

“PAPER METROPOLISES” IN AMAZONIA: LEFEBVRIAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE IN MACAPÁ-SANTANA, BRAZIL

Romário Valente Santos*

Gabriel Villas Boas de Amorim Lima**,***

José Júlio Ferreira Lima**,****

*Universidade Federal do Pará, Programa de Pós-graduação em Geografia, Belém, PA, Brazil.

**Universidade Federal do Pará, Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo, Belém, PA, Brazil.

***Universidade Federal do Pará, Programa de Pós-graduação em Engenharia Civil, Belém, PA, Brazil.

****Universidade Federal do Pará, Programa de Pós-graduação em Arquitetura e Urbanismo, Belém, PA, Brazil.

Abstract

“Paper metropolises” are urban centers in established metropolitan regions that present no functionalities of a metropolis, in terms of political, economic, and social influence, as well as the flow of information, capital, and people. Thus, this study has sought to understand the conception, perception, and experience of a “paper metropolis” located in the Brazilian Amazon based on Henri Lefebvre’s understanding of the production of urban space. Using a historiographical approach, and a literature and documentary review, it was possible to understand that the conceived space is essentially the result of joint actions among political and economic actors that prioritize the institutionalization of space rather than its production, thereby reflecting the lack of perception and experience of the population in relation to metropolitan space. Thus, particular intra-urban dynamics transform the metropolitan spaces into a product that does not necessarily fit into Lefebvrian theory, creating new horizons for apprehending the socio-spatial production of what constitutes paper metropolises.

Keywords

Regional Planning; Regional Development; Metropolitan Areas.

“METRÓPOLES DE PAPEL” NA AMAZÔNIA: HORIZONTES LEFEBVRIANOS NA PRODUÇÃO DO ESPAÇO EM MACAPÁ-SANTANA, BRASIL

Romário Valente Santos*

Gabriel Villas Boas de Amorim Lima^{**,**}

José Júlio Ferreira Lima^{***,****}

*Universidade Federal do Pará, Programa de Pós-graduação em Geografia, Belém, PA, Brasil.

**Universidade Federal do Pará, Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo, Belém, PA, Brasil.

***Universidade Federal do Pará, Programa de Pós-graduação em Engenharia Civil, Belém, PA, Brasil.

****Universidade Federal do Pará, Programa de Pós-graduação em Arquitetura e Urbanismo, Belém, PA, Brasil.

Resumo

“Metrópoles de papel” são centros urbanos de regiões metropolitanas institucionalizadas que não apresentam funcionalidades de uma metrópole, tais como influências político-econômicas e sociais, além do tráfego de informações, capital e pessoas. Assim, este estudo buscou compreender a concepção, a percepção e a vivência de uma “metrópole de papel” localizada na Amazônia brasileira com base no entendimento da produção do espaço urbano de Henri Lefebvre. Utilizando uma abordagem historiográfica, análises de recursos bibliográficos e documentais possibilitaram apreender que o espaço concebido é fruto essencialmente de ações conjuntas entre agentes políticos e econômicos que priorizaram a institucionalização do espaço em vez de sua produção, repercutindo na ausência de percepção e vivência por parte da população com relação ao espaço metropolitano. Por conseguinte, dinâmicas intraurbanas peculiares tornam a produção dos espaços metropolitanos um produto que não necessariamente se encaixa na teoria lefebvriana, criando novos horizontes para a apreensão da produção socioespacial do que se constituem as metrópoles de papel.

Palavras-chave

Planejamento Regional; Desenvolvimento Regional; Áreas Metropolitanas.

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Introduction

Terminological differences between “urban agglomeration” and “metropolitan region” go beyond the political-institutional aspect, inducing characteristic socio-spatial occurrences. Thus, urban agglomeration is understood as a link between municipalities that presents processes of spatial continuity – i.e., interdependent socio-spatial relationships – and, ultimately, territorial – through conurbation (MIYAZAKI, 2010). On the other hand, a metropolitan region (MR) demarcates a regional unit that groups together neighboring municipalities with the objective of integrating public policies of common interest, presupposing a coordinated action in the political-administrative sphere (BRASIL, 2015). According to Fresca (2011), a MR implies the existence of a metropolis, a city that has political and socioeconomic relevance and influence on either a national or a regional level.

A metropolis presents metropolitan functionalities as a fundamental condition of its existence, centralizing actions and coalitions internally (within its institutional limits) and externally – through its influence over other cities. Therefore, MRs, in addition to inter-municipal political-institutional regulation, must present socioeconomic, cultural and ideological dynamics that enable them to create metropolitan functionalities, which is what truly makes them metropolises. That said, the existence of a metropolis should precede the creation of a metropolitan region, and not the other way round. However, it may be noted that the formation of MRs is strongly articulated by political actions that eventually diverge from the real

manifestations and scales of the metropolization of space, resulting in the creation of MRs that are disarticulated from a possible metropolitan context (LENCIONI, 2004). Studies on metropolitan regions have indicated that disarticulation may be observed from the fiscal performance dependent on the municipal performance (GARSON; RIBEIRO; RIBEIRO, 2010) through to identifying discrepancies between political aspects and the spatialization of the MRs (MANSUR, 2013).

Cunha (2005) used the expression “paper metropolis” to designate the mystification of the dominant urban center of a given MR as something equivalent to a metropolis, when it does not have the necessary metropolitan features to be considered as such. The effects of the paper metropolis appear in the political-institutional field due to the lack of an operationalization of inter-municipal systems and in the popular imagery, which disconnects intra-urban dynamics from the theoretical constitution of space.

