

Indigenous peoples, territorial identities and fragilized territorialities in northern Amapá, Brazil

Pueblos indígenas, identidades territoriales y territorialidades debilitadas al norte del Amapá- Brasil

Povos indígenas, identidades territoriais e territorialidades fragilizadas no norte do Amapá, Brasil

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss how “Galibi do Oiapoque”, “Galibi Marworono”, “Palikur”, and “Karipuna” build their place-territories where they exert territorial vigilance and develop their territorial identities independently of multiple interactions between these indigenous peoples. Research data was collected on bibliography, news reports, documents, association’s and ONG’s reunion transcripts and interviews. It is concluded that there is a place-territory proper to these indigenous peoples that is superposed in the Brazil-French Guiana frontier; there is a strong territorial identity, even if with fragilized territorialities facing spatial tensions decurrent from inadequate interventions and the absence of adequate indigenous-centered policies.

Keywords: alterity, sociocultural transformations, indigenous policy, place-territory.

Resumen

El territorio y la naturaleza son la esencia de la vida de los pueblos indígenas. Así, este artículo tiene el objetivo de hacer un acercamiento a cuatro pueblos indígenas ubicados en la frontera Brasil-Guiana Francesa y la construcción de lugares-territorios donde ellos ejercen el control territorial y desarrollan sus identidades territoriales independientemente de las múltiples interacciones entre estos pueblos. Metodologicamente se trabaja con encuesta bibliográfica, informes en el sitio web de periódicos nacionales, documentos y actas de reuniones de asociaciones, ONG y testimonios. Concluimos que para estos pueblos indígenas existe un lugar-territorio que se superpone a la frontera y una fuerte identidad territorial, aunque con territorialidades debilitadas frente a las tensiones espaciales resultantes de intervenciones inadecuadas y la ausencia de políticas indígenas apropiadas.

Palabras clave: alteridad, transformaciones socioculturales, políticas indígenas, lugar-territorio

Resumo

O propósito desta discussão é refletir sobre como os indígenas Galibi do Oiapoque, Galibi Marworno, Palikur e Karipuna constroem seus lugares-territórios onde exercem uma vigilância territorial e desenvolvem suas identidades territoriais independentemente das múltiplas interações entre estes povos. Levantamento bibliográfico, reportagens em *site* de jornais nacionais, documentos e atas de reuniões de associações, ONGs e entrevistas forneceram os dados apresentados. Conclui-se que existem, para esses povos indígenas um lugar-território que se sobrepõe à fronteira Brasil e Guiana Francesa; e uma forte identidade territorial, embora com territorialidades fragilizadas em face das tensões espaciais decorrentes de intervenções inadequadas e da ausência de políticas indigenistas apropriadas.

Palavras-chave: alteridade, transformações socioculturais, políticas indígenas, lugar-território.

Introduction

Discussion on indigenous peoples must be contextualized in comprehensions about the actual conception of indigenous and of the politics that are being conceived. It starts by looking into Amazon and actions directed towards the region. In frontier spaces, such as northern Amapá, the presence of French-Brazilian political and administrative limits, puts forwards the sociocultural identities of *Uaçá* Indigenous Lands (TI), where four indigenous peoples live their transfrontier condition. The focus of the discussion is on the manners by which these indigenous peoples build their territory-place through territorial vigilance while developing their territorial identity that superposes administrative frontiers.

Discussions and perspectives of territory, territory-place, territoriality, and territorial identity as categories were informed by an approach centered on cultural geography. The challenge consists of seeking comprehension of spatial relations and spatialities as a movement capable of unraveling how much they are revealing of territorial space, or of being in the world. Cultural Geography has been aiming towards this epistemological orientation.

“The fact and feeling of belonging to what is ours” is Milton Santos’ (2003, p.96) regard concerning territory. If it is conceived as such, we are dealing with existential territories, territories of life, territories that become places and, though symbolic and material mediation, an “encounter” between place and territory or, as Silva (2020) explains, a place-territory.

Through this pathway, we find a way of “doing” geography that has allowed us to comprehend the multi-scalar facets of place-territory. This way of “doing” can delineate relations of belonging and attachment as constitutive elements of territoriality and place-territory’s subjective dimension.

Methodological proceedings were centered on qualitative phenomenological research as dissected by Vargas and Santos’ (2018) discussion on times and spaces of qualitative research. Triviños (1987) delineates some characteristics of qualitative

research: natural environment as a direct source of data and the research as key-instrument of spatial comprehension; it centers its concerns with processes beyond results and products. Based on this comprehension, we employed bibliographic research, consulted material in Amapá's Associations, National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples¹ – Funai, the Institute of Research and Indigenous Formation² – IPIÉ and national newsletters. We conducted semi-structured interviews with Funai's representatives in Macapá and Oiapoque, with indigenous students in the Intercultural Course on Universidade Federal do Amapá – Binacional do Oiapoque Campus; and in visits to the settlements along BR-156 highway, where observations were also conducted. In these interviews, we obtained knowledge that aided in comprehending the perceptions of research subjects.

In this essay, I intend to explore the context of indigenous peoples in the last decades of Brazil/Amazon and Amapá's and indigenous peoples' reactions through the creation of diverse Associations, Forums, and Conseils. They served as a basis to contextualize territories, territorial identities in place-territory, and its material-symbolic conditions that made their existence and territorialities possible.

Amazon and recent indigenous policy

According to Funes (2019, p.115), since the Brazilian coup of 2016 and, specifically, in

the actual government committed with big corporations, the indigenous situation is aggravated as it opens Amazon for woodcutting exploration, agribusiness, and mineral extraction. This policy is particularly devastating for the environment and indigenous and *quilombola*³ territories.

