

GUARDIANS OF AN ENORMOUS CARBON STOCK — THE AMAZON RAINFOREST AND ITS TRADITIONAL POPULATIONS BOUND BY THE SUSTAINABILITY DISPOSITIF

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Introduction

The Amazon region is the subject of a considerable amount of attention from the Brazilian media (such as newspapers, weekly magazines and television programs, scientific journals and online news sites) and it is often the subject of special reports, newspaper columns, editorials, short news items and sketches. Although the Amazon region is relatively distant from Brazil's main economic and political hubs, it provides many texts and images published in the most diverse types of media, representing a wide range of different and diverging interests. In these texts and images discourses are often conflicting though they work together to construct truths about the region. The fact that most media articles about this area relate to the forest and manifest an apparent consensus on its (environmental, social and economic) significance to the country and the world does not preclude animated discussions, in particular regarding economic issues frequently associated to the forest. Indeed, it may be for this reason that the Amazon region is so intensively discussed in the national media.

However, it is important to recall that in the past the region has always been the object of narratives (or discursive “inventions”¹), very different from the present ones, as the considerable number of studies conducted in Brazil show. For example, those carried out by some of the scholars consulted during the research which resulted in this article, Gondim (2007), Araújo (1998), Pádua (2005), Andrade (2010), Costa (2009), Guimarães (2006), Bueno (2002) and Silva (1997). Each meaning attributed to the Amazon during the different historical periods constructs the region on the basis of particular characteristics which, according to prevailing interests, provide an array of reflections on, and means of, intervening in the region. However, it is not the case that each invention about

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the Amazon region substitutes another, eliminating the traces of previous significations. Today we can still find discourses which emerged in the distant past and play a role in the constant process of invention, “dis-invention” and re-invention of this region.

In view of the above, the aim of this research is to analyze in detail some of the contemporary discourses about the Amazon region. In order to do so, texts published in newspapers in wide circulation in Brazilⁱⁱ were examined. Our decision to study journalistic texts was not incidental, given that we also considered analyzing other materials which disseminate the meanings currently assigned to this region (such as academic texts, non-governmental organization websites and public policies). However, we opted to focus on media articles because they are accessible to a wider public and play an important role in disseminating statements about the Amazon region. We took into account the heavily “educational” appeal of contemporary media which teaches us how to see the world and how to relate to it in specific ways. As Thompson (2009) argues, the media are the spinning wheels of the modern world through which we produce our own webs of significance.

It is worth pointing out here that it was not the aim of this study to address the full range of current discourses on the Amazon region. We decided to focus on discourses linked to the hypothesis which steered our analysis of the *collected* press articles. That is, that in the last decade we have observed a growing articulation between *traditional populations*, the *Amazon Forest* and *sustainability*. Stuart Hall, when interviewed by Grossberg (1996), described the concept of “articulation” as a non-necessary and non-determinist link between social forces under construction and conceptions of the world that give meaning to this process. Articulation grants a new social status and new political positions to a new set of socio-political subjects within the historical process. According to Slack (1996), the concept of articulation within Cultural Studies can be conceived at different levels: the *epistemological level* - as a way of understanding structures we know as a play of correspondence, non-correspondence and contradictions, and as the fragments of constitution of what we take to be unities; the *political level* - as a way of bringing to the forefront the structure and the power games imbedded in relations of dominance and subordination; and the *strategic level* - given that articulation acts as a mechanism which shapes intervention in a particular social formation, conjuncture or context.

The articulation which occurs between traditional populations, statements about the Amazon Forest and the concept of sustainability encompass all three levels described by Slack (1996). At the epistemological level, it occurs through the production and dissemination of particular statements - above all those drawn from academic works - about the relationship between traditional populations and nature, usually described as more sustainable. At the political level, this process emerges mainly as a form of resistance by the traditional populations for whom the environmentalist discourse is a means of acquiring legitimacy in relation to their use and ownership of land (see, for example, ALMEIDA, 2004). In the Amazon region in particular, this articulation also represents a way of directly opposing developmentist discourses which leveraged large amounts of investment for the region during the 1970s and 1980s with high socio-environmental costs. At the strategic level, despite the fact that this articulation was construed as a mechanism for

resistance against specific political forces, we argue that some discourses may be fostering its naturalization. That is, conceiving traditional populations as the *natural guardians* of the Amazon forest may be shaping their actions and limiting these populations to unsophisticated productive practices, as well as social and cultural isolation, thus confining them to a pristine way of life, not contaminated by “the ways of the globalized world”.

