

Mismatches between extended urbanization and everyday socioenvironmental conflicts in Santarém, Pará, Brazil

*Descompassos entre a urbanização extensiva e os conflitos
socioambientais cotidianos em Santarém, Pará, Brasil*

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doi:10.18472/SustDeb.v11n1.2020. 29468

Received: 02/02/2020
Accepted: 27/03/2020

ARTICLE- VARIA

ABSTRACT

This article aims to investigate the reasons why the environmental debate has failed to flourish within contemporary urbanization in the Global South, by investigating the case of the newly created Metropolitan Region of Santarém (MRS), located in the Brazilian Amazon. This area has been occupied for thousands of years, and today is a region where natural resources have been overexploited. Urbanization has been extensive in Santarém and associated with institutional violence, in which old social hierarchies have been re-contrived and homogenizing spatial patterns have been imposed onto territories where the original occupation and spatial structures linked to the production of commodities coexist. It was observed that to understand the socio-environmental conflicts of the MRS, it is necessary to consider the connections between the Global North and South and between countryside and city, subsumed by a new urban that has stratified and encompassed the planet.

Keywords: Santarém. Global South urbanization. Sustainability. Extended Urbanization.

RESUMO

Este artigo tem por objetivo investigar razões para o não florescimento do debate ambiental na urbanização contemporânea do Sul Global, por meio de um estudo da recém-criada Região Metropolitana de Santarém, localizada na Amazônia brasileira, em área de ocupação milenar que hoje

é zona de superexploração de recursos naturais. Em Santarém, a urbanização é extensiva e associada à violência institucional, reedição de velhas hierarquias sociais e imposição de padrões espaciais homogeneizadores aos territórios onde ocupação original e estruturas espaciais ligadas à produção de commodities coexistem. Constatou-se que para compreender os conflitos socioambientais da RMS, há de se considerar conexões entre Norte e Sul global e entre campo e cidade, subsumidas por um novo urbano que estratifica e abrange o planeta.

Palavras-Chave: Santarém. Urbanização do Sul Global. Sustentabilidade. Urbano Extensivo.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Eurocentric concept of city-regions emerged after World War II. Since then, adaptation to Fordist and post-Fordist phases of capitalism have been taken as its catalyst, and over time has evolved into archipelagos of nodes that compete and cooperate across the planet (Scott, 2019). The city-oriented debate based in the Global North also highlights the emergence of new city typologies and local and world geographies, well adapted to new forms of labor, as being milestones in the transition towards a cognitive economy (Soja, 2000; Garreau, 1991).

This transition ties in with yet another paradigm shift, related to the environmental circumstances across the planet, which has created new geopolitics for cities and regions, described by While, Jonas and Gibs (2004) as an “urban sustainability fix”, or the green element of the 1980s growth machine presented by Logan and Molotch (1987). In Europe, such a process has recomposed landscapes and ecologies, and promoted agreements amongst social groups and classes, and has been subdivided into several approaches, such as urban sustainability (SWANN; DESTALE, 2019), urban ecology (BARLES; BLANC, 2016), ecological urbanism (HAGGAN, 2015), urban political ecology (Heynen, Kaika and Swingedown, 2006), and even the idea of how food shapes our cities (STEEL, 2013).

Although such approaches present several differences, they nonetheless converge when it comes to the need for land-use controls, distributing access to natural resources, providing infrastructure and energy and a correspondence between the way of life and the territory. Besides, some have strongly acknowledged adaptation to climate change as being an important issue, thereby becoming aligned with the formal inclusion of cities and urbanization onto the agenda of adaptation to climate change by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2014), including the understanding that hegemonic capitalism is placing human life and world biodiversity at risk (IPBES, 2019).

While levels of criticism have gradually increased in the Global North, an environmental and urbanization crisis has become established in the Global South, due to the intensification of urbanization (ALMANDOZ, 2015) and the overexploitation of natural resources (GUDYNAS, 2019). Generations of decolonial theorists have claimed that in the main, States in the Global South countries support political and economic structures that operate within the same dynamics of colonial systems (BALLESTRIN, 2013; MIGNOLO, 2017). They have enforced power and social hierarchies, and have sustained homogenization and hegemony through violence (either physical or institutional), together with a variety of manners with which to organize material life, social and spiritual values, and previous knowledge, to exploit both people and natural resources (BARROS, 2019).

Within such a context, this article explores the contradictions that exist between the forms of use and occupation of the territory within the recently created Metropolitan Region of Santarém (MRS) in the state of Pará¹. Local communities have been forced to develop resistance strategies, based on their identities, historic inheritance and traditional² knowledge, to link human settlements and nature in a well-intentioned manner, as recommended in principle by current urban ecological concerns.

The new productive dynamics, although based outside the city, demonstrate a variant pattern of implosion and explosion, described by Lefebvre (1999 [1970]), through the verticalization of the city

centers (implosion) and the changes of use in the peri-urban areas, where housing schemes, tourist and real state enterprises have outbid the territory occupied by native peasant communities (explosion). This explosion has also formed nodes located in further areas of the municipalities where industrial extractive activities have been installed (agribusiness, mining).

