

EX NIHILO NIHIL FIT – NEW CITIES AS TERRITORIAL INFRASTRUCTURES IN BRAZIL AND PORTUGAL

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Abstract

The pre-foundational stages of new cities are marked by several decisive elements that ultimately led to their genesis. The reason for their existence and where they materialize necessarily depend on decisions made by agents, institutions and specific political-economic-social circumstances that have guided each of these undertakings. In some cases, new cities have not only involved the destruction of local ecosystems (human and natural) but even their eventual disappearance, within a context whereby the human species has simply viewed them as being subsidiary (almost always superfluous) to pursuing its colonizing determinations. The aim of this article, which is the result of post-doctoral research, is to characterize new cities, those intentionally created and professionally designed, as infrastructural devices for territorial activation and urbanization. Rather than being the end-products of a political-spatial dynamic, could these cities be understood as intermediary cogwheels for productive and extractive activities? In the pursuit of an answer, attention has been focused on the cities founded in the central-south region of the Amazon (Brazil) and in the Sines region (Portugal) during the 1970s, all of which emerged from developmentalism, state authoritarianism, the dynamics of capitalization and accumulation and the expanded participation of private sectors. While maintaining the due proportions and scalar differences, the processes of occupation, colonization, infrastructure development, and exploitation of natural assets characterize both territories, including the predatory urban planning practices that are harmful to local ecosystems. Thus, these cities have become our exploratory field in this investigation, conducted through an historical perspective, underpinned by consultations with primary and secondary sources and on-site visits. With an understanding that “nothing comes from nothing”, this study qualifies each new city as a representation of the conditions that led to its birth and its strategic position in the recent capitalist system.

Keywords

History of Regional Planning; Capitalocene; Territory; Urbanization; Amazonia; Sines; Ecosystems.

EX NIHILO NIHIL FIT – CIDADES NOVAS COMO INFRAESTRUTURAS TERRITORIAIS NO BRASIL E EM PORTUGAL

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Resumo

Cidades de raiz – não espontâneas – têm em seu passado pré-fundacional elementos decisivos que induziram a sua gênese. A razão de existir e onde se materializar passam necessariamente por decisões de agentes, instituições e conjunturas político-econômico-sociais específicas que direcionam cada um desses empreendimentos. Em alguns casos, as cidades novas implicaram a destruição dos ecossistemas (humanos e naturais) locais e do seu eventual desaparecimento, num quadro em que a espécie humana os encarava apenas como subsidiários (quase sempre supérfluos) para a realização dos seus propósitos colonizadores. Este artigo, decorrente de pesquisa de pós-doutoramento, tem como propósito qualificar cidades novas, aquelas intencionalmente criadas e profissionalmente projetadas, como dispositivos infraestruturais de ativação e urbanização territorial. Mais que produtos-fim de uma dinâmica político-espacial, podem essas cidades ser compreendidas como engrenagens intermediárias a atividades produtivistas e extrativistas? Na busca por resposta, direciona-se a atenção às cidades fundadas no centro-sul amazônico (Brasil) e na região de Sines (Portugal) nos anos 1970, surgidas como resultado do desenvolvimentismo, do autoritarismo estatal, das dinâmicas de capitalização e acumulação e da participação ampliada de setores privados. Guardadas as devidas proporções e diferenças escalares, os processos de ocupação, colonização, infraestruturização e exploração de bens naturais perfazem ambos os territórios, incluindo práticas urbanizadoras predatórias aos ecossistemas locais. Assim, tais cidades tornam-se nosso campo exploratório nesta investigação, conduzida por um olhar histórico, respaldado por consultas a fontes primárias e secundárias e por visitas in loco. Ao entender que “nada nasce do nada”, este estudo qualifica cada cidade nova como representação das condicionantes que levaram a seu nascimento e a seu posicionamento estratégico no sistema capitalista recente.

Palavras-chave

História do Planejamento Regional; Capitaloceno; Território; Urbanização; Amazônia; Sines; Ecossistemas.

EX NIHILO NIHIL FIT – NEW CITIES AS TERRITORIAL INFRASTRUCTURES IN BRAZIL AND PORTUGA¹

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1. Contextualization: the present as access to the past

If the Anthropocene defines the actions of men in the environment, the term Capitalocene² extends this meaning and attributes environmental transformations to the “capitalist economic valorizations of appropriating nature and territories, and not just [to] direct human actions” (Ulloa, 2019, p. 2).³ Despite the terminology adopted – Anthropocene, Plantationocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene –, it is well-known that we stand on the brink of collapse, due to the “actions etched in stone” by the human species, or, at best, a transition to a new geological period. However, the concept of Capitalocene offers the possibility of obtaining a better understanding of the origins of this destructive power, originating not from something abstract and generalist (humanity as a whole), but rather from concrete

1. This article is the result of post-doctoral research conducted by the author, Ricardo Trevisan, under the supervision of the co-author, Maria Manuel Lobo Pinto de Oliveira, in the School of Architecture, Art and Design at the Universidade do Minho (Portugal) between January 2023 and January 2024, and which received financial support from CNPq (National Council of Scientific and Technological Development – Brazil). Thanks are extended to the research group TOPOS – Landscape, Design, Urban Planning (CNPq; FAU-UnB, Brazil), Lab2PT – Landscape, Heritage and Territory Laboratory (EAAD-UMinho, Portugal) and IN2PAST – Associate Laboratory for Research and Innovation in Heritage, Arts, Sustainability and Territory (Portugal).

2. The term *Capitalocene* appeared in 2009, coined by Andreas Malm (1976-), professor of Human Ecology at Lund University (Sweden), as a criticism and correction to the term Anthropocene (created by the American biologist Eugene F. Stoermer, in the 1980s, and redefined by the Dutch chemist Paul Crutzen, in 2000), attributing to development and capitalism a greater share of responsibility in relation to the current environmental crisis.

3. This and all other non-English citations hereafter have been translated by the authors.

actions promoted by public and private agents, institutions and corporations articulated around political relations and common economic interests (Fernandes, 2013). In peripheral countries of the globalized capitalist system, such as Brazil and Portugal, predatory appropriations of territory, exploitation, and the transformation of nature into merchandise (Haraway, 2016), or logistical support for business and financial conglomerates based in central countries, are linked, respectively, to the climatic and-environmental crisis and to wars.

In Brazil, the four years of the Bolsonaro government (2019-2022) exemplify the dismantling of policies, laws, and actions to protect the environment, in favor of deforestation, illegal mining, clandestine occupations in reservation areas, and the advancement of agribusiness (Davis et al., 2020; Caetano, 2021). This portrays the environmental *depolitics* assumed by that particular administration (Grandes, 2011)⁴, which directly impacted the Amazon, Cerrado and Pantanal biomes (Raisg, 2021). However, turning a blind eye to environmental issues has not been exclusive to this government. Subjection to economic interests to the detriment of conservation has permeated both previous and current governments, either to a greater or lesser extent. By way of illustration, the “*Ferrogrão* [Railgrain]” proposal, the 170 Railway Line (EF-170), for transporting commodities from the Central-North region of the state of Mato Grosso to the port of Santarém, in the state of Pará, drafted in 2014 by the three largest agricultural trading companies in Brazil – the multinational ADM, Bunge Brasil and Amaggi –, was taken on by the government of Dilma Rousseff (2015-2016), gained prominence during the governments of Michel Temer and Bolsonaro and has currently been defended by Renan Filho, the Transport Minister in Lula’s government (Preite Sobrinho, 2023).

The new infrastructure project, seen as a cheaper, less polluting alternative than road haulage on the main BR-163 highway (Cuiabá-Santarém), could, however, cause the deforestation of 49 thousand km² in 48 municipalities, and completely disrupt the “fabric of the forest people” along its embankments (Cardoso, 2023, p. 73; Costa et al., 2020). Whether the intention is to maintain the current infrastructure, or whether the aim is to create something new, the question arises as to what future perspective is being projected for this territory: is it to continue the expansion of agriculture and livestock production or to completely break away from any productivist action in deference to local secular knowledge and nature conservation?

4. With regard to *depolitics*, the writer and columnist Almudena Grandes, in the newspaper *El País* (2011, p. 1), defined it as an “action or omission that enables the function for which a public servant was elected to be contradicted, distorted or emptied of content”.

In Portugal, the interrupted sale of Russian gas to European Union countries, due to the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, has rekindled the possibility of the country administrating this energy crisis and providing alternative supplies to the rest of the continent (Cohen, 2022; Amato, 2022). Together with Spain, the Iberian Peninsula, for a long period of time, was set apart from the distribution of energy resources obtained by other European countries. Isolated, they were compelled to resort to alternatives, such as importing gas and oil from the United States, North Africa, Nigeria and the Middle East, in addition to exploring other renewable sources, such as wind, solar and hydroelectric energy. Today, both countries are attracting interest due to their strategic geographic position, as the gateway of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), oil and green hydrogen (H₂V) for countries in central and western Europe. Portugal, with its deep-water port in Sines, in the region of Alentejo, since it is the closest terminal to the United States and the Panama Canal, specifically offers favorable conditions to receive deep-draft vessels, in which the only remaining step is the construction of a gas pipeline and electricity grid in order to transport these supplies to Spain, and from there to France and other countries. However, this projection is still surrounded by speculative scenarios, largely due to political-economic conflicts between the governments involved and interested in the energy market. Furthermore, the operation has prioritized economic aspects, disregarding the environmental impacts, as already observed in the Sines Conservation Zone, and local society, which is already experiencing a steep rise in housing purchase and rental prices (Matos, 2023).