The first year of federal government rise to power of an ultra-right politician marked an advance into exploitation, environmental destruction, and aggravation of territorial disputes and tensions in the Amazon rainforest. The capitalist territorial dispute for resources and means of production, anchored in an unequal correlation of forces, and sociobiodiversity were always the cause of conflicts in this region. They contributed to form a *sui generis* agrarian question. According to Fernandes *et al.* (2020), in contrast with the incentives to popular classes motivated by left-wing governments in recent years (2003 to August 2016), Bolsonaro's government has incentivized and proposed a model of development that valorizes and creates opportunities for landowners, mineral industry and agribusiness in detriment for Amazonian subjects. Amazon resources are being appropriated, thus, by capitalist enterprises and becoming distant from Amazonian citizens.

¹ In Portuguese: Fundação Nacional para o Índio (Funai).

² In Portuguese: Instituto de Pesquisa e Formação Indígena (Ipié).

³ The Brazilian equivalent to Maroons. It was opted to maintain the term in Portuguese due to its specificity and importance for the history of this country.

The most notable cases of Bolsonaro's government action into Amazon were: 1) insinuating that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activists, amongst those the actor Leonardo DiCaprio, were related with the growth of woodfires; 2) constant attacks to legitimacy and political positions of indigenous leaderships, such as *cacique* Raoni Metuktire, who has been accused of not representing the indigenous peoples of Amazon; 3) demission of the ex-director of the National Institute of Spatial Research⁴ (INPE), Ricardo Galvão, after he publicized woodfire and deforesting data, with the clear objective of questioning and disrespecting Brazilian science; 4) cuts towards research financing and imposing budgetary constraints in educational sectors, which compromises *in loco* scientific production; 5) Divergency and extinction of international funds towards research after polemics and divulgation of political positions on Amazon woodfires.

Flexibilization of laws and weakening of research, teaching, protection, and inspection institutions, as well as ideological attacks against Amazonian peoples, composed part of strategies favorable to natural resources exploration, disrespect of rights and accomplishments of those who live there and illegal and predatory appropriation of territories.

As the precarization of daily life is amplified, agribusiness and landowners seized the opportunity to advance land regularization processes. In Pará's state, i.e., state-law 8.878/2019 aims to create favorable and safe conditions for agribusiness expansion and its production of commodities.

In other words, it can be stated that monoculture and animal husbandry continued to advance in the same Amazon where land alienation and slave work express the ferocious reproduction of capitals. From August 2018 to July 2019, an area of 9.762km² was deforested in the nine states of Brazilian Legal Amazon, an area equivalent to 1,4 million football fields. This value corresponds to a 25,54% growth concerning deforesting data collected in 2018, which was of 7.536km² (INPE, 2019).

The main consequence was a wide international reaction and, for the first time since its inception in 2008, the Amazon Fund, the largest project of rainforest preservation, ended without approving any projects in 2019. Norway and Germany suspended their contributions in response to the Brazilian government. R\$2,2 billion in financing was paralyzed and millions of Amazonian families were prejudicated by Brazilian government attitude that negated its environmental uncontrol and disrespect.

Different governments of the world manifested their critics to policy preconized by the president and acted in defense of the Amazon rainforest. As the French government, accompanied by many others, critiqued the woodfire spreading in Amazon, the Brazilian government defended itself by accusing that foreign government of attacking national sovereignty. Amazonian peoples, historically ignored in developmental plans, have ways of life more integrated to nature than woodcutters, cattle breeders, agribusiness entrepreneurs, and miners, and are now deeply threatened.

⁴ In Portuguese: Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais (INPE).

Demarcation of lands and territories was paralyzed and attacks against originary, *quilombola*, *ribeirinhos*, land-less peasants, amongst others, became more frequent, amongst which eight indigenous leaderships were assassinated between 2019-2020 (FERNANDES *et al.*, 2020). It was what occurred in 2019 at Amapá with the *Mariry* village leader *Emyra Wajãpi* of *Wajãpi* ethnicity. In its July 27 of 2019 edition, *Estado de Minas* newsletter reported that he was stabbed to death in the beginning of that week. His assassination was correlated to an “invasion” of a group of around 50 mineral prospectors in his village. These facts exemplify the territorial precarization of indigenous lands.

In the case of indigenous peoples, one can infer that Bolsonaro distinguished them through an anti-indigenous policy. On February 5 of 2020, even with alerts from inside his government, the president signed the Law Proposal nº191 that regimented mineral extraction, oil and gas production, and generation of electrical energy in indigenous lands (XAKRIABÁ; DIAS NETTO JÚNIOR, 2020; O ESTADO DE S. PAULO, 2020). This project defines “specific conditions for research and extraction of mineral resources, including the prospection of oil and gas alongside the generation of hydroelectrical power in indigenous lands”, which proposes an ethnocentric model with profound differences to indigenous cosmovision (XAKRIABÁ; DIAS NETTO JÚNIOR, 2020).

To be validated, those rules need to be approved by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate and then sanctioned by the President. In a public speech, Bolsonaro referred to this regimentation as a “dream” and said that the indigenous people “are as Brazilian as us. I hope that his dream comes true by the hands of Beto [Albuquerque, Mining and Energy minister] and the votes of parliament. Indigenous persons are human beings exactly like us”, he completed. This affirmation generated indignation and protests amongst indigenous peoples because it does not hide its prejudice and exposes an assimilatory government.

