


## THE COLONIAL NARRATIVE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HYDROELECTRIC POWER PLANTS IN AMAPÁ

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### ABSTRACT

In the Amazon, the persistence of a colonial project, which triggered the appropriation of the territory for the implementation of hydroelectric plants, has been reproducing damage and disasters and causing, for decades, a series of socio-environmental conflicts. From this perspective, the objective of this article is to analyze the dynamics of the implementation of mitigation and compensation measures, as an instrument of Environmental Policy, in communities of artisanal fishermen and family farmers in the Brazilian Amazon, specifically in the State of Amapá, which are subject to disasters caused by hydroelectric dams on the Araguari River. In the conjuncture, even in the face of the persistence of social and environmental damages and disasters, there is a discourse of the inevitability of hydroelectric plants, under the allegation that the consequences can be mitigated or compensated. However, guided by Decolonial Epistemology, after documentary analysis of Ten-Year Energy Expansion Plans (2006-2021), public civil actions, TACs and interviews, which comprise information collected from fishermen and family farmers on the Araguari River, State of Amapá, it was found that the implementation of mitigating and compensatory measures proved to be illusory. From a participatory research, it was possible to observe the destructuring of an environment that was the basis for the survival of secular communities. In view of this, it is necessary to break with this exclusionary and unequal rationality through resistance movements and to embark on an epistemological disobedience necessary to confront the relations of domination and power present in capitalist projects, such as hydroelectric plants.

**Keywords:** Hydroelectric Plants, Environmental Policies, Development, Araguari River.

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## INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of Brazilian energy planning begins with government plans for energy expansion, which are structured based on a political project adopted by the Brazilian government and implemented in the states. The Brazilian Amazon has devastating consequences of this project. In this sense, this work proposes to investigate one of the faces of the Amazons by analyzing the dynamics of the implementation of mitigation and compensation measures, as an instrument of Environmental Policy, in communities of artisanal fishermen and family farmers in the Brazilian Amazon, specifically in the State of Amapá, which are subject to disasters caused by hydroelectric dams on the Araguari River.

The implementation of Hydroelectric Power Plants (HPPs) in Amapá occurred in the 1950s, in the period when this State was still a Territory, through Law No. 2,740, of May 2, 1956, to meet industrial growth. Soon after the implementation of the Mineral Industry and Trade (ICOMI) to explore manganese in Amapá, there was planning for the installation of a hydroelectric plant that could assist ICOMI. Much of the amount used for the construction of the plant was derived from *royalties* from the mining company. The Coaracy Nunes hydroelectric plant was designed at a historic moment when the country's government was publicizing the infrastructures for large projects, seen as pillars for progress.

When the process of redemocratization resumed in 1985, Eletronorte continued planning the expansion of the energy park in the State of Amapá. During this period, Eletronorte announced that there was a forecast to start not only the inventory of the Araguari River basin, but also that of the Jari River (National Archives, 1985). However, it was only in 1999 that the inventory of the Araguari River basin was released (Aneel, 1999).

The subsequent procedures to start negotiations with ANEEL, regarding the documents for the expansion of the Araguari energy park, had an accelerated process from the Growth Acceleration Plan (PAC), launched in 2007. After the establishment of the three axes that guided policies for economic growth, namely logistics infrastructure, energy, and social and urban infrastructure, several investments were made. It must be considered that, from the planning of the inventories to the beginning of the issuance of the preliminary license of the Cachoeira Caldeirão Hydroelectric Power Plant and Ferreira Gomes e Energia, thirteen and eleven years elapsed, respectively.

With the Operating License granted in 2014 to Ferreira Gomes e Energia and, in 2015, to the Cachoeira Caldeirão HPP, the daily life of local communities whose social reproduction is based on fishing and agriculture was deconstructed due to the existence of

hydroelectric plants. The plants were licensed after the bureaucratic fulfillment of the environmental studies, under the justification that the compensations would be framed in a set of conditions, which were identified in the studies (EIA) and environmental impact reports (RIMA) and detailed in the basic environmental plan.

This context is inherent to a Eurocentric dynamic, such as a "Eurocentric world of colonial/modern capitalism and that naturalizes the experience of individuals in this pattern of power. That is, it makes them understand as natural, consequently as given, not susceptible to being questioned" (Quijano, 2010, p. 7). It is in the context of the reproduction of this same pattern that, after the licensing of hydroelectric plants, intense and continuous social struggle is necessary to demand compliance with the conditions.

