

# SMALL CITIES OF THE DELTA

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Sandra Maria Fonseca da Costa <sup>a\*</sup> - Gustavo Rodrigo Milaré Montoia <sup>b</sup>

(a) PHD in Spatial Information. Professor at the University of Vale do Paraiba, Sao Jose dos Campos (SP), Brazil.

**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0540-228X>. **LATTES:** <http://lattes.cnpq.br/4480639361832564>.

(b) Dr. in Urban and Regional Planning. Professor at the University of Vale do Paraiba, São Jose dos Campos (SP), Brazil.

**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8654-9875>. **LATTES:** <http://lattes.cnpq.br/5966452895271256>.

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## (\* ) CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

**Address:** UNIVAP, Av. Shishima Hifumi, 2911, URBANOVA, Cep: 12244-540, Sao Jose dos Campos (SP), Brasil, Tel: (12) 39471127.

**E-mail:** [sandra@univap.br](mailto:sandra@univap.br)

## Abstract

This article aims to present an analysis of the urban dynamics of small towns Afuá and Ponta de Pedras, located in the state of Pará, and Mazagão, in the state of Amapá, of the Amazon River Delta, from the discussion about urbanity and the ribeirurbano. A multitemporal mapping of their urban area was carried out and questionnaires were applied to urban residents to obtain information to understand urban dynamics, as well as the use of census data. The analysis of urbanity for the reality of the small cities of the Delta has to admit the singularities of the ribeirurbano and thus enable the recognition and construction of citizenship in this new humanism.

**Keywords:** Small Cities, Delta, Urbanity, Ribeirurbano.

## Resumo / Resumen

### PEQUENAS CIDADES DO DELTA

Esse artigo tem como objetivo apresentar uma análise sobre a dinâmica urbana das pequenas cidades Afuá e Ponta de Pedras, localizadas no estado do Pará, e Mazagão, no estado do Amapá, do Delta do Rio Amazonas, a partir da discussão sobre urbanidade e o ribeirurbano. Foi realizado um mapeamento, multitemporal, das áreas urbanas e formulários aplicados aos moradores urbanos para obtenção de informações para a compreensão da dinâmica urbana, além de dados censitários. A análise da urbanidade para a realidade das pequenas cidades do Delta deve admitir as singularidades do ribeirurbano e, assim, possibilitar o reconhecimento e a construção de uma cidadania neste novo humanismo.

**Palavras-chave:** Pequena Cidade, Delta, Urbanidade, Ribeirurbano.

### PEQUEÑAS CIUDADES DEL DELTA

Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar un análisis de la dinámica urbana de las ciudades pequeñas Afua y Ponta de Pedras, situada en el estado de Pará, y Mazagán, en el estado de Amapá, delta del río Amazonas, a partir de la discusión sobre la urbanidad y ribeirurbano. Se realizó un mapeo multitemporal de áreas urbanas y cuestionarias aplicadas a los habitantes urbanos para obtener información para comprender la dinámica urbana, así como datos del censo. El análisis de la urbanidad a la realidad de las pequeñas ciudades en el delta debe admitir la singularidad de ribeirurbano y así permitir el reconocimiento y la construcción de la ciudadanía en este nuevo humanismo.

**Palabras-clave:** Ciudad Pequeña, Delta, Urbanidad, Ribeirurbano.

## INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian urban network has changed intensely since the 1950s when it was a “sparse, coastal and disarticulated nuclear configuration”. After that period, different sized urban locations from all over the territory were incorporated into it, based on the newly available road network that connected distant places in the country (MARTINE et al., 1988, p.19).

The Amazon is one of these far off areas, which were incorporated in this process, as a result of a set of federal government actions (Becker, 1985) promoting industrial and agricultural activities that encouraged migration to this Region after the 1970s, as discussed by Martine and Turchi (1988, p. 161). Thus, an intensification of the urbanization process erupted in the Region, which, after 1980, was characterized as “[an] urbanized forest” (BECKER, 1985).

This urbanization process “broke Belém’s prevalence in the Arc of Deforestation or Dense Settlement” and “(...) several cities with a population between fifty and one hundred thousand inhabitants were formed in the vicinity of Belém, along the Belém-Brasília Highway, in Rondônia and Mato Grosso” (BECKER, 2013, p.47). Becker (2013) states that the Amazon has a greater expression in its small urban centers, where indigenous, caboclo, and, indeed, riverine culture and knowledge persist. These small towns predominate and are considered cities despite their lack of basic infrastructure and their inefficiency in generating economic resources (BECKER, 2005). They are small urban centers, with fewer than twenty thousand inhabitants, with “little or no infrastructure, whose economic base is the transfer of public resources and, although they have a city structure, they lack urban economic activities” (OLIVEIRA, 2006).

