



STATE, CAPITAL AND NATURE IN CONTEMPORARY AMAZON: QUESTIONS
OF A CENTRAL DEBATE FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND BRAZILIAN
SOCIETY

*ESTADO, CAPITAL E NATUREZA NA AMAZÔNIA CONTEMPORÂNEA: QUESTÕES
DE UM DEBATE CENTRAL PARA AS CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS E A SOCIEDADE
BRASILEIRA*

*ESTADO, CAPITAL Y NATURALEZA EN LA AMAZONIA CONTEMPORANEA:
CUESTIONES DE UN DEBATE CENTRAL PARA LAS CIENCIAS SOCIALES Y LA
SOCIEDAD BRASILEÑA*



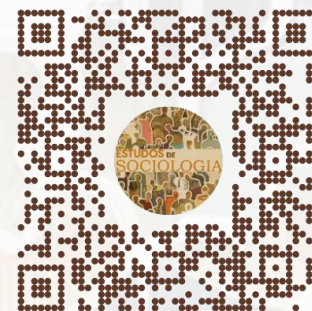
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The debate on the relationship between the development of capitalism and the exploitation of nature is one of the main topics on the contemporary research agenda of the Social Sciences (O'CONNOR, 2004; ALTVATER, 2010; CALHOUN, 2014), as evidenced by the current discussions on the causes and effects of global climate warming and the analysis of the correlations between the destruction of natural ecosystems and the production of pandemics (BOYER, 2020).

In the case of Brazil, this discussion has the Amazon as one of its main focuses, given the importance that this region plays in global ecological processes and the strong anthropization that it has undergone over the last fifty years, as shown by the data on the development of agricultural activities and the evolution of deforested areas (COSTA, 2000).

The dynamics of forest destruction involve different social forces, mobilizing collective and individual agents interested in exploiting regional natural resources (land, timber, minerals, biodiversity products etc.). It is opposed by an important range of social actors who have been mobilizing to curb this process, such as the so-called traditional populations (indigenous peoples, quilombolas, extractivists, riverside dwellers etc.) (ACEVEDO; CASTRO, 1993; RUSTAIN, 2021) and social groups who moved to the region more recently, such as peasants attracted to colonization projects during the period of the military dictatorship (ESTERCI, 1987; HÉBETTE, 1991; SCHMINK; WOOD, 2012).

In this sense, the analysis proposed here seeks to account for processes that involve at least three dimensions: the dynamics of capitalist development, the role played by the agencies that aim for state power in the region (BOURDIEU, 2012) and the disputes between different social agents located within civil society.

In the first case, we have a dynamic development of capitalism, which in many ways recalls the process of primitive accumulation (MARX, 1998) or the so-called Polanyian "satanic mill" (POLANYI, 2000), which is advancing on indigenous lands, environmental conservation units and areas occupied by traditional populations (quilombolas, rubber tappers, Brazil nut growers etc.), using repressive mechanisms to immobilize the workforce, now widely described as typical of contemporary slave labor (ESTERCI, 1994).

However, this allusion to the more deleterious aspects of the process of primitive accumulation should not obscure the fact that the economic processes underway in the Amazon are strongly articulated and are often directed by leading actors in global value chains or global production networks, as is the case, for example, with iron mining, soybean exploitation or

palm oil production (SANTOS, 2010; GUÉNEAU, 2018; CANDIDO, 2023; CARNEIRO, 2023).

As the holder of a monopoly on legitimate physical/symbolic violence and sometimes an agent directly involved in processes of appropriation and exploitation of natural resources, the state can be considered an integral part of the pattern of development of capitalism in the Amazon (FRANÇOIS; LEMERCIER, 2021), playing a central role in disputes in the region. This action sometimes incorporates the demands and claims of subaltern social groups, serving to counterbalance powerful economic interests.

The articles in the dossier "State, capital and nature in contemporary Amazonia" discuss the issues listed above, delving into them from different fields of research, different thematic perspectives and mobilizing specific theoretical perspectives.

