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## Amazonia as Territory: Poder & Potencia in Pará

Benjamin Kantner <sup>α</sup> and Hugo Lopes Tavares <sup>β</sup>

<sup>α</sup> *University of California, Los Angeles;* <sup>β</sup> *Universidade de São Paulo*

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Benjamin Kantner<sup>1</sup> and Hugo Lopes Tavares<sup>2</sup>

## Amazonia as Territory: Poder & Potencia in Pará

**Abstract.** This paper considers the dialectic of territorialization at play between the Brazilian state and traditional peoples (*ribeirinhos*) in Amazonia through Nick Clare, Victoria Habermehl, and Liz Mason-Deese’s (2018) theorization of *poder* and *potencia*. The interplay between *poder* and *potencia* becomes evident throughout the modern history of Brazilian development initiatives, interventions by capital, and social movements organized by traditional peoples. Territories of *poder* and *potencia* in the Brazilian Amazon draw from this history of dialectic territorializations which finds contemporary form in knowledge discourses and resource politics. The *poder* of the Brazilian state and extractive corporations utilizes both overwhelming scale and personal confrontations to facilitate resource requisitions. The *potencia* promised by traditional territories—reciprocal socioecologies connected to Amazonian ecosystems—suggests power derived from overlapping territorialities between humans and nonhumans. Through interviews and counter-mapping with the São Francisco community, we demonstrate that the place-based lifeways (“*modo de vida*”) of the community also sustain prefigurative potential for a territory that exceeds the logics of the state and capital.

**Keywords:** Territory, Brazil, Amazon, counter-mapping, development, knowledge

**Resumen.** Este artículo considera la dialéctica de territorialización en juego entre el estado brasileño y los pueblos tradicionales (*ribeirinhos*) en la Amazonía a través de la teorización de poder y potencia de Nick Clare, Victoria Habermehl y Liz Mason-Deese (2018). La interacción entre poder y potencia se hace evidente a lo largo de la historia moderna de las iniciativas de desarrollo brasileñas, las intervenciones del capital y los movimientos sociales organizados por los pueblos tradicionales. Los

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Kantner is a doctoral student in the Department of Geography at the University of California, Los Angeles, United States. Email: brkantner@gmail.com ORCID: 0009-0008-0237-3704

<sup>2</sup> Hugo Lopes Tavares is based at the Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil. Email: hltavares@usp.br ORCID: 0000-0002-8446-7630

territorios de poder y potencia en la Amazonía brasileña se basan en esta historia de territorializaciones dialécticas que encuentra una forma contemporánea en los discursos del conocimiento y las políticas de recursos. El poder del estado brasileño y las corporaciones extractivas utiliza confrontaciones personales y de escala abrumadora para facilitar la requisición de recursos. La potencia prometida por los territorios tradicionales—socioecologías recíprocas conectadas a los ecosistemas amazónicos—sugiere un poder derivado de territorialidades superpuestas entre humanos y no humanos. A través de entrevistas y contramapas con la comunidad de São Francisco, demostramos que los modos de vida basados en el lugar de la comunidad también sostienen un potencial prefigurativo para un territorio que excede las lógicas del estado y la capital.

**Palabras clave:** Territorio, Brasil, Amazonia, contra-mapeo, desarrollo, conocimiento

## Introduction

On February 24, 2022, the Russian military invaded the territory of neighboring Ukraine, provoking an international response of financial sanctions and copious proclamations regarding territory. Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, a frequent admirer of Russian President Vladimir Putin, bluntly stated that Brazil could not risk its fragile economy, in particular Brazilian agroindustry's reliance on Russian fertilizers, even as the Brazilian government arranged flights to evacuate citizens residing in Ukraine. On March 8, Bolsonaro emphasized his appreciation for Putin:

President Putin, the world is our house and God is above us all. Twice they tried to water down our sovereignty in the Amazon. And, with veto power, President Putin wielded that power. This reduction [of Brazilian sovereignty in Amazonia] was not discussed in light of the environmental question ("*questão ambiental*"). I thanked him. (Coletta & Holanda, 2022)

Bolsonaro's cryptic reference to Russia's permanent veto on the UN Security Council reflected a consistent narrative of his presidency (2019-2022): rich countries are intent on diminishing Brazil's sovereignty over the Amazon region through transnational modalities including international environmental policies, trade agreement terms, big conservation NGOs, and traitorous Brazil-based social movements prizing international human rights discourses over patriotic developmentalism. Ironically, Bolsonaro expressed his appreciation of Putin's respect

for Brazil's sovereign territory in Amazonia even as Putin violated Ukraine's territorial rights.

This paper engages the issue of Amazonian territorial politics through juxtaposing the Brazilian state's territorialization efforts with those of traditional populations (*ribeirinhos*) in western Pará state. We present findings and ethnographic excerpts from our fieldwork within the agro-extractivist territory Sapucaá Trombetas where we engaged in participant-observation, semi-structured interviews, and a counter-mapping project requested by the community of São Francisco. The community's relational form of territorialization, embedded in the historical socioecology of the locality<sup>3</sup>, indicates a territoriality both completely at odds with that of the Brazilian state (and its corporate partners) while also inescapably intertwined by power relations converging within the adjacent national forest Saracá-Taquera. We identified a dialectic reminiscent of Nick Clare, Victoria Habermehl, and Liz Mason-Deese's evocative 2018 article "Territories in contestation: relational power in Latin America". In response, our paper first details a modern history of the Brazilian state's approach to territoriality in Amazonia, before engaging Clare et al.'s *poder / potencia* theorization. In the second half, we transition to the case of São Francisco and the Saracá-Taquera National Forest which we argue is an example of a traditional community's *potencia* in dialectical engagement with the *poder* of the Brazilian state and Mineração Rio do Norte (MRN) mining company. The *ribeirinhos* of São Francisco appeal through place-based history, knowledge, and reciprocities to produce a "power to" (*potencia*) that both contests and converses with "power over" (*poder*) wielded by federal environmental agencies and MRN.

As a result, we offer three important contributions to discussions of territory: first, the relational dialectic of territorialization must be continually reenacted across time in order to produce power with previous enactments acting as ghostly layers upon which contemporary territories take form—these appeals to history can both strengthen *poder* through narratives of development and affirm *potencia* through traditional knowledge; second, *poder* exercises territoriality over its desired resources through scalar affect and relational confrontations, acting upon both vertical and horizontal axes; and finally, the resource reciprocity of *potencia* underlies its territoriality by creating immediate, mutually-beneficial relations through multi-territorialities between humans and nonhumans. These three factors of *poder/potencia* together contribute to territory's agonistic, prefigurative potential. Within the

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<sup>3</sup> Locality refers to "the social and spatial endogenous capacities of place and of place-based actors as collectives" politicized as territory (Sandoval et al., 2017)

communities of Lago Sapucaá we found that arguments for the right to territory employed history, knowledge, and day-to-day practices as much as collectively-perceived future needs and desires. We refer to prefiguration in this case because the place-based lifeways (“*modo de vida*”) of traditional territories held in common certainly exceed and confound the fading neoliberal moment. Yet before arriving there, with our feet on the ground in the forest of Saracá-Taquera, we begin with a historical narrative of Brazil’s Amazonian geopolitics, the crucial backdrop from which emerged Brazilian anxieties and ambitions regarding the rainforest.

