Conservation, Territory, and Knowledge in Western Pará

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Abstract

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This thesis evaluates two case studies from western Pará state in the Brazilian Amazon: *ribeirinhos* living on the border of Saracá-Taquera National Forest and the Maró indigenous group fighting for demarcation of their territory on the Arapiuns River. Both cases consider the presence of Conservation in the region including the Brazilian state and international NGOs. Local communities push back against conservation interventions, contesting Conservation's ability to ensure their ancestral territories as well as respect traditional knowledges. The *ribeirinhos* and Maró articulate alternative worlds to both conservation and development through the relationality they experience with the forest as Place-based peoples.

I. Introduction

Within the first decade of the 21st century Brazil entered a new era of national development, including considerable progress on environmental issues, mostly notably in *Amazônia Legal* (the administrative designation of the Amazon region). By 2009 the end of deforestation in the Amazon appeared within reach. From July 2005 to July 2009 deforestation fell dramatically: To 35% of historical levels (Nepstad et al., 2009). Yet less than a decade later, reputed international environmental news source Mongabay reported escalating levels of violence and deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon (Branford, 2017). Murders related to land conflicts increased dramatically over the previous year fueled by the cycle of illegal land-grabbing followed by deforestation and cattle ranching (Girardi, 2020). Local currents of dispossession and deforestation gathered energy from instability tied to the political crises of Petrobras corruption, dubious impeachment of Dilma Rouseff, and violent rhetoric of current President Jair Bolsonaro. The conflagration of 2019's devastating fire season both symbolically and materially emphasized the tenuous future for the Amazon and its peoples, impacting local lives and gaining remarkable international media attention. In 2020, with the arrival of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19 in the Brazilian Amazon, indigenous Brazilians face a new yet familiar biological threat to their elders and communities, transmitted by settlers such as wildcat gold miners (*garimpeiros*) ("Brasil sofre," 2020). Whether on the ground or viewing photos of the socio-environmental turmoil from afar, environmental activists, NGOs, and academic researchers including myself increasingly face feelings of desperation.

How will Conservation respond to this assemblage of threats, old and new, to the integrity of the Amazon rainforest? The rainforest, afterall, became increasingly symbolic and central to international Conservation's biodiversity preservation strategy since the 1980's, mixing with both human rights and climate change discourse. Along with the growth of neoliberal government models, new market-based, Conservation initiatives such the Kyoto Protocol's carbon offset regime, including Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD), approached optimistic euphoria. While Conservation previously thrived on the protected area model, paying for forest preservation suddenly appeared critical for accomplishing both conservation and development in the Brazilian Amazon. Yet, in light of the complexity of problems facing the Amazon Basin, positivist Conservation as Development (CAD) discourse increasingly feels inadequate given both the scale and diffusion of conflicts. Additionally, the term "development" itself remains attached to military dictatorship plans for the Amazon, enlivened today as an advancing soy monoculture frontier and hydropower schemes such as the Belo Monte dam. Even fundamental conservation measures suffer: Government proposals to slash protected area size along with violence towards workers of Brazil's environmental protection agency IBAMA spread the feeling of environmental policy retreat. Indigenous areas remain a barrier against critical forest loss; aerial maps demonstrate the very real boundaries of these "forest islands" within seas of industrial extraction; *Terra Indídgena* (TI) territories embody continuing resistance through the lives of leaders and their communities standing up to government, industry, and in some cases even international conservation NGOs. Extractive Reserves for traditional, small scale use of

forest resources and related land use designations similarly provide a buffer against violent forms of transforming forest space.

The current trend of increasing deforestation rates combined with violent land conflict, outright verbal attacks on environmentalism from the Bolsonaro government, and racialized discourses on development call for new approaches to conservation in the region. Any equitable solution must be linked to the ongoing survival and resilience of populations dependent on the ecological integrity of forest resources including indigenous groups, quilombos, and small-scale extractivists (e.g. *ribeirinhos*) invested in the environmental health of their territories and the rainforest at large (Branford & Torres, 2017). International Conservation presents itself as a solution to land conflicts in the Amazon and other biodiversity hotspots, through the operations of NGOs and incorporation of policies within national governments such as National Forests and "sustainability" (e.g. UN Sustainable Development Goals). Despite considerable financial resources and political clout, conservation initiatives and interventions encounter ongoing resistance on the ground: In conversations between local groups, government, and international NGOs.

Objections to international conservation interventions such as protected areas, sustainability discourse, international NGOs, and carbon offsets (e.g. REDD) center on questions of territorial sovereignty, knowledge, distrust, and refusal. The western region in the Brazilian Amazon state of Pará provides a paradigmatic case of Conservation's failure to offer neither conservation nor development as desired by local communities. My ethnographic findings from two cases, one at the Saracá-Taquera National Forest and the other in the Lower Tapajós Basin emphasize divergent perspectives leading to rejection of interventions offered by approaches to conservation developed in the global North. Healthy critique and local perspectives may offer a path to the improvement of future conservation endeavors linking Amazon forest communities, the Brazilian state, and international NGOs.

> Given International Conservation's self-purported advocacy for local populations, we would expect the impact of conservation programs to strengthen the position of indigenous and traditional Brazilians living in western Pará with respect to territorial rights and autonomy, but instead we see the rejection of conservation interventions by indigenous and traditional peoples alongside the continuing proliferation of conflicts between community claims to land and environmental authorities such as the Brazilian state and International Conservation. Why?

I begin my discussion of the above quandary with attention to my theoretical basis for defining and understanding the terminology and concepts of my research. I emphasize the conversational nature of my literature review as I establish dialogue between enlightened sources on conservation, development, territory, indigenous rights, and environmental justice. Next, I move to methodology, advocating for a decolonial approach. The project of decolonization remains a continuing process of critical

self-reflection and sensitivity to voices often excluded from academic discourse, and I believe there are concrete methodological tools available that emphasize conversation rather than information extraction within field work. I reflexively analyzed my methodology as my fieldwork progressed, emphasizing the research community's desires and goals.

My first case study is that of the Saracá Taquera National Forest and nearby *ribeirinho* communities. Through considering the deployment of a protected area (the national forest) as well as accompanying sustainability discourse, I contrast local understandings of territory and resources. In this region, International Conservation acts through the Brazilian government's adoption of conservation measures, demonstrating the penetration of the global North's environmental policies. I offer alternative conceptions of knowledge and development such as *bem viver* as well as observations on relationality between these *ribeirinho* communities and their traditional home in the forest.

As I transition to my second case study, I offer a brief consideration of the forms taken by the larger Paraenese landscape, a history of development pathways favored by Brazilian and international influences. Here I emphasize the coloniality that continues to dispossess communities and devastate ecosystems in the name of the modernity currently imagined as agribusiness and resource extraction infrastructure. A bird's eye view of Pará offers a historical tragedy of transformation marching for east to west and south to north. Western Pará is the newest frontier.

Next, my case study of the Lower Tapajós casts the Maró as central figures within the larger context of international conservation interventions in Western Pará, namely the presence of BINGOS (big international conservation NGOs) and carbon offsets. I propose the following question: Despite the intersectionality of biodiversity and indigenous territory on Maró lands, why do the Maró reject international conservation-as-development efforts while facing a proliferation of conflicts between their claims to land and Brazilian society? Through this case study I demonstrate critical differences in worldviews as applied to territory and conservation in the region while considering the various stakeholders' conflict over the questions of conservation policy and land use. The stakes could not be higher for the Maró who face the precarious situation of a territorial demarcation process hanging in limbo between the official recommendation from FUNAI and a signature from the executive branch of the Federal Brazilian government.

Following my case study findings, I offer personal reflections on a role for Conservation, hope for pluriversal Amazon futures, and the presence of international researchers such as myself.
I recognize the tenuous balance existing between local voices and international support within the Amazon Basin. The scale of challenges facing the Brazilian Amazon necessitate a response of equal formidability and greater sensitivity, establishing new alliances, strengthening networks, and prioritizing decolonization over Conservation-as-usual.

I recognize the limitations of written communication as a medium for an environment as potent in sound, sight, and sensation as the Amazon Basin. As such, I rely heavily on ethnographic narrative, interview quotes, and powerful moments communicated by photography. My choice of words may offer some insight into the timbre of sounds and humid textures ever-present as I conducted field work. I hope the reader feels both the gravity and joy of the journey. The more-than-human power of spaces like the Amazon functions as an auspicious advocate for those willing to step forward in defense of Place.

II. Situating people in Place

The following review of literature and knowledge narratives links perspectives on natural resource conservation with cultural studies including historical framing of people, places, and politics within the Brazilian Amazon. Beginning with sociocultural anthropology's perspective on Nature versus Culture, I next explore insights from the Ontological Turn followed by narrowing my scope to Brazilian political ecology before intersecting the regional history with the arrival of international interventions from Conservation. Finally, I include essential observations from Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Indigenous Studies to add a decolonial frame to my discussion of environmentalism in the Amazon.

Following the military dictatorship of 1964-1985, Brazil's return to democracy arrived with a new Constitution in 1988. Diverging sharply from the military government's strong-armed policy of large-scale industrial development in the Amazon, the 1988 Constitution enunciated the rights of both indigenous and "traditional" Brazilians (*ribeirinhos, beiradeiros,* etc) to historical land, culture, and livelihood. However, a crucial caveat to restoration remained: demonstration of cultural integrity and a sustained relationship to territory. The Executive Branch called upon Brazilian anthropologists at FUNAI (Brazil's federal indigenous agency) to visit indigenous and traditional communities and report on the state of these communities' cultural identity prior to granting territorial demarcation. This approach held implications for Brazil's conservation strategy as indigenous territories became associated with de facto environmental protection through absence of development.. In many ways these demands represented a familiar role for professional anthropologists, completing conventional ethnographic studies of culture. Needless to say, evaluation of culture as the task of anthropologists has been frequently criticized. Critiques of the deployment of culture as path to territorial demarcation identify the Subject-Object dichotomy between the observing anthropologist and the observed "native" as well as the universalization of the concept of culture as an object which can be either affirmed or denied via a proper epistemologically-Western evaluation.

Valorizing culture

Despite critiques challenging objective consideration of culture (Clifford, 1988), Brazilian anthropologists push back against the postmodern turn in anthropology which led to frequent

dismantling of the notion of culture as a universal discourse which can be structurally analyzed (Carneiro Da Cunha et al., 2017). As an object for mediation between modern and traditional/indigenous Brazil, universal valuing of culture as promoted by both the 1988 Brazilian constitution and United Nations became an instrument for indigenous advocacy and expanded to include "forest peoples" through the work of Chico Mendes ("forest peoples" may include indigenous, Afro-Brazilian, and mixed-ancestry communities demonstrating ancestral ties to a particular geography and continuing reliance on small-scale use of forest resources). While the development of state categories linking culture and territory created possibilities for alliances between "forest peoples" and activists including those researching from outside the Amazon Basin, these categories also ensured a new politics tied to identity. Disputes over identity, and which communities qualify as authentic, entails the objectification of culture through domestic and international rubrics. Communities and struggles legible to international campaigns benefited from the legibility of cosmopolitan discourses on biodiversity and survival of indigenous cultures. Social movements for culture and environment in the Amazon combined during the past decades through the work of international environmental nonprofits exemplified by the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, Kyoto Protocol, and anti-hydropower campaigns surrounding the Xingu and Tapajós Basins.

Efforts to put culture in conversation with Nature, or the non-human environment, evolved substantially with implications for Conservation philosophy. Culture as exemplified within socio-anthropological theory remains a tortured term. Culture was not a concept created by the indigenous or traditional peoples of Brazil and functions only as a word or a symbol given meaning by the context of the discourse surrounding it. However, both indigenous and traditional communities must interact with State-sponsored categories (especially when linked to rights and territory), and play a role in the continuing evolution of what "qualifies" as indigenous or traditional culture. Historically, anthropology's pursuit of laying bare and understanding diverse cultures from a Western perspective remains consistent and often destructive. The heritage of colonial tabulating of culture goes back to figures such as LH Morgan and James Mooney during the 19th century leading to the partial emergence of the concept of culture through the work of Franz Boas. Culture initially became a less abhorrent substitute for talking about the Other and describing differences without resorting to pure racism as suggested by George Stocking (1966). Renowned ethnographer Bronislaw Malinowski approached culture as a system intimately attached to function (1922, 1935). For Malinowski, the role of the anthropologist is to make sense of an otherwise exotic universe through Western logic and order. Western anthropologists emphasized the importance of science, rationality, and often the ability to identify universal structures across the societies of the world. Claude Levi-Strauss presented a breakthrough within anthropology and particularly in the Brazilian context given his extensive field research with Brazilian indigenous groups. *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) and *The Savage Mind* (1962) emerge as fundamental texts foreshadowing current conversations within Brazilian political society around cultural purity and valorization of indigeneity. On one hand, Levi-Strauss advocated for the sophistication of indigenous ways-of-being, demonstrating the benefits of a multicultural approach to

universal questions exemplified by science. However, Levi-Strauss simultaneously presented indigenous cultures as vulnerable, fading, and Other thereby necessitating a "modern" response from the Brazilian state and international community. Conservation similarly emphasizes the tenuous, exotic biodiversity of threatened tropical forests. For Brazilian society, indigenous culture became an object of curiosity, reverence, and paternalism. Yet given the material benefits of rights to land and resources, Western anthropology simultaneously tasks itself with the role of verifying the purity of indigenous cultural claims. Fredrik Barth began the shift towards indigenous self-determination of cultural community membership beginning with *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* in 1969. Jonathan Warren (2001) describes Barth's impact:

> Ethnic identities and communities—including Indianness—are no longer understood to be grounded in prefigured, objective cultural distinctions. It is instead recognized that if actors have ethnic identities and envision ethnic divisions, then ethnic groups can be maintained despite culture change and in the absence of "real" cultural differences. (p. 217)

The impact of Barth's breakthrough in anthropological theory connects with the 1988 Brazilian Constitution through the recognition indigenous self-determination of culture and territory. In modern Brazil culture as articulated by indigenous groups retains value as an effective intermediary in exchanges between the modern Brazilian nation-state and indigenous or traditional populations across the country. Bernard Cohn (1988) writes of a similar use of culture while speaking of Western-educated South Asians in a particular moment in the twentieth century, "They in some sense have made it into a 'thing'; they can stand back and look at themselves, their ideas, their symbols and culture and see it as an entity" (229).

In reading Eduardo Kohn's *How Forests Think* (2013), I was struck by the similarities between his riddle of the Sphinx example and reconsidering the role of constructed objects such as culture. Kohn recounts the riddle the Sphinx posed to Oedipus regarding a creature which goes by four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening (5). He uses the riddle as an illustration: In the final sequence of life, a walking stick functions as the third leg and this object enables mediation of life in old age. For the elder in question nearing the end of their life, an object is necessary for traversing a world in which a power hierarchy, in some ways based on physical resources and in other ways socially-chosen, has left this elder disadvantaged. The cane is a literal object though also a tool. In discussing culture, anthropologists undertake the creation of the object of culture, analysis of the resulting artifact, and sometimes self-inflicted calls for its destruction. An argument against the conceptual articulation of culture as an object must account for the dangers (as emphasized in Cohn's writing) as well as the opportunities for representation facilitated by this prospective tool of mediation. In "Anthropology in the face of Brazil's political crisis" (2017), an essay included in ""Indigenous

peoples boxed in by Brazil's political crisis," Carlos Fausto recounts a conversation with Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, one of Brazil's premier anthropologists and advocates for indigenous rights:

> Some fifteen years ago, in a casual conversation with Manuela Carneiro da Cunha about anthropological expertise on indigenous lands and identity in the 1980s, I asked her why Brazilian anthropologists, especially those working with "traditional peoples," had never fully embraced postmodernist rhetoric. She looked at me with a slight smile and said, "We just couldn't." ... At the time, we also could not easily discard the holistic notion of culture in favor of a more dynamic and less totalizing concept. After all, Article 231 recognized for the first time the right of indigenous peoples to their own "social organizations, mores, languages, beliefs and traditions," an enumeration of abstract entities that was synthesized in a simple word: "culture" – a word that many indigenous people rapidly incorporated into their own discourse, both internally and externally. (413-414)

Like a walking stick, culture as a concept acts in both dangerous and helpful ways. Lila Abu-Lughod (1986) brilliantly articulates the critique of culture and the threat of objectifying and generalizing peoples as a result of a discourse on culture. Similarly, noticing a person with a walking stick might lead to an objectification and stereotyping of the individual: senile, helpless, old timer. Yet the walking stick also aids the person's navigation of a landscape produced by societies favoring particular forms of mobility and activity. The Brazilian project of modernity within the Amazon Basin is committed to a production and manipulation of space which intentionally and unintentionally renders indigenous societies invisible and perishable. However, indigenous populations have recognized that Brazilian law and discourse affirms the existence of indigenous culture. This official affirmation of existence is a tremendous advancement in the context of historical (and often still prevailing) attitudes in Brazil. For the indigenous and traditional groups in Brazil, affirming culture is affirming existence and opens a negotiation between "forest peoples" and "modern" Brazilians otherwise unavailable between two divergent worldviews. Culture as a tool also invites international activists and NGOs to the table.

Progressive concepts of cultural representation recently lead to an expanded role in cultural self-determination by indigenous populations (Warren, 2001). This is the case for some indigenous Amazonians such as the Maró in the Tapajós Basin who previously did not identify as culturally indigenous (previously the Maró considered themselves traditional extractivists, *ribeirinhos*). Despite the utility and purported recognition of "culture" found in the 1988 constitution, indigenous Brazilians suffer no illusions regarding their struggle with the Brazilian national project. While the 1988 constitution acknowledges traditional rights and culture, its peaceful transfer of power from military dictatorship to democracy preserved the modernizing desires of the military planners through the continuing development of Amazonia. In practice, the Brazilian government frequently ignores indigenous rights, complicates access to promised services, and deepens vulnerability to exploitive

extraction. Power is concentrated within industrialized cities and extractive industries; the Maró and other "forest peoples" must engage with this hierarchy, even when their response is refusal (Simpson, 2007). Equivocations inherent in representing indigeneity and territory under the universally agreed-upon term "culture" with all its racialized connotations carry dissonance as emphasized by the tremendous range of alterity identified within anthropology's recent "ontological turn".

Multiple ontologies

Scholars such as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Bruno Latour, Eduardo Kohn, and Marisol de la Cadena further transformed anthropology's functionality on behalf of indigenous groups through theoretical considerations within the ontological turn in socio-anthropological theory. Theorists of multiple ontologies further expand politics for indigenous recognition and knowledge production as articulated by indigenous groups themselves. As a Brazilian, Castro seeks to limit the role of anthropologists to theoretical affirmations of indigenous subjectivities while allowing indigenous movements to self-define the subjectivities themselves including rights to land, natural resources, and development. Expanding beyond anthropology's canonical writings mentioned earlier, Castro's theorization of Amazonian Perspectivism contrasts with Western views of culture. Western anthropologists theorize a diversity of cultures yet one embodied human experience (Nature) leading to multiple approaches to universal problems. Conversely Amazonian Perspectivism based on Castro's extensive ethnographic work across the Basin reveals an inverted anthropological theory as well as an expanded world of subjects. Anthropological subjects include tribes, jaguars, and mountains which all share one culture yet distinct embodied experiences. Elaboration of this profoundly theoretical work provokes interventions within Brazilian discourses of modernization in the Amazon as well as space for a radical form of alterity, liberating articulation of indigenous cultural concepts from the gaze of the Brazilian state. Such departures from universal definitions of culture result in a distinctly Amazonian form of relations with land and nature as well as human cultures, potentially provoking collisions with state processes and International Conservation. The ontological term dramatically dismantles the divide between Nature and culture, prompting consideration of ecological assemblages and relations (Latour, 2014).

Critiques of the ontological turn point to its boldest apologists and exotification of cultural difference (Graeber, 2015). Theorists even push ontological considerations to the point of multiple realities and the impossibility of agreed-upon meanings between groups with differing ontologies (Bessire & Bond, 2014). Here decolonization theory offers an important intervention in the ontological turn: application of the ontological turn via methodology rather than producing statements on reality (Holbraad & Pedersen 2017). A shift towards a decolonizing methodology via the ontological turn acknowledges the importance of departing from academia's historical role as arbiter of what counts as knowledge (Tallbear, 2011). Indigenous actors, histories, and worldviews instinctively create theory rather than awaiting validation through Western academic gatekeepers.

Conversations progressing from critical development theory likewise consider both ontology and epistemology through interrogating the presence of both human and more-than-human actors as well as whose knowledge counts within development and conservation. The two (development and conservation) are often treated as one-in-the-same within the interdisciplinary space of Political Ecology. Political Ecology deconstructs assumptions that have driven state decisions regarding the interface between economics, conservation, and geographic space to reveal an entrenched modern Western ontology that reflects a universalizing colonial rhetoric of development, assimilation, and multiculturalism. The applied worldview of international conservation and development authorities fails to privilege the reality of indigenous and traditional peoples living for generations in the geographies targeted by state power and international development. Separated from its claim to universal truth and objective reality (through a reified ontology), previously rational frameworks deconstruct and we see how foundational assumptions within international conservation occlude an intrinsic complexity of local conservation approaches markedly different from those that inform the state's conservation decision-making process.

Brazilian political ecology

Political Ecology represents a recent development within academic discourses on the environment. Paul Robbins defines political ecology through contrasting "apolitical ecology";

> This as the difference between identifying broader systems rather than blaming proximate and local forces; between viewing ecological systems as power-laden rather than politically inert; and between taking an explicitly normative approach than that one that claims the objectivity of disinterest. (2012, 13)

Although some political ecologists stress particular academic fields such as political economy or environmental anthropology, most recognize the role of assemblages resulting from power relationships in environmental outcomes (Osborne, 2017). Within the Brazilian genre, contemporary political ecology emerges from the colonial context founded in a racialized political economy of primitive accumulation exemplified by "crony" extractive industries[1]. These industries may operate through official channels as partners of the state or hidden as organized crime. Regardless, their power connects to colonial structures of land ownership and seizure of natural resources through logics of violence and occupation (Schulz, 2017). John Berger's theorization of a unilateral "gaze" from Subject to Object when applied to this extractive supremacy provides a valuable tool for framing the objectification of both nature and labor through the now neocolonial lens (1972). Renowned Brazilian historians Alida Metcalf (2005) and Hal Langfur (2002) emphasize the original extractive mentality of Portuguese colonization and the Brazilian frontier in their work on the transience of Portuguese

[1] In *Friction* (2005) Anna Tsing identifies the collaborations between private sector and government in Indonesia to exploit resources and enrich state and private ventures as a form of crony development linked to environmental destruction laced with nationalist rhetoric at the expense of traditional communities

involvement in areas deemed as geographic wildlands or empty space. *Terra incognita* figured prominently in colonial Brazilian political ecology. Often this *terra incognita* functions as a pressure relief valve for the Brazilian state to transfer population from the drought-stricken Northeast or European colonists from the South to Amazonia. Other expansionists—whether government, private, or corporate continue to allude to *terra incognita* to render indigenous geographies vacant and open to exploitation, colonization, and civilization. Unfortunately, *terra incognita* also facilitates discourses on Amazonian wilderness favored by international conservation NGOs.

Brazilian environmental decision-making favors elite interests. Brazil notoriously possesses one of the most unequal land distribution disparities in the world with 1.6 percent of landowners controlling 47 percent of agricultural lands (Carter, 2010). Eduardo Galeano's classic text on Latin American political economy *Open Veins of Latin American* (1971) demonstrates the impact of international transfers of resources via Latin American elites and associated control over land. Criticism of Galeano's work centers on his unflinching opposition to capitalist political economy as he dismisses all market-based development solutions (which would include many conservation interventions). Nancy Postero edits a more pragmatic overview of emerging Latin American political economy which presents a range of market-based interventions and resistance (2013). As I am considering Conservation-As-Development (CAD) interventions which feature strong ties to political economy (including Payment-for Environmental Services (PES) in the form of carbon credits), I wish to emphasize the role which the international market and Brazilian elites as gatekeepers play in Amazonian political economy.

At the behest of local elites, political economy remains internationally-oriented in the Amazon and both the indigenous group with whom I performed my case study, the Maró, as well as the *ribeirinhos* at Lago Sapucuá exist within this paradigm, purchasing goods and essential fuel at the river port cities of Santarém and Oriximiná. Consistent with the continuing dominance of international commodity interests in Brazil is a correlated lack of investment in the labor force/general population (Rogers, 2010; Warren, 2016). Traditional Amazonians continue to face a paucity of involvement in government plans or return on development promises such as in the case of Amazonian hydropower (Hess, 2016). Lack of procedural influence through local representation in decision-making processes perpetuates past patterns and fosters an atmosphere of distrust for both state and international authorities (Caplow & Suiseeya, 2013). The tremendous flow of commodities beyond Brazilian borders becomes identified with state-sanctioned international profiteering rather than inclusive economic development. This distrust finds fuel in the historical internationalization of the Amazon.

<u>International rationalization of the Amazon</u>

Both the Brazilian government and international interests seek forms of development to modernize and rationalize the Amazon ostensibly into a productive member of the international market economy. Although international accounts of the natural resources of the Amazon exist for the centuries preceding the 1800's, interest in internationalization of the Brazilian Amazon accelerated at the turn of

the 20th century when rubber raised fortunes to transform Belém, Pará into a tropical Paris at the mouth of the Amazon River and manifested a luxurious opera house surrounded by jungle in Manaus, Amazonas. This initial boom proved short-lived and further concentrated economic power in the region's elite. Seth Garfield begins his consideration of discourses on development and the environment with the second rubber boom during World War II. *In Search of the Amazon* (2013) asserts that the United States, Brazilian President Getúlio Vargas of the Estado Novo government (1937-45), local Amazon populations, and migrants from the arid Brazilian Northeast *all* perceived the future of the region differently, leading to conflict and impeding effective development. Garfield focuses on hierarchies: of nations, economy, race, and gender. However, the indigenous populations of the Amazon receive little consideration. However, Garfield does emphasize the Brazilian valorization of *caboclos* (Brazilians of mixed indigenous and European ancestry) as hardy workers knowledgeable of the forest. These *caboclos* acclimated to the Amazon, contributing to the foundations of modern Amazon society which includes indigenous as well as Quilombo communities. Both my case studies include communities with connections to the *caboclo* imaginary. While the term *caboclo* may be regarded as pejorative given the objectifying history I recounted above, I also heard one of my primary informants use it similar to "comrade". During the Estado Novo government, Brazil emphasized the rugged resourcefulness of *caboclos* while utilizing the United States' resources and interest in wartime rubber availability towards the introduction of natural resource production controls via a planning philosophy rooted in rationality. The movement of Brazilians from the Northeast to the Amazon and establishment of economic controls over the region initiated the Brazilian government's 20th century project to integrate the territory into the Brazilian national hierarchy. This national integration and occupation concern found ample support with the military coup of 1964. James Scott in *Seeing Like A State* (1998) references state attempts to create both legible, productive environments and subjects through examples in both timber and land reform. Within the military's conceptualization of the Amazon, the problems of productivity and population remained central. Rationalizing and thus controlling the Amazon through modernization projects remains a key component of the Brazil state-making project in the Amazon through partnerships between local elites and international thirst for resources, even under the auspices of Conservation through the importing of wilderness (and biodiversity).