Given this situation, we seek to discuss what would constitute the analogous narrative for the Global South of an “urban sustainability fix”, considering the consequences of the current urbanization process and the urgent need to preserve biodiversity and roll back Amazonian environmental degradation, or why socioenvironmental concerns have not flourished in the Global South as they have in the Global North. The backdrop to this discussion is the re-contrivance of exploiting natural resources with multinational financing in Latin America, and the related major territorial transformations, characterized by short-sighted, environmental degradation and little absorption of labor, plus the constitution of hybrid peripheral edge areas in the suburbs, with shopping malls, real estate ventures and traditional peri-urban spaces (CARDOSO et al, 2018).

The presence of infrastructure associated both with logistics for commodity export, and the creation of new business and housing spaces over the floodplains, forest, and territory of peasant production, evokes the phenomena already described in the literature on contemporary urbanization, based on implosion and explosion (LEFEBVRE, 1999 [1970]), planetary urbanization (BRENNER, 2014), extensive urbanization (MONTE MOR, 1994), or the conception of the edge city continuum (GARREAU, 1991).

On the other hand, neglecting the connection between ancestry, reciprocity, identity and sovereignty regarding how to live and produce, and the preservation of nature, herein understood as natural resources (forest, floodplain, rivers), practiced by local communities, plus the violence with which political and economic power has erased their spatial manifestations. This has reinforced the need for postcolonial and decolonial theoretical perspectives, which place in check the perpetuation of strategies of domination by the Global North over the Global South, which, regrettably, strongly permeates academic discourse and public policies (ROY, 2016; BARROS, 2019).

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This was a qualitative research, developed between 2015 and 2019, based on fieldwork carried out once a year. The first stage of fieldwork was exploratory, based on previous knowledge of the region and focused on identifying the relevant social agents and the existing socio-spatial dynamics. Once contacts were established within the social movements, and public and private sectors, the second stage of fieldwork was initiated to contact authorities and social leaders in their offices and communities and to observe local dynamics, to establish parallels between city and countryside. From this point, the documentary research was developed, gathering official documents, local newspaper articles, and academic literature, to contextualize legislative projects, either approved or under-appreciation, which had either aims or outcomes related to territorial restructuring.

The stages of assessing documents and of observation were complemented by interviews held with a) staff from the NGOs Fase Amazônia and Saúde Alegria and the Cooperative Coomflona, b) lecturers and technicians from UFOPa, and technicians in charge of the Municipal Environment Secretariat, Land Coordination of EMATER and the INCRA local office, c) representatives from the Male and Female Rural Workers Union (STTR), from the Santerém Diocese, and Real Estate Enterprises. We also called on the experience of participation in daily activities within the São Brás community in the Agro-extractivist Settlement Eixo Forte, to examine the community’s production, housing, and sociability. The overlap of shapefiles, documents, and spatial observations gathered from all these sources, enabled the production of new cartographies to reveal the socio-environmental conflicts, which in turn were compared to the information available on websites that advertise real estate sector products. This research needs to be followed up by further quantitative research to measure the intensity of the processes and conflicts that have been identified.

3 THE SOCIAL FORMATION OF THE TERRITORY INSIDE THE METROPOLITAN REGION OF SANTARÉM (MRS)

The privileged location of Santarém, within an area rich in biodiversity and scenic beauty, and easily accessible from the viewpoint of fluvial logistics, would explain the occupation of this site for more than 7000 years by civilizations with urban characteristics, given their social organization and network links (ROOSEVELT, 2009; LOPES, 2017). Indeed, such an abundance motivated the Portuguese to appropriate these indigenous sites during the 17th century, by establishing the city of Santarém as an intermediary commercial warehouse between the Amazonian metropolises of Belém and Manaus, to potentialize the exploitation and export of exotic products from the floodplain and forest (CORRÊA, 1987).

The foundation of Portuguese colonial cities was instrumental in restructuring the Amazonian territory, and for fostering the Marquis of Pombal's policy of miscegenation between the Portuguese and Indigenous peoples, to produce a population called *cabocla*, which was able to combine indigenous knowledge on biodiversity with the commercial experience of the Portuguese (COSTA, 2019). It made the transition from a pattern of indigenous occupation to a myriad of localities and small settlements, inhabited by families of *Caboclos*, which although dispersed far from one another, were nonetheless connected through the network of rivers (COSTA, 2012).

For these families, the floodplain was a space of abundance, which enabled the practice of multiple activities throughout the year, such as fishing and petty production of agriculture, the transhumance of herds to higher firmer land, petty extractivism (of gathering from the forest) and trading at the city market (STOLL, 2014). *Caboclos* have always had a great familiarity with the river and the forest, despite the silence of official data regarding this fact and the stereotypical associations made by the urban elites concerning poverty and idleness (LOUREIRO, 2014).

Africans were also introduced into the region in the seventeenth century, thereby originating the *quilombola* communities, which began to appear on the farms inherited from former masters or in areas occupied by runaway slaves, who managed to adapt very well to the conditions of production across the region (CUEVAS, 2011). Because of the droughts in the Brazilian Northeast, another type of peasant migrated to the Amazon, the *Sertanejo*, who, in comparison with the *Caboclo* and the *quilombola*, was more daring and violent. However, throughout the decades they merged into the Amazonian *Caboclo* and assumed extractivism (petty extractivism) as their productive activity. Thus, an Amazonian peasantry was formed, which sometimes produced for the market (during the petty extractivism cycles), and sometimes for subsistence (LIMA, 1999).