It is no coincidence that these facts have been mentioned in this introduction. They are framed as gateways to the past, a time fifty years ago when the addressed territories – the central-south Amazon (encompassing south Pará, north Mato Grosso, and Rondônia) and the region surrounding Sines and Santiago do Cacém – were targeted by state and private policies aimed at integrating both areas into the current capitalist system. Endowed with an abundance of natural resources (both renewable and non-renewable), low population densities, and exceptional geographic conditions, these localities attracted the attention of the Brazilian military dictatorship and the regime of the Portuguese *Estado Novo* [New State] under Marcello Caetano in the early 1970s, and were envisaged as powerhouses for economic development and social control.

While maintaining the inherent proportions and scalar differences between the countries in question – this is an approximate analysis, not comparative – the processes of occupation, colonization, infrastructural development, and exploitation natural assets exhibit striking similarities across both territories. Amidst surging rural-urban migration and signs of economic openness to the global market, this

era witnessed a surge in Brazilian and Portuguese rulers advocating for directed colonization policies in unpopulated areas, intertwined with capital accumulation and development initiatives in less developed areas. In this pursuit, substantial public investments were channeled into the territory's development through basic infrastructure (highways, railways, ports, airports, hydroelectric plants, thermal power plants, dams, canals, gas pipelines, oil pipelines, high-voltage networks, mining companies, refineries, etc.). These, coupled with private sector involvement in the industrial, financial, and urban structuring of the territory, definitively altered the landscapes, failing to respect the inherent, endogenous qualities (Figures 1 and 2). The “severe discontinuities”,⁵ mentioned by Haraway (2016, p. 140), were thus traced and, to the “terrans”, human and non-human (Latour, 2016), the current climatic-environmental crisis was left.

Operationally, this study examines a dual urban and regional planning episode that occurred in Brazil and Portugal fifty years ago. During the infrastructure development projects in the central-south Amazon and the Sines region of Alentejo, urbanization processes in these regions were impacted with the creation of new cities (Trevisan, 2020).⁶ Examples of cities founded as devices of occupation and territorial activation in Brazil are: Rurópolis, Nova Marabá and Tucumã, in Pará; Sinop, Sorriso, Nova Mutum, Lucas do Rio Verde, Primavera do Leste and Alta Floresta, in Mato Grosso; Ariquemes, in the state of Rondônia – new colonization cities or border cities –, in addition to Vila de Tucuruí (Pará), Carajás (Parauapebas, Pará), Vila dos Cabanos (Barcarena, Pará), Porto Trombetas (Oriximiná, Pará) – new company towns (Trindade Jr., 2010; Rocha, 2008).⁷ In Portugal, the example is given by Santo André, classified both as a new city of territorial occupation and as a satellite town of Sines, to house workers for the new port and the emerging industrial complex. Beyond being the end products of a political-economic-spatial dynamic, can these cities be understood as intermediate cogwheels in the productive and

5. N.B. For direct citations the English version was used of HARAWAY, D. Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin. *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 6, 2015, pp. 159-165.

6. The concept of *New Cities* is specifically defined as urban centers: (i) created by the desire of the public authorities or private initiative and concretized in specific actions; (ii) that seek to meet, at least initially, one or more dominant functions (administrative, colonization, entrepreneurial, railway, relocation, seaside resort, satellite, etc.); (iii) implanted on a previously chosen site; (iv) based on an urbanistic project; (v) prepared and/or developed by a defined agent(s) – conceivably qualified professional(s); and (vi) within a determined time limit, also suggesting a reasonably precise moment of foundation.

7. A new company town may be defined as an extension of the company's production line (dominant function), with a certain degree of political-administrative autonomy granted by the company that founded it, possessing aspects of urbanity unlike those presented by other cities and towns in the region and materialized in a closed, delimited urban center, in order to ensure the functionality of its activities and the control of its employees.

extractive activities? Could these cities truly be considered “*ex nihilo* cities” (cities created from nothing), or do they instead embody the conditioning factors that led to their birth? Driven by the search for answers, this article posits that in the universe of territorial urbanization during the twentieth century, new cities were simultaneously the drivers and the products of technological advancements and territorial occupation. Therefore, it seeks to understand the processes of Brazilian and Portuguese territorial planning and organization in the 1970s as a lens to reveal a new perspective on the role of cities within the broader territorial context.



Figure 1. Implementation of the new city of Sinop (in Mato Grosso) on the side of the BR-163 Highway, in the middle of the Amazon Forest (July 1973)

Source: Tenente Coronel Jaime Ribeiro photographic collection.



Figure 2. Construction of the port in Sines, Portugal (1970s)

Source: Sines Area Office Collection, Setúbal District Archive – ADSTB (Portugal).

Structurally, the article consists of three parts that will lead us through to the final considerations. The first part consists of exposing the contexts of Brazilian and Portuguese developmentalism during the 1970s, identifying the agents involved, and the plans and actions put into practice to transform the territory. The second part brings conceptual information regarding territory and infrastructures and the consequences of their overlap in regional planning. Lastly, the third part sheds light on how the concept of infrastructural devices is attributed to the new cities implanted in the central-south region of the Amazon and Sines.

2. Developmentalism here and there, operative approaches

Amidst a landscape of political instability, social discontent, and economic stagnation, restoring popular support through nationalism and fostering progress through developmentalism became priority goals for the Brazilian and Portuguese dictatorial governments in the late 1960s. Seeking to legitimize the established powers, the 1964 civic-military coup in Brazil and the arrival of Marcello José das Neves Alves Caetano (1906-1980) as Prime Minister in 1968, in continuation of the Salazar regime (1933-1974), brought with them their operational models: the centralization of power, control over formulating laws and their respective applications, the technical apparatus of public institutions and bodies, and the pursuit of support from the main business and financial sectors of each country (Lobato, 2020; Fernandes, 2018). Having established a favorable scenario, both governments aimed at opening their economies to international requirements and reformulating their productive bases to bring financial leverage to their countries and insert them into the global order of the time. In both cases, the economy became the main target of state action, and everything related to this area was planned and structured in order to advance toward achieving the set developmental goals.

But to which developmentalism are we referring here? The Moroccan philosopher Mohammed Allal Sinaceur (1941-), in his article “Development – to what end?” (1983), addressed the notions of growth, development, and progress. Recognizing the transpositions of these terms from biology to economics and sociology, Sinaceur distinguished growth from development, whereby growth was only an increase in size, while aligning development more closely to the concept of progress championed by Auguste Comte (1798-1857), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and other nineteenth century positivists (Sinaceur, 1983). For these theorists, development necessarily hinged on social progress, fueled by the accumulated advancements of science and its technological outputs. Consequently, economic development was envisaged through cultural and social engineering, aiming to achieve, on a global scale, the promises of a particular model of governance and human experience.

After World War II, the measurement of a country's progress was made by the conjunction of national accounting systems, long-term statistical studies, static representations of balanced growth, and the participation of large-scale global industries. As a state policy, development takes on an ideological and doctrinal version – *developmentalism* – thus defined by the economist and researcher Pedro Cezar Dutra Fonseca (2014, p. 59):

[...] an economic policy deliberately formulated and/or implemented by governments (national or subnational) to transform society through the growth of production and productivity, under the leadership of the industrial sector, in order to achieve desirable goals, particularly the overcoming of its economic and social problems, within the institutional framework of the capitalist system.

Hence, developmentalism has been incorporated into the government agendas of peripheral countries as a political artifice aimed at economic progress and at participating in the hierarchical structure of capitalism, even if in the condition of supporting economies. In this organizational system, the roles played were very clear. On the one hand, the highly industrialized countries – central, such as the United States of America, Western Europe and Japan – that concentrated capital, diversified their services and knowledge, promoted productive activities, and for this, required raw materials (renewable and non-renewable natural resources), without objecting to the predatory impacts resulting from obtaining such resources. On the other hand, the other countries – peripheral – assumed a position of resource donors and became consumer markets for manufactured products from the economic centralities.