A combination of Brazilian administrative interest and international pressure led to the creation of a national park incorporating environmental and social priorities in 1961 in the Xingu River Basin. Given the indigenous presence, and in the absence of strict removal policies such as during the creation of the United States' national parks system (Nash, 1965), Xingu National Park acknowledged the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the landscape. Yet, the traditional occupants of the park continued to face threats of encroachment and dispossession as Amazonian policy operated with a neocolonial agenda advancing worldviews and knowledges favoring development and security during the military dictatorship of 1964 -1985 (Garfield, 2001). The Brazilian government frequently emphasizes and exploits asymmetric relationships between local groups and state interests in order to design an

Amazon policy focused on state control and natural resource production security (Toohey, 2012). This is an understandable intention for a region continually exposed to conflict and marked by porous borders, yet indigenous territories continue to function both as *terra incognita* and "savage slots"--or spaces--in the national psyche (Trouillot, 1991). Hecht and Cockburn (1990) demonstrate the Brazilian government's approaches to enclosure, a strategy at times articulated as environmental conservation yet ultimately concerned with control of Amazon indigenous groups, Quilombos (Afro-descendent communities), *ribeirinhos* (traditional river dwellers), and other small scale extractivists (*caboclos*). These Place-based peoples advocate for a future defined by Amazon localities rather than the Brazilian state or international interests. Calling for more attention to local Amazon societies and desires creates tensions with international interests which continue to play a large role in the Basin's political economy, ecology, and power distribution. International or Brazilian state retreat from the Amazon appears unimaginable as the region becomes increasingly linked to international economies of consumption, meaning that local interventions must emphasize the "decolonial cracks" within the existing power hierarchy (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018). Included within this power hierarchy, custody of knowledge entails advantages for those regarded as modern, scientific, or rational. Within environmental policy, discourse often emphasized Conservation's claim to expert knowledge and neutrality through appeals to Cost-Benefit Analysis and the underlying Rational Choice Theory. Michael Taylor offers an essential critique of this approach in *Rationality and the Ideology of Disconnection* (2006). Taylor demonstrates the dangerous privileging of the individual inherent in rational choice theory. Deconstructed, Cost-Benefit Analysis demonstrates an epistemological insistence on individual self-interest and ownership of benefits through reliance on the ontology of Western positivism. Even today's biodiversity considerations entail negotiation of Cost-Benefit Analysis, identifying hotspots, convincing government authorities of the utility of conservation, and employing market-based conservation measures such as REDD+ (carbon credits). Unseen in the above calculations of when, where, and how to enact conservation, environmental authorities must transform local communities in environmental subjects in a process that involves the objectification of both people and forest through industrial resource management.

Tropical forest subjects

Conservation discourses regarding the Amazon evolved over time from conceptions of the entire region as an untouched wilderness to current alliances between international conservation organizations and indigenous groups in advocacy campaigns for indigenous territory. Yet the conservation philosophy of International Conservation remains epistemologically rooted in Western perspectives idealizing Nature as absent of humans (Nash, 1967). Well into the 20th century (and to some degree even today) Western conservationists imagined the Amazon as devoid of human-caused disruption even as the biodiversity/rainforest interests of the second half of the 20th century acknowledged the ecological contributions of indigenous populations. Resulting portrayals of indigenous populations imposed narratives of complete environmental harmony and zero impact: the

"noble savage", defender of the rainforest. Extreme portrayals of the "noble savage" flattened indigeneity and environment into one object, "Nature" (Schulz, 2017).

Today many Brazilian national parks include provisions for traditional extractivist use. Yet often neither traditional populations nor biodiversity receive sufficient government oversight, resulting in frequent cases of encroachment for natural resource appropriation. Despite concerns of unpeopled environments including "paper parks" (boundaries on a map with no real enforcement) and *grilagem* (seizure of land by illegal colonists), the incorporation of traditional uses into a national park marks an emphatic departure from the environmental thinking exemplified by early international preservationists such as John Muir. Muir repeatedly clashed with early conservationists including the founder of the US Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot; this conflict sparked an ongoing debate in environmentalism: intrinsic versus utilitarian values of Nature (Nash, 1967). Today both Muir and Pinchot's perspectives live on under Conservation with Muir's idealization of wilderness exemplified through "Core Areas" (e.g. designated Wilderness, National Parks, Ecological Stations) and Pinchot's "wise use" philosophy strongly alive in multiple uses areas (e.g. National Forests, Extractive Reserves, mitigation). Muir and Pinchot's ideas were exported to the rest of the world with international conservation debates avoiding considerations of power as well-financed international NGOs, wealthy northern countries, and national governments sought modernization through favored technocratic approaches to environmental policy.

Within the Amazon, both the Brazilian government and International Conservation benefit from objectification of the landscape. In the case of Brazilian occupation of the Amazon, the emptiness of the landscape justified countless development interventions including dams, highways, and colonies. For International Conservation, when discussions include human populations inseparable from Nature, images of Eden and innocent natives under threat become marketed to distant populations: North Americans, Europeans, and Brazilians in modern São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro. While this discourse of the imperiled Indian side-by-side with threatened Nature replicated across the world through international NGOs focused on attracting donations, technocratic Conservation-As-Development (CAD) work in the tropical global South often presented a different image of local populations to development decision-makers. When necessary, local populations were presented as inauthentic, "fallen" (having forgotten traditional ecological knowledge or TEK), engaged in rampant population growth, and a direct threat to biodiversity (Shoreman Ouimet & Kopnina, 2015). While authentic indigenous faces adorn the covers of *National Geographic*, international audiences dismissed the majority of Amazon communities, enabling development authorities to create environmental subjects lacking rationality, in need of intervention. These modern *caboclos* continued the legacy of the mixed-ancestry Brazilians escaping attempts at standardizing rubber production during the Estado Novo. Environmental authorities including international conservation utilize environmentality to shape human behavior through the mediation of how humans relate to the

natural environment. In some cases the two collapsed into one (as in the "noble savage") and in other cases traditional uses became regarded disdainfully, a scar on otherwise pristine Nature.

Political ecologists credit Fairhead and Leach (1995) with unpacking Conservation's history of frequent misuse of social sciences to present an environmental narrative separating people from forest. Coercive and market-based measures are similarly employed to channel local behavior into forms compatible with governance by Western conservation philosophy. Recently Paige West (2006) and others critique Conservation-As-Development (CAD) for its implicit perpetration of asymmetrical exchange relationships based on cultural misunderstandings and ignorance driven by state society and NGO power dynamics. Nugent criticizes Conservation's cessation of power to the capitalist forces that simultaneously drive extraction from the industrialized economies of the Northern Hemisphere (1993). Likewise, scholars including Anthony Hall (1997) and William Balee (1993) similarly identify international conservation efforts as embedded in philosophy steeped in neocolonial relationships. While divergences in Conservation-as-usual worldviews exist among environmentalists, these truly reciprocal relationships remain the exception. Later, I will discuss the remarkable case of Chico Mendes as a truly exceptional example of common ground between global North environmentalists and global South activists. However, the historically and Place-situated nature of the Chico Mendes story created challenges for its global export (Tsing, 2005). Such specificity contrasts with the global proliferation of forest carbon credit regimes.

Universal carbon

The objectification of the more-than-human Amazon is well-known: through production and export of timber, beef, minerals, and soy. Perspectives regarding the quantification of Amazonian forests through carbon offsets range from fears of "carbon colonialism" to appreciation of the environmental justice component of financing sustainable development in the global South (Dalsgaard,2013). What is erased as forests become represented by the single number of metric tons of carbon sequestered? Dalsgaard goes on to explain, "As an objectified entity, carbon enables comparability and even commensurability between different forms of life and different actions across spheres" (pg83). Thus, carbon credits may refer to the same "object" in markets even as the realites found in forests and communities diverge dramatically. Additional critiques of carbon credits and REDD include political choices made without awareness of equality, environmental ethics, and environmental justice including carbon payments functioning as a double payment for both carbon and inequality in the global South (Caney, 2010; Spash, 2010). In particular, the commensurability of carbon involves a dramatic equivocation, the objectification and quantification of forests seen by communities as territories, as diverse ontologies become streamlined into one environmentality for better management and governance. Both Arun Agrawal (2005) and Nancy Peluso's (1994) field work with forest communities demonstrate the use of environmentality by environmental authorities to demonstrate political conceptions of territory as well as the social creation of specific types of environments and subjects to fit those environments. For this reason, the way in which communities, states, and organizations

interact via equivocations, commensuration, and legibility holds dramatic consequences for decisions relating to territory. Marisol de la Cadena (2011) proposes the imperative of putting indigenous ontologies of the landscape in conversation with those of hegemonic nation-states and Western culture (including Conservation). Quoting Peruvian Justo Oxa: If an ontology encounters a place as a "dynamic space where the whole community of beings that exist in the world lives; this includes humans, plants, animals, the mountains, the river, the rain etc. All are related like family", is an equivocal translation necessary for working with Western ontologies of nature embodied by the epistemologies of NGO's, national economies, and nation-states desirable (2010, pg354)? In representing Nature through international markets, carbon credits transform landscapes into agreed-upon numbers, an uncanny reduction. Translated into international exchanges, the objectification of Nature whether by extractive industry commodities or carbon credits raises ontological differences often overlooked. Hegemonic deployment of "modernity" through its commodification of Nature operates as an exclusive epistemology within the Amazon and overlooks deeper questions over diverse worldviews and knowledge systems as well as local, practical concerns over natural resource use. As Cadena highlights, modern politics frequently preclude agonistic conversations between ontological differences (2011). Arturo Escobar provides indispensable analysis of development and modernization discourses impacting traditional communities in Latin America (2008). Escobar characterizes modernity as a quest for universalizing solutions to cultural problems, much in the same way which commensuration commodifies the forests as carbon universalizes, globalizes, and standardizes the valuing of ecological functions. Thus, critical questions emerge around the representation of market-based valuation systems trafficking financial accounting-based solutions for territorial self-determination. In other words, do carbon credits really benefit local struggles for autonomy? And if carbon credits fail to benefit these communities, do other options exist?

Perspectives on the utility of valuing ecosystem services and market-based conservation vary, with some conservationists suggesting environmental accounting as an option for avoiding the problem of environmental degradation (Costanza et al., 1997). Advocates of this approach risk ignoring the complexity of tropical forest political ecology through focusing on purely financial representations of landscapes at the expense of questions regarding the intersection of power, Place, and race. Similar to timber calculations, carbon valuation of forests returns Conservation to focus on rational choices for optimum use attached to market value (Taylor, 2006). Peter Brosius's account of the rainforest politics in Southeast Asia reinforces the frequent impotence of market-based conservation and government-sponsored environmentality to protect both forests and communities: "The larger message being conveyed is that the problems of rainforest destruction and indigenous rights can be solved by some combination of technically grounded institutional intervention" (1999, pg49).

Increasingly, environmental anthropologists as well as Latin America offer alternatives to international conservation philosophy. Appeals to Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) of Amazon peoples as well as decolonial critiques of technocratic, market-driven international conservation question links

between international NGOs and dispossession of indigenous territories and cultures (Hindery, 2013). Indigenous definitions of conservation often emphasize relationality: The sustained co-existence of people, culture, and more-than-humans (flora, fauna, rivers, etc) (Smith & Wishnie, 2000). Given the long-term, human culture-inclusive vision of indigenous conservation, it should not come as a surprise when indigenous Brazilians maintain ambivalence towards recent conservation-as-development interventions that privilege neoliberal international conservation power structures over indigenous self-determination. Conservation tools such as Payment-for-Environmental Services, Debt-for-Nature swaps, and privately-funded protectionism represent increased integration into destructive international economic networks rather than opportunities for autonomy (Mulder, 2005).

Now that I have illustrated Western conceptions of natural resources and conservation in the Amazon, we turn to indigenous-linked approaches which have often been disregarded as either unproductive or non-existent. However, current scholarship illustrates the significant role indigenous Amazonians had in shaping the current ecology of the Amazon Basin and continuing management. The continuing transmission of Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) and its agency in sustaining the Amazon Basin for both humans and more-than-humans suggests a decoloniality of alternative pathways to development in the Basin (Bebbington, 1993; Gonzales & Husain, 2016). Mobilization among indigenous and traditional Amazonians continues to press the Brazilian state for human rights enshrined in the 1988 Constitution as well as ILO 169 as ratified by Brazil. Just as traditional Amazonians expertly guided and transmitted natural processes and biodiversity to sustainably transform the Basin, today activists navigate regional, national, and global networks to maximize the visibility of their struggle for ethno-territories (Escobar, 2008), exerting considerable pressure on the Brazilian state and multinational corporations alike. Thus, a mix of TEK, decoloniality, and social mobilization emerges as a viable approach to development in the Amazon; solutions based in Western modernity and international market economics must be put in conversation with Place-based approaches, indigenous rights, and self-determination.

Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK)

As referenced in my discussion of the literature surrounding conservation and development in the Amazon, Western conceptions of Amazonia often ignored the existence of indigenous civilizations and systems of knowledge. I use "civilization" intentionally here in order to emphasize the scale of pre-Columbian Amazonian populations. Recent archeological studies emphasize the astonishing extent of human influence in the Amazon, the role of human interventions in producing Amazonian biodiversity, and the expansive trading networks actualized by Amazonians. Development of Western scientific approaches accelerated through the Enlightenment and put in practice through colonialism established a hegemonic Occidental epistemology leading to the classification of pre-Columbian Amazonian technologies as "Traditional Environmental Knowledge" (TEK). I employ Berkes' important definition of TEK from *Sacred Ecologies*: "a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission,

about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment (1999, pg 8). Anthropologist Harold Conklin conducted pioneering field work and analysis in the Philippines up through the 1950's which would inaugurate contemporary approaches to considering TEK as coequal to Western environmental science through the field of ethnobiology (1967). Whereas indigenous environmental technologies such as swidden agriculture were previously dismissed as crude, ineffective, and even environmentally destructive, Conklin demonstrated the sophistication of his research subjects' TEK while also serving as an advocate for disenfranchised populations such as the Hanunóo of Mindoro. In the Brazilian Amazon, environmental anthropologists such as William Balée and Darrell Posey would take similar positionality between the academy and advocacy, negotiating criticisms of abandoning academic neutrality. Although conversations debating the conservation intention of TEK remain, historical accounts of the Amazon were permanently transformed to include the agency of traditional Amazonians upon their ecosystem. As one of the premier ethnoecologists specializing in the Amazon, Posey has pointed out the important role of indigenous groups in shaping the current environment of the forest. "Presence of areas extensively managed by indigenous peoples emphasizes the necessity for the re-evaluation of concepts about natural landscape (1985, pg 100)

Growing valorization of TEK led the World Commission on Environment and Development to recommend the inclusion of TEK in management of complex ecosystems like the Amazon (Bruntland 1987, pg 12), contrasting with previous resistance in the field of development to inclusion of TEK. Conservation and development's growing recognition of TEK diverges notably from the Brazilian military dictatorship's Amazon development efforts which failed to recognize the contributions of both indigenous and traditional Brazilians to socio-ecological systems. Hugh Raffles synthesized much of these developments in environmental anthropology into his momentous work *In Amazonia* (2002) through chronicling the development of canals, land rights, and forest science beyond the official narrative of top-down development in the Amazon Basin. This account of productive transformation of the environment by traditional societies remains crucial for overturning the dialectic of pristine rainforest versus industrial agriculture facilitating the rendering of traditional societies as invisible. Enhancing the visibility and valorization of TEK pushes back against the narrative of the Amazon as an empty wilderness, articulating the ways in which Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) created the biodiversity of the forest through situated agroforestry and the intentional dispersal of plants beneficial to human communities. Revealing the role of indigenous peoples in actively creating ecosystems contests the technocratic environmentalism of accounting for the Amazon in terms of biodiversity statistics, sequestered carbon, and emissions offsets for industry in the global North.

Myths regarding the laziness of indigenous Brazilians in comparison to the "productive" ranchers, soybean monocultures, and mining corporations may be reversed if more attention is given to TEK over the whimsical portrayals of passive "noble savages" in complete equilibrium with the natural habitat. Arun Agrawal advances the role of TEK further, elevating in particular indigenous knowledge

to the level of Western science, with implications for equal standing in development, conservation, and education (1995). Formerly, theorists include Levi-Strausse separated indgenous knowledge into a separate category from Western technical knowledge, leading to asymmetrical power structures typical of coloniality.

Decoloniality

Surveying the political ecology of Amazonia must highlight the role of colonial structures of power as well as the continuing presence of neocolonial aggressions and the persistence of race-based environmental injustices. Scholars have termed this continuing colonial project as coloniality (Quijano, 2000). Coloniality as a concept contests constructions of the post-colonial which emphasize the conclusion of colonialism and occlude recognition of the continuing global racial hierarchy established and maintained by hegemonic power (Castro-Gomez & Martin, 2002). Decolonization theory remains central to the articulation of colonialism, the postcolonial, and coloniality. Due to the ubiquitous use of "decolonization" within academic jargon and activist lexicon alike, I define decolonization as an emancipatory project critically addressing the history of Western-led "discovery" and expansion in which non-Western societies existed prior to colonization consisting of intact peoples, autonomy, indigenous worldviews and universes of thought, as well as an ambivalence towards "progress". As my region of focus is the Brazilian Amazon, I focus on the colonial legacy of European contact with Amerindian populations. However, one can make the case that most of the world has experienced colonization; at times by Europeans, but at other points through non-Western powers such as the Incans or Aztecs. The resulting disruption of colonization must be addressed as a society, questioning how the colonization process took place as well as the immediate impact on the past, present, and future. Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova describe the decolonial project as creating "epistemic, political, and ethical options" challenging the historical and continuing presence of "conquered and managed territory" resulting from the processes of destroying prior social orders along with imposing new social orders "responding to the needs and habits of the conquerors" (2012, p. 17). Academic research has often existed within the above mentioned process, leading to self-reflection on how decolonization might be extended into the production of knowledge through research (Smith, 1999). Within the Amazon Basin, researchers historically played a prominent role as interlocutors between communities and officials (as mentioned in my discussion of FUNAI anthropologists). As researchers from outside the Basin highlight the incredible diversity of Amazon society, bringing concerns to international governance, the Brazilian state's response emphasizes multiculturalism while overlooking incompatibilities in diverging worldviews as well as dismissing racism. The Brazilian hegemonic center tolerates indigenous cultures up to the point where natural resources and land become contested. Suddenly, the government and private corporations alike dismiss indigenous perspectives on territory and resources as s "prehistoric" "cavemen" (Phillips, 2019). Multiculturalism does not confront the material consequences of Western epistemologies nor property regimes maintained by settler colonialism nor violent extraction and has resulted in superficial pronouncements of "racial democracy" in Brazil (Warren, 2001). Coloniality itself along with alterity and the subaltern maintain

the position of the Western ontology at the hegemonic center. Thus, the concept of decoloniality becomes essential for an alterNative discourse on development, environment, and race.

Decoloniality affirms the historical and ongoing presence of indigenous and traditional knowledges, agency, and futures (Mignolo, 2013). In the case of my focus on western Pará, the deployment of decoloniality highlights the historic indigenous occupation and creation of the ecology of the region, the ongoing presence of indigenous and traditional Amazonians, and the viability of these ontologies at the epistemic borders of the Brazilian national project as well as their clear difference in approach to regional development. Here, conceptualization of Nature returns to the discursive forefront, articulating via decoloniality the Amazon as an inhabited wilderness (Brower, 1998 where "wildness" is prioritized over IUCN wilderness classifications (Van Horn & Hausdoerffer, 2017). Decoloniality delivers an upside-down environmentality, contesting the hegemonic dialectic between culture and nature through Place and relations (Pierotti & Wildcat, 2000) Within western Pará, land uses range from destructive extraction to conservation enclosures. Decoloniality presents an alterNative epistemology of the environment affirmed by neither National Forests nor soy monocultures.

Indigenous mobilization

AlterNative conceptions of territory manifest through the development of movements uniting social and environmental concerns under the banner of environmental justice. I define environmental justice as a critical and praxis-oriented consideration of the impact of race, economic class, and history on access to environmental goods, emancipation from pollution, and availability of the holistically immanent ecology. The environmental justice movement initially focused itself with the siting of industry, but has grown to encompass and materialize a counterpoint to Western wilderness discourses which avoid human components of ecology. Today environmental justice is international, intersectional, and includes questions of climate justice (Carruthers, 2008). As environmental justice faces critics in mainstream Conservation-As-Development approaches, mobilization emerges as a key strategy for furthering activist goals including the rights of indigenous and traditional communities to self-determination. These mobilizations, both regional and international, question the process of demarcation for indigenous territories, consultation on infrastructure projects whether hydropower or highways, siting of extractive industries, and international conservation activities (Porto, 2012). Indigenous activists at times occupy interstitial spaces through virtual mobilizations on the internet, developing advocacy networks of indigenous activists and allies across the world, contesting framing which presents indigeneity as an antipode to modernity (Forte, 2010). Indigenous activists have also demonstrated the effectiveness of differential consciousness, confounding traditional anthropologies emphasizing cultural purity (Conklin & Graham 1995; Sandoval 2003). Indigenous groups may ally with extractive corporations, environmental NGOs, or other social movements, highlighting the priority of self-determination over essentializing narratives of the environmentally noble savage, destructive extractivist, or isolated primitive.

Moving into consideration of the methodology of my own case study and field research, I wish to again emphasize the dissonance created across the epistemological spectrum between the continuing modernization project of the Brazilian state deployed in Amazonia and radical alterity as personified by indigenous and traditional perspectives on relationships with Place as well as alternatives to development. Where might conservation interventions arising from Western environmental philosophies and market-based tools fall within this discourse and what methodological construction would best serve an evaluation? Prior to undertaking my field research, I viewed international conservation design including carbon credits and REDD+ as necessary solutions due to their emphasis on monetary compensation. I assumed conservation-as-development provided essential pathways toward environmental justice through the transfer of financial resources from the carbon hungry North to the biodiverse South. The preceding literature review reveals my own positionality in manifesting this preconception. My professional and academic backgrounds include market economics, wilderness advocacy, and epistemologies prioritizing biodiversity conservation over environmental justice. As this project developed, I repeatedly reflected upon my own assumptions and sought to better align methodological choices with a decolonizing approach in considering the interactions of the above mentioned forces, theories, and structures within the situation of the Maró people on the Lower Tapajós River and traditional communities at Lago Sapucuá.

III. Negotiating Place

As Edward Said discussed in his classic text *Orientalism* (1978), Western academics often find themselves susceptible to discourses highlighting "Otherness", sometimes unwittingly. "Decolonization" might likewise fall into this quagmire, favoring images of endangerment or helplessness; an objectified Other in need of rescue. Despite best intentions, a position of weakness becomes established and the very hierarchy the researcher seeks to destroy might be enshrined. Such was the impetus behind the abandonment of lexicon such as "Third World" or the creation of Gayatri Spivak's "subaltern" terminology (1999). For this reason, I choose to focus on the specificities of history and Place in order to avoid perpetuating universalizations sometimes found in global discourses on poverty, indigeneity, and rainforest cultures. The work of Arturo Escobar (2008) inspired this choice; in Escobar's words, "people engage in the defense of place from the perspective of the economic, ecological, and cultural difference that their landscapes, cultures, and economies embody in relation to those of more dominant sectors of society" (2008 pg. 6).

I also acknowledge the unparalleled role of ethnography as a method for elevating perspectives otherwise obscured by dominant economic and scientific knowledge hierarchies. Macarena Gómez-Barris writes of the importance of "submerged" perspectives in describing the possibilities of life created through Place-based communities despite the overarching constellation of industrial extraction (2017). Both my case studies engage communities advocating for self-determination and autonomy beyond export-oriented interests of mining, soy, hydropower, and environmentality. These

communities' resources face predation by those who would transform both the material and social nature of territory. Ethnography facilitates the communication of perspectives and knowledge otherwise avoided by discussion amongst the Brazilian state, corporations, and international environmental authorities. My research communities were unanimous in expressing their frustration at the lack of meaningful conversations, adequate consultations, and respect present in decisions impacting their territories. What follows is an overview of my methodological approach before diving deeper into considering decolonial methodologies.

Methodology overview

The inductive/abductive approach of Glaser and Strauss's Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) was indispensable in the production of my research plan (1967). My design focuses on case studies as well as the pragmatic consideration of advancing the dialogue on international conservation in the region. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* offers a foundational text for framing any research involving populations long immersed in coloniality (1999). Both cases studied informed the specific elements of international conservation considered by my thesis

> Research Question: Given International Conservation's self-purported advocacy for local populations, we would expect the impact of conservation programs to strengthen the position of indigenous and traditional Brazilians living in western Pará with respect to territorial rights and autonomy, but instead we see the rejection of conservation interventions by indigenous and traditional peoples alongside the continuing proliferation of conflicts between community claims to land and environmental authorities such as the Brazilian state and International Conservation. Why?
>
> Hypothesis: Conservation approaches do not account for the continuing presence of coloniality present in Conservation-As-Development interventions impacting territorial claims of indigenous and traditional Brazilians; nor environmental authorities connect with indigenous or traditional conceptions of knowledge, resources, and Place.
>
> Data Collection: Two case studies consisting of ethnography: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, survey use, participatory mapping, informal conversations.

Initially, I chose the case of the Maró of Pará state for consideration of an indigenous perspective on the presence of international conservation organizations and Payment-for-Environmental Services (PES), specifically carbon credits. Presently, Maró territory exists in limbo within the Brazilian demarcation process. The Brazilian federal indigenous affairs administrative organization FUNAI recommended the official demarcation of Maró territory, however, due to opposition by the state government of Pará as well as the powerful rural lobby (*bancada ruralista*), the Maró have yet to

receive official rights to territory. The traditional lands of the Maró are claimed by the state of Pará. Additionally, Maró lands represent the best remaining tract of primary forest in the area and thus are desired by the timber industry.

