

“THEY WANT TO DIVIDE US TO DOMINATE US”: EFFECTS OF SOCIAL-ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS ON COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN A QUILOMBO IN NORTHEASTERN BRAZIL

“QUEREM NOS DIVIDIR PARA NOS DOMINAR”: EFEITOS DOS CONFLITOS SOCIOAMBIENTAIS SOBRE AS RELAÇÕES COMUNITÁRIAS DE UM QUILOMBO NO NORDESTE DO BRASIL

“QUIEREN DIVIDIRNOS PARA DOMINARNOS”: LOS EFECTOS DE LOS CONFLICTOS SOCIOAMBIENTALES EN LAS RELACIONES COMUNITARIAS DE UN QUILOMBO DEL NORDESTE DE BRASIL



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ABSTRACT: This article conducts a scoping review on the mobilization and application of the concepts of climate justice and just transition in the Brazilian scientific and technical literature from 2015 to 2024. The review is relevant given the current climate crisis and advances in public policies, such as the National Climate Change Plan (Plano Clima) and the Ecological Transformation Plan. The document selection included texts in Portuguese and English focusing on Brazil. The methodology followed six stages: defining the question, search strategy, screening, eligibility criteria, analytical coding, and integrated analysis, using bibliometric techniques. The results indicate that climate justice has been widely mobilized as a comprehensive concept, including topics such as just transition, climate adaptation, historical inequalities, gender, race, and the relevance of vulnerable populations. Despite the limitations, this article contributes to mapping the use of these concepts in Brazil, highlighting how they have been mobilized and applied in the country.

KEYWORDS: Socio-environmental conflicts. Environmental racism. Climate justice. Quilombos. Community resistance.

RESUMO: *Este artigo investiga os efeitos dos conflitos socioambientais sobre as relações comunitárias do Quilombo do Cumbe, no Ceará, Brasil. A pesquisa, baseada em metodologias qualitativas e participativas, como entrevistas e rodas de conversa, analisa como a presença de empreendimentos como a carcinicultura e os parques eólicos têm transformado o território quilombola, promovendo fragmentação interna e disputas narrativas. Os resultados evidenciam que tais conflitos resultam não apenas em danos ambientais, mas também em desagregação social, reforçando processos históricos de expropriação e racismo ambiental. Além disso, o estudo demonstra como a resistência quilombola se configura como uma luta pela justiça climática e pela manutenção de práticas ancestrais de manejo ambiental. Ao destacar a importância das políticas públicas para a titulação e proteção dos territórios tradicionais, o artigo contribui para o debate sobre equidade territorial e social. Conclui-se que a preservação dos quilombos é essencial para o enfrentamento das injustiças ambientais e para a promoção da autodeterminação dessas comunidades.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Conflitos socioambientais. Racismo ambiental. Justiça climática. Quilombos. Resistência comunitária.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo investiga los efectos de los conflictos socioambientales en las relaciones comunitarias en el Quilombo Cumbe, en Ceará, Brasil. La investigación, basada en metodologías cualitativas y participativas, como entrevistas y rondas de conversación, analiza cómo desarrollos como la cría de camarones y los parques eólicos han transformado el territorio quilombola, promoviendo la fragmentación interna y las disputas narrativas. Los resultados muestran que estos conflictos no sólo provocan daños ambientales, sino también la desintegración social, reforzando procesos históricos de expropiación y racismo ambiental. Además, el estudio muestra cómo la resistencia quilombola se configura como una lucha por la justicia climática y el mantenimiento de las prácticas ancestrales de gestión ambiental. Al destacar la importancia de las políticas públicas de titulación y protección de los territorios tradicionales, el artículo contribuye al debate sobre la equidad territorial y social. Concluye que la preservación de los quilombos es esencial para enfrentar las injusticias ambientales y promover la autodeterminación de esas comunidades.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Conflictos socioambientales. Racismo medioambiental. Justicia climática. Quilombos. Resistencia comunitaria.*

Introduction

The intensification of the global ecological crisis, marked by extreme climate events and the accelerated degradation of ecosystems, has exposed the limits of the modern-colonial civilizational model grounded in the separation between humans and nature. This dominant ontology, responsible for territorial expropriation and the commodification of life, has profound effects on traditional peoples, particularly quilombola communities, which are distinguished by ways of life based on collectivity, care for the land, and the preservation of biodiversity.