A day before its signage, February 4 of 2020 *Folha de São Paulo* editorial critiqued anti-indigenous policies put forward by the current government. Its opening statement was: “What can one expect from an indigenous policy of a President that is capable of saying that indigenous persons are ‘evolving’ and are closer to becoming human beings like us? The worst”. The editorial was critical of the retrogressive posture adopted by the President:

Jair Bolsonaro speaks and acts with the obsolete military doctrine that believes that indigenous peoples and their lands represent a threat to national sovereignty and territorial integrity...Moreover: it is in open conflict with the Federal Constitution posture on indigenous peoples, which determines that the Union must recognize and protect their social organization and traditions, beyond the rights of their historically occupied lands, which must be demarcated by the Federal Government.

Everything indicates that Bolsonaro’s anti-indigenous policy is destined only to land alienators, cattle herders, and mining extraction greed. However, it seems evident that

the cultural annihilation and land expropriation of indigenous peoples also orient Federal Government and threatens territorialization processes and promote deterritorialization of these peoples. Hence, we aim to discuss its effects on Northern Amapá indigenous peoples.

Indigenous policy and indigenous peoples (re)existence in Northern Amapá's state

In Amapá's state, contrary reactions towards the absence of national policy or actions opposed to implementations of anti-indigenous policy come from indigenous people with the aid of NGOs and the state's government. An important analysis of how Amapá's indigenous peoples have organized since the 1970's was laid out by Rocha and Mendes (2017).

In the 1970s there was a growing movement of indigenous peoples demands and struggles articulated through assemblies. Peres Peres (*apud* ROCHA; MENDES, 2017, p.6) affirmed that "53 indigenous assemblies were organized in the 1974-84 period", which had the objective of understanding and unifying these peoples in their search for legitimacy and political unity through their defining identity.

1988's Federal Constitution guaranteed various rights to Brazilian indigenous peoples, such as the possibility of being legally represented by indigenous associations. In this particular context, the number of associations was multiplied in all regions of the country, expanding their representativity and associative concerns in amplifying their involvement in the juridical means to claim their legal-guaranteed rights.

This growth of associations in the country is the context through which the Association of Oiapoque Indigenous Peoples⁵ – APIO – is founded in 1992. The organization reached the four ethnic groups of the municipality: *Karipuna*, *Palikur*, *Galibi Marworno*, and *Galibi Kaliña*. This reach followed the mobilizations of the period, which unified all peoples as indigenous. Thus, they had a common identity to fight for shared agendas, such as health, education, and territorial maintenance.

Wajãpi/Apina Village Council

In 1994 the *Wajãpi* organized a Village Council aimed at political representation in the regional and national levels, which was registered in 1996. This organization is also called *Apina*, which is not an abbreviation, but the name of an ancient *Wajãpi* subgroup remembered for its courage.

Wajãpi of *Amapari* Triangle Indigenous Peoples Association⁶ – APIWATA

⁵ In Portuguese: Associação dos Povos Indígenas do Oiapoque (APIO).

⁶ In Portuguese: Associação dos Povos Indígenas *Wajãpi* do Triângulo do *Amapari* (APIWATA).

In 1998, some dissident leaders of Apina, representing a local group (*Wiriry Wan*) founded APIWATA, which reunites part of the local group members, nowadays dispersed between CTA, *Manilha* and *Jakareakãgoka* villages.

*Galibi Marworno Association*⁷ – AGM

Founded in 2002, AGM was created to represent the interests of *Galibi Marworno* people.

According to Rocha and Menders (2017), in the 2000s, when the *Uaçá* land was already registered, discussions and assemblies gained strength and the indigenous peoples became even more present in their claims. In 2004, the 1st Socioenvironmental Forum of Oiapoque's Indigenous Peoples was carried out with the goal of, as stated in its official report, "cement commitments with Government and other partners with the indigenous proposals of compensation and mitigation of BR-156 highway due to its impacts" (*apud* ROCHA; MENDES, 2017, p.8).

BR-156 construction caused diverse impacts that were felt by these groups, which resulted in the attempt to determine work directrices in accordance with their interests, aiming to urgently lower alterations caused by the infrastructure. In their Forum, indigenous people demanded broader participation in discussions about the work and called for the employment of indigenous environmental agents. Those would be responsible for keeping track of the technical work of the contracted enterprises on the highway. This Forum allowed for different debates and questionings towards the developmental advances in the region, demonstrating that Oiapoque's indigenous peoples were attentive to their lived juncture.

The indigenous report indicated amongst the violent impacts against the indigenous peoples in the 2003-2005 period a deforestation process in the BR-156 that caused great preoccupation in state and indigenous entities. Through the account of this deforestation, the report highlighted previewed impacts regarding this context, such as the advance and eventual arrival in indigenous reserves, even those far from the highway. The report stresses out, amid preoccupations concerning BR-156, as cited by Rocha and Mendes (2017, p.9-10) "indigenous peoples have notions that paving and highway building converge in being the main determining factor for future projects of deforestation in the Amazon basin".

A public policy response came in 2005, when the "Program of Socioenvironmental, Economic and Cultural Compensation of aid for Oiapoque's Indigenous Peoples that dwell in BR-156 area of influence, Ferreira Gomes-Oiapoque/AP segment"⁸. This project aimed to implement compensation and mitigation activities between 2005 and 2010.

⁷ In Portuguese: Associação *Galibi Marworno* (AGM).

⁸ In Portuguese: Programa de Compensação Socioambiental, Econômica e Cultural de apoio aos Povos Indígenas de Oiapoque.

