafia. Denounced for embezzling public money, he grabbed 7,000 hectares of land in Santa Luzia do Pará, here on the so-called Cambará farm. Your security company with armed jagunços murdered a rural worker and tortured a second worker named José Valmeristo Soares in 2014, and you have impunity there until today. The principal, the son of the pastor, who spent a short time in jail, was imprisoned for 40 days. You have engineering. Who are those who cooperate in this system? Firstly, those operating in the system are the shooters hired by the so-called farmers. Where does the bulk of the gunfire in the state of Pará come from? It comes from the state of Maranhão. Most of the shooters, classic shooters that we met in the struggle for land here, like the so-called Sebastião da Terezona, the so-called Zé Mucura who worked in the Tucuruí Region. Most of these gunmen came from the state of Maranhão because of the state's misery and because of this open border here in the State of Pará. They are hired in the region, because the frontier is open, then they flee to the same region, that is, these shooters work in different regions, but they even have scales, for example, in the prices of heads of leaders, a priest costs a certain amount, a lawyer defending the human rights costs a certain amount, leaders of landless rural workers cost a certain amount, that is, there is even a price list in relation to this.

Death considered as business and investment reveals itself in even more perverse faces when we verify the existence of collective interests in financing and planning them, these processes are called consortia of death:¹

¹ Currently, social movements have highlighted the existence of militias in the countryside linked to landowners, land grabbers, loggers and prospectors.

If you take all the cases of murders here in the countryside, for example, you have the case of Sister Dorothy from 2005, in which there had been previously scheduled meetings with farmers in the region who collaborated, sponsored, and hid the perpetrators of the murders on their properties. In the case of the Eldorado dos Carajás massacre, in the Rural Producers Union of Parauapebas, you had a meeting beforehand saying how they would sponsor and finance the police themselves to act. In this case, the police of Parauapebas and Marabá promoted the massacre of the Eldorado dos Carajás massacre. So, it was once a murder, a previously articulated slaughter.

In addition, there is particular growth in the association between security companies and Agribusiness, which leaders have understood as the professionalization of pistoling. However, these strategies have intensified the inequality of forces in the territorial dispute since the companies have weapons:

So, it is widespread nowadays for the performance of security companies, that we say is the professionalization of the old pistol. These security companies operate on these more modern farms. The so-called agribusiness sector acts even in an official way. Others use a large-caliber weapon that is not the responsibility of these security companies, such as the repeating twelve pistols that are also for the exclusive use of the police and the armed forces, that is, long-range weapons that are not the responsibility of the security companies safety. Security companies can only work with a 38-caliber revolver. These companies work with a cartridge belt, and a repeating gun, in short. They operate officially and underground which are contracted companies of the so-called agribusiness.

This system kills leaders created over years of activity, and it is a selective process with mobility that accompanies the border, annihilating resistance. In another excerpt from the interview with a threatened woman, she reports the peaceful coexistence inside the camp and highlights the fear of moving “- *I am one of the **fourteen threatened people** who live in the camp. But I'm not afraid. Inside the camp I feel safe. But when I have to go to the villages. Yeah, I'm scared.*”

Professionalization and brutality in the Amazon

The advance of capitalism in the Amazon has made access to land and other resources a matter of violence involving murders, police, shooters, companies, etc. Violence with refinements of cruelty shows that certain social actors do not have the right to choose. It is the moment when cruelty and brutality meet in the illegal appropriation of land, and it is the subjugation of social actors to interrupt political trajectories.

The refinement of cruelty is evidence of how the large estates or even the State attribute meanings and political content to the murders to corroborate an illegal system. The same hands that defend and work more sustainably are tied, broken, and prevented from fighting and working. These are evidence that the attack on the body drives some

demobilizing force achieved through physical, mental violence, censorship, coercion, and silence², even involving State institutions.

Regarding the Pau D'Arco Massacre, which took place in 2017 in Pará, the interviewee highlights not only a severe situation of change in the scenario³, but also the annihilation promoted by the military police against the landless:

A complete manipulation and alteration of the conflict scenario. So, they completely removed the bodies from the region, prevented an autopsy in the region itself, a survey in the region itself. They completely removed all the bullet casings. So that completely changed the scene of the slaughter. But, in a way, social movements claim that there was widespread killing. There are accusations that they were financed by the farmers in the region to commit this type of action, but only a more, shall we say, delicate investigation will be able to determine this. But in the eyes of the social movements, it was a *cachina*, a massacre, previously deliberated by the military police, by the forces of State repression. There is under no circumstances the possibility of conflict. In the conflict you put conflicting people on an equal footing, which did not happen under any circumstances. [...]

According to survivors' accounts, the police arrived shooting, humiliating and beating the workers who were unable to escape. Several managed to flee, others were captured and massacred due to the police operation. Literally slaughtered. This was the report of those who managed to escape and still saw the police officers smiling, beating, humiliating the workers and hearing several shots. These workers made this statement and the press even had access to this statement of those who reported this fact.⁴

In the words of the interviewee, “they are land grabbers who even seek to consolidate the most primitive process of land tenure brutally, they are the ones who hire pistoling,” and “large companies are migrating to a more modernized process of the so-called “pistol.” A process that reflects the coexistence of old practices associated with modernization and permanent judicialization. This complex and diverse scenario presents a set of problematic aspects and facts, due to its perverse and brutal logic that appears daily to counter-hegemonic social actors:

- Displacements are dangerous for leaders and other threatened social actors. Small roads in the middle of the forests are places of recurrent ambushes and murders. This denotes that the deaths are planned with time and place;
- Although violence is part of a secular power project in the Amazon, the invisibility of deaths and mourning shows a selective emotion over bodies. The news, for example, varies between local and national diffusion according to the body and its representation. The murder of the North American religious Dorothy Stang represented the selective commotion and the scales of representation. However, it is an exception since, in most cases, the information refers to the Amazonians and remains on the local scale of circulation. The scales and “eyes” of the world place

² Complaints about mental health are constant among leaders.