In this regard, adopting a reading according to what Lefebvre (1991) discussed concerning moments in the production of urban space becomes essential in order to understand how paper metropolises present themselves within a pseudo-metropolitan context. For the French philosopher (1991), the urban extrapolates the idea of a built environment in which social relations occur and, for this reason, it simultaneously becomes the form and content of the different socio-spatial dynamics established within that temporality. Thus, urban space is both material (insofar as it is present, with concrete manifestations) and virtual (while as a possibility, with inevitable transformations) –, and is transmuted into coexisting, and eventually, conflicting readings on the spaces conceived, perceived and lived (LEARY, 2015). The conceived space is formal, rigid, and planned by technocrats (politicians, architects, engineers), built through discourses and representations of reality. This is the space for laws, municipal master plans, zoning, etc. The perceived space is that which represents the logic that each social relationship imprints onto the urban environment, i.e., the way in which each individual sees the functionalities, uses and relationships that the city may provide, indicating how society views the urban and itself. Lastly, the lived space demonstrates everyday life, the sovereignty of reality in relation to that which is programmed, and constitutes the most tangible manifestation of urban space.

Considering this approach, the lack of an investigation into the phenomenon of producing the “paper” metropolitan space according to the Lefebvrian perspective demonstrates a perceivable research gap. In order to fill this gap, the aim of the present study has been to understand how the processes of conception, perception

and experience of a “paper metropolis” occur, together with its intentions and implications arising from a systematic analysis based on cause and effect relationships. The research question involves investigating how these different processes are articulated, and indicates the existing dynamics in a concrete case of a “paper metropolis”. In order to answer this, the Metropolitan Region of Macapá (MRM), located in the state of Amapá, in the northern region of the Brazilian Amazon, was used as a case study. Despite the evidence of its constitution as an MR, it fits into what was proposed by Becker (1966; 2004) when he stated that analyzing the production of urban space in Amazonia is a significant challenge, because its processes of urbanization have become disarticulated from the conventional cycles of other Brazilian regions, which therefore makes it unique.

1. Case study

Established by State Complementary Law No. 21, on February 26, 2003 (AMAPÁ, 2003), the MRM (Figure 1) covers the cities of Macapá (state capital), Santana and Mazagão, with an estimated population of 658,051, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2020a). In a comparison with other MRs, the MRM presents the 42nd (of 49) metropolitan economy, of R\$ 12.149 billion (IBGE, 2017), and the 19th (of 20) Municipal Human Development Index (MHDI) – of 0.746, according to the Institute of Economic and Applied Research (IPEA, 2019). When examined individually, Mazagão reveals a latent socioeconomic and socio-environmental discrepancy in relation to Macapá-Santana. From the socioeconomic perspective, it is indicated that the municipality of Mazagão has the lowest degree of labor formalization (12.26% of the population aged 18 years and over has a formal work contract), against 37.41% and 35.12% of Macapá and Santana, respectively. From the socio-environmental perspective, only 62.42% of the population is served by piped water, while Macapá and Santana have a coverage of 95.07% and 92.5% respectively (IPEA, 2010).

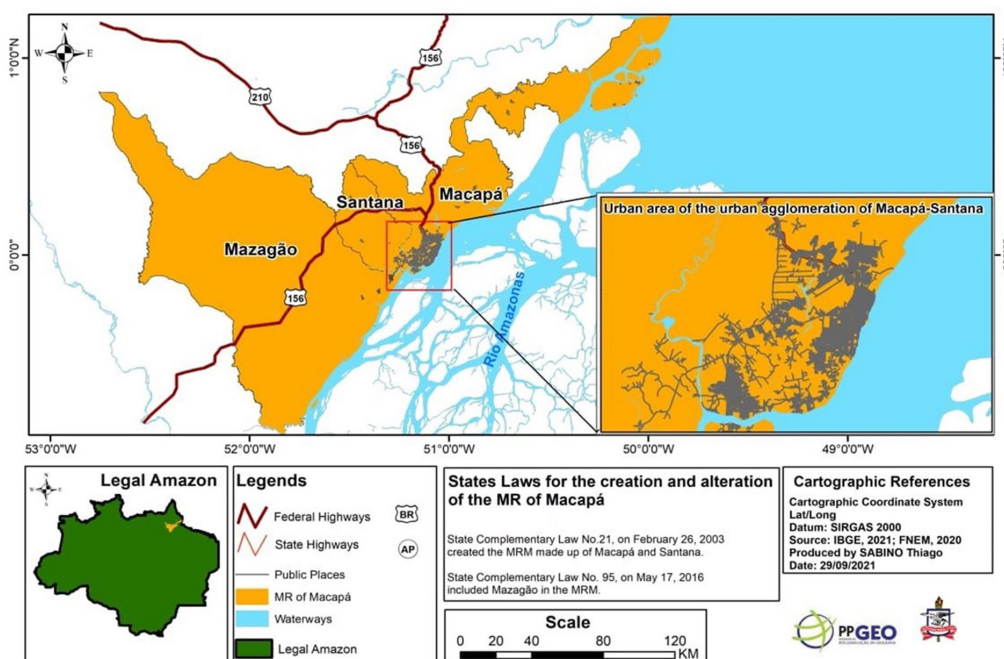


Figure 1. Macapá-Santana urban agglomeration and the Metropolitan Region of Macapá (MRM)

Source: Own elaboration (2022).