In peripheral nations like Brazil and Portugal, it may be affirmed that the state actively steered the process around a national project, articulating alliances with social classes and groups composed of the industrial, commercial, and financial bourgeoisie, large landowners and land-owning entrepreneurs and the state, (Furtado, 1985; Fernandes, 2018; Lobato, 2020). The idea of a strong, controlling, active State is described in the following passage:

The most characteristic trait of capitalism in its current evolutionary phase is the fact that it supersedes the State, whether national or multinational, with the intent of establishing guiding criteria in the general interest that will regulate economic activities as a whole. It is not that States are less worried today about the collective good. As economies gain greater stability, the role of the State on the social plane is amplified. But because both the stability and expansion of these economies depend fundamentally on international transactions – and because these are under the control of large companies – the relations of nation-states with the latter tend to be relations of

power. First, the large company controls innovation within national economies – the introduction of new processes and new products – which is certainly the primary instrument of international expansion. Second, they are responsible for a large portion of international transactions and effectively restrict initiative to this sphere. Third, they operate internationally under leadership that sidesteps, in large measure, the isolated action of any particular government. Fourth, they maintain great liquidity outside the control of central banks and have easy access to the international financial market (Furtado, 1985, p. 33).^{9,10}

Along the pathway of *laissez-faire*, in countries where government operations were organized around autocratic regimes, whose oppressive power and patriotic discourse clouded the real intentions, it became recurrent to minimize social welfare policies and prioritize incentives for the private sector, duly guided by neoliberal doctrine. The state apparatus operated in favor of the interests and actions of private capital, which appropriated investments and public works to subsidize and promote its actions and activities. The Brazilian and Portuguese states, articulated with large national and multinational capital companies, therefore adopted developmentalism as an economic path, guided by transformations in the production chain and territorial appropriation.

Acting inside these governments, a technical body may be identified, which was responsible for transforming such ideas and goals into plans and actions (Figures 4 and 5). Subordinated to strategic ministries (Economy and Finance, Interior, Planning, etc.) and inserted into specialized public departments – Federal Housing and Urban Development Service (Serfhou), National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Incra), Regional Development Superintendencies, National Commission of Metropolitan Regions and Urban Policies (CNPU), in Brazil, and the Sines Area Office (GAS), in Portugal – these professionals assumed the technocratic posture in which only state-interest information entered as project constraints, often leaving local socio-environmental constraints to one side. Although they assumed a technocratic position, composed of the erudite knowledge of professionals from various areas (multidisciplinary teams), in reality they ultimately became entangled by the hierarchical structure established and present in the higher echelons of both governments, in which orders from above had to be obeyed by the lower echelons, thus defining the *modus operandi* of decisions and actions.

9. N.B. For direct citations the English version was used of FURTADO, C. *The Myth of Economic Development*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020, p. 42. Translated by Jordan B Jones.

10. This text was written by the economist Celso Furtado between 1972 and 1974, when he served as a visiting professor at the American University (Washington, D.C.) and Cambridge University (U.K.), and therefore refers to the time frame of this article.

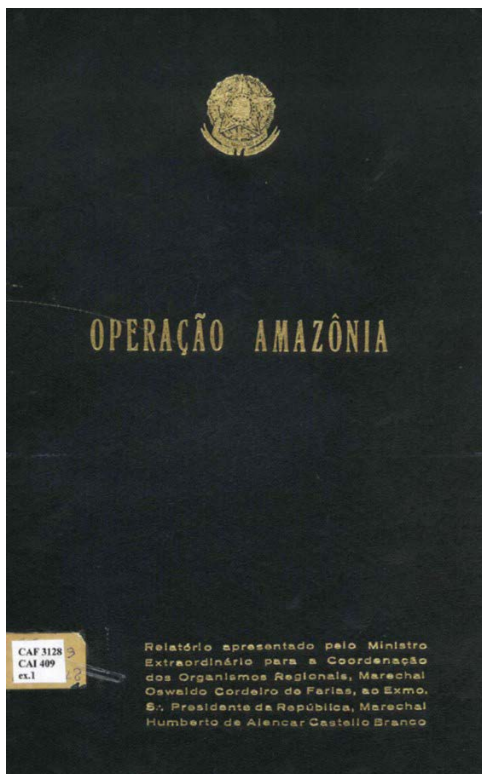


Figure 4. Cover of *Relatório Operação Amazônia* [Operation Amazon Report] (1966)
Source: Sudam (1966); Sudam Collection, at the Inocêncio Machado Coelho Library

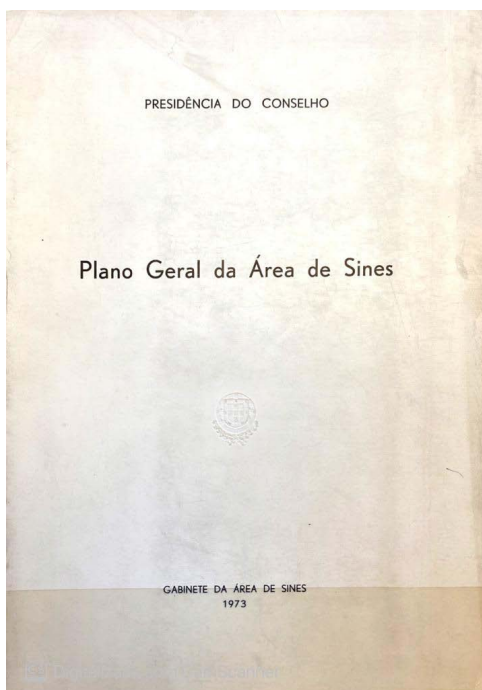


Figure 5. Cover of the *Plano Geral da Área de Sines* [Sines Area Master Plan], coordinated by the engineer António da Silva Martins (1973)
Source: GAS (1973).

In the Brazilian case, the developmentalist project took on a much grander scale, primarily focusing on a plan for occupying and economically exploiting the Legal Amazon (Sudam, 1967).¹¹ Beginning with Operation Amazon (1966), the military government swiftly sought to discredit all prior initiatives, particularly those undertaken by the Superintendency for the Economic Valorization of the Amazon (SPVEA) (1953-1966). Instead, they invested in actions targeting what they perceived as the Amazon's true potential: vast swathes of inexpensive land offering limitless possibilities for extracting its mineral, timber, and agricultural resources (Sudam, 1966; 1967). The State was responsible for the territorial macro-project, from the zoning of the areas to be explored, provided for in the National Development Plan I (1972-1974) (Brazil, 1971) and the National Development Plan II (1974-1979) (Brazil, 1974), and incentives for interested parties (national, international and mixed capital) in the infrastructural capacity of the territory through highways (Belém-Brasília, the Trans-Amazonian, Cuiabá-Santarém, Cuiabá-Porto Velho), railways, ports, airports, hydroelectric plants, areas of mineral exploration, metal works, among others (Becker, 2015 [1982]; Miranda, 1987; Leme, 2019; Tavares, 2023). Therefore, under a liberal bias, the militarized State assumed the dual role of patron and regent. On the one hand, it was a provider, investing public resources in territorial development; on the other, it was an articulator, offering numerous lucrative attractions to private capital.

Large national and international developers, companies, and joint stock companies, as well as cooperatives, colonizing companies and corporate groups seized this opportunity to gain a foothold and obtain significant profits. Tax exemptions on land acquisition and income tax reductions (Sudam, 1968) enabled agents to expand their profit margins, with a view to subdividing the acquired areas of land into dozens and hundreds of rural properties or, even more so, creating cities with the trading of urban plots of land (65 anos, 2013). Tucumã and Paragominas, in Pará; Vera, Cláudia, Sinop, Santa Carmem, Feliz Natal, Sorriso, Nova Mutum, Colíder, Juína, Nova Ubiratã, Brasnorte, Lucas do Rio Verde, Primavera do Leste, Alta Floresta, Matupá e Água Boa, in Mato Grosso; as well as Ariquemes, in Rondônia, are

11. The area of the Legal Amazon was agreed by SPVEA and comprises the states of “Acre, Pará and Amazonas, and the territories of Amapá, Roraima and Rondônia and also the areas of the state of Mato Grosso, north of the 16th parallel, of the state of Goiás, north of the 13th parallel [territory, which today is the state of Tocantins], and the state of Maranhão, west of the 44th meridian” (Sudam, 1967, p. 14). This accounted for a total area of 5,057,490 km². Nowadays, according to Bonini, Pessoa and Seabra Júnior, (2013), the Legal Amazon already corresponds to an area of 5,217,423 km², around 61% of the Brazilian territory. BONINI, I.; PESSOA, M.J.G.; SEABRA JÚNIOR, S. Faces da produção agrícola na Amazônia mato-grossense: tipos de formação, origem dos agricultores e impactos na conservação ambiental em Alta Floresta (MT). [Aspects of agricultural production in the Mato Grosso Amazon: types of training, origin of farmers and impacts on environmental conservation in Alta Floresta (MT)]. *Novos Cadernos NAEA*, Belém, v. 16, no. 1, p. 173-190, jun. 2013.

some of the several examples of new cities of colonization and territorial occupation – Becker’s “frontier cities” (2015 [1982]) – founded based on a logic established by the partnership of military personnel with private entrepreneurs, which formed a hegemonic nucleus capable of “orchestrating the means to oil the cogwheels of the expanded reproduction of capital” (Lobato, 2020, p. 110).

To these, may be added the new cities linked to large logistical undertakings (Trans-Amazonian),¹² such as Rurópolis, Medicilândia and the H. J. Cole + Associados project for Nova Marabá, all in Pará (Oliveira et al., 2023), in addition to those aimed at exploratory activities for natural resources: the working groups that emerged as a result of the construction of the Tucuruí Hydroelectric Plant,¹³ the company town of Carajás (Parauapebas) and Vila dos Cabanos (Barcarena), in Pará, within the framework of the Great Carajás Project.¹⁴ Whether as frontier cities or as company towns, they directly impacted the socioeconomic, territorial, and political dynamics of the Mesoregion in Southeast Pará. Any other attempt that deviated from this capitalist strategy, from a perspective of preserving the environment or something similar, such as the Cidade Laboratório de Humboldt [Humboldt Laboratory City],¹⁵ was doomed to failure (Gaspar, 1976; Machado; Trevisan, 2023).