In 2007, a Term of Commitment between the State Government, DNIT, Funai, and Oiapoque's indigenous peoples represented by the Commission of Oiapoque's Indigenous Peoples⁹ – CPIO –, which had the same representative role as APIO, the Association in other past situations. The Term had the aim to assert that mitigation, compensation, and indemnity were effective in this region. In it, the indigenous peoples were emphatic in their preoccupations and demands in the six aid subprograms, which were: “Administrative Management; Environmental Protection and Inspection; Sustainable Development; Ethno-education and Culture; Indigenous Health; and Indemnity to Oiapoque's Indigenous Peoples” (ROCHA; MENDES, 2017, p.10).

The Management Committee of the Indigenous Program of BR-156¹⁰ – COGEPI – was created in April 2008 and was composed of indigenous and governmental instances to articulate specific discussions concerning the highway. The actions of the Committee sought to articulate strategies to guarantee indigenous rights in the work and removal of villages around BR-156. However, there were few advances in this respect and the impasse remained until 2020.

Rocha and Mendes (2017) highlighted 2009 as the year that indigenous leaderships deepened their relations with Oiapoque's indigenous peoples. Workshops carried out by APIO with aid of partner entities, such as Funai, TNC, Iepé, and others, generated the “Plan of Life for Oiapoque's Indigenous Peoples and Organizations”. The document was based on a diagnosis of problems that affected Oiapoque's indigenous peoples, which were consequences of inadequate public policies in that region. The Plan of Life initiative was also justified in the projects of implantation of tree other large enterprises that could cause great impacts¹¹ in the region: Eletronorte transmission line in the LT Calçoene – Oiapoque segment over TI *Uaçá*; Paving of BR-156 that connects Macapá and Oiapoque; and Binational Bridge, connecting Brazil and French Guiana.

The Plan of Life evidenced that BR-156 is only one amongst many others that indigenous peoples have over their territory. Leadership affirms that they are not against the project, but that they intend to participate in discussions and claim their rights, which must be respected.

In 2009, APIO ended its activities. There were already other indigenous associations in Oiapoque. In broader agendas, such as territorial concerns, all other associations were present in the assemblies and the Cacique Council of Oiapoque's

⁹ In Portuguese: Comissão dos Povos Indígenas do Oiapoque (CPIO).

¹⁰ In Portuguese: Comitê Gestor do programa indígena da BR-156 (COGEPI).

¹¹ In the firmed treat, indigenous leadership demands are presented by the general context of changes caused and that can be caused by the highway since highways “cause not only the direct impact of their implementation but also populational growth and secondary deforestation”. Thus, it is comprehended that the highway can augment the population and deforestation in its region alongside an accompanying rise in land speculation, which are impacts that a highway such as BR-156 can cause in this region.

Indigenous Peoples¹² – CCPIO –, founded in 2006, became the most prominent due to its larger scope.

In 2010, discussions on the creation of the Management Program of Oiapoque’s Indigenous Peoples¹³ (PGTA) began and gained force in 2014, when the Institute of Research and Indigenous Formation – Iepé –, in partnership with Gati Project, Funai, and TNC, promoted “The PNGATI and the Challenges of Territorial Management of Amapá’s and Northern Pará’s Indigenous Lands” cultural diffusion course in Macapá-AP between September 29 and October 3, 2014. Fifty technicians and public managers from the state and federal levels that deal with the indigenous and socioenvironmental thematic in Amapá State participated. The course was also taken by many university students. Its objective was to discuss the National Policy of Environmental and Territorial Management in Indigenous Lands¹⁴ – PNGATI – in Amapá and Northern Pará in its process of Brazilian implementation and its particularities concerning the regional context.

On June 22, 2015, Universidade Federal do Amapá promoted an event on the National Policy of Environmental and Territorial Management in Indigenous Lands (instituted by National Decree 7.745/2012). The initiative was proposed by Amapá’s State Environmental Council¹⁵ (Coema-AP) in partnership with Funai, State Secretary of Environment¹⁶ (Sema-AP), and Iepé. Students of diverse courses participated, particularly those of Law and Environmental Sciences.

The “Protocol of Inquire to Oiapoque’s Indigenous Peoples was launched on September 10 2019 in Amapá’s Public Federal Ministry auditory at Macapá. The state government was represented by the Extra-ordinary Secretary of Indigenous Peoples – Sepi.

Sepi’s titular, Ecleimilda Macial, stated that the Protocol always existed, but only in indigenous memory because they don’t have the habit of writing. The decision to document them was to ensure that these orientations are not lost in future generations. “The State has been developing public policies towards indigenous peoples observing their rights, hopes, and traditions”, declares Macial.

Gilberto Iaparrá, president of Cacique Council of Oiapoque’s Indigenous Peoples – CCPIO –, considers that the protocol represents a right to have a voice on actions that the Union, State, or Municipality, as well as NGOs and Researches, want to conduct inside demarked lands. “What we want is to be consulted to discuss any action effectuated in our lands alongside the responsible institutions”, stressed out Iaparrá.

Federal Republic procurator Alexandre Guimarães affirmed that this document is a tool that makes explicit how to have an inquire into indigenous peoples’ perspectives

¹² In Portuguese: Conselho dos Caciques dos Povos Indígenas do Oiapoque (CCPIO).

¹³ In Portuguese: Programa de Gestão dos Povos Indígenas do Oiapoque (PGTA).

¹⁴ In Portuguese: Política Nacional Gestão Ambiental e Territorial em Terras Indígenas (PNGATI).

¹⁵ In Portuguese: Conselho Estadual de Meio Ambiente do Amapá (Coema-AP).