During the rubber cycle (years 1850-1910), the productive structure of the forest products was prejudicial to this population, as it drained off the economic and social benefits towards the metropolis of Belém, and to the cities that were commercially stronger (VENTURA NETO, 2017), as in the case of the city of Santarém.

The stereotypical image of backwardness and poverty also came from the operations of the *aviamento*, a form of semi-slavery, which maintained the petty extractivist in continuous debt with the employers. The balance between the profit from rubber production and the debt with food, ammunition, and accommodation, offered to the worker by the *aviador* (the entrepreneur) always went against the worker. This circumstance, in addition to the culture of land occupation by adverse possession, placed this group of workers in a very unfavorable situation during the process of national integration (the 1950s-1970s), which presupposed the privatization of the land and financing profitable productive activities following a capitalist perspective (VENTURA NETO, 2017).

The capitalist exploitation of the forest was made feasible by a complete paradigm shift - abandoning the river as the main logistic structure, transforming land into a commodity, with the assumption that any work would take place within capitalist relations. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the region

within the bounds of the city of Santarém was being disputed by both agrarian and extractive activities, followed by tourism. All these activities were unable to generate the expected labor absorption levels, as a large contingent of the population remained outside the formal market (see Chart 1), living in the ancient *caboclo* system, characterized by Loureiro (2002) as being of the “river, backyard, family farm, forest”, which for centuries, had been successful in building livelihoods and a popular economy. The dispersion of rural communities and villages intertwined the settlements and the space of food production, linking communities as nodes by rivers and trails.

Chart 1 | Official socioeconomic and demographic data and percentage of the territory occupied by the municipal seats (cities), in the MRS.

	<i>Ratio between urban/ rural population</i>	<i>% of the municipality occupied by the urban fabric of the city</i>	<i>Municipal economy data reported on the database of the IBGE (@cidades.br)</i>
SANTARÉM	Population: 302.900 33.3% rural 66.6% urban	0.43%	30000 formal jobs for 150.000 people of economically active age (15.7% of the employed population) Average monthly income 2.1 Minimum Wages ³
BELTERRA	Population: 17.624 38% rural 54% urban	0.34%	1260 people employed (7.3% of the employed population) Income up to half a minimum wage: 52.1% of the population Average monthly income 1.9 MW
MOJUÍ DOS CAMPOS	Population: 15.982 (the rural/urban proportion unavailable)	1.59%	103 people employed (0.7% of the employed population) Average monthly wage 2.1 MW
BRAZILIAN AVERAGE	Population: 209.3 million 15% rural 85% urban	Not applicable	Average monthly income 2.2 MW

Source: IBGE (2010, 2018).

The high proportion of people of economically active age, kept outside the market or with remuneration of up to ½ a minimum wage, indicates that the substitution and denial strategies of traditional forms of work have not been successful in this context. In this respect, Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of communities in relation to drainage in the municipalities, indicating how much the local rivers were determinant in defining the location of human settlements, as well as a strong bond between people, river, floodplain and forest for their livelihood, which has existed until the present day.

The figure also outlines the urban fabric of the cities and presents the connecting highways and the extent to which the towns of Belterra and Mojuí dos Campos, municipalities dismembered from the municipality of Santarém, have become inserted into the area already converted over to soybean production, and which is cut by highways (federal and state) and contains the hydroelectric Curuá-Una, built by Eletronorte (a state-owned company) in the 1970s. Urban public policies approach the area within the urban fabrics and the nearby roads, disregarding the ancient pattern of settlements, and their dependence on the rivers and forest.