The struggles for social and environmental equity precede, above all, the institutionalization of environmental policies that established technical variables to prepare the environmental studies of each polluting enterprise. Even with the institutionalization of all legal procedures, such as the EIA and the RIMA, the application of measures that prevent or minimize damage demonstrate, in some cases, inefficiency and, for the most part, mere bureaucratic formalization.

In this scenario, to analyze the dynamics of the implementation of mitigation and compensation measures as an instrument of Environmental Policy<sup>4</sup>, the epistemological contribution had a decolonial orientation, among other authors: Escobar (2005), Quijano (2010) and Mignolo (2017), in line with Political Ecology. Ten-Year Energy Expansion Plans, Master Plan of the municipality of Ferreira Gomes, public civil actions and Conduct Adjustment Terms (TACs) were analyzed, since they represent the actions and discourse of the State on the energy dynamics of the country. In addition, from 2019 to 2022, artisanal fishermen and family farmers from the municipalities of Ferreira Gomes and Porto Grande, located in the State of Amapá, who actively participated in the movements organized for the benefit of the communities affected by the Ferreira Gomes and Energia and Cachoeira Caldeirão HPPs, were interviewed.

## **THE GOVERNMENT DISCOURSE IN THE TEN-YEAR ENERGY EXPANSION PLANS**

In the Ten-Year Energy Expansion Plans (PDEs) analyzed, the concept of "sustainability" is used as a category to establish strategies to reaffirm that the socio-environmental dimension would be met in the prerequisites mentioned in national and

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<sup>4</sup> This work presents derivations from the doctoral thesis of the first author.

international agreements for the protection of the environment. However, sustainability, according to the World Economic Forum, held annually in Switzerland, is an essential element to characterize a country's energy production. In the case of Brazil, the fact that the energy matrix is based on hydroelectricity built the imaginary of energy production based on sustainable development.

This claim is related to the emission of gases that cause the greenhouse effect, mainly because Brazil has its energy matrix with renewable sources, with a low pollution index, when compared to other countries. However, the construction of hydroelectric plants is associated with a large number of lawsuits that report the socio-environmental damage caused by the projects.

Mitigation measures, or even compensations related to the submersion of territories, which affect residents, buildings, crops, fauna and flora and cause changes in the hydrology of the place and expropriation of traditional populations and native peoples, are not included in the PDEs with the same attention that greenhouse gas emissions receive.

The different governments of Brazil, during the elaboration of the PDEs, insufficiently relate the concept of sustainability to the disasters that occur after the implementation of energy policies and reiterate purely economic aspects to build the representation of the imaginary of sustainable development in the context of hydroelectric plants, reinforcing market indicators for the beginning of energy studies. This conception reflects the very structure of the capitalist model, which neglects social and cultural aspects to the detriment of market relations. Such logic represents Western ideological-symbolic strategies (Mignolo, 2017), by creating mechanisms for the erasure of a more modern self-styled culture that seeks to overlap with another.

The disasters that derive from these projects, in several affected territories, even after this series of planning to meet the deadlines regimented in different institutional spheres, were densely analyzed in research that focused on the subject (Nascimento, 2017; Fearnside, 1999). The investigations showed that socio-environmental analyses, established based on anti-social criteria (such as the constant search for meeting deadlines), reduce the visibility of the people harmed and create institutional arrangements to speed up hydroelectric projects.

The main aspects involving the socio-environmental studies of the PDEs correspond to the establishment of alternatives for the expansion of the electro-energetic system and the types of planning for decision making. This covers all phases for adapting to the

mandatory documents to meet the deadlines related to the release of the project, within the scope of feasibility, installation or operation. For this, in this case, the socio-environmental studies comprise the generation and transmission projects; In addition, they use indicators as basic criteria.

This process, which concerns the acceleration of procedures related to licensing, is mentioned at the other levels of the procedural evaluation. At the intermediate level, where concessions have been approved, the project must "quickly respond to any complements requested by environmental agencies", in addition, it must "promote and value the relationship with the communities, both in the sense of informing them about the project and to facilitate the negotiation processes that may lead to the signing of social agreements" (BRASIL, 2009, p. 380).