In short, we could argue that traditional populations are conceived as having a less disruptive life-style in their relationship with nature and are considered more suitable for living within the exuberant and biologically-rich Amazon Forest. These types of statements about traditional populations prevail in a number of cultural spheresⁱⁱⁱ. They describe, locate and set these characteristics as marking the difference between these populations and others, including those which inhabit the same spatial territories. In other words, the procedures used in order to identify, select and therefore validate the knowledge and practices of traditional populations also act to regulate their behaviour in order to attain particular objectives (such as fostering sustainable ways of life which ensure the environmental preservation of the Amazon region). We argue, therefore, that discourses on sustainability are key to understanding and thinking about the Amazon region in present times. They act as strategic devices for defining ways of standardizing and regulating the relationships between the people who live in this region and nature.

Ways of seeing and doing

In order to give a brief description of the steps taken in the study which resulted in this article, we will explain some issues which, though they appear to be technical, are nonetheless essential in view of the fact that this type of analysis deals with a considerable number of texts that need to be organized, selected and classified in a productive, coherent and rigorous manner. A total of 559 press articles on the Amazon forest, published between 2007 and 2011, were identified. However, after preliminary screenings, the *corpus* of the study was effectively limited to 192 texts which were analyzed and discussed. Subsequently, excerpts from the texts, considered important in relation to the subject matter of the research, were selected. Excerpts were read and re-read a number of times so as to identify their underlying arguments and to establish a relationship between them. They were subsequently grouped into subsets entitled “topical axes”.

Within each topical axis, statements were classified into different groups, or “blocks of analysis”. That is, each block of analysis was made up of sets of excerpts from the same topical axis, emphasizing a specific statement which was analyzed and discussed during the study. Our aim was to show how statements fall within a discursive network which is not limited to the fragments presented in the block of analysis^{iv}, but encompass a wide range of socio-cultural spheres.

Given the objectives set out for this study (the articulation between the Amazon forest and its traditional populations) and the conceptual tools developed (in particular our conception of sustainability dispositif - or sustainability apparatus), the topical axes chosen for analysis were those which could best “tell us things” about our object in line with the theoretical and methodological strategies adopted. In this article, discussions are

restricted to the topical axis that classified statements on the importance of the traditional Amazon populations within the context of global change^v.

The methodology employed here was underpinned by discourse analysis, based on the theoretical and methodological tools present in Michel Foucault's work, in particular, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (FOUCAULT, 2009). One of the fundamental aspects of this perspective can be synthesized in the claim that discourses are repeated and circulated, resulting in truths which are activated during specific historical periods. Some of its distinctive features relate to the fact that Foucault (2009) conceived discourses as: events (given that they do not relate to cause and effect), singular or particular (that is, they are historically situated) and having the potential for being disseminated - including in time - being repeated, transformed or deleted. Veiga-Neto (2005) argues that it is important to interpret what is said in terms of positivity and not attempt to search behind linguistic constancies or frequencies, or even analyze the personal characteristics of speakers or writers. In view of the above, it is even more important to establish the relations between statements and what they describe "in order to understand the power lying behind these statements and which power(s) they activate or bring into circulation" (VEIGA-NETO, 2005, p.126).

We emphasize that our objective is to analyze the readings and discussions of press article excerpts by seeking to identify the statements which appeared most frequently, their relationship with other statements, as well as to observe if the selected statements implied a continuity or discontinuity of discourses about the Amazon region. Our aim is not to look for "hidden" meanings between the lines, seeking to reveal surreptitious claims about the Amazon forest and its inhabitants. Nor do we seek to enquire about the motives for the emergence (causes) of contemporary discourses concerning the Amazon region. Instead, we seek to study the conditions which enabled them to emerge, as well as their effects. We did not think it worthwhile to quantify the analyzed texts. That is, from our theoretical and methodological perspective, we were not concerned with what percentage of texts a particular statement appeared in, our aim was to trace the sayings about the forest and traditional populations, even if these statements were marginal, rare or deficient. It is possible that these statements might have more to say about the constructed truths concerning this region than those which are exhausted from overuse.

Furthermore, as we will show in the next section, we based ourselves on another Foucauldian argument - the notion of *dispositif* (or apparatus) - a conceptual framework which led us to propose a "sustainability *dispositif*", in operation in our times. This conceptual tool greatly contributed to the development of a grid of intelligibility with which, and by means of which, we shall discuss what has been said about the Amazon region in the Brazilian newspapers during the first decade of the millennium.

The forest and its inhabitants within the web of a sustainability *dispositif*

The *sustainability dispositif* is the set of discourses, images, institutions, laws, philosophical suppositions and scientific statements which are currently associated to sustainability. The concept of *dispositif* is found in the work of Michel Foucault and seeks

to establish the relationships between discursive and non-discursive elements to enable an understanding of fundamental issues about the constitution of current subjectivities. According to Foucault (2003), a *dispositif* is made up of power relations strategies which sustain the different types of knowledge and are in turn sustained by them. *Dispositifs* co-existing within a particular historical period make up and shape the ways of being and existing in the world at a given moment. Thus, contemporary subjectivity originates from the *dispositifs* and they act to promote visibilities and statements which define how we are made up, how we see ourselves and how we narrate who we are. “We belong to *dispositifs* and act within them. What is new about a particular *dispositif* in relation to previous ones is its actuality, our actuality” (DELEUZE, 1999, p.159).