### **Historical Brazilian sovereignty & the Amazon**

Bolsonaro praising Putin’s respect for Brazilian sovereignty represents only the latest iteration of a long-term territorial dynamic within Amazonia. Beginning at the turn of the 20th century during the first rubber boom, Brazilian politicians monitored North American intentions to take over the territory of Acre, center of the rubber economy (Hecht & Cockburn, 1990). During the first government of Getúlio Vargas (1930-45) and the *Estado Novo* (1937-45), fears of an Axis invasion of Brazil prompted even the nationalist Vargas to accept US military aid to improve airfields in Amapá and Belém (both near the Amazon coastline) as part of the \$90 million Airport Development Program (Garfield, 2013).

The second half of the 20th Century began with the celebration of the modern capital Brasília closer to Amazonia (1960), the development of the Belém-Brasília highway (1960), and a military coup resulting in decades of dictatorship rule (1964-1985). Under military rule, Brazilian geopolitical concerns dramatically shifted from the southern border with Argentina to the northern borderlands only recently demarcated alongside Suriname, Guyana, Colombia, and Venezuela (ibid). The very notion of a nationalistic pride in developing Brazil’s rightful, sovereign territory became reason enough to advance a fury of conflict-ridden infrastructure projects and ill-fated colonization schemes funded by international debt. “Integrate so as not to surrender” (“*integrar para não entregar*”) became a justifying mantra for massive development endeavors (Barbosa, 2015, p. 31).

As the military dictatorship collapsed and international ecopolitics expanded, culminating with the murder of “Forest Peoples” coalition leader Chico Mendes (December 22, 1988), the Sarney administration (1985-1990, tasked with transitioning Brazil from military dictatorship to constitutional democracy) responded to calls to internationalize the Amazon by launching the *Nossa Natureza* (“Our Nature”) initiative. Hecht and Cockburn (1990) describe the program as “the first time that ‘forest dwellers’ and river people had been thus recognized, having been previously invisible to policy makers” (p. 138). *Nossa Natureza* presented the

Brazilian nation-state as an environmental steward including the creation of national forests (Amapá, Amazonas, Pará), national parks (Acre and Mato Grosso), and a shift to a sustainable development lexicon with agro-ecological zoning. However, long-standing plans to continue infrastructure development of dams and roads remained unchallenged. So did Brazilian suspicions regarding North American designs for Amazonia including “US geography textbooks that they [Brazilians] believe depict an autonomous Amazon severed from the Brazilian nation-state” (Mitchell, 2017, p. 159). In addition to defending national sovereignty, both the military dictatorship’s aggressive insertion of development and Sarney’s *Nossa Natureza* conservation program relied upon the affective, discursive power of Brazil’s imaginary as the Country of the Future (“País do Futuro”). As Brazilian geographer Carlos Walter Porto-Gonçalves (2001) points out, Amazonia is seen as Brazil’s reserve of resources— or collateral—to achieve this imagined future.

At the dawn of the 21st century, the neoliberalism of the Cardoso government (1995-2002) followed by the Workers Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* or “PT”) presidencies of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) and Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016) accomplished several important shifts for Brazilian territoriality within the Amazon. Erosion of Brazilian nationalism in favor of international trade norms which suggested commitments to human and environmental rights led to increased political power for multinational corporations, international organizations, and social movements alike. While the Lula and Dilma administrations staffed their ministries with activists from social movements and promoted social programs, agroindustry also expanded in Amazonia through corporations such as Cargill, Bunge, and Archer Daniels Midland (ADM). At the same time, the rise of the BRICS economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) meant a shift in Brazil’s primary trading partners.

The commodity boom of the first decade of the 2000’s buoyed social program spending even as massive monoculture and mining projects threatened local Amazonian livelihoods (Science Panel for the Amazon, 2021). China emerged as a primary destination for Brazilian agricultural and mining commodities. As a result, Brazilian politicians became less and less concerned with the threats of North American and Western European (i.e. North Atlantic) international organizations to boycott Brazilian products in response to socio-environmental abuses. Brazil’s purported “post-neoliberal” moment under successive Workers Party presidencies aligned with Latin America’s “pink tide”—Evo Morales in Bolivia and Raphael Correa in Ecuador similarly utilized a combination of progressive discourse and economic nationalism to expand agribusiness and extractive industries while rallying social movements to support and occupy positions in the executive branch (Hope, 2016;

Guzmán, 2017). It is exactly this paradox that leads quilombola (maroon) intellectual Nêgo Bispo to lament, “The right and the left are conductors driving the same colonialist train” (“*A direita e a esquerda são maquinistas que dirigem o mesmo trem colonialista*”) (Lourenço, 2023). Bolivian decolonial theorist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2020) characterizes the supposed “pink tide” of South American leftist presidents as the infiltration of social movements by the capitalist state. Always present throughout the political shifts detailed above, developmentalism champions the extraction of profit, stimulation of capital, and GDP growth as the primary uses of state territory.

### **Amazon territoriality in our current moment**

We come full circle to the election of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro in 2018. Bolsonaro ran on a platform committed to elevating the standing of the Brazilian military, halting further demarcation of Indigenous or quilombola territories, and exercising Brazil’s sovereignty over the Amazon through increased extraction and agro-industrial development.

Although Bolsonaro’s strategies for developing the Amazon are by no means novel, several important shifts occurred as a result of the contemporary period summarized above. First, the increasing presence of clandestine economies in gold, timber, and drug trafficking now plays an important role in transecting the forest with unofficial infrastructures in pursuit of profit. However, assumptions of government absence overlook the increased presence of the Brazilian military in Amazonia as evidenced by \$71 million in funding for military-led environmental operations between 2019 and 2021 (Paes, 2021). At the time of the writing of this article, Brazilian security forces remain present in 17 Indigenous territories (not to mention other beleaguered government lands) (Lopes, 2023). These dramatic interventions by the Brazilian state reinforce its Amazon territoriality as a “vector of state power ... [a] material assemblage that requires ongoing state intervention to avoid a catastrophe whose conditions of possibility it [the state] has itself produced” (Minor & Boyce, 2018).

Secondly, linkages with global commodity markets facilitated by multinational corporations means that apart from major infrastructure, the Brazilian government no longer needs to play the role of primary investor in growth poles and colonization efforts as it had during the military dictatorship. Domestic multinationals such as JBS Foods and Amaggi Group along with international corporations now possess the resources required to execute large capital investments in Amazonia and face little political resistance. Brazilian agribusiness remained an economic success story even when the commodity boom cooled. Here, we also note Brazil’s international geopolitical status in relation to global capital. Despite

impressive economic growth and powerful, homegrown corporations, market economists continue to regard Brazil as a developing country of the semi-periphery which leads to a public discourse centering the need to court international investment. However, this obscures the fact that “Brazilian’ agricultural [and mineral] exports are transnational capital exports” (Robinson, 2015, p. 9). As we will demonstrate, focusing solely on either the Brazilian state or capital occludes the extent to which the two function together.

Finally, Bolsonaro succeeded in dulling the influence of international environmental politics through casting suspicion on international NGOs as threats to Brazilian territorial sovereignty, aligning Brazilian climate change skepticism with that of former US President Donald Trump, and effectively freezing the policy-making power of the internationally-led Amazon Fund (Kantner, 2021). However, the region’s social movements now exert unprecedented, internal pressure upon the Brazilian government. Many of these groups gained a seat at the table during the creation of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution following decades of military rule. These diverse collectives include coalitions of Afro-descendants, Indigenous activists, rural peasants, and urban poor acting as the conscience of Amazonia. Even as Bolsonaro enjoyed successes eroding protections for Indigenous groups, quilombolas, traditional peoples, and their ecosystems, the Brazilian Supreme Court (*Supremo Tribunal Federal* or “STF”) and Federal Public Ministry (*Ministério Público Federal* or “MPF”) challenged the most extreme regressions. It is difficult to imagine this dynamic of contestation decades earlier during the military dictatorship. Yet despite the pressure of social movements, the Brazilian state often evades its constitutional duty to guard the borders of Indigenous lands, quilombola communities, sustainable use reserves, and conservation units. As a result, local groups increasingly engage in territorial monitoring and even auto-demarcate their borders despite threats of violence (Vega et al., 2022). Thus, while power certainly courses through the diverse territories and coveted resources of Amazonia, its flows remain unpredictable, shared between regional and extra-regional actors of *poder* and *potencia*.