At the High action level, concessionaires should identify pending issues in the licensing process and be able to solve them "in a timely manner to ensure their implementation within the appropriate deadlines", but provided that the company manages with the "bodies/entities involved with the issues and pending issues to, based on the results of the review, propose, for example, Terms of Commitment (TAC) that meet the interests of the parties involved **and ensure the continuity of the project/enterprise.**" (BRASIL, 2009, p. 381, emphasis added). In the example shown in the 2007/2016 Ten-Year Energy Expansion Plan, the TAC is also used as a legal instrument during the process of implementing HPPs, to ensure that institutional procedures are accelerated. This process, which concerns the acceleration of procedures related to licensing, is mentioned at the other levels of the procedural evaluation:

[the] stages of study and planning of the supply of electricity, it has been sought to know and minimize impacts, through the investigation of the hydrographic basin and its interaction with the existing and planned HPPs (Inventories and Integrated Environmental Assessment Studies – AAI), as well as [...] **in the feasibility stage when fundamental information is generated to support the preparation of projects and the design of their environmental programs**, within the scope of Environmental Impact Studies (EIA) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (BRASIL, 2010, p. 298, emphasis added).

Even using a base of studies in the feasibility phase, the discourse of the planning of the PDEs states that socio-environmental issues are related to the sustainability category, which, according to the PDE 2020, presents aspects related to "the capacity to support the conservation of the natural resource base, environmental quality, sustained economic development and social justice" (BRASIL, 2011, p. 256). The dissonance present in this

discourse involves several elements, since, by destructuring the historical character of riverine cultures, communities of fishermen, farmers and indigenous populations, whose immaterial value is undeniable, the very sense of social justice is deconstructed.

In addition, the economic development to which the fragment refers is related to the intentionality of the Brazilian government regarding the use of the territory to obtain electricity, since there is a discourse "that the energy produced is considered a common good necessary for the development of society"; however, "the energy is sold to the market, thus benefiting specific groups and, above all, private companies" (Laschefski, 2011, p. 40). In relation to the rupture of territorialities and identities due to the market use of the territory, the concept of "development" does not apply, especially when the change harms the traditional use of the river.

### **THE COLONIAL RATIONALITY OF THE HYDROELECTRIC PLANTS IN AMAPÁ: THE CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN WHAT IS SAID AND WHAT IS LIVED**

The production of the space of the Araguari River used by riverside communities is a fundamental element for the subsistence of a collective of community members related to artisanal hake and plant extractivism. In the Araguari River valley, especially in the portion that comprises the municipalities of Ferreira Gomes, Porto Grande, Cutias and Tartarugalzinho, "the activity with the greatest economic representativeness is family farming, closely linked to the production and extraction of forest products for their own food" (IEPA, 2020, p. 13). In this place, most of the riverside families have native açai trees for family subsistence.

Prior to the implementation of the Cachoeira Caldeirão and Ferreira Gomes and Energia hydroelectric power plants, in the middle course of the Araguari River<sup>5</sup> (part of the municipalities of Ferreira Gomes and Porto Grande), fishing activity contributed greatly to the socioeconomic maintenance of local communities. In these two municipalities, the fishermen's colonies are representatives of the collective social organization of these workers, however, they do not concentrate all the fishermen who also practice artisanal fishing individually for family subsistence.

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<sup>5</sup> The division between lower, middle and upper Araguari is a representation to identify different spaces of the watercourse of the Araguari River basin, which rises in the Tumucumaque mountain range (upper Araguari) and flows into the Atlantic Ocean.

In Ferreira Gomes, there is the Z-7 colony, founded on July 3, 2004, and in Porto Grande, there is the Z-16 colony, founded on March 28, 2002, both registered with the Federation of Fishermen and Aquaculture of the State of Amapá. Dozens of fishermen from the Z-16 colony and part of the local population develop artisanal fishing as a survival mechanism.

Artisanal fishing is, therefore, central to the way of life of these communities, it is not characterized as a productive activity of great impact on the municipal economy, but it is important for the food sovereignty of farmers and urban populations, indispensable for the health of communities. In Porto Grande, for example, fish originating from artisanal activity had a certain destination: "local commerce", as it was sold "on the corners of the city or in wheelbarrows or bicycles" (Lima *et al.*, 2021, p. 12482). In a riverside community on the Araguari River, an INCRA settlement, Fisherwoman B narrated: "we took 80% of our food from the Igarapé and we even drank the water from the Igarapé" (Verbal information)<sup>6</sup>.

In the lower Araguari<sup>7</sup>, in the municipality of Ferreira Gomes, "fishing activity", "extractive activities" and "traditional agriculture" were, in 2014, the source of income for 90 families, approximately 400 people (Silva; Alves; Portilho, 2016, p. 18). In this municipality, the families of the São Tomé community, for example, had their subsistence rooted in the resources that comprised the territory corresponding to the Araguari River.