However, the reality of many of these communities is shaped by the presence of socio-environmental conflicts—stemming from the persistence of historical processes of coloniality, expropriation, and marginalization (Acselrad, 2004; Ferdinand, 2022). Over centuries, these communities have developed specific forms of social organization and territorial management grounded in reciprocity, the common use of natural resources, and the interdependence between humans and nature (Santos, 2023). Yet, with the expansion of large-scale enterprises and developmentalist policies, these ways of life have been systematically threatened, intensifying territorial disputes and fostering internal divisions among residents (Nascimento; Ferreira, 2023).

The presence of such enterprises has affected community relations, generating conflicts that reveal not only environmental racism but also the impact of the hegemonic capitalist economic model, which adopts predatory practices of agricultural production and accumulation and consequently produces environmental injustices. At the same time, conflict also represents a process through which environmental injustices are transformed into collective struggle, as resistance and mobilization emerge in response to democratic deficits and power asymmetries (Porto; Pacheco; Leroy, 2013).

In contrast to the colonial logic of inhabiting the land are the ways of life of traditional communities. Within their cosmovisions, there is no separation between humans and nature. The existence of these populations is constituted through the relationships they establish with the environmental systems present in their ancestral, collectively used territories.

Quilombola modes of life and resistance reveal the existence of alternative rationalities, constructed through collectivity and reciprocity and sustained by practices of care, memory, and sharing (Santos, 2021; Santos, 2000): a counter-hegemonic community-based political project grounded in territorial autonomy.

In this context, rendering visible the harms and violations experienced by traditional communities, as well as recognizing their collective strategies of resistance and the

strengthening of knowledge systems in the face of environmental and territorial injustices, constitutes a means of denouncing the logics of land expropriation and affirming quilombola conceptions of well-being and *bem viver*.

Given the need to make such violations visible, this article investigates the effects of socio-environmental conflicts on community relations in the Quilombo do Cumbe, located in the municipality of Aracati, Ceará. Drawing on a qualitative approach and participatory methodologies, the study analyzes how the presence of large-scale enterprises—such as shrimp farming and wind farms—has generated tensions and reconfigurations in the community’s social dynamics (Nascimento; Lima, 2017).

The analysis is situated within debates on environmental racism and climate justice, emphasizing how the coloniality of power and knowledge continues to operate through the invisibilization and precarization of quilombola territories (Gonzaga, 2017). Based on testimonies from local leaders, participant observation, and interviews, the study seeks to understand the effects of these disputes on collective well-being and processes of identity construction within the community. It also highlights quilombola protagonism in the struggle for environmental preservation, demonstrating that territorial defense constitutes a form of resistance to the structural inequalities that affect these populations (Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência, 2021).

The Colonial Matrix of Socio-Environmental Conflicts

The unity of body–territory and human–nature constitutes a foundational ontology and cosmovision for many traditional peoples of the Global South. From this relationship of interdependence emerges a conception of territory that transcends its geographic dimension and becomes central to identity formation and to the communal and resistance processes of these peoples.

However, in the era of the Anthropocene—an insidious consequence of colonialism and the Industrial Revolution—the hegemonic ontology presents the human being as isolated and detached from the territory–nature web that surrounds them. This separation has justified various forms of domination, appropriation, and commodification of nature and has laid the foundations of capitalism (Delanty, 2018). The Anthropocene—also referred to as the “Capitalocene”—is marked by profound transformations in the Earth’s geophysical nature as a

result of capitalist activities. As Delanty (2018, p. 385) argues, the systemic effects of human activity on the Earth should be attributed not to humanity in the abstract, but to capitalism as the driving force behind planetary destruction.