Thus, we argue that the *sustainability dispositif* is in full operation in our times. We are called upon (and demand) to relate with this *dispositif* every day when we open a newspaper or magazine, turn on the television, when we are at our workplace, talk to friends or when we travel... In short, with its tentacles (or, according to Deleuze, lines) the *sustainability dispositif* reaches us through a multiplicity of tactics, urging us to speak its language and forming our attitudes in line with its discourses (SAMPAIO; GUIMARÃES, 2012). The educational pull of the *sustainability dispositif* is evident within the multiple spheres it crosses, reaching beyond the frontiers of educational institutions and even environmental educational activities. We learn to be “green” in a number of different sites. Nevertheless, it is worth stressing the incisive role the media plays in this process. It positively participates in the formation of contemporary subjects, teaching them to be and exist in the culture they experience.

Furthermore, we argue that the *sustainability dispositif* allows transnational capitalism to be constantly renewed and reinforced whilst seeking to associate environmental conservation to economic growth. The discourses associated to this *dispositif* use expressions such as “sustainable costs”, “natural capital” “sustainable capital”, “sustainable production” and “sustainable consumption”. They are entirely in synchronization with the conventional economic vocabulary. Guimarães (2011, p.34) argues that we are constantly exposed to “images which show successful subjects in the new business market whose management is based on sustainability”. The American “green” politician, Al Gore, once said that nowadays we are all encouraged to believe that environmentalism is an opportunity for building the perfect type of capitalism (ROSS, 1996). It is possible to say that the staying power of the *sustainability dispositif* we currently observe is largely due to its association to neoliberal policies and its consensual nature: who would dare to argue against the need to live in a more sustainable manner?

To think about how the *sustainability dispositif* is imbricated in statements about the Amazon Forest and traditional populations seems to us to be a suitable analytical route to reflect on the Amazon region within contemporaneous society. The extensive incorporation of environmentalist discourses to the network of representations about the Amazon region led to enormous changes in the ways the region is conceived, in that sustainable development became an integral part of this debate. Silva (1997, p.133), argues that “amidst a large variety of proposals, the concept of sustainable development

permeates disparate interests, as if it were a legitimizing ‘view’ of interpretations of the role of the Amazon region in the Earth’s equilibrium”.

Thus, when dealing with press articles we were surprised by how frequently economic issues permeated much of what circulated in the reports about the forest, even when the main focus was the indigenous and traditional populations. References to the Amazon are not exclusively restricted to the scientific and/or environmental sections of the papers. They are also found on the main pages in the sections on politics and economics, as well as in editorials. Therefore, in the newspapers reviewed, the Amazon forest features sometimes as a “thorn in the side” of those who yearn for the expansion of agro-business or argue for the implementation of large infrastructure works in the region, and sometimes it features as a source of economic opportunities, most notably as the opinion of those who believe it is possible to explore forestry products in an efficient way or when the likelihood of obtaining profits from the new market of carbon credits is identified. We will discuss how some of the discourses about the Amazon region which circulate in the Brazilian press (and in many other social and cultural spheres) are shaped by the *sustainability dispositif*, in particular economic developments which are finely tuned to globalized market strategies.

The Amazon on the agenda – the current crossroads between the global and the local in the Amazon Forest

In this section we present the analyses of the press articles, revealing the power of debates articulating the Amazon forest and traditional populations to the webs of *sustainability dispositif*. In order to do so, we will refer to some issues which we noted appeared frequently in the press articles collected, either as the main or as a secondary topic. We will focus on excerpts of some reports which address issues such as: a) the (non)viability of extractivist activities as a means of economic sustainability for traditional populations; b) listing of other strategies which may make keeping “standing forests” profitable; c) the pronounced participation of these social groups in the dynamics of capital by means of negotiations regarding financial compensation for nature protection. Initially, we believed that there would be a greater number of texts on the forest from the point of view of its biodiversity and, therefore, its potential value for Brazil, both in environmental and economic terms. However, we noticed that the intensification of discussions on climate change resulted in a new vocabulary, adding new value to the forest - now understood as a *carbon stock* - and attributing new roles to traditional populations - who are now construed not only as the guardians of biodiversity, but also as fundamental players if the forest is to continue to be a large *carbon storehouse*.