Cities with less than twenty thousand inhabitants preponderate in the Amazon Region and according to the 2010 Census, they accounted for more than 60% of the total cities in the Region. They are the result of changes over the past forty years, as is exemplified by the cities in the Amazon Delta. Costa and Brondizio (2011) point out that the cities located along the Amazon River floodplain have a history of over 300 years of urban and economic dynamics.

Understanding the urban dynamics in the contemporary Amazon, which are also socio-environmental changes, means that attention needs to be paid to the relationships created by the rural-urban continuum and the relationships in the regional urban system. For Padoch et al. (2008), the extension of social and family relationships form a continuum between rural-urban spaces.

Given these discussions, it is clear that it is no longer possible to understand these urban spaces solely through the concepts conceived under the logic of the capitalist system of central areas, such as Southeastern Brazil. Instead, it is necessary to consider that the reality of these riverine places presents another urbanity. There are structural problems in these urban spaces in the Delta. However, as explained by Oliveira and Schor (2008), there is always hope on the other side of the river, which drives these cities’ dynamics and gives rise to the ribeirurbano’s identity.

Therefore, this article aims to present an analysis of the dynamics of small cities in the Amazon River Delta, including their history, recent urban growth, and investments in infrastructure, based on the study of three cities: Afuá and Ponta de Pedras, in the state of Pará, and Mazagão, in the state of Amapá. The concept of urbanity is addressed taking the concept of the ribeirurbano as the starting point of the discussion.

## METHODOLOGY

This research was developed using aerial photographs obtained in 1969, and satellite images from different sensor systems, acquired between 1984 and 2010, in different months. The images for each year were selected to map the urban area of the cities studied and to quantify urban growth. In addition, census data on the number of inhabitants for the years 1980, 1991, 2000 and 2010 were employed to assist in assessing the cities’ population growth.

Urban residents in the three focal cities of this research responded to a questionnaire designed to assess their socioeconomic profile, the infrastructure available to them, and their access to services. The samples of the urban households in each city were carried out according to the method proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), thus the number of households sampled by census sector in each city was

around 10% of the total existing households.

This research was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the University of Vale do Paraíba and was approved under number 69815317.8.0000.5503. Taking the number of urban households disclosed in the 2010 population census into consideration, the questionnaires were completed in July 2016, July 2017 and July 2018, covering 883 urban households: 311 in Afuá, 262 in Mazagão, and 301 in Ponta de Pedras.

## THE SMALL CITIES OF THE AMAZON AND THEIR CHALLENGES FOR ANOTHER URBANITY

Some authors view small cities as those capable of meeting minimum needs (SPÓSITO and SILVA, 2013). Actually, they play an important role in the dynamics of a network and the group of cities in this dynamic has the potential to make a difference in the Region. According to Endlich (2016, p. 15), despite their small spatial character, they have political, social and cultural possibilities. Thus, this urban needs to be understood in light of these possibilities and their social constructions.

Sawyer (1987, p.43) explains that despite their size, small cities, with less than twenty thousand inhabitants, have important urban functions at the local level, as they offer opportunities to the population in their surroundings. In the Amazon Region, these places have more than mere demographic features. As Oliveira (2004) points out, they articulate poorly with the surrounding cities; they have almost zero economic activities and most employment is in public services; there is a low capacity to offer services, especially basic ones, linked to health, education, and security; and overall, rural activities predominate.

These cities' landscape has strong natural features and social relations that are produced and reproduced, created and recreated by both exogenous agents and the culture of the riverine populations themselves (OLIVEIRA, 2004). Consequently, the population is accustomed used to living with the essential products of the forest and they have also created a culture through the habits and customs that have been formed over time. These riverine populations experience a reality of abandonment concerning public investments and the implementation of public policies; however, they have developed living conditions and survival strategies like those of the poor located in rural areas, even within the urban areas of cities (TAVARES, 2009).

These behaviors coexist with strong links to riverside life, giving a peculiar character to the Amazon Region. Life is associated with nature's tempo, the tidal flows and their urban setting, inherited from different eras and resulting in three spatial patterns. According to Trindade Jr et al. (2008), these are the riverine (directly or indirectly influenced by the river), the spontaneous (without any referential orientation due to the random construction that followed the needs and interests of spatial appropriation of its different agents) and the pre-defined (usually public or private subdivisions). Identity is linked with the place, of which the river is part and includes various interactions between the inhabitants and the watercourses: domestic use, source of material resources, leisure, and symbolic representation. (TRINDADE JUNIOR et. al., 2008, p. 39).