For consideration of mixed-ancestry, traditional Brazilian[2] experience of Conservation-As-Development, I selected a second location in western Pará: Lago Sapucuá including the Trombetas River and town of Oriximiná. I chose to include this site alongside the Maró because of both the similarities and differences in the two cases. Both feature socio-ecological settings at resource extraction and logistics hubs (Oriximiná and Santarém). The two sites are also focal points for conservation interventions. The primary conservation actor at Lago Sapucuá is the Brazilian government while international NGOs played central roles on the Tapajós River as a result of an international audience for anti-hydropower campaigns. The positionalities of communities at the two sites include important differences (the Maró identify as indigenous, the communities on Lago Sapucuá as *ribeirinhos*) as well as compelling similarities (forms of settlement and subsistence economy).

The similarities in socio-environmental circumstances yet important contrasting socio-cultural characteristics offer complementary perspectives on Conservation-As-Development in western Pará. The state of Pará is particularly relevant given its centrality in conflicts between extraction and indigenous and traditional rights. The state capital Belém is a center for education, export, and regional governance with a metropolitan population of over 2 million. Santarém (population of 275,000) exists near the proposed site of the São Luiz do Tapajós dam which was postponed indefinitely in 2016 due to combined indigenous and environmental movements. This successful collaboration between indigenous rights and environmental NGOs partly inspired my research focus. Additionally, Santarém is situated along the recently enhanced BR-163 highway, a vital corridor for the export of commodities from recently deforested lands in the southeastern Amazon. Finally, Oriximiná (municipality population 74,000) sits farther west on the Amazon River, near the border of Pará and Amazonas state. Nearby, the confluence of the Trombetas and Amazon rivers facilitates convenient transportation of bauxite by deepwater vessels. Development plans initiated by the Brazilian military dictatorship call for a closer relationship between Santarém and Oriximiná: BR-163 may be extended across the Amazonas and pass through Oriximiná.

The Maró provide a critical case given the precarious nature of their current progress in the demarcation process (Flyvbjerg, 2006). If the Maró find use for alliances with international conservation NGOs and participation in PES such as carbon credits, it is likely that other indigenous groups facing territorial challenges will approve of participation in similar programs. In addition to

[2] While *povos tradicionais* is an official lexicon, I recognize the problematic nature of the category of "traditional" due to its suggestion that unchanging, traditional practices exist in some uninterrupted, pure form and that the State is the arbiter of a purported authenticity. For more consideration, see Alpa Shah's *In The Shadows of the State* (2010)

Maró territory, locations for analysis of public perceptions were selected to allow for a range of positionalities considered through conducting interviews with both indigenous and non-indigenous populations. Interviews with Brazilians in urban environments such as Belém and Santarém focused on their perceptions of indigenous rights, traditional Brazilians, international conservation, and development. Likewise, the *ribeirinho* communities at Lago Sapucuá provide a critical case on resistance to interventions inspired by international conservation and executed by the Brazilian state. Inclusion of non-indigenous though Place-based *ribeirinho* communities[3] acknowledges the tapestry of identities constructing 21st century Amazon society. Indigenous Amazonians recognize the importance of alliances between "forest peoples", a contribution to sustained decoloniality even as histories of colonization differ.

My field research began with Maró attitudes towards Conservation-As-Development (CAD). The Maró represent a provocative response to CAD interventions including Big International NGOS (BINGOS) and PES because the group faces a struggle for demarcation of their traditional territory, land occupied by the Maró yet officially belonging to Pará state. Due to the high ecological quality of the forested lands of the Maró as well as the extractive potential, the territory would be an excellent site for PES. However, researchers from the Federal University of Pará in Belém, in personal conversations, suggested the Maró would reject pursuing a PES agreement for their territory. In order to appropriately apply Maró representations to PES programs, I conducted field research in partnership with the Federal University of Pará (UFPA). Field work began with stakeholder identification in order to determine how the Maró perceive their current situation. Semi-structured interviews with Maró leaders identified by UFPA provided data leading to a localized construction of the current opportunities and threats for Maró territorial integrity and autonomy: "Where are the Maró?" A sample interview schedule includes questions such as:

1. What is your situation now?
2. Who are the stakeholders?
3. What are the stakeholders proposing?
4. What do you think of the stakeholders?
5. What do you think of what the stakeholders are proposing?
6. What is your proposal?

I conducted a similar interview schedule concerning Maró territory. Collection of data involving Maró perceptions of territory, resources, and conservation: "What is Maró territory?" required ethnographic interviews of the leaders of the Maró community using a semi-structured elite interviewing approach as recommended by Lewis Dexter in *Elite and Specialized Interviewing* (1969). Semi-structured interview schedules contained lead-in questions stimulating further elaboration:

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[3] I reference Place-based communities and their territories frequently; I return to Escobar to describe this focus: "engagement with and experience of a particular location with some measure of groundedness (however unstable), boundaries (however permeable), and connections to everyday life, even if its identity is constructed and never fixed" (2008).

1. What resources exist on your territory?
2. Which resources do you value most?
3. What is the history of this territory?
4. When did conversations with Pará begin?
5. What is the role of international conservation in the region?
6. What does conservation mean on your territory?
7. What do you know of carbon credits?
8. Would carbon credits be suitable to your territory?
9. What are the threats to your territory?
10. What do you think of the government proposal to reduce conservation areas in Pará?

Ethnographic work with the Maró took place primarily in 2017. I received another opportunity to continue field work on Conservation-As-Development in western Pará in 2018-2019. I once again conducted unstructured interviews with urban residents in the cities of Belém and Santarém to understand how the political ecology evolved following 2017, most importantly given the presidential election of October 2018 shortly after I arrived. Brazilians and international observers alike viewed the election of Jair Bolsonaro as incredibly dangerous for indigenous rights and conservation. International support moved to bolster the indigenous movement given Bolsonaro's racist rhetoric toward indigenous Brazilians. Similarly, conservation advocates confronted Bolsonaro's ambivalence towards deforestation.

I asked whether there are Amazon populations missing from the internationalized politics of the Amazon. My initial review of international as well as Brazilian media alongside informational conversations in Belém, Santarém, and at a political ecology conference in Salvador revealed two significant groups: urban Amazon communities (including indigenous populations in cities) and traditional Brazilians (*ribeirinhos, beiradeiros,* etc). I learned of connections between these two populations as well as their shared invisibility in Brazilian society. Because my research focuses on Conservation-As-Development, I approached a *ribeirinho* community living at the edges of a large National Forest, Saracá Taquera. I was accompanied by two Brazilian researchers from UFOPA (the Federal University of Western Pará). Semi-structured interviews substantially replicated the questions I posed to Maró interviewees, though with more attention to which resources in particular were valued by the communities (in contrast to Brazilian federal environmental authorities, mining, and timber operations). I utilized surveys to better understand relations with natural resources through subsistence use as well as supplemental income and engaged in participatory mapping to learn local perspectives on territory as well as an act of solidarity.

I also included secondary data through discourse analysis of Brazilian media and government representations of the environment and indigenous claims to demarcation. Coding of the

above-mentioned interviews to correlate with narratives found in popular media yielded relevant variables impacting conceptualizations of conservation and development as well as international participation in the Brazilian Amazon. Finally, I include original images representing Pará originating from my field work along with representations from the Brazilian state, Brazilian media, and international conservation organizations. I expect stark contrasts to arise situated in smooth and striated differences identified in the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). I have always been impressed with the visual component of the Brazilian state's Amazon development logic (or lack thereof). Most environmentalists remain well acquainted with aerial photos of deforestation or the classic landscape shot of the lone castanheira in a newly established cattle pasture. Epistemological difference quickly becomes apparent through the material forms of Nature-making: how we see or fail to see Place as well as the practices and knowledges we bring to bear in its transformation.

I gathered substantial, original qualitative data consisting of subjectivities towards Conservation. Utilizing inductive analysis as employed by Glaser and Strauss in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, I developed key themes to frame my conclusions. My conclusions agreed with previous case studies critical of conservation, suggesting my research expands the empirical support for decolonizing Conservation. Comparison with similar cases studies would be most applicable for locations experiencing convergences of indigenous/traditional rights, industrial resource extraction pressures, and importance to international conservation.

My analysis of field data and secondary source case studies, discourses, and images utilized the theoretical framework provided by decolonization scholars while paying particular attention as recommended by Grounded Theory scholars to narratives involving Positionality, Power, and Co-learning as well as my own Reflexivity (Bryant & Charmaz, 2012). Comparative analysis demonstrated differences emerging under postcolonial concepts such as hierarchy of modernity, valuing of resources, conceptualization of Nature, localization of capital, and disbursement authority. Arturo Escobar utilizes similar framing to contrast projections of imperial globality with local conceptions of Place in *Territories of Difference* (2008). This application of postcolonial thought and decolonization intervention is well-suited to describe the current state of both natural resource extraction and international conservation in the Amazon in relation to indigenous rights as identified in my literature review: the Brazilian Amazon continues to be a landscape articulated by a coloniality of power. As a pragmatic application, growing evidence demonstrates the importance of promoting indigenous rights for deterring environmental destruction of tropical forests. However, Conservation interventions originating from the global North must be consistent with indigenous and traditional Brazilian thinking regarding territory. Both the Maró and *ribeirinhos* of Lago Sapucuá offer important conversations on conservation from populations vulnerable due to the land politics of demarcation and Conservation-As-Development interventions seeking to protect the remaining biodiversity of the eastern Amazon region.

Decolonization Theory & Interviewing

Because of the centrality of interviewing in my methodology, this section will be largely devoted to definitions in order to transition from the framing and overview of my methodology to specific techniques. Within my field work, interviewing, audio/video recording, and observation were the best options for primary information regarding the Maró and Lago Sapucuá *ribeirinhos* (Emerson et al. 1995).

> An interview is an exchange relationship. At times manifest in a matter of minutes, months, years or a lifetime. The participants negotiate power, offer knowledge and/or a mirage, perform a dance of information, and imagine the secret desires of the Other. All from an unavoidable positionality of Self.

The above definition is not meant to obscure the pragmatic aspects of the interview, but to call attention to the unavoidable dynamics present in any conversation between two humans (and other forms of life as well). If an interview seeks data yet a negotiation of power is unavoidable, how might the researcher effectively and responsibly gather relevant information while ensuring ethical treatment of the interviewee? At this point decolonization theory becomes a relevant tool in traversing histories embedded in Place.

I call attention to the continuing existence of neocolonial Brazilian projects impacting Amerindian populations as well as how mixed-ancestry Brazilians became enmeshed in the Amazon environmental history and present socio-ecological system as *ribeirinhos*. Conversations amongst Place-based peoples in Pará highlight the importance of addressing how the colonization process took place as well as the immediate impact on the past, present, and future. To repeat, Walter Mignolo and Madina Tlostanova describe the decolonial project as creating "epistemic, political, and ethical options" challenging the historical and continuing presence of "conquered and managed territory" resulting from the processes of destroying prior social orders along with imposing new social orders "responding to the needs and habits of the conquerors" (2012, p. 17). I must also consider the presence of coloniality within academic research. As an effective means of gathering information from cultures favoring oral histories over written text, interviewing figures prominently into past imperially-minded research projects.

> As a site of struggle research has a significance for indigenous peoples that is embedded in our history under the gaze of Western imperialism and Western science. It is framed by our attempts to escape the penetration and surveillance of the gaze whilst simultaneously reordering and reconstituting ourselves as indigenous human beings in a state of ongoing crisis. Research has not been neutral in its objectification of the Other. Objectification is a process of dehumanization. In its clear links to Western knowledge research has generated a particular relationship to indigenous peoples which continues to be problematic. (Linda Tuhiwai Smith 1999, p. 41)

Grounded Theory

As mentioned previously, I relied on Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) as the systematic basis for my fieldwork and analysis. Grounded Theory relies on comparative analysis and the use of abductive reasoning to develop a theoretical explanation for conspicuous irregularities between cases. Grounded theorist Kathy Charmaz explains, "Abductive inference entails considering all plausible theoretical explanations for the surprising data, forming hypotheses for each possible explanation, checking these hypotheses empirically by examining data to arrive at the most plausible explanation" (2006, p. 201). The central instinct within this approach emerges from Pragmatism as discovered by Charles Peirce. Pragmatism may be defined as "neither modern nor postmodern, but orthogonal to those debates, including positivism vs. interpretation (or realism vs. relativism) ... choices are complexly mediated by close-in cultures also by cultures at a distance ... we arrive at humanness through the constantly offered interpretations of our family, community, nature, media, art, animals, and all others" (Star, 2007, p. 87). The fine line observed by Pragmatists becomes essential in the practice of interviewing. The interviewer must avoid denying the interpretation or experience of the interviewee while also listening objectively for elements of truthfulness.

The combination of abduction and pragmatism situates GTM as a potent tool for applying decolonization theory to research. Norman Denzin agrees, "Grounded Theory, because of its commitment to critical, open-ended inquiry, can be a decolonizing tool for indigenous and non-indigenous scholars alike" (2007, p. 456). The adjustable structure of GTM may be applied to the very act of interviewing as well. "Informant learns from informant as well as from the researcher. The researcher learns from multiple informants" (Dick, 2007, p. 406). The common thread in any research approach involving decolonization theory and the essence of interviewing is dialogue. Paulo Freire seized upon this concept in his pedagogical classic *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). For Freire, the nature of colonial power relations is anti-dialogical in which subjects are viewed as objects within an oppressive hierarchy. The resulting conversation becomes inherently anti-dialogical as the oppressed are denied proper voice. As referenced earlier, Smith finds a similar threat within research, and interviewing may fall prey to this power disparity as well. Freire asserts, "I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing" (1995, p. 17). In their paper "Grounded Theory and Racial/Ethnic Diversity", Green et al. identify the dialogical interview as the "primary form of data collection" within Grounded Theory (2007). This emphasis on the participation of the research subject, or in this case interviewee, affirms the elite interviewing approach as articulated by Lewis Anthony Dexter in his important text *Elite and Specialized Interviewing* (1970). There, Dexter explains, "Often at any rate, I try to handle the relationship as discussion—two reflective men trying to find out how things happen, but the less informed and experienced one (the interviewer) deferring to the wiser one and learning from him" (p. 54). Dexter completely inverts the academic hierarchy, calling for the "critical consciousness" (to borrow from Freire) of the interviewee to emerge most prominently. Viewed through the lens of Ground Theory,

the research subject's critical consciousness as discovered in the dialogical process of interviewing enables the resulting abduction by the researcher/interviewer.

Implications

While I wish to identify Maró and *ribeirinho* critiques of conservation interventions through my research work, I also hope to provide utility to the international conservation strategy in the Amazon. International conservation has undoubtedly played an important role in the development of Brazilian environmentalism as well as global awareness of the Amazon: "rainforest" exists as a relatively recent addition to the global popular lexicon. These case studies may represent useful models for future collaborations between conservation researchers and international communities seeking to improve protection of networks of both endemic biodiversity and Amazonian culture. Within this contribution to the conservation dialogue, my methodology emphasizing and applying decolonization theory for elevating the voices of indigenous and traditional communities should be considered by researchers conducting work on behalf of international NGOs.. For this reason, I close my discussion of methodology with an emphasis on the importance of fluidity within my approach: my positionality as a physically present, international researcher in both case studies must be sensitive to following community needs. Thus, my research program was finalized only upon my arrival at the communities' territories.

IV. Saracá-Taquera

Even as cell phones and social media become common across much of the Lower Amazon, travel by night on one of the many boats plying the ever-fluctuating waters emphasizes the sheer expanse of distance between electrified settlements. Boat travel has always been common in Amazônia, but increasing urbanization (Richards & VanWey, 2015) means networks between dispersed families consolidate along pathways to urban centers. Most people I interviewed in western Pará had spent a period of time working in either Manaus or Belém or had a family member there. These massive urban centers feature increased employment opportunities, but also heightened crime and disconnect from the Place-based lifeways of the *Interior*. Traveling up the Amazon River from Belém, families returning to the *Interior* must connect through Santarém midway between Belém and Manaus. The urbanscapes of Amazonian cities such as Belém and Manaus do not appear in most international depictions of the Amazon unless the organization intends to focus on urban health such as the Coronavirus pandemic (*The Guardian*, 4/30/20). Smaller cities such as Santarém remain invisible. Given the connection between the *Interior* and Amazonia cities, what accounts for the silence of international conservation on the urban environments of the Amazon?

International perspectives dominate historical narratives of the Amazon. Whether articulated by the Portuguese, Dutch, English, Germans, or more recently the United States most of these accounts wrestle with a familiar dialectic: Whether to assign the Amazon to the realm of "green hell" or tropical

paradise. This consternation preceded yet informed historical arguments within the field of conservation when around the turn of the 20th Century Gifford Pinchot of the United States Forest Service and John Muir traded barbs and visions of Nature. Pinchot and Muir advocated for polarized approaches to conservation focusing on either the utility of the natural world to industrial development or reverence akin to a cathedral. Debate over the Amazon likewise ranges from its potential for powering (figuratively and literally) the Brazilian economy to whether the vast geographies should be an internationally-administered pristine reserve. Neither of these approaches sufficiently acknowledge the societies existing across Amazonia (Nugent, 1993).

Returning to my question of where to place urban Amazonia in conversations on conservation, I argue that urban environments must be approached in tandem with those of the *Interior* because the socio-ecological systems remain linked. Scale plays an important role across these geographies, interlocking international systems at Manaus or Belém to smaller cities like Santarém and even smaller towns such as Oriximiná along the Trombetas River near the border of Amazonas and Pará states. Oriximiná sits far enough west of Belém that socio-cultural networks lean towards Manaus even as the region's resources such as bauxite flow to Belém. The *ribeirinho*, quilombo, and indigenous groups with territory near the Trombetas depend on Oriximiná as a trading post. No reliable highway exists to deliver goods to Oriximiná so the waterfront acts as an interface for receiving a range of products from distant sources or more local movements such as cattle arriving for newly cleared pastures. A daily boat departs from the Oriximiná waterfront in the early afternoon, providing a circuit to *ribeirinho* communities along the edges of Lake Sapucuá, a large, fluctuating expanse of water and floating forests in between the Amazon and Trombetas rivers. The daily arrival of processed foods and fizzy drinks in these geographically remote Amazon communities links global markets to individuals living without electricity or running water. Thus, while methods of resource gathering throughout these *ribeirinho* communities remain modeled off indigenous practices, such practices live alongside new, globally available commercial products, a striking paradox for portrayals of an Amazonian wilderness.

East of Oriximiná, midway between Belém near the mouth of the Amazon River and Manaus at the center of the Brazilian Amazon, the medium-sized city of Santarém sits at the confluence of the Arapiuns, Tapajós, and Amazon Rivers. I will return to discussing Santarém's increasingly strategic position within the region, but for now I focus on the importance of the city as an education center for the *Interior* (*Universidade Federal do Oeste do Pará* or UFOPA). The growth of Santarém connects to the expansion of UFOPA in recent years which empowers the local indigenous movement through learning emphasizing decolonial approaches while technical subjects conversely enhance Santarém's evolution as a port of export for Brazil's central region via both the Tapajós River and BR-163 highway. Standing on the Santarém waterfront, both realities collide as the city continues to negotiate its future: Small, wooden boats arrive from nearby indigenous communities in the shadow of Cargill Corporation's new soy export terminal. Although the scale of Santarém's urban environment pales in comparison to Manaus or Belém, the smaller city serves as an important connection point for

Oriximiná to the world as boats travel daily between the two. Santarém is also Oriximiná's nearest airport with flights to Manaus, Brasília, and Belém. To summarize, Santarém's recent growth elevates its socio-cultural and economic status as a regional center for the *Interior*.

Forest peoples

Leaving from the Santarém docks in the evening, travelers will not arrive in Oriximiná until the following morning. Most of the journey between features little artificial distraction from the stars above. Urbanites may mistake this lack of electrical lights as indicative of empty wilderness, but the contrary is actually true. The nighttime darkness obscures countless settlements as the boat exits the mouth of the Tapajós, enters the powerful current of the Amazon River, and eventually ascends the Trombetas to dock at Oriximiná; rainy season waters conceal structures designed to last the yearly fluctuation of water levels. The margins of the Amazon River emerge during the dry season, unveiling *várzeas*, fertile floodplains ideal for agriculture. The Amazon ecosystem, often dismissed as "poor" in nutrients and agricultural possibilities, offers riverine communities seasonal opportunities for impressive crop yields (Nugent, 1993). Fertile terrains (for commercial agriculture) can be scarce across the Basin and development agencies commonly lament these constraints (again, for commercial agriculture) and conservation organizations quickly take up a similar discourse to justify why the Amazon would be better left as "Nature". Afterall, why waste the "lungs of the world" on growing food that can be easily imported from elsewhere? Concepts behind carefully managing landscapes for their competitive advantage commonly justify global North development interventions. Land zoning frequently avoids overlap of function, opting for monocultural territories as the most efficient option. For the communities of the PAE Sapucuá Trombetas (agro-extractivist settlement), the opposite necessity arises: Desire for autonomy means land use diversifies. Ironically the inefficiency (yet again, for commercial agriculture) of *ribeirinho* small scale farming and forest resource extraction has made for photogenic opportunities for international development and conservation organizations as well as the Brazilian government, to the point that *ribeirinhos* become poster children for sustainability in Amazonia. Yet at the same time, *ribeirinhos* are depicted as poor and at the mercy of Nature. These discourses and the processes involved in creating such subjectivities are related.

The advocacy and martyrdom of Chico Mendes in 1988 lead to the creation of novel forms of conservation including Extractive Reserves, Sustainable Development Reserves, and Agro-extractivist projects (PAE). Following these classifications, newly designated protected areas in Brazil identified the importance of community leadership and use of natural resources. Communities living in such reserves receive recognition by the Brazilian state as "Traditional Communities" and contribute non-timber forest products (NTFP) to local markets, the most famous being açaí and Brazil nuts (Allegretti, 2007). Other forest products including small scale tree-felling contribute principally to the community itself, such as canoes or house-siding. These lifeways are considered "traditional" because communities living in extractive reserves trace their histories to the beginning of the 20th century. These communities credit much of their knowledge to lessons learned from indigenous Amazonians

due to the necessity of survival in unfamiliar habitats--the ancestors of these "traditional" communities arrived from the Northeast during the rubber booms of the early 20th century (Garfield, 2013). Place-based, situated knowledge constitutes the core of the Extractive Reserve concept.

Returning to the catalytic spark, these people-centered, small scale use protected areas emerged in response to conflict over territory in the Brazilian Amazon and the murder of Chico Mendes in 1988. Waves of conflict spread across the Basin, primarily along the aptly-named "Arc of Destruction" borderlands at the southern and eastern edges. Expansion of conflict owes its planning to the military dictatorship, its funding to international development organizations such as the World Bank, and its execution to colonially-empowered large scale landowners favoring the deployment of rural violence to gain territory (Cockburn & Hecht, 1990). Through this lens, conflict in the Amazon remains rooted in territorial struggles emerging from epistemological contestation linked to race. White southern Brazilians displaced indigenous, Afro-descendant, and mixed ancestry communities along with Place-based subjectivities valuing the forest for its ecological communities rather than potential conversion to industrial use. To push back against the neocolonial invasion, indigenous Amazonians, Afro-descendents (Quilombos), small-scale extractivists like Chico Mendes (seringueiros, ribeirinhos, beiradeiros, and other labor-derived identities sometimes referred to as Amazonian peasants) partnered with international activists (including NGOs) and larger Brazilian social movements (such as the Landless Workers Movement or MST).

At the risk of flattening differences across these actors, "world-making" objectives include the protection of traditional Amazon lifeways and biodiversity. Both lifeways and biodiversity depend on space autonomous from the advance of the agribusiness frontier (Rubis & Theriault, 2019). Consider the United States' own frontier imaginary encapsulated in phrases such as Manifest Destiny, the march to the west, and Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro's own admiring allusion to the American cavalry's destruction of indigenous populations (Phillips, 2020). Actors representing this settler-colonial form of world-making include ranchers from the Brazilian South, large scale landowners, the Brazilian military, international agribusiness and Brazilian allies, international mining and Brazilian affiliates, and Brazilian citizens frustrated with setbacks in their nation's economic development. Frustrated Brazilian citizens flocked to Bolosonaro in the 2018 presidential election, envisioning modernization as the conversion of an empty or backwards Amazon to "productive" economies combined with the assimilation of the indigenous Other into mainstream Brazilian society. The development of protections for small-scale extractive use and resulting designation of reserves protecting traditional socio-ecological networks represented a negotiation between these unequivocal Amazon imaginaries. The recognition of territorial protections through traditional use reserves balances against the expansion of cattle pastures and soy fields.

Transitioning to the 21st Century, under the banner of multiculturalism, both neoliberal Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) and lefist Lula contributed to the expansion of Extractive Reserves during

their presidencies (Gomes, 2018). The RESEX framework became an international model for sustainable development, understood as balancing socio-ecological protections with the continuing projects of highways and industrial agriculture in the Amazon. This delicate armistice frayed when Dilma's presidency became more reliant on ruralists (large scale landowners and their political alliances) to preserve her political mandate (Costa, 2019). Dilma's coalition collapsed and her presidency ended in impeachment. The consequences of that dissolution became clear with the beginning of the Bolsonaro presidency in 2019. Despite changes in Brazilian political support for traditional use reserves[4], the international conservation community engages with national governments to present occupants of traditional use reserves as archetypes of sustainability on the global scale. Brazil's extractive reserve framework led to similar approaches around the world (Gomes et al., 2018) and images of community members tirelessly working in concert with their ecosystem became photogenic proof of hope for sustainability.

