

Extended Urbanization in the Brazilian Amazonia

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The Brazilian Amazonia¹ is being socio-economically, spatially, and ecologically restructured as bulldozers, chainsaws, and axes combine to destroy the tropical rainforest and replace it with agricultural and grass lands, mining camps, and towns and hamlets of various sorts. In the southern part where upper lands predominate, highways and roads connect urban centers, rural areas, and mining sites cutting across the forest, fields and savannas attracting several economic activities and millions of migrants that come from all over the country in search of profits and/or a better life. In the low *várzea*² areas, where the waterways still preside over the socio-spatial organization, changes are less dramatic although they also do occur as capitalist modernization inexorably connects once isolated micro-regions to national and global space.

Until World War II, the regional pattern of occupation of Amazonia rested on forest extraction and the various forest-goods export cycles tell of its peripheral insertion within capitalist international economy. Attempts to promote new economic cycles marked that society and regional economy since its beginnings, and natural rubber defined the most important cycle until unmatched productivity of Asian British plantations squeezed the Amazonian *seringueiro*³ from the world markets.

¹ The Amazon River Basin—Amazonia—extends from the Atlantic Coast to the Andean Mountains comprising areas in nine countries: Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guyana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela. Brazilian Amazonia encompasses the Amazon's low lands and slopes of the Central Plateau and Guyana Shield. Amazonia Legal, a planning region encompassing nine states in Brazil, has circa five million square kilometers, over half of the national territory. I use Amazonia referring to Brazil's Amazon River Basin, unless specified otherwise (Figure 1.1).

² Amazonia has been divided in two major areas: the *várzea*—seasonally flooded low wet lands along the Amazon River and tributaries; and *terra firme*—dry upper lands that include the plateaus' slopes where the vast majority of recent frontier occupation has taken place. This rough division has been largely challenged in the face of new perceptions about the complexity of Amazonian soil fertility.

³ *Seringueiro* is the Brazilian term for the natural rubber collector (rubber tapper) who historically, alone or with

Historically, urbanity in Amazonia was restricted to the two main regional cities on the Amazon River—Belém and Manaus—who concentrated the political and mercantile conditions to organize the (capitalist) space of production and the rainforest itself. Other river-port towns were local commercial outposts for indigenous products, such as Santarém, Tefé, and Macapá. The region did not present, apart from Belém and Manaus, the conditions to concentrate economic surplus, political power and the cultural synthesis that characterize cities.

The construction of Brasília, Brazil's new federal capital since 1960, created the interiorized base from where the military governments ruled the country from 1964 to 1985 and imposed an extensive road system upon Amazonian traditional riverine socio-spatial structure attempting to link Amazonia to the Southeastern Region, where São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro formed with Minas Gerais the country's urban industrial core. Mostly for geopolitical reasons, but also to extend the natural resources frontier and alleviate social and political pressures for land reform in southern regions, the military governments channeled federal investments, incentives, coordinated state efforts and designed regional policies to occupy (and restructure) Brazil's alleged last frontier. Extensive (and intensive) occupation of *terra firme* areas in southern Amazonia in the past decades thus consolidated State policies and imposed upon the region's states and federal territories⁴ political, socio-spatial and economic actions that aimed to interiorize and integrate the Amazonian frontier to the country's capitalist industrial development.

his family, collected latex from rubber trees along forest trails. Although Brazil's current rubber production concentrates in rubber-tree corporate plantations in São Paulo and Mato Grosso where capitalist relations of production dominate, Amazonian *seringueiros* form an important political group who is organized in national, regional and local associations and have progressively transformed their labor conditions and relations of production, both in the forest and within world markets.

⁴ Brazil's Federal Territories were formed by areas acquired from other countries and/or dismembered from existing Brazilian states; they were constitutionally defined as Union lands under direct control of the Senate

Brazil's patterns of economic and territorial expansion historically focused on agricultural settlements, cattle ranching, and mineral exploitation. The occupation of new regions with cattle ranching in search for fertile lands and valuable minerals is recurrent in the country since colonial days. From the early explorers and missionaries, particularly the Jesuits who pushed the colony's territorial borders beyond its original limits, to the 18th Century gold rush and the 20th Century rubber and coffee booms, the occupation of interior Brazil has been a saga of territorial expansion and conquest/destruction of native peoples and their lands and regional export economies and local subsistence activities combined to expand hinterland areas of regional cities and generate new productive regions in response to increasing demands for natural resources.

Amazonia is still largely perceived as a rural region, if not a pristine jungle. The regional economies that have produced it—mining, agriculture, and cattle ranching, not to speak of forest extraction—are commonly identified as rural activities. Although state city-capitals and middle-size commercial towns grew intensively in population in the past decades, they are still questioned in their urbanity in the face of their unstable mobile migrant populations and precarious urban (infra) structures. Small towns marked by muddy roads and palm-tree huts popping along farming and mining areas amidst the exuberant tropical forest do not easily suggest a steady urbanization process.