## THE CITIES OF THE FOREST, URBANITY AND THE RIBEIRURBANO

Certain authors have called the cities of the Amazon 'cities of the forest' (BROWDER and GODFREY, 1997; CASTRO, 2009), which are typically small cities that combine a rural way of life with a rhythm and dependence on forest resources. Such cities have established direct contacts with other nearby cities - towns, villages, and riverine communities (TRINDADE JR, 2013). They are examples of the interactions between local culture and rural life, where the economic bases depend on the local and regional scales. In this sense, these "forest cities" are usually small and lack modernization, with a very uneven economic and territorial reality compared to other Brazilian cities. For Trindade Jr (2013), "cities in the forest" are characterized by how they articulate with areas outside the Region and establish links unconnected to forest resources. Their customs or ways of urban life are a form of denial of their former reality, which was directly linked to the caboclo's customs and traditions. The "forest"

space has become a means of exploring wood, minerals, fragrances, species, fauna and flora, and tourism, among others.

The landscapes of these small towns have different stages that designate the structuring agents' actions and retain similarities. They are strongly marked by social relations, which give them a unique meaning. Nature is remarkable and privileged, but its real existence is given through these social relationships, and so the natural "fades and what remains is artificially constructed" (OLIVEIRA and SCHOR, 2008, p. 19).

According to Trindade Junior (2010), even though the Amazon Forest is considered an urbanized forest, since the 1980s (BECKER, 1985), there has been proximity between urban and rural in the Region that makes distinctions difficult. In this sense, the social, economic and geographical dynamics of each city must be considered.

When discussing this urban aspect of the Amazon, Trindade Junior (2013) highlights and suggests some city patterns in the region, for example, the riverine city, the highway city, and the company city. According to the author, these cities have an "urban-diversity" that represents both the cities themselves and the diverse urban areas in the region. This urban diversity plays an important regional role but frequently its singularities are not captured by studies. How these cities articulate goes beyond local activity, becoming not only strategic but also "logistic cities" that aggregate the economic relations linked to extra-regional activities (TRINDADE JR, 2013).

These small riverine towns, which are and/or "of the forest", have small populations but are large in terms of their importance in the local urban network. Their ways of life give them a unique urbanity, between needs and virtualities. In this article, "Urbanity" is defined as the quality or condition of the urban being, and refers to life in the city, namely, the quality of life in the city, as discussed by Ribeiro (1995).

Ribeiro (1995) argues that the Brazilian urbanization process has produced urbanization without urbanity, as social exclusion has been reinforced and access to services and infrastructure is far from satisfactory. The author also comments that "urban Brazil is also one of the regions far away from the area that has historically concentrated modernization processes" (RIBEIRO, 1995, p.576). For the author, Brazilian society has structural problems, which need to be considered, as

How can the threats of increasing levels of exclusion, carried by the current modernization projects, be faced in social realities with intense modernity deficits, that is, of normative rationality in economic and social relations? (RIBEIRO, 1995, p. 559).

Léfèbvre (2001) believes that a possible way to build citizenship lies in the direction of "a new humanism", by establishing "another man, the man of urban society." Ribeiro (1995, p.585) explains that a new urbanity of cooperation must be proposed, which, according to the author, "could stimulate the diffusion of a new urban development ideal and help to clearly discern the forms of investment and financing of services and equipment of real interest to Brazilian society".

We also believe that this other urbanity can be established by this cooperativism, by the social networks that are still very present in small cities, especially the riverine Amazon. In this manner, the population's participation helps to build more unique cities, transforming them into places of possibilities. As Oliveira (2006) points out, "it is necessary to cross the river, because there is always hope on the other side". This hope makes these cities breathe another urbanity.

Thus, social space, economic activities, and family relationships have an existential relationship that, despite not denying the exogenous, comprises a dynamic marked by peculiarities that need to be considered in the context of regional development, such as those found in the cities of Afuá, Ponta de Pedras and Mazagão.

The ribeirurbano, therefore, has an existential relationship in which the various aspects of the river are part: contemplation, legends, stories, beliefs, a path, economic activities, family relationships, contacts, access, and opportunities.