In tracing Conservation's narrative of the Amazon we have thus far encountered four imaginaries, two hidden and two extensively publicized. International conservation conjures Muir's legacy to focus on the wilderness qualities of the Basin and more recently showers praise on the sustainable forest dwelling subject, adding a touch of humanity. The urban Amazon remains obscured as does linkages between conservation practices and the wise use maxim of Pinchot. These four imaginaries exist in linked networks yet involve intra-Basin conflict, reminiscent of Anna Tsing's metaphor of "friction" to describe global-local dynamics in our current age (2005). The streamlined narrative of international NGOs, development organizations, and the Brazilian state of a Basin balanced between national economic interests and noble local traditional communities existing isolated, keepers of sustainable wisdom, does not account for how these same communities face dispossession and become branded as "backwards" by environmental authorities such as IBAMA and ICMBio--the Brazilian governmental agencies frequently acting as partners of large international environmental NGOs. The communities themselves negotiate this fluvial subjectivity, at times functioning as environmental props and in other moments regarded as dispendiable from the protected forests they traditionally inhabit. These communities may identify as *ribeirinho*, *beiradeiro, açaizeiros,* or *seringueiros*--subjectivities based on socio-ecological relations. Unlike discourses around indigeneity or quilombos these categories focus substantially on labor rather than culture or social organization (as evidenced by the above categories corresponding to situated labor practices), resulting in government interventions aimed at managing these traditional communities much like the conservation areas they call home. At Lago Sapucuá, the Brazilian government engages ribeirinho communities as though these communities present a liability for the bordering National Forest. This treatment reveals the reality of the logic of the National Forest, a form of protected area derived from Pinchot's concern with wise use of natural resources at industrial scales.

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[4] In 2007 the government of Brazil through decree 6040/07 recognized "traditional people and communities" to include indigenous, quilombo, and other regional cultures (including *ribeirinhos*) associated with Place-based lifeways and small-scale extractivism (Calegare, 2014).

Environmentality

To the West of Oriximiná, in the small communities founded along *iguarapes* draining into Lago Sapucuá, little electricity exists. Generators and precious fuel are saved for church services or the yearly celebrations of saints. During these lengthy parties neighboring communities assemble for a shared meal, cold drinks, and electrified *Forro* music. The Lago Sapucuá region features little monoculture or tourism, yet extraction is never far away in the Amazon, as exemplified by the massive bauxite mining operations governed by Mineração do Rio Norte (MRN). All other economic activities pale in intensity compared to the monumental freighters leaving the Trombetas for the Amazonas before eventually unloading at the refinery of Barcarena near Belém. Natural forms are leveraged by a power hierarchy with MRN at the summit (Kohn, 2013). Towering plateaus crown the Saracá-Taquera National Forest (FLONA). High above the streams or *iguarapes* flowing into Lago Sapucuá, MRN dismantles forests to access thick deposits of bauxite. Aerial photography reveals the "ruins" left behind, eerily organized lagoons of waste, mining pits, and creeks severed by roads for trucking output (Gordillo, 2014). Community members expressed uncertainty over where the bauxite travels after it is pulled from the mountains, only that it had been ripped from their forest and was not going to be sold until it was far far away.

Seu Ze is one of the residents living along the margins of Lago Sapucuá below the bauxite mines and has substantial experience fighting MRN's vision for the FLONA Saracá-Taquera. Originally from Maranhão to the east, Seu Ze married into the community and worked the communal land he was granted through use rights via marriage. Seu Ze had witnessed competing visions of Amazonia from the lawless highways connecting Maranhão with eastern Pará to wildcat gold-mining in the west (*garimpo*). Although Seu Ze had already spent much time in Amazonia, when he arrived at the community of Boa Nova, he was treated as an outsider "Seu Ze Maranhense" (Seu Ze of Maranhão). He is still referred to by this name years later. In conversations with Seu Ze and others in the communities of Lago Sapucuá, agroecological knowledge was most frequently mentioned as the attribute separating Seu Ze from locals. It seemed odd that an outsider would be so highly regarded for his perspective amongst communities known for their long-term connection to the land and family ties. Yet, the logic behind the primacy of Seu Ze's knowledge replicates the pattern of subordination of local practices except when outsiders affirm value (the previously-mentioned romanticization of small-scale extractivists as ecologically harmonious stewards presented by NGOs).

Seu Ze's arrival from the east, Maranhão, led community members to associate Seu Ze with the colonial past, the emergence of history and civilization. Seu Ze even described himself as having brought knowledge from the Northeast, an area associated with a longer history of agriculture. He explained that he knew techniques for maximizing production of fruit trees, watermelon, and other valuable crops that were unknown to Amazon locals. Seu Ze's history offers a contemporary mirror of the past trajectory of community ancestors. Northeastern drought and Amazonian rubber booms at

the turn of the 20th century and leading up to World War II lured subsistence farmers to emigrate through Fortaleza in Ceará to rubber tree groves (*seringais*) scattered throughout Amazonia. The natural dispersal of rubber trees foreshadowed the eventual assimilation of the migrants into the forests: Rubber bosses frequently reported their workers vanishing into the environment, sometimes returning to work though often abandoning the efficient regiments advised by development officials from both Brazil and the United States[5]. Brazilian officials shifted between lauding the tenacity of these rubber extractivists and scorning their unreliability. Often the difference in narrative equated to an inside-outside dynamic: When Brazil needed to represent itself to the outside world, officials focused on the durability of these workers due to a history of racial mixing and hard work. However, when these officials turned to governance and coercion of these same men to efficiently extract rubber, the indolence of the extractivists became the focus. While the technocrats guiding rubber development placed some blame on the character of these workers, the forest itself frequently assumed culpability. Outsiders championed the Amazon forest both for its exotic beauty and fecundity, yet the forest invariably corrupted the men who entered its rubber groves. As a more recent arrival, Seu Ze perhaps remained partially free of the forest's influence that slowly breaks down work ethic and rationality like a mold. Seu Ze appreciated the problematic yet valuable respect he received as an outsider as he succeeded in growing difficult crops with commercial value, and leveraged this historically-rooted framing to champion both education and leadership across the communities of Lago Sapucuá.

Although the Portuguese colonization of the Brazilian landmass began on the eastern coast, Seu Ze never associated his knowledge with Portuguese ancestors. He highlighted another outcome of Portugal's violent subjugation of land and labor: his African ancestry. Seu Ze valorized his African ancestors, explaining that his agricultural knowledge had come from Africa as opposed to local Amazonian knowledge connected to past and current indigenous societies. When speaking of knowledge, Seu Ze sought to "delink" his knowledge traditions from both those emerging through Western modernity (as exemplified by the Portugusese and international conservation actors) and postcolonial actors as well (the Workers Party or *Partido Trabalhador*). Seu Ze expressed an ambivalence between these two political and epistemological polarities, instead situating his knowledge in his body and relations with the land (De Sousa Santos, 2015). He also promoted the situated knowledge of others, explaining that although most community members had never achieved much education through Brazilian schools, they were "doctors in the forest". Brazilian authorities disagreed. Community members recount attending meetings with IBAMA and ICMBio regarding national forest management during which their intelligence was insulted and dismissed as "unsustainable". Community members live in constant fear of rebuke by environmental authorities and when invited to meetings must silently listen to "experts" explain sustainability (Nepomuceno et al., 2019). One local recounted their experience at meetings, explaining that government officials typically commanded,

[5] The United States government was divided on how to stimulate the rubber industry in Brazil as some politicians supported standards for treatment of labor while others intended to leave the matter of worker's rights up to the Brazilian government and focus on maximizing rubber extraction regardless of labor conditions (Garfield, 2013).

"*Faz isso, faz isso, faz isso*" ("Do this, do this, do this") without proper respect. The irony of such moments was not lost on locals who laughed when pointing out their inclusion on a sustainability calendar in heartwarming images yet faced the frequent discipline of IBAMA and ICMBio for unsustainability. Outside knowledge commanded respect over local knowledge, except in this case when local knowledge proved useful for affirming the government's environmental authorities.

Earlier I identified the epistemological foundations of environmentality as theorized by Arun Agrawal (2005) through empirical study of forest communities in India. Nancy Peluso's findings from Java point to a similar pattern of governance efforts to constrict traditional, local use of natural resources in favor of the rationality of export (1994). State-sponsored development of environmental subjectivities occurs as an outcome of the pristine wilderness-resource management conservation dichotomy identified earlier in this chapter: locals either don't belong or do not maximize wise use of the forest. Officials involved in forest governance--whether public or private--must preserve the imaginaries of people-less wilderness and natural resources exploitation by limiting the resource rights and forest relations of locals. Environmentality functions through leveraging the international legitimacy of sustainability discourse while normalizing and even rationalizing disposition on the ground. As a result, MRN's industrial extraction of bauxite represents a rational use of the national forest while a community member's felling of one tree to construct a canoe violates environmental norms based on economic efficiencies (Taylor, 2006). Community members internalize the inferiority of their knowledge as well as their place in the hierarchy of development buttressed by international development and conservation discourse. Organizations from outside Amazonia set the standards for management of the forest, including local faces only when conveniently credible.

Environmentality obscures and distrusts local knowledge. In *Rewilding the World* (2010), author Caroline Fraser quotes conservationist Joseph Kirathe, "Conservation is about managing people. It's not about managing wildlife." Although this statement undoubtedly holds truth, humans, especially locals, become problematized rather than lauded for their involvement in socio-ecological systems. Although Seu Ze is respected for his outside knowledge while also advocating for the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) of community members, interviewees from the community of São Fransisco did not emphasize their knowledge of the forest, but rather focused on the deficiencies of their knowledge. The leader of the community organization, Jesi, emphasized that their efforts to preserve species and provide economic opportunities for their children had failed due to lack of scientific knowledge. When speaking of agricultural systems, they noted that perhaps Seu Ze knew more than they because he came from Maranhão which was perceived as more developed, and more modern because the state exists to the east, outside of Amazonia. A hierarchy of knowledge materializes with the *ribeirinho* communities at the edge of Saracá-Taquera National Forest situated at the bottom or on the periphery. The emergence of this knowledge hierarchy corresponds with what Saskia Widenhorn describes as epistemic or cognitive injustice (2014). Knowledge emerging from a Western natural resource epistemology exterior to the Amazon is assumed as more modern than local

traditional ecological knowledge. The internalization of this colonial mantra internalizes inferiority as demonstrated in Jesi's comment about crop failures above. This form of epistemological self-disciplining even challenges local, situated knowledge of the forest. When community members attempted to establish a new, productive forest of itaúba trees, the death of the young saplings was seen as indicative of the need for expert help rather than a refusal of the forest to function with the dislocated rationality of modern natural resource management. However, the blame was internalized as local, human failure rather than an ecosystem reality much like the impossibility of rationalized, industrial production of rubber (Garfield, 2013).

The conclusion of the Amazon's rainy season around July foretold a mix of torrential downpours juxtaposed with brilliantly hot sun. Seu Ze's aluminum boat received both with equal enthusiasm adding thermal drama to the transit between homes scattered along the creeks (*igurapes*) feeding into the Lago Sapucuá. Seu Ze would call out to the elevated wooden homes as we approached. The occupants' first look was always skeptical. Noticing myself and my Brazilian collaborator Hugo, residents explained that they were initially concerned, thinking that we must be with IBAMA (the Brazilian environmental agency responsible for administering environmental fines). They figured Seu Ze must have been hired as our local guide. The aluminum boat also spoke to government resources as community members typically travel in wooden canoes made of itaúba powered by a slim *rabeta* motor instead of the more potent motor on Seu Ze's boat. Seu Ze's boat had been provided by the local union (he currently served as temporary community president). Despite the additional cost, the canoe and *rabeta* combination actually was superior for these geographies, requiring less fuel and adapting better to fluctuating water levels. We frequently cut our engine to paddle by hand; failure to do so results in untangling the aquatic plants thriving in the high waters from our propellor. Locals saw Hugo and my soft exteriors along with our choice of boat as indicators of our outsider status before we ever spoke. And because the only outsiders to visit this remote pocket of Amazonia are government agents, community residents feared disciplinary measures. While most community interviewees recounted a personal experience with discipline from environmental officials, environmental education remained absent. A community member explained that authorities tell the communities to behave in a certain ways without providing tasks or training. The recent arrival of this environmentality contrasts with the long-term relations between the communities and the forest. The Brazilian government created the National Forest in 1989 despite the pre-existing communities of both mixed-ancestry (*ribeirinhos*) and Afro-descendents (Quilombos). Up until 2010 the National Forest included the communities' settlements when community organizing led to the creation of a PAE (Agro-extractivist territory). However, much of the communities' traditional territory remains behind the borders of the National Forest.

Interviewees included members of the Boa Nova community on Lago Sapucuá as well as the four communities of Lago Maria Pixi[6]. Interviews with elders of the São Francisco community of Maria Pixi dated the founding of the São Francisco community to the time of their parents, corresponding roughly with the beginning of the second rubber boom in the 1930's though some suggested an even earlier founding around the turn of century. One work site we visited had remained in continuous use for 80 years (Zé Bó) centering on manioc cultivation and processing. The founding members were most likely connected to the dispersion of rubber workers discussed earlier. Interviewees credited indigenous Amazonians with having taught these newcomers the skills needed for surviving in a new environment such as planting manioc and creating shelters with palm leaves. The emerging communities also mixed with nearby quilombo populations who sought refuge in the forests of Pará prior to abolition. Today the *ribeirinho* communities include relatives of Quilombo communities existing on the opposite side of the National Forest on the Trombetas River. Like these *ribeirinhos* of Lago Sapucuá, the Quilombos also fought for the right to territory and received demarcations sectioned out of the National Forest. Traditionally São Francisco and surrounding communities had little access to goods exterior to the forest yet learned to rely on the surrounding forests and waters for all needs apart from sugar, salt, and coffee. Emphasis of the self-sufficiency of these communities does not imply lack of outside contact, rather that lifeways existed autonomously with the forest both by relation and necessity. Returning to Seu Ze's earlier comment on the communities' extensive knowledge of forest products, lack of currency precluded reliance on imports while the biodiversity of the forest provided access to nutrition, medicine, and building materials. As one São Francisco community explained, "Nós somos filhos dessa terra" ("We are the children of this land"). Relations between people and the forest as territory continued despite the designation of the National Forest in the 1980's.

In 1989 the creation of Floresta Nacional (FLONA) Saracá-Taquera heralded the arrival of a large protected area for the region. International and domestic campaigns centering on protecting the rainforest raised the consciousness of non-Amazonians and evaporated the natural resource base of São Francisco and nearby communities. The resulting local struggle for traditional territory would last until 2010 with the creation of the agro-extractivist settlement (PAE). However, the most resource-rich, core of the forest remains restricted territory of the Brazilian state. Despite a long history of community use of the forest, attempts by community members to grow traditional crops or extract necessary timber result in heavy fines that are essentially impossible for locals to pay with currency. The current PAE designation does not provide a sufficient resource base for *ribeirinho* populations, necessitating risky incursions into the national forest. Many community members remember the period before the FLONA as a time of autonomy and continuity between generations. The arrival of IBAMA enforcement ushered in a new reality of resource squeeze and added dependence on the markets of Oriximiná for expensive, processed foods and petroleum-based lifeways such as transport to

[6] I mostly refer to these communities as existing on Lago Sapucuá because Lago Maria Pixi is a smaller body of water adjoining the larger lake. Access between the two varies depending on water levels.

the town and replacement of organic materials with plastics. Community elders fear that future generations will be drawn further and further from their traditional territories. As resources leave the forest for urban areas, forest dwellers will follow that path, traveling along paths of extraction. As alluded to earlier, most community members have at least one relative working in Manaus or Belém. While communication between these Amazonian metropoles and the *Interior* is historical, the more recent expansion of violent land-grabbing and resource displacement in the *Interior* threatens intergenerational continuity of local knowledge. Neo-malthusian perspectives may dismiss migration to cities as a result of a diminishing natural resource (Hardin, 1974). However, this rhetoric overlooks the role of power and coloniality in continuing the extraction of forest value for markets outside Amazonia. As the Brazilian government, private corporations, and international organizations earmark Amazon resources for both national and international importance, local communities are pushed to the margins.

Environmentality appears in various yet common forms across the world. For the FLONA Saracá-Taquera, Brazilian environmental authorities utilize conservation and sustainability narratives through the creation of national forest. Although locals commonly face criticism from Brazilian authorities for their lack of environmental awareness, interviewees noticed the dissonance between platitudes of IBAMA or ICMBio and the nature of activities occuring in the national forest. Sustainable management discourse makes for green-washed governmentality, allowing the creation of a "managed global Nature" free from site-specific cultural commitments (Tsing, 2005, p. 107). The Brazilian government commends corporations such as MRN and timber companies for their sustainable practices and job creation, contrasting with the direct experience of community members:

> *The large corporations are not good citizens, they don't help with planning, they view social good as only a tax on their income.*
> --Boa Nova community member
>
> *The constructions machines unearth the holes where the animals live, flattening the animals we hunt.*
> --interviewee at Lago Sapucua

An interviewee recounts the horror of destruction occurring within the national forest. Frequently informants focused on impacts to water and food sources. The Brazilian government's exclusion of community activities in favor of industrial extraction of timber or bauxite results in an asphyxiation of Place-based lifeways, a trade-off common for traditional communities in resource rich geographies (Escobar, 2008). National forest regulations limit traditional activities within the forest and squeeze availability of clean water and food sources outside the national forest borders. Again, this is a common outcome of application of environmentality through government regulation of forest resources. The

threat of government fines for interactions with the forest beyond the government borders couples with extractive industries' deception of local communities through isolating individuals with cash payments to allow for destruction of community resources.

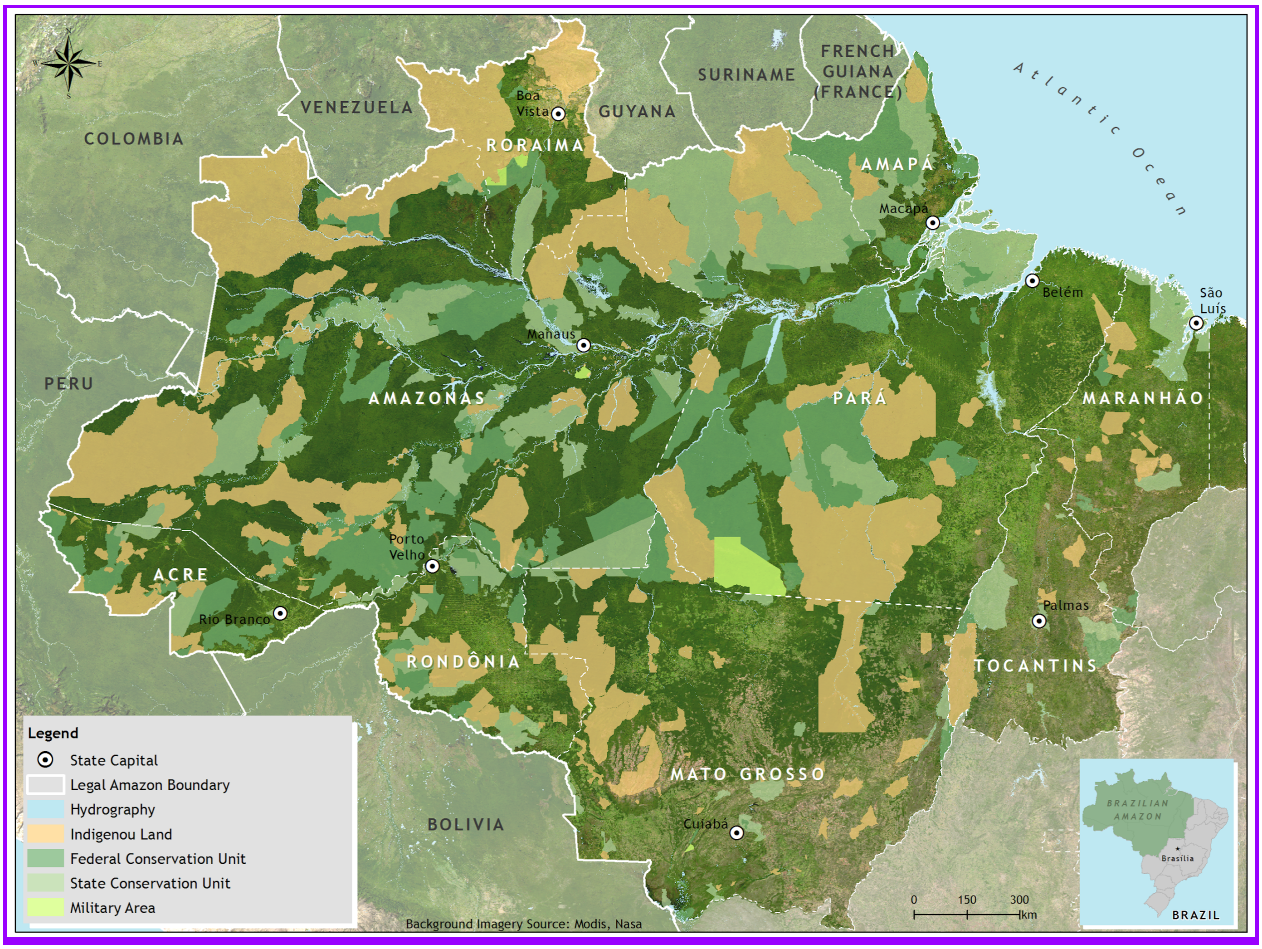
> *They* (MRN) *will come to people in your community individually, offer money, and when the money is accepted say that the entire community has agreed to their project* (mining).
> --Seu Ze

Seu Ze had already resisted the hegemonia of the government-extractive industries assemblage in his village of Boa Nova. As he guided us by boat through the aquatic forests connecting to the communities of Maria Pixi including São Francisco, he resolved to preempt the arrival of company representatives of MRN. During introductions to the residents of São Francisco and three other communities, his message was simple: Both mining and logging was planned for the forests and plateaus at the headwaters of the community streams. These same headwaters connected the fate of his own community to São Francisco and others. Soon company representatives would arrive and attempt to isolate residents, offering individuals small payments in exchange for the right to degrade the community's resources. MRN had a mitigation budget and company leadership were rewarded when they spent as little as possible. Community members had already noticed the telltale signs of commencing extraction operations: "Do not enter" signage banning access to traditional sites in the forest and the growls of arriving heavy machinery. At a community gathering following São Francisco's yearly celebration, Seu Ze advised listeners to be proactive lest they find themselves caught in the sights of extractive industries. He called on the community to unite and work together to proclaim its traditional territories through mapping, just as he and his community had done.

<u>Mapping</u>

Seu Ze told me he had imagined what my home, the United States, must be like. He envisioned the United States as the opposite of the forested landscape surrounding Lago Sapuaca. For Seu Ze, the United States is devoid of any forest, a giant city stretching from shore to shore. This is the mythology of how the center of modernity transformed a landscape, even a continent, an idea emphasized by the rhetoric of the Brazilian Bolsonaro government ("Brazil's indigenous to sue Bolsonaro," 2020). In the imaginations of Brazil's governing elites, the Amazon and its peoples are prehistoric remnants of an irrelevant past ("Bolsonaro declares 'the Amazon is ours'," 2019). While Amazon spaces and peoples remain situated outside of time and history, at the edge of existence, the United States represents the center of progress. It follows that Brazil is somewhere in between and must develop Amazonia in order to reach the United States' modern status. This development narrative extends beyond the Brazilian federal government, Brazilian citizens I met throughout the country repeated attitudes ranging from regret that the Amazon must be destroyed to develop the national economy to national pride in

deforestation. Bolsonaro even framed deforestation as culturally Brazilian (Lopes, 2019). Bolsonaro's dismissal of deforestation as cultural stands in stark contrast to notable Brazilian efforts to protect the Amazon. International news sources frequently lauded Brazil's efforts to establish protected areas across the Basin (Viscidi & Graham, 2019). Indeed, the elevation of Amazon conservation to a global issue offered the Brazilian government a platform to project its image as an environmental leader, even leading to Brazil's role as a negotiator between the global North and global South in climate talks. Rich nations such as Germany, Norway, and the Netherlands invested significant financial resources in Brazilian conservation and sustainable development programs through the Amazon Fund, buttressing the duties of state governments including in Pará (Ortiz, 2019). So how did deforestation suddenly become both cultural and necessary for development in Brazil?



(Imazon, 2014)

While international conservation organizations may imagine their contribution to the Amazon as pushing back against the Brazilian government's narrative of western civilization/modernity, in fact they are contributing a connected imaginary. In this competing but ultimately reinforcing imaginary, the Amazon is untouched, unspoiled Nature. Brazilians connected to international media become

exposed to this vision of the Amazon: a living museum of rainforests, tribes, and colorful biodiversity. Brazilians are also taught to feel shame about Brazil's management of the Amazon. A college-educated, middle class Brazilian I spoke with in São Paulo conceded that perhaps the Amazon would be better off in international hands. The international conservation narrative thus depicts the Brazilian Amazon as an endangered ecosystem of international importance. It is similarly prehistoric, existing as an ideal, the conservationist's dream. This idealization and romanticization cannot help but polarize. Battlelines on either side of the debate are drawn with the reality of the contemporary societies of the Amazon existing in the liminal middle space. Absent from both development and conservation's vision is discussion of the agency to Amazon locals. What do those living in the Basin desire for the rainforest's future?

Local considerations fail to inspire at the scale of the grand debates on the Brazilian Amazon's future. Policy architects frame desired outcomes at the international level: lungs of the world versus the world's future of food supply (Andreoni & Londono, 2019). Individuals such as Seu Ze, Jesi, and youth *ribeirinho* communities are peripheral to these debates. They lack the knowledge that both development and conservation admire. For precisely this reason, Seu Ze situated his knowledge within a tradition of resistance, of quilombos who formed their own societies at the borders of colonial Brazilian and indigenous cultures by highlighting his family on Alcântara in Maranhão, a site of territorial contestation involving Quilombo communities, the Brazilian space agency, and the United States. Seu Ze's claiming of this legacy is an example of epistemological disobedience and border thinking. The embodied truth of his claims resonates with others materially connected to the forest through their labor and oral histories. The community of São Francisco immediately recognized Seu Zé as a leader, even a prophet as he narrated the coming destruction resulting from expanding mining and timber operations. Seu Zé encouraged disobedience to the regulations of the National Forest as a form of activism and cultural survival. Even as he highlighted his conversion to evangelical Christianity, he emphasized his status at the border, speaking of charms he always carried with him in the forest. He spoke of jaguar encounters with enthusiasm and referred to others in the community as *caboclo* in moments of solidarity. The sum of Seu Ze's actions, rhetoric, and worldview emphasize decoloniality, a concept which Mignolo asserts as emerging from the "Third World" (Mignolo, 2013). When asked of his dream for the future, Seu Ze reflected a decolonial option absent from both westernization and de-westernization approaches: *bem viver*. *Bem Viver* may be described as "a holistic practice that describes both a vision and a practice" (Widenhorn, 2014, p. 382). The philosophy emerged from conversations connecting indigenous Andean perspectives with critical theory including postcolonial considerations. *Bem Viver* (or *Buen Vivir* in Spanish) expanded across South America, acknowledged as an alternative to development. Given the deep linkages to Western conservation practices to development philosophies, I regard *Bem Viver* as a viable alternative to conservation. The spread of the philosophy throughout South America with connections to conversations in the United States and Europe speaks to the compelling nature of an alternative to both conservation and development. At a national level in Brazil, consideration of *Bem Viver* remains peripheral unlike Ecuador or Bolivia which

incorporated the philosophy into national initiatives. Catherine Walsh, a leading thinker on connections between Bem Viver and development, references the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution for its description of *Bem Viver* as "a new form of citizen coexistence, in diversity and harmony with nature" (Walsh, 2010, p. 18). The emphasis on relationality is significant and in contrast to both conservation and development interventions which invariably sever relations as in the case of the creation of the Saracá-Taquerá National Forest.