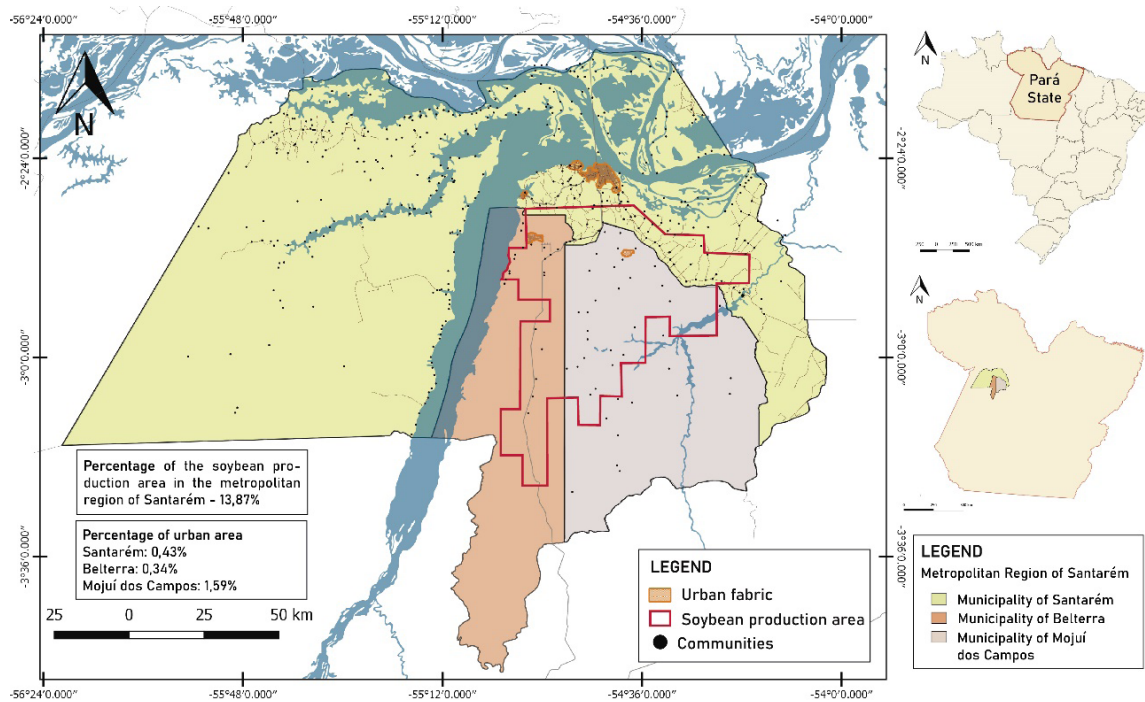


Figure 1 | Distribution of human settlements (communities) in the MRS.

Source: Rural Workers Union (STTR, 2016); IBGE (2010).

4 THE CONTEMPORARY EXTENSIVE URBAN REGIME IN SMR

Over recent decades the regional political and economic elite have established external links, and therefore have become capable of representing national and global capitalist interests, and of constituting power blocs and political and economic privileges based on official funding, on the valorization of rural and urban land that it already controlled, on the exploitation of timber, livestock and soybean production and, more recently, on the real estate market (VENTURA NETO, 2017).

In the case of Santarém, representatives of the elite have aimed to accelerate the conversion of land use and occupation from rural into urban, and consider that protecting the traditional way of life is an obstacle to the profitable structuring of the territory, despite its environmental resilience, thereby operating as new agents of colonization in the twenty-first century (OLIVEIRA, CARDOSO, 2016).

This has been made possible by power coalitions between the state and market, which may affect both cities or other parts of the municipalities since the frontiers remain open either for the exploitation of natural resources or for the accumulation of real estate. The introduction of new typologies (tower blocks in the city center, and land divisions on the outskirts) has created a new image, with a strong symbolic appeal. In practice, however, it has been restricted to axes or zones where the real estate market has followed national prices⁴ (MELAZZO, 2013), thereby characterizing a phenomenon of extensive urbanization⁵, still poorly understood at a local level.

There has also been an interchange of local agents from rural activities (e.g.: soybean production) to larger urban investments (e.g. real estate, logistics or mining projects) (MELO, 2015), promoting socio-environmental exclusion, which always occurs with selective modernizations (Santos, 2008), close either to human settlements (rural villages and cities) or to areas of investment in rural areas (mining fields).

In the municipality of Santarém, the implementation of logistics, the installation of soybean fields, and the expectation of deploying mining areas are related to the operating strategies of financial capital. Currently,

multinational corporations fund mining and grain production, and have been followed by other global players who have linked themselves to local capital to foster real estate production in and around the city.

This has, therefore, prepared the way for the tourism real estate sector to operate in the village of Alter do Chão and other areas of scenic beauty. The restructuring (and rural exodus) that these actions have promoted across the territory has created another market, exploited by national companies, such as the social housing program *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* (My House, My Life). This program produced the housing scheme called Residencial Salvação, on the outskirts of Santarém, which when occupied became the most populous district of the city, with 15000 poor residents, isolated and vulnerable to crime and violence (REIS; RODRIGUES, 2019).

In this aspect, modernizations are dialectically linked with land commodification. The new extractive and real estate activities claim rural and peri-urban areas originally occupied by peasant and traditional populations, while the inner-city spaces have imploded to enable the construction of apartment tower blocks, or vegetation has been suppressed by land-use change, thereby denying the presence of nature.

The metropolitan space has been structured by the explosion of new uses across the territory, and the implosion of Santarém's city center (by verticalization and the specialization of uses), but this dialectic movement is not perceived as part of the same capitalist strategy of homogenization and integration of this landscape to the market; in everyday practice, there is outstanding resentment (by the peasants) against the city. Locally, the city is viewed as a privileged symbol of the oppression of rural communities.

This feeling is interpreted by representatives from social movements through the statement "when the [agri-extractivist] settlement plants nothing, the city does not dine", complemented by the question: "why doesn't the city adequately repay the communities for what it receives?" (Interview, January 2019). Moving against the debate on how food shapes cities, the city promotes the oppression of its hinterland inhabitants.

However, across the whole municipality the uses that form the new extended urban fabric⁶ contaminate rivers and soil, suppress vegetation, reduce biodiversity and cause water scarcity, factors that hinder the way of life of the population that lives outside the formal market, and that has always constituted a popular economy that respects the environmental cycles - based on a combination of animal breeding, small crops, petty extractivism (of gathering) and fishing, under the collective management of the land. This circumstance affects the livelihoods of groups that live either in- or outside the city, and that interact with other segments of the population through the open market (SÁ, COSTA, TAVARES, 2006), and that support the local gastronomy and tourism.