### **Poder/potencia & other theorizations of territory**

We are suggesting a territorial dialectic between the Brazilian state and social movements that broadly aligns with the Clare et al. (2018) model of *poder* and *potencia*. The authors assert that power is immanent to territory (a “political technology”) and the characteristics of that power range from “power over” (*poder*) to “power to” (*potencia*) (ibid, p. 306). These two forms of power exist in tension yet together result in the spatialized relational constructions of power that equate to



territory. Because power is immanent to territory, the Brazilian state and forest peoples both wield power through spatial control. However, this power is not equally distributed nor do respective territorial borders ensure sovereignty within. As a result, Clare et al. also remind us that neither form of power achieves its spatial form in isolation from the other.

Territories of *potencia* exist and emerge relationally *with* the state, not in isolation from the state (p. 312). Likewise, since the creation of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, the Brazilian state demonstrates *poder* through its power to demarcate massive Indigenous territories such as that of the Yanomami in Roraima. This occurs despite the protests of local elites. Referencing the other side of the spectrum from land-owning elites, Susanna Hecht deploys Holston's concept of "insurgent citizenship" (2008) in relation to the Amazon Nation (2011): the Indigenous, quilombola, and traditional territories representing *potencia*. Thus, the regional dialectic becomes clear through the lens of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution. The Amazon Nation wields *potencia* by way of not only their self-determination/defense of land but also vis-à-vis their insurgent claims to the *poder* of the state as represented by the ultimate expression of state rule-making authority, the constitution. Simultaneously, these claims of *potencia* offer the Brazilian state the opportunity to demonstrate its power and even sovereignty across national territory through adjudication of local territorial and property rights.

By asserting territory as relationally constructed, Clare et al. break from Eurocentric understandings of power expressly through domination and overtly vertical approaches to theorizing territory which regard territory as a container filled with people and things, created by the power of the sovereign (Sack, 1986). In this regard, Clare et al. draw extensively from Latin American scholarship on territory, which while maintaining the scalar analysis of power relations, challenges the Anglophone "trap" (Agnew, 1994) through emphasizing multi-territoriality (Haesbaert, 2008). In contrast with state-centric understandings of territory, Latin American scholars theorize territory as a relational process which exceeds the modern state (Fernandes, 2012).

As an "arena of dispute" (Manzanal, 2014; Svampa, 2008), territory welcomes a plurality of "protagonists" beyond the state (Porto-Gonçalves, 2009). Diffuse, relational power opens up the possibility of reinvention (Porto-Gonçalves, 2012). Through reinvention, social movements exercise power through territorialities corresponding with *potencia* in Clare et al.'s dialectic. These myriad spatial claims and strategies of appropriation establish the overlapping nature of territory. Afro-Brazilian geographer Milton Santos identifies the ingredients of territory as material space and productive social relations (lifeways). A territory itself results from the

appropriation of territorial configurations (we suggest also their layered histories) often by non-state actors via political interventions (Santos, 1994).

While not specifically identifying *potencia*, these authors infer social movements' appropriation of space as a justified territorialization, a survival strategy (Escobar, 2008; Zibechi, 2012). Their power emanates from the legitimacy of an immediate and collective sense of place that includes the spatial encounter of events, histories, traditions, ancestors, and rituals (Giménez, 2000). The malleability of space through social relations underlies the transformational potential wielded by socio-territorial activists (Fals Borda, 2000). Latin American scholarship additionally explores the politics of territorialization at an expanded variety of scales, including the materiality of the “inseparable ontological relationship between body and territory” (Zaragocin & Caretta, 2021, p. 1506). Divergence from Anglophone scholars imbues territory with the dynamism at the heart of the *poder-potencia* dialectic while adding further complexity through emphasizing both layered and relational territorial dynamics.

### **Our definition of territory**

As researchers who work with traditional communities in Amazonia, our theoretical approach must align with how communities themselves understand and communicate territory. In line with Sandoval et al. (2017), we contend that territory as pursued by socio-territorial movements in the Brazilian Amazon involves three attributes: “a) autonomous use, enjoyment and management of the natural resources within it; b) control over the political, economic, social and cultural processes taking place inside it; and c) acknowledgement of indigenous norms and institutions exerted in it” (p. 53). We suggest the addition of place/placemaking defined by Escobar (2008) as “engagement with and experience of a particular location with some measure of groundedness (however unstable), boundaries (however permeable), and connections to everyday life, even if its identity is constructed and never fixed” (p.30).

Additionally, Escobar reminds us of the reciprocity which exists through social relations between human and nonhuman placemaking. An emphasis of human/nonhuman reciprocal territorialities aligns with the growth in popularity of the philosophy *Bem Viver* (*Buen Vivir* in Spanish) within Brazilian eco-social activism (Peixoto & Saraiva, 2023). Furthermore we identify the reciprocities which relationally produce the territorial power of *potencia* as prefigurative or holding future promise through their generative lifeworlds and persistence (Ince, 2012). Therefore, territories of *potencia* may be defined as socioecologies affixed to place through

reciprocities expressing relational power and future possibilities. Next, we reveal the empirical origins of our definition: the territorial dynamic unfolding between Brazilian state authorities, Mineração Rio do Norte (MRN) mining corporation, and the *ribeirinhos* (traditional, small-scale extractivists) of Lago Sapucaá in western Pará, Brazil.

### **Methodology: traversing western Pará**

Even as cell phones and social media become common across much of Lower Amazonia, travel by night on one of the many boats plying the ever-fluctuating waters emphasizes the sheer expanse of distance between electrified settlements. Boat travel has always been common in Amazônia, but increasing urbanization (Richards & VanWey, 2015) means networks between dispersed families consolidate along pathways to urban centers. Most people we interviewed in western Pará spent a period of time working in either Manaus or Belém or had a family member there. These massive urban centers feature increased employment opportunities, but also heightened crime and disconnect from the place-based lifeways of the “*Interior*” (in Portuguese, used to describe settlements, farms, or villages distant from urbanized areas). Socio-ecological networks link residents of the *Interior* with those of cities. Family ties and livelihoods establish multi-sited households and promote interlocking employment practices with international systems (e.g. the mining corporation MRN) at Manaus or Belém as well as logistics terminals at smaller cities like Santarém and even smaller towns such as Oriximiná along the Trombetas River. Oriximiná sits far enough west of Belém that socio-cultural networks lean towards Manaus even as the region's resources including bauxite flow to Belém.

The *ribeirinho*, quilombola, and Indigenous groups with territory near the Trombetas depend on Oriximiná as a trading post. No reliable highway exists to deliver goods to Oriximiná so the waterfront acts as an interface for a range of products from distant sources or localized cycles of deterritorialization/reterritorialization as cattle arrive for newly cleared pastures. A daily boat departs from the Oriximiná waterfront in the early afternoon, providing a circuit for *ribeirinho* communities along the edges of Lago Sapucaá, a large, fluctuating expanse of water and floating forests in between the Amazon and Trombetas rivers. The daily arrival of processed foods and fizzy drinks in geographically remote Amazon communities links global markets to individuals living without electricity or running water. Thus, while methods of resource gathering throughout the *ribeirinho* communities remain modeled off Indigenous practices, such lifeways exist alongside new, globally available commercial products, a striking paradox for portrayals of an Amazonian wilderness.