Throughout my interviews, *ribeirinhos* of the Boa Nova and São Francisco communities living along the edges of the national forest emphasized the relations communities maintained with forest lifeways. Although conflict exists within the communities over resource rights and resistance practices, interviewees were unanimous in their appeal to relations: between communities, within families, and with the forest. Interviewees imagined that this historical network of connections would continue with their grandchildren. Yet, that future is currently threatened by the expanding operations of timber and mining in the forest. In Boa Nova, Seu Ze's cousin Jones told a cautionary tale of how quickly relations with Place could be altered and replaced with detached individualisms. Jones explained that massive groves of Brazil nut trees (*castanha do Pará*) previously existed atop plateaus within the national forest. MRN destroyed the groves when the plateaus were cleared to begin Bauxite mining and replaced the communal gathering practices with individual contracts to perform dangerous work procuring seeds that would ultimately be used for government-required reforestation by the mining company. Families had previously journeyed to the Brazil nut groves together, embodying an intersection of production, food security, social cohesion, and tradition. Theorists often invoke the concept of Place to describe the occurrence of meaning and affect connected to physical spaces yet transcending the material properties of those spaces (Escobar, 2008).

Although both conservation and development attempt to appropriate ideas such as Place and community consultation often through the notion of sustainable development, Western conceptions of territory and space result in a logic of separability and equivalence (Escobar, 2018). Returning to the map of Brazilan Amazon protected areas, the impressive scope speaks to an ecological vision for conserving the Amazon yet obscures the negotiation and trading of ecologies with development interests. Protected areas established along the "Arc of Destruction" in Pará were meant to compensate for the expansion of agriculture, cattle, and other extractive industries. While conservation approaches compromises as integral to advancing its agenda of protecting the Amazon, concerns for local autonomy or Place-based relations and histories must question losses obscured by high-level, government-sponsored arrangements that create both conservation and extraction geographies. Only by scaling down to hear the stories of individuals and communities does the intimate stores of those living in Place and traditional territories become apparent.

During a participatory mapping excursion in the Saracá-Taquerá National Forest, our group of male community members were joined by one woman. Francinilda dos Santos explained that she was aware

of the risk involved in joining us in the national forest. She explained, "*Nos sempre estamos com medo quando nós passamos a linha pra trabalhar*" ("We are always afraid to pass into the national forest to work"). Brazilian federal employees from IBAMA and ICMBio frequently engage in intimidation tactics to convince community members to avoid entering the national forest. Interviewees described these tactics as including disciplinary measures such the fines mentioned in my discussion of environmentality. However, beyond fines, the community faces threats of physical harm resulting from accidents involving the heavy machinery of timber and mining in the forest. Yet, for Francinilda dos Santos missing this opportunity to return to the site of her birth and childhood meant an even greater risk. Francinilda had passed her family's territory within the national forest to her relative by marriage, Jesi, who asserted the need to return to occupy this land in the national forest, "*Depend nós continuamos mostrar que o trabalho aqui é nosso*" ("[Territory] depends on us continuing to show that the work [in the forest] belongs to us").

Like other community members, Francinilda was born on a small *roça* surrounded by stalking jaguars, boisterous howler monkeys, and the ebullient foliage of manioc the most important food staple of the Amazon. It took our group two days to reach the site of her father's former *roça* through a mix of hiking, riding dirtbikes, and crossing meandering streams filled with clear water. Community members took pride in this cool water, savoring stops to gather, drink, and feel relief from the tropical heat. When I drank the water I felt similarly refreshed though nervous of potential gastrointestinal consequences given my body's lack of familiarity with the ecosystem. The *donos da floresta* were kind and I experienced no side-effects, a testament to the priceless purity of the forest waters. The presence of these streams deep within the forest enable community members to undertake long journeys into the heart of *o Centro* without carrying water. Our group remarked on each forest resource gathering site, leading me to understand that we navigated the dense forest through environmental labor relations rather than a managed trail. When we finally arrived at the ruins of Francinilda's childhood home, the emotional reunion took priority as community members watched her uncover the remains of the *casa da farinha*. She pointed out where her family had harvested açaí from dense groves. Then during a short interview with her and the São Francisco community leader Jesi, the two passionately spoke on behalf of their relationship to Place. On the verge of tears and supported by her good friend and relative, Jesi, she carefully articulated the difference between her community's reality and that of the Brazilian state. She contested the official narrative of her community as backwards, unsustainable, and destructive while emphasizing the relational and historical nature of their connection to the forest. As she spoke, her language highlighted the role of the forest as both home and family member. Since the community had been pushed outside the forest, its lineage had been disrupted.

When speaking of the forest, the community of São Francisco never uses the government terminology of *floresta nacional* or *FLONA*. The community refers to the forest as the "Center" (*o Centro*). *O Centro* is where people retreat to in times of social anguish but also a source of favorite stories. This forested tapestry of histories, memories, and sustenance corresponds with ideas of territory and future

resilience despite shifting social and environmental conditions. Community mapping participants contrasted the government's relationship with the forest from their sense of Place. They described the government's interests as exclusively the transformation of the environment into income through the selling of logging and mining permits to private corporations. The prices these corporations could pay were well beyond the finances of the community--the community wished that they had the resources to legally gain official access to their traditional territories within the national forest at an equal level to the timber and mining companies. Beyond the difference of wealth, the community stressed that while the government wanted the forest sent far away, even beyond the shores of Brazil, the community retained the materials they gathered from the forest, building their lives from the wealth of the forest and passing the resulting homes, canoes, and tools to future generations. The difference in scale at the basis of desire over the same resource could hardly be more dramatic. These prized material legacies crafted of cherished trees such as the esteemed itaúba represent the continuance of the forest rather than its destruction as they are passed down through generations within the community. Unlike the Brazilian government and extractive industries, the São Francisco community members did not seek the transformation of the forest into exclusionary property. Conversely, Seu Ze highlighted the multi-species mosaic of stakeholders. Seu Ze explained that he did not resent the *jacaré* for eating the community's fish nor the *onça*'s consumption of community hogs because these wild animals retained as much right to the shared home as the community. Similarly, the community's use of forest resources, whether noble woods or hunting deer, emerged from an existence in partnership. Even the presence of the *curupira* affirmed the relationality between human and more-than-human under the shared tropical canopy high above.

Desires

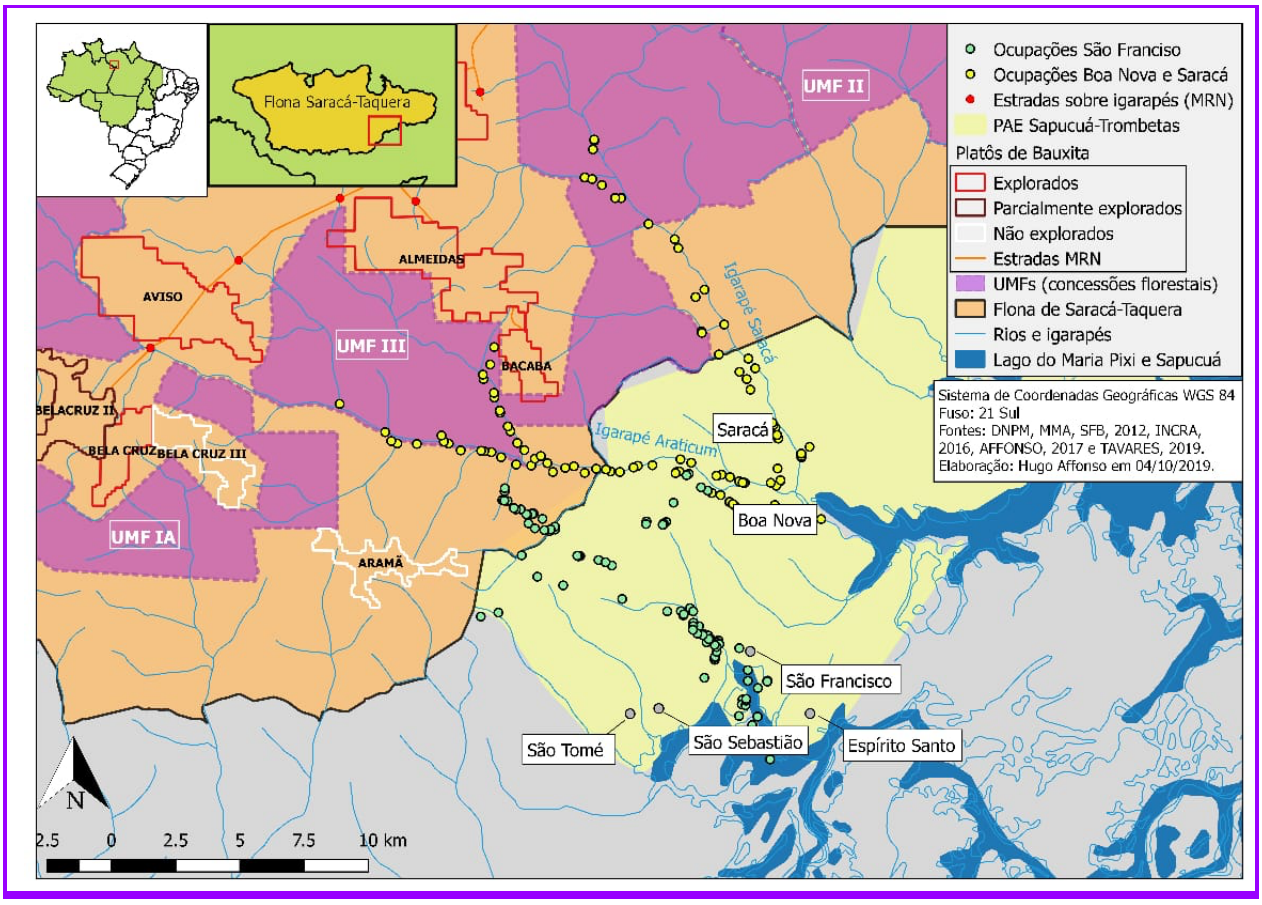
The Amazon's seasonal cycle moves through a wet season and dry season. The waters of the river, *iguarapes*, and lakes are at their lowest as the wet season begins. I heard the wet season referred to as the "Amazon winter"--in Belem, the *pancada da chuva* disrupts *carnaval* block parties and by time Ash Wednesday arrives, much of the city is satisfied to pass weekends indoors, awaiting the return of the dry season and anxiously eyeing the rising flood waters throughout the city. Yet, invariably each day of rainstorms includes a temporary pause. The silent skies sometimes accompany the setting sun and as dusk falls, the sumptuous temperatures and ambient organic noise of birds or bugs casts a sense of eternity: a perfect moment possible no matter the month or season. For myself, a product of latitudes of distinct four seasons, there is no sensory difference between the temperature, lighting, or more-than-human activity. I feel similarly when walking through lowland Amazon forest, the visible landscape a captivating mosaic of organisms with no vantage of landscape change or ecological community borders. At the intimate scale on the forest floor, I experience my surroundings as anywhere and nowhere in particular, just as the evening realm of temperature, humidity, and light engenders timelessness.

Following the *ribeirinho* group through the assemblage of vines, trees, glossy leaves, and echoing forest sounds left me feeling vulnerable and naive to the invisible intricacies of the forest. I observed no path in sight and I knew that if there was a path, it was invisible to me. Yet we moved confidently through the dense understory, an embodied structure of sites for gathering forest resources and stalking memories fastened by a lifetime connected to this Place. The invisible path also served strategically, obscuring the vital arteries connecting the sanctioned territories outside the national forest to traditional lands within. High above the steamy forest in the cold, silent expanse of outer space, IBAMA monitors the national forest through satellite, an almost mythical mechanical eye--silently sensing, surveilling, searching. Community members will never see the satellite nor IBAMA staff reviewing aerial surveys of the forest, but everyone I spoke with feared the arrival of forest police with exorbitant fines. Community members did not contest the importance of a forest reserve, however, the current structure of exclusion, surveillance, and discipline spoke to environmental official's dismissal of the community's traditional rights. One São Francisco community member highlighted the need for the forest to be administered by the community as a reserve, "*Seria bom ficar como uma reserva. Nós precisamos do recursos naturais.*" ("It would be good if this was a reserve [for us]. We need these natural resources"). For now the community remains entangled in the risks associated with entering the forest to gather the very resources upon which collective survival depends.

Rubis & Theriault apply the idea of survivance as articulated by Vizenor to the efforts undertaken by traditional communities to both conceal and embrace international conservation (2019). Based on my conversations with the *ribeirinhos* at São Francisco, similar necessities face community members: Leaders must embrace sustainability narratives by appearing on agro-forestry calendars even while concealing that their traditional lifeways continue to rely on the restricted forest core. Ironically, the same aerial imaging avoided by the community reveals the massive extent of damage caused by bauxite mining. However, the Brazilian government regards this industrial use of the forest as sustainable, citing the role of bauxite mining in regional development efforts and applauding Mineração do Rio Norte (MRN) for its commitment to reforestation. The scale of MRN's activities in the Saracá-Taquerá National Forest ensures that all communities existing on the periphery of the forest experience impacts. While these communities experience minimal day-to-day interaction with each other, their reliance on forest resources faces constant threat from the pollution, disruption, and threats of violence connected to bauxite mining. The communities themselves exist at small scales, with no more than 60 households in São Francisco, especially isolated from neighbors during the rainy season due to logistical barriers. For example, Seu Zé who resides in Boa Nova explained that while he suspects his family has relatives in the communities of Lago Maria Pixi (which includes São Francisco), the cost of fuel and winding route through floating forests between Boa Nova and São Francisco means he seldom visits. When I asked Seu Zé about the Quilombo (Afro-descendent) territories bordering the national forest along the Trombetas River, he did not reference significant interaction with any residents, though again, he suspected relatives formed familial bonds between nearby *ribeirinho* residents and those in the Quilombo communities.

Seu Zé participated in a project organized by Fundação Pró-Índio de São Paulo which produced a report on the impact of MRN's bauxite mining operations on the communities living along the borders of the Saracá-Taquerá National Forest. In contrast to the immediate, relational scale of the *ribeirinho* and quilombo communities, the scale of MRN's operations is stunning: Entire plateaus previously covered with dense forest transformed into naked pits alongside lakes of mining waste. Suddenly the entire national forest appears small with tendrils of contamination leaking into the streams of communities no matter which side of the forest they draw their water from. In *Friction*, Anna Tsing identifies the role interlocking scales as necessary for the production of global capitalism (2005). Tsing also notes the flows of resources and information enabling local environmentalisms to connect via global networks also produce the circumstances for counter-mobilizations of anti-environment rhetoric. A similar dynamic exists at the Saracá-Taquerá National Forest where the MRN as part of international mining conglomerate Vale connects spoilage of local water supplies to global thirst for aluminum. However, the scale of MRN's operations also make visible ribeirinho and quilombo struggles, attracting the attention of Fundação Pró-Índio in São Paulo. Countless ribeirinho communities across Amazônia do not benefit from the same visibility. Students at the federal university in Santarém explained that most Brazilian academics overlook the needs of *ribeirinho* communities, let alone the absence of the international community. Indeed this gap of support motivated me to ask the *ribeirinho* communities of Lago Maria Pixi whether they were interested in working together on a project.

I recognize the irony between on one hand the community of São Francisco's desire for a map to highlight their traditional territory and on the other hand their careful avoidance of attracting attention from Brazilian--or international--forest monitors. However, returning to the concept of survivance, the community acknowledged the tension between providing for the necessities of daily life through hidden subsistence activities in the forest and advocating for their long-term survival through denouncing MRN and publishing a map of traditional territory. Returning to Jesi's comment, the community must demonstrate that the territory is theirs through the testament of their work. The map we produced in partnership with the community focused on traditional work sites in the forest, articulating the nature of the relationship between people and forest, a relationship grounded in exchange. This manner of exchange extends to the more-than-human community of alligators and river dolphins: *"All the animals are necessary to maintain the connection of life:* jacaré, boto, arraiha, peixe. *People think the lake would be better without jacaré, but how would you react if someone entered your house to take things?"*



GPS data by Hugo Tavares & Benjamin Kantner; GIS visualization by Hugo Gravina

Just as the lure of opportunities in cities such as Manaus or Belém must be acknowledged, the value of continuing *ribeirinho* lifeways of the *Interior* exist as equally modern. As referenced in my literature review, Kothari et al. advance a similar vision for the "Pluriverse" that must succeed previous focuses on development, including the "sustainable development" purportedly practiced by MRN (2020). In contrast to visions for development deployed by Brazil's political center in Brasília or economic centers in the southern states including São Paulo, Paraná, and Rio Grande do Sul, pluriversal visions for the Amazon future do not necessitate the transformation of entire ecosystems into plantation-style fuel production, the destruction of rivers for the sake of expensive hydropower, or reliance on the production of commodities for export.

While I was living in Belém I walked past the Norsk Hydro's towering glass tower daily. Norsk Hydro supports MRN operations in the Saracá-Taquerá as a foreign shareholder and partner in the production of aluminum from raw bauxite. While much of Belém's population lives in informal communities pejoratively referred to as *favelas*, both Norsk Hydro and MRN reside in towers in one the city's most expensive neighborhoods: Batista Campos. In the distance an even larger cluster of tall, slender high-rises is visible in another upper class neighborhood, Umarizal. At night, most of these

towers appear dark and conversations with city residents suggest a prevalent suspicion that no one lives in most luxury towers in Belém as a high-rise lifestyle is exceedingly unaffordable. Instead, locals speculate these towers are used for laundering money from illegal extractive activities in the Amazon. However, panoramas of these empty monuments figure prominently in efforts to present the Amazonian metropolis as a modern, beautiful city.

Brazil's South frequently depicts the North as poor and dirty. Perhaps advertising these modern towers feels like a righteous refutation for Belém's middle class even as this vision of development coexists with elevated levels of violence in both urban Belém and the Pará countryside. The extraction of bauxite from Saracá-Taquerá National Forest poisons the water and displaces the resources of the communities living on its borders. Displacement of resources forces communities to increasingly depend on urban markets and non-local products. Francinilda reflected on this reality as we discussed the lost of her family farm in the forest, "Today people buy more than they plant … because people have fear of IBAMA, fear to work the territory that they traditionally worked."

The export of bauxite to Belém where it is refined at Barcarena accumulates fortunes in glass towers even as rural-urban migration occurs in the supply chain's wake. Residents of the *Interior* which functions as an internal periphery in Brazil arrive at the urban periphery of Belém where they must trade their knowledge of the forest for dangerous neighborhoods flooded by sewage during the rainy season. This is modernity and development as preached by MRN, Norsk Hydro, Bolsonaro, and the global North: A shiny glass tower with no substance surrounded by slums, savaging the earth and eliminating the possibilities of alternatives.

At Saõ Francisco, when asked about the behavior of the Brazilian federal government and corporations in the Saracá-Taquerá National Forest, the *Centro*, faces became sorrowful and lamented the tunnel vision of extractive methodologies that destroyed freshwater streams, burrowing animals, and Brazil nut groves for the exclusive harvesting of bauxite. However, community critiques of Mineração do Rio Norte's practices, fell short of a blunt rant against extractive industries. Many community members had worked for the company at the Trombetas port. Salaries with the mining company are much higher than others available in the region and the importance of Brazil's economic development remained acknowledged. However, communities pushed to the edges of the Saracá-Taquera national forest unite in their advocacy for traditional rights resulting from their grounded relationality and accountabilities to Place (Van Horn & Hausdoerffer, 2017). When queried about the communities' desires for the future, interviewees envisioned the forest as a source of security. Their food sources, water, and ability to remain sheltered all depend on continuing viability of autonomy supported by forest resources. Interviewees acknowledged the other option of moving to the city. However, the city is not seen as a sign of progress or modernity. Rather, the city represents a spiritual hazard resulting from the severing of connection with the forest and the community's past. Indeed, the *Centro* demonstrates the power of territory to make territories and identities. Although Seu Ze was esteemed

for agricultural knowledge he gathered in the East through his education in Maranhão, he frequently contrasted the violence of the East with the provisions of his new forest home. He believed that apart from considerations of healthcare and education, the forest remained capable of providing all the communities' needs through valorizing cultural continuity over individual wealth.

Scaling out

The *ribeirinho* communities of Lago Sapucuá know the future they desire for their territory and descendants. While Brazilian authorities fear an Amazon stuck in the past, defying rationality, *ribeirinhos* do not suffer from the same delusion: Traditional lifeways can co-exist with the 21st century. Some households equip their roofs with solar panels while others welcome Brazil and the world into their homes through watching Globo on television sets. Cell phones are common though service fluctuates. These connections with the world beyond immediate territories do not contradict inherited lifeways. Rather, such forms of energy gathering and communication affirm the possibility of coexistence and autonomy within decoloniality. Despite scarce monetary resources, communities connect the sustainable relationality of forest ontologies with a cosmopolitan orientation allowing the periphery to speak back to the hegemonic center. Yet, the wisdom of communities like São Francisco and leaders such as Seu Ze is rarely priveleged by the Brazilian government, NGOs such as IMAFLORA, or extractive industries (Escobar, 1998). The hegemonic center views *ribeirinho* communities as problematic sites in need of "modern" solutions even while excluding these territories from the profits of extracted resources.

I often heard discussion of the *linhão* during my trips to the communities of Lago Sapucuá. In an attempt to avoid appearing ignorant, I patiently waited for some contextual clues to decipher what exactly it represented. I was told it formed a boundary between the community lands of the PAE and the national forest. Okay, so it is a map-based boundary much like the administrative borders of the national forests and conservation units of the United States. Then I was told it allowed for *ribeirinhos* to move between their respective communities with unprecedented quickness and ease. Increasingly confused, I began hearing stories of dangers associated with it, travelers needed to know its nature by heart as it had proved deadly in the past. Finally the *linhão* appeared before me as I gripped the back of a motorbike weaving through the mix of forest and pasture at the edges of São Francisco's allotted territory. The air crackled and the sun violently reflected off the steel centurions guarding the edges of the national forest. The hi-tension wires circumvented the dense topography in a clear line, stretching as far as I could see in either direction above a carefully cleared path. The steel towers eemed to descend from above, touching the earth at singular points and otherwise balanced by cables as though they preferred to keep their distance from the organic material of this place. I was almost hypnotized by the sharp, geometric shapes, completely at aesthetic odds with the rest of the landscape. Afterall, these imposing structures were only passing through along with the energy transmitted between distant locales. *Ribeirinhos* traveled between their communities on motorbikes via the space created below and

otherwise ignored and were ignored by the presence of these electrified giants. I was told the towers were marching to Manaus. Where did their journey begin?

V. Transition

The "*linhão*" transmitting electricity from Tucuruí in eastern Pará to industry connected with Manaus

Bauxite mining in the Saracá-Taquera National Forest conservation unit (Environmental Justice Atlas)

A refinery in Bacarena near Belém where bauxite is processed for export (Environmental Justice Atlas)

Cattle truck on a highway near Marabá, eastern Pará (Mongabay)

Distant from the Amazon metropoles of Belém or Manaus, the communities of Lago Sapucuá occupy refuge-like lands, a conclave distant from the corruptions of urban Brazil[7]. However, such an interpretation overlooks connections between otherwise distant Amazon communities, patterns of communication and internal migration I have already alluded to. Violence and conflict do not remain confined to cities, and often commence in the countryside, provoking the resulting flight to the periphery of cities. The violence driving these internal migrations exists wherever resources are seized from Place.

We return to the massive hi-tension power line dissecting the territory of São Francisco from the national forest. The electricity humming above never descends to the *ribeirinho* communities. Countless *ribeirinho* communities witness the transit of this electrical power which begins far to the east at the Tucuruí hydroelectric dam and powers the free-trade industrial zone of Manaus in the center of the Brazilian Amazon. The development of hydropower at Tucurui on the Tocantins river in eastern Pará remains a tragic moment in the history of the Basin--and equally foreshadows dangerous futures. The environment of western Para, the site of my field work, remains remarkably intact in

[7] Frequently the *ribeirinho* communities regarded urban Amazonia as dangerous/violent, disconnected from heritage, and to be guarded against; even the small town of Oriximiná becamed framed as luring locals into drug use and crime as well as dependence on markets instead of traditional lifeways. This struck me as reminiscent of rhetoric from the Canudos rebellion of the 19th century (Levine, 1988).

comparison to the region surrounding the city of Marabá in eastern Pará. Throughout the Amazon and Brazil, Marabá functions as a painful synonym for the rural conflicts between *latifundia* allied with government interests and landless workers. The region also fits within the corridor of intensive, military-designed development impressed upon the region by the dictatorship between 1964 and 1985.

The infamous Trans-Amazonian highway cuts through Marabá before heading north to Tucuruí and then west to Altamira. Military planners carefully designed the route of the Trans-Amazonian to facilitate future ambitions related to hydropower development and resource extraction. The highway's proximity actualized construction of the Tucuruí hydroelectric dam and the road's penetrating legacy continues as the controversial Belo Monte dam nears completion where the highway crosses the Xingu River at Altamira. Similarly, multiple hydroelectric dams remain in planning nearby theTrans-Amazonian crossing over theTapajós River near Itaituba upstream from Santarém.

The construction of the Tucuruí Dam is only one example of land-based conflict in southeastern Pará. Along with the displacement of riverside communities caused by the creation of the reservoir behind the Tucuruí dam, the Araguaia guerrilla war (1967-1974) placed locals in the midst of bullets exchanged between the Brazilian military and Communist Party of Brazil (de Almeida Teles, 2017). The massive mining operation at Paragominas further underscores the barren nature of the landscapes of eastern Para (Galeano, 1971). Hugh Raffles recounts his own field work at an experimental mahogany project in eastern Pará, an oasis of possibility surrounded by the ruins of ravaged forests and degraded pastures. Islands of forest exist throughout this otherwise transformed landscape. A Brazilian academic in Belém recounted flying above the terrain with government planners, noticing the location of indigenous reserves sheltering forest remnants. These reserves become increasingly targeted by illegal logging following the exhaustion of other options: Between August 2018 and July 2019 the six Indigenous Territories with the highest degree of deforestation were situated in southeastern Pará (Braga de Sousa for ISA, 2019).