The first article in the dossier, entitled *Amazon socio-biodiversity in search of international markets*, is signed by Ana Margarida Castro Euler, Catherine Aubertin and Nathalie Cialdella. The text examines the potential for developing supply chains for natural inputs from the Amazon for international markets. In line with the proposals at the origin of the socio-environmentalist movement of recent decades in the Amazon and with the recent creation of the National Bioeconomy Secretariat in the Ministry of the Environment by the third Lula government, the authors discuss how Brazilian socio-biodiversity chains can value the knowledge of forest communities and reconcile improving their quality of life with forest conservation.

The analysis focuses on the potential associated with the international cosmetics market. In this market, there is a consistent trend towards valuing socio-biodiversity and a "return to nature", as stated in the title of the third part of the text. The authors analyze the connections between the main links in the supply of Amazonian bio-inputs and the international links, identifying some of the main players and analyzing their motivations and lines of action. The analysis of large cosmetics companies that are "at the tip" of the chain is highlighted. The text emphasizes the importance of the marketing logic of these organizations, which guides the search for Amazonian inputs, and the concern with the social, economic and environmental conditions of their suppliers, which drives the development of "short chains" and articulation with certifiers, given that the precariousness of these chains represents important risks for their reputation.

The second article analyzes the construction and deconstruction of federal state capacities to control deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon based on the political-cultural

approach developed by Fligstein and McAdam (2012). The text was written by Silvio Eduardo A. Candido, Leonardo H. L. de Moura, Ricardo M. Duarte and Juan D. Pietro and was entitled *The construction and deconstruction of state capacities to control deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest: From PPCDAm to Bolsonaro*.

Operationalizing concepts such as fields of strategic action, socially adept actions and internal units of governance in dense historical research that takes power relations seriously, the authors present their narrative in three main parts. The first investigates the gradual formation of the institutional foundations of the environmental field, in which deforestation control policies are situated. The authors show that this process took place slowly and cumulatively from the 1970s onwards, culminating in the successful creation and implementation of the Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Amazon (PPCDAm) by the first and second Lula governments.

The second is marked by the intense changes in the Brazilian power field, beginning with the June 2013 protests, passing through the parliamentary coup against President Dilma Rousseff and ending with the election of Bolsonaro. The changes to the Forest Code in 2012 were the harbinger of the reactions to the effectiveness of the PPCDAm that unfolded during this period. For the authors, this process involved the effective mobilization and rise of fields competing with deforestation in the Amazon, notably agribusiness and infrastructure. The strengthening of these fields imposed setbacks on the environmental field, but they did not dispense with its existence.

The most severe attack came with the election of Bolsonaro, which marks the beginning of the third period of analysis. Here, it is the very foundations of the existence of the environmental field and the fight against deforestation that are being dismantled through their incorporation by opposing sectors and the military, which are destroying them "from the inside out". The solidity of the gradually constituted environmental institutions and the lack of social skills of the government actors meant that this process did not advance significantly in this deconstruction, which was fortunately interrupted by Lula's election in 2022.

The next text, entitled *The development of steel production in the Eastern Amazon and the debate on the process of technological and social upgrading* e social by Marcelo Sampaio Carneiro and Roberto Martins Mancini, discusses the process of structuring the mining and metallurgical production chain located in the eastern Amazon, focusing on a recent process of technological and social upgrading.

Written from the perspective of global value chains (GEREFFI, 2018), the authors discuss the process of technological improvement underway in this chain, with the shift from pig iron production to rolled and drawn steel, seeking to identify whether this process also generates benefits for workers and the territory in which these companies are located, in the case of the municipality of Açailândia/MA and Marabá/PA.

In this analysis of the process of technological and social upgrading, the authors also draw attention to the need to take into account the disputes within the global value chains, since, in the study in question, the switch to the production of a higher added value commodity (rolled and drawn steel) implied the partial disconnection of two companies from the value chain that gave rise to the Carajás steel hub, the pig iron production chain.