Communities that lived in the southern part of the Amapá National Forest (FLONA), in stretches that included the Araguari and Falsino rivers, had typically riverine occupations. In them, the subsistence economy was the basis for family income, as these communities developed fishing, hunting and slash-and-burn agriculture, in addition to the frequent production of cassava flour. In the upper and middle Araguari,

The main activity carried out by the residents is agriculture and/or fishing (94%), and there are also cases of people who work as boatmen and caretakers, 3% each. In the case of farmers [...] most plant for their own consumption, with cassava flour being the only product that is usually sold by some residents. The main purpose of fishing is also subsistence [...] (Fernandes, 2014, p. 34-35).

In São Tomé, the main product sold was açaí, with an "estimated average production of 2083.3 kg/year, followed by bacabeira with an average production of fruits estimated at 567.5 kg/year, piquizeiro with an estimated average production of 105 kg/year, andirobeira

<sup>6</sup> Interview conducted with a fisherwoman in the municipality of Porto Grande-AP, on February 18, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> "It is located in the lower portion of the homonymous Basin, at the height of the municipal seat of Ferreira Gomes and extending to the border with the municipality of Cutias do Araguari" (Silva; Alves; Portilho, 2016, p. 18).

with an average production of 40 kg/year and breu with an average production of 30 kg/year." (Santos *et al.*, 2015, p. 45).

The rich diversity of natural resources was fundamental for the social reproduction of its residents and for the feeding of urban populations and other local communities in the municipality. In 2015, "The São Tomé community" was "the second most important in the municipality of Ferreira Gomes with significant extractive production" (SANTOS *et al.*, 2015, p. 42). However, "the extractivists did not present good prospects regarding their future, due to the removal of the community members from their properties by the construction of the Cachoeira Caldeirão Hydroelectric Power Plant" (Santos *et al.*, 2015, p. 45).

The relationship of belonging that these communities build with the place of their ancestry is rooted in a local system of diverse practices, which is the basis for diversified local productive activities, but also that transcend material aspects and represent the sharing of knowledge between generations. The valorization of nature is an essential element that sustains local subsistence systems, such as the productive activities of São Tomé, different from the eminently capitalist mode of production, a model on which hydroelectric plants are based, which aims to use any means, natural resources and people in favor of their self-reproduction. I can infer that perhaps this dissonance represents one of the elements that demonstrates the restlessness of farmers to remain in São Tomé (Santos *et al.*, 2015). The following excerpt, extracted from the RIMA of the Cachoeira Caldeirão plant, reveals this perception pointed out earlier:

The riverside family farmers of the Araguari, who once constituted the totality of the river's inhabitants in the past, are slowly being replaced by other activities. **There is also a population composed mostly of elderly people**, who live in wooden houses, almost always without electricity, and survive from agriculture, animal husbandry, gathering and subsistence fishing (ECOTUMUCUMAQUE, 2011, p. 49, emphasis added).

The attempt to construct a discourse that seeks to devalue local farmers, reducing their importance in the economic scenario and in the production of the territory, expresses not only the reduced understanding of the researchers who prepare the RIMA about the local reality, as explained in the excerpt highlighted above, but is also a reflection of a capitalist logic. For the agents of capital, there is no other form of economy than capitalism, the others should have their forms of existence compelled to capitalist structures, under penalty of extermination. The naturalization of this modern rationality represents this pattern



of power that inserts the experiences of each individual within a colonial and capitalist scenario (Quijano, 2010).

This same imaginary of interpretation of reality was the basis for the elaboration of the Master Plan of the municipalities of Ferreira Gomes and Porto Grande, a document prepared in reference to one of the conditions and to Program 33 of the Basic Environmental Plan (PBA) of the Ferreira Gomes HPP.

The Master Plan establishes that agricultural and livestock land is deficient, considering that the "low productivity of small-sized and individually owned agricultural establishments and the lack of stimulus for the installation of small industries in the municipality, cause a kind of stagnation in economic development" (FERREIRA GOMES, 2013, p. 220). The document relates family farming to a capitalist indicator of measurement – productivity – and associates the reduced implementation of industries with municipal economic obstacles. This ideological manifestation, in reality, translates a Eurocentric thought, which is dissonant from the reality of the place (Mignolo, 2017).

By conceptualizing the municipality's agricultural production as deficient, without carrying out analyses on the daily life of these communities, the RIMA and the city's Master Plan relate a Western concept of development to a heterogeneous reality. Subsistence activities involving family farming indicate human potential in an economy with solidarity characteristics, different from the determinations that capital imposes. However, the construction of the Master Plan corroborates the colonial paradigm of development, which expropriates communities from their way of life and projects subsidies for the advancement of capital.