Amazonian urban growth has thus many times been understood as a temporary feature due to the inefficiency of public institutions in distributing rural land. Towns are often seen as doomed to shrink or even disappear as rural occupation intensifies leaving only a few subsisting central places to support country life. Therefore, most attempts to

and governed by the Brazilian Federation. Four contemporary Amazonian states were former Federal Territories: Acre, Amapá, Rondônia (Guaporé), and Roraima (Rio Branco).

occupy Amazonia were—and many still are—thought of on the basis of its alleged rural, if not peasant, regional vocation.

I argue, instead, that the urban phenomenon is not only present in Amazonian cities and towns but also in various other socio-spatial forms such as mining areas, settlement and/or colonization projects, timber industries, cattle-ranching and farm enterprises, in addition to urban concentrations of commerce and services spread throughout the region⁵. The urban phenomenon has reached Brazil's farthest and wildest frontier, gone into forested areas and produced a variety of social processes and spatial forms. The new socio-spatial relations thus produced combine apparently oppositional spaces—the jungle and the urban tissue—and are currently being (re)construed in everyday socio-spatial practices under the hegemonic logic that emanates from Brazil's urban-industrial forces centered in its metropolitan areas.

What does urbanization mean in Brazil today and what are its implications for the production and destruction of social space and nature in Amazonia? What are the bases for Amazonia's current socio-spatial restructuring and how does it relate to the urban-industrial processes observed in Brazil in the past decades? What are the specificities of the urban phenomenon in Amazonia and how did they come to be? How should we address Amazonia's contemporary complex and changing socio-spatial reality?

I address these questions by looking at the socio-spatial relations—social processes and spatial forms—in Brazil and in Amazonia as they are manifested in micro-

⁵ Before moving any further, I will briefly clarify what I mean by *urban phenomenon*. I draw this concept from a neo-Marxist theoretical interpretation of contemporary urbanization that has Henri Lefèbvre's work as its utmost expression and synthesis referring to the specific spatiality of capitalist societies (Lefèbvre, 1968, 2003; Lefèbvre, Kofman, & Lebas, 1996). I will be using terms such as *urbanization*, *urbanity*, *urban tissue*, *urban nucleus-i*, *urban center*, *urban process*, *urban-industrial*, and finally, *urban*, all within the same theoretical Lefebvrian perspective.

regions, cities, towns, hamlets, rubber states, colonization and mining areas, and the various social spaces that connect cities and towns and extend them upon the countryside and the region. I look particularly at urban processes related to the gold rush and/or agricultural colonization in areas that a few decades ago were occupied by native populations and/or controlled by *latifúndios*⁶ of various types. The contemporary transformation and restructuring of Brazil from a predominantly agrarian into an urban-industrial economy and society is at the center of my understanding of Amazonia—and of its frontier areas—as a region that is undergoing an intense urbanization process manifested in city and town growth, but also in the production of space in general.

Urbanization, modernity and citizenship

Brazil's urbanization and industrialization gained momentum only in the second half of the 20th Century when the urban-industrial economy began to restructure the country. In 1950, only 36% of the Brazilian population lived in urban areas; in Amazonia, that percentage was even lower: 30%. The process of urbanization intensified throughout the 1950s maintaining an average annual urban population growth rate around 5.2%, and in 1960 Brazil's urban population represented 45% of the total population reaching 56% in 1970, while in Amazonia it reached respectively 35.5% and 42.6%⁷.

An average annual urban growth rate of 4.5% in the 1970s led to a national urban population of 68%, in 1980, mostly concentrated in large industrial and regional cities.

⁶ *Latifúndio* is a widely used term in Latin American studies meaning a large tract of land controlled by a single proprietor—the *latifundiário*. Many are the possible classifications, productive and non-productive being the most common. In Amazonia, where land property relations only recently superseded previous non-capitalist forms of land control, *latifúndios* may take other forms related to the control of superficial natural resources, like rubber or nut trees, or to the subsoil, in the case of minerals. I use *latifúndio* and *latifundiário* in the broadest sense mentioned above.

⁷ Amazonia is here equated to Brazil's Northern Region as in the current federal Sustainable Action Plan for Amazonia—PAS. It includes Rondônia and Tocantins (formerly, Center-West) but excludes Mato Grosso (Center-West) and Maranhão (Northeast), both not totally comprised in the Amazon River Basin.

The nine metropolitan regions created in 1974 concentrated 27% of Brazil's total population, but the other municipalities in those regions began to grow faster than the metropolises themselves, as also did several middle size cities throughout the country. By 1991, the country's urban population reached 76% and despite its lower annual growth rates (around 2.5%), it continued to increase to reach 81.2% in 2000⁸.

Amazonia showed a different pattern, though. While the country had declining total population growth rates since 1960 (from 2.99 in 1950/60, to 2.48 in 1970/80, and 1.61 in 1991/2000), the Northern Region saw a population increase due to frontier migration, with average annual total population growth rates varying from 3.34 in 1950/60 to 5.02 in 1970/80, then dropping to 3.85 in 1980/1991, and 2.57 in 1991/2000. Despite intense rural-rural migration, urban growth dominated Amazonia's last decades: 5.44 in 1960/70; 6.44 in 1970/80; 5.37 in 1980/91; 4.75 in 1991/2000.

