



# INTERETHNIC ENJOYMENT, MYTH, AND MATERIALISM

*A Case Study from the Fringes of Eastern Amazon*



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*A Case Study from the Fringes of Eastern Amazon*

MSc Thesis Sociology of Development and Change (SDC-80433)

written by Sarunas Jomantas (850507400080)

in partial fulfillment to obtain  
the degree of a Master of Science  
in Development and Rural Innovation

Supervisor – **Dr. Pieter de Vries**

Chair of Sociology of Development and Change (SDC)

Examiner – **Dr. David Ludwig**

Chair for Knowledge, Technology and Information (KTI)

Wageningen University and Research

July, 2019

*“I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think.*

*I am not whenever I am the plaything of my thought;*

*I think of what I am where I do not think to think.”*

**— Jacques Lacan**

*The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious* (1977:169 [1959])

*'The wheel is still spinning but the hamster is dead.'*

**- Patrick Goddard**

*Lonely Planet: A Guide to the New Ruins* (2019)

*The opinions and potential mistakes expressed in this work  
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that of the Instituto Sociedade, População e Natureza (ISPN)*

## **Abstract & Manifesto**

This work is not a critique of indigenous lifestyles, their personhood, or ways of being; nor is it a search of a non-existent and romanticized other, or being reactionary. It is not about what the native should be, or what we learn about ourselves by studying them. Rather, it is a theoretical exercise to understand the role of materialism with implications on political strategies to be adopted to sustain the cultural survival of native groups. It is also about deconstructing the dichotomy between the non-Indian and the native based upon the latter's assumed disembeddedness from the capitalist system. There is an urgent need to expand our conceptual political sphere with the quest to uncover a common ground upon which emancipatory political implications may be plotted. It is equally vital to comprehend why the system of capitalism persists reproduced in the face of current socio-environmental crises. Contradictions, antagonisms, and fantasies, manifesting as an integrated part of the contemporary world, based upon this economic system, insist to be clarified. The persistence and deadlock of a predatory capitalist order, fused simultaneously with emerging aspects of political correctness, shed light on the fact that to curb negative effects engages us in idealistic fantasies. Herein possible way forward has been often presented by at least partially instrumentalizing and forcing peculiar roles upon traditional native peoples. They are expected to carry out environmental protection and sustainable resource use, while in addition required to remain ethnically pure, and exhibiting static identities. Instead of imagined homogenous proto-socialist and anticapitalistic resistance groups who would denounce commodities for the sake of utopian Western dreams of global degrowth, native people have the foremost right to be given not only the chance to be self, but also to be accepted into a society of enjoyment. By studying and theorizing the nexus of subjective libidinal economies and the universal dynamics of the capitalist machinery might produce insights drawing upon which the binds of political impasse could be broken free. This could potentially benefit both the indigenous and the general populations at stake. Drawing from insights of both Marx and Lacan, this thesis uncovers and sheds light on some aspects of the unconscious that appear to explain what makes us human, and going further, portrays how capitalism and objects/commodities produced within such a peculiar system have been able to bank beyond cultural relativism upon this very human nature, in reproducing the universality of the capitalist order.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have come to fruition were it not for the numerous people who have directly and indirectly supported me both in Brazil and the Netherlands.

I am foremost grateful to Fábio Vaz Ribeiro de Almeida, the Executive Coordinator at the Instituto Sociedade, População e Natureza (ISPN), for supporting my quest as a novice from Europe to understand the complexities of Amerindian context in the setting of contemporary Brazil. For being a key figure and tutor when it comes to matters surrounding indigeneity, for continuous patience in my attempts to improve Portuguese, and for permitting me to see the real - Thank you sincerely.

To Ruthiane Pereira who provided all required institutional support while in Maranhão, the numerous employees of ISPN in Brasília and Santa Inês, for their advice, hospitality, and sharing knowledge - my kindest Thank you to you all!

To the Maçaranduba Community of the Guajajara Indigenous Land Caru and their Leader Pistola, for sharing invaluable moments that made me grow. *Obrigado/Katu!*

To all the Ka'apor of the Indigenous Land Alto Turiaçu, and especially those from the *aldeias* Turizinho, Paraku'y and Xiepihunrenda - to Iracadju and Rosilene, Valdemar, Petronio and Ira-i, Xuxu, Kiki and Awaxi, Quentino, Karairano, and many many more – *petiki!*

To both Prof William Balée and Prof Benno Pokorny, for inspiration, Thank you.

To those who supported me in the process – Eric van Bruggen for critique of the first draft; my home in 61, and the whole of Droevendaal, for providing me with space to think, and room to wander - Thank you all!

To Stefan Kolling and LISTE, for opportunities to acquire funds to complete my studies, and the German Federal Government for financing the first years of my education – Thank you!

To Dr Robert Fletcher, for inviting me to the Research Seminar on *The Hauntological Turn: Psychoanalysis and Political Economy*, support and discussions prior to this thesis – Thank you!

To Dr Pieter de Vries, for continuous and approachable interaction and inciting my interest on Lacan. This thesis would not have been possible without your support. Thank you!

To Dr David Ludwig, who agreed to examine and read my work, Thank you.

To all those that I forgot while typing this lines with the deadline ticking, too numerous to be counted, my apologies for omitting you!

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## *Prologue*

Brazil and its history related to tropical forests and the native people living there attracted my interest more than half a decade ago. I spent significant time during my undergraduate degree in forestry devouring books on these topics, as also writing my Bachelor thesis focused on native groups of the *Cerrado*. This initial literature groundwork paved the way forward for my very first visit and actual fieldwork in Brazil. The Institute for Society, Population and Nature (ISPN) granted me an internship and first-hand opportunities to see in real life what so far I had only read. Around July 2016, as soon as my Portuguese had improved sufficiently, under auspices of ISPN, I left the head office in Brasília to stay amongst the Guajajara people, living in the pre-Amazonian tropical forests in the state of Maranhão.

Considering that most of my interest surrounding native people and Brazil focused around the decades of the 1970s and 1980s when the first contacts were established, the anthropological insights I gained from it were somewhat outdated and the context I found myself in 2016 shocking me, to say the least. The Guajajara living in intermittent contact with the Brazilian society for more than 400 years and effects thereof that I perceived when confronted with such stark reality, made me realize that I was harboring quite romantic assumptions on how things were, struggling to find my fantasized notion of ‘*nativeness*’. My image of the Amerindians had been largely conceived by the ideological and symbolic workings of western societies. Since physical distance up until then prevented the comparisons between the imagined and real, the contemporary configurations I stumbled on were initially quite hard to accept and fathom. These first bumps were crucial to initiate me into the context of the contemporary field setting, confront my Eurocentric views, thaw away my romanticism and in addition, fuel my later passion to proceed with studies of sociology. In this way, the time spent amongst the Guajajara proofed to of extreme importance and value.

I now realize how unaware to myself, on my very first visit to the Guajajara, I was seeking to discover potential aspects that I had longed for in my own society. Growing up in post-USSR independent Lithuania, I witnessed how the national independence movement for democracy and freedom transmuted. Imported material goods slowly appeared on the market, evoking notions of autonomy, emancipation, and a privilege for self-determination. One could infer that striving to live out national identity people united, while commodity fetishism of the free market hid the fact that it was establishing the capitalist order as a new means of domination and a new master. Resurfacing symptomatic to my personal past, these insights led me to engage with neoliberalism, capitalism and their various ill effects. In retrospect, my drive to go to the native people was an attempt to escape the forced enjoyment propped by consumerism – a typical neurotic semblance of late capitalism. Although not expecting to find places void and free of capitalist processes, I did harbor expectations certain groups would denounce their wish and desire for commodities. This was clearly not the case; capitalism had unleashed its full force on both the people and the cultural landscape decades ago, absorbed both the people and their deepest desires.

Upon my return from Brazil and graduation in Forestry, I began a Master's degree in sociology, hoping to bridge the gap between technical knowledge and community development work I envisioned to be beneficial at the frontier. However, my studies unveiled and confronted me with multiple shortcomings of development work from a critical perspective, showcasing some of its ideological workings, where the premises, and solutions, were at times appearing to be tainted rather negatively and embedded in the larger functioning of the very capitalist system ordering *progress*. During the lectures, I got a chance to get acquainted with psychoanalytic perspectives as analytical frameworks that gave a completely new angle on the situation and ways to approach the actual framings of the problems.

Determined to return to Brazil and the field to apply newly gained critical insights, I embraced another four-month internship with ISPN end of 2017. My task was to assess the feasibility of reforestation projects of degraded areas, and how these could be implemented, adhering to local needs and realities, without disturbing the daily life of the Ka'apor Indigenous people. I mingled in and out of the field, studying the people and their interactions with the surrounding nature. Learning to accept the local perspectives was at times challenging, yet aiding in shedding more of my residual Eurocentrism. The Ka'apor no longer living in a cultural vacuum, and in constant contact and exchange with the outside Brazilian society, made their engagement with outside society appear manifold and multifocal. Next to writing my report on reforestation approaches, native people's constant quest and desire to acquire commodities, either food or non-perishable items, outside of their indigenous land, intrigued me. In addition, voiced concerns regarding assistance to the community to my surprise rarely implied a transfer of knowledge, but rather insisted upon supply of material goods. I began to perceive capitalism and the exchange of commodities as the ground mediating and linking the Amerindian world and the outside society. Dumped onto the frontier as excess, the desire to acquire goods appeared to persist independently of one's ethnicity or the meaning ascribed to said objects. Role of capitalism and particularly that of commodity fetishism<sup>1</sup> amongst distinct ethnic groups on the frontier raised multiple questions, and since the focus of my research was reforestation, I never had the chance to set aside time to analyze closer these field observations or adopt theory trying to clarify what was taking place. By means of the thesis, therefore, I aim to do this justice, aspiring to introduce the reader to the intricate world of both the commodities and the unconscious, and the subjectivities formed in between, based on my work and experiences amongst the Indigenous people in the easternmost Amazonian region of Brazil.

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<sup>1</sup> Fetishism refers to things “unnatural”, “artificial”, or “fake” with colonial connotations, representing the ignorance of the Eurocentric perceptions who defined other cultures as deviating from the norm, and the observer thereby also holding a superior position over the one which is observed.

## 1. Introduction

Since the 1940s and up until the 1980s Brazil's economic transformation was remarkable. Its growth thereafter was equal only during the commodity boom of early 2000, slowing down after the 2008 global crisis, and finally crashing down in 2014. For several reasons, however, possibilities to associate growth with the benefits to the public did not manifest itself during these decades. The elites appropriated production means such as land establishing themselves as perpetual heirs in political arenas, advancing pragmatism for continuous accumulation, dispossession and 'vertical' submission in calls for development and progress (Saad-Filho & Morais, 2018). The ruling establishment unleashed and waged continuous war on the poor, in the midst of what can be referred to as an internal continuation of colonial rule. Although disregard for the natural environment and its people led to the growth of GDP, it also exacerbated the social and economic inequalities, with deteriorating conditions for many. Adverse effects were major on traditional, rural, indigenous, riverine and *quilombola* communities, notwithstanding millions of migrants fleeing the nation's drought-stricken northeastern regions, who next to that in the south were both under rising land tenure pressures. Migrants in search of a better life therefore either burst into the slums of large cities or followed the newly built highways towards extractive frontiers in search of land to subsist.

Developments of the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century Brazilian economy hinged heavily upon the incorporation of its densely forested, but sparsely inhabited region of the Amazon. Building roads and clearing vast tracts of land inhabited by until then hostile tribes was the outset; the motto - bring people with no land, to a land with no people. The Roncador-Xingú expedition (1943-1948) inaugurated this quest, referred to simply as "*the march to the West*" (Villas Bôas, 2012). Since the discovery of the New World up until more recent rubber-booms, native tribes encountered only exterminations, enslavement and misery, unless fleeing into the inaccessible forests and by adopting hostile ways. The frontier was now to be unleashed on an unprecedented scale, roads cutting straight into the previously impenetrable forests. Native people residing therein overnight became standing in the way of *progress* conceived on absorbing their "vacant" *terra nullius* lands originally meant to be allotted for migrants, but very soon set aside for capital laden large-scale agriculture and infrastructure projects. Hostile tribes inhabiting these places were to be pacified and made sedentary. This role was ascribed to the agencies meant to take care of the Indians such as SPI<sup>2</sup>, later reformed as FUNAI<sup>3</sup>, who were made complicit in executing the role of contacting and moving native people out of the way for the construction of new roads and arriving masses of people. In their initial quests, material objects were consistently of major significance in establishing first contacts

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<sup>2</sup> Serviço de Proteção aos Índios (SPI) was established in 1910 to provide support to Indigenous populations across Brazil and led by Marshal Rondon. In 1967 embezzled in various corruption scandals it was reorganized into FUNAI.

<sup>3</sup> Fundação Nacional do Índio (FUNAI), or The National Indigenous Foundation, is the Brazilian governmental agency in charge of protecting Indians, and their interests

with the native people, as also later their interactions with the Lusophone society. The process of contact, with gifts, left hanging from branches, to emit notions of a friend and not enemy, would soon lead to knives, pots and pans, beads, hammocks, fishing line, and hooks, distributed at attraction posts free of charge for the tribes emerging from the forest. The Indians were meant to become sedentary around these pacification posts, adopt agriculture, grow rice, beans, and manioc, slowly to be turned into *caboclos* and peasants, completely incorporated into the large society and market economy. With no immunity to modern diseases such as flu, tuberculosis, measles, polio or influenza, numbers as high as 90% of those initially contacted commonly died after pacification (Hemming, 2003). With the deaths also went the traditional knowledge, the social fabric of clans and families disintegrating, and many tribes going completely extinct. These facts and related atrocities ascribed to the incompetent Indian agency and the government's priorities run by a military dictatorship since the 1964 coup, were rightfully so referred to as '*a genocide*' (Lewis, 1969).

In the pursuing decades and Brazil's quest for progress many Amerindian tribes were first contacted, then made sedentary, and finally simply abandoned, once attraction post finance ran out and government focused on other priorities. In turn, left to care for themselves, particularly between the 1980s and 2000, it was relatively common for native people to participate in alliances with illegal loggers, gold prospectors, and land invaders to maintain the flow of commodities by which they were first off lured into contact (Turner, 1995; Rabben, 2004; Schwartzman & Zimmerman, 2005; Williams et al., 2012:336). In exchange for timber and gold cheap commodities were provided for native people who saw little ground to abstain from them, which flooded native villages, with various effects on culture and these small scale societies (ibid.). In their quest to protect the Amazon region from deforestation and forestall ecological destruction within native lands, both local and international NGOs, next to governments came to the fore in their quest to leverage '*environmental destruction*' promoting '*cultural survival*', by seeking to find market-based win-win solutions, commercializing native non-timber forest products, including more complex approaches of carbon sequestration watershed protection programmes, all applicable also to native people, as part of the PPG7 project after the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992.

On the same frontiers, where native people were contacted and roads cut through the thick jungles, arriving migrants and *posseiros* cleared forests and tried to make a living by planting rice and other crops, quite often realizing that the soils were too impoverished to sustain growth without additional fertilizers. If not the poor soils, then lack of land titling, which often led to counterfeiting and violence, pushed those mostly marginalized further. The peasants thus often moved on, or struggle on their plots, additionally failing to sell any produce due improper embeddedness into the market. Tracts of land with richer soils were often already sold to large-scale landowners even before feeder roads were installed (Schmink & Wood, 1992). Nonetheless, these lots were often squatted by landless peasants abandoned by the government. Left to deal with their dire situations on their own, they either trespassed

into Indigenous lands that were demarcated for the native people or out-migrated as a mechanism to cope with lack of land and pressures arising thereof. Indians at the same time were ransacking ranches, animals slaughtered for their meat, whereby steel tools and shotguns were appropriated for their superiority against stone axes, bows, and arrows.

The frontiers where government policies were implemented first, such as in the state of Pará, turned into a melting pot of potentials and limitations, increasingly marked by confrontations, violence, and murders (Simmons et al, 2007). The cause was often the complex interplay of government policies, sheer bureaucracy, and failure of land titling agencies, next to shifts in development priorities abandoning smallholders and favoring large investors (Schmink & Wood, 1992). The frontiers became contested and wild-west-alike where gun often ruled the law. Social and grassroots movements such as that of landless peasants (MST), rubber tappers of Acre, the *garimpeiros* taking charge of gold pits of Serra Pelada, but also native indigenous populations, all continuously fought for their survival and the right to be considered as parts of society that the military dictatorship tried to ignore. While the Guerilla fighting in the Araguaia region in the early 1970s sought to directly overthrow the military rule, most of the resistance before the end of the decade was silenced by violent means, and much of unresolved tensions, not limited to the Amazon region, was carried into the post-military regime into the democratic order commencing as of 1988. This meant that a new constitution was drafted from scratch, and while it granted native people sufficient rights and many environmental laws were established to protect nature and their indigenous lands, little was put forward to enforce them, tensions and deforestation remaining high across many frontiers, as peasants struggled on for their life, and large scale landowners continuously crept upon the *Amazon* and the *Cerrado* regions. Following the Rio Summit in 1992 international aid had managed to secure rights and resources to indigenous people, while life for the working classes and peasants improved little, the politics struggling with newly found democracy.

During the rule of the Workers Party (PT) (2003-2016), led by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, poverty began to decrease, with strata of newfound lowest ranks of the middle class beginning to emerge due to various government incentive and benefits. Social programs and public spending fed by exports of commodities did, therefore, have a positive effect on millions of poor peasants and traditional communities. However pertinent unresolved institutional and political problems next to widespread corruption, and the decreasing demand across global markets for commodities gave a blow to the economy in 2008, leading to the fall of PT and Lula in 2013-14. The political status quo and a failing economy, next to unresolved crimes of the military dictatorship, untouched by the PT rule, raised waves of dissatisfaction in the public (Saad-Filho & Morais, 2018). A parliamentary coup impeached and ousted President Dilma Rousseff in 2016. Michel Temer, not elected by the public, became the new president of the country, strongly supporting the *Bancada Ruralista* and the Congress dominated by Cattle, Bullets, and Bible lobbies. The effects of the coup brought changes to policies by which political elites sought to decrease public spending and bring to demise the welfare state. Instead of acting horizontally, the government again put vertical pressure on the poor.

It dried out financial support to the established pro-social policies, attacked workers' rights, cut spending on education, health, and pensions. On the other hand, government spending to municipalities and states, where corruption reigns, as a rule, was backed by Temer in order to buy support within the Senate. These events paved the way for the rise of extremely reactionary politics, culminating in the election of a right-wing president Jair Bolsonaro, who took up his office in January of 2019.

This unfolding development appears symptomatic to the deep political, socio-economic, and environmental crises that Brazil has been dealing with in the last decades, if not longer. The occupation of new lands for the use of above and below ground natural resources was already presented as an imperative to curb the deficit of payments and encouraging the economy during the election campaign of the current President Bolsonaro. Constantly dependent on exports for its GDP, the Brazilian economy is painted as capable to rapidly expedite and deliver raw materials for global markets in exchange for hard currency and growth. Disregard for nature, traditional and native communities, and in sui genera, all that impedes the rapid expansion of deforestation, agriculture, mining, and large infrastructure project implementation, are therefore on the agenda and pushed forward by the extremely conservative new far-right government. The potential of another capitalist boom devised to appropriate so far protected and untapped resources across new frontiers are therefore very likely, particularly considering the support voiced by Bolsonaro himself towards the government's agribusiness stronghold. He has promised not only to remove rights of indigenous people to their lands but also to wage an actual war on the entire Amazon region, abolishing its protection by suspending state environmental agencies, such as IBAMA<sup>4</sup>. Data shows already that previous political turmoil led to the highest rate of deforestation increase for the decade to date in 2018 (MMA, 2018). Such current evidence signals the threat that in the wake of governmental support, next to logging and mining, expansion of large landholdings is to unravel, part of which was already underway via clandestine activities across the Amazon and Cerrado regions.

In addition, the elected President has already signed a temporary decree to “supervise, coordinate, monitor and accompany the activities and actions of international organizations and non-governmental organizations in the national territory” (Reuters, 2019). In addition to such limitations, seeking to defend and preserve Brazilian nature and indigenous people, international organizations will face hurdles back home where own governments shall seek to continue their embezzlement in business as usual approaches in bi- and multilateral trade agreements in their quest to acquire resources providing both for the industries and the consumers. Peasants, native and traditional populations, landless workers, next to the large landowners and the local government with its various lobbies, in addition to international corporations and conservation agencies, and, indirectly, the global consumers, shall therefore all engage in a rush to secure access to natural resources at the frontier. This shall reproduce

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<sup>4</sup>IBAMA - Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis - Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources



unequal and unfair distribution, leaving in its wake violence, deaths, poverty and lack of public attention by the government towards those most marginalized. And while the West seeks to erase paternalism and ontological differences via postcolonial thought, native groups argue for the sustenance of their colonial identities (Rajão & Duarte, 2018), wishing to maintain these for the sake of assurance of the continuous flow of material goods and political support – a kind of controlled equivocation as described by Viveiros de Castro (2004).

## **2. Research Problem**

Following the establishment of the new government, local communities and native people of frontier regions across Brazil are suspended in uncertainty. International aid donors, environmental NGOs and human rights activists signal that across the already contested rural multiethnic landscapes, further deforestation, environmental degradation, and exacerbation of violence is imminent. While international aid of the Global North advocates for the preservation of nature and indigenous people's lifestyles across Brazil, consumers both herein and outside insist on a continuous supply of cheap commodities. The West discursively preaching conservation also dogmatically calls for the sustenance of economic growth based on neoliberalism and foreign resources. Inducing environmental protection, mobilizing social movements and resisting the forces of capitalism at the frontier is therefore extremely challenging. On the one hand, dispossession and appropriation of land and its resources are catalyzed and driven by global consumers, industries and markets demands. On the other hand, progress at the frontiers across Brazil is projected to be possible only on the premise of linkages to further extraction, echoing herewith its colonial history and the reluctance to proceed with alternatives to that of the neoliberal plunder. These powerful forces are thereupon unleashed on none other but the native people residing across indigenous lands that more than often have halted deforestation and mark actual extractive frontiers, their forested lands visible across degraded landscapes across satellite images.

In recent decades global markets have allowed to interlink people from extractive peripheries with the consuming and industrial centers. Capitalism is now a form of a mythical creature capable to swallow and appropriate everything in its wake. While omnipresent, and able to cast spells on most people, its true crudest form effects are only visible if one travels to places where primary accumulation is taking place. Brazil's case serves here neatly as a schoolbook example of the extractive frontier. Tainted with a negative force, the mythical notions of capitalism are associated with various ill effects and general class struggle. Juxtaposed, at the same time, stands its apparent creative ability to forge connections, providing all to relinquish in a non-discriminatory enjoyment found via commodities, even propagating and giving meaning to life, aiding local livelihoods, next to inducing 'morality, faith, power, and emotion' (Konings, 2015). Positive aspects of capitalism must outshine the negative ones for both the myth and economic system of it to persist without fading away. The ability attributed to capitalism as a self-perpetuating system is nonetheless false – the force sustaining this underlying economic phenomenon must be associated solely with humans, reproducing

the order through the practices of their everyday lives. While consciously the avoidance to exacerbate own conditions should appear logic, both native people, but also their non-indigenous counterparts do seek out commodities, sustaining and propagating the status quo of the already-all appropriating system of capitalism. If everyone's desire is after commodities, whom and how should confront the system?

In order to understand the persistence of an urge that seems rather irrational such circumstances hence insist to be inquired and to be looked at from both the perspective of particular subjectivities, but also the very unconscious forces that might be driving desires after objects such as commodities. This is what I assume to probe by drawing on the insights of psychoanalysis. The frontier of eastern Amazon hereby presents a curious case to be analyzed, providing a chance to look into the functioning and overall predicament of capitalism from the perspective of human subjectivity, both native, and not. The case of native people is more so inspiring since they have only relatively recently come in touch with the market economy, yet nonetheless appear to have been absorbed by it already – if not as members of a working-class, then as symbols standing in the economy for certain truths and myths, and going even further – as commodities seeking to increase their economic and the use-values. Ideas of combating capitalism, and particularly presenting indigenous people as bearers of such a task, expecting that they would curb their enjoyment, is then rather naïve, utopian and actually hopeless. Both native people and the public at large appear to be equally succumbing to commodities. The means by which capitalism absorbs people into submission while eliciting notions of their enjoyment of such a process then appears to function outside of their rationality, that since the Enlightenment we are assumed to possess. Yet it appears that our unconscious libidinal forces are more often in charge than we think of our actions. In other words, the *I who thinks* appears not to be the same *I that is*. This begets to be examined critically further - a task that this thesis takes upon, striving to show that acceptance of hopelessness of our succumbing to the market is the very way forward.

## **Knowledge Gap**

Centuries and decades after first peaceful contacts complete assimilation of native people into larger Brazilian society has not occurred as foreseen. Amerindians have managed to persist as distinct people adapting to circumstances and surviving multiple hardships. Although initially considered as culturally foreign and despised, commodities and consumer goods have become rapidly desired and incorporated into their daily lives. Production and consumption of objects is assumed from a subjective side, yet whether this is always the case requires further elaboration; if not, what are the repercussions of such perspective brought into the fore? If we were to assume that the metaphysical subjectivity of our contemporary life hides behind a fictional phantasy, how would one have to proceed to uncover that, which is potentially blurred? Assuming that reality is a social construction would present an optimal backdrop, allowing to question things that often remain taken up as facts, in the guise of truth, positivism, and so on. Going a step further, embracing psychoanalysis might enrich the overall approach permitting insights beyond the obvious and observable of objects as

commodities onto which desires are plotted. The unconscious as the focus of psychoanalysis could then present novel insights into the functioning of our minds, elucidating inconsistencies and aspects of our contemporary sociality in the sea of objects.

While literature critically assessing the frontier and capitalism within indigenous context exists (Li, 2015; Fisher 2000; 1980), frameworks using Lacanian psychoanalysis to produce insights into Amerindian lifestyles are much scarcer (de Vries, 2015; Sletto, 2011; Novaes, 1997). While Lacan's theories are vast, they depict humans as speaking subjects living in internal conflict, unable to voice their deepest desires because these always escape verbal signification. The apparent potency of capitalism is then to use this internal conflict and tension as a lack that may be solved by engaging in unconscious desires, through drives, and seeks out objects to cover up such internal negativity. These objects are commodities, which from a Marxian perspective are endowed with explicitly peculiar qualities, all of which conceive it as a very unusual form of being, to which I shall return in a moment. The ways in which capitalism then exploits aspects of the human psyche and its unconscious, particularly in the context of Indigenous peoples, remains occult and so far not applied in the case of the Amazonian frontier. Whether Lacan's theories could clarify, what role capitalism plays amongst the natives and the non-Amerindians caught in consumption insists upon further elaboration. Such novel insights could both illuminate upon the effects of subjective inter-ethnic encounters, the role of commodities played witching, and above all the universality of capitalism banking upon our unconscious. This thesis hence seeks to close this gap in knowledge by applying theoretical neo-Marxian and Lacanian psychoanalysis onto previous empirical observations amongst native populations at the frontier, engaging in research to uncover critical and potentially new insights.

### **3. Research Design**

The research design shall now present the hypothesis and the objective defining the research questions, and associated methodology with relevant and specific means of data collection. It shall in addition further contextualize the case study and explain to the reader how theoretical issues and research shall be operationalized, introducing the theoretical framework and outlining the thesis chapters.

#### **Hypothesis**

The basic premise of this research is the hypothesis that fascination and needs of material objects must somehow rest upon potent and omnipresent, and though distinct - nevertheless inherently universal human desires. The capitalist system, therefore, might reflect traits of our inner being which is attracted outwardly to objects with an extremely powerful force. The researcher insists and speculates that people are lured by objects/commodities due to the peculiar ways in which the unconscious functions. In addition, I claim, that this pull-effect and therefore the cause, operate place independently – whether at the periphery or the center of the capitalist system, and irrelevant of one's cultural background – be the subject

in question native or not. Furthermore, I claim that attaching subjectively alternative meanings to objects within different '*natures*', does not exclude one's susceptibility and proneness to succumb to the consumption of commodities. It is here, that commodities emerge appearing able to bridge distinct ontological worlds such as that of the Amerindians and the capitalist market economy at large. Abandoning associated pleasures of enjoyment in acquiring such objects, must be therefore be considered equally hard (or impossible) for both native and neoliberal subjects. However, borrowing insights of Marx and Lacan, I shall hypothesize and claim that the surplus-enjoyment obtained from acquiring commodities to be overall greater for the native people, because this happens on relatively different terms than in the case of neoliberal subjects. Disparities with the latter are to be observed from examples such as the emergence of Cargo Cults in Melanesia (Lindstrom, 1993; Worsley, 1959), arrival of commodities amongst tribal people (Gell, 1986), the role that exchange plays linking indigenous and nonindigenous worlds through certain forms of colonialism (Thomas, 1991), the peculiar aspects of commodities particularly in the lowland Amazonian case (Hugh-Jones, 1992) and various adaptations taken to fit them into Amerindian ontologies (Albert & Ramos, 2002), and the ways in which the "the pact with the devil get signed" (Taussig, 1980). I shall argue that even though material goods are desired by all, native people appear not to succumb to commodities in as a dramatic way as the western societies do. I will go even further to argue that while being commodified themselves, the native people are nonetheless capable to enjoy the commodities more than others, which to many might appears as unfair. In sum, the hypotheses that I shall strive to prove are:

1. Objects/Commodities lure all subjects with equally potent forces
2. These subjects are guided by the workings of the unconscious
3. Capitalism has the ability to produce what the unconscious subjects need
4. Indigenous people might subjectively enjoy material object more than others
5. Indigenous people are objectively commodities within the capitalist system
6. Capitalism reflects the inner working of our unconscious

### **Research Objective**

The overall objective of this fundamental research is to see whether existing theories may aid the comprehension of the capitalist induced phenomena unraveling at an interethnic frontier. Of particular interest are the Marxist perspectives on the commodities and what Freud-Lacanian theorization could elucidate and infer onto effects of it at the periphery. Abstract theoretical concepts are to be cross-compared and assessed descriptively with previous empirical observations. In doing so, probabilistic explanations as to what and how is unfolding at the fringes of a capitalist frontier are to be deduced. By means of a problem-analysis, this research assesses the overall dilemma of whether and how capitalism and the excess of commodities affects native people. The goal is to acquaint the reader with the theory of Marx's political economy infused with Freud-Lacanian psychoanalysis, showing the creative aspect and the ability of capitalism to profit from specific traits of the human unconscious.

The general objective of this research is to clarify whether a form of a capitalist unconscious is present and functioning amongst native people at the frontier, working in a similar fashion as amongst individuals subjected by capitalism for longer periods, e.g. representatives of western societies. The specific objective is, therefore, to first study the effects and processes that capitalism has unleashed on the interethnic frontier, amidst of which indigenous people have emerged as both victims and beneficiaries. To be studied next are then universal subjective desires of the unconscious, shaping overall enjoyment drawn from material things and affecting human subjectivities. Finally, considering native people participation and exchange with the outside world via a market economy, it remains to be determined, which of the particular Lacanian discourses the native peoples might find themselves hemmed in.

By adopting psychoanalysis, it is to be asserted how human subjectivity within capitalism does not negate agency for change but rather exhibits its marginal potentiality. The aim of presenting how the capitalist unconscious operates is to clarify how reproduction and perpetuation of contemporary capitalist order may be established on this very premise. By way of fusing theoretically conceptual insights, this research will engage in the broad analysis of the paradoxical ability of capitalism to successfully submit people of various ethnicities to a depriving market economy, while as a byproduct simultaneously evoking the semblance of their enjoyment in such a process. The objective is to illuminate how the physical frontier of resources appropriated to expand production, is intertwined with the libidinal unconscious desires meant to cover up the inherent human lack via the nexus of commodities. Development is built upon the idea that it is both desired, and beneficial, and above all - capable of cohabiting the same space together with capitalism, directly exhibiting the logical contradiction and perils this sort of thinking may induce, and which this thesis strives therefore to uncover.

## **Research Questions**

**GRQ** – *Is there a capitalist unconscious amongst the native people?*

**SRQ1** – *What effects and processes has capitalism unleashed onto the cultural landscapes and ethnic groups of the eastern Amazon?*

**SRQ2** – *What roles have the commodities and their exchange facilitated in the process of shaping, the interethnic frontier?*

**SRQ3** – *What do we learn by adopting Lacanian discourse(s) in relation to native people of the case?*

## **Empirical Chapters**

The separate empirical chapters of this thesis adhere to each specific research questions, employing relevant analysis methods to answer them. Fieldwork notes are filtered and juxtaposed with theory previously defined in the theoretical framework. For SRQ1, the

contemporary interethnic encounter between various native groups and the Lusophone society surrounding them is first analyzed historically. By conflating various works it provides insights into regional developments from a neo-Marxian perspective of political economy and the process of capitalism, and the effects thereof brought onto the region and its traditional inhabitants. Fusing historical data based on a literature review and the previously gathered personal fieldwork insights serve the contextual and longitudinal representation, underpinning the contemporary setting of the case in more recent decades. To answer SRQ2 the research engages further with the writings of Marx that are fused with further insights of Lacan, Saussure, and Lévi-Strauss. Capitalism and commodities are interpreted from a psychoanalytical perspective gaining further insights beyond the critique of political economy. Examples observed in the field are given. For SRQ3 - the introduction and operationalization of Lacanian theory on the four discourses is paramount. Herein Saussurean semiotics come again to the fore and indigenous people are compared objectively and subjectively from the perspectives of Marx and Lacan. Finally, the GRQ will be answered and discussed as part of the last research question, summing up previous findings and additional insights following Tomšič (2015). Joining these will provide sufficient material to theorize the potential existence of capitalist unconscious on the frontier.

#### **4. Technical Research Design**

The research design rests upon specific methods and a self-elaborated theoretical framework. While the methods clarify how research is undertaken and what data is collected, the framework forges a specific perspective and introduces the reader to the major theories to be applied in the interpretation and theorizing of previous observations. The methods employ a review of the literature and a case study, insights of which are expanded within the empirical chapters; theories are further elaborated and clarified by the use of examples from the field. Incorporation of maps further facilitates the comprehension of the case from a landscape perspective. These technical research design components are presented individually and more in-depth next.

#### **Research Methods**

This research is grounded on a mixed-method approach. It fuses insights from fieldwork, that simultaneously represent a case study, with further insights gained from a literature review, providing a longitudinal perspective to the case by means of a desk research. This step incorporates details from the review of books, peer-reviewed papers, ethnographic monographs, and official documents. The case study itself focuses on the eastern Amazon and historical processes of the frontier unfolding there. All empirical observations have been previously collected in the rural parts of the northeastern state of Maranhão, in Brazil, that I visited mainly as part of my two internship at the Instituto Sociedade, População e Natureza (ISPEN) between 2016 and 2018. It consists mainly of observations while working and living amongst the Guajajara and Ka'apor Indigenous people, and the non-indigenous counterparts living in the vicinities, with whom I came into direct contact either randomly or due to my

work. My conducted activities such as an evaluation of the viability of reforestation projects, based on participatory action research and dialogical anthropology, are not directly related to the research of this work, nonetheless, my presence in the region permitted me insights into the local context that puzzled me and to many of questions arisen I was finding a few answers. Since the current analysis rests upon previous observations in the field, the inquiry may be considered an ex-post analysis of former observational data, with the qualitative critical reflection and interpretation resting upon the cross-comparison and engagement with theory. By triangulating the wealth of data from the literature review, theory, and personal observations from the field, an in-depth analysis pertaining to a specific contemporary indigenous setting is therefore given as a case study. This permits to better fathom the overall functioning and underlying processes which have been catalyzed by capitalism in the enjoyment-marked interethnic encounter and a sensible and insightful firsthand account of the case of eastern Amazon inhabited by several ethnic indigenous groups.

### Operationalization

Considering the intention to adopt a psychoanalytical perspective, an introduction to such aspects begets introduction. Amongst the first authors to apply the lens of psychoanalysis to an ethnographic field setting was Octave Mannoni (1956), as also Frantz Fanon (2008 [1952]). Mannoni's 1940s study of Malagasy in Madagascar can be termed as the inauguration of the science of *ethnopsychiatry*. Mannoni's insights in the field are not accidental. During returns to Paris from his service as the head of information services of the colony in Madagascar, he had begun to be analyzed by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in 1945 (Chassler, 2007). These sessions allowed Mannoni to unveil the colonial situation he was caught up in from a rather unusual perspective for that time. He depicted colonization as a process by means of which Europeans projected their own lack, fears, and desires, onto the people they came into contact with. Introducing the terms *inferiority* and *dependency*, Mannoni showed these to represent Europeans perceptions harbored by feelings of inadequateness cast onto the locals. His study (1956) based on the premise of the unconscious argues that through it's working individuals '*project*' their emic desires and fears onto others. In other words, a fault in oneself is becoming a lack that the other is accused of having. As he writes, '*it is as difficult to see something of one's self in all men, as it is to accept oneself as completely as one is*' (Mannoni, 1956:34). Going further, he concludes that a Malagasy uprising during his service to have been caused not by a desire for independence, but rather a feeling of sheer abandonment by the master colonizer, who no longer subdues, forces, or exhibits authority. Although these insights remain debatable and potentially controversial they nonetheless have opened the human psyche to be incorporated and studied within the early debates on subjectivity and action. The actual culprit and the '*fundamental difficulty*' in the psychological study of man lies however in the scientific approach (Verhaeghe, 1995:91). Significations arriving at

generalizations, such as the DSM-5<sup>5</sup>, are preceded with observations that ground descriptions and categorizations. However, generalizations prove difficult, due to the fact that each individual is always a specific case, even though it might share similar aspects with others. The diagnosis and treatment of individuals with specific problems and the persistence of discomfort therefore cannot be transferred and ascribed to another individual. The great achievement of Freud was to discover means to make a general theory of the human psyche, beyond the manifesting individual heterogeneity, and making analysis and treatment viable and functional. Approaching the unconscious as a myth beneath which lie a certain hidden truth he found repetitiveness. Later, borrowing from insights developed by Lévi-Strauss's and structural anthropology in general, Jacques Lacan uncovered and systematized underlying formal structures of human minds, formulating his theory of the four discourses (Verhaeghe, 1995), elaborated and applied to the ethnographic case in Ch.III. Since this thesis strives to adopt a similar approach it is essential that the process and aspects of such an endeavour remain clear to the reader, and for which the theoretical framework is elaborated next. The following paragraphs try to do this justice by introducing the reader to the main theories and aspects to be applied in later analysis.

## 5. Theoretical Framework - Introduction

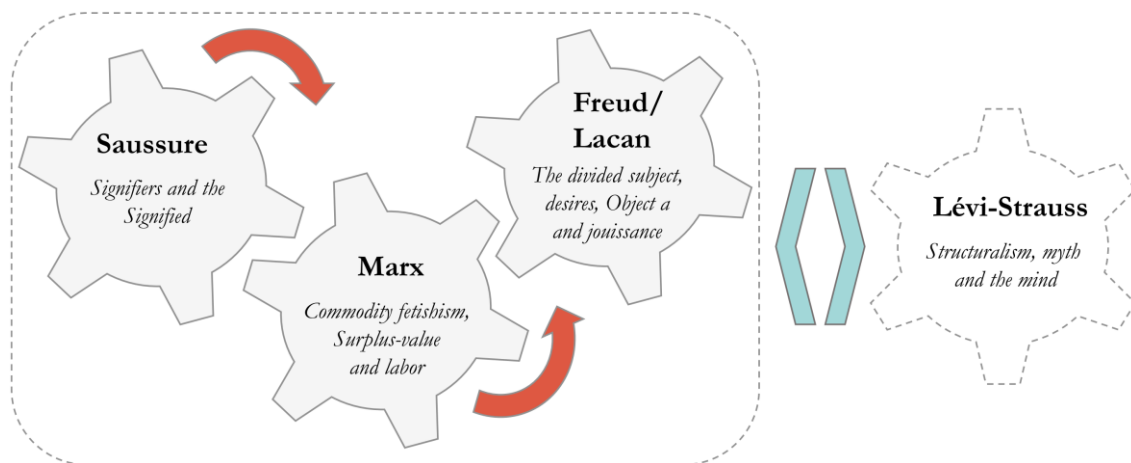
Traditional societies have for century's embraced egalitarian ways of life, dismissing emergence of political or economic hierarchies (Clastres, 1977). Whether this has any reason to hold true to this day since their confrontation with capitalism is a matter of this thesis. This framework, therefore, seeks to uncover means by which capitalism could potentially find ways to exploit humans, by tapping into their universal desires. This is facilitated in this research by relying on fieldwork observations, and the theories of Marx and Lacan. I use the earlier to elaborate on the peculiar form and notion of the commodity and the associated fetishisms within the system of capitalism, from the point of the critique of political economy; I engage with the latter for the expertise to further advance Freudian writings in uncovering radical aspects of the unconscious and the emergence of an explicit human subjectivity. If capitalism functions by mystifying objective appearances and hiding social links, then we are required to look both at these fantasies and how they enable the blurring out of particular facets hidden within the commodity form. Adopting the Freudo-Lacanian perspective and engaging with the work of Tomšič (2015), then clarifies this and shows how the functioning of the unconscious might be complicit in the forging and reiterating such fantasies, overall human subjectivities, and specific worldviews. For this, the reader is concisely, but robustly, familiarized with the Lacanian concepts of the barred subject, desire, drive, object *petit a* – as the object cause of desire/drive – and *jouissance*. Although these terms throughout Lacan's work have been continuously reworked and expanded, and precise and distinct definitions not prevail, it is only an attempt to introduce, but not necessarily to fully

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<sup>5</sup> DSM-5 stands for *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, in its Fifth Edition; published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) it serves as the taxonomic and diagnostic tool and a principal authority of psychic diagnostics



elaborate their comprehensiveness to the reader. By touching upon Saussurean semiotics and considering that commodities and the subjects themselves stand for particular signs and signifiers, unveils the structuring of our minds and the unconscious via the workings of linguistic mechanisms. Amerindian subjectivities are then juxtaposed with neoliberal subjects of the contemporary society, for which works of Claude Lévi-Strauss' structuralism is embraced as paramount, serving to see whether the functioning of the capitalist unconscious as such may be implied as standing for the common condition of our times. It may then open the possibility of hypothesizing that there exists a singular universality of people that are to be understood as a part-of-no-part, who are subjected in capitalism not as labor power itself, but rather as sheer commodities. The acumen and depth of Levi-Straussian writings additionally elucidates myth-making, of which capitalism is now a part, next to the functioning of traditional and egalitarian Amerindian societies. This is further advanced by borrowing from Pierre Clastres genius and seminal work *Society against the State* (1977). The bulk of the theoretical frame is introduced to the reader after the first Chapter I, which is rather self-explanatory. Before proceeding to Chapter II the reader is then familiarized with more intricate aspects that are important to be grasped prior to engaging with the questions at hand. Acknowledging the merit of the structural thinking and commonalities in the tradition to seek out the persistence of structures beyond cognition of Saussure, Marx, Freud and Lacan, and ultimately Lévi-Strauss, then permits the composition of a theoretical frame (Figure 1), where ones unconscious structure is given more relevance than the apparent subjective agency upon it.