12. The Trans-Amazonian highway (BR-230) emerged in the early 1970s as one of the military projects to boost economically poorly integrated and active areas of the country through targeted migration and colonization programs and the implementation of a hierarchical urban network along its verges, according to the study *Urbanismo rural* [Rural Urbanism] (1973), by the urban planner from Rio de Janeiro, José Geraldo da Cunha Camargo. With its planned 5,500 km, the road was to connect the Northeast (from the states of Pernambuco and Paraíba) and Northern (Acre) regions, with the intention of crossing the border and reaching the Pacific Ocean through Peru. CAMARGO, J. G. da C. *Urbanismo rural*. Brasília, DF: Ministério da Agricultura; Incra, 1973.

13. The Tucuruí Hydroelectric Plant (HEP Tucuruí) emerged in the 1970s to meet the energy demands of the Marabá region (Pará), especially companies such as Alunorte – Alumina do Norte do Brasil S.A., Albras – Alumínio Brasileiro S.A., Usina Alumar and Companhia Vale do Rio Doce. Designed by Engevix-Themag and built by the construction company Camargo Corrêa, it resulted in the formation of a huge lake, with an area of 2,430 km², and the expropriation of 4,300 families. Part of them were resettled in the new centers of Novo Repartimento and Breu Branco. The workers for its construction and the HEP employees were settled in workers’ villages, namely Vila Permanente and Vilas Temporárias I and II.

14. The institutionalization of the Programa Grande Carajás Program [Great Carajás Program] (PGC) came about through Decree-Law No. 1,813, of November 21, 1980 (Brazil, 1980), granting the Companhia Vale do Rio Doce, at the time a state-owned company, the right to explore different mineral reserves of Salobo (copper), close to Parauapebas, Azul (manganese) and Sossego (copper), comprising areas of 218 municipalities in Pará, Maranhão and Tocantins. This ranged from the Urban Center of Carajás, or Vila Carajás, designed in 1984 in the municipality of Parauapebas, through to Vila dos Cabanos, in the municipality of Barcarena, an urban center designed by the architect Joaquim Guedes in 1980, close to the state capital, Belém (Pará). BRASIL. Decree-Law No. 1,813, of November 21, 1980. This established a special incentive regime for enterprises that are part of the Programa Grande Carajás and provided other measures. *Diário Oficial da União*: Brasília, DF, 24 Nov. 1980.

15. Inserted into the Aripuanã-Humboldt Special Project, of 1972, the proposal to create a new scientific city in the Mato Grosso section of the Amazon, the Cidade Laboratório de Humboldt [Humboldt Laboratory City], was drawn up by professor, economist, and environmentalist Pedro Paulo Lomba, at the request of the federal government. The original intention was to use science as a means of

In the Portuguese case, the developmental efforts of the Marcello Caetano government can be traced back to before his inauguration, on September 27, 1968. Building on the groundwork laid by Development Plan I (1953-1958) (Portugal, 1953) – coordinated by Caetano himself while serving as a Minister of the Presidency – his administration embarked on a program of economic opening, internationalization, and modernization, a stark contrast to the autarkic policies of Salazar's era. Even though primary sector activities remained dominant throughout the 1960s in Portugal, a nascent industrial base emerged, primarily driven by external demands. This growth, however, was fueled by a largely uneducated, low-cost workforce, with illiteracy rates exceeding a quarter of the population at the time. Upon assuming the presidency of the Council, Caetano introduced Development Plan III (1968-1973) (id., 1968),¹⁶ marking a shift in the New State's economic policy. This plan prioritized the internationalization of the Portuguese economy and the development of private industry as the leading sector (Portugal, 1953; 1959; 1965; 1968; 1971; 1973). In response to a period of significant rural exodus, Plan III aimed to decongest the Lisbon-Setúbal and Porto metropolitan areas. This strategy involved establishing a productive and socially appealing logistics and industrial hub in the south of the country.

In the wake of studies endorsed by a multidisciplinary team led by the engineer António da Silva Martins (GAS, 1971), the region encompassing the municipalities of Sines and Santiago do Cacém on the Alentejo coast was deemed the most suitable location for the industrial complex. The establishment of a new bulk port capable of accommodating sizeable vessels, coupled with a network for the collection, refinement, and distribution of petroleum products and minerals, was envisaged in order to empower the region. This project had the potential to propel progress into a region mired in stagnation or dominated by large-scale landownership and oligarchic practices. When the central government established GAS by Decree-Law No. 270 in 1971 (Portugal, 1971), it assumed complete control over all decision-making. Based on the conditions of the preliminary study – (i) spatial planning, (ii) port infrastructures, (iii) land transport, (iv) urbanization and

sustainable development in the region, based on the understanding and creation of strategies to mitigate economic, social and, mainly, environmental impacts, ensuring the maintenance of important natural reserves in the country. The city for 1,000 inhabitants was created in 1973, however, due to a lack of public investment, it did not prosper and the project was brought to a close in 1975.

16. Between 1958 and 1968, Portugal implemented the Development Plan II (1959-1964) (Portugal, 1959) and the Intercalary Development Plan (1965-1967) (id., 1965), which reflected the country's economic integration with Europe and other capitalist nations. In 1960, Portugal joined the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and established closer ties with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

social infrastructures, (v) environmental pollution, (vi) exploration economy and (vii) planning and coordination – the region received public and private investment to construct the port and a new roadway network. Investment was also received for the expansion of the railway line, for the creation of a dam (Morgavel) and supply channels coming from the Alqueva dam (Évora), the thermoelectric plant, the refinery, the gas and oil pipeline, the industrial zone and even for a new city: Santo André, located in the Municipality of Santiago do Cacém, with housing for up to 100 thousand inhabitants.

However, this growth hub did not prosper. The great global oil crisis of 1973, the Carnation Revolution on April 25, 1974, with the deposition of Marcello Caetano and the establishment of democracy, the independence of the colonies from 1975 (Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Timor-Leste), and the lack of effective projections of the dynamics of port activities in Sines, were some of the factors that dragged the proposal into stagnation. Furthermore, despite emerging from the logistical-industrial transformations that took place in the Municipality of Sines and its new port, the administration and management of Vila Nova de Santo André remain, to this day, under the Municipality of Santiago do Cacém (a neighboring municipality). This reinforces that the new city retains characteristics of a device, of a territorial infrastructure typical of company towns (Trindade Jr.; Rocha, 2002; Rocha, 2008), rather than a fully autonomous and developed urban center. Today, after fifty years, Vila Nova de Santo André, according to its official platform, reports a population of around 9 thousand.

Whether there was ever an intention to integrate Brazil's northern region, more specifically the Amazon, with the most industrialized parts of the country, notably the central-south region, and include it in the national and international production chain; or whether the goal was to decongest the metropolitan regions of Lisbon and Porto during a period of strong rural exodus by creating a new logistical-industrial growth hub, both governments implemented policies of a developmentalist nature, linked to the capitalist, neoliberal dynamics in vogue at the time in central countries (highly industrialized). But the reported processes of regional development and associated urbanization through the creation of new cities ultimately hinged on structuring the territory through large-scale infrastructure projects. The urban sprawl across the territory, studied by regional planning researchers since the 1970s (Lefebvre, 2008 [1970]; Monte-Mór, 1994; Brenner, 2018) has been partly due to the equipping and technologization of the territory. However, how may these infrastructures be characterized?

3. Territorial infrastructures: flows, axes, and nodes

In order to grasp how territorial infrastructures are elements that regulate, promote, and guide human settlement and capitalist production, it is judicious to conceptually and methodologically qualify the space that receives them – in this case, that which far transcends the limits of existing large urban centers. Site, space, region, territory, landscape permeate the lexicon of different disciplines (geography, history, sociology, anthropology, economics, architecture, and urbanism, etc.), each offering its own interpretations, aligned with the purposes and specificities that define them as science and fields of knowledge. This study draws upon deliberately chosen conceptualizations and methods that enable a comprehensive, nuanced understanding of the dynamics that permeated the Brazilian and Portuguese scenarios under analysis.

By framing the central-south Amazon, and Sines within its surroundings, as the stage for a “hierarchical event” (Santos, 2005, p. 257), - where actions undertaken there throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were regulated by a distant power, outside that reality, holding privileged information and guided by strategic political decisions - it may be understood how both cases were governed by the abstract, generalist molds of developmentalist ideology. While the State ostensibly assumed the role of general provider, i.e., supposedly meeting demands across all sectors of society, in reality, the system reveals that only the strongest and most powerful part of society benefits from the economic appropriation of the territory (Chauí, 1980).