¹⁶ In Portuguese: Secretaria Estadual do Meio Ambiente (Sema-AP).

on legislative and administrative measures that can affect them. He highlighted that Amapá's and Northern Pará's indigenous peoples were pioneers for this type of action. In 2016, *Waiãpis* were the first to publish the document. "An example of how this protocol works can be found in the BR-156 highway, which passes through indigenous lands, where there was a re-management of villages to other areas by using an inquire in the document about removal" explained the procurator. He also added that this protocol aids public power and NGOs dialogues. He highlighted that the Public Federal Ministry's role is to observe these actions and guarantee these rights.

Of the nine villages close to BR-156, three were already relocated, and there are six that wait for their relocation, with a total of 120 indigenous persons. If conditions of re-management are not attained by the State, they will remain in the borders of the highway. Oiapoque's municipality has a population of approximately 10 thousand indigenous distributed in 53 villages of four ethnicities.

Heterogeneity is the mark of these new forms of indigenous association, representation, and participation in local, regional, and national political contexts. There are organizations of ethnical basis formed to intermediate interests of a people or a part of this people, such as the dwellers of a specific village; or a particular category of professionals, such as associations of indigenous teachers or health agents. Other organizations reunite more than one indigenous people and aim to represent the inhabitants of a given indigenous land or people that have villages along a certain river.

Some organizations seek to be indigenous references in the regional context and those that agglutinate other associations in the form of coordination or federations, as is CCPIO. In Amapá, this heterogeneity of indigenous organizations is also present as a counterpower, an important resource for these peoples' re-existence. These representative organizations of this region's indigenous peoples have representations in Macapá city.

Northern Amapá Indigenous Peoples territories

Indigenous peoples of this Amazon region never lived between themselves. They also had to deal with the advance of colonization fronts in their lands, which forced them to learn and have new experiences with non-indigenous people. They were inserted into a process of amplification of their exchange networks, which does not erase, but redefines the importance of their relations amongst themselves built over centuries, "even" with our interference.

These four indigenous peoples that live in northern Amapá – *Galibi Marworno*, *Palikur*, *Karipuna*, and *Galibi do Oiapoque* – are distributed on both sides of the Brazilian frontier. From one side to another, there is intermittent but regular contact. *Galibi Marworno* inhabit *Uaçá* Indigenous Land, homologated by Decree 298 (DOU, Oct. 30, 1991), as well as *Juminã* Indigenous Land, homologated by unnumbered Decree (DOU, May 22, 1992); *Palikur* inhabit the margins of *Urukauá* river, an affluent of *Uaçá*, in *Uaçá* Indigenous Land; *Karipuna* inhabit *Uaçá*, *Juminã* and *Galibi do Oiapoque* Indigenous

Lands; and *Galibi do Oiapoque* inhabit *Galibi do Oiapoque* Indigenous Land, homologated by Decree 87.844 (DOU, Nov. 22, 1982).

Since the 17th century, travelers have described the region as an area of intense contact amidst distinct peoples. Reports indicate that these groups were involved in migratory and fusion processes, wars and alliances. In recent centuries, this resulted in a dynamic of constant redefinition of frontiers. It can be affirmed that their territories had fluid frontiers. If nowadays these frontiers seem to be rigid, this is due to the instauration of indigenous policies promoted by Brazil's, French Guiana's and Suriname's governments since early 21st century. This is the point when they began to attribute distinct ethnic denominations to different indigenous groups found in the region, as stated by Gallois and Grupioni (2003)¹⁷. In the following, a brief history of the formation of each of these ethnic groups.

As stated, this extreme septentrional Brazilian territory presently is where the contemporary formations of *Paliur*, *Galibi Marworno*, *Galibi Kali'nã*, and *Karipuna* ethnicities. Since the 17th century, travelers described it as an area of intense contact between populations of different peoples.

According to Gallois and Grupioni (2003), it was in this century that distinct ethnic denominations were attributed to the different indigenous groups found in the region, which, except *Galibi do Oiapoque*, cohabit *Uaçá* Indigenous Lands. It is important to clarify that what "defines" a territory are power relations (SOUZA, 2008, p.59).

Portuguese were hostile to the indigenous practices of commerce with other Europeans, such as *Palikur*'s case. Capibaribe (2007) reports that mercantile involvement made them "enemies" of Grão-Pará Portuguese colonizers. Persecuted *Palikur* migrated towards the contested region between France and Portugal/Brazil, where Portuguese dominion was weakened and allowed commerce with everyone. *Palikur* presence in *Urucaú* river, where they currently live, has its first registry in the 19th century (ARNAUD, 1969, p.1).

Pereira, Oliveira, and Matos (2017) disserted that Amapá's indigenous peoples maintain distinct cultural markers: language, religion, and historic trajectories that brought them to their occupied spaces. Each group builds territory and establish territorial control in their way in *Uaçá* Indigenous Land. Currently, these characteristics are important for interethnic interactions that happen frequently in spaces such as schools and political environments.

At *Uaçá* Indigenous Land, localized in Oiapoque's municipality, there are three indigenous ethnicities: *Karipuna*, *Palikur*, and *Galibi Marworno*. Indigenous Land was homologated by Decree n°298 of 1991 and was an important step towards territorial

¹⁷ "When we say '*Galibi Marworno*', '*Palikur*', '*Karipuna*', '*Galibi do Oiapoque*', '*Wajãpi*', '*Aparai*', '*Wayana*', '*Tiriyó*', '*Katxuyana*' and '*Zo'é*', we are referring to groups with ethnic names that are not only historically dated, but that also have a relatively recent origin. Ethnic names are the names these groups adopted to indicate different ethnicities amongst themselves" (GALLOIS; GRUPONI, 2003, p.14).

preservation for groups of this region. There was a great preoccupation with maintaining this Land even with the BR-156 highway built inside the territory. This Indigenous Land has around 470.000 hectares and maintains the life of these three ethnicities. In it, they have interactions amongst themselves and the environment, a relation that marks and affirms their culture and identity. In these relations, each people are differently articulated with their place-territory, which constitutes a spectrum of knowledge, practices, and vigilance over the environment that is a consequence of their occupation on Indigenous Land until the present (ROCHA; MENDES, 2017).