In the current context—characterized by the succession and intensification of environmental disasters and extreme climate events, including droughts, heatwaves, floods, and large-scale fires—the global climate crisis may be understood as a metabolic rupture rooted in the modern-colonial conception that positions the white European man as the universal reference of a humanity detached from nature. According to Indigenous Brazilian intellectual Ailton Krenak (2019, p. 12, our translation), by severing ties with the land, colonialism—now expressed in neoliberal form—“suppresses diversity, denies the plurality of forms of life, existence, and habits. It offers the same menu, the same costume, and, if possible, the same language to everyone.” This is the “humanity” that now experiences the consequences of biodiversity exploitation and suppression.

According to Martinican ecologist and decolonial ecology scholar Malcolm Ferdinand (2022), the ecological crisis of modernity originates precisely in this separation and in the resulting totalizing way of inhabiting the world, which he terms colonial inhabiting. This mode of inhabitation articulates the exploitation, domination, and subordination of the bodies of women, racialized peoples, nature, and non-human beings, all reduced to their capacity to generate energy and value through labor. Colonial inhabiting operates through acts of land appropriation (property), the suppression of native non-human life (deforestation), and the destruction of other human lives (ethnocide, femicide). The logic of intensive colonial exploitation privileges a single form of life—patriarchal, white, and colonial—while producing multiple ecological ruptures, transforming landscapes, destabilizing biological balances, and disrupting the metabolism of life (Ferdinand, 2022).

According to the *Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência* (2021), territories inhabited by traditional peoples, including quilombola communities, have exhibited lower levels of deforestation than surrounding areas across all Brazilian biomes, indicating a positive contribution to conservation. Research conducted by the organization comparing different biomes found, on the one hand, an alarming deficit in natural vegetation cover—totaling 2.95 million square kilometers by 2018. On the other hand, biomes located within traditional territories stood out for their significant preservation of vegetation cover. These findings underscore the fundamental role of traditional territories in containing deforestation and

highlight the centrality of quilombola territorial preservation in debates on the contemporary ecological crisis.

Quilombola territories are among the most preserved—unsurprisingly so. The lived reality of many quilombola communities is grounded in sharing and collectivity, establishing relationships of interdependence with the territory and with natural elements—the foundation of their cultures, religious expressions, and collective identities. Such sharing extends beyond humans to include wild animals, trees, fish, rivers, and the ocean, as explained by quilombola philosopher and intellectual Antônio Bispo dos Santos (2023, p. 36, our translation): “the pine nut shares with the dove, the dove shares with us, and we will share again with the pine nut.” It is an organic mode of inhabiting the land in which quilombolas and nature become partners in reciprocity, enabling both to thrive (Santos, 2023).

In contemporary debates, therefore, it is not possible to address the climate crisis and its effects without considering the ethno-racial dimension of these populations, who serve as the true guardians of natural assets essential to their existence and well-being. As Gonzaga (2017, p. 5, our translation) observes, quilombola communities continue to experience profound invisibility, which renders them vulnerable to the expropriation of their territories and rights. Although global in scope, the ecological crisis is imbued with environmental racism, resulting in disproportionate impacts on certain groups. Beyond being more severely affected by climate change, many of these communities must also confront conflicts with large-scale enterprises that threaten their ways of life—ways of life that are, as discussed above, fundamental to the maintenance of diverse ecosystems.

Socio-Environmental Conflicts

In Brazil, as in the rest of Latin America, land conflicts and the exploitation of territories and environmental resources have been central to the production of socio-environmental problems since colonization, with significant impacts on the well-being and quality of life of traditional communities. Research conducted over the past decades reveals a worrying increase in socio-environmental conflicts (Pinto *et al.*, 2014).