Driven by the exploitative character of private corporations, in direct collusion with an autocratic State, the territory here takes on the meaning of a resource. This stands in stark contrast to the “commonplace materialism” of the French economist François Perroux (1983, p. 17) or the “used territory” of Milton Santos – both defined as a space for everyone, fostering a sense of nationality and belonging (Santos, 2005, p. 252). If the territory is ideally seen as an integrating unit bridging the external and the internal, the world and the place (its socio-geographic and economic ecosystem), in this case the relationship is extirpated, imposing on the local the demands and requirements of the global and its exploitative processes. The place ceases to be a space for the existence and coexistence of indigenous Latourian “terrans” and becomes a space made available to the world, for the interests and demands of actors who are alien and indifferent, if not hostile, to that reality.¹⁷

17. In both territories, impacts on the way of life of the local people and communities have been recorded. In Brazil, the takeover of the Amazon by large enterprises, as a result of colonizing and civilizing narratives, promoted structural changes in the daily lives of indigenous people, riverside people, local extractivists, caboclos, quilombolas, as Sônia Magalhães Santos indicated in her doctoral thesis: *Lamento e dor: uma análise socioantropológica do deslocamento compulsório provocado pela*

If in modernity the territory delimited and molded the Nation-State, with the neoliberal and globalized economy of the second half of the twentieth century, this concept went beyond political-administrative limits, making it a transnational concept, not restricted therefore to a people, State, or country, in short, to an administrative limit. The fluidity between these scales, from local to global, from global to local, controlled by the economic relations of production and competitiveness, made the territory simultaneously object and action, form and agent, an indispensable resource subject to being cannibalized.

Therefore, territory is a complex concept, with many facets, and therefore deserves to be dissected and investigated, paying special attention to how it is used in studies on the history of urbanism and urban and regional planning. To assist in this journey, in addition to Milton's speculations, we resort to the attributions of the Swiss historian André Corboz in *Le territoire comme palimpseste* (1983), in which territory is a large entity with specific properties, a kind of panacea, the unit of measure for human phenomena and, therefore, the result of several processes. Corboz (2001, p. 209-210) suggests that:

There are, in fact, as many definitions of the land as there are disciplines associated with it: the jurists' definition hardly deals with any more than sovereignty and the various authorities accompanying it. Developers, on the other hand, speak of factors as diverse as geology, topography, technical infrastructures, productive capacity, legal order, administrative organization, national accounting, service networks, political risks and on and on, not only in the totality of their conjunctions, but dynamically by virtue of a planning project. the word "land" can allegorize the unity of the nation or the state or can designate an expanse of cultivable territory or can refer to landscape areas set aside for recreation.¹⁸

construção de barragens [Lamentations and pain: a socio-anthropological analysis of the compulsory displacement caused by the construction of dams], in 2007. In Portugal, the advent of the new port and its industrial complex caused imbalances in the environment, flora and fauna, thereby affecting the lives of fishermen and small farmers – a fact that led to the Green Strike, between May and June 1982, the first protest against environmental pollution promoted by fishermen and residents of Sines. This was considered a founding milestone of ecological awareness, as described on a commemorative plaque erected there. SANTOS, S. M. S. B. M. *Lamento e dor: uma análise socioantropológica do deslocamento compulsório provocado pela construção de barragens* [Lamentations and pain: a socio-anthropological analysis of the compulsory displacement caused by the construction of dams]. 2007. 278 f. Thesis (Doctorate) – Postgraduate Program in Social Sciences, Universidade Federal do Pará, Belém, 2007.

18. N.B. For direct citations the English version was used of CORBOZ, A. The Land as Palimpsest. *Diogenes*, Cambridge University Press, Volume 31, Issue 121, March 1983, pp. 12-34. DOI: 10.1177/039219218303112102. Translated by R. Scott Walker.

The urban expansion, sprawl and diffusion that occurred in the mid-twentieth century, blurring the boundaries between city and countryside, necessitates a reevaluation of our understanding of territory. There was a break from the traditional physical-political-administrative framework, with territory adopting a more unstable character according to the forces and attributions attributed to it, both on a local and transnational scale. If, before, the territory had been understood through the spontaneous changes in the nature and morphology of the Earth, in the Capitalocene it became subject to human intervention and constant remodeling through its activities: irrigation, roadway and hydroelectric dam constructions, bridges, excavation canals, tunnel drilling, earthworks, land cultivation, reforestation, infrastructure, urbanization.

In this vein, for Corboz (2001), territory is a complementary product and project. It is a product when it becomes a locus of social occupation for performing activities of a lesser (subsistence) or greater (added value) impact, both related to the development and planning of space, since, being a constructed object, territory becomes an artifact. It is a project when it assumes within itself the dynamism of the phenomena of formation and production, in a perspective of the continuous improvement of results, integrating the most efficient use of possibilities, of the most judicious distribution of goods and services, the most appropriate management, of innovation in institutions. With this notion of territory, it is possible to gauge projections and make prognoses, thereby planning a space, a region.

One addendum before proceeding. In this research, the concept of territory has been assumed, rather than region, since we believe that the latter has cooled down somewhat in contemporary interpretation. Region, when understood in light of the specificities that make it distinct from other surrounding areas, has lost its reason for being given the conceptual flexibility attributed to territory (Lencioni, 2005). As the transformative and productive actions of the activities of capital in space have become frayed, territorialization has made the particularities of the region a subordinate element, hostage to previously defined purposes. The where has become “opaque” (id., *ibid.*, p. 197), reversing the understanding of the particularities of the nature that make up a region – absorbed, self-evident. It has begun to highlight only the political-economic dimension – the region itself does not exist, but rather the territory – in which the focus of interest is concentrated on *how far*, on maximum gain, consumption, and profit as an unquestionable priority.

According to the logic of modern capitalism, territory takes on features that serve the disciplinary actions of small, politically, and economically powerful groups, aiming to optimize the rational and effective use of capital and space (Weber, 2004). Territories cease to be “contiguous places” (Santos, 2005, p. 256),

with their horizontal intra-community relations, within a spatial continuity. Instead, they become tactical places, composed of geographically separated points, organized hierarchically according to the logic of capitalist production structures.

Territory, therefore, emerges as a more effective spatial denomination for this study, given the limitations involved in the meaning of region, even though the expression “regional planning” was employed in the occupation and territorial planning initiatives of the 1970s, in Brazil and in Portugal. The States, intertwined with private sector interests embedded within the specific spaces (the Amazon and the Alentejo regions), implemented the developmentalist goals of their economies, driven by repercussions that went far beyond their physical boundaries. The foreign companies, the establishment of logistical corridors for the export and import of commodities, migratory flows, and the infrastructural development serve as evidence that these actions not only extended far beyond these regional confines, but across distant, intercontinental territories (Figures 6 and 7).

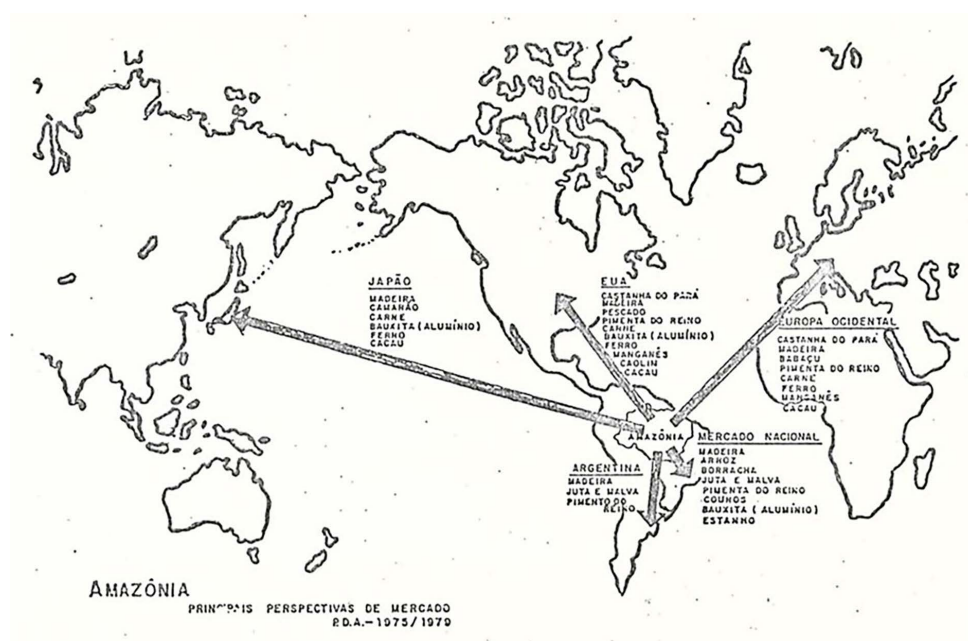


Figure 6. Consumer markets of commodities exported from the Amazon (1975-1979)

Key: Amazon: Main Market Perspectives – 1975-1979. Japan: Timber, Prawns, Meat, Bauxite (Aluminum), Iron ore, Cacao; Argentina: Timber, Jute and mallow, Black pepper; U.S.: Brazil nuts, timber, Fish, Black pepper, Meat, Bauxite (Aluminum) Iron ore, Magnesium, Kaolin, Cacao; Domestic market: Timber, Rice, Rubber, Jute and mallow, Black pepper, Leather, Bauxite (Aluminum), Pewter; Western Europe: Brazil nuts, Timber, Babassu, Black pepper, Meat, Iron, Manganese, Cacao.