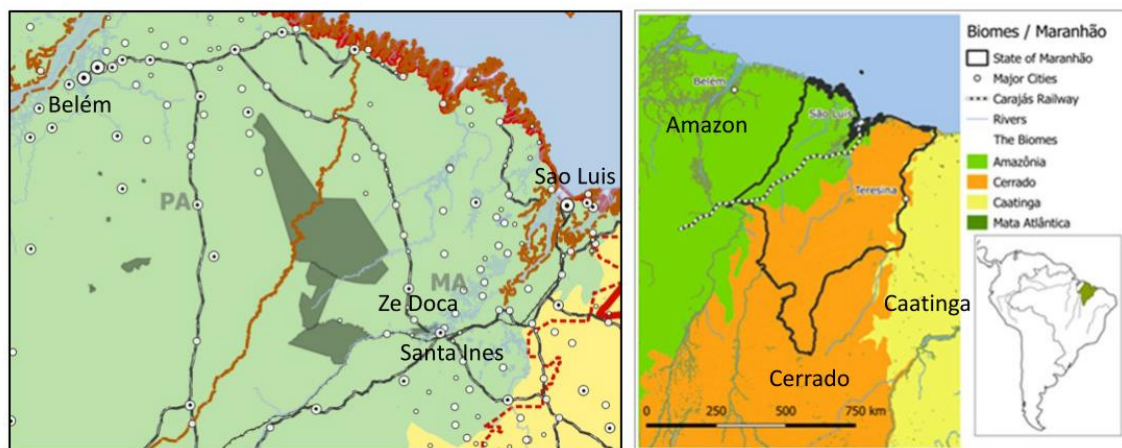


**Figure 1** | The Overall Theoretical Framework based on Saussurean Semiotics, Marx's Critique of Political Economy and Freud-Lacanian Psychoanalysis, and Lévi-Strauss' Structuralism

**Key concepts:** The Saussurean Sign, Freudian *jouissance*, Lacanian barred subject, drive, desire, object *a*, *jouissance*; Marx's commodity fetishism, Indigenous people, Lévi-Strauss and myths.

## 6. The Case Study: Indigenous people and the pre-Amazonian Maranhão

The bulk of the fieldwork data stems from my two internships at ISPN and fieldwork in June 2016, and then again between November 2017 and February of 2018. Apart from these two periods, I have notes from my visits by invitation from the Tenetehara in March 2017, and the Ka'apor in August 2018 that I carried out independently. The unit of analysis are the ethnic groups and individuals living between the Rivers of Pindaré and Alto Turiaçu, in the state of Maranhão in Brazil (Map 1), and their actions, engagements, and voiced opinions. The groups are represented by the Ka'apor, Tenetehara, and Awá-Guaja indigenous tribes and non-indigenous settlers arriving here since the 1960s. The area of the fieldwork is bounded by the municipalities of Zé Doca and Santa Inês of the northwestern parts of Maranhão. It involves, in particular, the urban locations such as the city of Santa Inês and Zé Doca, and smaller townships such as Nova Conquista. Additionally, I was invited by the leaders and representatives of respective groups to visits and stay for prolonged periods in the native villages of the Ka'apor - Xié, Parakuy, and Turizinho; and of the Guajajara – in Aldeia Macaranduba. I had also the chance to participate in an event focused on territorial protection that was carried out in Base Norte within the northern part of the Awá-Guaja territory.



Map 1 | Research Area with respective Indigenous lands

During my first placement at ISPN, I worked in the headquarters in Brasília for several months and then spent the June of 2016 amongst the Guajajara of the Indigenous land of Caru. This allowed me to see up close and live the reality of life in their main community village of Maçaranduba. In my second placement (Oct 2017 - Mar 2018) I was assigned the task of researching viable reforestation approaches that could benefit the Ka'apor Indigenous people, living within the Alto Turiaçu Indigenous land. During this time I additionally visited and helped in discussing and collecting field data for a similar project amongst the Guajajara. All of the reforestation related data was gathered using a mixed-method action research, based on daily observations of village life, semi-structured interviews, taking part in hunting and fruit gathering trips with local representatives across a variety of landscapes. The fieldwork was participatory and based on continuous dialogue resulting in a wealth of ethnographic data. The Ka'apor and the Guajajara were equal participators throughout, or

rather – my tutors in the quest to understand what they see and think about the cultural landscapes surrounding them. The body of the qualitative data gathered during fieldwork commenced at the end of the dry, and well into the rainy seasons, across the southern parts of the Alto Turiaçu Indigenous land, and around the village of Maçaranduba in the Indigenous land of Caru. Most of these projects and the presence of ISPN amongst these tribes were associated with VALE S.A. (VALE), the largest iron-ore mining company in the world, active in the region since the inception of the Great Carajás Program (PGC) in 1982. The mine was increasing its operations and seeking to be more competitive on the global market. This meant that upon my arrival VALE was already executing an environmental mitigation measure as part of the Basic Environmental Plan (PBA). Within the scope of the country's legislation, the Brazilian licensing law compels PBA's to regulate and mitigate potential environmental impacts arising due to large-scale development projects. It is a legal right and instrument fulfill social and environmental obligations towards affected environment and the people residing therein. During the development of the PBA negotiations in regards to agreements on provisions and measures take place between all the stakeholders. With respect to the context I was observing, the indigenous component of the PBA was agreed between the proponent (VALE), and the impacted native groups (e.g. Guajajara and Awa-Guajá). The process was overseen by FUNAI as the intervening body representing Indigenous interests, which also monitors the just execution of part of PBA's Indigenous component, which ISPN was contracted to perform. The terms of PBA approved by all parties has then granted building permits to VALE to duplicate the railway tracks to transporting the iron ore (Image 1).



**Image 1** | The 350-carriage-long VALE train passing nearby the Indigenous land of Caru and transporting iron ore to the port of São Luis; the track-duplication work may be seen running parallel to it (Picture by the Author. June 2016)

For the Guajajara and Awá-Guajá, this meant arduous discussion and working out the conditions and terms of PBA to be settled with VALE, which contracted its execution to be carried out by ISPN and to be overseen by FUNAI. The PBA was signed and agreed prior to my arrival by all the parties. The Ka'apor considered not to be directly affected by the duplication works due to the relative distance from the tracks, were exempt from the PBA. The Guajajara and Awá-Guajá insisted that PBA rather than executed by FUNAI would be carried out by a non-governmental entity, with ISPN winning the bid to take upon this role. In Brazil, PBAs implement only community projects offsetting potential negative impacts and generally exclude direct financial benefits or royalty-sharing (Hanna et al., 2014). To address this a separate agreement, known as the Termo de Compromisso de Cooperação (TCC) had been settled between VALE and respective communities, to which the Ka'apor had been included. TCC represents also means how mitigation payments and impacts to native peoples were carried out prior to the national legislation making PBA's obligatory. In this sense, TCC is continuity between the old terms of reference between affected native populations and VALE, in addition to the incorporation of the more recent requirement of PBA's. The TCC agreement foresees in the next ten years to share out equally R\$ 60 million, transferred annually to respective associations of the groups. The finances are meant to be used for sustainable projects strengthening environmental protection, infrastructure, and the overall resource base. The associations are allocated and manage each year a higher share of these funds, while the rest is overseen and handled by ISPN, decisions how it is to be spent nonetheless made by the groups themselves. The unraveling of the capitalist frontier within the case study therefore also includes and focuses on the activities of VALE in the region. The processing and transport of ore from the Carajás mine have had various adverse effects on the landscape and the native tribes of the region, since the mid-1980s, and railway tracks undergoing further duplication, that was completed during my visits in the study area.

### **Historical and Geographical Setting**

Up until the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, the population of Maranhão was sparse and presiding mainly along with coastal towns and river dwellings. The major economic produce across the plantations was sugarcane, cotton, and some cocoa, and as of early nineteenth-century large cattle ranches, known as *fazendas* began to occupy the south (Varga & Moreno, 2012). In addition, peasants extracted *babaçu* nuts from palm groves and produced rice. Importing slaves from Africa provided labor to meet high global demand for cotton, sustain the rapid growth of plantations by clearing forested valleys. More inland, and particularly in the forested refuge of tributaries and sources of the rivers Gurupi, Turiaçu, Maracaçumé, and Pindaré, roamed hostile and unpacified Ka'apor and Awá-Guajá groups, next to the “more acculturated” Guajajara. In the upper courses of these rivers and inaccessible jungles, runaway African slave established communities – *quilombos*, extracting and trading gold as of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Cleary, 1990).

The easternmost parts of the Amazon biome are to be found within the State of Maranhão, where the original cover is estimated between 81 thousand (Martins & Oliveira, 2011) and 110 thousand km<sup>2</sup> (IBGE, 2016). While it is considered a pre-Amazonian region, it shares many features with the Amazon itself, although with various geological, climatic, floristic and faunal distinctions (Martins et al., 2011). All of the major rivers drain directly into the Atlantic Ocean; there are no evidence of black anthrosols known as *terra preta do índio* (Balée, 1993); the humid tropical climate is interrupted by a prolonged dry season, its length increasing, and amount of annual rainfall dropping gradually, moving eastwards towards the *cerrado*. Brazil nut (*Bertholletia excels*) and mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) trees, typical to the Amazon are naturally absent here, while others such as maçaranduba (*Manilkara paraensis*), and a type of local rubber tree (*Hevea guianensis*), although not endemic, are significantly more common here (Frois, 1953 in Balée, 1993). The pre-Amazonian forests of Maranhão may be well considered as a transition zone between the Cerrado and the Amazon. Up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century being part of Brazilian North with its distinct tropical humid climate and culture, where darker skin tones and indigenous peoples prevailed, represented something foreign, and inferior to the remaining industrial centers and populations of the South (Bitoun et al., 2005). Affected by the first major frontier expansion in the 1960s, Maranhão since has undergone both vast deforestation and habitat fragmentation, with only a quarter of original forest cover prevailing within either the Biological Reserve of Gurupi or several Indigenous lands (Celentano et al., 2018).

East of pre-Amazonia of Maranhão stretches the savannah biome of the *cerrado* and the semi-arid *caatinga*, where its backlands, or *sertão*, are most prevalent in the Brazilian northeast and where droughts are the norm, and not a digression. Most of the land and the means of production here were concentrated in the hands of economically powerful estates owners, the *latifundiários*, who were granted the land by the monarchs (Bitoun et al., 2005). Some small-scale farmers subsisted squatting on marginal lands, pressured by both the arid climate and increasing pressures of expanding estates appropriating land. In addition, as of 1850 the *Leis das Terras* prohibited individuals from acquiring ownership of land, meaning that those possessing any were forced to continuously subdivide the plots, known as *minifúndio*, until the only options left was to move and labor on the plantations of the estates (Welch et al., 2015; Fernandes et al., 2012). Due to difficult subsistence and persistent droughts of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many chose to leave the region, proceeding to try and make a living by tapping the *Hevea brasiliensis* trees during the first Rubber Boom (1890-1912) (Hemming, 2009; Bourne, 1978). Passing on their way to the deeper Amazon some migrants stopped and settled on unoccupied appearing lands within Maranhão (Draulers & Maury, 1981; Varga, 2012). Up until 1940, only 10% of the land was owned privately, with the whole of the Pre-Amazonian forests public and open for squatting (Pedrosa, 2003). In 1961, decree, N° 51.026 was passed to set aside 1.674.000ha of its central parts as the Gurupi Forest Reserve (Brazil, 1961), and the fringes are occupied by colonists. Plagued by both short-term droughts and then the devastating multi-year dry spells, poor farmers of the Northeast were hit hardest. Unable to



produce crops, or sell labor to the *latifundiários*, which during extreme droughts, laid-off workers as a measure to temporarily save costs (Glantz, 2005), meant that packing up few belongings and leaving everything behind was often the only choice. Pushed out by the climate and further aggravated by land disputes with estate owners, migrants had but two options - either the metropolitan urban centers of the South or into the unknown fringes of the forested Amazon. In both cases they faced hardships. Arriving in the South and having limited levels of education meant difficulties in finding employment, settling in newly established favelas, and still lacking land to produce crops. In the forests up North, it implied adopting a slash and burn agriculture, removing forest cover, fighting malaria and unfamiliar climate, next to bad incorporation into the markets, due to impassable roads during harvest. In general, the dry and healthy climate of the *sertão* and *cerrado* was juxtaposed to the humid and infested Amazon, and recent immigrants from Europe that had settled in the South, and were now moving towards the North, to be confronted with the unfamiliar tropical setting, on top of distinct agricultural practices and crops. Nevertheless, during the 1940s and 1950s migration to northern Goiás and eastern Pará via Maranhão increased (Sawyer, 1984), ensuing in occupation and encroachment onto the forests of Maranhão.

With the military enjoying the power following the coup in 1964, most of the Amazonian basin was still intact, a vast and seemingly endless expanse of forest. Under pressure by large estates and lacking productive land and the situation in the Northeast did however not improve. This meant that after the 1960s the Brazilian military government commenced with the plans to mitigate social tensions by integrating the vast tracts of the Amazon and satisfying the long-standing calls for increasing national security by occupying lands further away from the coast. The overall involvement of the military in the development of the Amazon meant that private capitalist interests were often tainted with security and nationhood (Hamilton, 2009). The occupation of the Amazon in the decades to follow, would manifest in devastating socio-environmental impacts on the whole region and particularly to the original Amerindian heirs of these lands. Maranhão would, in turn, become the initial frontier, where new highways would bring various interests, unleashing socio-economic conflicts between not only new settlers but also them and the tribes' native to the region. Initial attempts to integrate the Amazon into the larger Brazilian state inaugurates Maranhão as a destination, representing today one of the oldest penetration frontiers of the Amazon (Celentano et al., 2018).

This venture commenced with the establishment of the Superintendence for the Development of the Northeast – SUDENE<sup>6</sup> - in 1959, directed specifically to manage and organize the resettlement of poor farmers from the drought-stricken northeast into 30.000 km<sup>2</sup> of forests within Maranhão (Roeder, 1967). As of 1962, this venture becomes known as the Alto Turi Colonization Project (PCAT), aiming to control the occupation front. However,

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<sup>6</sup> The Superintendence for the Development of Amazonia - SUDAM - was founded 10 years later.

arriving settlers often find others already settled. Land considered unoccupied in official project papers on the ground actually appears to be worked and owned by someone, leading to a variety of tensions and complications. This means that original heirs have to be expelled to make room for the migrants, and PCAT makes little viable success until in 1968, when it is reorganized with the help of FAO, USAID, and IBRD (Manhães, 1987). If the climate is presented as the limiting factor to the development of Northeast, then the North is painted as lacking in road infrastructure hindering to tap into its land and resources for national growth.

### **Frontiers, Integration, and Migration**

Expansion and opening up of new farming land across Brazil by way of clearing existing vegetation may be used as a definition of the physical frontier. At the same time, the frontier is a social magnet, draining populations where land distribution limits production, presenting it as space where an influx of the oppressed arrives in search for land to subsist. At the same time, the frontier incites the interest of the elite, perceiving it as an opportunity to invest and double their capital. Most of the time the lands to be occupied are however not empty, with indigenous and traditional communities, as also earlier arriving migrants already presiding therein. With multiple interest groups struggling for resources, it has been rare for the frontiers to unravel in peace, as the fight to redistribute land implies (re)negotiation. This process is often expedited by the violence unleashed by the powerful, most often engaging gunslingers, known as *pistoleiros*<sup>7</sup> (Simmons et al., 2007; Hecht & Cockburn, 1992). The accumulation of land for productive purposes – for subsistence or capital – may be either ‘primitive’ (Marx, 1976 [1887]), or based on ‘dispossession’, discussed and elaborated further by Harvey (2003). Insights of both authors are crucial to grasp the land grabbing that the opening up of new frontiers generally unleashes (Hall, 2013; Glassman, 2006).

Three specific types of frontiers of expansion may be discerned across Brazil. These are: (i) the extractive frontier, based on the removal of resources by means of gathering non-timber forest products, poaching, mineral prospecting as also logging noble timber and hardwoods; (ii) a pastoral front as a frontier that seeks new ground for the cattle to graze; and (iii) the agricultural frontier, appropriating lands for short-term production of crops, under slash and burn agriculture, but also more intensive mechanized agriculture based on input reliance, such as in the production of soy. All of these fronts have overlapped and put pressure on lands in Maranhão, particularly exacerbated with the opening up of new highways onwards from the 1960s.

Construction of Brasília-Belém highway (BR-010) between 1958 and 1960 inaugurated the penetration of roads into hitherto vast areas of relatively wild and sparsely populated territory. It was conceived as the first regional development plan for Amazonia between 1953 and 1964 by the Superintendence for the Economic Valorisation of Amazonia (SPVEA)

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<sup>7</sup> Find a remarkable price-tag list for assassinations in *Table 4* in Simmons et al. (2007).

(Hall, 1991). BR-010 was the first official road into and through the Amazon, passing on its eastern edge, although many of its stretches ran via the adjacent savannah region of the *cerado*. Compared to other moderate achievements of SPVEA, the highway was a triumph, spreading hundreds of thousands of migrants across the region in the first decades, and increasing the number of cities from ten to well over a hundred (Hemming, 2003). This highway running west of the pre-Amazonian Maranhão brought the first impacts to the region. Then, in 1970, as part of the Programme for National Integration (PIN), the road network is extended. BR-316, the next paved highway in 1974, links north-eastern regions with Belém, passing directly through the forests of Maranhão and opening them for migratory flux. A trail, or a *picada*, predating BR-316 was installed in the early as 1958 (Roeder, 1967), or 1962 (Manhães, 1987), running eastward of the telegraph line. The latter, established in 1886 (Silva, 2011) was at times used by both locals and Amerindians for travel, and as noted by Beghin (1957). It also served the migrants to venture and try to make a living by clearing the forests, if brave enough to confront the hostile tribes. The final highway - BR-222 - linking the two previous roads (BR-010 and BR-316) between Santa Inês and Açailândia commenced in 1968 and was completed 1974 bringing more peasants and pressure on lands of Maranhão (Mendonça, 2017). By the time it was paved in the early 1980s, the region was fully affected by predatory occupation, where after quick clearing and selling of timber, next to good harvests in the first years, the income would soon drop due to the infertile soils, and one would be left with nothing but destitute landscapes. Pressured to continue in the search of new vacant lands to clear, the migrants would continue moving, the land left behind absorbed by *fazendeiros* for low-quality pastures and extensive cattle ranching.

If during the early stages of the regional occupation of Maranhão occupation occurred on land considered empty, then in the later migration waves, it meant that those arriving had to compete with the already settled; the myth of vast empty lands for all failing to materialize. Serving as a vast frontier only up to the late 1960s, Maranhão slowly became saturated, coming to function only as mid-stop, and no longer able to absorb settlers, see them moving further inland, to Pará, and Mato Grosso (Almeida, 2010). It was particularly so during the 1980s and the financial stagnation in the industrial south. The majority of those who settled in urban centers now joined others fleeing the three consecutive droughts in the 1970s in the north and the overall tensions amidst the fight for land, in search for lots, moving into new frontiers, and to Maranhão (Bitoun et al., 2005).

The frontier also brought a gold rush to the Rio Gurupi basin between 1979 and 1982, gold there previously panned only by runaway slaves (Cleary, 1990). Known as *garimpagem*, the informal sector of gold mining provided manual labor for those migrating within the local region, unable to find land. The influx of workers prospecting for gold galvanized some parts of the local economy providing income to local farmers, who could sell their produce directly. If prior to the gold rush the incorporation of the region's economy around Gurupi and Turiaçu rivers was based mainly on smallholder agriculture, hunting and fishing, then the expansion of *garimpagem* stimulated the local market for foodstuffs. By 1985 *garimpeiros*



and small-scale farmers stood in a symbiotic relationship (Cleary, 1990). In addition, those unable to find land and lacking education could always attempt to try luck prospecting gold instead of moving further. Clearly, *garimpos* attracted the interest of the mining sector resulting in further tensions, next to those with local native tribes. On the other hand, the presence of gold miners meant that land conflicts which raged in the Gurupi region during the 1970s decreased during the gold rush of 1980s. *Garimpeiros* generally impeded the encroachment of ranchers and land speculators and being heavily armed functioned as a deterring force to be reckoned with. However, siding with the smallholders, the gold prospector's apparent social justice towards the weak often meant the violation of others, namely the indigenous peoples, trespassing onto native lands as a rule, and not as an exemption. Gold prospectors, at the same time, strengthened small farmer economically, providing them with a market for food-stuffs, services, labor, and some modest amounts of capital and credit (Cleary, 1990). Unlike ranching, *garimpagem* used little land and its growth in an area does not mean the automatic expulsion of smallholders. In this sense, agriculture and extractivism were combined in the local economy - '*historically the classic pattern of development in the interior of the Amazon*' (Cleary, 1990:214). The World Bank was an important donor in financing both the construction of the new highways, as also the settlement and agricultural projects along these new frontiers. Groups of migrating landless peasants, already established colonizers, and large-scale farmers employing gunmen to vacate lands, clashed, resulting in casualties, amidst the persistent unclear land titling policies and bureaucratic incompetence of SUDENE and INCRA<sup>8</sup>. To depict both the frontier and the government's attempts to control it, it suffices to look at one of its early projects.

### **Alto Turi Settlement Project**

With the establishment of the POLONORDESTE program in 1974, Maranhão became part of the plan to integrate and promote economic growth in an area nearly half of the whole of Northeastern Brazil (World Bank, 1984). This undertaking was to affect 15% of the state and be composed of three major projects – Alto Turi, Baixada Maranhense and Mearim-Pindaré. The idea of the Alto Turi Land Settlement Project (PCAT), was to allot land for small farmers in plots of 30-50ha, focused to raise crops for agricultural exports, such as pepper occupy parts of the lower Turiaçu and Paruá river basins along the newly constructed BR-316 highway (World Bank, 1972). The Pilot Project of PCAT, as early as 1962 was already facing issues unable to cope with land invasions by spontaneous migrants (Draulers & Maury, 1981). From the beginning of the project, land titling arises as the main bottleneck. Although around 2,800 settlers are noted to be in the area 1972, the project foresees to include them next to those to be resettled (World Bank, 1982). Soon after, the Colonization Company of the Northeast - COLONE, a subsidiary of SUDENE, created in 1972, becomes responsible for the management of the Project, with the objective to promote the agricultural frontier of a hitherto uninhabited region. Nearly a million hectares are devised for the project, and the

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<sup>8</sup> The National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (*Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária* – INCRA), is a federal government authority administering land reforms in Brazil.

World Bank loans the Brazilian government \$ 6.7 million to finance its infrastructure and feeder roads (Draulers & Maury, 1981). The construction of additional penetration roads attracts additional 20,000 families into the PCAT area (Ibid.). However, poor soils in need of fertilizers make it not viable nor profitable to grow peppercorn for exports and are soon abandoned in favor of the production of rice.

Colonos within PCAT faced many hardships as settlers, from lack of know-how to inputs and limited assistance from INCRA, but also pressured by waves of new arrivals. Those coming spontaneously from Northeast were even worse off as squatters. Arriving with only with what they may carry, they have to enter the system of *aviamento*, hinged on a debt peonage relationship with some local merchants for the exchange of tools and credit, to clear land they have found apparently vacant. Domination and exploitation of the small agricultural farmer would make him labor producing rice that he then had to sell to the merchant as soon as harvested, around July, when the prices are lowest. The merchant would dehusk and store it until December, when scarcity would drive up the prices six-fold (Balée, 1984:73). The squatter spending more than he earns would indebt himself each year more, while the merchant would collect a large surplus. In addition, only after 2 to 3 years of cultivation, the poor soils would require fertilizers, making the whole operation overly unviable for the squatter. Even though having invested extensive labor to clear the forest, the squatter would pack up his belongings, fleeing both the poor soils and his ever-increasing debt. The merchant, in turn, would claim it, as repayment for the debt. Better off squatters would quite often be pressured to abandon the lands by gunslingers, or *pistoleiros*, and *grileiros*<sup>9</sup>, giving way to larger landowners who would absorb it into their pasture, practicing extensive livestock farming. With the number of squatters increasing rapidly at the frontier, the pressures and competition for land does so too, obliging to disperse in the search of hitherto vacant forested areas to clear. Venturing eastwards of BR-316 and beyond, these waves of migrants would therefore often trespass into the traditional native lands of the Indians. Conflict and interethnic frictions would ensue, requiring FUNAI involvement for de-escalation. It is, therefore, to be observed, that the premise of debt peonage, exploiting squatters socioeconomically, to be an aspect ascribed solely to the capitalist mode of production, forcing the migrants to move, and enriching the patrons. On the other hand, fleeing the lands, large fazendas and cattle ranchers would take advantage and benefit from the misery of the squatters, sending them further in their continuous quest to settle down in search of a better life (Draulers & Maury, 1981).

The PCAT project area becomes a tense ground where disputes between squatters, settlers, and other interests for the land highlight the Brazilian government's inability to produce

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<sup>9</sup> *Grilagem* across the Amazon is a process through which by way of forging property documents land is appropriated. In the past, those practicing *grilagem* placed their fake titles together with crickets in boxes, who would chew at the edges and defecate on the pieces of paper, making them look and feel authentically aged (Campbell, 2014).

actual land titles. In addition, crops produced in the now forestless landscape fail to reach markets via impassable roads or are simply not worth to be transported due to high additional costs to cover extensively large distances. By mid-1970s the government abandons the ideas to colonize the Amazon with small farmers, proceeding to focus on companies and rich individuals able to acquire huge tracts of lands, simplifying and minimizing work associated with land titling problems. Colonization by larger enterprises becomes dominant and incentivized by the state to produce cattle and timber for exports on vast properties spreading across thousands of hectares. The unprecedented rise in livestock projects across Brazil - four in 1966 and 162 in 1969 – depicts well the focus of multilaterals such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), who alone in the decade of 1960's invested US\$1.3 billion in such ventures across the developing world (Hall, 1991). With incentives and tax cuts by the government focusing on *latifúndios*, small farmers that scattered migrating in search for lands to subsist were abandoned to fight for their own survival.

The tumultuous occupation process meant that as of the early 1960s the Gurupi Forest Reserve became affected by the spread of squatters. From the West, those who established themselves following the BR-010 highway built clandestine bridges to cross the Gurupi River and extract noble timbers. In the east and south, waves of squatters and fazendeiros and illegal loggers next to land speculators were approaching along the trails predating BR-316 and later on its highway, but also via BR-222, passing south. Land searching peasants and other enterprises moved quickly to the region that served as the eastern frontier of the Amazon in the scramble for land and resources. As of the 1980s, the Carajás Iron Ore Program will unleash the greatest trials and tribulations to the peoples and swaths of still intact forests.

### **The Great Carajás Iron Ore Program**

Flying above the dense forests of eastern Pará across the Mountains of Carajás in 1967, geologist of a U. S. Steel subsidiary company in Brazil, landed on clearing to refill their helicopter. Noting the lack of vegetation, yet without the presence of humans, they suspected growth to be impeded by the potentially high presence of iron oxides. After examining the soil samples their assumptions were proven right. Not only was the iron ore presence extremely high with 66% *Fe*, but later geological studies also proved the area to be sitting atop the biggest iron ore deposits known to man (Hall, 1991). Nevertheless, extending deep within hard to access forests of eastern Pará, it required substantial investments posing it an expensive venture, particularly considering the unpredictable fluctuations of iron markets at that time. Negotiating and failing to create joint companies between both the US, and later Japan<sup>10</sup>, as also due to inability to attract funding with presiding oil crises and low values for minerals across international markets, Brazil and the national mining company *Campania Vale Rio Doce* (CVRD) have to wait almost two decades, up until 1985, to finally tap into the mines

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that during the era Japan was extremely involved and promoting large scale commercial operations to tap into Brazilian resources via its consultations, encouraging to produce soy (San Martin & Pellegrini, 1984), extract minerals (IDCJ, 1980) as also to develop wood industries (OTCA, 1970).

riches (Hall, 1991; Treece, 1987). As of 1980, the government begins to draw plans how to develop the region, the overall project area of the Great Carajás Program – *Programa Grande Carajás* (PGC) covering over 900.000km<sup>2</sup>, spanning across the Amazonian rainforest, envisioned to function attracting economic enterprises and also the impetus for immigration (Hall, 1991). Conceived as a very ambitious project with the need of approx. The US \$62 billion, it starts with smaller loans seeking to establish running operations (Anderson, 1990). The credit to construct the railway transporting the ore to the port of São Luis in Maranhão and the infrastructure and operations of the mine itself, is paved by the World Bank, joined also by Japan, IADB and the EU (World Bank, 1982). The construction of the transporting railroad of 892 km commenced in 1982, 650km of it stretching across Maranhão (Hall, 1991). Part of the WB loan, a swath of 100km along the Railroad was designated to provide side projects focused on development, colonization, agricultural and agroforestry projects (Oliveira, 2005). Although Military approach towards the Project undermines many aspects of civil society, especially native tribes and local peasants who up until 1982 (PIB, 1983:130) aren't even mentioned in project plans, although affected, under pressure from anthropologist, indigenous activists and Amerindian groups and the World Bank itself, FUNAI is finally included in discussion with CVRD. This results in the signing of a five year US\$ 13.6 million plan to reduce impacts to indigenous lands as part of *Support for Indigenous Communities* within the scope of PGC. No Indians are consulted in these matters, and from the onset, the disbursement of project money to FUNAI raises questions with rising tensions between native groups and those in apparent guardianship of them (Treece, 1987). By 1985, additional groups presiding further from direct PGC impacts are included, totaling ~12.500 Indians (Oliveira, 2005). Nevertheless, the most pressing issue, namely the demarcation of Indigenous lands remains absent from the majority of talks and suspicions that majority of the finances appropriated by FUNAI rather than implemented to benefit affected communities (Treece, 1987). In 1993 The Indians Awá, Kaapor, and Guajajara had blocked the railway to resume talks with VALE (PIB, 1996:453), a practice that would prove very utilitarian in engaging the authorities such as FUNAI and VALE to discuss matters otherwise ignored of urgent importance to the tribes, such as during the first occasion, which led to retake the negotiations for the demarcation of the Awá-Guajá Indigenous Land, and implementation of health assistance and education measures. The tribes have been part of the ongoing discussion prior to the duplication of the railway tracks between 2013 and 2018.

### **The Amerindians**

The main individual indigenous societies currently residing within the original extent of the pre-Amazonian forests are represented by the Guajajara (or Tenetehara), the Ka'apor and the Awá-Guajá peoples. Linguistically they all belong to the Tupi-Guaraní peoples, who have dispersed in pre-Columbian times from the territory of today's Rondônia (Jensen, 1997). In comparison to other groups, such as the Arawak, Tupi-Guaraní speakers have been known to be less sedentary and showing a preference for forested upland regions, as opposed to riverine habitats (Heckenberger, 2006), and in addition to their characteristic mobility, lacked

hierarchical group divisions (Viveiros de Castro, 1992). The common phenomenon and “*cultural predispositions*” of exodus amongst these and other Indigenous groups of Brazil has allowed them to adapt, avoid environmental constraints, and maintain subsistence cycles including both warfare but also resuming to flights and migrations from more powerful tribes (Santos, 2017; Heckenberger, 2006; Bamberger, 1979; Métraux, 1929).

The Ka’apor, who in the course of the last three centuries migrated slowly from between the Xingu and Tocantins rivers to their present location is then no exception (Balée, 1994:25-47). Being the most hostile tribe in the region up until their pacification in 1928 they had little contact with the outside world than raiding local towns, attacking dwellings of peasants and *quilombola* communities, pillaging steel axes and machetes (Ibid.). In their extensive habitat, they had been enemies with the nomadic foragers Awa-Guajá, who often plundered their gardens, for which the Ka’apor retaliated, murdering men and stealing their women, having the upper hand due to their iron pointed arrows (Quentin Ka’apor: Personal Communication; Ribeiro, 1996). Being horticulturalists and hunters, the Ka’apor exhibited a semi-sedentary lifestyle, abandoning villages only when resources became depleted, or ensuing death of a headman, possessing a vast ethnobotanical knowledge of local plants and their use and values (Balée, 1994). Their diet supply or protein consisted mainly of tortoise, peccaries and deer, next to other game and fish, while flour made from bitter manioc provided carbohydrates, in addition to supplementary fruit such as acai, bacuri, bacaba or inajá (Balée, 1985). Marriages based on uxirolocal residence meant men moved first to the houses of their brides, subsequently constructing an adjacent dwelling. Arranged next to small riverine streams, the Ka’apor have always maintained multiple villages (Ribeiro, 1996; Huxley, 1956; Balée 1994), with the average settlement numbering 30 people in 1943, compared to 33 in 1982 (Balée, 1984). Their social organization is based on nuclear families, which have allowed the overall persistence of their culture (Ibid.). The Ka’apor possess headman, but these are only partially representative of family clusters, of which there can be more than one per village, and each village acting as a politically autonomous entity. Their lifestyles egalitarian mean labor was shared, just as the hunted meat, across families, although certain taboos prevailed and specific tasks such as hunting or cooking gender dependent. The Ka’apor in recent past have still maintained strong cultural ties and fluency in their own distinct language, with most adult men also speaking some Portuguese, whereas the women much lesser (Balée, 1994). With a high density of a deaf population (the reason for this to be given in the next section) the group is also amongst the few tribes to possess a sign language (Kakumasu, 1968). Famous feather adornments were produced by men, while the women engaged in weaving of hammocks and baby carrying straps, and some necklaces (Huxley, 1957; Ribeiro, 1957). The biggest festival is the annual naming ceremony all those born that year receive a name, and a

rare occasion to consume home brewed beer made of cashew fruit (Huxley, 1957)<sup>11</sup>. Ever since arriving to their contemporary habitat, the Kaapor had been in friction with the Awá.

The Awá, or Guajá, but more commonly Awá-Guajá people, have migrated to the region from the lower parts of the Tocantins river, and been in intermittent intertribal warfare the Ka'apor (Cormier, 2003). This changed soon after the Awá had been persuaded to establish first peaceful contact in 1978 with the FUNAI agents (Hernando & Coelho, 2013). This happened some fifty years later than with the Ka'apor and within the very same indigenous land of Alto Turiaçu where the Awá had been roaming. Forced to settle, they now live in thatched mud huts common to the region, whereas previously they relied on temporary shelters highly mobile in groups of 8-25 individuals (Cormier, 2003). Interestingly, although most recently foragers and traditionally nomadic, several centuries ago the Guajá have actually been much more sedentary, practicing horticulture (Balée, 1992; 1994). Pressured by warfare, arrival, and enslavement of the Portuguese, next to decimating diseases, they abandoned their villages and gardens, becoming slowly reliant only on foraging of fruit and game, a process that has been termed as '*agricultural regression*' (Ibid.). Forced to abandon agriculture, they have shifted to rely mainly on old fallows of groups such as the Ka'apor, but also more recent land-use changes, where *babassu* palm groves were amongst first colonizing species, and bearing nutritious nuts, a staple in the Awá-Guajá diets, and major source of carbohydrates (Balée, 1988). Since becoming sedentary they now also relish in manioc flour, one of the factors maintaining them from returning to nomadic lifestyle<sup>12</sup> (Uirá Garcia: Personal communication). They acquire protein by hunting and focusing primarily on howler monkeys, and only then other animals; food is shared across households, and hunting and eating are governed by certain rules and taboos (Garcia, 2010, Cormier, 2003; Forline, 1997). The Awá-Guajá practice several forms of polygamy, and partial paternity, meaning more than one father is required in order to conceive (Forline, 1997). The practice of rearing of animals considered as pets and therefore not edible is very common, women breastfeeding young monkeys a norm, and believed to increase female fertility (Cormier, 2003). The Guajá creation myth tells them to have been raised by a jaguar in the forest after he devoured their true mother, and the father fled to the sky to seek (Ibid.). Although using shotguns, the most prized possession of the men are arrows, for production of which they spend a significant amount of time, becoming part of the self, and always carried while hunting in excessive amounts (González-Ruibal et al., 2011).

If both the Ka'apor and Awá-Guajá peoples have immigrated into the region of their contemporary habitats, then the Guajajara, or Tenetehara people, have been inhabiting these areas since pre-Columbian times and therefore probably most related to the original inhabitants of the coast, the Tupinambá, who by now have disappeared (Gomes, 1977). The

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<sup>11</sup> For additional information regarding the myths of Ka'apor see Huxley (1957), Samain (1984a, 1984b) as also extensive diaries and field notes of Ribeiro (1996), recounting his experiences amongst the Ka'apor (1949-51).

<sup>12</sup> For a good description of why the Awá have been nomads, as also in general why foragers pursue these lifestyle adoptions see Cormier (2006).

Guajajara have been in touch with the Lusophone society and the various missionaries since the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (Wagley & Galvão, 1949). They survived waves of enslavement and serfdom until 1775, thereafter being declared non-aggressive and free, and enjoying relative peace since their lands were not viable for occupation for sugar or tobacco production (Gomes, 1977). As of 1840, they had established patron-client economic relationships via arrangements with the passing traders along the Pindaré River where they had mostly presided (Gomes, 1977:53-121). The most famous retaliation against the pressures of the outside world, and particularly by the missionaries towards the Guajajara, came about in 1901, known as the massacre of Alto Alegre. Disgusted with the missionaries appropriating their children to the monastic lives, they ambushed and attacked the Capuchin mission, killing nearly 200 people and many monks, for which the military forces later hunted down and exterminated nearly 400 Guajajara warriors (Gomes, 2000). Since then the majority of the Guajajara had presided more cautiously within the upper courses of the river Pindaré in the pre-Amazonian forests, including the tributaries Carú, and Zutiúa, trading in hides and forest products, next to *babassu* oil and fish (Personal Communication Antonizinho Guajajara; Wagley & Galvão, 1949). Within their gardens they grew sweetcorn and manioc for the flour, the villages moved when resources became depleted (Wagley, 1973). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the role of traders was replaced by the guardianship established via the Indian Protection Service, which oftentimes exerted equally submissive insolent relationships. Monogamy prevailed as the norm next to the use of *Cannabis sativa*. The latter was constantly brought to be criminalized, police and military forces condemning its traditional use adopted most probably from arriving settlers and *quilombola communities*, and rightfully regarded by Henman (1986) as ethnocide. Although already by mid-20th century some of the Guajajara were considered by Wagley and Galvão (1949) as *acculturated*, very few still practicing their full traditional heritage, their very endurance to retain even if only marginally the elements of traditional practices are remarkable, considering the some four hundred years of contact with the outside society. Before one can thoroughly posit these native groups and their embeddedness into the contemporary setting of the region, insists upon the historical examination and systematization of the impacts and effects that the capitalist system has unleashed upon them and their habitats.

## 7. Chapter I – Capitalism and the pre-Amazonian frontier

This chapter strives to clarify and present arguments elucidating SRQ1 - *What effects and processes has capitalism unleashed on the cultural landscapes and ethnic groups of the astern Amazon?*

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Before arguing what processes and effects capitalism unleashes, it is first important to define and discern the peculiar aspects of this economic system, expanding upon the general functioning provided in the framework. To begin with, capitalism is as a process and not a thing in itself, but '*a system in which goods and services [...] are produced for a profitable exchange [...] and where all the economic actors are dependent on the market*' (Wood, 2017:2). Within this economic system, everything is turned into commodities - objects of surplus-value, including humans, who seek to sell their labor-power across markets, dominated by competition. A capitalist seeks to control means of production as his own private property - be it agricultural land or a factory, with the only goal of creating the highest possible surplus by engaging those who own little to nothing, to sell their labor-force. While laborers strive to maintain their existence working as a means to meet ends, their labor input leads unwittingly for the capitalist to acquire surplus and profit. This profit is used to accumulate more capital, and by reintroducing it into the means of production to boost and expand his private affluence. In addition, constantly seeking to increase labor productivity by innovating production, the capitalist maximizes the surplus, while wages usually remain the same for those whose labor is being exploited. As noted further by Wood (2017:3) – '*the production of goods and services is subordinate to the production of capital and capitalist profit*', the overall objective within this system is, therefore '*the self-expansion of capital*'. To remain functional the process of capitalism hinges upon the establishment and maintenance of (i) property regimes, (ii) capital accumulation, and (iii) labor, next to (iv) voluntary exchange of goods, (v) a pricing system, and (vi) a market economy based on competition (Heilbroner, 2008). The subsequent analysis limits itself to focal points based on (i) *property*, (ii) *capital accumulation*, and (iii) *labor*. The process and aspects of commodification are then elaborated further in Chapter II.

### Processes

By engaging with the three aspects - property, capital accumulation, and labor - as specific processes of capitalism, we can discern them to result in respective direct and indirect effects on the landscape and people. Within the process of establishment of *property*, *therefore*, emerge property regimes endowed with specific property rights. These are paramount in distinguishing either the sole owner of a property or discerning the pertaining access and governance rights to common-pool resources such as pastures, forests, oceans, etc. An established framework for property ownership regulation permits to acquire, aggregate and collect more property, such as land, as, within the process of capitalism, it represents fixed capital embedded in itself. The actual process of *capital accumulation* then has two conspicuous qualities. One is concerned with the markets, where the surplus-value is produced via an economic process based on transactions, while the other hinges upon the relations between the modes of production between the capitalist and the non-capitalist (Luxemburg, 2015[1913]).



Resting upon the production of commodities, and their exchange for money, the aspects of engaging in markets may have the character of an agricultural enterprise, estate, where acquired capital may then be used to acquire additional *property*, such as land. Yet the very requirement of labor to generate surplus during the production of commodities establishes and maintains a peculiar class-system. It is based upon those, on the one hand, owning property and therefore means of production, and those on the other hand, who are exploited within, and selling the only thing they possess themselves - namely their *labor*. Labor in a capitalist system, therefore, insists on the existence of a class of people who have relatively little in order to incline them to sell it. Capitalism depends fundamentally on the acquirement of cheap labor - the only commodity capable of the production of more value than it has itself (Harvey, 2018:293). Owning cheap labor force is however not sufficient for production, as one requires resources. Here comes the second, and cruder aspect of accumulation, namely the relationship between the non-capitalist and capitalist modes of production. The latter is well showcased by colonial circumstances, where brute force and means of war were engaged to acquire more land and resources, next to cheap labor, of slaves and those oppressed to submit into the production of raw materials to be later processed elsewhere. This accumulation was described by Luxemburg (2015:434-437) as primitive accumulation through '*militarization*', and regarded further by Harvey (2003) more generally as '*accumulation by dispossession*'. When projected historically dispossession and accumulation seem to suit quite remarkably capitalism and the markets.

Let us now return and discern the general discrepancies of the relationships between capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production as noted above. The way commodities and money interact herein may be explained by circuits of capital as defined by Marx (1978 in Harvey, 2018:387-416). Picture a farmer, owning land and his means of production, where he invests capital, such as his labor, to produce agricultural output – crops as commodities, bulk of which he uses to subsist while selling the rest to acquire what he doesn't produce himself. This allows him to sustain his productive capabilities and to maintain his livelihoods. The existence of a self-subsisting peasant is then a closed circular movement  $C - M - C$ , or production of a (C)ommodity leading to (M)oney that secure the production of same, or other, (C)ommodity. Juxtaposed to this stands the capitalist, who uses money as capital, to acquire production means, buying labor cheaper than the selling price of commodities he produces, collecting a surplus. This surplus is invested to increase and improve production, and thereby additional surplus in the future, amassing more capital. The movement of the capitalist then resembles a spiral more than a circuit, represented by the cycle  $M - C - M'$  - or money leading to a commodity the sale of which acquires surplus in money ( $M' > M$ ), and where the difference of  $M'$  minus  $M$  is the pocketed surplus (minus investments to maintain production). The chain of the capitalist mode of production and accumulation is the best represented by the chain  $M - C - M' - C' - M'' \dots$  *ad infinitum*, limited only by resources and labor to increase

C and the workings of the market, where commodities are to be dumped. To maintain continuous growth, it requires increasing production per area, but generally also increasing the area itself, the fixed capital embedded in property such as land, serving further accumulation.

It is hereby worthwhile to note, that the very own origins of capitalism lie in the agrarian domain, that commenced with the enforcement of enclosures, in the early history of England. This had set the advent for '*extinction of the commons*' and the emergence of land as a commodity (Wood 2017:95-146). At the same time, the elimination of the commons created a mass of dispossessed landless peasants, who in order to sustain their lives had to sell labor, being rapidly absorbed by the rise of industrialization and need for the cheap workforce. Therefore, the sustenance of agrarian capitalism by accident also paved the way for the emergence of industrialization, class-structures, and reproduction of capitalism itself (Ibid.). This unleashed a further imperial character of capitalism. It was entrenched in slave labor of mainly, but not only, African origin, extracting resources from various colonies, such as Brazil, and their industrial processing in Europe. The profits made in this process were founded on previous exploitation of slaves, dispossession by the conquest of foreign lands and incorporation of cheap labor stemming from landless folk across England. Let us now look at the effects of the above mentioned processes within the case study from Maranhão, the forested parts of its pre-Amazonia and the ethnic groups residing therein.