Despite being constituted as an MR, this urban area has no functional characteristics that can validate the metropolization attributed to it, as highlighted by Santos (2012a). Therefore, this study will treat the MRM as synonymous with the expression Macapá-Santana, which is believed to be the most pertinent denomination. It is important to pay attention to the differences in the use of the terms “Macapá and Santana” and “Macapá-Santana”, which have different semantic explanations, whereby the first considers these municipalities as isolated urban centers and the second goes back to an aspect of urban agglomeration (SANTOS, 2012b).

2. Method

The present research, classified as qualitative, has made use of historiography, which, as a method, is able to counteract the collection built by exogenous sources in the Amazon and its urban expression, and has also relied on the examination of local authors who have addressed the relationship between urban expressions and a review of themes on the Amazonian frontier as well as the socio-territorial and political dynamics and expressions of the region (MARIN, 2005; TRINDADE JR., 2000; VELOSO; TRINDADE JR., 2014). The procedures involved a literature and

documentary review with municipal and state urban and regional development agencies, the IBGE and IPEA electronic databases, in addition to digital collections of periodicals, dissertations and theses, selected by reading keywords identified in databases referenced with studies on the development of the MRM and the theme of “paper metropolises”. The number of studies, still considerably small, comprised four doctoral theses and eight articles in periodicals in which Macapá is analyzed, both in isolation and from the perspective of the metropolitan formations of Belém, Manaus, São Luís and Marabá. The crossing of information from different sources made it possible to establish and converge correspondences in a systemic analysis of the Lefebvrian-inspired geographical area. For Leary (2015), studies based on Lefebvrian theory are observational, investigative of concrete reality and historical analysis. This type of study does not seek to obtain a status of totality, not even of synthesis and finitude, but rather of distinguishing the elements, moments and factors. Thus, a study with Lefebvrian horizons aims to reconnect elements that have previously been dissociated and to replace confusion with clear definitions, to gather together what has become separated and reanalyze the mixture.

3. Results and discussions

This section has been structured into three discussion moments. The first is focused on the discussion of the socio-spatial formation of Macapá-Santana, i.e., a reading of the socio-spatial trajectory articulated between the two cities that, according to Santos (2012b), present a common socio-spatial formation. The second moment discusses the veracity of the metropolitan character and the possible effects that this metropolitan conformation implies for socio-spatial relations. Lastly, the third moment proposes a reflection on the possibility of considering the Macapá-Santana spatial complex as a real metropolis, surpassing the political-institutional character and also transmuting into metropolitan functionalities.

3.1 The conception of the Macapá-Santana paper metropolis and the Amapá dream of metropolization

Macapá and Santana are the most important cities in the sub-region of the Septentrional Amapá Amazon (SAA), defined by Santos (2012a) as a spatial ensemble formed by the state of Amapá and territorial portions of the state of Pará and French Guiana. Strategically located at the mouth of the Amazon River, Macapá and Santana present strategic socioeconomic dynamics for the productive articulation of SAA, connecting it with other national and international regions through the role of spatial mediation. From a productive perspective, the region depends on the mineral extraction of manganese at Serra do Navio, gold from

Calçoene and iron ore from Pedra Branca do Amapari, responsible for 65% of the state's exports (AGÊNCIA AMAPÁ, 2020). In addition, the tertiary sector has achieved significant economic advances due to the growing flow of goods (SANTOS, 2012b). From a logistical viewpoint, there are links both through the Alberto Alcolumbre International Airport, in Macapá, and through the port complex of Santana, formed by the port of Companhia Docas de Santana (CDSA), by the port of the mining company Indústria e Comércio de Minérios S.A. (Icomi), Porto do Grego and Porto Souzamar, as well as smaller ports, which connect Macapá-Santana to SAA sub-centers. This shared logistics configuration serves the SAA as a veritable hub for distributing products and for moving people around. Concentrating 70% of the population of the state, the urban agglomeration of Macapá-Santana has suffered a marked urban macrocephaly, when verifying the collapse of its urban services and the inefficient provision of basic resources for its citizens, such as housing, sanitation, health, and security – sharing the collateral ills of economic growth between adjacent cities (SANTOS, 2011; 2012a; 2012b).

One factor that has potentiated this intra-urban restructuring is related to the implementation of the Macapá and Santana Free Trade Area, known as the ALCMS. Created by Federal Law No. 8.387/1991 (Art. 11) (BRASIL, 1991) and implemented in March 1993, the ALCMS was constituted as one of the main attractions for investments in urban infrastructure in Macapá-Santana, for which, at that stage, growing expectations of job creation were observed and, consequently, of socio-spatial concentration. However, the ALCMS did not experience full economic freedom, since it was subordinate to the Superintendence of the Manaus Free Trade Zone (Suframa). Although logistically linked, Macapá and Santana still presented differences in the political sphere due to fiscal disputes over leasing land to large companies and discrepancies in inter-municipal agreements, necessary for solving problems previously contained within municipal limits – such as public transport and solid waste collection (SANTOS, 2012a). Thus, justifications involving institutional cooperation on the inter-municipal level potentialized the formation of the MRM (AMAPÁ, 2003), made up of Macapá and Santana, in addition to Mazagão, included in 2016. However, due to difficulties in defining the political and administrative attributions and conformations of each municipality in a possible metropolitan management, the MRM was only made official in 2018 by the State Government of Amapá, through State Complementary Law No. 112 (AMAPÁ, 2018), thereby indicating that the regulatory process of this MR is somewhat recent.