In this sense, the ribeirurbano is an identity that does not deny the exogenous but has a life project linked to the place. Lima (2017) indicates the strong relationship between the inhabitant and the

location. It is this particularity, of a daily life that evokes the return: those who leave to work or to study outside take their habits with them and many return to their land, as a commitment to contribute to their city. It is part of a mosaic of small towns in the Amazon, multicolored amid the river and the forest.

## THE CITIES OF AFUÁ, MAZAGÃO AND PONTA DE PEDRAS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DELTA - ANOTHER URBANITY

According to the DELTAS Project (2014), for study purposes, the Amazon River Delta region includes 49 municipalities, nine of which are located in the state of Amapá and 40 in the state of Pará. In the last three decades, the urbanization process in this region has been intense and it is clear that the use value of this natural environment has been compromised. Cities with less than 20 thousand inhabitants predominate (68%), and 86% of all the cities in this area have less than 50 thousand inhabitants.

The way of life of a significant portion of the population that inhabits these environments is subject to the most diverse natural risks (landslides, floods, erosions) and diseases from unsanitary conditions. These factors simultaneously lead to socio-spatial segregation and are reflected in an unequal society (LEFF, 2002, p. 15-16).

The cities of Ponte de Pedras and Afuá, located in the state of Pará, and Mazagão, in the state of Amapá, are inserted in this context of small cities and are the focal study of the present research (Figure 1). These three small towns are representative of the diversity of small towns in the Delta: cities with an economy supported by forest resources, a predominance of the service sector, and high employment in the public sector. Due to their locations and characteristics, these cities allow us to understand the “urban-diversity” (TRINDADE JR, 2013) in the Delta and the possibilities of resilience

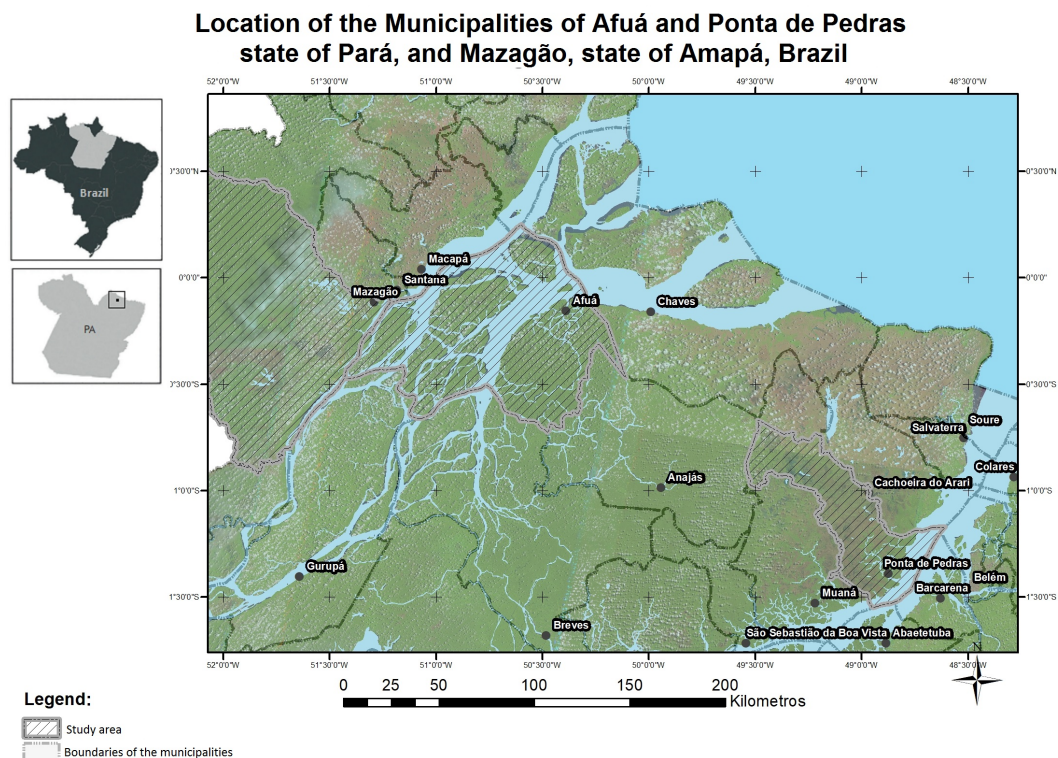


Figure 1 - Location of the cities studied: Afuá, Mazagão, and Ponta de Pedras

The formation of these cities is related to the colonial period, but they were recognized as cities in the nineteenth century. Ponta de Pedras was founded by Law 886, of April 18, 1877 (PEREIRA, 2013),

Afuá was erected as a village in 1890, and became a city, in 1896 (LOMBA E NOBRE JR, 2013), and Mazagão, which emerged from the migration of 436 families from Morocco to the Amazon in 1769, encouraged by the Portuguese crown, (BOYER, 2008, p. 13). This small settlement, which was formed in Amapá, had its headquarters transferred to another place, a few kilometers from the original site, and, according to Boyer (2008), in 1888 it was promoted to the status of a city.