A number of texts published in the newspapers reviewed characterized traditional populations as the guardians of nature whilst at the same time expressing concern for the possibility that extractivism might not ensure their survival, leading these populations to adopt other economic activities which could put the Amazon forest at risk^{vi}. Based on this line of thinking, various texts published in the newspapers expounded alternatives to activities damaging to the environment which might be taken up by traditional popula-

tions. One such alternative proposed the implementation of strategies for remunerating those who preserve the forest^{vii}. Within this context, a new market emerges where the terms of carbon credits are negotiated^{viii}, bringing other elements to the discourse which advocate the need for compensating the indigenous populations, as is clear from the following excerpt:

Only in the indigenous territory of Alto Rio Guamá there are 145.39 tonnes of stored carbon per hectare. This is such an enormous volume that it transforms the Temb -T n t har into the true guardians of an immense “carbon store” at the heart of the Amazon forest: 40.8 million tonnes of carbon are stored in a territory of 279,000 hectares, on the border with the state of Maranh o. [...] To give a more accurate picture of the wealth which today is in the hands of indigenous people, Ipam [Amazon Research Centre] concluded that the carbon stored in indigenous lands and extractivist reserves is equivalent to eight times the global emission reduction efforts defined by the Kyoto Treaty. One of the findings of the Ipam study is the important role traditional communities play in maintaining the global climate unchanged - argues Paulo Moutinho, one of the authors of the study and coordinator of Ipam’s Climate Change Program. - As these populations end up keeping the forest alive, they are transformed into the potential beneficiaries of international treaties for tackling climate change^{ix}.

This excerpt reveals some new statements concerning the Amazon region and the traditional populations found in discourses on the role of the forest within the context of global climate change. Arguments on the importance of traditional populations for the environment have been widely disseminated in the media, turning these populations into crucial players in the discussions and negotiations on global warming. Thus, the forest is described as a large carbon storehouse and traditional populations as its guardians. The extract selected shows *in numbers* how indigenous lands are valuable in maintaining the equilibrium of the global climate. The profusion of figures was one of the aspects we observed in many press articles articulating the existing relationship between traditional populations, the Amazon Forest and climate change. For example, there are estimates on deforestation and the amount of carbon stored in the forest, percentages relating to the reduction of emissions, measurements of how many tonnes of carbon are stored in the forest, how many hectares make up indigenous lands or extractivist reserves, as well as the price of carbon credits. The statements reveal that numbers of different orders are present in these texts and that, undoubtedly, they have a central role in predicting the future of the forest, the climate, traditional populations and humanity.

What is the meaning of this “sea of numbers” strategically thrown into these statements? Rose (1991) argues that numbers are uniquely powerful within modern political culture, in that they acquire a privileged status in political decision-making, whilst promoting the “de-politization” of the debate, given they are supposedly technical in nature

and in this way guide the prioritization of problems and the allocation of resources. Rose argues that some policies are informed/guided by all sorts of numbers, such as birth and mortality rates, the monitoring of changes in population growth, public opinion statistics, levels of education and the percentage of the Brazilian territory earmarked for traditional populations. At the same time, policies are drawn up to produce, and also intervene in these numbers (for example, actions to reduce mortality, increase educational levels and reduce the rate of unemployment). This being the case, the most legitimate way of assessing public (and private) policies is through numbers. For example, in the case of the Amazon region, recorded deforestation rates determine which policies will be carried out, whilst their purpose is to modify these very same indexes or numbers.

However, Rose (1991, p.676), adds that “it is obvious that numbers are not only there to record a pre-existing reality. They are reality!” Rose’s arguments are relevant when considering the “politics by numbers” which permeates discourses on the role of the Amazon region and its traditional populations within a context of climate change. The many technical reports regarding the quantity of carbon stored in the lands where traditional populations live, together with the country’s concern in meeting set emission reduction targets - a fact that led the government to establish new indigenous reserves - lead us to argue that numbers play an increasingly important role in the make up of the Amazon region in contemporary society. For example, numbers measure amounts of carbon, hectares, avoided deforestation and percentages of greenhouse gas emissions. This is how the scientific and objective nature of numbers invests them with sufficient credibility so that they can be used to implement policies and conduct negotiations and agreements (which are not restricted to the national level). Numbers on the amount of carbon stored within the Amazon *shape* (or invent) the forest in our present times and traditional populations are now described in discourses as being strategic elements in these relations.

The following excerpt describes a case in which some communities show an incipient interest in “carbon market” negotiations:

Marauê Kaiabi got up and went to the blackboard full of drawings, adjusted his feathered headgear and said: “What is this thing you call carbon? Is it dust? Is it what we call smoke?” It was the end of a short “lesson” on this topic given yesterday morning by André Villas-Boas, member of the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA), to leaders of the Xavante, Panará, Kaiabi, Yudja, Bakairi, Kisêdjê and Umutina communities who represent some of the 42 indigenous peoples living in the State of Mato Grosso. Later, in the plenary, Winti Kisêdjê requested in fluent Portuguese: “We need you, the NGOs, to explain this carbon market business to the communities. We are feeling the effects of climate change. We have to think about this together”.^x

This extract reveals how indigenous peoples (and other traditional populations) have been progressively included in discussion forums associated to climate change, where they are taught a new vocabulary in which *carbon* is the key word. Meanwhile they

have sought to find out how they can benefit from this. This extract describes a “lesson” where indigenous people from the state of Mato Grosso were taught what carbon is. It revealed the associations through which they learned these lessons, weaving connections with aspects they perceived as transformative in their own environments. It is possible to suppose that similar situations happen fairly frequently, promoting the articulation of traditional peoples to discourses which integrates them to the equilibrium of the planet’s climate. At the same time, we observe that these peoples also appropriate these discourses, incorporating them to their way of explaining natural phenomena and integrating these discourses to demands for improving their living standards.