According to the *Map of Conflicts Involving Environmental Injustice and Health in Brazil*⁶, which compiles data to identify territories experiencing socio-environmental conflicts, there are currently 642 active conflicts across the country. Data from the Pastoral Land Commission (*Comissão Pastoral da Terra* [CPT], 2022) further highlight the severity of the situation, reporting a 26.7% increase in land-related conflicts and a 53.6% increase in the number of families involved between the periods 2013–2018 and 2019–2022. Additionally, the average number of conflicts concerning access to, control over, and pollution of water resources doubled between these periods, indicating that agrarian conflicts are closely linked to access and control over natural resources.

Pinto *et al.* (2014) emphasize that socio-environmental conflicts involve groups with opposing ways and meanings of territorial appropriation: on one hand, a colonial mode of inhabiting the land; on the other, an organic, shared, and often traditional mode of territorial use, as explained by Santos (2023). The latter, in particular, faces the greatest threat: “socio-environmental conflicts are configured as threats to the way of life of traditional communities and to the local ecological knowledge acquired through the interaction of social groups with the environment over generations” (Pinto *et al.*, 2014, p. 271).

It is important to note that these conflicts reveal a strong intersection between environmental injustices and ethno-racial discrimination, as the primary affected groups are small traditional communities and Black populations in Brazil. There is a marked disparity in the distribution of environmental risks and disasters, with Black, quilombola, and Indigenous populations disproportionately bearing the impacts of environmentally harmful activities. Environmental racism functions as a risk factor that increases the vulnerability of these groups, particularly in rural areas, where it manifests violently in the unequal contestation between antagonistic models of resource use. Environmental racism is directly linked to socio-environmental conflicts, which arise when one group’s practices threaten the use of natural resources and territory by another, producing undesired impacts at multiple scales (Acselrad, 2004).

Among these conflicts are those experienced by the fishing and quilombola community of Cumbe. These conflicts not only threaten local natural resources and the economy but also

⁶ The Map of Conflicts Involving Environmental Injustice and Health in Brazil is an initiative of Fiocruz, an interactive map that seeks to gather information on socio-environmental conflicts based on the experiences of affected communities, whether from reports and articles developed by entities, NGOs, and partner institutions, including academic groups, government institutions, public prosecutors, or judicial bodies. See more at: <https://mapadeconflitos.ensp.fiocruz.br/>. Accessed on: Jan. 30, 2026.

profoundly affect intra-community relations (Nascimento; Lima, 2017; Nascimento; Ferreira, 2023). João Luís Juventino do Nascimento, also known as João do Cumbe, a community leader who has been denouncing these threats for over 20 years, reports that large-scale enterprises operating in the territory have led to increased local violence, internal community conflicts, and severe economic losses due to the degradation of local ecosystems (Viana; Nascimento; Meireles, 2016; Nascimento; Lima, 2017a, 2017b; Nascimento; Ferreira, 2023). Facing this high degree of environmental, social, and economic vulnerability, the Quilombo do Cumbe is experiencing a process of community disintegration, reflected in pronounced divisions in social relations.

This article, therefore, seeks to reflect on how the presence of mega-projects affects community relations in the Quilombo do Cumbe. The data presented are part of the doctoral research project *Global Problems, Local Suffering: A Study on the Effects of Socio-Environmental Conflicts on the Well-Being of the Quilombola Community of Cumbe, Ceará, Brazil*, conducted within the Graduate Program in Psychology at the Federal University of Ceará (*Universidade Federal do Ceará*) in co-supervision with *Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II*. This research is part of the umbrella project *Socio-Environmental Conflicts, Suicide, and Quilombos* (COSQUI), developed by the Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira (UNILAB).

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach and employed participatory methodologies to ensure a deep understanding of the effects of socio-environmental conflicts on the Quilombo do Cumbe community. The choice of a qualitative methodology is justified by the need to capture the complexity of social, identity-related, and territorial relationships in a context of contestation and resistance (Comerlatto; Kleba, 2022).

Given that the community under study is a quilombola fishing community, participatory methodologies were deemed the most appropriate for conducting fieldwork. These methods involve the engagement of all stakeholders, emphasizing collective and collaborative dimensions between researchers and participants. As Comerlatto and Kleba (2022) note, in this type of research, knowledge production carries an ethical-political commitment to guide the development of new practices aimed at social transformation.