Even in the face of this mythical interpretation of capitalist production, built on the pretension of being universal, alternative economies, such as subsistence economies, continue to survive and resist attempts at destruction (Lobato, 2021). These alternatives may represent local models of economy, which are different from modern models of capitalist accumulation. Escobar's (2005) analyses of post-development include, precisely, this context of local systems of practices and cultures that are representative of an economy that demonstrates that capitalism is not the only form of market, as classical and liberal economics preaches. Like so

community economies are place-based (even if not place-tied, because they participate in translocal markets), and often maintain a common space consisting of land, material resources, knowledge, ancestors, spirits, etcetera (Gudeman; Rivera, 1990; Gudeman, 1996 *apud* Escobar, 2005, p. 79).

It is in this sense that the Araguari River represents the place of riverside territorialities, the agricultural culture, the survival of the artisanal fisherman and the means to achieve the productive activities of a diversity of local actors. For Fisherwoman A, "there was a fish death and the river was all polluted [...]. And the fish became scarce" (Verbal information).<sup>8</sup> These damages are permanent, the ecological modification caused in the fauna is irreparable, since, consequently, it alters the working condition, according to the report of the same informant (Fisherwoman B): "you put 200 meters of mesh for you to catch 4, 5 fish. Before EDP [Cachoeira Caldeirão HPP] it was wonderful. I could swim, fish, put on mesh and catch fish, nowadays it is not possible to do that" (Verbal information)<sup>9</sup>.

Fishing performed an activity that involved one of the main bases of livelihood of these communities. According to Fisherman C, "there was a lot of abundance [abundance] of fish in the Araguari, I fished a lot of pirarucu with hooks, everyone saw schools of pirarucu in front of the city [Ferreira Gomes], but now you don't see anything, the fish ran out, drying up the river" (Verbal information)<sup>10</sup>.

The devastation of the social and environmental environment of the Araguari River is portrayed in the narrative of the fishermen and farmers. One of the community participants (Fisherman D) reported that, "in the hearings [on the implementation of the HPPs], they said that there would be schools for our children, there will be jobs and many believed it" (Verbal information). In this way, the illusory discourse impregnated in energy planning represents a practice that alters the dynamics of income, as well as the conditions of work and survival. In this scenario, Fisherman D makes the following statement:

I fish today every 15 days and before I was able to fish from Monday to Friday in the Araguari River. Today the fish sold in Ferreira Gomes is almost all from abroad, from Mato Grosso. Before the Ferreira Gomes e Energia plant, there was a school of pirarucu and we fished with a hook, but this no longer exists (Verbal information)<sup>11</sup>.

In a similar statement, a family farmer who also participated in the research narrated related episodes:

I tried to remove the manioc tree that was where I got my livelihood to make flour, but it didn't save anything because the river rose too fast. Now my plants are all in the

<sup>8</sup>Interview conducted with a fisherwoman in the municipality of Ferreira Gomes-AP, in January 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Interview conducted with a fisherwoman in the municipality of Ferreira Gomes-AP, in January 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Interview conducted with a fisherman from the municipality of Ferreira Gomes, in January 2019.

<sup>11</sup>Interview conducted with a fisherman from the municipality of Ferreira Gomes, in January 2019.

background there... A lot of lemons, a lot, the lemons are falling. It's desperate, I cried, I cried, this has never happened to us (Verbal information)<sup>12</sup>.

The scenario of perpetuation of damage and complete destructuring of the local economy of artisanal fishermen and forms of survival is not an element included in the mitigation and compensation measures. In the mold of the colonial rationality that planned the expansion of energy and the Master Plan of Ferreira Gomes, instead of valuing the economy of the place, as Escobar (2005) proposes, there is a discourse of monetization of culture and way of life, as if they represented challenges to be overcome.

These changes in living conditions and the socio-environmental destructuring caused by the HPPs were identified in some studies carried out in Amapá (Silva; File; Marinho, 2018; Corrêa, 2018; Lobato, 2021), which mention the impact of the impacts caused by the current hydroelectric projects in Araguari. The studies portrayed social, territorial and economic changes for the population directly affected by the dams. Corrêa (2018) carried out significant work regarding the exhibition of documentary elements, regarding the Araguari hydroelectric complex.