During the year of 2019 we performed research in partnership with *ribeirinho* communities inhabiting the *igarapés* (seasonal streams), forests, and

savannahs along the edges of Lago Sapucua adjacent to the border of Pará and Amazonas states. To reach these communities, we performed periodic trips from our homes near Santarém (location of the Federal University of Western Pará “UFOPA”) along the Amazon River to the small town of Oriximiná where we took a smaller boat across Lago Sapucua. At the request of the *ribeirinho* community of São Francisco, we organized a community assembly to discuss the process and outcomes of a community mapping project. Our interviewees included members of the Boa Nova community on Lago Sapucua as well as the four communities of Lago Maria Pixi<sup>4</sup>. In addition to 38 interviews, we surveyed day-to-day practices and traveled alongside community members through their traditional territory to mark the GPS coordinates of 113 homes, work sites, and historical locations. We understood our role as researchers (from outside the community) to be one of technical support, accompaniment, and solidarity to the community’s territorial project (Gonzales & Husain, 2016). This research ethic reflects our intellectual philosophy which prioritizes political engagement over detached inquiry (Guzmán, 2021).

The map below, created by our colleague at UFOPA Hugo Gravina, combines our mapping project with that of other researchers working along the border of the Saracá-Taquera National Forest. This map served as a community tool to denounce the actions of the mining corporation MRN to the Brazilian government. Similar to the use of the Brazilian Constitution, a tool of state power, by social movements to argue for territorial rights, *ribeirinho* communities point to the federal forest code (specifically Law 9.985 / 2000 establishing the National System of Conservation Units and Public Forest Management Article 6 of Law No. 11.284/2006) to compel action on their behalf. Resistance to bauxite extraction within the forest occurs despite local communities’ marginal political position in contrast to the ample financial capital of MRN. Yet in doing so, *ribeirinhos* “counter-map” from a position of *potencia* (Oslender, 2021). Their assertion of territorial rights as articulated in official documents by the Brazilian state compels Brazilian environmental agencies ICMBio (Chico Mendes Institute of Biodiversity Conservation) and IBAMA (Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable

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<sup>4</sup> We mostly refer to these communities as existing on Lago Sapucua because Lago Maria Pixi is a smaller body of water adjoining the larger lake. Access between the two varies depending on water levels. We visited four communities there: Espírito Santo, São Tomé, São Sebastião, and São Francisco

Natural Resources) as well as MRN to modify their exercise of *poder*, despite the peripheral location of this community-based *potencia* within Amazonia.

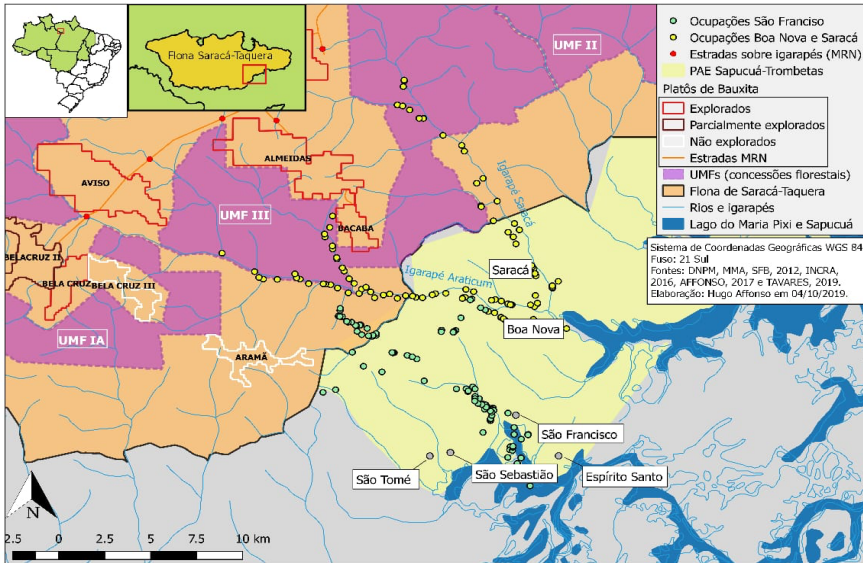


Figure 1: Community mapping project

Notes: GPS data by Hugo Tavares, Benjamin Kantner, Hugo Affonso; GIS visualization by Hugo Affonso (2019).

### Historical layers of poder/potencia at Lago Sapucua

The advocacy and martyrdom of Chico Mendes in 1988 led to the creation of novel forms of territories including Extractive Reserves, Sustainable Development Reserves, and Agro-Extractivist Projects (PAE) (Gomes et al., 2018). Following these classifications, newly designated protected areas in Brazil identified the importance of community leadership and use of natural resources. Communities living in these reserves receive recognition by the Brazilian state as “traditional communities” (*seringueiros*, *ribeirinhos*, *beiradeiros*, and other labor-derived identities sometimes referred to as Amazonian peasants) and contribute non-timber forest products (NTFP) to local markets, the most famous being açaí and Brazil nuts<sup>5</sup> (Allegretti,

<sup>5</sup> In Brazil, these nuts are known as *castanha do Pará* and are a considerable source of both income and pride.

2007). Other forest product extractions, including small scale tree-felling, contribute principally to the community itself, such as canoes or house-siding. These lifeways are considered “traditional” because communities living in extractive reserves utilize historical, ecological knowledge originating from Indigenous Amazonians--many of the ancestors of traditional communities arrived from the Northeast during the rubber booms of the early 20th century (Garfield, 2013). Place-based, situated knowledge constitutes the core of the extractive reserve territorial concept. This form of territorialization reflects the *potencia* or “power to” maintain ancestral forms of knowledge and day-to-day practices through spatial relations which emphasize reciprocity between both human and nonhuman communities.

Interviews with elders of the São Francisco community at Lago Maria Pixi dated the founding of São Francisco to the time of their parents, corresponding roughly with the beginning of the second rubber boom in the 1930’s (some suggested an even earlier founding around the turn of century). One work site we visited had remained in continuous use for 80 years centering on manioc cultivation and processing. Interviewees credited Indigenous Amazonians with having taught their ancestors the skills needed for surviving in a new environment such as planting manioc and creating shelters with palm leaves. The emerging communities also mixed with nearby quilombolas who sought refuge in the forests of Pará prior to abolition.

Traditionally São Francisco and the surrounding communities had little access to goods exterior to their locality yet learned to rely on the forests and waters for all needs apart from sugar, salt, and coffee. One community leader commented that an extensive knowledge of forest products and lack of currency precluded reliance on imports while the biodiversity of the forest provided access to nutrition, medicine, and building materials. As a São Francisco interviewee explained, “Nós somos filhos dessa terra” (“We are the children of this land”). Relations between people and the forest as territory continued despite the designation of the national forest in 1989 as part of the *Nossa Natureza* initiative.

The creation of Saracá-Taquera National Forest heralded the arrival of a large protected area for the region. International and domestic campaigns centering on protecting the rainforest raised the consciousness of non-Amazonians and evaporated the natural resource base of São Francisco and nearby communities. The resulting local struggle for traditional territory would last until 2010 when São Francisco received recognition as part of PAE Sapucaá Trombetas. However, the resource-rich core of the forest remains the restricted territory of the Brazilian state.