Based on this symbiotic construction, it was foreseeable that Macapá and Santana would eventually become a metropolitan region, due to the growing, interdependent networks and flows of capital and people established throughout

their constitution, especially in the post-state period. However, based on the concepts of Fresca (2011) and the Metropolis Statute – MS (BRASIL, 2015), was this the moment for Macapá and Santana to effectively become a MR? Or would this be a reverse attempt to encourage the development of metropolitan functionalities resulting from the institutionalization of the MRM? To clarify this, it is necessary to turn attention to the agents involved in the moments of space production and in their perspectives on the metropolization of Macapá-Santana. It is at this point that the semantic differentiation between the terms “urban space” and “metropolitan space” becomes relevant, since it demonstrates that the first implies socio-spatial dynamics established in a common mesh, both generalized and specific to a municipality, while the second reflects the sharing of spaces (physical and symbolic), previously distinct, today symbiotic.

Lefebvrian horizons (LEFEBVRE, 1991) enable the expressive conflicts and the prevalence of political-economic agents in the constitution of the metropolitan space to be identified, resulting in discrepant articulations between the conception, perception and experience of the Amapá metropolis. Strongly driven by political and economic concerns, the formation of the MRM was conceived, discussed and instituted by the local political class and by those holding the capital in the economic circuits of mining and plant extractivism. For these agents, the formalization of a metropolis substantiated the jurisdictional and symbolic freedom of Macapá-Santana from centers of direct influence, such as Manaus and Belém. This concept artificially encouraged the development of metropolitan functionalities specific to the region, such as instituting integrated physical infrastructure, obtaining greater control over the management of investments and exploitation of resources, enabling negotiation without regional intermediaries, as well as hegemony in the dissemination of values and socioeconomic and cultural dependencies of ASA sub-regions in relation to Macapá-Santana, thereby consolidating its area of influence and domination (PORTO, 2018; SANTOS, 2012a).

Amaral (2010) reported the economic dynamics and the position of Marabá and Macapá as medium-sized cities and their relative positions in relation to the metropolis Belém. For the purposes of the study on the Macapá metropolis, the obstacles in order for Marabá to become a metropolitan region deserve special mention. A bill with this purpose was approved in 2013. Although it is not the object of comparative analysis in this work, Marabá presents similar issues in a different context when compared to those of Macapá. Despite the fact that the proposed bill for instituting the Metropolitan Region of Marabá has not been approved by the State Government, much like other municipal seats in the Amazon that do not

present conurbation or the possibility of common policies, social actors demanded that the formalization be undertaken, at least “on paper”.

Other studies on the Metropolitan Region of Manaus have demonstrated that, since it was defined, a consequence of political interests, it has not been configured as a component of an economic development policy on a metropolitan level (LIMA, 2010; 2014). Reasons for this may be discovered in the very configuration of Suframa, defined in the 1960s by Decree No. 61,244, on August 28, 1967 (BRASIL, 1967). Despite the high number of urban jobs, the Amazonian hinterland marked by the Amazon biome does not configure continuous urban growth. These points are presented by Tiago Veloso dos Santos (2017), when comparing Belém and Manaus, and by Sousa and Santos (2021), when bringing São Luís into the discussion.

However, perhaps the plans that indicated the accelerated metropolization of Macapá-Santana were too ambitious. Despite the fact that the MRM has relative autonomy in terms of the plans for marketing and exporting mining products, the flow of which is operated directly by foreign companies located in Amapá, the region still has substantial dependence on the flows of communication, people and goods from the consolidated Amazonian metropolises – Manaus and Belém. In terms of tertiary circulation, Macapá-Santana presents a dynamic similar to that of the medium regional centers of the states of Amazonas and Pará, responsible for receiving and distributing flows from the metropolises to the subcenters and more distant locations. It is possible to note, therefore, that the socio-spatial dynamics established in Macapá-Santana acquire intra-urban characteristics, as if the municipalities functioned as one (SANTOS, 2012b). This consideration distances the perception of metropolitan flows, which reveal a socio-spatial centrality with unbalanced displacements of people and capital between municipalities, in a kind of interurban functional hierarchy, a characteristic not so clearly present in the reality of Amapá (PORTO, 2018).

Thus, a paradoxical conformation is expressively identified in the lived space. Although Macapá and Santana have evident, interdependent socioeconomic articulations, institutional integration is still incipient in terms of urban and territorial development, thereby restricting the metropolitan constitution to that of an economic character. This perspective may be confirmed by demonstrating the disarticulations in the planning of technical networks of public transport and sanitation and the lack of transversal assistance policies, resulting in an arduous, if not impossible, inter-municipal operational compatibility. At this conjuncture, Macapá-Santana presents curious intra-urban dynamics that both resist and confront obstacles indirectly motivated by the municipal public authorities themselves, when they do not provide conditions that facilitate inter-municipal

integration at a physical-territorial level. Despite there being an economic and productive interdependence, the physical flows involving the population are not prioritized, highlighting a process of selective functional integration.

In the perceived space, these conflicts acquire greater complexity due to the relativization of the metropolitan space. The symbiotic formation of Macapá-Santana creates a bias toward the common perception of a structured articulation, which results from an intrinsic ideology of cultural symbiosis. Along this spectrum, the population perceives Macapá-Santana as a common urban space, inseparable and indivisible, based on the historical framework present within the imagery. With regard to economic agents, the development of Macapá-Santana is understood as a single process and not as an inter-municipal articulation. In this context, the discordant perception is observed by political agents who seek not only to conceive, but also to build a symbology of the MRM, which supposedly carries metropolitan functionalities with it, in order to increase the area of political influence of these municipalities. All these conformations corroborate for the Macapá-Santana region to ultimately become a “paper metropolis” in Amazonia, the result of an essentially political expectation, while economic and social agents understand it as an urban agglomeration.