Rocha and Mendes (2017) also present the specialization of indigenous peoples, showing the expressive attraction exerted by fluvial streams and, since the 1990s, the preference for proximity with BR-156. Indigenous people usually say that rivers are their brothers and land is their mother in reference to their nature attachments. Since the 19th century, *Palikur* are found in abundance along the *Curupi* and *Urukauá* rivers and maintain relations with their parents that live on the other side of the French Guiana frontier. Since 1960s, a *Palikur* cultural transformation made them begin to follow Pentecostalism, which distinguishes their territories with temples, ministers, and missions in villages.

In *Urukauá* riverside, a large *Palikur* village named *Kumenê* was founded. Other smaller settlements were created in the margins of this river. An example is the *Ywak* village situated in BR-156 margin.

Karipuna occupied the margins of *Curupi* river, where they built their sociability. They speak Portuguese and Patuá and are divided between the many villages dispersed in *Uaçá*, *Juminã*, and *Galibi* Indigenous Lands. The most populous are alongside *Curupi* riverside and there are five others at the margins of BR-156: *Pikiá* (km 40), *Curupi* (km 60), *Ahumã* (km 68), and *Estrela* (km 70).

Galibi Marworno are a group of heterogeneous origin that descends from *Caribe* and *Aruaque* peoples, such as *Galibi*, *Aruã*, and *Maruane*. The actions of the Service of Indigenous Protection in the region during the 1940s denominated themselves as “*Uaçá*’s Peoples” and after being identified as of *Galibi* origin began to use this denomination. In the 1980-1990s, Missionary Indigenist Council¹⁸ – Cimi – recommended them to define as *Galibi Marworno* to differentiate themselves from *Galibi do Oiapoque* because they do not share an origin.

Galibi Marworno occupied the *Uaçá* riverside, where most of them are currently located. As the *Karipuna*, they speak Portuguese and Patuá. Most of them inhabit *Kumarumã* village, in *Uaçá* river margins. They also live in three villages along BR-156, which are: *Samaúma* (km 83), *Tukay* (km 92), and *Anauerá* (km 102) – located at Indigenous Land limits.

Amapá’s indigenous peoples are distributed on both sides of Brazil and French Guiana frontier. Brazilian *Palikur*, *Karipuna*, and *Galibi* cited an indigenous person whose

¹⁸ In Portuguese: Conselho Indigenista Missionário (Cimi).

mother and sisters live in Cayenne, another is said to have an aunt in Regina, another had a father who lived in Regina and brothers in Saint-Georges. From one side to another, there are intermittent contacts in virtue of legal proceedings that are not discussed in this essay.

These Indigenous Lands have power relations, which emerge from Funai, Brazilian Frontier Police, and their equivalent in bordering countries, Associations – be it the *Cacique*'s or Ipié NGO, and these guarantee the existence of a territory. However, we must consider that the immediately visible dimension is that of identities, intersubjectivities, and symbolic exchanges that base their sense of “place” for this land. Place that, according to Souza (2008, p.69), is the “lived and perceived spatiality given meaning and marked by ‘topophilia’ and ‘topophobia’ [...]”.

Thus, the exercise of power – and with it the desire or necessity to defend and maintain your place-territory – concerns access to resources and riches of the forest, rivers, and land. Indigenous peoples coordinate territorial vigilance and ascertain the maintenance of their ways of life and the control over material symbols of identity.

Gallois and Grupioni (2003) consider that all indigenous peoples of the region have particular ways of organizing and occupying spaces where they live through their calendar. As already stated, they have their norms and rules of conduct that establish their wellbeing and sociability.

Common villages found in *Uaçá* Indigenous Lands are characterized by having a relatively short lifespan, which is around five to ten years – up to a maximum of 15 –, if there are no additional problems as internal upheaval, epidemics, deaths or crop plague. In this period, it is highly predictable that hunt and other close resources will become scarce and, thus, be the main factor for their migration. This mobility characterizes a fluid place-territory and the necessity of deep knowledge of indigenous lands resources to install new villages.

Gallois and Grupioni (2003) comment that each village has its founder who is considered the “place’s owner”, to whom we refer as village “boss” or “*cacique*”. The lifelong function of the village boss is to guarantee that all inhabitants of his village remain with him and satisfied with his organization of community life and conduction of external relations with other villages. To do that, a village boss must know how to make allies through task efficiency and persuasion more than force or authoritarianism, because he is considered as the “place’s owner” and not the owner of people who live there. A village boss, thus, does not expect obedience, but cooperation from his fellow co-residents.

Beyond those domestic spaces, it is common to find a special place in each village dedicated to encounters among inhabitants, visitor reception, political reunions, and religious or festivity ceremonies.

“Being indigenous is having this in our soul”

Ecosystems that compose *Uaçá* valley in Northern Amapá, *Uaçá* Indigenous Land territory, are particularly adequate for the establishment of indigenous cultures way of life: rivers become pathways, fertilize the soil and provide food in the form of varied fishes; they equally have an abundance of animals. Woods supply fruits, some roots, and palm hearts that are integral to their alimentation and serve as cures for common diseases.

The four peoples highlighted due to their transfrontier localization – *Karipuna*, *Galibi Marworno*, *Galibi Kaliña*, and *Palikur* – have their own social and cultural configuration with particularities. This enabled the creation of territorialities derived from their differentiations that generated territories. However, when dealing with land issues or development projects in *Uaçá* Indigenous Lands, they unite with CCPIO to claim their shared rights.