### Contrasting scales of overlapping poder/potencia

A massive high-tension transmission line (“*linhão*”) cuts between the national forest and the *ribeirinhos*. Within the PAE, little electricity exists for the small communities founded along *igarapés* draining into Lago Sapucaá. Generators and precious fuel are saved for church services or the yearly celebrations of saints. During these lengthy parties neighboring communities assemble for a shared meal, cold drinks, and electrified *forro* music. The communities themselves exist in small clusters, with no more than 60 households in São Francisco, especially isolated from neighbors during the rainy season. While the Lago Sapucaá region features relatively little monoculture or tourism, profit-oriented extraction is never far away in Pará, as exemplified by the massive bauxite mining operations governed by Mineração Rio do Norte (MRN). All other economic activities pale in intensity compared to the monumental freighters leaving the Trombetas River for the Amazon River before eventually unloading at a refinery in Barcarena near Belém. Natural forms are leveraged by a territorial power hierarchy with MRN at the summit (Kohn, 2013). Towering plateaus crown the Saracá-Taquera National Forest (*Floresta Nacional* or “FLONA”). High above the streams flowing into Lago Sapucaá, MRN dismantles forests to access rich deposits of bauxite. Aerial photography reveals the ruins left behind, eerily organized lagoons of waste, mining pits, and creeks severed by roads for trucking output. The *ribeirinho* communities themselves expressed uncertainty over where the bauxite travels after it is pulled from the mountains, only that it had been ripped from their forest and was not going to be sold until it was far away.

Despite a long history of use of the forest, attempts by community members to grow traditional crops or extract necessary timber result in heavy fines that are essentially impossible for locals to pay with currency. This occurs despite provisions for traditional use in the national forest’s management plan. The current PAE territorial demarcation does not provide a sufficient resource base for *ribeirinho* populations, necessitating risky incursions into the national forest. As the Brazilian government, private corporations, and international organizations earmark Amazonian resources for both national and international importance, local communities are pushed to the margins. The intertwining of *poder* and *potencia*, reminiscent of Anna Tsing’s (2005) metaphor of “friction” to describe global-local dynamics in our current age, creates overlapping, historical claims to resources and corresponding knowledges on behalf of territory. Today, these knowledges (and reenactments of territoriality) play out as political statements to justify both appropriation of territory and power sharing.

### Claims to resources based on knowledge

Carlos Alberto is one of the residents living along the margins of Lago Sapucuá below the bauxite mines and has substantial experience fighting MRN's vision for the Saracá-Taquera National Forest. Originally from northeastern Brazil, Carlos married into the community and worked the communal land he was granted through territorial use rights via marriage. Since then, he became one of the most outspoken local advocates for rights to traditional resources. Carlos recounted witnessing competing territorializations across Amazonia from the lawless highways connecting Maranhão with eastern Pará to wildcat gold-mining (*garimpagem*) in the west. Although he had already spent much time in Amazonia, when Carlos arrived at Lago Sapucuá, he was initially treated as an outsider. In our discussions on the history of traditional peoples in the area, Carlos frequently valorized his African ancestors (and quilombola relatives), explaining that his agricultural knowledge had come from Africa as opposed to local Amazonian knowledge connected to past and current Indigenous societies (but also romanticized in sustainable development discourse). When speaking of knowledge, Carlos Alberto sought to “delink” (Mignolo, 2007) his knowledge from that of *poder* emerging through Eurocentric modernity (as often exemplified by Brazilian and international conservation/sustainable development actors) and postcolonial actors as well (the Workers Party or “PT”). He expressed an ambivalence between these two political and epistemological polarities, instead situating his knowledge in his body and relations with the land, particular places, and human/nonhuman reciprocities (Santos, 2015). In promoting the situated knowledge of others, he explained that although most community members had never achieved much education through Brazilian schools, they were “doctors in the forest”.

Brazilian authorities disagreed. Community members recounted attending meetings with Brazilian state environmental agencies IBAMA and ICMBio regarding forest management during which their history and day-to-day practices were insulted or dismissed as “unsustainable”. Community members live in constant fear of rebuke by environmental authorities and when invited to meetings listen in silence as the “experts” explain sustainability (Nepomuceno et al., 2019). One local recounted their experience at meetings, explaining that government officials typically commanded, “Faz isso, faz isso, faz isso” (“Do this, do this, do this”) without proper respect. The irony of such moments was not lost on locals who laughed when pointing out their inclusion on a government-issued sustainability calendar in heartwarming images. Outside knowledge commanded respect over local knowledge, except in this case when local knowledge proved useful for affirming the government’s territoriality as in the case of the promotional sustainability calendar. Organizations from outside



Amazonia set the standards for management of the forest, including local faces only when conveniently credible.

Following the unflinching critique of Brazilian authorities, the leader of a community association, Marcos Campos, emphasized that efforts to preserve species and provide economic opportunities for their children had failed due to lack of scientific knowledge, despite the community's intergenerational links and sense-of-place. This is an example of the friction between *poder* and *potencia*: contestation of knowledge hierarchies and land uses in the middle ground. When community members attempted to establish a new, productive forest of *itaúba* trees, the death of the young saplings was seen as indicative of the need for expert help rather than refusal of the forest to function with the dislocated rationality of modernist natural resource management. At the same time, multiple community members remarked on the foolishness of MRN's reforestation program which frequently made errors regarding the species type and planting season for their projects. When community members pointed out these errors, MRN ignored their advice. Contemporary territorialization calls upon historical layers through knowledges connected to territory. Knowledge engages the *dialectic* through discursive appeals, physical sites of contention, and relational interventions such as sustainability lectures at community meetings.

### **Poder & resource requisition territoriality**

From the point-of-view shared by IBAMA, ICMBio, and MRN which understands the forest as a sum of separable resources, knowledge which does not result in production gains remains inferior. A bias towards resource requisition even infiltrated the perspective of Marcos in the case of the attempted *itaúba* plantation. Although locals commonly face criticism from Brazilian authorities for their lack of environmental awareness, interviewees noticed the dissonance between platitudes of IBAMA or ICMBio and the nature of activities occurring in the national forest. Sustainable management discourse makes for green-washed territoriality, allowing the creation of a "managed global Nature" free from site-specific cultural commitments (Tsing, 2005, p. 107). The Brazilian government commends corporations such as MRN and timber companies for their sustainable practices and job creation, contrasting with the direct experience of communities. These territorialities, actions which exert control over a territory, reflect a singular strategy: resource requisition. Resource requisition refers to the absolute pursuit of severable, profitable goods which may be utilized in extra-regional supply chains to increase capital and the authority of *poder* itself. The resource requisition strategy focuses on extra-regional power, reflecting material priorities beyond the immediate locale.

A Boa Nova community member explained, “The large corporations are not good citizens, they don’t help with planning, they view social good as only a tax on their income.” This occurs even as timber companies pursue Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) sustainability certifications for their operations choking the *igarapé* headwaters. The Brazilian government regards industrial use of the forest as sustainable, citing the role of bauxite mining in regional development efforts and applauding Mineração Rio do Norte (MRN) for its commitment to reforestation. The spread of MRN’s activities in the Saracá-Taquera National Forest ensures that all communities existing along the periphery of the forest experience impacts. While these communities experience minimal day-to-day interaction with each other, their reliance on forest resources faces constant peril from the pollution, disruption, and threats of violence connected to bauxite mining. Carlos Alberto participated in a project organized by Fundação Pró-Índio de São Paulo which produced a report on the impact of MRN’s bauxite mining operations on the communities living along the borders of the Saracá-Taquera National Forest: Entire plateaus previously covered with dense forest appeared transformed into naked pits alongside lakes of mining waste. Suddenly the entire national forest appears small with tendrils of contamination leaking into the streams of communities no matter which side of the forest they draw their water from.

