

Articles

“Amazonizar”: education and political ontology of Amazonian peoples

“Amazonizar”: Educação e ontologia política dos povos amazônicos¹

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Abstract

This article results from an interdisciplinary effort developed within the scope of the Federal University of Amapá. It results from the work of professors of the course Education, Power and Territory, offered by the Postgraduate Programs in Education (PPGED) and Geography (PPGEO) of this institution. This component discussed how official education has situated itself throughout the different territorial dynamics that have developed in the Amazon and presented strategies of resistance in the memories and territorialities of the Amazonian peoples. In this writing, we synthesize part of the course debate, discussing, first, different processes of expropriation and exploitation that the region and its peoples have been/are subjected to; second, arguing the need for schooling to approach the political ontologies (Escobar, 2016) of Amazonian peoples, that is, the forms of struggle and resistance of indigenous peoples and traditional populations, mobilized by their cultures and cosmogonies, distinct from the instrumental rationality of Western modernity and constituent of capitalism.

Keywords: education; Amazon; territory; political ontology.

Resumo

Este artigo é fruto de um esforço interdisciplinar desenvolvido no âmbito da Universidade Federal do Amapá. Resulta do trabalho dos docentes da disciplina Educação, Poder e Território, ofertada pelos Programas de Pós-Graduação Stricto Sensu em Educação (PPGED) e Geografia (PPGEO) desta instituição. O referido componente debateu como a educação oficial se situou ao longo das distintas dinâmicas territoriais que se desenvolveram na Amazônia e apresentou estratégias de resistência presentes nas memórias e territorialidades dos povos amazônicos. Neste escrito, sintetizamos parte do debate da disciplina, discutindo, primeiro, diferentes processos de expropriação e espoliação que a região e seus povos estiveram/estão submetidos; segundo, argumentando a necessidade da escolarização se aproximar das ontologias políticas (Escobar, 2016) dos povos amazônicos, ou seja, das formas de luta e resistência dos povos indígenas e populações tradicionais, mobilizadas por suas culturas e cosmogonias, distintas da racionalidade instrumental da modernidade ocidental e constituinte do capitalismo.

Palavras-chave: educação; Amazônia; território; ontologia política.

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¹ The reflections presented in the text stem from the doctoral thesis of author Albert Alan de Sousa Cordeiro, titled: “Why are you still talking about this? A decolonial study of the relationship between school education and popular culture in the Brazilian Amazon”, 2021, available in the repository of theses and dissertations of the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Pará – UFPA, and were further refined with contributions from the other authors.

INTRODUCTION

Imaginary nature, peripheral region, backwardness, national issue, demographic void, land of conflicts, planetary ecological reserve. These are some of the narratives and images that, according to Porto-Gonçalves (2005, 2017), external perspectives attribute to the Amazon. For the geographer, these representations of the Amazonian territory stem from the geo-historical formation of the region following the arrival of the colonizer and are therefore colonial narratives and images that disregard the knowledge produced over thousands of years of human presence in the region.

Geopolitically located on the periphery of the system, the Amazon currently fulfills a strategic role in its maintenance, serving on one hand as a source of “natural resources” for the production chain and on the other as an indispensable biome for planetary climate balance. Within this irreconcilable dual function, at least under capitalism, regardless of the chosen perspective, the Amazon continues to be a territory marked by disputes and conflicts driven by external, national, and international actors.

That said, this work aims, without intending to exhaust the debate, to examine how, historically, the Amazon has been constructed as the “other” within Brazil, shaped by colonial legacies that manifest in local realities and resonate in the imaginaries, development models, and public policies imposed on the region and its people. Finally, we will argue in this text that the knowledge of Amazonian peoples and communities establishes a political agenda that envisions other possible worlds. Through the processes of struggle and resistance led by Amazonians, marked by advances and setbacks, rights are claimed, and the political landscape is shaped by their knowledge and ways of life. In this way, Amazonian cultures and identities become facets of political agency.

In this perspective, we agree with Arturo Escobar (2016) when he asserts that the perseverance of communities and ethnic-territorial grassroots movements involves resistance, opposition, defense, and affirmation of territories, but it can often be more radically described as ontological. Similarly, although the occupation of collective territories usually involves armed, economic, territorial, technological, cultural, and ecological aspects, its most important dimension is ontological.