Rural population annual growth rates have persistently declined in Brazil since the 1950s (1.55%), becoming negative after 1980 and reaching its lowest figures in 1991/2000 (-1.37%). In Amazonia, however, rural population average annual growth rate was already high in 1950/1960 (2.37%) and it reached its peak in 1970/1980 (3.7%), reducing again to in 1980/1991 (2.04%) and finally becoming negative, like the rest of the country, in 1991/2000 (-1.17%). Meanwhile, the percentage of urban population in the Region continued to grow to reach 50% in 1980, and 70% in 2000⁹.

⁸ All population data are from IBGE Demographic Censuses (1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1991, and 2000). In Brazil, urban population refers to those who live within the urban perimeter of cities, i.e., municipal headquarters, or villages (*vilas*), municipal administrative districts, regardless of their sizes. There is a vast literature about Brazil's recent process of urbanization: (Francisconi & Souza, 1976), (Santos, 1993; 2001), (Faissol, 1994), (IPEA/Unicamp.IE.Nesur/IBGE, 1999), among others.

⁹ Maranhão and Mato Grosso, the two states not in the Northern Region had, in 2000, respectively, 60% and 80% of urban population.

On the other hand, in 1950 Brazil had 1889 municipalities¹⁰, but thousands of new municipalities have since been created both in very dense areas in the urban-industrial core and in low-density areas in frontier regions and that number increased to 3974 in 1980, and 5507 in 2000. The subdivision of Brazil's smallest political cell—the municipality—also tells about the country's socio-spatial and economic restructuring from a local perspective. In the Northern Region, the 99 existing municipalities in 1950 became 153 in 1980, 298 in 1990, and 450 in 1999. In Rondônia, the two existing municipalities in 1970 were dismembered to become 52, in 2000. (IBGE, 1996, 2001)

The intense process of urbanization in the past decades produced a myriad of urban forms beyond cities and towns that have required new definitions beyond the traditional categories of city/country and urban/rural. The expansion of metropolitan areas upon their hinterlands¹¹, the new ways of municipal association involving middle-size cities and towns, and the extension of urban infrastructure and social services onto rural areas, both extensively and in concentrated nuclei, produced micro-regional organizations and hybrid city-country socio-spatial relations that do not fit the traditional classifications.

New residential developments, resort and (eco)tourism areas, services and commercial centers in the countryside, agro-industrial complexes, isolated power and

¹⁰ The municipality is the smallest autonomous political cell in Brazil's Federal Republic, a unique arrangement that gives the municipality—formed by a city and its hinterland most times subdivided into administrative districts—a very particular insertion in the country's political and economic system and in its socio-spatial organization and restructuring. It must be stressed that the creation of new municipalities does not have an immediate time/space correspondence with socio-economic changes. Local and state political interests might postpone municipal emancipations or else create municipalities that do not (cor)respond to (effective) socio-spatial and economic demands. In the medium and long run, however, the number of municipalities reflects to some degree the territorial and economic dynamics.

¹¹ The nine official metropolitan areas encompassed 117 municipalities in 1974; in 2001, they were 190 municipalities, a growth that reflects both the dismembering of municipalities and the extension of the metropolitan perimeter. In addition, since 1988 several other metropolitan areas have been created at state level.

industrial plants (particularly of intermediate goods such as mineral extraction, steel, cellulose, cement, among others) have produced new socio-spatial configurations that cannot be easily defined as urban or rural. Therefore IBGE, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics in charge of the Demographic Censuses, created sub-categories within the broad urban-rural dichotomy in an attempt to deal with the variety of new urban-rural forms, such as: isolated urban areas, areas of urban expansion, rural agglomerations from urban extension, rural nuclei, and rural settlements, among others¹².

The complexity that characterizes Brazil's and Amazonia's current urbanization in Brazil—and Amazonia—thus requires new approaches and ways of inquiring and understanding the diverse socio-spatial forms and processes that are being created throughout the territory beyond the city-country dichotomy. Urban-industrial capitalism, once concentrated only in metropolitan regions and in a few other urban areas has, in the past decades, been extended onto the countryside along roads and highways, electric power lines, communication infrastructure and services, urban, social, financial services and legal requirements, the State apparatus at its various levels (including the new municipalities), labor legislation, organization, control and social benefits, carrying beyond cities and towns those and other socio-spatial aspects of contemporary urban-industrial life.

¹² In Brazil, “urban” meant only the area within the urban perimeter defined by the Municipal Council (*Câmara Municipal*) around the municipal headquarter—*ciudades* (city or town)—and around district headquarters (*vilas*); all the rest of the municipal area was considered “rural”. The 1988 National Constitution allowed municipalities to define sub-categories, some included in the 1991 Demographic Census preliminary data (*Sinopse Preliminar*) but lately incorporated in the 2000 Census final data publication. (IBGE, 2000)

The *urban tissue*¹³ that extended from metropolises and large cities onto their rural hinterlands reached regional space in a variety of urban-rural forms, more or less dense, more or less equipped with infrastructure and services, and more or less economically, politically, and culturally linked to the national core(s). The result has been the extension of socio-spatial relations that were proper and limited to cities and urban centers to rural and regional space. This extension of the urban-industrial process allows us to speak of an urbanization that has been—or is being, in the case of developing regions¹⁴—virtually extended upon social space as a whole. Therefore, the concept of *extended urbanization*¹⁵ expresses a particular social spatiality brought about by late capitalism and extended onto isolated areas reaching unprecedented levels of time/space/societal (re)articulation¹⁶.

