



# VIOLENCE AND INSTITUTIONS IN THE AMAZON

## Constructing a Tradition of Expropriation in a Violent Environment

Felipe Milanez | Centre of Social Studies | University of Coimbra



### QUESTION

Why are these people killed?

The main questions driving this research project involve environmental conflicts in the Amazon, specifically the role of social and environmental violence as integral parts of the model of colonization in the Amazon and the extraction of natural resources (timber and mining), land grabbing, and impacts from infrastructure projects (roads, megadams). The advance of the Arch of Deforestation (the so called frontiers of capitalism or fronts of expansion) towards the central area of the biome results in environmental conflicts between local people, so called "traditional", and the new agents.

**Is violence a product (result), or is it itself an integral part (and not a consequence) of the process of environmental, cultural and social destruction?**

### SUB QUESTIONS

How can we classify these different population?

- How can we explain the decrease in deforestation rates and the persistence of high levels of rural violence, once those two factors have always been connected in literature?
- What economic, social and political variables are involved in different situations along the "Arch of Deforestation"? Network of capitalist violence?
- How local communities react and resist facing the challenges created by the advance of capitalism and violence in the forest? Are the forms of resistances form of environmentalism of the poor (Guha/Alie)? How and why does they engage, and how and why does they demobilize?
- How state institutions mediate such conflicts? Is there a normalization of violence?

### OBJECTIVES

- This contributes to understand why and how so many people are being killed every year in the Amazon due to environmental struggles since the 1970s.
- The project will investigate how institutions work in mediating violence in the Amazon and will contribute to a better understanding of the current process of enclosure and resource appropriation in the region.
- This research will review the concept of Violent Environments and will contribute to further develop the concept of Violent Environments and spaces and forms of government and territorialization taking into account the regional case of the Amazon.

### LITERATURE

Bring in the urbanisation of the forest

- Marx political economy: the system that exist "behind" the Arch of Deforestation pushing it. Foucault: Governmentality and the forms of govern of conduct and the governable spaces (Rose)
- Concepts of Violent Environments by Watts and Peluso, and Liberation Ecologies by Peets and Watts. The governable spaces and territorialisation in Watts and Peluso.
- Cultural Studies and the New Ecology
- Slow Violence (Nixon) / transcorporeality (Alaimo): what body and how the body embedded violence. Bodily and trans-corporal brute and slow violence.

### CASES

The different frontiers

- Comparison of cases of extreme violent conflicts in different environmentalist struggles that have interconnection of time, space, or agents network.
- the murder of extractivist peasants, environmentalists, chestnut collectors, **José Cláudio Ribeiro da Silva** and **Maria do Espírito Santo da Silva**, in Nova Ipixuna, southeast Pará, on May 24 2011. The "theater of cruelty" (R. Walker) in the South Pará.
- The murder of **Dorothy Stang** (2005) and violence against the projects of sustainable settlements in Altamira. (Terra do Meio -Middle Earth- and Transamazonica road region, state of Pará).
- The murders of **Gideon** (2006) and **Adelino Ramos** (2011), and the genocide of the **Kanoe** and **Akunts'u**, in the Southern Amazonas and Rondônia states.
- Genocide of **Tupi-Kawahiwa Pirikura** indians and the extreme violence in the city of **Colniza** (northern part of Mato Grosso state).

### METHODOLOGY

- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of material produced by institutions involved in land struggles and violence in the Amazon. The data will be entered into databases. Archives: Funai, Pastoral Land Comission. Public datas [deforestation (INPE), economics and violence (federal and state and municipal)]
- Interviews with local agents and state agents. (part of the field work has already been done)
- Following the outcome of lawsuits and criminal cases in the Brazilian judiciary system.