An expression exists for the destruction caused further west in Rondonia, the site of another major highway through Amazonia, that connects to fears of future development: the "Rondonization" of the Amazon. I first heard this expression from an interviewee in Pará who feared the same for their state. Ironically, the namesake of Rondonia, Cândido Rondon, remains credited with a more compassionate approach to exploration of the Basin being of mixed indigenous ancestry himself. However, his role in Brazil's march west, a process of colonization, displacement, and primitive accumulation continuing today, is undeniable. The United States' continental subjugation undoubtedly inspires Brazil's westward colonial imaginary. Brazilian President Bolsonaro even voiced regret that Brazil's expansion was too merciful in comparison to the United States' military's extermination of indigenous populations (Londono & Casado, 2020). Brazilian expansion into the Amazon Basin continues, often visualized as the "Arc of Destruction" curving from the eastern border of the Basin in the state of Maranhão, continuing southwest through southeastern Pará, before engulfing northern Mato Grosso,

and reaching its apogee of devastation along the colonization corridor following BR-364 through the state of Rondônia.

While it may be tempting to dismiss this destruction as a battle over natural resources motivated by consumption in the global North, my fieldwork at Lago Sapucuá illustrated a deeper contestation around the meaning of the forest claimed by both the Brazilian government and *ribeirinho* communities as territory. The Brazilian government views the forest as a commodity, separable and for sale at an industrial scale whether timber or bauxite. The *ribeirinho* communities engage the forest relationally, through the family histories, food webs, and rhythms defined by the yearly ecosystem cycle of waters. These differences over the meaning of the forest prove to be world-making and knowledge-making (Lagrou, 2018), and can lead to unequivocal meanings--and uses--of territory (Cadena, 2011). This epistemological conflict is most visible in the processes of frontier-making and colonialism, a cycle repeatedly apparent across the history of Brazil. Brazilian colonialism began on the northeast and southeast coasts, establishing a trajectory that continues to evolve and now focuses on the Amazon as frontier. The destruction of indigneous territories and identities remains fundamental to Brazil's territorial expansion, even proof of national sovereignty as well as progress, modernity and civilization (Hecht & Cockburn, 2011). In *Racial Revolutions* (2001), Jonathan Warren focuses on outcomes related to indigeneity in eastern Brazil, primarily the state of Minas Gerais. Although frontier is a fluid concept that does not always follow a linear route (Langfur, 2002), indigenous groups living in eastern Brazil face an even longer history of violence than those in the Amazon: gold mining shifted to the Amazon after sources in Minas Gerais went dry. Brazillan official and scholars considered devastation of indigenous groups in eastern Brazil complete even as cultural resurgence became undeniable in the 1990's-2000's (Warren, 2001). Proximity to long-term Brazilian settler colonialism also occurs in pockets of the Amazon, primarily along major rivers, and highlights the historical international connections of the region. One such location is Santarém where indigenous groups of the Lower Tapajós Basin have endured hundreds of years of invasion and forced assimilation, mostly at the hands of Catholic missions. This is also the site of deception and colonial empire-building, where the Portuguese manipulated ancient indigenous rivals to further imperial dreams[8]. Tensions exist to this day between indigenous groups, mostly in response to state-imposed structures such as the quota framework[9]. Similar to the cases described by Warren in eastern Brazil, the indigenous groups of the Lower Tapajós embarked on a process of reclamation of indigenous identity around the turn of the 21st Century. Opponents label these groups as fake Indians and the government resists demarcating indigenous territories. However, given the world-making conflict occurring throughout Amazonia, and intensely along the Tapajós River, Lower Tapajós groups asserting their indigeneity face death

[8] The Portuguese obtained control over the Tapajós Basin through manipulating the much stronger Munduruku to destroy their traditional enemies (Belik, 2018)

[9] Critics of the quota system for indigenous and black (*negro*) Brazilians frequently point to how quotas undermine Brazil's purported racial democracy and meritocracy (Porfirio, accessed on Aug 14 2020)

threats over this articulation of identity, illustrating a continuing colonial reality authenticated by familiar assaults on indigenous peoples throughout Brazil.

The Tapajós Basin also holds special meaning for conservationists. Collaboration between the Brazilian government and U.S. Forest Service supported the creation of the Tapajós National Forest. Alter do Chão offers a beacon of eco-tourism in the Amazon. And BINGOS (Big International Non-Governmental Organizations) such as International Rivers and Greenpeace proudly present their involvement to prevent hydroelectric development on the river. The region continues to prove critical in Brazil's strategy for agri-business expansion, a locus of competing interests and knowledges.

My description of arriving at Oriximiná on the Trombetas River at Lago Sapucuá likewise began at Santarém. While the boat to Oriximiná heads west from Santarém, if one departed by bus in the opposite direction along the new federal highway BR-163, a contrasting landscape dominates either side of the road: soy monoculture. Fields of soy spread across the plateau above Santarém and the expansion of *sojeiro* culture frequently captivated conversations with my informants, especially young adults considering their professional options. The hallmarks of *sojeiro* culture include brand new Toyota Hilux trucks, *sertanejo universal* (Brazilian pop country music), heteronormative values, and an interest in modernity exemplified by United States culture. I noticed how locals unaffiliated with the soy economy teased a young man who had taken a job at the Cargill soy terminal on the Santarém waterfront. They called him "soy man" and insinuated that he had sold out for money. Well-paying careers are difficult to come by in Santarém and I detected slivers of admiration and jealousy in addition to the teasing. Santarém and nearby tourism gem Alter do Chão are currently locked in a very obvious cultural contestation. Most locals seemed to have already picked a side, those siding with modern soy agriculture mark themselves through conspicuous consumption. And those favoring the revitalization of traditional Tapajônica lifeways often come together under the rhythms of carimbó, a local Parenese musical genre completely at odds with sertanejo universal. Sertanejo universal exudes a sense of family values and farming heritage while Carimbó references indigenous beliefs and local ecosystems. Both sides frequently complain about each other's musical taste.

Beyond important sites on the east side of the Tapjaós--Santarém, the Cargill Soy Terminal, the Federal University of Western Pará, Alter do Chão, the Tapajós National Forest--the west side of the Tapajós situates a diverse universe of indigenous territories and small scale extractivism like that of Lago Sapucuá. These communities transit between their territories and the markets, schools, and medical services of Santarém through the interface of the city's busy waterfront. The waterfront is where these seemingly disparate worlds appear to collide, though there is a familiar fluidity to interactions. Indeed the various interests and world-making agendas of settlers, indigenous groups, internationals, and mixed identities emerging at their borders have long connected through the hub of Santarém.

View of the federal highway BR-230 and deforestation pattern (Mongabay)

Cargill soy terminal, Santarém

Sunrise on the Arapiuns River en route to Maró indigenous territory

Lower Tapajós indigenous youth conference at Cobra Grande

VI. Tapajônica

Internationally, deforestation dominates the rhetoric of concern for the Amazon. Concerns around deforestation mostly connect to fears of losing the Amazon rainforest and its ecological functions

including biodiversity. Campaigns to "save the rainforest" typically occur outside the Amazon itself and focus on flora and fauna. Environmental anthropologists Carrier and West problematize this failure to see beyond the forest's trees:

> Environmentalists look at the world in a peculiar way. The realm of their concern is routinely understood to be one of objects and processes that, however much people may affect them, exist independently of human action. (2009, p. 157)

An overriding focus on "objects" such as endangered plants, animals, and rivers creates challenges for conservation organizations at the local level, particularly in terms of alliances. Discussions of political economy or cultural forces become subsumed into discourses revolving around protecting biodiversity and primary forests. As an example, consider international portrayals of drivers of Amazon deforestation. International media focuses on cattle ranching as the top villain, linking beef production to deforestation and personal consumption (Ingraham, 2019). Frequently headlines and editorials offer vegetarianism as a cure-all to environmental destruction in the Amazon (Pellman Rowland, 2019). I never heard similar platitudes on the ground in Amazonia. This is not to say that beef consumption is unconnected from Amazon deforestation, but rather, that Amazon societies suggest a more nuanced approach to conservation, one that is more inclusive of human variables and environmental justice.

As I transition to a discussion of field work in the Tapajós Basin and the vicinity of Santarém, my intent is to demonstrate the limitations of conversations of Amazon futures that fail to recognize the continuing role of coloniality, continuing power hierarchy which reifies Euro-American depictions of progress including violence against indigenous worlds. Appetites for beef do not account for the territorial nature of the ontological conquest rapidly approaching the confluence of the Tapajós and Amazon rivers at Santarém. By emphasizing the political ecology of the Tapajós, I include local perspectives of international conservation's activities centering on the river. While interviewees acknowledged the importance of participation of international conservation in the Amazon, these local voices also critiqued international perspectives as being oriented towards extracting value for international audiences. While this form of extraction may seem benign compared to timber, mining, or monocultures, international conservation can become a distraction and move important discussions away from local struggles over the meaning of both identity and forests.

Maró

Shortly before the clear waters of the Tapajós pour into the milky Amazon, the Arapiuns River merges with the Tapajós. While the wide Tapajós originates in rugged Mato Grosso to the south, the Arapiuns winds its way through dense forests upstream, a narrow river with lush shores. The Arapiuns River also serves as a boundary of identity, though this borderlands re-emerged recently due to the politics of conservation and indigeneity in western Pará. On one side of the Arapiuns exists a *Reserva Extrativista* (RESEX) and on the other side the Maró fight for their constitutional right to an indigenous territory

(*Terra Indígena* or TI). Families on either shore share common histories, knowledge, and lifeways yet were divided through the creation of the RESEX conservation area. Members of the Maró feel that the creation of the RESEX on only one side of the river was a political decision because the unprotected side contains some of the best remaining primary forest in western Pará. The decision of conservation authorities to not include the Maró side of the river was devastating to the community and families. Suddenly a border of a political nature constructed a division where previously relatives shared lifeways as one people regardless of their shore of the Arapiuns.

The Maró became disillusioned with the potential of a conservation initiative to benefit their struggle for territory and security. Additionally, the creation of the RESEX invited extractive industries to focus on Maró lands which remained property of the state government, an entity regarded as intimately linked to the timber industry in the region. A pajé for the Maró explained the relationship:

> *And we are all the time, treated like animals, treated like animals because we live in the forest, like a snake and wild animal. Only those who are in power are beautiful, government enters and government leaves and it is the same disgrace, it is the same disgrace, for the indigenous people it is the same disgrace because they never wanted to help us. The rafts with wood, our wealth, pass there every day, where is that wood from? Is it from the president's land? From the councilman? From the mayor? No! It's from the land here.*

The pajé recognizes two important variables influencing their relationship with Brazilian society: race and resources. A Maró leader expands on the connection between race and resources in the political ecology of the Tapjajós:

> *Growth! Brazil says that growth is soy planting, management projects, hydroelectric construction, railway construction and mining, so for them, this is development, indigenous land is not development for Brazil, because it does not generate profit for Brazil.*

At first glance Maró perceptions of discrimination by the Brazilian state may seem primarily related to development choices and extractive industrie. However, the logic behind dispossession of Maró territory remains rooted in coloniality, a power structure guiding resource management which judges some uses of land as modern and others as backwards. If this encounter sounds similar to the situation faced by the *ribeirinhos* of Lago Sapucuá, consider efforts to deny Maró indigeneity. Prior to Maró assertions of indigeneity, the Brazilian state regarded their communities as *ribeirinhos*. When the Maró faced abandonment by the RESEX conservation process, the Maró began to consider deep questions of identity and commitments to their territory. Like other Place-based communities across Brazil, the

Maró acknowledged their identity as indigenous Brazilians despite the failure of FUNAI, the indigenous affairs agency of the federal Brazilian government, to officially recognize the Maró (Warren, 2001). The state's denial of the Maró struggle for a conservation unit (RESEX) transformed into a larger campaign for an indigenous territory (TI).

As the Maró formed new alliances in their struggle for demarcation of indigenous territory, they also faced newly racialized attacks. Where previously development plans simply called for increased access to timber, now extractive industries pointedly attacked Maró culture and identity, calling the Maró "*falsos índios*" (fake indians) (Reporter Brasil, "Quem pode dizer que eles nao sao indios). Maró leadership faced death threats. When I visited one of the Maró leaders and his family, we traveled by small canoe, winding through dense aquatic forest to arrive at a hidden site separate from the rest of the community. This isolation was described as necessary due to safety concerns. Violence against idigenous communities occurs at all levels of society including rhetoric promoted by Bolsonaro in the presidency, likening indigenous groups to prehistoric humans in desperate need of improvement through development ("What Brazil's President, Jair Bolsonaro," 2019). However, the Maró are not without allies. The Maró exist as part of a larger indigenous movement on the Tapajós; at times international allies including conservation NGOs take important though mercurial stances of support.

<u>NGOs</u>

The Lower Tapajós and the city of Santarém grew into a focal point of the indigenous rights movement in Brazil from the beginning of the 21st century. The presence of the Munduruku indigenous group further upstream historically contributed to strong indigenous representation in the region. Recent intentions amongst communities of the Lower Tapajós to revive indigenous traditions along with the growth of the federal university in Santarém (UFOPA) elevated the Lower Tapajós to national awareness ("Primeiro indígena Munduruku," 2019). However, the creation of a Maró indigenous territory remains blocked by inaction at the presidential level. The indigeous agency FUNAI recommended the demarcation of T.I. Maró (2011), yet the election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018 leaves little chance of demarcation. Bolsonaro repeatedly insists there will be no more indigenous land in Brazil under his administration ("What Brazil's President, Jair Bolsonaro," 2019). Again, Bolsonaro's provocations are not empty rhetoric, but expose indigenous Brazilians like the Maró to the danger of increased attacks on their territory and lives.

Prior to the disturbing developments of the Bolsonaro presidency, indigenous as well as mixed-ancestry *ribeirinho/beiradeiro* groups along the Tapajós faced the threat of massive hydropower development in addition to ever-present threats from logging and illegal gold mining. Similar to the campaign to stop the Belo Monte dam on the Xingu River, resistance to the São Luís dam on the Tapajós attracted international attention and led to sustained campaigns by NGOs including Greenpeace, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, and International Rivers. Maró leaders described the impact of the involvement of international NGOs in the Tapajós region, and in particular Greenpeace with

whom the Maró had a partnership in 2009: International offices sprouted up and English-language websites suddenly depicted the distant west of Pará state. International conservation NGOs knew the advantages of including indigenous faces and bodies in their pleas for donations in the global North. Thus, these NGOs began to forge relationships and partnerships with indigenous groups along the Tapajós River.

The Bolsonaro administration repeatedly connects the presence of international conservation NGOs in the Amazon with manipulation of indigenous politics. Specifically, Bolsonaro frames resistance to development of indigenous territories as a plot by radical environmentalists from the global North ("Brazilian President speaks out," 2019). When Bolsonaro likened indigenous Brazilians to prehistoric humans, blocked from fulfilling their modern destiny by a self-serving environmentalist conspiracy, Bolsonaro implies that international conservationists desire an Amazon locked in time, a romanticized wilderness elevated above Brazilian sovereignty. Bolsonaro's appeal activates historical realities and suspicions connected to the actions of the United States and Western Europe in the Amazon. Mainstream media amplifies Brazilian distrust of the relationship between indigenous groups and NGOs by portraying indigenous Brazilians as susceptible to international manipulation (Mulder & Coppolillo, 2005), In the process, indigneous groups such as the Maró become further isolated and lose agency when the discourse focuses on a perceived battle between development and Nature. Both sides--international NGOs and the Brazilian government-- continue to rely on long-established tropes to depict indigeneity. As mentioned, the Brazilian government appeals for the assimilation of indigenous groups into modern Brazilian society claiming:

> I talked to an Indian, and my feeling is that most Indians do not want to live as an isolated animal in a zoo. He wants internet, television, football, he wants a dentist and he wants the *farinha* machine to be powered by an electric motor and not by the arm. (Godoy, 2017)

On the other hand, international conservation NGOs cast indigenous Brazilians as the archetypal defender of the rainforest. Most frequently this messaging casts indigenous territories as the best way to defend the environment (Georgiu, 2017). The websites and campaign messaging of major international conservation NGOs depict strong partnerships between Western conservationists and indigenous groups in the Amazon. Although such alliances do exist in both long-term and short-term timeframes, my conversations with indigenous groups in the Lower Tapajós and analysis of discourse emerging from this center of indigenous resistance reveals a more complex dynamic.

I interviewed Maró leaders following their schism with Greenpeace. I am unsure how leadership would have previously theorized NGO behavior in the Amazon, but given their experience with Greenpeace in particular and observations of the other international NGOs involved in the Tapajós Basin, the

Maró situated these international conservation organizations within a mindset of value extraction similar to that of extractive industries.

> *We realized that the interest of NGOs is to profit on top of people ... let's say that many of the NGOs, they preach the same principle of colonization. The NGOs, they only live on projects. Of all the NGOs I know here, none are accountable. Sometimes they run a project in a village, they don't finish, they are not accountable, so this isn't transparent.*

Here, the Maró leader critiques international conservation NGOs, but he could have used the same language to discuss agri-business, mining, or hydropower. At the heart of the shared behavior of these powerful actors remains the colonial enterprise of value extraction. Another informant describes the dynamic involving the appeal of indigenous faces and partnerships to donors in the global North. However, the credit taken by international NGOs for environmental victories in the Amazon is perceived as asymmetrical. An informant pointed out how NGO were always present for victorious photo ops and loved to discuss their impressive contributions, but was quick to depart the region when a particular project ended.

The flighty behavior of international NGOs in alliances with indigenous groups results in distrust between the two. Given the disparity of resources and international influence at the disposal of large conservation NGOs, locals in the Amazon enter partnerships very aware of this power differential. The relationship becomes increasingly sensitive as international conservation offers recommendations on the management of territory. Land managed by locals since time immemorial suddenly becomes the object of conservation biology and sustainable management. The imposition of "modern environmental science" becomes a threat to autonomy--and not just to natural resources but culture as well when territory becomes the object of international conservation's gaze. While green colonialism is seldom the stated goal of international conservation, the Maró justifiably experience the NGO actions and interventions through this lens.

<u>Nature-making</u>

Like countless field researchers before me, purchasing a cooler's worth of beer was my first intervention upon stepping on the shores of the Arapiuns River at TI (*Terra Indígena*) Cobra Grande (Schumaker, 2001). I balanced along a narrow board, transitioning from the 2-story wooden Amazonian boat to a white sand beach along the blackwater Arapiuns just before the confluence of the Tapajós and Amazon rivers at Santarém, halfway between Manaus and Belém in the eastern Brazilian Amazon. This spatial positioning creates "overlapping forms" as theorized by Eduardo Kohn (2013) with regard to cities' roles within regions of plentiful natural resources. The city of Santarém situates this nexus of exchange, knowledge, and power. At Santarém the riches of the massive Tapajós Basin—whether Amazonian timber, soybean, or the growing indigenous movement—merge with the aquatic superhighway of extraction, culture, and history between Manaus and Belém, the two largest cities of the Amazon

Basin. The community upon whose shore I disembarked was preparing for the next day's indigenous youth conference, drawing upon young adults, future leaders of the movement, from communities across the Lower Tapajós for several days of speaking, workshops, and ceremony; but first, a riverside cookout with the plentiful fish of the Maró delegation and gifted beer. The occasion marked not only an important political event for the Maró youth, but also mirrored a social rite-of-passage. The Maró spoke of the constraints of river travel in the region: dependent on water and gasoline levels, a formidable obstacle to the mixing of communities. The yearly cycle calls for gatherings among indigenous youth, opportunities to meet members outside the immediate community, connected by secret paths through the forest which substantially reduce the distance and time otherwise required by river travel. Tonight, younger members of Maró darted about at the edges of the clearing with youth of other communities while adults remained on the beach, sharing stories, struggles, and diluting my ever-present questions regarding forest carbon credits with ice cold beer. Suddenly I ceased my interviewing; as one swarm a mass of fire ants inundated my feet and ankles, creating unbelievable pain while sending me bounding across the beach, unable to stand still for more than a second. I was mostly ignored, semi-unseen, with fire ant-infested feet dominating my private reality, completely removed from the jubilant beach cookout. The experience made me feel isolated and out-of-place in addition to the physical damage. Emotions and pain would linger for weeks, even after returning to heavily urban Belém where my feet and ankles swelled like balloons. Brazilians in Belém were more understanding if not dismissive of my condition: consequences of falling for the forest's dangerous siren's call. Most Brazilians in Belém admired the idea of the "wild" Amazon yet felt little inclination to visit the forest. For these "modern" Brazilians, my affliction represented a sign of why they chose to live in the city: go to the forest, receive natural punishment. Still, Brazilians in Belém spoke glowingly of the cultural heritage of the forest and its peoples, objectifying a wide range of ethnicities, communities, and practices into a cultural yet distant whole. The attitude in Belém towards indigenous Amazonians contrasted with rural powerbrokers from the BBB (a rightwing caucus: bullets, beef, bibles). Urban perspectives on indigeneity approaches the "noble savage" and this image has promulgated in massive economic centers of the South, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Indigenous groups are seen as natural protectors of the rainforest and allies for environmental NGOs and programs.

For urban Brazilians in Amazonian metropoles such as Manaus and Belém, fire ants are often regarded as the forest realm. However, other creatures exist which act as cultural links between the city and the forest. These include *Boto*, *Matinta Pereira*, and *Iara*. Each of these beings interacts in the interstitial space between the society of the forest and that of the city. They also represent the city's fear of the forest: seducing, dragging, or charming urbanites into the sylvan realm. One of my Brazilian friends recounted her fear of going outside growing up, afraid that *Boto* (a romantic Amazonian pink river dolphin) would lead her away from home and into the Amazon River running alongside her home city. While certain forest-situated spirits reach out for urban Brazilians, the Maró recount the story of another being, as invisible to me as the fire ants were to the Maró. One of my Maró leaders, described this being, the *Curupira*, as his religion. Functioning as both belief and statement, this affirmation

identified himself and his community with the forest despite the centuries of Christianity and Portuguese language imposed on the Maró. The *Curupira* also reflects the acknowledged difference between forest and urban realities. The Maró understand that the *Cururpira* xists in their lives, unknown to the new agribusiness and hydropower technicians currently invading their basin.

The *Curupira* is the protector of the forest, a physical being encountered by the Maró people, hunters, and small scale loggers yet unknowable to most Brazilians and myself. I found this being to be as frustrating and distant as the current politics of the Amazon: the protector of the forest does not participate in the government decisions made in Brasília nor is the *Curupira* an impediment to the expansion of soybean monoculture or a hypdropower scheme designed to transform the Tapajós River into an agribusiness highway beginning in Mato Grosso to the south and ending in the booming markets of Asia. The *Curupira* only functions within the forest realm and the influence of the *Curupira* is confined to those with cultural membership to sylvan society. To all else, this powerful being is invisible, uncommunicable, and purely mythological. The Maró accept this dissonance even as it means the responsibility for defending the forest from soybean and hydropower expansion. However, defying expectations of urbanites who view the Maró as guardians of the forest, the Maró similarly rejected development in the form of carbon credits connected to forest preservation. My purpose in contrasting the perspective of the Maró with those of urban environmentalists such as myself is not to present the Maró as existing separately from the realities of international conservation NGOs or foreign researchers like myself. Rather, I intend to draw attention to the zone of overlap, where Maró leadership encounters threats, opportunities, and extractions requiring mediation between their cultural values and pressures to rapidly develop Amazonia.

<u>What is this doing here?</u>

The Arapiuns River meets the Tapajós immediately before the Tapajós merges with the Amazon. The merging of these mighty rivers creates an expanse of open water resembling a large, lengthy lake, vast enough to obscure one shore from the other. At times weather patterns result in fearsome storms, creating perilous conditions for the multi-storied wooden boats most riverine communities utilize to travel between isolated villages and trade goods with the port city of Santarém. As my return to Santarém from the Arapiuns neared, I recalled Santarém's waterfront, the initial point of departure captivating my vision, filled with wooden boats. Activity continues throughout the day and night: fish or forest resources leaving boats, gasoline and staples such as rice or household products arriving, *redes* (hammocks) tied between any available crossbeam with occupants napping or simply relaxing before a long, slow river journey. Goods flowed towards the boats, each person arriving from a walk around the city brought back a new item. Cargill Corporation's massive new investment presided over the boats: a state-of-the-art soy grain terminal for loading ocean freighters. Soy arrived by either truck via the BR-163 highway or by barge from the terminal at Itaituba. Although soy plantations recently expanded to the plateau above Santarém, most of the bulk grains come from the open landscapes of central Brazil, formerly a savannah-like ecosystem referred to as *cerrado*.

Returning from TI Maró, my boat prepared to traverse the meeting of the rivers again. This time an otherworldly vista appeared on the horizon: clouds of dust circling in the sky illuminated by powerful lights and accompanied by sounds of churning heavy machinery. As our boat drew closer, the stench of dry soy beans wafting from Cargill's facility overtook us. Our Maró boat did not shy away from the massive grain ship receiving the outpouring of distant monocultures. Other traditional boats similarly threaded the soy terminal extending on pillars from land to water. The Cargill soy export operation stood in marked contrast to the ubiquitous wooden boats: a monument to technology, prestigious employment, and even paired with a new park for soccer matches on the shore. Yet that night it appeared truly fearsome, reminding me of remarks made by a fellow traveler, "What is this doing here?"

A similarly ominous nighttime sighting occurred earlier that week, upstream the Arapiuns. I had concluded the day on the top deck of the Maró boat, interviewing and enjoying an immaculate sunset surrounded by water and forest. With no artificial lighting in the vicinity, the nighttime darkness was near complete. The night temperature on the Arapiuns felt perfect, even cool given the ample moisture present in the surrounding forest. Yet the atmosphere on the open deck became tense as one of the Maró noticed an object moving slowly in the distance. As our paths crossed more Maró stood by the railing, staring intently at the timber barge moving stealthy under the cover of night. The tension was heavy, the desire to reach out and strike the unjust seizure of the forest palpable. Prior to departing for Maró territory, I had spoken with a transport provider in Santarém about our long upcoming boat trip far up the Arapiuns to Maró lands. He seemed unimpressed, suggesting that these days one could drive to our destination. Illegal timber harvests had opened up crude roads far into the forest, arriving at the threshold of the best remaining tract of intact forest in the region, the ancestral home of the Maró. When I asked members of the Maró community what their impression was of the Brazilian state's desire for their territory, they answered with three important components of Brazil's stance towards indigenous groups: government authorities did not object to the Maró villages, rather, they felt that the need to claim a large territory was unwarranted given the Maró population size; the government did not want to lose the ability to profit off of the resources of Maró lands currently claimed by both the Maró and the state of Pará; and the government did not mind letting illegal loggers do the dirty work of keeping the Maró on the defensive including threats to the lives of Maró leadership and families.