Extended urbanization refers thus to the extension of contemporary socio-spatial relations—urban-industrial forms and processes—formerly restricted to cities and towns onto regional, national, and global scales. It encompasses the socio-spatial fabric that stems from the dialectical unity of dense urban centralities consolidated what as command centers and the urban tissue that extends the variety urban-industrial forms and processes onto the countryside and social space. Extended urbanization carries within it

¹³ *Urban tissue*, a term long familiar to architects and planners, is used in Lefèbvre's expanded meaning: "By 'urban tissue' we do not mean, narrowly, the built part of the cities, but the whole set of manifestations of the predominance of the city over the countryside. From this perspective, a secondary residence, a highway, a supermarket in the middle of the countryside, is all part of the urban tissue. More or less dense, more or less compact and active, only the decadent or stagnated regions, limited to 'nature', escape its influence." (Lefèbvre, 1972:10)

¹⁴ Santos (1978:103-110) emphasized the incompleteness of spatial organization in third-world countries emphasizing its derived, peripheral, opened, discontinuous, selective, fractioned, unstable, disintegrated, and differentiated character. The current restructuring process implies the overcoming of such character by the extension and articulation of those multi-dimensioned societal-spatial-temporal manifestations.

¹⁵ *Extended urbanization* is inspired on Lefèbvre's *urban tissue and urban revolution* (1968; 1972).

¹⁶ The *trialectical* approach to space/time/society is developed by Soja (1996:53-82) following his explorations of Henri Lefèbvre's (1991) *dialectic of the triad*. Soja relates the social production of Space, Time and Being-in-the-world—the *trialectics of being*—to what he names *the trialectic of spatiality*, after Lefèbvre's spatial triad: perceived, conceived, and lived "moments of social space".

urban praxis as a characteristic of its urban character, bringing thus politics along with it and producing the politicization of social space as a whole. The resulting socio-spatial fabric is therefore not only material or territorial, but it brings within it the extension or urban praxis in a symbolic way, extending the meaning and the scope of urban life to spaces and territories never before touched by the sense of pertinence and integration to the command centers.

Through extended urbanization multiple urban centralities, from cities and towns to commercial and service centers, industrial plants, large ranches, local communities, rubber estates, and even(tually) indigenous areas combine to connect and (re)articulate local, regional, national and global forces and thus produce a variety of locales and populations more or less linked to urban-industrial capitalism. Extended urbanization carries within it the socio-spatial processes and forms that are proper to industrial capitalism, manifested both in its early expression—the industrial city—and its contemporary globalized urban-industrial manifestations.

However, social production of space contains, particularly in peripheral countries, a multi-temporal heterogeneity¹⁷ that entails surprising temporal-spatial-societal encounters and combinations. This complex heterogeneity is generated by the apparently paradoxical duality of partial modernization processes and endeavors of radical modernities that inform modernist projects that aim to produce broad redefinitions within cultural traditions and contemporary social practices¹⁸.

¹⁷ I borrow the term from Canclini (1998:17) who uses it to address the hybrid cultural combinations of modernity and traditionalism in Latin America. I will return to this theme later.

¹⁸ I will rephrase what I assume to be an almost consensual distinction between the three following terms: modernities, understood as particular socio-spatial conditions of living implying time-space conscience of permanent changes; modernizations, as socio-spatial and economic processes that produce modernities; and modernisms, as cultural and political projects of socio-spatial constructions (and ideological and/or critical representations of social practices). From a postmodern perspective all those concepts, which were until

In countries like Brazil, where significant portions of the population have historically been excluded from the (western) project of modernity, the extension of capitalist urban-industrial relations—expressed within extended urbanization—to new and old regions and territories implies the production of diverse space-time-society combinations that represent not only local manifestations of hegemonic central (or first-world) urban-industrial processes and forms but also, and more particularly, local recreations of traditional practices informed by immediate needs deriving from those multi-temporal heterogeneities as they meld into the socially produced space. Brazil's modernization, although incomplete in its societal and space-time dimensions, has produced at various levels the multi-temporal heterogeneity Canclini describes. The result is multiple society-space-time experiences and innovations locally manifested in specific spatialities and, given the plurality of both distant and immediate forces at play, the resulting social space expresses multi-conditioned (cultural) constructions¹⁹.

Historically, the attempts to construe projects of modernity in Brazil were restricted to social spaces where incomplete modernization(s) had somehow occurred. In other words, it was mostly in the cities that the socio-spatial and economic processes and forms were strong enough to produce, for selected population groups, the conditions for the emergence of various forms of modernities. In such a restricted context the attempts to constitute peoples and/or communities as social subjects in control of their own

recently restricted to the hegemonic bourgeois European (Western) project, require the plurality demanded by the multiple looks within the contemporary societal crisis. See Habermas (1987); Berman (1988); B. S. Santos (1989); Soja (1989); Harvey (1989), and Canclini (1995).