The municipality of Ponta de Pedras is located on Marajó Island and, according to the 2010 Census data (IBGE, 2017), it had 25,999 inhabitants in 2010. The inhabitants of the urban area corresponded to 48% of the total inhabitants. The Municipality of Afuá is located in Marajó Bay, on the northern channel of the mouth of the Amazon River.

According to the 2010 Census, it had a population of 35,042 thousand inhabitants and 27% were the urban population. The municipality of Mazagão, located forty-five kilometers to the south of the city of Macapá, capital of the state of Amapá, had 17,032 inhabitants, in 2010, with 48% of the total in the urban area.

These three cities (Figure 2), administrative headquarters of municipalities of the same name, are riverine. Like many cities in the Amazon, they emerged on the banks of the rivers and their population still maintains a strong bond to the waters of these rivers, both in terms of income generation, from fishing or extraction of products from the floodplain forest, and their residence in that environment, as noted by Trindade Jr (2008) and Oliveira (2006).

Living on the banks and floodplains of the rivers is an important part of the life of this riverside population, supported by the acquisition of small boats that give these residents mobility and which are often the principal or only means of transport in these regions. Figure 2 shows photographs of the landscape of these three cities, highlighting some main aspects: firstly the rivers, which border the cities and which are intrinsically part of residents' lives, as is the case of Afuá and Ponta de Pedras, although currently less so in Mazagão.

There are unfinished works in Mazagão, which were only delivered many years after they were started. Afuá has a distinctive and colorful architecture and in Afuá and Ponta de Pedras bridges wind through the cities and give singularity to the riverine landscape. Also, there is a simultaneous downtown area with poorly maintained streets, as is the example of Ponta de Pedras.

The city of Ponta de Pedras can only be accessed by boat from Belém. This two-hour trip used to take three and a half hours, four years ago. It is a city of várzea and terra firma, considering that there are still places in the city accessed by bridges, which are found in the urban várzea (VALOTA, 2019), as well as neighborhoods in non-flooded areas, considered terra firma.

The city of Mazagão, located in the state of Amapá, is 60 minutes from the capital, Macapá, and can be accessed by the highway. Four years ago, a bridge was built over the Vila Nova river, which precedes the city entrance.

This structure made road access easier and has created a new growth dynamic for the city, whose economy is strongly connected to the production of açaí.

The population of these cities is riverine, and they are typically forest cities (TRINDADE JR., 2013), that is, they have an interdependent relationship with the natural resources that are important for their residents' survival.



Figure 2 - Urban Images: (a) Afuá, a city on stilts with a very distinctive architecture; (b) Mazagão, a dispersed city that, after four years, managed to inaugurate its UBS (1 and 2); (c) Ponta de Pedras, a dendritic city that mixes areas of bridges with areas of dry land. Source: Photographs obtained by the authors, on different field visits (collection of the Laboratory of Study of Cities, 2019)

Between 1984 and 2010, the urban areas of these cities grew significantly. Mazagão's area grew just over 300%, Afuá, grew more than 450%, and Ponta de Pedras' area increased 180% over this period, Figure 3 shows the difference in the growth intensity for the three cities, based on the maps alone.

This urban growth is associated with rural-urban migration, due to the intensification of açai production in these municipalities. According to IBGE (2017), for example, Afuá, Mazagão, and Ponta stand out as important producers of this fruit.