Among the various forms of participatory methodologies, Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Ethnographic Research stand out. PAR integrates action and research with the aim of addressing and solving concrete problems while simultaneously generating knowledge. It directly involves participants in the research process, fostering active collaboration between researchers and communities (Fals Borba, 1999). Ethnographic research, on the other hand, entails the researcher's immersion in the community environment through participant observation, aiming to understand the shared practices and meanings within the community. In this approach, the researcher seeks to interpret reality from the participants' perspectives (Sato; Souza, 2001; Arcidiacono; Di Martino, 2016).

Considering the participatory nature and the attention to cultural and community dimensions, the methodology adopted in this study combined participatory action research with ethnographic characteristics.

Data were collected through participant observation, field notebooks, semi-structured interviews with community leaders, shellfish gatherers, and fishers, as well as discussion circles with different segments of the population. Participant observation was crucial for understanding daily dynamics and the construction of networks of solidarity and conflict within the community (Arcidiacono; Di Martino, 2016).

The research involved a careful approach to the community, facilitated by ongoing dialogue with the leadership of the Quilombo do Cumbe. In February 2024, the research proposal—including its objectives, challenges, and potential risks—was presented to the community. With their approval, the researcher gradually built relationships and trust. The fieldwork entailed twelve months of immersion in the territory, attending community meetings, assemblies, collective activities, political events, festivals, and daily routines.

Regarding ethical considerations, the study followed Brazilian resolutions No. 196 (October 10, 1996) and No. 466 (December 12, 2012). The research protocol was submitted to the Ethics Committee, and upon approval, contact with participants began. The Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF) was provided, detailing potential risks of participation, emphasizing voluntariness, and assuring that participants could withdraw at any time without penalty or harm, in line with Resolution No. 466/12 of the National Health Council.

After collecting qualitative data through interviews and discussion circles, the analysis phase commenced using qualitative content analysis (Bardin, 2011). This approach aims for inferential interpretation based on both qualitative and quantitative indicators (Bardin, 2010).

Content analysis can be conducted using six techniques; in this study, categorical analysis was employed. Deductive categories were initially defined, leaving room for inductive categories to emerge from transcription analysis via the Transkriptor application. Thematic segmentation guided coding, linking data to analytical categories, and during the aggregation phase, categories were grouped into macro-categories (Bardin, 2010). The Atlas.ti software was used to systematically analyze the communications, providing indicators that allow inferences about the conditions of production and reception of these messages (Bardin, 2011).

Analysis proceeded in three stages: pre-analysis, involving preliminary organization and exploratory reading of the collected data; material exploration, in which emergent categories were identified and raw data were organized according to participants' narratives; and data treatment, relating the findings to theoretical frameworks, enabling coding, categorization, and interpretation while highlighting meanings and connections.

Research Context: The Quilombo do Cumbe Community

The Quilombo do Cumbe community is located in the municipality of Aracati, along the borders with the municipality of Fortim and the right bank of the Jaguaribe River, one of Ceará's most important rivers. Its territory includes the river's mouth at the Atlantic Ocean and is surrounded by mangroves, mobile dune fields, lagoons, and a long stretch of land.

The community maintains a traditional way of life closely linked to the environment, with its territory entirely within the municipality's only Environmental Protection Area (APA de Canoa Quebrada). Its environmental heritage is highly diverse, encompassing the Jaguaribe River and its islands, extensive fixed and mobile dunes, multiple estuaries, carnauba palm groves, and interdunal lagoons, supporting rich native flora and fauna. This biodiversity is increasingly threatened by the intrusion of economic enterprises (Nascimento; Lima, 2017, [n. p.], our translation).