We therefore highlight some of the most frequent ways in which the articulation between traditional populations and the Amazon forest is reshaped in statements which focus on the potential financial rewards obtained from carbon credits trading. In fact, it could be said that the emergence of discourses on climate change updates *sustainability dispositif* lines. They foment new visibilities and statements, encompassing the Amazon region and its traditional populations, which in turn promote new forms of subjectivation (and regulation) of the individuals who form part of these identitary categories. The following extract brings forth other elements, allowing us to observe in more detail some of the new ways of conceiving the relations between these populations and the Amazon forest:

By the end of May, the Temb  Indians, who live in the state of Par , hope to have signed the first contract in the country to preserve an indigenous territory in exchange for their participation in the sales of carbon credits generated by maintaining the forest. Negotiations with a Brazilian company, C-Trade, have been ongoing since last June. [...] According to the offer, 85% of the money obtained by the company from sales of carbon credits in the market will go to the Temb s. Figures have not yet been agreed upon, but the amounts the tribe will receive should exceed R\$ 1 million (Brazilian) Reais per year, that is, approximately R\$ 1,428 for each of the 700 families living in the reserve. Today, most do not have any income. The reserve is 279,800 hectares, of which 69,000 were “earmarked” for preservation. [...] According to Juscelino Bessa, manager of Funai [Brazilian National Indian Foundation] in Bel m, (state of Par ), the Temb s are succumbing to hardship and are trading illegally extracted timber with loggers. “They sell them for peanuts”. Valdeci Temb , one of the community’s leaders, agrees. “This [timber] goes for almost nothing. Let’s see if this contract works out. That’s the idea”.^{xi}

This excerpt exposes some of the issues which help us to better understand certain processes taking place in the Amazon region. It reports on an ongoing negotiation between the indigenous community and a company interested in obtaining “carbon credits”. According to information in the excerpt, indigenous people are experiencing hardship due to a lack of income. This leads them to sell illegally logged timber (“for almost nothing”). It is interesting to point out here that the indigenous people in question are not

described as “natural conservationists” (given they sell timber to survive). Nevertheless, they could become conservationists if they received financial incentives. The preservation of the forest is seen, therefore, as a new economic activity which may be more rewarding than the destruction of the forest, or as it is often cited: preservation is an environmental service requiring compensation.

The article “Amazônia tem projeto internacional para evitar desmatamento”^{xiii} [The Amazon region has an international project to prevent deforestation] describes ongoing negotiations in Juma Sustainable Development Reserve, in the state of Amazonas, already at an advanced stage. Certification has been granted for the avoided deforestation of approximately 366,000 hectares of forest. According to the report, the resources to fund this initiative - which foresees the payment of *forest assistance* grants to the inhabitants of the reserve - come from the first program for reducing emissions from native forest deforestation in Brazil and carried out through an agreement between the state government of Amazonas and an international hotel chain. As the article explains, on the basis of the agreement “guests of this worldwide chain can neutralize their carbon emissions by donating resources so that trees in the Amazon region remain standing”. The differential of this proposal is that it does not involve trading carbon credits, but works via voluntary donations by guests who are guaranteed that their money will be invested in the conservation of the Amazon Forest. This negotiation was based on an estimate of the amount of carbon stored in conservation areas in the Amazon region which was then converted into monetary terms, using as reference the price of a tonne of carbon on the Chicago Stock Exchange.

It is important to stop to reflect on the globalized nature of this network of relationships and the new status of traditional peoples living in the Amazon region in contemporary society. These reflections involve aspects related to the marked ingress of these populations to the workings of the globalized economy and also aspects linked to the spatial sphere which are present in the accounts selected above. The subjects involved in these relationships have different levels of mobility in space. However, it is important to point out that the generalized dissemination and the unstoppable economic flows of globalization, along with the asymmetric configurations of “spatial mobility” of today’s subjects, should be seen as articulated phenomena of our times. Similarly, Ortiz (2003) argues that the conception of the global and the local as different, excluding and antagonistic spatialities should be abandoned. He argues that in a globalized world there is no inherent opposition between the global and the local; instead these two spaces overlap.