Having previously defined capitalism to be found on processes insisting upon regimes of property, the urge to accumulate capital, and the requirement of labor, the effects thereof within the case of the pre-Amazonian Maranhão are now organized in a respective manner. Their overall confluence is systematized and paired establishing the overall effect capitalism had on the ethnic groups and the cultural landscapes they have inhabited.

### **Property Titling**

Let us begin with the aspect of the *property*. Before the region became largely accessible by a road network<sup>13</sup>, the lands were in the possession of certain groups or under specific regimes of access and used communally. Land was either owned federally, or by the state, occupied legally, or squatted by landless peasants, already sold but without the presence of the owner, or planned to be allotted for free to newly arriving settlers. In particular, however, and especially within the pre-Amazon of Maranhão, the lands were inhabited, used, and cared for in a traditional manner by native Amerindian populations for centuries. The complexity of actual land tenure on the ground prior to 1960s Brazil, but also the presence of various actors in the region atop of those newly arriving created havoc of unseen proportions. The roads in this sense promulgated the clash of interest groups and the scramble to define and redefine both implicitly but also covertly to whom what belonged, leading to tensions not shying away to apply violence. Considering that land tenure in rural Brazil since the colonial times was

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<sup>13</sup> See the subchapter *Frontiers, Integration and Migration* within the description of the Case Study

complex and contentious, and generally in the hand of an elite land-owning minorities (Damasceno et al., 2017), defining actual heirs and the ownership of property was, and still remains, explicitly tedious to secure for those posed as unprivileged and inferior, as was in the case of both the peasants and indigenous people. Introduction of *property* in the form of *land titles* into the complex and still relatively untouched region could have forestalled future tensions. Nevertheless, due to lack of integrated work by state agencies, and especially COLONE that was overly bureaucratic and at the same time incapacitated to be in charge of its supposed role to allot land and emit its titles for arriving migrants, confusion, rather than order, presided (Manhães, 1987). In addition, as part of PIN, and 1970 onwards, being part of the ministry of interior FUNAI was totally committed, if not to promote, then at least to appease the highway program seeking to open new lands. In this process, it executed its role in contacting, pacifying and relocating indigenous people if need be, and if conditions were granted – demarcating areas as indigenous lands with ownership regimes granting usufruct rights only to presiding Amerindian populations. Usufruct in these terms refers to the right to obtain the profit or products of the land, but not the land itself; ‘usufruct’ use rights come very close to the term ‘enjoyment’, as those inhabiting them are able to enjoy only the fruit, but not the *property, per se*. Therefore, if establishing *property* by means of land titles for the new settlers was nearly hopeless, the native people within the region in the rare case appeared more fortunate and in a relatively more advantageous position. Yet being granted *property*, or rather use-rights<sup>14</sup>, was only one of the cornerstones of implicit ownership, as the right to something had to be actively reproduced and enforced, particularly in the light of the legal vacuum and lack of state authority to carry out its own law, as the below case demonstrates.

The area of Ka'apor began to be under the direct influence of the outside society already in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but back then it was instigated more by natives themselves, attacking and looting neighboring towns and encroaching settlers for goods which they lacked. These were mainly steel tools – from machetes to axes, pots, and pans, and some other odd scraps. The area of the pre-Amazonia of Maranhão began to be penetrated spontaneously by those in search of land and means to subsist prior to and during the 1950s. The process of clearing land and producing rice also brought merchants, who made a living by providing the peasants with necessities, turning also into intermediaries when it came to the marketing of their crops. Around the 1960s a trail to later become the BR-316 highway linking Santa Inês with Belém began to be cut across parts of the Ka'apor forested habitat. This incentivized some settlers to relocate and clear patches of forest for horticulture. As of 1962 the occupation next to being spontaneous was also promoted and directed by SUDENE in charge of PCAT. By 1966 it was estimated that around 60 thousand people had arrived seeking to eke out a living in the region between the Rivers of Turiaçu and Pindaré-Mirim (Manhães, 1987). By the time the actual construction of the highway began in 1969, the state was already seeking to integrate and promote the colonization of these hitherto pristine lands where the Ka'apor and

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<sup>14</sup> The land of indigenous reserves in Brazil is the property of the Federal Union, and not owned by the native people. They have the rights for permanence and the use of above ground resources within.

some Awá-Guajá Indigenous people presided. With the transference of the area of PCAT into the hands of COLONE as of 1973, impacts to the Ka'apor habitat became rampant caused by the continuous encroachment onto their lands. This was mainly due to the apparent reliance for the projects western boundary to be delimited drawing from the defunct Gurupi Forest Reserve of 1961 and ignoring the fact that the Ka'apor lands extended much further, although not yet officially demarcated (Draulers & Maury, 1981). While this error was rectified, the inaccurate surveying of the boundaries resulted that the colonization program misappropriated at least 50.000*ha* of native lands, including several villages within (FUNAI, 1983). Even though the presence of settlements with more than two hundred Indians living along the eastern edge of the PCAT project area was confirmed early, leading to tensions and some casualties, it halted only temporarily the occupation and settlement activities and the actual construction of BR-316 (World Bank, 1982). When BR-316 was officially opened for traffic in 1974 it passed through areas where the Ka'apor used to live and hunt, and only recently the bulldozers having leveled some of their abandoned villages and gardens, next to the banks of the river Paruruá (FUNAI, 1983).

By 1975 uncontrolled invasion by arriving smallholders follow PCAT penetration roads, venturing into the jungles resulting in clashes and hostilities with the Ka'apor (Estado S. Paulo, 1975; 1976 in Hemming, 2003). To avoid further aggravation FUNAI succeeds in demarcating the 530.000 ha Alto Turiaçu Indigenous Land (TIAT) for the usufruct use by the Ka'apor in 1978 and ratified in 1982. At the same time, south of TIAT, 172.000 ha Indigenous Land Caru (TIC) is homologated for the Guajajara. While retreating eastwards from the arriving settlers via BR-316, the Ka'apor face those encroaching upon their western fringes since the opening of BR-010 in the 1960s. The continuous influx of migrants doubles the local population of the region in the 1970s (Hemming, 2003:607). This leads to a direct surge in the competition for land to both subsist, but also to increase capital by either cattle ranching or land speculation, which becomes uncontrolled (Neto, 2017; Sousa, 2016; Manhães, 1987; Redwood, 1993). While the formalization of Indigenous territories in the region by 1982 appears to be a solution to halt negative effects of the encroachments, it does in fact little in deterring determined illegal trespassers from invading the lands.

To avoid contact with ill-meaning settlers and garimpeiros in the 1970s, the Ka'apor retreat into the interior of their land, facilitating the surge in illegal logging around its borders, that continues rampaging uncontrolled up until late the 1980s (PIB, 2001:685; Cleary, 1990; PIB, 1984:132; PIB, 1991). As of 1988, Nicodemos Marcos Martins falsifies and sells forged land titles to lots as huge as 21.000ha within TIAT, as also TIC, to companies, banks, peasants, loggers, and fazendeiros (PIB 1991:368). In addition, the Galetti Brothers also sell falsified land titles with lots totaling in more than 200.000 ha within TIAT and also south of it, in so far not demarcated lands where the Awa-Guajá hunters preside (*Jornal de Hoje*, cited by FUNAI, 1991:88). In an intervention in 1989, Federal Police (PF) removes trespassers from TIAT, yet without continuous presence, they reappear (PIB, 1991:368). By 1990s an estimated 1100 families live within a swath as large as 46km in length and 15km width, and

although the Ka'apor demand FUNAI to take measures and even the federal judge ordering the Federal Police (PF) to vacate TIAT in 1991, little is done until 1993 when the buildup of tensions reaches the boiling point. (Hemming 2003:607; PIB, 1996:457).

While hunting, some Ka'apor are attacked within their land by armed men and after overnight being held captive and threatened at gunpoint released, told to never come back. The news of the incident spread fast inciting a meeting of all presiding village chiefs. The decision is taken that with lack of a stance from both of FUNAI, PF and the government, the Ka'apor shall take matters into their own hands. Within a week a front of ~600 men, armed with clubs, bows, and shotguns, begin to comb the central parts of the area, destroying more than 80 houses, and confiscating 119 guns, although giving time for invaders to pack up their belongings and leave; a notorious gunslinger Davi is killed amidst the tensions, and although the number of people removed totals 700, many others remain on native lands edges (PIB 1991-95:459-461). By 1998, there are again around 4000 invaders squatting and occupying TIAT, many having returned to their previously abandoned properties (PIB, 1996-2000:685). In 2000, by Invitation of Professor William Balée, Petrônio and Valdemar Ka'apor visit Washington, to inaugurate the exposition of their artifacts in the Smithsonian Museum, as also to gather media attention to their problems and pressures back home. In the meantime, TIAT suffers invasions by *garimpeiros*, with state mining companies also submitting documents for a concession to mine and extract mineral deposits within their indigenous land (PIB, 2001). It is not until 2001 that a widespread operation by the military, PF, and FUNAI removes all of the illegal occupants from the Ka'apor lands (PIB 2001-2005:732). 24 trucks and 10.000 logs of wood ready to be sawn are confiscated, 20 illegal sawmills destroyed, and many arrested (FUNAI, 2001). Although this halts major operations and invasion, poaching and illegal logging preside on the edges, in addition to drug traffickers planting 10km<sup>2</sup> with *Cannabis Sativa* in 2009 (PIB, 2011). Therefore, while on the one hand occupation and colonization of the region introduces *property* regimes, via land titling, these are not necessarily enforced by the state, leaving native people, but also landless peasants to struggle and care for themselves, clashing over their rights to exist, and subsist.

What retains a peculiar character and needs to be noted in particular is that the encroachment onto Indigenous Lands of the Ka'apor, but also of other ethnic groups of the regions is a direct result of the previous misappropriation of land from peasants in North and the South of Brazil. The front of approaching peasants is, therefore, a symptom and seepage from areas where land titling has been consistently unfavorable and where large *fazendas* and estates prevailed. The Land Law of 1850 had established purchasing as the only means to acquire virgin public lands in Brazil (Damasceno et al., 2017), leaving those unable to own, working on large estates. Subsequently in 1969, across Maranhão, the Land Law of Sarney introduces the possibility of public lands to be acquired, and therefore making all those that had been living there – Indians, *quilombolas*, riverine communities, but also squatters that had fled regions where land was already in the hands of large capital – instantly illegal, as soon as someone

appeared with a paper stating the land as their *property*. It was, therefore, the continuous expansion of capital in search of resources and land to acquire that pressured the peasants and all those dispossessed to seek new places. Immense waves of peasants were stuck between pressures of capital on the one hand represented by large landowners, and on the other the establishment of indigenous reserves, the latter being oftentimes less protected and therefore more inviting to be trespassed and occupied. Quite often the establishment of property by peasants was defined by the productive use of land, which was claimed and proven by having felled the forest. Encroachment, but also deforestation of native lands, and the pre-Amazonian landscape in general therefore were both direct and indirect effects of *property*. Its major benefit to the native people was the establishment of Indigenous lands. However, as argued by Brightman et al., (2016) the '*notion of nurture, rather than ownership*' is the fundamental aspect in the constitution of Amerindian societies. Collective things, such as land, are never *owned*, never *exchanged* nor *inherited* - and in general only *cared for*. Amassing personal wealth and '*private property*', is, therefore, a concept conceived by western societies that regulate ownership types, hinging upon individualism and the peculiar arrangements governing access modes and relations between objects to subjects. The emergence of property as *indigenous land* was therefore not something that native people relished in but were forced to accept, as a fact in the functioning of the economic system that they found themselves part of. For those owning capital, the notion of the *property*, however, served in permitting to expand their estates, whereas other areas could be set apart for colonization projects. However, as the property was not being implicitly established through land titling schemes for the arriving peasants at the frontier, meant they were left on their own - landless and abandoned, having to seek whatever means necessary to sustain their families. Thereby, in the wake of the unraveling process of *capital accumulation* by the elite, peasants became ignored in policies, while native people temporarily received some support. It was, in particular, the cheap labor value that the peasants represented for the elites that left them at most malevolence at the frontier.

### **Capital Accumulation and Labor**

Already as early as during the Rubber Booms end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, labor is established via debt-peonage relations as serfdom and is carried as a mechanism to the frontier regions, where peasants were now under auspices of merchants and middlemen, extracting the majority of their surplus (Bitoun et al., 2005). They were further indebted via their own subsistence since the merchants controlled the prices of produce bought and sold, and thereby the payments made available for newly arriving migrants. The peculiar situation at the frontier, therefore, provided a very unique process for the elites to profit from the mass of relatively free labor, from local merchants to large landowners. As noted earlier, one of the means to acquire land and claim property for the peasants was to clear forest cover. This also favored the production of crops, permitting subsistence. While noble timbers might have already been extracted from areas prior to their arrival, the rest was often burned to release nutrients to improve the fertility of the soils. What migrants did was clear forest that instantly increased the price of land. Therefore while squatting to subsist, the labor of their

families indebting themselves was increasing the profits made for the merchant and the actual landowner who would appear several years later once the forest has been cleared. Such progression observed between clearing forest, producing several harvests, and then being expelled by cattle farms, therefore, reproduced the very class system, of elites and those exploited, as previously in the regions from where the new settlers had fled – the North and South. This in itself represents the very penetration pattern of the capitalist mode of production across Amazonian frontiers marked by cycles and waves of expansion and retraction (Sawyer, 1984). Therefore the attempts to incorporate Maranhão into global markets by colonizing the pre-Amazonian forests via PCAT brought only some peasants income while the large numbers of influx found themselves landless, and in dire situations, able to subsist only if trespassing onto the properties of others.

The observed migration as of the early 1950s into the region may be summed up as the social and economic outcome of the interaction between two complementary land-ownership styles across Brazil. On the one hand, it is the tradition of large estates growing a single crop (sugarcane, cotton, rice or cacao) and extensive livestock breeding across the Northeast, and the heavy industries relying upon labor in the South (VARGA, 2012). During the 1970s the National Integration Plan (PIN) appears to view the three regions of the North, Northeast, and South as complementary. While the peripheral Amazon region would provide land, natural resources, and new markets, the cheap labor would come from the migrating peasants of the Northeast, whereas the capital and infrastructure itself would be provided by the industrialized South as the economic center. Development of the Amazon and diffusion of innovations plus alleviation of the poverty problems of landless north-easterner peasants become linked and depicted as easy to mitigate, therefore gathering political strength and support to occupy frontier regions. As noted by Bitoun et al. (2005), the veneer of simplicity inscribed into such consideration showed the overall lack of insight into the complex environmental and social manifestations of faraway regions, but also depicted partially the ignorance of the state to tackle the symptom and the actual cause, namely the unequal land distribution due to the expanding presence of *latifúndios*, not only across the Southern and Northeastern holdings, but also into national politics (Mahar, 1979). As shown by Schmink and Wood (1992) maze of institutional bricolage for land titling in Brazil means that there was almost no control over land titles across new settlements, but also forgery over old ones. One could even argue that following the practices of colonial history, the creation of the Pindaré Forest Reserve in 1961 in Maranhão, was to deter squatter and remain unoccupied, set aside to be later divided and appropriated by the elite. To make this viable, however, roads penetrating the forested regions had to be somehow financed and paid, for which political lobbyist engaged the government to seek loans, borrowing from the World Bank and IADB. Indebting the civil society benefited directly the elite, who additionally by means of absorbing the associated surplus value derived from the cheap labor force unhinged by the masses of arriving landless migrants increased their profits. Pouring borrowed money

into the road-building companies, political interests encapsulated capital expansion as a solution to alleviate social tensions that were actually caused by land tenure problems. As the case of PCAT ultimately shows<sup>15</sup>, that governments involvement increased capital flows leading only to land speculation and the profiting of large landowners, while waves of migrants passed and where expelled, bound in misery.

Although endowed with mobility as a strategy to survive, peasants suffered from the lack of ability in organizing political action, cooperatives and trade unions. Limited access to favorable credit and client-patron relationships, with rather low levels of education, impeded the smallholders to establish political links (remember – military era!) keeping most of these small producers in precarious conditions of near serfdom. Facing unfavorable conditions and nutrient-poor soils they were finally pushed to the new frontiers, unable to face and fight the injustice and violence exerted onto them by gunslingers made to vacate lands, serving *fazendeiros* and *latifundiários*. The plight for survival by peasants fighting these dire circumstances often meant that pressures for land were externalized onto native people and their still intact habitats. The inability of the federal governments bodies such as INCRA to provide land titles for the peasants, and law enforcement failing to exert order and carry out the law protecting indigenous lands, next to the judiciary system plagued by clientelism, and FUNAI often unable to demarcate native lands in time, led to the emergence of creative means to appropriate land. Emerging practice known as *grilagem*, appeared then almost as if an established element of an unofficial public policy of the state, supporting large landowners in their plight to absorb land, turning the frontier of Maranhão in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century into a place marked by illegal land grabbing and structural violence (Neto, 2017; Sousa, 2016; Asselin, 2009). As previously noted, the establishment of Law n° 2.979, known as Land Law of Sarney in 1969, gave means to now lawfully accumulate capital for the elite, permitting acquirement of public lands not limited by a property size cap (Neto, 2017). This established large capitalist based estates as the preferred means of the state to promote regional development via agricultural development of public lands (*terras devolutas*), the labor to be supplied by the landless peasants, who would in this process remain property-less.

This stands in sharp contrast promoted by NIP of the Médici government depicting the Amazon as swaths of unoccupied rich lands full of resources able to pave progress, solve both social and climatic issues of the North-East, and benefit the poor, while such statements ultimately were highly flawed and false, if not mythical. Soils sustaining the multi-layered canopies of tropical forests were rather impoverished to sustain agriculture – facts that the government new from the soils studies (Rodrigues et al., 1971; Roeder, 1967). Nor were these lands empty, since many of these habitats were occupied by traditional heirs, the Amerindians, who adopted hostile ways and the reason why some of these forests remained off-limits. Yet the major fault was actual land titling and land grabbing, meaning that land was often sold even before the penetration roads could reach it, re-establishing extremely unequal

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<sup>15</sup> See Alto Turi Settlement Project within the Case Study



distribution of properties between latifundiários and the peasants (Bitoun, 2005; Schmink & Wood, 1992). From a capitalist perspective of accumulation and production, it is quite clear that the North and South of Brazil with its productive estates and industries sought to appropriate and accumulate new land to increase their capital. The peripheries were to serve this expansion, where production so far had been stagnating. It also signified market extension and flow of capital in exchange for resources, epitomized by the very capitalist production cycle of  $M - C - M'$ . Yet while the rapid unraveling of capital meant changes in production patterns geared towards exports, it undermined the supply of foodstuffs for local consumption that due to the addition of distances from other producing regions were surging in prices. Amount of manual labor that was set free by waves of migrants meant both that wages were minuscule, but also that landowners with political influence were able to implement repressive systems of work on their estates via debt-peonage, limited tenancies, perpetuating the domination of the large estates (Hennessy, 1981). Unable to find employment or land, peasants were once again subjected to poverty, tried their luck in various gold prospecting sites, migrated further, or in worst cases became voluntarily enslaved on estates.

Governmental policies seeking to open the Amazonian region and the expansion of capitalist relations into new spaces, contradicted itself as it both cared to protect native people, while also opening their lands for capital expansion. Caught between state incentivized occupation programs and cattle ranch establishment, FUNAI became little more than an agency meant to remove those native people who in the eye of the government stood in the way of progress. Agreements made between the state and donors directed FUNAI to be executing its role of guardianship, whereas, just as in the case of PGC, it was meant to be a political tool to comfort foreign banks and institutions that indigenous peoples were being given their voice and treated rightfully, so that projects could proceed without hassle. The advent of PGC meant that while the Amazon frontier as of 1960 was already under pressure exalted by cattle ranchers and migrating peasants, it was to become additionally impacted by the pressures of mining industries. Aiming to integrate and industrialize the region PGC foresaw thirty smoldering plants producing pig-iron, mainly around the towns of Marabá, Açailândia, and Santa Inês, the latter two in Maranhão (Hall, 1991). Although within the confines of the Carajás mine measures for sound environmental management were taken, it was the opposite outside of its limits. Deforestation driven by gold prospecting, logging, and then shifting cultivation, and pasture conversion was exuberant - along the 300 km wide strip of the new railroad, half of the forest cover was gone by 1985, and with another 14.0% degraded (Anderson, 1990). The timber used for the production of carbon to fuel the smoldering plants instead to come from plantations, as foreseen in PGC project plans, was actually devouring unaccounted pristine forests free of charge (Hall, 1991; Cowell, 1990). WB intervention threatening to withdraw from the funding agreement and halting the loan resulted in raw materials from the mine then on being solely exported, unable to compete in the global market if processed locally. By this time, however, the majority of the deforestation and degradation had already been induced in the surrounding areas. And although agricultural

projects under the auspices of PGC were foreseen, little had been installed by 1990, with 83% of projects focusing again solely on large scale production of cattle and soy (Hall, 1991). This fed further the encroachment by landless peasants into hitherto vacant lands and the persistence of clandestine activities such as illegal logging across indigenous lands. The frontier, as was the case in the pre-Amazonia of Maranhão, presented favorable circumstances for the reproduction of capitalism and its continuous striving for self-expansion. Conflated into its major constituent factors, the opening of the frontier presented new resources to be accumulated via the establishment of property by means of land titles, while sufficient cheap labor force was secured by migrants from regions with the persistently unequal land distribution of the North and South. If the primary goal of peasants is to subsist and make a living, then that of the capitalist is to exert all means to expand the capital, securing unrestrained means to produce commodities. Therefore, if capitalism directly affected the size and establishment of indigenous lands, by acquiring public lands prior to their demarcation as native, then the dispossessed peasant encroaching onto them was the indirect result of the very same function of capitalist accumulation, snatching up land literally from under their feet. We turn next to see what effects the three aspects within capitalism interrelated processes – *property*, *capital accumulation*, and *labor* – have instigated and imposed in the region.

## Impacts

Encroachment onto Ka'apor, but also that of Guajajara, and especially so onto that of Awa-Guajá Indigenous lands, demarcated only in 2005, was set off by complex processes of capitalism entrenched into governmental policies and decrees, establishing many peasants as *de jure* landless. Their continuous migrations seeking for refuge to subsist created ongoing clashes with the native people onto which land they trespassed. If not directly through engagement with the Lusophone society, then via FUNAI and SPI agents, ethnic groups of the region suffered from epidemic diseases decimating their numbers. The opening up of the frontier meant forced and involuntary migrations across the region, where conditions might have deviated from those preferred. This was the case with BR-316 which meant that by 1982 the Ka'apor had completely abandoned the Paruá basin systems where the road cut through their previous gardens and hunting grounds (Balée, 1984:83). Tardin et al. (1979), comparing two equal-sized satellite image plots running parallel to each other and above BR-316 and BR-010, noted the latter, built more than a decade earlier, to have unleashed staggering deforestation of 1164 thousand ha, or nine times that recently new BR-316. At this point, in the early 1980s, the Ka'apor population is also at its lowest - 480 (PIB, 1983) and according to Gomes (Hall, 1989), many are affected by syphilis and in precarious health conditions. In addition, the spraying of Agent Orange by the US firm SWIFT to defoliate vast tracts of forests west of their land to produce meat (Balée, 1979), on top of previous measles outbreaks and high fevers, seems to have potentially caused some of the Ka'apor to go deaf, thereby resulting in the need to devise their own sign language. No cases of deafness were reported by either Huxley (1957) or Ribeiro (1996) who did fieldwork amongst the Ka'apor in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Mitigation of impacts to the Ka'apor was also not included

as a component into PCAT, although later it was confirmed that it was known that *'land set aside for Amerindian reserves [...] to be potentially influenced by development within the area'* (World Bank, 1982:19). Instead, WB considered that being within the influence area of the PGC, sufficient attention should be given to all potential impacts and needs of the group. In retrospect, PCAT and WB failed to attempt to bridge and institutionalize exchange of FUNAI and COLONE responsible for rural development in the region, stipulating instead that part of the area *'inhabited by about 10,000 indigenous Indians'*, would be *'colonized as the national and state highways are constructed'* (World Bank, 1982:18).

As a matter of fact, from 2000 onwards the Ka'apor had to drastically readjust their lifestyles by relocating from the inner of TIAT to the fringes of their land, settling next to clandestine roads previously used to penetrate and extract timber by illegal loggers. Setting up villages at the outskirts of their lands is an unofficial policy by FUNAI, encouraging native people to enforce protection amidst the lack of states presence, and the predatory nature of various groups amidst lack of vacant land and employment opportunities. Therefore in the case of TIAT, villages deep inside the lands are abandoned again, and new ones established along the perimeter. In the south these are Xiepihunrenda (2000), next to the huge sawmills where the Galetti Brothers presided; Paraku'y in 2008, next to a clearing for cattle, and Turizinho (2010), closest to the areas of Nova Conquista and Chapó, where many peasants had settled since the 1980s. Such village dispersal, following developments on the Lusophone society, induced many changes. It brought the Indians closer to the edges of their lands, where within their areal of hunting now also laid not only some buffer zone degraded forests, but also in the vicinity presiding shops and commodities. The short distances meant that hunting could at times be exchanged for shopping, if in possession of financial means. In addition, villages had turned into security posts, meaning that these had to become fixed in space and time within the territory, inhibiting traditional movement, once resource base became scarce (Balée, 1985). This means that for certain products, the nearby shops now represent opportunities to induce protection while inducing further dependencies on processed food and a variety of other luxury commodities.

In addition, while TIAT and TIC were established in 1982, a huge swath between them, where the Awá-Guajá roamed, remained legally not theirs. Only in 2005, after an extremely tedious process was their land demarcated and the majority of those that had lived there, invading the area, removed only in 2014. Being nomads and living in bands means that while some Awá entered peaceful contact in 1975 within TIAT, soon after which nearly half died of diseases (Balée, 1984:62). Lacking their own land, they remained within TIAT, while others were contacted within TIC, also remaining to live there. Being foragers and used to move, they fled the encroachment onto their traditional areas by moving into forested areas of the Ka'apor and the Guajajara. Although FUNAI has established that the last nomadic tribe had been contacted in 1989 (Forline, 1997), the Awá themselves have confirmed some of their relatives to this day to remain in voluntary isolation, being amongst the last uncontacted foragers of eastern Amazon, avoiding even their own kin and living within TIC and a more

southern Indigenous Land of Araribóia (Garcia, 2010). Following the scramble for land, FUNAI has managed to established indigenous reserves while the land was plenty. This becoming ever more complicated with time, as the case of Awa-Guajá Land has shown. Within the original extent of the pre-Amazonian Maranhão, there are now five indigenous lands, or reserves, that have fully completed the long demarcation process and been officially approved and registered by the government (FUNAI, 2019) (Table 1). Three of these lands - Alto Turiaçu, Awa and Caru - serve as an empirical case and focus of this study. They are located within the confines of the now-defunct Forest Reserve of Gurupi, established in 1961, and taken apart to provide land for the colonization projects such as PCAT, but also to create public lands that have all been later sold following the Land Law of Sarney in 1969. Dispossession of land from both peasants and partially from native people, diminishing their original extent, was a direct effect of *property* establishment. The deforestation arising thereafter by migrants to create arable land or pastures for cattle was an indirect effect in order to subsist, but even more so to claim productive use, as means to enact *property*, expecting to be granted titles.

#	Indigenous Land	Year Regularized	Area in thou. ha	Deforested	Degraded
1	Alto Turiaçu	1982	529,340	8.0%	1.4%
2	Arariboia	1990	413,830	6.0%	45.0%
3	Awá-Guajá	2005	116,770	36.3%	0.7%
4	Caru	1982	170,890	9.8%	0.4%
5	Rio Pindaré	1982	15,510	56.0%	-

#	Native Groups (main/other)	Year Pacified	Population
1	Ka'apor, <i>Awá-Guajá</i>	1928	1863/77
2	Guajajara, <i>Awá-Guajá*</i>	~1600	5317
3	Awá-Guajá	1978**	38
4	Guajajara, <i>Awá-Guajá<sup>o</sup></i>	~1600	400/171
5	Guajajara	~1600	1789

**Table 1** | – The State of the Indigenous lands within pre-Amazonian forests. (\*Some remain in voluntary isolation; \*\* Contacted in TIAT, other groups followed later (Data sources: Celentano et al., 2018; Forline, 1997; Wagley and Galvão, 1949; Balée 1984, Hernando & Coelho, 2003; ISA, 2019a)

Increased deforestation, Br-222, and Ferrovia Carajás have disturbed traditional hunting grounds of the Awá-Guajá, as also cut the corridor between TI Araribóia and TI Caru isolating these groups spread across various TI (Gomes, 1989). The deforestation has also cleared so far 29% of the Biological Reserve of Gurupi is 29% present in the region, where more than 6000 families reside within. Created in 1988, it is much smaller than previous Forest Reserve Gurupi established in 1961. Dismantled in 1976 (Hall, 1989), the previous extent of the Gurupi Forest reserve served to create Indigenous lands TI Alto Turiaçu and TI Caru, and much late that of Awá-Guajá. Other land had been made public, and later private, and some used for resettlement projects such as PCAT. Due to encroachment and illegal logging, TI Caru has lost nearly 10% of its forest cover and has been recently affected

by large scale fires degrading the remaining stands (Celentano et al., 2018). It was homologated same year the PGC commenced the construction of the railway track, which passes directly opposite the Pindaré river, that marks its Southeastern border. The Guajajara residing within have long-standing conflicts with VALE S.A (more on this in Ch 2.) In addition, there are two Awá-Guaja villages within TIC and some still uncontacted kin roaming the forest. TIAT has lost the least cover proportionally – 8%, yet representing the highest absolute value of 425km<sup>2</sup> (Ibid.). It is important to note that the degradation of the forests is extremely high due to the previous presence of thousands of families and loggers presiding within. A third of TI Awá is deforested (36.3%), depicting well the disputes of its recognition and resulting occupation by non-native peasants. Officially homologated in 2005, it had lost only a quarter of its cover, with the additional ten percent a more recent predatory phenomenon (Celentano et al., 2018). Exchange of commodities such as timber, for other material objects or direct payments between indigenous groups and those extracting the resources, have brought further distress atop of environmental degradation. Alliances with loggers in the early 90s meant that at least amongst the Guajajara, but also the Ka'apor, intertribal bouts of accusation and blaming has led to frictions and factions which have overall lessened the unity of these tribes in the wake of rising outsider pressures.

The analysis of the intricate relationships between human societies and the environments they inhabit may be further facilitated by adopting the insights of the research program of historical ecology (Balée, 2006). The bidirectional interplay across space and time between people and the landscapes surrounding them leads to adaptations, by means of which *nature* inscribes itself into societies in the form of *culture*. Concurrently, distinct resource management practices and land use types via human agency introduce disturbances and new elements into these landscapes (Balée & Erickson, 2006). The outcome is often a multitude of anthropogenic ecotones that would not manifest themselves in the absence of humans. Floristic composition and structural traits of the pre-Amazonian forests landscape of Maranhão hint to previous direct human interventions, mediated through centuries of indigenous peoples and traditional communities active management of these areas (Balée, 1989)<sup>16</sup>. The relatively recent flux of new settlers, migrants, squatters and *fazendeiros*, since the 1950s then have also brought their own peculiar cultural traits of land use that have induced again new features into the previously forested expanses. Already anthropomorphic, such *cultural forests* would now be subjected to large scale impacts. While indigenous management practices had introduced a variety of ecotones into the landscape, then the early production of cotton in 19<sup>th</sup> century unleashed deforestation (Mesquite, 1987), whereas in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, rapid agricultural and pastoral expansion, relied just as much removal of forest cover. The high-density babassu palm stands particular to Maranhão, benefit from human

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<sup>16</sup> Ecotones such as bamboo forests and palm groves bearing *babassu*, *tucumã*, *bacaba*, *inajá*, or *buriti* nuts and fruits found across the region are signs of previous native occupations and human presence (Neves and Petersen, 2006; Balée, 1989)

disturbances such as land clearing and fire, promoting the dominance of this particular species across secondary forests and Amerindian fallows (Balée, 1994), have in the late 1980s covered nearly a third of the previously cleared Pre-Amazonia (Anderson et al., 1991). Therefore the arriving peasants have not only impacted areas previously managed by native communities, but also areas that have been affected by previous migrants and land use types. Today agricultural fields and pastures cover 70% of Maranhão, providing income from crops composed mainly of soy (51%), maize (14%), manioc (10%) and rice (5%); pastures in various conditions cover nearly 6m *ha*, where an equal number of cattle is herded (IBGE, 2017).

Prior to the transformations of the landscape for large scale crop and beef production, the areas were inhabited and managed by indigenous peoples in continuous synergies between flora and fauna, neither preserving nor degrading them. Ethnobotanical research amongst the Ka'apor, one of the three groups of the pre-Amazonian forests, shows them to distinguish and use nearly five hundred species of plants (Balée, 1994), inhabiting three types of forest (Balée, 1984:81-82). By means of manipulating succession, they create at least four specific vegetation zones resulting in a variety of niches and habitats. (Balée & Gely, 1989; Balée 1994). In all of these habitats, species composition vary<sup>17</sup>, marked by the presence of indicator plants, devoid in other habitats. In addition, forest inventories have shown species occurrence across old fallows to be higher than high forests of the *terra firme* exempt of anthropogenic changes (Balée, 1994). In this instance, the Ka'apor presence across pre-Amazonia, in *sui genera*, has been proven to have a positive effect on local biodiversity<sup>18</sup> (Balée, 1993). These findings are in accordance to other studies that have shown the presence of indigenous people's management practices of habitats to increase biodiversity (Nepstad 2006; Colchester, 2004; Posey, 2003; Hecht, 2003; Schwartzman et al., 2000). Furthermore, research on the interplay between plants, animals and the humans established the Amazonian region to be a complex mosaic of distinct habitats and diverse forest patches, influenced for millennia by the Amerindians (Levis, 2017; Chambers et al., 2013; Heckenberger, 2007). Applying historical ecology to the contemporary setting of the pre-Amazonian landscape, therefore, expose changes not alone to the environment itself but even more so the specific cultural traits of the peasants subjected to capital forces and land tenure issues. These forces have resulted in political and economic struggles of peasants and indigenous communities, inscribed and manifesting themselves within the natural ecoregion by means of deforestation and land clearing.

The land is endowed with certain capacities to produce. The scramble for land is thereby a question whom and how shall be managing it. From the perspective of political economy, the land is not only a capital in itself endowed with value, but also means of production, able

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<sup>17</sup> For the classification and a full list of species known to the Ka'apor, their presence across habitats, and specific ecological importance, next to associated traditional uses, see Appendixes 1 to 10 in Balée (1994:225-362).

<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, Ka'apor niche management could have potentially undermined certain species, and while net biodiversity would increase, it does not foreclose the exclusion and suppression of other certain potential species, which might disappear from their habitats.

to sustain livelihoods, generating income, and various associated forms of wealth. Under these circumstances land itself resembles a laborer able to produce commodities; both laborer and land then appear as objects-of-surplus-value for the capitalist; land producing besides profit also rent. In these circumstances, the unraveling frontier sought to merge these two factors – land and labor force into one nadir. Land as a resource capable to produce output it is therefore targeted for specific reasons by a wide range of actors who are all eager to first of own the land, and thereafter to adopt culturally appropriate productive management practices, resulting in a variety of more or less disturbed landscapes. These landscapes express culture, becoming cultural landscapes, able to inscribe and express nature into culture, as exemplified by the research of historical ecology focusing on long term studies across the Amazon basin (Balée, 2006).

Having adopted the perspective of historical ecology one is able to perceive that not only various land uses have competed for access to land in the region, but their respective cultures for their persistence – that of the peasants, babassu nut collectors, and indigenous people, juxtaposed to amongst others interest groups, such as ranchers, gold miners and state-backed soy and cattle lobbies. Compared to the seemingly nurturing practices<sup>19</sup> of the Indigenous people, the changes brought by the frontier have inferred contrasting large-scale land-use practices, diminishing both species richness and the native vegetation cover by decimating the forested landscapes of the pre-Amazonian region (Celentano et al., 2017; 2018). The opening of the frontier penetrating the forests in the 1960s, and the more recent expansion of agriculture, continues to threaten and exert further changes, either by trespassing into the indigenous lands where forest remnants prevail (Ibid.), or by occupying and further degrading productive anthropogenic landscapes, such as the *babassu* palm groves (Hill, 2015). While justifications in their own right have always been voiced by those circumscribing and scrambling for lands at the frontier, what remains inarguable, legitimate and exact, is that these areas of the pre-Amazonian forests, apart from a more recent presence of *quilombola* communities (Balée, 1994; Cleary, 1990), have been for centuries occupied and cared for by local Amerindian groups. Even if trespassers have been removed from lands such as TIAT, they have left elements in the cultural landscape such as the huge clearings, which are plagued by the *Brachiaria Spp.* Imported African signal grass previously used to graze cattle, and now dominating early succession. These new aspects within the landscape have shown that traditional practices of Ka'apor forest management unable to redeem these grounds, since areas burned to avoid snakes, as informed by informants, inadvertently also kill all regeneration, maintaining clearings closes to villages open after decades of abandonment. Emic cultural strategies to deal with these are no longer apt. On the other hand, changes in the landscape emit notions that culture itself has been affected, not only of the people but the interaction

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<sup>19</sup> While for the Western episteme native people often represent practices considered as *management* of their habitat, this very form of *management* amongst native people often draws on abandonment of landscapes that no longer serve the purpose, than an active interaction to increase the benefits. Abundance of land hereby permits a rather more sustainable use of the landscapes, with integrated periods for the soils to recover, while others are put under management practices extracting both nutrition's and the resulting crops in the vicinity.

between native and non-native groups across the landscape. A scarred and degraded landscape, therefore, is perfect evidence of the mingling and clash of cultures on the frontier, from which one is able to deduct very distinct modes of production.

Diseases from early contacts brought rapid depopulation in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the Ka'apor. Considering that health assistance in the indigenous posts was limited, most of the Ka'apor had to travel to distant towns such as Paragominas. It was these travels, over dilapidated roads, that also made them participate over the decades of the 1980s and 1990s in the sale of mahogany to the *madereiros*, in exchange for the maintenance of the roads and a car (Valdemar Ka'apor in López, 2017). Such practice of participating in trade of timber, but also further alliances with *garimpeiros*, was quite common at that time amongst the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil, seeking to acquire goods and services, but left without government assistance via the underfinanced FUNAI (Rabben, 2004; Hemming, 2003; Fisher, 2000; Watson, 1996). Having abandoned raids and entered peaceful relations with the surrounding society, decades after the Ka'apor were being decimated trespassers. If hostility in the old day brought respect, and thereafter steel tools for free, with passing time peaceful relationships meant lack of respect towards the Indians. Similar to building alliances with illegal loggers as in late 20<sup>th</sup> century, following the abandonment of state agencies, meant that entering conservation discourses the means to acquire to necessities, after the turn of the millennium had to also evolve. As of 2018 the railway linking the Carajás mine and the Port of Sao Luis has been duplicated. The impacts of 3km long heavy loaded trains passing with 340 wagons now even more often next to Indigenous lands of Caru, where also the Awá reside has led to increased unity amongst local native groups in search for political and lawful repatriation of caused harm now, but also due to past presence pressures due to PGC. Resulting environmental mitigation payments now provide opportunities to benefit the communities and are discussed further in Chapter 2.

## Summary

Droughts, disputes due to the lack of land and social tensions across the northeast and south of Brazil created a need for the military government as of 1964 to target the pre-Amazonian region as a quick solution to diffuse several issues simultaneously. By committing to the growing discontent of both rural landless workers, but also industrialists desires to expand their production and capital, taming and occupying the forested region of Maranhão appeared advantageous to appease all parties. To link the regions of discontent with areas depicted as able to mitigate arising pressures a vast road network infrastructure had to be established. To many struggling peasants this introduced opportunities to flee from oppression. At the same time connecting new regions of so far untapped resources quickly became also of interest to elite groups seeking to capitalize on the extraction. The peculiarities of the rural man's flight induced trajectory of migration, however, rests on his inability to own land and subsist and under continuous confrontation and coercion by *latifúndios*. Opening of the frontier then seeks to vent these tensions on the premise that 'empty lands' via *primitive accumulation* will be available for migrating peasants and squatters for occupation. However, the



simultaneous interests by elite groups in the frontier regions unleash the process of *accumulation by dispossession*, expelling by various means peasants from lands which they might have managed to so far occupy. The reproduction of similarly unequal land distribution patterns exerted the very same issues from which the peasants had previously fled. Instead of breaking apart large landholdings, the Brazilian government had historically always chosen to absorb vacant lands, distributed to states and municipalities via decentralization processes. Rather than to be geared towards the incorporation of smallholders, rapid change in policies of the Amazonian colonization schemes and the particular preference of large capital, depicts the military government itself as complicit in the reproduction of social and political violence. The opening of the frontier in Maranhao then stands for the unwillingness of the military government to directly deal with unequal land distribution in the south and the north.

By keeping the status quo of both elite power and their established properties, removal of the buildup of social tension was outsourced onto the frontier that served as a valve<sup>20</sup>. The arrival of capital and the overall scramble for land would induce the requirement to establish ownership regimes defining the *property*, amidst of which indigenous reserves would be designated as certain types of holding owned as assets by the Union, guaranteed for usufruct right to Amerindians by the 1988 Federal Constitution. Although establishing these reserves was a true milestone of the era considering the circumstances, it did little in deterring illegal trespassers, in search of land and opportunities to subsist. Moving onto native lands posed an easier option than confronting the large landowners, particularly due to the politically disorganized mass that the arriving peasants represented, and the violence that the latter was not afraid to unleash by hiring gunslingers to silence those who were not moving on.

The politics since the establishment of Brazilian independence in 1825 have reproduced a vertical ordering replicating colonial rule and a class dominated society marked by privileges. It was further exacerbated by racial inequalities in particular through the land ownership patterns carried over from the colonial past (Damasceno et al., 2017; Bitoun et al., 2005). In this light, the peasants as a class in the mid-20th century still stood for nothing but cheap labor force in the production of commodities – from sugar and cotton to coffee or tobacco. Indigenous people, on the other hand, appeared relatively more organized, at least on a tribal level, and represented partially by the FUNAI, were facilitated in having their lands established as Indigenous reserves with usufruct rights, and which although a great feat, was meant to serve PIN and not the Amerindians *per se*. With native lands now fixed in space as reserves with de facto boundaries, peasants pressured by politically endorsed large capital forces began to invade these, in order to squat, log and subsist, bringing diseases, change and degradation to historical landscapes and ethnic groups. Invasions further were facilitated by the fact that following first encounters with arriving peasants, native people had fled deeper into the forests to avoid negative impacts and in search of tranquillity and hunting grounds

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<sup>20</sup> This was during the 1970s when the military dictatorship had its reasons to fear of political uprising stemming from peasants and rural people representing civil society, as had already happened during the guerrilla war of the Araguaia infused with communist ideologies, see e.g. de Almeida Teles, J. (2017) or Schmink (1992).

with non-depleted fauna. This left large tracts of indigenous lands void of the deterrent force of active presence of native people and lacking the next to the absence of the state to carry out its own legislature of protecting these territories, made it extremely vulnerable for invasions very first by smallholders, but thereafter also by larger capital and land speculation.