We will analyze how the knowledge of Amazonian peoples: Indigenous, quilombola, rural, riverine, and forest populations has been fundamental in the construction of their political agency in the struggle for rights, presenting other possible worlds and urging us to rethink the social parameters established by Western modernity. We will also debate the role of education as a way to disseminate these political ontologies.

The article is the result of an interdisciplinary effort developed within the scope of the Federal University of Amapá, stemming from the work of faculty members teaching the course Education, Power, and Territory. This course is part of the curricula offered by the institution's Stricto Sensu Graduate Programs in Education (PPGED) and Geography (PPGEO). It aimed to discuss how formal education has positioned itself throughout the various territorial dynamics that have unfolded in the Amazon and to highlight resistance strategies present in the memories and territorialities of Amazonian peoples.

Although the work is primarily characterized as a bibliographical study, it is also the result of teaching, research, and outreach experiences of the authors, who work with Indigenous peoples and rural, riverine, and forest populations. In our approach to analyzing the phenomenon under discussion, we understand the Amazon as the socio-spatial framework formed by the inseparable set of ecosystems encompassing the Amazon River basin, the Amazon rainforest, the populations, and other beings, both living and enchanted that inhabit this place.

The text is organized into two sections: “Amazon: Colonialism and Capitalist Exploitation”, where we argue about the colonial legacies in the socio-spatial formation of the region, and “*Amazonizar*: Amazonian Knowledge and Political Ontology”, where we discuss the struggles, resistances, and existences of Amazonian peoples. In this section, we particularly advocate, especially in formal education, for the need to access alternative representations of the Amazon and its populations, moving beyond the narratives and images produced from a colonial perspective.

AMAZON: COLONIALISM AND CAPITALIST EXPLOITATION

According to Malheiro, Porto-Gonçalves and Michelotti (2021), the Amazon region played a foundational role in the establishment of the Modern-Colonial World-System. From the earliest moments of European invasion, the presence of five colonial powers was evident: England, the Netherlands, France, Spain, and Portugal.

Before the European invasion in the 16th century, the region was inhabited by populations with high demographic density and social complexity. These communities occupied the territory on an urban scale, supported by intensive production systems, diversified agriculture, and complex cultural systems². The genocidal assault by the Global North dismantled, in less than 100 years, what took approximately 10,000 years to build. Since then, the remaining populations have been subjected to a policy of terror (Souza, 2021).

Loureiro (2019) states that the process of conquering the region, both in the past and present, consistently combines key elements that have rendered it the “Other” of the country Brazil, both for foreigners and for Brazilians themselves, legitimizing its subordinate condition. Although this process originated during the colonial period, it has persisted beyond it and remains entrenched in this condition today.

According to the author (idem), many elements have been used to justify such subjugation, constructed from the colonial imagination: the distances, the distinct language, the predominance of Indigenous and caboclo populations, the way of life shaped by the river and forest, and its deep connection with nature. The “backwardness” of the Amazon compared to the rest of Brazil ended up identifying the region as the negative and inferior pole in the dichotomy of “modern-backward”, where Brazil’s Center-South represented the first element of the binomial.

In the same vein, Paes-Loureiro (1995, p. 45) asserts that the Brazilian colonial period is the root of a cultural formation permeated by what he calls the ideology of colonization. The author explains that, because the centers of European cultural influence and implementation, understood as modern and contemporary, were established in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and Bahia, practices in other regions, “[...] even though contemporaneous practices, came to be understood as the ‘most ancient,’ the ‘folkloric,’ and consequently, the most primitive”.

Being far from the Europeanized space meant being located in a past, primitive time. Cultural manifestations from the regions farthest from the “central cores” came to be understood as belonging only to the realm of folklore, confusing this with the current, present, stylistically diverse expression of recognized authorship that characterizes the field of popular culture (Paes-Loureiro, 1995, p. 41).

Therefore, it is fair to say that the Amazon region has always been thought of through the Eurocentric lens, but it is not only the European that colonized (and continues to colonize) the region. It is still seen as the periphery of Brazil and thought of as a place with infinite natural resources that must be exploited by outsiders, as its local population is considered incapable of managing these riches. Thus, many of the public policies discussed for the region ignore the populations living there, riverine, rural, quilombo descendants, and Indigenous peoples, disregarding their specificities, their unique needs, and their perceptions of the nature that surrounds them (Oliveira, 2018).