Given the issues affecting the traditional populations of the Amazon region, these arguments assist us in problematizing the apparent separation (or opposition) identified in the relationship between these people and the global culture and economy. That is, in the reported cases of carbon trading negotiations, traditional Amazon communities are not situated in an idealized *local* that can be reached by “external globalization”. We argue that in today’s world interconnections between events in a particular place in the middle of the Amazon Forest and discussions in an international meeting room in Tokyo, for example, are increasingly possible (and expected). However, there are also disjunctions between these two spaces. According to Ortiz (2003), globalization engenders a very

powerful means of domination. It is therefore necessary that the indigenous population of the state of Pará or the extractivist populations of the Juma Sustainable Development Reserve remain exactly where they are, conserving the forest and “caring” for carbon stores, so that the meetings of multinational companies can continue to take place.

Gupta and Ferguson (2000) argue that the contemporary processes of the production of cultural differences occur in a continuous space which is both connected and permeated by unequal economic and political relations. Consequently, social relations are asymmetric, given that “the spaces and institutions which produce them have different power and legitimacy status (powerful countries *versus* weak countries; transnational organizations *versus* national governments; national States *versus* indigenous groups)” (GUPTA; FERGUSON, 2000, p.169).

Furthermore, Ortiz (2003) warns us that we should recognize that in our present world, one institution has acquired disproportional power: the market - both as the locus for economic activities and as a producer of meanings. It is, therefore, essential to consider these phenomena when we think about the intersections observed in contemporary society, such as between traditional populations and companies interested in the carbon market, or between these populations and organizations discussing climate change in international conferences, or even between the Amazon region’s extractivist peoples and a tourist who is a guest of the above mentioned hotel. Parties do not have equivalent power and legitimacy status. However much the leaders of traditional populations make themselves present in discussion forums on global climate change and are actually heard, neither the welfare of communities nor even the forest’s ecological importance are a priority in negotiations when a community is remunerated for conserving the forest. Our analysis of the statements found in the newspapers reviewed seems to indicate that what is actually at play is the market and its continuity, either by ensuring that carbon remains stored in the trees of the Amazon forest (and the financial activities resulting thereof) or through discussions on the sustainable development of the Amazon region.

Bauman (1999, p.8) claims that “the global operations of business, finance, trade and information flow come hand-in-hand with a process of ‘localization’ and fixation in space”. He argues that “today we witness a process of global *re-stratification* where a new worldwide socio-cultural hierarchy is being constructed” (p.78). These new stratifications are strongly translated into the mobility of some and the corresponding ‘fixation’ of many others, as in the contrasting case between extractivist communities and tourists. Further exploring this metaphor, we could say that in order for tourists to exist, that is, for there to be connected and mobile global citizens, extractivist communities must also exist. According to Canclini (2005, p.94), “the small and the localized are indispensable ‘doubles’ for the nomadism and enrichment of the powerful”. If the classic relations of exploitation used to be based on the unequal sharing of goods which were territorially stable and fixed (such as property and the means of production in a factory), today “capital, which produces difference and inequality, is able, or has the opportunity, to move and be interconnected” (CANCLINI, 2005, p.95).

However, we stress that our aim is not to characterize traditional populations as hostages of the situations they find themselves in, as if they were passive in face of so-

something which appears to be immutable. Traditional peoples have actively sought these networks of relationships (and discourses) because they can benefit from them, either in terms of territorial rights or financial compensation. On the other hand, it would be naive to suppose that indigenous people and businessmen interested in paying for “avoided deforestation” sit down at the negotiating table as equals. Therefore, we believe that highlighting the distinct capacity of mobility of different subjects contributes toward thinking about the asymmetries present in these relations. Indeed, these distinct capacities produce new social stratifications in our world.

Some final words

One of the statements which stood out from the press articles analyzed seems to indicate that land inhabited by indigenous and traditional peoples should be considered as “huge carbon stocks” and that these populations should be responsible for their protection, preventing them from being released into the atmosphere and causing “climate chaos”. Whilst analyzing these excerpts and reflecting on our subject matter, we questioned whether, for these populations, being conceived as the guardians of carbon stocks may not be a heavier load than being conceived as guardians of biodiversity. The erosion of biological diversity may be described as an irremediable loss for humanity, given, among other reasons, their potential and future use (and value). However, according to scientists, the releasing of carbon into the atmosphere would have far greater and direct consequences for everyone on the planet. It is as if the burden of responsibility for avoiding a potential catastrophe falls on the shoulders of these populations.

We therefore argue that the discourses on global climate change are more and more influential with regard to the ways of thinking and acting in relation to the Amazon region and its traditional populations, plunging them deeper into the lines of the *sustainability dispositif*. By locating the integration of traditional populations within the discussions on climate change, the texts analyzed show how some communities have shown an interest in taking advantage of awards (or payments) resulting from the preservation of the forest, whereas other communities are already involved in economic transactions within the “carbon market”.