The use of the Araguari River as a commodity by hydroelectric plants gives rise to a set of actions contrary to these interests. Local resistance was constituted as a collective organization (Figure 1) after the continuation of socio-environmental disasters and the violation of the rights of the affected population. In addition, they demonstrated a strategic and political effort to destabilize the colonial hegemony that hydroelectric dams represent:

Figure 1 – Demonstration of fishermen and farmers affected by the Cachoeira Caldeirão HPP in front of the Forum of the Municipality of Porto Grande, Amapá (2021)



Source: Lobato, 2021, p. 246.

During the public act, the demonstrators demanded, since the period of four years had already elapsed, a judicial response on the continuation of the death of fish in the

<sup>12</sup>Interview conducted with a riverside farmer in the municipality of Porto Grande, in April 2022.

Araguari River; in addition, they denounced the lack of compliance with the TACs, signed in the case of the fish mortality attributed to Ferreira Gomes e Energia, given that, after the Environmental Inspection Report No. 01/2015 (IMAP, 2015), the institute issued a notice of infraction against this HPP for causing damage to the environment, which culminated in the death of aquatic fauna.

After this action, nine hearings followed between representatives of the Public Prosecutor's Office and those responsible for the plant, with the purpose of drawing up a list naming the affected fishermen. However, "after delivering the list in the manner required by the company, it deceived them about the payment in monthly indemnity, as well as this Park that at all times trusted the word of its representatives" (MPAP, 2016, p. 3).

In view of the above, it can be seen that the TACs actually represent the flexibility of licensing, used as an instrument for groups with private interests to organize a whole set of strategies and legal artifices to not comply with the regulations established by inspection agencies, as well as the conditions.

Mitigation and compensation measures, as instruments of Environmental Policy, in fact, reinforce the persistence of social damage, even in the face of the establishment of conditions. This context reflects the Eurocentric thought, of fixing an imaginary of superiority in relation to hydroelectric plants, engendered through the myth of modernity and development present in the PDEs, which denies the valorization of local knowledge in the name of this modern and totalitarian rationality, which is the foundation for the implementation of hydroelectric plants.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The discourse impregnated in each ten-year plan for energy expansion, with regard to mitigation and compensation measures, represents a colonial paradigm that aims to monetize historical, cultural, environmental and social losses and losses. The scales of analysis of the PDEs, between the political-economic aspects and the socio-environmental (national) studies, present an abyssal zone of difference when considering the unequal distribution of (local) risks that hydroelectric plants cause.

The discourse that the State uses in the PDEs argues that the plants could bring quality of life and well-being to the population. However, when the case of Amapá is analyzed, it is found that local communities accumulate the damage caused by these plants and are forced to live with the Western meanings attributed to mitigation and compensation.

Hydroelectric dams, in this context, do not deny their civilizing project based on a colonial and capitalist modernity and, judging by the actions they undertake, they reinforce that, once they have obtained the legal right to use natural resources for their interests, they hide, as much as possible, the rights of the affected communities.

The use of natural resources by HPPs and the dispossession inherent to this exploitation are legitimized through practices that involve power relations distributed in a network of political and legal arrangements. In this context, the interests of polluting agents are maintained, while reinforcing exclusionary impositions of the community's access to the symbolic and material use of the Araguari River.

Riverside populations have built their way of life over generations, adapting to nature, seeking balance with their environment and seeking to conserve the natural resources that sustain them. They know the dynamics of the rivers and the forest through detailed observations that have built knowledge accumulated and transmitted by generations and being a representation of the heritage of the original peoples. Capitalism in this region manifests itself first, materially, through the construction of large works such as dams that disrupt the flow of water and sediments, block the migration of fish, thus destroying the balance and, consequently, destroying the relationship skillfully established by traditional populations with their environment for centuries. In addition, capitalism denies the value of the knowledge transmitted about the environment, its dynamics, its fragility and the resources it provides, altering natural cycles and polluting the environment. Capitalism pushes the new generations to enter a mercantile system, to buy food that they can no longer produce, to alienate themselves, losing the knowledge that their ancestors developed.

At this juncture, the consolidated and permanent struggle continues to represent a possibility of emancipation in the face of the destructive capacity of the colonial project that hydroelectric dams represent. The sustainable use of resources and an ecologically balanced environment are not associated with the concealment of damage to the environment or an increase in social inequalities. The perspective here is to deconstruct a modern paradigm that associates the concept of mitigation and compensation with mere bureaucratic connotation to meet geopolitical agreements on the use of natural resources. Insurgencies are needed regarding the risks that the State and private actors assume when implementing historically excluding enterprises.

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