The establishing of a road network and the appropriation of the frontier into the capitalist order brought the definite expression and need for ownership by devising and establishing *property* and their regimes. Although COLONE tried to provide a land title for peasants, it was stalled by bureaucracy, and before land titles were officially awarded, it had often been sold or simply forged, by those able to influence and hold onto power. Therefore the failure of land titling to establish land as a *property* for the arriving peasants, emerged amongst the major causes to improve migrant's conditions, forcing them to invade indigenous lands. Under these circumstances, intraregional migrations across Brazil have been plagued by the exchange of one marginal survival strategy for another, with most of the families' first residences at the frontier only but the beginning of a long migratory journey. Such land titling instability across peripheral areas is further perpetuated by policies and constantly disrupted by changing economic cycles at the centers, based upon resource depletion at the extractive frontiers marked by timber, mining, agriculture, cattle ranching or other large development projects. This is best exemplified by rapid plunder of available resources and subsequent outmigration once these are gone, the destitute land, without titles for the peasants, slowly appropriated, or extorted, by those in possession of capital, for later production of cattle or soy. The general introduction of extractive regimes and capitalism into the Amazonian region has instead of improving overall outcomes for various societal groups, rather led to the strengthening only of the elite and the overall underdevelopment of the region, when compared with previously available resources (Bunker, 1988). At the same time, those who have managed to establish themselves in the region have informed that transforming forest into pasture, and trees into cattle, have allowed their children to eat, go to school and finally study and move into larger towns in search for a better future (personal communications in Nova Conquista and Chapó). For peasants having established cattle is quite prestigious and marks someone as having it '*made*', and owning sufficient land to be a rancher – a *fazendeiro*. Resources, accordingly, are made not only to serve various purposes, but also emerge as such only under certain circumstances and arrangements (see e.g. Richardson & Weszkalnys (2014) and Davidov (2014)). The aspects of rapid economic changes, the uncertainty of land titling, but also continuous fight to secure any means to subsist has therefore introduced a certain *temporality* feature into the region. The appearance of capital relations on the frontier unleashed deforestation, and rapid transformation of primary resources into capital, after which land stood to be occupied for productive practices, increasing in price if cleared. With the continuous spread of the capital forces, commodities followed, and have entered the context, both rural, as also that of ethnic groups. It has reached a point where subjects themselves have become commodified, a process taken up further for the analysis in the next chapter.

## 8. Theoretical Framework

### Saussurean Semiotics

The way we speak about things is in principle the way how we construct our reality. In order to communicate we create, ascribe meanings and interpret various signs; the academic discipline concerned in dealing with this is known as semiotics. Its founder, Ferdinand de Saussure (2011, [1916]), conceived any linguistic sign always to be composed of the visual, or verbal - the '*signifier*', and the mentally understood - the '*signified*'; the association of both resulting in a '*sign*'. Meaning is created by interpreting the signifier, this meaning is that which is signified. When signifiers, or signs, are interpreted by both sides equally information is exchanged. However, a signifier is always only a symbolic mental construct stemming from culturally agreed norms and notions, and not necessarily actual '*things out there*'. The signified is hereby conceptual to the mind and only a notion of *something* understood or signified by a sign or a word. To any signifier, a signified meaning may be attached and made to be referent to a specific idea. Considering this, the structure of the semantic space of language is rather unstable, its configuration permitting plural meanings to be attached to single *words* (Sturrock, 1979). Such fluidity is quite radical and '*proposes the autonomy of language in relation to reality*' (Chandler, 2002:25). Additionally, since any signifier, and vice versa, may relate to various signifieds, exhibits the fact that there stands no actual link between the signifier and the signified. Although this 'relative autonomy' in the relationship between the two is arbitrary, it does have structure - the signifiers are established through time with associated notions, as part of any language. Once we speak, we utter signifiers but mean the signified. Yet the freedom posed between the signifier and the signified does exhibit and denote '*a non-communicative kernel of linguistics*' (Tomšič, 2015:32). Language in this way nonetheless structures reality, limiting individual ability to change it, with conventional agreements within the same social and cultural setting defining both signifiers and their associative meanings. According to Chandler (2002), language for Saussure rather than substance was more of a form and structure in itself.

Saussurean semiotics were fundamental for the emergence of Structuralism as a sociological phenomenon and intellectual fashion of 1960 in Paris, replacing the fading fascination of the intelligentsia with existentialism. Claude Lévi-Strauss in Anthropology, Jacques Lacan in Psychoanalysis and Foucault in the Social sciences engaged with structuralism, enacting certain '*hostility towards individualism*', in the pursuit to discover social mechanisms governing *all* humans (Sturrock, 1979). Lévi-Strauss sought to find universal mental structures by analyzing the meaning of myths, kinship rules, and totemism amongst native peoples; Lacan investigated the functioning of the unconscious to understand the human psyche in general. Similarly, Karl Marx (1976 [1887]) explored how capitalism and the commodity form enabled the functioning of the political economy and society itself from the perspective of *base* and *superstructure*. Freud also added a twist to Saussurean ideas by noting that beyond the conventional 'decoding' of signs, even more, intricate unconscious meanings were hiding. Following von Hartmann's (1884) discovery of the unconscious and its certain structure, Freud was

inspired and insisted that it wants to be heard, as in the *Freudian slip*. Later, pursuing the meaning of dreams, he explains that violet lilies appearing to the patient do not represent purity, but rather, that the words 'violet' phonetical meaning is closer to the English word 'violate', suggesting in his analysis that violet flowers stood for violence, and furthermore 'defloration', as in loss of virginity (Freud, 1938:382-3, quoted in Chandler, 2002:53). Lacan later also highlighted the primacy of the signifier to the psyche, particularly since it resists any attempt of being delimited, rewriting the Saussurean sign by emphasizing the signifier over the signified. In addition, for Marx, the commodity stood also as a sign for social inequality. Going further, and arguing a sign to mean only that it means something, Lévi-Strauss introduced the term '*floating signifiers*' (Lévi-Strauss, 1987 [1950]). Semiotics are of interest to this research to argue that not only the term *indigenous people* itself is able to evoke distinct notions and meanings, but also to show that commodities from the semiotic perspective can, and do, have additional meanings other than economic and use-values, particularly when adhering to the functioning of the unconscious.

Borrowing from linguistics and addressing Freud's writings for the first time, Lacan shows how the unconscious manipulates and processes conscious material via the central operations of language such as metonymy and metaphor<sup>21</sup>, leading to conclude that the '*unconscious is structured like a language*' (Lacan, 2001:178 [1953]). If representations cease to exist without language, then the unconscious executing this structure must be enabled by its lack equally. In other words, without language, we would not be able to grasp and interpret what we see. In a similar fashion, the autonomy of the signifier then also implies an effect on social reality itself, the language used within as a link. If the signifier holds no relation to the signified, then the social link must be also disproven. The imperative of structural linguistics then consists of thinking the subject constructed through the subtraction of language from speech (Tomšič, 2015:46). To Lacan, this implies the '*repression of the subject*', denoting more of being in the world and the actual non-relation between humans (Tomšič, 2015:35). As clarifies Žižek (2018) - silence is the best example of the failure of a language; it simply does not exist outside and is a strict part of it. This research is enriched by these insights, since language not only constructs interpretations of the observed, but also builds linkages, which later will emerge also to be achieved by objects, or commodities, that simultaneously stand for Saussurean signs.

### **Marxian Commodity Form**

In his continuous analysis focusing on class struggle and the critique of the political economy, alienation, historical materialism, and so on, Marx always returns to commodities, the aspects of their production, with the focus on the fetishisms associated with it. As he notes - '*a*

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<sup>21</sup> While metaphors compare things (e.g. hard as a rock), metonyms use 'for the name of a thing or a relationship, an attribute, a suggested sense, or something closely related, such as effect for cause' (Chandler, 2002:132), e.g. Chernobyl means both a place and an event, the crown representing an object, but also the monarchy, etc. These two linguistic operations in dreams are expressed via condensation and displacement - the main achievements of the unconscious labor.

*commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties, and theological niceties'* (Marx, 1867:81). Commodities arise from human labor in the process of production, endowed with the exchange and use values; the latter implies qualities capable of alleviating specific needs. Yet *'production not only supplies material to the need, but it also supplies a need for the material. Production not only creates an object for the subject but also a subject for the object. Production, in other words, breeds consumption'* (Marx, *Grundrisse* (1993:22), quoted in Tomšič 2015:28). If the use-value nonetheless appears as a *'direct'* quality, the exchange value is trickier.

Each commodity across markets is worth a certain amount of the other, e.g. two chocolates are equal to three liters of milk and so on. Such exchange value becomes expressed in terms of economic value – money, to simplify transactions, instead of engaging in barter. Interestingly, money is then also endowed with a use-value, and exchange-value, and as is in the case of financial capital – money breeding more money through credit. Yet while for the laborer money enables exchange and subsistence, for the capitalist it breeds more capital. Since the economic value in objects cannot be created from thin air, it implies that in the process of production of the commodity, something becomes *of value*. This value is conceived through labor, and labor, therefore, must have value in itself to be exchanged. Hereby a curious link is established with the worker as a subject, who suddenly possesses qualities of an object, as his labor-power can be traded similar to a commodity, being sold and bought on the market. This hidden economic value emerging in subjects-as-objects-of-value then creates a direct link between the worlds of subject and objects, commodities as the *form* expressing both. By acquiring commodities we therefore also always also retrieve labor-power, supporting and reproducing the system that manufactures them. Within it, the laborer is generally always paid less than the value that his labor produces during a shift of work. Although what the capitalist buys is the subject's labor-power, he always also acquires additional surplus-value embedded within, that he pockets as profit when commodities are sold. The capitalist mode of production complies *'the perverse scenario where the subject [...] of production assumes precisely the position of the commodity, whose function is to produce surplus value'* (Tomšič, 2015:150), the laborer hereby turned into an object-of-surplus-value, capable of increasing the capital of others.

By bearing human labor, commodities, therefore, presuppose the existence (or trace) of subjects within them. At the same time, these two types of subjects – that of use-value, as a consumer, and those of exchange-value, the producers - are clearly not the same subjects upon closer analysis. If the subject of need is produced with the commodity and is driven by self-interest, then the laborer, too, pursues self-interest and need of earning wages, nonetheless, they both represent *'non-cognitive subjects of value'* to the capitalist – that of production and that of consumption (Tomšič, 2015:30). Furthermore, through a completely objective and not a subjective misunderstanding, commodities appear as if endowed with a value *per se*, composed of intrinsic and autonomous quality, as if not at all related to subjects or the social relations. Both commodities and money then appear as *natural objects of value*, with fetishism disguising the fact that their existence engenders true individuals as subjects. Commodity

fetishism highlights the problematic aspect of appearance - not subjective and cognitive misperception, but objective appearance operating beyond truth and error (Tomšič, 2015). When speaking of commodity fetishism, Marx, therefore, implies '*a minimal shift between the appearance and the logical autonomy of value*' (ibid: 35). It is not that the subjects don't know what they do, it is more as if they know, but nevertheless, do it:

*'Commodity fetishism is not located in our mind, in the way we (mis)perceive reality, but in our social reality itself. In other words, [...] 'You may think that the commodity appears to you like a simple embodiment of social relations (that, for example, money is just a kind of voucher entitling you to a part of the social product), but this is not how things really seem to you. In your social reality, [...] you bear witness to the uncanny fact that a commodity really appears to you as a magical object endowed with special powers.'* (Žižek, 2016:125-126).

In commodity fetishism, relations between men are externalized to relations between objects of our labor, servitude, and dominance no longer observable and apparently transparent at the interpersonal level. Marx critique of the political economy, therefore, shows how subjective appearances are underpinned objectively. Žižek calls it the '*ideological fantasy*' - not the illusion masking the real state of things, but rather an unconscious fantasy structuring reality (Žižek, 1989:27-30). By additionally converging the idea of freedom of both people and the markets, the neoliberal system of capitalist accumulation is then able to rapidly engulf new spaces and the human psyche.

Within such an economic system - as Thatcher had famously put it - '*all forms of social solidarity are to be dissolved in favor of individualism, private property, personal responsibility, and family values*', the slogan, motto and foundation of the neoliberal order represented in her phrase that '*economics is the method, but the object is to change the soul*' (Harvey, 2007:40). Living becomes separated and artificial, the '*continuation of life taking place under the annoying pressure of the superego*' (Žižek, 2016:83). Without real autonomy nor freedom from the capital-centric economy, subjects are posited as automata subjected to exclusion and exploitation. Individuals are ideologically made to compete with another, and constant improvement and progress painted as the divine goal. The self is to be turned into a project, with subjective independence from anyone but the market as the fundamental way of life. Intersubjective competitiveness should mimic the market, social relations becoming occluded by objects. The failure to adapt to rapidly changing reality enmeshed in capitalism is projected as a personal deficit. Insistence upon the emergence of resilient and adaptive subjects able to live in a '*dangerous world*' (Evans & Reid, 2013; 2014) of free market forces, then allows nation-states to abstain from their responsibilities to care for the citizens, abandoning them to market forces. The notion of self-governance is hereby bestowed as beneficial and desirable, even enjoyable to the subjects themselves. The joy of life and freedom becomes defined ideologically as the ability to indulge in an endless choice from a vast array of commodities that appear to express the true meaning to one's existence and the emergence and reproduction of identity through the appropriation of symbolic objects allowing one to fully be thyself.

Although capitalism is not a perversion in the sense of sadism or masochism, it does nonetheless demand that the subjects embrace perversion as part of its functioning, demanding *'that subjects enjoy exploitation and thereby abandon their position as subjects'* (Tomšič, 2015:151). Most disturbingly, however, the capitalist subject laughs in the face of this estrangement and castration, buying into the idea and tall tale that modernity, and the market, having actually set him free and helped in overcoming *any* possible form of lack. Capitalism as a hegemonic system then reveals itself by defining the struggle as the failure to find one's way in the system where social non-relation is primary and competition and labor celestial. Further solidified by centuries of the persistence of market economy, the subjective misconfiguration of the capitalist system is hardly noticeable anymore to individuals living therein. Subjects living within a market economy find their value by comparing themselves to others, as if they were commodities. Marx theory of the subject is therefore also built on the examination of the commodity itself, and if *lack* in the subject occurs, then it may be defined based on the negativity of the system of political economy itself. According to Tomšič's interpretation, the equivalent of alienation on the structure of the capitalist system unleashes, and promotes, the *'production of surplus, and the production of lack, as the true matter constituting the subject'* (2015:66); cf. for Lacan, through the functioning of language and the unconscious, the subject *is* already *'de-psychologized and de-individualized'* (Tomšič, 2015:6). Considering that true enjoyment is only possible on the basis of ignorance and a certain non-knowledge, or fantasy (Žižek, 1989), societies facilitated by the workings of commodity fetishism become deprived, alienated, and reproducing the very same order in the pursuit after a simulated need for commodities, and the apparent pleasure drawn from the enjoyment borne out of their acquirement. This insists that we look closer at this specific type of *enjoyment*.

### **Lacanian Object *a* and *Jouissance***

Where does one start to introduce Lacan? Let us return to the concept of language as a system of differences, as expressed by Saussure. Considering that language structures reality by means of how we express ourselves, imposing onto us its linguistic functioning, it represents a system that is replicated by subjects born into it. By adopting a language we therefore also instantly enter a world of symbols, whose meanings have been previously assigned to these signs. By means of embracing the language, we may, therefore, be considered to come into *existence*. If we ascribe the totality of effects language has on humans as a sort of *'linguistic universe'*, we unearth the very crude initial notion of the Lacanian *Other* (Fink, 1997:5). The *Other*, as a closed symbolic order, does itself not exist physically, however it does not prevent it from having real effects on the subjects (Žižek, 1989). Children assimilate this *Other* by learning a language to express what they seem to desire, yet in their quest to internalize speech, their idea of what they desire is seized by the *Other*, first structured via the encounter with the *mOther*. We don't express thoughts into language, but rather think language and

express it in language; the function of the language is thereby already guiding the way we think.<sup>22</sup>

Lacanian insights of such statements build upon the ideas brought initially forth by Freud, the engagement with whom may be divided into two major phases. The first up to 1955 has Lacan focusing towards the functioning of the unconscious from a linguistic perspective, arriving at the conclusion that that '*the unconscious is structured like a language*' (Lacan, 2001:178 [1953]). This phrase brings to the fore first the fact the unconscious relies on signifiers as defined by Saussure, and subsequently that the functioning of the relationships between them at the unconscious level is established upon the very same semantic rules as in language (i.e. see footnote 8). Nonetheless, the unconscious according to Lacan '*is itself Other, and remains unassimilated and foreign*' (Fink, 1997:9). The *Other* in our unconscious is structured and draws upon the discourses of people around us, the best example of it being the guilty conscience, or the Freudian superego, telling us what is (right or) wrong. When we express desires, but also fantasies, they are therefore that of the *Other*. This *Other* ultimately stands for *the structure* as established in the school of Structuralism. Structure and its effects on the agency have been part of long debates in sociology, philosophy and political economy (Elder-Vass, 2010; Sewel Jr., 1992; Giddens, 1991; Bourdieu, 1977; Levi-Strauss, 1963; Weber, 1930; Durkheim, 1952 [1897]; Marx, 1976 [1887]). Agency is hereby attributed to individuals, or subjects, as the ability in the midst of structuring forces to attempt to act free of them. Considering that our unconscious connects signifiers on its own '*passively*', suggests that for its continuity an actual subject with an *agency* is superfluous. Yet the subject persists throughout the writings of Lacan. Who is this subject?

As conflates Fink (1997:36-44), Lacanian subject is not the conscious 'individual', nor the subject of the egos statement *I*; this subject also does not appear in what is said, but does sometimes protrude standing for a *signifier*; it is also neither the Freudian agency of the unconscious, nor is it the Cartesian subject, who *is* when he *thinks*, since rational thought defines only the ego, rejecting the existence of the unconsciousness. Considering the split between the being of the ego, and thinking of the unconscious, Lacan's notion of the subject may be posited as "*either I am not thinking or I am not [as in beingless]*"<sup>23</sup> (Fink, 1997:45). In other words, the subject for Lacan is defined in the split, represented by the 'or', as seen in Figure 2. According to Lacan, the split appears due to one's entrance into the symbolic world order defined by the structure of language. This split also occurs between two distinct kinds of

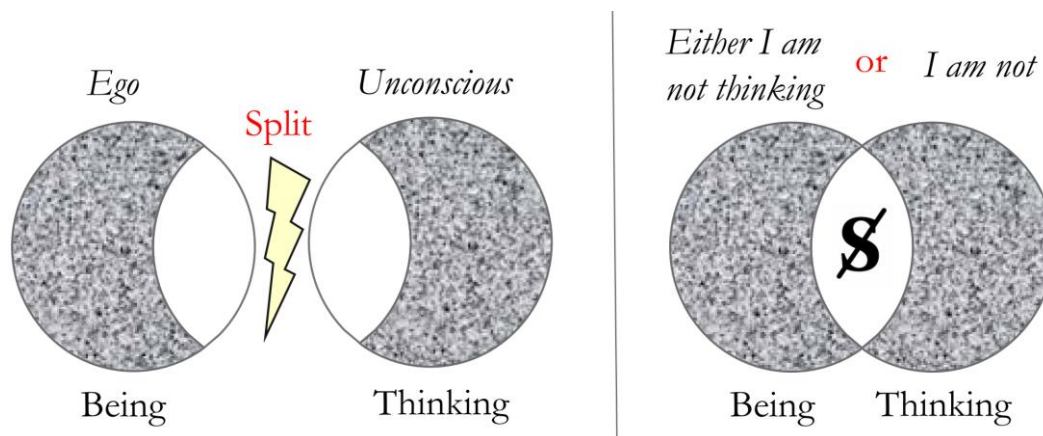
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<sup>22</sup> The world as we think we know according to Lacan (2001) is constituted via three overlapping orders. The Symbolic order ascribes meaning to things via language and constructs the perceived '*reality*'. The Imaginary order structures subjects through norms and rules providing the chance to imagine and ideal-ego, or the way I would like to be seen. The Symbolic order defines how I measure myself towards the *Other* (Žižek, 1989). If one subtracts the structured interpretative '*reality*' of language from the Symbolic order, what remains is the Real. The Real is outside of signification and thereby cannot be grasped by the human mind.

<sup>23</sup> The subject is constituted exactly at the interface of the Real and Symbolic orders – *lacking* in one, and *being* in other.



otherness – ‘the ego as other and the unconscious as the Other’s discourse’ (Fink, 1997: 46). The split standing hereby for the excess of the *Other*, results in a divided, alienated, and a barred subject, denoted by the symbol  $\$$  (Figure 2).



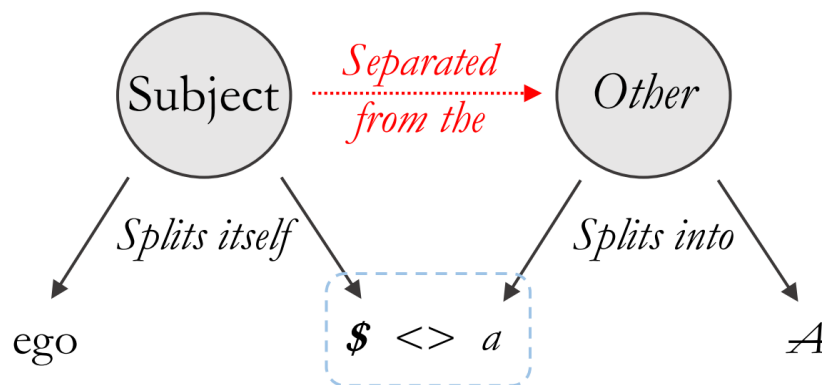
**Figure 2** | The Lacanian subject split between the conscious being of the ego and the unconscious thinking (left); it is found in the ‘or’ (right) as represented by  $\$$  (Adopted from Fink, 1997:44).

The child becomes signified and meaningful by adopting language standing for the discourse of the *Other*, becoming instantly alienated by it and slipping under its signification within the *language*; the *Other* therefore stands for a signifier and the child emerges in this function as a divided subject -  $\frac{\text{Other}}{\text{child}} \Rightarrow \frac{S}{\$}$ ; ‘the signifier is hereby that what founds the subject’ who is nothing but a place-holder of *Other* and signified by it (Fink, 1997:52). In other words, ‘the signifier is what represents a subject to another signifier’ (Tomšič, 2015:60). The child entering the *Other* is further separated from himself through the forming of his desire, which is initially totally absorbed into an exchange with the mother, coming only slowly to grips with the fact that he is not always everything for, and one with, the *Other*<sup>24</sup> (Fink, 1997). This is also partially the moment and emergence of the mirror stage, once the child is able to recognize himself as being in a body and separated from the gaze of his mother in which he has found himself previously. In this dramatic moment, a split separates the child from himself through his own image (Tomšič, 2015:172). Although alienation of the subject from himself being signified by the *Other* appears as negative, it is actually the first step beyond nothingness. When we turn to desire, Lacan proves that alienation arising from the encounter with the (*m*)*Other* further induces a separation, which can be summed up in the fact of us seeking to *be* in the eyes of the (*m*)*Other*, by means of fulfilling *her* desire. In other words, humans learn to desire by looking for it in the others. In this sense, the alienated subject is linked to the *Other* via the desire, inducing in him a separation from one’s own subjectivity.

The aspect inspiring desire in the subject arising due to the *Other* shall be referred to as object *a*, also known by the French name *objet petit a*, or object small *a*, in comparison to big *A*, standing for *Other* (*l’Autre*). It is within the *object a* that the desire of the other is exposed. In

<sup>24</sup> This *other* is referred to be both the paternal figure – (*m*)*Other*, but also (*f*)*Other*, but also arising due to one’s emergence as subject during the mirror stage (Fink, 1997).

the pursuit to close the arising separation with the *Other* and to sustain the fantasy of such unity, object *a* plays the most crucial role by representing the only means to find himself whole again and foregoing one's actual alienation, separation and internal division (Fink, 1997:58-60). The first separation from the *Other* leads to the further splitting of the subject into the ego and \$, with ramification onto the *Other* as well, which then also splits into the lacking other  $\bar{A}$ , and object standing for this lack (Figure 3). The idea of overcoming the lack is precisely what then structures the fantasy, expressed by Lacan as the divided subject in relation to object *a*, or -  $\$ <> a$ .



**Figure 3** | The subjects separated from the *Other* splits itself into ego and the barred subject \$; the *Other* is simultaneously split into a lacking *Other* ( $\bar{A}$ ) and *objet a*. The Relation  $\$ <> a$  represents the fantasy and ability to overcome lack from initial separation (Modified from Fink, 1997:61).

In Lacan's second return to Freud after the 1968 student protests in Paris, his interest shifts from the big *Other* as the field of language, towards object *a*, and the Freudian reading and interpretation of Marx's critique of political economy<sup>25</sup>. Acquiring *objet a*, and fulfilling one's very initial desire and fantasy for completeness, may however result both in pleasure and/or disgust, represented by the French term *jouissance*, signifying enjoyment beyond normativity. More often, therefore, *jouissance* may also imply an actual lack of satisfaction, but also stand for pleasure by displeasure, i.e. pleasure when enjoyment is actually not achieved. In this, *jouissance* is also somewhat similar to the Freudian *libido*, but even more so condensed in the expression of *Lustgewinn*, or unconscious production that satisfies the unconscious tendency, seeking satisfaction beyond rationality (Tomšič, 2015:11,117). Object *a* becomes the driving apparatus of *jouissance* which stands for enjoyment, that is not. Fantasy [  $\$ <> a$  ] is therefore engaged to cover up for the fact that enjoyment is not achieved, 'domesticating' *jouissance* (Žižek, 1989:139).

Rather than being split and lacking, the *fantasy* of possible 'completeness', permits the subject to emerge into some form of *being*, in other words, 'a being of desire', or more generally – 'a desiring being' (Fink, 1997:59-61). The first alienation from the *Other* and the later splitting of the *Other* ultimately results in a 'castrated' subject that continuously seeks to be accepted and

<sup>25</sup> Upon the second return Lacan concludes that 'the unconscious is politics' (Tomšič, 2015:20).

to signify something to the *Other*. Therefore, the subjects delusory need to strive for wholeness is borne out of the splitting and alienation from the *Other*, forcing dependence and pursuit after object *a*, internalized and strived for as if own cause. However, since object *a* is always only assumed, it thereof never is in itself *an object*. In other words, the desire to obtain the object *a* does not have an actual object, but only an object that *causes* desire. This cause may be projected on any signifier, driving the ego to go from one to the next to obtain *a*, each signifier acquiring meaning only through its relation to other signifiers. As sums up Fink – ‘the distinction between an object *of* desire and an object which *causes* desire is truly a crucial one’ (bold highlighting added) (1997:97), and therefore commodities, goods or objects may be best described as object-causes of desire.

The subject is ultimately hysterical, seeking to understand himself by addressing the *Other*, who is supposed to know not only what “*I am*”, but also “*what I desire*”. Taking an example from Tarkovsky’s (1979) seminal movie the *Stalker*, where within a metaphorical room inside a strange Zone, every human desire is granted the chance to manifest into reality, everybody fails to achieve it. Why? Because beneath our linguistically and symbolically structured conscious reality, the true carnal and libidinal desire escapes signification; although we might know what we want, and therefore need – we never truly know what we desire; the desire itself is without a strictly determined object and the *unconscious desire* demanding further rethinking of what an object for itself is<sup>26</sup>. The pursuit of the unconscious desire to obtain object *a* always results in a failure to satisfy the subject and breeds the compulsion to repeat, something that Freud termed the pleasure-gain - *Lustgewinn* – now replaced by the subjective drive after signifiers (Tomšič 2015:122). Since desire has no actual object of desire, but only object cause of desire, it needs to engage the drive, which fixates on objects, this permits the desire to acquire object *a*, that it finds for himself docked onto a specific object, or signifier. Yet as the unconscious desire itself cannot achieve surplus from objects (its subjective lack is inherent), it must find a surplus of *jouissance* in such an attempt, based on the relation to the drive. It is then the drive, ‘the symbolic machine without end’ (Tomšič, 2015:138), also known as *Todestrieb*, or the death drive, that indulges in the pursuit after objects, caused by object *a* in the desire. Many modern day ailments arise from the fact that we suppress our drives, creating conflictual situations inside ourselves, which then lead to tension, hysterical or psychotic outbursts, and neuroses (Freud & Breuer, 2009 [1895]; Freud 1986). The symptoms psychoanalysis detects in neurosis appear as the psychic inability to sustain *jouissance*, manifesting as failure to obtain enjoyment and pleasure in life from contemporary consumerism, and the structural perversion implying to *Enjoy!* Why would we willingly abstain from pleasure? According to Tomšič – ‘because the unconscious is split between the part of the capitalist and the laborer, satisfaction experienced by each as pleasure, and unpleasure’ (2015:137). In a similar fashion, lack of pleasure and discomfort breeds *jouissance*.

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<sup>26</sup> This line of inquiry may be pursued further following the school of Object Oriented Ontology, or OOO, discussed by Žižek (2016) and Harman (2018)

When returning to Marx's surplus-value, we need also to note its similarity to the existence of surplus-*jouissance*, or surplus-enjoyment (Tomšič, 2015:47). This additional type of enjoyment is based on sacrifice, even renunciation, or discontent, represented by objects such as coffee without caffeine, beer without alcohol, cream with no fat, even pleasure from displeasure, victimhood, and so on. If *jouissance* stands to strive to cover up a lack, then surplus-enjoyment for an actual gain – both representing two sides of the very same coin. Yet '*it is the very surplus that (re)creates the lack that it is supposed to fill in*' (Žižek, 2017:15). As an example, the redistribution of surplus of excessive wealth cannot establish balance if merged with poverty, because lack and surplus actually do not stand within the same space; '*the paradox is that the more you have the more you feel the lack*', experiencing a subjective deficiency of something that you already own, expressed in the terms of how much more you could have. Therefore the surplus of the unattainable enjoyment is where enjoyment, as we understand it literally, can be truly gained, in the form of excess, but again, standing for the pain in pleasure; if we subtract this surplus, we lose the enjoyment itself (Žižek, 1989:54). It is here that we can draw the homology between surplus-value as in the production of capitalist systems, and surplus-enjoyment that is ultimately the object cause of the desire (ibid.). The latter fuses lack and surplus, and is directed towards object *a*, ultimately driving the desire to engage the drive towards the object of fantasy and embodiment of *surplus-jouissance*. Object *a* represents an excess of a property outside of its '*positive consistency*' as an object (Žižek 1989:104). It resonates to the subject causes that make objects appear more than they are - gold more than a shiny metal, Coca-Cola - *freedom*, and so on; object *a* is ultimately the basis why commodities appear to us manifesting the sublime object-cause of our desires. It stands for apparent and accessible antidote concealed inside material objects able to alleviate an inherent lack and subjective loss. At the same time, this 'surplus', to forego lack, that we unconsciously strive for, is beyond symbolization, and not found in objects, its power to cause desire therefore temporarily and soon losing its whole appeal, the unconscious already in the process of transferring it onto other signifiers. Desires and drives appear to function best when left unhindered, autonomous and not questioned, thereby permitting the semblance of maximum surplus-*jouissance* obtained for the subject.

To round up the theoretical framework means acknowledging the importance of Marxian insights and how through the critique of political economy he clarified the peculiar form of commodities. Freud and Lacan later expanded the implications thereof via psychoanalysis onto the unconscious. Since this work shall engage with the question of indigenous people, at least partial homage has to be paid to the brilliance and genius of Lévi-Strauss. What is even more intriguing, is that Lacan's ideas were deeply influenced by him, particularly after his first return to Freud (Zafiroopoulos, 2010). Lévi-Strauss was the first scholar to apply structuralism to the ethnographic field seeking to find universal configurations governing traditional societies, studying their kinship systems and myths. Initially focusing on kinship, Levi-Strauss found order and rules amidst apparent chaos of social organization of native tribes, concluding that kinship systems ordered societies '*independent from the awareness that men*

*have of them whose existence they nevertheless regulate'* (1952:302). He proved that the prohibition of incest benefited societies, making females circulate inside the community similar to commodities (he was later criticized for that), and how their marriage strengthened family ties laying the foundation and basis for a continuous survival of nuclear families and societies composed thereof. He went even further stating that *'kinships exist not because it preserves the state of nature, but because it separates us from it'* (Godelier, 2018:11). In his later writings, he became much more focused and fascinated with the material reality on the structuring of the human mind and social life. Whether archaic or not, the mind according to him imposed order onto its content in a similar fashion, the patterns reflected in how myths were conceived, showcasing the unrestricted workings of the *'savage mind'* (Godelier, 2018). His interest in myths was not to find individual and figurative meaning ascribed to objects within the storylines, but rather the working of whole symbolic systems, and the mind representing itself through them. The basic assumption he followed was that myths were composed free of rules, where the unconscious mind could wander freely. After studying vigorously thousands of them across traditional societies in both of the Americas and Australia, he was able to verify the emic origin of the mind reflected the outside world via the myths (Levi-Strauss, 1967 [1964]; 1973 [1966]; 1978 [1968]; 1981 [1971]). Going further, he persisted *'to show, not how men think in myths, but how myths operate in men's minds without their being aware of the fact'* (Lévi-Strauss, 1986:12). According to this line of thought, myths disregarded and removed completely the subjectivity from them (Godelier, 2018:369). This study diverges from the classic adoption of Levi-Strauss, in as much that it does not focus on the study of kinship or myths, but embraces the labor put into proving that the structural approach has validity, especially in implying that there exists universal rules to which humans and their minds succumb, also across the native societies. And while Levi-Strauss borrowed from Marx and Lacan, and focused initially on those societies where according to Marx social classes have not yet emerged, his overall interest was to proof that structural elements prevail irrelevant of these facts, going as far as calling them a *superstructure*, similar to the one elaborated by Marx (Roth, 1993). Acknowledging the merit of the structural thinking and commonalities in the tradition to seek out the persistence of structures beyond the cognition of Saussure, Marx, Freud and Lacan, and ultimately Lévi-Strauss, permits the composition of a theoretical frame, where ones unconscious structure is given more relevance than the apparent subjective agency upon it. Let us embark and see whether these insights can elucidate the specific questions at hand.

## 9. Chapter II - Commodification

This chapter analyzes and seeks to answer the SRQ2 – and *what roles have the commodities and their exchange facilitated in the process of shaping, the interethnic frontier?*

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The historical backdrop introduced as part of the case study next to the findings established in the previous chapter in sum depict the changes since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century unraveling at the pre-Amazonian frontier catalyzed mainly by the processes of capitalism. These circumstances increased the tension in the scramble for resources, e.g. capital and land, revolving in particular reliance around the embedded practice of the establishment, access, and claims to the *property*. Marked by extractive character, the frontier in these circumstances emerged manifesting as a physical one, where varying occupation and land-use regimes were defined, according to the each of the diverse groups, amongst which predominated the arriving new settlers, the traditional heirs - indigenous people, and the *fazendeiros*. Their clashes inflicted changes to various aspects of sociocultural organization amongst both the native and non-indigenous groups, with broader impacts encompassing destitution of environments upon which their livelihoods depended. In this subsequent chapter, I strive to move from the depictions and effects of such a tangible and physical frontier and the major groups therein, to a more sublime frontier, forged within the human mind especially due to the effect of encountering the *Other*. Expressed via of libidinal drives for, and the desires attached to the peculiar form of commodities, I seek to show that the very functioning of the psyche and its unique traits might expedite one's embeddedness into the capitalist system. While claiming that such effects do not spare indigenous people, I shall argue that their inclusion, and being part of, occurs on quite distinct terms. From a Lacanian perspective the increasing number of available commodities presented for exchange at the frontier, and the encounter with the outside society itself, must have unleashed unique and unusual effects onto the formation of desires, and the negotiations of identity amongst the Amerindians. To these aspects and effects thereof, I turn next.

### **The frontier and arrival of the *Other***

Before proceeding to analyze the effects of the approaching frontier, it must be noted, that the very indigenous peoples were active members of such matters, and changes occurring thereafter having an *a priori* origin. As has been shown in the case of the Ka'apor migrations (Balée, 1994:25-48), their movement from the lower Tocantins and Xingu Rivers in the late 1600s and early 1700s to their current habitat sought to avoid the Lusophone society (as much as other tribes pressures), but at the same time opportunities to appropriate and benefit from superior materials, such as iron, that the latter possessed, attacking and ransacking nearby villages. In a certain way, we also need to establish some more general criteria of a past era that have marked Amerindians and have been transposed into attributes alike in the current era. To being with, amongst the egalitarian societies hierarchies had been traditionally kept flat, outspoken chiefs served to maintain peace by moderating group needs and being extremely generous with possessions, always taking requests, but never giving orders (Lowie,

1948). The social balance was maintained by preventing the emergence of authoritarian figures, and the power of leadership prevailing only in a non-coercive and non-compulsory manner (Clastres, 1977). Kinship ties functioned like a social contract, securing the survival of nuclear families, clans and the tribal society itself. Each individual was assigned with labor according to one's sex and age group, while the food, and game, that reached the villages was shared out equally, defining the egalitarian mode of being. The groups of the Amazonian lowland in general always devoted little time to *work*, yet were nevertheless continuously able to meet their needs. Excessive energy expenditure on labor to produce a surplus that is needless, as storing surplus crops was not convenient, that would rot away stored, or get eaten by wild animals in the gardens, was simply abstained from (ibid.). The idyll, as writes Hemming (1978:28) '*was spoiled only by one great blemish. The Tupi [speaking groups] were one of the most bellicose nations of Brazilian Indians, constantly at war ... not over material possessions or territory [of this there was enough], but to avenge past wrongs and kills and capture members of enemy's tribe ... these vendettas dominated groups cycles and social-life*'.

Private property simultaneously was kept minimal, the majority of which would be either destroyed, buried next to, or burned together with the former dwelling of the deceased. All of this made objects generally exempt from inheritance. In addition, with the insights gained from anthropological research revolving around predation (Santos-Granero 2009; 2010); alterity and perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro, 1998; 2004) has shifted the concept of Amerindian's individuality embedded into the local cosmovisions to be reversed to that of subjective relations built upon the notion of neoliberal subject, and paramount to the capitalist order. Such tacit assumption gives insights that the blurring of humans and non-humans have required the Amerindians to constantly care and maintain the established subjective relationships between oneself and the *other*, while never resulting in actual ownership (Brightman et al., 2016). Constant *domestication* and *nurture* were therefore required to both keep objects as objects and humans human (Brightman, 2010). The concept of wealth, value, materiality, and objects as artifacts amongst traditional Amerindians then, in general, stood in binary opposition to Western societies (Santos-Granero, 2009). Under such auspices, e.g. land being worked, hunted, or left to rest during the initial successional stages, is to be considered as nurtured, and hereby equal to the western concept of *being owned*, although nobody would claim it as such (unless currently someone's garden). Similarly, however, by incorporating the external other, dependencies were crafted across Tupi societies from the interactions between the giver and the taker, resulting in and marking control over the other via intricate relationships. Native people were thereby aware of subduing both human and non-human subjects in their quest to maintain complex and at times asymmetrical relationships. Becoming enslaved, or accepting the other's dominance within a symbiotic relation meant that one would be taken care of, similar to the master-slave dialectic as described by Hegel (1996 [1807]). In Amerindian conceptions, this may be translated into a category of being a master-owner (Fausto, 2008). As has been shown amongst the Wari' and Araweté Indigenous groups, enemies were converted into affine and consanguine members of own

society by extending and exchanging kin as a form of enslavement, depicting means of *direct predation* of the other, beyond the physical (Vilaça, 2010; 2007; 2002; Viveiros de Castro, 1992). These processes prevailed or were adjusted to fit accordingly the ontologies of specific groups and the context of the arriving frontier and ensuing establishment of inoffensive relations through certain accords.

In the case of the Ka'apor, after entering peaceful relationships with the Lusophone society as of 1928, they soon became less hostile. Let us first look at the antecedent animosity, which must be understood twofold. First, it was the active presence of the Ka'apor around the established habitat within the pre-Amazonian forests, where trespassers would pay with their lives if venturing further into. On the other hand, the Ka'apor themselves attacked and ransacked villages and homesteads, focused on obtaining iron tools such as knives, machetes, axes, if lucky - guns, but also other odd objects, such as salt, pans, pots, and clothing. Hostilities of both aspects were lessened by the attraction posts, where after entering peaceful contact, the Ka'apor became supplied with commodities by the SPI. Under such circumstance the need to venture out and loot in search of desired objects decreased and the Ka'apor could remain within their forested habitat in relative seclusion, experiencing relative affluence and surrounding villagers of the peasants no longer attacked at random. the auspices of FUNAI, the Ka'apor would also venture outside of their territory, traveling to towns such as Belém, in order to exchange, trade, and acquire goods that they lacked at the posts, but also of sheer interest to see *the city*. This was proceeding relatively peacefully, although these trips and increased contact with outsiders brought back diseases (Ribeiro, 1996), decimating the number of Ka'apor kin by more than half. At the same time, the number of attacks decreasing on rural dwelling around their lands began to usher changes amongst those who previously would not dare to approach the forests, respecting the native lands due to not so distant hostile encounters. This implies a relative thawing of respect towards this native as *other* and the stigma surrounding *its fierceness*, especially by those who previously had experienced adverse confrontations. Nonetheless, this must be considered a turning moment, at which both sides still experienced relative benefits. During the post-pacification period (1930-1960), and prior to the building of roads the region would remain in relative harmony when compared to soon come repercussions to both the Amerindians but also small-scale farmers (see Ch.1).

Familiar with the future that unfolded onto the region, the prolonged attempts by SPI enlisted by the government to attract the Ka'apor, and the establishment of peaceful relations as of 1928 are thereby to be seen as forceful and imposed. At the same time, Indigenous people had little choice in declining the random gifts left strategically, as needs and desires thereafter had been created from previous encounters with their superiority of iron tools. Repetitive supply of desired goods meant to establish further needs, and actual dependencies, in order to manage the native groups easier. As written by Scott (1998:1) – all forms of nomads and pastoralist, to hunter-gatherers have '*always been a thorn in the side of states*' and constant attempts made to either exterminate or settle them permanently, thwarting their



mobility through sedentarization. The attraction thereby itself functioned always based on supplying objects that may be conceived as either *gifts*, *goods* or *commodities*<sup>27</sup> - metal tools, beads, hammocks, including mirrors, and other goods, first left out in the forests and later handed directly to the natives who would arrive with requests to pacification posts. It banked upon the general notion that the giver of these objects would appear as a friend and not the enemy. New needs after being presented with industrial goods were assumed to imply within native people drives to obtaining these magical objects so strong, that they would turn their leisure time into labor to acquire them. Especially in later decades as of the 1970s, pacification fronts due to the increasing number of groups contacted would have to seize the supply of free objects abruptly, resupplied only in exchange for certain deeds, or labor. This hinted also the hopes FUNAI had in incorporating the native people expeditiously into the broader society, dispelling also their *nativeness*<sup>28</sup>, via then still linearly conceived processes of progress and civilization. Such Eurocentric views would later be criticized by seminal works of Wolf (2010 [1982]) and Fabian (2014 [1983]), insisting to engage critically with the notions of time, history and the native people as objects within the western anthropological episteme. It might have also indirectly readjusted certain policies in FUNAI as of the 1980s<sup>29</sup>. Bound within these new areas native people such as the Bakairi (Picchi, 2006), and the Xavante (Flowers et al., 2004), would be subjected to undergo mechanized agricultural *community projects*, serving to exchange rice for material objects on extremely unequal. The banner of imposed peaceful relations and the forced inclusion attempts into the larger society meant for native people nothing other than being violently disrupted, and becoming abandoned thereafter. Impaired due to approaching frontier and changes in the conception of the *Other*, they were left quite often to take care of themselves under the auspices of quite venal FUNAI (Price, 1990).

Although the Ka'apor were to remain relatively undisturbed by the physical changes of the outside world inflicted upon their habitat up until the 1950s, the presence of SPI, and later FUNAI, but also the members of outside Lusophone society would inaugurate separate changes of the unconscious, varying in their impact and intensity, that all contacted groups underwent to a degree. These shifts came first with the arrival of new standards as imposed by the outsider's gaze, as an external *Other*. It was either specific new values, e.g. labor as a virtue, family planning, and conduct of life in general, or through the imposition of new habits – from clothing and new foodstuffs to the ways time and space was ordered, how

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<sup>27</sup> Advise Gregory and Strathern (2015) for distinctions between the specific terms.