**Urban Growth of Afuá and Ponta de Pedras, state of Pará, and Mazagão, state of Amapá, Brasil - 1984 up to 2010**

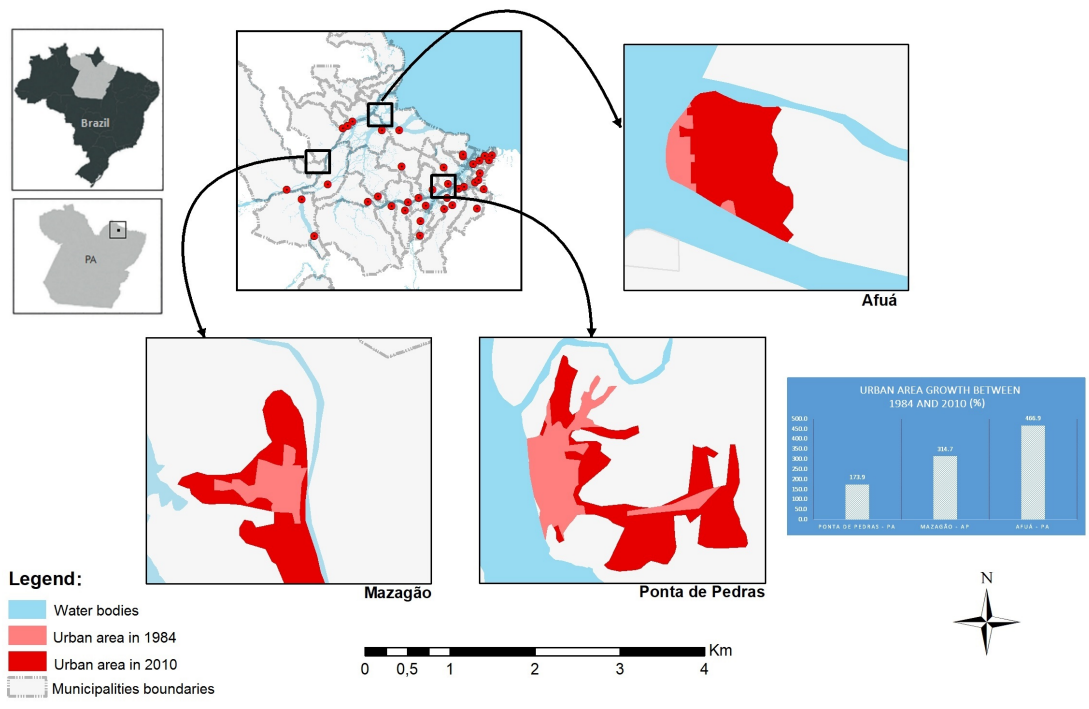


Figure 3 - Mapping the urban growth of Afuá, Mazagão, and Ponta de Pedras -1984 and 2000

The graph in Figure 4 evidences the relationship between the growth, in area, of the three cities, the urban population, and the available infrastructure for urban households.

Regarding access to the general water supply network, we observed that, according to IBGE (2017), in 2000, 28%, 85% and 74% of urban households in Mazagão, Afuá, and Ponta de Pedras, respectively, were connected to the mains water network. In 2010, these figures had changed to 41%, 84%, and 74.5%, respectively for Mazagão, Afuá, and Ponta de Pedras.

This information indicates that despite the increase in the number of urban households with access to the water and sewage infrastructure, this increase did not meet the population’s needs. Thus, the residents of these cities, and several others in the Amazon River Delta, continue to be deprived of access to those basic services that help provide a better quality of life.

Urban growth, which reflects the appreciation of açaí, attracted people to the cities in search of better public services, but that is not reflected in the quality of access to these services.



