

Amazon and Planetary Environmental Crisis - Beyond the grotesque and ignorant

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In the context of a reactionary political-economic agenda pursued by the Bolsonaro government, the environmental debate has been the target of strategic attack by the latter. Given the interests of agrarian, mining, and industrial capital (which requires energy, raw materials, etc.), the Amazon region is the place for the empirical experiments of the agenda.

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Invasion of indigenous lands by illegal miners, predatory logging, increased burning and escalating violence against small farmers, environmentalists, landless, quilombola and indigenous leadership are on the agenda under a government of fascist politics. And it is in this environment that the controversy between the Brazilian government and the international community explodes, with the French government at the head, around the burning of the Amazon and global warming.

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Capital as a fundamental factor of the environmental crisis

A condition for a rigorous analysis of the issue at hand is to take as a methodological starting point the observation of the fundamental ontological condition: capital is in modern life the main factor of changes in the dynamics of nature that result in the environmental crisis, global warming. This means that the world of commodities puts pressure on the natural world on a scale that irreversibly degrades natural resources, biodiversity stocks and the objective reproduction of social being.

This condition deepens with the technical-scientific revolutions. Ricardo Antunes, in his book *The Privilege of Servitude: The New Proletariat of Services in the Digital Age* (2018), points out that in the universe of online, digital work, in the production of mobile phones, there is an effective destructive exploitation of workers and workers. of nature in China's coal mines: "accidents, contamination, devastation of the productive body, deaths, all occur in the society of those who thought that information technology would eliminate mutilating work" (ANTUNES, 2018, p. 20). Capital is thus the main agent of production of man's estrangement from the natural environment and his own nature. Therefore, the challenge to think critically is to point out the limits of the discursive keys around climate change and the burning in the Amazon produced by the political leaders of the European Union and the reactionary political group that governs Brazil. of the interests of capital. There is, therefore, no way out on a capitalist path, since it cannot promote the emancipation of the social being and establish relationships that do not degrade ecological systems.

Structurally, the Amazon is connected to the emergence of capitalism, occupying in its various stages of development a place of primitive accumulation of capital. From colonization to contemporaneity it has been the scene of expropriation, theft, and degradation of their natural resource stocks, massacre of indigenous peoples, voracious exploitation, to the death, of the labor force. Industrialized, financialized Brazil has in its processes of exploitation of the Amazon the darkest face of its capitalist adventure. The article *Land-use and climate change risks in the Amazon and the need for a novel sustainable development paradigm* (Nobre et al 2016), points out that Amazon competes with 14.5% of the Gross Domestic Product of Brazilian agriculture, deforesting for such an area. 750,000 km². In contrast, the state of São Paulo contributes, by the same economic variable, with 11.3% to a deforestation area of 193,000 km². Comparing the two data, one can see the capitalist option for the exploration of large territorial scales in the region.

A recent article entitled *Moved to Paranoia* and published by Intercept Brasil reveals the Bolsonaro Government's plan to intensify the economic exploitation of the Amazon through the extraction of subsoil wealth, the construction of hydroelectric dams and roads, and the attraction of non-indigenous labor. the region. The basis of this policy rests on the recycling by the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs of the current government of contents forged in the Military Dictatorship for the region: that this is demographically a void, that there is a risk of foreign invasion by the border and therefore it is necessary "Integrate" it into the nation to reaffirm national sovereignty. In this authoritarian key for the region, the Chinese element, which can invade Brazil via Suriname, was elected as an external enemy. However, the effective enemy of the fascist politics narrative is internal. Indigenous people, quilombolas, small farmers, trade unionists, and environmentalists are on their way to calculating predatory exploitation. According to the Bolsonaro government, Amazon should contribute 50% of Brazilian GDP. This delirium represents an intensification of environmental destruction patterns that can only be advanced through repressive instruments against the internal enemy.

In the Amazon, therefore, one of the central aspects of capital becomes effective, according to Marx: that the socio-metabolic control of capital subjugates men and the natural environment in such a way as to guarantee to go beyond any limits imposed on its expansion and circulation, thus freeing it up. , its destructive effects.