<sup>28</sup> Ordering all native tribes of Brazil representing various linguistic groups and distinct historical confrontations with larger society under the umbrella term *indigenous peoples* is rather restraining, and particularly even more so since their number is nearly three hundred (ISA, 2019b). In addition, the signifier '*communities*' draws and signifies in general on ideas of unity and concord, while quite often group heterogeneity is more prevalent than actually presumed (Skutsch & Turnhout, 2018). Also, *being indigenous* has no unified definition, and suffices to self-identify with a group and to be accepted by its members, as outlined by the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169, 1989)

<sup>29</sup> FUNAI's policy for attraction and pacification changed during the 1980s introducing the concept of 'voluntary isolation', meaning that tribes were left to initiate contact themselves, or remain relatively undisturbed until required.

certain things were to be done, all from the perspective induced by the presence of the non-native *Other*. This *other* was also to be somehow manipulated or pleased, to induce an everlasting and constant resupply of objects of desire. Due to the engagement with society other than that of one's own, the ways in which the world and identities of the Ka'apor undergoing contact were conceived, could be assumed having to either change or adopt means by which they benefited from the interaction with the outsiders. As discussed previously, the slow intrusion of the *Other* and his objects into the native's ontology forced to surrender more than their independence. The relative hostility that so far had deterred many non-natives from trespassing onto their lands, had also maintained the *native* as radical *Otherness* – horrifying, to be reckoned with, and respected. Depicted as a crossroad, pre-Amazonian Maranhão emerged as a place where the destinies of arriving waves of peasants were decided - they could either stay and try to subsist, continue on to Pará in hopes to find more land, or directly divert and seek refuge in urban centers of Rio and São Paulo, landing in one of the many extending slums. In the same region and now boxed into indigenous lands native people were seeking just as much own ways to decide their destinies and paths ahead. Much of this revolved of deterring trespassers, but also maintaining the supply of outsiders objects and sparking native people to deplore their own agency, as also in seeking to align with environmentalist, politics and the rise of '*projects*', with whoever appeared to be most beneficial, avoiding any romantics behind such alliances. In search of income and materialities, they would neither suppress their desires nor shy away from exchanging the resources of their '*pristine*' lands. Extraction of timber and minerals such as gold and embracing the loggers or gold miners for the royalties and direct payments, while abstaining from actual labor, proved lucrative and was practiced amongst the Kayapó (Turner 1993, 1995) or the Guajajara (Watson, 1996), but also amongst multiple other tribes. This brought multiple outcries by foreign observers ensuing fear that indigenous people were being rapidly absorbed by the larger society, as also emerging as capitalist consumers already. At the same time, they were falling out with the conservationists, who noticed their negligence of alliances established, over the superiority of direct financial payments with extractive industries avoiding the middle-men. Returning to the notion of 'disappearing cultures', Ribeiro (1962) had claimed that societies with intricate ceremonial life and moiety systems, such as the Gê-speaking groups of central Brazil (Maybury-Lewis & Bamberger, 1979), would withstand changes within the inter-ethnic encounter far better than Tupi groups (such as the Ka'apor). The latter group of Tupi speakers often were demonstrating dispersed nuclear family patterns and lack of collective social institutions. Going against this idea, Viveiros de Castro (1992) had shown that Tupi societies were extremely creative in ways to '*incorporating*' the external other, beyond that of their ontologies. Furthermore, in his PhD dissertation, William Balée also showed that the Ka'apor were absorbing the multiple induced shocks, and persisting as distinct people while resisting foreseen cultural change in proliferating contact situations with the encroaching settler, particularly due to the fact that their life was organized around the centrality of nuclear families, rather than '*higher-order socio-political phenomena*' as that of the Gê (Balée, 1984). Before scrutinizing theoretically further the contact situation and resulting effects of arising dependencies

and conflict, let us look the historical configurations that have marked native peoples encounter with the outside world through the perspective and form of various *exchanges*.

### Exchange relations

Barter and exchange throughout the centuries went on between not only different tribes but also with the arriving nonindigenous representatives. Thus in the early New World era native people's knowledge served to introduce the colonizers into the rich flora and fauna of the region, while hunting, gardening and supplying those arriving with royal brazilwood and in exchange being laden with gifts from Europe (Hemming, 1978). The fierceness of local tribes, when supplied with guns, facilitated also the extermination of enemy tribes to vacate lands, but later also in capturing slaves for labor, in exchange for commodities and the chance to persist, and being confronted with the superiority of firearms of the conquistadors (ibid.). Missionaries, such as the Jesuits, the Salesians, Franciscans, Catholics, and Protestants sought to exchange the savage and primitive souls preaching the word of god, benefiting through direct payments from the Crown and the support for their monasteries and cause in the quest to execute *a divine cause* and the overall increase in the number of believers. Natives were presumably to benefit from the direct exchange for salvation in the afterlife, forced schooling and the appropriation of western manners. Nonetheless, the results were quite various amongst each specific tribes where the missionaries touched down – some converted, others became fanatics, while other expelled the preachers due to their violent methods (Wright, 1999). During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Christian non-profit organization of the Summer Institute of Linguistics began to penetrate deepest parts of the globe, to spend prolonged periods amongst native tribes, and in order to study and systematize languages so far unknown to men. In exchange, reading and writing had been non-coercively thought to tribal people, yet the main goal had been always to expand Christianity by being the first to translate the Bible into the native tongue (Payne, 2014; Hvalkof & Aaby, 1981). This was also the case amongst the Ka'apor, who were visited by James and Kyioku Kakumasu, producing not only a dictionary, next to the Bible in Ka'apor language, but also a wealth of other linguistically and historically relevant documents (1968; 1976; 1977; 1985; 1986; 1988; 1990). In addition, native people played an important role in attracting and contacting neighboring hostile tribes during the era of highways construction<sup>30</sup>. Exchanges had later been established between the scientific world and the native people, providing from naturalists to anthropologists opportunities to study their culture and nature, leading to degrees, and directly maintaining the livelihoods of doctoral researchers and whole University programs. At times, such works had no absolute or direct value to the Indians, as in the case of kinship studies (Overing et al., 2001). Nonetheless, goods were transferred as downright payments by a variety of visiting scientists from biologist to linguists, and anthropologists, dissecting, systematizing and collecting various forms of traditional indigenous knowledge and aiding group members in overly hard times with financial and political support (Maybury-Lewis, 1988). In addition, it

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<sup>30</sup> In the early 1970's and during the onset of the construction of the Transamazon in Pará Petrônio Ka'apor himself, by personal invitation of João Carvalho, helped in the attraction and pacification front of the Parakaná.

did have the effect of benefiting them by raising awareness of various ongoing struggles and distinct issues these people faced back home, which has led to their slow emergence in global debates as active agents whose voice should be included and heard within various polemics, thanks to these scholars. Clearly, there were also numerous obscure and unlawful treatments caused upon the native tribes by visiting anthropologist (Tierney, 2001). Atop came another sad form of exchange marked by predation of the collection of traditional ecological knowledge focused primarily on the extractive aspects of its use to the pharma industries, based on bioprospecting and biopiracy (Shiva, 2007; Greene et al., 2004). As if not enough, symbolic images of native tribes were used across several chains of beauty products in UK and US, capitalizing on native images, while in exchange for it little was given in return (Turner, 1995).

Various form exchanges as depicted before have to be noted as a specific and particular form and means of interacting inter-ethnically for centuries between the native people and the outsiders. This means that transactions in place today resemble their very potential same functioning and insisting on historical grounding. Such matters at hand were always means to relate, but also from the native peoples ontological perspective to *incorporate the external* into their worlds. As noted previously, these exchanges are not always found on equal terms. The outside society has sought relentlessly to absorb the Indian and various means to benefit from such engagements. On another note, the native people within these exchange processes must be characterized as active participants granting them agency, but also to explicitly noted in being actors able of securing and enforcing their requirements to at least on a certain extent on the outside world and such *Other*. In thinking of the Amerindians as '*static*', and the outside world as '*active*' members, would seriously undermine the overall ingenuity of native people and the sheer fact of their continuation to this very day. Just as an example, the Ticuna native groups of the upper Amazon, or Alto Solimões, have proven throughout centuries to possess capabilities and ways to claim, rework, and induce various forms of *territoriality* beyond to that of the physical, and modes to steer the political and social configurations with the outside, maintaining states well beyond those conceived as inferior, of the '*suffered*' or '*imposed*' (Oliveira, 2002). Also, if we look into a part of the creation myth that the Ka'apor told to Darcy Ribeiro in 1950s (1996:373-377), the white man is depicted as endowed with special qualities to produce iron tools and objects that the Ka'apor lack in their habitat. For being so ingenious, however, the white man is obliged to share such items with the Indians, free of charge, especially because he had been taught these skills by Maíra, their very own mythical god-creature. By leaving the Ka'apor to hunt and enjoy leisure, the whites, being more creative, had to exchange and share whatever they had. This story operationalizes the white man's alterity, which during pacification, but also later during the guardianship times of FUNAI, is assumed to distribute and share objects, as gifts, from the outside. As noted, the internal working of native societies is the ongoing struggle to forge alliances with the outside world, continuously seeking out ways to sustain the flow of material goods, political

support, and inclusion. The adoption of any means necessary in order to constitute conditions beneficial to their overall survival have been termed as *ethnopolitics* (Oliveira, 1994). Native people across Brazil have therefore for centuries oscillated between coalition building and search for benefits. This has included both conceding forests for timber logging, or land for gold mining prospectors, but also later the environmental movements.

Throughout the 1980s and 90s Brazil's progress and ensuing large-scale deforestation of the Amazon rainforest attracted immense international attention, scientific research, and media coverage (Cowell, 1990). Both the Amazon and the natives became '*floating signifiers*' (Lévi-Strauss, 1987 [1950]), made to represent whatever romantic notions could be exerted in order to appeal and please the '*modern*' viewer. Juxtaposed with the devastation unleashed onto the tropical ecosystems of the region, images of native people were presented of them living as forest guardians in complete harmony within the distant and pristine environment. The commodification of exotic symbols appealing to the West was rapidly aligned to coalesce with the discourses of sustainability and protection of *nature* (Conklin, 2013; Conklin & Graham, 1995). Enormously powerful, indigenous images were rapidly absorbed by a variety of emerging environmental movements across Europe and the US in search to improve their successful lobby work. The Amazon itself, engulfed in various symbolic representations to the outside world since the colonial encounter, and the very dichotomy of nature and culture, in the global imagination through centuries had become an enigma, evoking usually various symbols and forms of non-modernity, captivating the masses (Oakdale and Watson, 2018). One of the major reasons why native people to this day remain being romanticized is the implicit colonial view of within the very observer who paints these people to still represent inferior states of civilization and history, presiding to this very day as if '*halted in time*'. Next, to being reactionary, such *assumed nature* of indigenous people is also unrightfully romanticized – negating such facts as that lacking outside pressures in their history they would embark on continuous intertribal warfare's, leading to deaths, pillaging of goods and abductions of members from neighboring tribes. In this sense, romanticizing and patronizing the Amerindian *other* rests upon the notion that these people were somehow '*good savages*, a fallacy denying their own forms of brutality and warfare', but also respect therein, exhibited in the past. This is best exemplified by what Adrian Cowell had written in regard to the situation at the Xingu at the end of the 1960's – '*most of them had been withdrawing from advancing white man, but where tribe had met tribe they had ambushed, retreated, massacred and defended. The jungle around us was, in fact, little better than a graveyard of extinguished peoples: the Anumania wiped out by the Trumai, the Yaruma by the Kuikuro, the Maritsana by the Suyá*' (1974: 24). This was a similar case with the Ka'apor, who in intermittent contacts with Awa-Guajá had to count both losses and celebrate victories, which often meant that raids ended with bringing back captured women, who would be married, giving Ka'apor offspring. The brutality of warfare and slaughter, of both women and children, would have to make the romantics very cautious of what they are actually fantasizing about.

The ability to acquire political and financial support, by manipulating next to complying and adapting to rapid changes, has allowed some native people groups to persist as distinct people, while others had been in their quest much less fortunate. Siding with the environmental conservation agendas simultaneously advanced the presence of indigenous peoples in international politics, while at the same time strangled their actual participation and overall authenticity back home (Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2013; 2016). Exchanging symbolic meanings for political support has therefore both enabled and constrained them as social actors within identity politics (Harris et al., 2013). To no surprise, then, a similar path of falling-out between the Western conservationists and the Amerindians followed at the turn of the millennium, as the native people's visions and ontologies appeared to drastically clash with opposing notions of *nature* and 'conservation' inscribed into the scientific worlds episteme and agenda (Chapin, 2004; Conklin, 1997; Turner, 1995). The exchange was thereby thwarted once again, and as many explicit traits pertinent to opposing ontologies and social organization of the subsistence forest dwellers had been overlooked, many projects based on *community development* and *market inclusion* thereafter also ended up in failure (Little, 2005). Such missteps and overall inability to benefit native people, be it commercializing their non-timber forest products or the development of functional synergies via transactions and trade with western conservation agendas revamped the overall colonial discourse of indigenous people being inferior and '*not ready for the market*' (Li, 2014). Being not ready simply implied that they were unable to benefit during exchanges and that this often harmed them more, whereas these perceptions were most of the time Eurocentric and aligned with cost-benefit analysis which while claiming native peoples incapacities, actually where rational choices by representative of various NGOs back in the West. Required to adapt and be resilient subjects within the neoliberal order (Reid, 2013), native people were also made to embrace the new discourse of sustainability entering the fore in Brazil after the Earth Summit in 1992, executed via the PPG7 program. Even if theoretically based on sound and positive aspects, such an approach was imposed onto the Amerindians by the West, only aspect of its execution open for negotiations (Le Tourneau, 2015).

In all their endeavors, native people have continuously strived to be incorporated into political debates aiming to create at least moderately acceptable situations but always striving to acquire substantially beneficial terms for their overall survival. Native people have thereby been historically always active in reconfiguring situations in which they had found themselves repeatedly embroiled in (Fausto & Heckenberger, 2007; Albert & Ramos, 2002). Overall reliance on commodities and money amongst the native people must be therefore be noted to stand opposite to being conceived as direct dependencies; rather, both are appropriated, tamed, and domesticated reproducing and restructuring the native's ontologies adapted to the *modern* world (Ewart, 2013; Albert & Ramos, 2002; Turner, 1987). In doing so native people manifest clever and creative ways to persevere and prevail. Yet the advent of the capitalist system has also found means to appropriate the radical otherness represented by the identity of the very native people. Native people once again have become incorporated

into the global discourses of sustainability via the UN's 2030 agenda and the SDG's (UN, 2019). On another note, adopted by environmental groups local Amerindians are recurrently produced and rendered vernacularly and symbolically to manifest novel ways foreign and outside of the predatory system of accumulation (which is nonetheless supposed to have-already affected them). While being defined, produced and presented as signifiers through the emblematic notions of their *indigenous identity*, the actual native people's insistence upon financial and political support to strengthen their fight against this very same system of expropriation very often escapes the analysis. In sum, resistance against the exploitative capitalist regime reproduces a very peculiar '*indigenous person*' established within dependency relationships. What this position implies to our current contextual setting I proceed to clarify next.

### **Being native**

As a repetition of history across Brazil, since the election of the right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro native people of this case study find themselves once again abandoned by the nation-state. As noted by Marx historical repetition and dialectics always arise, '*the first time as tragedy, the second as farce*' (Marx, 1852). In this light, native people have also no other choice but to embrace all possible ways in order to maintain the balance between being for the *other*, and being for themselves, and persisting as distinct people. Hereby the local mining industry and the associated benefits from the expansion of infrastructure works to support the world's largest mining operation has proved beyond vital, and therefore also very welcome.

As of 2016, and for at least the next decade, iron ore extraction operated by VALE and the duplication works to the 932km railway track have secured community and infra-structure projects, next to direct payments to benefit the communities of the Guajajara, Awá-Guaja, and Ka'apor indigenous groups of the pre-Amazonian region of Maranhão. Engaging with the industry also assured relative reimbursements of the adverse indirect effects associated with the establishment of these operations in the region as of the 1980s (Hall, 1991). In addition, the achieved agreement amongst the native people and VALE marks the emergence of indigenous coalitions, whereby acting together, distinct groups, and previous enemies, are able to politically organize themselves, insisting upon the mining companies' representatives to appoint the execution of the indigenous component of the PBA to other entities than that of FUNAI. In this sense, Indigenous people of the region display their eagerness to actively seek out agencies that providing overall support become partners in their struggles for inclusion and rightful treatment. This has been appointed by contract to ISPN, whose role and obligation are to oversee the execution of the projects and activities defined as the explicit part of the PBA indigenous component, as also to assist in managing and balancing the financial resources of TCC, accordingly to agreed terms. Finally, due to the coalition building and strong negotiation with VALE, indigenous groups have also signaled that they are to be adamantly reckoned with, expressing their disdain towards the ongoing mistreatment and abusive guardianship from the state, private companies, or the handicapped civil society itself, which shall not be tolerated. At the same time, the reoccurring and increased presence

of native people in political and economic debates has resulted in polemics on their very *ethnicity*. Native people become more and more presented as drowning in the sea of consumer goods, needs, and desires, and therefore actual-already fissured from being *native*. Painted this way Amerindian emergence into the larger society, and especially their ongoing participation in the market economy, once-again foretells the telltale prognosis of tribal cultures to become rapidly residual and extinct. To show the logical and theoretical limitations of these assumptions let us recall the specificities of native groups, and their envelopment by the market economy.

Via specific political and social organizations small and egalitarian Amerindian societies have throughout history, controlled, maintained, and refused to be engulfed by an excessive surplus of own production (Clastres, 1977). Since ownership regimes of native people rendered property communal, they exhibited a distant and relaxed approach to both the production, and the reluctance to amass individual material wealth (Santos-Granero, 2009). Rejection of hierarchies and the neutralization of the establishment of private property regimes may then be viewed as paramount in maintaining egalitarianism and thwarting the advent of antagonistic command-obedience relationships, social classes, and the political economy as conceived by the West. Inhibiting the very advent of nations, small-scale Amerindian societies, in comparison to the Aztec or Inca empires, may chiefly be defined as *societies against the [emergence of] states* (Clastres, 1977). Producing sufficient to meet basic needs, Amerindians have avoided excess, not due to laziness, but deliberately preserving energy guided by pragmatism to limit worthless tasks without direct benefits. This is well illustrated by the following example - '*when the Indians discovered the productive superiority of the white man's axes, they wanted them not in order to produce more in the same amount of time, but rather to produce the same amount of labor in a shorter period*' (Ibid: 165).<sup>31</sup> Also, even if processes of internal economic differentiation amongst Amerindians may arise, associated benefits appear to be structured rather on induced prestige, rather than wealth, which is non-inheritable. Objects in unequal quantities do not lead to separate '*capitalist classes*'. The drive itself is never after the capital but prestige, and community-dependent, that still functions as a whole. Thus, even though Amerindians might have incorporated a variety of consumer goods into their contemporary lifestyles, in doing so they have nonetheless to a degree also maintained aspects of their traditional functioning, referred to as *culture*.

International environmental NGOs and politics have been fetishizing native people for quite some time, and continue on to display these traits to this very day. Native people are still referred to as if denoting and standing for the symbolic and pure native, to whom the conservation of nature and culture, next to the retention of traditional ecological knowledge is not only the sole goal but also an actual intrinsic desire. Although global forces and historical

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<sup>31</sup> Western concepts of enjoyment drawn from walking are absent amongst tribes that I have visited, underlining the fact that energy expenditure and possibility to go to bed without dinner make everyone cautious where energy is spent. Walking for the fun of it is therefore rather a privilege expressing relative food security and a surplus of energy, or in the case of native people – often associated with hunting.



underpinning have now swept over most of the indigenous people worldwide, the symbolic meanings that they symbolically elicit amongst the general western subjects have remained nearly untouched. Lowland South American native peoples, and particularly those practicing at least partial nomadic lifestyles, are still widely considered as if living outside of time, history, and above all – modernity (Brightman & Grotti, 2017). These notions of native people persist to be absorbed in varying levels of discourses of national and international political governance, grounded in paternalistic assumptions of humanitarian responsibility, but actually based on the reproduction of knowledge-power relations<sup>32</sup> (ibid.). On the other hand, it is the only way and means by which native people have so far been able to take part in political debates, exerting and embracing roles expected of them as of the end of the 1980s when they became embroiled within discourses of sustainability and environmentality. Yet commodity consumption next to technological advancements amongst native people remains outside of the traditional signified as if reversing *nativeness*. This argument is often used for both *expired ethnicity* and a yardstick of their actually-already entry into the larger contemporary society marked by consumption and enjoyment. What remains overlooked is that in pursuit for rights, recognition, and re-distribution of privileges and striving inclusion, native people incorporated outside aspects into own ontologies aiming to minimize the tension between actual signifiers – those they stand for, and those that they are compared against – namely the larger society. This has often bred more discrimination than inclusion, and submission, rather than sovereignty (Conklin & Graham, 1995). In addition, contemporary indigenous people's drive for commodities in Brazil have been critiqued, ridiculed, and portrayed as being equal to the neighboring farmhands and peasants, claiming Amerindians having lost their roots. Then again, when exerting symbolic means of nativeness – head-dresses, body paint, or traditional dances and songs, they are coined as deceitful imposters, only acting *as if* indigenous, to appease the foreigners.

Being *native* since some time now has become also a category associated with a specific surplus, drawing upon specific benefits to which other social groups across Brazil might actually be exempt from. This is exemplified by the case of duplications work carried out by VALE in the pre-Amazonian region, where payments to indigenous groups as a whole are much higher than those received by agrarian settlements, which might be due to the fact that the latter finds it harder to organize themselves as one active voice. Although living in the very vicinity of the railway tracks following INCRAS land titling policies as of the 1980s. In addition, benefits related to nativeness have become surrounding the debates of the emergence of new political identities, and claims by not only the increasing amount of indigenous people seeking to reoccupy previously dispossessed lands, but also quilombola and *quebradeiras de coco babaçu* communities, amidst other active and diverse social groups since the late 1980's (Porro et al., 2011). Indigenous identity is additionally not only symbolic, but also the only way to harness that which is defined as pertaining to the Amerindians by the Brazilian constitution

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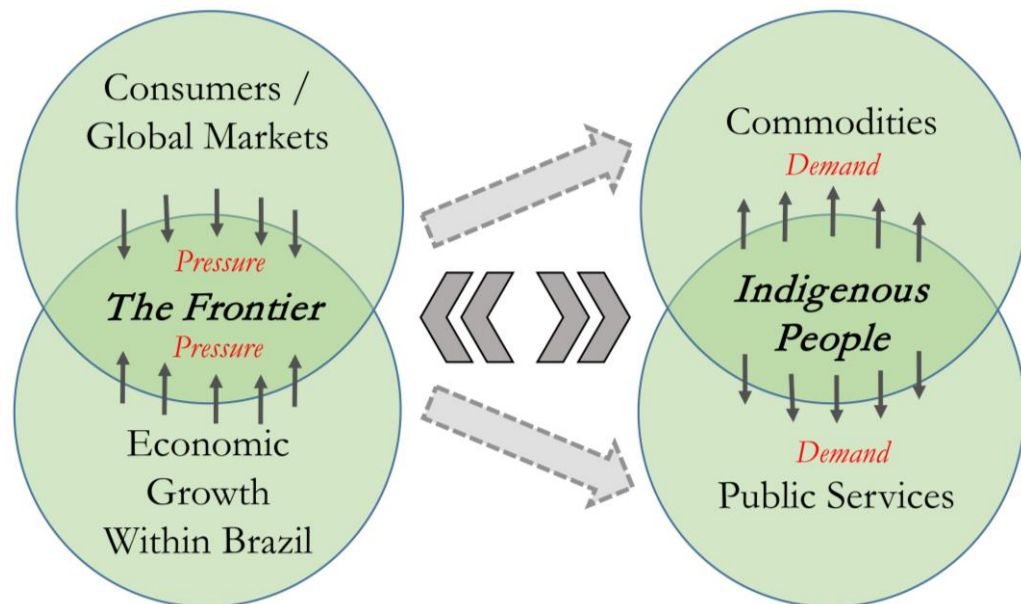
<sup>32</sup> I shall return to the aspect of Knowledge and its creation in Ch.3 applying the Lacanian Theory of Discourses.

of 1988. Ultimately, *being indigenous* in contemporary Brazil has multiple shades, and is (re)constructed through historical, political and social exchanges, encounters amidst various groups and interests, and their joint developments resulting in a *form of being* that is more complex than apparent. In a similar vein, commodities amongst native people are more than just representations of wealth or of the standard use values in the notion of western episteme, but rather more so as objects enabling the possibility of being part of several *natures*, where specific *social skins*, or appearances, are appropriated and adopted according to the necessary context (Conklin, 1997).

At the same time, the assumed cultural changes perceived amongst local indigenous groups do appear to correlate with the increased number of surrounding commodities. This is, however, true only if one chooses to overlook the simple fact that that these new objects and processes of establishing dependencies have very distinct meanings (Gordon, 2006; Ewart, 2002; Albert & Ramos, 2002), beyond that of the superficially perceived hegemonic and Eurocentric point of view. If culture is nothing but an apparatus of perspective, then its purpose is to permit the establishment of different meanings. This is an argument for cosmological perspectivism as introduced by Viveiros de Castro (2012 [1998]). For him, multinaturalism stands for the fact that while for the western episteme there exists one nature and many cultures, for the Amerindians there exist many natures and only one *culture*. This culture is rather of perspective than of nature, to each very own, and manifesting different life-worlds, or ontologies. When lost in the Amazon, and meeting an animal, we are never sure, whether the animal upon his return home, where he manifest as human, will not have perceived us animal-like, since being in the forest unaware to ourselves we might have actually *become* non-human, incapable to perceive such perspective. Accordingly, every life form perceives distinct natures while the multitude of life forms might be alike and overlapping. Similarly, the arriving Portuguese in Brazil were interested to see whether the *savages* had a soul, and weren't animals, by trying to bring them closer to god. The natives respectively were drowning the Portuguese to see whether their bodies would putrefy and if so, to know that they were not spirits, and actually human (Viveiros de Castro, 2004). Considering the various ontologies and their elaborations of reality, whether Amerindian or Western, invites us to look and analyze the assigned roles that commodities might play in the confluence of these distinct worlds and perspectival disparities.

As a matter of fact, by the turn of the recent century, many indigenous people across various extractive frontiers have become dependent on perishable and non-consumable commodities incorporated into their diets and lifestyles. They range from biscuits, beans, rice, and coffee, to other necessities such as clothes, toiletries, hammocks, and various electronic appliances from fridges, TVs and stereo systems, in addition to motorbikes, cars and the petrol required to cover long distances within and outside of indigenous lands. Indigenous people express growing demands and pressure the government to sustain public services, ranging from healthcare and education, geared and adapted to their specific indigenous needs, as provisions of electricity, and potable water, provided by the government often free of charge.

Under these circumstances, the frontier emerges having embedded native people as active agents in its partial reproduction and a complex relationship to each other. Driven both by economic growth demands within Brazil, but also the provisioning of commodities to global consumers, the frontiers are pushed onto the native people, producing export commodities, seeking to regulate local economies. It is also meant to provide financial means to support public services, both of which indigenous people demand, and see as both their right but also an intrinsic need to secure their persistence. The frontier pressured by both the global markets and needs presented as crucial for economic growth within Brazil also incorporates the indigenous peoples, who not only find themselves within its tumultuous developments but also constantly demands both commodities and the provisioning of public services. On the other hand, native people did, in fact, become dependent upon some government services, which they see as continuous repatriation and the norm surrounding the ill effects the onslaught of civilization had brought onto them and their lands (Figure 4).



**Figure 4** | The frontier and the Indigenous people *interrelated* through various processes

However, their refusal to participate in the market economy opening up their lands for extraction is painted by both the state and discourses of surrounding peasants as unfair exchanges, as withholding resources the native people still seek to benefit from state services. A similar argumentative logic shall most probably be adopted by the Brazilian government, seeking to deprive further native people of what constitutionally is theirs, arguing that only in doing so their needs and requests can be catered for. Clearly, this ignores the already accumulative dispossession that historically has taken place, and the limited willingness of the Brazilian nation-state to engage in a non-capitalist way of thinking and acting, whether politically or economically. In fact, the government had already stripped the funding and commenced reorganizing the FUNAI, yet the latter move, even if only temporary, has now been undone by the lawmakers (Reuters, 2019). In order to supply the global demand, the

government of Brazil, therefore, executes a specific social ordering, neglecting and invalidating traditional and peasant communities, suppressing their rights and violently dispossessing them of their resources facilitating commodity production for foreign markets. VALE operations in turn also display the '*materio-spatial intensity*' across the world-system, merging global drive for resources with a local interest to focus on economies geared at exports (Bunker & Ciccantell, 2005:53). The mechanism of capitalism across Brazil hinges upon the execution of violence to disrupt stagnancy by inducing dynamic frontiers that serve the provisioning of commodities and raw materials geared to other economies. Although liberal, the democratic West would never admit in partaking in such acts of brutality, yet in continuing to trade bilaterally interpassively<sup>33</sup> they approve Brazilian misconduct, as with the recent trade agreement that EU has signed against all rational odds (Reuters, 2019b).

What remains actual to the particular case is the fact that some native people of the region are able to continue strengthening their overall resource base and political standing not via state policies, but both by cash payments and community projects provided by none other but a private mining company in its constitutional obligations to mitigate environmental impacts. In short – there is mutual complicity for both the company, but also the native peoples. The very same system that has deprived native people of the region is now playing the role of a savior, highlighting the incorporation into the capitalist system beyond that described in the first chapter. Receiving aid in various forms, including direct cash transfers to their associations, ascribed with specific roles, native people are to benefit so that business could proceed with the usual operations. This means devastation of many other communities and groups that historically have been displaced with a variety of adverse impacts, the environment surrounding indigenous lands sequestered and degraded. While the profit is made continuously from the previous destruction of the region, those eligible to receive ongoing aid today are nearly limited to be the native people, and that so only after long discussions and deliberate arguments with the mining company and own coalition-building amongst the Guajajara, Awa-Guajá and the Ka'apor. Native people in such a sense, abandoned by the state, are supported by none other than the capitalist system. Their role within - to comply with the extractive regime elsewhere, without impeding production and transport of ore, for payments and assistance. In addition, ascribed with specific roles, especially native people are to be presented as treated well and conforming with all constitutional regulations so that international shareholders could retain their piece of mind. VALE at the same time pays also billions of taxes to the government (Reuters, 2013) that is meant to allocate these accordingly to societal needs. In sum, native people are dependent on the exported resources, if not directly through the payment and the support coming from VALE, then by the taxes that the company is supposed to pay to the state and the government. This tax-based income then facilitates governmental spending towards infrastructure, healthcare, education, and

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<sup>33</sup> This is similar to cases of the EU supporting Sudanese and Libyan militias to cause havoc and hinder the migrants from sub-Saharan countries reaching Europe (Tubiana et al., 2018; Baldo, 2017). Such interpassivity then 'protects' the western subjects to persist in safety and surplus and the violence outsourced to keep those others out.

other services, which the indigenous people receive inside their lands. These matters are outside of the PBA's and thereby does VALE by no means make itself responsible for such matters, which are that alone of the nation-state. Although some costs covering indigenous schooling or infrastructure development within native lands are covered by respective associations and funds of affected groups, their continuous request for ongoing state support may be depicted as part of the squander of the frontier itself, embedded in complex relationships between giving and taking, and being a *master-owner* of own fate. If VALE has the agency to execute complex mining operations that the native people do not, and neither are allowed, then the Brazilian government is indirectly complicit in maintaining such circumstances of unequal profit distribution, transferring only a part of the taxes to those directly affected by profitable activities. In general, then the neglect of the larger civil society is defined by law, where support to groups, such as that of native people, are outsourced to obligations of multinationals. The frontier, establishment of contact, as also the arrival of the nonindigenous society and their objects represent means how distinct worlds became interlinked and further discussed in the next paragraphs.

### ***Bridging of Worlds through Commodities***

Prior to the encounter with the outside society, the majority of objects found and created amongst native tribes were limited to their natural environment. Some odd bits were acquired during raids of other groups, or exchanged with them, who again received them from surrounding dwellers, the encroaching migrants, and other mobile groups such as the *riberinhos* or the *quilombolas*. The direct and continuous convergence of native societies with the outside world may then be characterized, conflated to, and equal, to the exponential appearance of culturally foreign objects within, or around, their traditional habitats. The sum of these objects has increased rapidly during the contact establishment and the post-pacification phase. To make sense and fit into the logically composed Amerindian lifeworld's the various artifacts were assigned emic signifieds finding meaning to the different local mindsets and ontologies. Hereby these objects adamantly became also capable to appease new cravings and extinguish arising desires, having been ascribed with specific use-values. Accordingly, Marx has clarified that within the capitalist system all commodities are endowed with a use (UV) and economic (EV) values. While there can be use-values without exchange value, there are no exchange values without relevant use values (Heller, 2018 [1976]). During the process of production, the need for the commodity is produced simultaneously, which drives and continuously breeds consumption, as new objects are capable to satisfy the created needs. While the need for a particular commodity may be clear from its use-value, the desire after the commodity is much more complex. Every subject has the obvious universal direct and observable need for a commodity-dependent on its original use-value. However, also having a distinct *lack* within, and being barred subjects (\$), objects may be sought to foreclose such internally experienced tensions. This elicits specific drives, which in this case become directed towards objects (commodities), but may be aimed also at anything else, material or immaterial. The idea that the desired object will somehow permit in escaping the subjective *lack*

manifests a fantasy, explicitly defined by Lacan as the barred subject's relation to *objet petit a* (Figure 3, p.54). Furthermore, it connotes the fallacy that going after one's libidinal desires we are pleasing the cogito and embracing our inner ego. Actually, what drives our desires, but not necessarily our actions, is relatively beyond cognitive reach and guided by the  $\$$  - the barred subject of the unconscious. Returning to Lacan we learn that even one's enjoyment is rather forced, and not that of the libido as assumed by the Cartesian subject of *cogito ergo sum*. Building further upon Lacan and Freud insights beyond that of Marx's critique of political economy, commodities next to possessing UV and EV must then be extended as having a peculiar quality capable of both absorbing and eliciting *desire*. Such objects then stand for nothing other but placeholders onto which subjects may project their fantasies of escaping the *lack*, by conceiving to each a specific *objet petit a* within the commodity. Not only industrial goods, as objects, but all that is part of market economies may then be ascribed with these three qualities - EV, UV and *objet petit a*. This also includes subjects-as-objects linked through their labor with the larger market economy. All humans, and thereby the native people too, as objects, are endowed with a surplus value that may be extracted from them under the right market conditions. In this sense, appropriation of subjects into a depriving market economy functions in a very similar way, namely via their objectification and later commodification.

While the need to engage with the market economy is now also a daily fact for many Amerindian societies, the acquirement of industrial and consumer goods stands for more than just mere accumulation, but the very establishment of distinct forms of social ties and kin with the outside world (Ewart, 2014, 2013; Vilaça, 2010, 2002; Gordon, 2006; Albert & Ramos, 2002). Therefore, although often appearing as direct demands for industrial goods, they are actually underlining not necessarily a desire towards the objects to be exchanged or given, but much rather the establishment of lasting social relationships with the outside world through these goods. In other words, while the assumption of nonindigenous persons rests upon the fact that what is exchanged are objects, what the emic view insists is that instead relationships are being assembled, and objects come only to crystallize them as existent, which in itself attests to Lacan's dictum that a signifier represents a subject to another signifier. The apparent dependence on material objects of indigenous people, as observed by the outsiders, overlooks the very paramount fact that what native people actually seek out, as is the case, e.g. with the Panará, are not dependencies on actual objects, which are prized nonetheless, but the '*establishment of ongoing and enduring social relations with the nonindigenous others*' (Ewart, 2013).

Of importance is hereby the insistent fetishization by Amerindians of social relationships, while for the outsider it appears that the native people are possessed by hoarding things. Presence of commodities and the general excess of capitalism present across Amerindian villages of either the Ka'apor, Guajajara, or Awa-Guajá, which I have observed, hints to peculiar presence of an *Other*, who is subdued, or of kin, and therefore providing. In other words, there is a relationship between the system of capitalism as producing commodities, and those receiving them, but the latter, in Amerindian context proceeds in trying to keep an

upper hand, by maintaining the providing Master in a potential role of a Slave. This is in not contradictory to the practices of pacification adopted first by SPI and later FUNAI, which sought to exert the arrival of the *Other* marked as a friendly one, by strategically placing objects as gifts to be found by the Indians. Until then, the natives perceived as a certain Master had to be reckoned with due to their brutality and fierceness, were sought to be turned rapidly into compliant Slaves. Objects were deployed to inscribe in the natives' perspective the notion the *Other* to be of kin, as those who were not, were defined as enemies, and for times immemorial either avoided or ferociously attacked. And even though such endowments were meant to affinity, the effects to emerge later exhibited rather predatory qualities – dispossession, abandonment, followed by diseases, and death. In this sense, the meaning and effect of the very act of contact and exchange had additional connotations, which are similar in aversive meanings of what the native people attach to the fact of acquiring objects from the *Other*. It is more than the accumulation of wealth and stands for the establishment of relational contexts wherein the *Other* may be normalized, emerging as either good or bad; providing or abandoning; a Master or a Slave. In such relationships the *Other* must be owned, predated on, to sustain, but in such relationships are elevated to an actual Master, that is always a role done by the Slave. The approaching frontier, and all that unravelled *a priori*, leading to it, must be understood as an inter-ethnic exchange of not only power and objects, but reconfiguration of groups through imposed relations, that in order to persist, as already insisted upon, had to be nurtured and cared for from the Amerindian perspective, whereas from the States perspective the *Other* 'pacified', subdued, sedentarized, and disenchanted. The thought-provoking aspect therein is however that beyond the fact of coercively seeking to manipulate and control the native directly, other, more subtle processes emerged from the slanted view granted by this *Other*.

The slowly emerging peaceful confluence with the outsiders until then experienced by the native people only through warfare, raids, or flight from, induced something so far explicitly removed and absent from the notion of *being*. Establishing relationships outside of one's kin, or larger group, had been so far impossible, or if - then only through warfare and raiding. One was therefore always surrounded by own people, language, objects, and ontologies. While the exchange of objects brought a direct assault onto the native peoples land and kin, it instigated also on the emerging opportunity for the very first time to observe oneself through the eyes and gaze of an externality, the *Other*, serving as a mirror<sup>34</sup>. As shown to be the case amongst the Bororo (Novaes, 1997), and must be to an extent similar elsewhere, encounters with frontiersmen and FUNAI agents, evangelical missionaries, and a myriad of other interest groups unleashed a complex set of processes affecting how the native people construed themselves. The impressions and representations emulated and echoed by the sum of the alterity of the *Other* led to certain shifts amongst previous value systems and moral

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<sup>34</sup> When talking about mirroring, I refer to what Lacan (1949) calls the mirror stage - the process whereby alienation and separation takes place; the subject coming to see herself as complete and at the same time extraneous to his own reflection.

economies. It induced an ongoing reordering of the world and one's discrete position within, manifesting as a *refabrication* of native identity amongst the various tribes, such as the Bororo (Novaes, 1997), Waiãpi (Galois, 2002), Matis (Erikson, 2002), or the Yanomami (Albert, 2002). This must have also played a role in the way the Ka'apor, and other groups of the region viewed themselves.

Objects introduced to traditional peoples during the nexus have therefore unraveled in both how kin was established, but also the very identities members of the opposite world represented to each other. Not only were the Indians being pacified by the white man, but the white man was ultimately also being pacified by the Indians, which was being mediated by industrial goods, wherein both were being subdued (Albert & Ramos, 2002). As with the industrial goods, use-values, as envisaged and conceived during the industrial process of production of specific commodities, elicited quite different meanings for the native people. A watch could serve not only to read time but also to stand as a symbol for its control. In addition, the very same watch when meeting outsiders and traders would establish the native person wearing it as an authority due to the symbolic meanings associated with its golden properties elicited to the observer, translated directly into economic terms, and therefore, elevated the status of the owner. Following Lacan, beyond prestige that objects brought, the native person could have also found new means to cover up some [presumed] intrinsic *lack* (which has not been studied directly but must nonetheless be asserted). It could be one's feeling either of incompetence, both inferiority, and superiority, but also the unconscious desire of wishing to be included and part of the outside - the *Other*, after coming in touch with the larger society. Not objects themselves, but the fluidity of attached meaning, or the signified through *objet petit a* may then bridge pluriverses, objects structuring market economies and the frontier driven by both physical needs, and beyond of that - libidinal desires, and their ontological reworking's. In other words, even if attached meanings or use values may diverge across ontologies for what the object stands, the fact that these objects nonetheless need to be produced requiring both labor and resources is not negated.

From such an outlook multinaturalism does not thwart capitalism but is an additional stimulus for its potential proliferation, commodities serving not only growing external markets but also possessing additional properties appeasing oneself and the ontologically *other*<sup>35</sup>. Within these multi-cosmological and pluriversal linkages, the process of production of such objects is not foregone. This means that disembeddedness of the capitalist system and the mode of its production delivering commodities suits very well both the markets and libidinal economies. As a '*carrying substance*', industrial goods stand for what we think we desire, while beyond looms the actual drive and its reason - *objet petit a*. Mediating the convergence of

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<sup>35</sup> This is not to normalize the superior position of the western observer, or producer. Just as industrial goods from the outside have the capabilities to dock on the desire of the native peoples, we are as much subjected to fall prey to our fantasies when coming across indigenous artefacts. Although the latter might have been a simple tool, such as a stone ax, it would elicit more, e.g. stand for primitive history, its persistence, and the object as if halted in time.



frontiers and international markets, the outer and the inner worlds, and their continuous reworking from both sides, plus bridging of emic and etic realms between separate ontologies must be viewed at least partially to be facilitated by none other but such objects. Linkages of different worlds are therefore supplied by and forced through the frontier and enjoyment found behind them, by none other than the capitalist system of production itself, and commodities as both its excess and impetus. Such objects – commodities, gifts, goods, or simply specific signs, within respective ontologies, embeds the *signifier* and the *signified* in original ways, providing insights into circumstances that conveys objects to be endowed with a certain plasticity, which is capable to absorb and allow various representations and meanings to distinct groups of people through the idiosyncrasies of the *objet petit a*.

In a similar way that the objects began to be incorporated into native worlds, but also the mirroring induced by the *other*, the outside world has been equally mesmerized and captivated by the Amerindians. They were found and meant to represent objects, that had their use-value, but also economic-value, especially that attached to their *originality* expressed as *identity*. From semiotics we know that any language is a system composed of the totality of terms that denote differences, or - the signifier achieves meaning only through its distinct relation to another signifier - a dog is not-a-cat, and not-a-bird, etc. Similarly, identities, as signifiers, equally rely upon the continuous retention of a specific difference, which maintains these as signifiers, and their signified, as semblances dependent upon the field of all other signifiers, and the *Other*. As with the native people, the need for objects to identify with, in order to portray ones belonging, or being part of the specifically signified origin, necessitates artifacts, which may be provided and continuously produced, as commodities, by the capitalist system. While the signified according to Saussure is superior to the signifier (1918), Lacan, propose the opposite, denoting the signifiers to be cut above the signified and standing for '*that which represents a subject for another signifier*' as opposed to the sign, which '*represents something for someone*' (Lacan, 1977:206). Synchronously then, the increasing number of artifacts and objects with various attached signifieds expanded the totality of previously conjured possibilities of signified, and therefore also of *being*, for the native people. The proliferation of goods created a broader spectrum of elements that could be incorporated to distinguish and portray oneself, and a variety of frames of reference to interpret the *Other*, standing for the total sum of signifiers. However, the meta position of the outsider consistently negates the right for the native people to rework the signified, insisting the latter retains its archaism, their identities instrumentalized and in captivity. Yet psychoanalysis bursts into the fore to deconstruct the notions any subjective *being*, revealing the '*fantasmatic ground of every identity politics*' established on a fantasy, and the only stable plane that of non-identity (Tomšič, 2019:17). In simple terms, it is not that we possess an identity, but rather that we have *none*, and are in a continuous pursuit to assemble one. Requiring objects in order to do so we extend our hand to capitalism providing any means necessary to proclaim ones being, that has been marked by the very economic modelling, notification and proliferation of identities in the last decades.