SMALL CITIES OF THE DELTA

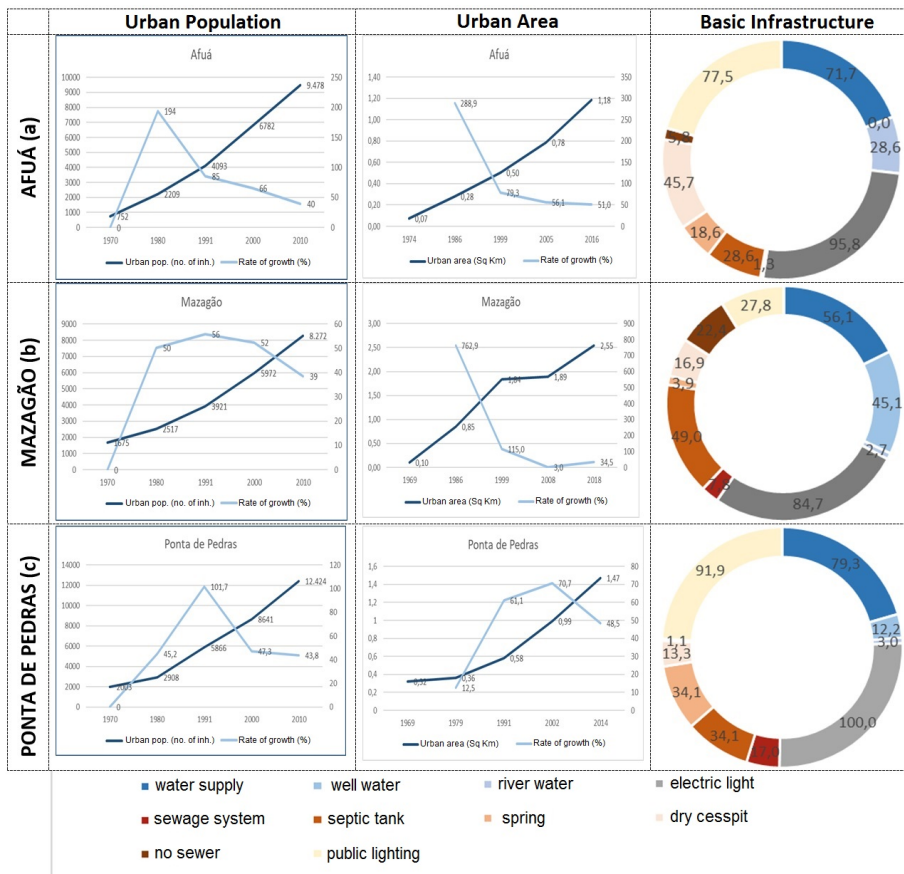


Figure 4 - Graphs of the urban population, in different years, of the urban area, in 1984 and 2010 and of the basic infrastructure available to urban households, when applying questionnaires, for the cities of Afuá (a), Mazagão (b) and Ponta de Pedras (c). Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data obtained from mapping the growth of the cities of Afuá Mazagão and Ponta de Pedras and data on population growth (IBGE, 2017) and access to infrastructure by households, obtained by applying forms.

The results obtained in 2013 and 2017 show that access to these services was unchanged. According to the table, it appears that access to the water supply system has improved in all three cities. However, the number of households connected to the general sewage network has not changed and domestic effluents are discharged into streams or septic tanks.

Figure 5 shows the reality of these locations, where the right to clean water, a basic need to maintain the population’s health and quality of life, is denied.

The questionnaires applied to urban households in the three cities studied, evidenced that the urban economy’s dependence on forest resources is no longer the main income generation activity of urban residents.

Many of the interviewees responded that a family member’s pension is the most important source of family income (14% in Afuá, 20% in Ponta de Pedras and 18% in Mazagão). Public workers’ salaries are another important resource for family revenue (14% in Afuá, 8% in Ponta de Pedras and 12% in Mazagão).



Figure 5 - Examples of the reality of the water supply and sewage collection system in the cities of Afuá (a), Ponta de Pedras (b) and Mazagão.

The income from açai production is fundamental for the residents of Ponta de Pedras (13%) and Mazagão (26%), however, it is not an important activity for family incomes in Afuá (only 2%). In contrast, for the residents of Afuá, commerce (employment or property) is an important element for the income of 8% of families; in Ponta de Pedras, it is an important income-generating activity for 12% of the interviewed families, whereas, in Mazagão, this is the case for only 3% of families.

These results reaffirm the deliberations of several authors discussed in this article, for whom these cities are plural, despite the similarities between them. Therefore, how else can their singularities be observed? It is necessary to progressively deepen the discussions about these singularities because they define the qualitative in the search for their urbanity

## THE UNIQUENESS OF THE URBAN GROWTH PROCESS AND THE RIBEIRURBANO

When observing the urban growth process of the three cities that are the focus of this study, it is clear that their intensity of urban growth is very similar. This growth, as mentioned, has no impact on investment in infrastructure. Thus, these three cities fail to provide infrastructure services to their populations.

Considering other aspects, as analyzed by Montoia (2018), Rangel (2019) and Lima (2017), these three cities are deficient in the provision of basic services. In all three cases, there is a problem investing in Basic Health Units (UBS) and hiring the technical staff to care for the population.

Public management is a problematic issue in all three cities, although, in this regard, it is notable that Afuá's administration is more citizen-centered in terms of the maintenance of public patrimony, such as city hall buildings like existing public schools in the urban area, and the elaboration of a participative master plan. In Ponta de Pedras the public administration's concern with the collective space was not evident, and even less so in Mazagão.

The situation of leisure environments is also noteworthy, some examples are shown in figure 2. Afuá has a more compact urban area, so leisure environments are easily accessed, and their maintenance is observable. Well-cared-for wooden walkways, well-maintained sports courts, as well as clean and painted squares.

The public leisure equipment in Ponta de Pedras is less well maintained than in Afuá and in Mazagão none of the existing leisure spaces were found to be in good condition.

Urban roads used for circulation are another important aspect. Afuá is a city on stilts, the bridges must be always well maintained. Rotten wood can cause passers-by to fall. During fieldwork, we witnessed pedestrians falling off bridges, which is a very common occurrence.