Source: Kayath (1989, p. 10).

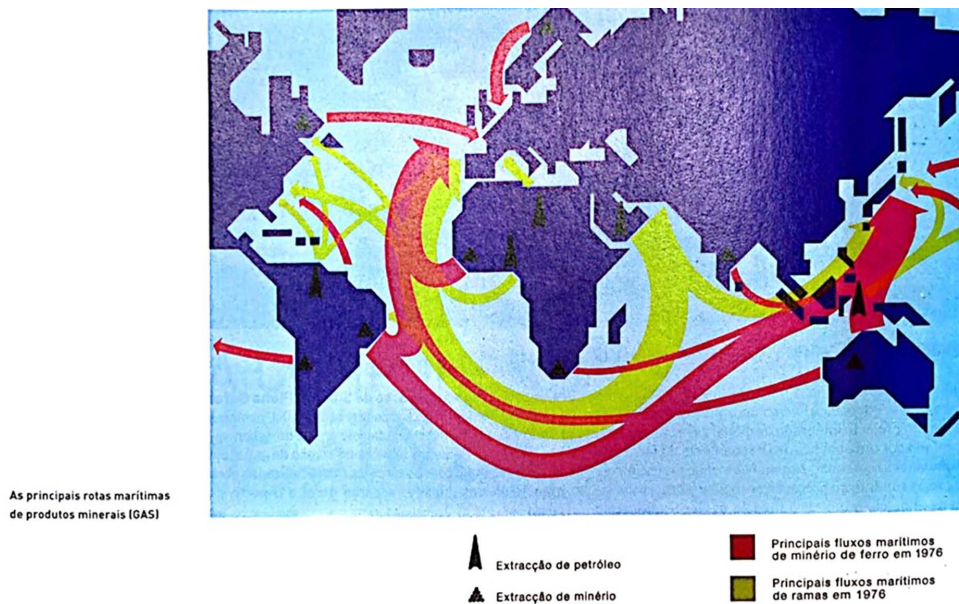


Figure 7. Maritime routes for mineral products bound for Europe (1976)

Key: The main maritime routes for mineral products (GAS); Oil extraction; Mineral extractions; Main maritime flows of iron in 1976; Main maritime flows of raw materials in 1976.

Source: Martins; Dias (2007, p. 70).

By stimulating economic activities, Brazil and Portugal embarked on distinct territorial explorations and, each in their own way, defined the one that would best serve their purposes. Brazil focused on the occupation and exploration of the Amazon, far from the large coastal urban centers, and was considered by the military as the “green hell”. Portugal on the other hand, prioritized the creation of a new port and industrial zone in Alentejo, characterized until that point by fishing and agricultural activities, thereby transforming it into a gateway to the European Economic Community (EEC). However, it was necessary to conquer these territories, and there was an urgency to empower these locations, to tame nature. Thus, to achieve their goals, they adopted modern techniques and installed technological artifacts.

According to the French economist Pierre Pottier, in his 1963 theory of communication and economic development axes, creating infrastructures can boost development through the large-scale projects they require, with the hiring of a huge workforce, and for the expansion opportunities they generate, resulting from the profits obtained which may be reinvested by the beneficiaries. Pottier argued that public works, which enable the creation of infrastructure, act as a springboard for further public and private investments. In turn, these investments act as a trigger to multiply and expand the economy across various sectors, with immediate repercussions in the surrounding areas. These investments, potentially

spanning several years, act as a growth factor due to their multiplier effects, since they foster the development of sectors related to the specific technologies and techniques required for each infrastructure project, through a process of complementary interaction.

While the emphasis of Pottier's (1963) theoretical formulation was on road transport infrastructure, it is understood that it may be readily applied to other infrastructures, such as railways, ports, airports, hydroelectric plants, thermoelectric plants, high voltage networks, refineries, mining companies, etc. Thus, the impetus brought by the Brazilian and Portuguese governments to install large-scale territorial infrastructures would make it possible to reverse economic backwardness and integrate these peripheral economies into a broader network of relationships.

By encouraging such territorial development devices – the PIG mobility model by François Ascher (2010), which articulates people, innovation, goods and energy –, an accelerated, profound transformation of the local landscape would be generated, with repercussions on the form of occupation, no longer specific and isolated, but diverse, diffuse, connected in terms of infrastructure, thus urbanizing the territory. As the Portuguese geographer Álvaro Domingues (2010, p. 60) indicated: “The city has lost its monopoly on infrastructure (water, sanitation, energy, telecommunications) that today irrigates immense territories [...]”. What was previously wilderness and distant, a hindrance and obstacle to development, with the precise implementation of techniques and technologies, the territory would become a space of flows, axes, and nodes (Corboz, 2001). Therefore, the contiguous Miltonian spaces and the tactical places of the contemporary process of capitalist production overlap, simultaneously acquiring either different, divergent, or opposing functional features.

Accordingly, the infrastructures crucial for capital production – transport, communication, mineral extraction, energy generation, rural production, housing provision – propel specific territories toward becoming conditioned for corporate, agricultural, commercial, exploratory, profitable, and colonizing activities. These infrastructures, embodying the representation of territorial domain and dependence on the very production they enable, impose a hierarchical relationship of power and control, of rule and subservience, of existence and maintenance, where territorial infrastructure initially stands alienated from the local context, indifferent to its surroundings. Over time, such technologies appropriate the strategic position imposed upon them and establish a reciprocal relationship of power and dependence with the territory, of passing or permanence, of dispersion or concentration.

Furthermore, these artifacts become landmarks on the landscape, defining the cause and consequence relationships of their emergence over the territory.

In the form of silos, port and airport structures, oil, gas and derivatives reserves, dams and locks, thermoelectric plants, high voltage networks, multimodal terminals, steel complexes, ore extraction apparatus, propellers and wind turbines, solar parks, solar gems, large meat processing plants, gas and oil pipelines, gas and convenience stations, assume strategic functions for economic-productive operations to take place (Figures 8 and 9). By transforming the it into “transgenic landscapes” (Domingues, 2021, p. 65-72), these devices extract the territory’s identity and its local and original particularities – a process that alienates spaces and men (Santos, 2005) –, technifying it physically and visually and specializing the surrounding functions.



Figure 8. Silos and storage for soyabeans in the city of Sinop (MT), Brazil

Source: NovaAgri – Toyota Tsusho Group. Available at: <https://novaagri.com.br/ativos/sinop-mt>.



Figure 9. Thermoelectric plant (foreground) and refinery (background) under construction in the Municipality of Sines, Portugal (1970s)

Source: District Archive of Setúbal (digital).

This becomes evident in the cases of the Amazon and Sines in the 1970s, when technocratic planning, based on modernizing discourses, and promoting demographic occupation, attracting migrants from other regions, took advantage of the installation of these infrastructures. Undertaken and financed by the State, and subsequently capitalized and complemented by private sectors, in the Amazon Forest, they promoted the economic exploitation of its resources and the sociocultural indoctrination of its original, traditional inhabitants and migrants, according to colonizing and civilizing logics (Becker, 2015 [1982]; Tavares, 2020). In Sines however, the new bulk port, the industrial hub, mining (pyrite), copper metalworks, thermoelectric plants, gas and oil pipelines and the new city of Santo André stimulated the substantive alteration of a rural landscape – among dunes, pine forests and sea – into a hub of urban-industrial growth.

In both cases, the taking of nature, its infrastructure, and its subsequent occupation reduced it to a mere resource, a manipulable object. This has imposed a territorial order defined by equipment, promising progress, and a supposedly civilized life. Consequently, the centuries-old “tetrad city-river-forest-field” that had characterized the region became destabilized (Cardoso, 2023, p. 58).¹⁹ Given this transformation, how can we situate the cities that emerged from or were influenced by this territorial development? Are they simply the end products, i.e., the result of this productive chain? Alternatively, can we view them as indispensable pillars supporting the economic activities carried out there?

4. New cities as infrastructural devices of the territory

New cities may be understood in countless ways, and their origins directly linked to the dominant function that spurred their creation. Whether as a new administrative headquarters of a federative state or country, or with the intention of colonization and territorial occupation, or even for business or recreational purposes, in some way, the main activity remains registered in its origin and enables a better understanding of its genesis. As some authors have indicated (Boyer, 1983; Boumaza et al., 2006), new cities bring with them the idea of having been programmed, planned according to the political, financial, technical, and material capacity used. But are they the end product of this entire process, from idealization to foundation, or is it possible to understand them as just another cogwheel within a broader production system?

19. The author appropriated this musical reference to describe a way of reflecting on territorial occupation in the Amazon. However, due to ongoing activities, especially since the twentieth century, the items in this combination has been considered separately. According to Cardoso (2023, p. 69), “the forest has been transformed into a field [...] interspersed with the extensive urban fabric in which industrial extractive activities are based [...] or high-tech farms linked to the agricultural sector [...]. Rivers began to be seen as waterways for transporting commodities [...]”.

Wouldn't the new city be just another support infrastructure, a device, to channel the intended exploratory economic activities? When the ideology of developmentalism takes on an urban form, including the appropriations of land and landscape to exploit profit based on countless activities (mining, agriculture, logistical support, etc.), it should be asked: what is the real function of these new cities?