¹⁹ I borrow the concept of “multi-conditioned cultural constructions” from Canclini (1998:23) but add to it a spatial understanding that comes from Santos (1982; 1994) who describes the multiple conditionings of “third-world derived spaces”, and from Soja (1989) who stresses “the reassertion of space into social critical theory”.

space/time/societal transformations have taken radical forms since it was necessary to recurrently dive into deeper societal roots to produce or rescue emancipatory projects.

“[In Brazil, Modernism] ...is a misplaced idea that expresses itself as a project.” (Ortiz, 1988:35)

Many have been the projects of modernity—modernisms—mostly misplaced²⁰. Cultural and political emancipatory attempts have marked Brazilian and Amazonian history from Ouro Preto’s attempt to establish a (slave-based) republic in 18th Century Minas Gerais to the 19th Century *Cabanos Revolt* along the Amazon River, from the early 20th Century São Paulo’s Modernist Movement up to contemporary social movements. Several other attempts at modernity can be—and some will be—recognized both in Brazil and Amazonia, albeit always as incomplete processes. In fact, within the diverse contexts of both the continental country and region, the conquest of Amazonia and Brazil can be seen as a series of isolated and/or disarticulated projects of modernity producing not a single and hegemonic modernity, but multiple and heterogeneous modernities.

Modernity requires more than space-time consciousness; it implies breaking away from the alienation of prevalent society-space-time constraints to create new conditions for the construction of social subjects. It also implies the interconnection with other social subjects with whom to form a totality, a collective conscience in which spatiality is recognized and incorporated as history. In other words, the local can only be modern if and when articulated with the global (and vice-versa, since abstract space is alienated). In this sense, both city and country cannot be modern unless connected to the urban.

²⁰ Roberto Schwarz, in his famous essay about Brazilian literature, coined the expression *idéias fora do lugar* (misplaced ideas) to discuss how “European ideas” were appropriated in an “ideological comedy” that masked local social reality (Schwarz & Gledson, 1992).

On the other hand modernity, in its radical sense, implies urbanity. It stems from the metropolis (and its many incomplete manifestations) and it grows to its highest (imperial) form—the urban. Therefore, it also requires the metropolitan characteristics: intense time-space-societal transformations, speeding up socio-spatial exchanges and rearrangements, and permanent restructuring within collective life. True modernizations thus imply projects of modernities that allow for the extension of citizenship (of the *polis*, of the *civitas*, of the *urbs*) and growing participation of the peoples in their process of emancipation.

A theory of modernity is a theory of transformations, discoveries, connections, extensions, renewals, and (re)constitutions. The extension of the urban socio-spatial form from the metropolis onto regional space that I have been calling extended urbanization could then be also understood as a process of modernization, i.e., the extension of the socio-spatial and economic conditions of constitution of modernity beyond the limits of the metropolis where it was originally generated.

It is the appropriation and redefinition of those processes and forms produced in the center of its transformations—the *urbs/urban*—by the peripheral integrated tissue that (re)produces and extends the possibilities, concrete meanings and mediations of modernity. It is extended urbanization, understood as a contemporary capitalist urban-industrial form, what allows for modernity (and modernization) to expand onto social space as a whole.

However, (post)modernity²¹, potentially manifested ubiquitously with/through extended urbanization, does not take place without radical socio-spatial and political

²¹ I use (post)modern in parentheses as a preliminary form to refer to the Brazilian context in which the incomplete process of modernization requires a more thorough discussion of the implications, limits, and possibilities of post-modernity and post-modernism in Brazil (and elsewhere in the peripheral world).

transformations. Time and space critical consciousness and awareness amplify the need to take history into one's hand. Therefore, political and socio-spatial participation follows extended urbanization bringing content to the notion of citizenship beyond cities—extended citizenship, we could say—to encompass the nation state, continents, and eventually, the planet itself (as hopefully heralded by environmental movements)²².

The concept of citizenship implies timely control over social production and reproduction and connection to a territorially defined collective destiny. The peoples who achieve such control engage in a socio-spatial *praxis* collectively defined over their reproduction and, therefore, over production of social space itself. Historically, it was city life what allowed for the emergence of such socio-political integration and cooperation. The French bourgeois revolutionary cry clamoring for the *citoyens* to take history into their hands symbolized the project of extension of citizenship—and for that, of civil liberty, fraternity and equality—across classes and provinces to encompass the nation state as a whole, to extend the city/polis praxis across the country. However, it was urbanization, meaning the extension of the *polis* beyond city limits that actually allowed for the project of extended citizenship to come to life. In other words, it was extended urbanization what allowed for that extension of the polis upon the countryside to virtually encompass the whole country/nation state. The industrial city/metropolis spilled over to produce its metropolitan region and give rise to extended urbanization disseminating political urban praxis across social space as a whole. As the urban tissue extended farther

²² The concept of citizenship is being challenged beyond national territories in current global times. However, I will not engage directly in those contemporary approaches that privilege collective actions beyond national boundaries (Scherer-Warren, 1999), converse with the concept of “otherness” (Isin, 2000, 2002), or discuss global consumption (Canclini, 1995), although those approaches are to certain degree contained in the discussions about extended citizenship in Amazonia. For a political and historical account of citizenship in Brazil, see Carvalho (2001).

over territories it carried within it the germ of the polis, the political praxis that was proper and restricted to city space, historical locus of liberty and modernity. Urban social movements all over the world showed that the struggle for citizenship was latent in cities and urban areas and soon moved beyond those limits to reach social space in general²³.