We would like to emphasize the potential of the climate change discourse in bringing the market into the sphere of nature preservation. Examples of strategies which were mentioned are: payment (financial compensation) for forest conservation, the interest of multinational companies in obtaining certification for protecting the Amazon Forest and the inclusion of carbon in stock exchange listings. It seems to us, therefore, that “the discovery of the forest’s carbon stock” resulted in an increase in its economic value which proved to be more effective than previous attempts of calculating the potential financial value of the biodiversity of the Amazon. This is because whilst biodiversity is frequently described as a future “value reserve”, something similar to a savings account, carbon stores represent the possibility of obtaining immediate (or very imminent) returns. An interesting aspect regarding the increase in value of forest carbon is that price is not attributed to a real product which may be used, sold or exchanged (as is the case with

biodiversity resources). Instead something which is to a certain extent virtual is traded. That is, transactions occur so that carbon is neither seen, nor felt or released, it is important that it continues not to exist, or rather, that it continues to exist as stock within the forest. In other words, people pay so that carbon does not come to “exist”.

We therefore argue that traditional populations are subjected to (and are interconnected by) the *sustainability dispositif*, given that they join this category voluntarily and are committed to the statements that describe them as the guardians of nature (or of carbon deposits). Viveiros de Castro (2005, p.126) argues that indigenous peoples (and generally speaking traditional populations) are valued because they are a reservoir of useful technologies for the sustainable development of the Amazon. This is a utilitarian view “which only admits their right of existence if they are *useful* to us in some way” (author’s italics). However, it is worth stressing that, in this study, this dispositif is not necessarily seen as something bad (or good), but a set of different strategies which affects people - be they the inhabitants of large cities or the “peoples of the forest”.

Based on these facts, one of the possible conclusions regarding contemporary discourses on the Amazon region refers to the important role the market increasingly has in the power game about what needs to be done with the forest and its traditional peoples. This allows us to point out that the statements on climate change update and reinforce the *sustainability dispositif*, given that they lead to new forms of conceiving and describing the Amazon Forest. These interpretations result in much stronger ties between traditional populations and the discourse on sustainable development, producing renewed tactics to subjectivate and regulate the individuals who adhere to this identitary category. In short, this is what we can learn about the Amazon region and its “traditional inhabitants” when we leaf through the pages of a newspaper as well as, of course, other means of production and communication of discourses in our times.

Finally, by analyzing the statements which articulate the Amazon Forest, traditional populations and the idea of sustainability, we argue for the need to promote *estrangement exercises* in order to foster the “breaking down of the clear contour lines of the object so that it is able to return to its undefined state, opening up the possibility for a new coming-to-be” (ALBUQUERQUE JUNIOR, 2007, p.153). Perhaps, the exercises in “de-familiarization” open up possibilities for escaping, deviating or resisting which also fall within the ways the dyad Amazon Forest/traditional populations are construed in our times. As Foucault (2009, p.24) warned us: “It is important that we are perturbed when faced with certain groupings or situations which are now familiar to us”

Notes

i Here we use the concept of ‘invention’ as employed by Albuquerque Jr (2007, p.20), that is, it highlights *rupture, censorship and the beginnings of new practices*.

ii The following newspapers were chosen: Folha de São Paulo (FSP), O Estado de São Paulo (ES), Valor Econômico (VE) and O Globo (G), in the period 2007 to 2011. We set this time frame to coincide with the period of study, thus facilitating the search for articles and ensuring the discourses analyzed had a “current” value.

iii These include the academic world, the discourses of environmental organizations and statements circulating in the media (the focus of this article), as well as legal documents which define the policies directed at these populations. In

this regard, the presidential decree n. 6.040, 7th February 2007, which establishes the National Policy for Sustainable Development for Traditional Peoples and Communities is particularly worthy of note.

iv Unfortunately, it will not be possible to present the blocks of analysis in the discussions that follow. In order to promote a more in-depth discussion around the topical axes, the blocks of analysis were broken down, enabling the separate presentation of some excerpts. To produce articles from a larger body of work always requires a certain amount of editing, selecting and excluding. It is possible, therefore, that this procedure may modify (and perhaps impoverish) the sequence of arguments employed in the research.

v Other topical axes addressed the impasses, tensions and approximations between development and preservation in the discourses about the Amazon region and the relations between traditional populations and the conservation of the Amazon forest.

vi See, for example, the articles “Chico Mendes: o extrativismo vive o maior desafio” [Chico Mendes, extractivism experiences its greatest challenge] (ESP, 1º Caderno - Vida & Ambiente, 21/12/2008), “Extrativismo insustentável” [Unsustainable extractivism] (FSP, Caderno Mais!, 22/07/2007), among others (19 in total).