When undertaken, both through the interest and investments of the State and through private sector undertakings (colonizing companies, pioneers, multinational extractive companies, land speculators), cities assume the position of supporting demands and exchanges between this peripheral territory and the central regions. In a closer context, to the region, it seeks to attend and serve as a habitat for the labor force that works directly in the activities for which the city was created, in addition to providing shelter and support for their families. In a more extended relationship, each new city becomes another cog in the vast capitalist productive machine, controlled by very distant private agents. While facilitating exchanges across transnational territories, these cities, along with other support structures, foster the local emergence of industrial and operational complexes, expedite agricultural development, incentivize resource extraction, and dictate the rise and sprawl of urban centers.

The "expansion of territories" (Ascher, 2010, p. 63), favored by means of transport, communication and energy supply, leaves its mark on the local landscape. New and existing cities strive to connect in the best possible way to large agglomerations in order to benefit as much as possible from their urbanity. Thus, urban space is constructed by articulating different types of domination resulting from territorial occupation. It provides cities with a decisive role in the economic development of the territory and, consequently, in social transformations with the advent of migratory waves for colonization and sustenance of the production process established. That's how it was in Brazil and that's how it was in Portugal in the 1970s.

In the central-south region of the Amazon, among the innumerable initiatives undertaken by the military government, in 1971, the BR-163 highway was implemented (Figure 10). It connected Cuiabá, the state capital of Mato Grosso, to Santarém, one of the major ports in Pará, located within the Amazon (Passos, 2011). This intervention empowered private companies and enterprising individuals to acquire land bordering the highway at bargain prices. Fueled by this accessibility, they swiftly replicated age-old colonization practices, fragmenting the land into marketable plots and establishing new cities. Established in the 1970s under the aegis of federal government plans, programs and projects (Minter, 1984; Minter; Sudam, 1975), these highway cities emerged alongside this major route. Their economies centered on agriculture, and attracted migrants from Southern and Northeastern Brazil seeking new opportunities in the region.



Figure 10. New Cities bordering the BR-163 highway (Cuiabá-Santarém)

Source: Vilela; Trevisan (2022, p. 6).

Now recognized as “agribusiness cities,” Sinop, Nova Mutum, Sorriso, Lucas do Rio Verde, Matupá, and others, form a concentrated hub for activities related to the sector. These activities include soybean processing industries, poultry, pig, and cattle processing centers, stores specializing in pesticides and agricultural machinery, banks offering rural credit, and agricultural research companies (Elias, 2022). In 1971, the entrepreneurial ambitions of Ênio Pipino and João Pedro de Moreira de Carvalho gave rise to Sociedade Imobiliária Noroeste do Paraná [Northwest Paraná Real Estate Company] (SINOP). Acquiring a 198 thousand hectares of land from Jorge Martins Phillip, known as Gleba Celeste, they embarked on a unique colonization project that combined agriculture with manufacturing.

Co-owner of Sinop Colonizadora S.A., founded in August 1948, Ênio Pipino (1917-1995) was known as the “seeder of cities” (65 anos, 2013), due to his experience in creating cities in the western part of the state of Paraná, in the South of Brazil. Upon arriving in Mato Grosso, in addition to Sinop, he founded the new cities of Vera, Santa Carmem and Cláudia, all in Gleba Celeste. Around each of these urban centers, a green belt of smallholdings was designed, followed by larger rural properties. Sinop, the largest of them, was created to be a geoeconomic and geopolitical hub in the region (Ferreira, 2017), and was founded in September 1974 (Figure 11). Designed by the civil engineer Roberto Brandão, the planned population for the new city was 120 thousand, with regional facilities including the headquarters of public bodies, the Companhia Brasileira de Alimentos (Cobal) and the Cooperativa Agroindustrial de Soja (C. Vale), in addition to bank branches,

energy and chemical industries (Sinop Agroquímica, ethanol plant), a hospital (built in conjunction with Germany), an airport, university campus (along the lines of the State University of Maringá), a branch of Rádio Nacional and a telephone network – a model of colonization, according to the military, to be followed by other regional centers in the Amazon. Populating it was directed at both northeastern settlers, due to the problems they faced with the constant, prolonged droughts, and southern migrants, because of the conflicts generated over the lack of land in the southern states of the country. However, indigenous people and prospectors were excluded, and considered unwelcome (sociocultural control in accordance with civilizational standards). Today, Sinop is a hub city in the north of Mato Grosso, with a population of 196 thousand and direct influence over twenty municipalities (IBGE, 2018).

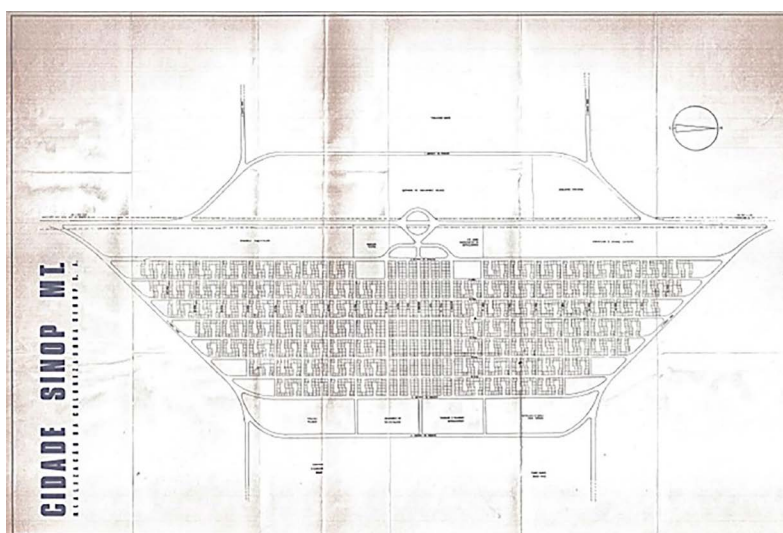


Figure 11. The original urban plan for Sinop (1971)

Source: Ferreira (2017), p. 347.

In seeking a new growth hub in Portugal, far from the major centers of the time (Lisbon, Setúbal, Porto), in the early 1970s, Marcello Caetano's government directed occupation efforts toward the Alentejo coastline. Drawing on the "Development Plans" of the 1950s and 1960s,²⁰ territorial planning began with

20. The Development Plan I (Law No. 2,058/52) (Portugal, 1952), in force between 1953 and 1958, was rooted in Salazar's autarkic model, prioritizing national activities, including colonization processes in rural and forest areas. However, this, as well as the Development Plan II (1959-1964), already signaled measures to encourage the basic manufacturing industry (steel mills, oil refining, fertilizers, chemicals, etc.), as well as the implementation of large infrastructures. In 1962, the country signed the *Protocolo do Acordo Geral de Tarifas e Comércio* [Protocol for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] (GATT), demonstrating a reversal of the economic policy of self-sufficiency (Portugal, 1953; 1959; 1965; 1968; 1971; 1973). PORTUGAL. Law No. 2,058, of December 29 [1952]. Enacts the bases for the execution of the Development Plan in the economic years from 1953 to 1958. *Diário da República*: Lisbon, 29 December. 1952.

studies by a multidisciplinary team tasked with selecting the optimal region for a Concentrated Area of Base Industries. The decision to go to Sines (Figure 12), along the coast, with its deep-water port and capacity to dock deep-draft ships, was welcomed by the government and important incorporations in the country, such as the Sociedade Nacional de Petróleos (Sonap), Companhia União Fabril (CUF) and the Champalimaud Group (Fernandes, 2018), who soon saw this opportunity as the means to leverage larger-scale industrial and commercial activities and, consequently, the economic advances resulting from them.

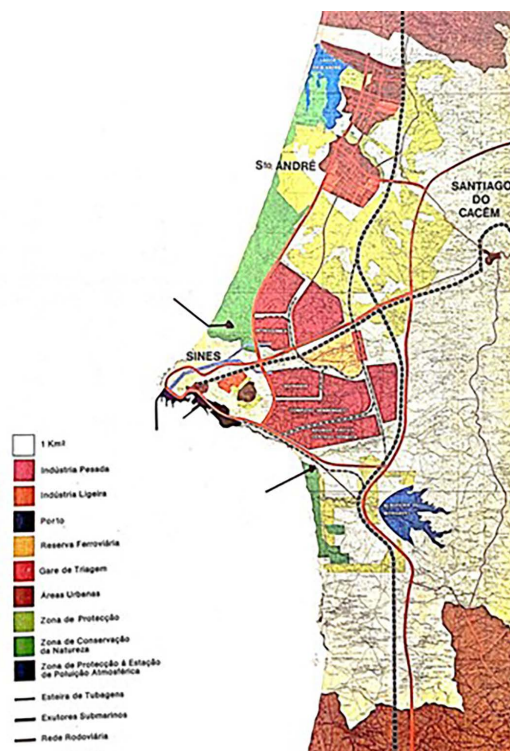


Figure 12. General territorial plan for Sines, with the new city of Santo André to the north

Key: 1 Km²; Heavy industry; Light industry; Port; Rail reserve; Sorting station; Urban areas; Protected area; Nature conservation area; Protection zone for the atmospheric pollution station; Pipe conveyor: Water drainers; Highway network.