Federal public policies directed towards this metropolitan region tend to privilege the exogenous agenda, which in turn, is well received by local agents interested in linking the investments made in the city to the image of a classical metropolis, where there is a predominance of constructive density, individual property, a conventional provision of infrastructure and a strong emphasis on a pattern of consuming industrialized products. This agenda goes hand-in-hand with deforestation and the deterritorialization of the original population and goes against all international consensus, cited in the introduction of this article, such as the need to reduce CO2 emissions, to preserve biodiversity or for cities to adapt to climate change.

Stone (1989) stated that the implications of the game regarding urban sprawl and land use conversion - here understood as the production of an extended urban fabric, may be decoded from the answers to such questions as: Who decides? How do they decide? And how do the agents adapt themselves?

The power game to create the MRS has relied on the interests defined at several decisive moments. A relevant starting point would be the historical demand for the emancipation of the western region of the state of Pará from the territory of Pará. This was justified by the aim of strengthening the formal economy through the interlocution of the political class with the soybean producers, who already worked on the central plains of Brazil; the creation of the municipality of Belterra, dismembered from

Santarém in 1997; the emancipation of the municipality of Mojuí dos Campos, dismembered from Santarém in 2013; and by the granting of mining rights to multinational mining companies in the 2000s.

The proposal to create the MRS was presented by a local politician, a representative of the region, to the Chamber of Deputies in the State of Pará in 2010, taking advantage of the political alignments of the municipal, state and federal administrations, and agreements between several political representations based on the Western Region of the state of Pará (PL 1/2010, State law 79/2012).

The expectations of political and economic growth were coupled with the centralized management of federal resources. This required the adherence of states and municipalities to federal programs to obtain funding, devising a fairly conventional agenda of “development” for the new metropolitan region (a large city-region as it were), which was unable to consider its socio-biodiversity and local knowledge on how to manage long term natural cycles as a differential or a potential to alternative forms of development, not listed in Global North agendas.

This modernization was a decisive move in jeopardizing the achievements gained by social movements over the past decades. Thanks to their commitment to protecting biodiversity, they had mobilized federal organs linked to territorial management in search of institutional solutions, which could guarantee that they would remain on public lands (FOLHES, 2010, 2016). This resulted in the creation of intermediary typologies between the two extreme positions of the agrarian reform settlements, destined for migrant peasants, and the conservation units, devised by the National System of Conservation Units, which determined the eviction of all those living there.

Decades of negotiations resulted in a territorial mosaic in which important milestones, such as the Resex Tapajós-Arapiuns was created, in 19981, together with the Agro-extractivist Settlement Projects (PAE) Lago Grande, in 2005. Alongside this, countless *quilombola* communities were certified by the Palmares Foundation² thereby guaranteeing that traditional populations remained in the forest, floodplain and riverbank environments, including those living within the city or in the peri-urban areas.

Despite this obvious resistance, public policies directed towards the area have not created a convergence between its Amazonian profile and the generic metropolitan debate. Both the mosaic of protected areas in the municipalities and the traditional communities amalgamated as neighborhoods of the city of Santarém began to be seen as obstacles to the ongoing development project, understood mostly as economic growth. The decades of superpositioning these rationalities have generated a socio-spatial stratification that has inserted typical typologies of industrial societies into the city of Santarém - such as the port of the Cargill Company, built on an old beach in the city center, an official housing scheme, a shopping mall and informal occupations (in fact, the former fishermen’s villages).

Moreover, the extended urban fabric that structures the metropolitan space of Santarém is now funded by financial capital involved in the production of all these typologies, and upon the expectations of exploiting bauxite, by an American mining company, which is claiming one-fifth of the area of PAE Lago Grande to open new operational sites, while maintaining 57% of this settlement for mineral prospecting surveys (field research, 2019).

Another 13.87% of the metropolitan area is already dedicated to soybean plantations. These activities instrumentalize the advancement of an urban ubiquity, governed by a distant logic that gradually outbids the historic spatial patterns, to the extent that it amalgamates peri-urban peasant communities located along the city’s expansion axis, or *quilombola* communities, into ordinary city neighborhoods and peripheries (GOMES; CARDOSO, 2019).

This has consequently spoilt the fractal of the huge regional territorial mosaic that also existed in and around the city, and that has supported livelihoods, based on the management (without destruction) of the local biodiversity, which could be an indicator of resilience, the protection of biodiversity and socio-

environmental balance. This fading process was furthered by the stigmatization of the populations that depend on nature, and by the action of local media in associating economic growth to the (frustrated) implantation of industrial plants and to expanding the port area (which became a top priority).

