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HOW "STEP SOFTLY ON THE EARTH"* IF OUR URBANIZING FOOTPRINTS ARE GETTING WIDER AND WIDER?

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The landscape, entangled by natural and artificial elements, is the stage of successive confrontations between humanity and Nature in the "longue durée" of the Anthropocene, visible both in the stratification of footprints, tracks, subversions, remodelling and destruction, as well as in the meanings and values assigned by interests, speculations, fabulations, technical and local, contemporary and ancestral knowledge. The holistic understanding of landscape as a cultural construction – in its materiality and immateriality – is presented in this essay as an instrument for reading and interpreting the anthropic actions that have taken place in the territory, specifically in the regions of Sines, Portugal, and Mato Grosso, Brazilian Amazon, in the last fifty years. As these urbanizing processes have expanded their scale towards territorial occupation, the impact on Nature, its native peoples and communities has been equally proportional. Vast regions, once called "Voids", "No Man's Land", "Green Hell", were targeted by developmental and national integration policies, in both cases engendered by authoritarian governments. With a focus on extractivist and productivist exploitation, countless infrastructures (ports, highways, mineral exploration fields, hydroelectric plants, service networks, pastures, intensive and extensive farming, even cities) were embedded into the surface, scratching its soil and reshaping the landscape. Territories previously apprehended by their extensions and obstacles became mapped by flows, axes, and nodes. Known occupied lands were appropriated as assets and converted into capital. New cities emerged like phantasmagorical Benjaminian allegories as they demonstrated a true disregard for and oppression of the fauna, flora, and the gentiles of the land. In short, consequences that will be better problematized in due course. At this point, regarding the cases in question, we should direct our

attention to the meaning of the ground we step on and to its ecosystems. By refuting the idea of Nature as an external and independent entity, as a mere support at the disposal of mankind – disregarding its waste – we rely on the idea of Nature as a subject, a field of our imagination, a mythical being in constant dialogue with humanity. For Ailton Krenak, our future on Earth will be possible if we know how to coexist on it, humans and Nature, making our footprints on it ever lighter and shorter, to the point of becoming invisible to the next generations; something similar proposed by André Corboz, of scraping with the greatest care the ancient text that men inscribed on the irreplaceable matter of the soil, before it is completely revoked. May our future landscapes be (re)constructed out of this respect, and not by pretentious "ex nihilo" urbanizing footprints!

Keywords: Landscape; Territory; Soil; Amazonia; Sines; New cities.