Assertions by the Maró concerning Brazilian state policy echo the experience of many indigenous populations throughout Brazil (Branford, 2019). Consequently, indigenous populations increasingly turned to the international community for support building capacity and to pressure the Brazilian government. International conservation NGOs act as an enthusiastic partner for indigenous groups in Brazil, particularly in the Amazon region (Barbosa, 2003). As outlined in my literature review, opinions vary as to the synchronicity between indigenous and international NGO goals.

> *We realized that the interest of NGOs is to profit. On top of the people and dictate rules, they start to dictate rules of how you have to do it, when you have to do it and where you have to do it. And we see this as terrible, a strategy for profit. First, let's say that many of the NGOs, they preach the same principle of colonization, including the Catholic Church.*

In the quote above, an indigenous chief in the Lower Amazon focuses on the concept of profit when discussing NGOs. The chief also relates the pursuit of profit to the process of colonization. He sees colonization as a concern for profit over relations and believes that NGOs weaken indigenous peoples' ability to protect themselves and their resources. While examples of success exist, when I asked my Maró interviewees regarding the benefit of collaborating with international conservation NGOs, they recounted their own experience working with Greenpeace. Their story involved a barge similar to the one we witnessed together that night on the Arapiuns River. Yet rather than passing silently by during the night, this particular barge of illegal timber found itself beached on one of the river's remarkable white sand beaches. When the Maró discovered the stranded barge, they immediately contacted the Brazilian government and Greenpeace, elevating this offense to the highest environmental channel. However, even Maró leadership could not have predicted the way this incident would ultimately progress. What was predictable was the Brazilian government's lack of response. The barge remained on the beach, full of valuable illegal timber awaiting government officials to confiscate the timber and document the crime. The authorities never arrived and Greenpeace offered no alternatives, leaving the Maró to handle the matter as a community. It is difficult to fully imagine the emotional impact of the event upon the Maró: encountering their forest dismembered, abandoned, violated upon that idyllic beach. The Maró responded unilaterally by burning the barge and its tragic cargo.

Given the absence of the Brazilian state, the Maró were surprised when Greenpeace intervened to fulfill an authoritative role. Greenpeace assailed the Maró for their unauthorized action and testified against the Maró in a resulting court case. The Maró understood that Greenpeace felt Maró actions might lead to conflict with Greenpeace's own negotiations involving the Brazilian government and timber companies towards the NGO's regional priorities. Yet this strategic consideration paled in comparison to the fundamental experience of dispossession. The Maró experienced betrayal by Greenpeace and vowed to never cooperate with the NGO again. When I first asked Maró leadership of the role of international conservation NGOs in their fight for territory, this story immediately came to mind. My interviewees admitted that there were more positive examples (e.g. International Rivers), yet the general consensus remained: international NGOs could not be fully trusted and also might leave at any time depending on their mission and funding. When I asked the Maró for an example of a positive relationship, the only instance that came to mind was that of an Italian environmental worker who secured funding for limited forest monitoring. Maró impressions of international conservation NGOs centered on differing priorities, pointing to the question I raised regarding equivocation. Elsewhere around the world, accounts of relationships between indigenous groups and international

conservation NGOs echo a similar relationship (Hindery, 2013). Distrust of international environmental NGOs extend to the interventions offered by these organizations, including carbon credits.

Carbon optics

I attended a gathering on the shore of the Arapiuns focused on developing young leaders from the indigenous peoples of the Lower Tapajós Basin. Although the speakers, workshops, and songs of the conference frequently proclaimed the importance of the waters, plants, and animals of the region, there was no talk of the conservation value of the landscape. Participants described a relationality to Place rather than values defined by ecosystem services. As I continued interviewing Maró leaders regarding their views on partnering with international conservation NGOs, they maintained a certain ambivalence. They recognized the potential benefits of the political power of international media networks while acknowledging that their struggle differed from the motivations and commitments of the NGOs. Afterall, these same conservation NGOs frequently negotiate with Brazilian agro-industrialists including the soy and beef industries ("10 Years Ago the Amazon," 2016; Miller, 2012). The Maró view the lands and waters of the Tapajós through relational commitments connecting past to present and imagining an indigenous future. Despite having faced intense pressure from historical assimilation policies including the loss of their indigenous language, the Maró do not doubt the continuance of their indigenous culture because their relationship with the land remains intact.

Threats from timber and other destructive industries represent a direct attack on the existence of the Maró people. The desires of international NGOs to protect biodiversity or preserve forests to guard against climate impacts are unequivocal to the worldview of the Maró, especially in relation to territory. Maró leadership were particularly resistant to the flattening of their relations with the environment into the singular, universal value of carbon for export.

> *When it comes to money, there is no need for us here in the region. There is no need for us to make a project and sell. There is no need for that, we consume and produce what is necessary for us. We are not concerned with who is out there [global North]. Look, it has been over 500 years since Brazil was colonized and even today Brazil remains a colony. Brazil is one of the countries that exports most raw material , primary matter.*

I had asked the above interviewee, a leader with the Maró, about whether a carbon credit program would be useful for the Maró. He focused on the financialization of Maró natural resources and pushed back on the need to turn their forested territory into income. Maró interviewees regarded carbon as a concern of the global North to whom the Maró attribute the current climate crisis. The Amazon forest's carbon storage capabilities supersede the importance of indigenous territories and

rights to healthcare or education in the discourse materials of international conservation. Indigenous rights acquire importance due to the value of indigenous territories in protecting ecosystems. Neither the Brazilian government nor international conservation NGOs engage indigenous groups in conversations regarding their desires for their territories. Both leverage their narrative of choice, focusing on the value of the resources of the territories rather than questions of indigenous futures. The Maró spoke of the responsibilities of the Brazilian government in terms of security, education, and healthcare while rejecting opportunities to connect their territory to conservation initiatives such as carbon credits.

The ontological foundations of carbon credits differ sharply from the cosmovision of the Maró. Western economists and environmentalists frequently champion carbon credits as a rational, efficient, market-oriented response to the twin threats of climate change and tropical deforestation. Although both these problems connect to Western colonialism and related development policies, the Maró choose to focus primarily on deforestation, stating that climate change is a problem stemming from the global North and should be dealt with accordingly. The Maró do not wish for their territory to function as an offset for foreign carbon appetites. From a climate justice point-of-view, the Maró perspective is especially salient (Zhouri, 2010). Tropical deforestation directly impacts indigneous bodies and lifeways and represents the continuing existence of coloniality across indigenous Amazonia. Deforestation also directly enacts a biological and cultural genocide upon indigenous groups in the Amazon. Biologically-speaking, indigenous individuals and more-than-human relations are killed by the timber interests and other extractive industries. Culturally, the loss of clean waters, healthy fish, and forest sources of other resources threatens to displace traditions of exchange and production in the forest with dependence on nearby markets like Santarém. Assimilation of both indigeous and *ribeirinho* communitie into capitalist markets across the Amazon would mark a dramatic and destructive severing of historical embodied relationalities. The impact of this shift threatens both ontology and epistemology as the two frequently combine in the Amazon (Overing, 1990). The rationalization of the Amazon occurs both through destructive development and well-meaning conservation. Both threaten decolonial futures through precluding pluriversal possibilities. Hearing the Maró reject carbon credits was honestly shocking for me. My previous experience in conservation work in the United States through the Sierra Club suggested carbon credits as an ideal solution for international forest protection. However, as a Maró interviewee stated, "*Não é assim que funciona na Amazônia, né*?" ("That's not how it [conservation] works in the Amazon, right?"). While the international community does not shy from suggesting conservation approaches in Amazonia, the reality on the ground confounds perspectives rooted in the global North.

> *At the time we didn't know what a carbon credit was about. And then we went to study, then we went to exchange experiences with other relatives where they had accepted carbon credits in their territory. The reports that relatives passed on to us were not the best, they said they limited, they sold carbon credits, they negotiated there, they didn't even know*

> *what they were doing, and then they only saw the consequences afterwards, that they couldn' farm. "Oh no, you sold your carbon, you can't make a garden", or if you could, it's very little, it's limited, so that plot there where he would make a garden would not be enough for him to sell the flour. From the cultivation. To make a swidden, we have to deforest an area, a section. That's what they include: "Anything you wanted to do in the forest, you're going to have to communicate to us", like, that was the condition, then we say: "Wait a minute, it's ours, so we cannot do this, we will be selling our land?"*

Rather than strengthening indigenous rights, conservation interventions such as carbon credits can lead to confusion and a loss of autonomy. An interview with an indigenous student at the local federal university offers important perspectives into indigenous Brazilians' fight with the carbon credit proposal. This student explained that indigenous resistance to the program eventually occupied a government office because indigenous voices felt excluded from the process. These indigenous activists came to the decision to oppose the program after consulting with other indigenous Brazilians who had experience with carbon credit programs. Resistance centered around the changes to traditional lifeways that would occur because of the program regulations, guidance dictated by outsiders. Based on my conversations and observations with the Maró and other case studies (Ybarra, 2017), I concur that international conservation organizations frequently engage in fraught, opportunistic interactions with indigenous groups. This is not to rule out the potential of productive relationships, but rather to push back against assumptions that a natural partnership exists (Redford, 1991).

Autonomy & collaboration

In my Literature Review I outlined the continuing presence of international influence in the Amazon, a dynamic not lost on the Brazilian government nor the Brazilian people (Barbosa, 2003). Certainly similar concerns enter within indigenous considerations involving collaborations with international conservation NGOs. While I initially expected the Maró to embrace the support of international entities as a contingency vis-à-vis a dysfunctional Brazilian state (as illustrated in the above example of burning the timber barge), the response of the Maró surprised me. When I asked whether collaboration in an international environmental program such as REDD+ might lead to greater autonomy for the Maró, the answer remained one of suspicion. In fact, the Maró asserted that the opposite effect might take place, that the Brazilian government could respond by isolating the Maró further. The interviewee continued, asserting that the Brazilian government must provide the Maró with essential services. The conversation illuminated a significant divergence between my prior conception of indigenous rights based in North American discourse, that of sovereignty versus the Brazilian priority of autonomy. Indeed, when I brought up the situation of Tribes as sovereign nations in the United States, the Maró did not reflect similar goals. Priorities such as education, healthcare, and territory demand the involvement of the Brazilian government. The Brazilian state guarantees this governmental role through the 1988 Constitution and for the Maró, federal investment in this manner is critical to self-determination. Maró leadership focused on the justice component of both social and

environmental policies: the government's role is to provide the rights dictated by its Constitution. Further considerations such as economic development, conservation-as-development, and expulsion of the Brazilian state are not a part of autonomy as articulated by the Maró. Interviewees felt that their indigenous communities retained autonomy except for the areas of education, healthcare, and security which remained the duty of the federal Brazilian government. However, the growth of indigenous territorial patrols and auto-demarcation suggests that some communities may be expanding their definition of autonomy, particularly in light of conflict stoked by the Bolsonaro government ("Alta do desmatamento não é inépcia," 2020). I suspect that the Bolsonaro government's policy of racialized violence against indigenous Brazilians fueled by both rhetoric and absence may lead to increased roles for both international and domestic NGOs. Unfortunately the retreat of the public sector for essential services only furthers the neoliberal model in Brazil (Silva, 2019). However, some of this collaboration continues to take place in the public sector although through indirect channels. In particular, the federal university in Santarém (UFOPA) functions as both a site of learning and a fountain of technical support for surrounding communities. In programs such as anthropology, archeology, and geography I observed research projects fulfilling both academic requirements and free consultations on issues such as environmental law, civil rights, and territory.

One night during my stay at Terra Indígena Maró I learned the meaning of both decolonized research and a role for non-indigenous actors in indigenous struggles. I left our boat heading towards the center of this particular village alongside Kércia, Gera, and Shirley Krenak (a researcher from UFPA in Belém, an activist from Minas Gerais, and an idigenous leader from Minas Gerais). Walking, we listened to the surreal sounds of the forest: bleeps, whistles, and trills. The nighttime chorus was impeccably profound, so I reached for my recorder and proceeded to absorb that moment. Accompanied by the voices of the surrounding forest, Shirley sang in the Krenak language. Listening to the recording later, I am amazed at the vibrancy of the sounds in the background, perhaps a testament to the health of the Maró ecosystem (Krause, 2012). Despite wishing to avoid the interference of artificial light in this special moment, I occasionally trained my headlamp on the path ahead in order to avoid tarantulas or snakes. We approached the village center, identified by a simple church building and a large gathering place outside the structure. Members of the community brought food and drink from a cooking area elsewhere in the village, preparing the banquet at the center of the encircling assembly. Maró young and old gathered for this special moment as Kércia joined with Maró leaders, holding the massive blue-bounded book housing her recently completed doctoral dissertation. Kércia had focused her dissertation on the Maró struggle against racism for recognition as an indigenous people in their ancestral territory. This story of regeneration of indigeneity among the Maró has occurred across Brazil, representing a watershed moment in Brazilian history (Warren, 2001).

The mood that night at TI Maró spoke to the intimacy of the years of collaboration between Kércia and the Maró rather than the overarching transformation of Brazilian politics and the global indigenous movement at-large. In the ceremony that followed, Kércia handed her research back to the

Maró community, presenting them with the bound copy of her dissertation containing maps, photos, and countless conversations synthesized into a compelling affirmation of culture, rights, and identity. Although the Maró themselves advocate fearlessly against the Brazilian state, the chronicling of their story in written word, particularly analysis of the perpetuation of racism in the power seat of Santarém, remained hidden prior to Kércia's work. The emotional "return" of this research to the Maró contrasts profoundly with Maró accounts of relationships with international conservation NGOs as mentioned earlier. The dissertation, a project in its own right, had been long-term, relational, and predicated on Maró priorities. With Kércia trust was established, commitment demonstrated, and work accomplished towards the central objective of the Maró: demarcation of indigenous territory.

Decolonizing conservation

When Maró leadership repeatedly answered that an international conservation intervention such as carbon offsets would present a distraction from their ultimate goal of achieving an indigenous territory I remained surprised, stubbornly speechless that the flow of financial resources for conserving forest held no sway. My assumption remained based on the rhetoric of international conservation NGOs, UNFCCC's COP, and countless academics (Soares-Filho et al., 2006). Within Brazil, the much studied case of the Suruí of Rondônia remains frequently cited as a positive intervention of REDD on behalf of indigenous territory (West, 2016; Forero, 2013). Elsewhere in the world, studies find local benefits related to creation of additional financial resources and autonomy (Lyons et al., 2017). However, significant doubts exist over whether compensation by international organizations truly leads to self-determination gains or primarily benefits adverse international agendas with little prior consultation of local communities (Chernela, 2014). Indeed, the binding of the indigenous Maró to international authorities and the translation inherently involved were emphasized as a formidable obstacle to achieving more pressing Maró goals. By translation I do not mean purely linguistic, but rather the semiotic translation of forest into carbon alluded to in my literature review. The reduction of the rich Amazon ecosystem to carbon value legitimates fears of the necessary elements required for the alchemy: restrictions on traditional uses--whether hunting, land, or representation. Maró fears of restrictions associated with international conservation norms echoed those of other indigenous groups engaged in such negotiations around the world (Fairhead et al., 2012). An interview with a Maró woman respected by leadership highlighted the community's attitude towards Western conservation ideals. She explained that the Maró hunt all species even as it has become apparent that wildlife face a decline in Maró territory. This approach conflicts with wildlife management policies typical of Western-style conservation and has led academics to contest identification of indigenous peoples as inherent conservationists (Conklin & Graham, 1995). Such rebuttal of the "ecologically noble savage" trope is similarly embraced by indigenous theorists such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith:

> I believe that our survival as peoples has come from our knowledge of our contexts, our environment, not from some active beneficence of our Earth Mother. We had to know how to survive. We had to work out ways of knowing. (1999, p. 13)

Yet, after traveling with the Maró and repeatedly hearing the invocation of their priority of defending the natural world, I am reluctant to dismiss their role as conservationists even as they retain cultural priorities such as hunting, traditional extraction, and swidden farming. While such activities are largely incompatible with the Western notion of Wilderness, the apogee of preservationist philosophy, the Maró make several important observations regarding their ambivalence to Western environmentalism, constructing an insurgent environmental framework pragmatically oriented to their situation in Amazônia.

In considering threats to Maró territory, one must consider territory as Place, merging ecological and social relations as environmental destruction impacts both. My observations on Maró environmental philosophy find a consistent articulation of Place and "home" rather than "wilderness" (Daniel Wildcat foreward in Larsen et al., 2017). In conversations with the Maró, the more-than-human elements of their ecosystem were never disarticulated from Maró culture and politics. Several outcomes result: Maró territorial politics present a narrative of protecting both environment and culture from analogous threats; environmentalism which does not recognize the priority of Maró territorial security is dismissed; and the indigenous movement in the Lower Tapajós retains an environmental focus. Before I move into consideration of each of these outcomes, I wish to make a reflexive observation on my approach to this discussion. In each of the above observations, my framing perpetuates a dichotomy even as I seek to undermine it. Separation of people and environment forms the basis of Western conservation (Guha, 2013) and leads to interventions which are noteworthy within the epistemology of conservation yet incredibly redundant in indigenous thought (Pierotti & Wildcat, 2000). Indigenous leaders in the Lower Tapajós moved seamlessly between discourse on indigenous rights and environmental protection. The possibility of indigenous cultural resurgence emerged from a relationship with Place and environmental health. One approach to identifying this relationship is praxis as articulated by Brazilian education activist and theorist Paulo Freire. Freire theorizes co-creation as the basis of education, calling for a resurgence of consciousness (*conscientização*) similar to the process of indigenous self-identification occurring in the Lower Tapajós. In the case of the Lower Tapajós, discourse surrounding indigeneity is recognized as only part of the movement's goals. One interviewee reflected that discourse begins with the leaders of the movement. The movement's actualization occurs when this discourse is linked to cultural practice in praxis.

Cultural practices are often dependent on the natural environment. Theorists such as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro recognize linkages between human culture and natural environment in Amazonia as inseparable and in constant negotiation. In *Immanence and fear* (2012), Castro demonstrates the impossibility of separating people from Place in Amazonia based on traditional cosmovisions. In brief, separation between human and more-than-human lifeforms represents an exception to the natural ontology of life rather than the rule. Thus, if the emergent humanity represents only a temporal manifestation of the same form of existence and perspective found immanently across all forms of life,

separation of humanity from ecology reflects an absurd departure. Translating this alterNative framework to hunting, if hunting exists as an elemental process in which physical form is negotiated in Amazonia, removing humans from the equation would have deleterious impacts on the capacity of humans to maintain participation in Amazonian ontology. This ontological basis for indigenous environmental philosophy intersects with practical application into indigenous activism: the loss of the ability to manifest indigeneity via praxis inevitably leads to a loss of indigenous culture, identity, self-determination, and Place.

The inseparability of humans from Nature emerged during a lunchtime conversation in Santarém with Kércia, Shirley Krenak, and Geralda Soares. The discussion revolved around endangered species, echoing one of the principal concerns of the Maró in regard to allowing a carbon offset program to administer their land: the right to conduct traditional hunting in their territory. Hunting itself has come to represent the division between the rights of whites regarding the environment versus of native populations. Charlotte Epstein (2006) quotes William Adams, "white men 'hunted' while Africans 'poached'" when describing the ways native Africans were excluded from colonial preserves. The September 25, 2017 report from Survival International "New Report exposes widespread abuse funded by big conservation organizations" details recurring conflicts between local groups and conservation authorities in the Congo Basin. Negative publicity seems to be an exception for African wildlife rangers. Searching the internet led to frequent articles along the lines of "World Ranger Day – Meet the true heroes of Africa". However, it is conceivable that the African wildlife rangers share much more in common with the tribal peoples suffering at their hands than either group does with international conservation organizations such as WWF and WCS (funders of wildlife rangers as well as partners with timber companies). At the conclusion of the Survival International articles, an appeal is made, "WWF and WCS supporters might ask these organizations how they could let this situation carry on for so long". Referencing the supporters of NGOs such as WWF or WCS harkens back to Epstein's consideration of the distance between Western environmentalists and much of the wildlife they wish to protect.

In Ecologies of Comparison (2011) Timothy Choy asserts "the politics of endangerment rests upon two fundamental gestures—those of threat and specificity" (PG 49). International regimes focused on the protection of charismatic wildlife illuminate a threat which can become personal and emotional, even for those far from African savannahs or the Amazon's endemic species. However, this specificity is often best known by those for whom the species at risk constitute daily interactions. Particularity and interrelatedness falls behind international political goals or distant fundraising appeals in relevance to conservationists. These stakes differ sharply from those of indigenous Amazonians whom encounter a level of immediate personal and cultural significance beyond international biodiversity assessments. As mentioned above, Brazilian theorist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro demonstrates the role of hunting in Amazonian subjectivities, identifying the position of the hunter as critical to maintaining one's humanity in an ecosystem of related selves (2012). Castro contends that through the hunt, a human

ensures their own personhood apart from the more-than-human selves of the forest just as a jaguar does when it hunts a human. To remove humans from the equation would be an irreparable interruption in Amazonian ontology. Yet, declining population numbers demonstrate the threats facing various forest species. Kércia, Shirley, and Geralda answered this quantitative reality through a renewed call to respect the rights to self-determination and autonomy over territory of indigenous peoples, emphasizing that the decision to curtail hunts or alter methods must be made by indigenous peoples alone.

Advocates for indigenous management of biodiversity including the Maró leadership point to past stewardship, highlighting the destruction done by non-indigenous actors such as industrial timber, agribusiness, and development projects. Biodiversity, indigenous territories, and indigenous cultures all suffer the outcomes of the environmental destruction executed by outside groups surrounding and invading indigenous territories. The leadership of the Maró take this external assault on their home very seriously, reserving determination of the path forward for themselves, otherwise they might lose both the biodiversity and human culture of their home. The historical contribution of TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge) to the creation of the biodiversity of today's Amazon suggests that TEK also holds solutions for adaptation to the tremendous changes the ecosystem currently faces. Acknowledging the changing nature of ecosystems as articulated by both indigenous ways of knowing and disturbance ecology presents a compelling case for increasing applications of TEK and community participation in resource management in the tropics (Dove & Carpenter, 2008; Christie & White, 1997). TEK, adaptive management, and disturbance ecology avoid the static response of preservationists, fortress conservation, and equilibrium ecology which favor excluding human presence in ecosystems. Similarly, measurement by a baseline assuming an ecological history of wilderness (an environment free from human intervention) remains fraught. Although such methodologies have been privileged among conservationists and national governments alike, examples point to their deficiencies in halting the advance of both habitat destruction and extinctions (Peet & Watts, 1996; West, 2006). On the other hand, within Brazil, indigenous lands are regarded as the last bastions of primary forest in multiple regions (Davis et al., 1994).

Protecting Place

Threats to the security of Maró territory and the safety of its leadership were palpable during our visit. I observed the great lengths the Maró undertook to ensure the safety of leadership and the growing role of patrols of Maró throughout their territory to intercept illegal loggers. Maró young adult males embraced the role of the warrior in this regard, particularly with its relation to auto-demarcation as practiced by the Munduruku further upstream the Tapajós. In absence of support of territorial demarcation and policing by the Brazilian government, indigenous groups rely on their own mapping, determination, signage, and security along the borders of their territories (Nepomuceno, 2019). Although I felt tension related to insecurity while visiting Maró territory, it was not until I began analyzing my data that I realized how concerns over land conflict might intersect with Maró rejection

of carbon offsets. My own background in technocratic conservation approaches in the United States where government enforcement is assumed precluded a more perceptive consideration of security, conservation, and indigeneity across TI Maró and Amazonia. This blindness underscores the importance of considering positionality in research as well as its role in perspectives concerning policy decisions, whether conservation or other. Non-Maró informants emphasized lack of clear communication as the primary cause of rejection of carbon offsets by the Maró. The Maró, on the other hand, emphasized carbon offsets as a distraction, one which might lead to physical and territorial harm. For the Maró, self-determination of conservation on their territory related to security.

Often mainstream discourse simplifies the cause of land conflict in Amazonia into clear culprits, depending on the goals of the organization presenting the data. These campaigns assume a regime of law and search for deficiencies which would otherwise confound the regulated use of land and presence of proper titles. Blame is attributed to sources ranging from international appetites to lack of private titling of indigenous lands to criminal cartels or even conspiracies of global North-based conservation NGOs depriving Brazilian agriculture of its destined growth. However, analysis of the political economy and history of the Brazilian Amazon transcends both the usual suspects and isolated factors in considering land and resource conflict (Hecht & Cockburn, 2011). However, a recurrent theme throughout land conflicts in Amazonia remains the Brazilian government's dismissal of indigenous rights to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) on major land use projects involving territories and resources traditionally controlled by indigenous peoples. Brazil is a signatory to both ILO Convention 169 as well as UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples), obligating the government to FPIC. However, the reality often sharply differs as Brazilian land policy within *Amazônia Legal* (portion of Brazil officially recognized as Amazon for socio-geographic purposes).

In order to promote decentralized development of the vast Amazon, the Brazilian government frequently fuels land speculation and colonization as well as subsidizing otherwise unprofitable industrial endeavors. Indigenous peoples are typically excluded from decision-making processes involved. Such was the case with the carbon offset project. While myself and others fixated on communication of the project's plan and intent, the Maró emphasized the process by which the plan was delivered without effective consultation. Thus the conservation and development goals of the carbon offset regime reanimated pervasive fears of loss of autonomy and security through lack of FPIC. The carbon offset plan may be viewed as a security threat similar to state-sponsored encroachment of illegal timber or roadbuilding within their territory, an ever-expanding network putting Maró lives, culture, and resources in constant danger. Defeat of the carbon offset proposal meant one less threat to Maró self-determination and security. Even the potential distribution associated with payments to the community through carbon credits paled in comparison to the ceding of control over territorial resources. Indeed, payouts are frequently promised to indigenous and traditional communities in exchange for foreclosure of decision-making rights.