In *Friction*, Anna Tsing identifies the role of interlocking scalar imaginaries as necessary for the production of global capitalism (2005). A similar dynamic exists at the Saracá-Taquera National Forest where MRN as part of Glencore (a Swiss multinational commodity trading and mining company) connects spoilage of local water supplies to global thirst for aluminum. At the same time, MRN presents itself as possessing superior knowledge on sustainable use than that of the communities. Despite disposing of mining tailings in the *igarapé* headwaters and kicking community members out of the forest, MRN promotes community scale sustainable development (“Projetos levam desenvolvimento”, 2023). MRN’s imposing scale as an international mining corporation carries a demoralizing, affective influence on the *ribeirinhos* of Lago Sapucaá. Taught by Brazilian environmental authorities IBAMA and ICMBio that their positionality includes deference to outsiders’ knowledge, the community of São Francisco must listen to MRN’s lectures on sustainable development even as the corporation trashes the forest.

An interviewee recounts the horror of destruction occurring within the national forest: “The construction machines unearth the holes where the animals live, flattening the animals we hunt”. Frequently informants focused on terrifying impacts to water and food sources. The Brazilian government’s exclusion of community

activities in favor of industrial extraction of timber or bauxite results in an asphyxiation of place-based lifeways, a form of dispossession common for traditional communities in resource-rich geographies (Escobar, 2008). National forest regulations limit traditional activities within the forest and squeeze availability of clean water and food sources outside the national forest borders. The threat of government fines for interactions with the forest beyond the government borders couples with extractive industries' deception of local communities through isolating individuals with cash payments to allow for destruction of community resources.

We refer to this technique of territoriality as the horizontal axis, because it relies on immediate, personal confrontations. As a prior association chair, Carlos Alberto had already resisted the hegemony of the government-extractive industries assemblage in his community on Lago Sapucuá. As he guided us by boat through the aquatic forests connecting to the communities of Lago Maria Pixi including São Francisco, he resolved to preempt the arrival of MRN's company representatives. During introductions to the residents of São Francisco and three other communities, his message was simple: Both mining and logging were planned for the forests and plateaus at the headwaters of the community streams. These same headwaters connected the fate of his own community to São Francisco and others. Carlos continued by narrating that soon company representatives would arrive and attempt to isolate residents, offering individuals small payments in exchange for the right to degrade the community's resources. He described the dynamic of cash transfers in exchange for rights to destruction: "The [MRN] will come to people in your community individually, offer money, and when the money is accepted say that the entire community has agreed to their project [mining]". MRN had a mitigation budget and company leadership were rewarded when they spent as little as possible.

Community members had already noticed the telltale signs of commencing extraction operations: "Do not enter" signage banning access to traditional sites in the forest and the growls of arriving heavy machinery. At a community gathering following São Francisco's yearly celebration, Carlos advised listeners to be proactive lest they find themselves caught in the sights of extractive industries. He called on the community to unite and work together to demonstrate its traditional territories through mapping, just as he and his community had done. The mixing of Brazilian state authority with the infusion of private capital from MRN produced the latest reenactment of *poder* and *potencia* in a series of historical frictions faced by the *ribeirinho* communities. Environmental knowledge both reflects that history and functions as a tool of territoriality over resource politics. In response, the counter-mapping project would demonstrate both the historical legitimacy and geographic precision of the *ribeirinhos'* socio-ecological knowledge and relations.

### Scalar discipline & affect

Following *ribeirinhos* through the assemblage of vines, trees, glossy leaves, and echoing sylvan sounds left us feeling vulnerable and naive to the invisible intricacies of the forest. As outside researchers, we observed no path in sight and knew that if there was a path, it was invisible to us. Yet as a group we moved confidently through the dense understory, an embodied structure of sites for gathering forest resources and stalking memories fastened by a lifetime connected to this place. The invisible path also served strategically, obscuring the vital arteries connecting the sanctioned territories outside the national forest to traditional lands within. High above the steamy forest in the cold, silent expanse of space, INPE (the Brazilian National Institute of Space Research) monitors the national forest. The Amazônia-1 satellite, an almost mythical mechanical “god trick”<sup>6</sup> utilizing remote sensing technology, silently searches. Community members will never see the satellite nor IBAMA staff reviewing aerial surveys of the forest, but all feared the arrival of forest police with exorbitant fines.

The use of satellites for deforestation monitoring again echoes the literal “power over” possessed by the Brazilian state as well as the complexity of its approach to environmental governance: As a technology, remote sensing may be used to both prevent invasions of traditional territories as well as threaten, fine, and remove traditional peoples from forests destined for other uses such as bauxite mining. This is not to mention the ongoing dispossession of Brazil’s largest concentration of quilombola communities at Alcântara, Maranhão to make space for public-private satellite launches (Mitchell, 2017). Surveillance acts as a double-edged sword for traditional peoples when relying on protection provided by the state in conjunction with internationalized tech regimes (Rubis & Theriault, 2020). This is not to mention the gendered, technocratic utopianism of high-tech conservation monitoring (Litfin, 1997). Community members did not contest the importance of a forest reserve, however, the current structure of exclusion, surveillance, and disciplining territoriality meant the dismissal of the community’s traditional rights and territory. One São Francisco community member highlighted the need for the forest to be administered by the community as a reserve, “*Seria bom ficar como uma reserva. Nós precisamos do recursos naturais*” (“It would be good if this was a reserve [for us]. We need these natural resources”). For now the community remains

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<sup>6</sup> Here we allude to Donna Haraway’s (1988) critique of Western scientific vision including mapping practices.

entangled in the risks associated with entering the forest to gather the very resources upon which collective survival depends.

The practice of environmentality (Agrawal, 2005) through the panopticonesque use of the deforestation monitoring satellite (the community has no idea when the satellite is indeed photographing their particular region) reveals the increasing presence of *poder* occupying the vertical scale of environmental “stewardship”. At the same time, the dialectic between *poder* and *potencia* maintains its horizontal relationality at the forest floor when a government representative arrives to issue the fine or disputes knowledge at a meeting. In this sense, scale (such as the national scale inhabited by IBAMA and ICMBio) pertains to the affective dimension of authoritative *poder* (the “power to” intimidate or command obedience) rather than a qualitatively different category of analysis (Moore, 2008). The emotional distress caused by community members’ fears of wanton destruction in the forest (“power over”) was overwhelming (Anderson & Smith, 2001). Meanwhile, periodic personal appearances of government or company representatives within the immediate community territory generated a justified sense of communal resistance. Often we were treated the same until a fellow community member explained that our outsider appearance did not mean we represented the Brazilian government. Because power is immanent to territory, *poder* and *potencia* must equally participate in reenacting their relational territorialities within the national forest. Reenactments occur through physical confrontations, but also between discourses of technology and development which become more potent due to the affective weight of resource geopolitics. A constant deluge of corporate and government media messaging the need for Brazilian development paints *ribeirinhos* and their lifeways as an impediment to national territorial progress.