vii This point of view is argued in texts such as: “Bolsa-floresta fortalece ideia de negociação em mercado” [Forest Assistance Program strengthens the idea of market negotiation] (ESP, 06/11/2008); “Governo estuda criar bolsa-floresta” [Government studies the development of a Forest Assistance Program] (ESP, 28/08/2009); “Compensando pela preservação da Amazônia” [Compensation for preserving the Amazon] (VE, 2º Caderno – Opinião, 23/07/2008). Approximately 16 texts addressed this issue.

viii According to the Kyoto protocol, countries cannot consider forests when developing targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is also not possible to negotiate credits with other countries or companies related to “avoided deforestation”. However, it is possible to trade carbon credits for the preservation of forest in “voluntary markets” by trading with companies. During the data-gathering period, proposals were being discussed to include “avoided deforestation” as one of the internationally agreed mechanisms to reduce greenhouse gases. One of the most popular measures was a financial mechanism for cutting deforestation emissions, known as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation). During the Cancun Conference in 2010, an agreement was approved on a mechanism to compensate tropical countries for reducing deforestation, now known as REDD+.

ix Excerpt in “Índio não quer fumaça” [Indians do not want smoke], published in O Globo, Caderno Especial, 07/06/2009.

x Text extracted from “Indígenas querem saber o que é mercado de carbono” [Indigenous people want to know about the carbon market], published in Valor Econômico, 1º Caderno – Brasil, on 12/09/2008.

xi Extract from the article “Índios ganharão para preservar a floresta” [Indians will be remunerated to preserve the forest], published in Folha de São Paulo, 1º Caderno – Ciência, on 02/05/2009.

xii Published in Valor Econômico, 11/04/2008.

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GUARDIANS OF AN ENORMOUS CARBON STOCK — THE AMAZON RAINFOREST AND ITS TRADITIONAL POPULATIONS BOUND BY THE SUSTAINABILITY DISPOSITIF

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Abstract: In recent decades, attempts to promote the articulation between the Amazon rainforest and its so-called traditional populations have greatly intensified, both in academic debates and environmental activism. The concept of sustainability, understood as a strategic apparatus, operates by strengthening this coupling, giving rise to new analyses of the relationships between traditional peoples and nature in the Amazon region. The aim of this paper is to discuss and analyze this articulation, taking as a starting point several text analyses on the Brazilian Amazon published in newspapers with wide circulation. Emphasis was given to the discourse on global climate change which often describes the Amazon rainforest as a carbon depot and portrays traditional populations as guardians of this store. This paper seeks to highlight the ability of discourses on climate change to bring the stock market into nature preservation.

Keywords: The sustainability dispositif. Traditional populations. Amazon rainforest. Carbon market.

Resumo: Tentativas de colocar em articulação a floresta amazônica e as chamadas populações tradicionais têm se intensificado bastante nas últimas décadas, tanto no âmbito acadêmico, quanto na militância ambientalista. Por sua vez, a noção de sustentabilidade, entendida, como um dispositivo estratégico, atua na intensificação de tal acoplamento, possibilitando leituras renovadas das relações entre povos tradicionais e a natureza da Amazônia. O propósito deste artigo é discutir e problematizar a referida articulação, tomando como subsídio análises de textos sobre a Amazônia publicados em jornais brasileiros de ampla circulação. Dentre os enunciados analisados, este texto coloca em destaque aqueles que tematizam as mudanças climáticas globais, descrevendo muitas vezes a floresta amazônica como um depósito de carbono e atribuindo às populações tradicionais o papel de protetoras deste carbono. Dessa forma, as discussões desenvolvidas buscam ressaltar (e problematizar) a capacidade que os discursos sobre as mudanças climáticas têm de integrar o mercado à preservação da natureza.

Palavras-chave: Dispositivo da sustentabilidade; Populações tradicionais; Floresta amazônica; Mercado de carbono.

Resumem: La articulación entre floresta amazónica y poblaciones tradicionales viene ganando bastante reconocimiento en las últimas décadas, tanto en el ámbito académico como en la militancia ambientalista. A su vez, la noción de sostenibilidad actúa, cada vez más, como un dispositivo estratégico que intensifica la articulación entre estos elementos, posibilitando lecturas renovadas de la relación entre los pueblos tradicionales y la naturaleza de la Amazonia. El propósito de este artículo es discutir y problematizar la referida articulación, tomando como apoyo algunos análisis de textos sobre la Amazonia que fueron publicados en periódicos brasileños de amplia circulación. Se le ha dado destaque, principalmente, a los discursos sobre los cambios climáticos globales, los que, muchas veces, describen la floresta amazónica como un depósito de carbono y a las poblaciones tradicionales como protectoras del mismo. Finalmente, se resalta la capacidad que tienen los discursos sobre cambios climáticos de integrar el mercado a la preservación de la naturaleza.

Palabras clave: Dispositivo de la sostenibilidad; Poblaciones tradicionales; Floresta amazónica; Mercado de carbono.