Thus, it can be said that the history of the region:

[...] is that of a secular saga undertaken by the State and the elites in an attempt to domesticate the inhabitants and nature of the region, shaping them according to the vision and expectations of exploitation by outsiders, foreigners in the past, both Brazilians and foreigners in the present. But it is also the history of the resistance of its people to the various forms of domination (Loureiro, 2009, p. 31).

² According to Oliveira (2018, p. 361), “[...] at the time of the invasion of the Americas, the Amazon was inhabited by more than two thousand Indigenous ethnic groups, and its population is estimated to have exceeded seven million people. It is likely that this number is underestimated due to shortcomings in official demographic statistics”.

It is interesting to note that, throughout the history of the region, the “developmental fallacy”, denounced by Enrique Dussel (2008), created by the “myth of modernity” during the colonial domination period, continued to thrive after the country’s independence and throughout different periods of the republic. Obviously, from new configurations, in which the binomial hierarchy/domination, previously based on the presumed racial inferiority of peripheral peoples, had its distinctly racist foundation (although this still persists) replaced by the narrative of the supposed cultural, scientific, technological, and social inferiority of the peoples here (Loureiro, 2009).

“Development” became the central discourse and the main justification for the environmental and social atrocities the Brazilian State continued to commit against the Amazonian people, reproducing the colonial power matrix in its actions.

Arturo Escobar (1995) analyzes the national and international development institutions after World War II and concludes that the representations of the Global North regarding what they have conventionally called the “third world” are colonial discourses aimed at exerting control over it, a colonization of reality through the discourse of development. The Latin American thinker asserts that the type of development in question corresponded to Western ideas, understood as the natural course of evolution and progress, becoming a powerful tool for normalizing the world.

Development entered the scene by creating abnormalities (the poor, the malnourished, pregnant women, the landless), anomalies that were then to be reformed. Aiming to eliminate all problems from the face of the Earth, from the Third World, what it really achieved was to multiply them infinitely. Materializing as a set of practices, institutions, and structures, it had a profound impact on the Third World: social relations, ways of thinking, and visions of the future were indelibly marked by this ubiquitous element. The Third World became what it is, to a large extent, because of development (Escobar, 1991, p. 142).

The Amazon and its populations were/are victims of this phenomenon described by Escobar. Therefore, not coincidentally, from the second half of the 20th century, they became targets of the “development projects” of the military governments and a profound cultural invasion led by “modernizing” educational models.

According to Marques (2019), in the developmentalist imagination, the Amazon was understood as a source of natural resources, being restricted to raw material production on one side, and to the form of commodity on the other, with lands for commercialization and accumulation. Nature, according to this economist conception, is an obstacle to progress, and official documents of the time called for the struggle to subjugate the natural world and to conquer the “empty spaces” of the Amazon.

As the materialization of this process in the territory, space organization patterns were used that did not recognize the ways in which Indigenous and traditional populations of the Amazon coexist with nature. In colonial ideology, the forest, for example, is not a place of reproduction of life or life itself, as Krenak (2020) explains when stating that forests are our mirror. It is raw material, a resource, transformed into an object, into a commodity. The commodification of nature thus presents itself as a powerful mechanism of colonial domination over the Amazonian peoples and their territories.

Mignolo (2017) states that throughout the course of European modernity, “nature” came to refer to the source of natural resources (coal, oil, gas) that powered the machines of the Industrial Revolution. In other words, it became a repository for the objectified, neutralized, and basically inert materiality that existed to fulfill economic goals.

The legacy of this transformation remains to this day in our presumption that “nature” is the supplier of “natural resources” for daily survival: water as a bottled commodity. In the West, the mutation of nature into natural resources was a sign of progress and modernization, while at the same time a sign that other civilizations had stagnated and were being surpassed by the West (Mignolo, 2017, p. 7-8).

Thus, the Amazon region has been subjected to distinct forms of commodification and financialization of land and natural resources. These forms, which Malheiro, Porto-Gonçalves

and Michelotti (2021) conceptualize as agro-minero-hydro-bio-carbon-business, have promoted processes of capitalist territorialization, deterritorialization of peoples, groups, and communities, and are also related to:

[...] with practices of absolutely degrading violence, in the shaping of a capitalism where wage labor, servile labor, and slavery coexist, in which there is a power pact between banks, large transnational corporations, large landowners, regional entrepreneurs, henchmen, gunmen, and, logically, the State, through its logistical support, its financial arm, its other (de)regulatory arm, or even through its forces of (in)security (Malheiro; Porto-Gonçalves; Michelotti, 2021, p. 35).