However, these changes have not taken place without a reaction from local social movements, which have promoted 12 community workshops (5 urban and 7 rural), 3 public hearings and a municipal conference, to discuss and review the Santarém Master Plan (*Plano Diretor*)⁷, in a popular process that terminated in December 2017, when their proposed document was delivered to the City Council (REIS, RODRIGUES, 2019). After one year of analysis the new master plan (Lei 189 \ 2018) was approved by the City Council, with a unanimous vote to alter the popular proposal, and for the production of a cartography that had not been previously discussed, such as the map of agricultural aptitude, which considered 41.57% of the territory of the municipality of Santarém fit for the cultivation of grains, an area unprotected by conservation units or related to floodplains.⁸

This map caused a great controversy between the progressive and conservative sectors, by overlapping the area suitable for monoculture with areas still covered by forest and agri-extractivist settlements, where dozens of communities and extractive villages would be subjected to the effects of deforestation and contamination of water, soil, and air if the monoculture area was enlarged.

This was an example of how the local agenda is ruled by external interests. Meanwhile, communities were unrecognized by the master plan as the inheritance of a wise Amazonian capacity to balance human settlements and nature – but rather, they remained invisible and unentitled to public transport, water supply, electricity, telephone, internet, and access to services and equipment. They lacked support for enhancing small-scale technological solutions (historically practiced) for their needs (e.g., small turbines used for hydroelectric production), accessible solutions for public transport, connecting villages to one another and to the city; for recognizing centralities and functional complementarities between the villages (via the distribution of public equipment such as schools and health clinics) and most of all, there was a clear dismissal of popular knowledge in public policies (PINHO, 2011; DAL'ASTA, AMARAL, MONTEIRO, 2017).

Although the economic elite expected advantages with a change of the productive platform (from petty extractivism to mineral extractivism and agribusiness⁹), the recent history of the Amazon indicates that more qualified positions in exporting activities were supplied by migrant labor, with no effective absorption of any local labor (LOUREIRO, 2002; CARMO et al, 2014). On the other hand, these activities have generated environmental degradation, land expropriation and a decline in the production conditions of the original population (CARDOSO, CÂNDIDO, MELO, 2018; GOMES, 2017).

This logic had already been devised in the municipal master plan for Santarém in 2006, which defined an area for urban expansion with a radius of 30 km from the center of the city of Santarém out to the former village of Mojuí dos Campos, assimilating several ancient communities scattered across the area, and designated *quilombola* areas for port expansion (PMS, 2006). The master plan approved in 2018, eliminated the expansion zone, defining only the urban perimeter and rural districts, but established a port area equivalent to the entire front of the city (the whole riverbank inserted in the urban perimeter), reaching the neighborhoods of the fishing and *quilombola* communities, which today constitute the close periphery to the city center.

The new law (Law 189/2018) not only expanded the area with the potential of receiving a cargo terminal, but it also triplicated¹⁰ the volume of cargo possible in relation to the already installed Cargill terminal, which exports most of the pork for Dutch pork production. Prioritizing logistics compromises local levels of wellbeing (based on cultural identities and productive sovereignty) and practices that depend on access to the river, contrary to the aims proposed in post-industrial societies.

The federal instrument for land regularization, Law 13.465/17, eliminated agri-extractivist settlements situated on public lands, to provide access to land according to the market rules. The land was put up

for sale that was immobilized collectively for these populations, for a lower price than that practiced by the market, on a family-by-family basis (BENATTI, 2018), affecting, for instance, PAE Eixo-Forte, located between the city of Santarém and the touristic village of Alter do Chão (Figure 2). This strategy undermined collective organization and highlighted the difficulties of the families in affording to buy the land and, most of all, to maintain it, fostering PAE's replacement by deforestation and suburbanization.

Within the PAE communities, the housing area corresponds to just 10% of their production area, and there is a great need for uncontaminated water and soil (OLIVEIRA, CARDOSO, 2017). As land became a commodity and urban rationality advanced, public policies reduce the needs of the communities to housing and suppress the links between the conditions of production and reproduction. Communities based within the city, but along the riverbanks, are under huge pressure to become regularized and absorbed by the local real estate market. However, within the city area, Law 13.465/17 associated land regularization to the obligation of supplying infrastructure based on conventional infrastructure and not on ecological solutions already practiced by the natives, thanks to land availability. Defining targets according to market priorities presupposes the intensive use of land and a high dependence on building works, and prompts the transfer of duties (or the liberation of land) to the private sector (FISCHER, 2018). This trend will increase the urban fabric, reduce soil permeability and the city's resilience to floods and the impacts of climate change.