Construction of environmental thought is inherent to different peoples of the world, each with its conviction on the theme. In the case of indigenous peoples, there is close contact with cultural, religious, ancestral, and economical significations around the land, “the mother”, which configures it as an essential determination of daily life for these groups. Thus, the place-territory becomes a predominant factor in the construction of their identities because their relations with land goes beyond an economic-capitalist perspective.

Bonnemaison (2000 [1995], p.131) argues that territory is firstly a space of identity or identification. This author’s perspective on territory is close to that of place. Place, in this instance, especially contemplates the dimension of lived space in all its symbolic meaning. According to Holzer (1997), in an approach centered on lived space, the territory is fundamentally composed of places. It is important to comprehend the differences and imbrications between place and territory to understand the territorial identities of Oiapoque’s indigenous peoples, because it is through them that daily practices can be grasped. In this regard, Silva (2020, p.74) collaborates in relating that identity, place and territory are connected in a way that “it is not possible to mention those without, however, speaking of identity, change, resignification, rootedness, belonging and the senses of being, staying, remaining, acting, living and relating”.

Penna (1992, p.56) reveals her preoccupation with identity when interrogating about “What defines someone as a northeastern?”, the title of her book. The author discusses hypotheses concerning the configuration of this identity, such as naturality, life experiences, culture, and individual auto-attribution. She reinforces that “one has to abandon all perspectives of identity that conceives it as something monolithic, unique or stable, or even as having its own existence” (PENNA, 1992, p.56). Based on this author, we conclude that indigenous identity is dynamic and many identity bonds are manifested in place and territory conviviality.

Approaching the relation between identity and territory, Haesbaert (1999, p.172) contributes that “all territorial identity is a social identity fundamentally defined through territory”.

Castells (1999, p.22) considers identity as “the process of building meanings based on a cultural attribute, or on a group of inter-related cultural attributes, through which prevails against other sources of meaning”. This conjunct of cultural attributes is associated to the raw material or the necessary basis for the existence of any given identity and it is “originated in history, geography, biology, productive and reproductive institutions, collective memory and personal fantasies [...]” (CASTELLS, 1999, p.22). According to C.A.M., of *Galibi Marworno* people, “being indigenous is in our blood. Is the culture to be maintained, that of our ancestors” and, in his perspective, it is not necessary to wear a particular vestment to be indigenous. He highlights the cultural-symbolic and lived dimension, where the construction of identity is the most important aspect.

According to Cruz (2007, p.260), identity must be considered as “a historical and relational construction of social and cultural meanings that orient the process of distinction and identification of an individual or group”. Hence, identity also involves relations of differentiation between “I” and “Other”, scales and places, be it from cultural, ideological, power, belonging, or other kinds of distinctions. All those are elements of differentiation, but also of affirmation and acknowledgement, as present in D.M.S.’s account, 18 years, of *Karipuna* people, who considers that being indigenous is “having knowledge of your people, your culture and being collaborative with our community”.

As presented by Castells (1999), Haesbaert (2009), Almeida (2005, 2008, 2018), Cruz (2007), and Hall (2006), identities can be comprehended as construction, multiplicity and movement in different times and spaces, and different sociocultural contexts. Identities involve discourses, representations, social practices, and meanings that are produced, reproduced, and molded by life experiences.

An example of these sociocultural contexts is G., 72 years, *Galibi Marworno*. He reports his farming experience, remaining for five years in the same space before moving to cultivate elsewhere, where he remains for up to ten or fifteen years before regressing and cultivating the first explored land. He complains that he has to do the same as “white people” because it is currently impossible to do crop rotation.

It is through the differentiation and encounter of “I” and “Other”, that is to say, the relation of alterity, that identities are established and ramified, as previously stated (ALMEIDA, 2005, 2008). Alterity consists of the conscience of the existence of an “other” as a subject with characteristics that are not affected by myself but are part of that “being’s” own universe, which we regard by cultural, ideological, social or projective singularities.

Alterity can also be recognized by the “other” that arrives, the “outsiders”, in opposition to the “insiders”, those that already have or built their territorial identities or that have a fondness for the land and place based on the existence and maintenance of their

ways of life. This circumstance defines alterity and can be qualified through the sense of frontier (ALMEIDA, 2018; CRUZ, 2006).

Benítez and Levy (2009, p.125) expressed that:

Identity is a social construction reinforced by a retro-alimented discourse that is supported by distinct characteristics and traits to affirm and reaffirm similitudes and differences. [...] Even if such traits might contemplate aspects of gender, religion, ethnic group, or occupation, the originary or neighboring character is determining for the perception of self and other, in how the collectivity is constructed and how it establishes alterity.

Alterity makes us to conscious of our identities and the identities of others. Thus, it is possible to talk about collective identities that can be revealed through the present moment as well as the historical processes and transformations of a given people. These identities can emerge from religious or ethnic actions and from seeking or holding a determined territory; however, they can also be associated with relations of conviviality, sociability, and familiarity in the same environment at which peoples and subjects assemble, as indicated by indigenous D.

Hall (2006) pointed out that identity is a historical construction that is subject to resignification and involves different forms of attachment: belonging, heritage, and future aspirations. Identity is effectively built and molded by the time of each societal or group cultural context. It presents itself as something spatially and temporally dynamic, always susceptible to processes of change and this does not imply losing its original ancestry.