The Quilombo do Cumbe is a traditionally fishing-based community that structures its culture and economy around the mangrove ecosystem, which provides livelihoods and serves as a foundation for a shared collective identity. The existence of the Cumbe Quilombola people is deeply tied to their territory, which is central to the community's social and economic reproduction, as they act as the primary stewards of all life within the mangrove ecosystem. This stewardship is not merely a task but an integral part of the Quilombola worldview, developed over centuries of inhabiting the land and its natural resources. However, in recent

decades, the growing and pervasive presence of large-scale enterprises has increasingly threatened the community.

According to João do Cumbe (2024), the first historical records of the community date back to the late 17th century. Aracati, where Cumbe is located, was a port city and one of the wealthiest in the region, with its economy centered on sugarcane cultivation and the production of salted meat, which were traded throughout Brazil. By the late 18th century, the area had nine distilleries producing cachaça using enslaved labor. Many of the families who owned these distilleries still retain influence in the region, holding ownership of lands that in some cases were sold to companies or third parties (Interview with Marina Passos Pereira Campos, 2024).

Historian Flávio dos Santos Gomes (2015) notes that in Venezuela, the term “Cumbe” referred to communities of enslaved Africans who escaped bondage, similar to “Palenques” in Colombia and “Quilombos” in Brazil. Despite the historical and cultural presence of African heritage, some members of the Cumbe community do not identify as Quilombolas, rejecting their ancestral identity (Nascimento; Lima, 2017).

Currently, the community comprises approximately 170 families, of which around 110 self-identify as Quilombolas. In December 2014, the community received certification from the Fundação Cultural Palmares, the agency responsible for recognizing and certifying Quilombos. Following certification, the community initiated a process with the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) to secure formal land title and prevent further conflicts (Nascimento; Ferreira, 2023). Despite these efforts, the land title has not yet been granted.

To advocate for rights, the Associação Quilombola do Cumbe was created as a community organization promoting recognition of Quilombola identity in political, cultural, and social spheres. Through engagement in political debates, the Association has amplified the voice of the Cumbe Quilombolas and increased their visibility. It also works to strengthen local culture through community tourism, popular festivals, and the promotion of local crafts, particularly the traditional weaving known as Labirinto. Researchers from various institutions collaborate with the community to produce shared studies that expose the environmental and social harms caused by large enterprises (Nascimento; Ferreira, 2023).

Shellfish gathering, primarily performed by the women of Cumbe, is rooted in ancestral knowledge and practices related to the territory’s ecosystems: rivers, mangroves, estuaries, river islands, fixed and mobile dunes, and interdunal lagoons (Nascimento; Lima, 2017). This communal use of natural resources sustains the community and reinforces an organic

connection where activities like shellfish collection or crab harvesting contribute to the preservation of the mangrove biome. Moreover, local fishers and shellfish gatherers act as biodiversity stewards, using traditional knowledge to detect contamination and report territorial incursions.

The community also engages in traditional small-scale agriculture and animal husbandry, primarily in household backyards, known as productive gardens. Handicrafts provide additional income, particularly the Labirinto weaving, a traditional craft that is gradually disappearing. In contrast, industrial activities employ many families who do not identify as Quilombolas and are the primary source of socio-environmental conflict with the Quilombola community.

Results and Discussion

Socio-Environmental Conflicts: “They Want to Divide Us to Dominate Us”

According to Nascimento, Oliveira, and Jesus (2023), since the 1970s, the Cumbe community has experienced increasing dispossession due to large-scale enterprises. By the late 20th century, three major industrial activities had transformed the local landscape.

In 1977, the arrival of the Companhia de Água e Esgoto do Ceará (CAGECE), a public water supply company serving Aracati, resulted in the privatization of lagoons and dunes for water extraction, disregarding the presence of the Quilombola community that had long inhabited the area. The first observed impact was the fencing off of previously communal lands and crops.

Continuous water extraction, combined with climate change altering local rainfall cycles, severely affected local flora and fauna. As Cleomar, president of the community association, explained:

After CAGECE arrived, it changed the fauna and flora because all the vegetation—plants and animals that thrived in that specific climate and location—either died or were displaced. The destruction it caused is evident. Today, it’s a dry place; the water no longer flows from the dunes! (Interview with Marina Passos Pereira Campos, 2024, our translation).