By engaging with the critique of political economy through Marx and Lacan, the interdependence of exploitation, fetishization, and identity becomes elucidated via commodities. In a similar vein, according to Saussurean semiotics, '*human language and commodity language are inseparable*' (Tomšič 2015:35), both driven by their intrinsic values based on differences, arising from the existence of a signifier and the signified. '*Value is nothing but a relation to another value, and a signifier in relation to another signifier*' (Tomšič, 2015:167). As in language, then, it entails misunderstandings and the lack of a social link - commodity fetishism best example of it and '*the immediate capitalist form of social relation*', where fetishization and exploitation are its two interdependent components (Tomšič, 2015:168-70). For Marx, it is thus not objects, but structures, which are independent and equipped with causality. In this sense, indigenous peoples are by no means exempt of the exploitative architecture of the market. Drawing together previous claims, if a subject is what a signifier represents to another signifier, and signifiers are a system of differences, the subjects himself *is the difference*, standing for tension between the linguistically constructed reality and unconscious desires<sup>36</sup>. By increasing the number of commodities this difference between the signifiers is easier to maintain by fabricating means to elicit identity and market economies geared towards providing means to represent one's '*self*'. If commodity fetishism occludes social inequalities, masking commodities to appear '*just as objects*' for the subjects, then Lacanian fantasy allows objects to appear '*only as commodities*', occluding the unconscious desire structured around the very subjective *lack*, and the *objet petit a* as capable to foreclose it, and hidden from the conscious grasp. In this sense, objects, whether artifacts of indigenous origin, or industrial goods of market economies, presents the very same medium, which may elicit various desires to distinct groups, but also have clear and defined meaning within same ontologies. One needs to note here, that desire for objects has no ethnicity as such, and from the fact of what one desires, one can say little about the person's cultural grounds (or blame someone to be non-native for craving some object). It is the *objet petit a* that is engaged and connected to a fantasy, which to all is speculative, emanating from within of barred subjects unconscious. Throughout the encounter with the outside society and the frontier, the processes of commodification and identification have been crucial in maintaining and forging relationships, but also provided the required means for appeasing libidinal desires. In the wake of developments, indigenous peoples have been swallowed up by capitalism, partially maybe by an irrational choice, meant to elicit specific identities, for which they are remunerated and celebrated, as having been given *the right to be*, but that so only under certain conditions.

### **Indigenous Peoples as Commodities**

From Ch.1 we know that the frontier unravels through capitalist processes. Next to establishing ownerships regimes, it hinges on labor power and capital accumulation. It also elicits two distinct processes – on the one hand, it induces the production of commodities, but then also establishing the very commodification, through which something new might become of

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<sup>36</sup> Whether this applies equally for both indigenous people and the nonindigenous members of society is dealt in Ch.3.

both use- and economic values, and then described as a resource. The savage aspect of the frontiers implies its senseless unraveling and rather than inclusion, certain '*unmapping*', which result in the frontier to be but an '*imaginative project capable of molding both places and processes*' (Tsing, 2005:32). In such a process, the re-discovery of the Indian becomes captivating, as it shows the sheer effects that were so far discussed to induced none other but the very commodification of the native, who next to increasing amount for land, forests, and subsoil riches has its own value, that he must be up kept to remain marketable. Caught within the approaching, or already established frontiers, Indigenous people are made instrumentalized to protect nature and secure their traditional resource base and their land via specific sustainable ordering. At the same time, they seek to acquire goods, circulating across the markets into which they have been forcefully incorporated. Certain services that have been granted to them - such as education and health - are supposed to be provided by the government according to the Constitution. The depicted situation of need for commodities and services has created relative dependencies, which have put indigenous people in the place of the receiving end, which functions only under the clause of them *being worthy*. Next to requiring such services they are however also to deliver services to the *Other*. Yet the aspect eliciting righteousness to benefit is determined by none other than *being indigenous* and thereby should be constitutionally exempt from any need to elicit labor-power in exchange for either public services or mitigation payments. From the current perspective of the market economy, this nonetheless appears to reproduce exchange relations where '*being indigenous*' is exchanged with or against '*services and support*'. This is the very Catch-22, which comes to pass exactly at the notion of being '*exempt*'. From this particular perspective it becomes implied that the specific cultural trait of '*being indigenous*' is no longer a choice, but a task, which comes with the usually associated activities that may be directly translated to nothing other than labor-power. Labor, which in its most crude sense, is to elicit and manifest the *being* of Indigeness - appearing both driven by a potential capitalist unconscious, but also natural cultural adaptation.

Based on collective ownership of means of production and labor, native people have historically maintained a highly functional communal proto-socialist lifestyle, living a distinct form of '*primitive communism*', yet lacking the usually bestowed ideological underpinnings in its Western sense. Idleness, play and family time, discussions, festivities and the sharing of food was and still is what keeps Amerindian people most happy. Alienation in any form from such matters in Marx's sense, to maximize output, would appear here completely absurd. As has been noted by the Ka'apor leader Iracadju - '*why would one want to work hard, carry loads, or spend prolonged time away from the loved ones, when the only thing that matters in life is to enjoy one's family, things like hunting, eating and spending leisure time together?*'. As already noted, however, engagement with the outside world has caused native people to adapt both their lives but also the essence of *being native*. Confrontation with the outside world has affected the natural flow of things in the Ka'apor villages, as also across the majority of other tribes *aldeias*, disturbing the traditional ordering of social and material life, inducing activities previously unknown to the Amerindians. Let us look at some examples.

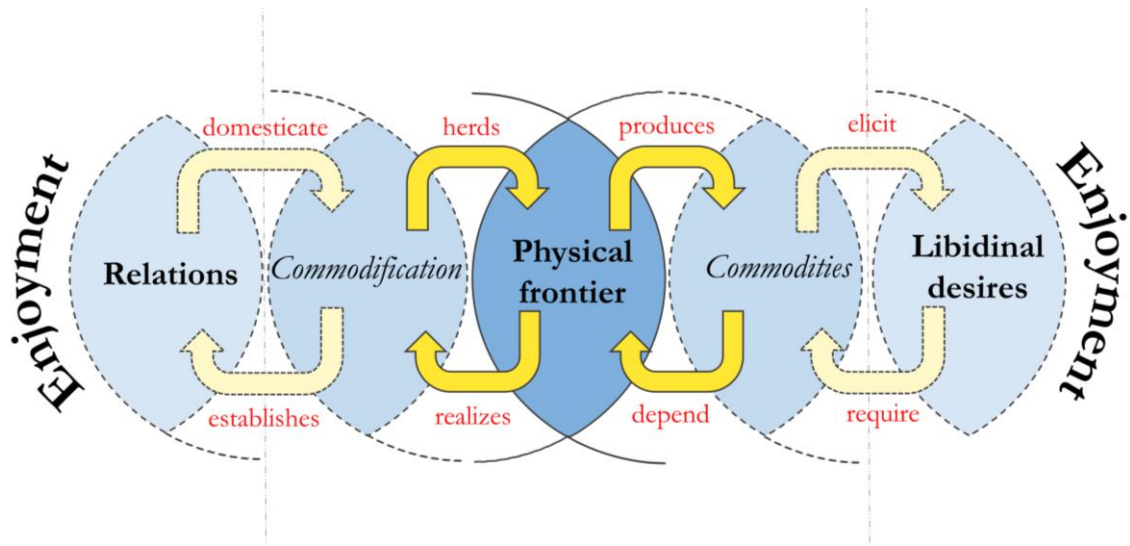
To order and control finance, participate in projects, and represent own people, the Ka'apor have to be part of an association. Although its headquarters are approximate to their lands it still means the prolonged absence of leaders who travel constantly and uninterruptedly to an exaggerated number and variety of meetings. In addition, they take part in regional debates, which also imply travel, and an unprecedented need to represent and speak of one's rights, and of *being Indigenous*. Leaders absent from villages have however often failed to plant family gardens, as constant travel impedes traditional agriculture. If on the outside they are to appear standing for the *native*, inside they are castrated of the *traditionally understood form of being* because their absence undermines the overall ability for subsistence. Or so it seems, as in the case of certain reconfigurations, hunting for the game may now be represented by *hunting for projects*, and associated benefits. In another case, if patrols have to be undertaken in the forests, or trainings take place outside of indigenous lands, somebody has to provide families with food, that would traditionally be hunted by men, who are now absent from villages. Protecting their territory therefore leads not only to development-induced relocation and establishment of villages further away from locations presenting perfect conditions for subsistence, but in addition often also means to be gone from these villages performing other duties. As noted already, the villages themselves cannot be relocated, as they are now serving as protection points from the frontier and trespassing set on the buffer zones, e.g. amongst the Ka'apor. Duties are to be associated and related to *being indigenous*, as in protecting their land and representing themselves to the outside society. If this is not complex enough, those remaining within indigenous lands, and rarely leaving, have a hard time comprehending why their kin is for extended periods gone, leading to rumors that weaken overall trust within the communities, creating hierarchies of those who do - and those who do not - participate in projects. In addition to meeting with other groups to discuss how to fight intruders, but also matter of the associations that govern the bookkeeping, organizing the work and representation of the Associação, next to various VALE related matters and travel between the villages, the Ka'apor have no other choice but to participate in order to be part-of matters that affect them. Their participation has however implications that affects the outdated notion of what native people *should be*. Indigenous participation in government but also other mitigation to the environmental impact projects, similar to the appropriation of commodities points to something other than initially observed.

The contemporary reconfiguration of indigenous life follows a very interesting relation to the frontier and the very commodities as observed. If fetishism in Freud conceals the lack of castration, articulating a specific symbolic network to overcome it, for Marx the fetish obscures the positive network of social relations behind things (Žižek, 1989:50). For both, the move is made from '*the imaginary appearance to the symbolic semblance*' (Tomšič, 2015:157). Functioning as fictions, fantasies, and fetishizations, both in emerging resource fronts of the periphery, but also across the consumerism centers of the Western Hemisphere, commodities have been able to obfuscate what is truly at stake – namely the entanglement and struggle

of unequal social relations between consumer groups, vis a vis market goods and technologies (Hornborg, 2012). Endowed with powerful traits, the delight of acquiring objects appears to blur any related negative aspects associated with the persistence of the capitalist system of the market economy, unleashing the very savage frontiers. In addition, the desire after commodities appears to function irrelevant of the consumers ethnic origin - the urban and rural Lusophone society, and folk of the frontier, but especially also the native people, adore and are attracted towards commodities with a force that is unprecedentedly powerful (Ewart, 2013; Conklin, 2010; Gordon, 2006). Yet the Indigenous people are driven to acquire commodities and take part in activities for reasons other than might appear from initial observations. These are, as previously noted, mainly to establish ongoing social relationships with the outside world. Commodity fetishism of the western society therefore occludes the *true* contemporary indigenous people, masking the aspects of their continuously strive to build relationships with the outside, while they are commodified, based upon the outsiders fantasies, of some expired traits or qualities, some of which might never have existed, but nonetheless now have to be performed. As an example may serve the romanticized connection with nature, which although sensitive, might nonetheless actually be exploitative and opposite to that sought to signify by the outsider - the forests are cut, burned, used for all necessary materials while resourceful, and later abandoned in the search for new ground to subsist. In traditional societies, indulging in commodity fetishism reworks social fabrics, and, as states Žižek, '*relations between men are totally defetishized, whereas, in pre-capitalist societies, they are still fetishized*' (1989: 21). Additionally, capitalism exploits the true non-relation of society, by mystifying it via '*ideological fictions, fantasies, and fetishizations*' through objects. (Tomšič, 2015:97). Having entered the market economy on relatively own terms, and always actively seeking to rework their part within it, and making the Master work for them, the native people appear to fetishize the social relations more, than the actual commodities themselves. Native people don't have to pretend foreign objects to be endowed with mythical powers, they appear most likely equal to the other observers, after decades of contact, satellite TV and numerous visits to towns and foreign countries. Instead, goods themselves represent the givers, and stand for them, long after their visits to the villages have been forgotten. The decay of some objects then represents a relationship that is slowly disintegrating and is left uncared for by the Master, who provided the very gift. Relationships that have been built elicited enjoyment, whereas the same was done by acquiring commodities by nonindigenous fold. The frontier emerged as interlocutor of enjoyment, or rather *jouissance*, between all those directly and indirectly involved in its reproduction.

As a fiction, capitalism elicits the enjoyment tied in together with the consumption of commodities, which are capable to obfuscate the inner lack of our libidinal desires. In the same light, commodities cause us to project our desires onto them via *objet petit a*. These commodities are produced by the frontier and its extractive workings. Thereby commodities consumed both locally and across global consumer chains, such as cattle, drive the very frontier. At the same time, the frontier has the capability to commodify objects, and resources

that arise as such in the process of production – resources don't exist endowed with value but emerge as such in specific contextual settings, e.g. crude oil became significant after the creation of an internal combustion engine. Indigenous people as a commodity emerges next to the need to protect the environment, tropical forests, that on their own have value. The commodification of certain objects involves those as part of them into a similar vile course of value-making. If the frontier has been unleashed based on extraction, then the larger society and market economies have found ways to incorporate indigenous peoples outside of actual relations, by commodifying their identities and what they stand for. Exchanged are then commodities for commodities –indigenous land or resources for monetary remuneration; the appearance of nativeness for political support and alliances. Yet the very same unraveling of the frontier from a native perspective might appear reverse. Perceiving our total obsession with objects and capital, they might see the fetish we try to occlude by engaging with objects and hiding actual unequal social relations. When engaging with the larger society, Indigenous people engage via the rules imposed but ascribe varying meanings in the process, and Knowledge associated. Therein, while accumulating objects beyond the share direct necessities, they perceive them as the constant strengthening of relations. What indigenous people then do, one could assume, is to live out the opposite of the gaze they found themselves in. Indigenous people might reflect back to us the very same way try not to appear – completely obliterated by accumulation obfuscating any assumed social relation. That this is not so, we gather from anthropological analyses of their contemporary material settings (Ewart, 2016; Gordon, 2006). Yet once established, commodification herds the frontier itself towards the production of defined commodities, and the need of the being of indigenous people to persist in its own use-values, that have exchange values on the market but also lobby work. In other words, indigenous people might seek out objects, while striving to maintain relations. However, they do so in a way equal to the capitalist societies which do ignore direct relations and fetishize objects. Although wishing to appear to be establishing these, engagements are based only via exchange relations - commodities and support are provided, while you do your task, which is to maintain the commodity of *being native* shiny. In this sense, the indigenous people perform a certain purifying performance of capitalist modernity through insistence on relations, rather than a direct exchange of commodities. Their cultural production is therefore still based on non-other but relationships with the outside society built through objects, the very society which strives to subdue and consume them, by providing such goods in exchange for something else. Finally, however, not only does commodification establish specific relations between the physical frontier and the commodities, but also domesticates the very commodification of the native people (Figure 5, next page).



**Figure 5** | Nexus of the physical frontier as represented by libidinal desires of the general consumers and the relationships as forged by native people; arrows in dark-yellow represent primacy over others. Enjoyment on both sides stands for the *jouissance* experienced as pleasure by both extremes.

Adopted by native people, their demanding, appealing, and never having enough approach is similar to the fact where they incessantly have to strive in maintaining themselves, as something *other* and commodification of their identity and presumed traits. Asymmetrical exchange, maintaining the hegemonic practices of engagement role of the Master is much more convenient and pleasing the outsider. Expecting that native people would engage with our society on terms established by us is therefore only another form of colonialism established as engagement practices, even if these seek to elicit community projects or any other form of imposed means to benefit the *other* based on western etic terms. This is a reflexive take on the conceptualization of different means to engage with and the ongoing reproduction of primitivism. The project of '*cultural revitalization*' is performed by none other but the Master himself, who consumed by the system preaches in seeking to undo it. Amerindian ways to seek out means to engage with the outside world are nothing other but resistance against means of unification and universalization, and the total power represents in absorbing goods of the *other* while retaining own forms of being, wherein retention of relationships is superior to commodities and goods standing only as secondary. This leads us back to the fact that there exists a certain '*permeability*' of capitalism into other life-worlds, where objects might be turned inside-out and reworked according to the specific ontologies. The object, therefore, exists in different plains and domains and is objectively subjective - either through commodity fetishism, ontological reordering, or as signs - the signifiers and the signified, and lastly the very specific unconscious drives after *objet petit a*. Systematic enjoyment nonetheless as elicited by capitalism is still possible to be dodged by native people by avoiding to become true laboring subjects, implying that cultural retention and means to persists are venal to the emergence of capitalist relations within own communities. The *objet petit a* as an object of desire hides the very fact that although we might understand native people through

Knowledge, and approach working in a respective manner together, something always escapes signification, making projects often fail, or in need to be constantly readjusted. This aspect is exactly the *objet a* – if it ceases to exist, then native people are completely integrated into the market economy of selling labor and losing attributes that so far mark their difference from the larger society. Alterity exerted is what appears to be the defining unary trait.

Observing the developments of the interethnic frontier at the pre-Amazonian frontier, we may now return and answer what roles the commodities, and also of commodification induced thereunto. It appears as the secondary order linkage and a movement that incorporates both libidinal desires and relationships on the other hand. Both at opposite ends, and capable of representing distinct ontologies (Figure 5 – the punctuated lines). Above all – commodities and commodification elicit specific forms of enjoyment, or rather tensions experienced as such, in the form of *jouissance*. This enjoyment across various domains and subjective perceptions drives the frontier and its reproduction and is causal to both the associated pleasures. Indigenous people's *being* and *culture* has been turned into objects-of-surplus-value and are part of the frontier processes. Concurrently, to maintain their use-value that each commodity they have to elicit labor. Such labor involves various activities and is geared towards the maintenance of supporting means to reproduce *native* identity, by means of maintaining differences, amongst various other signifiers. Commodities and identity within this process have intertwined to form a complex relation. Indigenous peoples as commodity are aware of their value, and are amongst few commodities, whose net value increases the more it is consumed, or in other words, being consumed, and eliciting labor of *being native*, indigenous people strengthen their own persistence and recreate conditions for their continuous and ongoing cultural persistence, through a variety of projects. At the same time, it helps to maintain relationships through objects, but also benefit the communities. In a certain way, the indigenous people could choose not to partake, and be even more marginalized, or continue in seeking to improve overall resource allocation and their relationships with the outside. On another hand, they are only part of global discourse as long as they can elicit the specific identities and subjectivities that have been carved out for them. On the other hand, indigenous people *being* for the World, or against capitalism, is just as fake, as their care and interest to persist focuses mainly on their land, people, and are rarely extended to the outside non-indigenous society because own persistence has always dominated the survival of kin.

The nexus of native people with the outside at the frontier rests on specifically different goals, and each side masks the *other* in ways that allow reproduction of the same beneficial status quo to each to persist, which - in a sense - is a perverse relationship reproducing the frontier and capitalism itself. The presence of goods and the latest developments in the process of capitalism appear to have successfully incorporated the indigenous people into the economic system. As part of the unraveling of commodification, indigenous people have been also turned into objects-of-value. At the same time, native people have been creative in building alliances with non-indigenous members of the larger society, in their quest for political inclusion, economic advantages, and global presence. In these various long-term



ongoing forms of exchanges, the 'use-value' that each counterpart presented to the other have shifted, while both sides maintained benefits, even if oftentimes on unequal terms to the native and '*cross-cultural consumption*' (Howes, 2002). Previous findings from a Marxist historical perspective, portray the development of actual capitalist economy amongst small-scale Amerindians societies to have been foreclosed by a choice. The refusal to be deprived of self-worth via excessive labor allowed retaining self-conception and a sense of well-being (Sayers, 2007) juxtaposed to factors arising due to alienation, exerted when sold labor power is consumed within the process of [capitalist] production. Instead of echoing the bottom and initial stage of historical materialism, as defined by Marx and Engels, native people's contemporary organization may be depicted as having directly surpassed the stages of slavery, feudalism, and capitalism. In this process, they have conjured their own superior form of metamorphosed socialism of benefit to their persistence as distinct people. They have embraced the role of the Slave, but only in the notion of Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic when interacting with the *Other*; engaging in '*semi-feudalism*', they were granted rights to land only in exchange for, their service and merit of *being native*. The associated labor with retaining identity has found space within the system of capitalism, where indigenous people have been gracefully incorporated to represent a commodity endowed with a surplus-value. In the last chapter, adopting the Lacanian Theory of Discourses, I seek to lift any remaining questions and doubts regarding their incorporation into large society, as also engage with answering my general research question - *Is there a capitalist unconscious amongst the native people?*

## 10. Chapter III – Jacques Lacan’s Theory of the Discourses

This chapter seeks to answer the final SRQ - *What do we learn by adopting Lacanian discourse(s) in relation to native people of the case?* After collecting previous insights it then culminates in discussing the General Research Question of this thesis – *Is there a capitalist unconscious amongst the native people?*

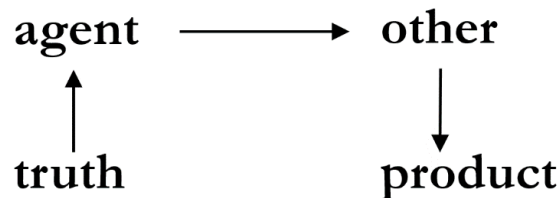
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So far Ch.1 has presented changes as of the 1950s unraveling at the pre-Amazonian frontier adopting the historical, political and materialist perspectives. It clarified how long-standing adverse pressures upon the civil society in Brazil’s North-East have unleashed devastation onto the cultural landscapes of the Amazon. Additionally, it has shown how the scramble for land and contesting claims to it by various groups brought tensions and confrontations between the native inhabitants and the non-indigenous folk. Subsequently, and after introducing the reader to further theory, analysis of Ch2. departed from these tangible and concrete effects at the frontier, showcasing how the appearance of commodities and the overall process of commodification has caused both the Amerindians and other members of the larger society, to be joined by the very frontier itself. By adopting the psychoanalytic perspective allowed the identification of the major cause for this confluence to be the anti-thetical factor of *enjoyment*. Continuing further with the psychoanalytic scrutiny this chapter elaborates the case further by means of engaging with the Lacanian Theory of Discourses. In doing so it distills the actual position the indigenous people have assumed in their ongoing incorporation into the contemporary society of capitalism, elucidating their perseverance in withstanding the all-appropriating, destructive and exploitative character of capitalism, for none other but the very subjective *jouissance* found in this process. To commence with the case at hand let us familiarize ourselves with the theory to be adopted.

### The Theory and Structure

In *Seminar XVII* titled ‘*The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*’ Lacan introduces his theory of the Four Discourses (Clemens & Grigg, 2006), which based on a level of abstraction and formalization permits the fitting of subjects into any of the defined particular frames (Verhaeghe, 1995). Although noted to be in general extremely hard to comprehend or interpret, Lacan’s schematic and nearly algebraic depictions embodying the discourses provides both a comprehensive structure but also refreshing clarity. His claims depart however very much from the standard ideas of communication theory. While language for Lacan remains a necessary condition for discourse to exist, speech in itself is not a prerequisite (Hoens, 2006). In his claim, any discourse exists prior to the exchanges of a spoken word determining from the onset the very act of speech, how it is conducted, and the positionality of those interacting within. This is Lacan’s fundamental assumption and opposition to towards the more general communication theory - each discourse represents a distinct bond marked by the persistence of non-relationship between those interacting. Claiming autonomy over interdependence of the subjects involved Lacan reformulates the idea of ‘*intersubjectivity*’ (Hoens, 2006). Let us now look at the composition and functioning of these actual discourses.

Each of the discourses follows a formal structure. First of all, there are four specific *positions* in the scheme – *truth*, *agent*, *other* and *product*; (there are also four specific *terms*, to which we shall return in a moment). The *agent* always addresses the *other*, and the action results in a *product*, conceived by the latter. The *product* is not necessarily a physical object, but rather an action, emotion - a reply. The psychoanalytic dimension to this specific Discourse Theory beyond that of the traditional communication theory is brought by adopting *truth* and positioning it at the beginning of the discourse. The *truth* becomes the force and the initiator in driving the *agent* to address the *other*, and the emanation of a *product* (Figure 6). Building upon the work of Freud, Lacan denotes this driving *truth* to be hidden from the *agent*. In this way, the *agent* does not express himself but is rather *spoken by*, and the speech exposing unconscious desires. The conceived *product* by means of approaching the *other*, might therefore actually not appease the *agent* once it is confronted by it because the cause behind its desires remains repressed and part of the unconscious.



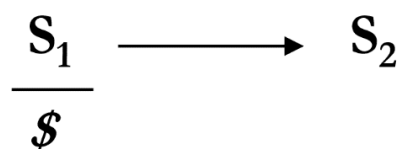
**Figure 6** | The general scheme of a Lacanian discourse

Similarly to Freud, who has spoken of the *T* as not being the master of his own house, Lacan has defined the subject as a passive result in the signifying chain and only an *agent* of the barred subject  $\$$ . Being a semblance, the *agent* is never in charge of his unconscious actions, yet always meant to carry out its demands. Freudian insights highlight further the fact that complete verbalization of truth is impossible since the primary object of our desire is not only repressed but according to Lacan, also maintained ‘*outside the realm of language*’ (Verhaeghe, 1995). Unable to grasp its meaning, we are driven nonetheless to compulsively repeat our attempts in constantly aspiring to attain whatever lingers as tension at the non-verbal level, and in doing so to approximate our fulfillment of said *unconscious* desires.

Considering then the *agent* to be driven by such an unconscious *truth*, or desire, the *other* has no means to appease the *agent's* demand with the *product*. This is represented by the unidirectional arrow within the upper part of the discourses scheme. It stands for the non-rapport between the *agent* and the *other*. For Lacan, this also asserts the impossibility and disjuncture in all acts of speech, regarding communication in *sui genera* as a failure, and the only reason why subjects insist on talking (Verhaeghe, 1995). The *product* similarly has no agency in appeasing the unconscious *truth*, as lacking any connecting arrows, their relationship is marked by a void and depicted as ‘*truth // product*’. The absences of interaction between *truth* and *product* also ground the impossibility of a specific direct social link, since the reason for it, and the result thereof, can’t be conjoined (*//*). Said otherwise, while the *product* arrives at the *agent* with a certain effect, it never reflects what is truly desired by *truth* (Vanheule, 2016). The disparity between the *truth*, or the motivation of the desire, and the *product*, as enjoyment

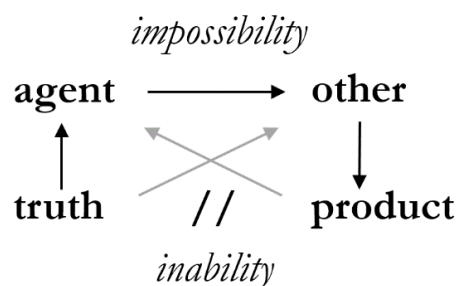
produced by failed communication, keeps ultimately the whole process of communication running. The upper part of '*agent* → *other*' then attempts to depict the failure of the pleasure principle, and its *impossibility*, whereas the lower part of '*truth* // *product*' highlights the *inability* of fulfilling one's *truth* via *another* and grounds the impossibility to establish true and direct social links. Finally, the two disjunctures within the discourse theory – *the impossibility* and *the inability* – stands across the four discourses to represent the futility of attaining one's desire (Verhaeghe, 1995).

The Discourses Theory, expanding upon the Saussurean sign (refer to the Theoretical Framework) is further based on Lacan's insistence that a signifier represents a subject to another signifier<sup>37</sup> (Clemens & Griggs, 2006) (Figure 7). It captures the specific features of the barred subject **\$** – not representing an individual, but a being of language; the internal division due to the entrance into the symbolic realm of language; and the fact that each signifier is defined by '*its difference from and opposition to other signifiers*' (Verhaeghe, 2006).



**Figure 7** | Lacan's depiction how a signifier represents a subject to another signifier

Therefore each of the discourses marks an attempt to reach a specific desire and the means how the failure to achieve it shall be masked (Verhaeghe, 1995). *Surplus-jouissance* is the result of each discourse, standing for a specific mode of production, representing an ultimate lack, caused by the division between things, as signifiers, and words, as signs. In this sense, the discourses stand also for how the specific (dis)connection between the *agent* and *other* is conceived. While the *product* may reach the *agent*, it has no effect on the *truth*; and while the *truth* might affect the *other*, it caters only the *agent*. Communication, as it is then, is always thwarted, producing something both unexpected and unintentional. We can complete the formal structural graph of the discourses with all relevant positions and their connections (Figure 8).



**Figure 8** | Overall structure of the four discourses

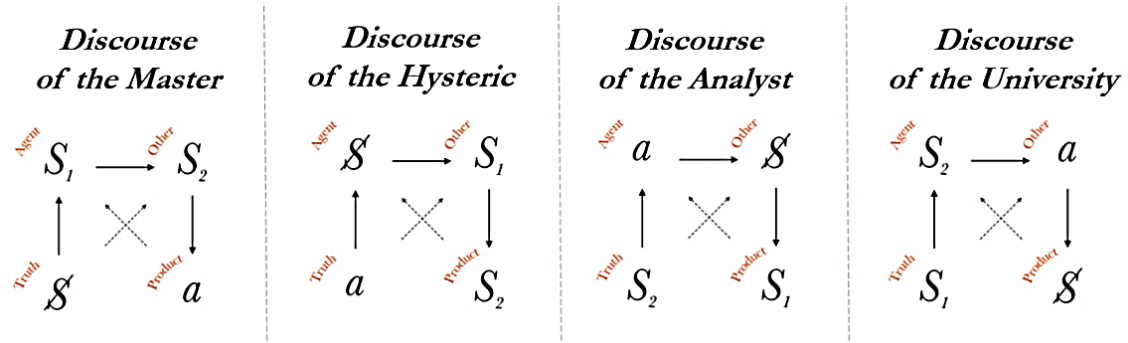
Additionally, the formal structure represented by the triangle formed by the interactions between *truth-agent-other* stands for *representation*, while that of *agent-other-product* – for *production*

<sup>37</sup> Note the word represents, meaning that a signifier never *is* the subject, but only its representation.

(Tomšič, 2015:203-4). Lacan himself departs from Saussure and superiority of the signifier and its representation, giving more importance to the signified and the process of its production. Failed communication must produce excessive pleasure, or *jouissance* that in turn provides the drive for the agent to continue putting demands on the *other*. Our speech is then produced through the discourse of which we are part of. In this sense, it links Marx notions of capitalist production, and the emerging subjectivities, as signifieds, therein (ibid.). In a moment when Structuralism is facing hardships, Lacan proposes his Discourses as a means to portray the '*science of the structural real*' (Tomšič, 2015:208).

Finally, to be a functional discourse, each of the positions (*truth, agent, other, product*) has to be represented by one of the four specific *terms*, as mentioned earlier. These are composed of  $\$$  - the barred subject, standing initially for the *truth*, divided in itself, between the linguistically structured reality and the unconscious desires beyond symbolic meanings. In addition, there is the  $S_1$  – or the Master-Signifier, providing points to measure and establish one's identity, based upon the ego (See Theoretical Framework), in addition to *jouissance*, and the unconscious itself (Bracher, 1994). If one's primary identification depends upon the encounter with the *Other*, then its continuous manifestation throughout the subjects life in guiding actions, beliefs, stance towards the world, and the desire itself, is established only via comparing oneself with the Master-Signifier. It permits '*to have an identity in which I can recognize myself and be encountered and recognized by others*' (Bracher (1994), quoting Miller (1991), p. 112). It has a unifying character and therefore permits the *agent* to approach the *other*.  $S_1$  may be represented by master signifiers, used in order to stabilize the situation an insisting upon a certain action, such words may be '*trauma*' or '*fantasy*' amongst psychoanalysts, while in political circles they may be replaced by '*freedom*', '*democracy*' or '*sustainability*'. It is here, that such  $S_1$  become representative of the  $\$$  to another signifier –  $S_2$ . Standing for Knowledge, or "knowing that...", but also for all remaining signifiers, it permits the unidirectional approach of the *agent* towards the *other*. It also produces value systems by which the ego is kept in check, meaning it is complicit in eliciting the *nature of enjoyment* (Bracher, 1994:110). Also, considering different forms of knowledge, there is also the chance of  $S_2$  being confronted with another set of knowledge, and most commonly - that of the unconscious (ibid). Finally, there is the fourth term - *objet petit a*. It is best conceived as what is left out but also producing the very identity of the subject. It is a placeholder for our desires towards objects, also equaled with surplus-pleasure we are able to draw from it (Žižek, 2017). It '*stands simultaneously for the imaginary fantasmatic lure/ screen and for that which this lure is obfuscating, for the void behind the lure*' (Žižek, 2016b:8). In laymen terms, it means that *object a* both exposes and hides the fetishistic disavowal. *Jouissance*, for example, may only be expressed in symptoms revealing desires, but concealing it at the same time through our engagement with the object-of-desire. Respectively, it also represents the missing object that results from the acquisition of knowledge through language and loss of the primary condition of '*nature*', which then escapes signification (Verhaeghe, 1995). Standing for the final term of the desire itself, *object a* is beyond the separation of the object and subject. The discourse matrix organizes the above four terms in

a strict circular order, and while rotations are allowed, interchange of the terms is not - their relative order to one another is fixed (Figure 9).



**Figure 9** | The four discourses of Lacan, (*Seminar XVII*)

It is vital to address a lingering issue before proceeding in adopting these discourses. Perceived through this application of the theory of the discourses, indigenous peoples are treated from a Meta position, robbed, as if, of their power to change it. I have already claimed that such agency persists in their meaning-making ontological encounter with the *other*, wherein they are able to adjust their identities and experiences (Chapter 2). Nonetheless, as the thesis deals with the effects of capitalism represented by the emergence of western trade relations and impacts thereof since the middle ages, surrounding Genoa and Florence and the moment surplus-value emerged as calculable, native people must be perceived as rather absorbed by the system, and by no means from a vice-versa standpoint, where they overpower capitalism via their own methods. I shall do my best to depict this in the following sections and paragraphs. And while native ontologies remain explicitly significant to local lifeworld's and their varied manifestations capable of reconfiguring itself in the wake of '*pacifying the white man*' (Albert & Ramos, 2002), native people do have rather limited effect on how capitalism unravels globally, while able to deal with some aspects of how the trickling down impacts and influences thereof are encountered emically, at the frontier, where majority of them endure. Let us now look at the specific nuances that are laid barren once the theory of the specific discourses is applied with further insights elicited onto to the case at hand – the indigenous peoples and the processes conditioned at the frontier.

### The Discourse of the Master

We begin with the first Discourse of the Master (MD), that Lacan calls the condition of possibility of the subject of the unconscious. While it may depict the functioning of single individuals, we shall apply it to a broader concept. Standing above  $S$ , the Master-Signifier suppresses the *truth* as inferior, becomes inherently divided, but proclaims own superiority. Ignorant of *truth* it cares only about his own positionality – that is to represent a subject for another signifier. Being the agent -  $S_1$ , '*autonomous and self-identical*' while representing divided subjects, he addresses Knowledge -  $S_2$ , seeking to assert its role as a Master (Bracher, 1994). His approach is to uncover and answer as to what  $S$  desires, as the Master does not know it himself, avoiding the *truth*. In addressing the Knowledge, the produced surplus of  $a$ , remains

out of reach for  $\$$ , agitating it, and unleashing further demands onto  $S_1$  (Verhaeghe, 1995). The Master has to produce answers since he stands for the *subject-who-is-supposed-to-know* for  $\$$ . The reason for  $S_1$  in continuously going after a failure via  $S_2$  is twofold. First, in doing so it retains the position of the Master, even if a castrated one, incapable of meeting  $\$$ 's expectations. Secondly, the associated labor produces tension from which arises enjoyment for the Master, represented by a pleasure that is not-as-such, namely *jouissance*. I shall return to this in a bit, but for the moment - the Master-Signifier is '*both the means for arriving at enjoyment and the cause of its loss*' also for the  $\$$  (Verhaeghe, 2006:38). In general, MD then represents [ $\$ \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ ] the divided subjects incapability of reaching *jouissance*, and who is in a dialectical Master-Slave relationship – Masters attempts to produce a surplus is constantly out of reach, and always leading to loss. It marks not only the experience of subjective division that cannot be overcome but also the very limits of the emergence of fantasy -  $\$$  has no relation with  $a$ . Without a fantasy, it cannot really know what it wants, which leads to the tensions within. The fantasy maintains sustainable and indigenous development as if possible and able to be aligned with simultaneous dispossession as if nature wouldn't be exhaustible. That is the true paradox of the west – the delight and enjoyment obtained from indigeneity and native people, while at the same time continuing in amassing and extracting resources, going after desires through the commodities. The wish to both have the cake, and to eat the cake. The production set in motion within MD -  $S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow a$  then creates the *jouissance* for the Master. He remains in constant dialectical tension with the barred subject and slave  $\$$  and unable to find soothing answers for him, suppressing its *truth*, and the very knowledge it has of  $S_1$ , as a failing Master (Verhaeghe, 2006). This is why the Master partakes in exchange with *others* Knowledge, and its products –  $a$ , serving none other but him, at the expense of  $\$$ .

How does this discourse fit our case? Let us approach it from the perspective of the term of the Master-Signifier, '*the singular unit of value, which cannot be quantified*', but providing a point for self-identification to others. The *truth* in our case are the struggling and marginalized citizens of the frontier - peasants, quilombola, traditional communities and especially the native people. To profess and challenge the circumstance of '*injustice*', they approach the Master-Signifier, the Power of the State, meant to enact '*rules*' and '*laws*'. Its roles and responsibilities are defined in the Constitution of 1988, with its specific directives towards the treatment and rights of Indigenous peoples. The Master, the Power of the State itself, established via the Constitution of 1988, directs the demands to  $S_2$  – Knowledge, represented by the legislative and judicial system, experts and technocrats, amongst whom are also anthropologists, and laymen alike, who are advised, as is in the case of demarcation of new indigenous lands (Neves & Machardo, 2017).  $S_2$  produces and presents contextual and legal frameworks to the  $S_1$ , providing answers based upon, and packaged in, various laws, policies, and politics, that in the case of the Amerindian issues may be summed up as *indigeneity* and various aspects, including *identity*, defined therein. The answers provide the Master with notions to show how to not only define who is who – indigenous people, *quilombola* and others,

but also what they are to represent in order to qualify for specific privileges and liberties. Above all, it provides knowledge on what they [are to] desire.

As to desiring subjects, they are to enact and elicit labor, however, by no means does it imply that the Indigenous peoples some sort of proletarians in the early stages of capitalism. Let us look closer at this claim. Through labor relations, the master exploits the proletarians and appropriating their surplus labor. Indigenous people are also exploited, but this happens on through cultural relations they have to persist as the *other*, and which facilitates the surplus - indigeneity – to be appropriated. Standing for the universal split subjects, both the proletarians and the natives lay bare the truth of the system of capitalism - it both unstable and inconsistent. If the worker in the factory is the obstacle *and* condition for capitalist profit, then in the Amazon the native people reveal them as necessary to both condition and obstruct the reproduction of the frontier as the site of accumulation through dispossession. This is clarified through the discourse of the Master.

To begin with, an impossible moral relationship exists between the Master  $S_1$  and the *Other* ( $S_2$ ) where the latter must obey the orders. It is, however, the worker -  $\$$  - pure subjectivity, that enables and stands for the senseless drive of the capitalist Master  $S_1$  and his desire to endlessly make a profit. Similarly,  $\$$  as the native stands for the senseless desire of the Master to accumulate through dispossession in the frontier. As *truth*, this pure subject entity  $\$$  appearing as a hindrance is for the very process to go on. The worker is paramount in producing commodities through his surplus labor and must be protected for production to occur. Pursuing the analogy the indigenous people's role of pure subjectivity ( $\$$ ) and indigeneity ( $a$  - the product as *jouissance* of *otherness*) is to perform the labor of not-working defined through indigeneity, which is inconsistent with capitalism. It is, therefore, indigeneity as the surplus that is produced through extraction at the frontier. Stands for the limits of nature it spells out to the capitalist that certain resources are not renewable, hence the need to protect the indigenous peoples as  $\$$ , similarly to the proletariat. This is in line with the findings of Ch.1 demonstrating that Indigenous lands, as a hindrance to uncontrolled frontier expansion, emerge through none other but property regimes established through the very capitalist processes.

Being the one who represents the signifier, the Master must also ignore the very *truth* which is presented to him by native people in their claims of 'injustice'. By all means, being barred subjects occludes the inherent alienation and division arising from the split in  $\$$  between *subjects that are*, or the real Indigenous peoples, and *subjects spoken by language*, or the imaginary Indigenous peoples as conceived by the State. While the answers of  $S_2$  should appease the real ones, they are directed to create satisfaction to others by reproducing the imaginary native that it is not. At the same time,  $S_2$  stands complicit with the capitalism, setting the whole process in motion and that which has arrived at the frontier, bringing social and environmental devastation, extracting resources, dumping superior industrial goods as excess, and



in the process diminishing the size of traditional lands and populations. Above all, the production of MD set to the case rationalizes the establishment of land use practices based on productive regimes enacted by the capitalist processes, carving into the pre-Amazonian region, and surplus, that is negated to the real natives. The Master Signifier insists upon knowledge on how indigeneity is to be established, performed, and adhered to, formulating native people as a specific group that is bound by laws that are carried out only in recognition of their static identities, the imaginary, and not the real. Within such a bundle of knowledge, *Indigenous people* are presented as a set of clauses, to be '*promoted*', '*guided*', and '*helped*'. Hereby the *Other* establishes what it means *to be native*, and what specific roles the *native people* have to play and carry out, how problems are depicted, what questions are asked to rectify them, and specific types of proposed solutions. Indigeneity is placed into the guardianship of the *Other* – the State, FUNAI, or the NGOs, and only then accepted into politics as a filling substance, a puppet, with imposed sustainability discourses and identities geared towards romanticism and exoticism.

Political forces – the interaction of Power with Knowledge ( $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ ) have incapacitated native people across Brazil, by shaping the means of how local people are to represent themselves, and their '*nativeness*', through the very knowledge of who they are, and their '*refabrication of identities*'. When protesting, confronting the public, judiciary, and legal systems, or private companies, native people may be observed to manifest by adopting traditional means, such as body paint, naked skin, headdresses, war dances, while carrying bows and arrows, limited so in their representations as they are castrated of agency and made to perform explicitly via the notions of *purity* and *nature*, that has become symbolic of the imaginary, but not the real Amerindian. Reproduced partially via the Masters Discourse, Indigenous peoples of contemporary society are therefore in a Master-Slave relationship in their political struggles across Brazil. If the Master-Signifier is Capital, then the subject it represents (the native) to another signifier (the bureaucratic apparatus/FUNAI/the State) stands in a dialectic relationship allied by the very mutual dependency with this capital. The native person stands for the pure universal subjectivity. Represented at the bottom of the discourse, indigeneity as the *product* is, therefore, unable to form a bond with the *truth* of the native person as a split and subject as a void, whose desire might be that of the Master. Also, as noted above, performativity induced by the very Master onto the native through indigeneity is a screen covering the void;  $\$$  or the split indigenous subject is then to perform indigeneity at the frontier partaking in the fantasy of a certain sustainable indigenous development possible at the frontier itself.

On the one hand then, native people are accused by those living next by of being fictitious – for hunting using guns, in the villages rarely wearing body-paint, blasting music, the headdresses worn to present alterity, and only for the outside, while their desires for commodities or technical advancement remains preferably out of sight. On the other, native people proclaim the government as if incapacitating their traditional means of way of life, while in fact, native people live a certain *modernity* right to their own terms, which in their contemporaneity is impossible without neither the states services nor provisioning of industrial goods. It is

however not to imply that the native people without the state would not endure, rather the opposite. But as part of the contemporary setting, native people's assemblage with the state is that which is manifest now. '*Was it not for the state*', insists upon that certain *jouissance* must be renounced, appearing if stolen, but potentially never having existed. Native groups prior to state intervention did not live in Eden or times marked by peace. Incapacitated by the dominant political forces native people constantly embrace the space carved out and given, considering the obsolete notions of *nativeness*, produced by  $S_2$ , rightful, while actually ill-fitting actual given circumstances and limiting their possibilities of expressions and claims of the real. Representing knowledge  $S_2$  produces suppression of enjoyment through defined norms of accepted *indigenous being*. Restricted in their access to direct enjoyment, native people are then meant to live for sustainable projects and the environment, while structured through the *Other* their desires might push them to indulge in materialities as much as the nonindigenous societies. It is not to be translated into the fact that native people want to abandon their lands or forests – in contradiction, they want to maintain what is theirs, and have the additional right of having the surplus that the *Other* has accumulated through century-long dispossessions and conquest. Constantly confronted and having to supply the native people, the Master is then forbidden its full *surplus-jouissance*.