### **Relational territoriality: resource reciprocities**

Carlos Alberto told us he had imagined what the national territory of one of the author’s homes, the United States, must be like. He envisioned the United States as the opposite of the forested landscape surrounding Lago Sapuacá. For Carlos, the United States is devoid of any forest, a giant city stretching from shore to shore. This is the mythology of how the center of modernity territorialized a landscape, even a continent, an idea emphasized by the rhetoric of the former Bolsonaro government (“Brazil’s indigenous to sue Bolsonaro,” 2020). In the imaginations of Brazil’s governing elites, the Amazon and its peoples are prehistoric remnants of an irrelevant temporal space (Phillips, 2019). Bolsonaro even framed deforestation as culturally Brazilian, a distinct form of territoriality (Lopes, 2019). In contrast, theorists rightfully invoke the concept of place to describe the occurrence of meaning and affect connected to physical spaces yet transcending the material properties of those

spaces (Escobar, 2008). Throughout our interviews, the *ribeirinhos* living along the edges of the national forest emphasized the relations communities maintained with place-based lifeways (“*modo de vida*”). Although internal conflict exists over resource rights and resistance practices, interviewees were unanimous in their appeal to relations: between communities, within families, and with the forest.

Interviewees desired that their historical network of connections with place would continue to their grandchildren. Yet, the community also fears that the knowledge maintained by elders struggles to reach newer generations drawn further and further from their traditional territories. As resources leave the forest for urban areas, forest dwellers will follow that path, traveling along the routes of extractive industries. Most community members already have at least one relative currently working in Manaus or Belém. At Lago Sapucaá, *ribeirinhos* remember the period before the national forest as a time of autonomy and continuity between generations. The arrival of IBAMA enforcement ushered in a new reality of resource squeeze and added dependence on the markets of Oriximiná for expensive, processed foods and petroleum-based lifeways such as transport to the town and replacement of organic materials with plastics. In Boa Nova, an interviewee told a cautionary tale of how quickly relations could be altered and replaced with detached individualisms. He explained that massive groves of Brazil nut trees (*castanheiras*) previously existed atop plateaus within the national forest. MRN destroyed the groves when the plateaus were cleared to begin bauxite mining and replaced the communal gathering practices with individual contracts to perform grueling and dangerous work procuring seeds that would ultimately be used for government-required reforestation by the mining company. Families had previously journeyed to the Brazil nut groves together, embodying an intersection of production, food security, social cohesion, and tradition.

For the *ribeirinhos* of Lago Sapucaá, territory hosts the overlapping territorialities of both humans and nonhumans. These relational territorialities function out of reciprocities of use. We refer to these mutually-beneficial acts as resource reciprocities in contrast to the resource requisitions sought after by the Brazilian government, MRN, and timber companies in the national forest. For community members, resource reciprocities entail an active, collective territoriality, both within the human community and in collaboration with nonhuman ecology. At one late night discussion Carlos Alberto reflected on the philosophy of Bem Viver as a viable ethic to guide interactions between communities like his and the world of development. Bem Viver emphasizes relationality, reciprocity, and community-level use of resources (Acosta, 2017). An example shared with us by one community

member included the felling of an itaúba tree. While federal environmental agencies prohibit this action in the national forest, contracts are routinely awarded to timber companies which promise empathy for locality despite exporting the logs out of the region. As a contrast, the community member fashioned a sturdy canoe from the tree for his family's use, ensuring that the tree existed within the reciprocal forest web into the next generation.

### Counter-mapping

During a mapping excursion in the Saracá-Taquerá National Forest, our group of male community members were joined by one woman. Maria Antônia noted that she was aware of the risk involved in joining us in the national forest. She explained, "*Nós sempre estamos com medo quando nós passamos a linha pra trabalhar*" ("We are always afraid to pass into the national forest to work"). Brazilian federal employees from IBAMA and ICMBio frequently engage in intimidation tactics to convince community members to avoid entering the national forest. Beyond fines, the community faces threats of physical harm resulting from accidents involving the heavy machinery of timber and mining. Yet, for Maria missing this opportunity to return to the site of her birth and childhood meant an even greater risk. She had passed her family's territory within the national forest to her relative by marriage, who asserted the need to return to occupy this land in the national forest, "*Depende nós continuamos mostrar que o trabalho aqui é nosso*" ("[Territory] depends on us continuing to show that the work [in the forest] belongs to us"). Community leaders and those with relations to particular worksites shared stories of interactions with flora, fauna, and mysterious forest creatures such as the *curupira*. Along the way Marcos Campo paused, yelling to the howler monkeys (*guariba*) resting in the canopy above. With each step we took, community members detailed the uses and histories they shared with various plants and animals. What otherwise appeared as a catalog of nonhuman species took on the affective and cultural conditions of place. The inclusion of this place (the national forest) into claims or appropriation of territory solidified its collective significance to the community.

When speaking of the forest, the community of São Francisco never uses the government terminology of *floresta nacional* (national forest) or "FLONA". The community refers to the forest as the "Center" (*o Centro*), a site of both material and affective relations. *O Centro* is where people retreat to in times of social anguish but also a source of favorite stories. This forested tapestry of histories, memories, and sustenance connects place with territory through the *potencia* of future resilience despite shifting social and environmental conditions. Counter-mapping participants contrasted the government's relationship with the forest from their sense of place. They described the government's interests as exclusively the transformation of the

environment into income through the selling of logging and mining permits to private corporations.

These value chain relations underlie the territoriality of resource requisitions. The prices paid by corporations to the government for access to the forest are well beyond the finances of the community. Community members lamented their lack of monetary resources to legally gain access to their traditional territories as an equal to the timber and mining companies. Beyond the difference of wealth, the community stressed that while the government wanted the forest sent far away, even beyond the shores of Brazil, the community retained the materials they gathered from the forest within the immediate locality, building their lives from the wealth of the forest and passing the resulting homes, canoes, and tools to future generations. Unlike the Brazilian government and extractive industries, São Francisco community members did not seek the transformation of the forest into exclusionary property. Conversely, Carlos Alberto highlighted the multi-species mosaic of stakeholders, explaining that he did not resent the *jacaré* (caiman) for eating the community's fish nor the *onça's* (jaguar) consumption of community hogs because these wild animals retained as much right to the shared territory as the community. Similarly, the community's use of forest resources, whether noble woods or prized deer, emerged from a mutually-beneficial existence based in reciprocity.

### **Amazonia, crossroads of poder and potencia**

In contrast to visions for territorialities of *poder* and profit deployed by Brazil's political center in Brasília or economic centers in the southern states including São Paulo, Paraná, and Rio Grande do Sul, the *potencia* of the Amazon pluriverse does not necessitate the transformation of entire ecosystems into plantation-style fuel production, the destruction of rivers for the sake of expensive hydropower, or reliance on commodities for export.<sup>7</sup> Brazil's South frequently depicts the North as poor and dirty. Yet the state's developmentalist response, the extraction of bauxite from Saracá-Taquera National Forest, poisons the water and displaces the resources of the communities.

One community member reflected on the abrasive sound of construction equipment rumbling nearby as he tended his *roça* (small farming plot). Displacement

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<sup>7</sup> In contrast to modernity or universality, the pluriverse imaginary retains space (and territory) for multiple lifeways, creative eco-design benefiting both humans and nonhumans, and diverse worlds (Escobar, 2018).



of access to traditional resources forces communities to increasingly depend on urban markets and non-local products. Maria Antônia commented on this reality as we discussed the loss of her family farm in the forest, “Today people buy more than they plant ... because people have fear of IBAMA, fear to work the territory that they traditionally worked”. Through territorialities of *poder* exercised via resource requisition strategies (including national forest governance), MRN and the Brazilian state deterritorialize the socio-ecological and cultural lifeways of the *ribeirinhos* of Lago Sapucaá. The resulting reterritorialization threatens to vacate *ribeirinho* territory (PAE Sapucaá Trombetas) of reciprocal practices. The traditional *roça* cycle includes both farming and letting plots return to nonhuman use: fallow, feral, and fertile as *capoeira*. These reciprocities must be generationally renewed through the day-to-day practices of working the territory and ensuring its relational maintenance for future generations. Active resource reciprocities prefigure the possibility of post resource ecologies<sup>8</sup> existing within territories of place-based lifeways (Coombes & Johnson, 2012).