3.2 Life and death of the “paper metropolis”: who does the Amapá metropolitan ideal serve?

In theory, the formation of an MR is a political response to factors related to the development of a metropolitan space. Consequently, an increase in the number of MRs would denote the growth of regions where different municipalities view themselves in conurbation with a metropolis. However, a substantial number of these regions do not have this metropolitan configuration, and their institutions are nothing more than a “paper metropolis” (FIRKOWSKI, 2012; CORDEIRO, 2019). This conception of a theoretically integrated space comes from the Brazilian Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988), which provided federative entities with the possibility of creating their own MRs based on their local particularities, as long as they obeyed three requirements: (i) that the MR was created as a result of a State Complementary Law; (ii) that the MR was formed by grouping neighboring municipalities and; (iii) that the MR is created with the objective of integrating the organization, planning and execution of public functions of common interest. Thus, the formation of an MR implies that attracting federal resources is facilitated for promoting regional development policies. This condition made the metropolitan ideal an avid, voracious goal to be achieved, especially by medium-sized non-metropolitanized cities.

Since then, a “metropolitan outbreak” has extrapolated the areas of the main Brazilian capitals, manifesting itself in regional capitals and in clusters of medium-sized cities, jumping from nine (1974) to 29 (2003) MRs – an increase of 322%, which Cordeiro (2019) entitled the “banalization of metropolitan regions”. At the same time, Cunha (2005) had already identified in Londrina (PR) the political Manichaeism behind the formation of paper metropolises in a coercive attempt to achieve the functional independence of effectively metropolitan regions. According to Firkowski (2012), this banalization was so expressive that, between 1998 and 2011, more than half the territory of the state of Paraná was made up of MRs. For the political class, metropolitan functionalities may be artificially created in the face of a political-institutional rupture with MRs of historical socioeconomic and functional dependence. In 2016, Brazil had 76 MRs, a number that reveals the exacerbation of the metropolitan outbreak and the banalization of these regions. In an attempt to define a legal framework for metropolitan initiatives, the Metropolis Statute – MS (BRASIL, 2015) was instituted to regulate, define and classify new MRs, with a view to avoiding the banalization of the phenomenon by including socio-spatial, socio-economic and socio-cultural criteria of inter-municipal conformations, so as to then establish the political-institutional character of each regionalized cross-section.

The subject in the studies of Amazonian metropolises was addressed by Veloso and Trindade Jr. (2014) regarding the imperative that metropolization in Amazonia is subject to intra-regional dynamics. For these authors, the formation of the urban network and of the Amazonian metropolitan centers abides by external, categorical commands, which reverberate both in internal dynamics and in regional socio-spatial processes, in order to contradictorily influence the inherited socio-spatial formations. Hence the importance of the Macapá-Santana case study as evidence that a metropolitan formation has been inserted into the dynamics of this nature.

According to the study of the Region of Influence of Cities – Regic (IBGE, 2020a), the Population Arrangement of Macapá – composed of Macapá, Santana and Mazagão – is considered Regional Capital C, i.e., an urban center with a high concentration of management activities, but with a smaller outreach in terms of being a region of influence compared to the metropolis. This is plausible when it is identified that although all the legal and administrative activities in the state of Amapá are concentrated in Macapá, it is still dependent on the socioeconomic and sociocultural influence of metropolises such as Belém and Manaus. This condition breaks with the credibility of the paper metropolis of Amapá due to the following question: *Ceteris paribus*, would they have the conditions to be able to sustain, in the medium and long term, the artificial aspect of a metropolis? Could this be

the death of the paper metropolis in Amapá? As suggested by Cordeiro (2019), the effect is likely to be the opposite. When analyzing the MRs in the state of Maranhão (MA) – São Luís (Regional Capital A) and Imperatriz (Regional Capital C) –, the author observed that these cities interact sufficiently with nearby municipalities to form population agglomerations without presenting a continuous urban sprawl, thereby contradicting the notion of territorial continuity of the MS (BRASIL, 2015). This is due to the creation of prominent socioeconomic relationships, although not sufficiently expressive to be characterized as metropolitan functionalities, such as the presence of commuting or the integration of urban services. Despite this, the State Government of Maranhão is studying the possibility of incorporating such municipalities into the respective MRs, in an attempt to substantiate a network of influence of paper metropolises.

If, on the one hand, the MS (BRASIL, 2015) was also instituted to control the creation of MRs, the loophole that it created has enabled entities to regulate and adapt their own MRs according to ultimately subjective criteria, thereby rendering the implementation of the MS questionable (CORDEIRO, 2019; PORTO, 2018; SANTOS, 2012b). As a direct consequence, the death of the paper metropolises is transformed into their most substantial birth, within a panorama of difficult intergovernmental regulation. Thus, the provisions of Cunha (2005) and Cordeiro (2019) seem to be proven in the MR of Amapá, either by the inclusion of Mazagão in 2016 or by the attempt to increase the territorial expansion of the ALCMS (SENADO FEDERAL, 2016), factors that explain a political attempt to maintain the current paper metropolis. However, the emergence of metropolitan functionalities corresponds to internal (infrastructure, inter-municipal cooperation) and external (macro-regional influence) restructuring, as yet unexperienced by Macapá-Santana, which is dependent on Manaus and Belém.