The real, or '*true native people as they are*' unclaimed by Knowledge and uncommented by this *Other*, are void. In other words, Indigenous people as part of the *Others knowledge* are bound within indigeneity and also environmental politics, as specific subjects. Part of it means to rob them of the potential *surplus-enjoyment* by not allowing them to partake openly in the consumer society, without the attached guilt, which stems from identity politics where native people are depicted as if bound by the purity and denouncing enjoyment. On the other hand, across native villages, native people are accumulating goods, for a special type of enjoyment that is drawn from establishing specific bonds and relationships (Ch.2). This restriction of the depiction of enjoyment found in objects and similar to commodity fetishism experienced by nonindigenous folk are simply prohibited and hinders actual political action by expecting those fighting for survival to additionally disguise emic notions. This argument is picked up again in the next discourse.

For Lacan, the desire of the self is only realized through an *Other*, where this *Other* also has to recognize one's desire. It creates the conditions for the one who desires and recognizes (the Indigenous People, the slave) and the one who is desired and recognized (The State, the Master, Capital/commodities). There is a Master-Slave relationship between the opposite sides, wherein the Capital unleashes unaccountable power at the frontier, through illicit and illegal deeds of the loggers, poachers, and land grabbers. The native people are there to fight it and persist, but as proletarians requiring wages, they are to be remunerated with commodities and inclusion into political debates. This implies that the authority enacted by the State/Capital is so only due to its recognition by the native people (following rules, laws, ascribed-identities, desires, etc.). The state impedes the fulfillment of a real desire, which is

impossible while standing as deadlock of indigenous people's possible enjoyment that is recognized through desire that is not-as-such. Borrowing from Lacan and also shown in Ch.2 the State in itself is significant in the very formulation of the identities of native people that proclaim of being robbed of enjoyment that they never had. As summarized by Newman (2004) – '*The existence of political authority is a means of constructing the absent fullness of the subject*'. In this light, indigenous peoples' limitations to succumb to commodities limits the coming of age of realizing the *truth* from Lacanian sense – we are all inherently barred, and divided subject, to whom desire is nothing but means to create drives and purpose in life, and while we might not get what we want, sometimes we might find what we need. In sum, prohibited from excessive surplus native people have a cause to claim to know the reason for tensions and failures they are constantly to experience.

To summarize – MD *produces* a form of indigeneity displacing possibilities of performative change for native people binding them to certain political means to engage against the State, but also inducing them with labor that is associated with enacting specific roles. At the same time the Master-Signifier *represents* the *Indigenous peoples*, claiming possession of complete self-knowledge and insights in how these subjects ought to be, what they require, desire, all while actually ignoring them, and own internal division existing due to the real, and the imaginary, *Indian*. What is the *truth* behind the real of Indigenous people? They are people just as us -  $\$$  - true universal subjects of lack! This is the point where claiming to be *part of*, but under different conditions, is crucial – part of being of society, means being part of lacking subjects who are all marked by their desire to find enjoyment in objects and foreclose internal divisions. The produced concept of indigeneity and of being native – as a surplus – hides the inner truth that negates the right to appear as consuming. And why so? Because consuming would annul the reproduction of a difference as a signifier! Yet emerging into the global scene via the colonial encounter and further exacerbated by frontier-capitalism, native people have been both produced and made to labor in sustaining obsolete and ascribed roles of a past era, where claiming *nativeness* or the upkeep of one's indigeneness is nullified if partaking in market economies. Caught between the real, and the imaginary, Indian, native people are finding it harder to foist into the *Other*, and the Master itself.

The *Other*, as the Master-Signifier  $S_1$  is sustained by the system it itself stands for – namely the all appropriating exploitative capitalism machine capable of ascribing humans with use-values, roles, identities, and therefore destinies. In this sense, the *Other* provides identification, which gives short-lived pleasure but is more prominent in its long-term castration, of none-other but full and inclusive participation of native people within debates that affect them, such as international politics, limited by the very thing which founds them - the identity politics itself. The disavowal of castration is the *truth* that remains hidden from the Master-Signifier, motive for ongoing consulting with  $S_2$ , and the impossibility of the answers giving permeating to, and increasing the awareness to  $\$$ . The Master's discourse is also unique in defining the inability of fantasy where instead of  $\$ \leftrightarrow a$  all that manifests is  $\$//a$ . Totally void from the discourse, the fantasy is to be enacted by the Master, who is supposed to know,

lead and conduct what I desire, in order for me to be complete. MD hereby elicits same alienating power as that exerted by the signifier onto the signified, in our case - the State onto the Native People. Unable and forbidden to express their fantasy of interest to partake in the capitalist excess of enjoyment under different terms would defy  $S_2$  and its complicity in the reproduction of a capitalist order rendering surplus for some, and the very lack, for others. Implications of fulfilling the potential fantasy of accessing surplus-enjoyment is the first step towards constituting new politics of engagement with the larger society and using it as the right of the claims of the universal subject for means to foreclose lack by embracing commodities. The repetition of production of MD in order to close the void of barred subjects uncovers enjoyment as "*impossible*", and the inability to link *surplus-enjoyment* with the universal split if the barred subject  $\$$  - *truth*, that the Master leaves ignored (Župančič, 2006). What it means is that a forced-choice - *to be native* is also meant to liberate. But this is possible only if one abandons desire, and identifies with the object cause of enjoyment – the object of the drive. Adopted to our case, it would mean native people to renounce capitalism and commodities, as the henchmen of their being, but as so far observed, an impossibility due to their reworking of materialities via their own cosmologies.

If MD stands for capitalism itself, then the product is a specific form of Indigenous Peoples as the laboring proletariat in exchange for commodities and the surplus produced in exchange for commodities the very sustenance of indigeneity. The fight against this system, as a discourse, would entail nothing other, but a reproduction of a new Master, that through some novel Knowledge – a fallacy - would allow the emergence of enjoying subjects [of lack!]. As reminds Žižek (2016b:13) – '*there is no active free agent without [being] totally manipulated by the Other*'. This brings us to the underlying non-accessible *truth* - indigenous people today stand instrumental to the *Other's jouissance*, subtracted their surplus-value is if they were commodified objects, as shown in Ch.2. Lacking enjoyment within such depriving circumstances, but also unable to change the structural reality defined by the Master the subject matures into a demanding hysteric. It is a direct reaction to the inability of the Master to produce a society capable of experiencing enjoyment and rather depriving them of potential pleasures, that morphs MD right into the discourse of the Hysteric (Župančič, 2006).

### **The Discourse of the Hysteric**

By means of progression and moving all terms in the scheme a quarter of the circle clockwise we arrive at the composition defining the Hysteric's Discourse (HD). The paramount change within is that the failure of the Master discourse puts the very divided subject  $\$$  into the position of the *agent*. This permits it to direct all of the complaints to the *other* -  $S_L$ , the Master himself. Suppressed within MD, the barred subject is now unhindered in interrogating the *other* why it experiences tension, who is the Master-Signifier is supposed to know. As discomfort may be alleviated by enjoyment, the paramount question posed by the *agent* is none other but '*what do I desire?*' (Verhaeghe, 1995), which uncovers also a lack in subjective positionality adding the question of '*who am I in the desire*' (Hoens, 2006:102). The structural

problem of HD is, however, the place occupied by  $\$$ , ignoring the surplus of  $a$  that it suppresses. The Master is therefore to produce knowledge, while the agent himself chooses to maintain the *truth* hidden beneath. Yet the narrative and solutions delivered by means of Knowledge ( $S_2$ ) fail to assuage the agent, who instead of clarity of how to proceed towards enjoyment, experiences nothing but lack of surplus, remaining incapable of understanding and pinpointing its very origins. In rejecting constituent tensions for surplus as *truth*, the agent returns to press on the Master, yet the factual Knowledge produced maintains surplus-enjoyment elusive, and the very means of uncovering the path to obtain it is concealed. The predicament bounded by the gridlock of the HD scheme supports the hysteric in maintaining his neurotic character, wherein he occupies the position of the alienated and protesting subject, who desires through the *Other*, instead of seeking out the hidden *truth*. The surplus constantly barred and rebutted by  $\$$  disallows the formation of fantasies and maintains the unattainability of the desire itself, depicting that '*desire of this discourse is desire itself, beyond any satisfaction*' (Verhaeghe, 2006). The inability at the lower part of HD ( $a//S_2$ ) bespeaks the inability of Knowledge to affect and provide *objet petit a* to the *agent*. The fact that representation of MD is equal to that of production in HD indicates that what is established via this discourse is the very subjective division itself. The split emanating through the insistence of a Master (real) that fails through Knowledge (symbolic), articulates the traumatic experience of the hysteric as '*the essential experience of the subject as such*' (Arenas et al., 1994). This uncovers the fact that most of us are hysterics, which is symptomatic to the contemporary capitalist society (McGowan, 2004). We consciously choose means to cover up systemic exploitation, instead of confronting the truth; short term holidays and permanent tiredness. In fact, the surplus leading to discomfort is not hidden from us but actually extracted by the capitalist system itself.

Once applied to our case the Amerindians address the Master-Signifier of Power, demanding to know why the situation they live in is so unbearable, wishing to put the Master on trial. Told what it is that they are to desire to find enjoyment, leaves Amerindian people aghast – as the solutions are *always* associated with labor. Native people's reluctance to find enjoyment through labor was already uncovered in Ch2. and parts of the Theoretical Framework (xx-xx). However, following Lacan, the desire is always lived out through the gaze of the lacking *Other*. The knowledge produced then on how to accomplish it has the effect of dividing Indigenous peoples into subjects *they are* but also defining whom they *ought to be*. Accessing surplus, in this case, is difficult, as division hinders appeasing both sides. This is marked by the actual division of labor, where Amerindians carry out the aspects of cultural-labor. The moment they seize in doing so, their labor will be that of any other destitute frontier settler who became incorporated into the capitalist system on the Master's terms. Native people obtain surplus therefore that enables them to retain leisure, hunting as physical labor, and cultural aspects and organization as psychic or mental activities. Meant to desire cultural retention, be praising TEK, sustainability, conservation, and territorial protection, Indigenous peoples actually continuously experience a lack in the failure to be equipped adequately and

in excess of industrial goods and state services, next to all that is material wealth to the non-indigenous. This glut and surplus now remains in obtainable proximity due to the arrival [and passing on] of the frontier, and while desired to a level of discomfort – actually out of reach, posed as semi-prohibited, and to be renounced, exerted through the very Power/Capital (Master) and Knowledge (Experts). Claimed in the not so distant past to be protosocialists, anti-capitalist, desiring nature, and not culture, they are still barred from accessing it openly in the contemporaneous settings, their predicament to be the external other. Enjoyment for Amerindians, depicted as void of material desires, is meant to be found in actually renouncing goods that due to their *purity* should be obtained via abstinence. However, native people as other global citizens are part of consumer chains, which at times goes against the knowledge they are vernacularized to produce – TEK, sustainability, protecting the environment, etc. To this day their labor means to retain *culture*, while combing the native forests and providing a dangerous service of protecting and conserving nature, that is being constantly assaulted by both deprived peasants, now involved in clandestine illegal activities such as logging, but also against the very state who sides to represent the cattle and soy producers. Injustice experienced by the Indigenous subject within HD uncovers *the incommensurability between what I am personally and my symbolic role or function*” (Zupančič, 2006:166). Production within HD ( $\$ \rightarrow S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ ) therefore forms a symptom where native people are subjects as painted lacking truth due to repression of *a*, turning them into agents that are hysterics. This has indirect means to obtain *jouissance*, drawing enjoyment and satisfaction as it posits one in relation to the Master – to carry out a specific role of *being Indigenous* as a slave, next to Knowledge, that is split between that praised by experts (TEK) and that which is lacking – entrepreneurship, production of commodities and lack of skills to be absorbed by the market economies. Through limiting access to surplus-*jouissance* – *a*, that which may be expressed as dispossessed lands and changes to traditional cultural means to subsists in the absence of the *Other* in the past, maintains the hysteric stuck. He reproduces the discourse stands for lack of enjoyment in itself to accomplish a surplus extracted of him in the past, but also a surplus in the future, that which he might desire but is incapable of obtaining – independence of the *Other* if all circumstances of sustainability are met.

While the complaints are advanced towards the Master resulting in Knowledge that fails to deliver answers, the actual demise lies in the fact that the subject seeks out a desire, unwilling to admit to his *truth*. This truth, of a lacking surplus, is consistent with theory depicting human desires to cover up that which is impossible, namely the entrance into symbolic order that tries to cover up what is Real. The subjective split marking native people across Brazil are tensions due to lack of solutions. Yet while objects of desire such as industrial goods are constantly insufficient within the native villages *for the Indigenous people*, outside of their reservations *for the nonindigenous* it is the very Amerindians who are presented as not enough, being boxed-in by the exotic and romantic concepts of *otherness*. While presenting themselves as the *Indigenous peoples*, they live out the notion that is desired by the *Other*, produced through extremely ambiguous Knowledge, and not the *truth*, of subjects that are inherently lacking.

This tension may be well exemplified as positing it between on the one hand the indigenous people's relatively romanticized otherness, the explicit ontological differences (Viveiros de Castro, 2004), and sentimentalizing fierce '*uncontacted tribes*' in the far reaches of the Amazon's Javari Valley, with an opposite. In the latter, exhibited are elements of the cultural mixture, Indigenous people as accessible and implicitly '*acculturated*', whose lives unravel next to the proximity to the *Other*, as is the case for the native people of Brazil's North-East, following centuries of contact (Oliveira, 1998; 1999). In both cases, we have Indigenous peoples that the very Knowledge fails to represent adequately and who escape the signified of the term. If the hallmark of HD is the production of Knowledge demanded through the Master by the hysteric, then the result functions as standardizing - Amerindians are presented on the one hand as holistic, complete and knowledgeable, and on the other, as craving consumer goods, being hedonists, and thereby inferior to their *true self*. Such a divide and the splitting of the Indigenous subject appears as a dualism, yet as puts Ragland (2006:85) – "*both is the position of suffering - not liberation*". The impossibility of finding enjoyment creates *jouissance*, exemplifying how the adopted identity both enables to *be native*, but also castrates, producing a lack. The pleasure as *jouissance* is then derived from trying to diminish tensions via the drives to pursue things that serve to cover up the very lack.

In this sense, the *Indigenous Peoples*, or *§*, within HD, materialize the very form and resistance of being defined by the signifier, and the true lacking '*subject that undermines the authority of both master and knowledge*' (Dolar, 2006:144). Limited in the access to *truth* and surplus-enjoyment, and not achieved by addressing neither the Master nor the Knowledge provided, Amerindians depict the very lack and subjective tension [experienced by all humans as subjects]. Seeking to overpower discomfort the Master is scolded, yet in continuous confrontation, this *Other* in the guise of the State apparatus renders Knowledge that exhibits actual castration. Presented as the Constitution of 1988, with substantial and ongoing amendments and changes, it defines both *the laws that exist*, confronted with a reality where they are either executed not efficiently or not at all. In the case of Brazil, the Master then represents the very bureaucratization of the State apparatus, which requires to bend and circumvent rules in order to accomplish of being a part of a shell that pretends to be functional. Locally across Brazil that is referred to '*jeitinho*', or bypassing rules in order to accomplish things that are already legal. Dissatisfied with the Knowledge the *agent* has but only one thing to do which is to insist upon a new Master. He hopes that the new Master will provide means "*in the form of a secure meaning that will overcome anxiety, meaninglessness, and shame and give a sense of stable, meaningful, respectable identity*" (Bracher, 1997:123). Since the Master is already the one who is constantly being bombarded with demands, the only means to escape the division is in finding desire outside of preconceived Knowledge by assuming the essence of subjective alienation. This task might be facilitated the Analysts discourse, that through introspection and alternative Knowledge establishes new Master Signifiers, and new derivatives of values, desire, and identity (Bracher, 1994).

## The Discourse of the Analyst

The discourse of the Analyst (AD) is an inverted discourse of the Master. It is capable of uncovering the true cause of why subjects experience discomfort and tensions, the internal splitting, and lack. It begins with the fact that the agent - the very surplus *a*, addresses the divided subject *\$*, who in turn realizes that it is not necessarily what fulfills him, producing a new Master-Signifier(s), in order to rearrange his values, desires, and identity (Bracher, 1994) in search of a new *a*. The very *truth* guiding the discourse is Knowledge – *S<sub>2</sub>*, either that of the analyst or any set of Knowledge that liberates the barred subject, invites questioning, probing and scrutiny, rather than possessing him [as in MD and HD]. It is the knowledge that does not know itself, or the unconscious, that assumes alienation within AD, while nevertheless being *put to work in the production process*<sup>38</sup> (Tomšič, 2015:206). Such Knowledge should emphasize the relationship between one's true surplus-*jouissance* and the tension of being split (*a* → *\$*). The most eminent characteristic of AD is, therefore, the ability of the production of new Master Signifiers and the rearrangement what power is then exerted through them. The [new] Master becomes the *product* of the discourse and not its catalyzer; in addition, it is not a tyrant imposing order as within MD, but instead meant to reassure, and guide. The AD provides opportunities for the divided subject to come into touch with its actual lack, and what enjoyment is needed to cover it up, promoting the restructuring [not preventing] of the split that maintains the barred nature of the subject itself. The result is a decrease in tension, acknowledgment of one's actual-always alienation, and stimulation to accept lack as the very principle of *being complete*. Coming to terms with *a* should make *\$* realize that presence of other auxiliary means for referencing one's identity. However liberating it might seem, AD functions only if repressed *truth*, or knowledge that does know itself, is stimulated since it might be too out of the ordinary for the agent to accept it himself. Therefore representation in AD emits Knowledge as the definite factor in both producing the potential surplus, but also the barred subject himself. To reawaken, *\$* must acknowledge that which is barred. While the bidirectional exchange between *a* and *\$* remains impossible, its unidirectionality permits to conceive fantasies and to restructure one's desire. The inability of the Master-Signifier to address Knowledge marks the latter's superiority uncovering the productive character of AD in transforming the Master, and type of *a* desired by *\$*. The potency of AD lies in presents the subject with tools to construct and deconstruct oneself, by following the analysis of the lack, and the assemblage of a new Master. However, knowledge does not know itself, must be uncovered, requiring assistance, while the labor of accepting and appropriating it remains that of the split subject. Knowledge eschewed then makes the focus be posed onto the *object a*. Read symptomatically and questioned what objects are desired to find completeness, pinpoints at internally experienced lack. The true agent of change in AD is, therefore, the very *object a*.

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<sup>38</sup> In this sense it is similar to what Marx uncovers via the critique of political economy – subjects are alienated in the process of production, but they may overcome this through social reordering, revolution, and a new Master that represents themselves – the proletariat.



How do such insights clarify our case of the pre-Amazonian frontier? In short, and on the one hand, it presents means to insists that a potential of the native people to foreclose their actual castration exists, if they engage with the surplus desired, conceived as a representation of an inner lack. On another hand, very AD insists upon being questioned, and whether desires expressed by native people do at all represent an inner lack, or are rather posed to invoke their alterity. Said otherwise, could the native people be engaging the desire of the *Other* in order to emerge as *self*? Both prepositions are dissected next. Subjective division insists upon focusing on the capitalist excess, and commodities as the object-cause-of-desire. Presented to the subject they have the potential in uncovering the fact that no object is capable of neither fulfilling desire, that always reinvents itself, exposing the fact that abolishing internally experienced subjective lack is truly futile. For decades, and some for centuries, the Indigenous peoples of the region have been accompanied by improvements to their lifestyles due to the expansion of state infrastructure, some sparse education programs, as also medical assistance within villages. At the same time, the number of commodities outside of the native lands have not reached the level of those present within. The Indigenous split subject produced by the frontier has no means to overcome the divisive experiences as that of a lack of objects, as a constituent of all subjects, that arises due to the entry into the symbolic world structured by language, and experience of the *Other* through the mirror stage. The relative lack of commodities as compared to outside societies, therefore, continues in structuring specific Amerindians subjectivities, exerting a form of *being* that is to remain static. The disparity of material wealth between indigenous and non-indigenous societies in such setting emerges as limiting the opportunities of native people to observe that ‘enough’ is elusive and then secondly, to provide means to restructure desire and the cause for *being*, potentially altering their identities in relation to both the lack and the *Other*. The fact that no amount of development projects may bring serenity to appease desire still harbors tension experienced that objects do appear as possessing qualities to somehow *soothe* the *Other*. Might this be what the native people possibly perceive through the gaze of such *Other*? Why else would there be the constant need to produce commodities, converting forests to pastures, and cattle into cash, both symbolizing wealth and prestige but also furnishing privileges? Having insufficiently, facing shortages and lacking a surplus, native people might perceive themselves as outright not-enough and never equal to the *Other*. And it is not that I am not-enough-for-myself, but explicitly not-enough for this *Other*. Why? Because my perception upon myself is structured via the ego and mirroring in me the *Other*. There is, therefore, a split in my very *nativeness*, translatable into *being indigenous* for myself, and *being indigenous* for the *Other*! In such circumstances, if I am going for desires for commodities equaled with that of nonindigenous peoples implies that I am nonindigenous, or – by remaining indigenous for myself, that I do not desire what the *Other* enjoys. It becomes a deadlock within which the native people have no right to claim objects foreign to their culture without appearing as if non-native. This clarifies the first preposition. Let us look now whether native people do express a desire that is truly theirs.

Indigenous *identity*, as shown in Ch.2 is at times established and reconfigured in relation to the *Other*. In this sense, we might dare to contemplate that if not exhibiting the desire that for Lacan is always of the *Other*, the native people to bear at least a residual aspect of the *Other* as part of themselves. This stands for how I am to *be-Indigenous* for the *Other* – implying also that I desire means presented as capable to diminish material lack, conceived in the gaze of the *Other* as not-enough, and implying *me-as-a-native* to desire to exert labor and be sustainable. Hereby the *Other* may persist in an excessive wasteful surplus, whereas the imposed processes maintain the Indigenous people in producing means to persist in a sustainable and organic lack. But this might not necessarily be experienced the same way by the part of *me-being-Indigenous-for-myself*, even if the native people do have a certain surplus when compared to the peasants and other have-nots. Deprived of both land, resources, and future, the majority of social groups presiding across rural landscapes are being dispossessed by capital who accumulates land via processes unraveling at the frontier (Ch.1). Native peoples preoccupation with commodities and a lack thereof might appear as hindering their political voice to persists, and also made complicit of the systemic extortions exhibited by capital onto the frontier, and themselves (Figure 2). One can, therefore, rephrase the question driving the split of the Amerindian subject within MD of ‘*what do I desire?*’ to a split within AD in as ‘*how do I become the object of Others desire so that I can live out my own fantasy?*’ Herein lies the overwhelming clarity of a lack that might be plaguing indigenous societies.

Identities and the split experienced by native people in the process of encountering the *Other* have this *other* as part of one’s own identity, which is completely unbarring because it insists upon this exploitative *Other* defining who I am. Presiding at the frontier means native people partaking in its matter, resulting in the commodification through relationships, but also the accumulation of commodities, of the *Other*. To cover up the pertinent fact experienced as castration since being part of the *Other* native people obsess with external objects to soothe themselves and to insists that there actually is an established relationship. This is true only so if it the matter and circumstance of it lie in their own hands. This means while external society has a peculiar way to interact with the native, the latter does the same in creating his own way to convene with the *Other*. Parasitic from both sides, it allows to cover up the exchange and commodification’s enacted not in fetishizing the objects as commodities, but by transferring the fetish from objects to subjects. Here the fact of Lacan’s insistence that actual true social links and relationship do not exist comes to light – for being impossible, a price has to be paid to maintain a fantasy of this being not so. The price is the very persistence of native people within their identities, exerting labor to maintain discourses of sustainability, and finding and defining themselves through this *Otherness* in the case of being-native-for-the-Other. Yet the way native people present their claims, and the fetish that seems to consume them open a very peculiar window and perspective, which is how they are *being-native-for-themselves*. It is not that the native people exert radical difference through western objects, but by the very means of demanding commodities, mirroring the fact that the external non-indigenous

society dumps excess expropriates, in an unjust way, while expecting the native *other* to remain manageable and playing by the rules of the Master. Knowledge to be of agency acquired through AD may elicit true change, presenting and uncovering that what really is desired by the split subject as insists Bracher (1994:126), is not '*the actualization of a particular ideal, the satisfaction of a specific desire, the realization of a certain identity, or the establishment of a given value, but rather the enactment of a particular fantasy, which ultimately means occupying a particular position as object of the Other's desire and jouissance*'. And here comes the true ingenuity of being native.

While being-for-the-Other is elicited through the gaze it makes the native people potentially carry out the expected roles guised in whatever matter appeases the *other* – retention of TEK, sustainable management of forests, traditional cultural traits, being exotic and naive savage. The nonindigenous society may hereby subtract jouissance established and maintained through the hegemonic perspective since the colonial encounter claiming that the native is in itself an *Other*. On the other hand, and in being-native-for-myself *Indigenous people* may assume alterity which permits them to structure unheard of demands to this very same *Other*, represented by the State or Private companies, such as VALE. Herein the demands are to appease them as much, as their role is to appease the *Other*, who is just as much irrational, unjust, exploitative and pretentious. AD, therefore, has the potential to uncover the very fallacy of the promise of the development industry – to decrease the deficit of the have-nots by inducing them to assume productive activities, reproducing power relations cementing social differences, while subtracting their objective-surplus. 'Progress' from this perspective – as concludes Lacan - is '*the central hypothesis of the modern master*' (*Seminar XX:56*, quoted in Tomšič, 2015:162). In this sense native people do not succumb in their split to the Master, but use the split to both appease, and benefit, drawing gains from both sides. In this means native people possess means to establish agency based on own ontologies.

If the analyst's discourse stands therefore for the possibility of the emergence of a revolutionary-emancipatory subjectivity, where *a*, as the agent, is capable to addresses the split subject from the position of Knowledge occupying the place of *truth* doing away with the '*Masters Signifier that structured the subject's (ideologico-political) unconscious*' (Žižek, 2006:110), then the native people may be exhibiting this by their very refusal to follow the capitalist game by its rule. They demand commodities, but in such a way subdue the very capitalist Master to perform. Tapping into their ontological alterity native people then exhibit capacities to re-work the Master, by tapping into own emic alternative Knowledge. By placing *a*, or the surplus-*jouissance* of consumerism and objects of desire at the center as agents, they drive a distinct fantasy, that is not of succumbing to objects, but in transforming and subduing the Master to the one who provides. AD as such assumes critique of the culture of consumerism and of the peculiar form of a commodity that permits via its fetishization the establishment of exploitative social relations and means to pretend of possibility to overcome internal splitting and lack. Instead of fighting exploitation, native people appropriate means of how to exploit the very *Other*, mirroring the outside society through their '*unjust and irrational*' demands, the '*exploitative and atrocious*' experiences they underwent in the wake and still

experience daily due to the unraveling frontier (Ch.1). In such light fantasies and cause of desire expose their goals still fabricated through the Other - an old Master, but also in providing means to collect a surplus-jouissance, that arises from enslaving the Master and his Signifiers to provide, even if that means *'loss of traditional culture/ knowledge'*. Ontological alterity means that native people presiding in a dualistic way might experience subjective split potentially distinct from that by nonindigenous members of society. Only Knowledge has the potential to uncover the truth, which brings us to the last of the four original discourses of Lacan, namely the one where Knowledge reigns supreme – the Discourse of the University.

### The Discourse of the University

By means of regression, or turning all terms by one-quarter of the circle, we arrive schematically at the Discourse of the University (UD). UD may be perceived as the outcome of the failure of MD. Deprived of authority the Master is displaced and de-subjectivized, but reappears retaining command through the guise of impartial expert-knowledge - *'it's not ME who exerts power, I just state objective facts'* (Žižek, 2017:17). It is  $S_2$  or Knowledge, that takes the role of the *agent*, and the *other* is represented by the *object a*. UD relies on this calculable surplus  $a$  that as a tension configures subjects. So as if ignoring the Master beneath it as *truth*, Knowledge in its epistemological superiority, interaction with the very surplus of capitalism -  $a$  and produces nothing other than the split subjects  $\$$ . Filled with discomfort arising from the object as excess, the subjects ask for further Knowledge how to overcome it. In this sense, the production within UD is based on the proliferation of Knowledge but not its mastery that negates to uncover true hidden Power – the very same Master of MD hidden beneath. Production within UD relates both to the surplus and lacking subjects as sustaining the persistence of the very Knowledge system, and the Master signifier as the sole driving force of the apparatus. If Knowledge does produce clarity assuming its limitations, then the result is subjects who seek to devise alternative knowledge to overcome tensions, which still distances them from the actual *truth*. Obsession with Knowledge within UD forges the very split subjects lacking the unconventional insights. In short,  $\$$  continuously fails to perceive that the *truth* hidden under  $S_2$  has but no other serving than to re-cycle knowledge for Capitalism and Power. Continuously driven by the Master signifier, UD, therefore, becomes *'subservient'* to MD (Brach, 1994). Also, while universities produce knowledge, UD bears little or no direct link to the social institutions themselves, as for Lacan, noted by Žižek, *'the Soviet Union was the pure reign of university discourse'* (2006:107).

The part of the representation of UD depicts the Knowledge serving to calculate the surplus that stands for the *other*. A surplus that suits both the subject and the Master does not exist as the subjects are exempt from representation - the Master's enactment of this surplus is the cause and result of emerging tension in subjects. Changing the running of UD, therefore, implies accessing  $S_I$  at its core. But the split subjects are hindered to effectively address it, as expressed by the inability at the lower part of the discourse -  $S_I / \$$ . The barred subjects, experience *jouissance*, through the castration by, and joy from, acquiring knowledge. We are told repeatedly told – *'you do not possess the required knowledge'; 'the more you know, the older you get';*

but also – '*the more one knows, the more one understands not to know, or - less capable of enacting true change*'; but also the very dogmatic assumption guiding the very universities – '*the researchers don't solve problems – they answer research questions!*' What we have then is UD as the imitation of enjoyment, and only a semblance of its real. In this light, UD becomes the new MD, made to guide the society for it to find enjoyment rather than try to change the system. The knowledge produced is to serve how to find means to overcome dissatisfaction. This is done through changing the perception of the subject himself – countless self-help books, podcasts, and gym-memberships, YOLO<sup>39</sup>-attitudes, flights to distant places to forget systemic exploitation, and consumption of organic produce to appease one's ego of doing a positive change. Knowledge is made to redefine the nature of enjoyment, and observing the way surplus-jouissance is derived within, UD clarifies its purpose as the maintenance of '*tolerable exploitation*' (Zupančič, 2006.).

How does it fare with our case? To begin with, Knowledge, similarly as in MD, defines a very peculiar *Indigenous person* and from this position, sieved through the surplus, they emerge as lacking. If the general public might not be aware of Amerindian specificities, then the anthropologists as instruments of Knowledge creation, reproduce them as subjects standing for objects-of-surplus-value. Complicit in producing *Indigenous people*, the surplus obtained from knowledge is employment and benefits, while the production is of none other but representations of *their culture*, as if not our contemporaries, and lacking serious deromanticization of the *Other*. On the contrary, such expert knowledge benefits from the creation of an *Other*, and the difference, produced between the studied and the one studying. Such production of knowledge is then inherently bound by politics, and historical emergence of the field itself as part of the colonial encounter (Fabian, 2014) articulating '*othering*' (Said, xxx). Objectification *produces* them already as lacking. Lacking not only to be themselves but also lacking to be that what the system of knowledge redefines them to be in perspective of time. In other words, by defining Indigenous peoples it also points at the historicity of those which are apparently *not*, sparking identity and indigeneity polemics. In their castrated position Indians are negated full options to find means to fulfill their subjectively produced lack, even though through Lacan we know that it is futile to be achieved via objects and that desires remain unsatisfied. Instead, Amerindians are bombarded by none other but factual truths of how to *be native* (e.g. sustainability) but also deceitfully reminded of *being not enough*, for not participating via labor in the market economy of the very system that seeks to subdue them. They are elevated to be masters in the imaginary, only soon to be reminded of their actual lack and castration in the system by charging and alleging them as the real Indians to be *insufficient* and *not-complete* subjects.

In the case of the Amazon, Knowledge addresses the circumstances of the frontier as the *Other* and depicts the sum of its problems (loss of biodiversity/exploitation/cultural ethnocide) as *jouissance*. The unconscious as repressed knowledge creates divided subjects unable

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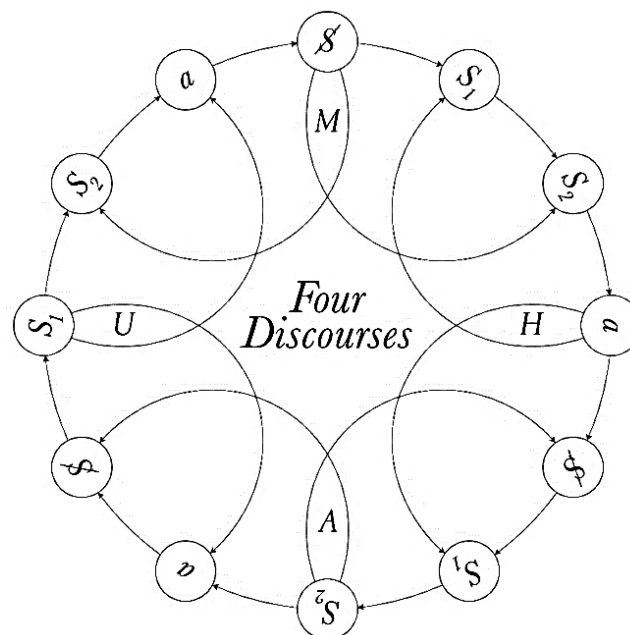
<sup>39</sup> YOLO – You Only Live Once!

to deal with the *truth* of the UD that the final decisions are not in the hand of the scientists, bureaucrats or technocrats, but by unaccountable power holders, and especially those pursuing Capital and political rule. Directed by Knowledge surplus-value, that has capitalism as its *truth*, then conduces the production of divided subjects  $\$$ . These subjects occlude themselves from becoming knowing agents, by succumbing to the ideological fallacies of '*knowing enough*'. Thereby Amerindians are at times hindering themselves by ignoring their potentially total incorporation both into MD, but also UD. Claiming to possess sufficient knowledge to articulate themselves amongst national lobbyists, media, and the private companies, native people are at times actually limited by both the state in their participation in public policies, as much as themselves and their comprehension of the situations at hand (Almeida, 2010b). Possessing sufficient knowledge (and avoiding the subjective lack) they are then capable of presenting themselves as potent protagonists of their own fate. This occludes the fact that not all that is offered shines like gold, and instead of freeing, bounds them in shackles. In this sense, Indigenous participation within national politics in Brazil has to be understood as a specific rendering of contextual legitimacies which have to be questioned, rather than being followed, and must come from native people unsatisfied with the status quo, beyond to that of the bare minimum provided currently, and under pressure by current government to subtract even more. In other words, Knowledge that is producing the surplus of enjoyment creates native people both as lacking subjects, who claim they are nevertheless complete, requiring no further assistance in *being indigenous*, but also imaginary Indians that are complete, in comparison of which contemporary Amerindians fall short to the uninitiated into their matters. Although hidden in the discourse, the agent of knowledge, someone possessing, it, say a scientist, but also a native person, proclaims himself as knowing his side, knowledge that he knows, while knowledge is the knowledge that does not know itself, being suppressed by the unconscious. The universal subject produced via UD is then based on the lies echoing from MD – subjects as self-identical, complete, and not willing to accept their inherent lack beyond surplus. The knowledge that one possesses rather than freeing becomes similar to language – the subjects do not speak as such, but *are spoken*; similarly - knowledge does not guide, it *possesses*. In this sense, the native people could appear not really knowing what drives them in their position as producers of knowledge, which again is at the service of capital.

The enjoyment derived within UD is possible only by ignoring the actual subject who partakes in it and accepting him only as an enjoying substance, a body, that produces nothing but more of his own tension. But the very truth of native people's continuous precariat and marginalization remains hidden from them. Capitalism is the very force that in the triangle of representation induces enjoyment via knowledge, while simultaneously maintaining the Master propelling Capitalism and the fact that divided subjects are completely withdrawn from partaking directly in this inner cycle. It represents capital as pure *jouissance*, and nothing else. Such Knowledge is barred in the *truth* that is void in the production cycle resulting in the split and lacking subjects. In other words, Indigenous peoples are made to find their own

happiness, and enjoyment, by means of solving as if personal problems, which are nonetheless caused by the structural persistence of the capitalist order. The message reads – global problems will be solved when you find ways to your own happiness. The means are laid barren in front of you via the discourse of sustainability, and while you keep busy finding how to achieve it, global capitalism can proceed with its own business. You have a clear role and target to become happy, execute it! Instead of questioning how one should ask why? This is the true tyranny of the University Discourse – not to question the knowledge that produces oneself, but to embrace it and be a pawn in its executive order.

Having completed the full circle of the discourses, we may now observe the complete structural frame and the arising implications through its working. Through the portrayal of the specific positions that the native people take in the respective discourses, they are produced, appropriated, and subdued to carry out specific roles and functions. These are important in the reproduction of specific means to forego enjoyment, and while deprived of surplus-pleasure, to experience *jouissance* and means to mask ones overall impossibility to achieve what is desired. In the very schemes and operations of discursive functioning, native people, but also indigeneity are positioned as pieces of a larger puzzle whose overall interaction portray the specific set of positionalities and their effect onto each other. As the scheme of the discourse permits specific terms to interact according to their position, while impeding others to form connections, the result is that in each discourse the structural real is distinct from the other, while at the same time interrelated in its overall functioning through the repetitive *terms* and their roles (Figure 10). Similarly as the Knowledge is guiding the production of subjectivities, it is also the Master, who swapping places, does not remove itself from the picture, but is ascribed with different roles throughout.

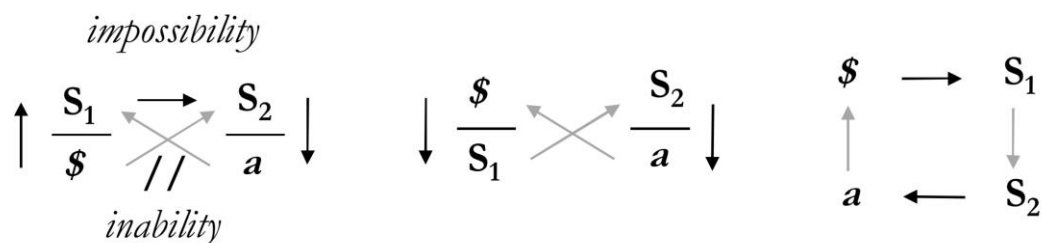


**Figure 10** | The circular interaction MD → HD → AD → UD. Source: *Wikimedia*, 2019.

Having completed the theories showing how UD serves the capitalist Master himself, it must be noted, that it was not the ultimate saying that Lacan had on emergence of the political economy onto the functioning of the subject. His final interpretation of the capitalist real came conceived through the thesis that the determining feature of the capitalist discourse was to foreclose the symbolic castration experienced by the universal split subject (Tomšič, 2015:219-229). The capitalist discourse, or the 'fifth discourse', is the last one, to which we turn in order to finalize the probing, and to focus on its discoveries, to see whether from the insights gained it is possible to deduct the native people to possess a capitalist unconscious.

## The Discourse of the Capitalist

Although Lacan originally anticipated only the already presented four discourses, his second engagement with Marx made him stipulate a fifth one – the Discourse of the Capitalist (CD). Presented in Milan in 1972 (Lacan, 1978) it comes to life as a mutant, as Lacan introduces deviations previously forbidden, namely changing the flow between the positions within the scheme itself. CD represent thus an anomaly of the MD, where both the direction of the initial arrow ( $\$ \rightarrow S_1$ ) and the terms themselves exchange positions. In doing so CD foregoes the impossibility of rapport between  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ , by dropping the horizontal arrow altogether (Figure 11). In doing so, not only does the capitalist discourse foreclose non-rapport; it directs the agents  $\$$  not to the *other*, but straight to the *truth*, which is now occupied by the master signifier  $S_1$ . While Marx's general addition to the critique of political economy was his theory of labor value aimed at the production of commodities, when devising this ultimate discourse Lacan's focus was much rather on the aspect of the actual consumption associated with such commodities.



**Figure 11** | The structure of the Capitalist Discourse (CD) (center), that of the Master Discourse (MD) (left), and the loop (right) enabled in CD by inducing changes to MD.

Within CD the *agent* as the divided subject is able to approach the position of *truth* that is not permitted in any other of the discourse. If in MD the universal split subject is the *truth*, experienced as tension due to the *objet petit a* out of its reach, then the barred subject in CD as the *agent* may try to confront such lack more directly. It does so by running straight to  $S_1$ , rather than seeking the *Other*, or the Knowledge -  $S_2$ . In this sense *truth* represented within CD is also distinct from that of other *truths* within the four discourses. In CD it is open and accessible to anyone seeking it, and rather than suppressed or hidden – open, tempting and posing as able to please through a certain *fetish*.



Freud defines fetishism as a certain form of negation, functioning through disavowal, where the subject acts towards the symbolic castration as if it was non-existent and fake. As a defense mechanism, it strives to cover the pertinent lack by forging a fantasy, wherein such castration is overcome. In engaging the fantasy disavowal is able to fuse and operate at the very limit between the inside psychic truth and the outside world of the external reality of objects (Tomšič, 2015:173-174). The main aspects of the disavowal are the (mis)recognition of truth in the observed, and the engagement in fantasies that covers up for the lack, and *truth*, in the form of psychic labor to maintain said negation. However, the actual subjective castration persists beyond the perceivable, neither abolished nor resolved; on the contrary, '*the fetish is ... a negation of negativity*', exposing the truth of '*castration as the split that constitutes the subject*' (Tomšič 2015:177-182). The discomfort of subjective division and inherent lack continuously confronting  $\$$  engages the agent to strive to forego it. The demand drives the agent to search for alleviation in CD by seeking out the Master Signifier, which stands to pose for solutions to the barred universal subject. How does CD operate on the whole?

$S_I$  within CD stands for any specific commodity that functions as the *truth* capable of alleviating internal tension. Something that one *has to have*, or *experience*. This is a welcoming fantasy which the subjects engage with in order to escape their internal barring. The satisfaction for  $\$$  becomes simple to achieve as it only needs to engage with the *truth* – if only one can acquire  $S_I$ , one shall feel pleased, and complete, at least for some time. In this moment one can pretend to be not lacking, demonstrating explicitly that CD for an instance provides means to foreclose and impose the '*denial of structural quality of subjective division*' (Vanheule, 2016). It removes the fact that within symbolic worlds, of which we are all part, we are all inherently lacking, due to being at least partially castrated. The castration happens when, e.g. one is granted identity, but with which also come specific prohibitions to sustain it as such. CD presents our unsettled being capable of reaching bliss if one complies with market demands to enjoy, and strive to fulfil our desire through objects. The very structural suppression of the subject is to be alleviated with fruits of this very same system, which is a paradox. This inherently insatiable desire for fullness, completely out of reach of the split subjects command, structures a drive that is then supposed to mask the impossibility by engaging in a more simple desire for which there is always an answer, which in CD is a commodity. What this discourse then ultimately does is to exploit the very universal subjectivity, by producing objects and together the use-value, to fabricate and exploit means to engage in a desire. The message of CD is nothing other than '*Consume!*' in order to '*Enjoy!*', in relentless approach to satisfy the desire, which may be referred to as being clinical.

Within the capitalist discourse,  $S_I$  is not fixed but stands for any of the commodities and services in the market one is attracted to. If  $\$$  wants to forego tension it needs to acquire specifically that, meaning where its *objet petit a* may dock itself easiest to construct a fantasy. As soon as one owns it, it rapidly deteriorates into being a mere artifact, outside of the grips of fantasy and as capable to induce enjoyment. When compared with the rest of commodities as part of  $S_2$  it serves as a sobering effect and one quickly understands that the ultimate desire

hasn't been met.  $\mathcal{S}_2$  then using both knowledge and innovation to create new commodities to fulfill the desire for the consumer, proceeds to craft a new representation of a lack, and a where *object petit a* may be posited. Directed towards the consumer it creates new tensions, to which the answers lie in  $\mathcal{S}_1$  and a new commodities. Here again, not only is  $\mathcal{S}$  able to reach the position of *truth*, but by changing the arrows positions, to make the discourse itself run as a loop (Figure 11, right). One can travel endlessly within CD, consuming, enjoying, lacking, and repeating. This apparent smooth circular functioning of the discourse is what potentially also leads to burn outs, and the self-consumption of the  $\mathcal{S}$  caught within it.