Excessive water extraction led to lowered aquifers and the loss of interdunal lagoons, which had been essential for both the community and local ecosystems. This situation created

conflict with public authorities, as CAGECE utilized a previously communal resource for years without compensating the community. While the community acknowledges the social utility of water supply for surrounding areas, it considers it unjust for Cumbe to bear the cost of water sourced from its own territory, as emphasized by leader Cleomar.

It is CAGECE’s social role. When I see them taking water to other people... in that sense, yes. But for us—the ones from this territory, who take care of it, who defend it so it isn’t destroyed—we should have water... and to have water, we have to fight. So, there is a clear contradiction (Interview with Marina Passos Pereira Campos, 2024, our translation)

By the 1990s, the community faced the rapid expansion of shrimp farming, or **carciniculture**. Originating in Asia, this activity found in Brazil an ideal habitat near natural mangrove ecosystems rich in both fresh and saltwater. Shrimp farms introduced heavy pollution from toxic residues into the Jaguaribe River:

With this shrimp production, you also get many heavy metals in the waters of the estuaries until they reach the river. Plus, a lot of organic matter from the shrimp feed and some antibiotics they add to the water, you see? (Interview with Marina Passos Pereira Campos, 2024, our translation).

The construction of shrimp ponds also led to the deforestation of large Permanent Preservation Areas of mangroves and the privatization of spaces previously used communally. Studies indicate that industrial activities, including shrimp farming, have increasingly intensified socio-environmental conflicts in fishing communities like Cumbe, negatively affecting both the ecosystem and local economies. Beyond water contamination, these activities disrupt the livelihoods of artisanal fishers (Pena, 2021; Azevedo, 2021). In Cumbe, the removal of vegetation, toxic contamination, and intensive water use have significantly impacted crustacean populations, a key economic resource. Women are disproportionately affected, facing not only health and income challenges but also difficulties in obtaining social security rights for traditional labor activities such as shellfish gathering (Azevedo, 2021). Simultaneously, these women are at the forefront of territorial resistance efforts.

As shrimp farming expanded and environmental damages grew, internal conflicts within the community intensified. Local leaders report that these conflicts were often manipulated by companies and politicians: “Within all this, there is internal conflict among community members, which is a strategy heavily used by business owners and local politicians operating in these territories.” (Interview with Marina Passos Pereira Campos, 2024, our translation). Gradually, some local residents—encouraged by promises from the shrimp industry—began

constructing shrimp ponds within the village, where much of the community's housing is located, creating disputes and disrupting collective land use.

This process of community disintegration worsened in the first decade of this century with the privatization of the local beach, essential for artisanal fishing. Following an energy crisis caused by severe drought, the Brazilian government began constructing its first wind farms in the 2000s (Interview with Marina Passos Pereira Campos, 2024). The privatization resulted from an agreement between a private company and the Federal Public Ministry of Ceará to build Brazil's first wind farm, *Parque Bons Ventos*, installing 67 turbines without environmental impact studies, under the pretense that wind energy is inherently clean (Nascimento; Oliveira; Jesus, 2023).

For the installation of the wind farm, the community of just over 200 people encountered hundreds of workers and the construction of large infrastructure across the dune fields, previously used solely by the community. The social impact was profound, as recounted by Cleomar:

It was chaos—many men arrived, the first to work on this land. They stayed in the territory... there was harassment in the community, men impregnated women and left, many bars opened, factional fights at night, orgies... everything. Our calm life, by eight o'clock everyone was home. Suddenly, our peace was gone; our houses cracked, the church almost collapsed, the school almost collapsed... so much heavy traffic (Interview with Marina Passos Pereira Campos, 2024, our translation)

Beyond social disruption, the wind turbines were installed over aquifers, and the concrete bases in water raised concerns about future water quality. The construction also affected archaeological sites containing historical artifacts important for reconstructing community history (Nascimento; Lima, 2017).