In this endeavor of development, only the knowledge of specialists, trained in the Western tradition, was considered relevant and appropriate; whereas the knowledge of the “others”, the “traditional”, the poor, and the peasants, was seen as an obstacle to the transformative task. Modernization was regarded as the force capable of destroying superstitions and archaic relations at any social, cultural, and political cost (Escobar, 1995; Lander, 2005).

Similarly, the idea of development, modernization, and progress in the modern era, according to Toledo and Barrera-Bassols (2015, p. 28) “[...] became an era imprisoned by the present, dominated by amnesia, by the inability to remember both immediate historical processes and those of medium and long-term”. This context produced a forgetfulness, causing the loss of humanity’s capacity to remember, disconnecting us from individual and collective memory.

In the present day, what we observe is the continuation of the process of plunder (Harvey, 2014) of nature and populations in the region, through traditional forms of primitive accumulation associated with new mechanisms of expropriation carried out through biopiracy, the commodification of nature, the regression of regulatory statutes meant to protect ancestral and traditional territories, the patenting and licensing of genetic material, the privatization of public land, and the privatization of public goods previously administered by the state, such as river water, underground resources, soil, and air.

Cruz Hernández and Bayón Jiménez (2023) assert that, in the last decade, the neoliberal approaches framed by the Washington Consensus have been replaced in Latin America by the Commodity Consensus, based on the export of raw materials. This movement has had significant repercussions in the Amazon as it intensifies capitalist relations within the territories through the implementation of mega-extractive projects or through the involvement of communities in so-called green economy projects, which replace traditional forms of economic and production organization in communities with local economic arrangements serving corporate interests.

The advancement of capitalist relations within the territories under the logic of the commodity economy has led to the deterritorialization of individuals and the production of violence in its multiple dimensions, with a particular focus on gender-based violence. Cruz Hernández and Bayón Jiménez (2023) highlight a body of studies and experiences of Latin American women, particularly indigenous women, who have been warning about the strengthening of patriarchal relations in regions where extractivism is advancing, a process they describe as the (re)patriarchalization of territories. According to the authors, these studies have shown that the advance of extractivism on territories has worsened the lives of women because it is an economic activity that privileges men, reshaping political, economic, and patriarchal power relations that intersect with classism and colonialism.

The commodities consensus, which marks a new territorial and global division of labor for Latin America, intensifies extractivist processes in the region, placing the biome and its populations under renewed threat. However, as Svampa (2016) aptly states, extractivism is not a destiny; it is a political and civilizational choice made by different governments. This choice negatively reconfigures our territories and economies, relying on the irresponsible appropriation of non-renewable natural resources and creating new economic, political, and environmental asymmetries between the geopolitical North and South.

One of the consequences of the current extractivist turn is the explosion of socio-environmental conflicts, evident in the intensification of ancestral struggles for land by Indigenous and peasant movements, as well as in the emergence of new forms of

mobilization and citizen participation focused on defending natural resources (defined as “commons”), biodiversity, and the environment. Socio-environmental conflicts are understood as those related to the access, conservation, and control of natural resources, involving divergent interests and values among the actors in conflict, within a context of power asymmetry (Svampa, 2016, p. 143).

As resistance, it is through the struggle to defend their territories that Amazonian peoples and populations have mobilized their knowledge and ways of life as a means to counter colonialist and exploitative capitalist greed. They have brought their culture into the political agenda and public debate as a way to defend biodiversity and as a possibility for constructing a new hegemonic rationality that transcends the instrumental and utilitarian rationality underpinning the foundations of the modern/colonial capitalist world-system.

As Jason Moore (2022, p. 29) states, this involves new ontological politics that are organized not only around the distribution of wealth but also its redefinition. These politics transcend Cartesian dualism, advocate for different values, and “[...] point toward a world-ecology in which power, wealth, and (re)production are forged in conversation with the needs of the web of life and humanity’s place within it”.

We will now discuss how these political ontologies manifest in the Amazon, through the actions of Indigenous peoples and other traditional local populations. These actions even suggest pathways for school education to increasingly align with Amazonian demands and realities, building on an intercultural dialogue rooted in the knowledge produced by local populations, a process we will refer to here as *Amazonizar*.