Yet the region’s reterritorialization as an export-oriented industrial extraction frontier increases the dislocation of *ribeirinhos* who must resort to precarious urban informal economies. The export of bauxite to Belém where it is refined at Barcarena accumulates fortunes in luxury towers in the upscale Batista Campos neighborhood even as rural-urban migration occurs in the supply chain’s wake. Residents of the *Interior* (such as the Lago Sapucaá region), which functions as an internal periphery for the Brazilian nation, arrive at the urban periphery of Belém where they must trade their knowledge of the forest for dangerous neighborhoods flooded by sewage during the rainy season. This is modernity and development (made sustainable for capitalism) as preached by MRN, its multinational investors, Brazilian politicians, and the global North: a shiny glass tower surrounded by slums, savaging the earth and eliminating the possibilities of alternatives.

At São Francisco, when asked about the behavior of the Brazilian federal government and corporations in the Saracá-Taquera National Forest, *o Centro*, faces became sorrowful and lamented the tunnel vision of extractive methodologies that destroyed freshwater streams, burrowing animals, and Brazil nut groves for the exclusive harvesting of bauxite. However, community critiques of MRN’s practices fell short of a blunt rant against extractive industries. Many community members had worked for the company at the Porto Trombetas. Salaries at the mining company are much higher than others available in the region and the importance of Brazil’s

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<sup>8</sup> Here we are not implying that material resources will cease to matter, but rather that competition and analysis of these resources will cease to be the organizing principle of environmental politics and research.

economic development remained acknowledged. When queried about the communities' desires for the future, interviewees envisioned the forest as a source of security. Their food sources, water, and ability to remain sheltered all depend on continuing viability of autonomy supported by forest resources. Interviewees acknowledged the other option of moving to the city. However, the city is not seen as a sign of progress or modernity. Rather, the city represents a spiritual hazard resulting from the severing of connection with the forest and the community's past.

While Brazilian authorities fear an Amazon stuck in the past, defying rationality, *ribeirinhos* do not suffer from the same delusion: Traditional lifeways can co-exist with the 21st century. Some households equip their roofs with solar panels while others welcome Brazil and the world into their homes through watching the popular Brazilian news channel Globo on television sets. Cell phones are common though service fluctuates. However, most important to the community is that *o Centro* remains intact, accessible, and present for younger generations. Indeed, *o Centro* demonstrates the power of territory to make future territories and identities. The community histories, knowledges, and lifeways shared with us by the *ribeirinhos* of São Francisco both affirmed their territoriality and sustained activism on behalf of territory to maintain *potencia* for future *ribeirinhos* as long as reciprocities remain intact.

## Conclusion

São Francisco welcomed us as researchers because they knew a community-led counter-mapping project could signal boost their traditional knowledge and claims to territory, which long precede those of MRN. We recognize the irony between on one hand the community of São Francisco's desire for a map to highlight their traditional territory and on the other hand their careful avoidance of attracting attention from Brazilian--or international--forest monitors. The community acknowledged the tension between providing for the necessities of daily life through hidden subsistence activities in the forest and advocating for their long-term survival through denouncing MRN by publishing a map. Returning to an interviewee's comment, the community must demonstrate that the territory is theirs through the testament of their work/lifeways. The map we produced in partnership with the community focused on traditional work sites in the forest, articulating the nature of the relationship between people and forest.

In this article we have made three important contributions to theorization of territory as a relational dialectic interacting through transfers of power over physical spaces. The first, focuses upon reenactments of *poder* and *potencia*: The two forms of power must be continually re-enacted in order to maintain territories. Territory is constructed relationally not only between territorializing actors in the present, but through the ongoing interaction of historical layers. The history of relational territorializations involving the Brazilian state and *ribeirinhos* confirms this processual production of territory through a series of alternating reenactments: state efforts to expand the rubber boom draws workers from the Northeast who resist government efforts to regiment their labor. Upon integrating into an Amazonian socioecology, Northeasterners first territorialize as *seringueiros* and with the collapse of the boom as *ribeirinhos*. Later the dialectic produces industrial resource extraction prioritized by the military dictatorship, local resistance, conservation designations (the national forest), and finally the agro-extractivist project (PAE). Our counter-mapping project, requested by the community of São Francisco, may be viewed as the latest in this series of reenactments. The map also reflects the presence of history as knowledge.

*Poder*, and as a result territory, often focuses upon the role of the state. In the case of the *ribeirinhos* living along the edges of Saracá-Taquera National Forest, an intermeshing of the state and capital occurs through the dramatic transformation of the forest by mining corporation Mineração Rio do Norte (MRN). The Brazilian federal government administers the national forest as a part of its sovereign national territory, yet its desired territoriality remains elusive without the participation of private capital through MRN. Therefore, rather than focus solely on the “public” attribute of state territory, as is often done by conservationists in pursuit of “national” forests, parks, or reserves, scholars and activists will be better served by interrogating *poder*’s resource requisition strategy which incorporates both the state and capital. “Power over” exercises territoriality by commanding requisitions of resources through scalar affect and relational reminders like personal cash payments, handing off fines, lectures at meetings, and employment opportunities. The state and capital privilege top-down territorialities, a politics of intimidation through the vertical scale. However, these territorialities still rely on a relational dialectic to maintain and ensure territory.

Finally, *poder*’s resource requisition territoriality contrasts with the resource reciprocity of *potencia*, again noting that the two function not exclusively but in conversation with each other. Crucially, reciprocity calls attention to overlapping territorialities involving nonhuman in addition to human resource demands. Evidenced by our interviews and mapping project, *ribeirinhos* engage in resource management based on principles of reciprocity. Unlike sustainable development

discourse which assumes both maintenance of capital flows and constant growth of levels of production underlying developmentalism, resource reciprocity focuses on retaining resource life cycles within locality. “Power to” exercises territoriality by creating immediate relations of resource reciprocities through multi-territorialities between humans and nonhumans such as caimans and river dolphins: “All the animals are necessary to maintain the connection of life: *jacaré, boto, arraia, peixe*. People think the lake would be better without *jacaré*, but how would you react if someone entered your house to take things?” The regeneration of the material basis of *potencia* that is crucial for autonomies emerging from place-based lifeways (“*modo de vida*”) contributes to the affirmation of place as territory. In other words, *potencia*’s emergent “power to” extends from the possibilities of what some have termed the pluriverse.

The concept of the pluriverse or “a world where many worlds fit” (Escobar, 2018, p. xvi) encapsulates the future imagined by the São Francisco community in which traditional lifeways continue to survive, thrive, and even regenerate power. We recognize the *ribeirinhos*’ territories of *potencia* as a form of prefigurative politics which promotes “new understandings of territory to emerge that eschew territorial imaginations rooted in capital and authority” (Ince, 2012, p. 1655). Territories which maintain logics before and beyond the capitalist state prefigure post-resource ecologies. Unlike severable resource requisitions, the prefigurative *potencia* of territory depends on the maintenance of socio-environmental relations constituting the pluriverse yet frequently threatened by *poder*. Within the Brazilian Amazon, the state articulates sovereignty as power over (*poder*) national territory which may align or contrast from the goals of multinational capital, international institutions, private elites, and local communities. In response, traditional peoples negotiate, resist, and re-enact *potencia*, the power to enrich socioecologies through reciprocal territoriality.

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