At this point, the urban question becomes a question of social space itself and *extended urbanization* can be seen as a metaphor for the production of (urban-industrial) space across the nation. The industrial, however, is each day more submitted to the determinations of the urban, of everyday life, of reproduction requirements, and re-politicization of urban life becomes, for that matter, the re-politicization of space itself:

“The problematic of space, which subsumes the problems of the urban sphere (the city and its extensions) and of everyday life (programmed consumption), has displaced the problematic of industrialization. It has not, however, destroyed that earlier set of problems: the social relationships that obtained previously still obtain; the new problem is, precisely, the problem of their ‘reproduction’.” (Lefèbvre, 1991:89)

In Brazil, urban social movements gained momentum in the 1970s when intense social mobilization contributed to soften, and finally end, the military regime. However, soon those movements lost their “urban” qualification as they encompassed most of the countryside and parts of the jungle²⁴, (re)uniting peoples all over the country—and the globe—around concerted political actions²⁵. From then on, societal mobilization and political resistance were no longer restricted to cities, involving instead social space as a whole as politicization spread along the territory with extended urbanization.

²³ Lefèbvre (1968; 1970) wrote extensively about the “right to the city” and widespread resurgence of the “urban praxis” as a reaction to industrialism, calling it “the urban revolution”.

²⁴ I differentiate between jungle and forest and use jungle to refer to the perennial Amazonian rainforest in which the threatening meaning is associated with the dense forest but also wild animals and “savage” *Índios*. The Portuguese word —*selva*—also conveys the idea of *selvagem* (savage).

²⁵ Although I do not directly address regional or global social movements such as the Amazonian Social Forum or the World Social Forum, their role in connecting disenfranchised peoples and in promoting political and socio-spatial alternatives centered on collective reproduction must be emphasized.

Modernity, citizenship, and urbanization are thus related facets of contemporary socio-spatial practices virtually taking over Brazil. It is this encompassing process that allows us to discuss the current and intense politicization of Amazonia's disenfranchised peoples who, until recently, were doomed to be engulfed or decimated by the "inexorable forces" of modern industrial capitalism: *Índios*²⁶, *seringueiros*, miners, landless workers, and settlers, all organized in hundreds of socio-political movements that connect extended urbanization to new forms and possibilities of modernity and political resistance.

Extended urbanization in Amazonia

In this dissertation, I apply the concept of extended urbanization to Brazil and to Brazilian Amazonia in an attempt to understand the new socio-spatial relations that organize the territorial restructuring at both national and regional scales. As stated before, I claim that a contemporary understanding of contemporary Amazonia—particularly, Frontier Amazonia²⁷—requires an urban (industrial) approach that allows for a better comprehension of the complexity of the socio-spatial relations that are being produced as

²⁶ In Portuguese, *Índio* refers to the native inhabitants of the Americas, and *Indiano*, to the native of India. To avoid the ambiguity of the English term *Indian*, I will use the Portuguese word—*Índio*—to refer to Brazil's pre-Cabralian inhabitants, i.e., the peoples existing in Brazil before Portuguese navigator Pedro Álvares Cabral reached Bahia for the first time on April 22nd, 1500.

²⁷ I use the term Frontier Amazonia to refer to the part of Amazonia that has been occupied in the second half of 20th century by agricultural, cattle, and mining, more so after the late 1960s when the military governments' geopolitical strategies defined the occupation of that region as a matter of national security and of strategic socio-spatial and economic interest for the country. Heavy investments on highways to link it to southern Brazil and incentives for migration of people and capitals to that region followed one of the mottos that characterized the military period: *integrar para não entregar* (to integrate to avoid giving it away). Foweraker (1981); Schminck & Wood (1992; 1984); Sawyer (1984); Hecht & Cockburn (1989); Torres (1990b); Lourenço-Pereira (1990); Becker (1982; 1985; 1990), among others have discussed frontier expansion in Brazil, particularly in Amazonia, from complementary perspectives. Most approaches drew from Frederick J. Turner's famous (re)conceptualization of the North American Frontier (Turner, 1920). Although I mention different frontier approaches, I don't try to redefine the term; instead, I take Frontier Amazonia as an ambiguous and changing reality encompassing all parts of Amazonia where urban industrial processes dominate the (re)organization of the region's territory and social spaces.

extended urbanization accompanies the frontier. It implies looking at Frontier Amazonia from the theoretical window of urban (socio-spatial) theory and to analyze it through the manifestations of a socio-spatial praxis that has urbanity at its center. The strategies and processes that characterize contemporary urban-industrial capitalist economy and political culture in Brazil and Amazonia (and in other parts of globally integrated space) are stressed as manifestations of the mixtures and exchanges that the local and regional cultures and material means apply upon them.