AMAZONIZAR: AMAZONIAN KNOWLEDGE AND POLITICAL ONTOLOGY

[...] they call us lazy because we don’t cut down as many trees as they do! Those harsh words make me angry. We are not lazy at all! The images of the saúva koyo ant and the waima lizard live within us, and we know how to work tirelessly on our gardens under the sun. But we don’t do it the same way as the white people. We care about the forest and believe that clearing it recklessly will only kill it. The image of Omama tells us otherwise: ‘Clear your gardens without going too far. Use the wood from the fallen trunks to make the firewood that warms you and cooks your food. Don’t mistreat the trees just to eat their fruits. Don’t damage the forest for nothing. If it is destroyed, no other will come to take its place! Its wealth will disappear forever, and you will no longer be able to live in it’ (Kopenawa; Albert, 2015, p. 469).

We begin this final section of the work with a fragment of thought from the Yanomami shaman, Davi Kopenawa, as it is representative of what we aim to defend here: the knowledge and wisdom embedded in the culture of Amazonian peoples and populations are fundamentally distinct from the instrumental rationality of Western modernity, which underpins capitalism. This distinct worldview constitutes their political agency, becoming intrinsic to their defense of territories and their pursuit of rights. As the same Indigenous intellectual states:

The thoughts of shamans extend everywhere, beneath the earth and the waters, beyond the sky, and into the farthest regions of the forest and beyond it. They know the countless words of these places and those of all beings from the first time. This is why they love the forest so much and want so much to defend it (Kopenawa; Albert, 2015, p. 468, emphasis added).

The political protagonism of Indigenous peoples, particularly, but also *quilombolas*, riverine communities, collectors, and small-scale farmers, is mobilized by a logic distinct from Western modernity regarding coexistence with the other beings that make up planetary biodiversity. This leads to alternative forms of land use. As Porto-Gonçalves (2017, p. 12) states, the Amazon is not just a vast forest and hydrographic basin, as it is often characterized, “[...] but also a repository of knowledge developed with (and not against) these living conditions, with which we must engage in dialogue”.

For some time now, both in academia and among various social movements, locally and globally, the role of traditional cultures and ancestral knowledge has been invoked and recognized as a means of resisting capitalist exploitation and building political, economic, social, and epistemic alternatives to the destructive aspects of Western modernity.

With their distinctions and similarities, these theories/practices that draw on ancestral knowledge as a form of social and political organization share a common goal: proposing an ontological shift and a profound redefinition of concepts crystallized by Western modernity, such as progress, wealth, and development. *Buen Vivir*, *Mother Earth Rights*, *The Commons*, and *Chthulucene* are some of the alternatives to the modern/colonial capitalist world-system that establish a profound relationship with the epistemologies of traditional peoples and populations.

As Arturo Escobar (2016) aptly states, many territorial ethnic movements in Latin America are vital spaces for the production of knowledge and strategies about identities and life, constituting a vanguard response to the social and ecological crises of these territories. They stand out for their political ontology, which radically questions the parameters established by Western modernity.

In these ontologies, territories are vital space-times for entire communities of men and women; however, they are more than that. They are also the space-time of interrelation with the natural world that surrounds and constitutes them. In other words, this interrelation generates scenarios of synergy and complementarity, both for the human world and for the reproduction of the other worlds that surround the human world. Within many Indigenous worlds and some Afro-descendant communities in Latin America, these material spaces manifest as mountains or lakes understood to have life or as animated spaces (Escobar, 2016, n/p).

Here, recognizing the protagonism of Indigenous peoples and traditional Amazonian populations and the role their cultural and identity affirmation plays in their political intervention and in constructing a public agenda that acknowledges their territorialities, we call on everyone to embrace *Amazonizar*. We reiterate that this is not about introducing a “new” term or concept in academic and political debates to gain notoriety. Our intention in this text is simply to establish the Amazon as a territory where political, social, economic, epistemic, and territorial struggles are waged based on unique ontologies rooted in the knowledge, cultures, traditions, and epistemes of its peoples.

We assert that *Amazonizar* represents embracing and learning from the body of knowledge developed by the peoples and populations who produce history and culture in the Amazon. This knowledge can no longer be concealed and, given the urgency of our times, must be deeply debated and understood (Cordeiro; Ribeiro; Pereira, 2023).