Source: Martins; Dias (2007, p. 73).

On June 19, 1971, the Sines Area Development Plan Office, known as GAS, was created, reporting to the Council President, with the aim of promoting the urban-industrial development of this area (Portugal, 1971; Gas, 1973). GAS, under the direction of engineer António da Silva Martins, was also responsible for creating a new population center (Figure 13); the construction, reconstruction and expansion of buildings; the installation of farms; changes to local geography through landfills and massive deforestation in the region (Portugal, 1971; Oliveira, 2020).



Figure 13. Construction of the urban center of Santo André, with a prominent school center (1973)

Source: GAS Archival Collection, District Archive of Setúbal (Portugal).

To accommodate a migrant workforce, plans were made for Vila Nova de Santo André, a satellite town of Sines. Located between the sea and dunes in the municipality of Santiago do Cacém, the ambitious project aimed to house a population of 100 thousand (Martins; Dias, 2007). Construction unfolded in three phases, as detailed below.

1. 1971 to 1974: initial urban draft based on a mathematical matrix and design of the first neighborhoods, coordinated by the architect Guilherme Câncio Martins (1938-);
2. 1974 to 1981: alignment of the urban plan with references from English new towns, carried out by the architect Francisco David Carvalho da Silva Dias (1930-);
3. 1981 to 1984: completion of the city undertaken, by architect Luís Vassalo Rosa (1935-2018).

In addition to the chief architects, the project benefitted from a team of professionals including additional architects, engineers, and surveyors (Cidade Nova, 1996; Mendes, 2020). On August 16, 1991, Law No. 74/91 (Portugal, 1991) officially designated Vila Nova de Santo André a town under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Santiago do Cacém. The new urban center became a town on August 16, 1991, through Law No. 74/91 (Portugal, 1991), under the jurisprudence of

the Municipality of Santiago do Cacém. This marked the creation of Portugal's only entirely new city in the twentieth century. However, as previously mentioned, this endeavor fell short of its initial expectations.

Thus, both SINOP (Brazil) and Santo André (Portugal) were purpose-built cities designed to support government and private sector economic priorities. Functioning essentially as infrastructure or cogs within a larger system, they provided the urban framework necessary for the targeted productive activities. By attracting workers and offering urban services, these cities catered to a combination of regional, national, and even global economic demands. Integrated with other territorial infrastructure projects, they formed networks, axes, and nodes, shaping their place within the economic landscape. Depending on the variables used, this node (city) assumes a greater or lesser role in the hierarchy of the established urban network.

That said, both Sinop and Santo André exemplify how cities serve the productive system, becoming essential cogs in the movement of capital within these territories. Their infrastructure caters to commodities and migrant labor. It is important to note that these, and similarly structured new cities, represent varying levels of urbanization. Despite not being major metropolitan areas, they function as centers for local and regional management within their territories (typically medium or small-sized cities). These locations provide immediate responses to the technical, financial, logistical, scientific, and workforce needs for any given core activity, i.e., they act as crucial intermediary points, not final destinations, but fundamental to the production and resource extraction processes of these territories. Furthermore, these new cities, as territorial infrastructure projects, embody the Anthropocene at its cultural peak, a time when concern with environmental issues was confined to niche scientific and countercultural circles.

5. Final considerations: *ex nihilo nihil fit*

By understanding that “nothing comes from nothing”, this study has qualified each new city as a representation of the specific conditions that led to its birth and its strategic positioning in the current political-economic-sociocultural landscape. The Latin expression *ex nihilo nihil fit* is employed here precisely to convey that, even though a new city has been planned from scratch, from the ground up, its origins are linked to something larger, with well-defined intentions and strategic spatial positioning, despite different geographical circumstances, and scale, as in the two cases studied herein. Indeed, this is not about foundation for foundation's sake, as a heroic, domineering milestone, but about meticulously aligned processes, such as directed occupation and colonization, the provision of conditions for economic

exploitation, logistical support, subsidy for the lives of their future inhabitants, etc., which permeate the local scale and reach national and transnational scales.

Imbued with the guise of *tabula rasa*, within a modernizing discourse, these cities selectively incorporated, within the chosen environment, elements of interest that were crucial to their original existence, to their preliminary conception. Mirroring the precepts contained in Genesis 1:26-28, where God instructed his children to go forth and dominate the Earth and everything on it, these new cities appropriated the territory, dominating it, exploiting it, and considering it solely as a resource, a mere support for their intentions. As these urbanizing processes expanded their scope toward territorial occupation, the impact on nature, its indigenous peoples, its communities, its flora and its fauna were equally proportional. Vast regions, previously termed “empty”, “*terra nullius*”, “green hell”, were targets of developmental and national integration policies, engineered by authoritarian governments in both Brazil and Portugal.

Focusing on extractivist and productivist exploration, countless infrastructures (ports, highways, mineral exploration, hydroelectric plants, service networks, pasture fields, intensive and extensive crops, even cities) were encrusted onto the surface, burdening its soil and remodeling the landscape, deliberately indifferent to the geographic and social ecosystems that inhabited the equilibriums of this land laboriously constructed over a long period of time. Territories previously acknowledged for their extensions and obstacles became mapped by flows, axes and nodes. Land known to be occupied was appropriated as assets and converted into capital. New planned cities emerged just like the Benjaminian phantasmagoria by demonstrating blatant disregard and oppression toward the fauna, flora and people of the land. By altering the established “order” in favor of their own exclusive, selfish benefit, these cities ruptured the “contiguous places” and indiscriminately promoted the vertical order through tactical places, imposed by rigid technocratic normatives.

Will it ever be possible to reverse such processes? By understanding the worldview of the poor and slow Miltonian men, the territory becomes active and ultimately imposes its revenge. Corboz would say that “[in] traditional civilizations, concerned with not disturbing the order of the world, or even with helping to maintain it, the territory is a living body, of divine nature, to which people worship and make offerings” (2001, p. 215). When understanding territory as an entity, a body full of traces and molded by past memories, like a palimpsest, we must credit the basis of planning – a possible way out – no longer to the city, but to the territory, in its amplified sense, therefore understood as an accomplice, no longer as an available object.

A city is born, and becomes (or will become) a part of territorial urbanization. If new cities, at a preliminary stage, present precise, totalizing delimitations, over time, together with other new urban centers or existing settlements, linked to infrastructural elements, they acquire the features of a dispersed urbanization, of territorial occupation. Once reality is in place, how to proceed? Perhaps, within a speculative proposal, work on the territory at its various scales and actors (“terrans”), with a vision of proximity, attentive to local socio-environmental conditions, and acting, above all, with radicality in order to avoid new developmental advances in the Capitalocene.

Spaces should no longer be preyed upon, nothing more should be extracted, no construction should be undertaken – except what is strictly indispensable –, no more soil should be sealed... On the contrary, it is essential to increase permeability and porosity. It is necessary to break down “Lucifer’s barriers” (Secchi; Viganò, 2009, p. 35), taking advantage of territorial infrastructures in this task, giving them the quality of diaphanous membranes. This would imply – in professional and political terms – simultaneous reflection and action (through design and plans) on the way we live: not necessarily densifying the existing city, but seeing the existing building stock as a huge potential to explore, as long as it comes from different perspectives of inhabiting and of being urban.

Would this position signify no longer creating cities? Supposedly not, although perhaps the principle was this, that of non-construction; the building of new cities would be absolutely exceptional, using very fine, criterial requirements. Perhaps now – in the midst of an environmental crisis – the task lies in closely examining the “new cities” (which are no longer new) through the lens of the criteria laid out herein, including their history and initial goals. We must comprehensively review their socio-urban-environmental framework in the parity of these three axes (as if it were a single word), dismantling the current hierarchy, which prioritizes the economic-financial result as being success, and in this perspective, directly tied to the human dominance and control over the environment into which it is installed.

When refuting the idea of nature as something external and independent, as a mere support at the disposal of humanity – belittling it – we must support the idea of nature as a subject, a field of our imagination, a mythical being in constant dialogue with humanity. It is increasingly clear, with irrefutable evidence in the face of the climate crisis that results from the excessive, licentious exploitation of natural and human resources, that the future of the species will only be possible on Earth if we know how to coexist, humans and nature, feeding ourselves reciprocally and virtuously, and making our footprints on it increasingly lighter and shorter (Krenak, 2019), symbiotic to the point of becoming invisible to the next generations.

Hence, it seems essential that scientific and design approaches to strategic and focused planning of the territory, in its multidisciplinary intersection, lose their purely technocratic meaning – characteristic of the neoliberal developmental universe – and allow themselves to be imbued, as a basic factor in their orientation, by considerations of a philosophical and holistic nature that reframe the meaning of the ecumene, as it has been defined throughout the Anthropocene.

Invoking something similar to that proposed by Corboz (2001), let us meticulously scrape the ancient text that men have etched upon the irreplaceable matter of the soil, before it is entirely erased. May our future landscapes be (re) constructed based on this ethic of coexistence and mutual respect, and not by arrogant urbanizing footprints *ex nihilo*!

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