The traditional city/country dichotomy is therefore to be set aside if we are to understand the dynamics of contemporary social production of space, more so in Frontier Amazonia. The relational character of the diverse society/space/time combinations can be better apprehended in the context of the extension of contemporary social processes and spatial forms as they are produced in the urban-industrial capitalist centers and extended onto that region. Such an extension implies, however, particular encounters in space (the urban tissue and the jungle) and time (global informational processes and pre-Columbian cultures) and the consequent development of new socio-spatial relations. As extended urbanization reaches Amazonia it brings along with it new forms of modernity and political resistance that recreate and reinvent both local practices and migrant forms of occupation, all reporting to the process of extended urbanization.

However, I do not claim in any way that the socio-spatial understanding and the design of public policies or planning actions in Frontier Amazonia should concentrate in cities and towns in accordance to what came to be known as the “urban bias” (Lipton, 1977; Seers & Lipton, 1977). The claim that the focus on development efforts and resource concentration should be on in urban areas leaving rural poverty to its own find

no echoes in the perspective adopted in this dissertation. Instead, the focus on extended urbanization assumes that the city/country dichotomy that characterized the previous periods is today potentially set aside by the extension of the urban tissue throughout the territory and social space as a whole. Extended urbanization—and the “urban society”—gives the countryside the same theoretical status of the city, both contained within the urban synthesis (and metaphor) that considers social space the focus of human action, a privileged economically and politically integrated contemporary postmodern condition.

The powerful and apparently paradoxical advancement of the urban tissue over Amazonia produces complex socio-spatial rearrangements that obfuscate the dichotomous city-country patterns to which we were accustomed. The common use of the term urban as related to large cities does not easily match the idea of the tropical rainforest, except for picturesque ruins of ancient civilizations reclaimed by the jungle and thus the idea of an urbanized Amazonia sounds bizarre to most people, almost a catachresis. Nevertheless, the urban character of Frontier Amazonia has been stressed by many authors and the Brazilian State itself developed urban strategies to rapidly occupy the region using planned and spontaneous urban nuclei as previous bases for the economic activities²⁸.

In Brazil, as in Amazonia, urbanization has been traditionally seen as population concentration in legally defined urban areas: *ciudades* and *vilas*. Despite the recognition of complex urbanized regions such as metropolitan areas, urban agglomerations and conurbations, and the recent efforts to acknowledge new forms of urban(-rural) settlements beyond the legal definitions above mentioned, most studies have not

²⁸ Becker (1982; 1990) stressed this strategy and its implications and lately she refers to an “urbanized forest” (Becker, 1999b, 2003); I will return to Becker’s approaches in the following pages.

addressed urbanization as an encompassing socio-spatial restructuring process. The identification of the complexity of contemporary urban problems and of urban systems in Brazil has not moved much beyond urban areas (Gonçalves, 1995; IPEA/Unicamp.IE.Nesur/IBGE, 1999; Maricato, 2001), although some scholars attempted to discuss the urban problem beyond legal definitions in an attempt to reclassify relationships between the urban, the agrarian, and the rural (Santos, 1993; Santos & Silveira, 2001)²⁹.

Recent studies on urbanization in Amazonia have not moved beyond the urban systems approach. Comprehensive analytical studies or interpretive study cases carried out by geographers in Brazil (Ribeiro, 1998) or abroad (Browder & Godfrey, 1997) acknowledge the growing complexity of urban systems and/or urbanization “disarticulated” processes but have not been able to produce a framework to understand the contemporary connections between the processes of urbanization and global peripheral capitalist development in the region³⁰. Many authors adopted encompassing perspectives about the frontier but tended to see urbanization as a sub-product of problems in providing fast and efficient access of migrants to rural land. Sawyer (1979; 1987) moved from a peasantry-based approach into a broader understanding of Frontier

²⁹ It should also be stressed that as early as 1976 economist Francisco de Oliveira (1978; 1982) stated that the key to understanding Brazil’s recent urbanization lay beyond phenomenal urban forms but meant instead the extension of capitalist relations of production onto the country’s whole territory.

³⁰ Browder and Godfrey (1997), in addition to the merit of acknowledging contributions from Brazilian scholars (their researches were conducted together with Brazilian institutions), were able to stress new problems such as environmental degradation in Amazonian urban areas (Rondônia and Southern Pará) and to look at urban growth from a regional and global perspective. However, they rely on traditional urban-regional models, such as central place and mercantile theories, to identify a “disarticulated urbanization” alternatively linking urban centers to their hinterlands or to international or national markets and cultures and are not able to conceptualize urbanization nor question the traditional city-country dichotomy within that complex environmental and socio-spatial context. Miguel Ribeiro’s extensive Ph.D. dissertation (Ribeiro, 1998) draws from his previous works at IBGE and from several known geographers to produce a sophisticated three-tier analytical study of Amazonia’s urban networks. It incorporates contemporary theoretical approaches of a complex urban phenomenon but reduces it to towns above 5,000 people.