Capital [...] moves beyond national boundaries and prejudices as well as the divinization of nature, as well as the traditional satisfaction of current needs, complacently limited to certain limits, and the reproduction of the previous way of life. Capital is destructive of all this and constantly revolutionizes, it breaks down all the barriers that force the development of productive forces, the expansion of needs, the diversity of production and the exploitation and exchange of natural and spiritual forces (MARX, 2011, p. 334)

A critical disposition regarding the debate on the erosion of ecological systems, climate change and the place of the Amazon in such a context, is to understand that within the logic of capitalist accumulation there is only the destructibility of nature and human societies.

The meaning of deforestation in the Amazon

In the second half of the twentieth century, at the risk of nuclear catastrophe, pollution of the atmosphere, water, destruction of ecological chains, etc., governments, scientists, environmental organizations and various social groups began to debate the signs of a planetary environmental crisis. Several world meetings were held, international documents and agreements were produced with the intention of mitigating the effects of environmental degradation. It is in this context, as I pointed out in *The Green Panopticon* (2014), that the Amazon comes to be understood, along with Antarctica, Andes, desert areas and oceans, as a fundamental component of a set of ecological mega processes that, in the dynamic interrelation among themselves, ensure environmental balance on a global scale. Now, in the current phase of capital accumulation, marked by a structural crisis that unfolds into economic and political measures based on an option for barbarism, negating the scientific argumentation of an era of post-truth, this environmental balance is rapidly deteriorating. By taking, then, the Amazon as a place of heuristic explanation, we can grasp the totality of the planetary environmental crisis. Region, nation and world, expressions of the articulation derived from the globalized capitalist dynamics, destroy the environmental balance.

Lovejoy and Nobre, in *Amazon Tipping Point* (2018), point out that the scientific community is already consensus that the Amazon rainforest is responsible for producing half of its own rainfall, recycling moisture 5 to 6 times as the air masses move to the Atlantic. Their deforestation raises a key question: How much deforestation is required for the region's hydrological cycle to be degraded to the point of irreversible recovery of the region's ecosystems? Currently, the link between deforestation, burning and global warming results in an acceleration of the degradation of this cycle, which points to the reduction of forest to savannas. To this end, it is estimated that between 20% and 25% of deforestation is the tipping point from which recovery will be irreversible. The 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2016 droughts, as well as the 2009, 2012 and 2014 floods that plagued the Amazon may indicate signs of this tipping point. As part of its strategy to address this turning point, at the Paris Conference in 2015, Brazil committed to reforesting by 1230 12 million hectares.

However, with Jair Bolsonaro as President of Brazil, the country is increasingly distancing itself from this commitment. Demarcated indigenous land, protected areas, and strategic institutions, such as the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), are furiously attacked, censored, resulting in an escalation of dismantling of the conditions facing the inflection point. The negativity of environmental guidelines, scientific data on global warming, the turning point in the Amazon, among others, manifested itself in an action orchestrated by farmers in August 2019, which became known as "the day of the fire", when several fire outbreaks were simultaneously caused in southwestern Pará State.

There is a dark march toward the destruction of the largest rainforest on the planet. Facing it poses the challenge of looking at the resistances that come from within the Amazon because they imply a radical critique of the foundations on which the destructive forms that capital imposes in its process of expansion.

The anti-capitalist resistances coming from within

In the book *The Archeology of Violence: Essays on Political Anthropology* (1982), anthropologist Pierre Clastres notes that among the Yanomami that inhabit the Venezuelan and Brazilian Amazonia, as well as among other indigenous societies in Latin America, social relations are not limited to realize among humans, for in fact the relationship with nature is another dimension of social relationship. From this point of view, even nature does not exist. Natural events are “social events”, they translate into cultural terms.

Phillipe Descola, in *Structure or Feeling: The Relationship with the Animal in the Amazon* (1998), points out that the Western dualism that treats the animal world and the world of men as two distinct ontological domains does not correspond to the way Amazonian cosmologies grasp these domains. Among the various indigenous peoples of the Amazon, plants, animals, and other natural phenomena are, indeed, human beings, bearers of reflection and intentionality, and therefore they are people, they have souls. There is no separation between the universe of culture and the universe of nature.