The presence of the wind farm introduced new forms of territorial control, with the privatization of areas that were previously used communally by the community. For five years, Cumbe residents had their access to the beach blocked and were required to request "permission" to cross the dunes where the turbines were installed. This requirement exacerbated conflicts, as access to the dunes and the beach was monitored by workers who were also community members—a form of internal surveillance causing deep discomfort. According to João do Cumbe (2024), delegating the role of oversight to members of the community itself generated tension and mistrust, intensifying the criminalization of the Quilombola community and death threats against its leaders.

The installation of CAGECE, shrimp farms, and the wind farm in Cumbe illustrates a pattern of land appropriation favoring large companies under the pretext of promoting local economic development. This pretext received broad support, creating divisions not only within the community but also within families, where cousins and grandchildren assumed opposing positions regarding these activities. Ronaldo, a fisher and local leader, explains:

The greatest conflict is with the residents themselves, the locals, right? Families against families... people fighting even without physical confrontation, parents upset with children, siblings at odds with each other... it's a sickness; we become psychologically unwell (Interview with Marina Passos Pereira Campos, 2024, our translation)

On one side, some view industrial activities as development opportunities; on the other, some oppose them due to land loss, environmental degradation, and the disruption of traditional practices. This fracture has had multiple consequences, including the breaking of familial and neighborhood ties, and the creation of two associations with opposing stances: the Association of Cumbe Residents, economically supported by companies and not identifying as Quilombola, and the Quilombola Association of Cumbe, which seeks state support and affirms its Quilombola identity (João do Cumbe, interview with Marina Passos Pereira Campos, 2024). This division has complicated the recognition of community members as Quilombolas: some locals deny their identity, hindering land demarcation and titling processes (Nascimento; Lima, 2017).

When a Quilombola community's social bonds and identity are weakened, its collective agency and capacity to shape its own reality are also undermined. These developments reveal how enterprises deploy colonial mechanisms of domination and control to dismantle communal structures and advance predatory interests. The fragmentation of social relations, denial of Quilombola identity, and community detachment from territory are not isolated consequences; they reflect a diffuse, articulated logic of colonial presence in the world.

Conclusions

This article analyzed the effects of socio-environmental conflicts on the community relations of the Quilombo do Cumbe, highlighting how large-scale enterprises, such as shrimp farming and wind farms, generate tensions and reconfigure social dynamics. Using a qualitative approach and participatory methodologies, the study demonstrated that these enterprises not

only impact the environment but also disrupt community bonds, promote internal fragmentation, and trigger narrative disputes that compromise social cohesion.

The findings indicate that the coloniality of power and knowledge continues to operate in the invisibilization of Quilombola territorialities, reinforcing environmental racism and the precarization of historically marginalized groups. The Quilombola struggle to preserve their territory transcends physical resistance, representing a political, cultural, and epistemic claim within the broader context of climate justice. The fight for land rights and the maintenance of traditional environmental practices emerge as a counterpoint to predatory development models that prioritize economic interests over the rights of traditional populations.

By examining the case of the Quilombo do Cumbe, this study contributes to a broader understanding of environmental inequalities in Brazil through the lens of climate justice and environmental racism. This perspective aligns with the objectives of the journal dossier, which seeks to document and publicize the climate injustices experienced by marginalized groups, fostering a repository of critical and collaborative research. The realities presented underscore the importance of public policies that recognize and strengthen traditional environmental management practices, guaranteeing land rights and respect for Quilombola territorialities as fundamental components of environmental and social justice in Brazil.

Accordingly, effective land titling measures and the reinforcement of sustainable community practices must be prioritized to mitigate the effects of socio-environmental conflicts and promote greater territorial and social equity. Finally, further research should expand this discussion, deepening the understanding of the psychosocial impacts of these conflicts and investigating resistance strategies employed by Quilombola communities across different Brazilian contexts. The struggle to preserve the Quilombo do Cumbe exemplifies the confrontation of socio-environmental injustices and underscores the urgency of actions that secure the self-determination of traditional peoples in the face of contemporary threats.

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