Amazonia urbanization and Torres (1988; 1990a) discussed its urban linkages, but both assumed a prevalence of rural-agrarian processes and placed the urban dynamics almost as a temporary “pathology”. Cleary (1993) criticizes “the political economy in the modern Brazilian Amazon” put forward in the 1970s mostly by Brazilian and foreign authors writing in Portuguese charging them with a structural “frontier theory”. According to Cleary, those authors saw Amazonia—Brazil’s last frontier—as part of “the absorption of peripheral regions by an expanding capitalism.” He tries, instead, to look at the recent history of Amazonia to redefine the limits of a political economy to be applied to the region suggesting new ways to look at “what most of the modern Brazilian Amazon has become: the post-frontier.” (Cleary, 1993: 332) Cleary briefly touches contemporary themes, such as informality and intense mobility but somehow misses authors who addressed them, like Bertha Becker.

Bertha Becker offered a fresh perspective on urbanization in Amazonia by looking both at its functionality within Brazil’s geopolitical, macro-economic and territorial processes and at the specific role of urban centers in the frontier (Becker, 1982, 1995). For Becker (1988; 1990), Amazonian intense urbanization has two main dimensions: one linked to its economic integration, and the other related to territorial organization, both reflecting upon the proliferation, growth and organization of urban nuclei at various levels. The myriad of new, revived and strengthened urban centers constitute a major attraction for migrants (as opposed to most authors who see rural space and agrarian economies as the migrants’ sole targets), in addition to constituting the *loci* for State politico-ideological actions and the bases for the organization of labor markets and redistribution of a largely mobile labor force. Becker has steadily presented what I

consider the most consistent perspective on Amazonia and she also refers to Amazonia as an “urbanized forest”. She distinguishes two different and combined manifestations within frontier urbanization: “urbanization of the population”, referring to the urban migrants who come to the region; and “urbanization of the territory”, referring to the urban-industrial equipment of the territory (Becker, 1999a, 1999b).

The concept of extended urbanization attempts to overcome both the population/territory dichotomy and the separation between socio-economic and territorial processes as it relies on the study of socio-spatial relations including and emphasizing a central political dimension embedded in the process of urbanization: the extension of urban praxis and political resistance. In this sense, extended urbanization implies the extension of both the urban tissue—the socio-spatial fabric extended from metropolises, cities, towns and urban-industrial nuclei—and the urban praxis nurtured within cities and extended along the urban tissue as its constitutive socio-political element. Therefore, it contributes for the understanding of contemporary Frontier Amazonia as both a region with very strong rooted local connections defined by local (re)combinations of time-space-society and closely connected to Brazil’s urban-industrial core and global economic space. It implies that its innocence—if there ever was one—is forever lost and leaves no room for traditional views of peripheral forested spaces untouched by global capitalism. In spite of maintaining a low population density and a diversity of native and locally mixed peoples among the most significant in the world, Amazonia has fallen under the spell of capitalist developmental forces, meaning the removal of restrictions imposed by both the jungle and its peoples over the territory and its riches, for the best

and the worst. On the other hand, the reinventions of local and regional mixtures and combinations keep on surprising those who attempt to understand its complexity.

The extension of the urban tissue—and for that, of capitalist production of space—onto Frontier Amazonia seems an inexorable process. However, unless capitalist forces eliminate all other forms of economic organization and political and cultural resistance to produce a single hegemonic form, multiple space-time-society combinations will emerge from the many experiences, exchanges and encounters. Extended urbanization thus provides a privileged perspective to inquire about these complex combinations and socio-spatial processes and forms that emerge in Frontier Amazonia.

However, the multitude, the pace, and the intensity of restructuring processes taking place in Amazonia today make it difficult to approach the region in its totality, both territorially and socio-economically. In addition to looking mostly at Frontier Amazonia, I restrict this study to three southern micro-regions that I will describe below: Rondônia, Mato Grosso's *Nortão*, and Southern Pará-Bico do Papagaio.

Beyond this geographical contour, I privilege the socio-spatial relations produced in Frontier Amazonia by colonization, cattle ranching, tap-mining, and extractive activities, their distinct and related socio-spatial relations and patterns, not at all mutually exclusive. On the contrary, these complementary and competitive activities mix and combine to produce complex socio-spatial forms and processes that are locally and regionally articulated with national and global urban-industrial capitalist centers.

Although this analytical cut implies privileging Amazonia's disenfranchised peoples and migrants, it also allows us to understand the complexity of the socio-spatial relations that are originated by the extension of urbanization, modernity and citizenship

upon the region. On the other hand, although those processes have been the object of former studies on frontier occupation in Amazonia, even on their urbanization implications, those studies did not look at them from a perspective that connects them so directly to the extension of urban-industrial processes and forms that emanate from Brazil's—and the world's—metropolitan cores.

The paradox of an Amazonian context in which global, national and local interests combine to produce diverse and conflictive manifestations implies risks and opportunities. Nevertheless, the socio-spatial relations and processes today at play in Frontier Amazonia also suggest that new actors and organizations struggle to be strong enough to resist and eventually counterbalance the hegemony of global economy in Amazonia's and Brazil's current restructuring. The articulations between that hegemonic structure and the new forms of political resistance and socio-spatial transformation at local and micro-regional levels suggest that the various encounters between distant and local determinations also produce and express other socio-spatial nexuses attempting to construe new syntheses in the production of everyday life—and of social space—in contemporary Amazonia.

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