G., of *Kalibi Moroworno* ethnicity, stated: “look, when I am in the village, I am indigenous; but in Oiapoque city I am not considered indigenous, especially because my wife is not indigenous”. He plays, he manipulates this double standard of identity recognition and incorporates this in his way of life. It also highlights the frequent deterritorialization and reterritorialization between his village and Oiapoque city to guarantee his place-territory.

Therefore, “identity is something formed through time, through unconscious processes [...]. It remains incomplete, it is always in process, always being formulated”, affirms Hall (2006, p.38), reinforcing the dynamics of identity. The notion of time deepens identities, past, present and future aspirations. Time, space and memory qualify identities and allow us to understand that these have less to deal “with questions such as: ‘who are we’ or ‘where do we come from’, but with questions of ‘who we can become’ [...]” (HALL, 2006, p.109).

This becoming or, in other words, the process of ‘who we can become’ concerns processes of construction and resignification, with routes that can be altered, protected, or reaffirmed in time and space. Nevertheless, it cannot be associated with solely present cultural forms, as something halted or the reading of a moment.

We are supporting, thus, an understanding that identities, although expressed by subjectivity, are not dissociated from a basis of material reference. Symbolic elements appear and are constituted by material ones, such as rivers, forests, crops, houses, spaces of collective encounters, mills, villages, communities, cities where one goes to school, health clinics, temples, banks, other services and institutions, the country, and others. All those components of material basis cannot be separated from meanings that are expressed through the symbolic-immaterial. In this respect, we are informed by Cruz (2007, p.263) affirmation that:

Identity is subjectively built based on representations, discourses, systems of symbolic classification, even if it is not something purely subjective and restricted to 'textuality' or 'symbolic'. It is not a purely imaginary construction that minimizes material and objective real experience and social practices as some affirm and neither is it something materially given, objective, an immutable essence, fixed and definitive.

O., 28 years, from a *Tiryio* village in Pará, states with conviction that "being indigenous is not our clothes, language or blood. It is having this in our soul". He reinforces the concept that identity is inseparable from the existence of an immaterial symbolic element. I understand, as O., that this subjectivity is the raw material generated from a referential space that gives sense to an identity and by which their idealizers produce and resignify their lived space.

Place and territory constitute this basis because they are where identity takes form, be it from use and appropriation or by relations of belonging and rootedness. In this respect, Almeida's (2005, p.109) contributions point towards the fact that "for those who have a territorial identity with it, a territory is the result of a symbolic-expressive spatial appropriation, with meanings and symbolic relations".

Although a territory can be characterized by economic, biologic, social, and politic basis, "its more humane expression identifies it as a place of mediation between men and their culture. [...] Territory is, thus, this spatial parcel rooted in a shared identity that reunites individuals with the same feeling", ponders Medeiros (2009, p.217-218).

This understanding reflects on the comprehension of indigenous territories. These constitute spaces demarcated by relations of possession, the most significant spatial element. These territories safeguard the historicity of these peoples, their habits, customs, traditions, and culture. As previously stated, territories are space of shelter, safety, and preservation of meanings that make them indigenous "beings". Moreover, *ribeirinhos*¹⁹ or BR-156 *lindeiros*, *Karipuna*, *Galibi Marworno*, *Galibi Kaliña*, and *Palikur*, are thus what makes them Beings-in-the-world and Being-in-the-world with others, because they reveal the sense of existing. These are territories marked by relations of identity and

¹⁹ A Brazilian traditional people that occupy riverside regions in the North of the country.

belonging. A topophilia²⁰, a geographicality²¹ connect them to space, to the lived world where their daily life experiences are settled. One can affirm that this concerns a place of life, a place-territory.

Place-territory is present in diverse contexts of indigenous peoples, predominantly regarding territoriality, identities, territorial identities, belonging, power/possession, lived world, and the material/symbolic matrixes and signification/resignification as configured by the different ethnicities of *Uaçá* Indigenous Land.

Increased awareness of these indigenous peoples enables us to see that despite sharing with us almost all that the modern world allows in terms of consumption and information, we are dealing with other societies. We must highlight that they are heavily structured in their ways of life and world vision and that these particular ways are sufficiently versatile and appropriate to live alongside ours.

Closing the discussion

Amapá, as mentioned, was a pioneer in recognizing indigenous territorial rights: all claimed lands at the state were demarcated and homologated. The challenge, now, is to guarantee the quality of life that these peoples hope to maintain or recuperate according to their cultural standards and forms of organization. Demands for indigenous autonomy have emerged face the implementation of interventions that affect them directly and as a consequence of their rising capacity of dialoguing and positioning before multiple sectors of the national society.

The main problem faced by all *Uaçá* and *Kalibi* Indigenous Lands peoples of Oiapoque river is related to governmental interests with unrespectful intervention to their cosmovision and territory – both legitimized by 1998's Federal Constitution. Governmental changes tend to institute managers with ideologies contrary to those previously firm. There are frequent impasses generated by omissions concerning what was proposed by existing politics and this can consequently cause conflicts.

Face a capitalist frontier, which views nature as a commodity, those who are there and share a territorial rootedness, “identity gains contours of resistance” against changes put into motion by new ways of superposition and exploration of their place-territories. If it (re)exists, it is constantly in conflict, tensions that fragilize their territorialities.

Without a doubt, the context favored a greater union of them in defense of their place-territories threatened by inappropriate policies that are aggravated due to the transfrontier situation between Brazil and French Guiana. It is important to emphasize that Oiapoque's Indigenous Peoples seek to be subjects of their history and their territorialities

²⁰ Concept introduced by Tuan (1974) that concerns the affective bonds of human beings with environment and place.

²¹ With this concept, Dardel (1954) refers to the various ways by which we feel and know our environment.

– while simultaneously compromised and fragile – became instruments to fight for their land.

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