For Porto (2018), Macapá-Santana exerts influence over other municipalities in Amapá and over Marajó municipalities, an insular territory of Pará. Its urban agglomeration functionally plays the role of distributing flows from regional (Belém and Manaus) and national (São Paulo and Brasília) metropolises to other locations in the ASA region. However, these financial, commercial and cultural flows are not generated by the dynamics established in the Macapá intra-urban space: they do not, therefore, have a metropolitan functionality. This configuration acquires peculiar aspects when introducing Lefebvrian horizons into the analysis. In the conception of the MRM, political agents apparently obtain advantages in defining the metropolitan aspects that should be prioritized. Lefebvre (1991) indicated that, although there is a dominant class at a given moment in the production of space, it is unable to mold it perfectly to its logic and pretension, which makes it a

metropolitan conformation resulting from the conflicts of interest of the different agents involved. Thus, even though it was fundamentally promoted by political agents, the conception of the Amapá metropolis only became possible through the corroboration of economic agents, conglomerates that exploit natural resources, and the coercive omission of social agents. According to the law establishing the MRM (AMAPÁ, 2018), popular participation in the deliberations of the metropolitan council is negligible: with only one seat among the designated twelve. This makes it clear that the conception, regulation and management of the MMR consists of a process that is significantly more political-economic than social.

Furthermore, the relationship between the political and economic agents in the constitution of the paper metropolis of Amapá is codependent, i.e., without the positioning of economic agents, it would be difficult for the political class to successfully establish the formation of the MRM, due to its impossibilities of the interregional political influence. Part of the omission of social agents in the conception of the metropolitan space reveals a more complex genesis, linked to the perception and experience of the urban space of Amapá. In the view of Santos (2012a), the construction of the metropolitan ideal was (and still is) a distant reality in the imagery and daily life of the population, since both differ from the reality they experience in two aspects. The first permeates the strong dependence of Macapá-Santana in relation to Belém and Manaus, from where the population acquires financial, informational, material and human resources, inflicting on them a strong sense of still belonging to a network of dependence external to the MRM.

The second aspect encompasses the non-recognition of a metropolitan network in the Macapá-Santana conformation itself, which, within a common understanding, does not characterize municipalities that are part of a common nucleus, even though they are part of one. This is due to the local consensus that intra-urban flows and displacements are relatively homogeneous, without the existence of substantial centralities capable of explaining the prevalence of one municipality over another (SANTOS, 2012a). This perception comes from the very conception of municipalities, which have always performed complementary functions on a shared intra-urban scale (SANTOS, 2012b). However, the lived space presents socio-spatial contradictions, considering that this articulation was not always apparent. This indicates that the intentions behind forming the MRM were more political-economic than related to socio-spatial development. The incremental improvement of physical integration through road axes and the implementation of scarce integrated public transport networks marks specific interventions in the territorial perspective.

If, from this perspective, social agents do not understand the effectuation of the MRM, since they have not been prioritized, economic agents will benefit from this political-social duality. While political agents conceive and encourage the perception of a metropolitan abstraction, social agents are excluded from its conception and, for sociocultural reasons, induced not to perceive the metropolization of space. This conformation helps economic agents to maximize the exploitation of local natural resources, since metropolitan policies are directed toward the development of logistical networks, encouraging the production and reproduction of capital. Thus, there is a latent economic interest in metropolizing functionalities associated with tax flexibility and improving the logistics network, expanding its area of influence to interregional levels. Seeing an opportunity in the MRM to reduce their production costs, economic agents negotiate tax incentives on an inter-municipal scale and reduce socio-environmental pressures on their projects, since the participation of civil society in metropolitan decisions is reduced (PORTO, 2018).

Box 1, below, summarizes the Lefebvrian horizons of each agent involved. Within the context of Amapá, the political-economic order is prioritized over socio-spatial dynamics, restricting them to disjointed municipal public policies. This results in distinct perceptions and experiences of the metropolitan space of the RMM, an essentially institutional product. In practice, this omission intensifies the absence of possibilities for integrated urban development, which could generate direct social benefits.

Agents	Conceived space	Perceived space	Lived space
Political	Direct the principles of MRM and meet the economic requirements of transnational economic agents.	Increase the scope of political influence on an inter-municipal scale.	Receive resources from the Union (related to the RMM) and from economic actors (related to proportional productive growth).
Economic	Indirectly foster and review the MRM principles.	Increase the scope of economic influence on a macro-regional scale.	Obtain competitive advantages (cost reduction, logistics, incentives).
Social	Regularly consulted. No institutional power to veto legal principles.	Does not view itself as part of metropolization (culturally and economically dependent).	Difficulty in everyday physical integration, with resistant intra-urban dynamics.

Box 1. Perspectives, objectives and roles of the different agents in the production of space in the metropolis in Amapá

Source: Own elaboration (2022).

3.3 From the urban to the metropolitan: possibilities for effectuating metropolization in Amapá

The banalization of MRs and the idealization of paper metropolises resulted in a distorted understanding that spaces are only urban, which are effectively metropolitan. From a systemic viewpoint, several authors understand that every metropolitan space is urban, presupposing the existence of intra-urban dynamics that dialogue simultaneously in complex flows (CUNHA, 2005; FIRKOWSKI, 2012; FRESCA, 2011; PORTO, 2018; SANTOS, 2012a). These flows (of capital, goods, people, information) occur within an integrated, linked territorial mesh – the metropolitan area, designed to make intra-urban dynamics possible on a scale that is independent of municipal boundaries (VILLAÇA, 2001). This integration may occur both from a structural perspective, through integrated road axes and joint sanitation systems, and operationally, through metropolitan public transport, integrated basic healthcare, security and education services. The starting point for this must be integrated inter-municipal coordination, an essential process in constructing the metropolitan space.