Indigenous societies’ use of elements of the natural world are mediated by a series of rites and symbols that express the relationship between people. Such a relationship is not based on the logic of capitalist work for the generation of more value, on the private appropriation of the goods of nature and the necessary intensification of the exploitation of nature. Rosa Luxemburg, in the book *Introduction to Political Economy*, by taking stock of the ethnographic material produced from the mid-nineteenth century, takes, for example, information about Peruvian indigenous societies to point out the limits of bourgeois economic thinking about these peoples. Failure to understand the logic of indigenous societies makes Western bourgeois thinking bear an attitude similar to that of the Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Dutch conquerors: it is ignorant and grotesque.

The current debate that throws the Amazon at the center of concerns about climate change is marked by ignorance and grotesque. Speaking via social networking, President Bolsonaro, preparing to go to the UN General Assembly, argued that “we know from official data that the burning has all year, unfortunately. Want me to do what? Have. Even for the sake of tradition. Not only does the caboclo set fire to the field to plant something for survival. The Indian does the same thing. But there are those who do it criminally. ” This is the ignorant and grotesque unknowing, which manifests itself fully in the speech of the Brazilian president. It puts in a single reason radically distinct ontological dispositions.

In the Amazon, the presence of fire goes back thousands of years. According to Mauro Leonel, in *The Use of Fire: Indigenous Management and Pyromancy of Monoculture* (2000), Indigenous labor activity uses fire through a series of precautionary and regulatory techniques so that it serves within the precise limits of needs. of collective work. With accurate management techniques, fire should ensure, in the case of the fields, a consortium of varied species that guarantee the productivity of a field for decades. In addition, fire is part of the rituals to ward off evil spirits or to protect the path of the dead to a land without evil. Taking the considerations of Descola and Clastres above, it can be affirmed that fire is part of a context of social interaction in which the dualism between man and nature does not exist and, therefore, its use occurs considering the respect between beings, being humanly anthropomorphic. or not, who are people, have souls.

The ignorant and grotesque discourse, therefore, cannot perceive the particularity of the presence of fire among indigenous people. And by stating that there are those who use fire in a criminal way, it is anchored in a discursive resource so that public opinion does not reach the true factor of large-scale burning in the Amazon: the large agricultural capital, the pyromaniac monoculture, which

reduces nature to the thingified condition, reduced to the chrematistic and predatory logic of capitalist accumulation.

Ignorant and grotesque obscurantism chooses not to understand the logic of cosmologies of indigenous societies in the Amazon. There lies a denial of the destructibility of the world of commodities; ontologically they challenge to go beyond the order of capital.

Beyond the grotesque and ignorant

The challenge is set to debate the Amazon outside the discursive key of the colonizer, to reverse the starting point of the analysis. The environmental crisis in its national and global dimensions will only be effectively apprehended if we take the periphery as an explanatory element. And periphery in the sociological sense, quite different from a physical-geographical perspective. Structural periphery that, by this very condition, as Florestan Fernandes (2008) has already pointed out, has the worst starting point in the formation of the nation and the dynamics of capitalist accumulation. It is from this very condition that the materiality of the possibility of glimpsing a radically different social order emerges from the order of capital.

The periphery of the Amazon, then, must be liberated from the various ignorant and crude discursive forms that dispute legitimate authority for its exploitation or defense. Or the Amazon is thought of as a key according to the logic of the various societies that inhabit it (indigenous, riverine, quilombola, small farmers, rubber tappers, etc.), who experience a non-strange, non-thingified relationship between society and nature, or, An environmental, political, economic, social and contemporary crisis will result in an irreversible plunge into barbarism.

To remain in the dark night of ignorant and crude thinking, colonizing thought, agent thinking of an agenda of primitive capital accumulation in the 21st century, is to go to the death, to the fall of the sky, as it is put by the Yanomami cosmology: when the last shaman disappears, when the last tree is cut down, the sky will fall.

The tipping point from which deforestation will make the recovery of forests in the Amazon irreversible announce that the fall of the sky is approaching. Therefore, not a certain environmentalist discourse by Macron, let alone Bolsonaro's fascist, anti-environmentalist policy, can offer an alternative outside the framework of the objectification and destruction of nature. The debate should start from the anti-capitalist alternative that underlies the social relationship that thrives in the Amazon and in which people, beings with consciousness and soul, are both anthropomorphically human as animals, plants, rivers, mountains.

Luiz Fernando de Souza Santos

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- Luiz Fernando de Souza Santos is a sociologist and professor of Social Sciences Department from Amazonas Federal University.