³ A recurrence of the alteration and constitution of scenarios was noted in another interview: “He was **caught** on the road near the camp and **taken** to another place to be murdered”.

⁴ In 2021 a surviving witness to the massacre was murdered.

global society, to a certain extent, in a system of checks and balances in the forms of devastation;

- The murders prove the existence of a large organization in the death industry: shooters, companies, and retired police or police officers. In some cases, there is even a specific articulation and defense of interests represented by deputies and other politicians. Despite the Pau D'arco massacre, when ten peasants were murdered by police in an illegally owned area, having been harshly criticized by the national media, politicians such as Federal Deputy Eder Mauro (Delegate) and Councilor Sergeant Silvano, together with Colonel Barata and Sergeant Haelton, a demonstration called "march in favor of the police who participated in the operation at *Fazenda Santa Lúcia*, in *Pau D'Arco*" and with the following invitation "put on your white shirt and let's support the police." This tells us not only that violence is not carried out without support or by the State itself, but that these are organized actions with a disguised discourse;
- While, on the one hand, there are cases in which there is no intention to kill indiscriminately, on the other hand, assassins detach themselves from specialization to generate shock and tension due to the quantity. The quantity also feeds the understanding of the brutality of the fight for land: That is, quantity and quality are rationalized and fulfill different functions;
- Between 1997-2018, for example, there were 37 mass murders (101 dead). This represented 35% of the dead in Pará and demonstrates that collective murders on the border are common. It is essential to recognize that murders can also be articulated over a given period. The Pau D'Arco Massacre, for example, was compounded by a mass murder but later led to other deaths. This shows us that the murders are more widespread over time as a mechanism to hide their more perverse face and real dimension. In this way, simultaneous mass killings can be combined with asynchronous killings;
- Violence marks and creates places, expressing toponymy of violence. In addition to places of struggle and memory against oblivion, such as the "S Curve"⁵, monument, properties are gradually internalizing and constituting themselves as places of terror and violence, as we can see when systematizing the CPT's own data: the Gleba Bacajá/Fazenda Santa Rita, in the municipality of Anapú, where there were 14 murders; Fazenda Santa Lúcia, in Pau D'Arco, with 12 murders; Fazenda São Sebastião, in São Félix do Xingu, with 8 murders; Fazenda Estiva, in Conceição do Araguaia, and Gleba Capivara, in Novo Repartimento, both with 6 murders;
- The promoters of illegal appropriation act with a refinement of cruelty, seeking to compose a picture of humiliation and demoralization so that everyone can understand the "rules of the game." Mutilation or barbaric acts involve a certain amount of exhibitionism, a relevant ingredient to keep opponents scared, afraid, and under tension. Cultivating rumors and survivors to tell the stories play a role in this horror drama. But the murder of priests, nuns, government officials, children, and family members of leaders also highlights the unscrupulous power struggle. In other cases, the "solution" of agrarian capitalism cuts the throat, rapes, burns, and leaves the body on the road. Mutilation, torture, exhibitionism, prolonged action, and indifference show that the intention is not only to kill, but to subjugate the other and his ideas. There is an agenda dedicated to intimidating and exerting power over actions, bodies, and thoughts. The cases of leaders killed with shots to the head symbolically evidence of the murder of insubordinate ideas, of the critical mind, of the head who spoke and organized the resistance. In some cases, there are several shots, even knowing that only one was enough, it is the logic of defending and wounding to ensure their interests. The elimination of the body is a way of accessing the land;
- To dominate, disguise, extinguish or control speech. Although capitalist relations are not fully capable of ensuring extensive control over the border, it is not uncommon in

⁵ Place where the Eldorado dos Carajás Massacre took place.

the accounts to hear about vocabulary and topics that are not safe to talk about, that is, where, how, and when to talk is relevant. Violence in the countryside is not restricted to work or public spaces but exerts control within the daily lives of counter-hegemonic actors, even victimizing family members. Symbols, people, ideas, and spaces that are continually questioned, despised, silenced, and overthrown to express power.

Final Remarks

Although there are well-intentioned global discourses, the materialization of the plantationcane on the Amazonian agricultural frontier has been permeated by violence and its particular forms. Unable to hide its more profound disinterest in life, the capitalist wave of land grabbing recognizes the existence of activists and insubordinate organizations as obstacles to “development.” In this process, the State acts both as an organizer, killing and repressing, and as an institution with little commitment to controlling and suppressing the phenomenon, leaving other social actors to kill.

Killing for particular and local causes or to repress broader resistance is an investment in access to land. In some cases, these murders testify to an even more perverse face of situated necropolitics, involving investments by groups of farmers: consortia of death.

The illegal process of appropriation and accumulation of lands in the Eastern Amazon points to questions that reveal particular conditions. Therefore, the study of the phenomenon in dialogue with the context of the frontier and necropolitics, situated and motivated by agrarian issues, is relevant to understanding these specific conditions, which make up the contemporary agenda of spoliation in the plantationcane.

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