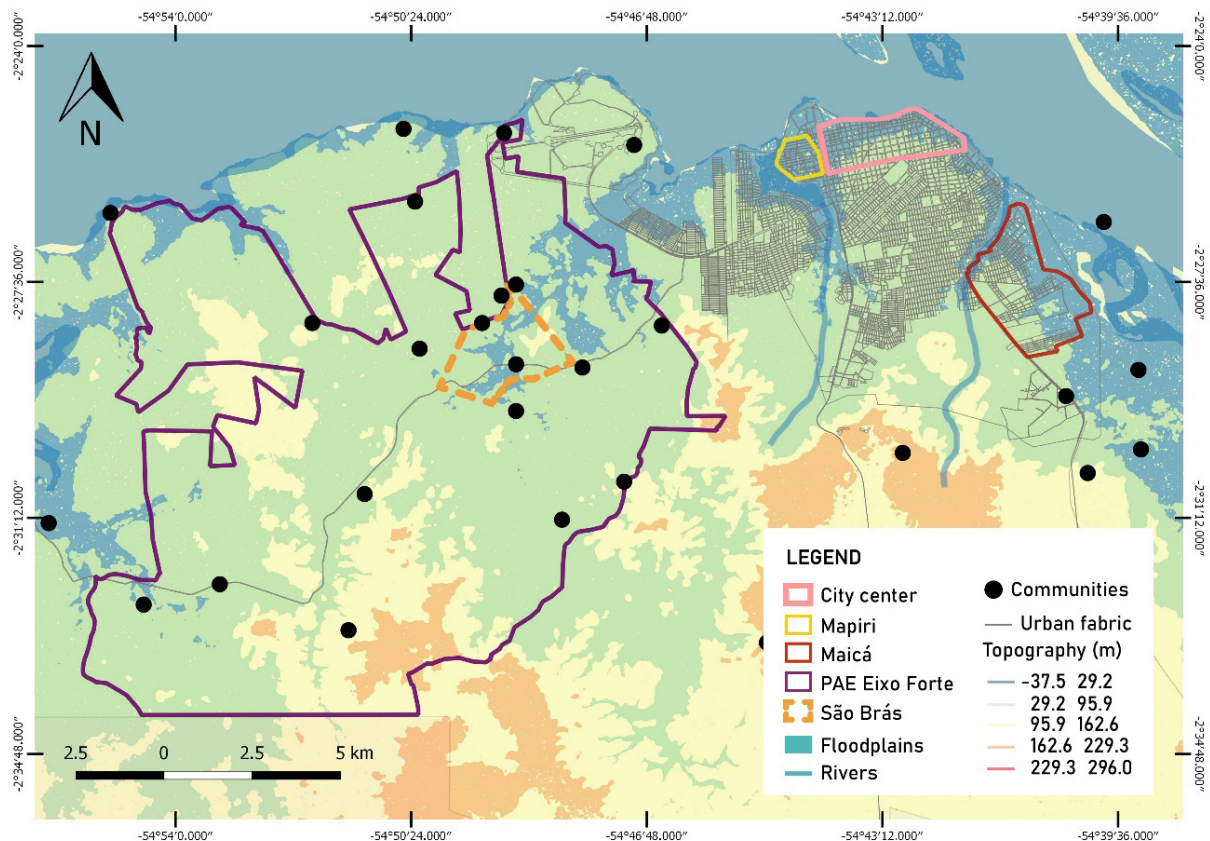


Figure 2 | Santarém's urban fabric, site (relief and floodplains) and outline of studied areas.

Source: Prepared by authors, based on the Union of Rural Workers (STTR, 2016) and cartographic bases of IBGE (2010).

The links between the expansion of agribusiness and mining and the master plan and the prospects of land regularization presuppose that the whole population would be economically incorporated into the new dynamics, despite the high degree of mechanization and automation of these activities, which are in the capital, technology and skilled labor-intensive. Expanding the power of these agents in the municipality signifies expelling

the population from small communities towards the city, where the conditions of housing, infrastructure, and income generation have become less compatible with the knowledge they possess to build their livelihood, despite their contribution to the local gastronomy, and with the alignment of the circumstances of their land occupation to the logic of landscape ecology (DARMSTADT, OLSON, FORMAN, 1996). Modernization creates the poorest social and environmental circumstances, due to economic domination.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This article provides evidence of the existing contradictions between the developmental discourse of public policies and the daily reality of the population in a newly created peripheral metropolitan region. Although it was created in the twenty-first century, there is a clear re-contrivance of the colonial metropolis in the manner by which the MRS was devised. Coalitions of political and economic power have reinforced predatory, short-sighted targets that have assumed land as a commodity, exploited nature and excluded social groups that were not fully integrated into the capitalist rationality, thereby denying the opportunity of development for a local socio-environmental consciousness based on deeply rooted experience and knowledge.

The resistance of local communities concerning this dominance has created hybrid circumstances, which demand that the links between urban and rural territories and practices need to be fully understood. The emerging extensive urbanization is biased towards fractions of capital that jeopardize natural resources both in and outside the city, albeit conducted by different but complementary activities. The simultaneous increase in socio-economic and environmental problems indicates that a “city-region” such as the MRS, cannot afford to copy either old Brazilian metropolitan regions or Global North metropolis strategies, particularly when the impact of economic dependency on large extractivism (including monocultures) is already known¹¹.

This case demonstrates that centuries of association between man and natural resources should be a reference for new, more organic urbanization patterns, more suited to tropical regions and their ancient cultures, and a starting point for a possible “Global South urbanization conception”, able to carry the positive concerns that the Global North’s “urban sustainability fix” aims to achieve.

However, this potential demands an ontological turn of public policies towards respecting diversity and the sovereignty of people, to the same extent as nations. It places the need to reduce the logic of private property in peripheral regions, and to acknowledge communitarian control of public land as an effective strategy for maintaining the environment and the quality of life of the original inhabitants, to protect life on the planet.