Yet going further, Vanheule (2016) notes that within the capitalist discourse what is actually consumed is not the subject himself, but its desire. It goes hand in hand with the current predicament where, as subjects, we are to engage in the labor of seeking enjoyment, and as hysterics, while finding temporary recluse, continue on the quest to forge new desires, in the relentless attempts to find happiness, that is no more a choice but an obligation. And since the arrows of impossibility of social rapport have been dropped, CD emerges as subjective and individual quest in avoiding true human interaction and standing for the anti-social (Declercq, 2006). In a society run by CD the social bond in general becomes imperiled, and its symptoms disconnection and incivility (McGowan, 2004). Within capitalism it is the very  $\mathcal{S}$  as a subject who dominates and takes the place of desire, and as the consumer, relinquishes in trademark goods to identify with finding means to *become*, while simultaneously reengaging in a symbolic castration. One must observe that it is not the subject that truly enjoys; the enjoyment belongs solely to the Knowledge and the Master. What the subject receives is alone *surplus-jouissance*. *Jouissance* in general terms stands for “*the disturbing dimension in the body that renders the subject unable to experience itself as a self-sufficient enjoying entity*” (Lacan, *Seminar XIX*, quoted in Vanheule, 2016). Desire is always directed towards the *Other*, as much as towards enjoyment – we need both another in order to enjoy, but also certain prohibitions for it to become enjoyment in itself. *Surplus-jouissance* achieved is then enjoyment that is perceived as such and built on the negation of castration of the split subject. While complex, it establishes common knowledge as such that objects do not make one happy, yet part of consumer chains, and deprived of true pleasures, the discontents of contemporary society proceed in seeking out satisfaction through materialities.

The psychoanalytic values we can draw from Marx's speculations on the origins of capitalism expose links between *jouissance* and ideology, and the overall fictitious subject of enjoyment (Tomšič, 2015:141). CD has in so far similarities with HD, yet its very superiority lies in the fact of it being able to at least temporarily to appease the *agent*. The fact that in CD Knowledge is out of reach, means the subject is limited in accessing insights that might induce conscious reflections upon the suppressed split, either as proletarians, technocrats, capitalist, or the native people. Object therefore have equal power to attract, impose and subdue the desires, crafted together with the use-value of the commodity. In addition, running as a loop, CD provides no means to escape such consumption, but rather keeps one inside, similar to a hamster in a wheel. Therefore if not knowing what we should want in

order to be happy and complete, we are presented with object that might alleviate this or that new use, which proclaims to then solve all that is inherently imposing the feel of dissatisfaction within. Drives engaged by desires therefore consumes objects for the sake of consumption, imposing needs for its own benefits, e.g. as the subject, who relishes in commodities, while being objectively consumed in the process himself. CD in general is seeking to impose the ego of the *cogito* as not only self-sufficient, but also representing a subject that is completely self-sufficient, and capable to find enjoyment as if without the *Other*. Said otherwise, the subject is foreclosed in CD. It means that instead of coming to term with inherent lack, but also the structural forces eliciting tensions and torsion onto subjects, submission appears as enjoyable and hidden by the fetish. How does it bear with the case at hand and the frontier?

With the previous elaborations on the four discourses having lifted much of the workings and meanings, implying what effect CD has on the pre-Amazonia is nearly straightforward. First of all we need to however remember that and delve into the fact that commodities beyond the direct desires of consumption and value, have been shown the current setting to produce via the excess of commodities indirect effects on native people, allowing them to reworking their identities. Production of same commodities driven by the capitalist system however has reshaped their cultural landscapes, induced distinct subjectivities, and also desires that so far had been not manifest, such as drives after commodities, but also and especially, created them as the commodity, that has answers to foreclose a peculiar lack in the *Other*. Focusing on the consumption patterns of the native people one could induce that majority of objects desired, provided, and present across the communities are to foreclose the lack emanating from being a split subject, and in addition to be collected as a surplus expressing capitalist notions of accumulation. That native people do have an unconscious, and must be inherently split due to entering the symbolic world of language must be accepted as a given. Simple evidence thereof could be taken the fact of them having dreams at night, that according to Freud would be moments when the unconscious is seeking to be heard. Yet their collection of objects has been already discussed to be rather more complex than just going for the object to foreclose an inherent lack to find completeness. Said otherwise, the completeness to be found, is specific to all universal subjects, and in the case of native people seemed to be expressing desire to build relationships, where objects manifest endowments standing for crafting the social link.

Commodity then appears to exhibit the peculiarity of the contemporary indigenous setting, and the very '*non-identity of the capital: capital is neither a subject nor an object but an internally broken process*' (Tomšič, 2015:224). And as such, by providing objects and engaging the functioning of our unconscious it negates one's personal split, where the subject stands for pure negativity, and by externalizing such notion outside, it not only creates solutions, but also the *Other* as having it. And while in a loop, and posing opportunities to go on endlessly, it consumes itself, similar to the growth of bacteria depleting all inside of its Petri dish. If capitalism is a symptom, then it implies our unconscious to be susceptible to acting out this total externalization

of destitution to the *Other*, as is similar to that of pleasure and desire, that is never owned. Capitalism as a system forecloses symbolic castration, and connects the solution via jouissance onto industrial goods or commodities. Jouissance as an agent of the ego and the subjects cogito in turn takes over the insatiable cause and thereby hijacks the subject putting him to work in order to access pleasure. Hereby the pleasure from enjoyment drawn becomes an imperative, and not a choice, enjoyment meant to bring pleasure, in turn becomes labor, labor in its pure form in the system of capitalism is labor of enjoyment (Tomšič, 2019). Such labor for the cause of enjoyment becomes the new mode of exploitation becomes imposed and demanded by the superego of the agent - 'enjoy your suffering, enjoy capitalism' (Tomšič, 2015:229).

Indigenous people do also relish commodities no differently than nonindigenous subjects, primarily it supports their diets, but also other specific needs arisen in the contact situations. Desire after objects therefore hints at similar fantasies, but their impact potentially rather different. As already discussed, bound within two ontologies, that of the native, and to some extent that of the *Other*, local groups are presenting their own way to interact with the outside world. Desires forged are therefore part of the *Other*, but not necessarily that of their indigenous self. It is not that a lack of commodities does not let them rest quietly at night, but more that in the presence of an *other* commodities are the only means to act out the link. Going for the object following CD would imply them going for the truth that there are no real non-exploitative links with the *Other* and therefore that pragmatism of benefits from engagement nonetheless, where commodities establish the necessary link. Fetishizing own kin, it is then transposed onto the *Other* that is to reemerge as master-owner, caring and submissive, but never giving order, alike to the old chiefs. Commodities in such terms hide the very same relation experienced by native people of their absorption into the market of objects-of-surplus-value, aware of the benefits their support and images bring to the outside world, the NGOs, as much the anthropologists, photographers and all that appear to draw personal benefit while appearing to be there for their cause.

This is best exemplified by one comment given to me during an event amongst the Guajajara, carried out to produce maps of where fire had affected their lands. The activities focused on the first steps in order to compose reforestation projects and relied heavily on locals who were present to share their knowledge. While meals were provided, there were no salaries paid for the participants, one of whom later asked – *"You are here to collect data to help us. But it is us who are providing you with information. You are like tourists in our land, but the ones paid are you, and not us. Instead of going to the garden today I came here, but I am not paid anything, although my work in the garden went lost? Are the benefits we supposed to draw from the project one day real, or should I rather just return to my garden now?"* This implies a very important point, while oftentimes unable to purchase commodities, lacking cash incomes, native people require such objects as down payments for their participation. In these circumstances requiring remuneration implies also possibility of failure of such future projects, and knowledge that was produced, which in turn would invite further development projects, and the cycle of giving and taking. In this sense

indigenous participation in matters of importance to the outside – protection of nature, is meant to first of all benefit the actors themselves, making those implying to help to help in two ways. First, it is help directed to future benefits, but also help that is meant to provide for the current day. All interventions disrupt normal cycles and flows within villages and constantly require time that could be otherwise spent on something else – fishing, hunting, or gardening, with real and direct impact and benefits. In these circumstance going after commodities is an example to forego a lack that is produced directly through interventions. This lack would not necessarily been required to be covered, where there not the projects themselves. It implies that commodities are not the primary driver of desire amongst the native people themselves, who are not seeking to extract good from each other, but rather something that is part of acting with the *Other* consistently intruding into the contemporaneous lifestyle of the native people.

Such intrusion may be best perceived as constantly extracting a surplus – timber, in case of illegal logging; forest for pasture, in case of illegal conversion and grazing of cattle; projects meant to mitigate environmental impacts, that in turn further degrade non-protected areas through leakage processes; etc. All of these processes generate a surplus for the capitalist behind. When native people are going for the commodities, it is then best perceived as their political economy based on engagement do be translated into commodities. Why? Because there are no actors that interact with indigenous people who would not otherwise benefit from such relation, be it their salaries, scholarships or illegally extracted resources. Exchange was and still marks relationships that mark the confluence of the imagined separate worlds, as described and depicted in Ch2. Ongoing engagements of exchange have now been redefined to a more accessible term such as '*partnerships*', seeking to elicit equality amongst parties involved, and agency given therein. By foreclosing the repression of *truth* CD enables a very simple and pleasing escape from tension, where native people know to this day to be unequally dispossessed and still made to serve other interests. In a sense, CD facilitates the simplification of reality, by removing knowledge how to overcome this, by providing means to forego sensible castration and perception of not being treated rightfully equal (as in not sharing resources), translating in the fact that commodities for the moment being might appease the discomfort sensed, both parties emerging on relevant benefits. Not only do indigenous people go after commodities, they themselves, as commodities are being consumed by the *Other*.

As a commodity native people are translated into identity (traditional), culture (*indigenous*), but also knowledge (TEK, sustainability) and a fantasy (the existence of *otherness*, connection to nature, exempt from capitalism) which leads to their relative value within discourses reflecting nature conservation and cultural survival. Used by environmental groups, benefitting from the discourse their own way, the myth of environmentalism now reaching limits with conservation becoming as much part of capitalism as native peoples existence themselves. Native people are then turned into project beneficiaries, where development benefits are outshined by the fact of their actual participation. In this, one can assume, native people

draw as much enjoyment as the very benefits from potential projects. Said in laymen terms, fact of projects including and discussing the role of native people therein provides notions of being included, being part of, and not completely abandoned. At the same time it might conceive illusions, and desires, that are beyond capable, as the state and its functioning for past decades has shown native people across the Brazilian Amazon to be only punctually included, and supported largely by foreign donors and aid agencies. In their quest to support local cause they had to stand shoulder to shoulder with own governments seeking to produce commodities, for the governments that were providing finances for the very conservation and community development. Before venturing to the final rebuttal, let us engage with the factual presence of the Amerindians to this in the region as a victory of their ongoing struggle to persist.

Through a direct refusal to sell their labor to acquire goods Amerindians many times did not let power structures emerge that would eventually coerce them. Instead, they oblige the outside world to supply and provide for them, forming asymmetrical master and slave relationships. While increase in commodities has led to certain fissures in communities, they have arisen not as a novel mode of relating, but rather the commodities given grounds for destabilizing that has previously been caused by other means. Native lifestyles, even if appropriating commodities, manifest the Amerindian legacy as an ongoing struggle and distinct means of revolutionize the contemporary class struggle, refusing to work in direct terms, but requiring 'welfare' in direct downright payments or material goods, of the Brazilian government, that has continuously appropriated what is traditionally theirs. In addition, by protecting their lands, their service of persistence must be met with equal support from those caring to maintain the battle, that oftentimes in case of local developments may seem as a Don Quixote's fight with the windmills. Although the persistence of the Amerindian legacy is presented at times as a possible post-capitalist utopia, they stand not for the service of fantasies, nor to answers to current failures of individually driven western societies. If so, their role is again to exposes something different, novel, as if not being for long been subdued by the very capitalist system. Native people do not necessarily possess the antidote to the failure of the market economy, as could be argued by their desire for the excess of the system, to be given them in the form of commodities, that nonetheless have to be produced. Rather, native people have found means to disengage from the capitalist system directly, but have been nonetheless been absorbed in carrying out specific labor in order to be given their right to persist. It is the creativity of native people to adapt and persist, that calls attention, but not their romanticized otherness. If primitive accumulation may be defined as the myth where while in the old day's everyone possessed equal wealth, some enjoyed more and wasted it, while other abstained, saving it. Those who abstained, then accumulated a surplus that they could be invested, but also exerted as power to subdue others. Used as an argument it still paints native people as lazy rascals, as subjects of a specific enjoyment, who refuse work, but nonetheless, insist on a surplus. That native people to labor, but in a different form, has already been discussed at length. Let us look at the final question that has still not been

addressed and the origin and the general research question of this thesis itself, namely - *Is there a capitalist unconscious amongst the native people?*

### **The Capitalist Unconscious**

The reader by now has been familiarized with three integral parts of the thesis. The first of them deals with historical developments at the frontier, from the perspective of the capitalist system of accumulation, incorporating the peasants, indigenous people, and the politics favoring the large-scale landowners, the *fazendeiros* and *latifúndios*. The unravelling developments in the pre-Amazonian Maranhão as of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century with respective impacts onto the people and their landscape have been portrayed and condensed in Ch.1. The focus had been brought in the next part onto the inter-ethnic encounter between the opposing societies – indigenous and the Lusophone, focusing on the role that commodities and commodification as processes had on their interaction, identities, and how it facilitated the very frontier. It was established that the native populations tend to enjoy the making of kin through commodities, while the nonindigenous folk is driven more by their libidinal desires. Enjoyment as constituent of these two opposing ways was nonetheless the common denominator and end of Ch.2. In the last part – Ch.3 we have so far observed how indigenous people have been incorporated into the larger society and ways to observe this by applying the Discourse theory of Lacan. The last discourse, that of the Capitalist, has highlighted not only how native people rejoice in commodities in varying ways (making kin, but also the libido), but there being also no structural transgression in means how native people have been absorbed into the larger nonindigenous society. Here they are imposed the function to a certain degrees as a commodity, where their projected surplus-value is capable to produce both political and economic alliances for their benefits in addition to commodities. Their presence in addition plays an important role in both thwarting the expansion of the frontier, but also its very existence as such, where they are made to execute various roles. To understand whether the indigenous persons unconscious could be capitalist, we need to move to the last, and most speculative part of this thesis, through which final insights are given into the character of desire and its potentially non-ethnic character, and which draws heavily from the work of Samo Tomšič (2015) – *The Capitalist Unconscious*. While on the start of the engagement with the question the question was posed as *‘Is there a capitalist unconscious amongst the native people?’* from the current understanding it must be additionally asked – *why not?*

The intention of the unconscious, according to Freud, should be separated from the subject, arising from the unconscious *‘split into the unconscious desire and the dream work’* (Tomšič, 2015:43). Considering the role of labor in the satisfaction of the unconscious desires through drives, accentuates some form of a productive dimension that is engaged in the unconscious. Desire within then forms the border beyond which there is no other reality; the structure and formal functioning of the *Other* becoming transposed onto the unconscious, where its labor is to create conditions for the fulfillment of such unconscious desire, interpreting reality in a way that it will provide chance of its satisfaction. One can find the intricacies of unconscious

labour by analysing the intriguing process of the production of dreams. Dreams as such, noted beyond myths, are part of Amerindian lifeworld's.

As the unconscious weaves the dream for the subject, it presents the wish via the manipulation of mainly residual memories of the short-term past from the hitherto day or so. If during the day it is saving visual material, then later at night, it produces dreams in spending the images based on memories. To manipulate these images and to make a new story input of labor in the form of '*psychic energy*' is required. It is this aspect of a detour that represents a contradiction - instead of consuming extra labor-power the unconscious could express itself directly. Absorbing '*labor*' the unconscious achieves satisfaction by presenting its dreams as certain wish-fulfilments (Tomšič, 2015:99-100). The actual object of the dream labor is then not the content, but the form, supporting the satisfaction of the unconscious desire by masking it. According to Freud, the best illustration of the unconscious mode of production is adopting capital and labor; '*capitalism is not the unconscious, but capitalism stretches its consequences into the unconscious*' (Tomšič, 2015:130). Marx, then, covering the commodity form, arrives at the conclusion that commodities abolish the division between immediate needs and physiological and psychological satisfaction; in this way they become universal sources of pleasure, in a world where only commodity pleasures preside, ascribing even to fantasies a use value (Tomšič, 2015:119).

Amongst such fantasies, aside of Marx's commodity fetishism, stand intricate things as dreams, when awake, or asleep, representing the true unconscious as in its working. It appears then additionally, that capitalism as a system is able to elucidate the actual workings of the unconscious. From previous arguments and writings it appears that one may draw certain parallels between the unconscious and capitalism, whereupon both seek only to create more of wealth, rather than enjoyment, where the unconscious pursues a similar pathway and workings. It is the Freudian discovery of the unconscious tendencies of the drive and desire, that might pose the unconscious as a capitalist, in the production of meanings, particularly dreams, but also reality, through ontological obfuscation of social relations through commodity fetishism. As Freud's analyses demonstrate, there is no subject of *jouissance*, and unpleasure by ignoring ones drives can still produce pleasure, to both the laborer and the capitalist in the unconscious, through *jouissance*. If displeasure precedes a satisfaction of a *need*, then within the *drive* displeasure coexists with satisfaction as '*the privileged form of pleasure*' (2015:137). Ultimately, this satisfaction is drawn from '*insatiable urges*' that accompanies and marks all drives as its pure essence. When drives turn to corrupt real physiological needs it is unveiled in the form of a slave to the unconscious desire, to be the '*the master signifier  $S_A$ , the repressed signifier of jouissance*' (Tomšič, 2015:137), an agent, constantly driven by something while in itself lacking knowledge to clearly interpret why, but nonetheless potential enjoying it. Consequently, '*Labour! is the true meaning of the superego's injunction (to) Enjoy!*' (ibid.) Capitalism appears then itself only engaging in structures that the humans already possess in the unconscious and the body as an object, exploiting it (Tomšič 2015:55).



Returning to the question whether Amerindians possess a capitalist unconscious it must be postulated that there is little in producing contrary arguments. As part of societies that are both renouncing enjoyment through social order and prohibition of incest as grounding rule to establish kin, native people partake in analysis of shamanic dreams, but also those told amongst them. Dreams are the clue to the fact that the unconscious does work like a capitalist irrelevant to one's ethnicity. Although speculative, it nonetheless addresses the very same fact that the split and barred subject existing as part of the native unconscious must be similar to that experienced by non-native people. Primarily the reasons for the split to occur are given – symbolic world of language is entered by all native people, either their own, or that of the larger society. In addition they are always confronted with the *Other*. First it might be the paternal and maternal figures, and later the society itself. In addition there is also the non-indigenous society that has agency in reworking native identities as addressed in Ch.2. The effects of capitalism and the universal subject must be therefore be kept relevant and actual. What however is of paramount importance, is that the unconscious functioning as a capitalist does not necessarily has to translate into consciousness that functions on the same principle amongst the native people. On the contrary – as it has been shown throughout this work, native people have not only persisted in their ways, reluctant to be alienated via labor, but maintained agency in forging relationships and partnerships that are of benefit to them beyond the commodities they sought to acquire. It remains factual that enjoyment that may be drawn from social interactions and the natural surrounding involving traditional practices of hunting, as much as working together, at times still outweigh that of pleasures associated with libidinal desires alike to that of non-native societies. On the general, and something that identity politics omits, conceived as universal subjects, but not individuals, we are relatively equal. The difference that allows indigenous people to persist outside of exploitative market relations are the opportunities, when granted, to ground their subsistence and politics grounded on territory and ethno-politics emanating thereof. Indigenous Peoples might be different, but objectively they are fighting the same forces that try to subdue them. While the Enlightened society appears more and more losing its bearing in the fight for politics and reason, native people are the ones who remain those that have the most to lose, should their cultural persistence be hindered due to the exploitative means seeking to dispose them of *land* that *de facto* is theirs since time immemorial.

## 11. Concluding Essay

From the onset, this work has been gradually increasing the level of theoretical input grounded upon mainly psychoanalysis and semiotics, thereby grown in complexity, at times speculative assumptions, and to a possible incomprehension of the content to some of the readers. The next paragraphs seek, therefore, to do justice by bringing things back to a level of possible simplicity and permitting the coming down to earth. This should not serve as a summary, for that is ascribed to the manifesto laid out at the beginning that also deals with the expected impact. Neither is it meant to discuss the separate chapters, since all, to some extent, have been conferring and insisting upon insights aiming to provide grounds in order to uncover the main message. Partially it also means that some readers have grappled with the overall contentious input, and might have long abandoned the text to its potentially inconceivable manner. Some of the arguments or claims might have also lacked sufficient examples from the field itself to make it more approachable. Under such circumstances, in this concluding essay, I strive to limit myself to pulling the work now together, letting the murkiness of previous chapters settle, and inviting in the next paragraphs to raise questions, and see whether the produced work has any partial answers. Without returning greatly to theory, it should make the major assumptions made accessible in laymen terms, the reasons why the cumbersome work was carried out, and potential insights emanating therefor.

It has been now a while, since pursuing my interest in tropical ecosystems, I have come to be fascinated beyond its sheer complexity and species richness as compared to the poor soils that ground it. Being for a fact amongst the oldest on Earth, some of these green spots on the map, have provided refuge to cultures, that had but no other choice than to fight, flee, die, or adapt, from the forces unleashed since the discovery of the New World. The perspective of those arriving to trade and establish themselves as the new heirs, slowly dispossessing the coastal areas, is sufficiently easy to understand and grasp. With superior technologies and knowledge adapted at exploiting the resources of the natural world, next to diseases to which immunity was missing amongst the natives, the expansion of the foreign, and the suppression of the local reality expanded rapidly. Both nature, and culture locally, if adopting the dichotomy, was being subdued and made to serve none other but rapidly rising calculations of surplus value and profits made. Very rarely are we given insights into how such developments affected the local world beyond the observations of conquistadors, *bandeirantes*, naturalists, or missionaries, giving the first accounts of the local people, but rarely their own emic perspective on things. As the title of Viveiros de Castro (1992) book, my interest had been for a long while been to understand the clash of the distinct worlds *From the Enemies Point of View*. The enemy, as such, was those discovered in their bliss, and made to slave or be exterminated. The Meta position of the colonial force never implied to perceive itself as the enemy itself, but that is not the point I seek to follow. The aspect of particular interest had been to understand the reality perceived by native people during the frontier in Brazil, of which the last one had been instigated with the commencement with the Plan for National Integration and the road building that was to dissect the immense forests stretching beyond the coast. The

area was so huge, that the pilots to reach Manaus, the city built during the Rubber Booms, and upon the enslavement of numerous tribes, leaving from Rio de Janeiro, or São Paulo, had to follow the coast, stopping to refuel on the way. What changes were unleashed to combat such circumstance are laid out as part of the Case Study and Ch.1. While it did provide some insights into how the frontier unraveled in the pre-Amazonia, the ontological perspective specific to each group had been rather missing. Instead, while of actual interest, but limited by observations collected during my internship I aspired to understand the frontier from the perspective of capitalist perspective, or even more so, the power it has in creating a particular type of subjectivities. Following the idea, I assumed the native people due to their cosmological perspectivism to display quite distinct traits, which to some extent were presented in Ch.2. Yet as capitalism was unraveling at the frontier, the native people stuck in their reserves, and populations rising rapidly around the indigenous lands, with overall interaction between increasing, what my general interest pushed on, was to display how native people have been both absorbed, and exploiting the very capitalist system that was unleashed onto them.

The insular image of indigenous worlds anthropologist had set out to encounter is gone; Amerindians of Brazil have been in intermittent contact and exchange of various intensities with the Lusophone society surrounding them. This has resulted in a multiplication of challenges and opportunities to creatively engage with the White man's world, forming asymmetrical relationships while actively engaging with one's own identity. The space and frontier of post-colonial neoliberalism and native people closing in rapidly sharpened the encounter of ontologically different worlds reworking and bestowing of symbolic meanings within their subjectivities and identities. There is consistency in the fact that identity always stands for something, enabling and giving meaning, part of ideological workings, but at the same time also limiting. By entering a symbolic order one gains identity but is simultaneously castrated of all that the identity doesn't represent – it is an inclusive exclusion and exclusive inclusion.<sup>40</sup>

The romantic assumptions that native people are anticapitalistic and condemning commodities while living completely outside of the realm of the capitalist world order is both a fiction and distortion of reality. The fact that native people use cellular phones, enjoy shopping, and drive cars to reach distant villages in across their lands, listening to popular music, dressed in western clothes, might even be upsetting and the western subject – from one side, they are no longer *native*, from the other – why would they want to have these objects?! To sustain the innocence of our total succumbing to capitalism, Amerindians are therefore expected '*interpassively*' (Van Oenen, 2016) to renounce consumption, and live a *sustainable* lifestyle, which we are unable. In the meantime, the non-native society at large, and particularly that

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<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, Marx pursues an alike homology that alienation and identity, are correlative. Observing that people treat kings by a fetish misrecognition as if they were kings by being, he reminds, that kings are only kings because people stand in relation to them as particular subjects; '*being king*' is therefore by no means a natural property of the person who is the king (Žižek, 1989:20-2).

of the West wants to continue in enjoying commodities, appropriating and benefiting from resources, while expecting others, mainly the Amerindians, but also those living in countries of emerging markets, to abstain from, limit the use of, and in general protect the resources, such as forests. In realizing that the market economy has engulfed furthest parts of the globe, the western subject becomes marked by hopelessness, as his fiction of the existence of primordial heaven shatters. The image of the nature-loving and abiding Indian suddenly turning antagonistic, since he seizes to reflect for the other what he is assumed, and therefore, *supposed to be*. In retaliation, flows of material goods, political support and coalitions come to a halt (Chapin, 2004), with the actuality of native reality not suiting easy instrumentalization for the extraction of the surplus value embedded into the harbored imaginary and symbolic identities attached to the native. Capitalism rapidly appropriates this fissure, projecting the contemporary native people who embrace technology and foreign goods as a yardstick, so that the 'modern' westerner could proceed in binge shopping, maintaining the gap within which he is subconsciously somehow superior to the other (Mannoni, 1990 [1956]). This gap is retained in acquiring modern artifacts represented by superior commodities than found at the frontier. To the western psyche the natives, therefore (similarly to '*underdevelopment*') are signifiers that should sustain antidotes to the neoliberal order, by maintaining a false nature/culture dichotomy.

Capitalism seeks to forego discontent by submitting and insisting that subjects find enjoyment within the world of objects. In doing so, this disengages humans one from the other, uncovering the non-existence of social links and the ease by which this may be substituted by attachment to objects. The interactions taking place with materialities are shielded by fantasies which cover up the fact that for each other we stand as and resemble, nothing else, but objects and commodities ourselves. The system of capitalism forecloses negativity while enforcing a fantasy that blurs inner distress, hinged upon a process represented by the functioning of the unconscious in a manner similar to the capitalist mode of production. As such, the frontier and forces unleashed have become places where worlds had been morphed via commodities, engaging in exploitations of the universal human distress and desire. In a similar fashion, market economy and the arrival of the *Other* has made Indigenous people become instrumental to capitalism, first to represent a gap between the modern and 'pre-modern' subjects, and secondly to ascribe symbolic meanings instrumentalizing their identities. As writes Tomšič, '*if capitalism would be only about enjoyment, and not enrichment, capitalism would have abolished itself already*' (Tomšič, 2015:69). While the desire for wealth accumulates objects that embody value, it focuses on the object of value, '*and not on value as an object*' and the drive constantly fixated on the object, seeking to fulfill a desire. Without capitalism indigenous people do not exist, not in a naive way, that they cease to prevail on Earth, rather, that capitalism as all-engulfing ontology has encountered, absorbed and appropriated them objectively and are now to be brought to a subjective demise. Native people in their own right have found ways to elicit agency and stand up against such recurrent threats. If capitalism, as a process, reinvents itself via new ideologies, then modes of production, distribution,

and dispossession still remain the same, wherein the created subjects as objects become inscribed with new meanings, roles, and agendas. In a similar fashion, being indigenous today is also process and not a static thing, wherein objects and commodities are incorporated to meet certain needs, desires and goals. Ultimately then, native people may subjectively not experience commodities as a certain fetish, cognizant that goods are exchanged in return for their overall participation in environmental protection projects all the while performing expected ethnic identities. Objectively, however, commodities endowed with use values to cover up newly inscribed needs do force them to ignore the fact that this might lead to their further integration into the perverse capitalist economy. On the other hand, they have the agency to choose to what extent they wish to be part of the system and limiting their alienation through labor, instead of focusing on activities improving their livelihoods on conservation of nature they depend upon. The ability to indulge and enjoy objects more than others rests upon the fact of limited alienation in performed labor, which is deeply embedded in their culture and identity use-values, which both strengthens their persistence and therefore implies continues the exchange of, and marketing of their identity as commodity and object-of-surplus-value. At the same time, identity politics assumes the character of the individual who is engaged with own ego and acting as if the desire is the true expression, and not perpetrated by the ideology behind capitalism itself. Common pleasures derived from obtaining material goods no matter their different meanings to heirs favors the continuation of libidinal assurances brought by capitalism. And although the process seemingly already underway, bound by identity politics to appear as if renouncing technological progress, they are meant to resubmit themselves to the dichotomy of culture/nature representing the latter to retain '*authenticity*'. Eliciting such images capitalizes on the symbolic imaginaries where native people are to represent the last stronghold of '*purity*' withstanding forces of capitalism.

With decades passing the situation across the frontier might have reached a sort of an equilibrium state, with trauma and past wrongdoings still plaguing the landscapes and people who have remained, crime and illegal activities part of the norm, and destitution and opportunities to embrace future pressing to focus on the here and now. Fighting of both the peasants and the capitalist system of accumulation facilitated by the government native people became surrounded and pillaged from the outside. Within in their lands, they had to readjust ways to confront this the best way possible, that at times was still not enough. While the state has abandoned its responsibilities to protect the indigenous lands efficiently, the role has been passed on to the Amerindians themselves. Therein they have adopted their lifestyles, in order to meet the needs to constantly patrol the forests, but also a variety of engagements with the outside world that are now a daily reality. Therefore while trying to persist as groups fighting for their survival native people how become a thorn in the back of the society itself, claiming them to have both undergone too many changes to claim still being indigenous, such as adopting modern technologies or clothing, but also to persist in their right to own Indigenous

Lands for that matter. There are so many wrong claims in such arguments that we need to dissect them one by one, succinctly.

Cultural adjustments as has historically been depicted have been none other but the very strength of persistence of native people. In finding ways to minimize the tensions between different groups while maintaining the actual difference is a skill to persevere. In addition, native people changed due to imposed policies by SPI/FUNAI, but also the very incorporation of their lands by the state. Inflicted changes to their native habitats, cultures, and environments. The claims that should appease the observers must reverse their own argument. It follows that in order for native people to persist as such, with minimal changes to culture, they would potentially have to be granted opportunities to restrain themselves to cultural activities, seizing to interact with the state, presiding in their lands, and being taken care of in paternalistic relationships. The failure of such approaches are the decades of the 1970s and 80s, in addition to the state that was incapable, nor appeared willing, to proactively secure native lands. If such protection of the TI was a failure of the state, then changes perceived in culture are partially its fault. Only by securing and promoting the persistence of native lands and their resources to local populations are the opportunities to claim their cultures also granted the chance to reproduce. Indigenous people have the remedies for their own survival and persistence if agency and protection of their landscapes is granted and implicitly provided by the state; in case the later is impossible, the circumstances and political instruments crafted creating opportunities to engage bilaterally or multilaterally for both conservation of nature but also grounds for native people to persist in their own right must be given.

It must be explicitly noted that *being indigenous* and ways adopted are the decision of native peoples themselves, and not to be imposed by the other. While they have to continuously seek to find ways to persist as distinct people, they also need to engage with the *Other*, who in turn seeks to subdue them for own benefits. From the one hand I argued therefore for the partial commodification of the indigenous peoples, turned into subjects whose surplus-value was being extracted by parties engaging in partnerships, and direct exchange for their resources, and political support, as a long historical development into the contemporary reality. On the other hand, I strived to show that native people had not been lacking agency and creative in not succumbing to commodities subjectively, while objectively they appeared to hoard and be consumed by their drive thereafter. Drawing enjoyment not from material objects as such, and avoiding to be alienated through labor in the most common sense, hinted at the potential of balancing their ontologies with that of the market economy through specific notions of enjoyment. While this was partially so in their fetishizing of relationships, more than commodities, they also sought to satisfy their pleasures by drawing from surrounding environment and kin when possible, while not shying away to collect a possible surplus via commodities. The latter, more than standing for material wealth, has enabled native people to direct their engagements with the outside world, hold those accountable for wrongdoings and those seeking to exploit them on unequal terms. Instead of denouncing

object of desire, and established modes of interacting, native people do not have the opportunity to withdraw from the frontier, nor politics that directly affect them. Therein, they have sought and continue to engage in a way that try to subdue the Master-owner as much, as they are incapacitated by policies and lack of the state's interest in carrying out the Constitution. Although many claims had been drawn from literature, they do incorporate a variety of similarities that I had observed in the field myself.

While ontologies of the native world have a chance to be clarified through laborious processes of anthropological work, I did not possess the opportunities to dedicate my time towards that while in the field. On the contrary, during my engagement with psychoanalysis and perspectives gained trying to understand the working of the capitalist system thereafter, I came to the conclusion that matters through the lens of political economy were no less complex, and as much elusive to pinpoint, as much as accepting and comprehending some of the Amerindian ontologies. In a sense, reality and perspective lived out in the contemporary western society, or any at large governed by capitalist relations must be denoted to be part of an ontology with capabilities to enact structural ordering and impose truth onto the universal subject found therein. It persists therefore not that much in the conscious and logical manner, but extends itself into the unconscious, were capable to tap into the functioning of the universal subject, it ground to proceed to subdue, and obfuscating the matter at hand – while subjectively we have grounds to proceed, objectively we act irrationally. Finally, by exemplifying that links between pluriverses and distinct ontologies are mediated by commodities, unveils consumption as the common and potentially universal ground, and the commodity form capable of incorporating subjects as an object in the chain of exchange of desires. The insights from merging ideas of Marx and Lacan then clarify how within the market economy subjects as objects become interlinked by commodities, allowing to counterfeit the existence of actual social relations. Such insights clarify to a part the crisis unraveling not only locally at the frontier, but as a symptom of a larger failure of the post Enlightenment society as such. The force of capitalism deployed foists itself beyond the clash that has marked the frontier entanglements and clashes between various interest groups, but into the very model of how enjoyment is conceived, and sought to be reached, and the current political crises both in the global south and north. It is important to engage with them in the times of failing politics and economies based on preaching sustainable 'developments' while inducing and externalizing extraction onto others. What the thesis, therefore, sought to portray is the limits of not the engaging with native people as such, and the cultural diplomacies and power struggles enacted, but rather the current failure of politics based on identity. Built upon notions of the individual it has completely obliterated the notion of the universal subject uncovered by works of Marx, Freud, and Lacan. It is not total freedoms and enjoyment, but dissatisfaction and renouncement that should be part of grounding engagements with the contemporary societies of enjoyment.

Engaging with psychoanalysis we arrive at the stage where the observations into the subject as such, emerging in consumer society builds completely on the individual not only as self-

sufficient but also a narcissistic egomaniac. Meant to strive for hedonistic pleasures, individuals proceed as if capable to find means to overcome inherent lack due to being split subjects. On the one hand, split, by entering into the symbolic realm, structured semiotically through language, an object appearing as signs, with a signifier and a signified. Language becomes a structuring reality, into which we are then born. In addition, due to the confrontation with our bodies as a limiting entity, but also interaction with the outside world as an infant we become split between an ego and the unconscious where the subject that is beyond language, and body, as such, presides. The subject that is not part of the symbolic world as we know it. He transgresses into the real by making appearances through desires, dreams, and slips of the tongue. Capitalism finds means to engage with the particular aspect of the desire of the split subject, by producing objects that give the opportunity to construct fantasies how to overcome the internal split, and the lack that is experienced due to entering into the symbolic world. Bound between fetishistic fantasies and the commodity form the universal subjectivities are hijacked and forlorn by the economic system to enact true change that instead of bringing Enlightenment and liberation with the promise of progress, to have actually reproduced pre-modernity, now guided it in veils of masochistic enjoyment. Beyond that, and true alarming insight must be noted the fact that democracy, identity politics, and capitalism as a political system go perfectly hand in hand, raising the question how we should reengage with not only our individual but also subjective selves. At the same time, it again proposes to look at the frontier.

The poverty of both the native people and peasants and misery often depicted as if self-induced and caused due to persistent failure to make something out of nothing. Rather than so, the frontier is a symptom of the state's failure to deal with the capitalist means of engaging with the socio-environmental aspects, just as much as providing services at the frontier. In such circumstances, not only were *nordestinos* presented as befallen of own incapacities to, but placed as if culprits for both their destitute state and misery, as if being recipients of failing public policies they were not at its will. Native people similarly were and remain projected as either insufficiently being, or as excessively having. The harsh reality of violence and exclusion embedded within the political sphere which itself is involved in the plunder of resources leaves all social groups as an excess that is not required for mechanized large scale capitalist enterprise to serve exports and markets based on financialization. Important facts continue ignored and remain unspoken, and if need be – silenced, so that the status quo could persist, the political machine working for the reason so that capital could pursue accumulation and dispossession. At the same time, institutionalized violence is overlooked, promoted, and externalized onto the deprived groups, by the state to this very day, who are meant to wage war between themselves, as in the case of the peasants and indigenous peoples, both lacking required support and incapacitated to engage in producing a change in the system. The stories of Chico Mendes (1944-1988), Dorothy Mae Stang (1931-2005) or Marielle Franco (1979-2018), amidst many others, may therefore not be forgotten, but are an homage to the brutality that is structuring not only the rural but also urban landscapes of



past and contemporary Brazil. Poverty and crime are therefore symptomatic to the failure of the state to engage in policies incorporating smallholders and laborers, rather than exploiting and abandoning them, who then seek ways to subsist by extracting illegally resources from already dilapidated indigenous lands.

On a wider scale, NGOs persistence on a global scale is complicit with the capitalist discourse of valuing nature, and at the same time ethnic groups, that are meant to attract investments and donations. With the tightening of means by which projects may be financed from outside of Brazil that lead towards the prosperity of native people based upon western financial means reflects the contemporary setting acquisitively well. Presently major aid for sustaining native people of the region is embedded in extractive industries, that while amassing wealth and having unleashed already major environmental degradation in the region continue to provide for global markets, the hunger for resources, and oppression of certain groups of people, such as negligence of the needs of the peasants, leads to increased valorization of indigenous people. Brazil, however, has no interest to prolong the subjective treatment of the traditional heirs of these lands, ensuring rather that issues of peasants remain a rural issue, fought out between marginalized groups rather than affecting the politics, beset by their own struggle for power, and feuds within the senate of various lobby groups. Indigenous people are both commodified within the extractive industries and race for resources, sustaining their reproduction of capital creation, engaged and included for the sake of capital, while at the same time made to care for themselves, and fight the symptoms caused by unequal land distribution across rural landscapes, and capitalist modes of production. In such circumstances, asking the right questions, rather than acting, might be of utmost importance. Understanding that part of the problems are based on the fact how questions are asked we need to reengage with the desire to cover it up with a solution. Through Knowledge that does not know itself we must engage to uncover means to structure fantasies capable of change not in a romantic way, but factual and capable to uplift romantic dreams that seek a counterfeit paradise and ways by which they obfuscate structural dystopias emerging through unbridled capitalists mode of engagement with the subjectively and objectively real.

## Epilogue

This work provided me with the privilege and opportunity to confront both my own perspectives, but also engage with theory to elucidate of what appeared as perplexing, strange and contradictory, that I had perceived in the field. It was epitomized by the manifesting reality of native people in the pre-Amazonian region that to some extent reflects Amerindian contemporaneity in the rest of Brazil. To my initial bewilderment local people appeared not as much denouncing capitalism, and its associated forces, but part of the system. On the other side, I did have sufficient anthropological insights to know that Amerindians to this day have been incorporated into the consumerism shaped society. Therefore, I needed to understand the situation that I found so perplexing – why would someone being actively exploited by the system adore and enjoy benefits that the very system produces. Would it not be hypocritical to critique the Master, but demand him to provide? I learned, that knowing and seeing are two sides, of apparently not the same coin. My knowledge was based on an outsider's gaze, who ordered his world according to an episteme grounded upon a western ontology. On the other hand, what I was seeing was a perspective granted to me by my own culture, wherein Indigenous people had been instrumentalizing a fantasy, which I fed further by literature of an era surrounding the 1960s and 70s, that had represented the still raw, only coming to the fore, direct clash of societies only commencing to (re)unravel. In order to grasp the side of the observed, I had to disengage and cease to be part of the gaze, but rather unlearn certain predispositions and judgments, inviting the mirror and gaze to be reversed. Clearly, these insights and comprehension are symptomatically reworking the past, but without the time devoted to the thesis and answering things that were lingering inside there would not have been the possibility to come to peace required to continue. In other words, by failing upon my initial desire I had to access knowledge that was unknown to itself, and consistently revisiting my own ideas to grow and observe. The working through, as Lacan would coin it, was an important aspect able to provide reconfigurations of the fantasy. As the majority of those familiar with the field, the engagements are often combined in efforts, failures, adjustments and new attempts. In this case, this work and ability to dedicate time to change the frame of thinking and engaging with notions such as fantasies and desires have been fruitful in providing novel insight. Above all, grasping that *there is no other of the other*, and the way we adapt to emerge as part of the *Other*, has brought me to ease with seeing beyond rationality, and accepting the irrational as something that constantly provides us with food for thought. Above all, it has brought me to think of identity politics beyond that of the Cartesian *sum*, not based on notions of self-love or the commodity form, but means to reestablish potency of true social links, outside the world of subjects-as-objects-of-desire. These are important aspect for re-engagement with the field, and complexities of inter-ethnic encounter.

The thesis itself has clearly multiple shortcomings, and the polemic I have engaged with must be taken with a grain of salt. On the general level, my interest and studies have grown from forestry to anthropology, from there to sociology, and failing to find rationality how subjects

act, making me delve into psychoanalysis. The latter was a personal passion, and although pursuing it with calculated disposition many intricacies remain occluded, as much as the texts of Lacan himself, who is known to be wary of providing clear answers. As such, the sum of the insights incorporated into the thesis must be seen rather as an attempt to engage theoretically with the field of contemporary social anthropology of Amerindian life. Having been granted the chance to observe it in the pre-Amazonian setting, I have multiple times been forced to reinvestigate my assumptions. The chapters and paragraphs composed through the labor of love were means to engage retroactively with the field and local history that represents a snapshot of my thinking and perceptions sometime between 2016 and 2019. The complex interplay locally, but also my use at the time of literature from decades ago, depicts that to a large part, changes at the frontier have been rather slow and stagnating compared to the time that has passed at the frontier. This means that insights presented in this work will mature further and change in the course of time; the more one is acquainted with local realities of not only native people but also all other social groups struggling at the frontier. Made to fight each other, they are hidden from seeing that the cause of poverty on the ground is established by the system that has them subdued. In such circumstance, this thesis is an attempt to give some punctual insights that might be beneficial to awake further interest of anthropologists, but also sociologists, in Lacanian psychoanalysis - a powerful tool in describing times of crisis that we find ourselves living in. With new turbulent times in politics unraveling, the frontier appears once again as a never-ending process, and native people caught therein to be again at odds with the exploitative character of the market economies, both of local and international character. It is therefore that such social and psychoanalytic analyses must be made of use to rework fantasies of the possible, and real, beyond the modern politics, speaking through commodity spells and the desires of libidinal enjoyment. Fantasies should not foreground action, but crafted carefully be the potent agents of change.

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