Learning from Amazonian peoples and populations, *Amazonizar* is a call to implement alternative economic models, new productive arrangements, and different ways of using land, where anthropocentrism is transcended. [...] It is about relearning, reorganizing, and (re)existing through a critical intercultural dialogue with these historical cultural systems, which have been built, among other things, as resistance to capitalism (Cordeiro; Ribeiro; Pereira, 2023, p. 13).

In this sense, we align with the two reflective movements proposed by Malheiro (2023, p. 169-170): “[...] to construct, from the Amazonian perspective, a critique of capitalism, understanding it as a mode of production/destruction that, beyond commodities, produces forgetfulness, ruins, and an incessant war against life”; and, in seeking possible alternatives, “[...] to dive into Amazonian ancestral memory to recognize within it expressions that propose a different theoretical and political agenda capable of pointing to solutions for the current dramatic scenario of climate chaos we are experiencing”.

For our political engagement in defense of the territory, it is our duty to deeply understand how the exploitation of the region continues to occur, as well as to historicize and analyze the long trajectory of plundering and conflicts initiated by capitalism here. Researchers committed to defending Amazonian biodiversity and its peoples must strengthen the anti-capitalist struggle

from our ground up, understanding the inherent dynamics of the relationships the system establishes with local groups and territories.

Educators committed to Amazonian biodiversity and populations should take the lead in teaching and learning processes that highlight the region's centrality in contemporary capitalism dynamics, as well as its importance for maintaining the planet's climatic conditions, and thus, the continuity of human life itself. From this dual prominence of the region, education must make evident the intrinsic contradiction between them: capitalism is the antithesis of life.

Amazonizar, therefore, does not mean theorizing about Amazonian knowledge, cosmologies, and cultures in an abstract way, but rather debating other frameworks of political economy based on the political ontologies that Amazonian populations construct in their struggle to defend their territories. Any initiative that claims to defend the culture of Amazonian peoples but fails to radically address the processes of domination, exploitation, and conflict imposed on these populations is either a naïve effort or a strategy of subjugation aligned with so-called progressive neoliberalism.

In this task, formal education plays a fundamental role, but it must itself break away from the hegemonic representations it tends to reproduce. Overcoming the folklorized approaches that often characterize discussions of Indigenous peoples and Black, rural, aquatic, and forest populations in schools is essential. These topics must move beyond episodic events that lack political meaning and are laden with prejudice rooted in racism and classism.

Amazonizar the education requires engaging deeply with the cultural systems developed by Amazonian peoples and populations, while situating them within the dynamics of power, exploitation, and oppression that define the contemporary world and, of course, the Amazon. Thus, to Amazonize schooling demands a dialectical synthesis of Education, Territory, and Power.

To *Amazonizar* formal education is to establish a critical intercultural dialogue with diverse cultural frameworks, closely aligned with the oppressive realities that Amazonian peoples have historically faced and continue to endure. This dialogue must foster reflective practices that enable us not only to understand the mechanisms of domination imposed by the modern-colonial world system but also to prepare for the political struggle against the oppressive and exploitative structures that persist. This requires radical commitment to anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and anti-patriarchal struggles (Cordeiro; Ribeiro; Pereira, 2023, p. 14).

Criticism of capitalism in the Amazon must acknowledge that this system is not only ecocidal and genocidal but also irredeemably epistemicidal. The deterritorialization driven by various "development" initiatives in the region is characterized by the suppression and erasure of the vast and invaluable cultural systems developed by Amazonian peoples over millennia.

The exploitation carried out by outsiders in the name of "progress" is a political operation of erasure, an effort to obliterate everything that existed before crushing the life of the tropics under their boots. Outsiders have an irritating obsession with believing that all histories begin with their arrival. More often than not, what happens is that histories end under their boots, chainsaws, and guns (Brum, 2021, p. 26).

As Brum (2021) aptly stated after accompanying many anthropologists and ecologists in their work across the Amazon, many outsiders believe that the world's largest tropical forest is a creation devoid of human fingerprints, a belief that contemporary research has been disproving. Today, it is well established, as Toledo and Barrera-Bassols (2015) affirm, that among the expressions derived from culture, knowledge about nature is a particularly remarkable dimension. This knowledge reflects the acumen and richness of observations about the environment, accumulated, recorded, disseminated, and refined over long periods. It is wisdom perpetuated through generations via oral traditions, through which humanity has not only shaped its relationship with nature but also refined and improved that very nature. Regarding our region, we can now categorically state:

A part of the Amazon is a cultural forest, meaning it has been sculpted over thousands of years, primarily by humans but also by non-humans, those we call "animals", in their interaction with the environment. And not all humans, but those who today keep what

remains of the forest standing and are killed for it: Indigenous peoples and, in recent centuries, those known as beiradeiros and quilombolas (Brum, 2021, p. 22).