In such a context, to depict only the city space as a research object helps to reinforce the dependency of peripheral areas on global capitalism. The approach of cities blinds research to the importance of identity, autonomy, and culture, contained within a myriad of settlements that do not fit in with the time of profit. Emphasis on the ordinary city, without its dialectical counterparts – a fully inhabited rural region and an extensive urban area created by logistics, is instrumental in the advancement of post-industrial financial capital in areas where primitive accumulation is favored, such as the Amazon; a place where Northern formulas to produce green or eco-efficient ventures are easily distorted and used to deliver privileges to the elites.

From the case of Santarém, it is clear that the pattern of capitalist accumulation is moving from the former selective action on particular areas of interest – which was unable to dismantle small production created on top of a millennial history, towards a more comprehensive exploitative pattern. This assumes that any kind of land (either urban or rural) is a “commodity”, as important as mineral ore or soybeans, and promotes environmental and social impacts of local and global relevance, considering the importance of tropical forests for the planet’s climate.

Finally, the pro-growth agenda imposed on the MRS through official discourse and laws has a demonstrative effect for smaller municipalities (and cities) of peripheral regions and is the tip of the

iceberg of neoliberal coalitions of power that do not wish for legal obstacles to their goals, and that operate at national and international levels, to obtain advantages and to easily outbid local inhabitants.

At this point, Global North concerns on how cities can play a role in tackling the environmental crisis are very welcome to the Global South, to reinforce: a) efforts to protect use values rather than exchange values and to question accumulation and private property within tropical forests, b) to fight for solutions for sanitation, transport, and energy, that are suitable for the ways of living and producing, which have been very successful in protecting biodiversity and natural resources; and c) to make advances in providing full citizenship (in a Lefebvrian sense), consolidating and making truly differential spaces visible, where high levels of accumulation and consumption are not the rule, stating in a different manner, where the balance in the usage of social and natural resources is searched for.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their thanks to Capes (Masters scholarships; Capes Cofecub 88887.198788/2018-00) and CNPQ for funding during the research period (processes 309560/2015-2 and 307537/2018-8); to the reviewers, for their recommendations to improve the text; and to Brian Honeyball for reviewing the English language.

NOTES

1 | The State of Pará is the second largest state in Brazil, twice the size of continental France, and highly affected by the “Arc of deforestation” in the Amazon. Santarém is a regional pole, a municipal seat with an estimated population of 302.667 in 2018 (<https://cidades.ibge.gov.br/brasil/pa/santarem/panorama>). The Metropolitan Region of Santarém was created in 2011, and is also made up of the municipalities of Belterra and Mojuí dos Campos. In Brazil, each municipality has its administrative seat (city) under the same name.

2 | The word traditional is used in the text in the sense of endogenous and being rooted within a positive perspective concerning environmental and social aspects.

3 | The Brazilian Minimum Wage was equivalent to U\$233.2 in January 2020.

4 | Standard apartments at the Plaza de Vienna luxury building (166 m², on 25 floors) are advertised for R\$1.350.000,00, according to the advertisement available in <https://pa.olx.com.br/regiao-de-santarem/imoveis/e-luxo-plaza-de-viena-100-decorado-e-mobiliado-576165472>.

5 | Standard apartments with an area between 180 to 192 m² are advertised from R\$850.000, 00 (1 R = 4 US\$), even in the village of Alter do Chão, due to overlooking the meeting of the waters of the Tapajós and Amazonas Rivers (see Announcements in <http://www.coimbramobiliaria.com.br>). The extensive urbanization extends beyond the cities, in networks that penetrate virtually all the regional spaces, integrating them into the fabric of world networks, and structuring the capitalist production of space (MONTE-MÓR, 1994).

6 | The expression “extended urban fabric”, does not designate the built-up cities, but all manifestations of the predominance of the city over the countryside. In this sense, a second residence, a highway, a supermarket in the countryside, accommodation supporting the mineral exploitation, mines, farms, silos, etc., are part of the urban fabric.

7 | *Planos Diretores* are enforced by the Federal City Statute, meant to be a law that delivers systemic guidelines for all municipal policies, with a minimum set of instruments to control the private appropriation of social production of the city. The City Statute is greatly concerned with the speculation of private land and offers no solution for areas where land is mostly public, such as the Brazilian Amazon.

8 | The map presents and its legend states that: the categories “good, regular or restricted agricultural aptitude for planted pasture” and “inadequate land for agricultural use, but indicated for conservation and environmental preservation or ecotourism”, correspond mostly to the spaces subject to the floodplain; while the “agriculturally fit for farming with an emphasis on perennial crops, forest essences, pastures, and fruit trees” is not detectable, and all the remaining areas are described as “agriculturally fit for farming and intensive grain production”, except for the Resex Arapiuns.

9 | The expression industrial extractivism assumes the meaning exposed by Gudynas (2016), and the reprimarization scenario of Latin America exposed by Goresntein and Ortiz (2018).

10 | This project may be viewed on the YouTube platform at www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TndxyASxIA.

11 | According to Gorenstein e Ortiz (2019:50-51), the impact is expressed through socio-environmental tensions and political conflicts due to water contamination and its effects on agriculture and tourism; the removal of peasant communities; the generation of jobs in the service and supply sectors that require qualification; the growth of inequality, unemployment, and informality; the growing influence of multinational corporations on local power structures.

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