The fourth article, *Environmentalization locked in: Domination system and its effects in Caeté-Taperaçu, a marine extractive Resex in the Amazon*, by Maria José Aquino Tesseirenc (UFPA) and Pierre Tesseirenc (Université Paris XIII), addresses the issue of the construction of spaces for autonomous deliberation and their relationship with traditional methods of domination in marine extractive reserves (RESEX) located in the state of Pará.

By comparing the case studies of the Curuçá and São João da Ponta RESEX with the Caeté-Taperaçu RESEX, the authors try to identify the factors that have made it difficult for the residents of the latter to take more autonomous action, as they continue to be entangled in traditional networks of domination, particularly municipal politics. With explanatory elements for the maintenance of these relations of domination, the authors draw attention to how the agents of municipal political power in Bragança (PA) hinder the establishment of stronger relations of cooperation between the residents and representatives of expert knowledge (CALLON *et al.*, 2001) who have a strong presence in the RESEX area. The local population's relationship with these experts was also hampered by conflicts that arose during the process of drawing up the reserve's Management Plan.

The fifth text, *Cultural diversity as an outdated paradigm in the persistence of developmentalism in the Amazon*, by Luciana Gonçalves de Carvalho, analyzes government policy initiatives for the so-called Calha Norte region in the Amazon, highlighting the Barão do Rio Branco Program (PBRB), presented at the beginning of the Jair Bolsonaro administration (2019-2022).

The author revisits the proposals put forward under the Calha Norte Project, a government policy drawn up at the end of the military dictatorship, but which began to be implemented during the José Sarney administration (OLIVEIRA FILHO, 1991), highlighting

the actions to establish army battalions in border areas and the projects to build the Perimetral Norte highway and the Cachoeira Porteira hydroelectric dam, in order to make mineral exploration in the Trombetas River region viable.

Despite identifying many common elements between the two government policy initiatives, Luciana Carvalho highlights a central difference, because while in the Calha Norte Project there was a discourse of valuing the knowledge and characteristics of the traditional populations present in the Calha Norte region, in the PBRB this concern is replaced by a denounce of what the Bolsonaro government calls the paradigms of indigenism, environmentalism and quilombolism.

In the last paper in the dossier, Ismail Ertürk analyzes the mobilization of the financial sector to deal with global environmental and climate emergencies. His text, entitled *Financialization, environment and values*, critiques financial initiatives to deal with our contemporary environmental and climate challenges. These initiatives are divided into two main types and briefly presented. The first are more linked to regulatory changes in the traditional banking sector and have been led by the world's Central Banks which, in the wake of the macro-prudential measures to deal with the 2008 Financial Crisis, have proposed ways of stabilizing the world's financial system during the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Based on the idea of the Green Swan, climate change implies systemic risks, generating accumulations of cascading losses with multiplier effects (BOLTON *et al.*, 2020). These risks stem from both extreme weather events and the institutional changes recommended by the Paris Agreement to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis, which could severely affect "brown" sectors of the economy and create financial problems, in what are known as "transition risks". Ertürk illustrates the transformations that have been taking place in the space of central banks and the importance they have acquired in climate action by analyzing the trajectory of Mark Carney, considered one of the most respected central bankers in the world in recent decades.

The second set of initiatives, more associated with the financial markets, comprises voluntary actions developed under the leadership of the United Nations and organized around the idea of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG). The author questions the consensus among academic and professional economists that companies with good ESG performance also have superior financial performance and points out that the financial markets and their dynamics do not reflect the dynamics of the real economy and global socio-environmental issues, which means that they have little to contribute to solving the environmental and climate crises.

Finally, he points out that for financial actors to really be able to contribute to overcoming global environmental and climate challenges, they need to break with their concepts, reinvent their language and replace purely financial forms of performance measurement with physical measures that are connected to the real problems they face. He also points out, based on the work of philosopher Michel Serres, that a rapprochement between economic thinking and the world of art can inspire these reinventions.

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