However, the conformation of Macapá-Santana distances itself from this fully integrated conception, rendering the perception and experience of the MRM an abstract exercise. It is not a case for stating that Macapá and Santana do not experience shared intra-urban dynamics, but rather that these socio-spatial relationships are hampered by the absence of physically-territorially and operationally effectuating the metropolization proposed by the MRM. Although the growing real estate and tertiary circuit has boosted local activities, intra-urban dynamics are still economically insignificant: they cover only 20% of the source of municipal revenue (IBGE, 2020b). This reinforces the reason that metropolitan actions do not articulate these economic activities with the same vigor as primary and secondary activities, which results in conformations that are more political-institutional than socio-spatial. Within this context, interventions aimed at structuring an integrated territorial mesh are incremental, with territorially fragmented urban services. An example of this is the lack of synchrony between the integration actions of Macapá-Santana and Mazagão, recently included in the MRM in 2016.

Interventions aimed at the use of the population, such as the integration of public transport between Mazagão and Macapá-Santana, inaugurated only in 2020, were later implemented in the face of articulations that aimed to improve the production flow across the region, such as the construction of a bridge over the Matapi River (Figure 2), completed in 2016 (ALVES, 2016; BATISTA, 2020). The delayed construction/inauguration of the bridge over this river, a historical demand with

regard to the relationship between Macapá-Santana and Mazagão, is an example of the political tardiness regarding the materialization of the integration agenda. Part of this is explained by the private service of transporting cargo and passengers previously carried out by ferries and also by the constant delays in the work.

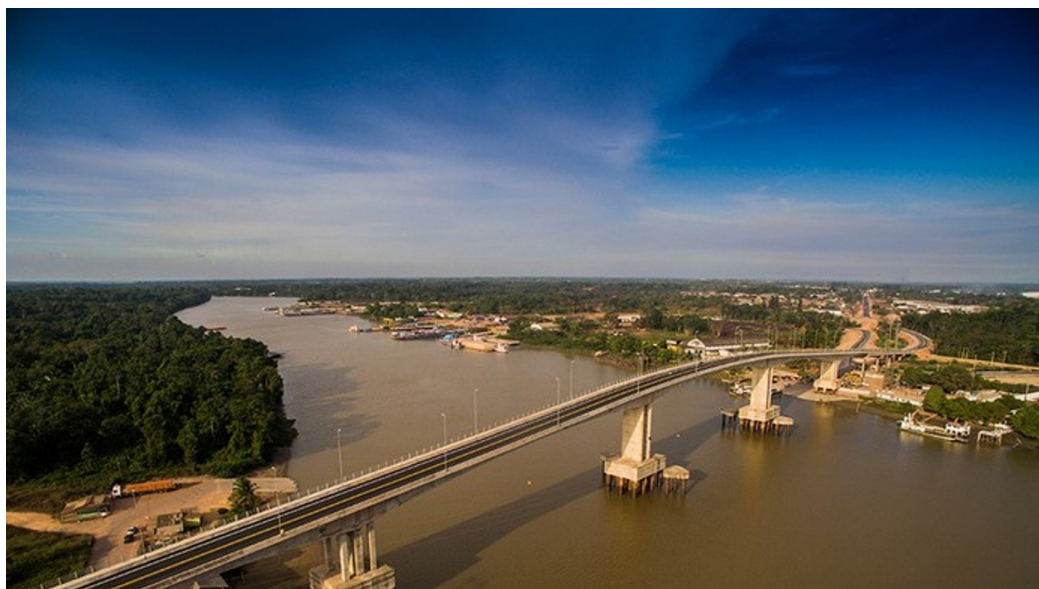


Figure 2. Bridge over the Matapi River

Source: Alex Silveira/Amapá State Government (2016).

This situation reinforces the prevalence of interests that are political-economic rather than social, which, when they eventually coincide, become actions to promote social well-being. However, as Harvey (2007) recalls, the interests of capital in space commonly diverge from the pedagogical right to the city (LEFEBVRE, 2016), suppressing the socio-spatial reproduction of healthy, sustainable relationships when faced with the incessant motivation of land exploitation. Based on an analysis of several studies (PORTO, 2018; SANTOS, 2012a), it may be understood that the limited inter-municipal road axes restrict full territorial integration between Macapá and Santana. The peculiarity of this finding lies in the curious fact that the municipalities are economically codependent without, in fact, the existence of a latent conurbation process. In the territorial portions between the urban centers of Macapá and Santana, subdivisions, services and facilities have been implemented, which reproduce intra-urban dynamics, indicating expansion vectors of territorial networks.

This socio-spatial perspective may indicate a displacement of urban centralities from traditional areas of Macapá-Santana to regions that have recently

appropriated urban-metropolitan space, or, even, reveal what Lefebvre (1991) indicated as the explosion-implosion effect of urban centrality, whereby the growth of the center results in it becoming fragmented into several subcentralities. However, the perspective of the Macapá intra-urban dynamics does not allow this effect to be understood in full consonance with Lefebvrian proposals, since the notion of urban centrality in the local context is relativized. From a territorial viewpoint, the coastal portions of Macapá and Santana present urban centralities in relation to their immediate surroundings, concentrating commerce and services, in addition to the flow of capital and information. However, the substantial socioeconomic centrality that conceived and guides the local urban development is abstract, since, unusually, the municipalities co-depend on both poles of attraction. In this reality, commuting occurs from both sides and in an equivalent manner, as does the traffic of goods, information and capital, so thereby not enabling the identification in preliminary analyzes of a possible predominance in socio-spatial attraction.