The substitution of wood for concrete has taken place in the roads of greater circulation; many of these works were financed by the federal government. In the central area, the roads are of good quality. Upon entering the city, towards the Capim Marinho neighborhood, which has emerged in the last 10 years, the bridges were observed to be poorly maintained. The water supply in this neighborhood is also precarious.

Ponta de Pedras is located on floodplains and dry land, in the várzea areas bridges with poor or regular maintenance were observed. The public authorities are landfilling many of these areas because, according to city hall staff, the bridges, which are part of the riverine culture and closely related to the environment, make it difficult to come and go, and to provide emergency services for the population. There has been a change in tidal dynamics due to embankments that were implemented without an environmental impact study (VALOTA, 2019).

In the portion of the city located on land, the traffic routes are paved and relatively well maintained, as the asphalt is poor quality and the rains are intense. Due to the precarious maintenance, coming and going is difficult. The streets and avenues are better maintained today than they were ten years ago, but they still need more attention.

Mazagão has a dispersed occupation, wide streets, and is all located on terra firma. However, the maintenance of the streets and avenues is very bad, except for the avenue that turns into a highway and connects the municipality to the interior of the state. As a rule, the streets and avenues are not well maintained.

The situation reported above leads us to observe that the absence of urbanity highlighted by Ribeiro (1995), is also verified in these cities. However, it is noteworthy how the population interacts with this environment, even with these shortcomings. In Afuá, the interaction with public space is greater, the population likes living in a city on stilts and is proud of this. Particular care is taken with the facade of the houses, which are carefully painted in strong colors and have unique joinery work. These elements reflect the residents' joy in living in that location. This care for residences and gardens is mainly observed in the oldest and most central area. In Capim Marinho, a neighborhood formed by an irregular occupation, the roads are in poor condition and the houses are simpler. Despite these problems, the Afuenses' relationship with their city is one of special affection and delight, which shows us the ribeirurbano being, as discussed by Montoia (2018).

Ponta de Pedras also has a relationship of empathy between the population and their city, despite the increase in violence in recent years. Thus, Pontapedrenses are very proud of their city. The influence of the metropolis, Belém, is noted in the reproduction of construction patterns, such as the old-fashioned use of decorative metal bars on windows and doors.

In Mazagão the population does not interact as much with its public space, which may be due to the proximity of Macapá (thirty-two kilometers away). Since the inauguration of the bridge over the Vila Nova river, opened in 2010, and the "Integration Washington Elias dos Santos" bridge, over the Matapi river, in 2016, the travel time between Mazagão and the state capital has fallen to sixty minutes. This has facilitated journeys and the commuting of residents who find work more easily in the capital. The city currently has the characteristic of a dormitory town, which will be reflected in the data from the next census.

Thus, in the three cities analyzed there is a reproduction of non-urbanity, as discussed by Ribeiro (1995). However, the inhabitants of these cities and their relationship with the place, the ribeirurbano, allows us to affirm that there is another urbanity. We cannot view the deficiencies only as defects, instead, we must observe the relationship highlighted by Nunes (2008), Oliveira and Schor (2008), between the population with their environment, its family network, with the ethos, as a space of hope and opportunities.

This proposed urbanity understands the small Amazon riverine cities as part of the Brazilian "jig-saw puzzle", as they have in common the language, tastes and habits and the political and economic logic that permeates the entire national territory. However, they have vernacular characteristics, which we call ribeirurbano, part of the understanding that the individual is a citizen of a place, where, despite

the presence of the State, there is the spatial production of daily life, according to which people construct their existence (MONTÓIA, 2018). It is the triad of place, inhabitant and way of life, traced by social relations that manifest the urban/ river/ forest.

## CONCLUSION

These cities have variables worthy of consideration: their urban growth in area and number of inhabitants, the social relationships established in a network, investments in infrastructure that have not kept up with real needs, with a precariousness that can be perceived by the naked eye, their residents' income generation and the reduced reliance on forest resources, with the increased role of the açai.

They also stand out for their vernacular character, the ribeirurbano, an aspect of identity to consider, not only in the development of economic activities but in thinking about urban and regional planning in a way that recognizes this socio-spatial alterity and executes public policies in which this reality is allied and not denied.

Thus, we believe that for this reality urbanity – the quality of life in the urban space – should acknowledge this scenario and, thus, enable the recognition and construction of citizenship in this new humanism that establishes “the man of urban society”, with the regional touch which is the ribeirubano, space and man.

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