As observed earlier, indigenous territories in the Brazilian Amazon represent some of the best-managed forests and lands in the Basin. For this reason, they are typically threatened by the expanding extraction and agriculture frontiers. The opening of these territories to private development, corrupt massive infrastructure projects (such as the Belo Monte dam), or reduction through parceling into private holdings presents a massive security risk for the region from both environmental and social conflict perspectives. Threats of continued loss of Amazon forest are well-documented from diminishing biodiversity to changing weather systems impacting areas as distant as the Brazilian southeast and beyond (Werth, 2002). These environmental security risks are associated with increasing conflicts over natural resources as well as fueling further illegal land seizures as existing farms, pastures, and timber property become degraded. The recent completion of BR-163 which connects the agricultural commodity center of Cuiabá, Mato Grosso with the port at Santarém illustrates the danger of infrastructure projects fueling land invasions along their path (Hecht & Cockburn, 2011). Often such impacts by *grilheiros*, gangs contracted by ranchers or farmers to seize loosely-held lands, occur along roads or areas along the development frontier where development projects promise a higher reward on displacement of indigenous or traditional peoples. The consequences of such conflict result in massive migrations to cities such as Belém or Manaus of displaced population, increasing poverty and tensions in urban centers. These forced migrations also push poor rural Brazilians into preexisting traditional or indigenous reserves, intensifying the demand on resources already confined to demarcated lands. The Brazilian government rarely adequately considers such impacts despite calls by indigenous groups. In the case of hydropower development, the Brazilian government sidesteps FPIC through citing massive infrastructure development as an issue of national security and importance, the loophole engineered by the military dictatorship and maintained even through the 1988 Constitution. Enforcement of existing laws meant to protect territory by either IBAMA (Brazilian environmental agency) or FUNAI (Brazilian indigenous agency) remains underfunded and often unsupported by other organs of the federal government lobbied by large landholders and rural powerbrokers. During my 2017 research trip to Pará, a ferry carrying IBAMA enforcement personnel and vehicles was torched further upstream the Tapajós River. Repercussions were minimal.

Indigenous futures

The Lower Tapajós leadership conference for indigenous youth began as the Amazon sun quickly heated the dusty ground of the gathering circle. Artistic reproductions of fish displayed the names of the groups making up the indigenous people of the Lower Tapajós crowned a circle of masts. Here at TI Cobra Grande, youth and leaders stood in a circle, as the opening song and dance began. The song repeated a chorus I had heard at TI Maró the night before, proclaiming the connection of the people to the water, earth, and creatures of this land of rivers, forests, and indigenous resurgence.

(Coral): Tupã está na terra, Tupã está no céu, Tupã está na mata, Tupã está no rio, Tupã está em ti {2x}
Tupã está na terra, Tupã está no céu, Tupã está na mata, Tupã está no rio, Tupã está em nós.

(Chorus): Tupã is on earth, Tupã is in heaven, Tupã is in the forest, Tupã is in the river, Tupã is in you {2x}
Tupã is on earth, Tupã is in heaven, Tupã is in the forest, Tupã is in the river, Tupã is in us.

The crowd of youth was inspiring, reflecting the power of the indigenous movement anchored in nearby Santarem and its federal university UFOPA and yet connected to other Brazilian regions and cosmopolitanisms (Forte, 2010). The faces of the youth reflected the collective strength of the moment, youth whom in decades past may been dismissed as "*caboclos"* and now rallied intersectionalities as youth activists as well as the vanguard of indigeneity in the Lower Tapajós. Centuries of aggressive assimilation policies from the Brazilian state and Catholic church of Santarém displaced language, culture, and even tribal names. One of the groups present had chosen the name of their favorite river fish as their banner, linking their revival to Place as well as creatively imagining their indigenous future. Next, the participants moved beneath a large covering, a gigantic classroom where a table for speaker panels faced rows of chairs quickly filled with indigenous teenagers, young adults, and few people older than thirty years.

A Maró leader commenced the speaker portion of the conference. His message was not without controversy. He spoke against the primacy of education in Santarém at UFOPA, calling for a focus on indigenous cultural resilience and return which could be thwarted by youth spending their months in urban Santarém rather than participating in traditional modes of production and ceremonies on indigenous territory. However, the Maró leader retained nuance, himself the orchestrator of the purchase of the large wooden motorized boat I had arrived on. This boat greatly benefited the supply chains and transportation of the Maró and other groups along the Arapiuns, acknowledging the connection between indigenous groups of the rivers and forest with the Brazilian city of Santarem. Following him, a younger female activist from CIMI (*Conselho Indigenista Missionário*) spoke, identifying the threat of capitalism and state policies aimed at detaching people from their resources. Later, I was told that these particular discourses were emerging within the indigenous movement of the Lower Tapajós, reaching portions of these populations for which such considerations had not been previously connected. I have no doubt the considerable use of critical theory in classes at UFOPA energizes ideological rejection of the Brazilian market economy.

Later, male and female youth were separated into breakout sessions, to address specific problems facing their genders. Throughout the conference I observed the faces of the participants, noticing how long lectures at times made focus difficult. The movement of artists painting bodies in traditional designs with heavy black ink grounded more cerebral discussions of political economy. Shirley Krenak spoke during one section of the conference, recounting the lessons learned by her people in southeastern Brazil, far from the Amazon. Her people too lived along a mighty river, the Rio Doce. The river of the Krenak had been polluted by a mining corporation to the point where the water was useless for fishing. Such destruction and loss may have been unimaginable in the present moment for those on the Arapiuns who both fish and drink from the river. The river and its resources form the lifeblood for Lower Tapajós indigenous peoples ,the foundation for human culture as indicated in the opening song. Humans, rivers, forests, and animal life were inseparable in the conversations I heard at the conference.

I spoke to Shirley regarding her mission and message to the Lower Tapajós. Her words were meant as a call to action, a warning, an encouragement to defend territory at any cost to avoid the unthinkable loss of the river. Shirley had also visited the Museu Goeldi in Belem where she encountered an artifact taken from her people a century ago. The Krenak's encounter with such monumental loss of culture and territory had spurred their fierce resurgence, yet despite cultural renewal a poisoned river could never be replaced. The energy at the conference was calm even as threatening topics were covered. The beach cookout the night before had highlighted the social opportunity for indigenous youth. The looks of resolve on the faces eschewed any naïveté. My conversations with youth leadership reflected a confidence, organization, and courage among the youth of this growing indigenous movement.

Two years later I was present for an indigenous art fair in the hip cultural focal point of Alter do Chão. Alter attracts travellers from all over Brazil as well as international backpackers with its laidback idyllic setting and contraction of small local restaurants, music, and artists. Indigenous youth had organized the art festival where I saw the wooden fish with the tribal names again floating above. A fashion show and pulsating carimbó performances reflected the vibrancy of the moment, the fashion show in particular showcasing the compatibility of traditional indigenous designs with cosmopolitan currents, the cool factor rivalling anything I've seen in São Paulo. The exploration of arts, culture, and music in the restoration of indigenous cultures demonstrates "creative liberation and cultural sovereignty" (Nelson 2008, pg 292) The participant of Brazilian independent news outlet Midia Ninja suggested the existence of networks connecting these young artists to others in Salvador or Rio de Janeiro. I remembered the Maró leader, two years ago, cautioning youth on becoming too attached to university life and urban cultures. Perhaps he underestimated the agility of his audience, able to bridge a deep connection to the past and Place with agency to craft a resilient cultural future. He had visited the art festival earlier that day.

VII. Reflections on mixing waters

What is meant by conservation design? In my literature review I discussed the history of conservation and arrived at a definition by which to describe the behavior of conservation as developed by Western epistemologies and ontologies. Similarly, design while typically emerging from discourse related to built environments or product development may be thought of more conceptually through the lens utilized by Arturo Escobar (2018). When Escobar considers how design might better create space for the pluriverse or co-existent diverse lifeways, he is asking how the discourse or theory behind design might be applied across society in the ways humans imagine and create. The results may be directly material or ideas that lead to policies engendering material outcomes. Conservation falls into the second category though certain conservation interventions such as bioswales or reforestation immediately impact material concerns. Within my data analysis sections I focused on four conservation interventions: public lands (the national forest Saracá-Taquerá), sustainability discourse, international environmental NGOs, and carbon credits. I presented local perceptions of each intervention, transmitting the voices of those upon whom such interventions are deployed along with theoretical intersections. In doing so I demonstrated how theory is affirmed by local ways of knowing. As I mentioned in my discussion of methodology, local perspectives are always my starting point, fulfilling both a Grounded Theory and Place-sensitive approach. The knowledge I compile begins embodied by those living in the forest, is communicated with me through ethnography, and finally is interpreted by me as the standard to which relevant theory is compared. Central to this process are critical questions regarding my positionality and reflexivity.

Throughout my field work, questions regarding my identity and ethos were common. While people living in closer proximity to international hubs such as Alter do Chão quickly identified me as a *gringo* and were more curious about my reasons for visiting their locality, more peripheral communities such as those of Lago Sapucuá initially assumed I was a southern Brazilian working for the government. When I explained that I was from the United States, individuals became intrigued with the reality of the United States as well as how the United States viewed the Amazon. Often, I assumed the identity of a student/researcher. This answer always provoked understanding given the Amazon's lengthy history as a crossroads for foreign researchers. Although the pursuit of knowledge has been linked to materially extractive, lucrative results such as biopiracy, most people I met were satisfied to assume I was pursuing knowledge for its own sake. My affiliation with Brazilian universities aided this understanding. Informants expected me to ask many questions, most of which might feel irrelevant or repetitive to their immediate needs and desires. Between my field work with the Maró in 2017 and at Lago Sapucuá in 2019, I resolved to further devolve my knowledge formation to the local level by asking the community how my research might best strengthen their resiliency. The resulting vector led to the participatory mapping project. However, my positionality continued to influence how informants responded to my questions and how I interpreted local perspectives. As I begin the discussion of my findings, I acknowledge that the stories, conversations, and observations I gathered in the field phase pass through two filters: Impacts on interactions because of how I was perceived by

both humans and more-than-humans as well as impacts on my interpretation of what I was seeing/hearing/feeling resulting from my personal history and identity.

Interrogating Conservation-As-Development

When asked regarding the intentions of my research, I always situated my questions within Conservation. You will recall from my literature review that the United States played a central role in the development of conservation design. When I spoke with communities about their experiences with Conservation, I emphasized that the ideas and connected impacts began in the United States. This made sense to most people because the role of international environmentalism is apparent across the Amazon Basin. The massive Brazilian television broadcaster Globo airs segments on the environment, reflecting discourse shared by a globalized environmental movement. Locals in the Amazon refer to the Amazon as the "lungs of the earth" when referencing its importance to the rest of the world. Ironically, the globally-recognized value of the Amazon reinforces long-standing Brazilian fears that rich nations in the global North might try to steal the Amazon from Brazil. As I consider critical observations on the design of conservation, this question of exporting the Amazon remains central: When does conservation design focus on facilitating exportation of ecological value?

Public lands have a storied history in western environmentalism and green colonialism (Nash, 2013). Often, the creation of new public lands in the form of parks resembles private reserves given displacement and access restrictions (Fairhead, 2012). This sad reality is certainly true in the case of the Saracá-Taquera National Forest near the Amazonas-Pará state border. Residents of the communities of PAE Sapucuá Trombetas frequently narrated the impact of the creation of the National Forest in 1989 on their lives. These impacts include harassment by government officials, displacement from traditional territory, destruction by extractive industries authorized to operate in the national forest, and the disappearance of more-than-human forest guardians. The term "green grabbing" is commonly used to highlight the tendency of conservation measures to "gazette" or enclose lands. Francinilda's emotional re-encounter with the *roça* of her birth demonstrated the human impact of displacement by conservation lands. While the forest has always held an affective presence for the connected human communities (Kopenawa & Albert, 2013), interviewees highlighted a more recent fear of being in the forest. This fear occurs not a result of jaguars or *curupira*, but out of concern of costly fines inflicted by forest police. Signs warning of injury and loss of life due to extractive activities further capitalized on local's fears of entering the forest.

While sustainability may at first appear benign and agreeable to any communities looking for a healthy relationship with their home ecosystem, empirical research frequently identifies sustainability discourse as a tool used by authoritative conservationists to legitimate environmentality upon Place-based communities. Community members recounted critiques from government conservation employees assailing local knowledge and lifeways as unsustainable and therefore unfit for a conservation area such as the national forest. Similarly, extractive industries emphasize their sustainability practices to

normalize their conduct in the forest. Alongside the Brazilian federal environmental agencies IBAMA and ICMBio, bauxite mining and timber operations depict themselves as conscientious and wise custodians of the forest. In particular, the use of the FSC label for timber operations erases local, embodied knowledges related to forest health while reifying the analysis of external certification organizations (Nepomuceno, 2019).

The Amazon has long been a focal point of international interests. As a result, prior to arrival in the region, outsiders are well-acquainted to the discourse surrounding the forest in popular culture, science writing, and NGO campaigns. I was unsurprised when the Maró quickly listed the international conservation NGOs operating in the Tapajós Basin--these NGOs direct the narrative found in large global newspapers and online giving campaigns, particularly in response to hydropower development. The Maró understood the importance of giving campaigns for international NGOs, linking the commitments of these NGOs to perceived donations abroad. As a result of this priority, NGOs became seen as unreliable partners in the Tapajós Basin. Alliances, however, were still considered valuable, an example of differential consciousness practiced by the Maró leadership within international environmentalism.

I initially focused my research on the question of carbon credits. I had viewed carbon credits as a win-win solution, providing communities with money for their immediate needs as well as land security through international legitimacy of conservation practices. My assumptions were quickly rebuffed by indigenous leaders referencing their experience with the carbon credit proposal in the Tapajós Basin. Although the Maró led resistance to a carbon credit proposal, interviewees also noted that they were not entirely opposed to the idea. However, Maró leadership again returned to concerns regarding the design of carbon credit programs and the concept's effective export of nature. Echoing Maró views on international NGOs, interviewees were concerned that the gap between their ontological understanding of the environment diverged emphatically from that of international environmentalism. Involvement in a carbon credit program constituted a distraction, and a potentially deadly one at that. While the Maró demonstrated profound care and concern for the Tapajós ecosystem, they did not express concerns with the universality of climate change or carbon. The Maró viewed carbon credits as an attempt by outsiders to reduce their forests to a single variable to be balanced against global North pollution.

Local interventions in international conservation

Given the complex impacts disrupting ecosystems around the world, I do not feel justified in critiquing international conservation practices without acknowledging the positive impacts of conservation NGOs and governmental environmental agencies alike. Conservation is a complex and diverse assemblage of actors and methodologies. However, my field work demonstrates the need for questioning the underlying design of conservation and the impact of conservation upon the human communities of the ecosystems it purports to protect. Frequently conservation experts dismiss local

concerns, viewing local relationships with the natural environment as part and parcel of the threats facing ecosystems. Criticism of swidden agriculture or hunting frequently appear, casting traditional practices as primary causes of ecosystem destruction.

Local communities rightfully contest the scale of impacts. In the Saracá-Taquerá National Forest, both *ribeirinhos* and timber operations extract valuable itaúba. Yet while local use transforms the tree into canoes or houses that remain situated in Place, industrial timber operations export large quantities of this and other valuable hardwoods far away from forest communities. The application of a sustainability label further increases the export value and associates the use of the forest in the global North with a healthy ecosystem. The Maró similarly faced efforts by FSC proponents to log their forest under a responsible label. Whether through the creation of a national forest, application of a sustainability label, photo ops in an international NGO campaign, or quantification as carbon credits, Place-based people in the Amazon experience conservation's interest in their homes as an act of exportation of value. Just as the raw bauxite mined along the Trombetas must be transformed into aluminum before becoming a valuable commodity, the ecosystems and communities of western Pará become valuable to international interests only when extracted from context and processed as an international concern.

Increasingly, conservation publications and reports acknowledge the essential function of local communities in protecting ecosystems. However, this framing perpetuates the value of local communities as dependent on the universally-idealized value of Nature. Conservationists may think this discursive tactic eludes local consciousness, but I believe my field work confirms otherwise. Communities in western Pará are aware that the world values their "Nature" and their value as human societies is contingent on the intactness of their ecosystems. It is no coincidence that conservation organizations are largely absent from eastern Pará where native forests were already devastated.

<u>Reflexivity</u>

I am very conscious that I offer these critiques of internationals in the Amazon as an international conducting research in the Amazon. Internally, I have struggled to explain why the Amazon needs one more researcher (me) from the global North. At one point in the field, the question was raised, "*Quem é o branco?*" (Who is the white guy?) It's a reasonable and important question.

On the ground in the Amazon, the atmosphere is one of autonomy, communities are not necessarily looking for foreign researchers to collaborate with. I was once told that if I wanted to work with indigenous groups, I should "get in line". The Amazon is far from the isolated land it is portrayed as in popular imaginations. There has been a long history of foreign involvement in the region not to mention Brazilian colonialism. Locals are suspicious of internationals like me. Again, even Brazilians outside the Amazon have long feared that the United States is trying to steal the Amazon from Brazil.

I don't think the Amazon needs another international researcher. But, environmentalism as practiced by the global North certainly does. Although there have been improvements, the communities I encountered in the Basin still feel as though they are not being heard. They feel that the brief relationships forged by international NGOs are ultimately utilitarian to the international community and less so to Amazonian desires. Such framing defines my audience: Conservation, Development, and imaginaries engaging in forms of value extraction from the Amazon.

Why me? While my positionality demands deep reflexivity and reflection for my field work in Amazônia, I do feel that I am able to passionately speak into spaces of Conservation and Development given my background in the field. I have volunteered at, worked for, and supported NGOs for my entire professional life. Conservation of wilderness was/is of massive importance to me. The changes and evolution of my own conservation ethos mirrors what is possible throughout the international conservation field.

Given my personal ties to Conservation, I do not wish to see it dismantled. In fact, I believe in it and hope the field can be decolonized. Within my own life I continue to see decolonization as a process in which I have much to learn from my research communities in the Amazon. It is my conviction that the periphery must lead the center as the source of ideas and dreams necessary to address the current socio-ecological crisis facing our shared planet.

In my continuing research, I will first ask communities what project(s) they desire. That is how I conducted my work at Lago Sapucuá. By letting the community lead and set the terms of the research, participation expanded, my perspective on field work was transformed, and local leadership rallied the community to break its silence and push back on extractive industries.

<u>Confluences in conservation</u>

Collaboration is often messy, but that does not make alternatives of isolation preferable. The emotional impact of daily stories of Amazon destruction and the physical violence occurring as a result of continuing racism, greed, and chaos presents a bleak future for both forest and people. However, for every story of despair, inspiring new alliances and collaborations begin. While the threats to the Amazon present an unparalleled struggle related to the shortened timeframes and expanded scales of 21st century environmental transformation, the same communication networks marshalling financial backing for the Amazon's destruction also facilitate exchanges of knowledge, resources, and solidarity for the marginalized people of the region: indigenous Brazilians, Quilombos, traditional Brazilians, the landless workers of the *Interior*, and the brave dreamers of urban peripheries. These groups chart new networks of resilience with similar communities around the world as well innovative forms of media to tell their stories. On the Tapajós I learned of new inter-ethnic alliances of mutual aid as well as the linking of local leadership to democratized resources flowing from individuals in the global North. While it may be tempting to dismiss this dynamic as repeating development or NGO practices, I

believe the direct connections enabled by online media between activists and allies represent an important step past NGO bureaucracies. Again, this is not to say that NGOs are becoming obsolete, only that strategies of resistance imagine new versatility even as the threats become more dangerous. Central to this exchange of knowledge are the individuals risking their lives, out of love and necessity for their communities. From the leadership of the Maró to Seu Zé educating his neighbors on counter-mapping shortly after a serious motorcycle injury. These local leaders are joined by the youth consciousness emerging from the passionate teachers at small public universities like UFOPA, Brazilians from outside the Amazon devoting their lives to undoing the actions of the government, and international researchers seeking to infuse respect and justice into international presence in the Amazon.

VIII. Conclusion

The sun rose framed by floating cumulonimbus mountains, reflecting the gentle morning light of an otherwise unrelenting heat. I sensed the expansive yet distinct reality of this Amazonian world that at moments overlapped with familiarity but was always quick to remind visitors of its domain. As I repeatedly bashed my head on the overhead wooden beams of the Maró boat until blood soaked into my hat, Kércia remarked that I should have brought a helmet. These petty injuries only added to my feeling that I represented some sort of awkward alien in this vibrant universe, that every question I asked might be a distraction for the Maró, time spent addressing my curiosities about conservation tools from distant lands could mean less fish for dinner, a message undelivered to a fellow activist, or a clandestine threat to territory unseen. Was my presence as unwarranted as that of the Cargill soy terminal? On one hand when I saw that Cargill corporate emblem for the first time, I felt that my work in the Amazon made more sense: If the agroindustrial tentacles of the global North had shown up on the other side of the world, I might as well have arrived simply to oppose fellow *gringos*. Perhaps the Maró felt more ambivalent, similar to their reaction to international conservation and the forest carbon credit proposal. The Maró chief had used the metaphor of hunting to describe the presence of carbon credit schemes: if one is hunting a certain game animal and sees another lesser animal and decides to pursue that less important game, it may preclude capturing the prey that one is truly seeking. The Maró repeatedly expressed demarcation of their traditional territory as the one victory which all future hunts depended on. All else—whether market-based conservation, Greenpeace, or semi-structured interviews—could pose risks as distractions.

My experience with the *ribeirinhos* living in the liminal space between the National Forest Saracá-Taquera and Lago Sapucuá felt decidedly different. Occurring two years following my research with the Maró, I benefited from improved Portuguese and a certain familiarity with travel on boats, sleeping in hammocks, and offering my flesh to critters that crawl or buzz. The *ribeirinho* community also had much less experience with internationals than the Maró. The Maró had navigated the wavering commitments of international NGOs, researchers, and journalists; they responded to my

questions with patience, but also recognition that when I finished my field work I would leave just like all the rest. Their respect for my Brazilian collaborator Kércia led them to humor me. The *ribeirinho* communities responded much differently, partly because I was introduced by a trusted relative and also because they had little contact with internationals. A feeling of isolation existed, and in truth the geography afforded such. While Maró youth received considerable education opportunities in their proximity to Santarém, my final morning with the *ribeirinhos* featured Seu Zé lamenting his grandson's high school-less future while the child prepared the boat for our departure. My point in emphasizing these differences is to highlight that communities with similar lifeways and histories often face very different presents in today's Amazônia even as popular Brazilian society may dismiss them collectively as forest dwellers. These differences impact interactions with the Brazilian economy, government, and internationals such as myself.

While the path of the rivers Arapiuns, Trombetas, Tapajós, and Amazon structures an ecological reality and ontological propriety, the difference of distance remains elusive. The Amazon was never an isolated pristine Eden as imagined by European explorers (Raffles, 2002). Networks of contact, trade, and development existed to an extent yet to be fully revealed (Blakemore, 2018). My conversations with the Maró revealed a lucid choice; Maró leadership espoused their right to their own ontology as an alternative to the modernity offered by the Brazilian state in the form of industrial extraction, urbanization, and cultural hegemony. At the same time, the Maró recognize that they must experience some level of connection to the Brazilian state for security, health care, and education; the Maró articulate these priorities as human rights, not dependency. The Maró themselves had experienced *conscientização* as theorized by Paul Freire, revealing themes which had previously been reduced to class now as matters of race and *cosmovisão*. The ripples of that moment of self-determination and reclaiming of indigeneity have spread to Brazilian academic discourses, international activist networks, and foreign researchers such as myself seeking to understand how concern for the natural environment might better reflect concern for its people. The Maró struggle for territory and self-determination—a future for their culture, people, and ecological home—is the standard which conservation interventions by international NGOs and markets must meet. After centuries of experiencing colonization by explorers, missionaries, soldiers, and development interests, the Maró instinctively know when individual or organizational intentions align or distract from their hunt for ontological restoration in the Tapajós Basin.

The *ribeirinhos* of Lago Sapucuá had not completed a process of self-reflection and political organizing to the degree of the Maró. To remember a conversation with a Brazilian academic, some suggest *ribeirinhos* lack the ontological difference required to nurture and sustain a collective story apart from that of the popular Brazilian narrative. "Their future is to be poor," he had said, separating their case from that of indigenous Brazilians whom he perceived as possessing a cosmovision that afforded a desirable future. My experience with the ribeirinhos differed sharply from this judgement. I encountered communities at the periphery of the Brazilian state's care yet firmly within the orbit of

export markets. My *ribeirinho* interviewees articulated a relationship to their forest and waters materially similar to the Maró even if their spiritual discourse remained guarded. They acknowledged the forest beings the Maró also encountered, but feared they were being pushed out of the forest by extractive industries.

The Amazon is not the only field of contestation between Place-less economies and local guardians in Brazil. The entirety of Brazil possesses important indigenous heritages. Some of these cultures have been erased, but many persevere on a path of cultural recovery to this day. Across the ecoregions of Brazil, indigenous Brazilians join more recent arrivals such as Afro-Brazilians and mixed ancestry working class to contest the dominant narrative of Brazilian history: that people, forests, rivers, and land should be sacrificed for wealth accumulation by elites. The colonial project continues, the frontier is always in formation, and the process is often modeled after strategies of dispossession engineered in the global North. Reflexively, I always recognize the events that set my research trajectory in motion, the months I spent in Brazil in 2011. It was then that I developed a vision of conservation grounded in human culture and personal experience rather than legalistic and administrative protocols. While technology-oriented research methodologies may seem more appropriate in our contemporary environment of big data, remote sensing, and interventions of scale, I believe that the appropriateness of any technology rests on its vetting by ethnography. The relationality and humility made possible by ethnography continues to affirm its methodological importance. Interviewing is the most personal form of research and leads to fieldwork which is simultaneously grueling, frustrating, intimidating, and inspirational. Although even good intentions can lead to one-sided conversations (as I have shown to be the case with NGOs operating in western Pará), by emphasizing an ethnography based on dialogue, researchers can push the process of decolonization forward, including within academia. This process of decolonization involves all who must take responsibility for past and continuing advantages enabled by value extraction from dispossionary practices impacting socio-ecological homes. Respect, trust, and relationality offer a pathway to change through dialogue, and even love for the places where we intersect on a shared planet.

> Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. (Freire, 1970, p. 89)

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