Thus, caution should be observed when attributing an explosion-implosion phenomenon of urban centrality to the context of Macapá-Santana, since this growth does not effectively occur in socio-spatial conformations nor is it necessarily related to a central, preponderant physical space, but to the inter-municipal co-dependency itself, which has always existed. Similarly, the implosion of centralities may not be immediately corroborated since the reasons that led to the production of such spatialities in discontinuous inter-municipal territories differ from what Lefebvre (1991) attributed to the collapse of the center. In this regard, these new regions do not come about from the excessive concentration of flows in continuous, delimited territories, but rather from the opportunity for capital from urban investors (real estate, retailers) to explore the land income generated with the creation of infrastructure designed to make mining and metallurgical capital viable and agro-silvopastoral systems present in the structuring road axes. This context is close to what Harvey (2007) understands as capital producing capital, except that, in this case, between scales (from the exploitation of natural resources to the exploitation of urban income) and different economic agents (from large transnational companies to local investors).

Starting from this foreshadowing of metropolitan construction, the question is: How can the metropolitan space be conceived, perceived and lived from the perspective of all the agents involved? As indicated by the MS (BRASIL, 2015) and the legal MRM diploma itself (AMAPÁ, 2018), the implementation of federative governance and the design and operation of Integrated Urban Development Plans (PDUI) are the first steps in the construction of probable metropolitan features, since it is evident that the Macapá-Santana metropolitan area presents clear

potential for economic and social development. These articulations must be thought out with a view to greater popular participation, essential for ensuring the facilitation of intra-urban dynamics that promote local incomes, quality of life and population-centered interventions. Thus, it is necessary to review the metropolitan institutionalization plans, ensuring effective social participation in metropolitan bodies and councils. Therefore, by conceiving and regulating the continuous interaction between the different agents, and their perceptions and experiences in the metropolitan space, it is possible that in the future, the MRM will cease to be a paper metropolis and indeed, become an Amazonian metropolis.

Conclusion

This study has fulfilled the objective of understanding the paper metropolis of Macapá-Santana, based on Henri Lefebvre's understanding of the moments of the production of conceived, perceived and lived space. More than being political-institutional cooperation agreements, metropolitan regions must present functionalities that justify the need for integrated inter-municipal articulations, which share common interests and problems. However, loopholes have enabled this articulation to be conceived with collateral intentions, involving the capture of federal resources and increasing the area of political and economic influence of political groups and economic agents. This obscurity in the pretension of an artificial metropolization results in paper metropolises. In the case of Amapá, the metropolitan region has predominantly served as a subsidy for the interests of political agents and transnational conglomerates, thereby invisibilizing the regulation of socio-spatial conformation and the intra-urban dynamics produced invisible. This has led to a lack of perception and experience of the metropolitan urban space, whose metropolization then becomes abstract. In this regard, it is important to ask: To what point does the political-economic need to metropolize spaces that have no metropolitan functionalities extend? To what extent does the prevalence of the institutionalization of space stop creating paper metropolises to create paper metropolitan regions?

These questions, as well as the possible reverberations of the designs of this essay, are encouraged as future studies, in an investigation of the possible prognosis of these effects in the context of Amapá and in other Brazilian paper metropolises. It is emphasized that this essay does not seek to close the debate on the moments of production of space in the MRM, whose recent events, such as the local energy crisis, have revealed important developments that are still difficult to predict regarding a metropolitan solution.

This study contributes to the literature on regional development from two perspectives. The first concerns an understanding of the problem of paper metropolization anchored in established foundations, such as Lefebvrian assumptions, which notably help in understanding the relationships and agents involved. The second involves the study and a deeper understanding of this problem in an Amazonian context, previously not approached from the aforementioned perspectives, thereby enabling more thorough investigations to be conducted in other Amazonian paper metropolises – such as Porto Velho (RO) and Rio Branco (AC) –, in order to establish an overview of the conditions of artificial metropolization across this region. Thus, it will be possible to understand how metropolitan spaces work in local contexts, conceived, perceived and lived with the desire that metropolization may effectively benefit the population with integrated, healthy and sustainable services and spaces.

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Romário Santos Valente

Graduated as a geographer at the Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA). Holds a master's degree in Regional Development through the Postgraduate Program in Regional Development at the Universidade Federal do Amapá (PPGMDR-Unifap). Currently undertaking PhD studies on the Postgraduate Program in Geography at UFPA (PPGEO-UFPA). A teacher at the Secretariat of Education in the State of Amapá.

Email: romariomdrgeo@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0001-6828-5944

Authorship contribution: conception; data curation; formal analysis; writing – first draft.

Gabriel Villas Boas de Amorim Lima

Graduated in civil engineering at the Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA). Specialization in Urban Planning at the Universidade do Oeste de Santa Catarina (Unoesc). Holds a master's degree and is currently undergoing PhD studies on the Postgraduate Program in Civil Engineering at UFPA (PPGEC-UFPA). He is a substitute teacher at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism (FAU) at the same university.

Email: gabriel.lima@itec.ufpa.br

ORCID: 0000-0001-7089-7421

Authorship contribution: conception; formal analysis; methodology; visualization; writing – first draft; writing – review and editing.

José Júlio Ferreira Lima

Graduated in architecture at the Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA). Holds a PhD in Architecture from the Oxford Brookes University, in the UK. Full Professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism (FAU) and on the Postgraduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism at UFPA (PPGAU-UFPA).

Email: jjlima@ufpa.br

ORCID: 0000-0001-5431-3529

Authorship contribution: supervision; validation; visualization; writing – review and editing.

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