Our ancestors sowed this colossal biodiversity that is the Amazon, and today Indigenous peoples and other traditional populations continue defending it against capitalist greed, a task that, in many cases, costs them their lives. It is, therefore, timely to reaffirm: capitalism is the antithesis of life; it is genocidal, ecocidal, and epistemicidal. A truly Amazonian-based education cannot lose sight of this.

We need to “re-territorialize” ourselves with the planet, with the nature that constitutes it, and build a radical political program, as Indigenous peoples and traditional Amazonian populations have historically done to defend their territories. *Amazonizar* means learning the lessons of fighting for the rights of nature and defending life in its most diverse expressions. As Davi Kopenawa says, we must reforest our minds.

It is not about inaugurating or creating a new civilizing model; systemic alternatives already exist. In the Amazon, they continue to exist, having survived despite colonialism, imperialist greed, so-called development models, and the countless genocidal endeavors that continue to occur against its peoples, populations, and territories.

In this sense, what is advocated is that the field of formal education, which has historically served as an aid in reproducing the narratives and images of the colonial ideology about the region, should now be capable of “amazonizar” itself and increasingly focus on reflections that help to understand the region from these cultural, political, and epistemic landmarks, which for a long time it concealed and contributed to disperse. “If schooling was an instrument of cultural invasion and the shaping of subjectivities aimed at capitalist societies, today it is urged to assist in this decolonizing task” (Cordeiro; Ribeiro; Pereira, 2023, p. 14).

This process involves reactivating ancestral memories that connect us to the knowledge and ways of relating to both human and non-human beings that have brought us here. Individual and collective memories that persist in the oral traditions and cosmologies of traditional peoples.

Amazonizar, then, is to (re)remember meanings and senses that were relegated to erasure and silence. It is to teach-learn by considering other temporalities, enabling the school to embrace the time of wisdom, which, according to the teachings of the Xakriabá people, “[...] is different from the time of intelligence, for it demands, beyond the time of the mind, practice with the hands” (Correa Xakriabá, 2018, p. 43).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Amazon region was/is the target of the civilizing project institutionalized and standardized globally by European colonial expansion. For this model, the Amazon (its biodiversity, its traditional populations, and the knowledge produced through the relationships established between people and the surrounding environment) is understood as barbaric, backward, and uncivilized.

As a result of the climate emergency of our time, the region returns to the global spotlight. However, following the same historical-colonial trend, external narratives and images are imposed on its people, overshadowing and silencing the groups, peoples, and populations that make up the territory.

The discourse of the moment, not without due reason and necessary urgency, is the fundamental role of the region in planetary climate balance. However, the semantics employed relate to the reconfigurations of the Modern/Colonial Capitalist World-System, with its greatest expression in debates concerning the environment being manifested in the narrative of “sustainable development”.

Indigenous peoples and other traditional populations that make up the region, what have they signaled regarding the role of the Amazon in maintaining human life on the planet? These people, who were responsible for establishing distinct relationships with biodiversity, different from those developed and “universalized” by Western modernity and that led us to the contemporary cataclysm, are they being heard in the global forums where the topic is debated? If so, is this a genuine initiative or merely a proforma action, where the ways of life of these people are not considered as indications of other possible worlds?

Given the urgency and complexity of the debate, it is essential to discuss these issues in order to avoid falling into the reifying strategies and discourses used by the “Global North”, as well as to prevent ourselves from being subjected to the narratives and development models imposed by the economic and political decision-making centers of the country.

In light of the above, it is clear that the defense of the peoples and territories in the Amazon involves a deep understanding of the ways in which the exploitation of the region continues and the long history of plunder and conflicts instigated by capitalism here. Committing to the defense of Amazonian biodiversity and its peoples and populations also implies strengthening the anti-capitalist struggle from the Amazonian ground, understanding the dynamics inherent in the relationships established by the system with the groups and territories.

Amazonizar requires us to rebuild the hegemonic political economy with the political ontology that Amazonian populations establish in defending their territories. Education has the task of making us remember the knowledge that our ancestors developed and that European modernity and capitalist greed have sought to erase from our minds.

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